



Conservation Area Assessment

Rolvenden

Conservation Areas are defined as “areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance.”

Designation introduces a general control over the demolition of unlisted buildings and provides the basis for policies designed to preserve all aspects of character or appearance that define an area’s special interest.

There are 43 Conservation Areas in Ashford Borough.

ROLVENDEN CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

AREA APPRAISAL [Brief, objective description of Conservation Area - scale, location, other special characteristics]

Rolvenden is the classic wealden village with a high proportion of listed buildings and range of vernacular styles and sizes. Some areas are "open" giving visual release while others have a more "enclosed" feel which gives rise to visual tension as one moves through the village. All of the sub-areas combine to produce a characterful village Conservation Area.

The village is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and also the Special Landscape Area defined in the Kent Countryside Plan. The village has a strongly rural setting and is located at a relative high point in the landscape before the land dips from the Parsonage on Hastings Road to the south in the direction of Newenden.

The high proportion of listed buildings has ensured that external alterations to buildings has fallen within the Council's control via the Listed Building Consent regime and this may account as to why the area is so well conserved. The predominance of Listed Buildings is shown on "Plan 1" attached with this assessment.

ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION	COMMENT
topography/physical structure and its relationship to the sites topography	<p>The majority of the Conservation Area is fairly level - this would include the northern entrance, the High Street (both ends) and Regent Street.</p> <p>From the crossroads of Hastings Road (A28) with Maytham Road, the road rises slightly and then starts to dip away to the east in the direction of Rolvenden Layne.</p> <p>From the Parsonage on the Hastings Road, the road dips sharply to the south.</p> <p>On the Benenden Road, having left the built up area of the village, the road bends and rises to the ridge upon which the windmill is located and then falls back down to its previous level travelling in a north-westerly direction.</p>
archaeological significance and potential of the area	<p>St Mary's Church is understood to be of early 14th Century origins and therefore development in its immediate environment may have archaeological implications.</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
<p>the character and hierarchy of spaces, and townscape quality.</p>	<p>Most of the spaces within the Conservation Area tend to be private front or rear gardens serving dwelling houses. The degree of privacy is determined by the physical setback of the property from the footway as well as the boundary demarkation e.g whether a property has a simple picket fence or at the other extreme, a high hedge and abundant tree screen.</p> <p>Nevertheless, there are some other important spaces within the designated Conservation Area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Cricket Ground/Recreation Area</u> - this gives a rural setting and room for the village to breathe on Regent Street. It also enhances the settings of the listed buildings on the opposite side of the road. • <u>Open space/Lower High Street</u> - the setback of the Council dwellings on the western side of the High Street gives an area of open lawns and row of mature oak trees accessible from the footway and allows the Listed Buildings on the opposite side of The Street to predominate the street scene. • <u>Churchyard Memorial</u> - space created by clustering of dwellings and semi-formal open space via a neatly cut and maintained hedge. The area, as befits its proximity to the Church and churchyard, has a semi-tranquil character. • <u>St Marys Churchyard</u> - this is essentially a leafy, green and quiet semi-formal open space accessible via public footpaths running in a southerly direction. • <u>Village Pond Near St Marys</u> - old pond surrounded by abundant vegetation and mature trees around which local authority dwellings have been developed in a courtyard type pattern. This area has a semi-tranquil feel and is located on an important pedestrian route through to the Hillreed Homes Gybbons Road development. • <u>Playing Field To Rear Of Rolvenden Primary School, Hastings Road</u> - Open green area bounded by mature vegetation to agricultural fields to north and west and backing on to the rear gardens of dwellings on the western side of the High Street. <p>These spaces are shown on "Plan 8".</p> <p>In carrying out the Conservation Area appraisal, five key areas or groupings of buildings were observed and have been used for this assessment. These break the Conservation Area into its constituent parts and are identified on the plan marked "Plan 2".</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
(continued)	<p><u>Group A - "Entrance From Tenterden"</u></p> <p>An aesthetically pleasing "green" entrance to the village from the surrounding countryside - characterised by abundant mature vegetation on northern/western side of the A28 and dwellings with large hedges to the rear of the footway.</p> <p>Amongst the greenery, the steeply pitched roofs of the row of listed buildings can be seen though only glimpses of the actual buildings themselves.</p> <p>St David's House and Chapel Cottage mark the entrance proper on the eastern side of the A28 though themselves are not of any great vernacular merit. However, they, along with the bend in the road, demark the entrance into the Conservation Area and view to the attractive buildings in the distance. Essentially, this area is one of "promise" of what is beyond and which is not immediately visible. Photographs of this group are attached as "Plan 3".</p> <p><u>Group B - "Regent Street Crossroads And Upper High Street"</u></p> <p>A distinct change from Group A, the strong north/south axis of the Upper High Street is the defining feature combined with two contrasting but complementary styles of development either side of the road which has historical/social connotations.</p> <p>The defining feature on the eastern side of the road is the long terrace of vernacular cottages, which forms a definite group. Backing directly on to the footway, these give visual tension in the street scene. The strong linear feel which is created is "enhanced" by the widening of the road which allows actively for on-street parking along the eastern side.</p> <p>The western side of the High Street complements the eastern side by having a lower key feel. A range of higher social order period buildings are set back a greater distance from the road and have attractive planting/hedges etc to the rear of the footway.</p> <p>The crossroads itself is full of character with one corner developed to the road and enclosed via a curved brick wall to the rear of the footway. Inside, a period building dominates the corner when travelling in a northerly direction. The other side of the corner is not as visually striking as there is a large open forecourt which wraps right around the corner.</p> <p>Travelling east along Regent Street to this crossroads, the view is framed by the vernacular detailing of the aforementioned terrace of buildings on the eastern side of the High Street. These "close" the long range view along Regent Street.</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
(continued)	<p>At the crossroads waiting to turn right, the first glimpse of the village Church is available, as is the primary character of the lower portion of the High Street. Photographs of this group are attached as "Plan 4".</p> <p><u>Group C - Regent Street/Benenden Road</u></p> <p>Beyond The Bull Public House, Regent Street is characterised by having development only on one side; the southern side. Again, a variety of styles exists with only one or two 20th Century buildings which do not spoil the street scene. The majority of buildings are listed and have imposing settings due to the absence of built development on the opposite side of the road.</p> <p>Moving in a westerly direction, there is a perception at the last dwelling on the southern side of the road that the village has been left. Field boundaries and agricultural land predominates between the listed buildings in the area, and the imposing windmill which stands majestically against the skyline. Photographs of this group are attached as "Plan 5".</p> <p><u>Group D - "Lower Portion of High Street"</u></p> <p>A subtle but noticeable shift from the character of Group B. Visual "tension" and "relaxation" effectively swap sides in the street as the road bends towards the dominating local landmark in the form of the village Church. The western side of the road is characterised by listed buildings located close to the rear of the footway with only small 2 - 3m setbacks whereas the western side of the road is characterised by inoffensive 20th Century public and private residential development.</p> <p>Linklater's shop on the eastern side of the road has importance in "villagescape" terms as it effectively terminates Group B and is the visual marker for the change witnessed in Group D. The eastern side of the Lower High Street can be characterised as being "low key" in visual and townscape terms. The greatest contribution made is in terms of enhancing the settings of the listed buildings opposite as well as providing visual screening and greenery within the heart of the village. Photographs of this group are attached as "Plan 6".</p> <p><u>Group E - "Church and Beyond"</u></p> <p>The Church and Churchyard environs probably represent one of the earliest nuclei of development in the village, hugging the two lines of communication to Rolvenden Layne and Newenden. The dwellings around the Church have an intimate vernacular feel whilst the Parsonage close by has a spacious and green setting with abundant mature vegetation on the road boundary enhancing the entrance into the village when approaching from Newenden.</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
(continued)	<p>There is a long range view to the High Street/Maytham Road crossroads and in many ways, Group E is similar to Group A in so far as its visual qualities are largely in terms of a green entrance and "promise" of the village itself beyond. Photographs of this Group are attached as "Plan 7".</p>
<p>the use of distinctive and traditional building materials</p>	<p>Rolvenden has a wide range of architectural styles in each of the identified groupings of buildings. The Kentish "vernacular" is well represented throughout with white painted weatherboarding and red brick coloured vertical tile hanging predominating. Roofs are generally steep with peg tiles, though a number of buildings have slate roofs.</p> <p>Windows are softwood, white painted sash windows or traditional casement windows with glazing bars subdividing the glass into small square panes. The Bull Public House is distinct in that the frames to the windows are painted black, adding visual contrast. This is particularly effective when windows are slightly recessed in window reveals and would work well where the exterior of the building is entirely clad in white painted weatherboarding.</p> <p>The dwellings on Regent Street are predominantly in brick, illustrating that this area is the most recent element of the historic core of the village.</p> <p>Boundary treatments differ in respect of each of the identified groups as follows:-</p> <p><u>Group A</u> - natural vegetation and hedge boundaries to the road.</p> <p><u>Group B</u> - on the eastern side, the buildings themselves act as the boundary whereas on the western side, small hedges and low retaining walls together with mature vegetation predominate.</p> <p><u>Group C</u> - a mixture of low white painted picket fencing and low brick walls with shrubs.</p> <p><u>Group D</u> - a mixture with low hedges/low close boarded fences, low brick walls, low white picket fencing on the western side. Strong visual contrast with the eastern side, which has no boundary demarkation around the lawned area to the local authority developed housing.</p> <p><u>Group E</u> - lush vegetation and predominantly hedge boundaries to the road.</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
<p>the contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, or other organic elements to the character of the area</p>	<p>See previous paragraphs and "Plan 8".</p> <p><u>Group A</u> - much character as an "entrance" from abundant vegetation and hedge boundaries.</p> <p><u>Group B</u> - character more from the built form and grouping of dwellings than vegetation and spaces. The greenery on the western side of the High Street acts as important visual "softening" of the street scene.</p> <p><u>Group C</u> - greenery along the boundary of the cricket ground which itself acts as an important open "green space" within the heart of the village. Mature vegetation on the cricket ground boundaries separates the village from the fields beyond.</p> <p><u>Group D</u> - the setback of dwellings on the eastern side of the High Street provides a characterful informal green space though "ownership" is unclear - is it "private" or "public" space? The softening effect of the row of mature trees adds substantially to the attractiveness and character of the area and enhances the settings of listed buildings opposite.</p> <p><u>Group E</u> - a characterful and leafy "entrance/exit". Much character from boundary vegetation on both sides of the road, especially lush vegetation and mature trees in the private spacious grounds of the Parsonage.</p>
<p>the prevailing or former uses of buildings in the area, and the influence of this on plan form and building types</p>	<p>Approximately 90% of the Conservation Area in built terms is residential. As villages go, Rolvenden has quite an active High Street. The 10% in non-residential use is made up of:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctors Surgery near Post Office • School • Playfoot's Junk Shop • Linklater's Foodstores • Post Office • Simpson's Stores/Newsagents (in terrace on eastern side of High Street in Group B) • Three antique shops • The Bull Public House and the Lemon Tree Public House • Village Hall • Village Garage <p>Barn/oast conversions are absent from the Conservation Area. There are few conversions of large dwellings into a smaller number of residential units. Most dwellings are purpose built for residential use be they 20th Century or earlier.</p>

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
(continued)	<p>The majority of dwellings have simple plan forms which are not excessively deep and produce characterful steeply pitched roofs. Larger dwellings tend to repeat this basic structural unit to provide additional accommodation. 20th Century dwellings, exhibit roofs with a shallower pitch and deeper plan form.</p>
historical evolution	<p>The grouping of buildings around the village Church and the nearby High Street most likely represent the oldest part of the village with the buildings in Group A representing higher "social order" residences. The group of buildings on the southern side of Regent Street appears, from the use of brick, to be the most recent group of listed buildings.</p>
the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside.	<p>From the vast majority of vantage points within the Conservation Area, views to the agricultural land beyond the village are limited. However, the buildings on Regent Street and some of the buildings in the northern area of the High Street back directly on to fields. Travelling west along Regent Street/Benenden Road towards the windmill, the perception is of having left the village and having entered the countryside with long range views over the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.</p>
the extent of loss, intrusion, or damage sustained by an area	<p>No serious intrusions or visual damage to the area observed.</p>
identification of features that detract from the special character of the area and that may provide sites where change could be encouraged	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Playfoot's Shop [eastern side of High Street (Group D/B boundary)]</u> - Playfoot's shop effectively terminates the long terrace of buildings on the eastern side of the High Street though it is a generally unattractive single storey property. This could be sympathetically redeveloped to turn the corner properly into the Sausage Factory site as well as providing a suitable visual finish to the terrace of listed buildings. A two-storey building would be appropriate. In the same way that Linklater's Stores on the opposite side of the road act as a local level landmark between the different characters of each of the parts of the High Street, so a redevelopment of this site could serve a similar function in "townscape" terms. An opportunity exists to pick up the slates and gable features of Linklater's in any design.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
(continued)	<p>2. <u>The Police House (Group D)</u> - situated at the edge of the Conservation Area as it exists, this late 50's/early 60's development sits unhappily with the Luytens style village hall and the award winning Hillreed Homes "modern vernacular" estate. Redevelopment would only enhance this area.</p> <p>3. <u>Boundary To Alma Cottages, Regent Street</u> - poor quality galvanised iron railings installed. Given the character of the dwellings and an attractive "sunken" brick floorscape, a better boundary treatment to the rear of the footway would enhance the character of the Conservation Area and the settings of the listed buildings.</p>
the existence of any neutral areas - those that neither enhance nor detract from the character of the conservation area	No specific "neutral" areas though the 20th Century bungalow close to the Rolvenden County Primary School and the local authority housing on the eastern side of the High Street are inoffensive though somewhat at odds with the strongly historical character of the majority of the village Conservation Area.
the existence of any threats to the area	<p>Given the listed status of the majority of buildings, fenestration alterations are controllable under listed building control.</p> <p>More serious might be boundary treatment alterations - hedges as yet do not have protection but low fences and walls elsewhere in the village do add subtly to the overall character of the Conservation Area. At present, the removal/demolition of such built development is "permitted development" and Conservation Area consent would not be required if the boundary fencing does not exceed 1m in height and is not physically attached to a dwelling house.</p> <p>Parking does not particularly appear to be a problem though during the course of the appraisal, a resident/visitor to one of the Council dwellings on the eastern side of the High Street drove his car up the raised kerb and across the open lawned area under the row of Oak trees. It is unclear whether this is a regular problem or indeed whether casual parking on the grass is a habitual occurrence.</p>

OUTCOMES

<p>Area boundary</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. All proposed alterations are shown on the plan marked "Plan 9".2. In terms of areas to be deleted, the present Conservation Area boundary line to the rear of West Lodge on the A28 Hastings Road is unjustified as it arbitrarily includes part of a larger field. The Conservation Area boundary should be redrawn so that only the domestic curtilage of West Lodge is included as the southernmost building on the eastern side of Hastings Road.3. The major deletion proposed is potentially contentious in so far as the Conservation Area boundary extending out to the listed windmill on Benenden Road produces one of the largest Conservation Areas in the Borough outside the town of Tenterden. There are distant glimpses of the Church tower when entering the village from the windmill. These include fields in the foreground, producing a characterful rural setting to the western side of the village. However, the natural boundary chosen during initial designation includes fields which do not impinge upon such views. As such, there is a case to 'trim the Conservation Area here, releasing land unnecessarily included.4. In terms of additions and extensions, Nos. 17 to 11 Hastings Road should be included as their present exclusion is artificial and does not follow from the extension of the Conservation Area on the opposite side of the road. Although the buildings concerned are inoffensive 20th Century designs, their roofs are visible when approaching the village from the south and potential redevelopment could have a substantial visual impact.5. The only other addition is the proposed inclusion of the Gibbons Road Hillreed Homes 1980's development on Maytham Road. This award winning "Conservation Area conscious" estate represents a natural evolution of the village and is worthy of Conservation Area protection.
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Potential Article 4 Directions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. New "local" Article 4 Direction removing Article 3 Schedule 2 Part 6 rights contained within the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 in respect of the erection of agricultural buildings etc which might impinge on the views between the windmill and the Church tower. See Plan 9.
Site Policies (proposals and protection)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Playfoot's Shop</u> - a policy is required encouraging a sympathetic redevelopment of this property in order to enhance the terrace of listed buildings close by and properly demarcate the change in character that occurs along the eastern side of the High Street. Use should either be residential or residential above ground floor shops. See site marked "B" on Plan 9. 2. <u>The Police House, Maytham Road</u> - An opportunity exists to redevelop this site in a more sympathetic way, perhaps via a small terrace of vernacular style cottages which would visually link the village hall with the Gibbons Road development. See site marked "C" on Plan 9. 3. <u>Cricket Ground</u> - Protection as important village amenity space and also the way it enhances the settings of listed buildings on the southern side of Regent Street. See site marked "A" on Plan 9.
Potential improvement schemes	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The seating area near the local authority dwellings on the crossroads of the High Street and Maytham Road can be seen over a significant distance when having entered the village from Newenden on the Hastings Road. Potentially, the long view which is available could be actively improved by additional planting or imaginative landscaping around the seating area. 2. The lack of any formal boundary demarkation to the open green area in front of the local authority dwellings on the eastern side of the High Street could be tackled by imaginative shrub planting/flower beds.

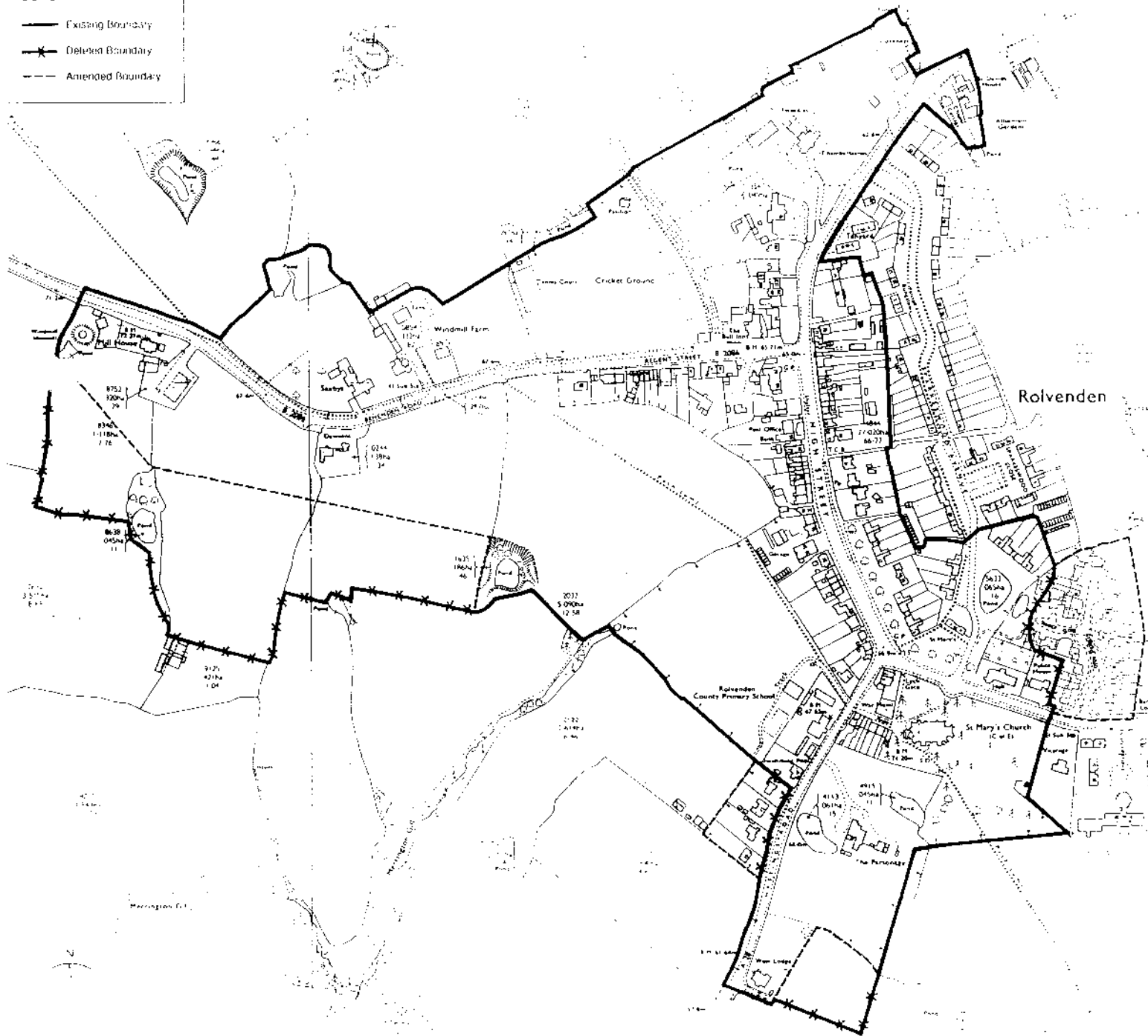
(continued)	<p>This would have the dual effect of maintaining the fundamentally "open" character of this part of the High Street yet preventing the area becoming scruffy through random pedestrian routes being forged or even car access.</p> <p>3. Boundary Alterations To Alma Cottages, Regent Street -the Borough Council should encourage the creation of a more in keeping set of boundary railings to the front of the cottages which are visually prominent on Regent Street.</p>
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Date: 30 October 1995

ROLVENDEN CONSERVATION AREA

- Existing Boundary
- Deleted Boundary
- Amended Boundary



Not to scale

ROLVENDEN CONSERVATION AREA