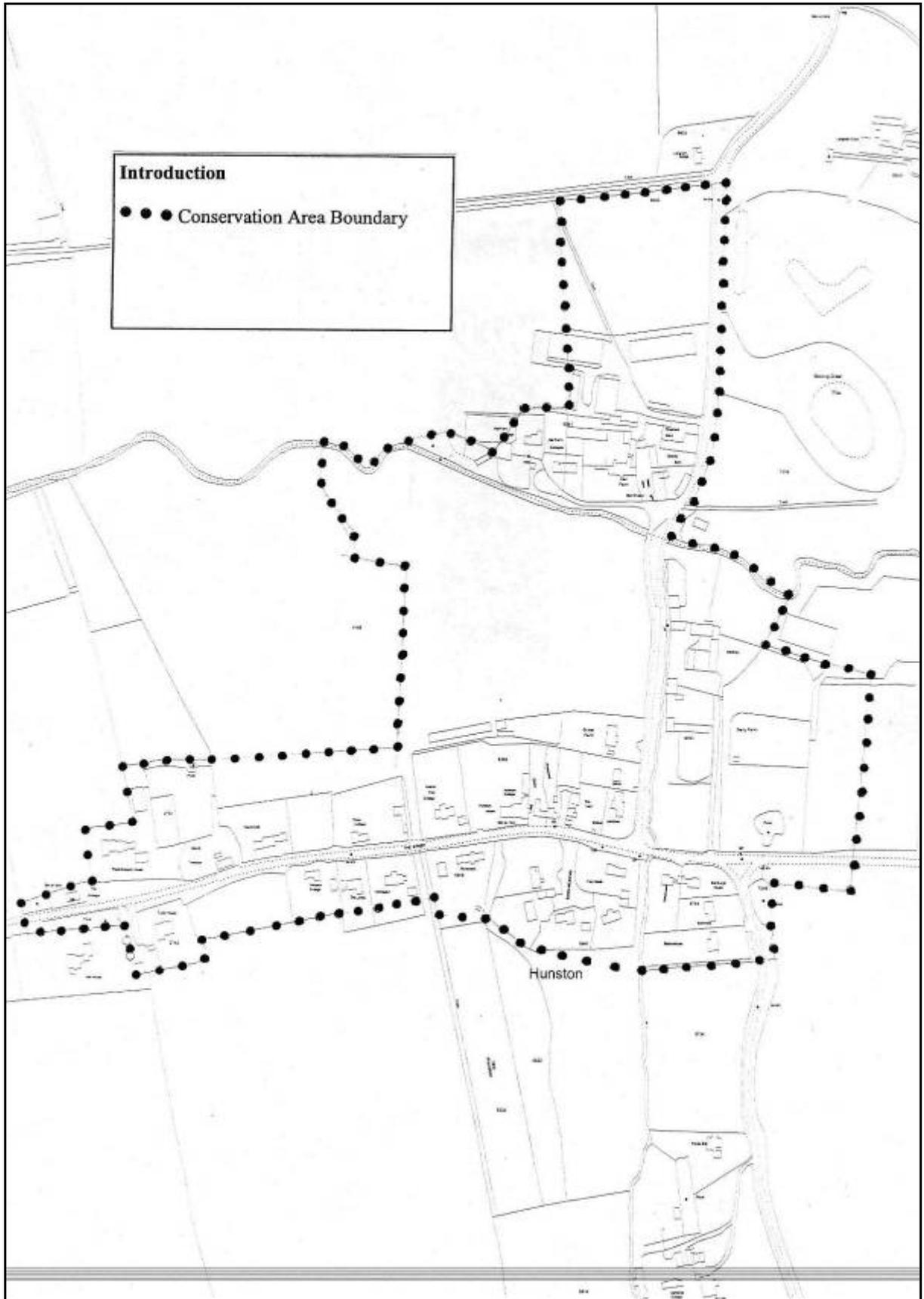


*conservation area appraisal*



# Introduction

*The conservation area in Hunston also covers a small nearby part of Langham parish and was originally designated by West 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 Hunston under a number of different headings as set out in English Heritage's new 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' (2006).*

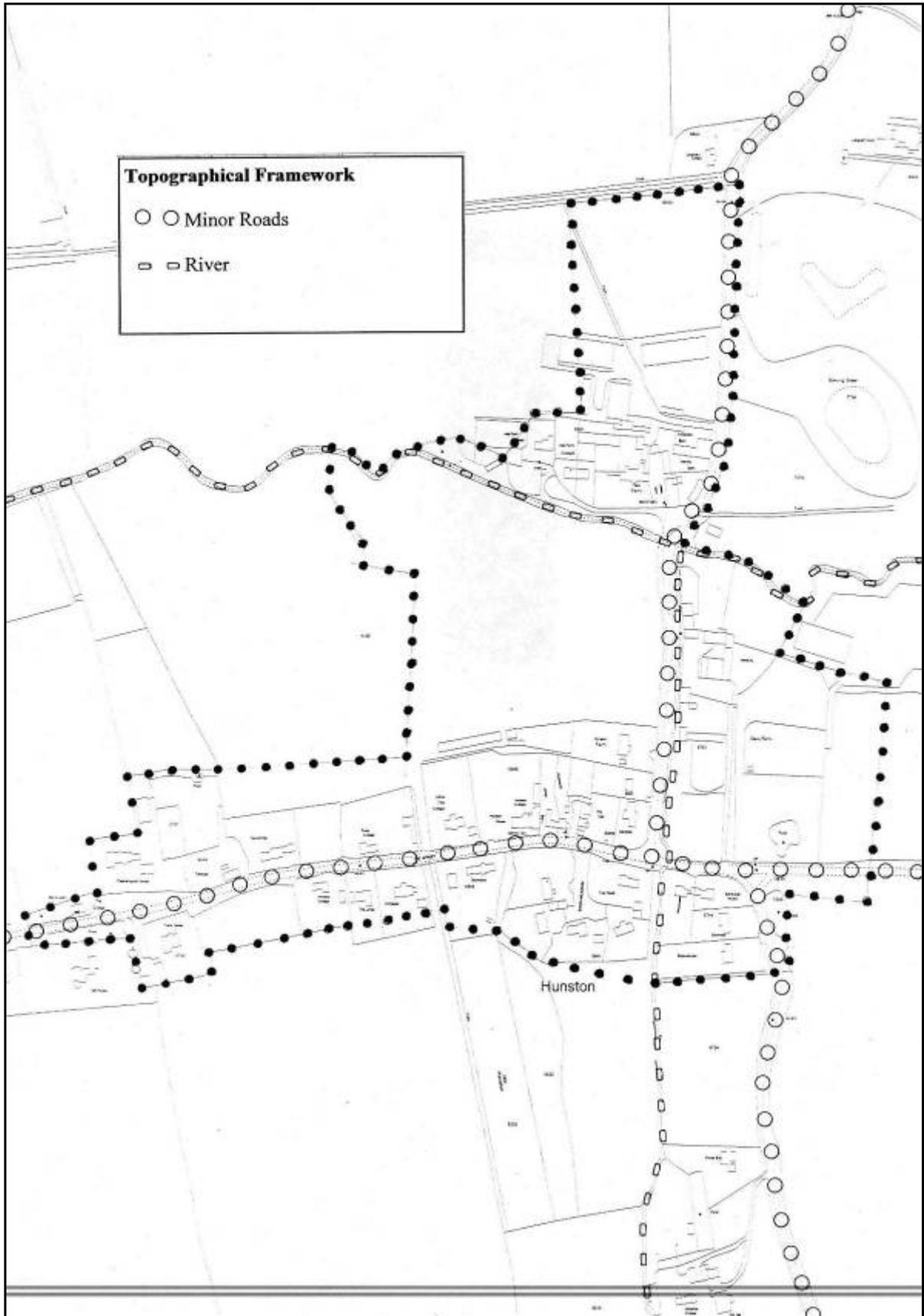
*As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Hunston's built environment in conservation terms.*



*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 Hunston is situated about eight miles north-west of Stowmarket, and a similar distance east of Bury St Edmunds, in the north-western part of Mid Suffolk District.*

*Just west of Badwell Ash, it runs along the south bank of the valley of a tributary of the Black Bourn that flows north-westwards from here, draining to the Wash.*

*Since 1846 the Ipswich to Bury St Edmunds railway line has passed to the south of the village, with the nearest station three miles away at Elmswell.*

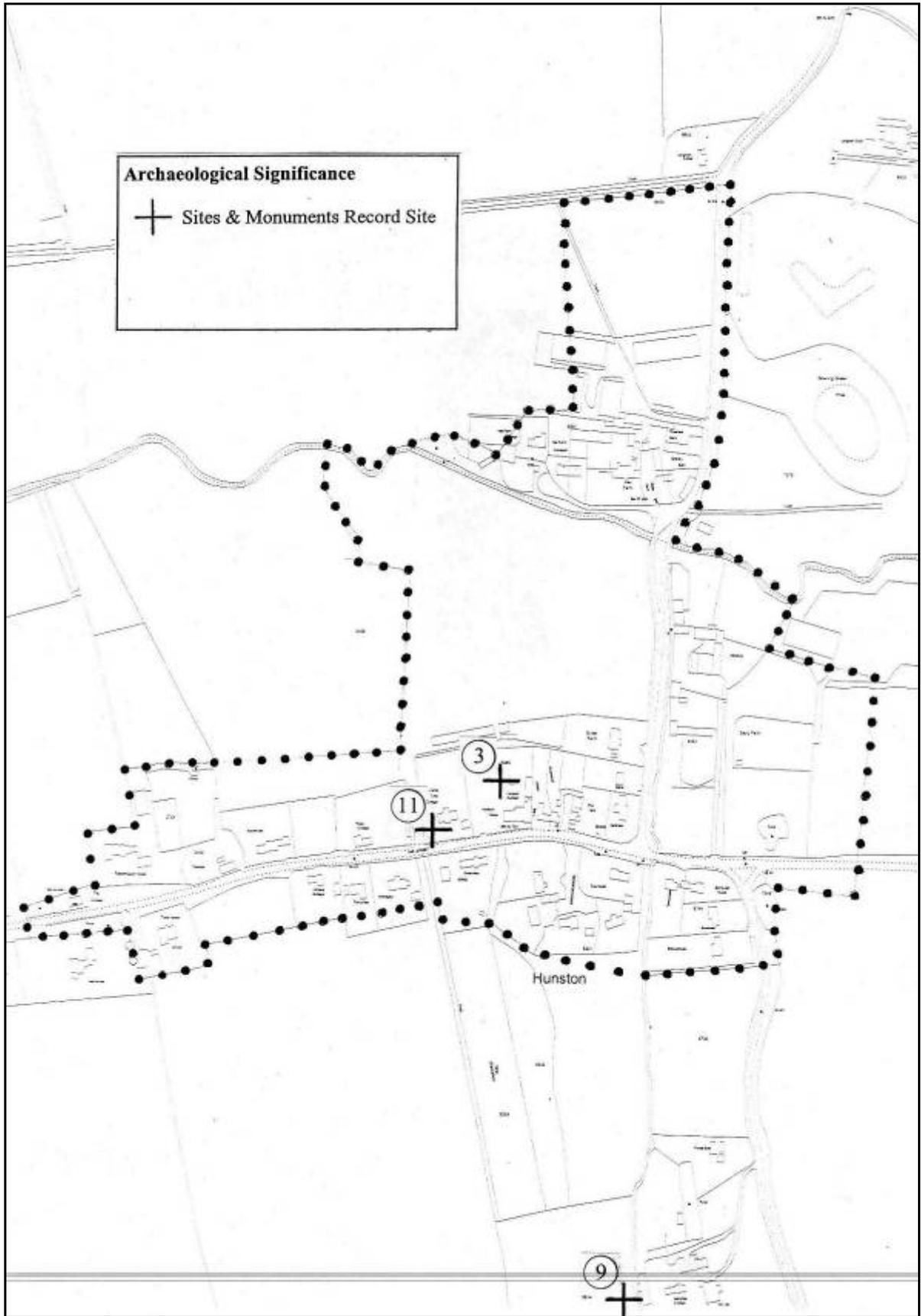
*Just south of this the A14 trunk road runs parallel with the railway connecting Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds.*



*The nearest main road is the A1088 passing two miles to the west and connecting Stowmarket to Thetford, whilst three miles to the north the former Bury St Edmunds to Scole Turnpike Trust's road of 1762 is now the A143.*

*The village is situated within 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, but the village itself sits within a till free pocket with exposed gravels and chalk.*

*The northern part of the conservation area is actually in the adjoining parish of Langham with a cluster of dwellings around Hall Farm.*



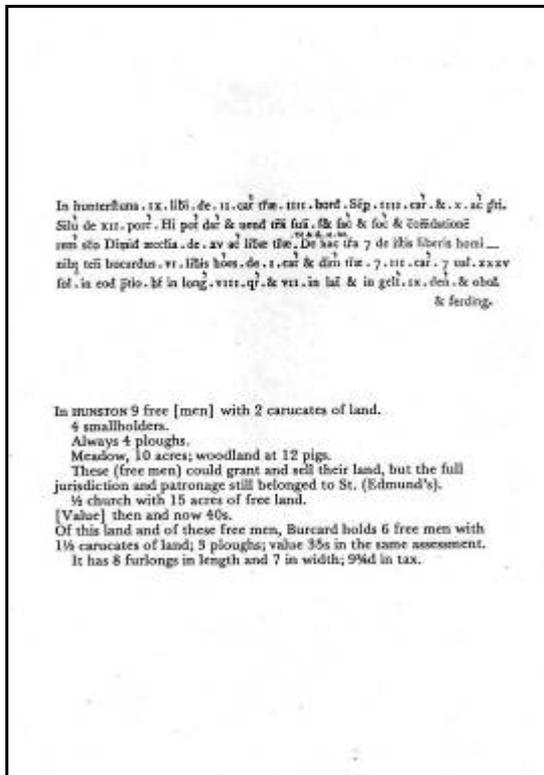
# Archaeological Significance

*The Suffolk County Sites and Monuments Record lists a dozen or so sites of archaeological interest from various periods in the parish of Hunston.*

*Whilst the neighbouring parish of Langham has a similar scatter of sites and finds, none of these occur within the conservation area.*

*Within Hunston itself the earliest find is a flint axehead from the Mesolithic period, but there was also a Bronze Age narrow bladed Palstave found.*

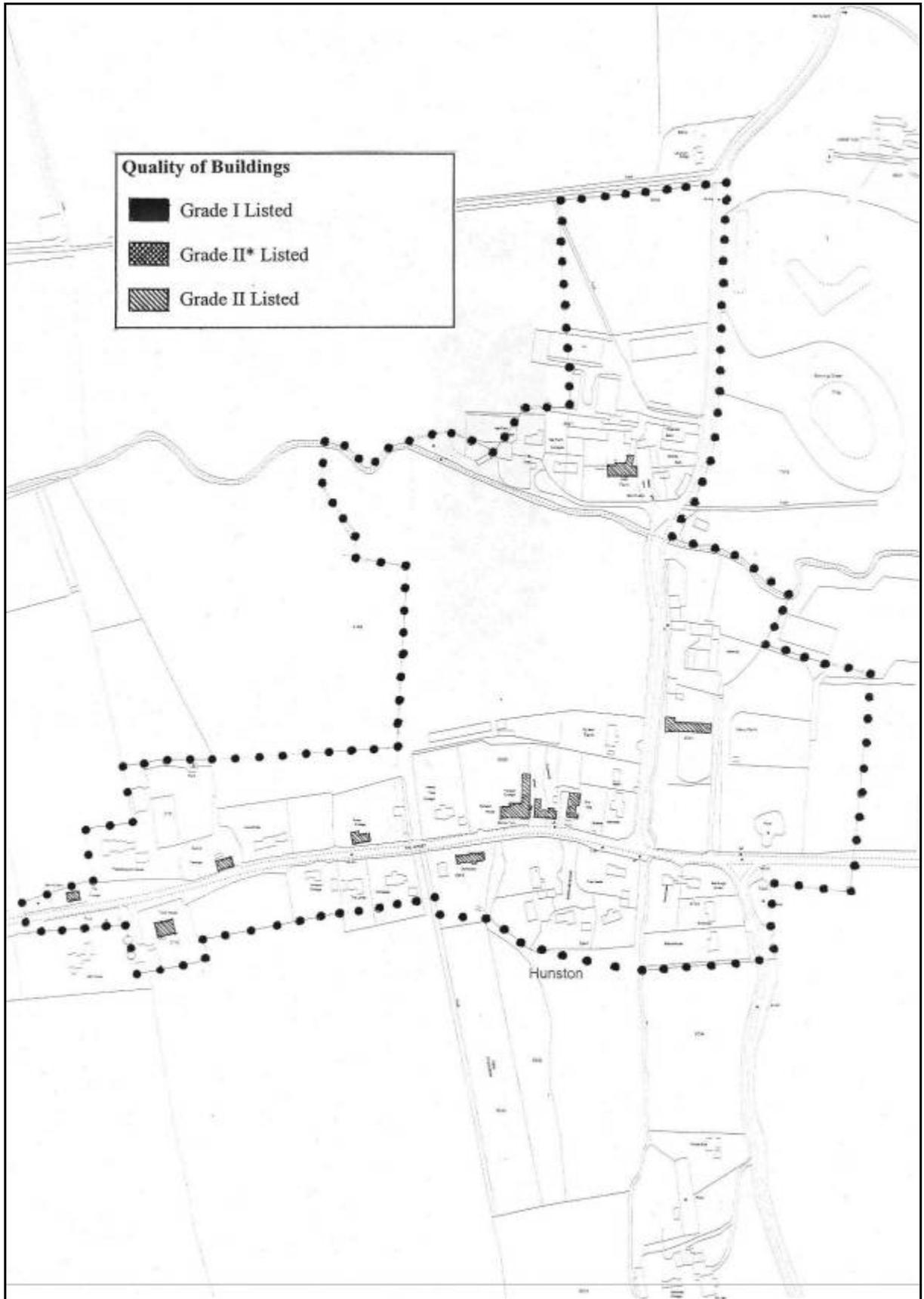
*Roman remains include a bronze dolphin brooch and a small glass unguentarium, both found in gardens, whilst a number of other sites have yielded Roman, Saxon and Medieval sherds.*



*Medieval sites listed include the moated site of former Hunston Hall along with the parish churchyard, both outside the conservation area to the south.*

*There is also some Post Medieval interest, represented by the site of a windmill even further to the south.*

*Hunston has two mentions in the Domesday survey of 1086. A small area was held by the King, whilst the main entry describes an area held by St Edmund's with half a church and 15 acres of free land.*



# *Intrinsic Quality of Buildings*

*There are only 12 listings covering the parish of Hunston, ten of which are within the conservation area. Of Langham's listed buildings, only grade II Hall Farm is in the conservation area.*

*These older buildings are predominantly domestic in scale, a few being former farmhouses, and mostly timber-framed and plastered with thatched or plaintile roofs.*

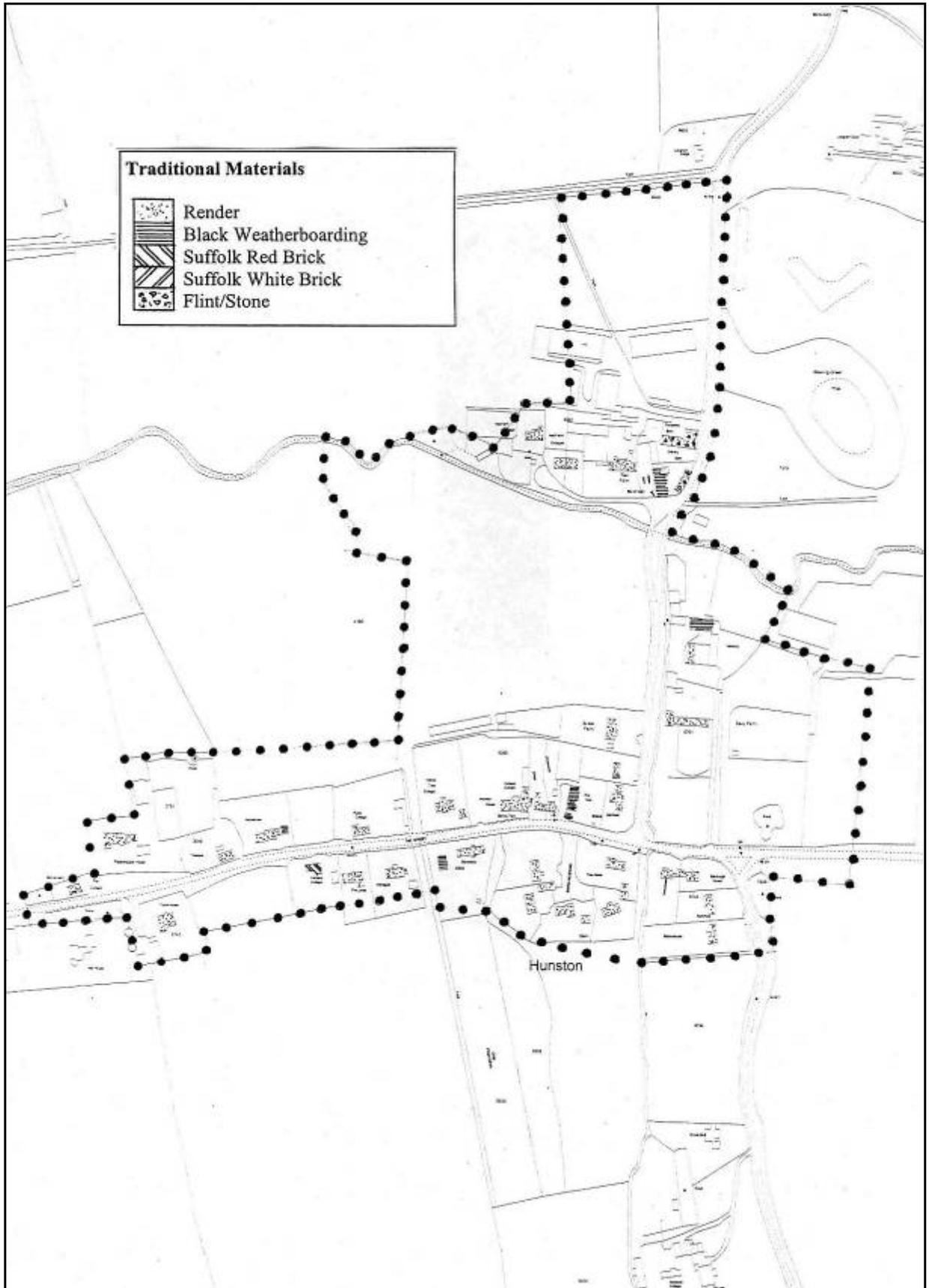
*Outside the conservation area to the south, the grade II\* listed Church of St Michael provides the usual village exception to this pattern of building with its plastered flint rubble walls and slate roof. It is mostly 13<sup>th</sup> Century with a 14<sup>th</sup> Century tower and in Pevsner's words 'a remarkable S transept'.*



*The other quality building outside the conservation area is a grade II listed former open hall house from the early 16<sup>th</sup> Century: The Elms, further to the south in the outlying hamlet of Hunston Green is timber-framed and plastered with a thatched roof.*



*On The Street there once stood a grade II listed K6 telephone box, demolished by an explosion. This was not far from grade II Hunston House (formerly Cottage), which has 18<sup>th</sup> Century pargetting and horizontally sliding sashes. Opposite this is Gunstocks (formerly Old Cottage) also grade II listed with exposed timber framing and a jetty on three sides and a date (of remodeling) of 1619.*



# *Traditional Building Materials*

*Many of the unlisted buildings in Hunston Street and near Langham Hall Farm are of traditional form and although not up to "listing" quality as individual buildings, they still have interest for their visual impact.*

*A first glance would seem to indicate an abundance of rendered timber-framed buildings, although on closer inspection some are painted or rendered brick.*

*The local red brick features throughout the village, principally on chimneys, but also as dressings with the frequently used flint around Langham Hall Farm.*

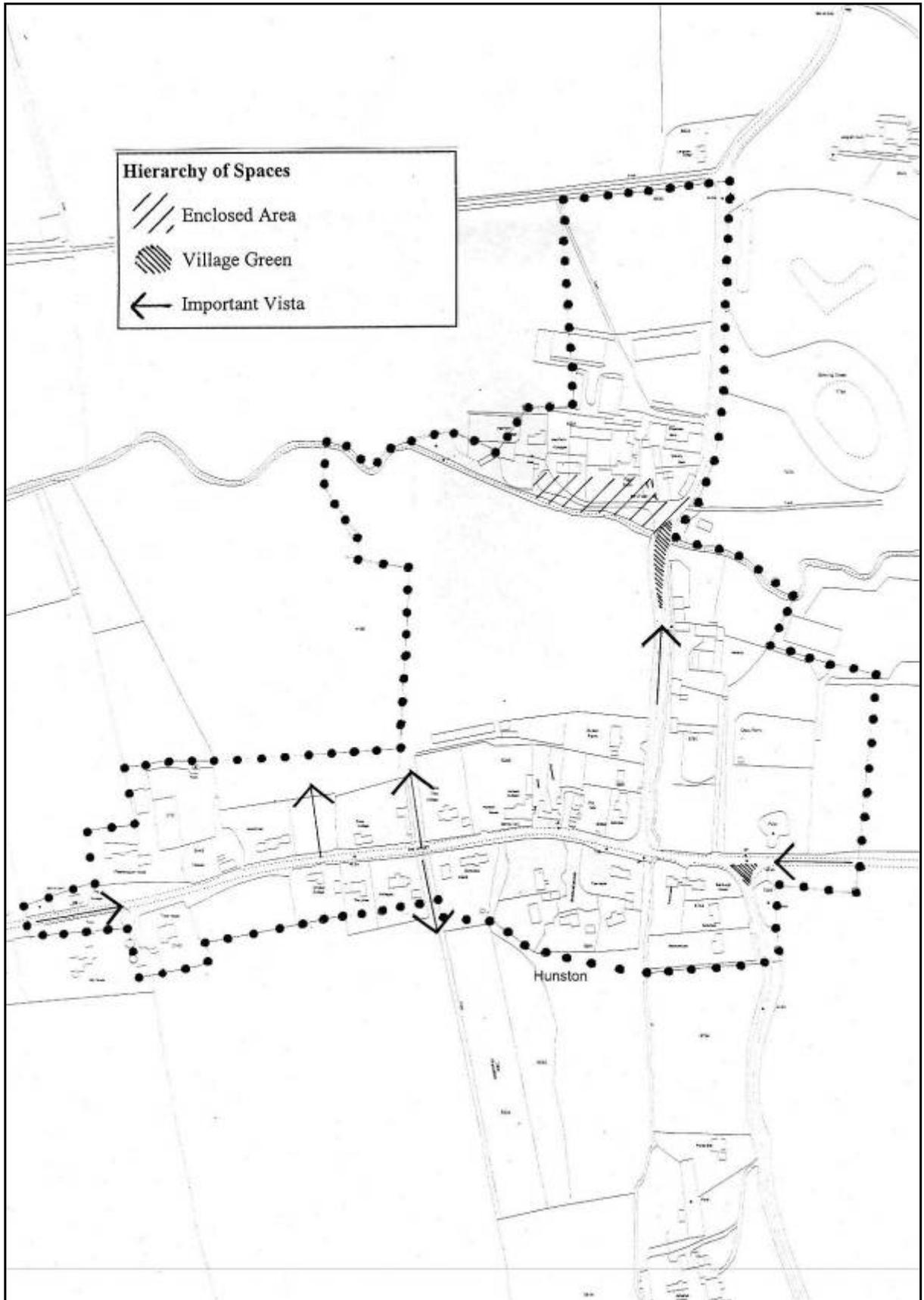


*Here there is also a preponderance of black weather-boarding on various barns and outbuildings, many now converted to domestic use.*

*Roofing materials around the village variously include on the older buildings thatch, plaintile and pantile, both natural and the black glazed variety so common in the Waveney valley.*

*Many of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century buildings have slate roofs, but most of the modern infill has made use of less appropriate concrete tiles of varying types.*





# Hierarchy of Spaces

*The conservation area in Hunston falls naturally into two parts, the main part east-west along The Street, the other at right angles off this to the north towards Langham.*

*This last has a secondary focus with a small area of green to the south of Langham Hall Farm. Here the road forks and rejoins itself again a short distance further on. The western branch crosses a bridge, whilst the eastern crosses a culvert, which presumably forms a ford in wet weather.*



*The Street winds through the dwellings scattered either side, not giving much clue anywhere of its relatively short length. Even at the countryside ends one expects another cottage around the next corner. The low density of the settlement is both an asset, with the views it affords across adjoining countryside, and a problem as traffic speeds through seeming not to notice the 'built-up' area.*

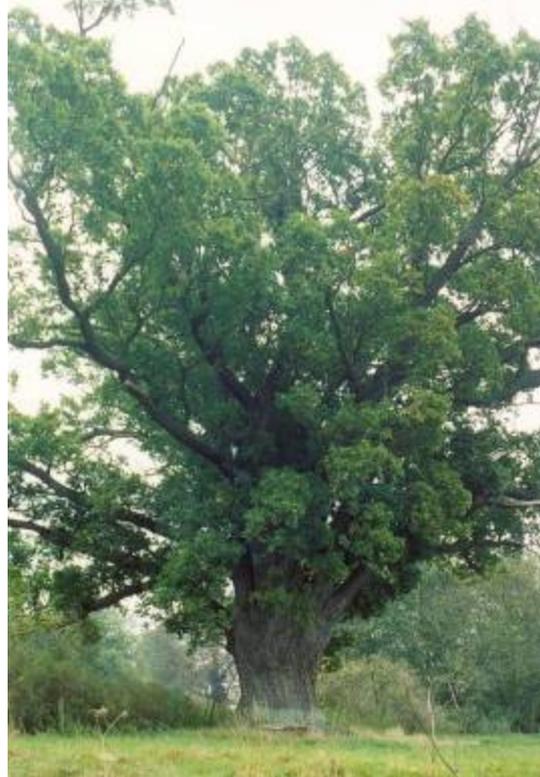
*At the east end of The Street, the village sign sits on a small triangular green where the road joins from the Church to the south, by no means central to the village, more at its eastern extreme.*



# Trees & Planting

*Two large areas of trees adjoin the conservation area. One is called Strip Plantation to the south of The Street stretching southwards to the Church, the other over the road from Hall Farm in the grounds of Langham Hall and enclosing a clearing with a bowling green. Near the latter a particularly fine elderly Oak sits alone in a field as part of a parkland view.*

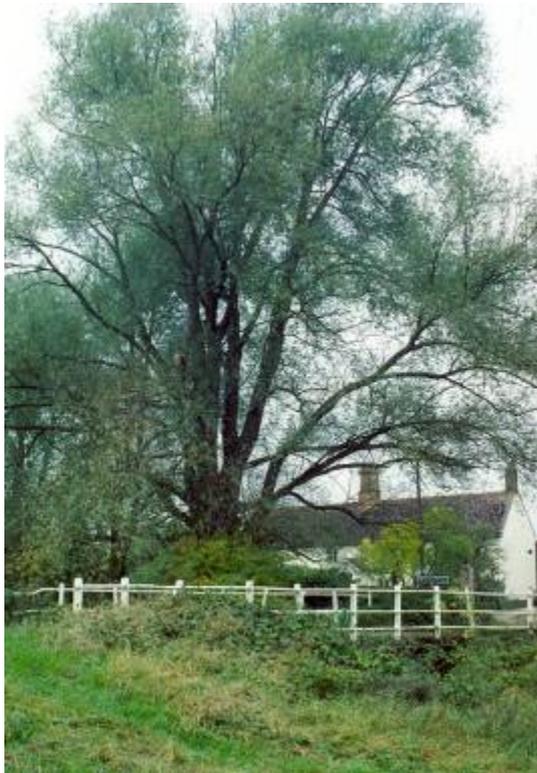
*Within the conservation area fine Willows thrive in the wet area adjoining the stream that forms the parish boundary south of Hall Farm. Along The Street in Hunston itself there are also many trees left in and around the scattered houses.*

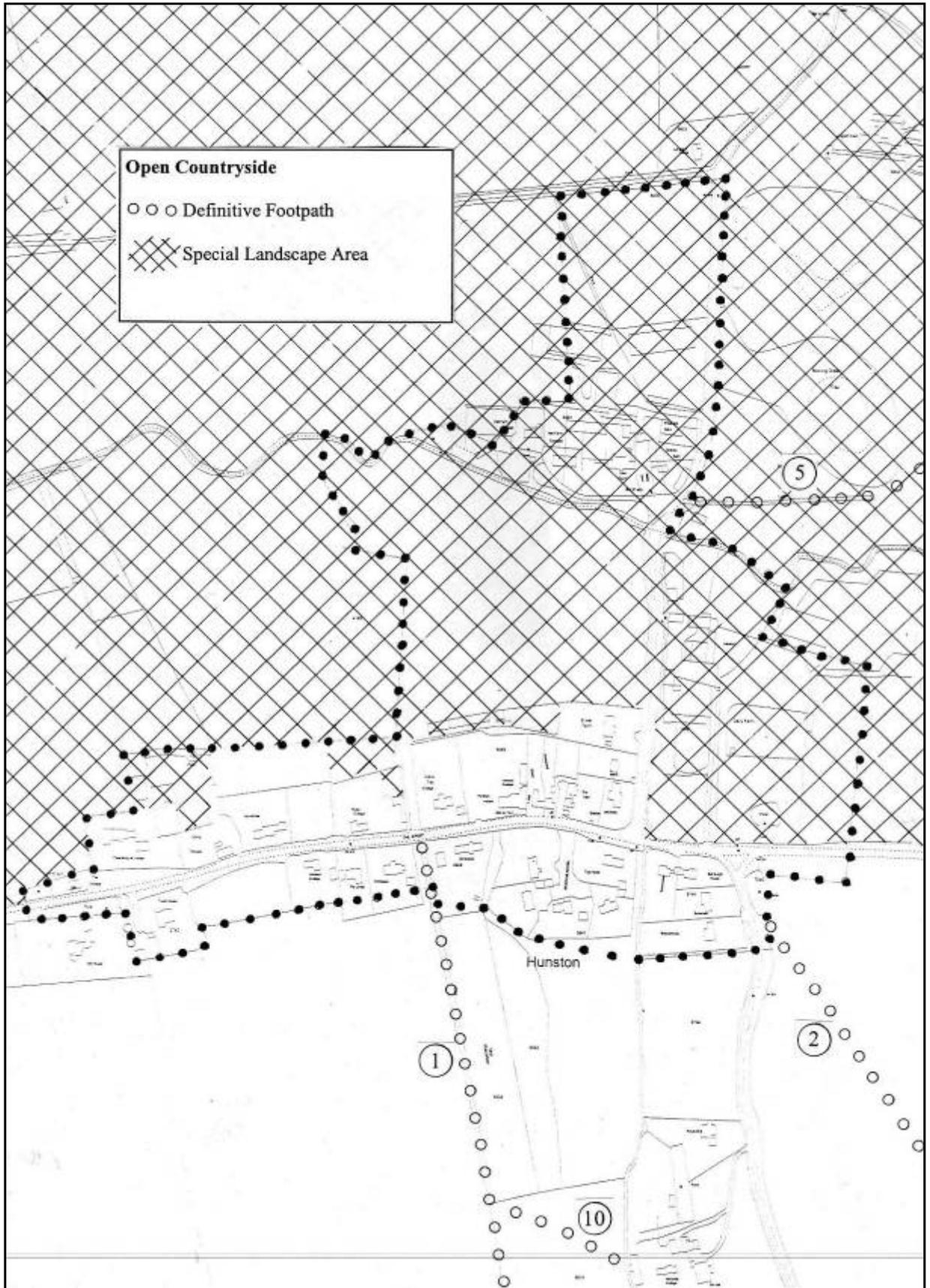


*The majority of Hunston's trees within the village, both along The Street and around the Church and Hunston Hall to the south are protected by a single Tree Preservation Order (WSCC TPO 223), which also includes the woodland area of Strip Plantation.*

*Further afield in the parish there are other trees, which have also been felt at risk and thus been made the subject of a tree preservation order. These include about forty hedgerow Oaks north-west and north-east of the centre covered by the earlier WSCC TPO 112.*

*Immediately adjoining the conservation area to the north, an area around The Lodge, containing Lime, Yew, Oak and Scots Pine, is now protected by TPO 183 (1992).*





# Relationship to Open Countryside

*The settlement pattern in Hunston, with houses scattered along The Street is mostly one plot deep. This means that, although not always visible, the countryside is never far away.*

*Indeed, immediately north of the village, fields of the river valley beyond are often visible through gaps in the buildings, so that any further infill here is to be discouraged. This area north of the road and settlement is designated a Special Landscape Area in the Local Plan.*

*Only the road northwards from the junction towards Langham crosses the river, and then twice with a dry ford and bridge alongside each other.*

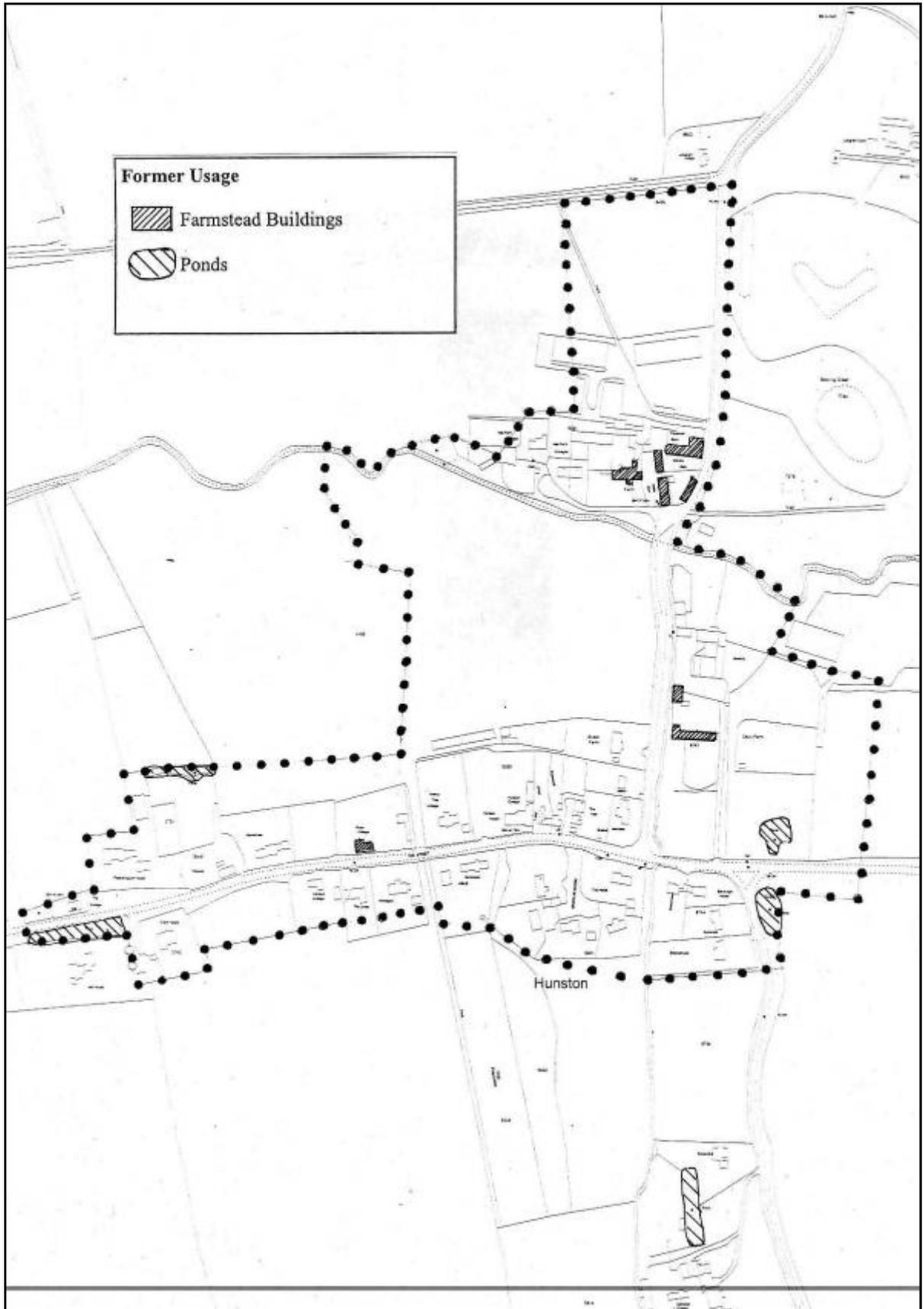


*Just north of the crossing, Langham's footpath 5 heads off eastwards through the grounds of Langham Hall towards Langham Church. The footpath network is otherwise reluctant at venturing through the river valley north of The Street.*

*Southwards however is a different story: here a series of footpaths follow many of the field boundaries, several of them radiating from the Church and Hunston Hall Farm.*

*Only two footpaths impinge on the conservation area at all, both heading off southwards. Footpath 1 comes off The Street towards the Church, footpath 2 more easterly providing a parallel route to the road towards Hunston Green.*





# Prevailing & Former Usage

*Hunston has its origins as a small agricultural community, a scattering of farmhouses and cottages.*

*In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, directories list for Hunston a cowkeeper, a shoemaker, a gamekeeper and several farmers.*

*There are a number of ponds remaining scattered around the village, most notably at either end of The Street, both on the south side.*



*The single windmill recorded for the parish sat on a mound called Mill Hill beside the road south of the Church. Presumably a post-mill, the workings were allegedly moved to nearby Badwell Ash.*

*The adjoining 'Mill Field' is recorded in the Tithe apportionment of 1846, along with a number of unusual field names. These include 'Steggles', 'Lyzard's Meadow', two fields called 'Drawbridges', three forming 'Lower, Ploughed and Meadow Debons' and 'First, Second, Little and Further Cockmerock'.*



# Losses & Possible Gains

*Overall Hunston seems to have resisted too much modern intrusion. There are a few infill bungalows of slightly foreign form, where asymmetric modern uPVC windows and inappropriate concrete roof tiles have been used, which do not fit with the local vernacular.*

*The large sheds used for chicken farming just north of Langham Hall Farm are fortunately tucked away, whilst the nearby Anglian Water pump-house box could be better screened.*

*Further south in Hunston proper, the otherwise ubiquitous rural hedge and rough verge is interrupted with a stretch of suburban fence and mown grass strewn with stone blocks to prevent over-running vehicles.*



*Some frontages are unfortunately planted up with alien species such as Leylandii, which not only look wrong, but can obscure views out as much as infill development. This last should also be resisted, as the views in and out of the conservation area are an integral part of its charm.*

*Like many small villages, Hunston and Langham suffer from a surfeit of overhead wiring carrying the villages' telephone and electricity supplies. This can be quite overpowering in places, a tangled web preferably not seen silhouetted against the sky. The undergrounding of these utility supply lines would greatly improve the appearance of the conservation area.*

# References & Further Reading

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*Suffolk County Council 1997 Sites and Monuments Record*

*Tithe Map & Apportionment 1846 Hunston 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*