ASHFORD
BOROUGH
LOCAL PLAN

Conservation Area Assessment

Reading Street

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.

READING STREET CONSERVATION AREA ASSESSMENT

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

The Reading Street Conservation Area covers a small group of development located off the B2080 Appledore Road and Reading Street in open countryside within the designated High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty two miles south-east of Tenterden. The northern part of the existing Conservation Area lies off the Appledore Road and is characterised by sporadic built development interspersed with open fields. It includes a small Church - St Mary's Church which is prominent in the surrounding landscape. The southern part of the Conservation Area centres around Reading Street and the junction with the Appledore Road and is more tightly knit comprising of a large garden centre site and a group of mainly unListed dwellings along Reading Street. The settlement is small and has no shops or community facilities apart from St Mary's Church. The Conservation Area was first designated on 31 May 1977.

ASPECT UNDER CONSIDERATION	COMMENT
topography/physical structure and its relationship to the sites topography	The settlement lies in open countryside with development sporadic along the Appledore Road becoming more compact at the junction with and down Reading Street. There is only a small drop in the gradient along the Appledore Road. Land to the south-west of the Appledore Road and down Reading Street falls away into a shallow valley. Properties are detached and located close to and visible from the road.
archaeological significance and potential of the area	There are no ancient monuments settlement but St Mary's Church is an area of archaeological safeguarding.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the character and hierarchy of spaces, and townscape quality.	The part of the settlement along the Appledore Road is spread out and characterised by large open spaces, mainly fields between properties. A small graveyard lies around St Mary's Church and there is a hard core open parking area near the roadside at the garden centre. Down Reading Street the open spaces are mainly private curtilage areas around the detached residences which form part of the setting of the buildings. The buildings along the Appledore Road are visually prominent in the skyline, in particular when entering the settlement from the east and south-west.
the use of distinctive and traditional building materials	Most of the properties have traditional clay roof tiles with brick and clay tile hanging elevations and white painted wooden casement windows. Some exceptions are St Mary's Church which has stone elevations, and Ebony Cottage - a distinctive timber framed house. The old inn, a prominent and large building at the Appledore Road/Reading Street junction has white rendered elevations. The garden centre site is also prominent and intrusive comprising of modern agricultural buildings, glass houses and polytunnels which are not in keeping with the character and appearance of the other buildings in the locality.
the contribution made by green spaces, trees, hedges, or other organic elements to the character of the area	The Conservation Area around Reading Street is characterised by dense vegetation with substantial mature trees and hedgerow compared to the surrounding open landscape. Along the Appledore Road there is a mature hedgerow on either side of the road but it is less densely vegetated with some open fields. There is a group of conifers at Ramsden Farm which are rather prominent and not indigenous to the area.
the prevailing or former uses of buildings in the area, and the influence of this on plan form and building types	The prevailing use of premises in the settlement is residential. Examples of converted agricultural buildings are at Ramsden where a barn and oast house have been converted to residential use resulting in the removal of surplus agricultural buildings. Old Barrack Farm was formerly the Post Office at Reading Street, but is now wholly residential. The only commercial premises is the garden centre which has resulted in the erection of numerous buildings spread around a large site which are rather incongruous in the settlement and wider landscape.

AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
historical evolution	St Mary's Church and Ebony Cottage are the earliest recorded buildings dating from the fifteenth century. The other Listed Buildings in the settlement date from the seventeenth and eighteenth century. There has been little modern development with the exception of the garden centre which has expanded on its site..
the relationship of the built environment to landscape or open countryside.	The settlement lies within an open landscape setting when approached from any direction. Buildings in particular on the Appledore Road are very prominent over wide open landscape forming part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The buildings down Reading Street are better screened due to mature trees and denser vegetation. This forms a vista of the surrounding open countryside when viewing southwards. There are wide views of surrounding open landscape from the Appledore Road.
the extent of loss, intrusion, or damage sustained by an area	The garden centre site and its buildings are prominent in the wider landscape and setting of St Mary's Church in particular when viewed from the south-west direction. It has a large car park and attracts outside visitors and their cars. At present the nursery site is not too badly cluttered by excessive advertisement signs which are often common on such sites. However, it has had a significant impact upon the rural character and appearance of the area.
identification of features that detract from the special character of the area and that may provide sites where change could be encouraged	The garden centre site with some prominent buildings and clutter on the site which impacts upon the setting of the Conservation Area with some Listed Buildings. There is also a dilapidated shed and disused oil drums on adjoining land to the west of Old Barrack Farm.

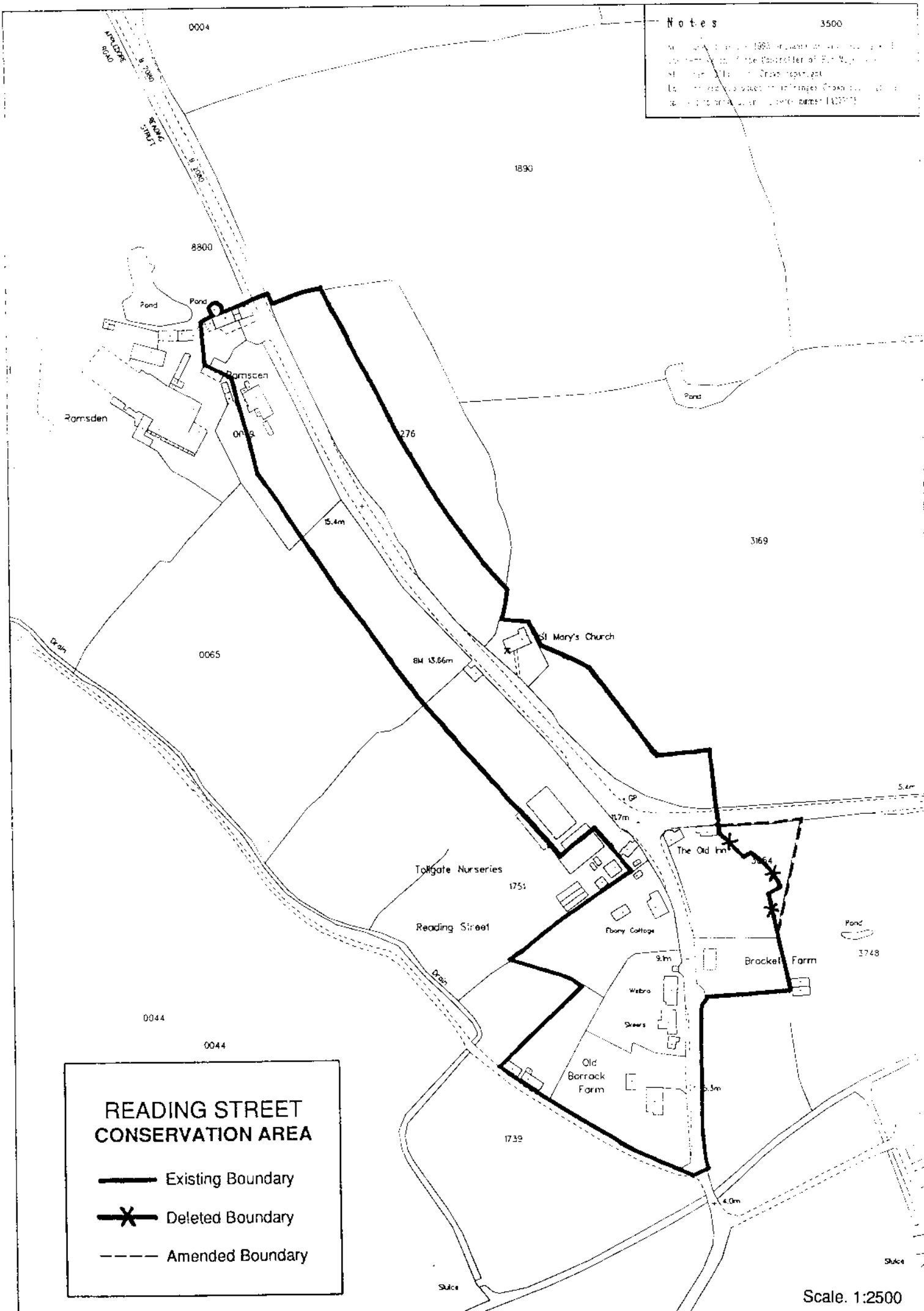
AREA APPRAISAL	COMMENT
the existence of any neutral areas - those that neither enhance nor detract from the character of the conservation area	None
the existence of any threats to the area	The garden centre site with further expansion, excessive advertising may be a potential threat, not only to the Conservation Area or its wider setting but also to the open countryside character of the surrounding area forming part of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

OUTCOMES

Area boundary	A lot of the northern part of the existing Conservation Area includes part of open fields. The boundaries also go through the middle of the garden centre and some buildings on that site. There are no buildings of any merit at the garden centre for it to be included. The other buildings at the northern part of the Appledore Road are spread out and either Listed or converted buildings so further alterations are restricted by planning conditions. Therefore potential changes on these buildings are already controlled. This part of the Conservation Area is proposed to be removed and it is proposed to concentrate the Conservation Area around the group of buildings which are mostly Listed at Reading Street.
Potential Article 4 Directions	The majority of dwellings are Listed which allows the Local Planning Authority control over further changes to materials, fenestration and even outbuildings. There are some attractive non-Listed Buildings which may adversely be affected by alterations permitted by the General Permitted Development Order but there is no evidence of a real and specific threat that this is likely to happen.
Site Policies (proposals and protection)	None
Potential improvement schemes	Softening of visual appearance of the garden centre.

Officer: Mr M Davies

Date: 1 November 1995


Notes
3500
0004
1890
8800
Pond
Pond
Ramsden
Ramsden
276
15.4m
3169
St Mary's Church
0065
Drain
8M 13.66m
GP
11.7m
5.4m
The Old Inn
Tollgate Nurseries
1751
Reading Street
Ebony Cottage
Pond
3748
9.1m
Bracket Farm
Webbs
Sheers
0044
0044
Old Barrack Farm
6.3m
1739
4.0m
Sluice
Sluice
READING STREET
CONSERVATION AREA
Existing Boundary
Deleted Boundary
Amended Boundary
Scale. 1:2500