

conservation area appraisal

Introduction

The conservation area in Chelsworth 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 Chelsworth under a number of different headings as set out in English Heritage's new 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' (2006).

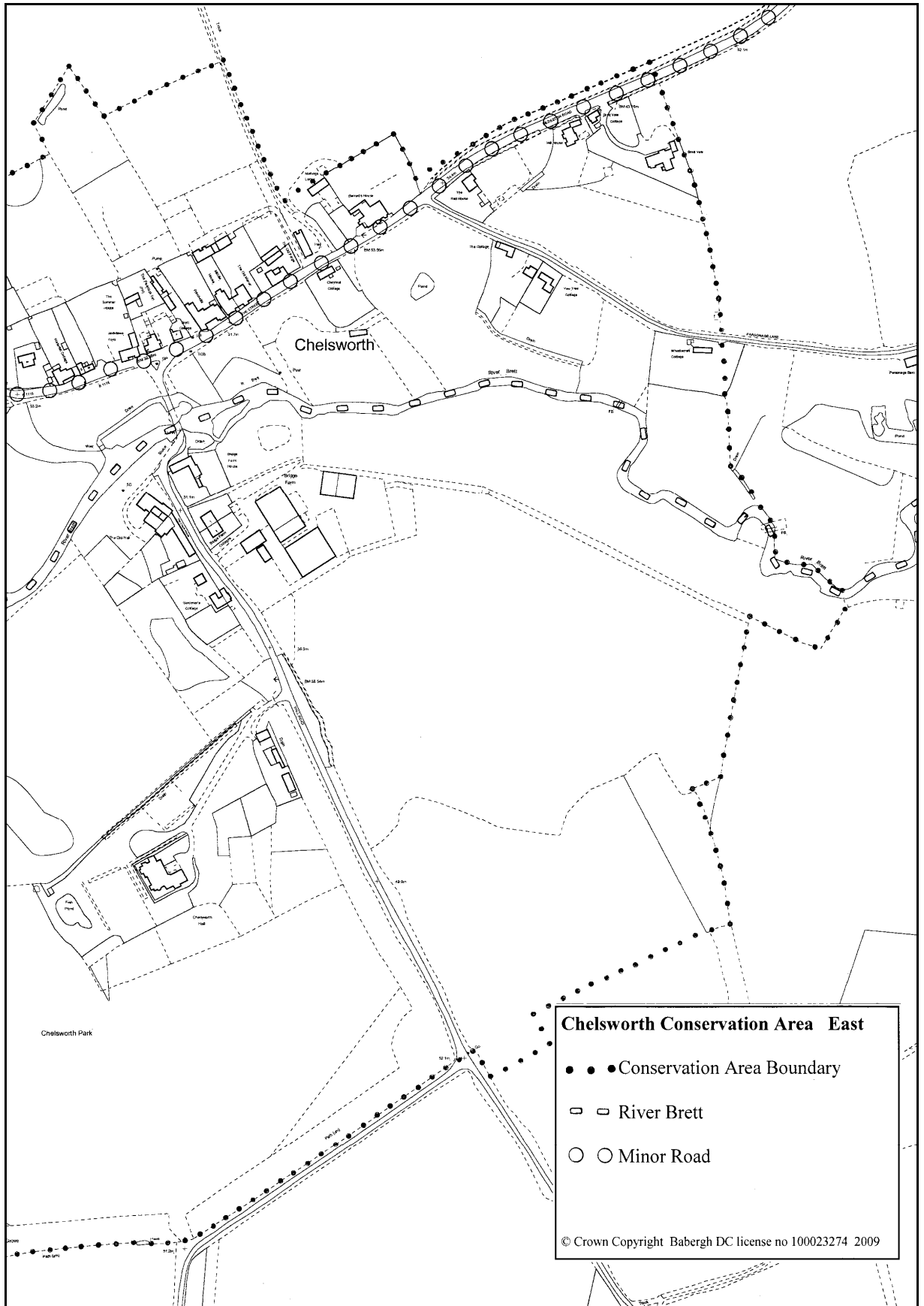
As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Chelsworth's built environment in conservation terms.



As a document it is neither prescriptive nor overly descriptive, but more a demonstration of 'quality of place', sufficient to inform those considering changes 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.



Chelsworth

Chelsworth Park

Chelsworth Conservation Area East

- ● ● Conservation Area Boundary
- □ River Brett
- ○ Minor Road

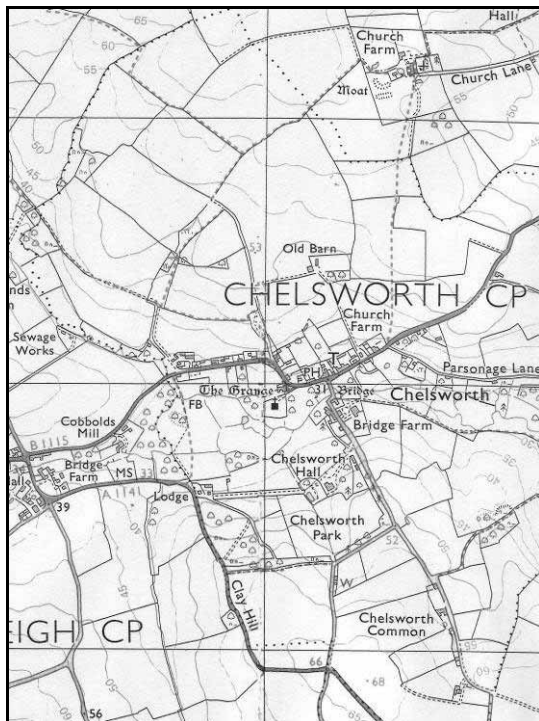
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Topographical Framework

The village of Chelsworth is situated in south-central Suffolk, about five miles north-west of the market town of Hadleigh and five miles east of Lavenham.

Both Hadleigh and Lavenham were at one time served by branch lines of the railway, now closed down.

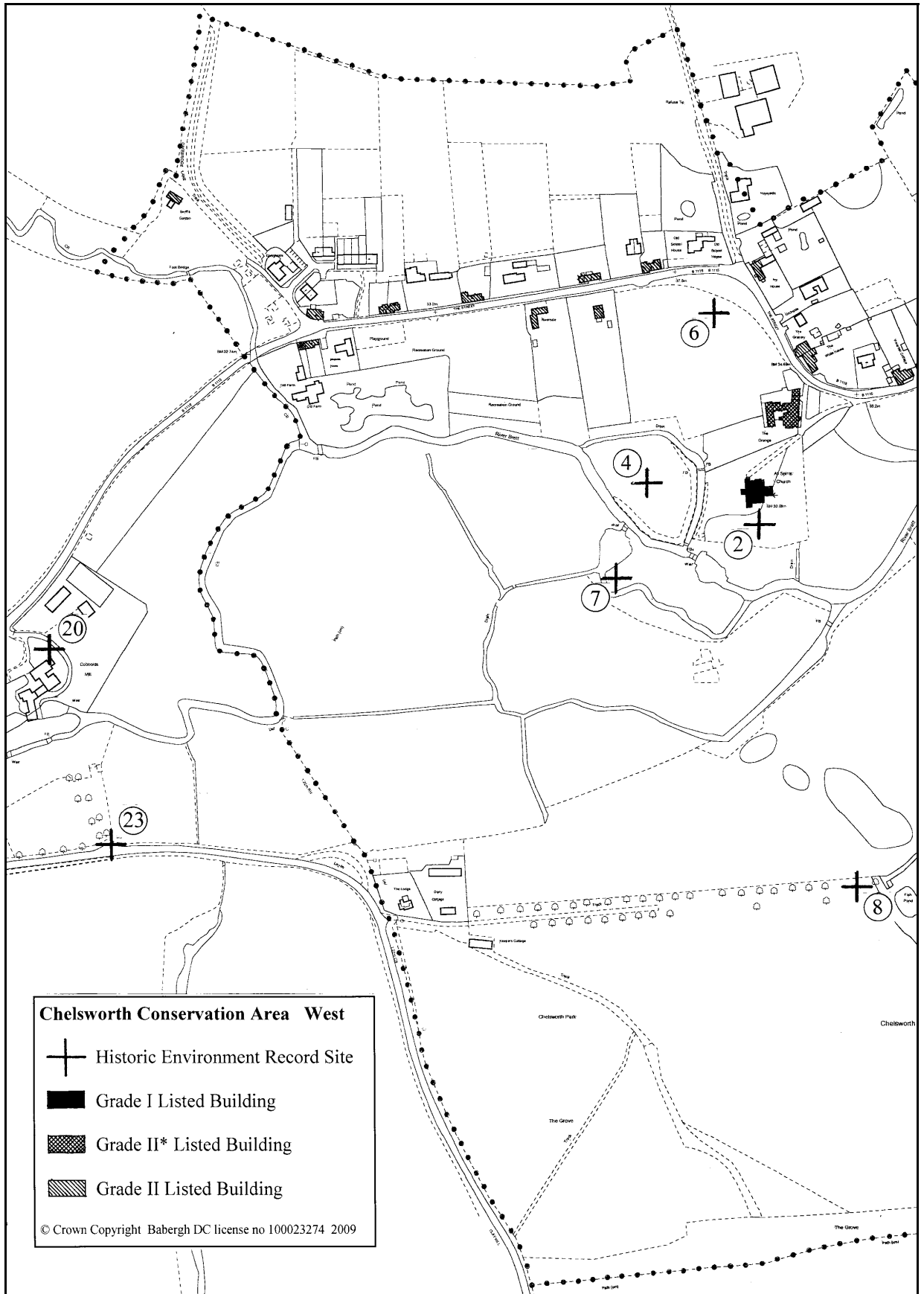
The majority of the settlement sits on the north side of the B1115, a minor road towards Bildeston off the Hadleigh to Lavenham road, running east to west along the north bank of the River Brett.



The River Brett flows from Lavenham in the west, through Chelsworth down to Hadleigh and on southwards to join the Stour at Higham.

The river valley has cut down some forty metres through the overlying boulder clay of 'High Suffolk' to reveal locally gravels, crags and pockets of older London Clay.

The village itself is approximately 35 metres above OD, with the adjoining hilltops up to about the 75 metre mark.



Archaeological Significance

The Suffolk County Historic Environment Record lists a couple of dozen sites of archaeological interest in the area, but nothing seriously prehistoric.

A single cropmark delineating some form of enclosure is given as undated, but could easily be the oldest if Bronze Age in origin.

A short section of Roman Road is identified north of the village, fitting within a line of other remnants, to the west at Brent Eleigh and east of Bildeston. Other sites include scatters of pottery, one Roman another Saxon.



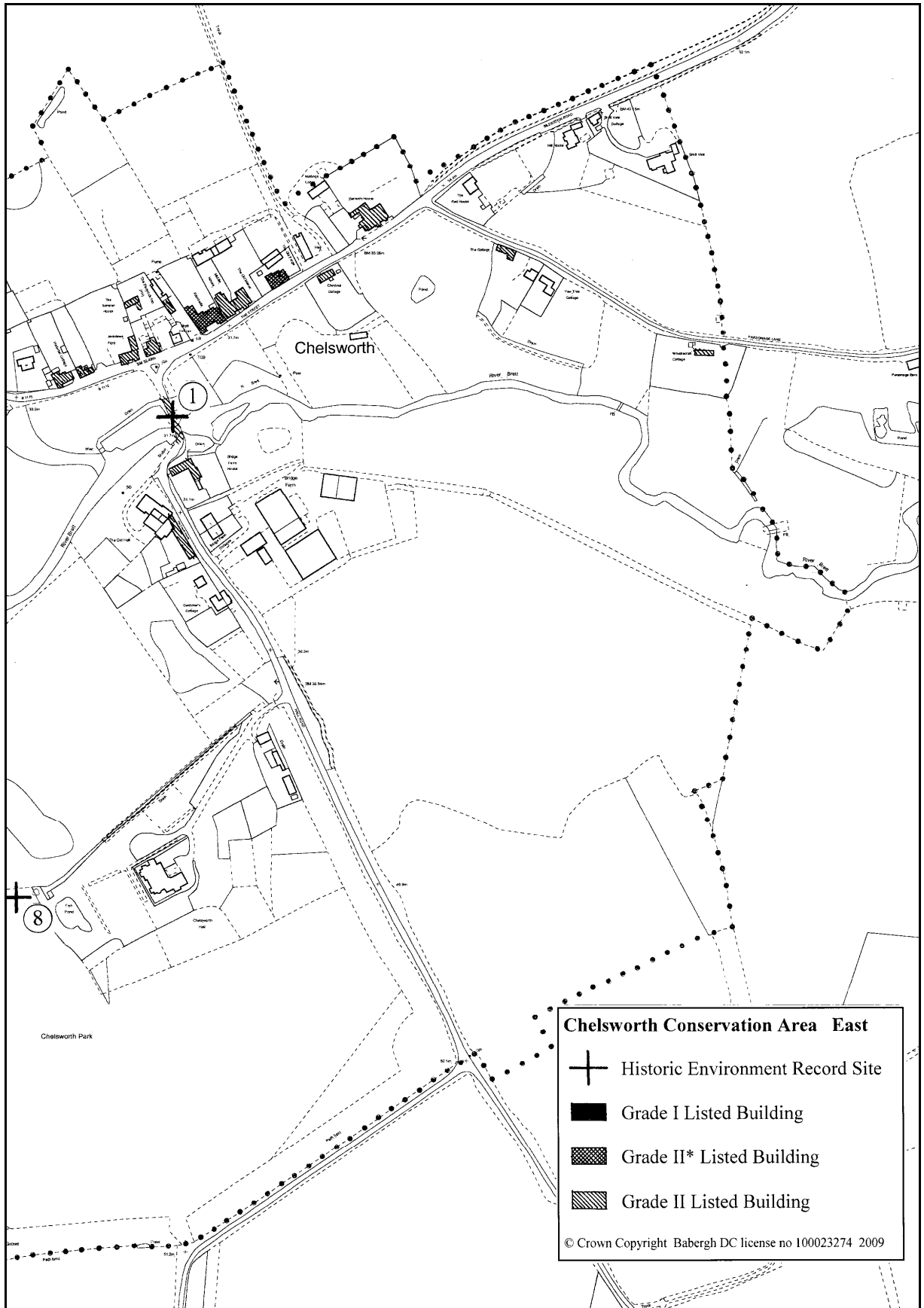
Medieval remains include both the Church and a moated site nearby.

The remainder of sites listed are Post-Medieval and include a water mill, Chelsworth Hall and Park, a milestone and Chelsworth Bridge, this last a scheduled monument.

Chelsworth was listed in the Domesday survey of 1086 as belonging to the Abbey of St. Edmunds, and included a meadow of 12 acres, a mill (which would have been a watermill at that time) as well as a church with 30 acres of land.

Cerlefwrdū . teñ . sēs . e . t . r . e . r . p . mañ . sēp . 111 . car & diñ
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St. Edmund's held CHELSWORTH before 1066 as a manor; always 3½
 canucates of land.
 8 villagers; 10 smallholders; 4 slaves.
 Then 2 ploughs in lordship and 4 men's [ploughs] and now the
 same.
 Meadow, 12 acres; then and now, always, 1 mill. Always 2 cobs.
 Then 10 cattle, now 9; then 16 pigs, now 20; then 30 sheep,
 now 60.
 Value of this manor then £4; now [£]5.
 It has 7 furlongs in length and 6 in width.
 A church with 30 acres of land. Meadow, 1 acre.
 3¾d in tax.



Chelworth

Chelworth Park

Chelworth Conservation Area East

- ⊕ Historic Environment Record Site
- Grade I Listed Building
- ▨ Grade II* Listed Building
- ▧ Grade II Listed Building

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Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

Chelsworth has but one grade I listed building, the Church of All Saints of flint rubble with stone dressings, now cement rendered. It is mostly of 14th Century date with some 15th Century additions. 'Not a big church' according to Pevsner, he also says the 'doorway is uncommonly ambitious'.

Three other buildings are of sufficient quality to justify listing at grade II:*

The Grange near the Church is a 15th Century timber-framed and plastered hall house with a plaintile roof. It has crosswings at the north and south ends and there are a number of later 17th Century additions including an interesting gabled porch dated 1689.



The Old Forge on The Street is of similar age but has exposed timber-framing and a thatched roof. It has a 16th Century central chimney stack with octagonal brick shafts and inside a good 16th Century fireplace.



A little further west on The Street, the third grade II building is Princhetts, dating from the 16th or 17th Century. Timber-framed and plastered with two crosswings, this one was refronted in the 19th Century in brick, now painted over.*



Traditional Building Materials

Like the buildings already mentioned, the majority of other listed buildings in the village are basically timber-framed with rendered walls and plaintiled roofs.

There are variants on this theme including exposed timber-framing, pargetting on the plasterwork, thatched or slated roofs and the occasional refronting in brick, this last sometimes painted.

Later buildings from the Victorian period are mostly local brick, variously Suffolk soft reds or whites, often rendered and painted to blend in with the colour-washed local vernacular.

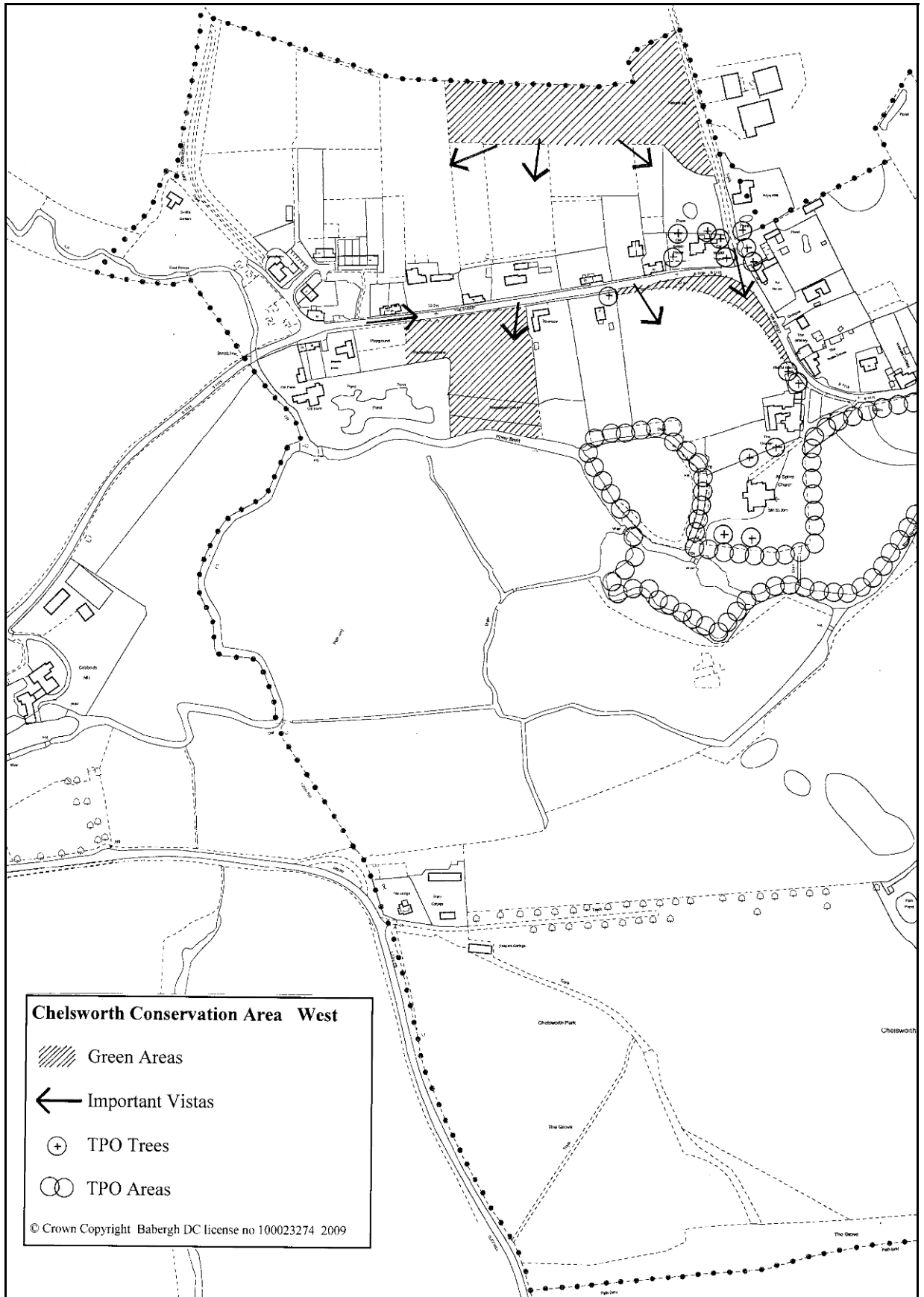


The Victorian School is one such notable building in Suffolk red brick with a plaintile roof and decorative chimney.







Roof finishes correlate well with wall constructions, following a similar distribution. The majority of roofs are plaintiles, mostly on the timber-framed buildings, the rest generally slated, usually on the brick buildings.

The Church alone differs from the rest, constructed of flint rubble with stone dressings although this is not now apparent hidden by the render finish.



Chelsworth Conservation Area West

-  Green Areas
-  Important Vistas
-  TPO Trees
-  TPO Areas

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Hierarchy of Spaces

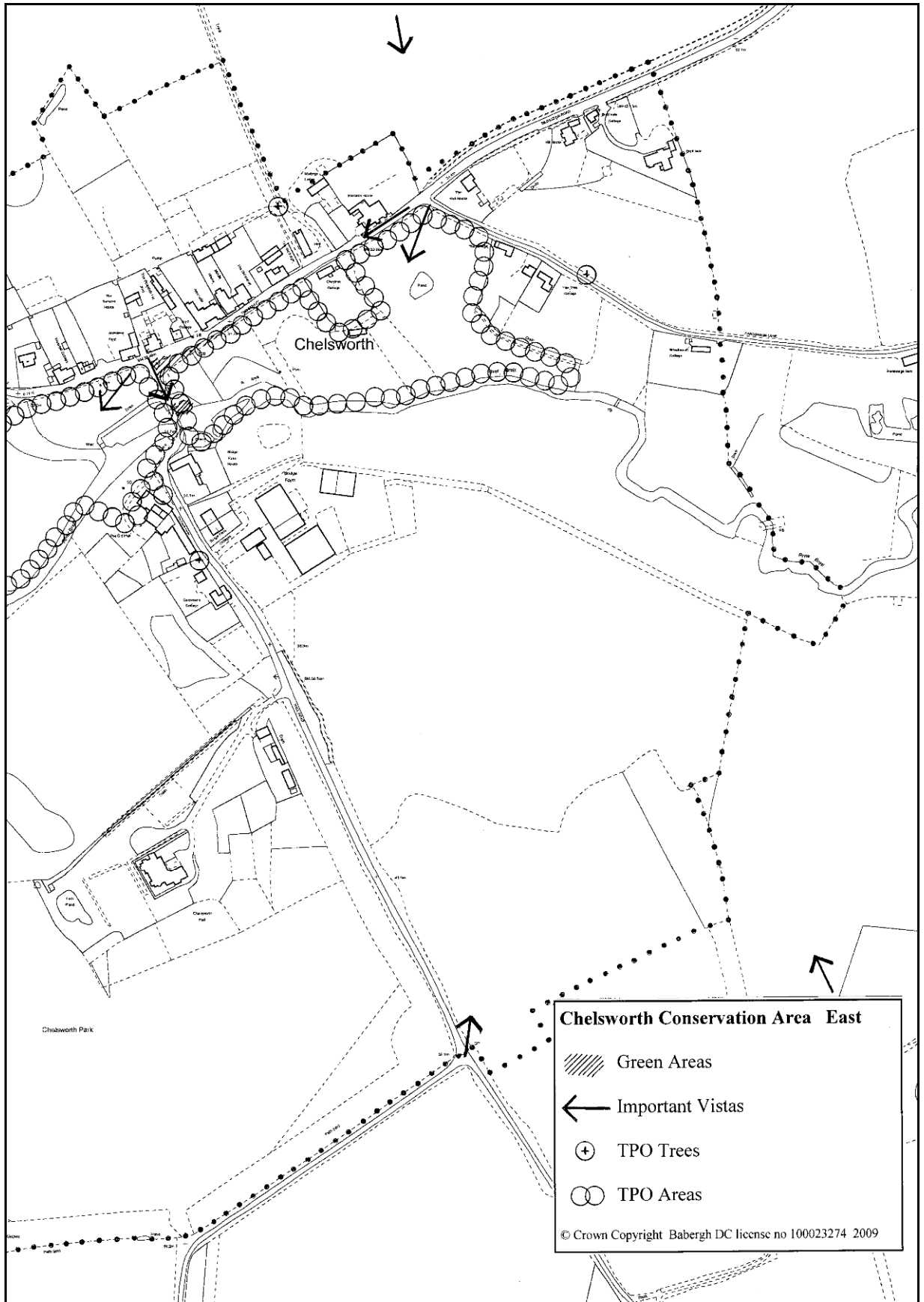
Because the road through winds, the linear nature of Chelsworth following the north bank of the river is not immediately apparent. The double bend at the village centre effectively splits the settlement into two separate areas.

To the west the buildings are fairly spread out, mainly on the north side of The Street, the lower density allowing views through northwards to the higher ground beyond. More open expansive views southwards here are across the low lying flood plain of the river and the village playing field. The large area of agricultural land north of Chelsworth and west of Bildeston can be accessed by the lane off northwards from the double bend itself.



Off this lane to the west Chelsworth Woodland, planted for the millennium, affords good views southwards across both village and valley. To the east, the buildings are still mostly on the north side of The Street, but at a higher density, with less frequent views through northwards.

To the immediate south at this end of the village there is an area of fields and parkland with a fair covering of trees. The buildings and trees here form more of a village centre punctuated by a small triangular green where a minor road heads off over a narrow bridge across the river southwards towards Lindsey. Once across the river there is some further development around Bridge Farm and up the hill to the south.



Trees & Planting

On the south side of The Street, trees form an important backdrop to the village of Chelsworth. Two large areas to the south either side of the road crossing the river form part of a large Tree Preservation Order, no.23, made by West Suffolk County Council in 1958.

Near the river these are mainly the usual wetland species, Willow, Poplar and Alder, with some ornamental species in the parkland nearer the road. Other trees covered by this TPO can be found scattered around the village and include species such as Oak, Birch, Ash, Larch, Corsican Pine, Sycamore and Horse Chestnut. Many of the Sycamores are self-seeded and should be managed so as not to dominate in future.

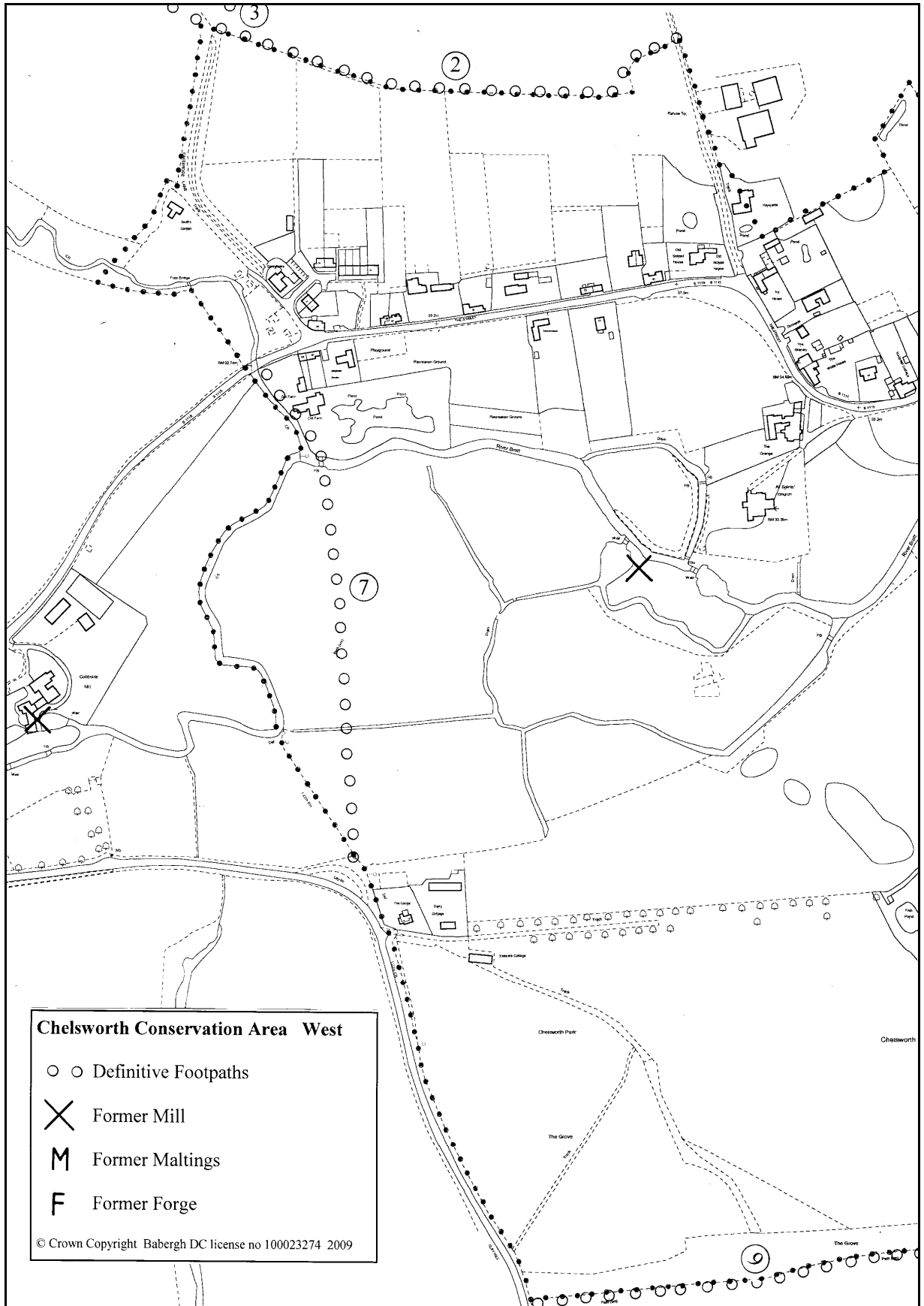


A number of these TPO trees have been lost over the intervening years and current policy is to require replanting with suitable species.

To the south up the hill, Chelsworth Park, the grounds of Chelsworth Hall, is surrounded by a thick tree belt and contains a large plantation called The Grove in the south-west corner, all contained within the conservation area. North of this plantation, the hall itself is approached from Clay Hill (on Hadleigh to Lavenham road) by an avenue of trees running east of The Lodge.

To the north Chelsworth Woodland will in time make its own contribution to the village's sylvan setting.





Chelsworth Conservation Area West

- ○ Definitive Footpaths
- ✕ Former Mill
- M Former Maltings
- F Former Forge

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Relationship to Open Countryside

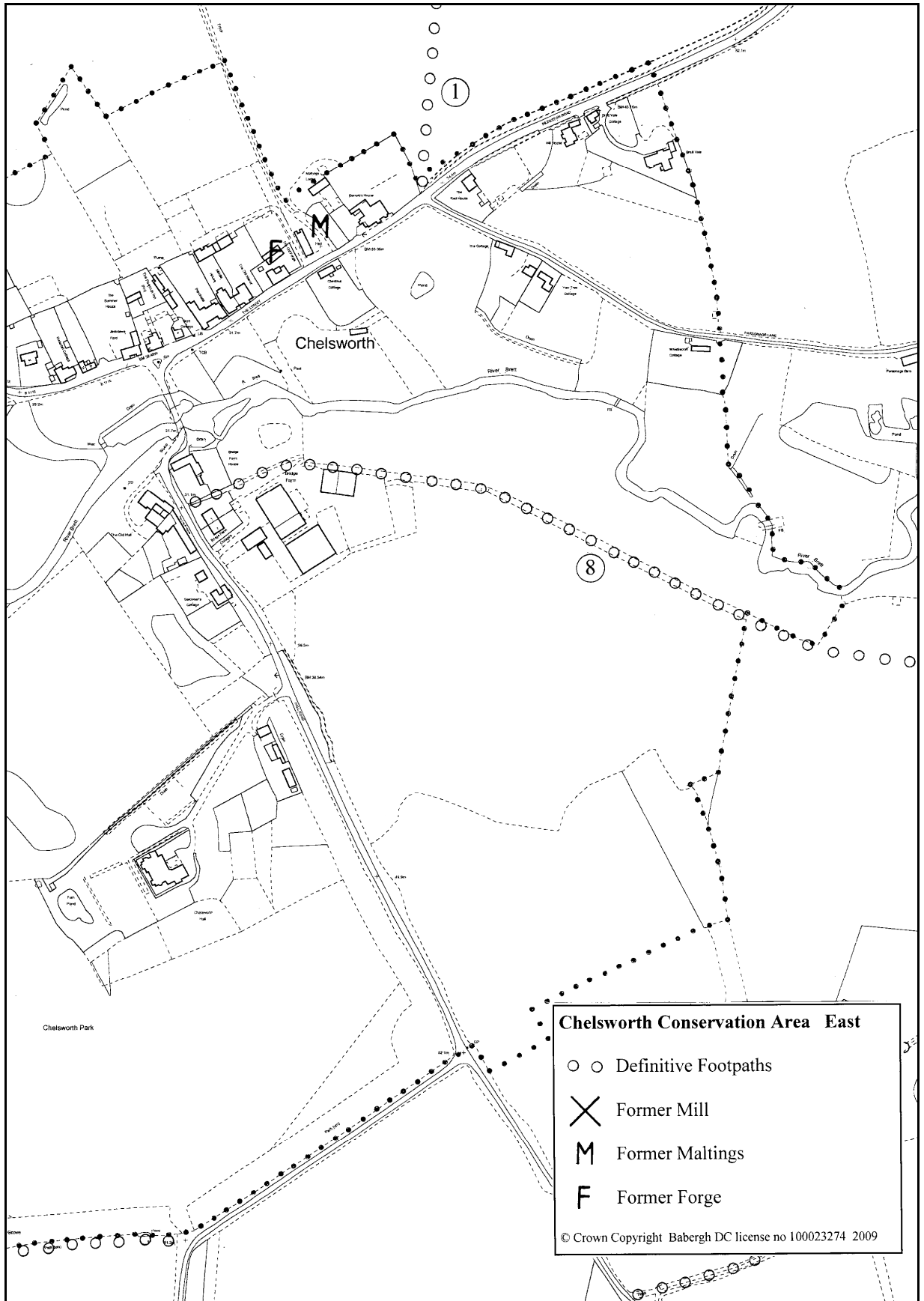
Because of Chelsworth's linear form and mainly single plot depth development, most of the properties there on the north side of The Street have farmland to the rear. The few properties on the south side or off the Lindsey road have the parkland around Chelsworth Hall behind them.

Chelsworth Park itself provides for generous views from The Street of trees in a parkland setting, but none of it is publicly accessible. Definitive Footpath 9 links across the southern side of the parkland, beyond the trees of The Grove, between the Lindsey road and Clay Hill.



Footpath 7 similarly skirts this area to the west, linking the bottom of Clay Hill northwards across the river to the western end of The Street.

Other footpaths are more radial in nature: footpath 2 heads off north-westwards from off the lane to the north; footpath 1 heads northwards from the eastern end of The Street at the Parsonage Lane junction (as shown left) and footpath 8 heads eastwards from near Bridge Farm, following the southern river bank downstream.



Chelsworth Conservation Area East

- ○ Definitive Footpaths
- ✕ Former Mill
- M Former Maltings
- F Former Forge

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Prevailing & Former Usage

As one of several villages along the River Brett below Lavenham, Chelsworth was undoubtedly involved in Suffolk's woollen cloth industry that thrived until the 16th and 17th Centuries.

Indeed early 17th Century records show the presence in the village of 2 clothiers, whilst later that Century there were 2 spinsters and a wool comber, along with a number of yeomen and husbandmen.

Many of the timber-framed houses in the village would have been the result of this 'wool wealth'.



Later evidence from 1844 directories indicates a more general agricultural economy, with farmers, shopkeepers, a joiner and a blacksmith present.

The tithe records of 1839 confirm this picture with field names indicating the presence of mills, malting, ozier growing.

A number of extractive industries are also indicated by field names mentioning pits where variously chalk, sand, gravel or clay were dug. There was also a 'Kiln Field' off the Lindsey road, which was probably for bricks as it is remote from the maltings site near the Victory Hall at the east end of The Street.





Losses & Possible Gains

Overall Chelsworth has suffered relatively little loss of historic fabric in recent times, but there are a few minor visual intrusions, which perhaps should not be repeated. There are perhaps rather too many highway signs warning of the inadequacies of the bridge.

In the one place at the western end of The Street where several new houses have been squeezed in on a backland site, their non-traditional form does not impinge on the overall street scene.

The Victory Hall at the eastern end of The Street is an important part of the village's heritage, erected after the First World War, very much of its time, but now with uPVC windows.



In addition the car parking area in front of the Victory Hall is a little unsightly, the more so because of its situation near the road and unscreened by any form of boundary treatment. Two large Horse Chestnut trees (TPO 23: T9 and T10) which formerly served this purpose have unfortunately not been replanted.

Elsewhere there are examples of modern materials such as concrete roof tiles, uPVC windows and conservatories and the use of modern colours on traditional buildings, which should be avoided in a conservation area.

One small section of flint walling near the central double bend in The Street is in need of some sympathetic repair.

References & Further Reading

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Tithe Map & Apportionment 1840 Chelsworth Suffolk Records Office

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Committee 17 June 2010*