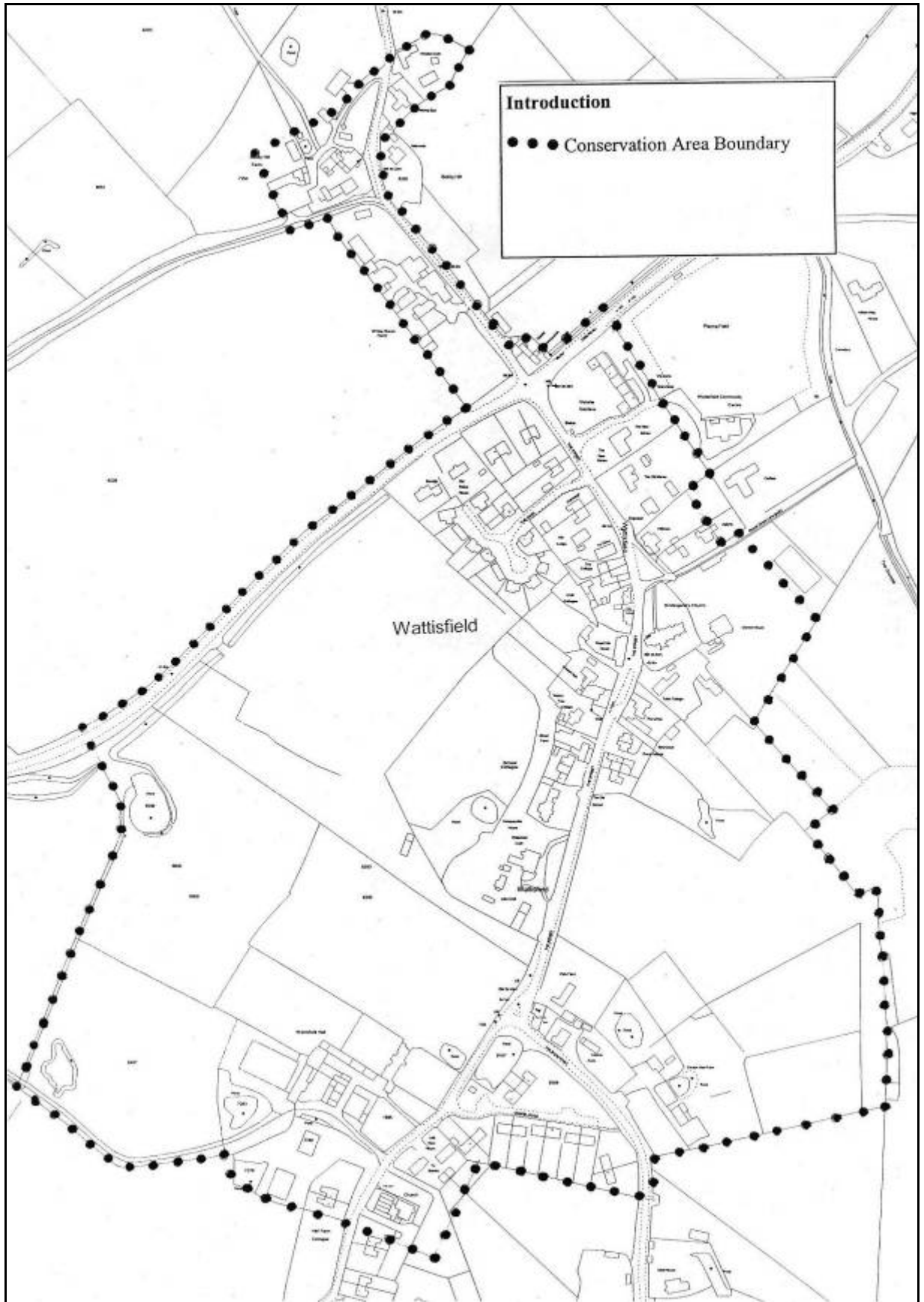




*conservation area appraisal*



# Introduction

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

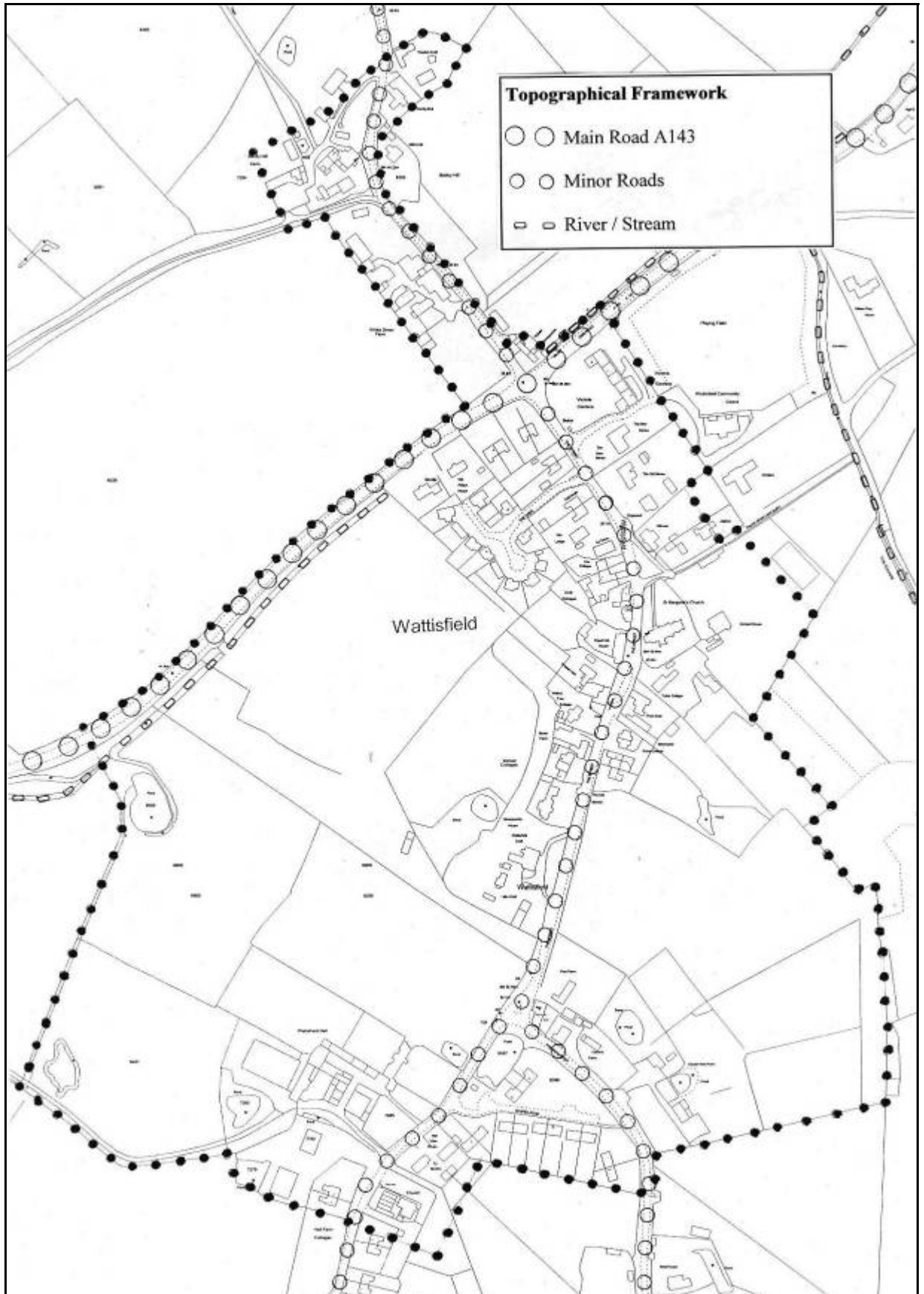
*As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Wattisfield's built environment in conservation terms.*



*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.*

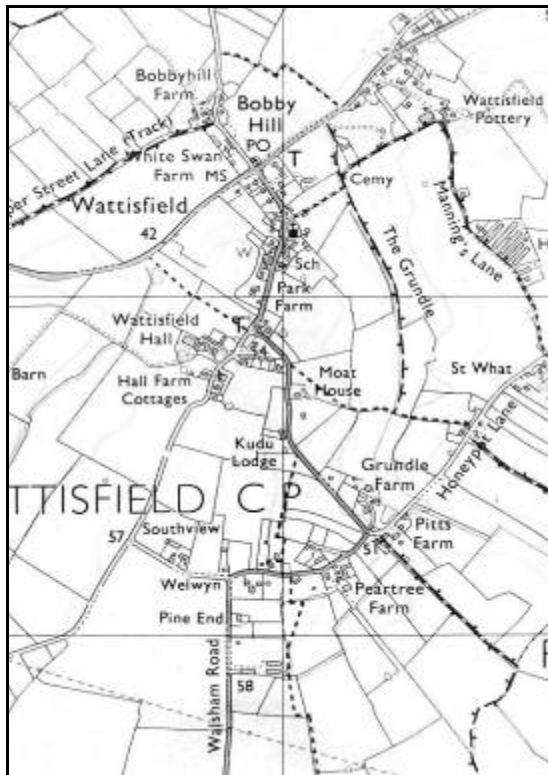


# Topographical Framework

*The village of Wattisfield lies midway between Bury St Edmunds and Diss on the north-western edge of Mid Suffolk District.*

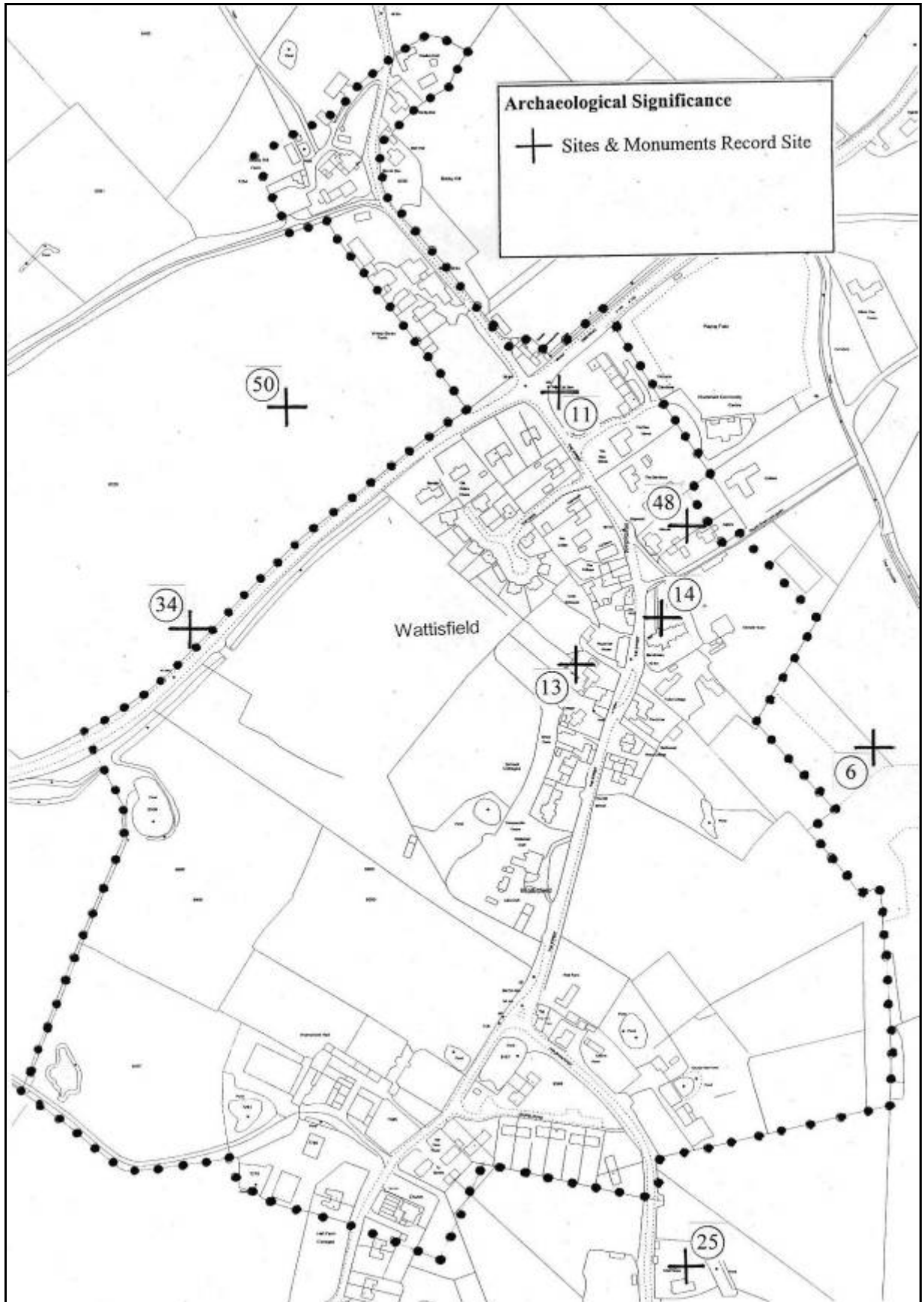
*About two miles west of Rickingham it adjoins a shallow branched valley of a tributary of the Little Ouse that flows north-westwards to the Wash via the Norfolk border.*

*The main part of the village follows a southbound road up a north-facing ridge between two valleys, whilst to the north a gentler climb leads to the outlying hamlet of Bobby Hill.*



*The modern A143 road from Bury St Edmunds towards Diss following the valley divides the village into these two parts separated by a cross-roads. This main road was the former Bury St Edmunds to Scole Turnpike Trust's road of 1762.*

*The village is situated on 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.*



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# Archaeological Significance

*The Suffolk County Sites and Monuments Record lists over fifty finds of archaeological interest from various periods in the parish of Wattisfield.*

*Neolithic finds include polished flint axes, a large flint scraper and a quantity of flint flakes.*

*Nothing is listed for the Bronze Age, but the Iron Age has a number of hut sites and pottery finds, plus a gold coin from the Iceni.*

*By Roman times the area was a veritable centre for the pottery industry with a number of kiln sites, hearths and sherds finds listed along with several coins, brooches and other metal finds.*



In Wattisfelda .xx. sibi bōas de .i. cur & dūm tūc .i. boad .R. i. frōd. .TE. viii. cur. n̄. vi. & .i. sū fūi .Sibua de .xii. pōd. .Ecclesia de .xii. ac̄ sibi tūc in tūc. Hi pot dūc & uocēti vōri fūi .fy sū & fōc & cōmū sēnū sūo . & sēnū in richinghalli . TE ualk . xxx. sū . 00 . xi. De hac tūc tēn Roric . i. cur. 7 sū . cur . 7 ualk xxx . fū in eod p̄io. Hi in lōg . vii . q̄ . & . v . in lat . 7 in gēl̄ xxv . d & fōrōg . Alii ibi h̄m.

In Wattisfelda in d̄no . xx. sibi hōmōm . xvi . ac̄ . & dūm cur̄ . & ualk xv . sū . Sū cadmondas fōc . Duo ex his fōc sū cadm̄ . ad cōmū . r . r . e . & . vii . anse cōfōcā sūgōis cōmūis .

Wattisfeld̄ tenet Aluic̄ p̄iā . r . r . e . p . r . n̄ . cū l̄re . s̄p̄ . i . t . uis . Tūc . ii . cur̄ . Tūc ualk . xxv . fū . h̄ . xvii .

In WATTISFIELD 20 free men with 1½ carucates of land, 1 smallholder; 1 slave. Then 8 ploughs, now 6. Meadow, 1 acre; woodland at 12 pigs. A church with 12 acres of free land in alms. These (free men) could grant and sell their land, but the full jurisdiction and patronage still belonged to St. (Edmund's), and service in Rickinghall (Inferior). Value then 30s; now 40[s]. Of this land, Roric holds 1 carucate; 3 ploughs; value 50s in the same assessment. It has 7 furlongs in length and 5 in width; 176d in tax. Others have [land] there.

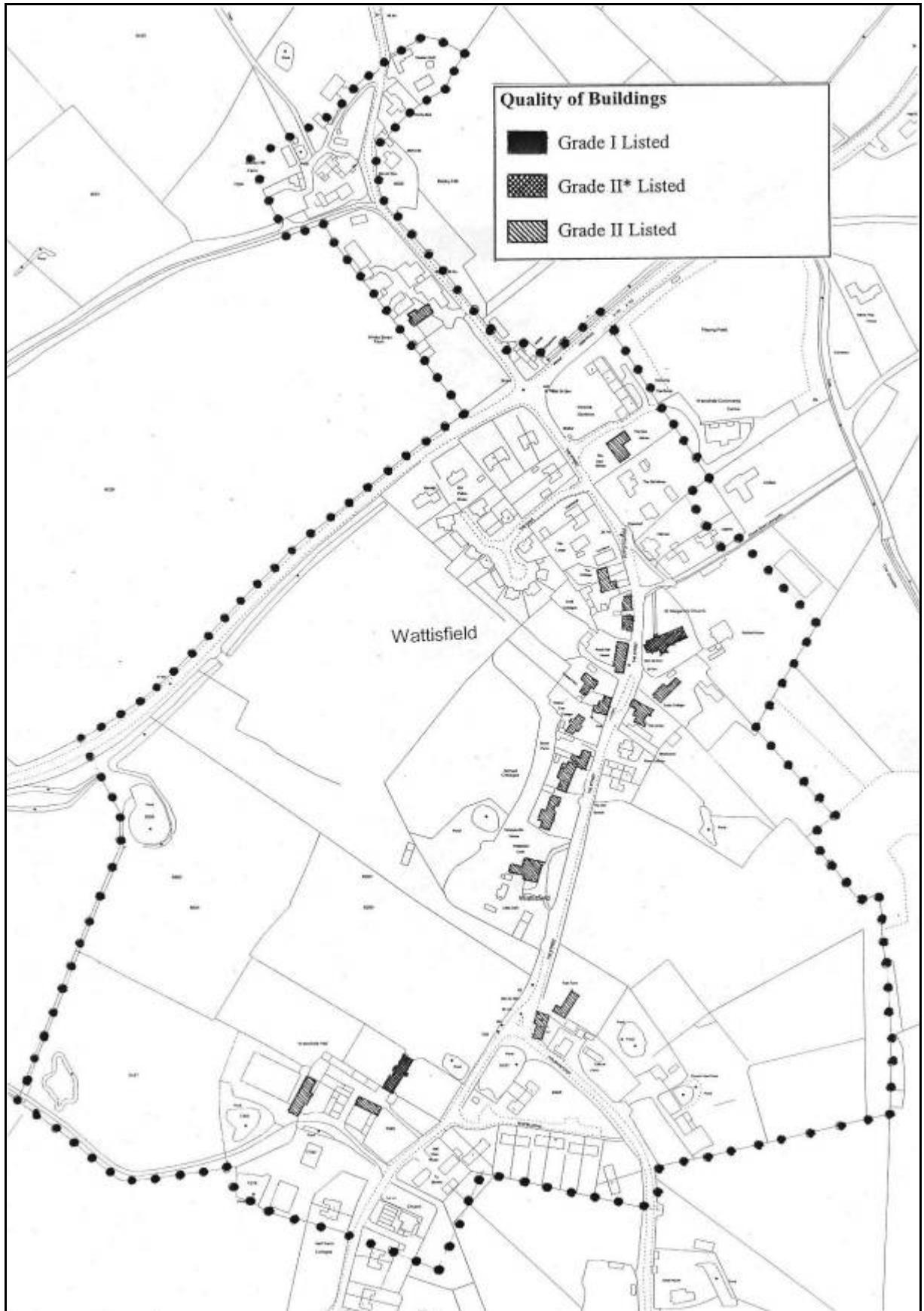
In WATTISFIELD in lordship, 9 free men; 16 acres. ½ plough. Value 35s. St. Edmund's (has) the jurisdiction. Two of these (free men) were St. Edmund's as regards the patronage before 1066, and 7 (were) Earl Hugh's.

Aelfric, a thone, held WATTISFIELD before 1066 as 1 manor; — carucate of land. Always 2 villagers. Then 2 ploughs. Value then 25s; now 17[s].

*The Saxons seem to have continued this tradition with several pottery finds, more brooches and a stone spindle whorl being recorded. By Medieval times the pottery industry was still thriving in the locality and has left us further kiln sites and pottery finds.*

*Post Medieval remains include further brick kilns, a mill site and a milestone.*

*Wattisfield has three main entries listed in the Domesday survey of 1086. The main manor was held by St Edmunds and included a church with 12 acres of free land, a one acre meadow and woodland for 12 pigs. The other holdings were by Hugh de Montfort and Earl Hugh.*



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# *Intrinsic Quality of Buildings*

*There are thirty listings covering the parish of Wattisfield, of which twenty are actually within the conservation area.*

*The Church of St Margaret is grade II\* listed and lies at the heart of the conservation area, providing the usual village exception to the traditional pattern of building with its flint rubble, stone-dressed walls, and its plaintile and slate roofs.*

*It is mainly 15<sup>th</sup> Century Perpendicular with some earlier fragments. Pevsner says of it 'The S porch must once have been quite an ambitious piece with flushwork decoration, but it fell on evil days and was repaired extensively in brick.'*



*The other grade II\* listed building in the parish is Wattisfield Hall, timber-framed and plaintile roofed, dating from the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century. At the south end of the conservation area atop the hill, its long range and four large chimney stacks, with respectively five, two, two and three octagonal shafts, dominating the skyline hereabouts.*

*The other listed buildings in the village are grade II, predominantly farmhouses or cottages, domestic in scale and mostly timber-framed and plastered with roofs of plaintile or thatch. Wattisfield Croft, at the south end of the central cluster, was once this way too but now has exposed timbers, a fine modillion cornice and sadly modern windows.*



# Traditional Building Materials

*The apparent abundance of rendered buildings in the centre of Wattisfield is relieved by the local red brick, which features on many chimney stacks and the fine boundary walls at Wattisfield Hall. It also occurs more grandly at Orchard House, the former 19<sup>th</sup> Century Rectory east of the church but not listed. Here the Flemish bond brickwork makes decorative use of the dark headers as chequer-work and some courses of roof slates are scalloped.*

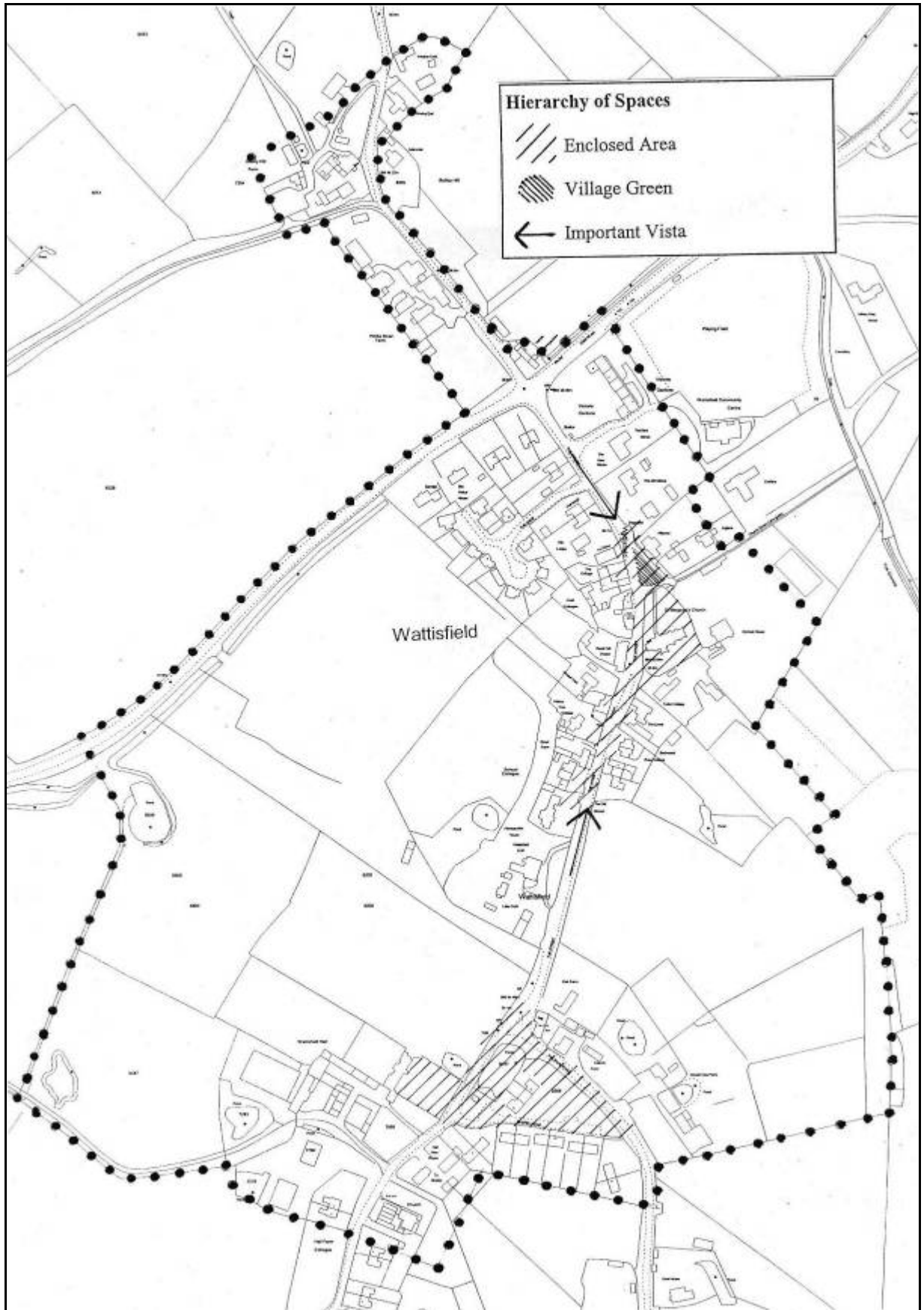
*The Victorians also made decorative use of red brick with other 'Suffolk' materials such as with white brick dressings on the unlisted former school and former chapel opposite Wattisfield Hall and with flint away from the Church on cottages just north of the main road.*



*Traditional black boarding can be found on a number of barns and some ancillary buildings.*

*The prevalent roofing material was thatch on the older listed buildings, but some are now pantile, either natural red or the black glazed variety, or plaintile replacements. Slate can be found on most of the Victorian buildings.*

*Modern infill buildings generally respect the local vernacular using render and red brick. Most of the infill has plaintile or pantile roofs, although some of the latter are concrete.*



# Hierarchy of Spaces

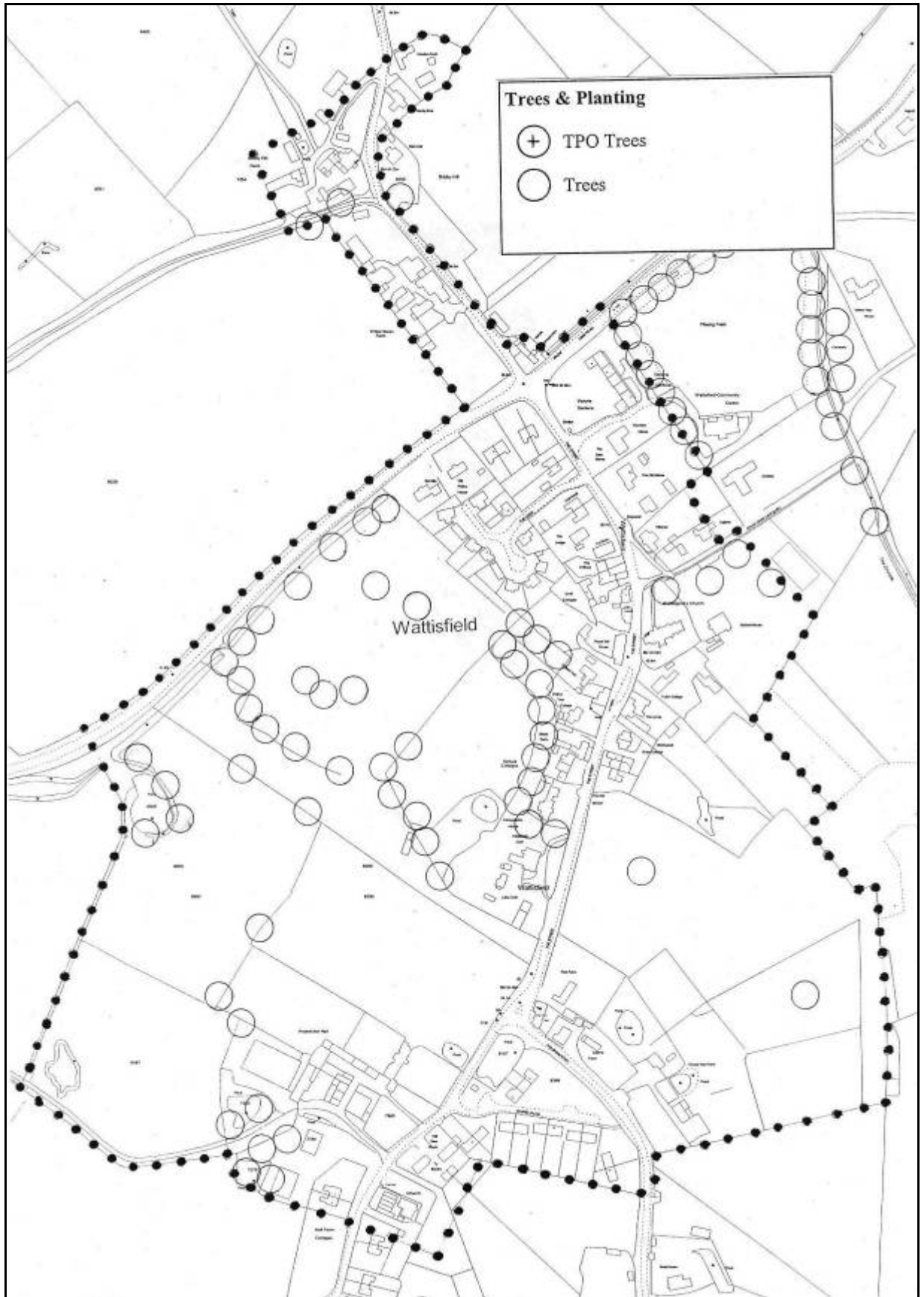
*The conservation area in Wattisfield is roughly centred on the church, halfway up the hill to the south off the main road. Here houses and cottages cluster tightly adjoining the edge of the road, giving a good sense of enclosure, only relieved by the open space of the churchyard itself, set at a slightly higher level within a flint boundary wall.*

*The Street leads on up the hill to the far southern end of the village, where Wattisfield Hall, with its adjoining fields, farmyard and barns is located on Chapel Road. This joins Walsham Road just to the north, with a pond and small green area filling the fork in the roads.*



*Behind The Street, back down the hill to the main road there is an area of parkland, contrasting well with the neighbouring farmland and providing a tree-lined backdrop to the properties on the west side.*

*Below the Church at the bottom of the hill more recent development allows views to open out somewhat, whilst beyond the cross-roads the small hamlet of Bobby Hill is dominated by the red brick mass of Bobbyhill Farm closing off the vista.*



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# Trees & Planting

*The most striking trees in Wattisfield are those in the parkland setting west of The Street, stretching down to the main road, where they form a wall of green against the highway edge.*

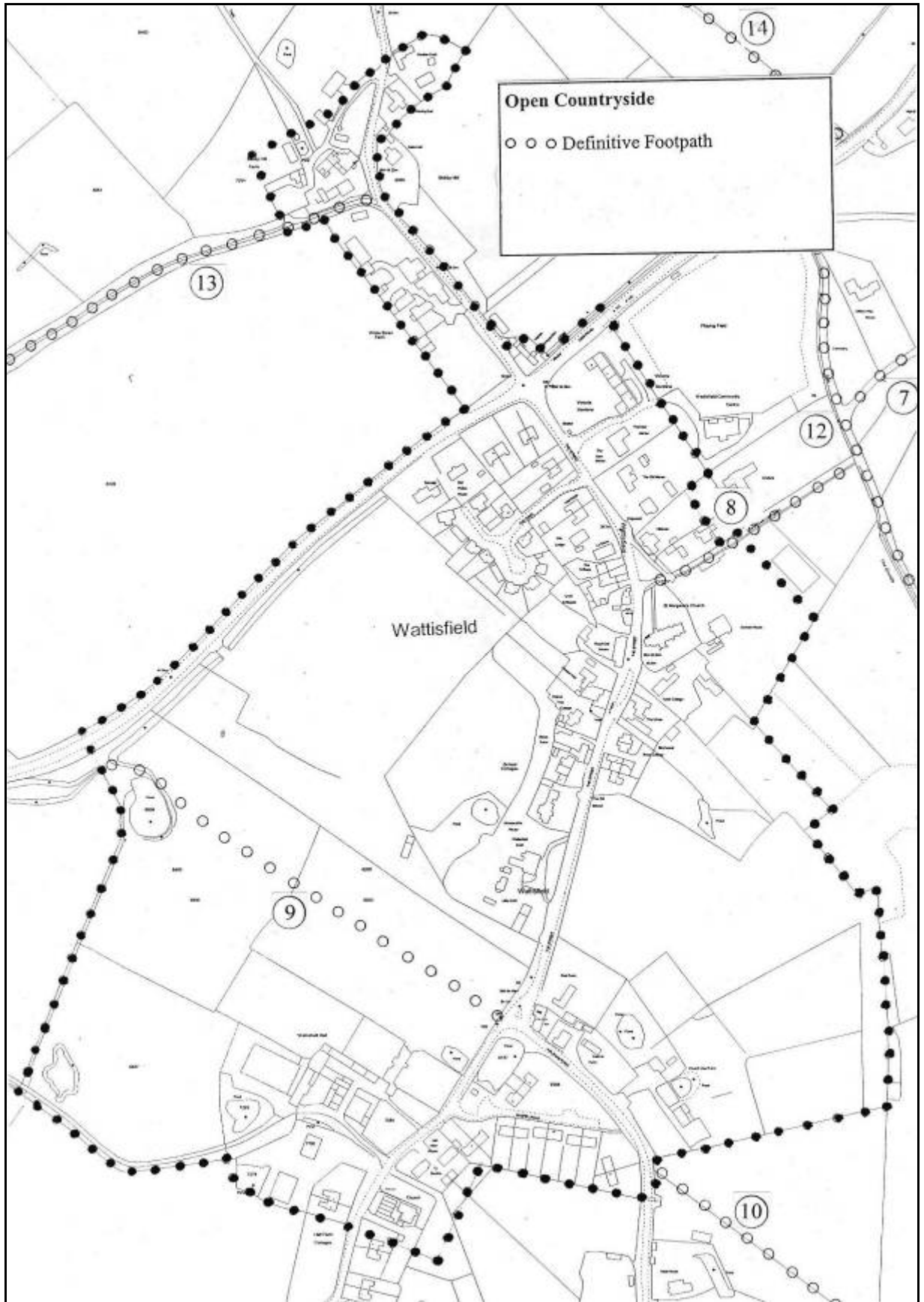
*Here can be found good examples of Ash, Oak, Lime, Beech, Poplar, Turkey Oak, Sweet Chestnut, Field Maple and a surviving Elm.*

*These trees are also visible towering over the rear of houses along The Street and are complemented by some to the front of properties there, especially at Wattisfield Croft, where the house is set back in a more woodland setting.*



*Within the conservation area the trees appear not to have been under any threat significant enough to warrant a Tree Preservation Order.*

*Within the parish as a whole there are only two TPOs, nos. 51 and 341. The former was made in 1982 to protect a large scatter of trees, mostly Oak, Ash and Poplar around Honeygot Farm across the valley east of the Church. Within the same valley the latter made in 2005 protects an area of Sycamore and Ash adjoining The Grundle north-east of the Church.*





# Relationship to Open Countryside

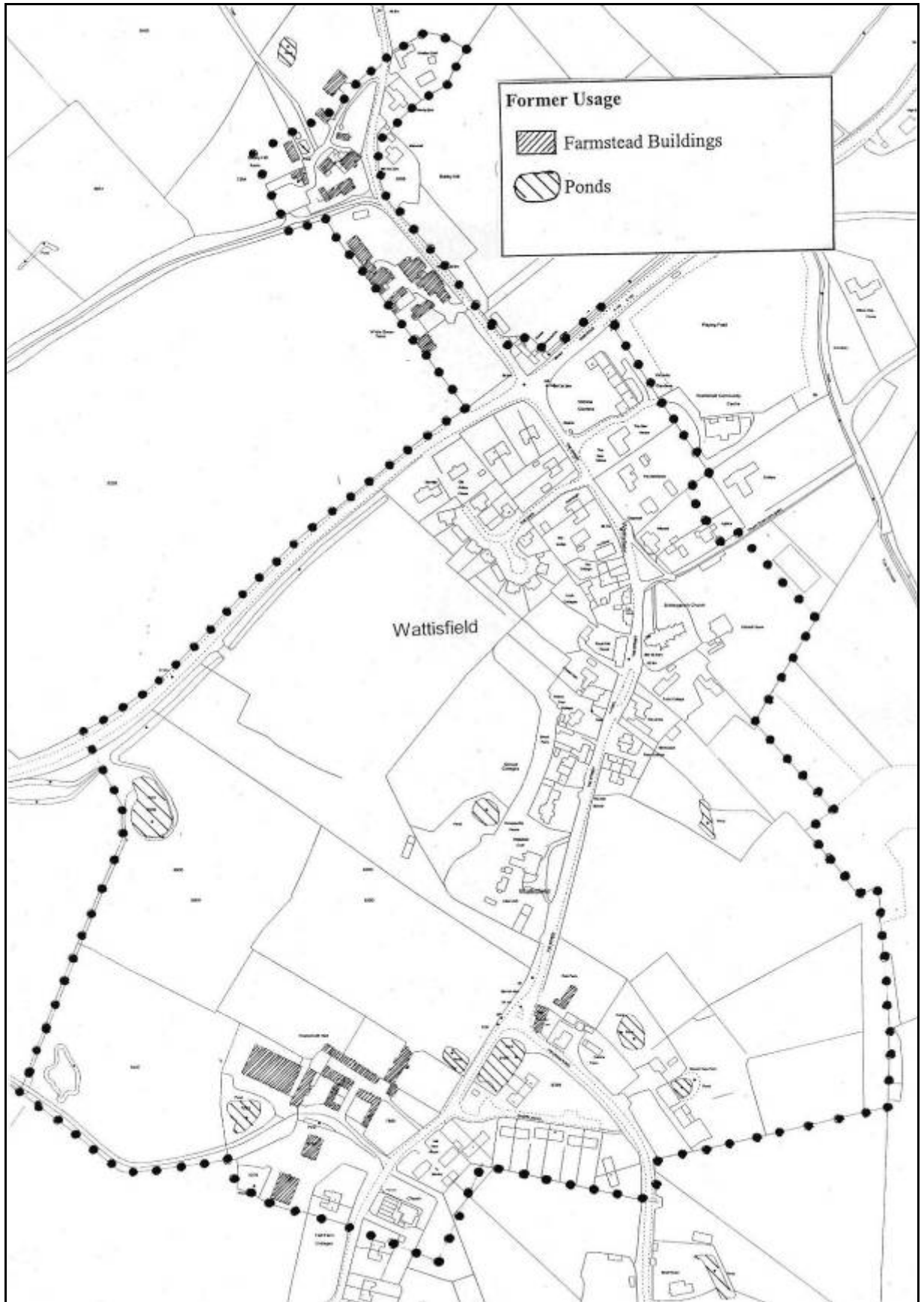
*The settlement pattern in Wattisfield, with houses clustered around the road up the hill and along the approach roads is mostly one plot deep. This means that, although not too visible, the countryside is never far away.*

*Presumably a result of Wattisfield Hall's location to the south-west of the village centre, the majority of footpaths are to be found east of the village.*



*Here radial paths nos. 8 and 7 (Miller's Way) to the north-east and nos. 10 and 4 (Pound Lane) to the south-east are crossed by the more circular routes of paths nos. 14 and 12 (alongside the Grundle) and further out nos. 6 (Manning's Lane) and 5 on higher ground the other side of this valley.*

*Two paths do occur to the west, both coming off the main road: no. 13 runs north-eastwards along Upper Street Lane to Bobby Hill, no. 9 runs south-eastwards towards the pond and green area outside Wattisfield Hall.*



# Prevailing & Former Usage

*Wattisfield has its origins as an agricultural community that has grown from a collection of farmhouses and adjoining cottages.*

*There are four farmsteads ranged around the central church: Hall Farm to the far south, Park Farm nearer the centre, White Swan Farm just across the main road and Bobbyhill Farm to the far north. Each of these has left the landscape with ranges of outbuildings and a number of ponds.*

*The former pottery sites and the surviving pottery business are mainly located east of the conservation area, with a loose cluster of dwellings around where Hinderclay Road and Manning's Lane branch off the Diss Road.*



*In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> Century, directories for the village list 2 brown earthenware manufacturers, a brick and tile maker, a miller, 3 shoemakers, a wheelwright, a blacksmith, 2 victuallers, 2 grocers, a malster and 14 farmers.*

*The general agricultural picture is borne out in detail by field names in the Tithe Map Apportionment of 1844. There are the usual tithe entries including 'Malthouse', and one field appears as 'Hempland', indicative of the Waveney valley linen industry. There are also several entries of 'Mill Field'. The post mill site was shown on a map in 1783, but nothing now remains.*

*The extractive industries make their appearance as 'Gravel Pit Field', 'Claypit Close', 'Kiln Meadow' and 'Kiln Close'.*



# Losses & Possible Gains

*Newer development has only impinged on Wattisfield in two main areas. South of the pond near Wattisfield Hall, relatively modern housing is tucked away adjoining the green, but brings with it some caravan parking that intrudes.*

*From here The Street remains largely as it was until its northern end, where near the main road newer buildings again are to be found in a more suburban setting. There a new estate has been tucked in to the west towards the parkland area.*

*Across the main road adjoining the former Post Office an extension currently housing a hairdressing salon does not quite match the local vernacular. Such small scale development can in quantity present a severe threat of erosion to the conservation area's character.*



*Some of the farm buildings at White Swan Farm nearby could also be more in keeping, whilst others such as near Bobbyhill Farm could do with some maintenance.*

*Like many small villages, Wattisfield suffers from a surfeit of overhead wiring carrying the village's telephone and electricity supplies. This is particularly intrusive up through The Street and past the Church and the under-grounding of these utility supply lines would greatly improve the appearance of the village.*

*With no major routes passing through the heart of the village, traffic is not at present a problem in Wattisfield.*



# References & Further Reading

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*Pevsner, N 1976 The Buildings of England: Suffolk Penguin*

*Suffolk County Council 1997 Sites and Monuments Record*

*Tithe Map & Apportionment 1844 Wattisfield 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*