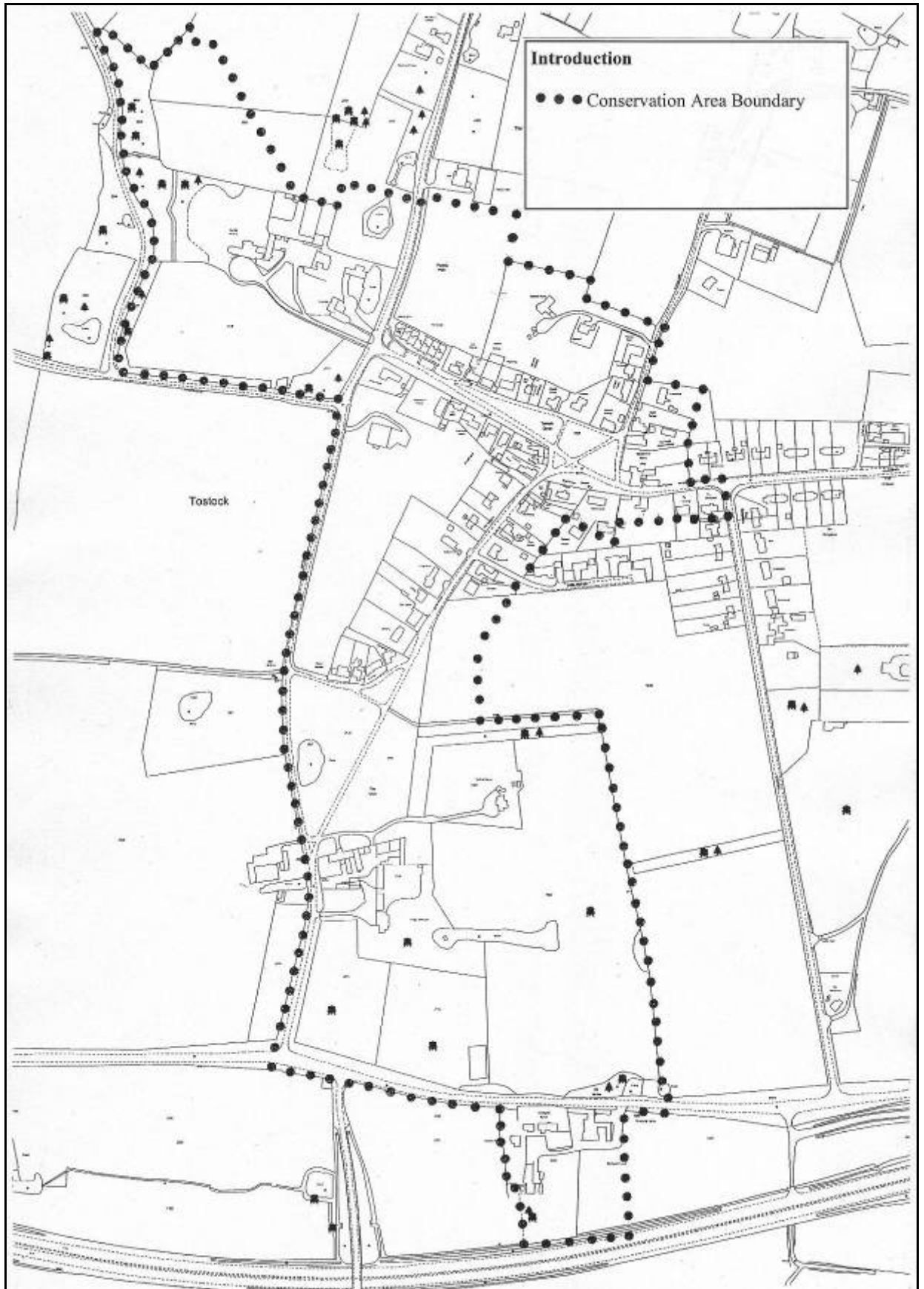




conservation area appraisal



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Introduction

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

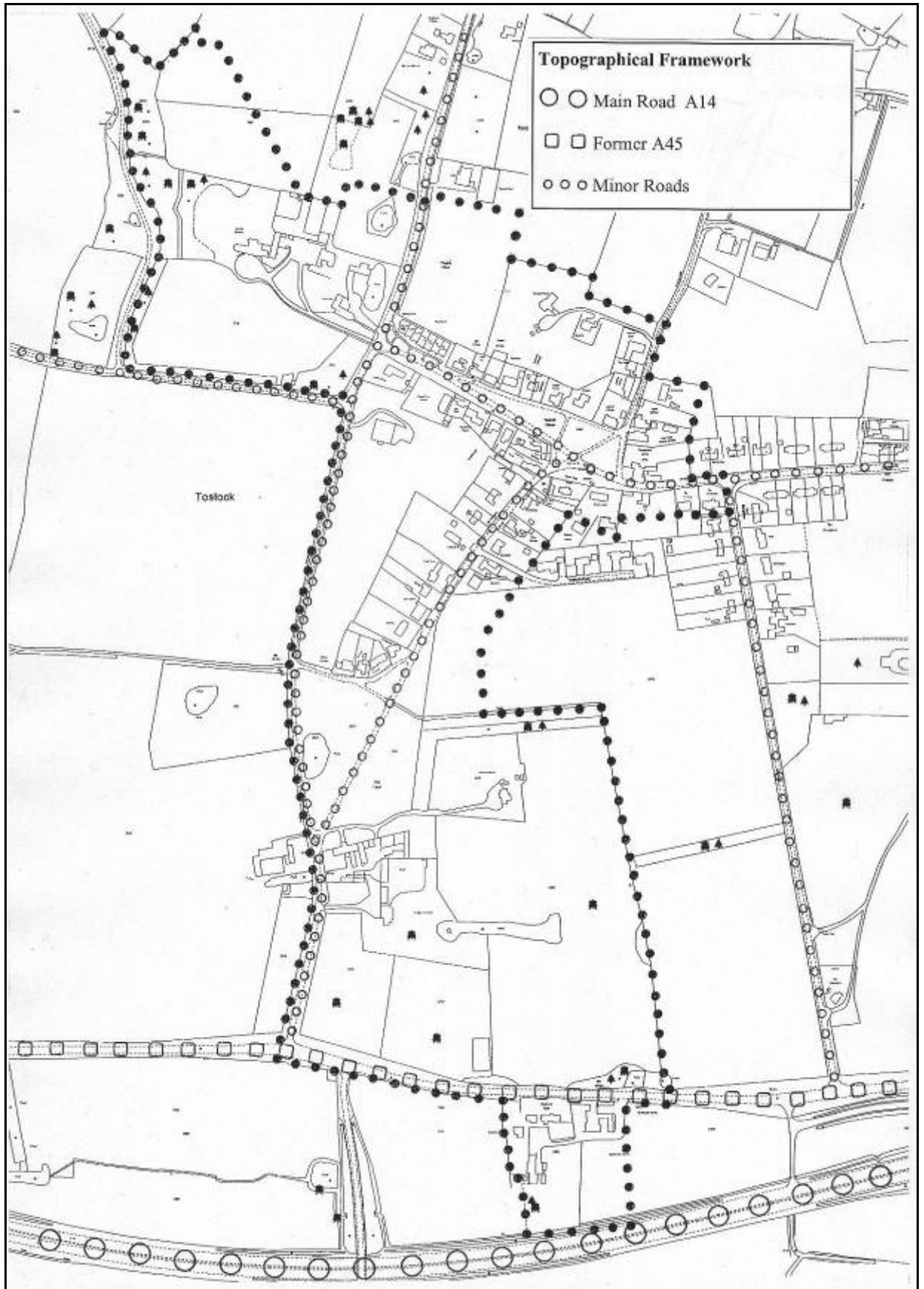
As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Tostock's built environment in conservation terms.



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 2006.



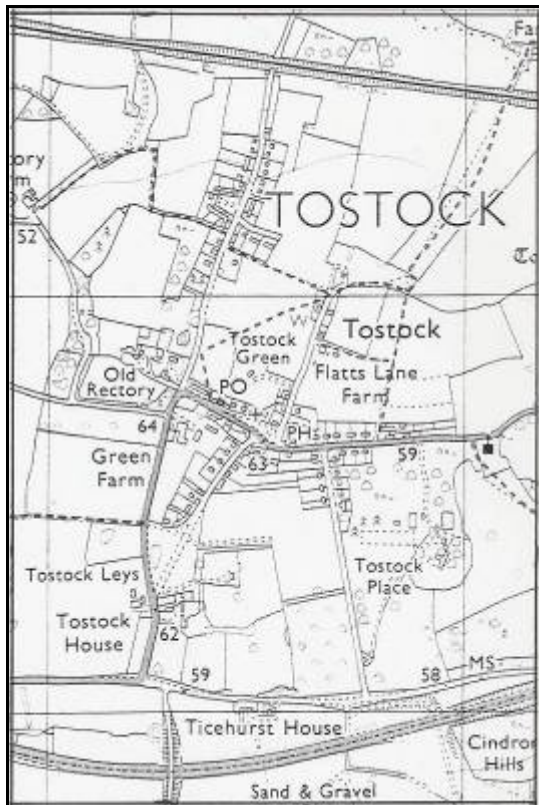
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Topographical Framework

The village of Tostock is situated in the far western corner of Mid Suffolk district, about six miles east of Bury St Edmunds.

It lies just on the northern side of the east anglian watershed, near the head of the valley of the river Black Bourn, that drains away north-westwards towards the Wash.

The Black Bourn forms the parish's eastern boundary, whilst the southern boundary now follows the modern A14 trunk road. Prior to its upgrading, the nearby and parallel old A45, a former turnpike road, performed the same function.

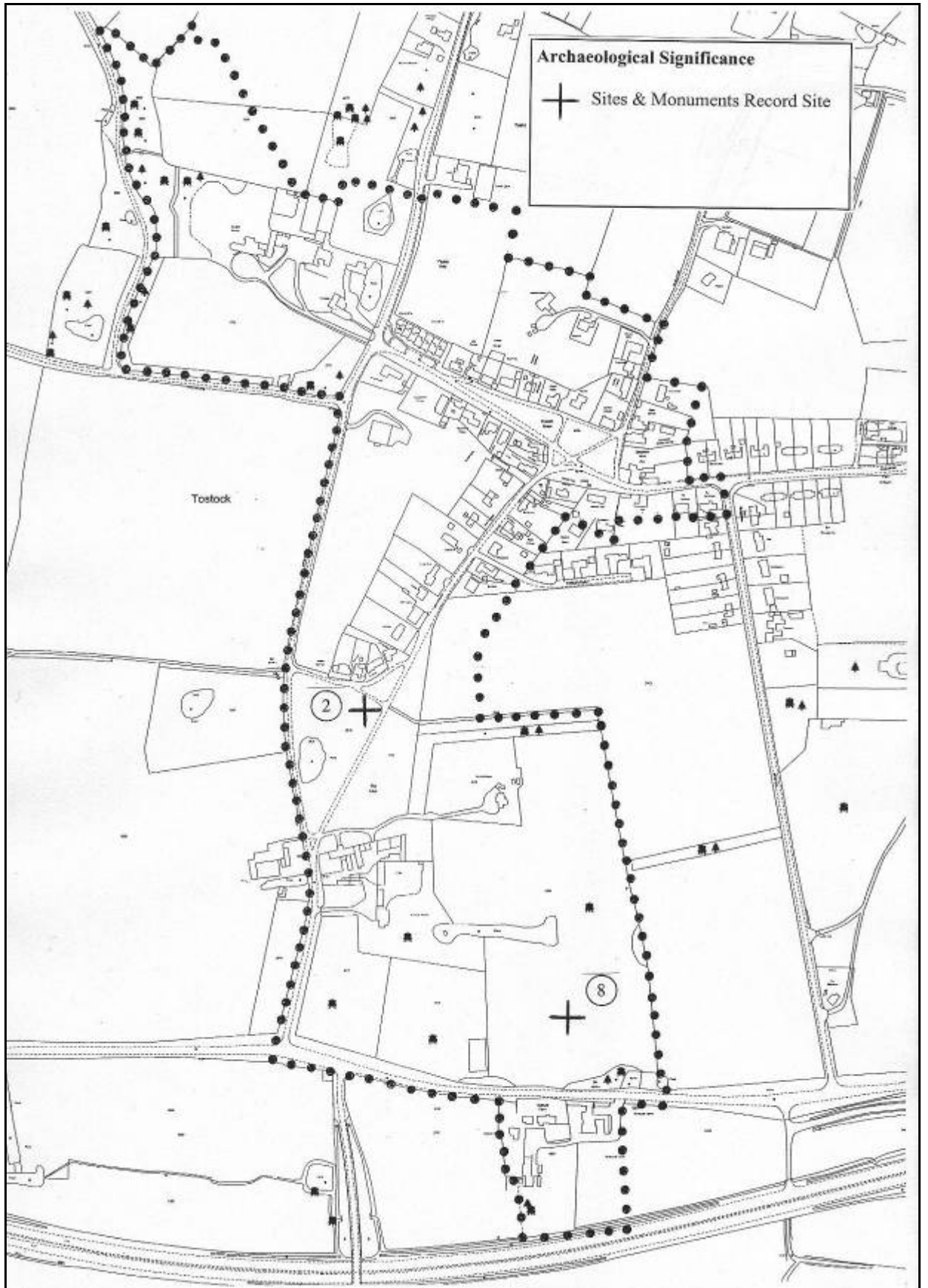


From 1846 the Ipswich to Cambridge railway line with its stations at Elmswell and Thurston provided a further east-west link, the line also forming part of the parish's northern boundary.

The village centre is situated away from these river, road and railway transport connections, essentially an east-west street with The Green at its western end and the remote church away to the east.

A road southwards off the green has some later development and leads to a second green area called Tostock Leys with a pond.

The village is situated on the claylands of High Suffolk, the clay deposited during the Ice Ages over the chalk that underlies most of Suffolk.



Archaeological Significance

The Suffolk County Sites and Monuments Record lists nine sites of archaeological interest from the parish of Tostock.

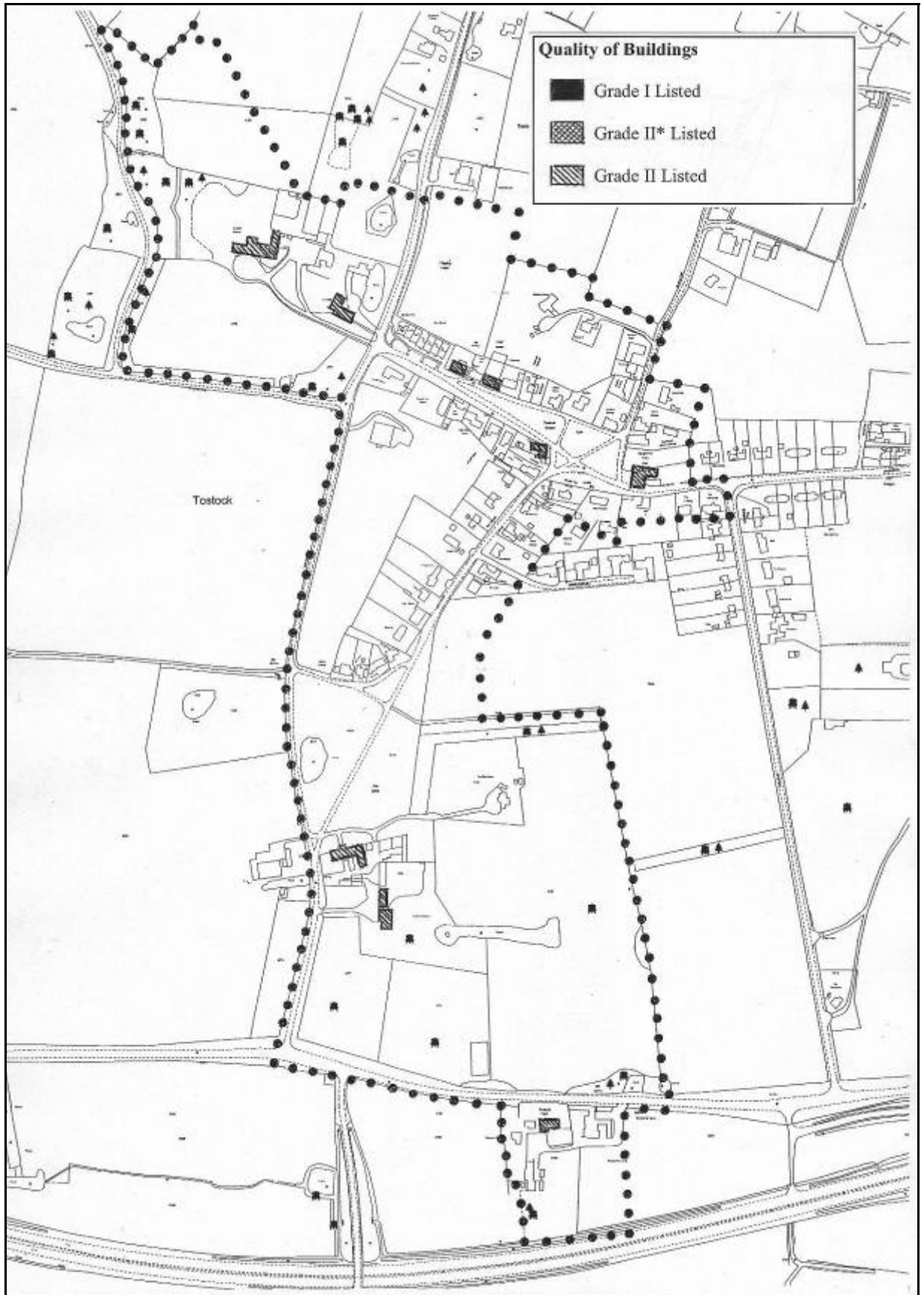
These include finds scatters of Roman and Anglo-Saxon date along with Saxon finds including a buckle, a brooch and a gold scabbard mount, believed to be contemporary with the Sutton Hoo finds.

More recent items recorded include the Medieval parish churchyard and the moated site of Tostock Old Hall adjoining the Black Bourn.



Tostock appeared in the Domesday survey of 1086, the manor formerly held by the church (St Edmunds), then being held by someone called Frodo. Mention is made of a meadow of 4 acres, woodland for 8 pigs (not very large!) and a church with 12 acres of free land in alms.

Records indicate the existence of two or more gilds in the village, although there seems to be no trace now of a gild-hall.



Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

There are sixteen listings within the parish of Tostock, ten of which are inside the conservation area boundary enclosing the main part of the village around the two greens. The six listings outside the area cover a walled garden at Tostock Place, the Church of St Andrew along with a tombstone in the churchyard and Tostock Old Hall with its adjoining barn and granary.

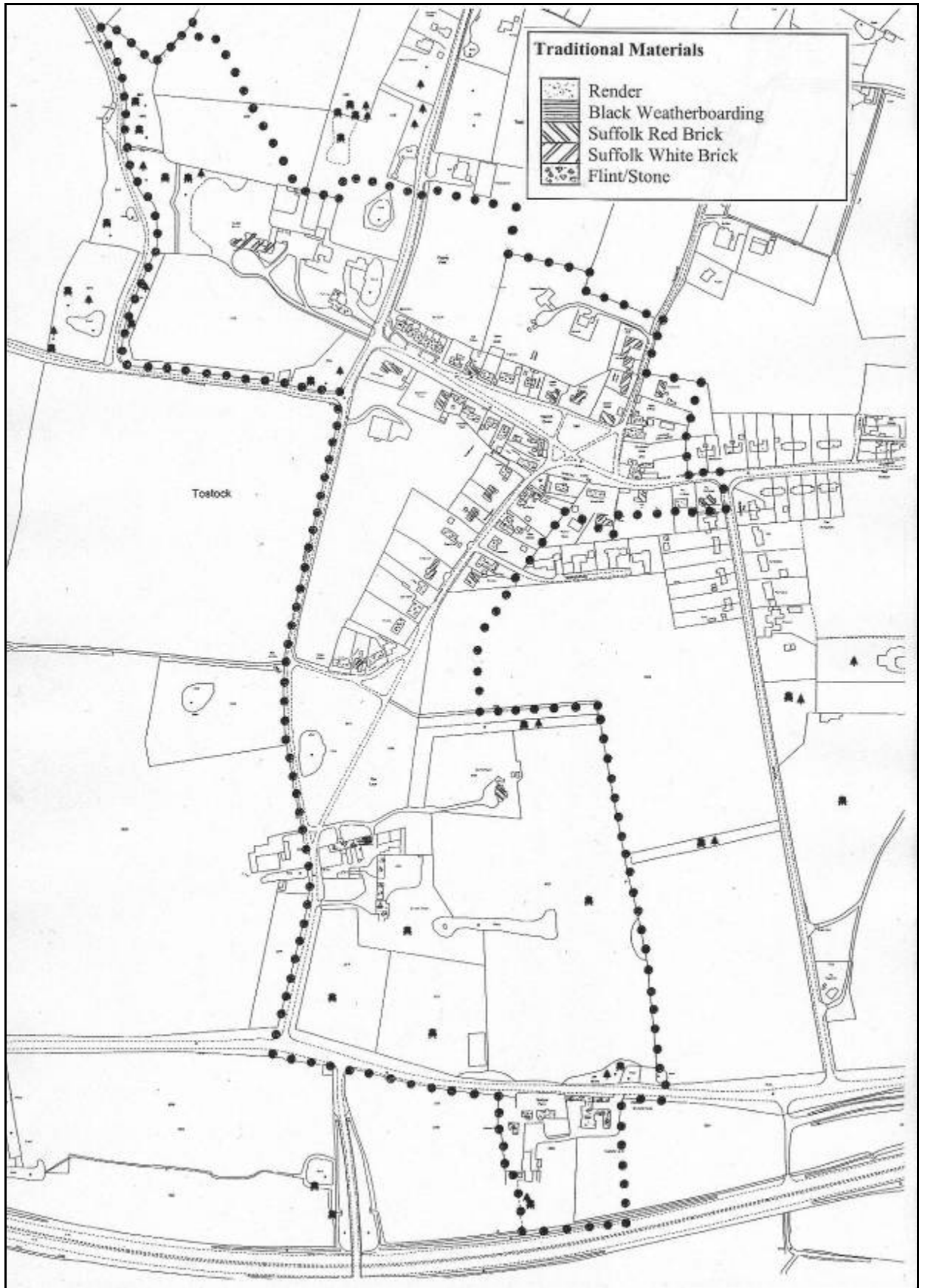
The Church of St Andrew is the only grade I listing and stands apart from the village east of the centre, mainly 14th Century and Decorated in style. It has a double hammerbeam roof structure from when the nave was remodeled in the 15th Century, and was further altered by John Sedding in an 1872 Victorian restoration.



Further still to the east Tostock Old Hall, originally late 16th Century on a moated site, has also been remodeled c.1850 in the 'Gothick' style. It does however retain some fine internal features with its early 17th Century staircase and paneling.

Also apart from the village centre, but in the conservation area is Tostock House with its adjoining Coach House and Barn, all listed grade II and built of flint rubble with Suffolk White brick dressings, more than likely from nearby Woolpit.

A little further south and again still in the conservation area is grade II listed Ticehurst Farmhouse of 1599 with elaborate carving to the jetty and tiebeam of its crosswing.



Traditional Building Materials

The remaining listed buildings in the main part of the village, centred around the green, provide a good cross section of the Suffolk vernacular.

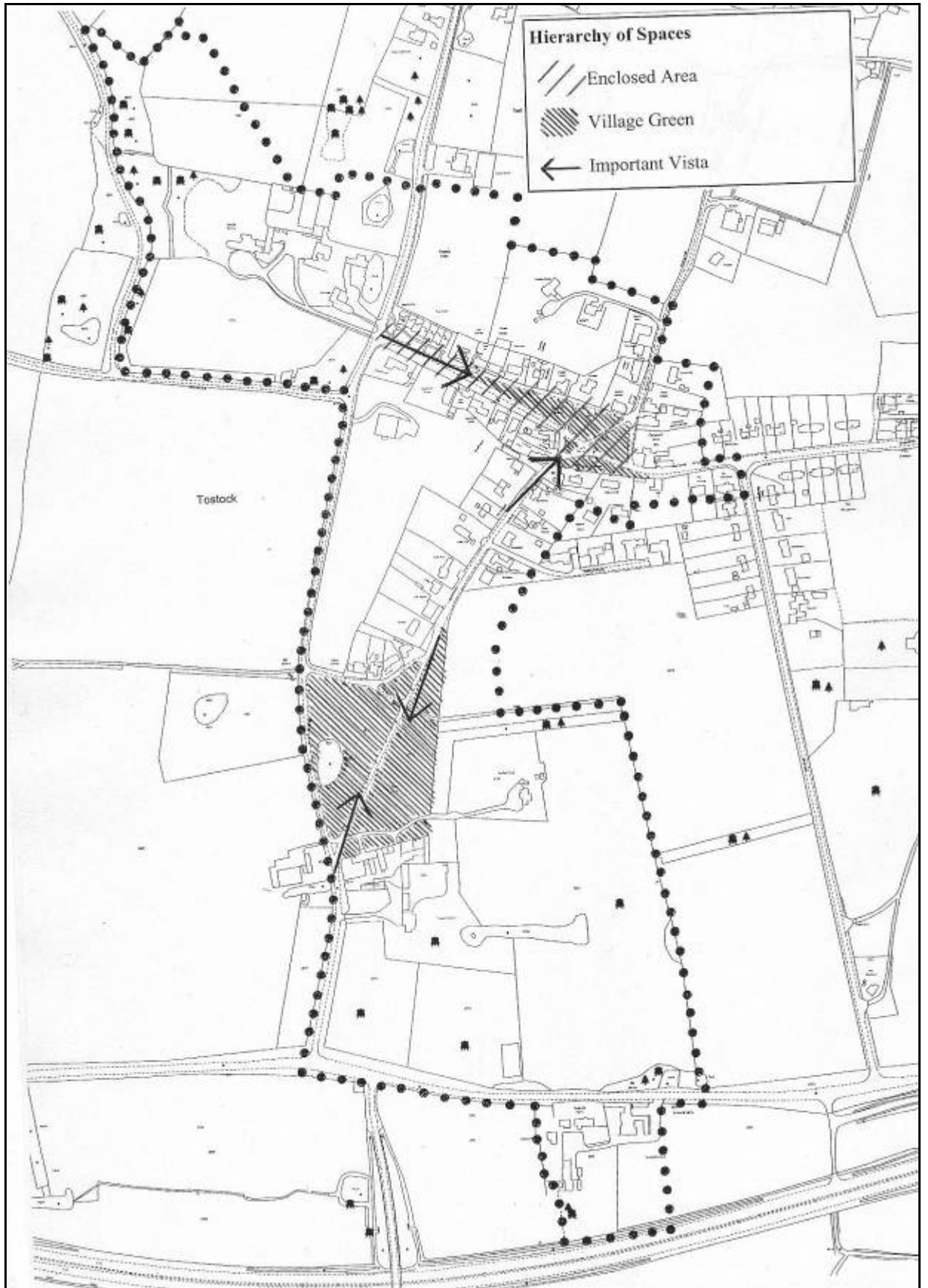
Suffolk White brick can be found to the west of the green on a fine Regency building, the Old Rectory. Adjoining this the former farmhouse, Old Rectory Lodge, is timber-framed and rendered, but has lost its plaintile roof to concrete pantiles.

The three grade II listed cottages facing the Green, Oak Cottage, Crispin Cottage and Crossings, are similarly timber-framed and rendered, but roofed with pantile, plaintile and thatch respectively.



Relatively few of the unlisted buildings in Tostock are of traditional form or materials. Suffolk Red bricks do however make an appearance, mainly on Victorian buildings, notably on the Green at the Old Chapel with its black glazed pantile roof and further to the east at The Old School, which has a slate roof.

A fair amount of flintwork is evident around the village centre; it has not been used extensively but appears in a few gables and boundary walls. Flint comes into its own however at Tostock Leys, where it has been used extensively on Tostock House and the adjoining outbuildings, giving this area of the village a very separate, almost continental, character.



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Hierarchy of Spaces

Tostock is centred on its ample green, around which are clustered five of its more domestic scale listed buildings.

The Green appears well cared for and has only been intruded upon by kerbing at one point opposite the Gardener's Arms, put in after some traffic problems.

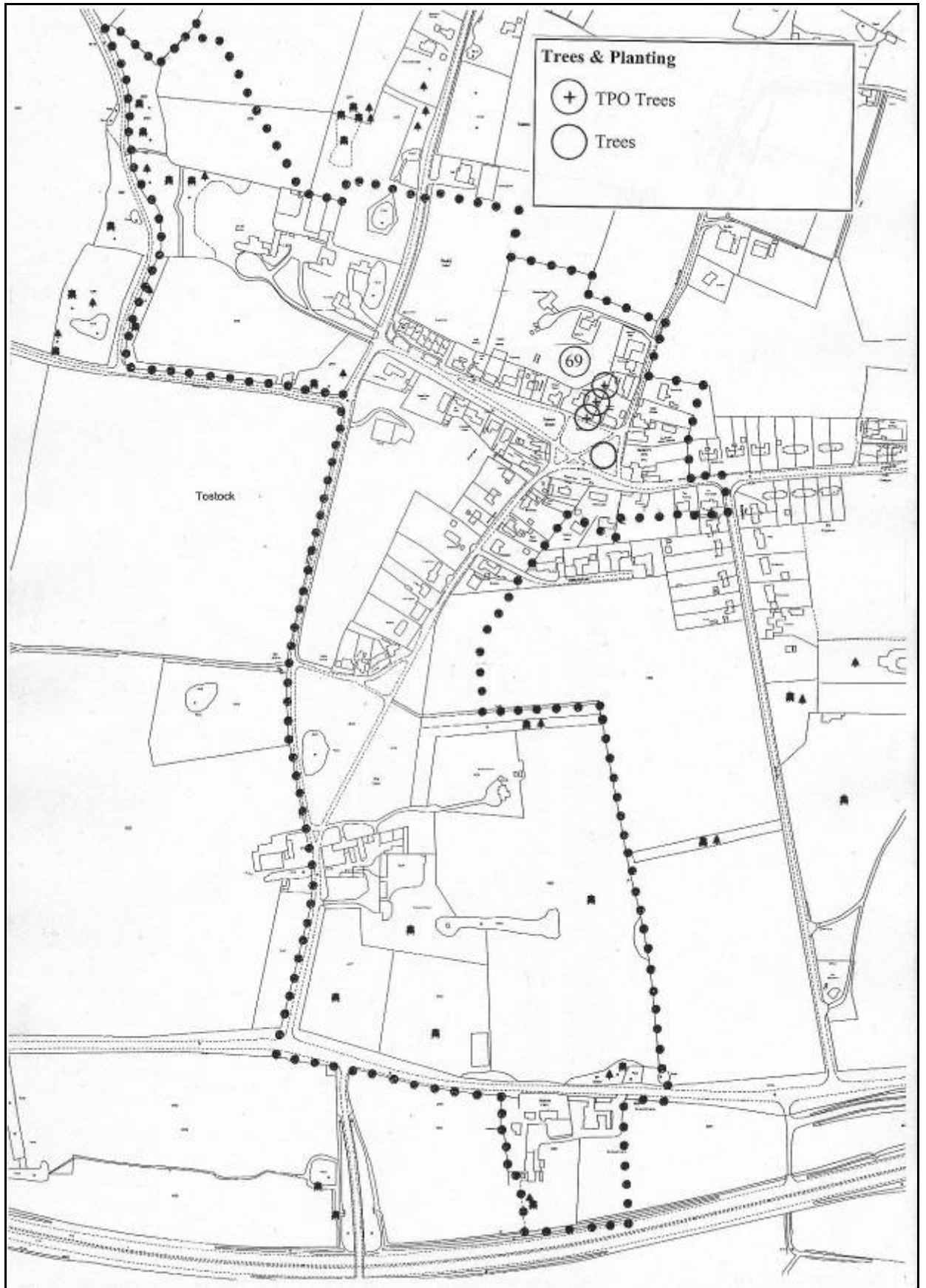
Beyond the immediate area of the Green, Tostock has sprawled somewhat. Along Flatts Lane to the north, Church Road to the east, New Road off this to the south and along Leys Road off the Green to the south there are many bungalows spaced out on their individual plots.



The second green at Tostock Leys further south is more rural in character. It has a central pond with some trees, and is bounded at the southern end by the distinctive bulk of the flint outbuildings to Tostock House.

Leys Road crosses this second green and joins the north-south road from the western end of the Green at this point, before continuing southwards to form a T-junction with the former main road.

The entire eastern part of the parish, including Tostock Place, the Church and Tostock Old Hall, lies within a Special Landscape Area that follows the valley of the Black Bourn.



Trees & Planting

The Green at Tostock is dominated by a single large Horse Chestnut tree, set at the wider eastern end.

Just north of this, part of the garden to 'Flinders' was made the subject of Tree Preservation Order no.69 by West Suffolk County Council. The Elms in the group later succumbed to Dutch Elm Disease, whilst the Willows have now been pollarded.

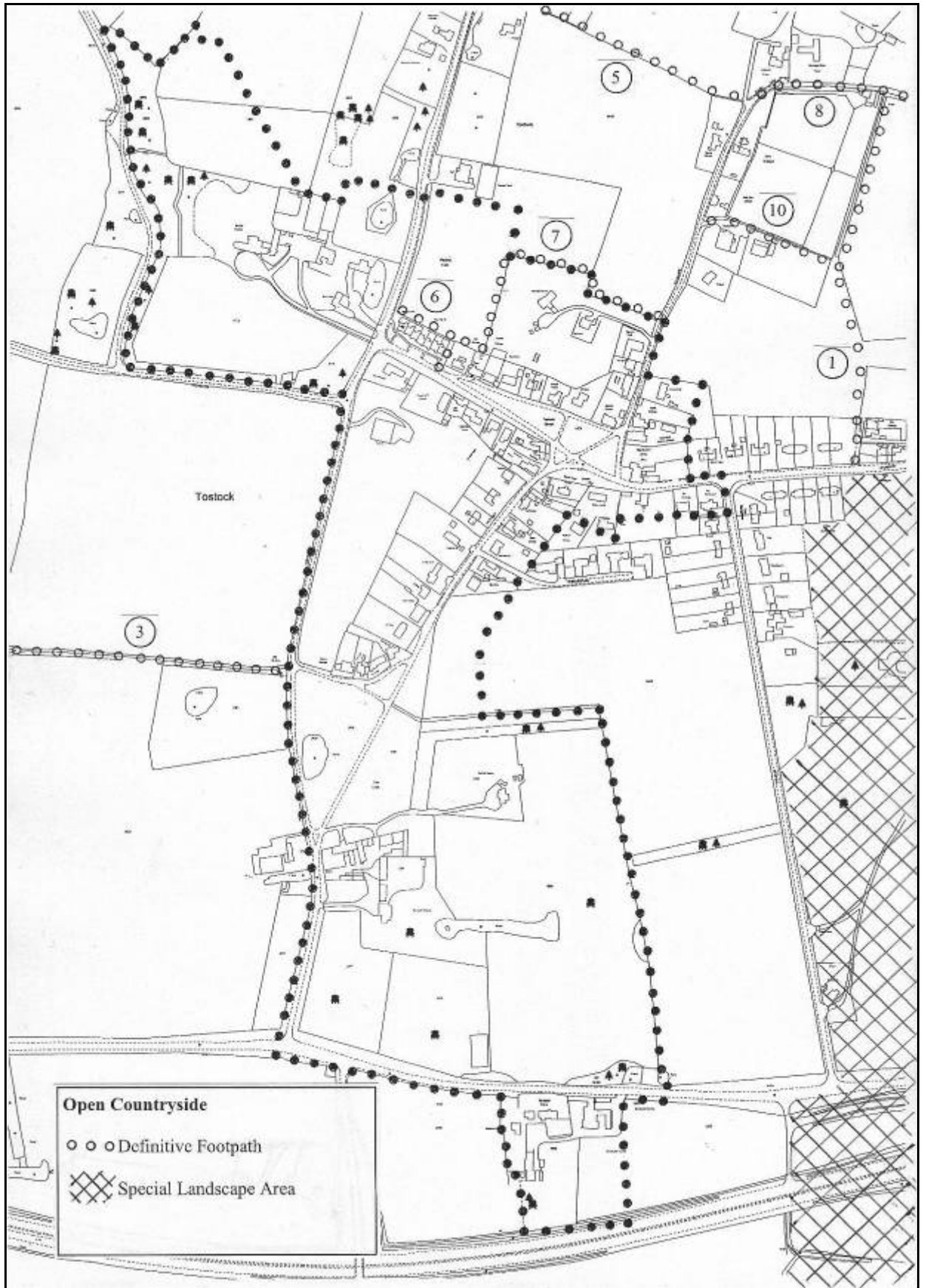
Further north at the end of Flatts Lane behind the farm buildings, TPO no.249 covers a group of Ash and Elm, the latter having since been lost and replaced by suitable species such as Ash, Hornbeam and White Willow.



Away from the village centre, the landscape is fairly well tree covered. The larger houses, the Old Rectory, Tostock House, Tostock Place and Tostock Old Hall, provide with their grounds a parkland belt that wraps right around the west, south and east sides of the village.

South of this, at Ticehurst Farmhouse, the other side of what was the main road, there is a fine large Wellingtonia.

Further afield, the Sites and Monuments Record lists an Ancient Woodland at Cindron Hills, south-east of the village just beyond the A14 and now actually in the adjoining parish of Drinkstone. This is the subject of TPO no.354 also made by WSCC.



Relationship to Open Countryside

Tostock is a fairly spread out village and totally lacks any urban feel. Only on the Green and along its the connecting roads is one surrounded by buildings on both sides, and yet a rural feel still prevails.

Beyond this central core the landscape quickly opens up to fields and woods.

South from the Church and east from Tostock Leys, there is very little access to the countryside other than two footpaths (nos 3 and 2 respectively) that pass through parts of the village's southern landscaped parkland area.

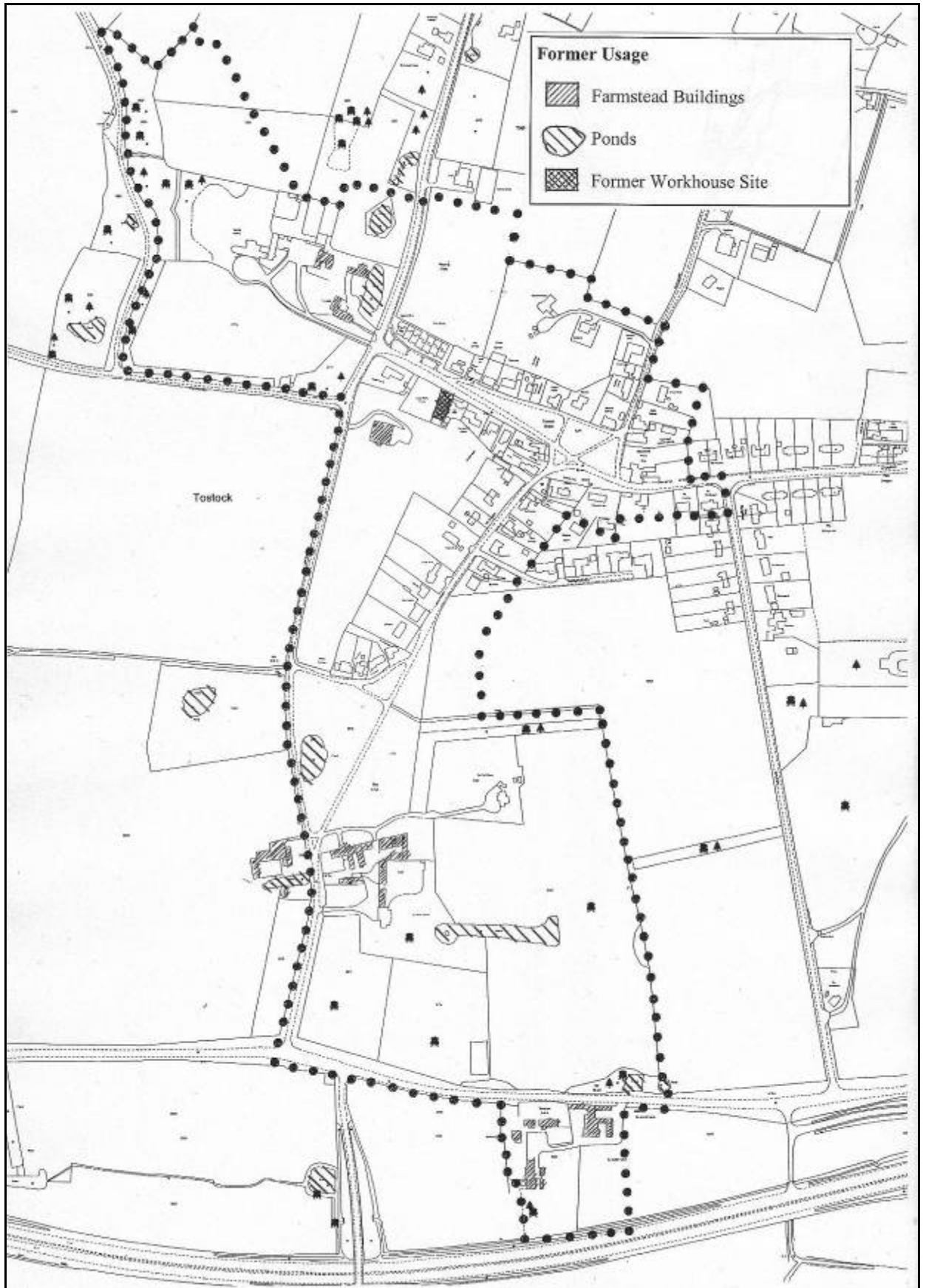
With the A14 nearby to the south there is little desire to walk the area.



To the north of the village we find the more usual footpath network coming right into the heart of the village.

Footpath 1 off Church Road, Flatts Lane and Footpaths 6 and 7 off the Green all head off northwards from the central area. Footpaths 10, 8, 5 and 4 then provide east-west links between these routes further north.

Overall this makes the village of Tostock reasonably well connected to its surrounding countryside, with a network of footpaths allowing for easy pedestrian access.



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Prevailing & Former Usage

With its medieval moated site and nearby river, Tostock has a relatively watery background for such an inland parish.

The Tithe Map Apportionment of 1843 includes 'Ozier Grounds' in the far south-east adjoining the river along with several intriguing entries of 'Sink Field' and 'Float Meadow'. In addition 'Canal Meadow' refers to a linear body of water parallel to the river fronting Tostock Old Hall, either an ornamental or a fish pond.

Other Tithe entries are the more usual for such an agricultural community: there are 'Clay Pits', a 'Gravel Pit Field' and a 'Mill Meadow'.



Records from 1844 show that there were seven farmers, four boot-makers, a blacksmith and a wheelwright living there. As with much of Suffolk, agriculture played a big part in village life.

Nowadays however the village is more of a dormitory, providing homes for those who work elsewhere or have retired there. The timber-framed granary shown adjoining was a victim of this trend, demolished when the nearby barns were converted to residential use.

Losses & Possible Gains

Tostock's growth as a dormitory village has brought with it inevitable development, some of which has respected the local vernacular, but much of which has not. The plot by plot growth has at least happened gradually, rather than by the imposition of entire one-design estates.

There are thus many foreign forms and a fair use made of modern materials such as concrete roof tiles, which are out of place in an historic environment.

Similarly frontage treatments vary enormously from the non-existent through the acceptable to inappropriate modern materials.



There are however a good few traditional frontages, mainly on the Green, which include flint walls, local brick walls, timber fencing, hedging and railings.

Another feature that is detrimental to Tostock is the remaining overhead wiring carrying the village's telephone and electricity supplies. Under-grounding of some these utility supply lines took place around 1970, and its completion would greatly improve the appearance of the skyline.



References & Further Reading

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Environment Policy Panel
9 December 2008*