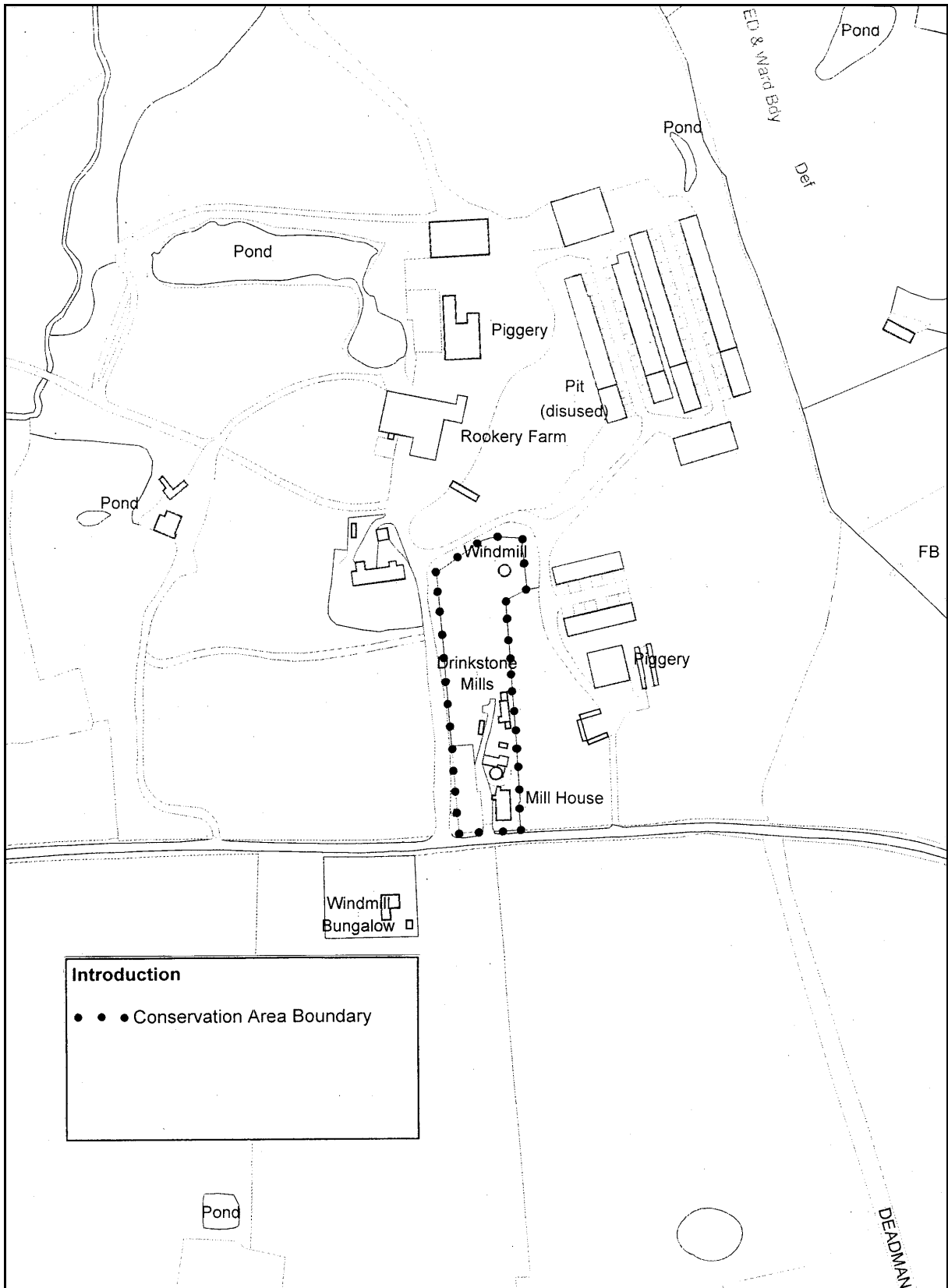




CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



INTRODUCTION

The conservation area at Drinkstone Mills was originally designated by Mid Suffolk District Council in 1991.

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

As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Drinkstone Mills' 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.

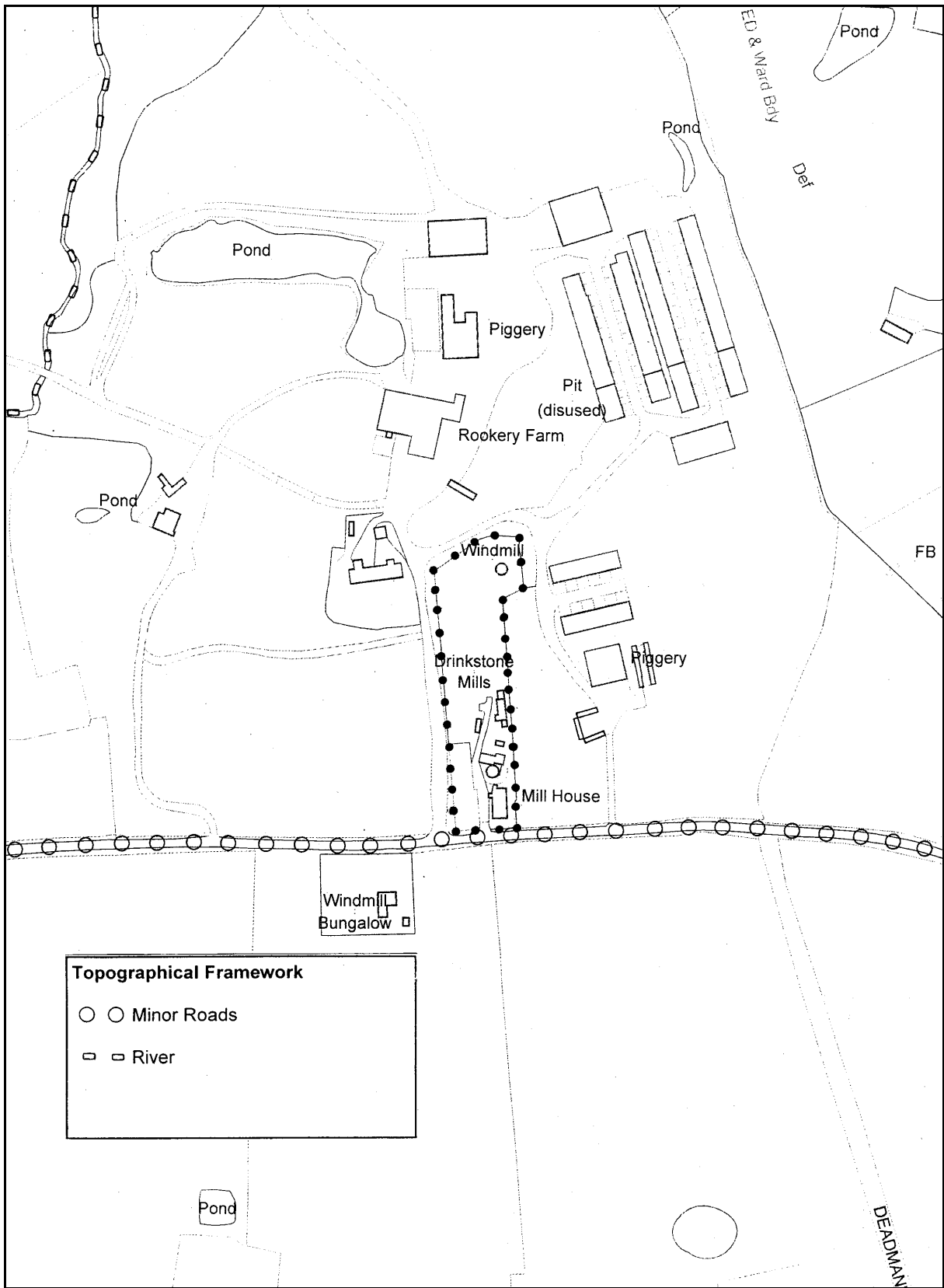
Text, photographs and map overlays by Patrick Taylor, Conservation Architect, Mid Suffolk District Council 2013.



Post Mill



Site Entrance



TOPOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK

The parish of Drinkstone is situated in central Suffolk roughly midway between the towns of Stowmarket and Bury St Edmunds.

The main part of the village sits at about 60m above sea level in the valley of a tributary of the Black Bourn, which flows northwards from there via the Little Ouse to the Wash, whilst the windmills are on the higher ground of the eastern bank.

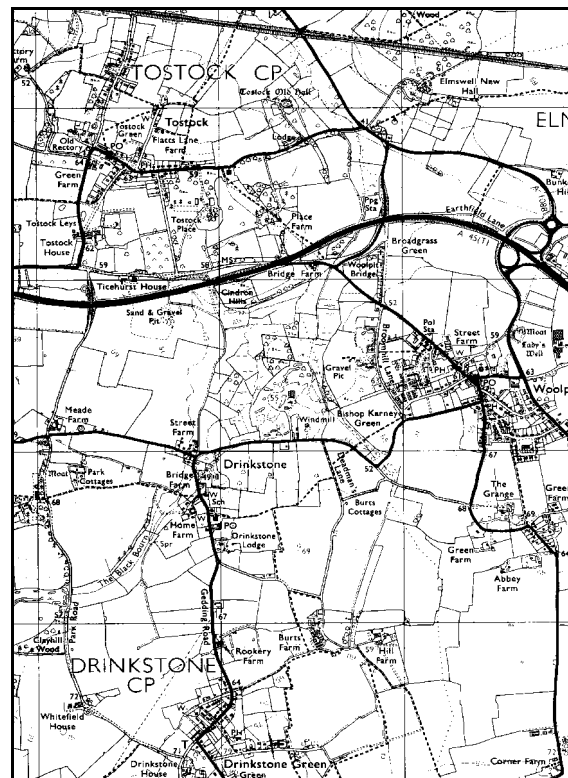
Beyond Drinkstone Green, about a mile further south, lies the valley of the Rattlesden River that drains to the sea through Ipswich, so the village is very much at the watershed between the north and south of East Anglia. The underlying chalk is here covered by the Lowestoft Till, the glacial sands, gravels and clays laid down during the Ice Ages to form the 'High Suffolk' plain.

Just west of Woolpit, the village of Drinkstone is about a mile south of the A14 dual carriageway, the main road having originally been part of the Ipswich to Bury St Edmunds route, which had been turnpiked in 1711.

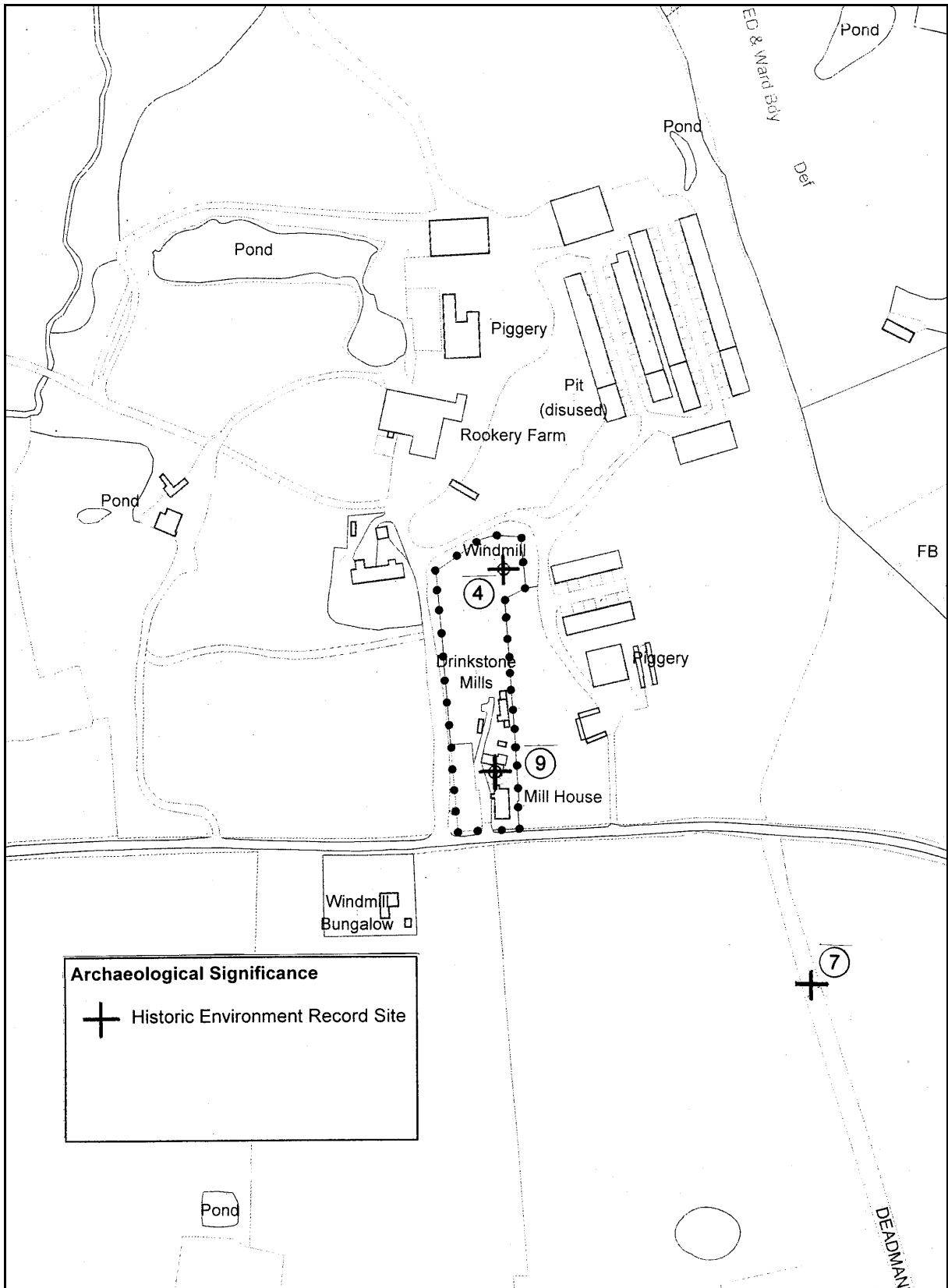
The railway linking the same two towns first came through in 1846 as the Eastern Union Railway and runs parallel to the road a little further north; the nearby station at Elmswell being the nearest.



Aerial Photograph



OS Extract



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Suffolk's County Historic Environment Record lists about a dozen sites of archaeological interest in the parish. At Mill Farm, on the parish boundary with Woolpit a little to the north of the mills, a Palaeolithic flint hand axe is probably the earliest local find, indicative of a long if not continuous human occupation in the area.

A possible fragment of Roman road can be seen south-east of the mills in the form of Deadman's Lane, near which a couple of Roman brooches have been found. This aligns with two further sections of Roman road, one to the south at Rattlesden, the other further north near Norton, all of which might well be part of the lost southern end of the Peddar's Way.

The Church of All Saints in the village is one of the Medieval remains included, whilst of Post Medieval date we have the two mills themselves.

The strip of land comprising the eastern half of the conservation area appears in the 1838 tithe records as 'House, Windmills & part of Pightle', both owned and occupied by John Clover. Adjoining it to the west, another strip is called 'Mill Pightle', now the other half of the conservation area, owned by the 'Trustees of Felsham Poor' and occupied by John Clover. A number of similar strips appear on the tithe map to the north, north-east and east of the village, many of them listed as 'Common Field', presumably remnants of medieval strip farming.

Drinkstone was listed in the Domesday survey of 1086 as 'Drincestona', part of the lands held by St Etheldreda's with mention of a church with 12 acres of land and woodland for 100 pigs.

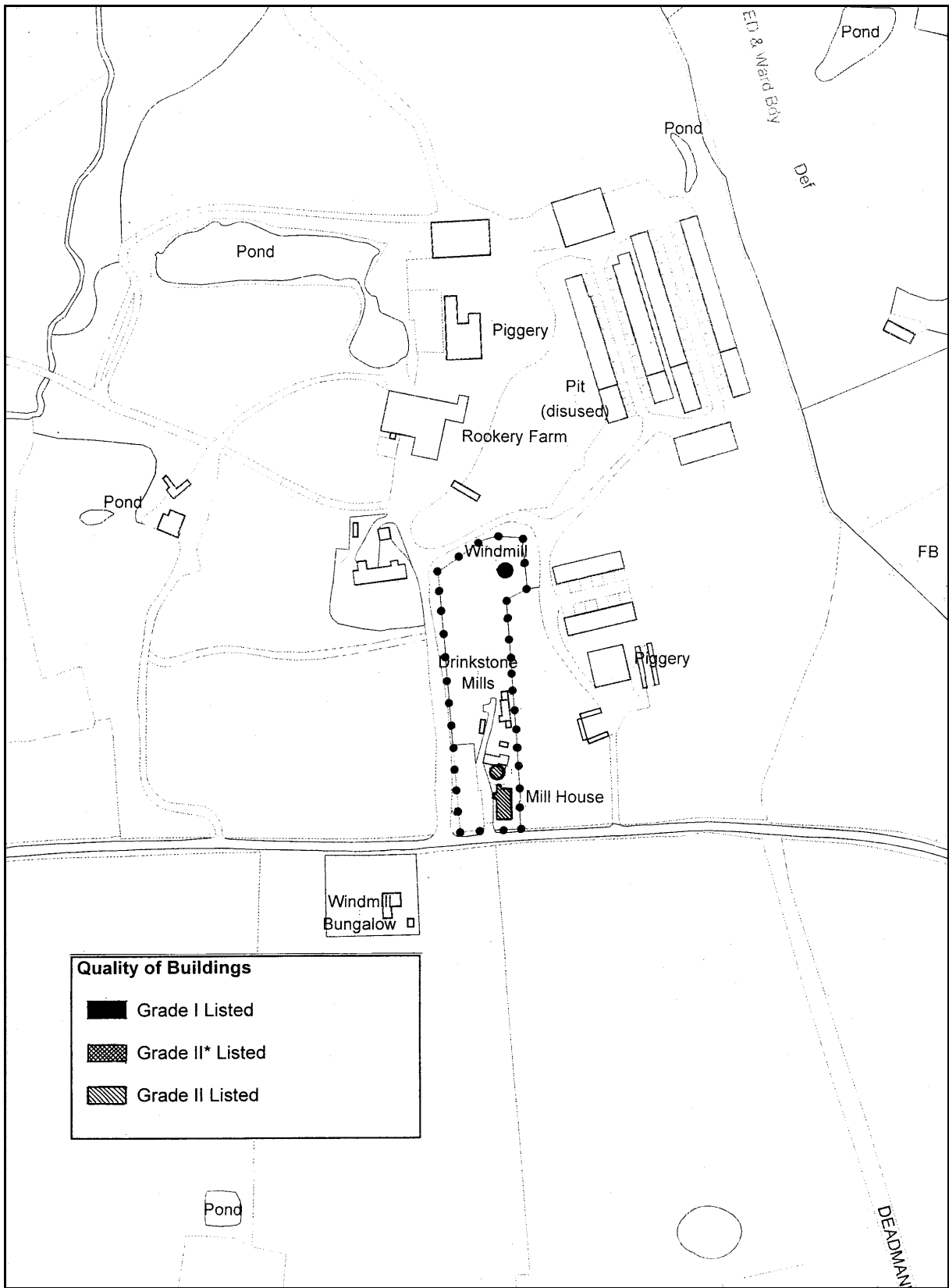


All Saints' Church

Drincestona ten s̄ca. A. t. r. e. . ii. car̄ terræ . 7 . i. æcclesia . xii . ac̄
Tē . xv . bord̄ . m̄ . vit̄ . Tē . vi . ferū . m̄ . tiii . femp̄ . ii . car̄ in dominio . Tē
iii . car̄ hominū . m̄ . i . Silū de . c . porc̄ . 7 vi . ac̄ p̄ci . Sēp̄ . ii . æqui . in halla
. x . an̄ . xxx . ii . porc̄ . xxx . oūs . viii . cap̄ . Tē ual̄ xl . fol̄ . m̄ lx . f̄ fuit
ad firmā . c . fol̄ . & n̄ potuit reddere . ht̄ . viii . qr̄ in loingo . & viii . i lato
Et de gelto . xi . d̄ .

St. Etheldreda's held DRINKSTONE before 1066; 2 carucates of land.
1 church, 12 acres.
Then 15 smallholders, now 7; then 6 slaves, now 4.
Always 2 ploughs in lordship. Then 3 men's ploughs, now 1.
Woodland at 100 pigs; meadow, 6 acres. Always 2 horses at the
hall, 10 cattle, 32 pigs, 30 sheep, 8 goats.
Value then 40s; now 60[s]; but it was at a revenue for 100s and
could not pay.
It has 8 furlongs in length and 7 in width; 11d in tax.

Domesday Extract



QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

The wider parish of Drinkstone has 35 listed buildings, the majority being grade II timber-framed houses, farmhouses and barns. The former are mostly rendered and thatched or plaintiled, the latter black weather-boarded.

Within the conservation area itself both the Mill House and Smock Mill are grade II listed, the former timber-framed and plastered with a black glazed pantile roof, the latter white weather-boarded at the base with temporary black plastic cladding above.

In the village and listed at a higher grade, the medieval Church of All Saints dates mainly from the 14th Century. Built mostly of flint rubble with limestone dressings, it has slate roofs and a brick west tower, described by Pevsner as 'c.1694 ... in chequer pattern of red and blue'. It is only grade II*, presumably because of the restoration c.1870 by E C Hakewill. Also grade II*, the nearby Old Rectory dates from c.1760 in red brick with a hipped slate roof.

Other interesting grade II listed buildings in the village include a dovecote in flint with red brick dressings and nearby Home Farmhouse, both remnants from the large estate that once dominated the area west of the village.

Had the former hall in Drinkstone Park survived beyond 1951, it would probably have been the top listed building in the village, but that honour now falls to the Post Mill, recently upgraded from II* to grade I. This has a white weather-boarded timber-framed buck held above the plaintile roof of a roundhouse in flint with red brick dressings.



Smock Mill and Mill House



Post and Roundhouse Mill



Suffolk White Brick



Flint and Red Brick



Black Weather-boarding



Black Pantile and Slate

TRADITIONAL BUILDING MATERIALS

Drinkstone's buildings are fairly demonstrative of Suffolk's mixed palette of vernacular materials.

The older domestic buildings around the parish are generally of timber-framed construction with applied lime render finish, occasionally with exposed timbers. Many still have their original thatched roofs, although some have been reroofed with plaintiles, pantiles, slate or even cedar shingles in one instance.

A few houses have been refronted in brick, either soft Suffolk reds or the harder Suffolk white. The latter is not unexpected so near Woolpit and had been used for Drinkstone Park itself.

In addition to its use on the Church, Dovecote and Post Mill, flint has also been used with red brick dressings to rebuild a gable at Rookery Farm.

The mills present us with examples of white weather-boarding, the black variety of which can be found on many of the timber-framed barns, granaries and cart-lodges around the village. Some of these have lost their original thatched roofs, variously replaced with pantiles, corrugated iron or asbestos.

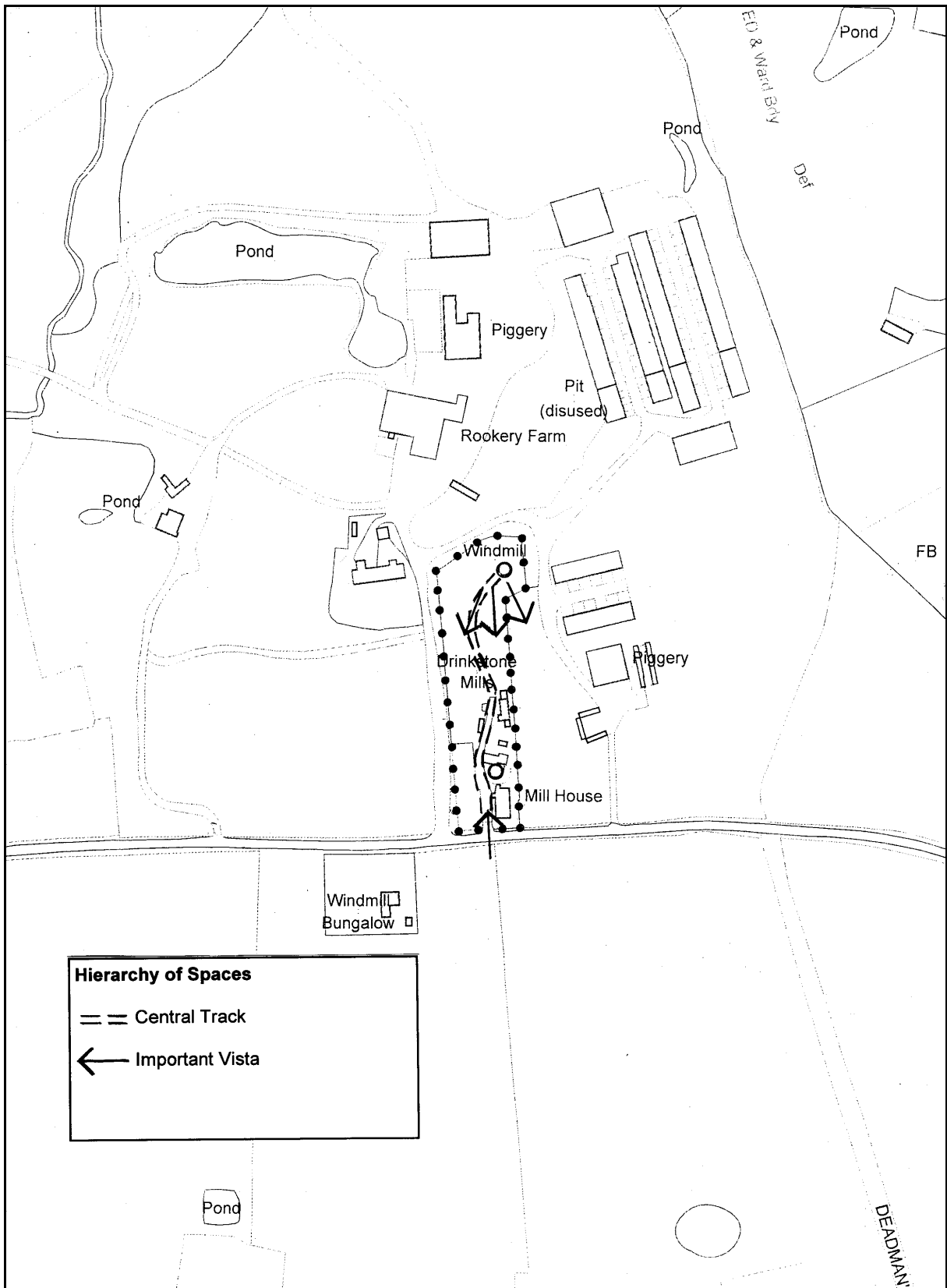
The majority of these materials can also be found in microcosm around the conservation area. Apart from the white weather-boarding of the mills, there is black weather-boarding and natural red pantile on some of the outbuildings between the mills. There is also plaintile, flint and red brick on the Post Mill roundhouse and black glazed pantile, slate and white brick on the timber-framed and rendered Mill House.



Black Weather-boarding and Pantile



Flint, Brick and Plaintile



HIERARCHY OF SPACES

The Street in Drinkstone village runs from the Church at its southern end to a junction at its northern end, where roads go off westwards to Hissett, northwards to Tostock and eastwards to Woolpit.

The conservation area is situated about a quarter mile along the Woolpit road on its northern side, comprising a long rectangular plot with the Mill House at its southern roadside end and the Post Mill on the higher ground at the northern end.

The narrowness of the plot and its former status as two parallel plots suggest its possible former use as medieval strip fields like others in the area.

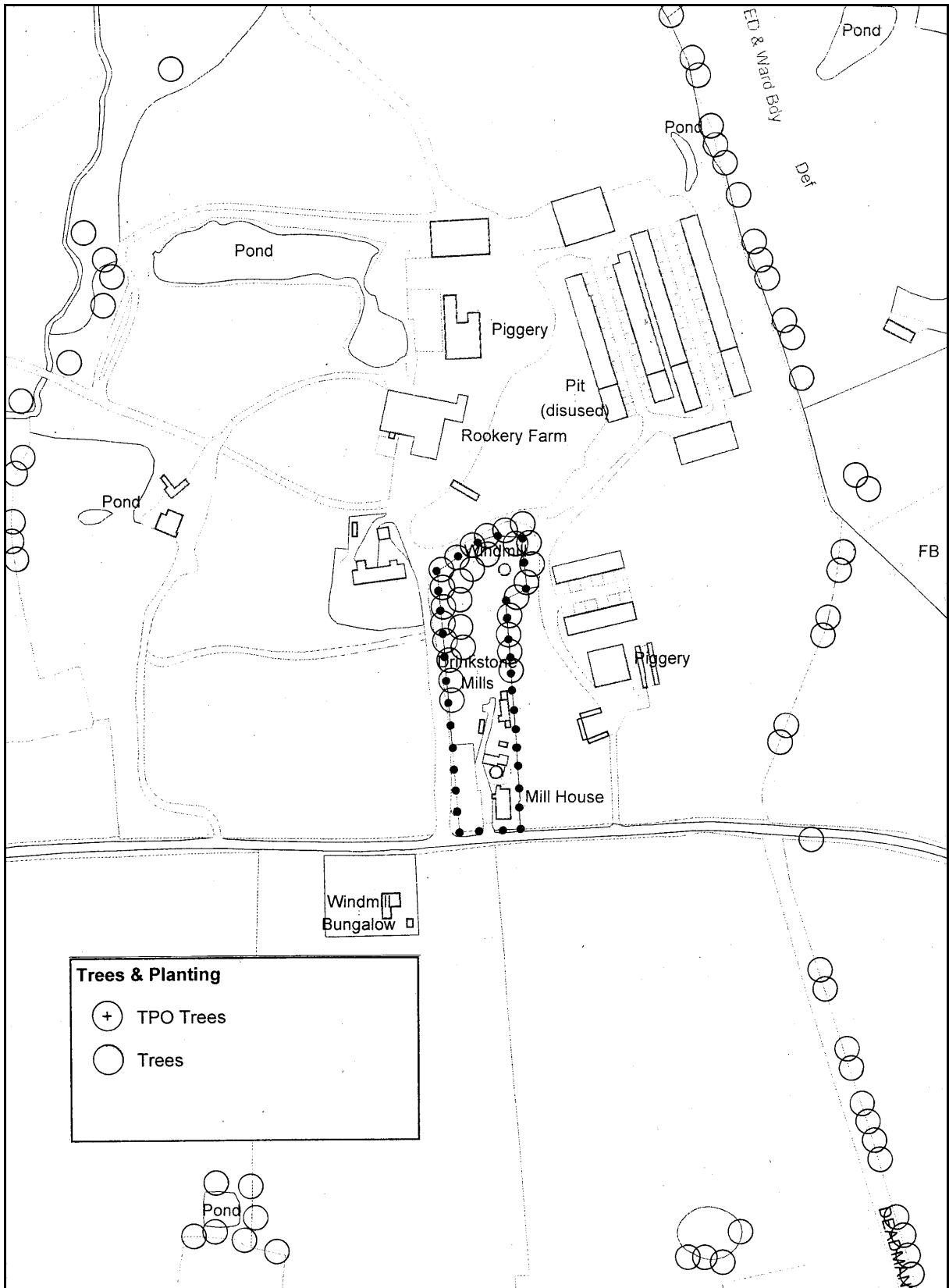
A narrow trackway winds itself up the slight hill from the Mill House guarding the entrance off the road, all the way to the Post Mill at the top. Along the way various small spaces open out, created by the setting of various outbuildings and trees either side.



Central Area looking North



Central Area looking South



TREES AND PLANTING

The conservation area, particularly at its northern end, presents something of an oasis of green and trees set within a wider landscape of farmed fields where the hedges have largely been removed.

Not specifically planted, this greenery comprises both former hedgerow trees around the edge of the plot and a more recent infill of shrubs and younger trees, many probably self seeded. Some of this infill has recently been cut back in preparation for imminent repair works to the roundhouse.

Within the wider parish there are eight Tree Preservation Orders put in place by Mid Suffolk District Council from 1987 onwards to protect various individual and grouped trees.

In terms of species these include the more common Ash, Yew, Holly, Hawthorn, Lime, Birch, Sycamore, Sweet and Horse Chestnut, Oak and Field Maple, as might be expected in the Suffolk countryside.

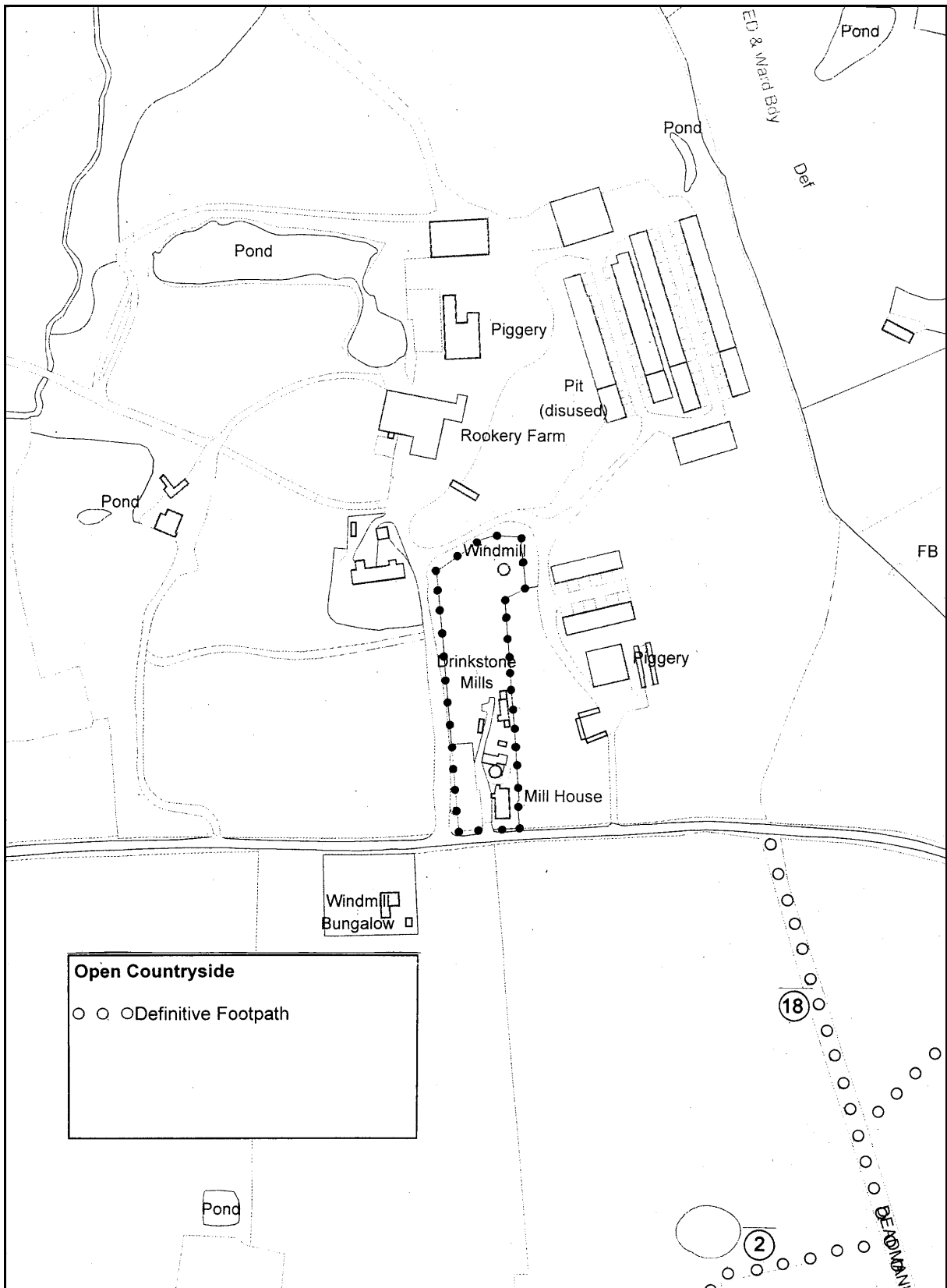
Also protected are specimens of the more unusual Spruce, Box Elder and Cedar at Meadow Cottage, Drinkstone Green and Redwood, Box and Western Red Cedar at Drinkstone Park.



Hedgerow Tree



Post Mill and Bushes



COUNTRYSIDE SETTING

Views into the conservation area from the surrounding countryside are well screened by the surrounding trees, such that the post mill cannot always be spotted.

Drinkstone Mills is very much a part of the countryside and there are large rolling farmland views out of the area in most southward directions. From the top of the hill views to the north are less satisfying with the presence there of a large former gravel pit now occupied by industrial units, at one time the site of a pig farm.

Further north the countryside is sliced through by the A14 major trunk road, so that access to the countryside is limited, with no footpaths at all in the area of the parish north of the Woolpit road, the valley of the Black Bourn.

However Deadman's Lane, just south-east of the conservation area, is the route of definitive footpath FP18, crossed halfway along its length by FP2, which runs through the fields south of the conservation area from the Church in Drinkstone village eastwards towards Woolpit.

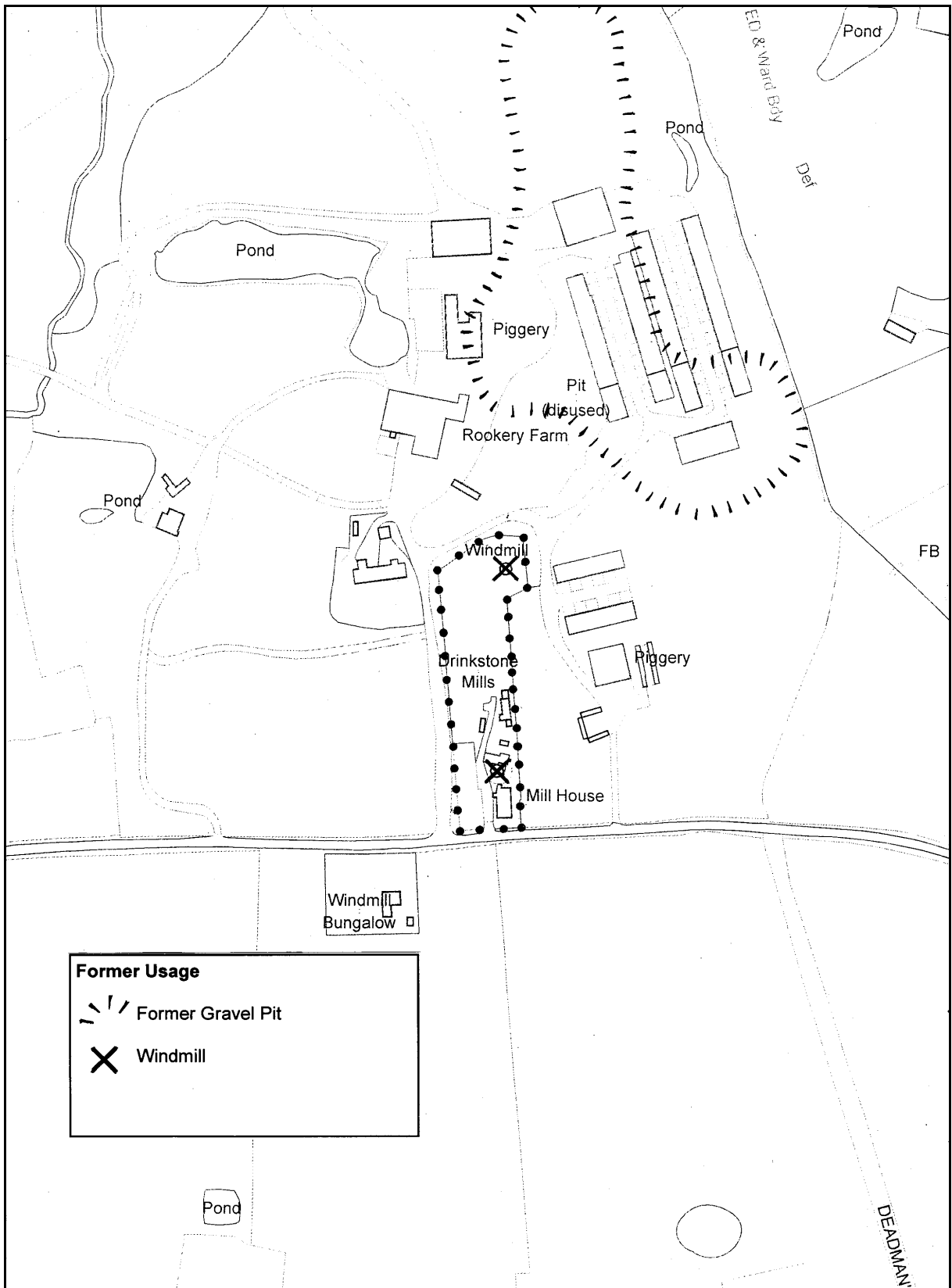
Branching off FP2 south of the mills, FP3 runs southwards parallel to the road towards Drinkstone Green.



View to South-east



Deadman's Lane



PREVAILING AND FORMER USAGE

Like most Suffolk villages the local economy in Drinkstone was originally agriculturally based and to some extent tied to the fortunes of a large country estate with its big house.

Early 17th Century records show 12 yeomen, 5 husbandmen, 2 millers and one each of labourer, weaver and tailor there, whilst later that century there were 10 yeomen, 1 husbandman and one each of miller, cordwainer, rector, clerk and grocer.

Much the same picture is given by directory entries in 1844 showing the presence of 11 farmers, 2 malsters, 2 shopkeepers and one each of corn miller, wheelwright and blacksmith amongst others. Obviously the conservation area with its two windmills was the centre of the milling business locally.

The presence of 'Malting Offices', 'Windmills', 'Wheelwright's Shop' and 'Blacksmith's Shop' are all confirmed by entries in the Tithe apportionment of 1838, along with 'Hop Meadow', 'Ozier Ground' and 'Winding Pightle', the latter indicative of the cloth industry. Mention is also made of 'Saw Pit Field' and 'Gravel Pits'.



Gravel Pit Area to North



Mill House



Felt Roofing



Corrugated Cladding



In Need of Repair



Various Outbuildings

LOSSES AND POSSIBLE GAINS

The Drinkstone post mill is grade I listed on account of its relative rarity as an unrestored 17th Century example retaining much of its original machinery. Repairs were carried out to the weather-boarded buck in 2005/6, but the roundhouse walls and roof remain in need of repair. The post mill is thus still on both the English Heritage and Suffolk County Council registers of 'Buildings at Risk'.

The late 18th Century smock mill nearby is of less historic interest as much of its internal workings were removed in the early 20th Century when it was converted to be driven by an oil engine. It is accordingly only grade II listed and also less at risk as it remains weather-tight within its temporary black plastic cladding. However reinstatement of the correct cladding would make an enormous contribution to the quality of the conservation area.

Less visually pleasing than the mills are some of the modern additions adjoining the smock mill, where some non-traditional materials and forms have been introduced. There is also some overhead wiring within the site which is visually obtrusive and would certainly prevent the reinstatement of sails on the smock mill.

This wiring should be put underground and the whole area could also be improved by the implementation of an ongoing management plan for the trees, retaining the hedgerow specimens around the boundary and perhaps selectively clearing out some of the scrub that has encroached within.



Temporarily Clad Smock Mill



Overhead Wiring and Mill

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This Appraisal adopted as
Supplementary Planning Guidance
by Mid Suffolk District Council
Environment Policy Panel
23 April 2013