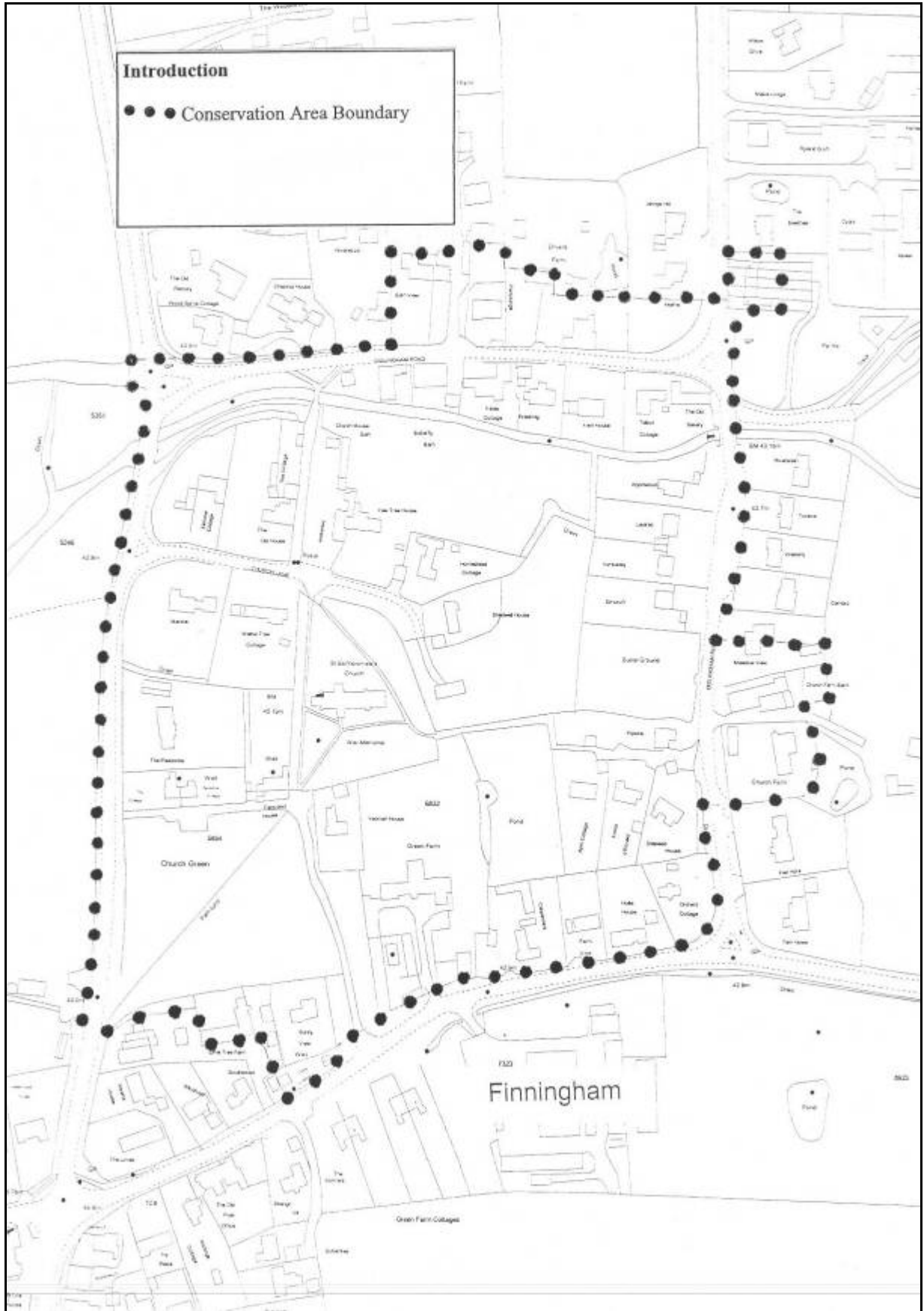




conservation area appraisal



Introduction

The conservation area in Finningham was originally designated by East Suffolk County Council in 1973, 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 Finningham under a number of different headings as set out in English Heritage's new 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' (2006).

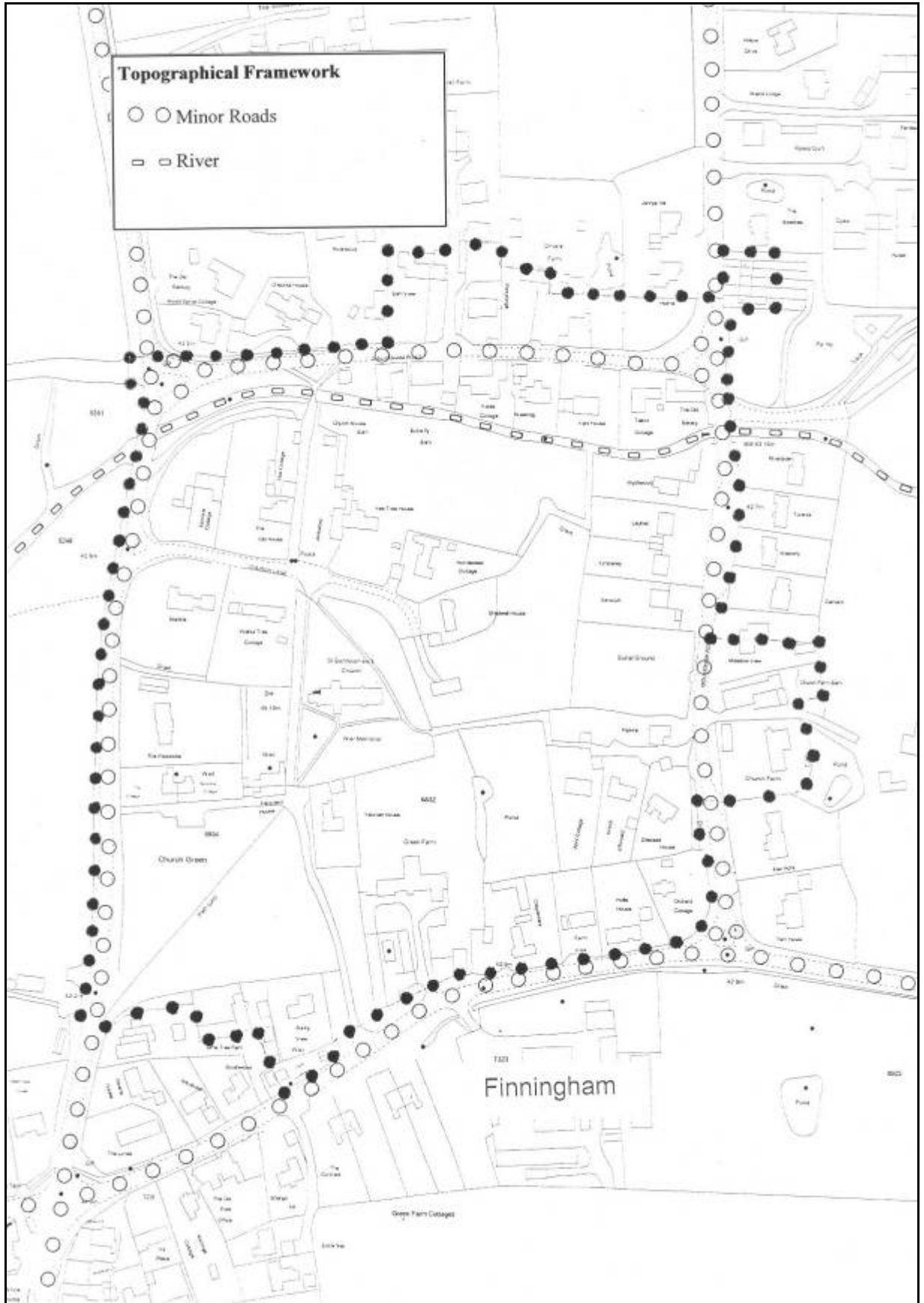
As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Finningham's built environment in conservation terms.



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 2008.



Topographical Framework

The village of Finningham is about seven miles north of the market town of Stowmarket and a similar distance south of Diss, thus lying near the centre of Mid Suffolk District.

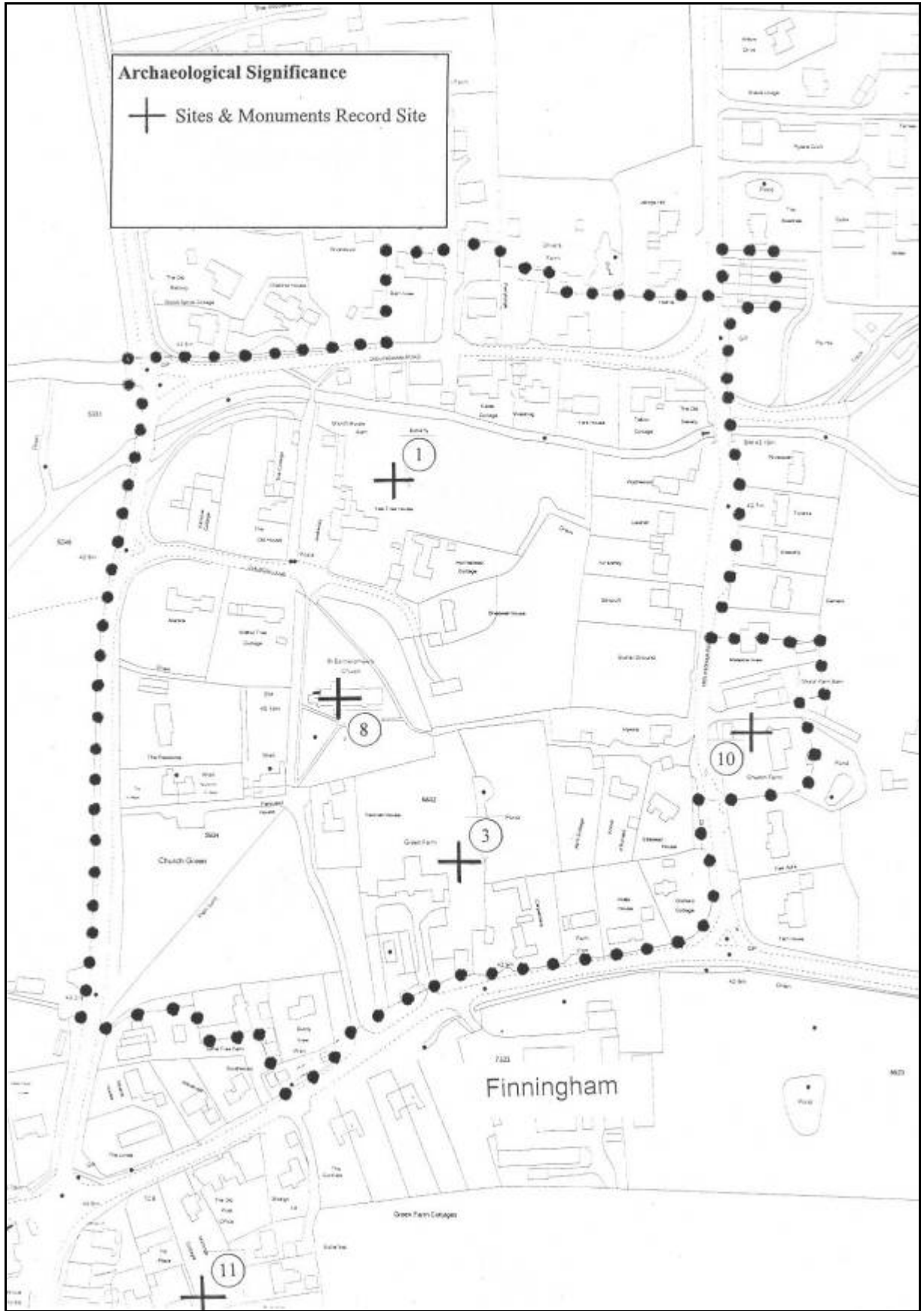
It sits in a slight valley either side of a tributary of the River Dove that flows north-eastwards via Eye to join the river Waveney at the Norfolk border.

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.



The village is about three miles west of the main A140 road from Ipswich, formerly controlled by the Ipswich to Scole Turnpike Trust of 1711, which continues from Scole onwards to Norwich.

Since 1849 the Ipswich to Norwich railway line has passed just to the east of the village on its route northwards from Stowmarket to Diss, the now disused Finningham Station lying in Bacton parish a short distance to the south.



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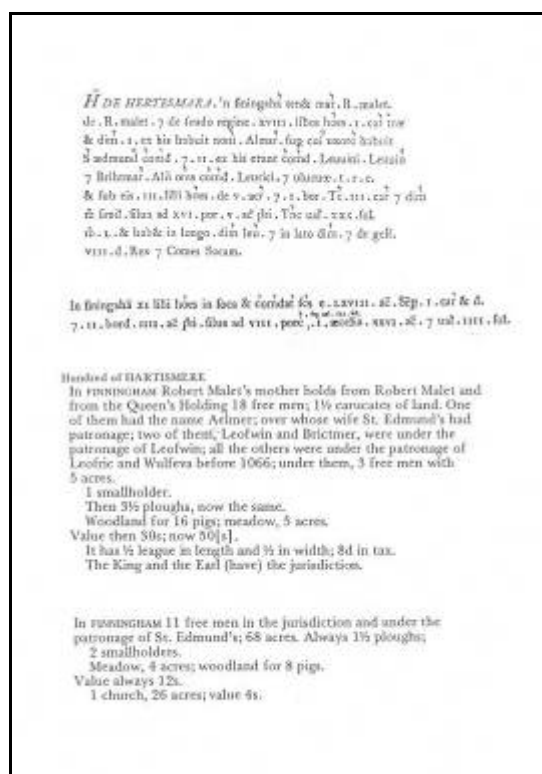
Archaeological Significance

The Suffolk County Sites and Monuments Record lists over a dozen finds of archaeological interest from various periods in the parish of Finningham.

In 1993 near Church Farm, a sewer trench yielded a Neolithic polished flint axe along with a quantity of Medieval pottery, a coin and a pilgrim's badge.

At Yew Tree House, just north of the Church, there had been a similar mixed find comprising a Bronze Age flint arrowhead along with Roman and Post Medieval coins.

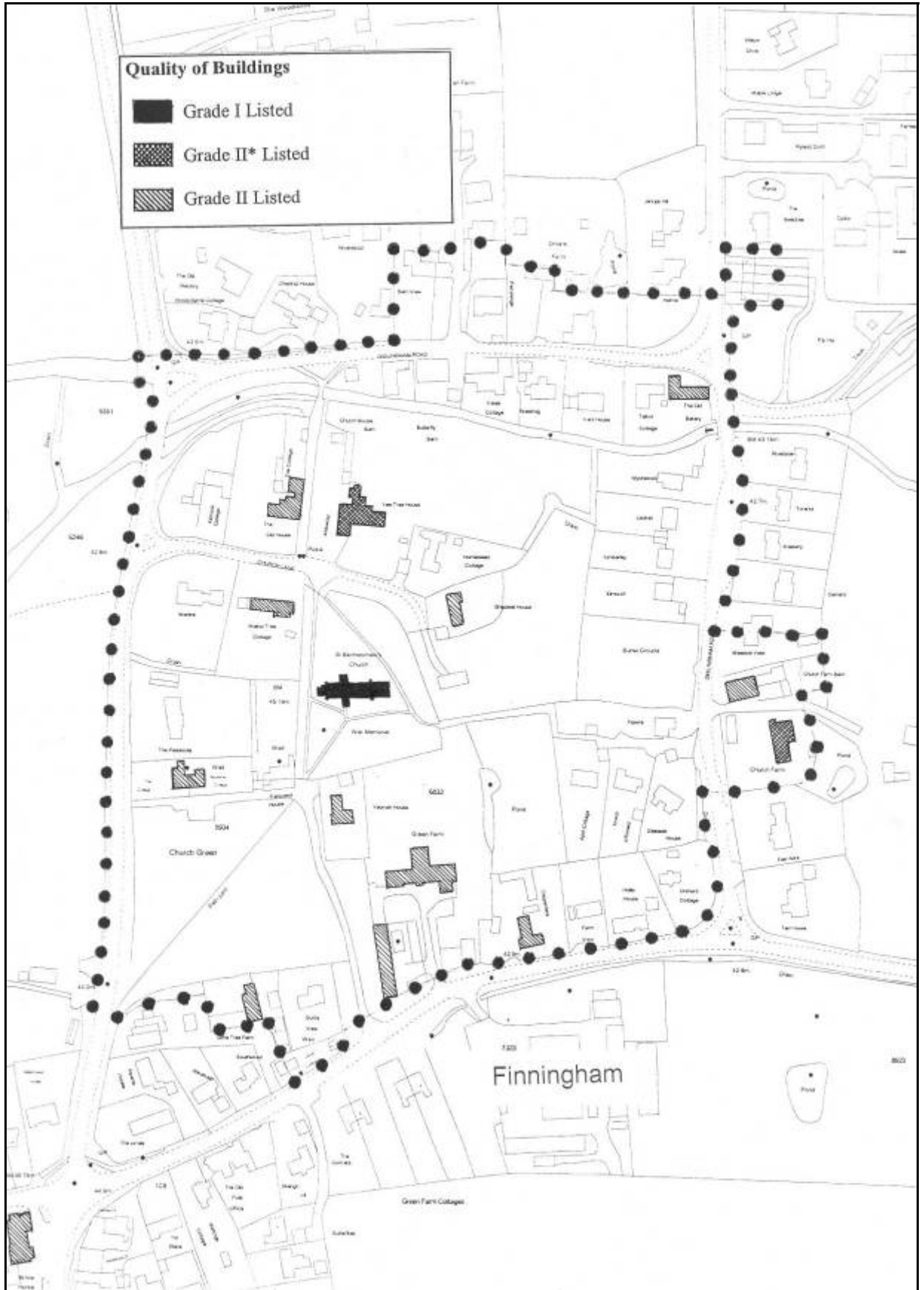
Just south of the centre near the Bacton road, a metal detector helped find a scatter of Saxon bronze objects including brooches.



A Medieval jug was found at Green Farm, a third site within a stone's throw of the Church. The Medieval sites include the parish church itself and its graveyard along with a moated site at Finningham Hall, north-west of the village centre.

Finningham has two main entries listed in the Domesday survey of 1086. The main manor was held by Robert Malet, having been held before the conquest by Leofric and Wulfeva . This holding included woodland for 16 pigs and 5 acres of meadow.

The other holding by St Edmund's included the church with 26 acres of land, along with woodland for 8 pigs and 4 acres of meadow.



Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

There are 27 listings covering the parish of Finningham, of which two thirds are actually within the conservation area.

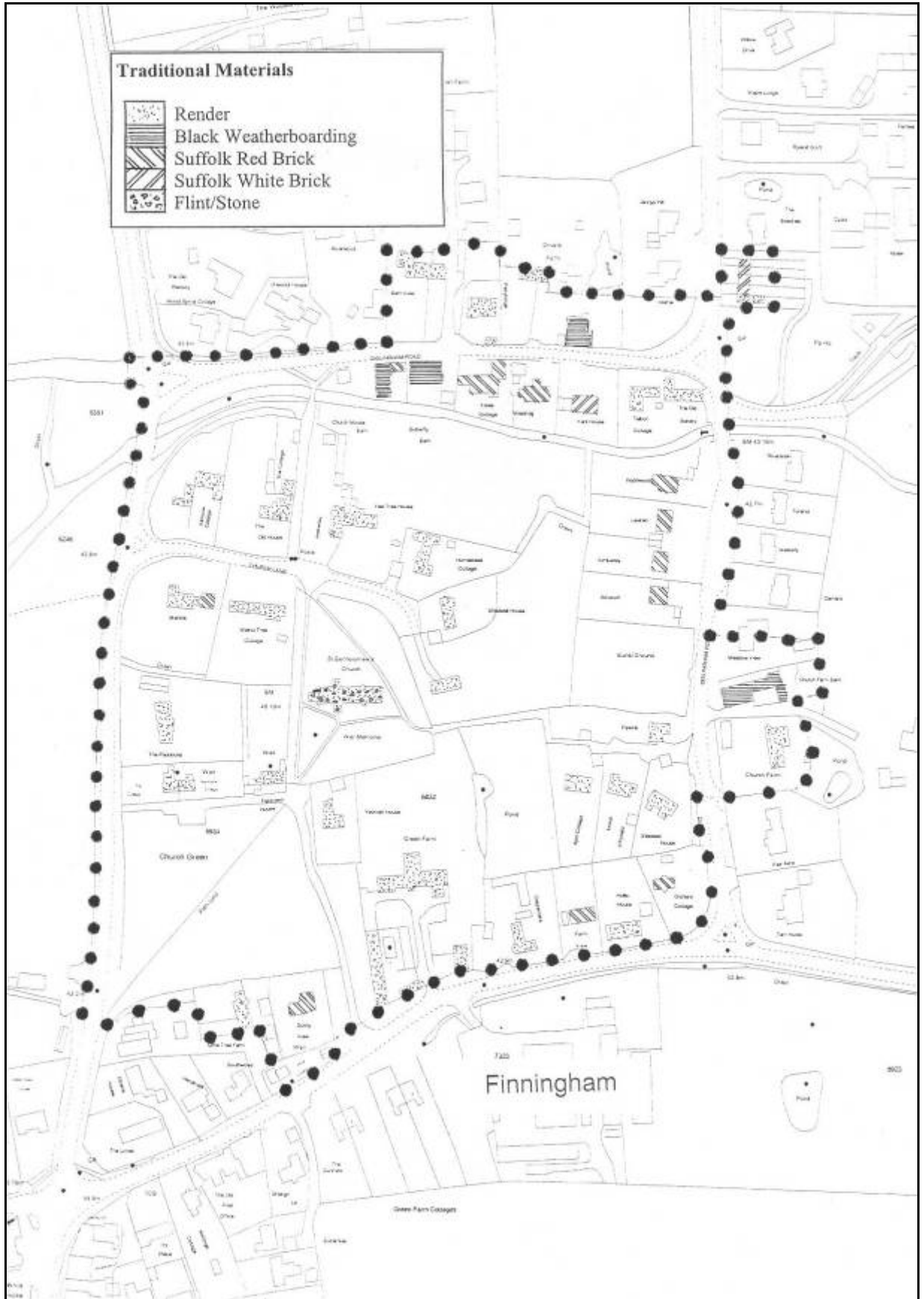
These older buildings are predominantly domestic in scale, and mostly timber-framed and plastered with roofs of thatch or pantiles.

The grade I listed Church of St Bartholomew lies at the heart of the conservation area and provides the usual village exception to this pattern of building with its flint rubble, stone-dressed walls, and its slate and plaintile roofs. It is partly early 14th Century Decorated: the west tower, chancel and nave south doorways, with the rest being Perpendicular.



Just north of the church is the grade II listed Yew Tree House, timber-framed and slate roofed, dating from the mid 16th Century. It has good late 17th Century pargetting described by Pevsner as 'perhaps the most handsome in Suffolk'.*

The other top quality building within the conservation area is the grade II listed Church Farm House with part exposed, part plastered timber framing and a plaintile roof. Originally an open hall house, this dates from the late 15th Century with a crown post roof one of many features that have survived several rebuilds.*



Traditional Building Materials

A first glance around the older buildings near the Church would seem to indicate an abundance of rendered buildings in Finningham.

However the local red brick features on many chimney stacks and some cottages, along with more modern red bricks on some of the recent infill buildings.

A single terrace of cottages at the beginning of Gislingham Road, north-east of the Church, appears to be the sole example of 'Suffolk White' bricks, some exhibiting the chequer-work pattern of Flemish Bond.

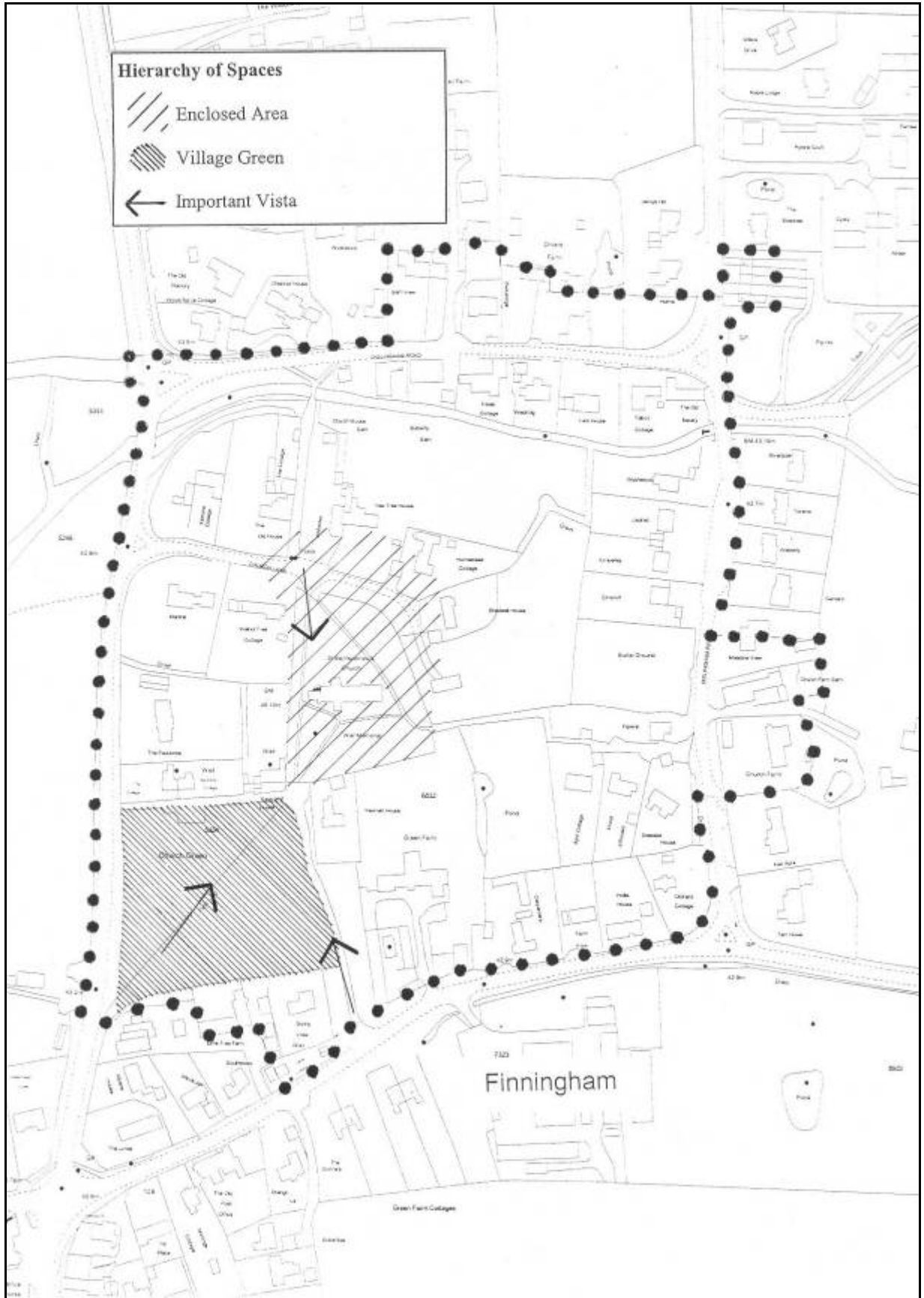
Flint only occurs on the Church, a few outbuildings and a good boundary wall at Driver's Farm.



A number of barns, some now converted, are in black weatherboarding with pantile or plaintile roofs.

The prevalent roofing material was thatch on the older listed buildings, but many are now pantile (natural red or black glazed), plaintile or slate replacements. Slate can also be found on most of the Victorian cottages.

Modern infill buildings generally respect the local vernacular using render and red brick, although some of the houses use rather dull modern bricks, not to very good effect. Most of the infill has plaintile or pantile roofs, although some of the latter are concrete.



Hierarchy of Spaces

The conservation area in Finningham is centred on the church, which sits within a rectangle of roads generally at least a plot distant. The conservation area boundary follows these roads and is thus also roughly rectangular in shape, with the river running through parallel to the road along the northern side.

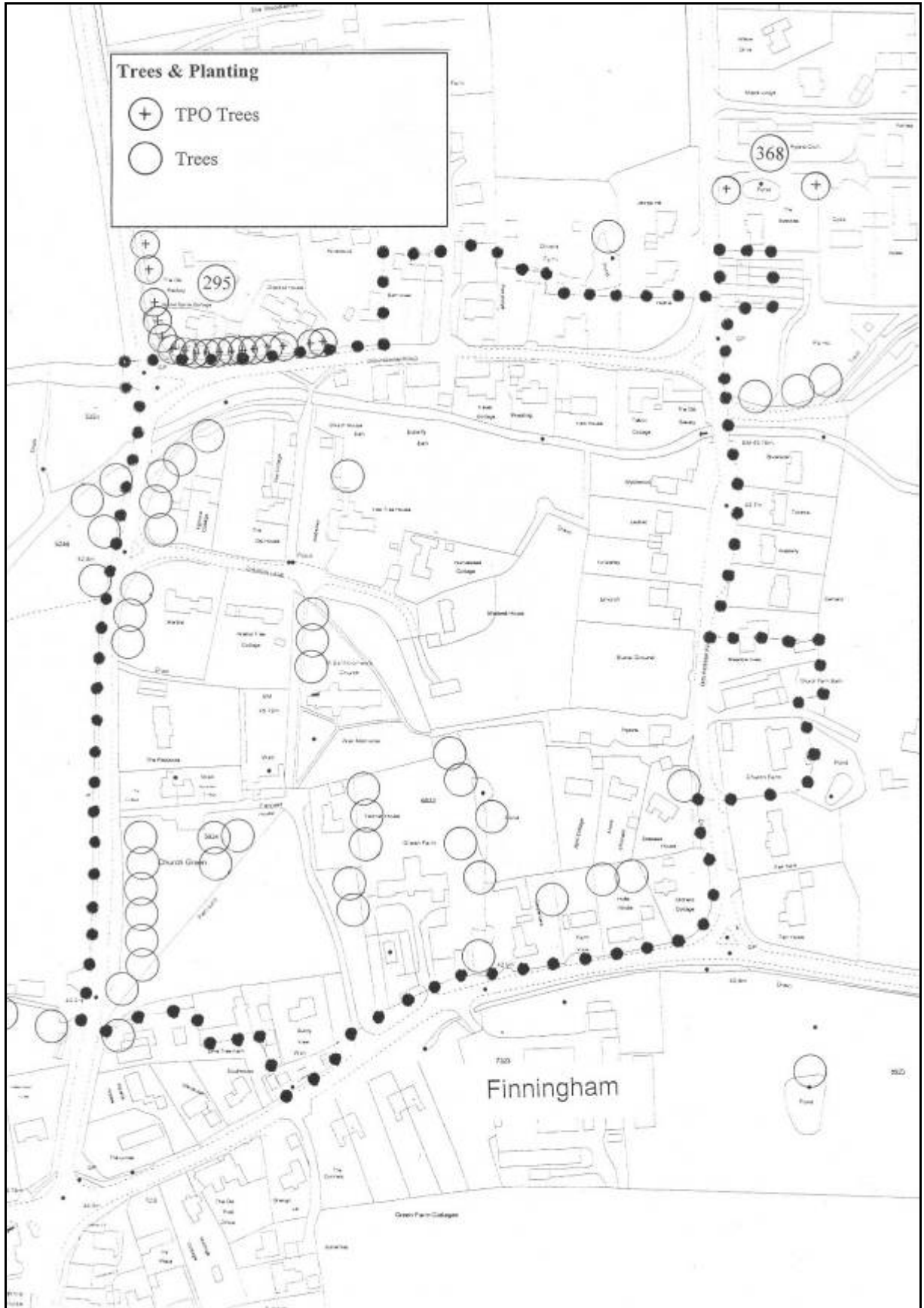
The south-western corner forms a cross-roads with roads heading off west to Westhorpe and south to Bacton. The south-eastern corner has a road off eastwards to Wickham Skeith, the north-eastern corner a road off north-east to Gislingham and the north-west corner a road off north-west to Rickinghall and Walsham le Willows.



Surrounded by houses set within a backdrop of trees, the churchyard provides a hidden oasis within the larger more open Suffolk countryside. There is little in the way of views out of the area, but many short intimate views across the area within.

Another slightly larger green space called Church Green lies to the south-west of the churchyard, bounded to the west by one of the roads.





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Trees & Planting

The first impression given by this part of Finningham is that of a luxuriant oasis of mature trees set in a more open countryside.

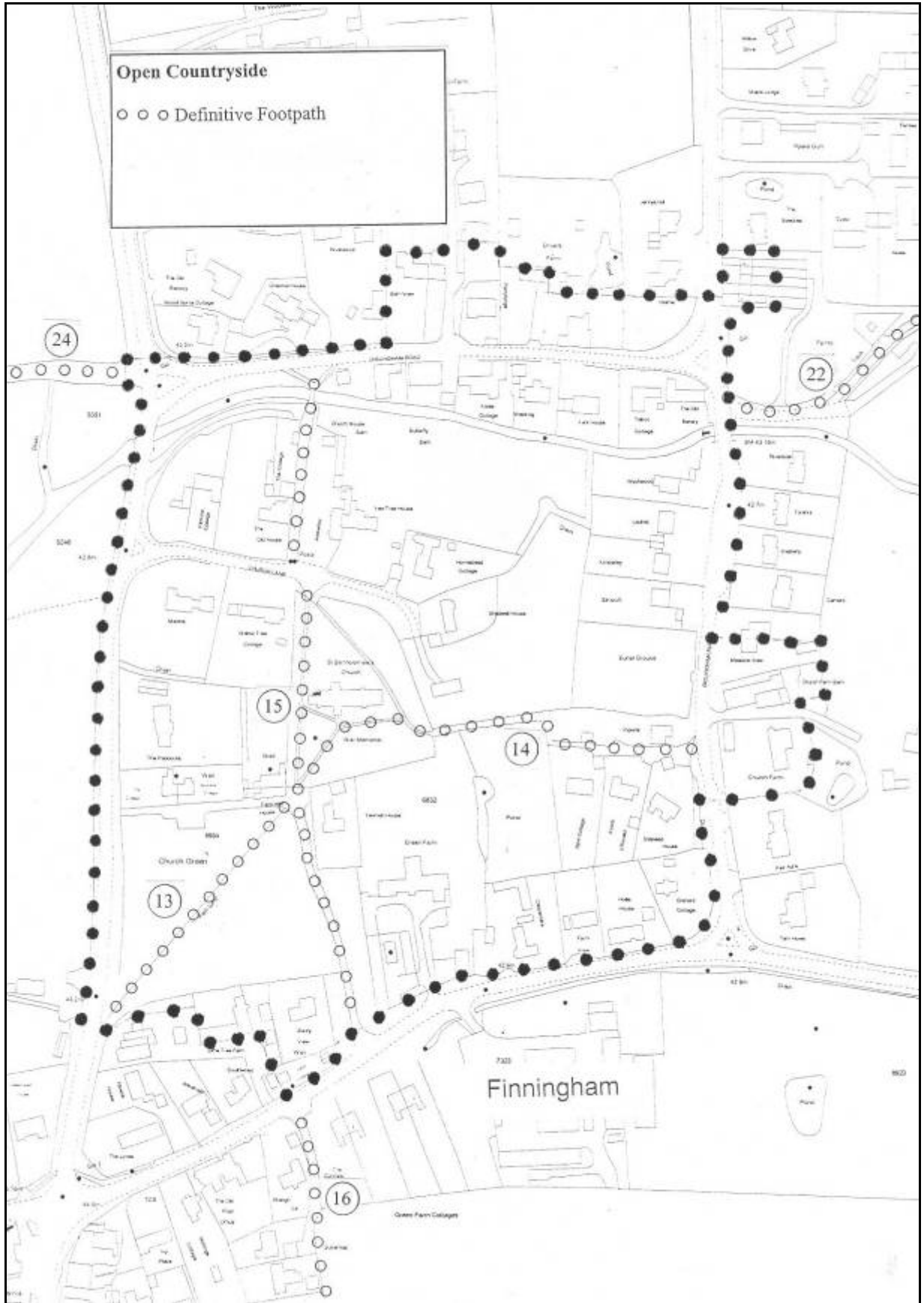
Around the churchyard in the centre there are Lime, Acacia, Birch and Ash trees. Further south around Church Green there is more Lime and Ash together with Oak, Alder, Beech, Horse Chestnut and a row of large Turkey Oaks.

In general the trees are dominant, but not overpowering, with large areas of open space between them. The houses around the Church are thus mostly set within a backdrop of trees.



Finningham's trees are important but appear not to have been under any threat significant enough to warrant a Tree Preservation Order until very recently.

In 2002 TPO no. 295 was made to protect a group of Yew and Oak trees around the Old Rectory, adjoining the Conservation Area. Further north two Oaks and a Lime were in 2005 protected by TPO no. 337 at the Old School on Walsham Road. Most recently in 2007 an Ash and a Lime were given the protection of TPO no. 368 on another site adjoining the Conservation Area, The Beeches on Gislingham Road.



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Relationship to Open Countryside

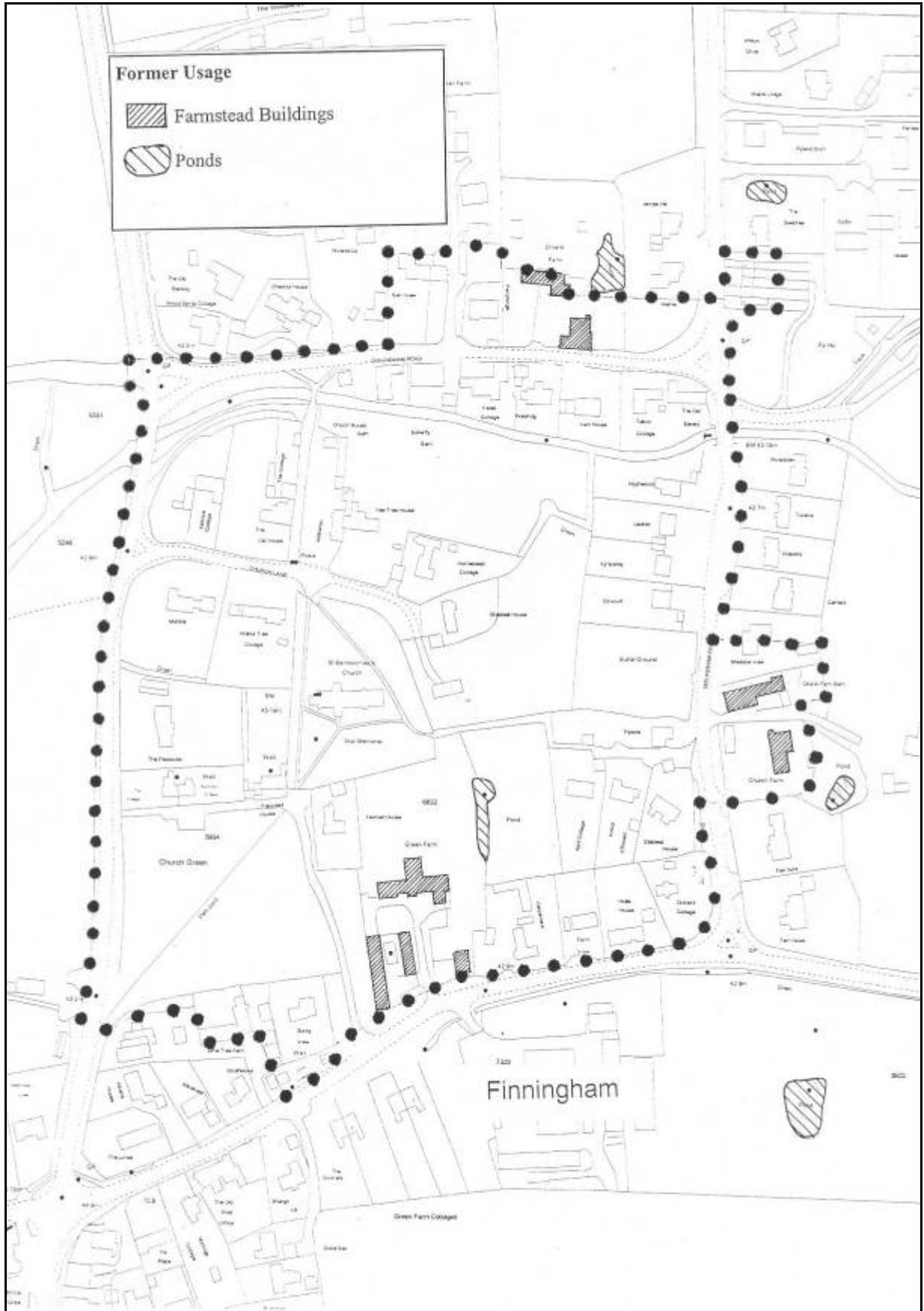
Away from the main road that passes to the west, the settlement pattern in Finningham with houses clustered around the Church, and along some of the approach roads is mostly one plot deep. This means that, although rarely visible, the countryside is never far away.

The central core of the conservation area is well served with footpaths, no. 15 passing north to south through the churchyard and no. 13 across Church Green continuing as no. 14 south of the churchyard across to Church Farm in the east.



Beyond the rectangle of roads encircling the conservation area, there are footpath links out into the wider countryside. To the south footpath no. 16 continues southwards towards Cotton from the end of no. 15.

Footpaths nos. 24 and 22 continue the line of the road across the northern side of the rectangle to the west and east respectively, both staying on the north bank of the river. The flood plain immediately to the west of the conservation area has no footpaths and provides an area of wet meadowland important for wildlife.



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Prevailing & Former Usage

Finningham has its origins as an agricultural community partly involved in the growing of hemp.

Some distance from the large linen market in Diss, it lies on the periphery of the Waveney valley where this was the primary local industry. A single linen weaver, a tailor and a worsted weaver (wool) were recorded in the village in the 17th Century.

There are three farmsteads ranged around the central church: Stanwell Farm to the north, Church Farm to the east and Green Farm to the south. Each of these has left the landscape with ranges of outbuildings, in a variety of conditions, and a number of ponds.



In the mid 19th Century, directories for the village list a wheelwright/blacksmith, a victualler, a miller, two grocers, three shoemakers and 12 farmers.

This general agricultural picture is not borne out in detail by field names in the Tithe Map Apportionment of 1839, as most holdings were simply listed as 'Field' or 'Meadow', although one appears as 'Hemmland'.

There is a tithe entry for 'Malting', one for 'Claypit' and one for 'Mill & Yard'. The post mill site was shown on a map in 1783, but demolished in 1877.

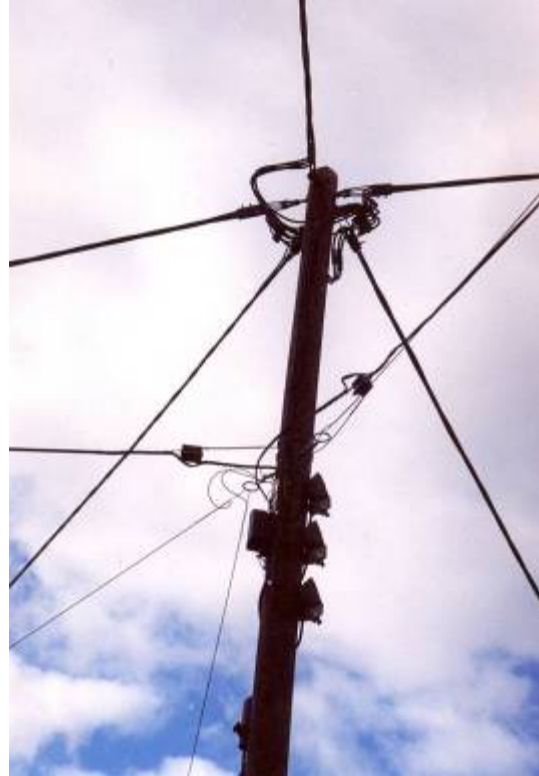


Losses & Possible Gains

Generally in the centre of Finningham there has not been too much modern intrusion. Some of the outbuildings at Green Farm have corrugated sheet roofing, which although not original can develop its own pleasing patina in time.

The few infill houses dotted around the perimeter road have for the most part respected the local vernacular using red brick or render with clay plaintile or pantile roofs. Some have perhaps not quite the right colour brick, too fleet a roof pitch or use concrete tiles, all inappropriate in a conservation area.

There are still a few possible infill sites around the area, which should be treated with great care if developed, as the present balance of old and new could easily be upset.



The end of the terrace of white brick cottages in Gislingham Road has unfortunately had a render finish applied and modern windows inserted, thus destroying the visual unity of the block.

Finningham suffers from a surfeit of overhead wiring carrying the village's telephone and electricity supplies. This is intrusive in places and the undergrounding of these utility supply lines would greatly improve the appearance.

Within most of the conservation area motor vehicles are not a problem in Finningham, other than where some driveway accesses have created large open spaces off the road without adequate visual boundaries. Traffic is however a problem on the B1113 on the west side, where a pavement might improve pedestrian safety.

References & Further Reading

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Tithe Map & Apportionment 1839 Finningham Suffolk Records Office

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*This Appraisal adopted as
Supplementary Planning Guidance
by Mid Suffolk District Council
Environment Policy Panel
3 February 2009*