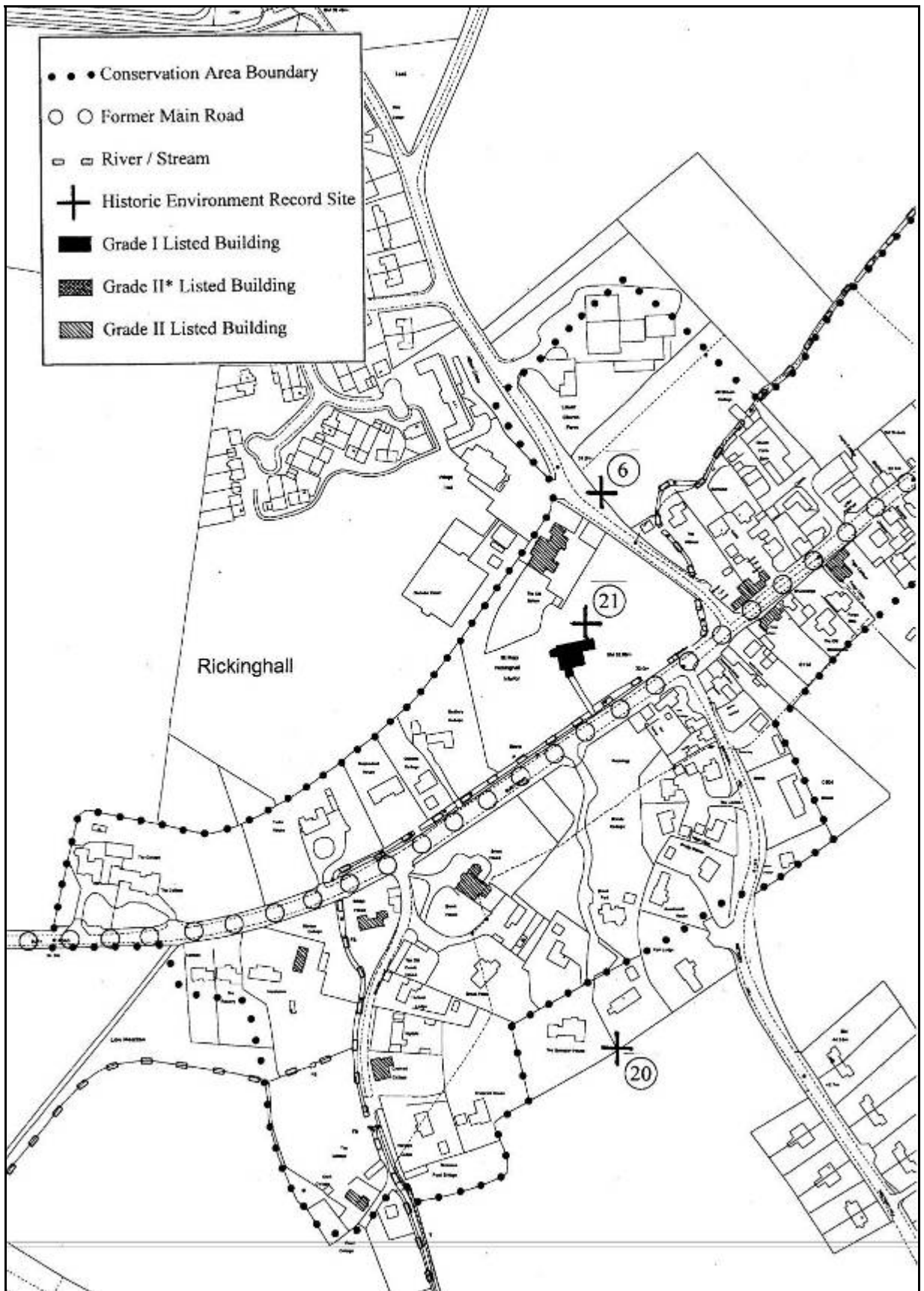


conservation area appraisal



Introduction

The villages of Rickinghall Inferior, Rickinghall Superior and Botesdale were designated as a conservation area in 1973 jointly by East and West Suffolk County Councils and inherited by Mid Suffolk 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 Rickinghall and Botesdale under a number of different headings as set out in English Heritage's new 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' (2006).

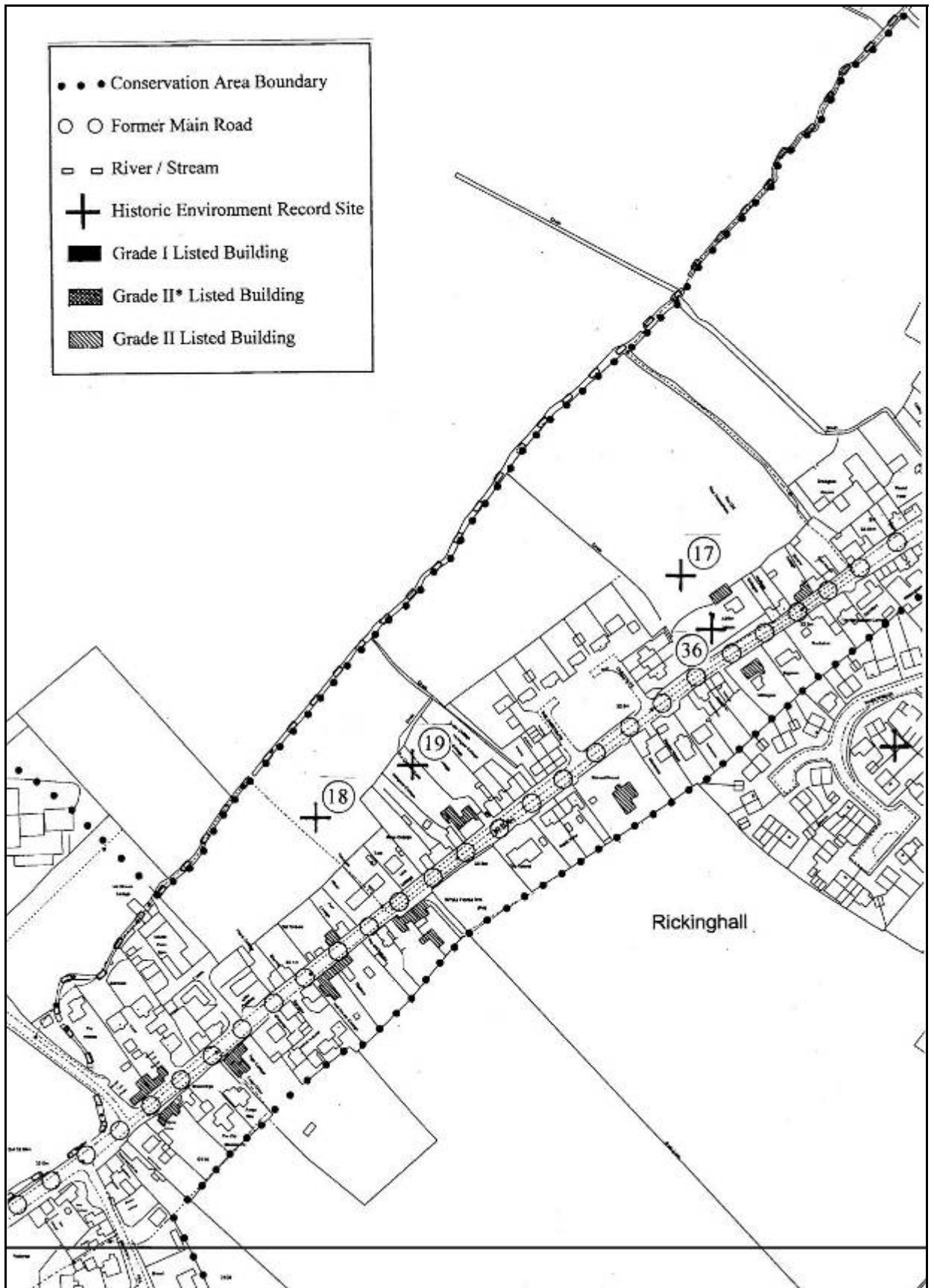
As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Rickinghall and Botesdale's built environment in conservation terms.



This document 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, Mid Suffolk District Council 2009.

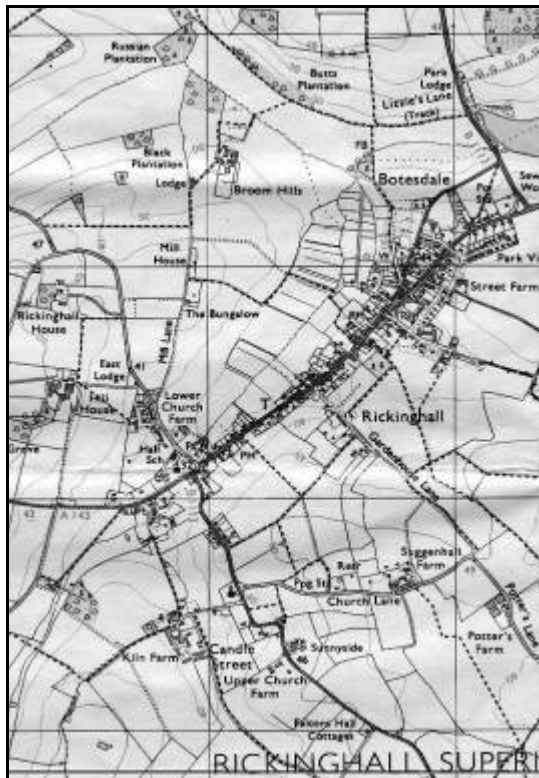


Topographical Framework

The villages of Rickinghall and Botesdale have become merged into a single settlement along about a mile of former main road six miles south-west of the Norfolk market town of Diss, in the northern part of Mid Suffolk District.

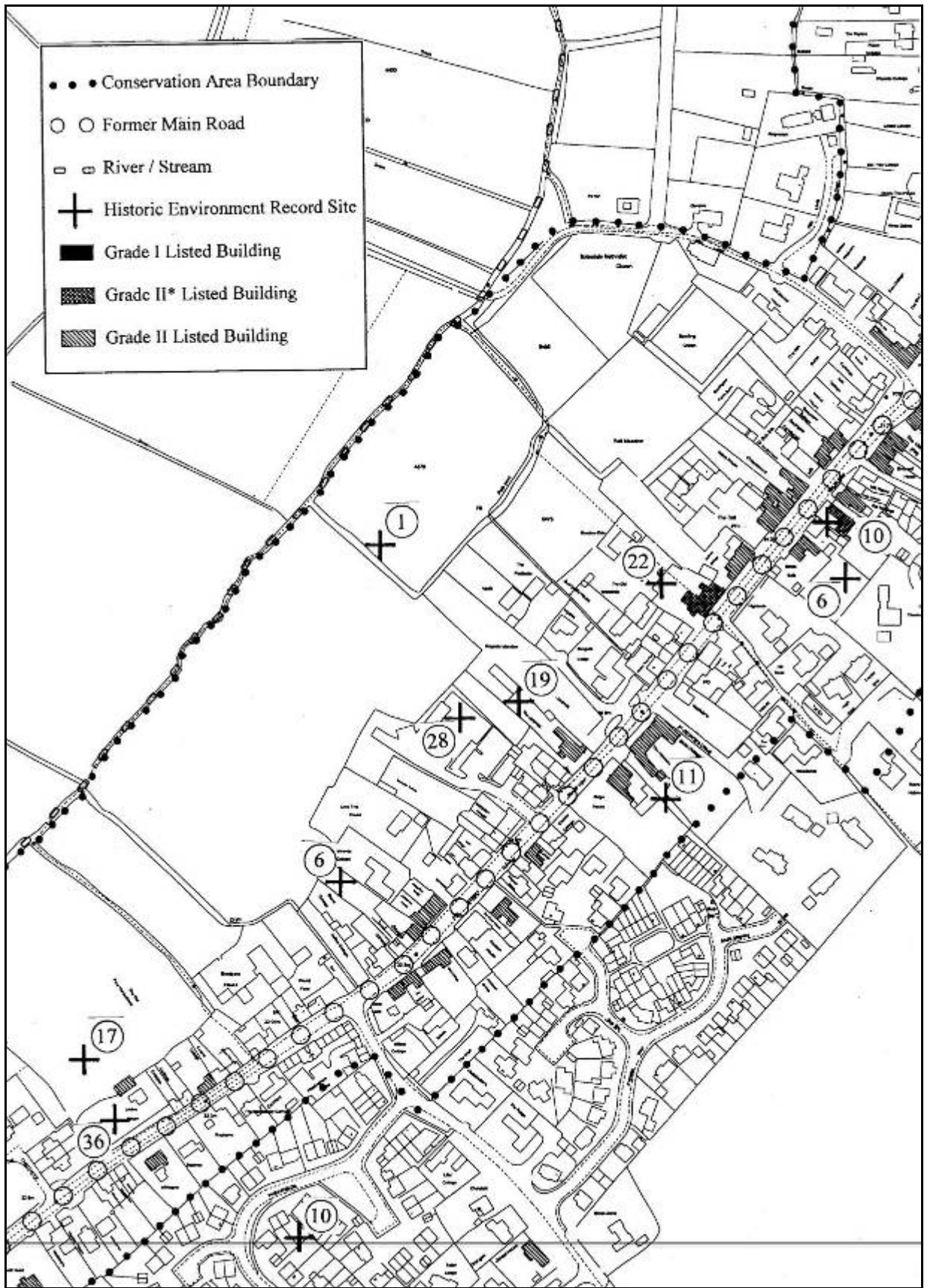
With Botesdale at the north-east end and the Rickinghalls at the south-west (roughly speaking Inferior on the north and Superior on the south side of The Street), the settlement lies along the south bank of a north-easterly flowing tributary of the Little Ouse River.

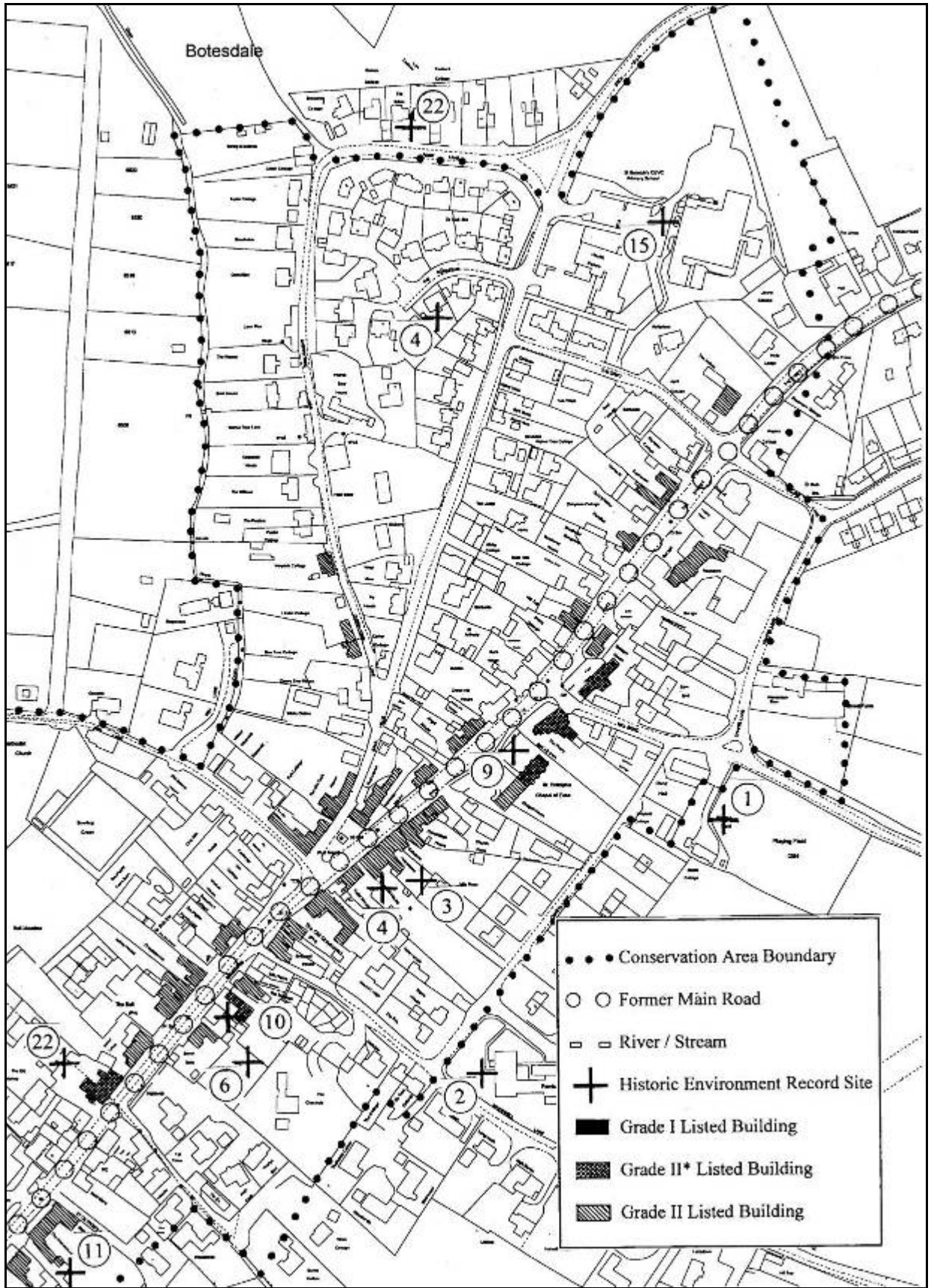
About three miles to the north the county boundary with Norfolk is delineated by this river to the west and the Waveney to the east, both flowing from adjacent sources just north of the adjoining village of Redgrave.



The modern A143 road from Bury St Edmunds joins the A140 just east of Diss and now by-passes the settlement to the south. This road originally ran through both Rickinghall and Botesdale, as witnessed by the surviving octagonal white brick toll-house in Botesdale that served the former the Bury St Edmunds to Scole Turnpike Trust's road of 1762.

The village is situated on the 'High Suffolk' claylands, deposited in the Ice Ages over the chalk that underlies most of Suffolk. The area is thus good for arable farming.





Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

The three parishes comprising Botesdale and the Rickinghalls contain 101 listed buildings the majority of which are within the conservation area.

Each Rickinghall has a grade I listed Church of St Mary, that at Inferior with a Norman round tower topped by a 14th Century octagonal belfry. The now redundant church at Superior also dates to the 14th Century and sits remotely about half a mile south of the main built up area.

Both churches with their flint rubble walls and slate and plaintile roofs provide the usual village exception to the Suffolk pattern of building, as does the grade II Chapel of St Botolph in nearby Botesdale.*



The remaining listed buildings are predominantly domestic in scale, many having former commercial uses. They are mostly timber-framed and either plastered or brick-fronted with plaintile or pantile roofs.

Of these five are good enough to warrant grade II listing: Street Farmhouse, The Priory, St Catherine's and Hamblyn House along The Street, plus Broomhills in Mill Lane away to the north. This last dates from c.1700 and was the Dower House to the now demolished nearby Redgrave Hall.*



Traditional Building Materials

Many of the unlisted buildings in Rickinghall and Botesdale are also of traditional form and grouping, and although not up to "listing" quality as individual buildings, still have interest for their visual impact. They could perhaps form the basis of a Local List.

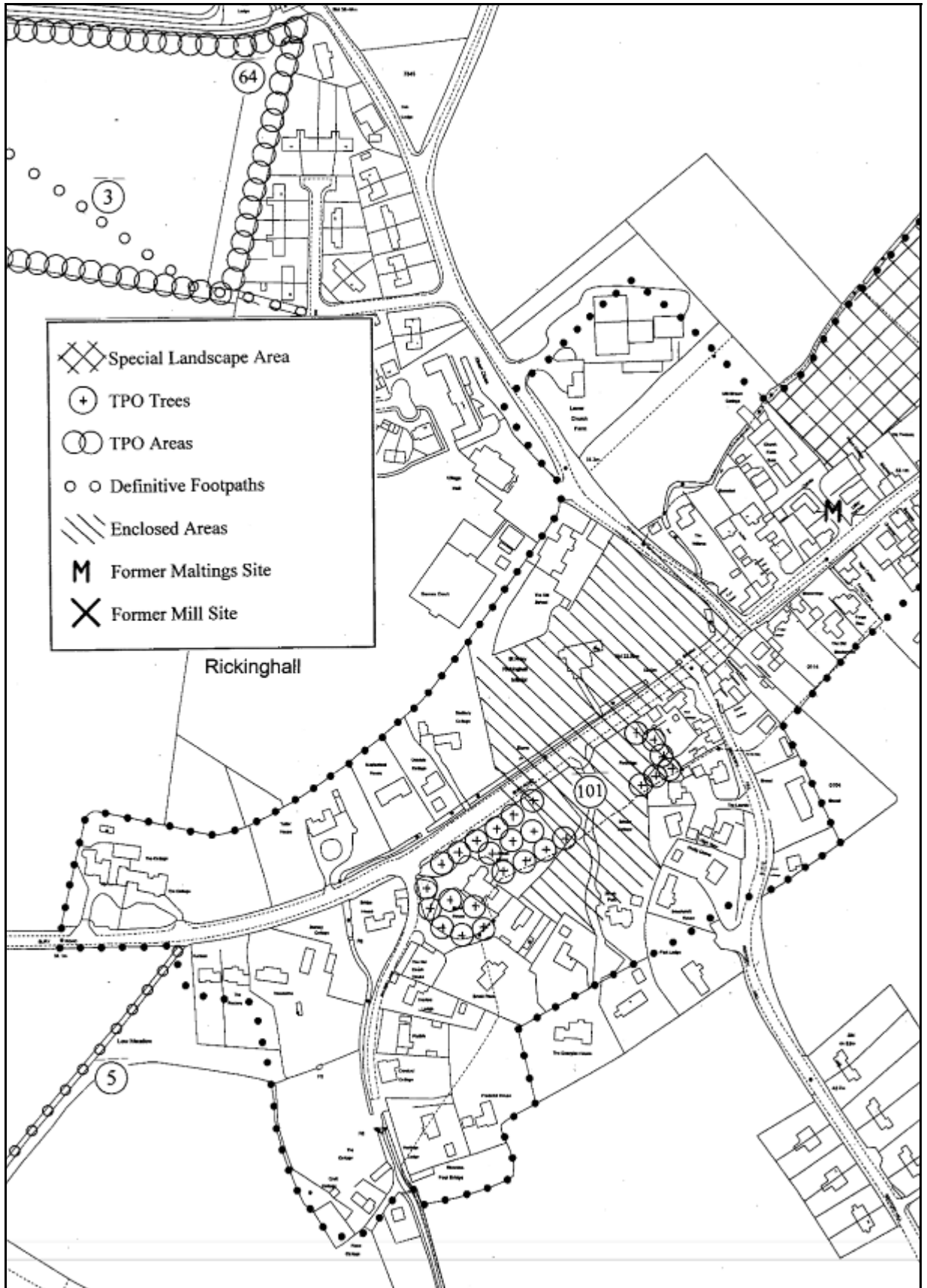
Overall there is an abundance of rendered and brick buildings either painted or left natural as soft 'Suffolk Reds'. This local red brick features throughout the village, both on cottages dating from Victorian times and on older timber-framed buildings that have been refronted.



There are also examples of 'Suffolk White' brick, notably on Chilvers shop facing onto the market square and as dressings to parts of the nearby Greyhound public house.

A significant amount of flintwork is also evident around the village, most notably on the church buildings and with red brick dressings on a number of cottages.

Overall there is a good mix of the usual Suffolk vernacular materials around the village, which is also reflected in roofing materials. Most of the buildings are very much the product of their particular era. The prevalent roofing materials are plaintiles on the older timber-framed buildings and slate on the more recent additions. There is some surviving thatch and examples of pantile too.



Hierarchy of Spaces

The settlement at Rickinghall and Botesdale is basically linear in form, strung out along the former main road from Bury St Edmunds to Scole.

Formerly in West Suffolk, at the south-west end of the area is the Church of Rickinghall Inferior. This forms a relatively rural focus of early development, with a scattering of cottages and a Victorian gothic revival school.

Towards the central part one moves into the former East Suffolk with Rickinghall Superior, much of which is infill development. Its Church is remote, away to the south near the hamlet of Candle Street.



At the north-east end in Botesdale the road forks at a former market square forming a second more urban focal point. Here there are larger more imposing buildings and a greater sense of enclosure. With development along both forks and numerous side roads there is less linearity here, but the main route through dominates.

Along this more southerly of the two roads north-east one passes a third Church, St Botolph's Chapel of Ease, tied to Redgrave parish. This gave Botesdale its name and along with the adjoining Chapel House is set back from the road creating a second small square off the hill one climbs to leave the village.

Trees & Planting

The linear nature of Botesdale and the Rickinghalls allows numerous pockets of trees to punctuate the settlement along The Street. The Chapel of Ease in Botesdale and Rickinghall Inferior's Churchyard at either end provide small oases of green with mature trees, mainly Oak and Lime.

In between these, two other substantial pockets of green can be found: an area of Scots Pine fronting Highlands and further west a group of Horse Chestnuts remain at The Chestnuts.

Slightly further west Tree Preservation Order 101 was implemented by West Suffolk County Council to protect an area of Beech, Oak, Pine, Lime, Acacia and a Tree of Heaven in the grounds of Brook House south of the Church.

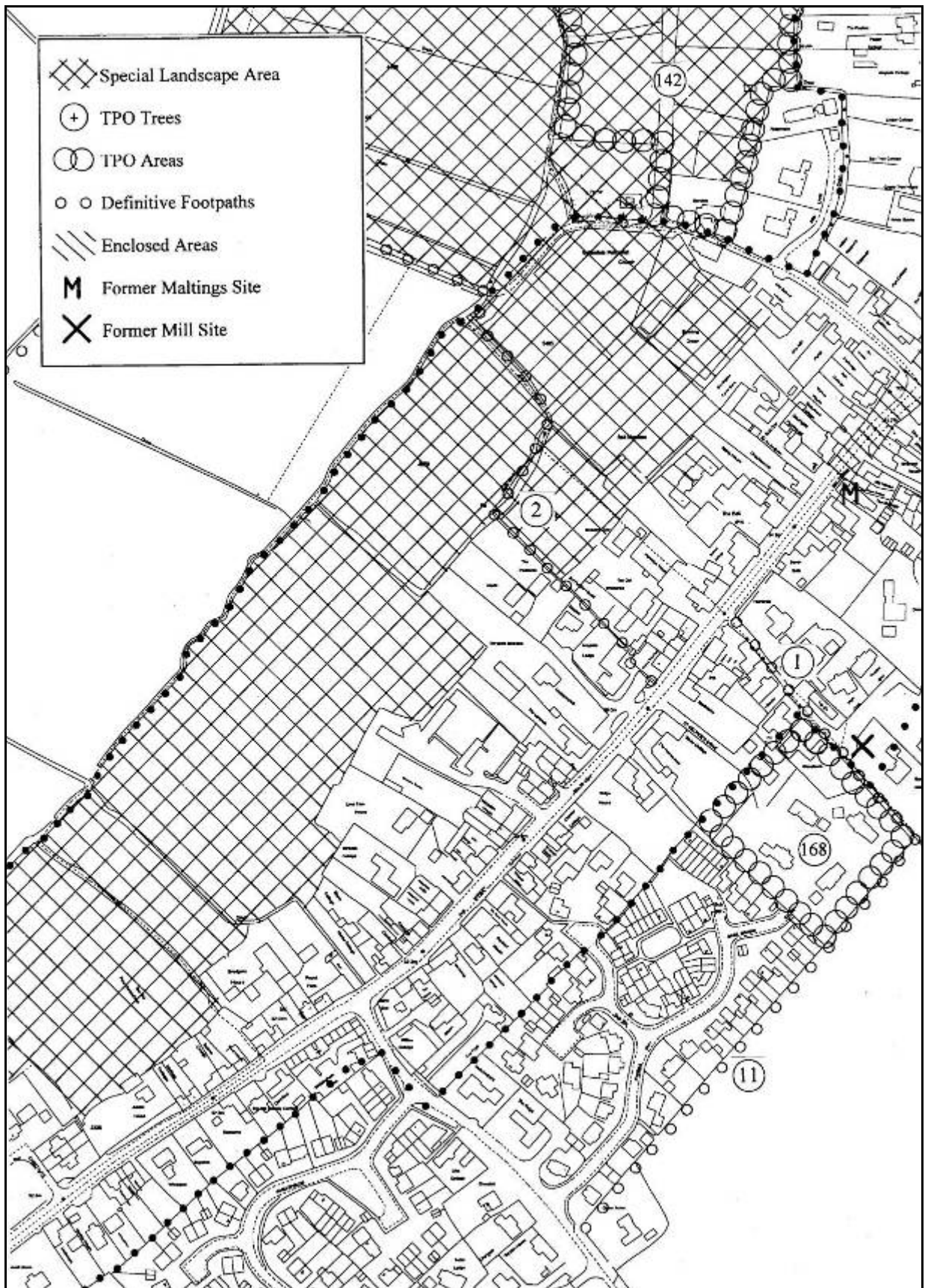


Behind The Street at the Homestead, an area of mixed species is also protected (TPO 168) as is a large wet area of Ash, Willow, Poplar and Oak at Fen Lane just west of central Botesdale (TPO 142).

Further afield in the parishes there are other trees, which have also been felt at risk and thus been made the subject of tree preservation orders. These include Lime, Ash and Yew trees south of the main settlement around Rickinghall Superior's churchyard (TPO 15) and to the west areas of mixed species in Rickinghall Inferior at Hill House and Snape Hill (TPOs 64, 156 and 229).

In more built up Botesdale itself, single examples of Ash and Walnut at Back Hills, the Health Centre and The Drift come under the more recent TPOs 244, 327 and 343.





Relationship to Open Countryside

Rickinghall Inferior churchyard and Brook Park across the road to the south are designated in the Local Plan as Visually Important Open Space, in order to protect the setting of the grade I listed Church.

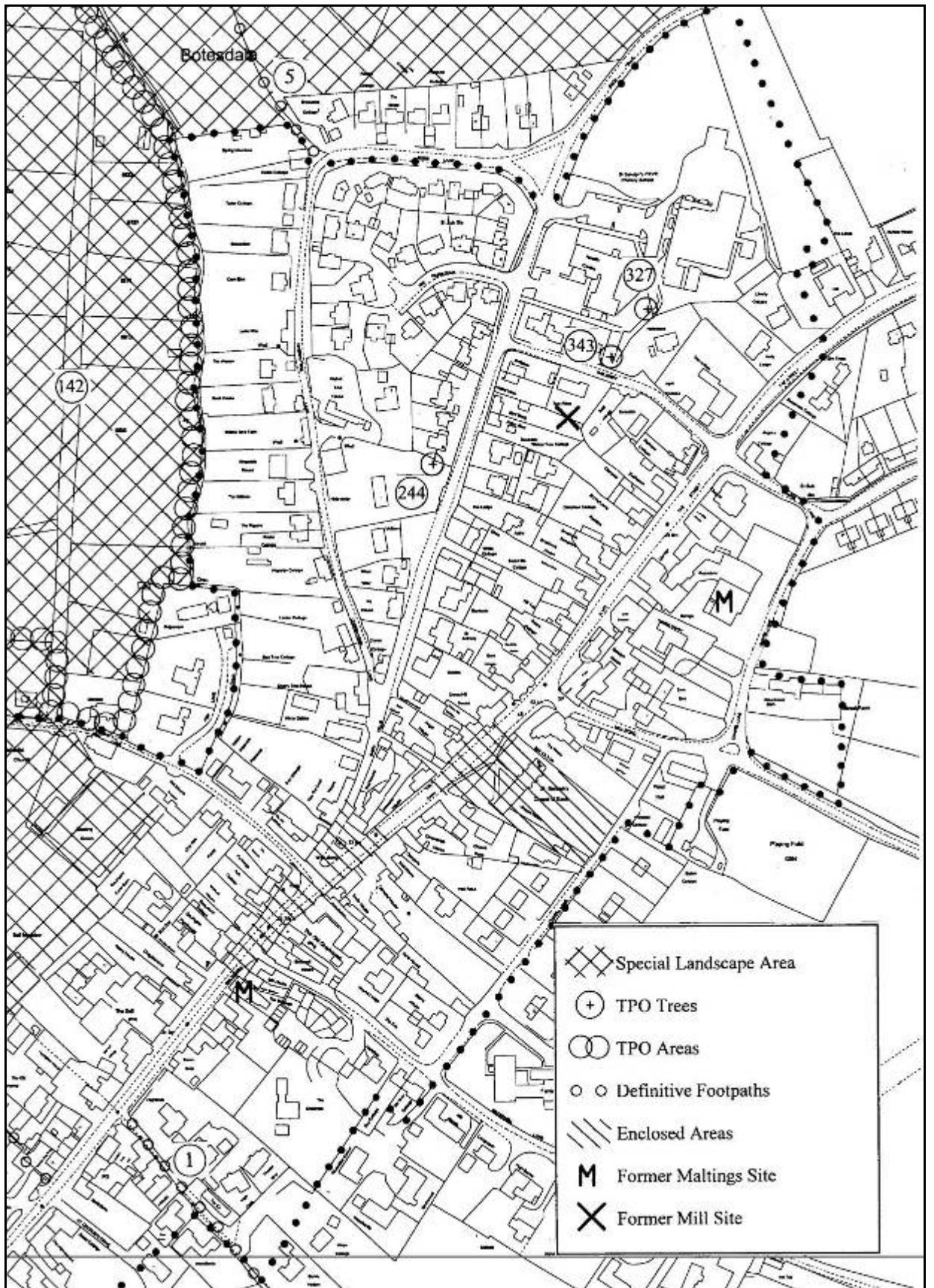
The linear nature of Botesdale and the Rickinghalls' settlement pattern means that development is mostly one plot deep. Thus, although not often visible, the countryside is never far away.

Views of the countryside are important and can be glimpsed through many gaps between the buildings along The Street. This is particularly true to the north where immediately adjoining the village, the Waveney valley is designated as a Special Landscape Area.



A stream feeding north-eastwards into the Ouse lies immediately north of and parallel to The Street, creating a wetland area with many obstructing ditches and few footpaths. However footpaths parallel to The Street can be found along most of the southern side, a field or so removed from the rear of the buildings: Botesdale FP 15 and Rickinghall Superior FP 11 and FP 9, the last of these linked back to The Street by FP 10.

Footpaths of a more radial nature venture further afield. Botesdale FP 5 heads off northwards towards Redgrave from the end of Cherrytree Lane. Botesdale FP 1 heads in the opposite direction towards Gislingham along the parish border with Rickinghall Superior. Rickinghall Inferior FP 2 and FP 1 lead off north-west from The Street towards Hinderclay.



Prevailing & Former Usage

Rickinghall and Botesdale were described in 1679 as a 'little market town with a good market on Thursdays' and now, regarded as a single entity, retains the feel of a small market town. The surviving toll-house serves as a reminder that it has now been by-passed and no longer suffers the excessive heavy through traffic of former years.

Nevertheless it has its origins as separate agricultural communities mainly involved in the growing of hemp. Proximity to the large linen market in Diss made this the primary local industry. Five linen weavers, a tailor and a cordwainer were recorded in Rickinghall Superior alone in the late 17th Century. Rickinghall Inferior had a further three linen weavers, a wool comber and a clothier at the same time.



Being away from any significant river valley, there were no watermills here, however six windmills are recorded for Botesdale parish alone, although nothing now remains.

In the mid 19th Century, directories for Rickinghall list a corn miller, a cabinet maker, a straw hat maker, a surgeon, two shoemakers and a host of other tradesmen and shopkeepers.

This general agricultural picture is borne out by field names in the Tithe Map Apportionment of 1840. Here along with many plots listed as 'Plantation' or 'Field' there are others with names such as 'Ozier Ground' or 'Malting Office'. Other more industrial local activities are indicated by 'Blacksmith's Shop', 'Lime Kiln & Pits' and 'Gravel & Sand Pits'.





Losses & Possible Gains

Overall Rickinghall and Botesdale seem to have resisted too much modern intrusion. There are a few infill houses along The Street where asymmetric modern windows and inappropriate concrete roof tiles have been used and the bricks are not exactly within the local vernacular.

These could perhaps be improved by overpainting the brickwork in a traditional colour. Elsewhere the original mix of render and brick has been obscured by the similar overpainting (and sometimes rendering) of buildings that would not be out of place stripped back to their original local brick finish.



With the A143 now by-passing the village, traffic is no longer a major problem in the village.

Like many villages, Rickinghall and Botesdale at one time suffered from a surfeit of overhead wiring carrying the village's telephone and electricity supplies. This was quite overpowering in places, a tangled web preferably not seen silhouetted against the sky.

The under-grounding of these utility supply lines at the eastern end of the village has been undertaken as part of an environmental enhancement carried out when the by-pass was built. Similar works at the western end would greatly improve the appearance of the village overall.



References & Further Reading

Chatwin, C P 1961 East Anglia and Adjoining Areas British Regional Geology HMSO

D.C.L.G., D.C.M.S. & English Heritage 2010 Planning Policy Statement: Planning for the Historic Environment (PPS 5) TSO

D.o.E. 1988 List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest: District of Mid Suffolk: Parishes of Rickingham Superior, Inferior and Botesdale

Domesday Book 1986 Suffolk Phillimore

Dymond, D & Martin, E (eds.) 1988 An Historical Atlas of Suffolk Suffolk County Council

English Heritage 1995 Conservation Area Practice HMSO

English Heritage 2006 Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals HMSO

Flint, B 1979 Suffolk Windmills Boydell

Goult, W 1990 A Survey of Suffolk Parish History Suffolk County Council

Pevsner, N 1976 The Buildings of England: Suffolk Penguin

Suffolk County Council 2007 Historic Environment Record

Tithe Maps & Apportionments 1839/40/45 Rickingham Superior, Inferior and Botesdale Suffolk Records Office

The maps in this document are based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. MSDC Licence no 100017810 2009



*This Appraisal adopted as
Supplementary Planning Guidance
by Mid Suffolk District Council
Environment Policy Panel
20 September 2011*