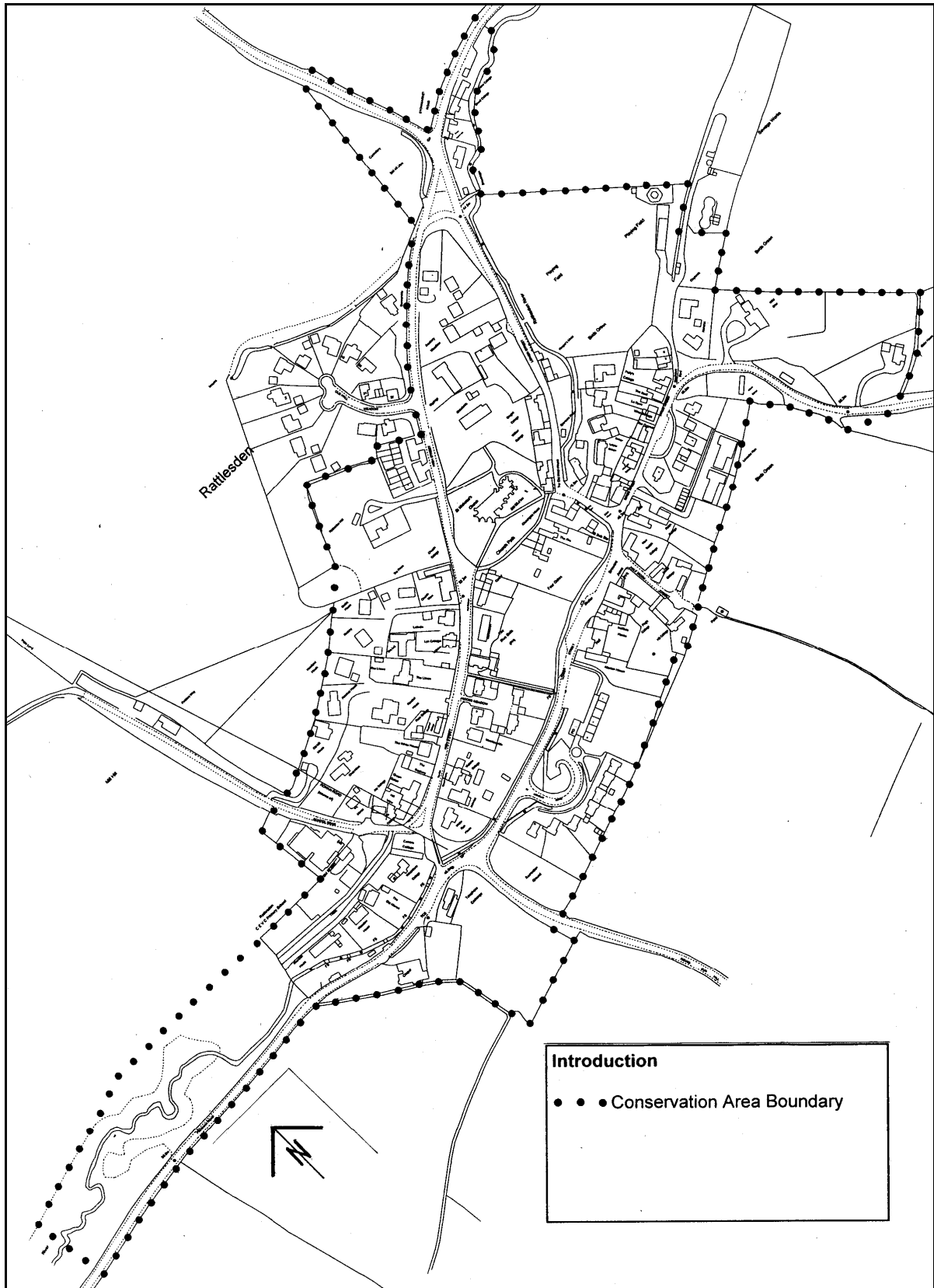




# CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL





## INTRODUCTION

The conservation area in Rattlesden was originally designated by West Suffolk County Council in the early 1970's and inherited by the newly formed Mid Suffolk District Council at its inception in 1974. The conservation area 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 Rattlesden 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 Rattlesden'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.

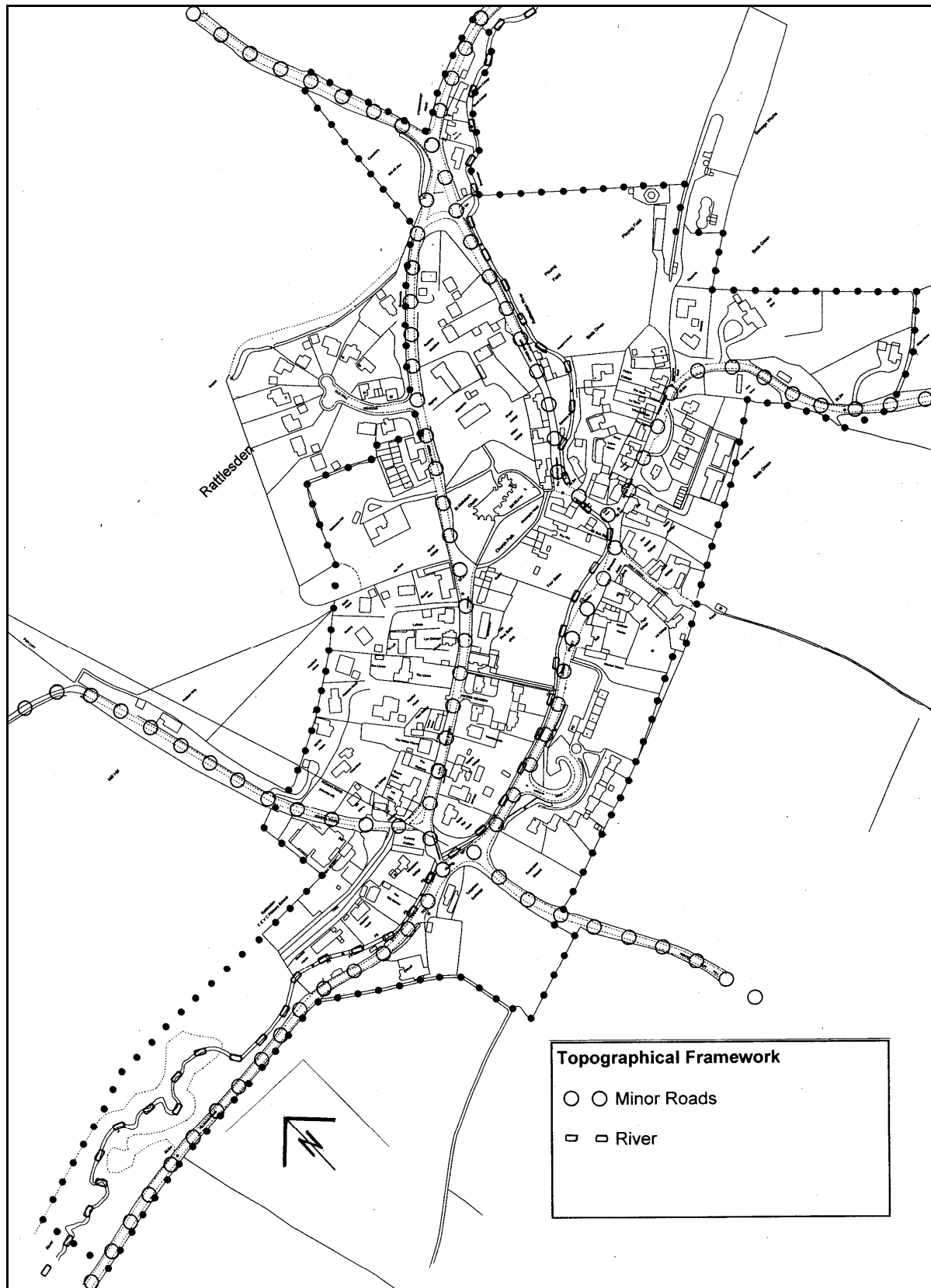
Text, photographs and map overlays by Patrick Taylor, Conservation Architect, Mid Suffolk District Council 2010.



**View from SW**



**Bird's Green**



## TOPOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK

Rattlesden is a large spread out village in central Suffolk centred around the valley of the Rattlesden River, which flows eastwards to join the River Gipping at Stowmarket, before continuing south-eastwards to Ipswich and the sea.

The broad flat bottomed valley is cut down through the overlying clays of 'High' Suffolk's Till plain, towards the underlying chalk, and is now filled with more recent alluvial deposits.

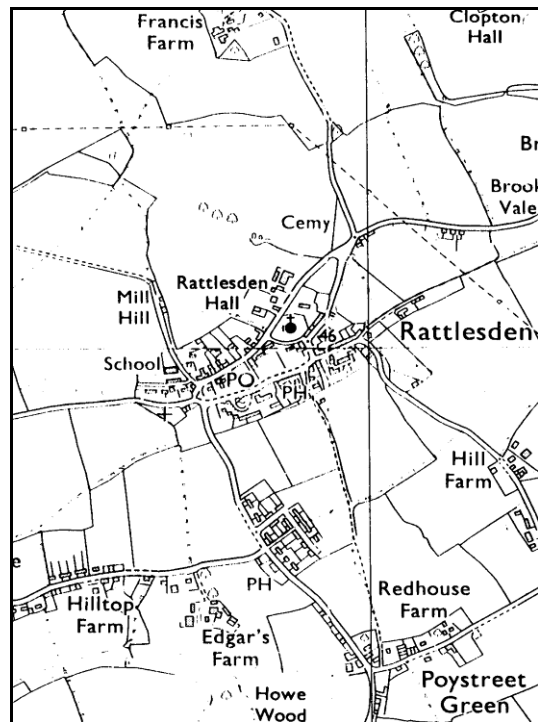
One section of undeveloped valley to the west is included in the conservation area, but lies outside the village's settlement boundary.

Until the coming of the Stowmarket Navigation in 1789, the Rattlesden River was not a mere tributary, but rather the main watercourse, as was witnessed in the Middle Ages by the unloading at Rattlesden of Caen stone, bound for the building of the Abbey at Bury St Edmunds.

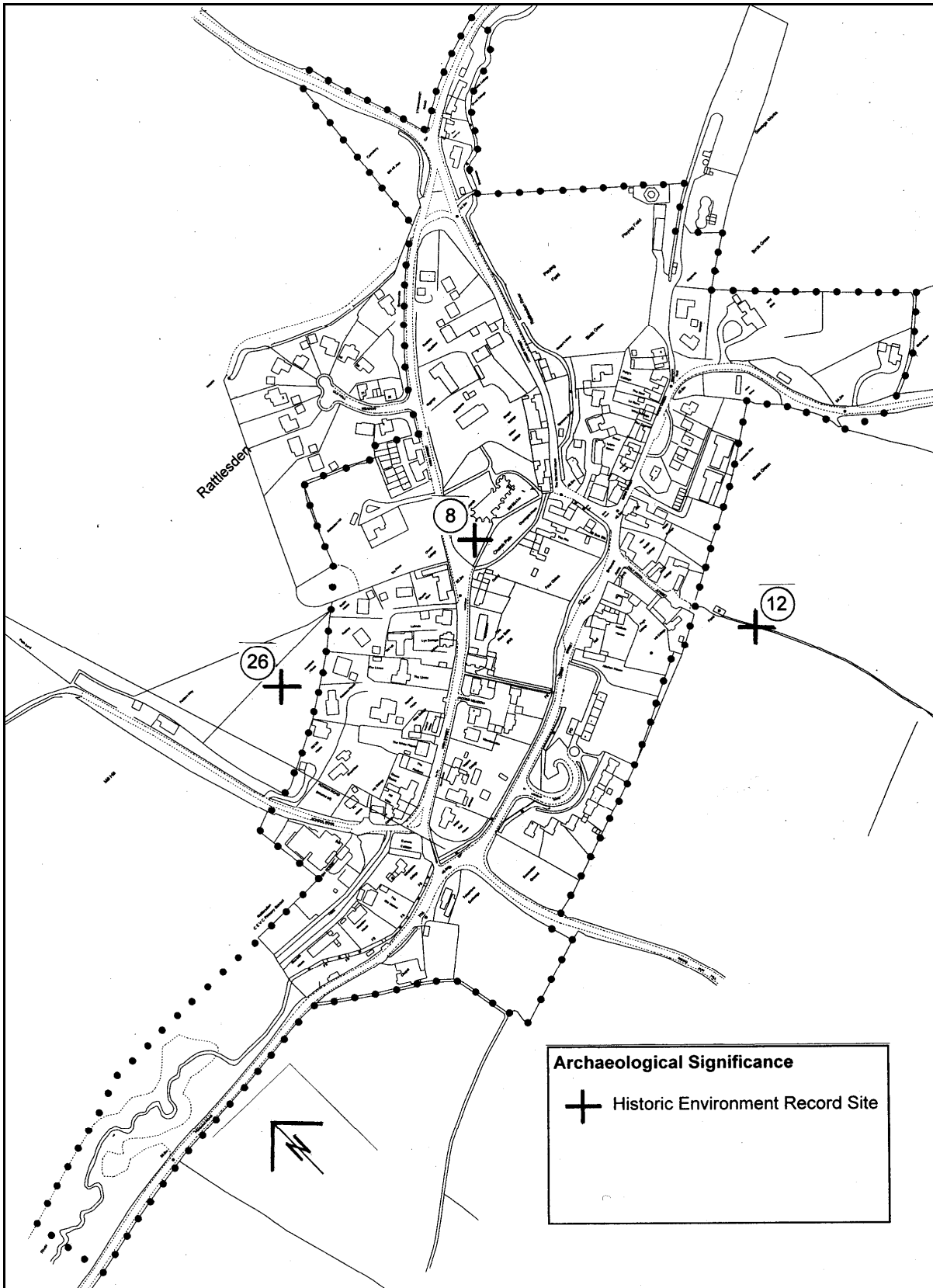
Although now tucked away from any major route, Rattlesden was also at one time much better placed in terms of overland transport. To the north and south of the village there are remains of a Roman road, more recently known as the Peddar's Way, which continues from here north-westwards across Norfolk to the Wash.



Aerial Photograph



Extract from OS Map



## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

Although Rattlesden was probably an important crossing point in Roman times, its history goes back much further. The Suffolk County Historic Environment Record lists finds from the wider parish that include a Neolithic flint axe and a Bronze Age axe and bronze dagger.

More recent finds include Saxon remains, Medieval pottery, a statuette of St John and a 13<sup>th</sup> Century lead seal. The record includes only the Medieval Church within the built-up area, but doubtless further archaeology remains there beneath the mainly timber-framed settlement.

The Domesday survey of 1086 lists a church with 24 acres of land. The main manor is believed to have been sited near the present Rattlesden Hall, a 17<sup>th</sup> Century farmhouse. There were several sub-manors around the parish, including Stonhams, Thurmodes, Wood Hall and Clopton Hall.

These last two, situated east and north of the village respectively, are among the half dozen or so Medieval moated sites that remain in the parish, another being at Edgar's Farm just south of the village.

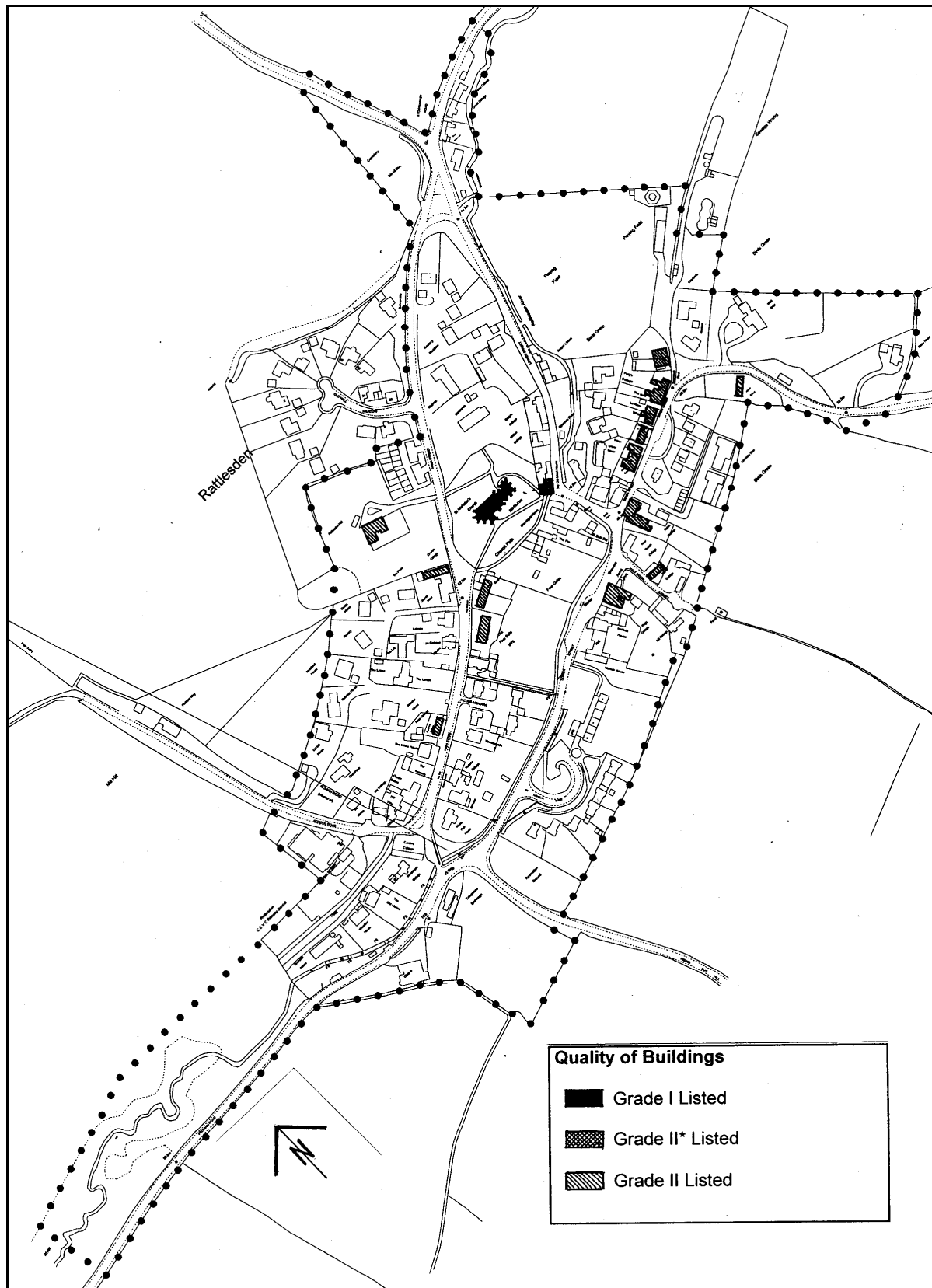


Church of St Nicholas

381 b  
.XXI. SVTHFVLC TRÆ SĒE ALDREDE; *THEWARDESTREF.*  
*H'NDRET.* Ratefdanc teñ sēa Aldreda. t. r. e. p. vi. car terre Semp xviii. uill. Tē xx. bord. C. xx. vii. Tē. vi. ferui. m. iiii. Sēp. iiii. cār in dūi. Tē. xii. car hōiū. m. iiii. Silua. xx. iiii. porc. 7 xvi. aē jūi. Sēp. v. run. Tē ū xii. aē. 7 lxxx. 7. x. oīs. xl. porc. ū. xi. cap. Semp ual. x. lib. . t. œclia. xxiiii. aē. 7. xv. aē. teñ hunfridus hō. W. de. Wār. & gofcelinus homo comitis. de moritonio. ii. hē. xvi. q̄r in longo. 7 x. in lato. 7 de getlo uiginti denarios. Socca sēe. caldrede.  
✓ In eadem. i. liber homo sēe aldrede cōm̄d 7 foca. t. r. e. iiii. aē. & ual. vi. d. ✓ In Ratefdana. i. liber homo sēe aldrede foca & foca viii. aē. 7 ual. ii. fol. falco homo sēi edmundi habuit has. viiii. aē. dū abbatia sēe aldrede. fēt in manu regis & uōt. huc tenuit. fr negat fe detinuisse feruitiū.

THEDWESTRY Hundred  
1 St. Etheldreda's held RATTLESDEN before 1066 for 6 carucates of land.  
Always 18 villagers. Then 20 smallholders, now 27; then 6 slaves, now 4.  
Always 3 ploughs in lordship. Then 12 men's ploughs, now 3.  
Woodland, 24 pigs; meadow, 16 acres. Always 5 cobs. Then [and] now 12 cattle; 80 and 10 sheep; 40 pigs. Now 11 goats.  
Value always £10.  
1 church, 24 acres.  
Humphrey, W(illiam) of Warenne's man, holds 15 acres; Jocelyn, the Count of Mortain's man, (holds) 2 (acres).  
It has 16 furlongs in length and 10 in width; 20d in tax. The jurisdiction (is) St. Etheldreda's.  
In the same (Rattlesden) 1 free man of St. Etheldreda's, under patronage and jurisdiction before 1066; 3 acres.  
Value 6d.  
2 In RATTLESDEN 1 free man of St. Etheldreda's, under full jurisdiction; 8 acres of land.  
Value 2s.  
Falc, a man of St. Edmund's, had these 8 acres while the Abbey of St. Etheldreda's was in the King's hand, and he has held (them) until now; but he denies that he has withheld the service.

Extract from Domesday





## QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

Clopton Hall is one of four buildings in the parish described by Pevsner. It is a grade II listed late 16<sup>th</sup> Century timber-framed house later remodelled with Doric pilasters, a segmental pediment and chimneys dated 1681. Unsightly additions to the porch have recently been removed.

Most of the parish's other grade II listed buildings are similarly timber-framed and plastered, many still with thatched roofs, such as occur in abundance on the north side of Bird's Green leading to Workhouse Lane.

Pevsner also mentions the grade II listed derelict tower mill of 1840 off Brettenham Road as well as Church Cottage, the village's only grade II\* building, which was an open hall house dating from the mid-15<sup>th</sup> Century, sometime known as the Old Moot House. The latter's date, position adjoining the churchyard and general form suggest it may have been the village's Church House, or Gild Hall.

Pevsner's main interest, however, is the Church of St Nicholas which he describes as 'Quite big with a Dec W tower'. The Church is grade I listed, has several 13<sup>th</sup> Century features, and was much rebuilt in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. The nave has a double hammerbeam roof and the tower a shingled broach spire.



**Clopton Hall**



**Old Moot House**



**White Brick and Slate**



**Flint and White Brick**



**Render and Thatch**



**Red Brick and Slate**

## TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

Like many Suffolk villages, Rattlesden has layers of different local building materials collected over the years.

The oldest surviving building, the church, is in flint with a plaintile roof. The older houses are for the most part timber-framed and rendered all over in the Suffolk tradition, a large proportion of these surviving with thatched roofs.

One timber-framed building, the former open hall Church Cottage, has exposed timber-framing and a plaintile roof.

The 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries brought with them a preference for brickwork, generally the local Suffolk soft reds, but here and there can be found examples of Suffolk whites, probably from nearby Woolpit. These buildings are more often roofed in slate, plaintiles or pantiles.

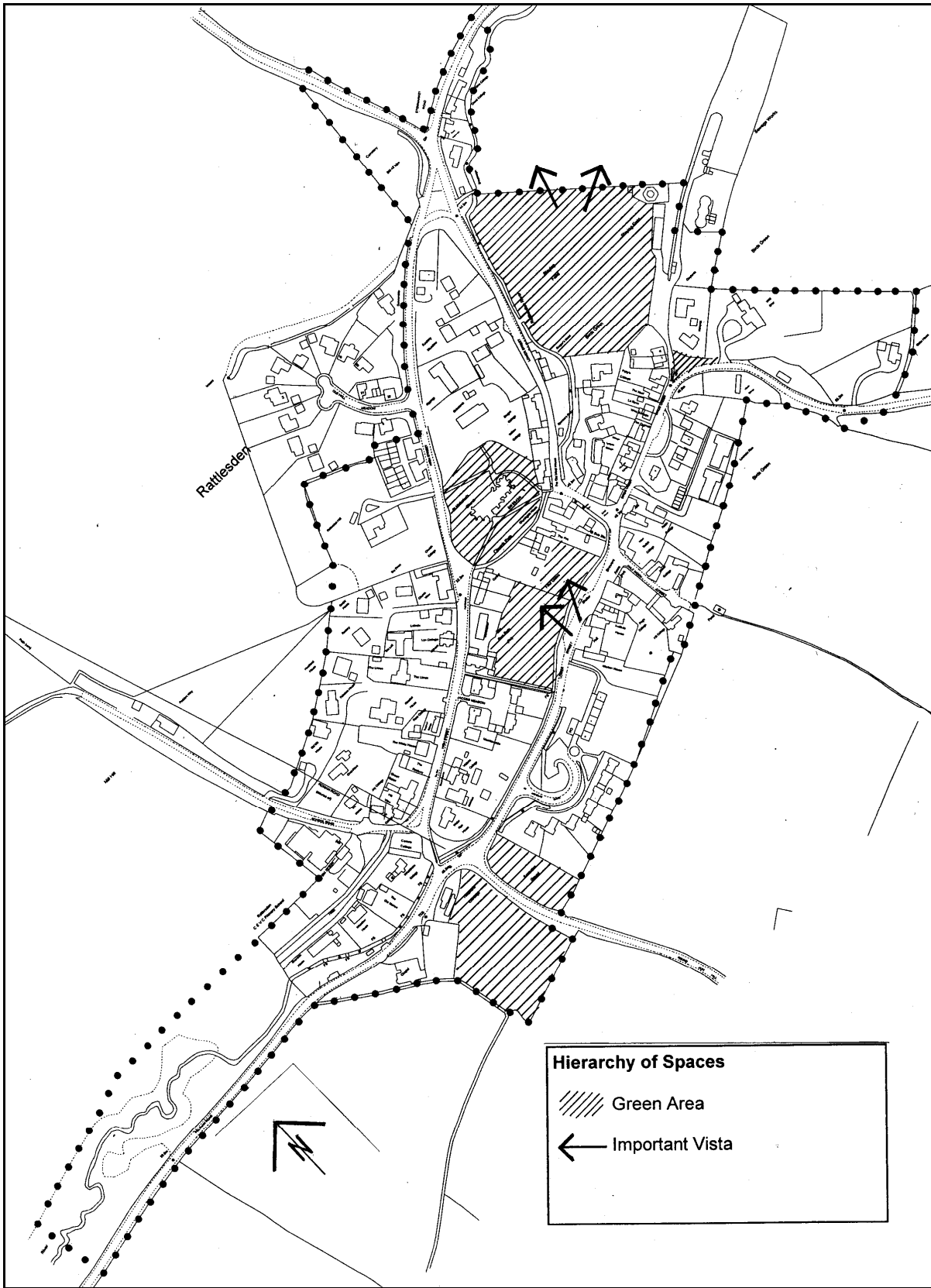
The open nature of the settlement has meant that in recent years a good deal of infilling has taken place. This has for the most part been complementary in render and bricks, with tiled roofs. The bricks used are not usually local but reasonably matching in colour, whilst the newer roofs in bright red clay pantiles will tone down in time.



**Pargetting**



**Rendered Brick and Slate**





## HIERARCHY OF SPACES

Rattlesden has a fairly spread out centre; it is not crammed tightly into its river valley as this is fairly flat bottomed and probably prone to local flooding.

The settlement is thus to be found mostly on the valley sides, allowing broad views across the wet valley in the centre.

Along the length of Lower Street the road and river wind together from west to east down the valley, changing places just below the church. High Street runs parallel on the northern side for most of the length of the main village passing above the church.

The village does not anywhere achieve the tight urban feel of an old settlement. A short section of High Street just west of the Church does have buildings facing each other across the street, but they are well spaced out and one side is higher up the hill than the other.

Elsewhere the entrance to Bird's Green and Workhouse Lane is squeezed between buildings but opens out beyond, one side a picture postcard row of thatched cottages right on the street, the other a modern development of bungalows fortunately set well back.

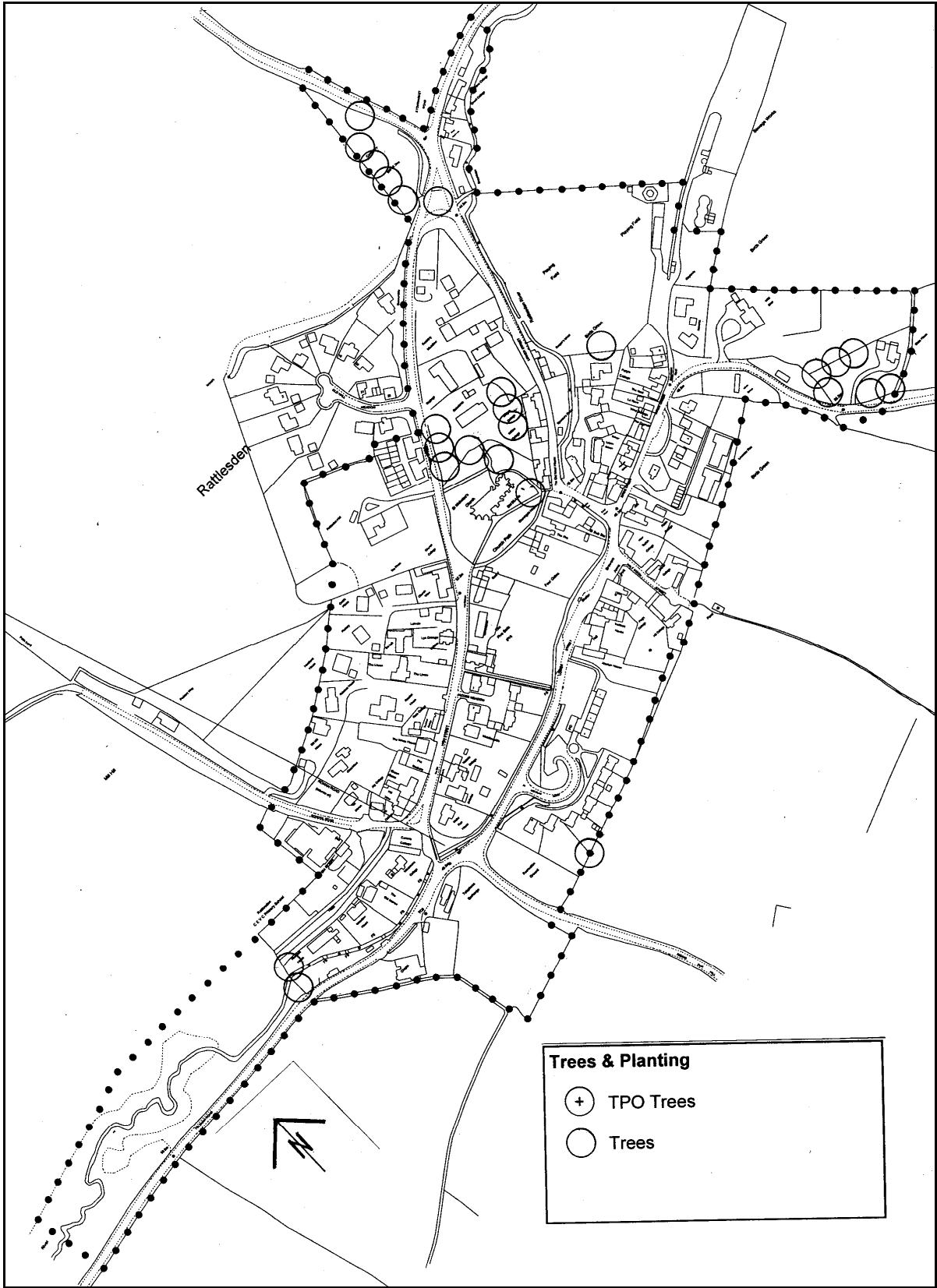
Basically Rattlesden's broad valley has never been pushed for space.



**Path beside Churchyard**



**Bird's Green**



## TREES AND PLANTING

The main green spaces in Rattlesden are the local playing field in the lower end of the valley at the east end of the village, and the large wet meadow area below the church, formerly kept as pasture for horses.

The church sits up high overlooking this with a backdrop of trees in the garden of the former rectory off High Street. Here can be found specimens of Yew, Corsican Pine, Cypress and a much truncated Wellingtonia.

The only other places with significant numbers of trees are the new cemetery at the north-east end of the village and the garden of Glebe House up the hill from Workhouse Lane.

In the former there are specimens of Oak, Sycamore, Horse Chestnut, Lime and Cypress whilst in the latter there is the same mix but with Holm Oak and Yew as well.

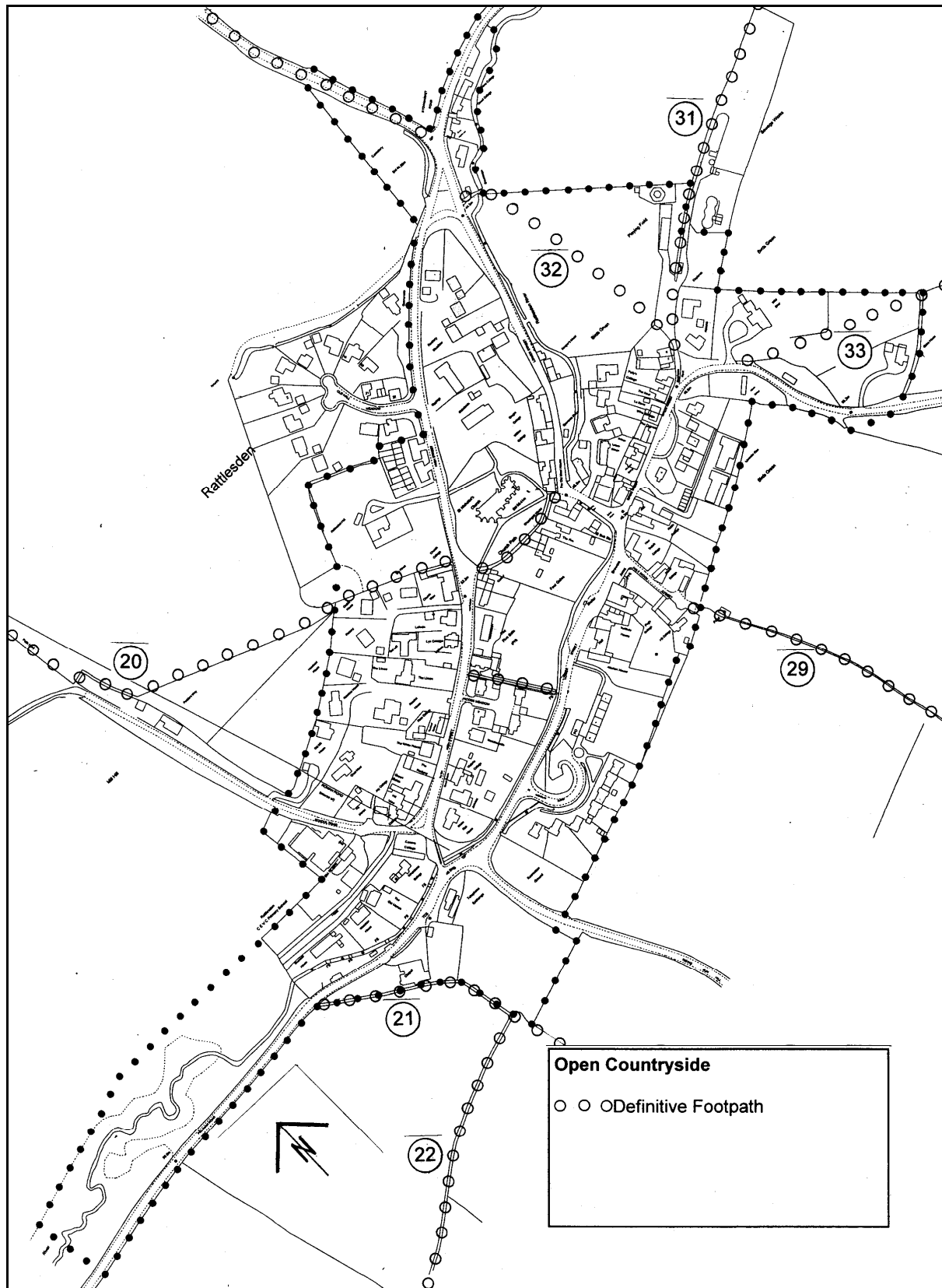
There are but two Tree Preservation Orders in the parish. One was on land adjoining the Old Rectory in Upper Street, now built on: the six Elms were lost in the 1970's, whilst the remaining Oak fell in the great storm of 1987. The other is the relatively new TPO no. 248 on eight Oaks, three Ashes and three Scots Pines at the outlying hamlet of Poystreet Green.



**Churchyard Trees**



**Green below Cemetery**





## COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS

Beyond the settled valley side the land levels out into the open farmland of 'High Suffolk', through which a good many footpaths radiate from the village.

The south-west section is covered by definitive paths FP 21, 22 and 23, which start near the Baptist Chapel at the west end of Lower Street; the north-east and east are covered by FP 31, 32 and 33, which start near the corner of Workhouse Lane. In addition to these, FP 20 goes off north-westwards from the church midway along High Street, whilst from midway along Lower Street FP 29 heads off southwards towards Poystreet Green.

High Street and Lower Street are linked near the middle of the village by a footway passing south of the churchyard.

Rattlesden's open centre, with former pasture adjoining the church, and such good accessibility by footpath make it very much part of the countryside.

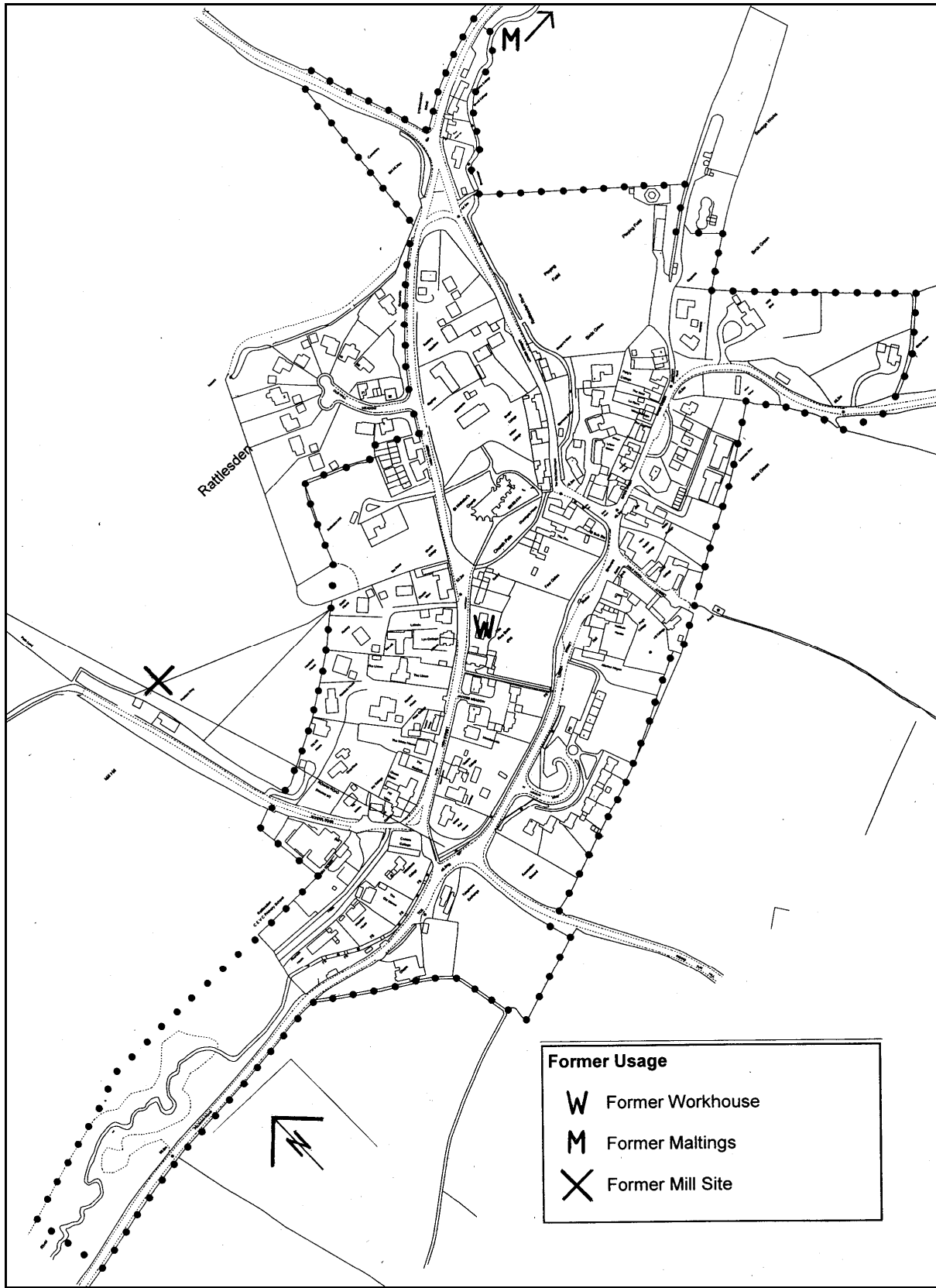
The village's past was indeed mainly agricultural, records showing it as having been occupied mainly by yeomen in the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century.



**Start of Footpath 21**



**Water Meadow below Church**



## PREVAILING AND FORMER USAGE

At one time the village had its very own workhouse, not in Workhouse Lane as might be expected, but on High Street near the church, in the house now known as Goldmartin. In 1776 it had 26 inmates.

Mill Hill, just north of the village near the Roman road, was the site of a post mill and later a tower mill, now gone. The listed derelict tower mill to the south-west of the village off the Brettenham road, replaced an earlier smock mill a little to the north, the remains of which form the footings for the power mill that replaced them both.

The tithe apportionment records of 1841 give illustrative field names within the parish such as Hop Ground and Malting Field or Gravel Pit Field and even one called 'Round the Groan'. Directory entries from 1844 paint a similar picture of a village agricultural economy with 32 farmers, a harness maker, 3 blacksmiths, a corn miller and 3 malsters amongst those present.

There was a brick kiln near the Felsham parish boundary and within the village proper a Smithy and Wheelwright's shop.

Apart from the already mentioned redundant transport links by river and road, Rattlesden also at one time had its own airfield in the south-west corner of the parish; formerly used by the Americans in World War II, it was returned to agriculture in the 1960's.



**Derelict Tower Mill**



**Former Shop**





## LOSSES AND POSSIBLE GAINS

The open nature of Rattlesden's pattern of settlement has unfortunately left it very vulnerable to the detractions of modern infill developments. The estate of bungalows at St Nicholas Close to the south could be improved by better planting and screening along its frontage.

Elsewhere on some of the unlisted buildings non-traditional uPVC windows have been installed, often resulting in glazing patterns with odd proportions.

At a number of points in the village overhead wiring is rather intrusive, whilst in other places it is totally absent.



**St Nicholas Close**



**uPVC Window**



**Overhead Wiring**

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Tithe Map & Apportionment 1841  
*Rattlesden* Suffolk Records Office

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This Appraisal adopted as  
Supplementary Planning Guidance  
by Mid Suffolk District Council  
Environment Policy Panel  
27 March 2012