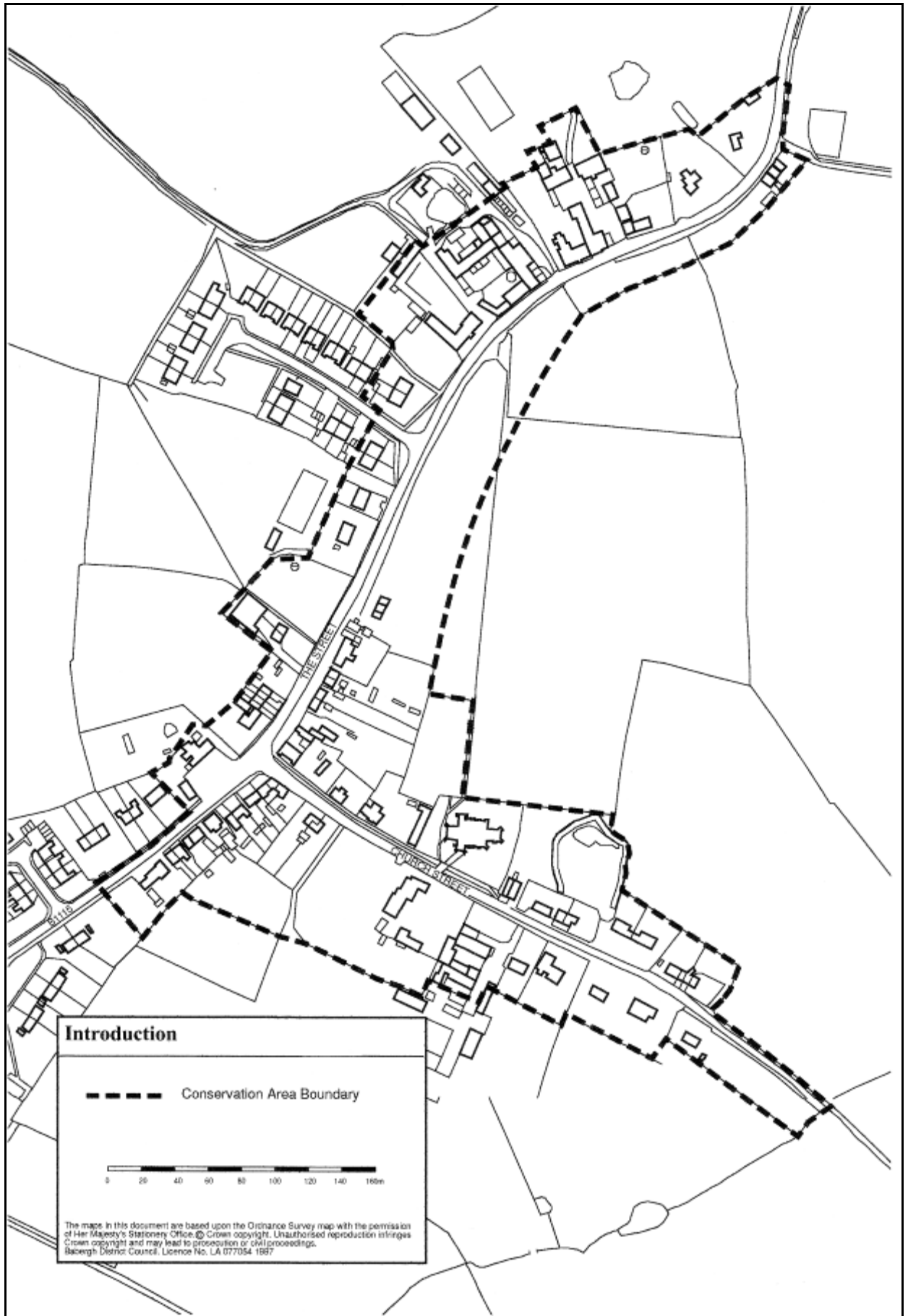




conservation area appraisal



Introduction

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

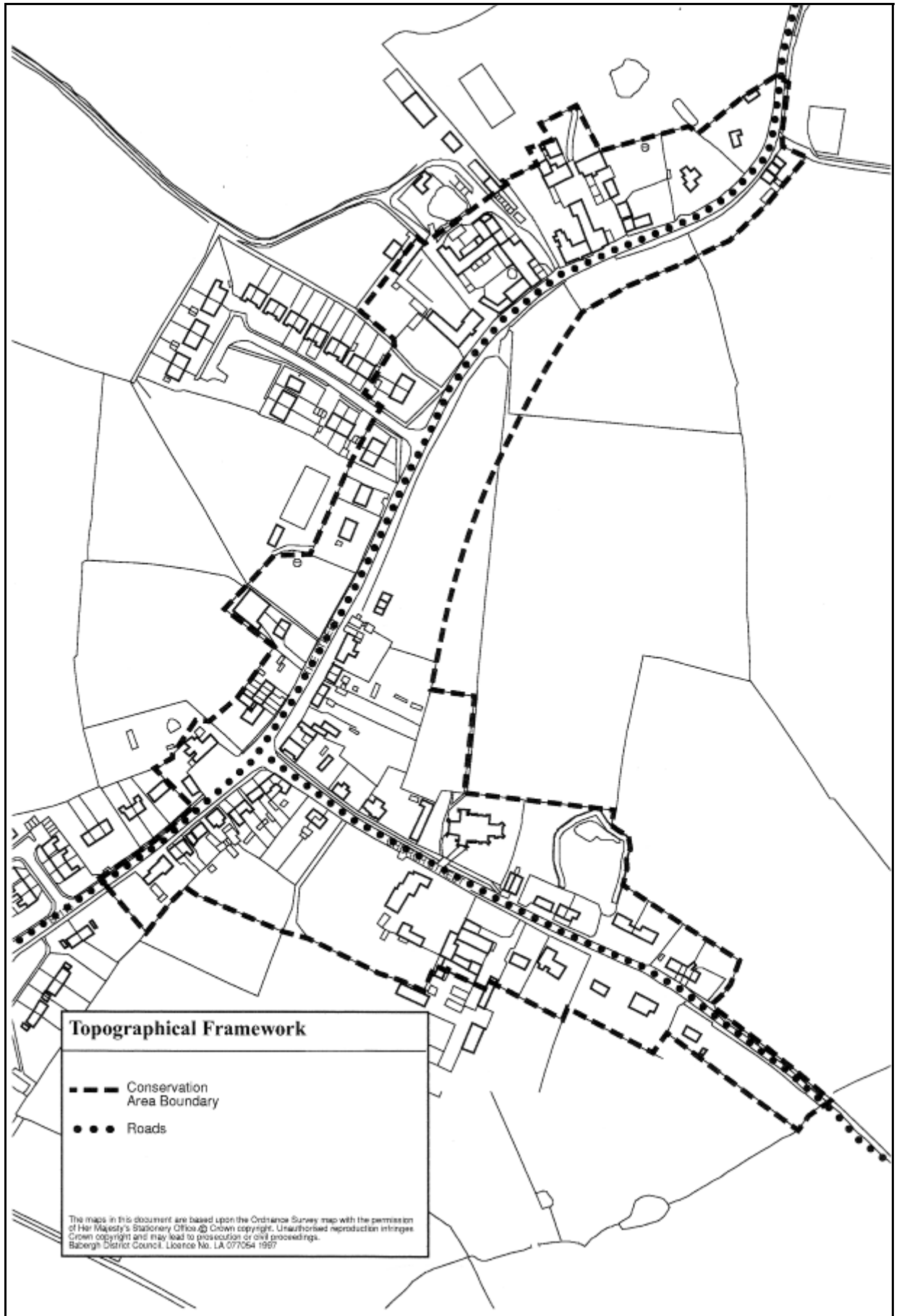
As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Little Waldingfield's built environment in conservation terms and is essentially an update on a draft document produced back in 1997, when the village was considered for a rural grant scheme that never came to fruition.



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 2007.



Topographical Framework

The village of Little Waldingfield lies about four miles north-east of the market town of Sudbury in south-west Suffolk, and a similar distance south of the historic village of Lavenham.

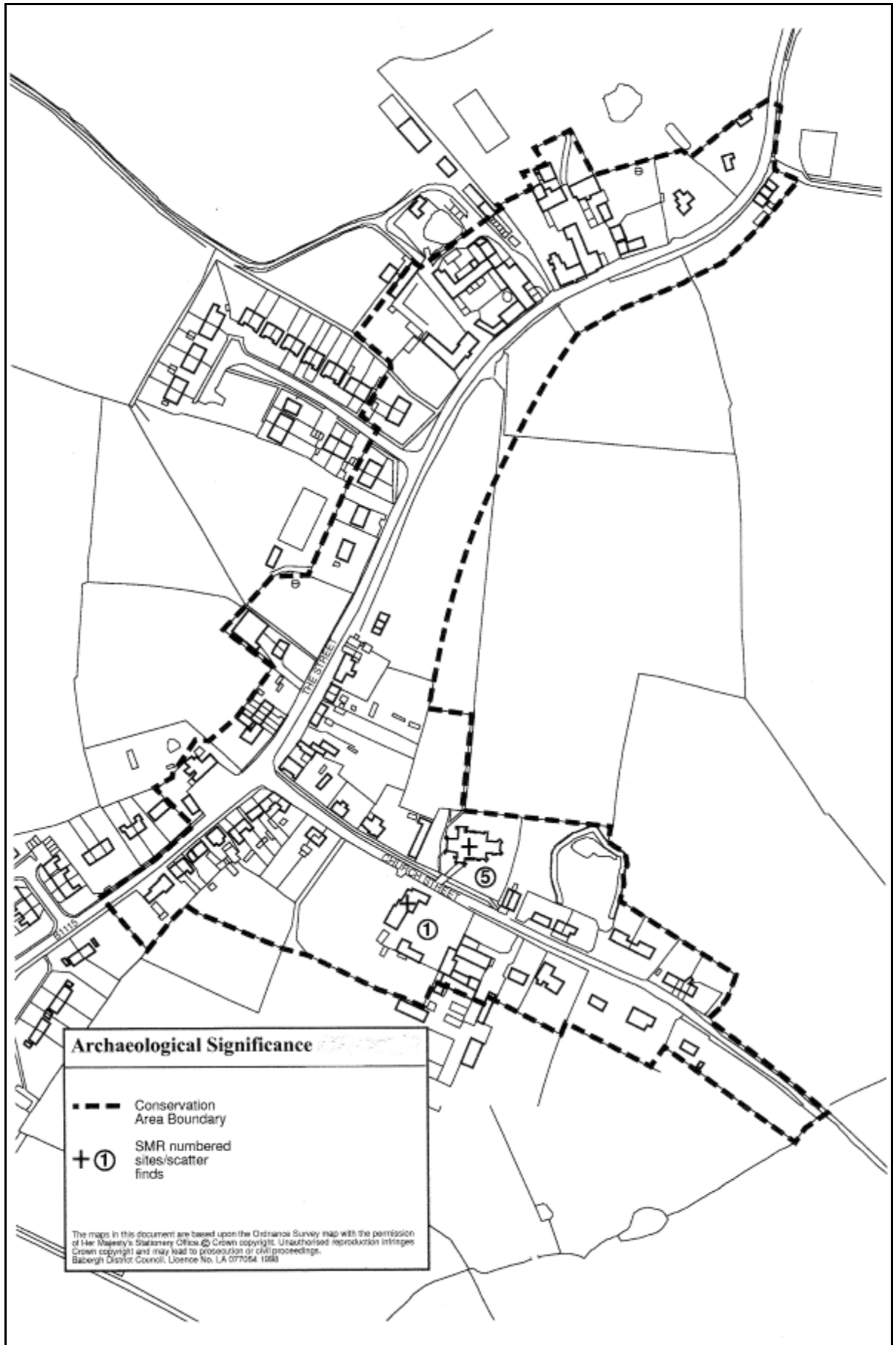
It is situated on a spur of higher land between 60 and 70 m above O.D., stretching south-westwards between two tributaries at the head of the river Box, itself a tributary of the Stour.

The village runs north-eastwards for about half a mile along the B 1115 from Sudbury, an equal distance either side of a T-junction where a minor road meets it from the south-east.



Whilst the surrounding countryside is essentially covered with the usual overlying layer of boulder clay of 'High' Suffolk's claylands, the village sits within a pocket where this is absent, exposing the underlying glacial sands and gravels.

Other such pockets occur nearby to the south-west of the village near Great Waldingfield, where the tributaries of the Box meet before flowing off to the south-east, as well as to the north-west of the village where one of those tributaries has removed the clay and replaced it with alluvium.

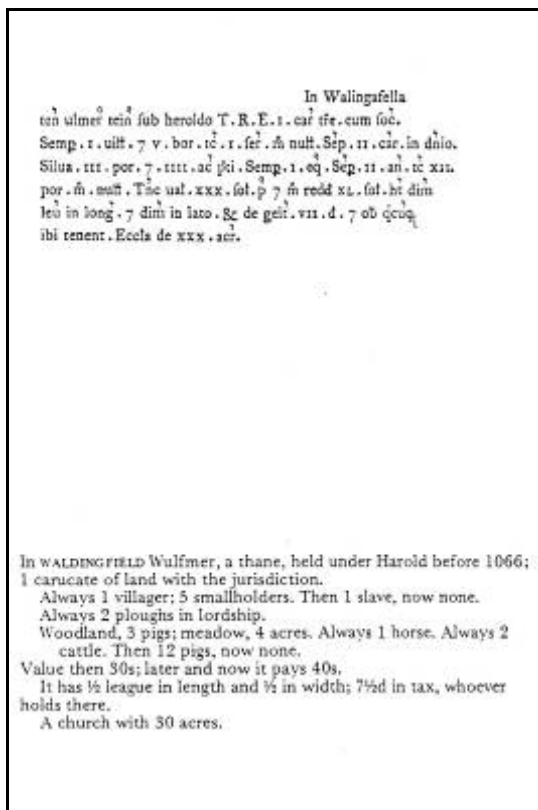
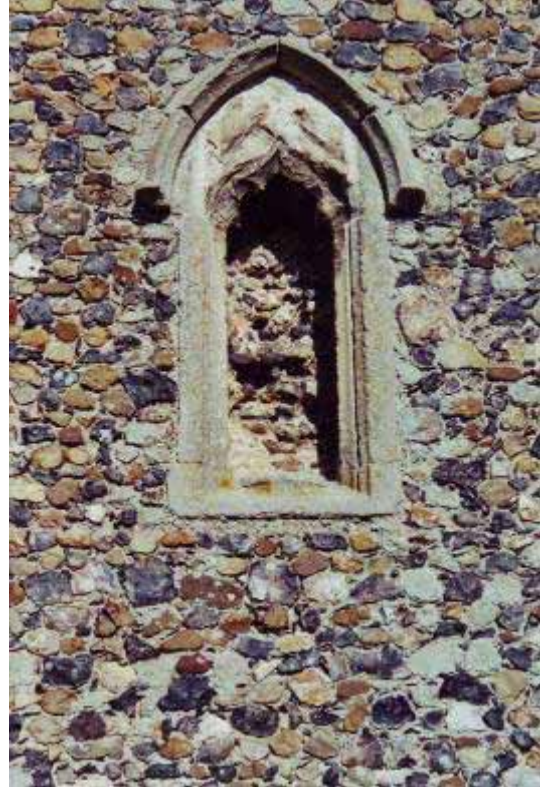


Archaeological Significance

Little Waldingfield is of no great known significance in archaeological terms.

The County Sites and Monuments Record lists only two sites within the village proper, one of which is the Church of St Lawrence.

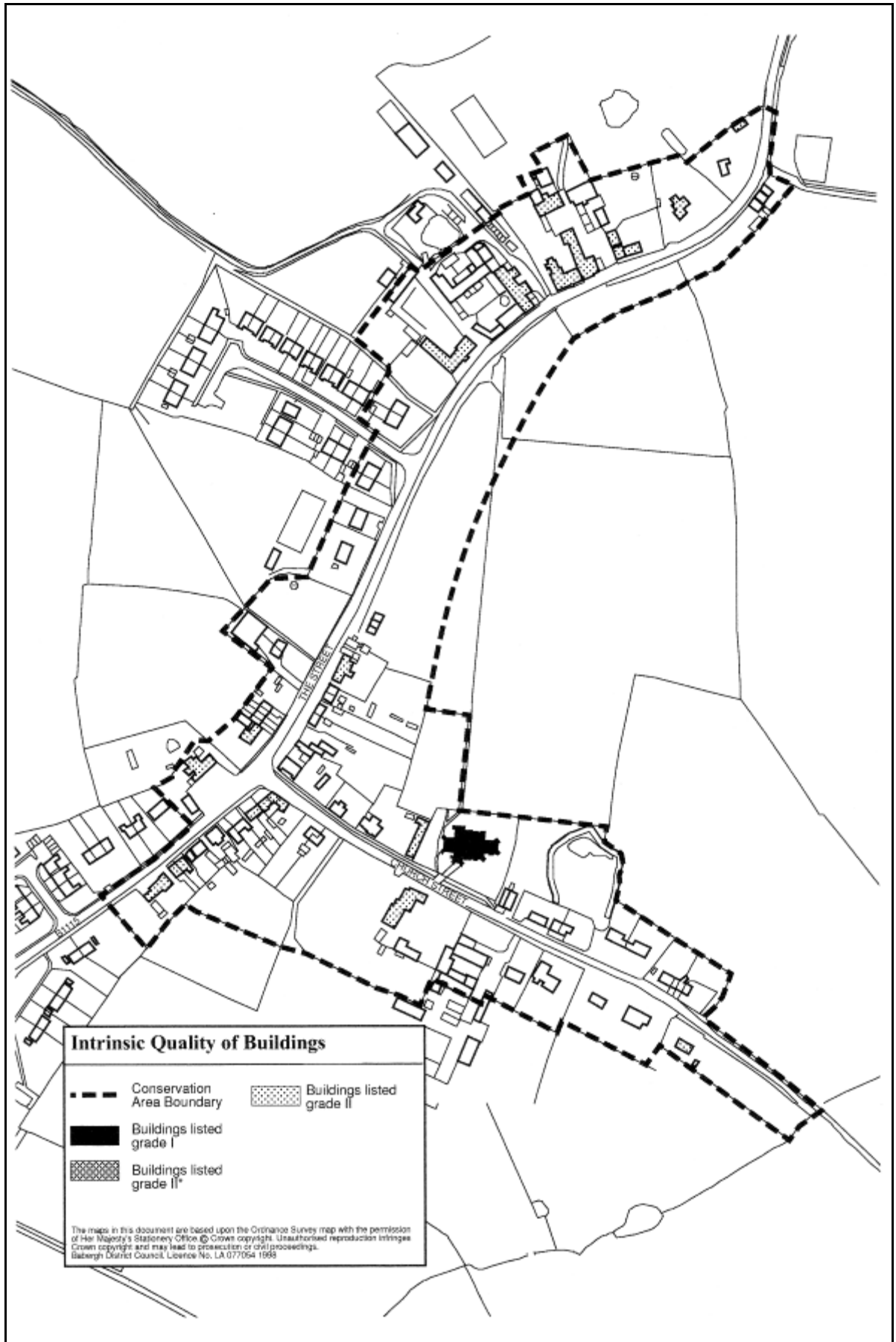
At the other, 'The Priory', the remains of brick vaults in the cellar had been attributed to a Benedictine Priory, but now this is thought to be more likely a 14th Century Manor house.



Nearby in Great Waldingfield is to be found Babergh Hall, the ancient meeting place for the Hundred of Babergh, from which the modern District Council takes its name.

The Domesday survey of 1086 lists two manors and one church for Waldingfield as a whole, but makes no distinction between Little or Great.

The name of the village is reputed to mean the 'open area (field) of the dwellers by the wold (wood)'.



Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

Little Waldingfield has its fair share of listed buildings, although only the Church of St Lawrence is listed grade I, the rest being grade II.

The Church is mainly 15th Century ('all Perp' according to Pevsner) of flint and stone, but unfortunately cemented over on the nave, aisles and chancel.

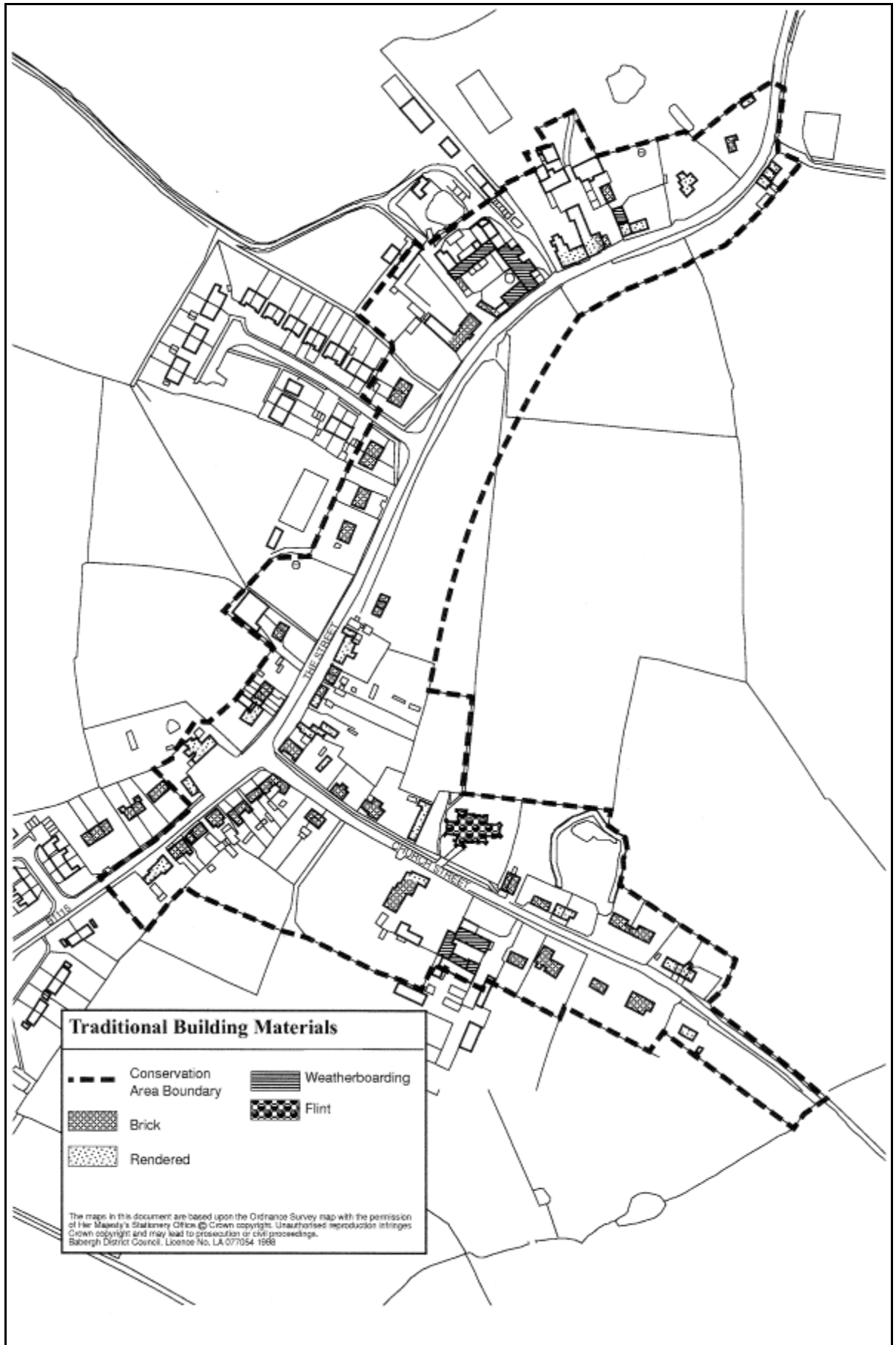
This together with 'Churchside', the former almshouses adjoining, and the Priory over the road form an important group of historic buildings.



Two very different, but striking, larger farmhouses are to be found towards the north end of the village, although neither is listed better than grade II.

Wood Hall has a grand three storey white brick and slate roofed 19th Century fronting to an older timber-framed building, whilst Malting Farm has a decoratively rendered gabled front, again 19th Century on an older timber-framed building, with a circular brick built malt kiln attached at one end.

The remaining grade II listed buildings are for the most part domestic, variously timber-framed or brick built, but also include a K6 telephone kiosk on The Street.

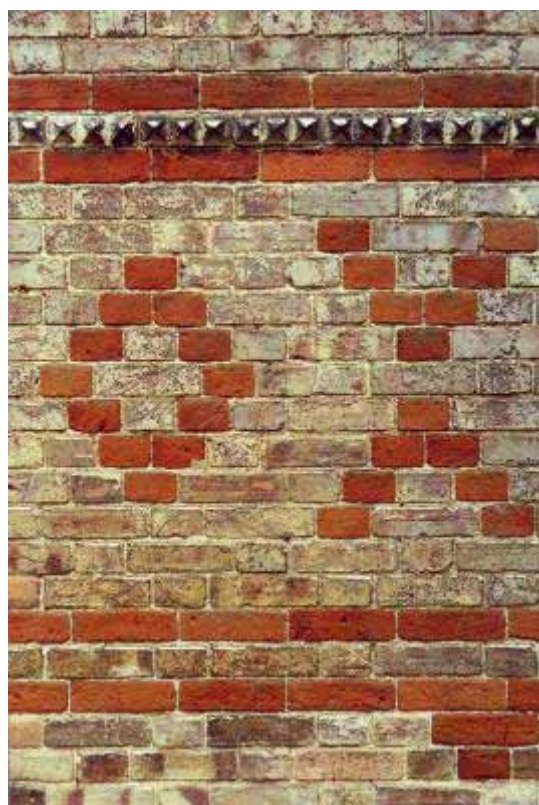


Traditional Building Materials

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

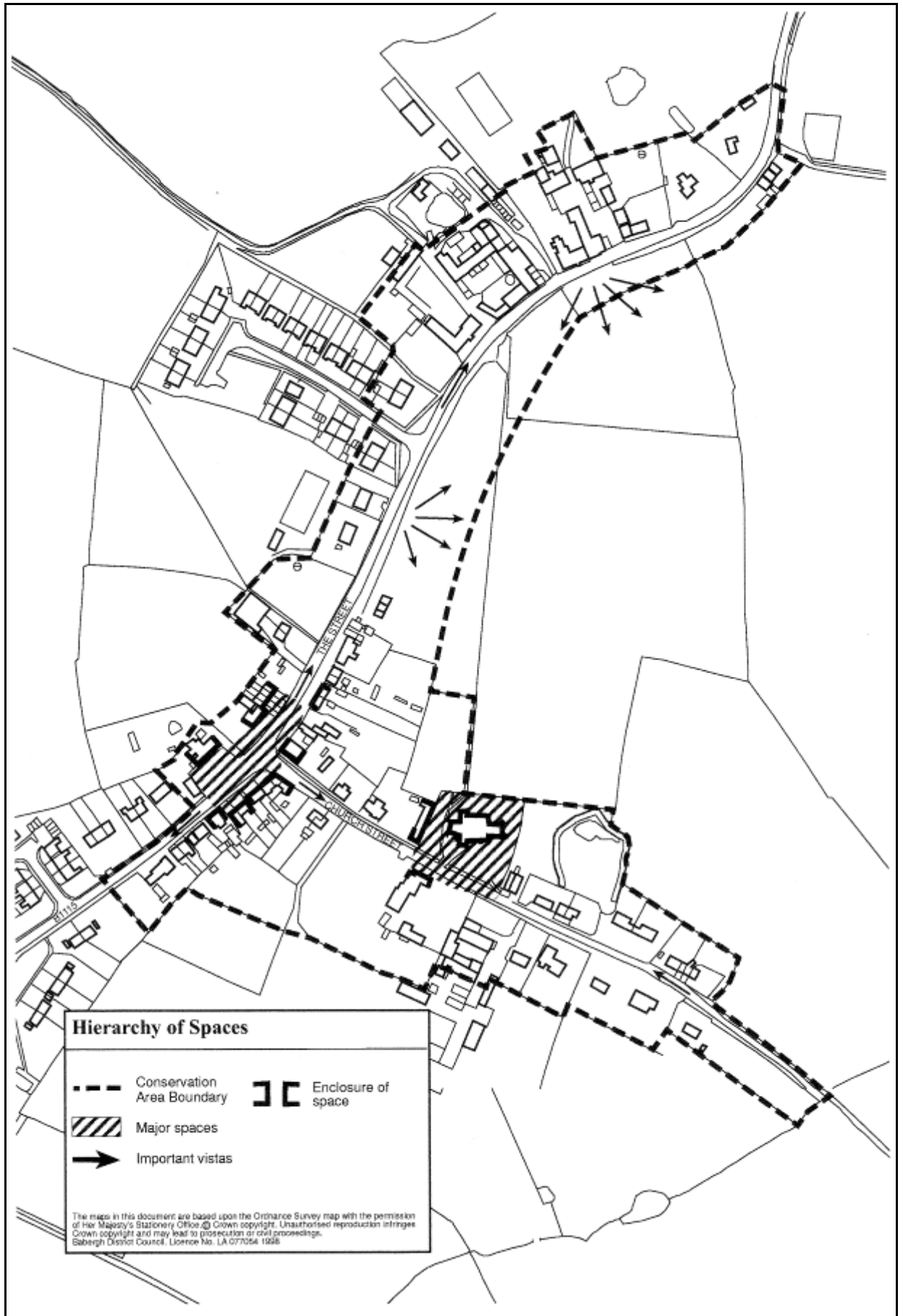
Timber-framed construction is there but not in an immediately obvious way, as there are no jettied first floors or exposed timbers. Brick or rendered fronts have hidden most of the clues and steep plaited roofs are all that remain visible.

Two rendered examples of timber-framed houses at the north end of the village look more authentically ancient with their thatched roofs and large brick chimneys.



Black weather-boarded barns, some now converted to dwellings, some still in agricultural use, are roofed in pantiles.

Soft 'Suffolk red' bricks appear as chimneys on many buildings, whilst near the village centre there is a concentration of 19th Century brick cottages with slate roofs, many with pleasing polychrome brick patterning in the local red and 'Suffolk white' bricks, the latter probably from nearby Sudbury.



Hierarchy of Spaces

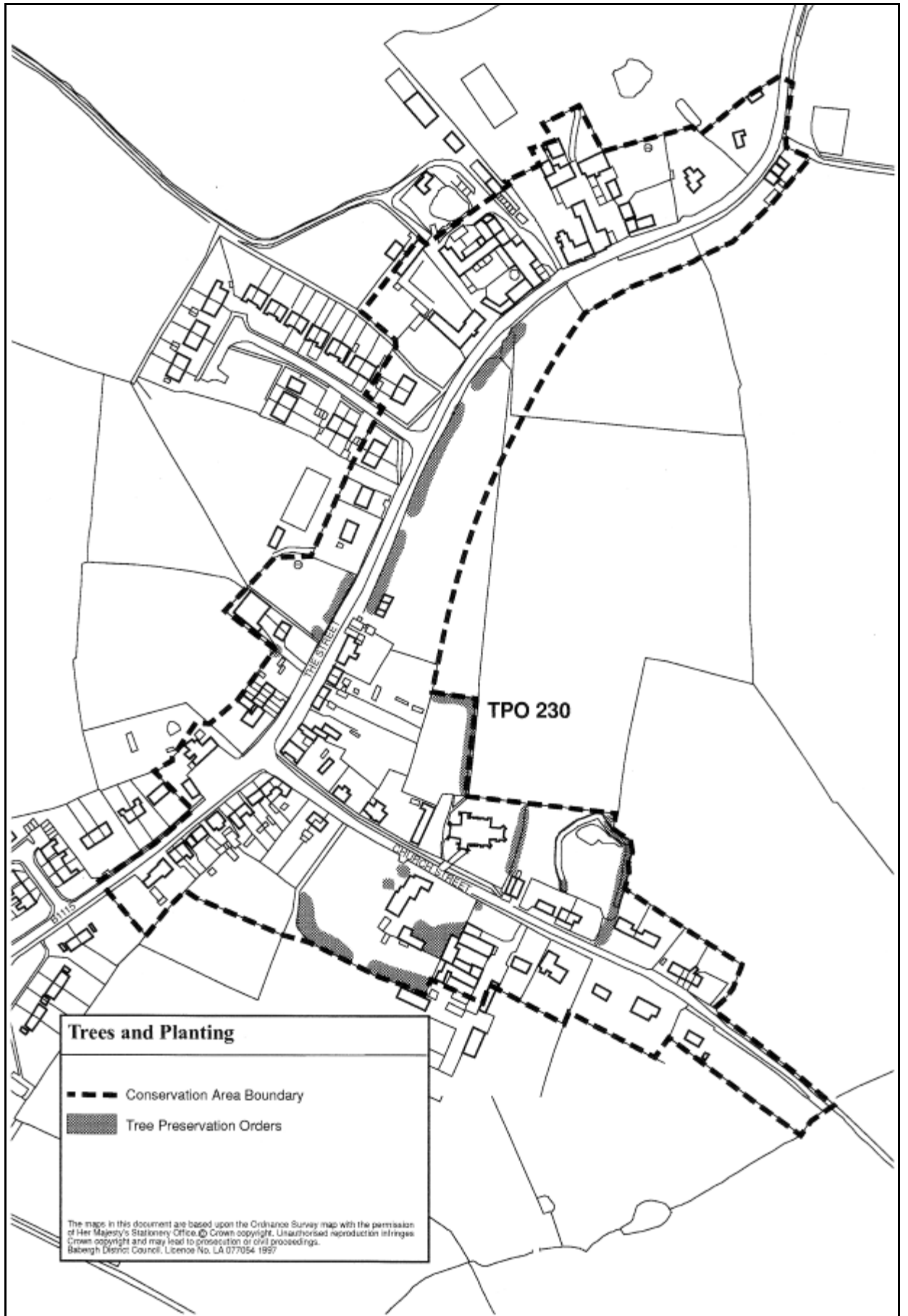
With its concentration of red and white brick cottages and a very wide pavement, the area of The Street adjoining the T-junction has a definite feel of having been at one time more of a centre to the village. The adjoining Swan public house set well back from the road adds to this wider public space and represents the only remaining commercial frontage there.

Other subtle clues to this being the centre of the village include the listed K6 telephone box, the adjoining post box and the presence of pavements on both sides of the road.



Away from this 'centre' the village gets markedly more rural. Church Road gently leads away south-eastwards, the area comprising the Church, former almshouses and the Priory opposite providing an important focal group of older buildings, whilst beyond the buildings get less dense and grass verges take over, before we get amongst fields.

On the road to the north-east, once past the 'centre', development is restricted to the western side only, giving good views out over open countryside to the east.

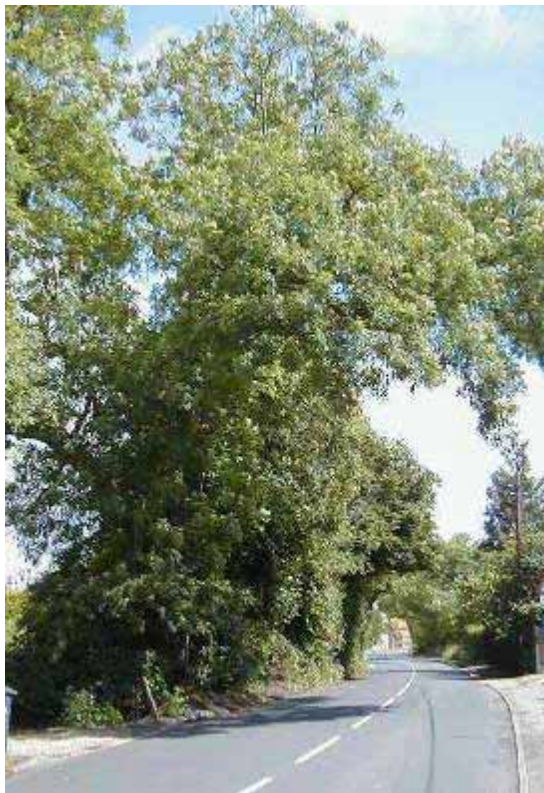


Trees & Planting

About a mile up the road to the north-east of Little Waldingfield lies Camps Wood, an ancient woodland remnant of about fifty acres.

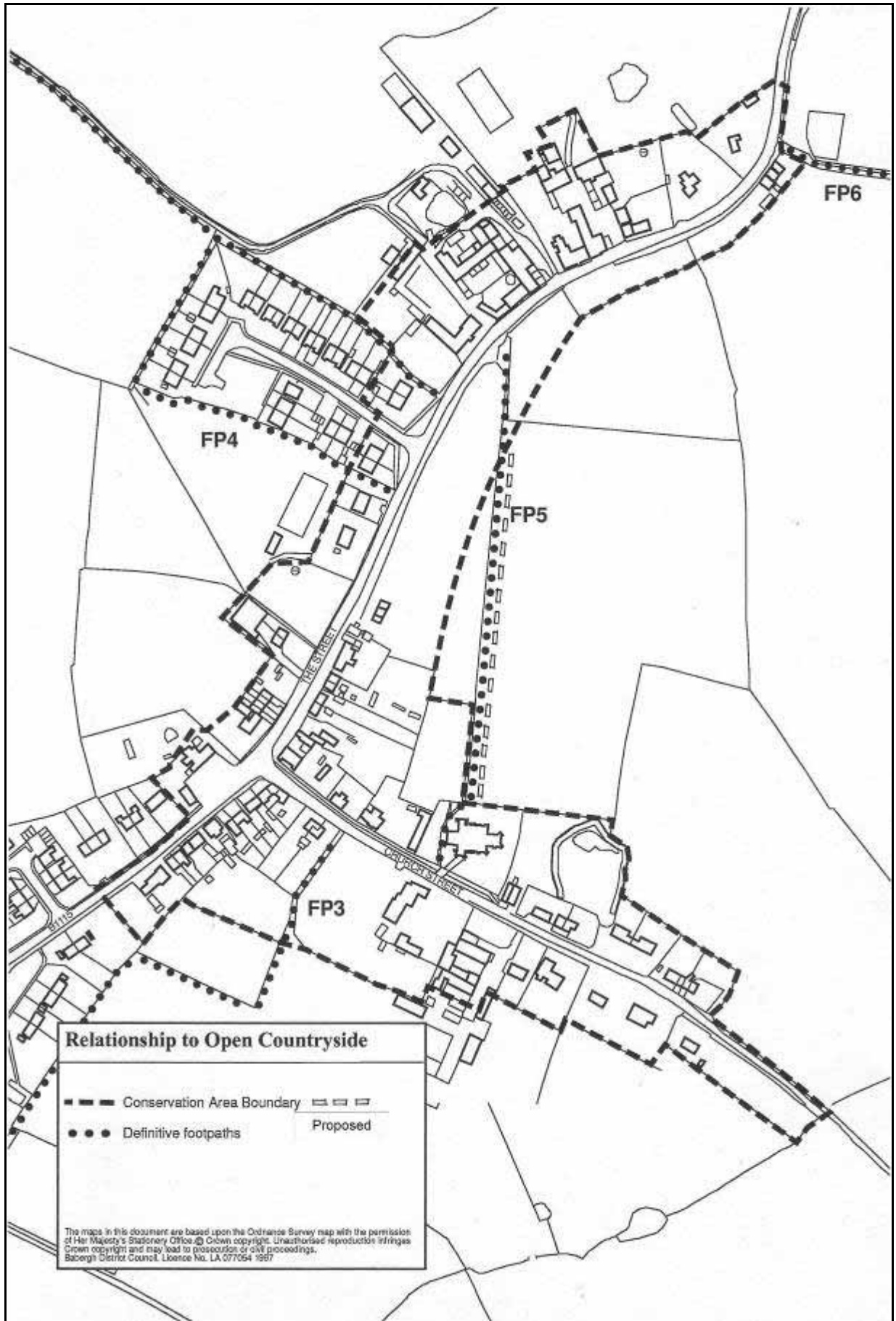
Ancient woodland practices, however, can still be observed in the village itself in the form of various pollarded trees. Two particularly good multi-stemmed Ash pollards can be found on the northern part of The Street where fields adjoin the road.

Nearer the centre of the village on the western side of the same road there is a magnificent old Oak, whilst at the appropriately named Walnut Cottage there is a fine specimen of this tree with four main stems.



Most of the trees within the village are the subject of a single tree preservation order (TPO 230). This covers the various strips, groups or just single specimens that occur for the most part off Church Road and along the northern part of The Street. Around the road junction the central area is noticeably more built up and devoid of trees.

To the north of the Church there are a number of old Lime trees, the last remnants of an avenue that went from there across the field to Wood Hall. A footpath still defines this route, which might prove a suitable case for the reinstatement of the missing trees.



Relationship to Open Countryside

- - - Conservation Area Boundary - - - Proposed
 . . . Definitive footpaths

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Relationship to Open Countryside

For the most part, Little Waldingfield's development has only been one plot deep along the legs of the T-junction of roads that meet there.

One exception to this is on the eastern side of the road north-eastwards towards Monks Eleigh, where fields about the road for some distance, affording good views out between the trees into the countryside beyond.

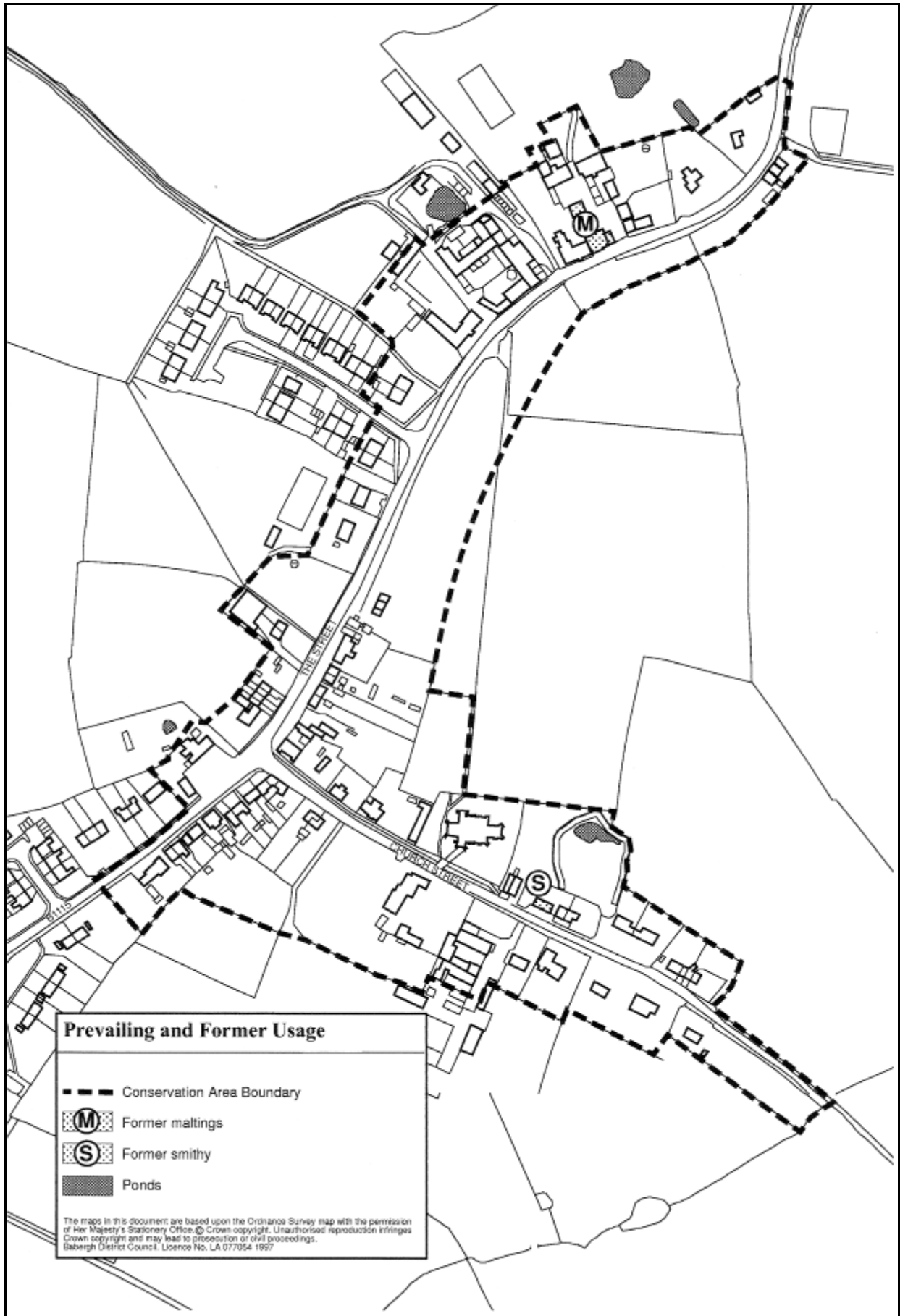
The presence of working farms within the village amplifies the rural character to be found there. The village has several footpath links radiating out into the surrounding countryside, many of these linking into neighbouring Great Waldingfield's footpath network.



Two 'internal' footpaths occur, one to the south behind the houses of The Street's south-westerly extension, the other previously mentioned linking the Church across the fields to Wood Hall.

At the northern end of the latter a small grass area could be created, acting as a terminus to the path and creating a setting for Wood Hall. A similar grass area can be found a few yards further north opposite Maltings Farm.

It is recommended that the conservation area be slightly extended here to include Footpath 5 and the thin triangle of land in between. Any future reinstatement of the avenue of trees will thus be protected.



Prevailing & Former Usage

From the 15th to 17th Centuries Little Waldingfield played a small part in Suffolk's then thriving woollen cloth industry as an outpost to the nearby important centre of Lavenham.

The local economy was primarily agricultural, but did exploit the land in other ways too, as witnessed by the Tithe map's reference to fields named after such ventures as Hop Grounds, Gravel Pits, Brick Kiln or Mill Field.

A post type windmill at one time stood south-west of the main village near Hole Farm and there was a smithy in Church Road.

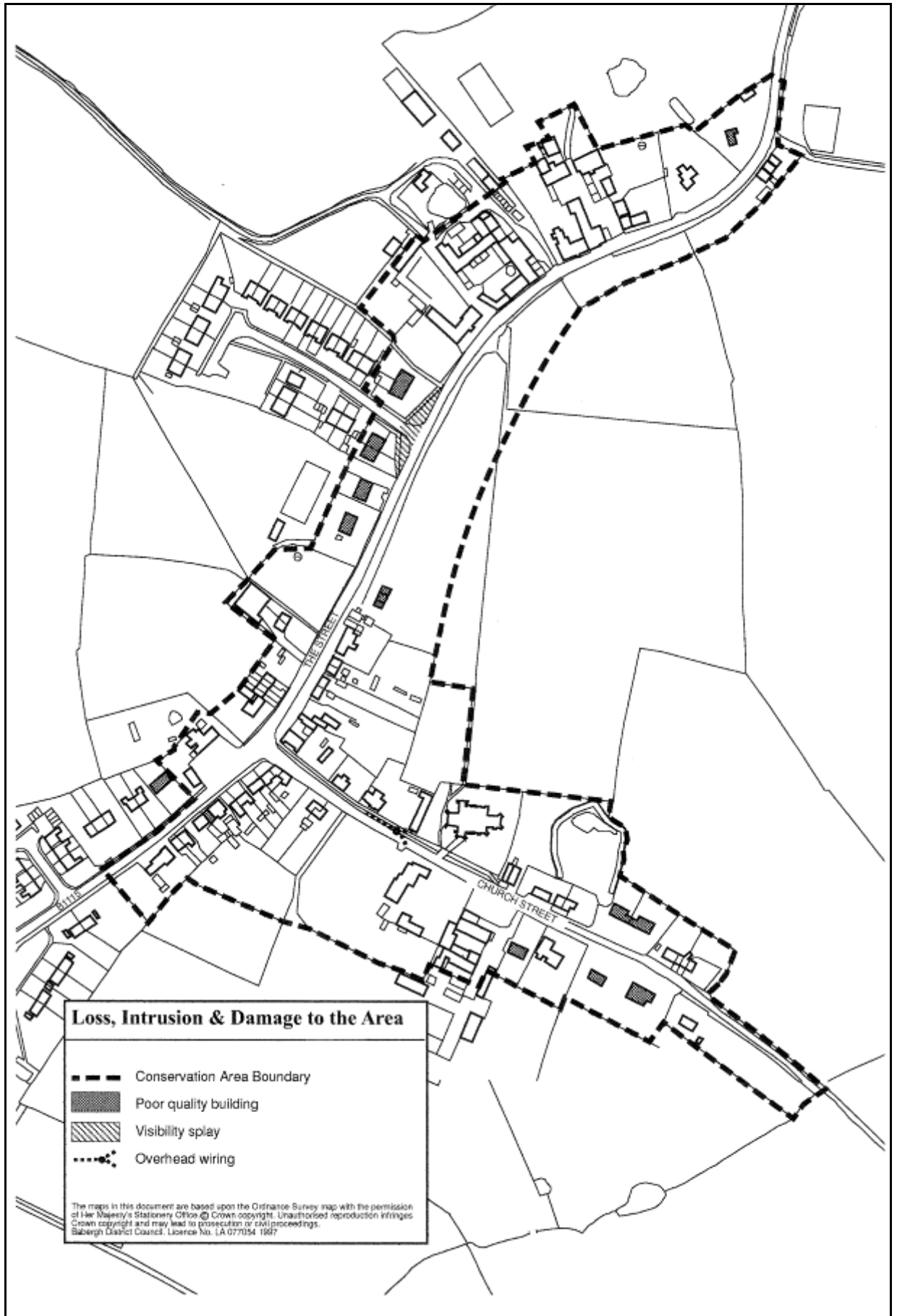


With no immediately adjacent water course, the village relied to a great extent on wells and ponds for its water supply. A number of ponds still remain in the north to the rear of Malting Farm.

Here also the red brick maltings and circular malt kiln remain, although much of this farm, including several black weather-boarded barns, has now been converted for residential use.

Similar black barns, still in their original agricultural use, do however remain at Priory Farm in Church Road.





Losses & Possible Gains

Little Waldingfield has suffered no major negative effects, but rather more of a gentle erosion at the edges.

The housing estate off The Street south of Wood Hall interrupts the rural road pattern with its grass-verged wide visibility splay. This could be improved if it became part of a greater green that could be created for village amenity out of the field opposite. The suggested reinstatement of the avenue of Lime trees between Wood Hall and the Church would form the boundary to such a green space, but would close off some existing countryside vistas.

Some newer bungalows and chalet style dwellings along both Church Road and The Street are rather out of place, but are mostly well set back and screened.



Nearer the centre of the village a double garage extension to one of the brick cottages attempts to blend in using matching materials, whilst a number of other properties suffer the indignity of replacement windows, but fortunately few so far are in uPVC.

There is scope for undergrounding some of the overhead wiring in the village, particularly near the Church. Should this be done there is the opportunity to upgrade the paving finishes. A softer approach than the current blacktop and concrete kerbing could be achieved using a chipping based surface dressing to footways and exposed aggregate kerbs. A more formal type of paving could be used in the wider space of the central area, perhaps taking in the forecourt of the Swan.

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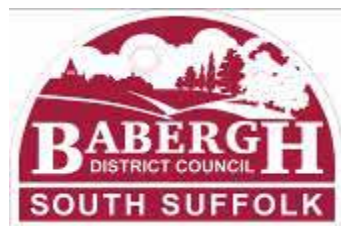
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Proposed extension to Conservation Area designated and this Appraisal adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Babergh District Council Strategy Committee 15 November 2007