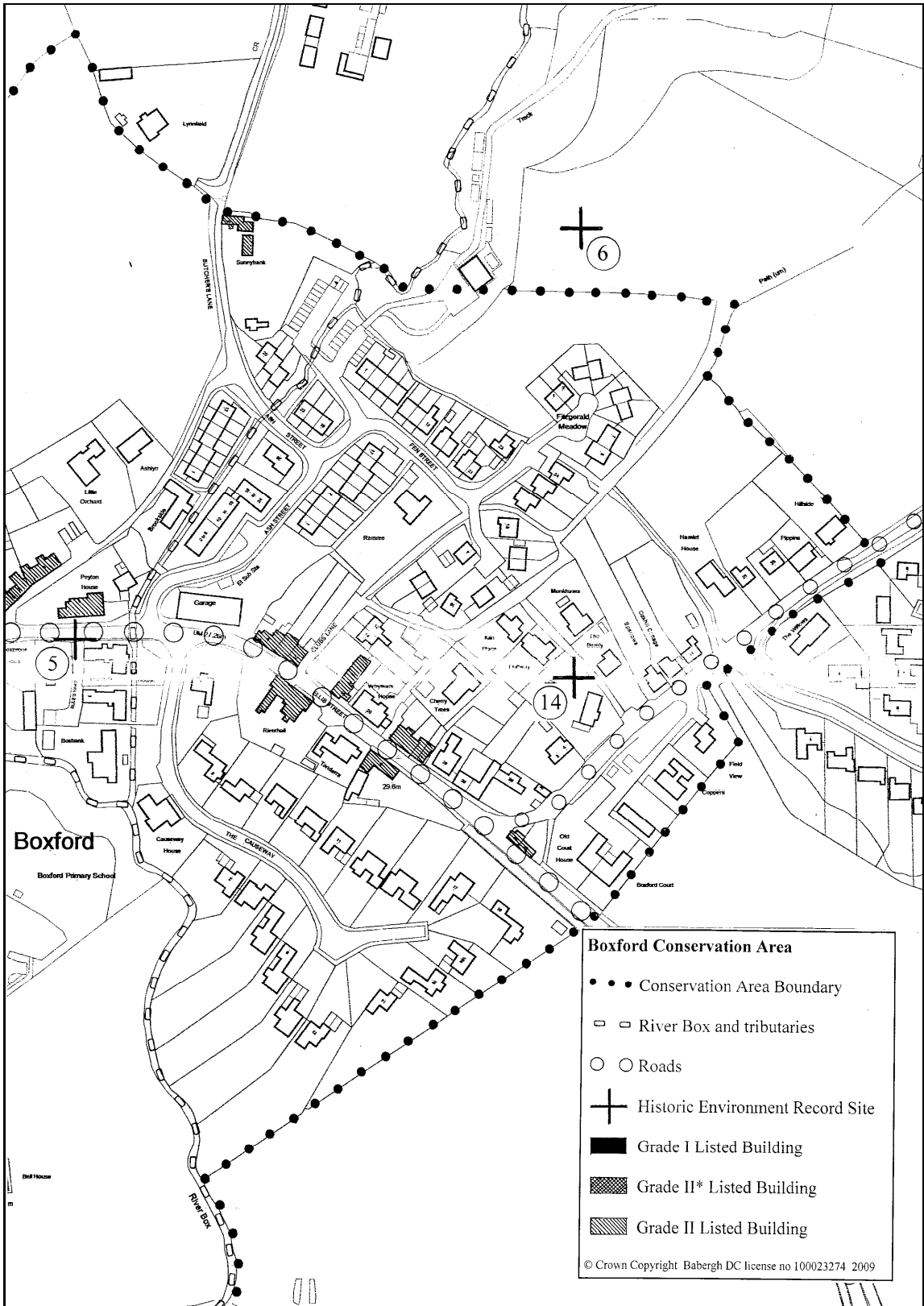




conservation area appraisal



Boxford

Boxford Primary School

Boxford Conservation Area

- • • Conservation Area Boundary
- □ River Box and tributaries
- ○ Roads
- ⊕ Historic Environment Record Site
- Grade I Listed Building
- ▨ Grade II* Listed Building
- ▩ Grade II Listed Building

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Introduction

The conservation area in Boxford was originally designated by West Suffolk County Council in 1973, and inherited by Babergh District Council at its inception in 1974.

The Council has a duty to review its conservation area designations from time to time, and this appraisal examines Boxford under a number of different headings as set out in English Heritage's new 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' (2006).

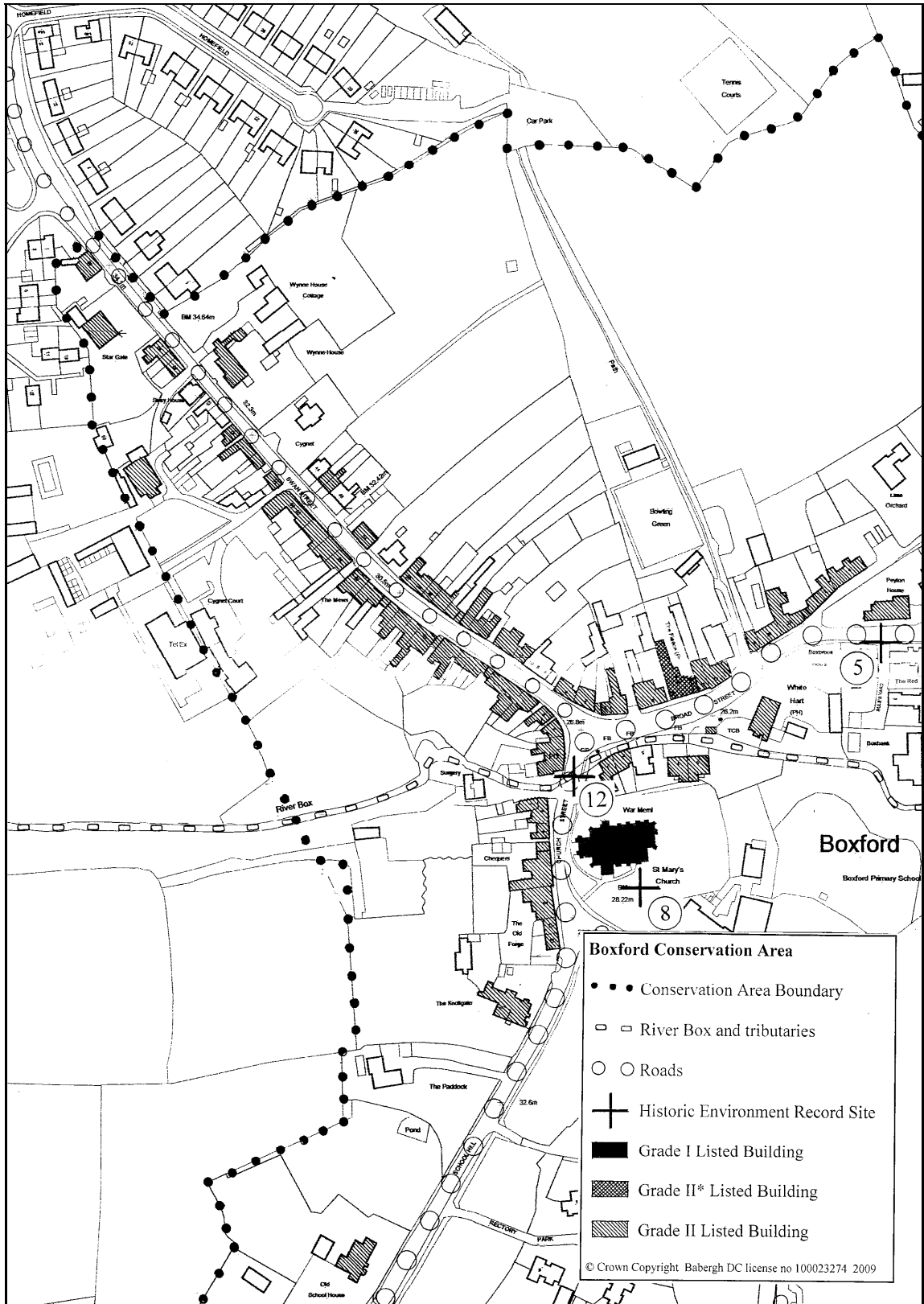
As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Boxford's built environment in conservation terms.



As a document it is neither prescriptive nor overly descriptive, but more a demonstration of 'quality of place', sufficient for the briefing of the Planning Officer when assessing proposed works in the area. The photographs and maps are thus intended to contribute as much as the text itself.

As the English Heritage guidelines point out, the appraisal is to be read as a general overview, rather than as a comprehensive listing, and the omission of any particular building, feature or space does not imply that it is of no interest in conservation terms.

Text, photographs and map overlays by Patrick Taylor, Conservation Architect, Babergh District Council 2010.



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Topographical Framework

The village of Boxford lies in south-west Suffolk, about five miles west of Hadleigh and six miles east of the market town of Sudbury.

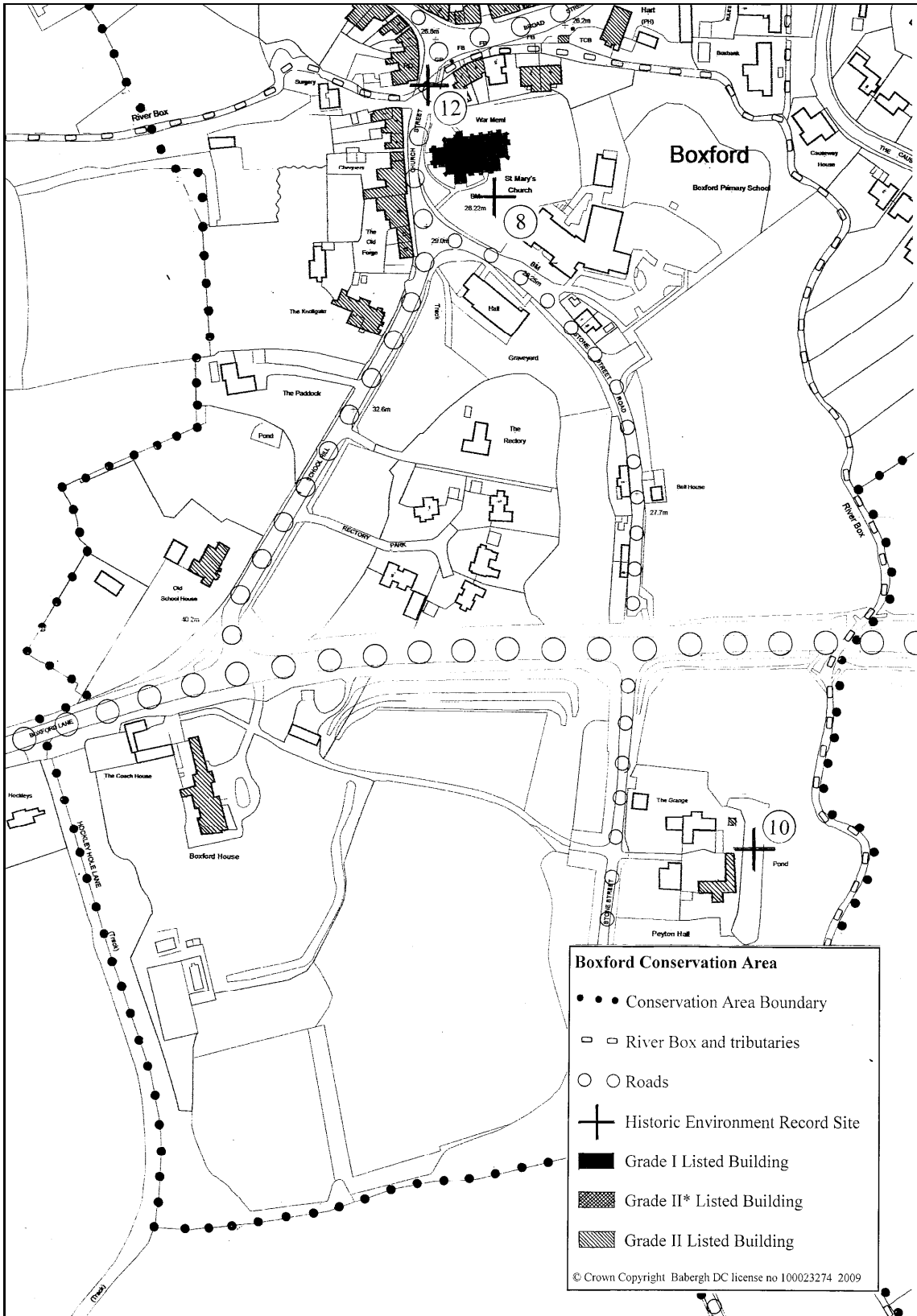
It is situated in the valley of the River Box, which flows south-eastwards from its rising near the Waldingfields to eventually join the River Stour just below Thorington Street in the parish of Stoke by Nayland.

The village lies mainly along the arc of the former A1071, crossing the river near the Church, as well as along Swan Street that comes off the old main road, heading north-westwards towards the adjoining village of Groton.



This village centre is now by-passed to the south, the new road cutting off the hamlet of Stone Street further down the river valley.

Whilst the surrounding countryside is essentially covered with the usual overlying layer of boulder clay of 'High' Suffolk's claylands, the village in its valley presents a pocket where this is absent, exposing the underlying glacial sands and gravels. As with the rest of Suffolk, at depth there is a considerable thickness of chalk.



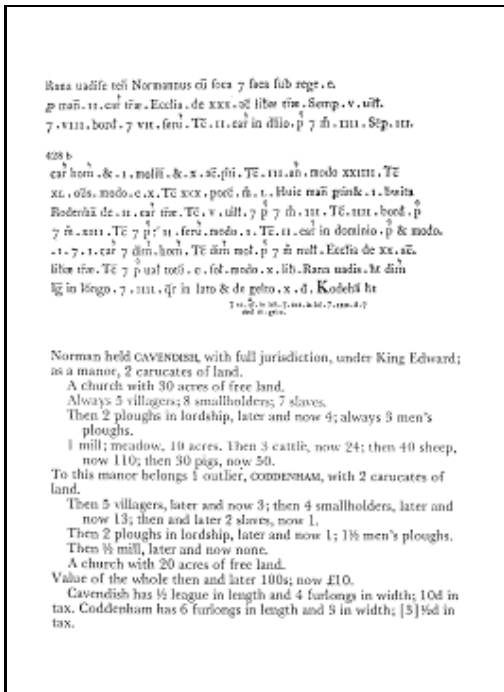
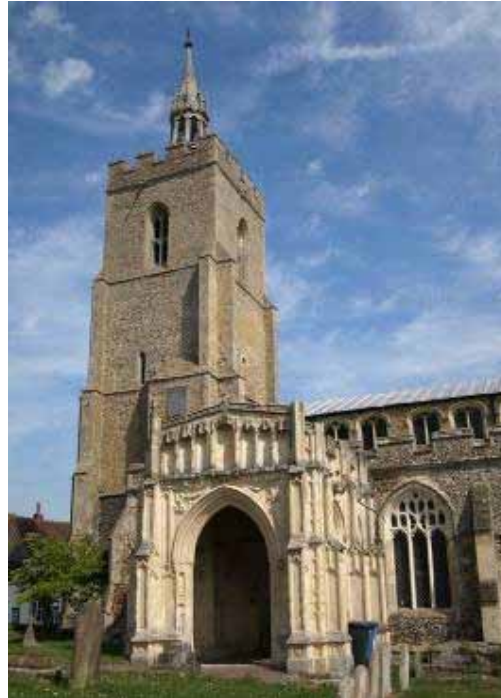
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Archaeological Significance

The Suffolk County Historic Environment Record lists about twenty sites of archaeological interest in the parish of Boxford. The oldest of these is part of a flint tranchet axe from Mesolithic times, indicating a long, if not necessarily continuous, period of human settlement thereabouts.

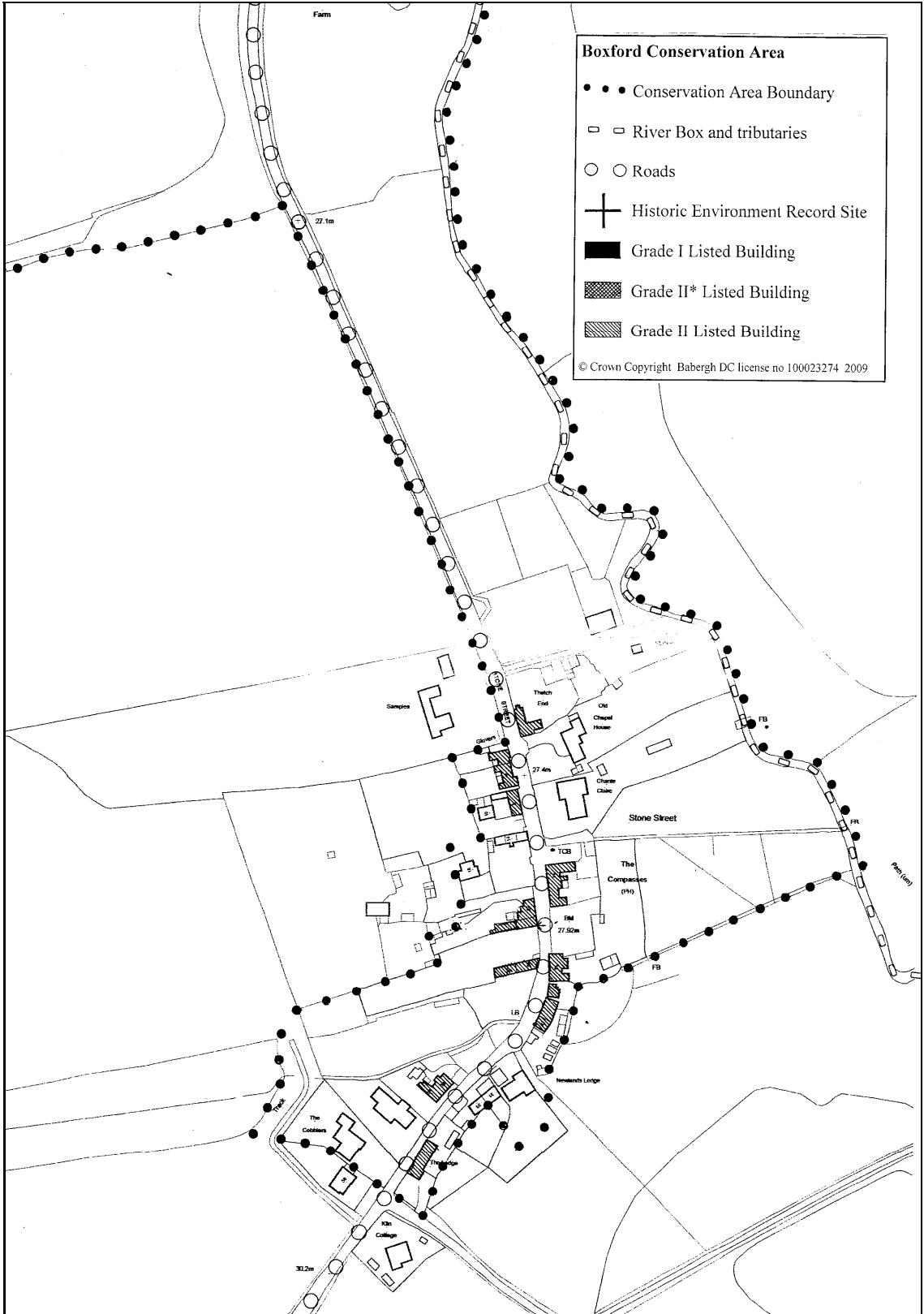
A bronze quoit-headed pin is the only definite find listed from the Bronze Age, although the sites of an undated ring ditch half a mile east of the village and a semi-circular earthwork a mile to the west may be contemporary. South-east of the village near the outlying hamlet of Whitestreet Green there is an Iron Age Belgic cemetery.



In their turn the Romans have left behind a figurine and a lava quern, whilst the Saxons left a single brooch.

The Church dates back to the Medieval period whilst Post Medieval remains comprise a canal at Parsonage Farm, two bridges (one in the village and one near Stone Street) and a brickworks kiln.

The Domesday survey of 1086 does not list Boxford in its own right, however there are entries for both Groton, the parish immediately to the north, and Coddensham (Hall) just west of the village. If the River Box was the boundary between these holdings, then the church with 20 acres of free land listed under the latter is probably Boxford's.

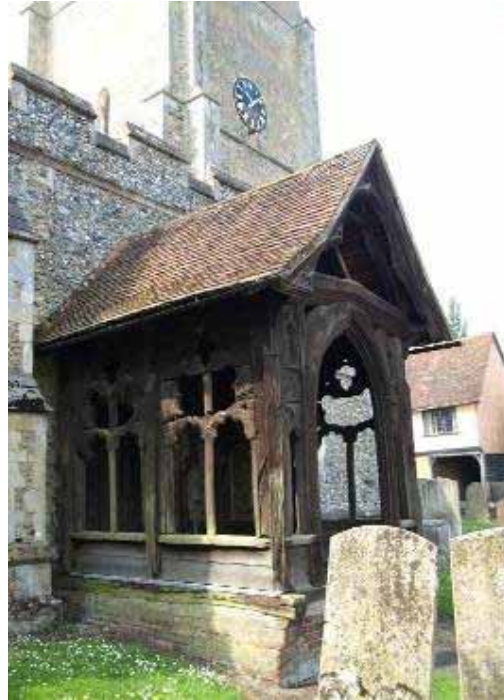


Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

Boxford has its fair share of listed buildings, although only the Church of St Mary is listed grade I and The Fleece public house listed grade II, the rest being grade II.*

The Church is mainly 15th Century of flint with stone dressings and a plaintile roof. Only the west tower with its lead spirelet and the north porch are earlier from the 14th Century, the latter, probably the oldest such in timber in the county according to Pevsner.

The Fleece has an 18th Century stucco front to an older, probably 16th Century, timber-framed building, with a carriage entrance through to the rear yard. Its quality Georgian doorcase is one of many in the immediate area.



Opposite The Fleece, there is an unusual grade II listed former Gaol (used later as a Fire Engine House) dating from the early 19th Century. It is in white brick with a slate roof and two large gothic arched doorways, now used as a bus shelter.

Elsewhere in Boxford the majority of the grade II listed buildings are domestic in scale, houses and cottages of timber-framed and rendered construction, many re-fronted in brick and many having had commercial uses during the 19th Century.



Traditional Building Materials

Boxford has good examples of most of Suffolk's local building materials that have been used through the ages.

Timber-framed construction is there but mostly not in an immediately obvious way. Jettied first floors and exposed timbers can be found in Butcher's Lane, but in most cases brick or rendered fronts have hidden most of the clues and steep clay plaintiled roofs are all that remain visible, sometimes hidden behind a parapet wall.

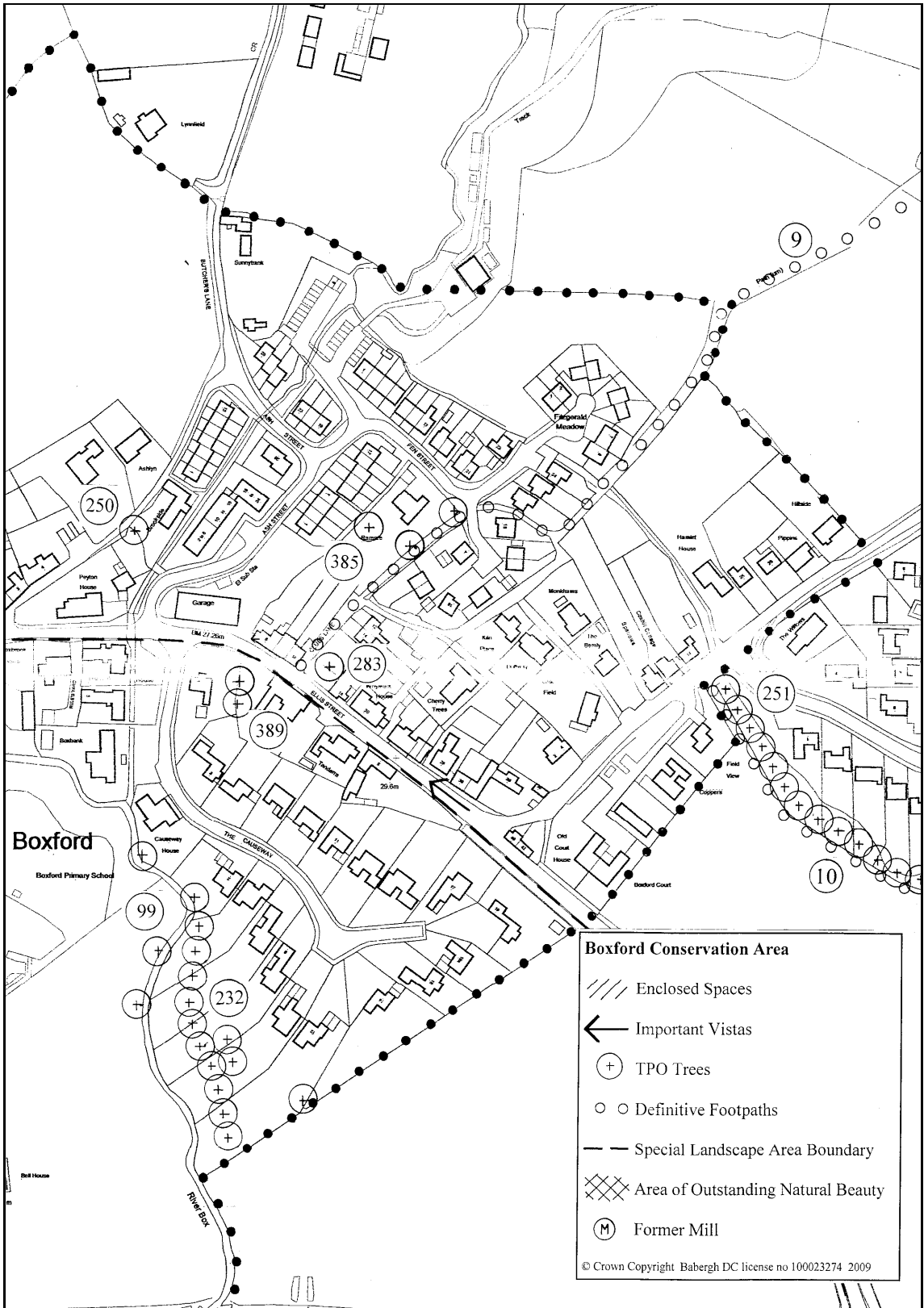
The more usual Suffolk vernacular employing a finish of lime render on laths covering and protecting the timber framing is mostly used, sometimes with applied patterns in pargetting.



Soft 'Suffolk red' bricks appear as chimneys on many buildings, and form the walls of those of the 19th Century, either solid or refronting many a timber-framed construction, although many of these are now painted over.

There are similarly buildings of the harder 'Suffolk white' bricks, probably sourced from nearby Sudbury, the majority of these later buildings having lower pitched slate roofs.

As with most similar settlements, the outbuildings and rear wings often employ slightly lower status materials such as black weather-boarding and are usually roofed in pantiles.



Hierarchy of Spaces

Contained by the PO Stores at the west end and the White Hart public house at the east, Broad Street is exactly that, very much forming the central space of the village. The buildings on the north side are very urban, sitting tight on the back of pavement edge, whilst those on the south side are set back somewhat with front gardens both above and beyond the river flowing through the village.

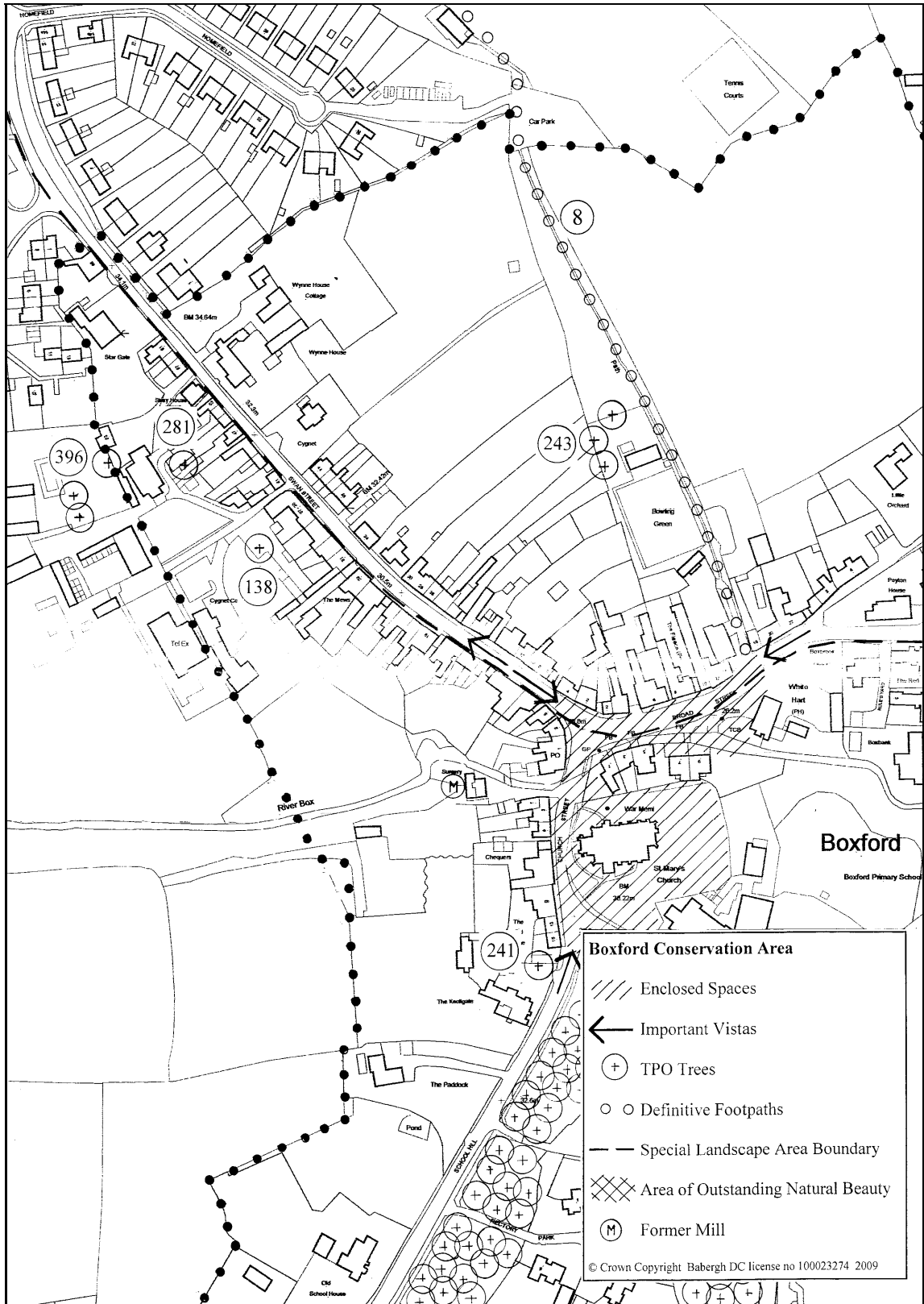
Whilst the river flows through a gap south of the White Hart, Broad Street continues for a short distance to the north around the green space of the pub's car park and garden before a fork where it becomes Ellis Street taking the main route eastwards, with Butcher's Lane very much narrower coming off to the north-east.



At the west end of Broad Street, Swan Street heads off north-westwards gently uphill continuing the urban feel with its buildings, many former commercial properties, essentially along the back of pavement line on both sides.

From this same junction, Church Street heads southwards across the river, again very built up on the west side, but to the east opening out into the green space of the churchyard. After a short distance this too forks, the main route continuing south-westwards up Boxford Lane.

Stone Street Road, now a cul-de-sac, heads south-east from here parallel to the river. Beyond the by-pass it continues to the hamlet of Stone Street where the buildings clustered either side of the road create a further urban area.



Trees & Planting

Around the village centre, there are a few trees, providing some greenery adjoining the White Hart and in the churchyard.

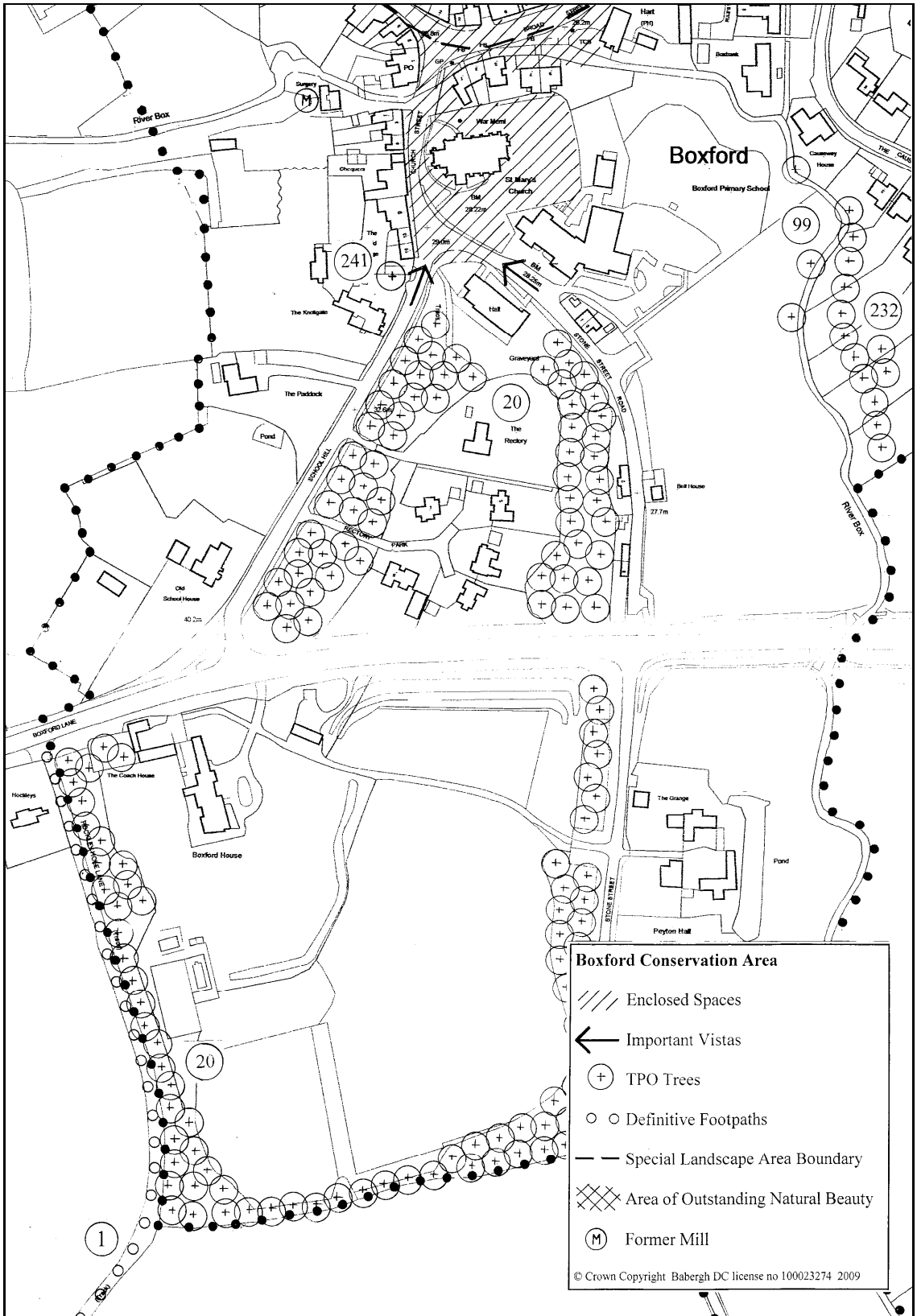
Between Stone Street Road and Boxford Lane there remain many trees that formerly provided a woodland belt around the grounds of Boxford House. Now separated from the big house by the bypass, this strip is only interrupted by the Village Hall at the beginning of Stone Street Road and entrances to Rectory Gardens off Boxford Lane.

These trees were the subject of one of the first Tree Preservation Orders in Boxford, no. 20 made by West Suffolk County Council in 1957.



The area contains many mature trees of various species and a good deal of invasive Sycamore. Other TPOs cover the various strips, groups or just single specimens that occur for the most part to the rear of various properties.

Boxford's countryside setting is recognized by the designation in the Local Plan as a Special Landscape Area of the whole area containing the River Box south of Sherborne Street, Swan Street, Broad Street, Ellis Street and Sand Hill. This is effectively a continuation northwards of the Dedham Vale and Stour Valley AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), which abuts the southern tip of the conservation area.



Relationship to Open Countryside

For the most part, Boxford's historic development has only been one plot deep along the roads and lanes that meet there. More recently a number of small estates have been built filling in various backland areas.

The effectively radial system of roads is augmented by a number of footpaths out into the countryside to the north and east. Most centrally 'The Croft', definitive footpath 8, heads north-westwards off Broad Street across the playing field and onwards to Groton.

A little to the east, footpath 9 heads off Ellis Street north-eastwards parallel to Cox Hill in the direction of the Kersey road.

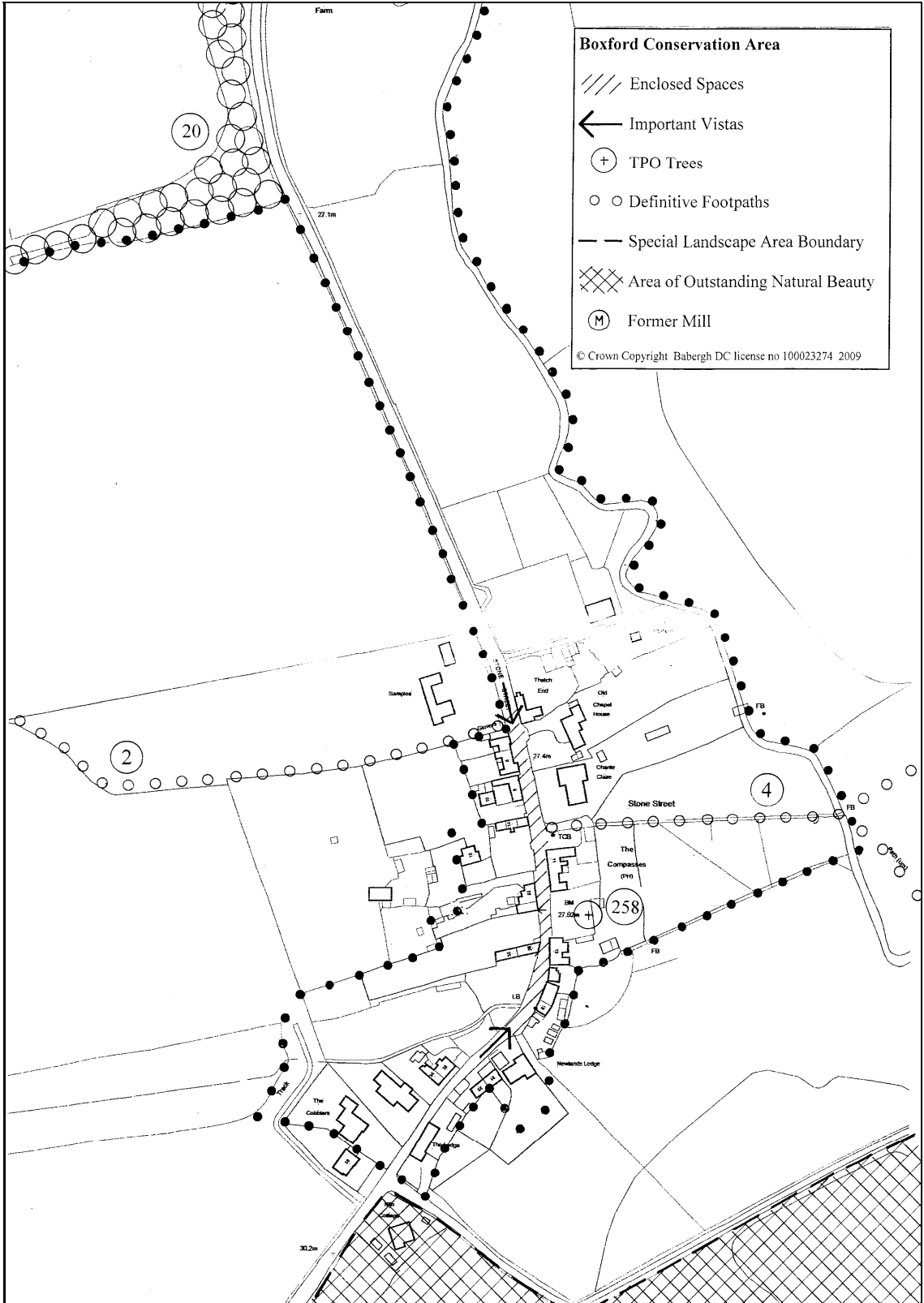


Off the bottom of Cox Hill itself footpath 10 heads east up a minor river valley, off which footpath 13 heads northwards to Cox Farm and footpath 11 southwards to the main eastbound Hadleigh Road.

South of this main road footpath 23 descends back into the valley and across the river to Stone Street, the hamlet south of the main village. Here the buildings are very close to the road, giving an urban feel, which is quite short-lived.

From here westwards footpath 2 climbs back up the hill to join footpath 1 that heads along Hockley Hole Lane to join the main road towards Sudbury west of the village. The footpaths to the south thus effectively encircle the village at about half a mile from the centre.





Prevailing & Former Usage

From the 15th to 17th Centuries Boxford played a small part in Suffolk's then thriving woollen cloth industry as an outpost to the not too distant important centre of Lavenham. 'The Fleece' pub provides a reminder of this industry.

The local economy was primarily agricultural, but did exploit the land in other ways too. Records from the early 17th Century show 6 yeomen, 4 clothiers and 4 weavers in the village, whilst later that same century there are 2 clothiers, 4 clothworkers, a miller and 3 malsters.

By 1844, directory entries show 10 farmers, 4 corn millers and 6 malsters amongst a host of other trades and several shopkeepers, the village having become more of a local service centre.



A post type windmill at one time stood on the hill south-west of the main village just off the Sudbury road, a little further out from the modern wind turbine on the eco-house at the top of School Hill that today collects the same free energy.

There was also a watermill on the river opposite the Church. This burnt down in the early 20th Century, remembered only by the white weather-boarding on the Doctor's Surgery standing there today.

To the west of Swan Street, there remains a black barn, now on the 'Buildings At Risk' register, formerly part of the now defunct Goodlands Farm.



Losses & Possible Gains

Boxford's conservation area remains fairly intact and has suffered no major negative effects, but rather more of a gentle erosion at the edges.

The newer housing estates added to the village have mostly been built outside the envelope of the conservation area, only those at The Causeway and at Ash Street, just south and north of Ellis Street respectively, being within.

The latter is screened by the village Garage, which has the estate access going round behind it. This building fits in the streetscape well with its black weather-boarding, but unfortunately the petrol pumps and signs tend to be the manufacturer's standard and rather oversized for this location.



Opposite the Garage the entrance to The Causeway has left a gap in the frontage with its visibility splays, but at least provides a pleasantly grassed area.

A few unlisted properties have suffered the indignity of uPVC replacement windows, which detract from the overall traditional feel of the village created by the listed buildings along most frontages. Some buildings have also been painted over, removing the traditional brick colours from the overall picture.

There is scope for undergrounding some of the overhead wiring in the village, particularly near the Church and up Swan Street. Should this be done, there might be opportunity to upgrade the paving finishes too.



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*This Appraisal adopted as
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Committee 13 January 2011*