

ROXTON CONSERVATION AREA

DECEMBER 1971

CIVIC AMENITIES ACT 1967

This document describes a Conservation Area which the County Council has designated under the above Act.

Just as there are individual buildings of architectural and historic interest which need safeguarding, so also are there areas of good architectural quality, historic importance, and special interest. The aims of a Conservation Area however are not only to preserve but also to enhance the character and appearance of an area. Although it may not be possible to justify the preservation of some features, the aim is that these should be replaced with something at least as good.

This document describes the important features of the area, and attempts to show how its attractive nature can be safeguarded and improved.

The aims of the Conservation Area procedure can only be fully realised with the willing co-operation of the Rural District Council, the Parish Council, and other organisations and individuals with an interest in the area. The County Council are already grateful to these people whose comments have been invaluable in preparing this document.

THE CONSERVATION AREA

Roxton is an agricultural settlement scattered along one of the most picturesque village High Streets in the County. It lies in the south-east of the Parish, some little distance off the main (A.428) road. Though new estates in its southern parts have given Roxton a residential function (the population is now about 370), it survives fairly intact as an attractive village partly because Roxton Park lies between it and the A.428 and acts as a barrier to development. Tempsford survives similarly, now that it lies off the A.1, and both contrast greatly with the nearby main road settlements of Great Barford and Wyboston. The Conservation Area covers most of the old village.

Four buildings are on the Statutory List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest and 15 on the Supplementary List (see Appendix): all but the Lodge have been included in the Conservation Area and most date from the seventeenth century. They are among the buildings marked 'important' on the map. A building so marked is regarded as making an important contribution to the character of the village scene because of its architectural merit, value within a group, position or building line; every effort will be made to preserve such a building but there is no legal compulsion to do so unless it is on the Statutory List.

The characteristic colours of the buildings are white and black. White farmhouses and cottages, thatched or tiled and with judicious use of black and white paint round the windows, contrast pleasingly with groups of black farm buildings placed at intervals along the roads. Most other buildings are pale brick though two yellow ones are notable in the street scene (especially the Chequers Public House), and Roxton House and a few others are red brick.

The Park is a fine background to much of the village and a pleasant introduction to it as one approaches from Bedford on the A.428, when the Park appears as an oasis of trees in an otherwise flat bare landscape.

High Street bends at both its northern and southern ends and buildings here satisfyingly close views into and out of the village. In the north the seventeenth century College Farmhouse (a Grade II Statutory Listed Building) and its barns perform this function; there are some fine trees in its grounds. On the opposite side of High Street a little to the south some of the pleasant thatched farm buildings are in a poor condition. Just north of the cross-roads site A has planning permission for two dwellings.

The buildings round the cross-roads are near to or right alongside the highway boundary and create a pleasant sense of enclosure, helped by the walls and trees of the Cedars; once past them in School Lane and Park Road the view expands over fields or the Park. They should be maintained on their present building lines. The approach to the village along Park Road is marred by a rather untidy farmyard with some dilapidated buildings. In School Lane is the Parish Church of St. Mary, dating from the fourteenth century with a fifteenth century west tower. The chancel contains the tomb of Roger Hunt whose family held land at Roxton from 1414 till the eighteenth century. The churchyard has fine trees, walls and hedges. The barn immediately to the west where the road bends slightly is important in the view from the east.

Opposite, site B has outline permission for one dwelling; the site is very important as an introduction to the village and the design standard should be high.

The view south from the cross-roads takes in the most attractive part of Roxton - the central section of High Street as far south as the Chequers Public House. White thatched cottages and tarred farm buildings are placed informally, almost casually, on the ground and are backed by the fine trees of the Park.

The Parish Hall is a rather unfortunate start to this section but opposite is a very attractive group of thatched cottages at right angles to the street and grouped around a miniature courtyard. To the south are two new houses behind some magnificent trees. Opposite are the fine black farm buildings of Church Farm built right up to the highway boundary alongside a wide green verge. Two buildings are set well back and give depth to the street scene - Church Farmhouse and, opposite, the Congregational Chapel. The latter is probably the most interesting building in the village: originally a barn, it was converted in the early nineteenth century into a place of worship by Charles Metcalfe, then Lord of the Manor; later, two wings were added and the entire block thatched. It is one storey, with wide eaves supported on rustic posts. Inside, the school room and vestry are in the wings and the chapel and gallery in the centre. The Chapel stands among good trees and forms a small group with the nearby cottages some of which were also built in Metcalfe's time and in a similar style.

Just south is a minor junction where the approach road to Roxton House gives a fine view of the Park and has attractive cottages on its southern side. Roxton House, a Grade II Statutory Listed Building, dates from the seventeenth century but was refronted in the eighteenth and enlarged in the nineteenth.

Opposite, the impact of the new estate road of Hills Close has been lessened by the use of walls at the junction so that the views along High Street are kept enclosed. The prominent yellow Chequers Public House stands across the line of High Street, forcing it to narrow considerably to the south and closing the view from the north; it is strategically the most important building in the village.

The southern part of High Street has seen the greatest changes. Houses have recently been demolished at site C and two chalet bungalows approved. Behind, on the site of farm buildings at D, seven dwellings have been permitted. Behind the white Park Farmhouse is a fine large tiled barn. On the east side of High Street there is permission for twelve houses with access taken from the area marked E: the red brick houses will go but the thatched cottage, derelict at present, is likely to be retained.

With these developments at C and E, the scene round the small triangle of green where Ford Lane meets High Street has been opened up and the intimate village character weakened. The only buildings which will remain close to the roadside here will be on the south side of the junction and it is important that these building lines are retained: as the road bends these houses close the view out from the centre of the village; they also present gable ends to the view from the east and the white house especially is important for its position when approaching the village from this direction.

Poplar Farmhouse, though separated from the Conservation Area by newer houses set back from the road, is an attractive building and with its poplar trees and fine group of black barns, some right alongside the road, is a magnificent abrupt introduction to Roxton and a pleasant feature of the view out.

GENERAL POLICY

In order to maintain the distinctive character of the area it will be necessary to

- (1) Retain important buildings and boundary walls and encourage their improvement rather than redevelopment. Consideration could be given to the addition of some buildings to the Statutory List and the Secretary of State for the Environment will be advised of these.
- (2) Retain the important spaces and the line of existing buildings, walls and hedges. This will mean paying careful attention to the implications of building lines and road safeguarding lines since the individuality of a street is quickly eroded if buildings are demolished and not replaced or if replacement buildings are unnecessarily set back. Existing building lines should only be abandoned where there is an overriding road safety reason. No new access roads, other than those already permitted, should be allowed to break open the street scene with their considerable overall width and associated visibility splays.
- (3) Ensure that any new development or redevelopment makes a positive contribution to the character of the area and that it is entirely appropriate in terms of siting, design and materials used. In particular, any new building should be designed as part of the group in which it is situated and in relation to surrounding trees and landscape, and not as an isolated structure. Applications for development unsupported by details will not normally be acceptable. Care will be taken to ensure that conversions of property are in harmony with the character of the buildings concerned and strict control will be exercised over applications for new advertisements.
- (4) Retain trees and hedges wherever possible, see that they are properly maintained and replaced when necessary, and encourage new planting where this would improve the village scheme. There are no Tree Preservation Orders at present and all important trees will need to be identified in greater detail and their protection secured by agreement with the landowner concerned or by the making of Preservation Orders. The help of the Parish Council will be necessary to achieve this. Trees lying just outside the Conservation Area should also be taken into account if they form an essential background to the Area, as in the case of the Park or Poplar Farm. New planting east of Hills Close and of the future permitted development to the south could help absorb these into the landscape.
- (5) Investigate the possibilities of replacing existing telegraph and electricity poles and wires by underground services and ensure that new installations do not spoil the appearance of the area.

APPENDIX: BUILDINGS OF ARCHITECTURAL
OR HISTORIC INTEREST -
"LISTED BUILDINGS"

Statutory List

Roxton House	Grade II
St. Mary's Church	B
Congregational Chapel	II
College Farmhouse	II

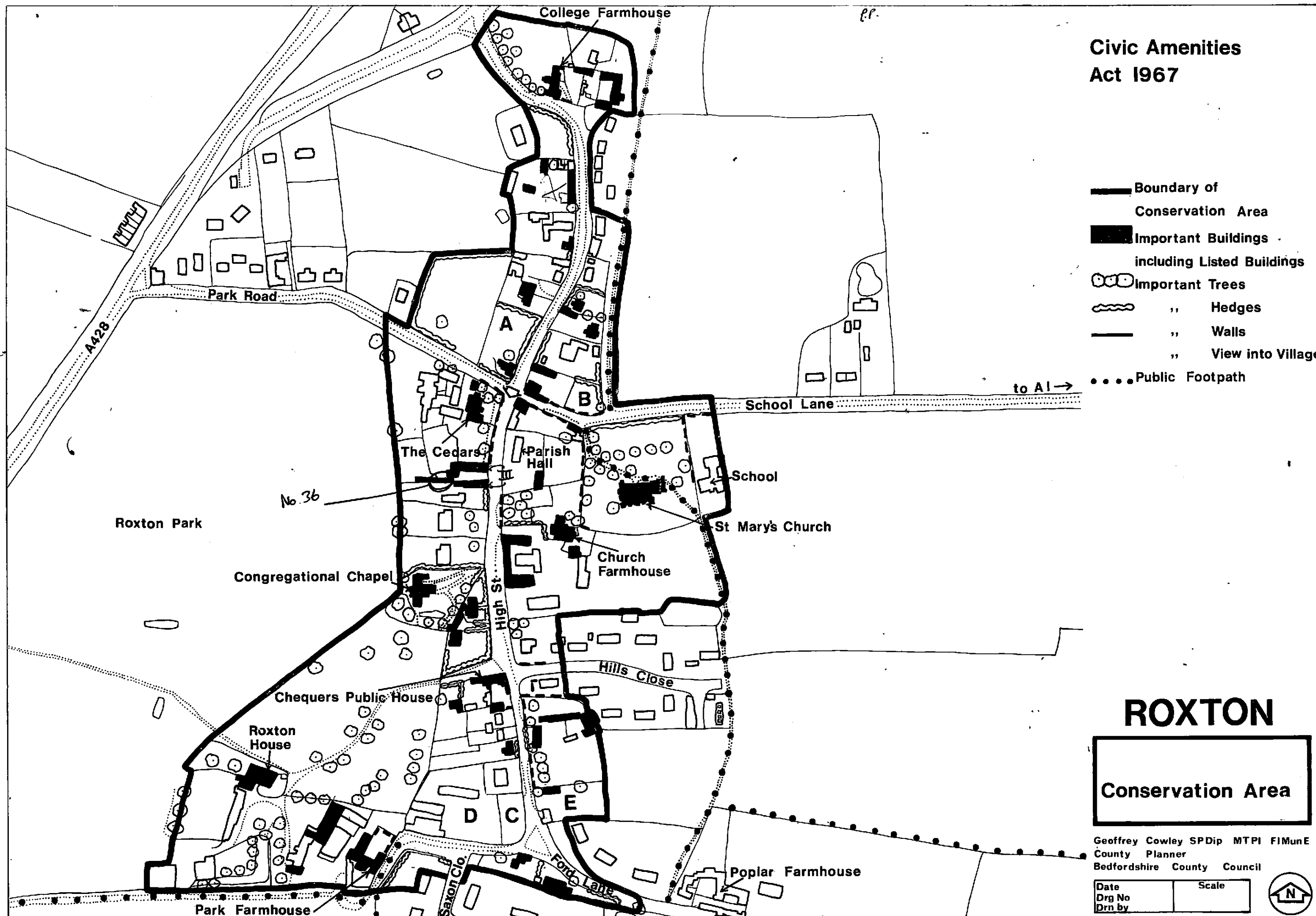
Supplementary List

(all Grade III)

Park Farmhouse	
Roxton House Lodge	
Poplar Farmhouse	
High Street (W):	No. 14
	The Cedars
	Nos. 28, 30, 32, 34
	No. 38
	Nos. 46, 48
	Nos. 52, 54, 56
	No. 58
	No. 60
(E):	No. 31
	No. 41 (Church Farmhouse)
	No. 55
	No. 57

Civic Amenities Act 1967

- Boundary of Conservation Area
- Important Buildings including Listed Buildings
- Important Trees
- Hedges
- Walls
- View into Village
- Public Footpath



ROXTON

Conservation Area

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County Planner
Bedfordshire County Council

Date Drg No Dwn by	Scale
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