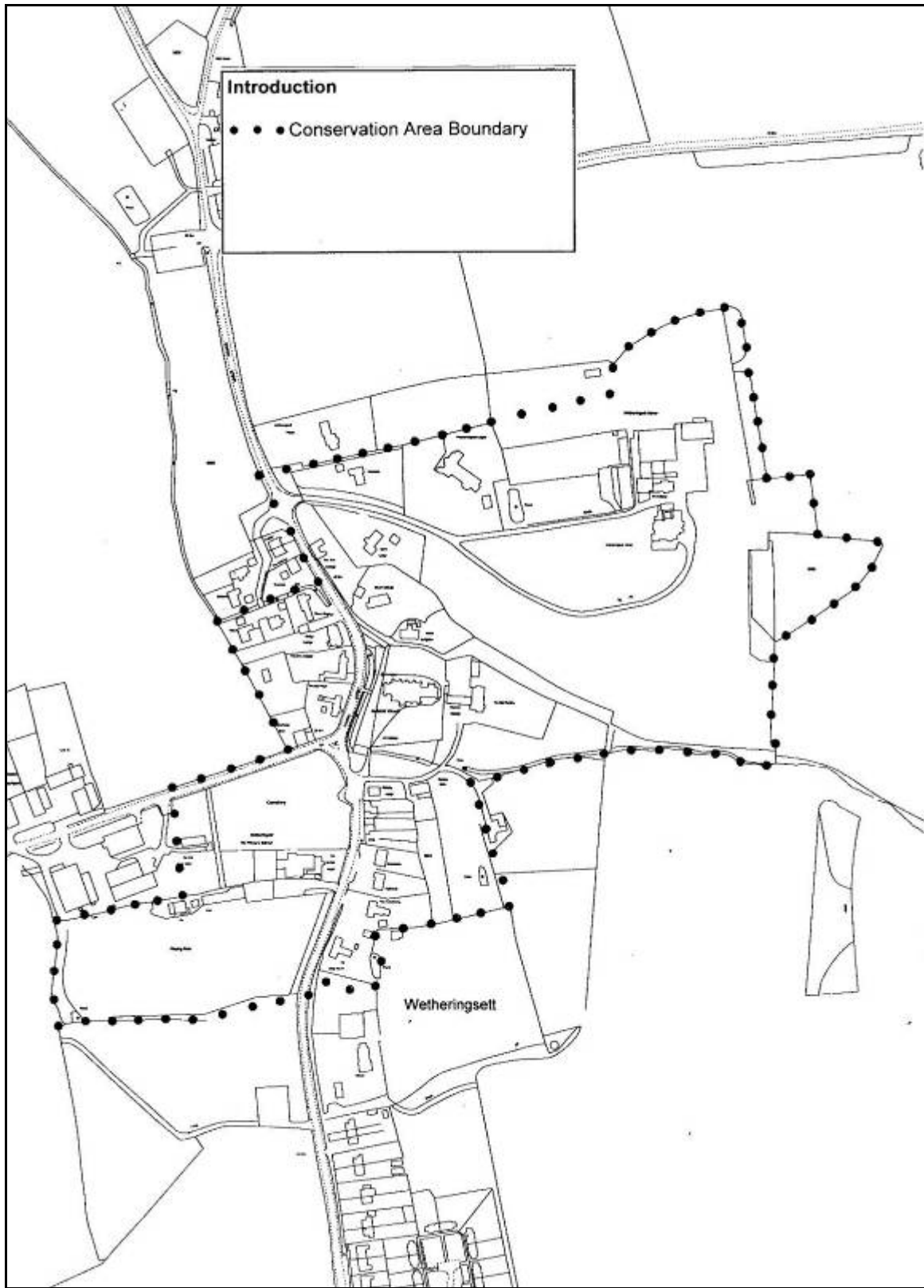


CONSERVATION AREA APPRAISAL



INTRODUCTION

The conservation area in Wetheringsett was originally designated by the newly formed Mid Suffolk District Council in 1975. 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 Wetheringsett 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 Wetheringsett'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.

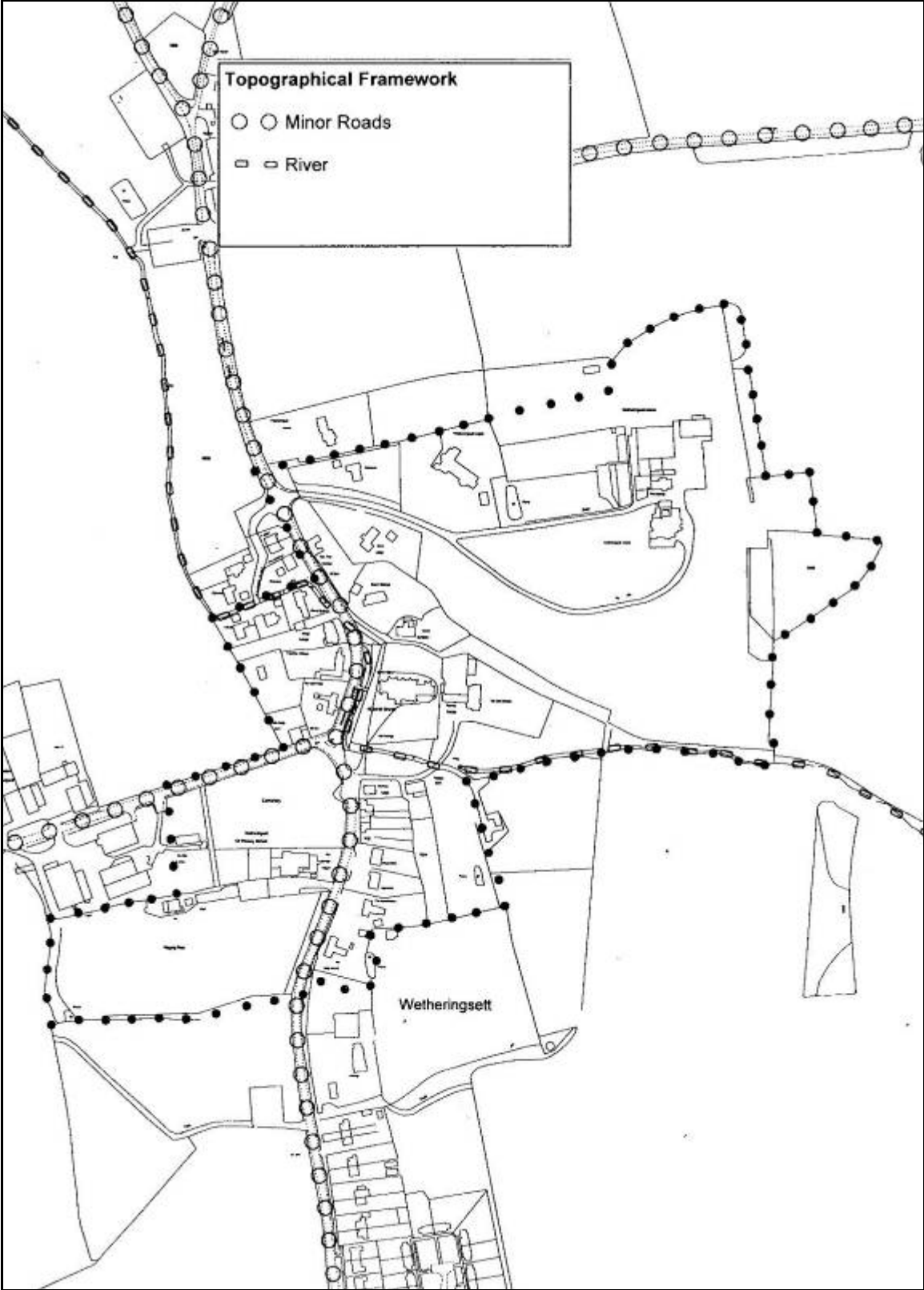
Text, photographs and map overlays by Patrick Taylor, Conservation Architect, Mid Suffolk District Council 2010.



Village Sign



Churchyard



TOPOGRAPHICAL FRAMEWORK

The parish of Wetheringsett cum Brockford consists of a number of outlying hamlets spread over a large area, along with a small central village clustered around its church.

This core lies in a well wooded hollow at the head of a tributary of the river Dove which flows northwards from the village to eventually join the Waveney north of the town of Eye.

Apart from alluvial deposits in the river proper, the geology locally is basically the clay of 'High' Suffolk's Till formation. This overlies crag deposits from the Pliocene and Chalk in turn, both of which stretch from here eastwards to the coast.

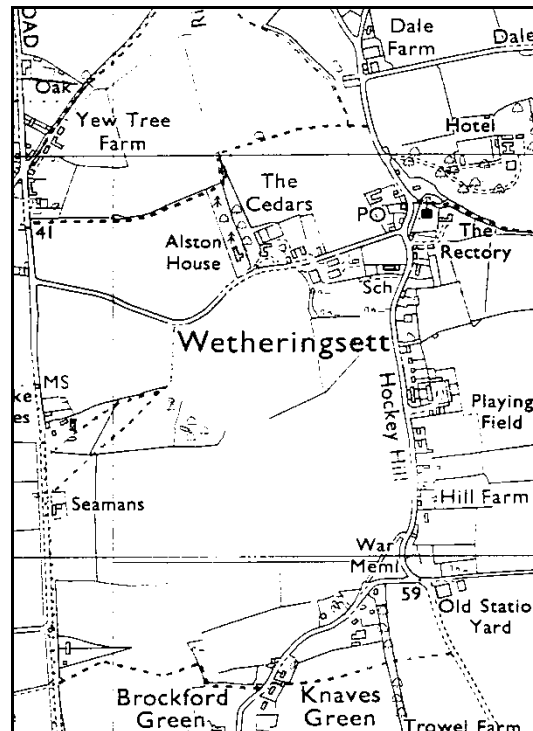
The village itself presents a very quiet backwater, which is surprisingly well served in terms of communications.

Half a mile to the west, running north-south, the modern A140 thunders by, joining the two county towns of Ipswich and Norwich. Originally a Roman road, in 1711 this became part of the Ipswich to Scole Turnpike, as is still witnessed by names like 'Turnpike Cottages' or further south 'Tollgate Farm'.

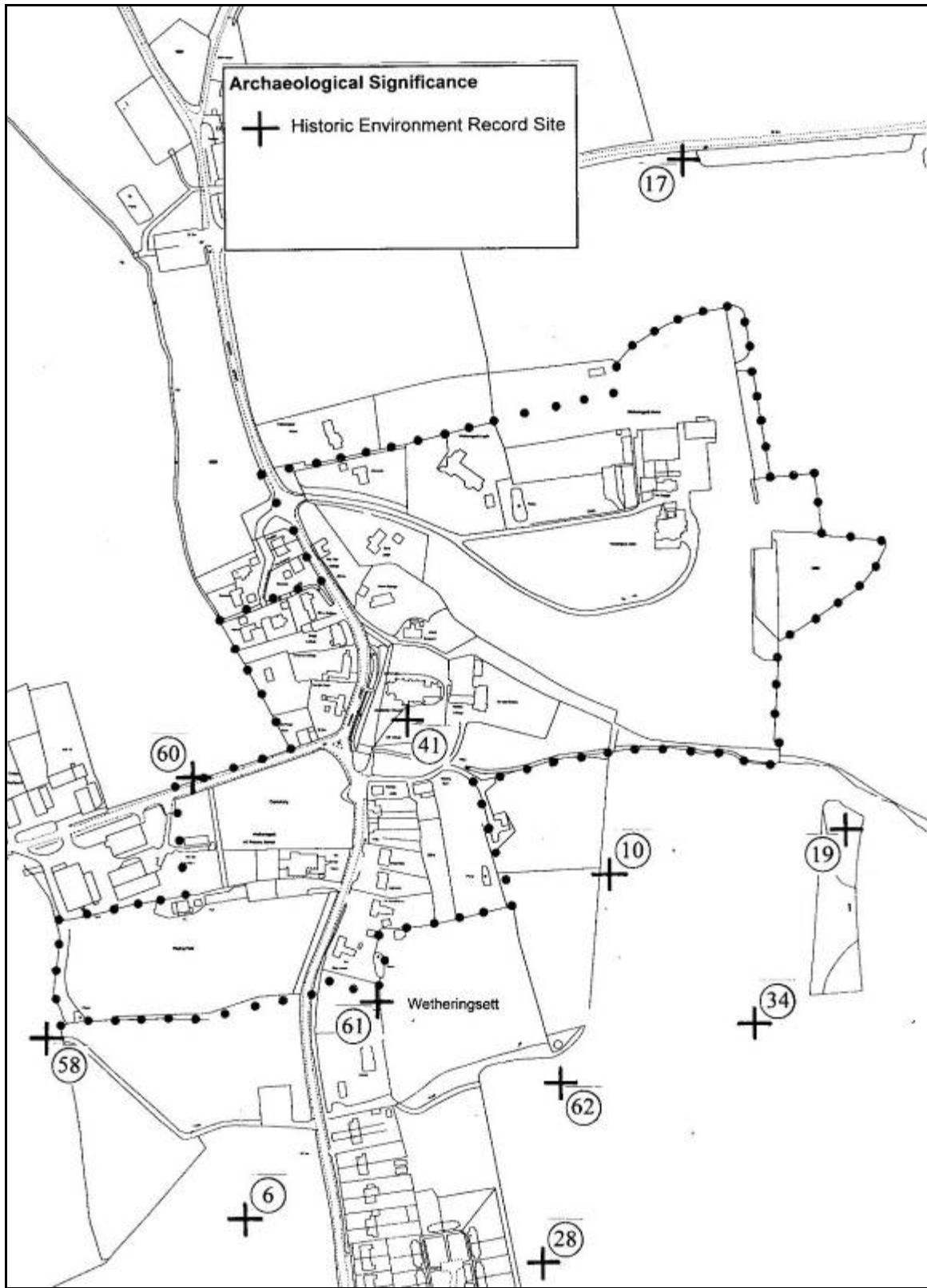
Half a mile to the south of the village, running east-west, the remains of the Mid Suffolk Light Railway can be found, that linked Haughley through to Laxfield for the first half of the 20th Century.



Aerial Photograph



OS Extract



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Suffolk County Historic Environment Record for Wetheringsett cum Brockford lists over fifty sites scattered far and wide within the large parish.

These include finds from the more distant periods such as a Neolithic axe, Bronze Age pottery and Iron Age coins.

More recent finds include Roman pottery and coins, a Saxon brooch and some Medieval scatter finds.

More specific sites listed in the record include several Medieval moated sites, a fishpond and a deer park.

The Domesday survey of 1086 lists a Church with 16 acres of land and half a plough, along with a monastic manor under the jurisdiction of St. Etheldreda's.

The parish has its own religious martyr in Mother Benet, executed by the Catholics in the purges of 1558 for not attending mass. She is reputedly buried by the roadside rather than in the churchyard.



All Saints Church

*HERTESMARA. H̄. Weringhefētā . teñ . Sca . A . t . r . e . c . 1111 . car .
terre . p . mañ . m̄ . tenē . Rad de fauigni q̄rā ; de . R . peurel . femp
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houm . & . 1111 . aē . p̄i . Tē . filua . v . porc . m̄ . cccc . Ecclia . xvi . ac . &
dim . car . & . 11 . rumē . & . viii . an . 7 . xxx . porc . & . c . vii . oūs . 7 . xviii . caſ .
Tē . ual . x . lib . 7 . m̄ . ūmiliē . In . ead . 1111 . libi . hōes . tōm . Godwinus
Bričtmar . Osulfus . De . Rolfus . xl . ac . femp . 11 . car . 7 . uaf . x . fol . Sca .
Ald . foē . hit . r . i . i . ḡ 7 . dim̄ in longo 7 . i . i . ḡ in laē . 7 . ix . den̄ de . getto .
Alii ibi tenent .*

HARTISMERE Hundred

St. Etheldreda's held WETHERINGSETT before 1066; 4 carucates of land as a manor. Now Ralph of Savenay holds a fourth (part) from R(anulf) Peverel.

Always 10 villagers; 9 smallholders. Then 4 slaves, now 2.

Always 2 ploughs in lordship; 3 men's ploughs.

Meadow, 4 acres; woodland, then 500 pigs, now 400.

A church, 16 acres. ½ plough.

2 cobs, 8 cattle, 30 pigs, 107 sheep, 18 goats.

Value then £10; now the same.

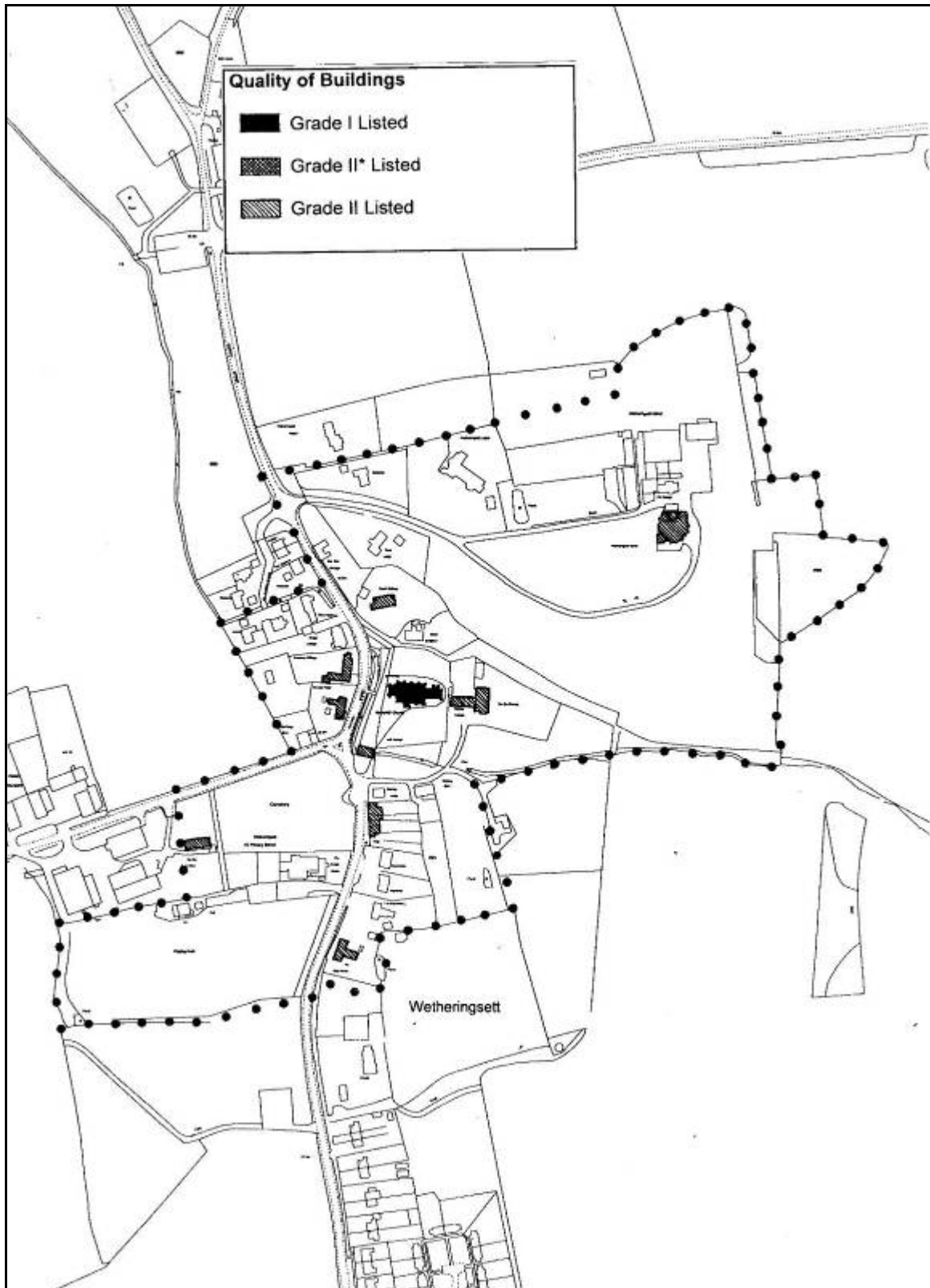
In the same (Wetheringsett) 4 free men under patronage, Godwin,

Bričtmer, Osulf, Derwulf; 40 acres. Always 2 ploughs;

Value 10s.

St. Etheldreda's (has) the jurisdiction. It has 1½ leagues in length and 1 league in width; 9d in tax. Others hold there.

Domesday Extract



QUALITY OF BUILDINGS

The central nucleus of the village around the church forms the heart of conservation area. Here can be found the greatest concentration of listed buildings, for the most part grade II 16th Century houses of timber-framed construction with thatched roofs.

The Church of All Saints itself is grade I listed and described by Pevsner as 'A stately church'. Much 13th Century work can be seen: the nave arcades, chancel arch and various doors and windows, added to in the 15th Century with tower, porch and clerestory, and finally 'restored' in the 1850's.

Tucked away in the north-east part of the conservation area lies Wetheringsett Manor, a striking Suffolk white brick early gothic revival small country house, now used as a Christian conference centre. It was recently listed grade II and dates from 1843, designed by Samuel Teulon, one of the major High Victorian gothicists.



1-4 Church Street



Wetheringsett Manor



Render and Pantile



Render and Thatch



Red Brick and Pantile



Weather-board and Pantile

TRADITIONAL MATERIALS

The church is mostly of flint with chequered flushwork to the tower and buttresses and has a slate roof.

Approximately a quarter of the village's buildings are rendered timber-frame with thatched roofs, very much in the Suffolk vernacular, without exposed timber framing.

Other rendered buildings in the village core are roofed variously with plaintile, pantile, slate and even concrete roof tiles, some of these doubtless having replaced thatch.

Many of the more recent additions in the village are red brick with pantile roofs, the precedent here being the red brick used to re-front the timber-framed cottages at 1-4 Church Street in the 18th Century, when a single house was subdivided into almshouses for the poor.

The Victorians also used red brick for the school and school-house, along with white brick dressings, whilst the Manor, as already mentioned, was solely white brick, most likely sourced from the not too distant Woolpit works.

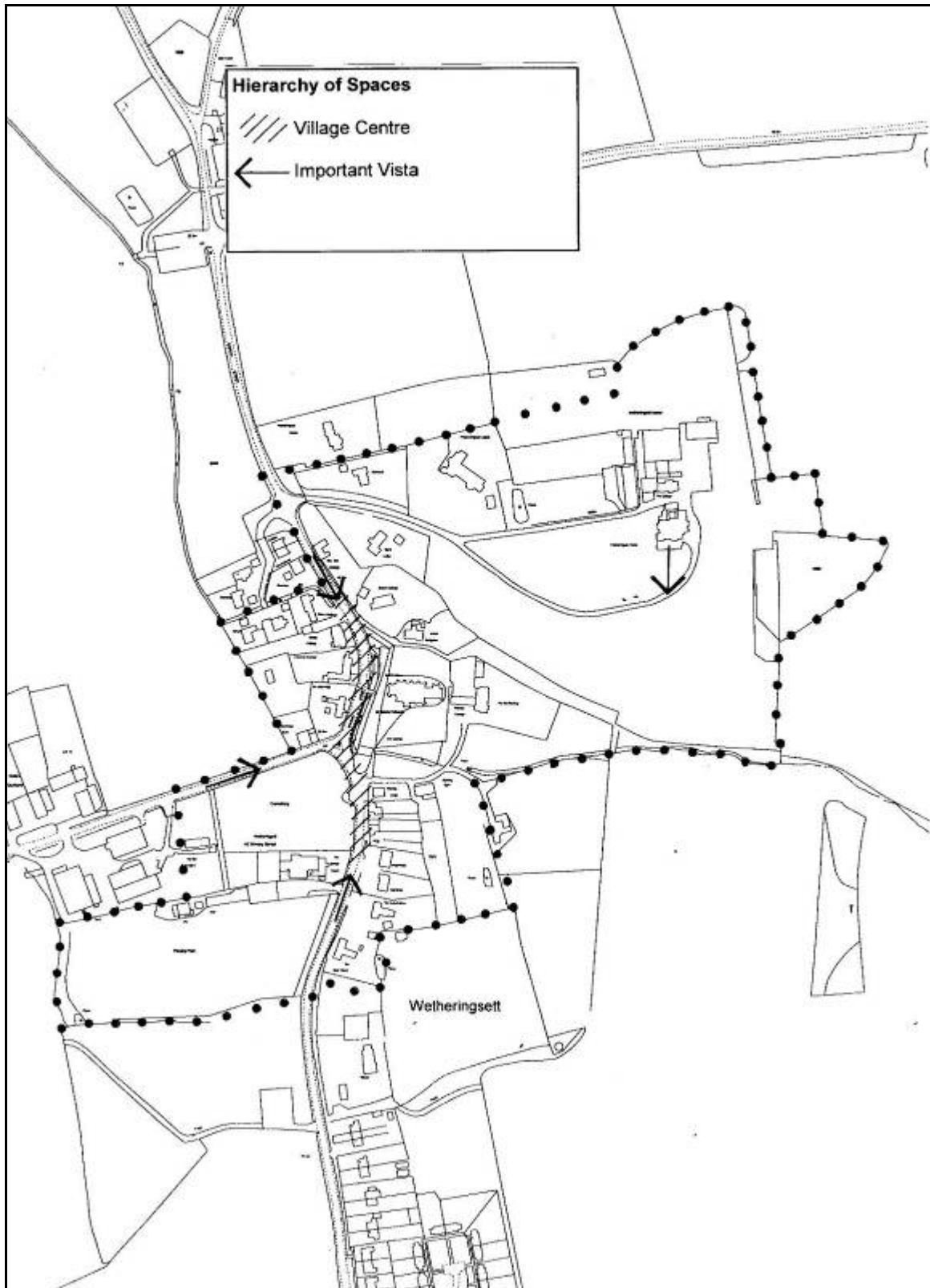
Two other buildings, now converted to dwellings, were formerly black boarded agricultural barns, one with a slate roof, the other with black pantiles.



Render and Thatch



Red / White Brick and Slate



HIERARCHY OF SPACES

The village is centred around the north-south running Church Street, which winds gently through the valley bottom, rising at its south end up past Step House into Hockey Hill.

The road in from the A140 to the west is much straighter and drops gently down to the village with a good view of the church amongst the trees. It passes the mature trees of the cemetery on the right before joining Church Street at a simple triangular grassed island.

Within the village proper, only nos. 1-4 Church Street (the former almshouses) are built hard onto the highway edge.

Elsewhere the buildings are set back within their own grounds, many well hidden behind mature hedges and trees, some even built up on the high banked valley sides. The screening and changes in level help create a feeling of enclosure in the valley, an element of the area's character well worth preserving.

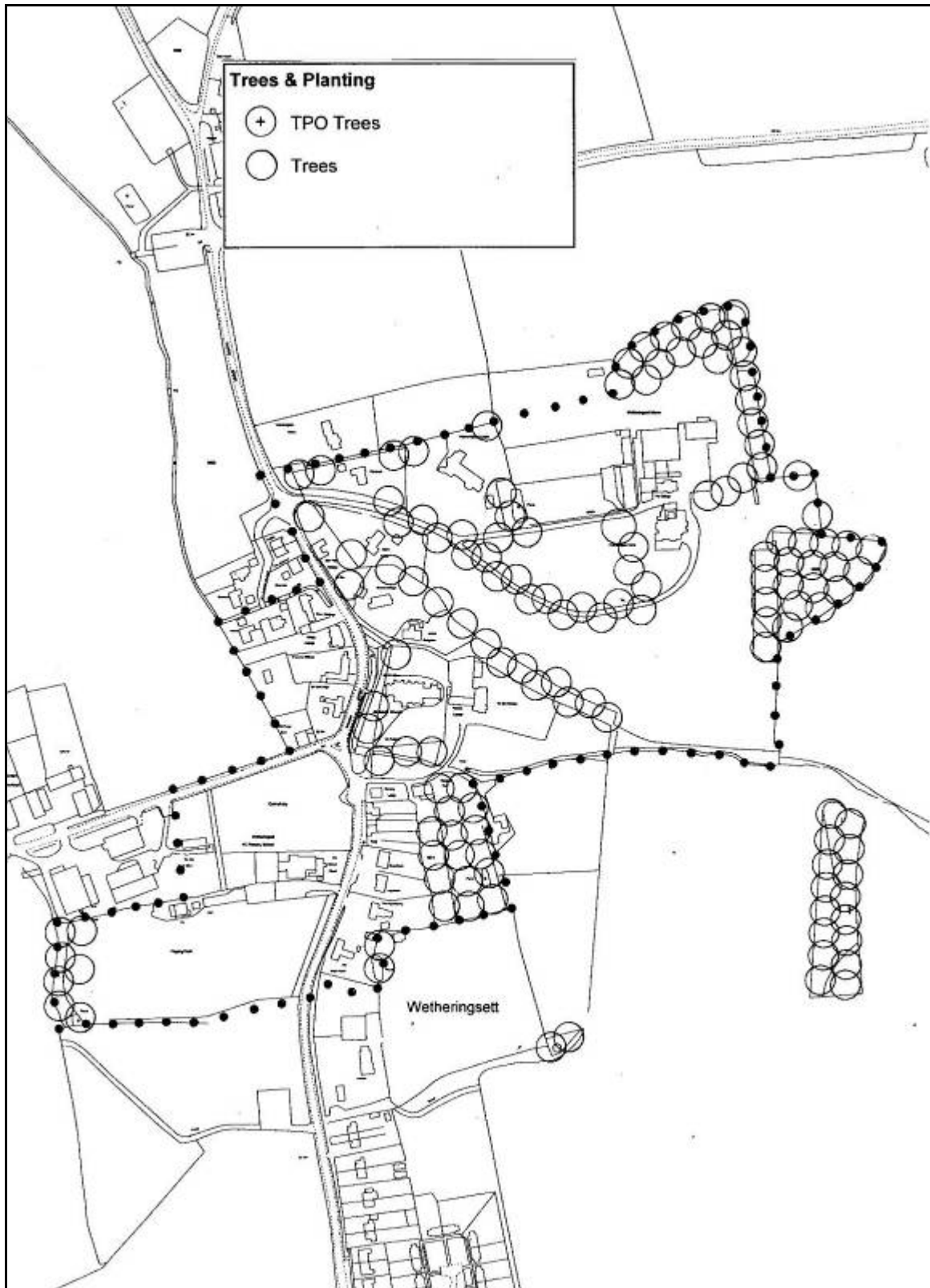
Wetheringsett Manor is perhaps the ultimate in this trend, set up on the hillside, looking out across farmland and approached via a long tree-lined drive, it is almost totally separate from the rest of the village.



Church Street junction



Church Street



TREES AND PLANTING

The trees around Wetheringsett village are for the most part fairly mature and consequently form a very dominant feature of the local landscape, particularly set against the open prairie of adjoining farmland.

This appears to have been the case historically too; in 1086 the Domesday survey lists "woodland, then 500 pigs, now 400", quite a considerable pannage, of which very little remains.

South of the village proper, around what is now Wetheringsett Lodge, there was a Medieval deer park which is recorded in the Suffolk Historic Environment Record.

Within the village itself there remain fine examples of Oak, Copper Beech, Lime, Ash, Holly, Yew, Poplar, Horse Chestnut and Scots Pine.

The approaches to Wetheringsett Manor include an avenue of Limes and within the grounds many other species abound including Corsican Pine and a large Wellingtonia.

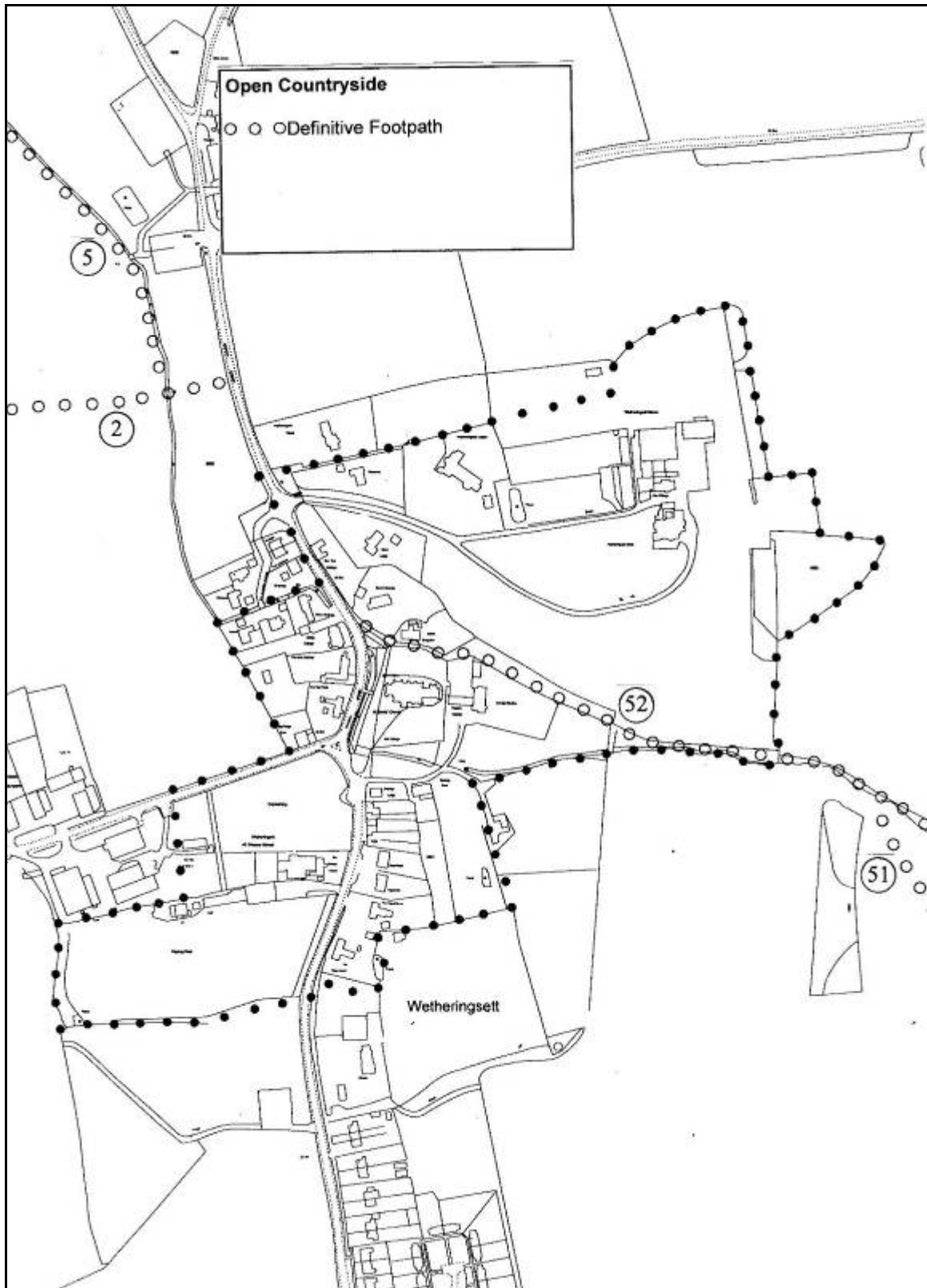
Preservation Orders on trees felt under threat include two Horse Chestnuts at Wetheringsett Lodge (TPO 216) and an area of mixed woodland further south at Moat Farm, Wetherup Street, one of the outlying hamlets (TPO 215).



Churchyard Trees



Avenue to Manor



COUNTRYSIDE ACCESS

The various hamlets of Wetheringsett cum Brockford parish are relatively well connected by footpath links between them across the intervening farmland.

Access from Wetheringsett village itself, with minor roads leading out to the north, west and south, is complemented by a footpath link to the east (FP 52), that starts just north of the churchyard.

About a quarter mile along, this crosses a ditch out of the conservation area and then forks into one path continuing eastwards (FP 16), and another heading off southwards to Wetheringsett Hall (FP 51).

A little to the north of the village, the only other central footpath link heads off westwards towards Brockford Street on the main road (FP 2).

The village is thus very much 'in' the countryside, its well wooded hollow a relative oasis in the desert of the surrounding intensive agriculture. This effect has to some extent been lost to the immediate south of the village along Hockey Hill, where the suburban sprawl of linear development has followed the road southwards.

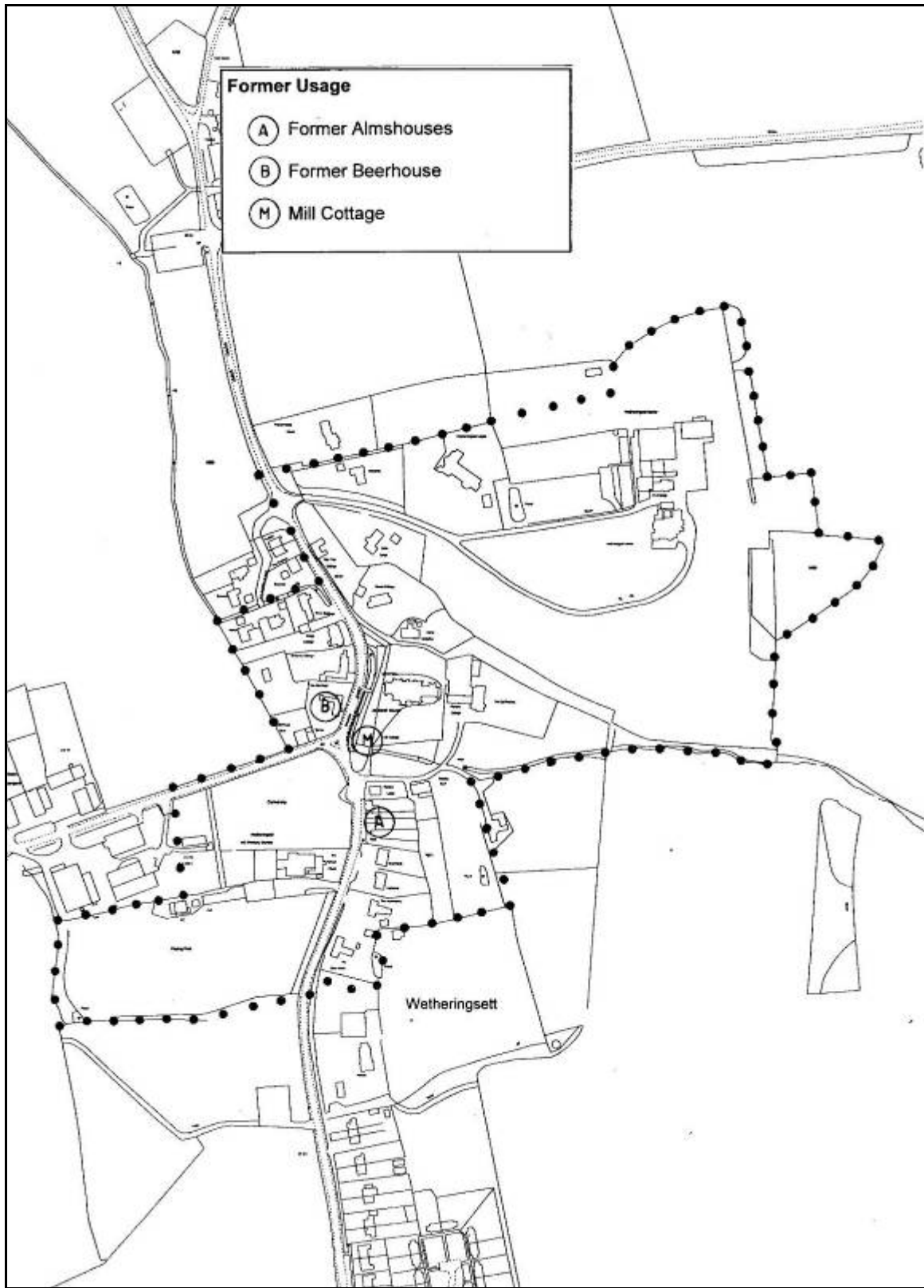
The church and the barn immediately to its south are both recorded as known bat roosts.



Start of Footpath 52



Ditch Crossing



PREVAILING AND FORMER USAGE

Although the village now serves mainly as a dormitory, in the past there was greater diversity of use.

Records show that in the 17th Century the village was largely populated by husbandmen and yeomen, along with a scattering of linen weavers and leather workers.

Tithe apportionment records of around 1840 for the parish give much away in the form of field names such as Brick Kiln Meadow, Sawpit Field, Winding Piece, Blacksmith Field, Gravel Pits and Hop Field, all indicative of a more locally self-sufficient age. The house now known as the Old Forge was formerly the 'Old Dun Cow' beerhouse.

The parish as a whole had at least three windmills of the post and round-house type. That off Station Road, south of Hockey Hill, was demolished in 1919, whilst the last at the outlying hamlet of Broad Green blew down and was rebuilt in 1882, but was finally dismantled in 1957.

In the centre of the village adjoining the Church, the thatched house known as Mill Cottage is built directly over the river.

Brockford Station, to the south of the village, has some remaining buildings and track from the former Mid Suffolk Light Railway that operated from Haughley Junction between 1904 and 1952.



Mill Cottage



Old Post Office

LOSSES AND POSSIBLE GAINS

The already mentioned suburban sprawl of bungalows and houses along Hockey Hill is perhaps unfortunate and provides sufficient reason to stop the conservation area at Step House.

Within the village modern houses have only to date impinged at the periphery of the main nucleus, at either end of Church Street.

Up at the Manor, the house itself remains relatively intact, whilst modern farm buildings, subsequently converted to workshop use, remain well hidden at the rear.

The conservation area should continue to protect the special 'arcadian' nature of the village within its wooded setting. Since many of the trees are of mature years, efforts should be made to underplant with younger specimens of local origin to secure succession.

The few areas of pavement within the village are generally blacktop with concrete kerbing. A flint chipping surface dressing would be more appropriately low key, perhaps with exposed aggregate kerbing to match.



Hockey Hill



Modern Infill

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