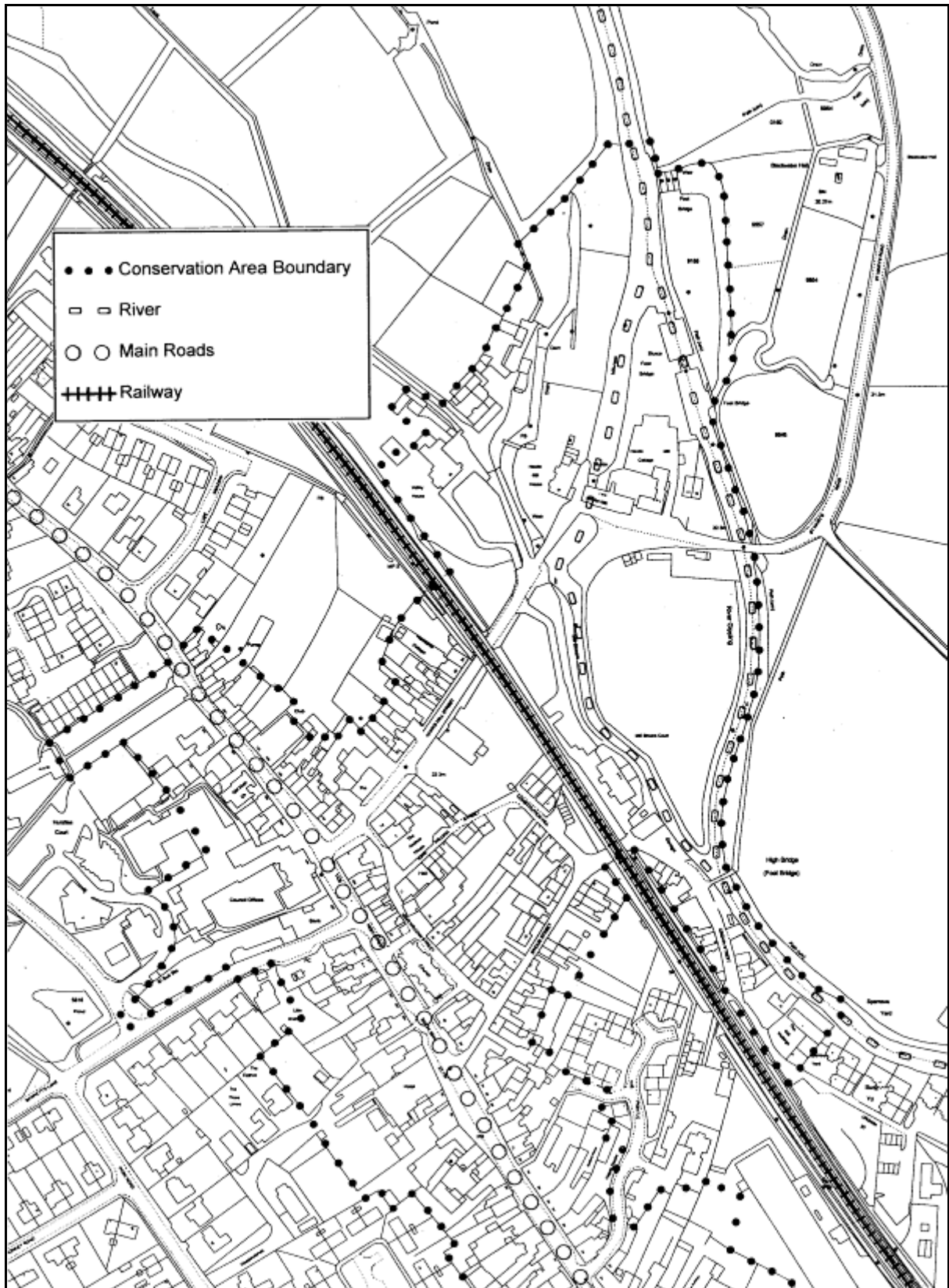




CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL

Needham Market NW



INTRODUCTION

The conservation area in Needham Market was designated in 1970 by East Suffolk County Council, and inherited by Mid Suffolk District Council at its inception in 1974. It was last appraised and extended by Mid Suffolk District Council in 2000.

The Council has a duty to review its conservation area designations from time to time, and this appraisal examines Needham Market 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 Needham Market'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 2011.

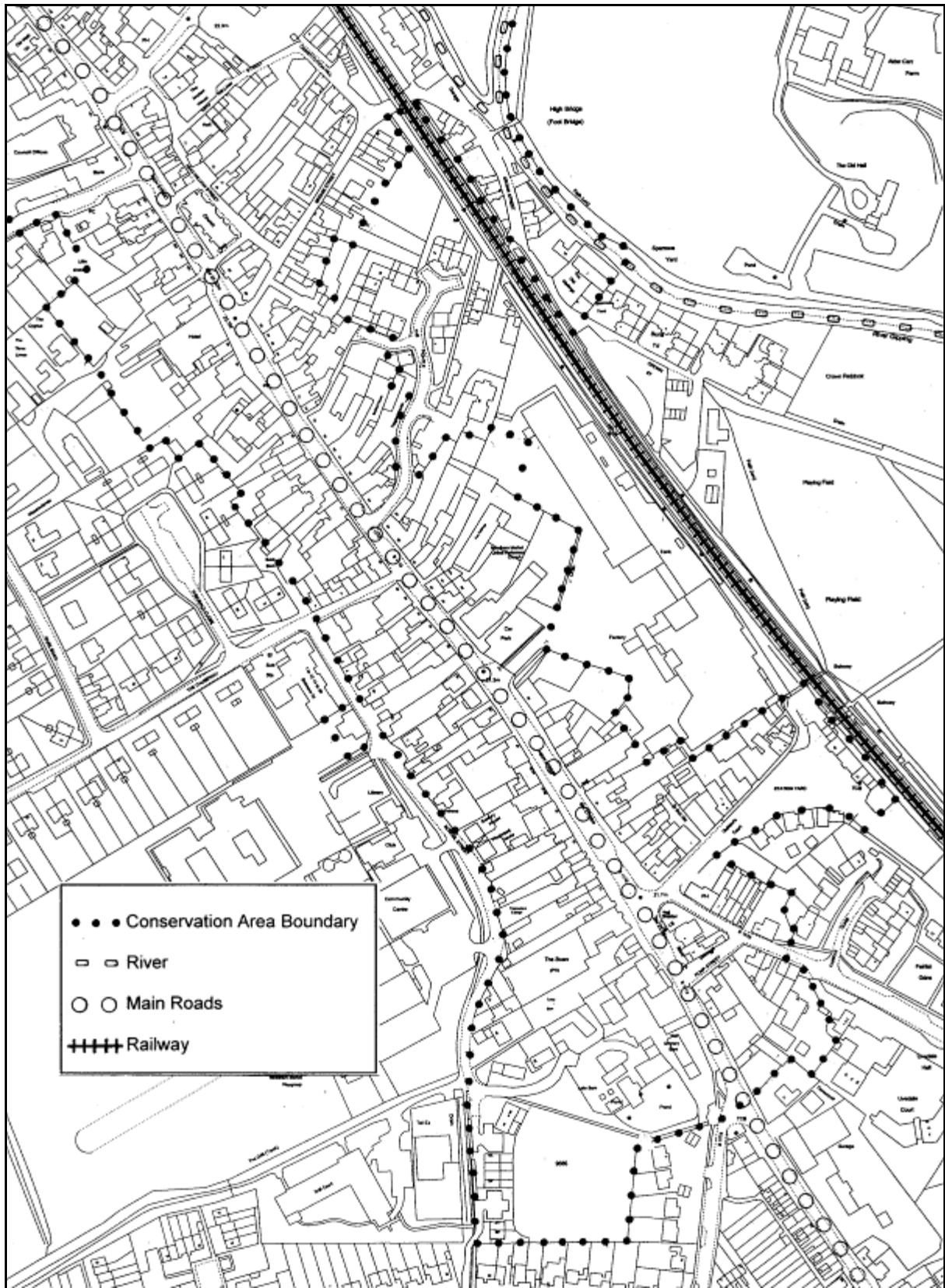


Town Sign



View South-east down High Street

Needham Market SE



TOPOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK

Needham Market is situated in central Suffolk, eight miles north-west of Ipswich between 20m and 40m above OD. It is built on the western bank of the river Gipping, which runs south-eastwards from here to Ipswich, where it forms the Orwell estuary.

The river between Ipswich and Stowmarket, four miles north-west of Needham, was canalised as the Ipswich and Stowmarket Navigation in 1793, and the valley has always been a main transport corridor inland from the coast.

The road through Needham Market from Ipswich to Bury St Edmunds was turnpiked by the Ipswich to Scole trust in 1711, whilst the same valley route was followed by the Eastern Union Railway with its line from Ipswich to Stowmarket, and thence to Bury or Norwich, in 1846.

Surrounded by the boulder clays of 'High Suffolk', the town itself is built on alluvial deposits over the underlying strata of Chalk and Pleistocene crags, exposed by the river's action since the ice ages.

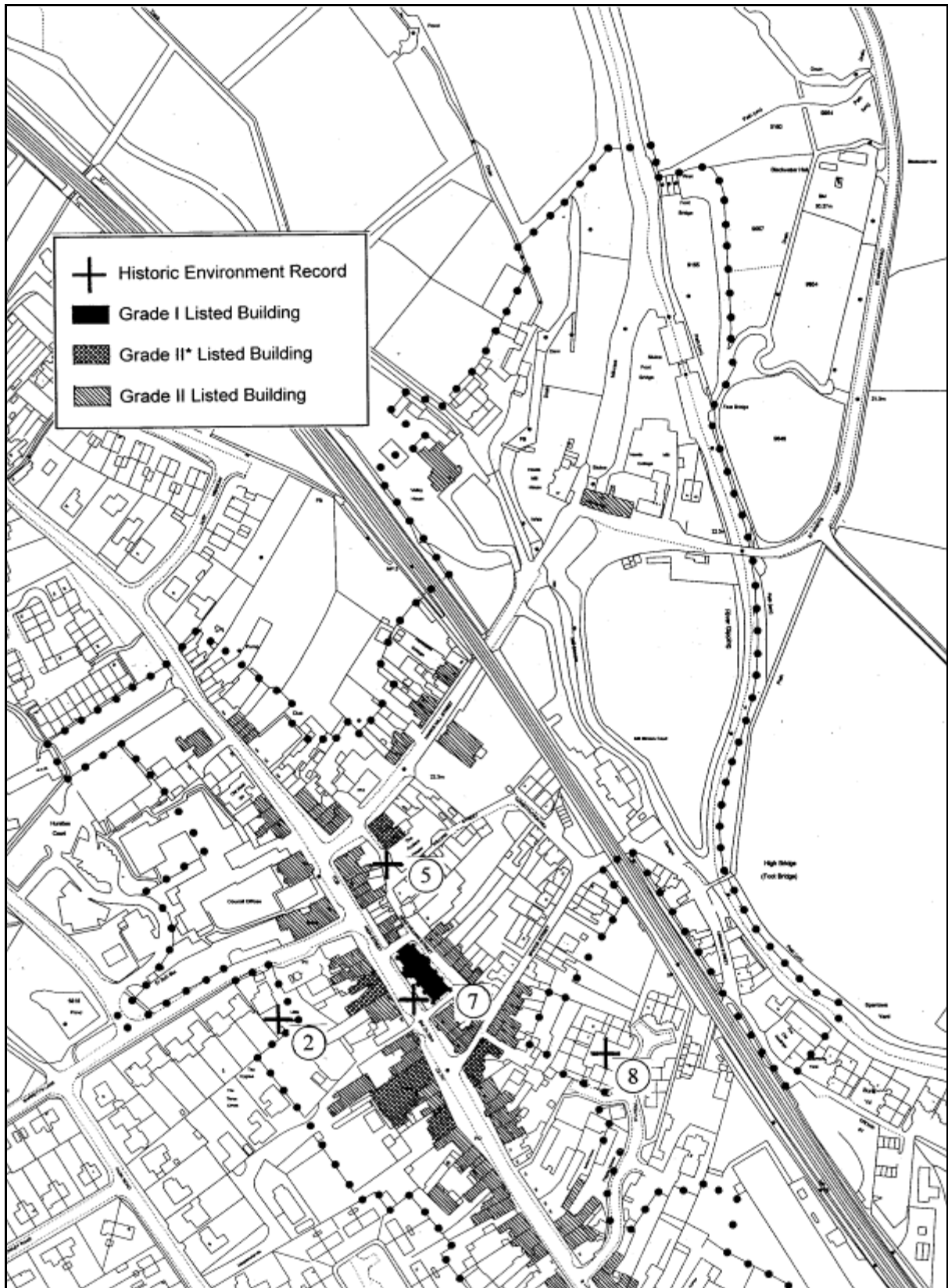


Aerial Photograph



Extract from OS Map

Needham Market NW



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

To date Needham Market has yielded remains from most periods of archaeological history, confirming its ancient status as a settlement.

One excavation carried out has yielded remains from the Mesolithic right through to Medieval times.

The County Historic Environment Record lists some 9 sites plus 7 miscellaneous stray finds ranging from Neolithic flints, through Bronze Age beakers and Roman coins, to Saxon loomweights and spindle whorls and Medieval pottery.

Needham was not specifically listed in the Domesday survey of 1086, at that time being part of the parish of Barking. It only achieved civil parish status in 1901, its church remaining a Chapel of Ease until 1907, and consequently it has no graveyard.

Having grown up in a corner of Barking parish as a result of the main road passing through, it was granted a market and fair by Henry III in 1226. The market was formerly held on Wednesdays and supplemented by the fair held on St Jude's Day in October, although both had died out by the end of the 18th Century.

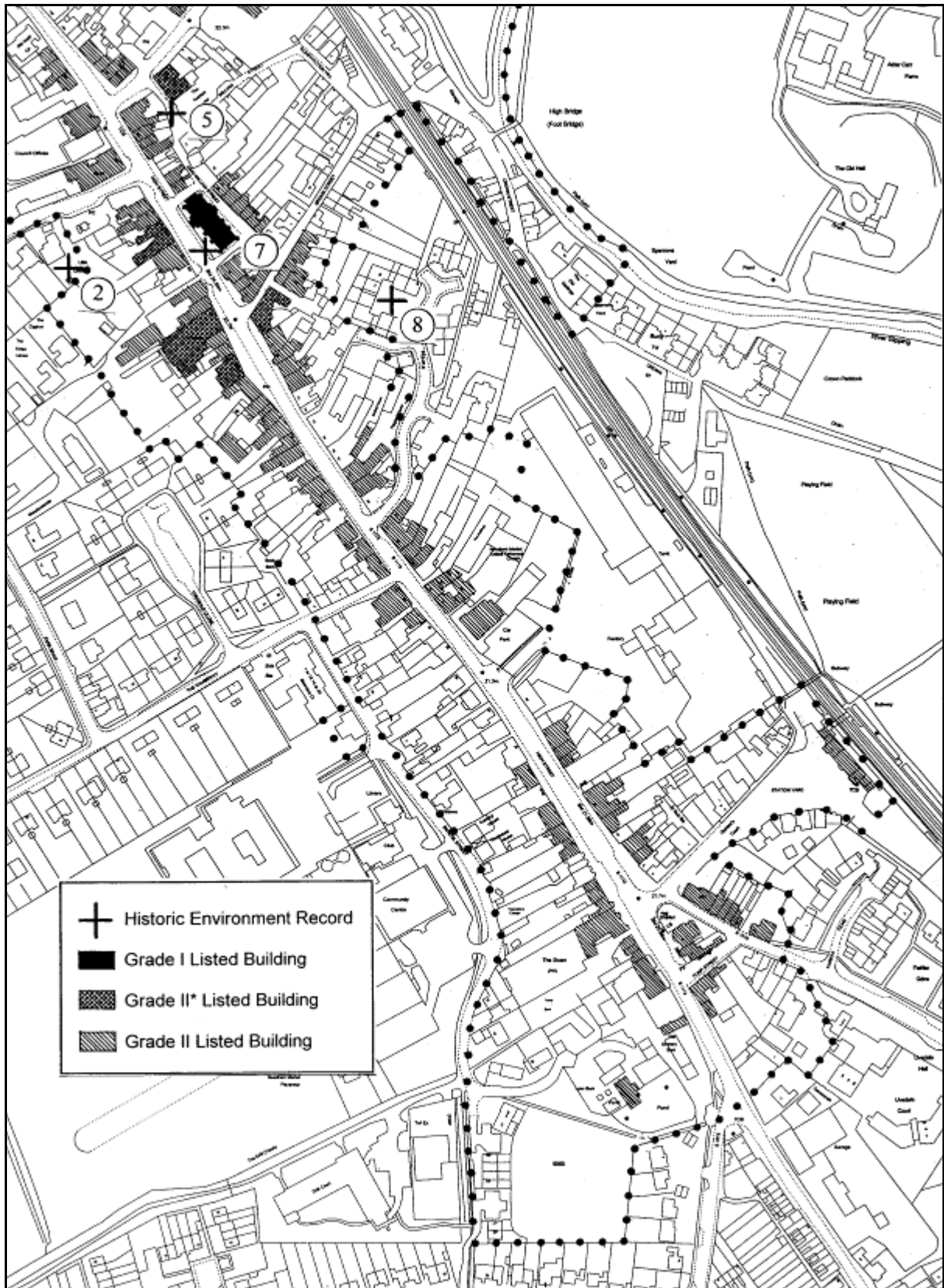


Church of St John the Baptist

<p><i>F</i> Solenera . ii . Berchingas cell . Sca . A . c . foca 7 faca . t . r . e . p . m . vii . car . fre . TU . xxvii . uiti . h . xxv . TU . xx . iiii . bord . h . xxx . TU v . fetu . h . iiii . sep . iiii . car . in . dno . TU . xx . iiii . car . homiu . h . xv . Eccleia . xxx . iiii . ad . lili . i . fa . 7 . ii . car . 7 . x . ii . ad . p . i . Silua . de . l . p . temp . i . mol . 7 . unā . exclusā . Alii . molini . 7 . in . exclusā . affi . mol . hi . Rob . malet . partē . 7 . ii . arpen uinee . In . dno . xi . ranē . 7 . xx . iiii . an . 7 . xxx . partē . 7 . c . oīs . 7 . xlviii . cap . 7 . iiii . libi .</p> <p>383 a Hoies . de . vi . ac . 7 . hnt . i . car . Ibi . additi . vi . luic . manerio . t . r . e . W . & . ual . ii . fol . Rex & . coms . focū . Vnum . 7 . dim . ex . his . habuit . hardwin qdo . forisfecit . h . tēn . abbas . TU . ual . m . nriū . xvi . lib . & . abbas . dedit ad . firmā . p . xx . lib . h . e . s . l . g . & . iiii . qf . in . longo . 7 . viii . qf . in . lat . 7 xx . d . de . gr .</p> <p><i>F</i> In . bchingas . tenet . Rog . c . xviii . ac . de . abbe . de . suo . dno . 7 . s . melli de . vi . ac . & . ual . x . fol .</p> <p>BOSMERE Hundred 16 St. Etheldreda's held BARKING with full jurisdiction before 1066 as a manor; 7 carucates of land. Then 27 villagers, now 25; then 24 smallholders, now 30; then 5 slaves, now 4. Always 3 ploughs in lordship. Then 24 men's ploughs, now 15. A church, 83 acres of free land, 2 ploughs. Meadow, 52 acres; woodland at 50 pigs; always 1 mill, and a dam of another mill, and in the dam of the other mill Robert Malet has a share; 2 arpents of vines. In lordship 11 cows, 23 cattle, 30 pigs, 100 sheep, 48 goats. 4 free men with 6 acres. They have 1 plough. These (free men) were added to this manor after 1066. Value 2s. The King and the Earl (have) the jurisdiction. Of these (free men), Hardwin had one and a half when he forfeited; now the Abbot (holds them). Value of the manor then £16; the Abbot granted it at a revenue for £20. It has 1 league and 4 furlongs in length, and 8 furlongs in width; 20d in tax.</p> <p>18 In BARKING Roger holds 118 acres from the Abbot in his lordship. 1 church with 6 acres. Value 10s.</p>
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Extract from Domesday

Needham Market SE



INTRINSIC QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

Needham Market's only grade I listed building is the Church of St John the Baptist, all Perpendicular and somewhat unusual in having no tower or spire and being aligned north-west - south-east parallel to the High Street.

Its 15th Century hammerbeam roof is one of the finest in Suffolk, "the culminating achievement of the English carpenter" according to Cautley (quoted by Pevsner).

A significant proportion of the town's other buildings, mainly domestic in nature and situated along the High Street, are listed grade II, with the best examples grade II*.

These latter include timber-framed houses such as the 15th Century 'Ancient House' at 1/3 King William Street, where the much restored framing is exposed, and the former Bull Inn at 86 High Street, early 16th Century and roughcast rendered with an elaborate dragon post. 'Tudor House' at 111/113 High Street is late 15th Century with good timber-framed rear wings, which are not apparent from the 19th Century painted brick front.

The other two grade II* listed buildings also seem more obviously brick, their 18th Century fronts still concealing older timber-framed cores: 93 High Street is 17th Century with an early 18th Century front in red and white brick whilst no.99, The Limes, is 16th Century with a late 18th Century front.



Hammerbeam Roof



Carved Dragon Post



White & Red Brick, Plaintile & Slate



Red Brick Nogging, Plaintile



Black Weather-boarding, Pantile



Red & White Brick, Slate

TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

Needham Market is predominantly a town of lime render and plaintiles, very much in the Suffolk tradition of timber-framed construction, although instances do occur where the frame is exposed.

Some of these older buildings now have more recent brick fronts and can only be spotted by their remaining steep plaintile roofs. These often have slate eaves courses, a local detail evolved most probably to cover the brick front, where the roof has been extended.

The more recent buildings of the 19th Century in local soft red or white bricks are more often slate roofed, the brickwork sometimes lost behind a rendered or painted finish.

The picture is completed by a scattering of other local materials including red brick built in rat-trap bond, pantile roofs, one thatched roof and a few examples of black weatherboarding on outbuildings and barns.

Knapped flint was used on parts of the Church, and also appears unworked in numerous boundary walls in the town, usually with red brick piers and cappings.

Flints can also be found as a paving material throughout the town, usually as cobbled aprons to back of pavement areas. At one time the entire High Street was paved in York stone with a cobbled edge strip at the kerb.

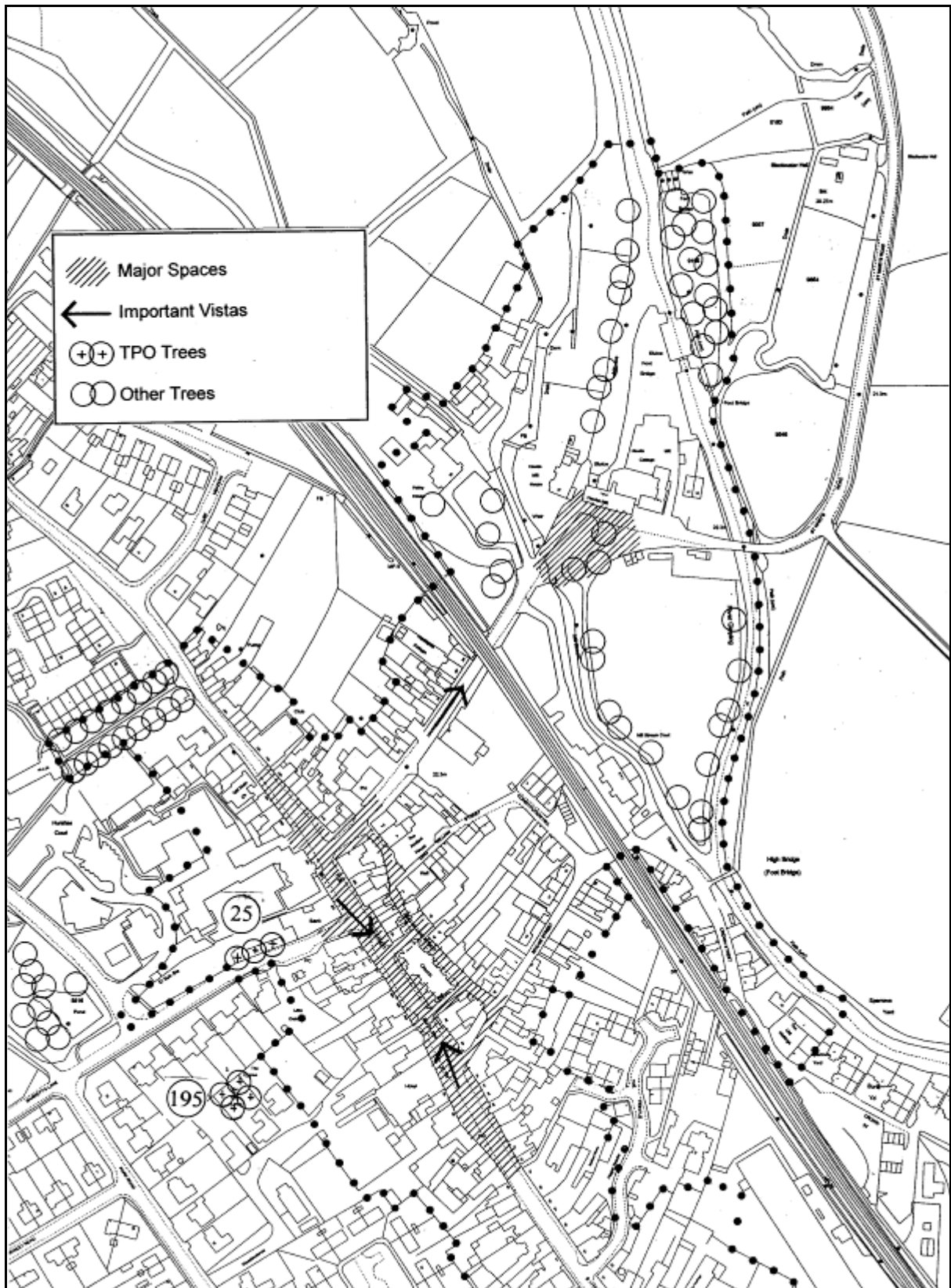


Pargetting and Plaintile



Rat-trap Bond and Pantile

Needham Market NW



HIERARCHY OF SPACES

Needham Market is a very linear town that has grown up along a through road.

Throughout the length of the High Street the building line moves in and out creating both pinch points and wider spaces in-between, sometimes with a very wide pavement where the cobbled apron has been lost.

Bomb damage during the war removed part of the street just south of the old Town Hall. This area is now replaced by a car park, single storey modern showrooms (used as a gym) and some infill housing and has left the town with two foci.

The lesser of these is at the southern end of the town around the junction with Coddendam Road where the former mid-17th Century Free School is now used as offices. Off from here is the Station Yard where the fine Victorian station building closes the view.

The main focus is at the northern end of the High Street, essentially around the Church. Here are to be found most of the town's commercial premises and the Mid Suffolk District Council offices.

The back streets to the east of this section of High Street are fairly intimate in scale, whilst Hawksmill Street dives deep into a cutting to underpass the railway, leading down to the river and the enclosed area around the mill.

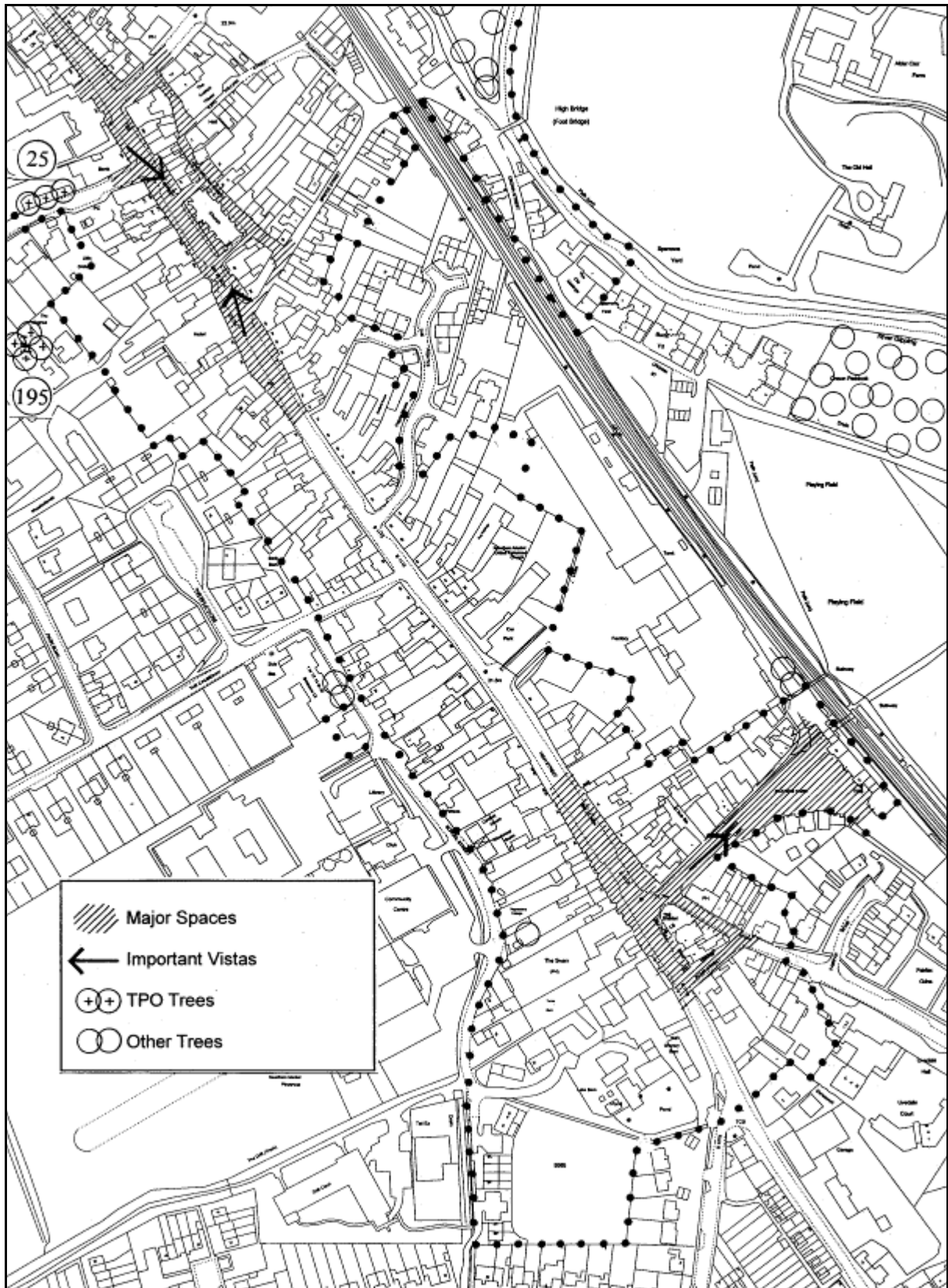


High Street



King William Street

Needham Market SE



TREES AND PLANTING

Needham Market is not noted for its trees, the High Street maintaining a consistently urban frontage throughout its length.

Tree Preservation Orders for the parish cover a number of trees and groups of trees mainly on the periphery of the town. Two of these are more central, TPO 195 covering three Lime trees behind the Limes and TPO 25 a False Acacia, two Yews and a weeping Ash adjoining Barclays Bank in Barretts Lane.

Further Lime trees occur as an avenue through a small grassed green space north of the Council offices.

The area around Hawks Mill and the river is well provided with the usual wetland and other trees, especially surrounding Valley House.

Unusual trees can be found: in Station Yard adjoining the railway embankment there is a large Wellingtonia; whilst in School Street to the rear of the old Town Hall there is an old Mulberry and further down behind 21 High Street is a fine Walnut tree.

About a mile south-west of the town south of the Barking Road lies Priestley Wood, one of several ancient woodland remnants in the area around Barking. A little nearer the town, north of the same road, there is 'Park Wood', the remains of a Medieval deer park.

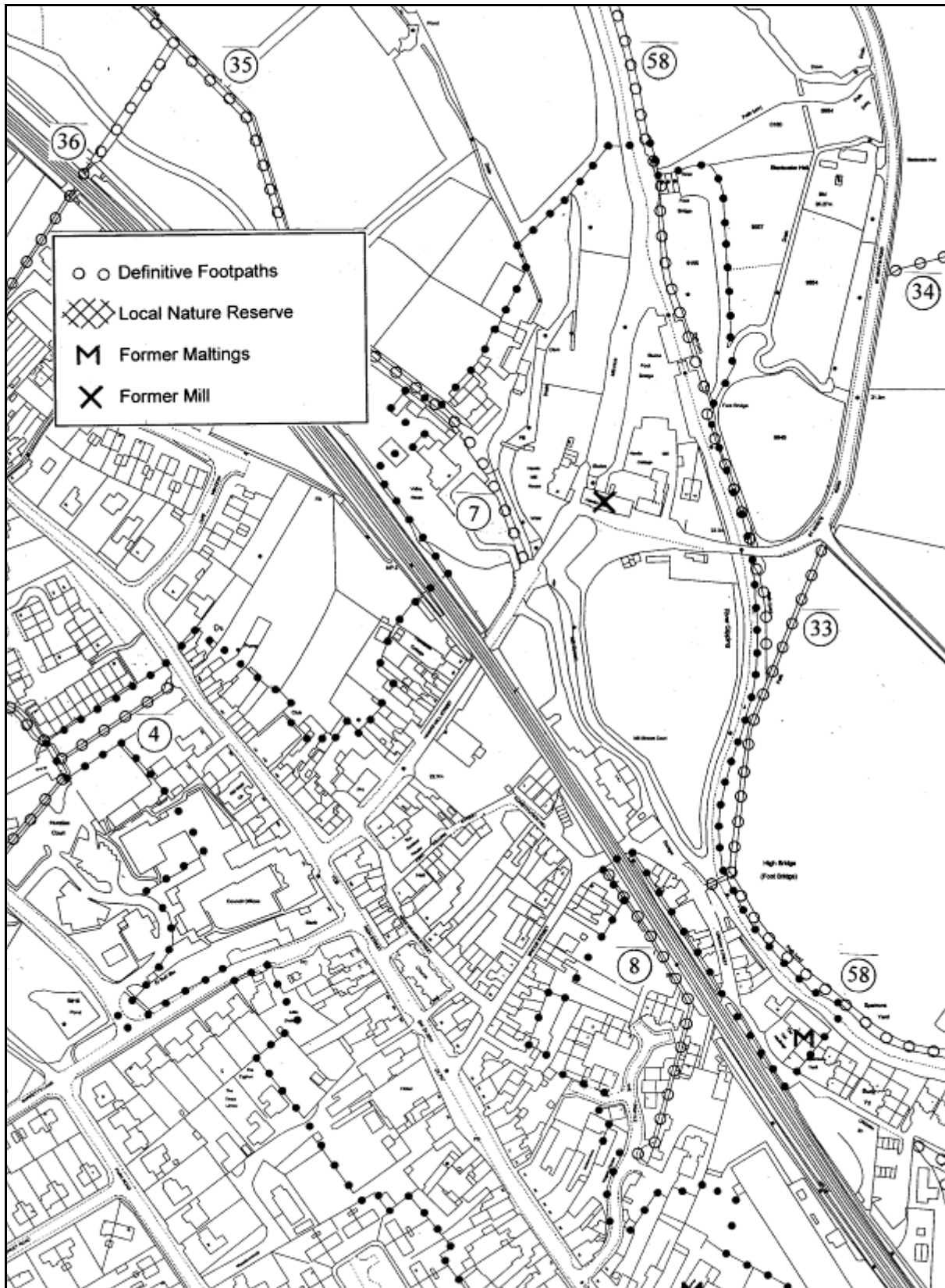


Avenue of Limes



Wellingtonia at Station

Needham Market NW



COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS

Immediately to the east of the town, effectively the other side of the railway tracks, the river Gipping, with its low lying water meadows and pastures, brings the countryside close by.

At the south end of this green corridor, along which the Gipping Valley path runs, there is Needham Lakes recreation area, making the most of an old flooded gravel pit. The adjoining 'Station Field' is a water meadow designated as a Local Nature Reserve, accessible by footpath from Station Yard, whilst the other areas of the river can be reached via Bridge Street and Hawksmill Street further north.

Access to the countryside on the west side of the town is also available by a number of footpaths running parallel up the hill perpendicular to the High Street. These ascend the valley side passing through modern developments to reach the fields along the ridge. One of these is 'The Causeway', a track used for funeral processions up until the 1900's, leading from Needham to the burial ground at Barking church.

Immediately to the south of the town, this same hillside has been carved out into a chalk pit, one path leading southwards up the hill running along an apparent clifftop.

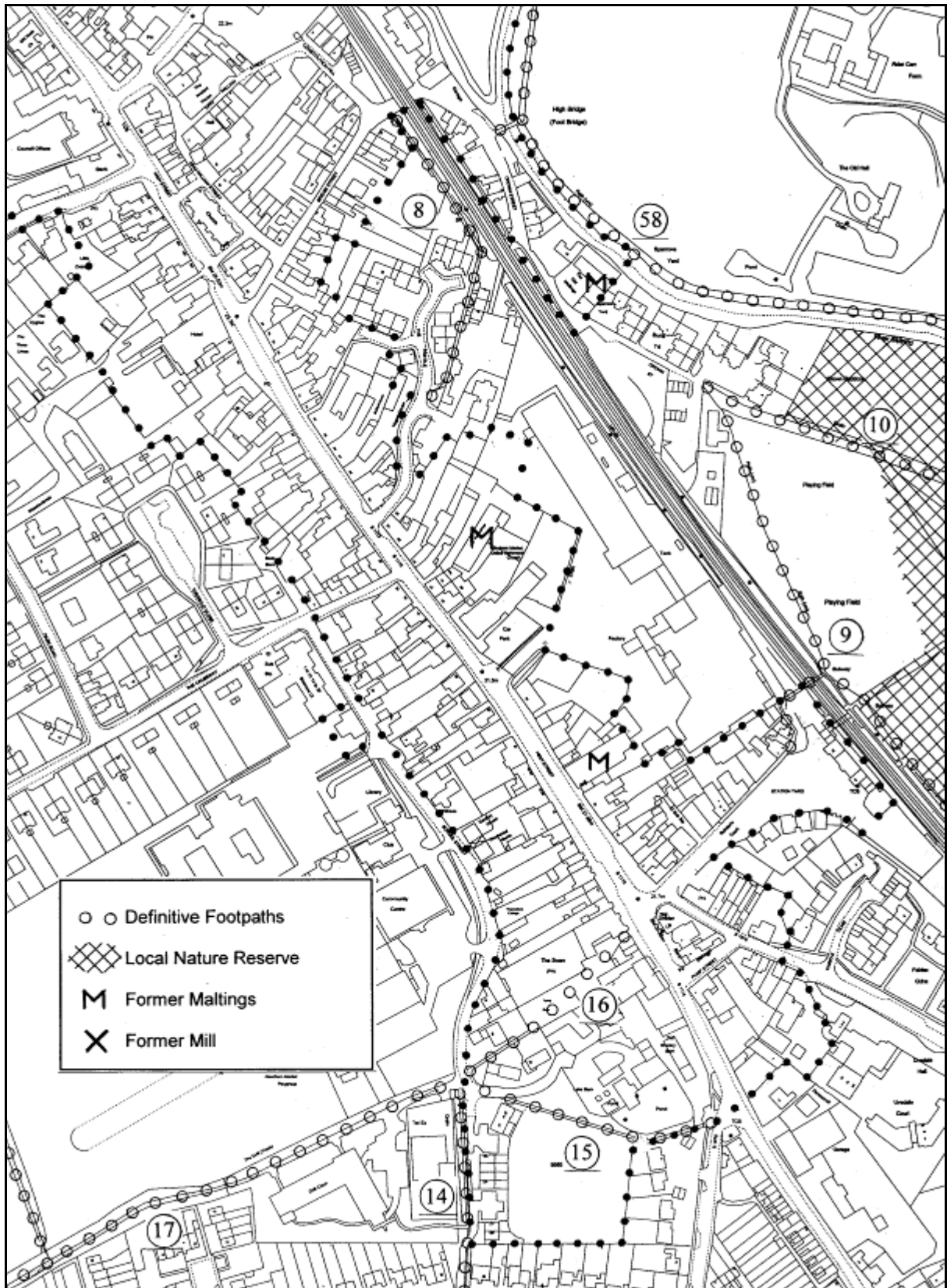


Gipping Valley Footpath



Footbridge over River

Needham Market SE



PREVAILING AND FORMER USAGE

The old chalk pit south of the town is surrounded by fields with names indicating the former presence of a lime kiln there, whilst to the south of the pit the Tithe map of 1841 shows a windmill on the hill.

Two large watermills at one time harnessed the power of the river's flow for grinding corn: Bosmere Mill to the east near Needham Lakes and Hawks Mill at the north end of the town. Both were sited adjacent to locks on the Gipping navigation, remains of which can still be seen despite being converted to sluices by the river authority.

A millstone set in the pavement of Station Yard, outside Quintons warehouses, recalls earlier uses in the area.

Most of the town's industry was agriculturally based, there being at one time three maltings, one in Crown Street, one at 20 High Street, the other behind 44 High Street which still has its square slate clad malt kiln tower.

Between the 15th and 17th Centuries Needham Market was an important centre for Suffolk's woollen cloth industry, being much on a par with Lavenham with twenty or so clothiers, but smaller than Ipswich or Bury.

There was also at one time a tannery somewhere near the river, and a brickworks thrived in the 19th Century about half a mile south-west of the town along Barretts Lane.



Hawks Mill



Former Maltings

LOSSES AND POSSIBLE GAINS

One obvious loss is the break in the High Street where the wartime bomb damage let in some modern infill. Should this be redeveloped at some stage, the old building line should be reinstated with new buildings respecting the local vernacular and any vehicular accesses reduced to the small scale of other side ways.

Station Yard, although dominated by the station building itself, has also suffered some modern intrusions on its southern side which fortunately follow a natural building line leading around to the car park on the right.

Whilst the town was by-passed in the 1970's by the A14 dual carriageway, the High Street still has to endure local through traffic of sizeable proportions. A traffic calming scheme in 1994 imposed a number of unsightly temporary concrete build-outs, which are slowly being phased out and replaced by more permanent measures, as successive areas come up for maintenance and improvement by the highway authority.

Here and there overhead wiring is intrusive and should be put underground if the opportunity arises.

The unlisted buildings are somewhat at risk of losing traditional features that contribute to the streetscape, the main offender being the installation of uPVC windows. Indeed the owners of some of them have already succumbed to the salesmen.



Bombed Out Area



Overhead Wiring

NEUTRAL AREAS

The quiet backwater area at the lower ends of Bridge Street and Constitution Hill and through under the railway bridge along Crown Street contains no particular gems architecturally, but neither do these areas detract from the town other than for the presence of a car repairs workshop.

Similarly the extremities of the main town centre are neutral in their value, both at the north end past the Council offices and to the south beyond Station Yard.

A number of buildings in the town are not listed, but nevertheless make a positive contribution to the street scene, and should perhaps form the basis of a Local List.

These buildings are for the most part Victorian in age and built of red brick. They include the Methodist Church, the nearby Cottage Home and the Institute and Club opposite at the top end of the High Street; St. John's Hall and adjoining former National School building off King William Street; the Three Tuns public house in Hawksmill Street; the outbuildings at the rear of the Town Hall, the adjoining cottages in rat-trap bond, the last part remaining of the former school in School Street and the former maltings behind 44 High Street.

Of the few similar quality buildings in white brick, nos. 70-72 High Street and the former maltings at 20 High Street are of note.



Crown Street



Former National School

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This Appraisal adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Mid Suffolk District Council Environment Policy Panel
19 July 2011