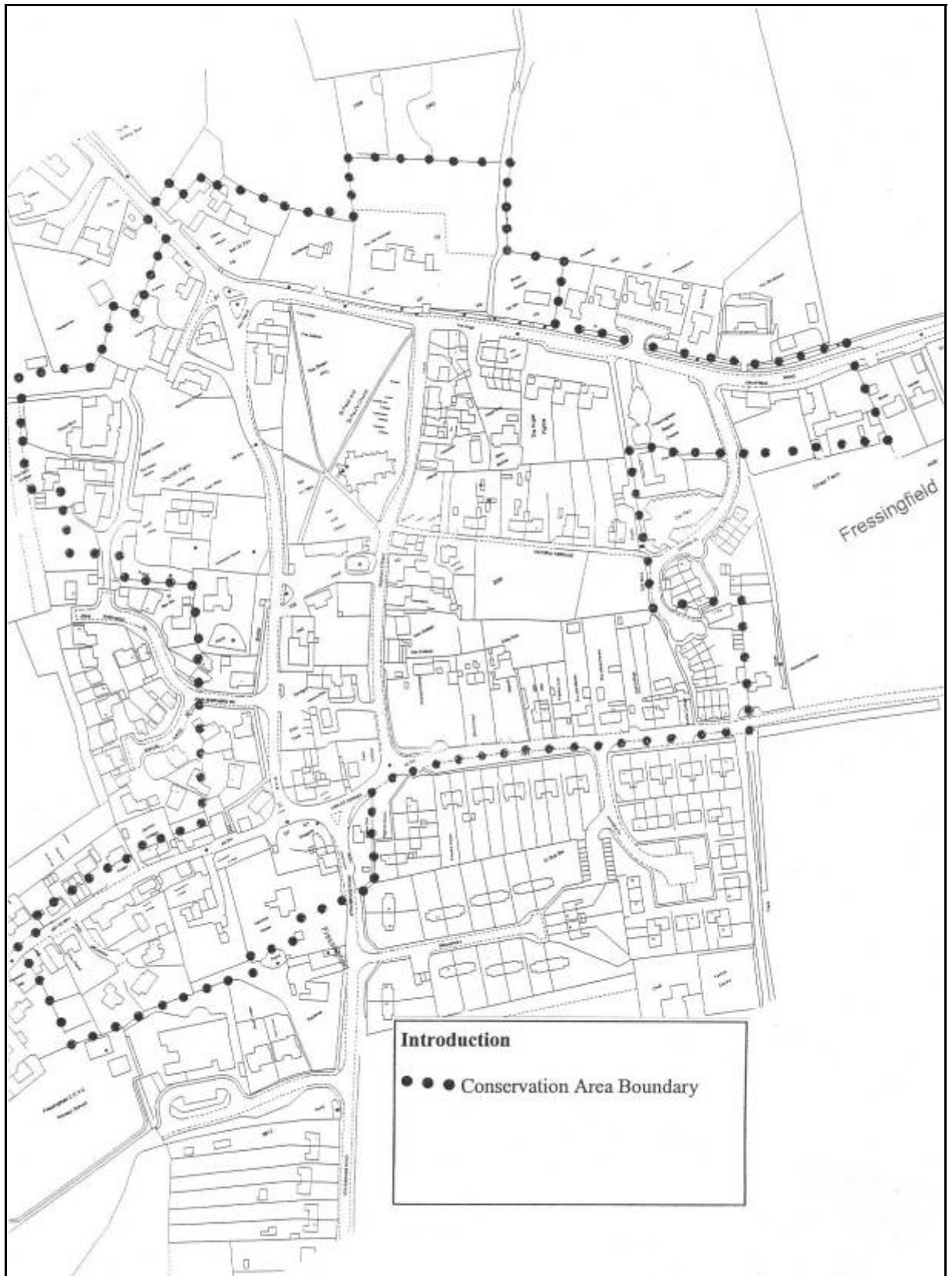




conservation area appraisal



Introduction

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

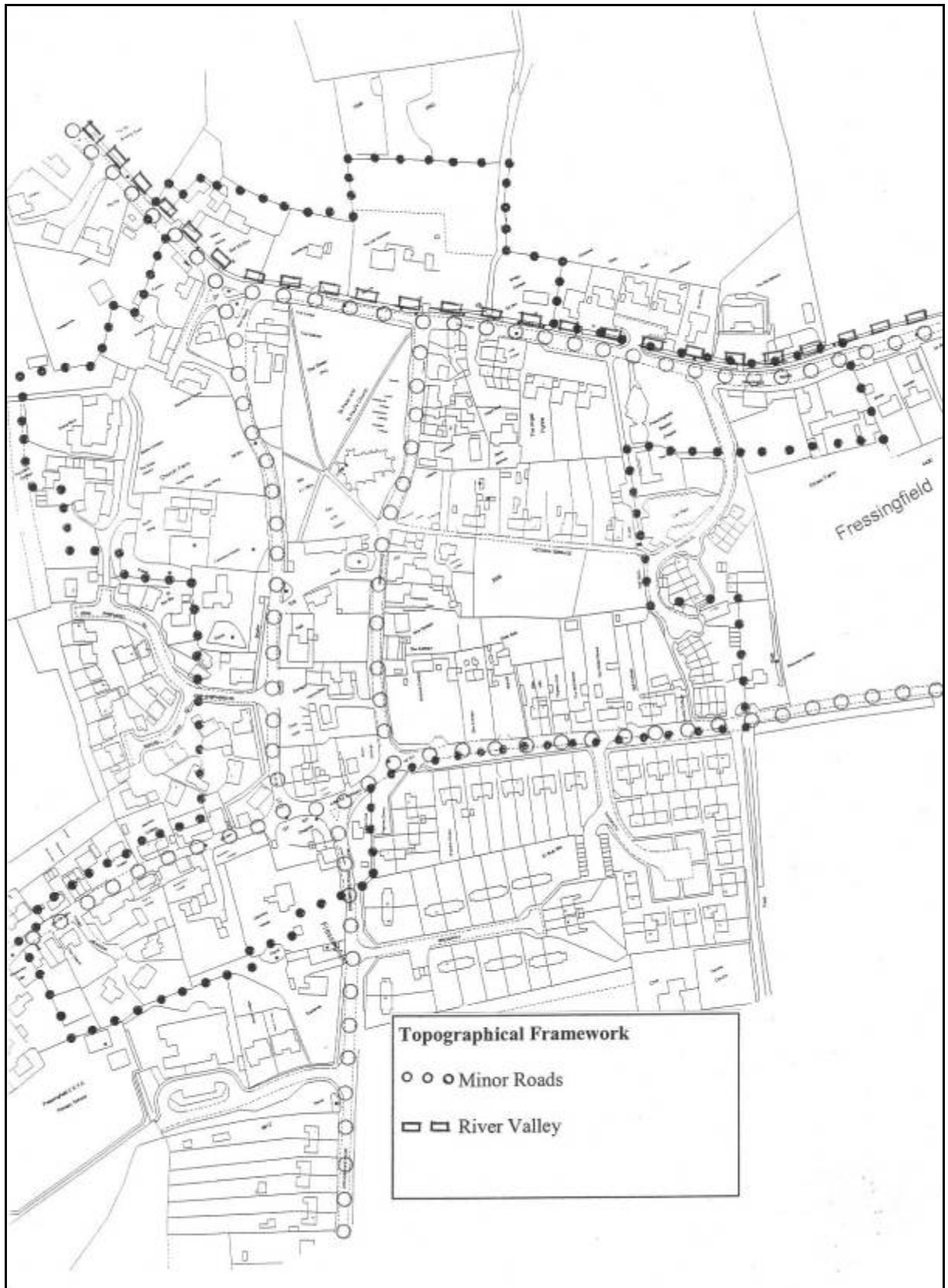
As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Fressingfield's built environment in conservation terms and is essentially an update on a draft document produced back in 2000.



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.

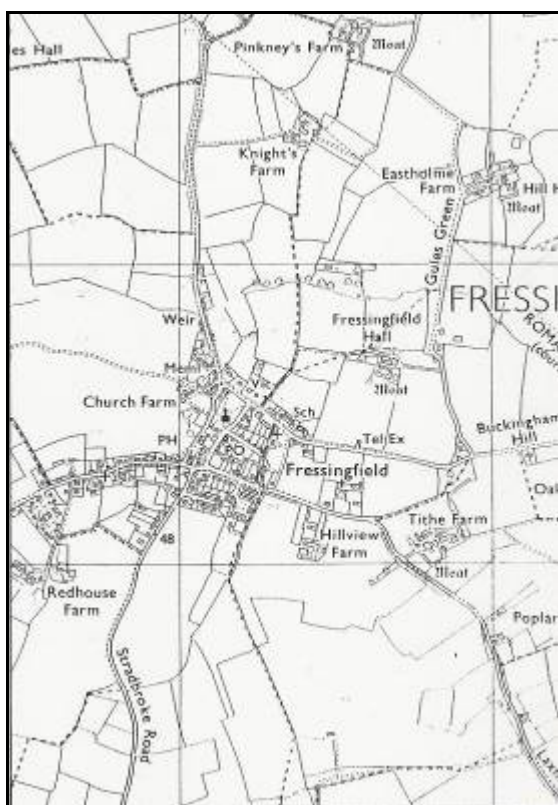
Text, photographs and map overlays by Patrick Taylor, Conservation Architect, Mid Suffolk District Council 2008.



Topographical Framework

Fressingfield is a small village in north Suffolk. It is situated on the south-western bank of a tributary that runs three miles further north-westwards before joining the river Waveney, which here forms the boundary with Norfolk.

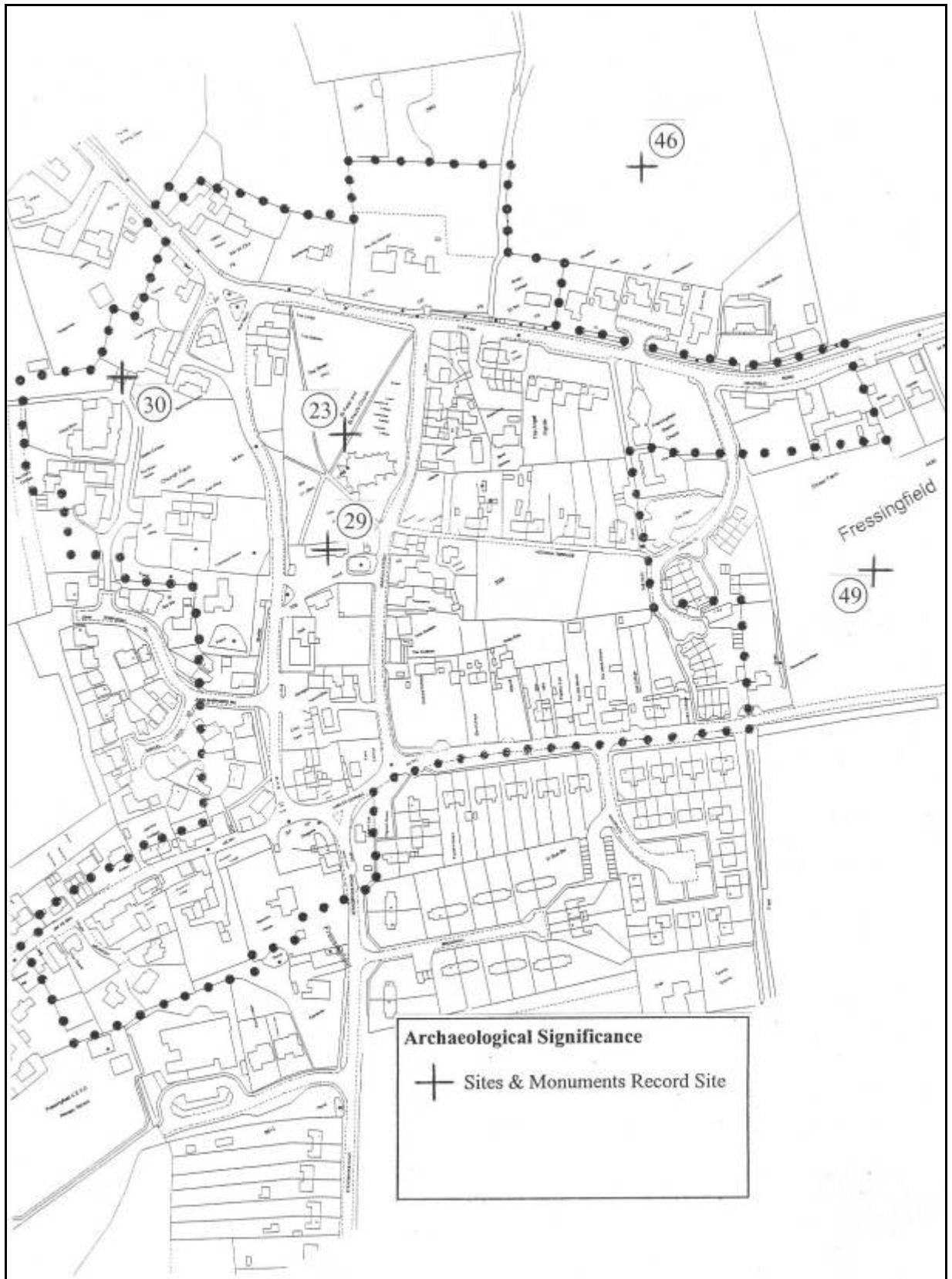
It lies about four miles south of the Norfolk town of Harleston on the B1116 road, part of which follows the route of an old Roman road running NW to SE through the parish, passing to the north-east of what is now the main settlement.



The Roman road has adjoining it two outlying settlements still within the parish, Little Whittingham Green and Chippenhall Green.

Apart from this, most communication in past times would have been via the river Waveney's valley, either by boat or during the century following 1860 by railway along the Waveney line terminating at Harleston.

The underlying geology in Fressingfield is the till plain of boulder clay of 'High Suffolk', which here covers a layer of glacial Norwich Crag deposits overlaying in their turn East Anglia's ubiquitous chalk.



Archaeological Significance

Fressingfield's archaeology covers many periods, from a Neolithic flint axe and a Bronze Age spearhead through to numerous scatter finds of Medieval pottery listed in Suffolk's County Sites and Monuments Record.

There are also mysterious square and oval 'enclosures' and many 'burnt flint patches', all of unknown date.

Other than the Roman road, the major remains that can still be seen are the dozen or so Medieval moated sites, which include Ufford Hall, the birthplace of Dr. William Sancroft (1616-1693). He endowed a school in the village in 1685.



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 & . . . u . . . v . . . fol . . . in . . . code . . . p . . . io . . . Galter . . . fil . . . Grip . . . i . . . xxx . . . ac . . . 7 . . . u . . .
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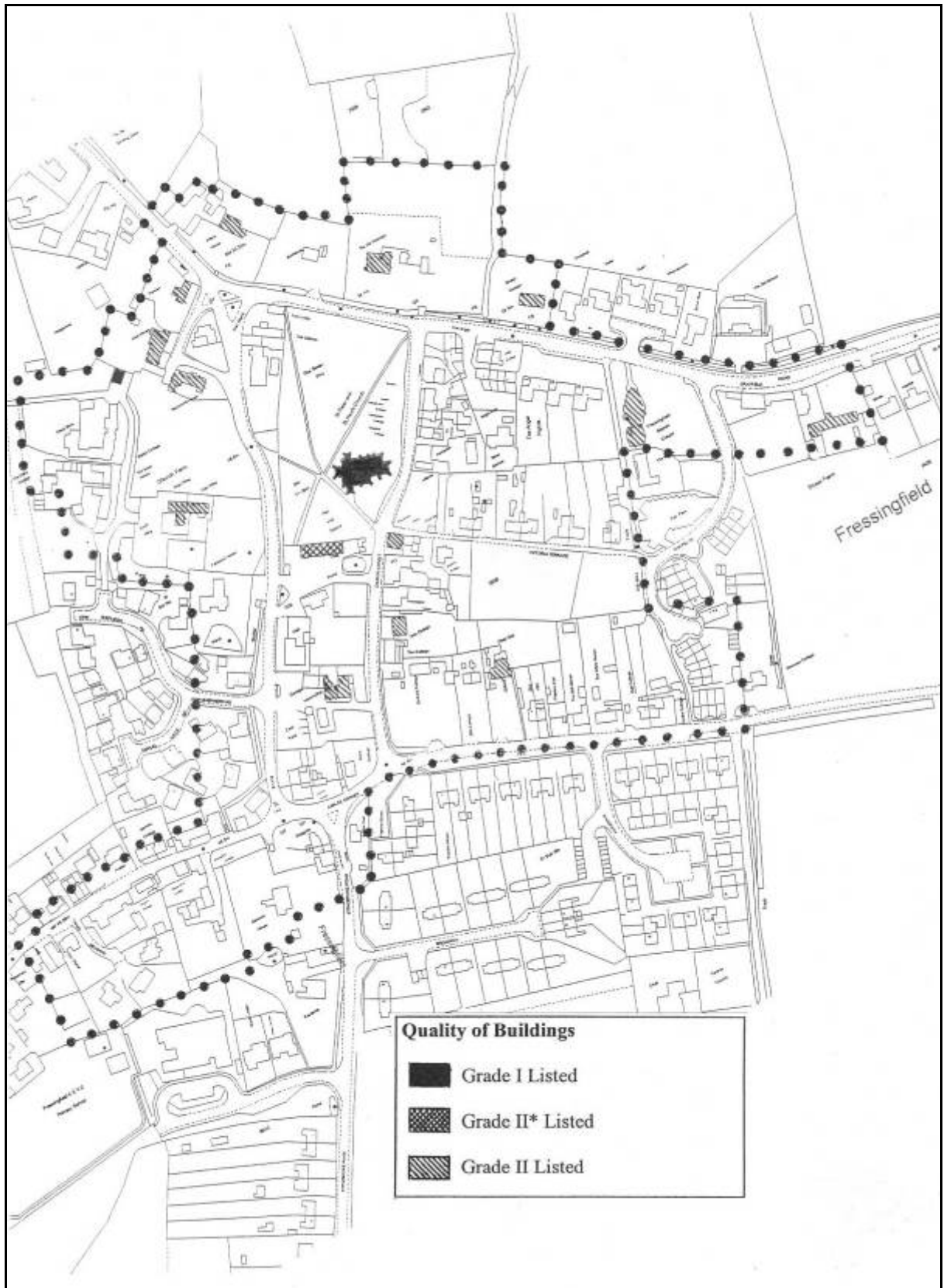
St. Edmund's field CHIPPENHALL before 1066 as a manor; 15 carucates of land with the jurisdiction; 15 carucates of land with the jurisdiction; Always 6 villagers; 12 smallholders. Then 15 ploughs in lordship, now 2 ploughs; then 3 men's ploughs, now 5. Meadow, 10 acres; woodland, then 160 pigs, now 100. Always 1 cow. Now 16 cattle, 16 pigs, 30 goats. 1/2 church, 20 acres. Value of this manor then 40s; now 60[s]. It has 1 1/2 leagues in length and 1 league in width; 15d in tax. Others hold there.

In CHIPPENHALL 9 free men under patronage; 2 1/2 carucates of land. Always 17 smallholders; 10 ploughs. Meadow, 12 acres; woodland, 300 pigs. Value then 100s; now 26s. 1/2 church, 20 acres. 1 plough. It has 2 leagues in length and 1 in width; 15d in tax. The jurisdiction is in the Bishop's manor of Boxne, but Edric held half from Bishop Actmer. Of this manor, Walter holds 4 Freeman; 1 carucate of land. (Value) 30s. It is in the assessment of 16. Robert (Malet)'s mother (holds) 3 (Freemen); 80 acres. (Value) 45s in the same assessment. Humphrey (holds) 1 (Freeman); 20 acres. Value 5s in the same assessment. Walter son of Grip (holds) 1 (Freeman); 120 acres. Value 40s in the same assessment.

Sancroft had become Archbishop of Canterbury in 1677, but was later imprisoned in the Tower of London for refusing an oath of allegiance, presumably to William of Orange. On his release in 1690 he returned to Fressingfield until his death.

Fressingfield village itself appears to be a late development. The parish is listed in the Domesday survey of 1086 under Chippenhall which at that time had a church with 40 acres, half under the jurisdiction of St Edmund's, half under Robert Malet.

The parish market was granted on Tuesdays in 1267, but was held at Little Whittingham Green, which appears as Piper's Cross on the 1841 tithe map.



Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

Fressingfield has two grade I listed buildings: the Church of Ss Peter and Paul has a Decorated west tower, chancel and north chapel, the rest being the usual Suffolk Perpendicular. It is mostly built of flint rubble, with stone dressings and a lead roof. It has a fine hammerbeam roof and 'one of the best sets of benches in the county', according to Pevsner.

The other grade I building is a former raised aisle hall house, now forming the stable block adjoining Church Farm, and dating from the 15th Century. The parish also boasts four grade II timber-framed buildings. Ufford Hall, Fressingfield Hall and Tithe Farmhouse on Laxfield Road are all three moated sites.*



The fourth grade II is the Fox and Goose Inn that sits on the edge of the churchyard and was formerly the Gild Hall of St Margaret. It is also timber-framed with fine close studding infilled with herring-bone brick nogging on the churchyard frontage and a carved corner post depicting the patron saint. Elsewhere in the parish there are numerous other listed buildings, grade II, for the most part farmhouses and cottages, mainly timber-framed and plastered.*

Also listed grade II is the very unusual Baptist Chapel of 1835, with its coffin shaped plan and to quote Pevsner again of 'red brick, with a [slate] roof of most surprising geometry'.



Traditional Building Materials

Although more common elsewhere in Suffolk, the brick-nogged timber frame and plaintile roof of the Fox and Goose are rather untypical of villages in the north of the county.

About half of Fressingfield's buildings are in the local soft red brick, most of the remainder being rendered onto either timber frames or brick again.

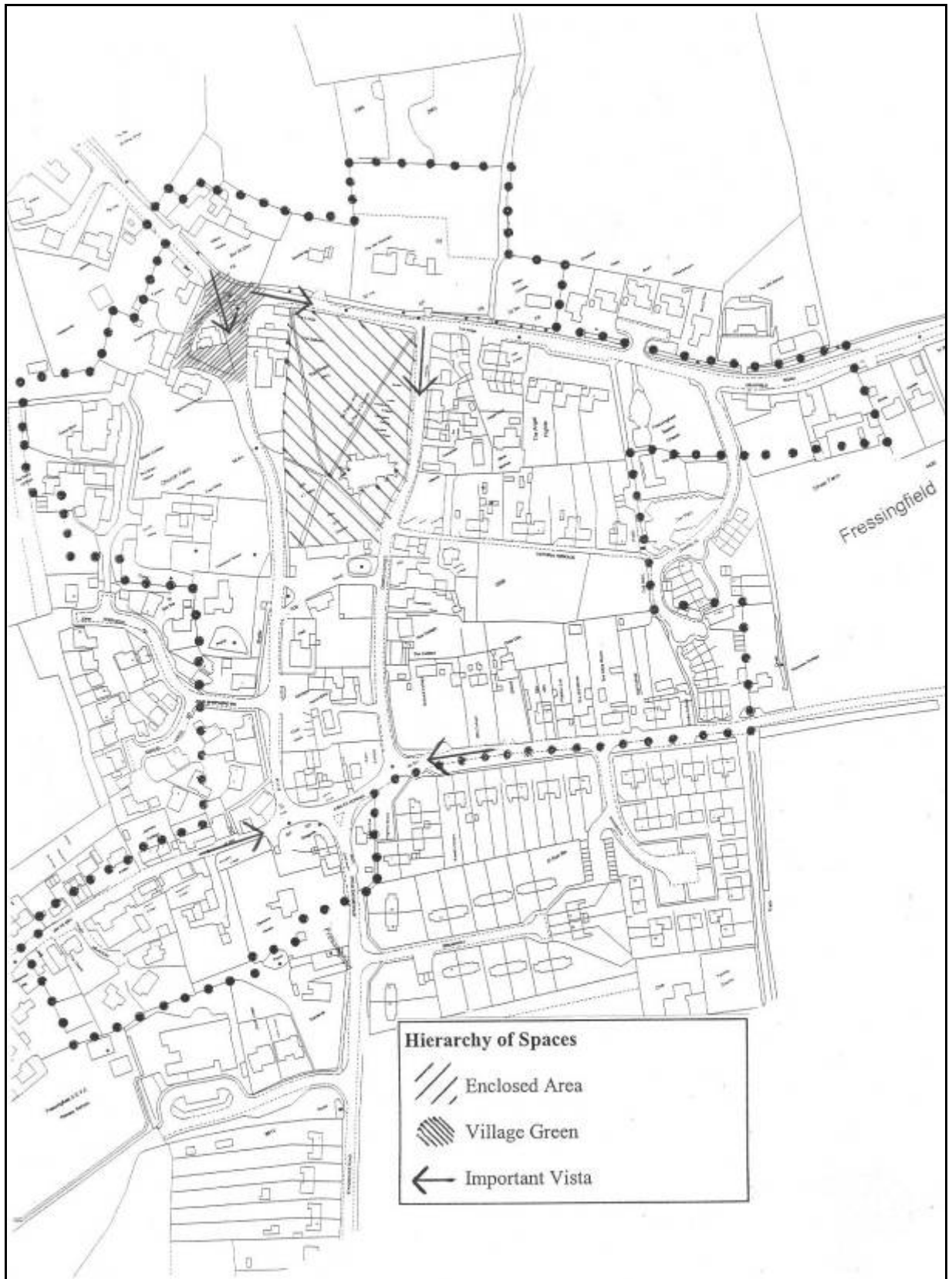
A small scattering of white brick buildings, mainly from the early 19th Century, make up the rest along with the flint and stone Church, some clay lump building and a couple of flint and brick barns.



Roof coverings are predominantly black glazed pantiles, as seen in many villages bordering the Waveney valley, along with a fair few of the plain red variety.

There is some slate from the 19th Century and a few plaintile roofs, mainly on the older listed timber-framed buildings. The full range of the Suffolk vernacular is completed by a pair of thatched roofs.

The conservation area is notable for there being relatively little encroachment of inappropriate modern materials.



Hierarchy of Spaces

Fressingfield is to some extent dominated by the two hills that run parallel, from the top of the village where the Stradbroke and Laxfield roads meet New Street, down to the stream in the north-east. These pass either side of the churchyard which stretches from the back of the Fox and Goose down to Low Road adjoining the stream.

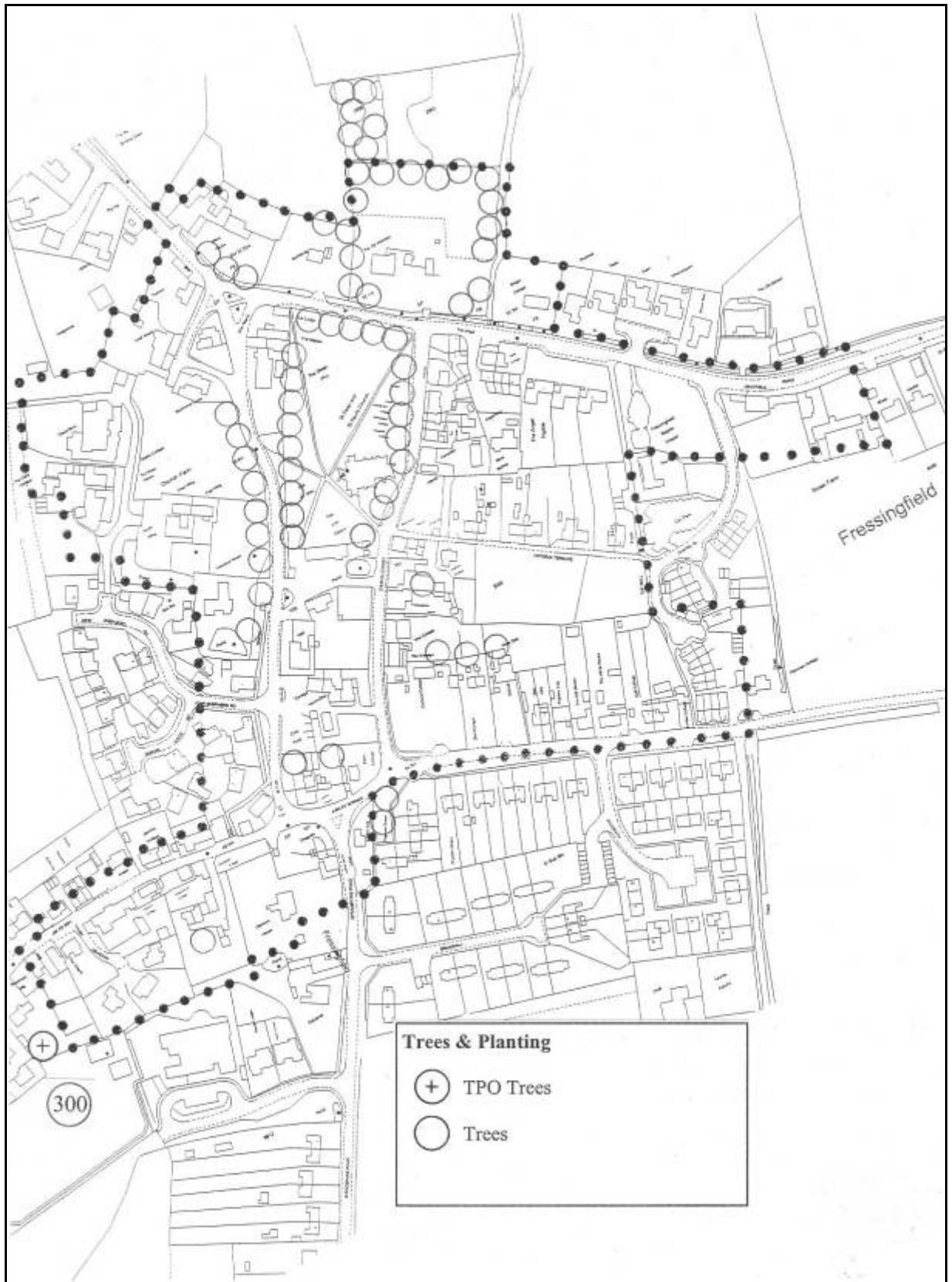
The B1116 that snakes through the village on its way between Framlingham and Harleston, does so via the north-western hill. At the bottom Low Road runs from a small green with a war memorial and follows the river upstream south-eastwards with houses set well back on both sides of the valley.



Fressingfield is the sort of place in which around each corner you expect to find the village centre. But you don't, instead there are a number of focal points spread around the central area.

These include the shop on Church Street near one gateway to the Church, the confluence of many roads in the south-west providing a busy meeting of ways and the war memorial green in the north-east, all of which have their claim.

If the village has a 'centre of gravity' at all, it is the historic focal point, roughly where the Fox and Goose adjoins the Church.



Trees and Planting

The main green space within the village is the churchyard which is bounded mainly by Lime trees, but remains fairly open in the centre.

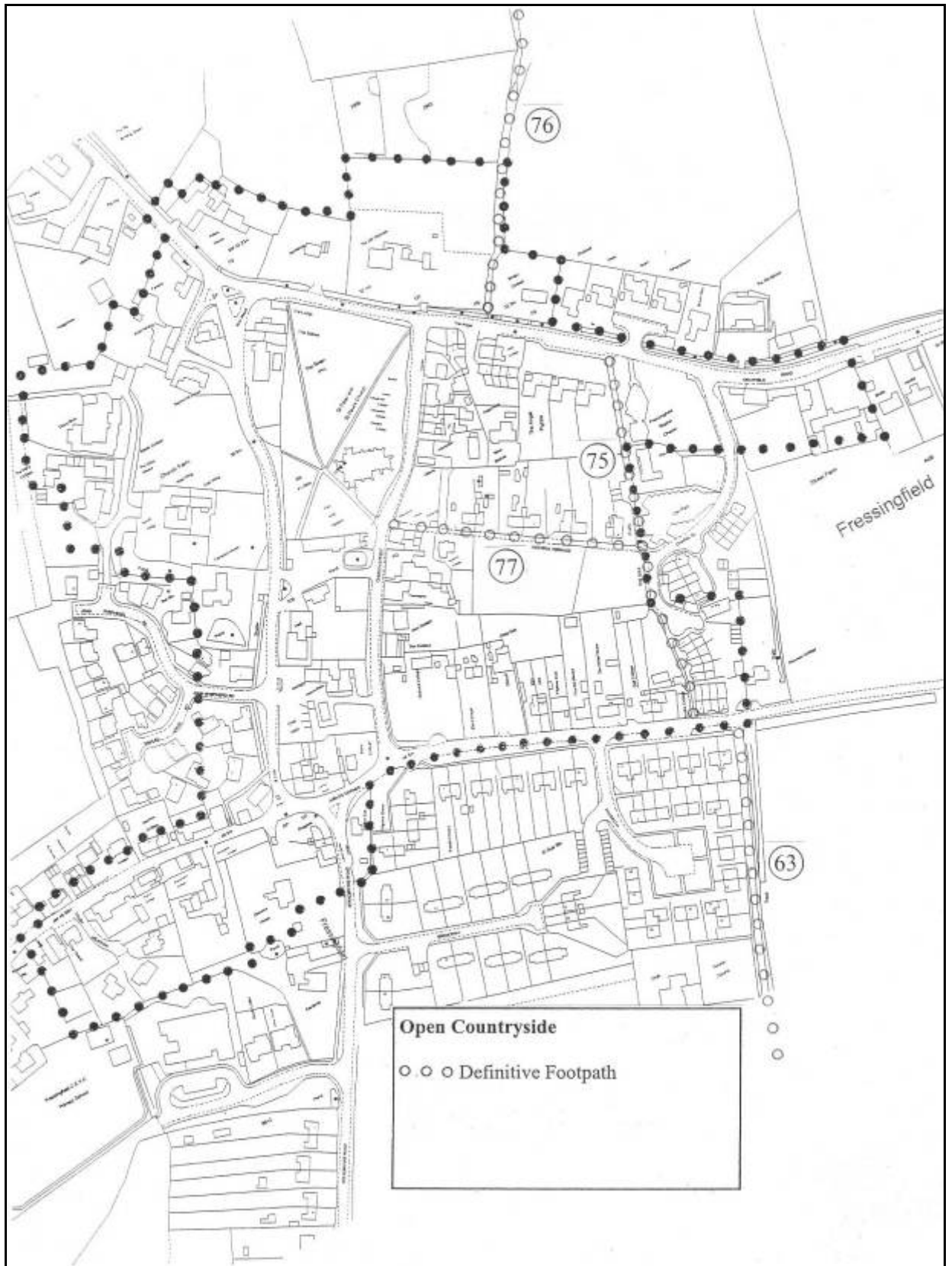
Elsewhere trees are fairly abundant, but not dominant, being mostly within back gardens and seen as a backdrop to the houses, particularly on the Laxfield, Stradbroke and Wingfield roads at the top of the village.

The other main area with trees within the village is along the stream side in Low Road to the front of the many set back houses there, opposite the churchyard.



Adjoining the conservation area boundary near the primary school, the threat to a single Ash tree has led to the imposition of TPO 300. Elsewhere in the parish the moated halls seem to have the monopoly on threatened trees. Tree Preservation Orders have been placed adjoining three of them.

TPO 17 protects two Willows, two Horse Chestnut and some other trees at Chippenhall Hall; TPO 149 covers two Oaks, seven Horse Chestnuts and an Ash at Ufford Hall whilst at Wood Lane near Whittingham Hall, TPO 200 protects a large number of Oaks and some other assorted trees.



Relationship to Open Countryside

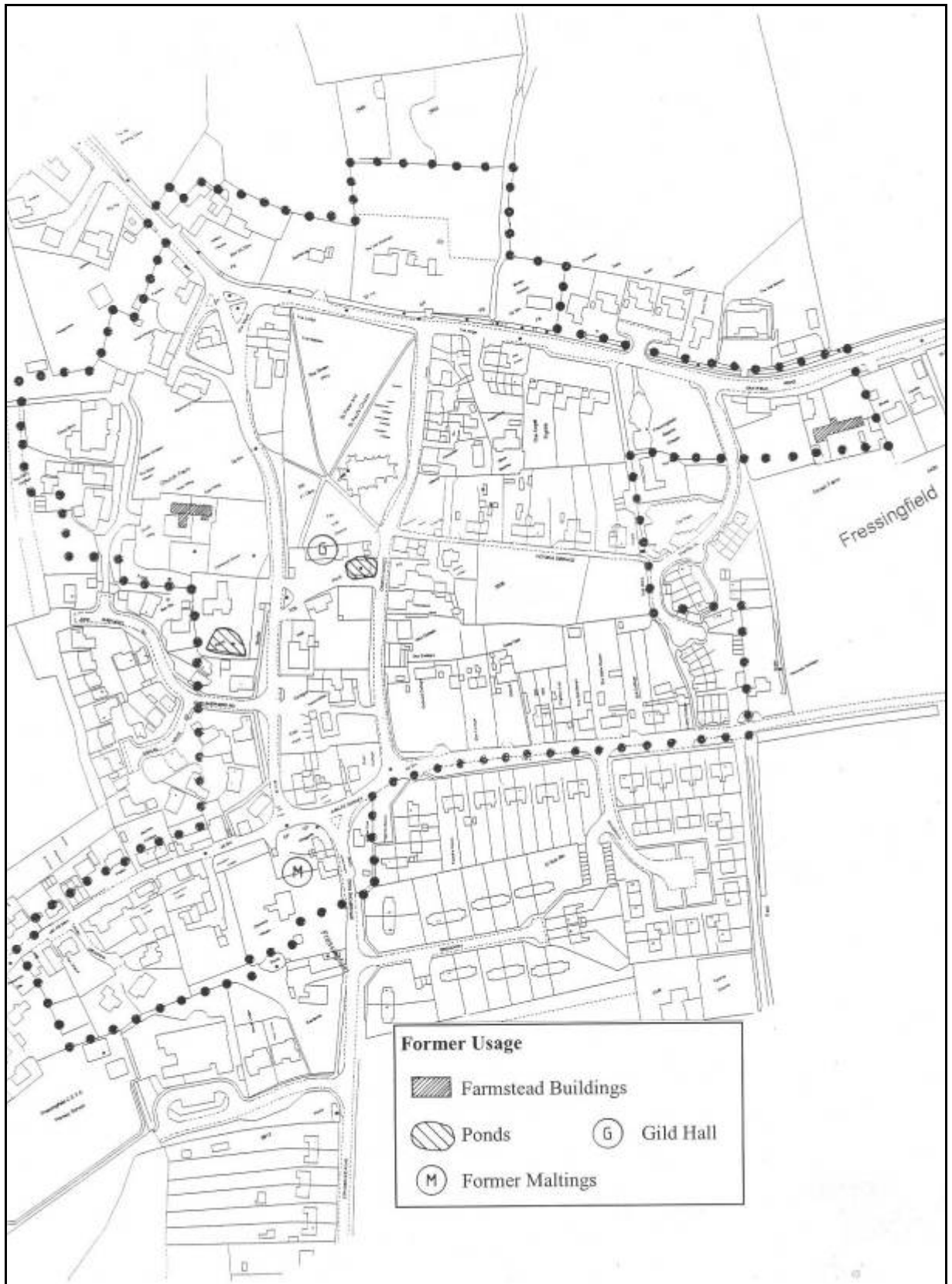
Very few parts of Fressingfield have buildings close to the road, so that the village remains fairly spread out without any urban feel to it.

Driving through, around any corner you expect to find the elusive centre of the village, but you remain disappointed as along any route the countryside soon reappears. The small size of the village means that the countryside is in fact never far away.



The spaces between the five roads that meet in Fressingfield are relatively well served by footpaths. Some, such as nos. 55 and 66 link between two adjacent outgoing roads, whilst others head out radially, usually in the direction of one of the moated sites where early settlement took place.

To the north FP9 goes to Knight's Farm and then Pinkney's Farm with its moat. To the north-east FP10 goes to Fressingfield Hall, onwards towards Hill House with its moat and then via FP17 eastwards to Whittingham Hall. To the south between the Laxfield and Stradbroke roads FP63 heads for Red House Farm and Manor House Farm.



Prevailing & Former Usage

Fressingfield's origins are primarily agricultural and based mainly on the Waveney valley linen industry. Several linen weavers are recorded in the village and the tithe map of 1841 reveals a great many fields listed with the title 'Hemplands'.

Also recorded in the tithe apportionment there is 'Brick Kiln Field', 'Malting Yard' (on the site of Clarence House), 'Sawpit Meadow', 'Claypit Field' and a scattering of rather more obscure names such as 'Bankrupt Hill', 'Looking Glass Field' and 'Piper's Hole' to name but a few.



The parish had at one time three windmills: Algar's Mill off the Wingfield road was a post and open trestle type, demolished around 1895. Nearby stood another post-mill with a round house demolished c.1929, whilst another of this same type stood until 1936 at Chippenhall Green.

Today the village survives as a small local centre and still has two shops, a garage, the church, the school and two public houses.

Overall, Fressingfield has remained relatively untouched, probably as a result of its relative isolation. It never developed a central 'commercial' area, and yet it is commercial influences that have done it most harm.



Losses & Possible Gains

The garage site adjoining the Sancroft Memorial Hall above the churchyard on the main road does little for the village in visual terms. The uncompromising modern sign, concrete fencing, asbestos roofed sheds and untidy areas of heaped coal contrast starkly with the traditional red brick and pantile cottages behind the trading area.

At the top of the village, the Mace shop on the Wingfield road is again rather uncompromisingly modern. Here a protruding square-edged box forms the shop frontage, tacked onto the front of what was once an attractive terrace of white brick cottages, their doors now filled in and the windows replaced in uPVC.



Improvements to both the above examples should be sought, but not at the expense of losing their amenity to the village.

To the north-west of the village centre opposite the garage and coal-yard the new infill development of John Shepherd Road has been inserted fairly sensitively with flint and brick screen walls.

Incongruous asbestos type roofing is also to be found on one of the barns adjoining Street Farm at the eastern extremity of Low Road.

Opposite here the late Victorian school is perhaps a suitable candidate for addition to the conservation area in a future review.



References and Further Reading

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*This Appraisal adopted as
Supplementary Planning Guidance
by Mid Suffolk District Council
Environment Policy Panel
9 December 2008*