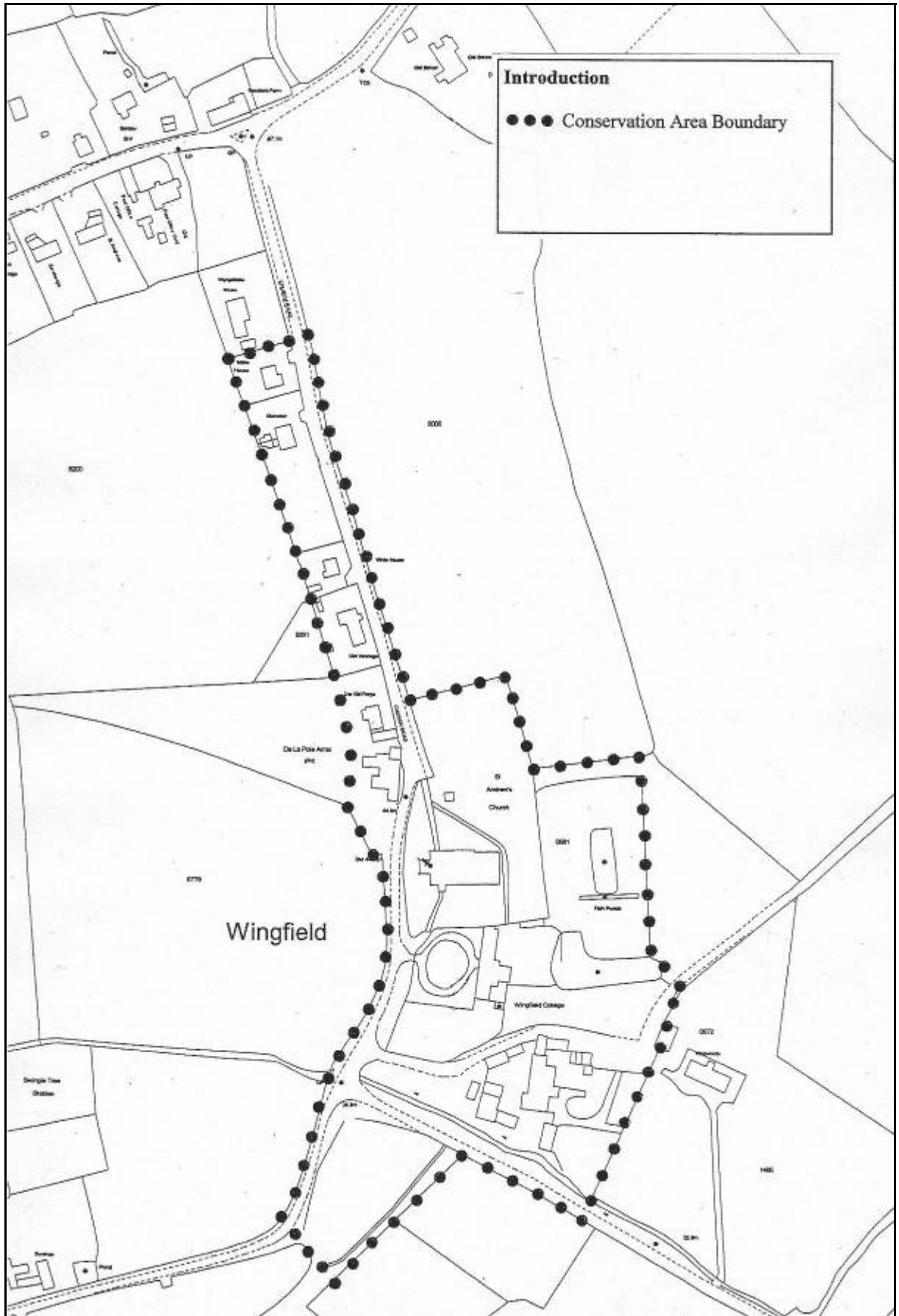


conservation area appraisal



Introduction

The conservation area in Wingfield was first designated by Mid Suffolk District Council in 1991.

The Council has a duty to review its conservation area designations from time to time, and this appraisal examines Wingfield under a number of different headings as set out in English Heritage's new 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' (2006).

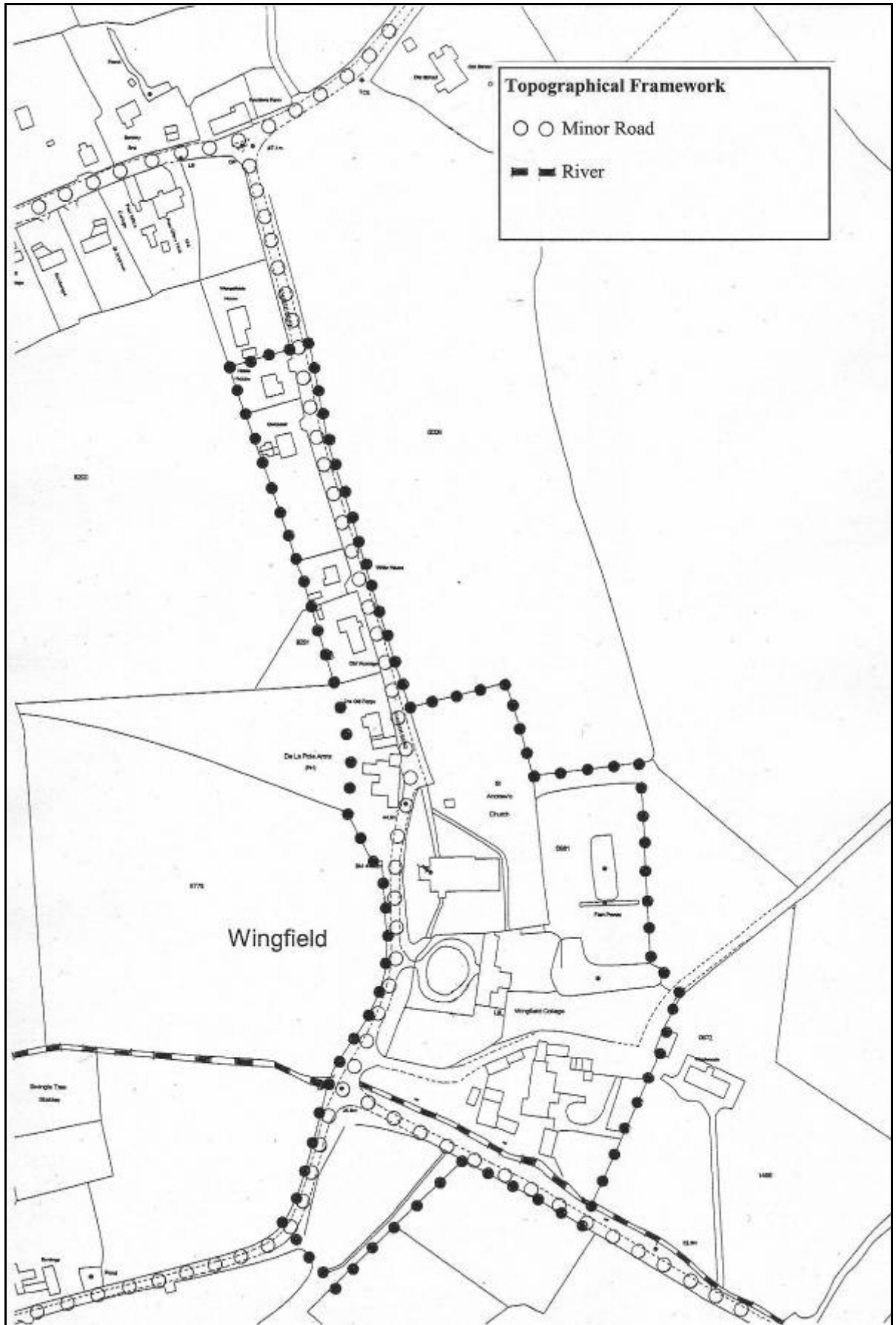
As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Wingfield's built environment in conservation terms.



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.



Topographical Framework

The village of Wingfield is situated in the north eastern corner of Mid Suffolk district, about five miles south-west of Harleston across the border in Norfolk.

It thus falls within the valley of the river Waveney, which remains to this day navigable up as far as Beccles.

From 1860 the Waveney Valley railway line with its station at Harleston provided a further east-west link, however this was closed for passenger traffic in 1953.

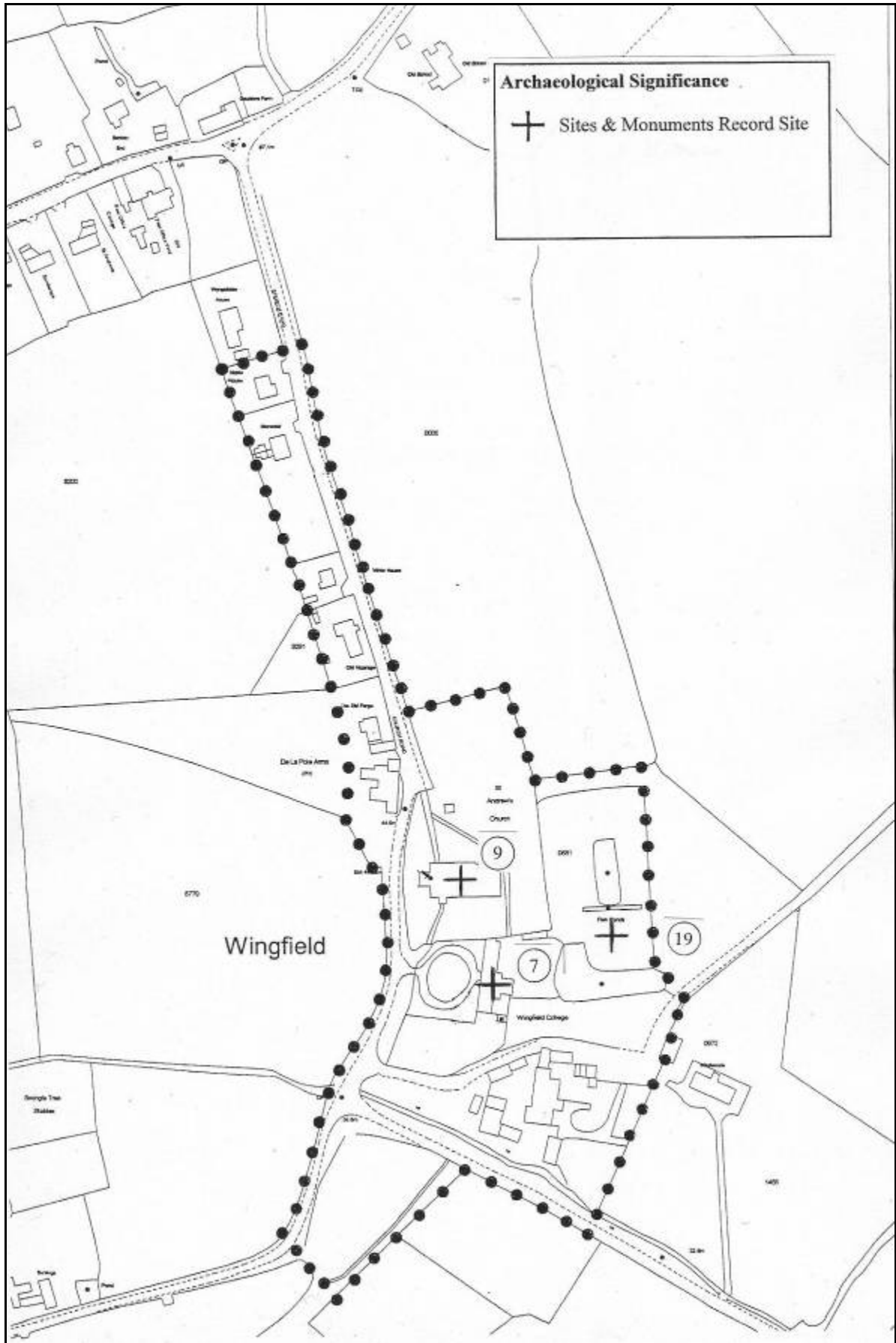
The modern road network follows a similar east-west line, with the A143 bypassing Harleston to the south, between the town and the Waveney. On the Suffolk side of the river the B1118 from Hoxne to Stradbroke passes about a mile south-west of Wingfield.

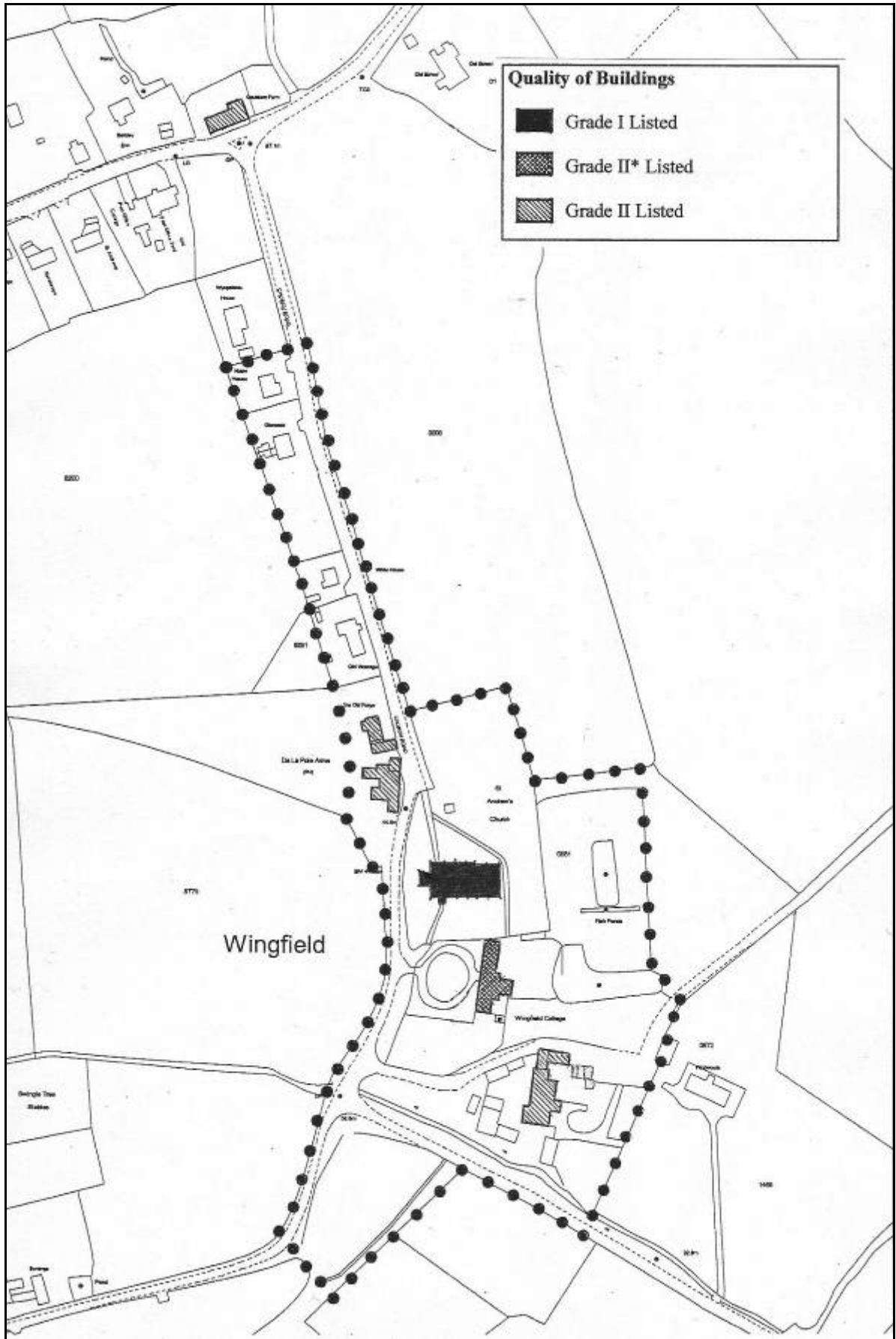


The village is situated in the southern edge of the broad flat valley of the river Waveney adjoining a tributary that rises further south near Stradbroke. This valley is cut down through the overlying clay of 'High Suffolk' into the underlying crag and chalk that makes up most of east Suffolk.

The name Wingfield has been interpreted as 'Temple Field' or alternatively 'Field of Wiga's People'.

In 2001 the population of the parish as taken by the census was 318.





Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

There are only five listed buildings in the area of Wingfield clustered around the Medieval Church, another five including the Castle spread around nearby Wingfield Green and a dozen or so others, mainly remote farmhouses spread wider around the parish. Although few in number they make up for this in terms of quality as both the Church and Castle are grade I, whilst the College and the outlying White House are both grade II.*

The Church of St Andrew is mainly late 14th Century and Decorated in style, built with money left by Sir John Wingfield in 1361. Pevsner describes the south chapel, given a little later by Sir Michael de la Pole as 'quite exceptionally lavish' inside. Other parts of the church are Perpendicular, or the result of 19th Century restoration.

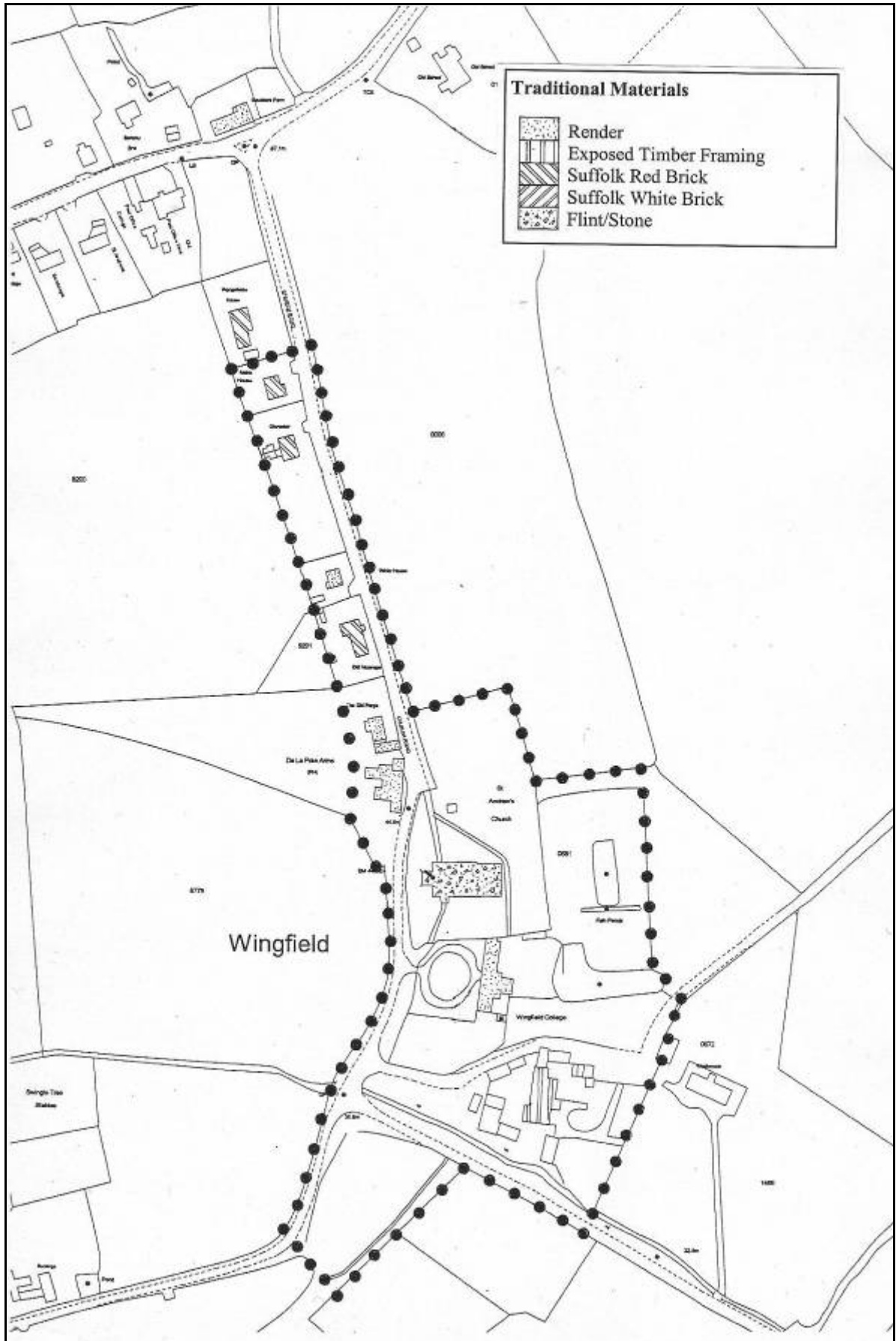


Pevsner also describes the Castle with its 14th Century flint rubble gatehouse, again due to Sir Michael de la Pole, being the oldest surviving part. The present house is later, having been added in the 16th Century on the site of the original great hall.



The College (formerly College Farm) was similarly founded in the late 14th Century, but extensively remodeled in the 18th Century, at which time it gained its Georgian frontage.

The grade II buildings are mostly farmhouses, domestic in scale, timber-framed and either plastered or encased in brick in the 19th Century.



Traditional Building Materials

The listed buildings around the Church in Wingfield are of traditional form and grouping. The Church itself is in the usual flint rubble with stone dressings and has a plaintile roof with lead on the shallower pitched aisle roofs.

Plaintile is again used on the adjoining College with its cream rendered walls and exposed timber framing at the gable end giving away its true construction. Timber framing is also exposed between white render panels on the nearby barn, now an art gallery, with traditional white boarding to its gable end. The roof here reverts to the less expensive clay pantiles.

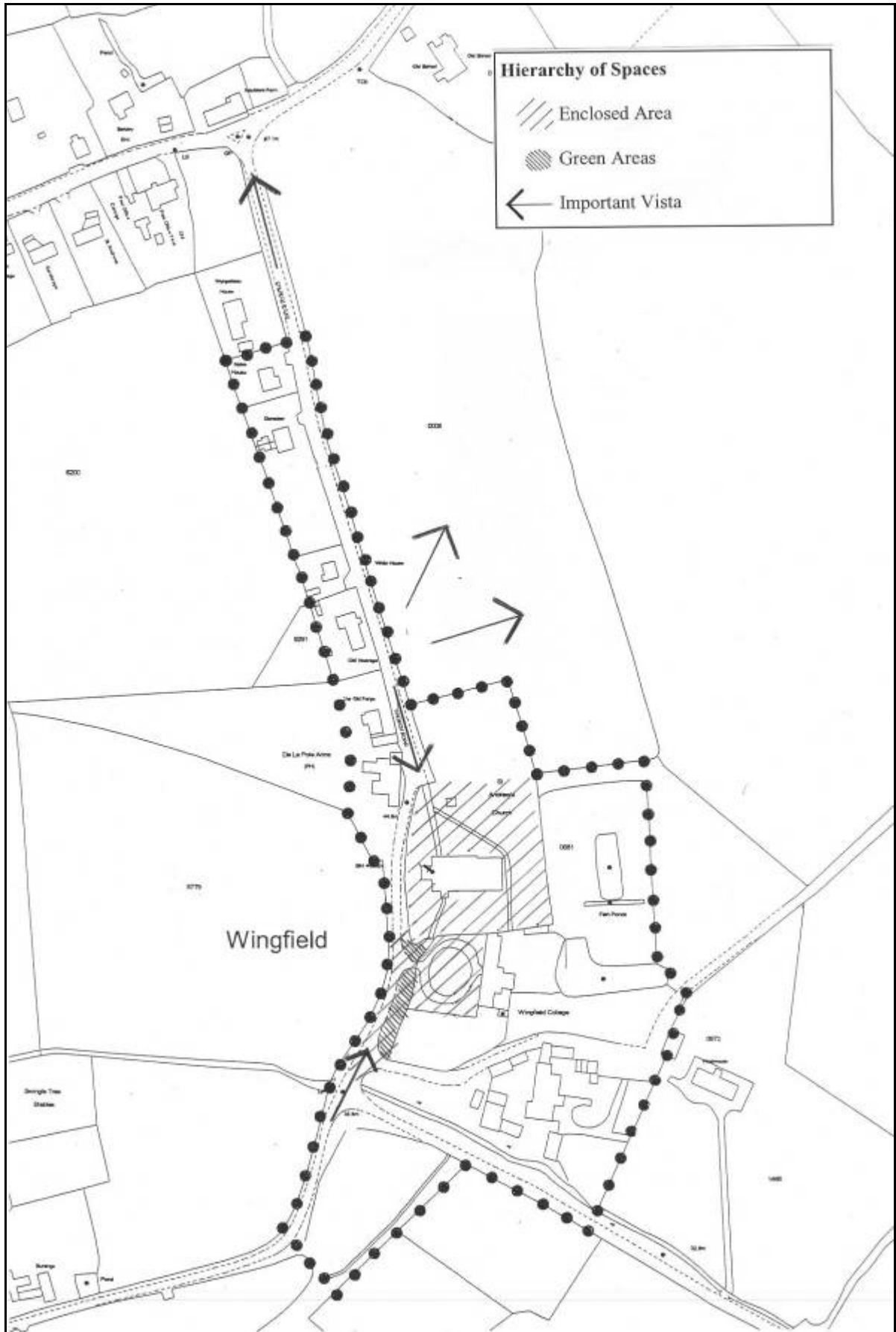


The more usual timber framing concealed by render is to be found on the De La Pole Arms and adjoining Old Forge, the former with a black glazed pantile roof, the latter thatched.

The local red brick features further north up Church Road on a number of unlisted buildings, along with some white brick dressings.

The prevalent roofing material here is pantile, both in the natural clay and the black glazed variety so common in the Waveney valley.

The only omissions from Suffolk's palette of vernacular materials appear to be slate and black weatherboarding.



Hierarchy of Spaces

The five listed buildings with the church at their centre form the core of this historic settlement. The church is very much the focal point, the road from the south crossing the stream and rising towards the church in its heavily wooded churchyard, with the college buildings on the right.

From the north, Church Road forms a very strong visual axis with the Church closing the southern vista and Goulder's Farm, at some distance, the northern one.

The alignment of pathways within the churchyard and the position of the front entrance to the farm allow virtual door to door visibility between these two buildings.

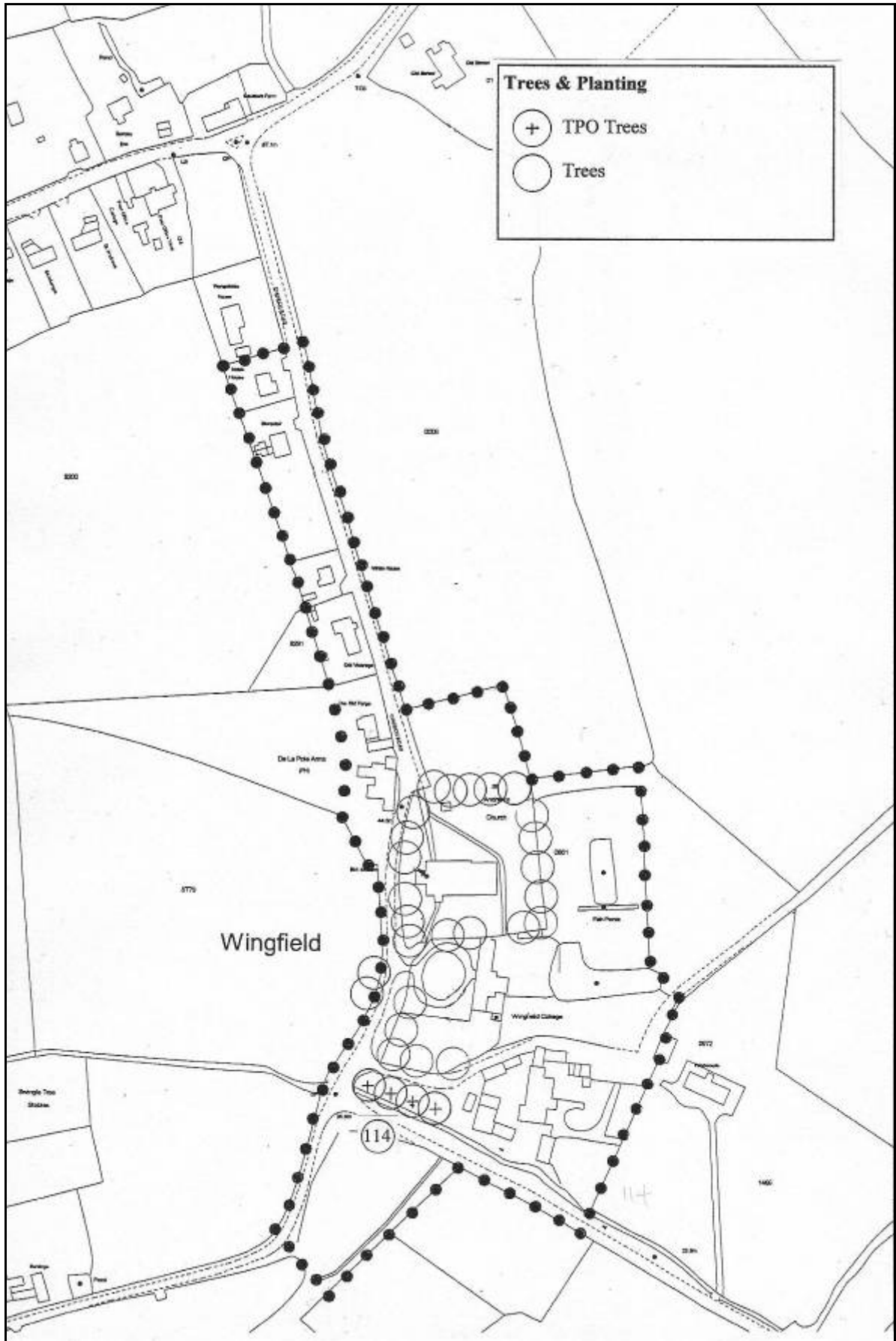


The extension of the conservation area to include all of Church Road and Goulder's Farm at its far end should be considered.

South of the church, the Georgian frontage to Wingfield College is well set back within a semi-formal garden with a circular driveway serving the central entrance. Further south the barn and outbuildings comprising the gallery complex have the more informal feel of a farmyard that has evolved over a long period of time.

The only other space worthy of note is the car park for the arts complex, further south just beyond the stream and closing the view southwards. This is somewhat untidy at present and could be improved in its presentation or might be better screened by planting.





Trees & Planting

The churchyard in Wingfield presents a dense nucleus of mature trees at the heart of the settlement. Here there are Limes, Plane, Sycamore, Horse Chestnut and Ash, all fairly sizeable around the historic part of the graveyard, with smaller more recent plantings to be found in the northwards extension.

Another group of more mature trees, the subject of Tree Preservation Order 114, including Horse Chestnut, Sycamore and Copper Beech is to be found along the roadside strip adjoining the stream on the south side of the arts complex.

Together these two areas of larger trees provide a sense of enclosure to the College buildings set between them.



Younger trees in the grounds include Walnut, Red Norway Maple, Hornbeam and various ornamental small trees.

Further afield in the parish there are trees, which have been felt at risk and thus been made the subject of further tree preservation orders. These include groups of Oaks with Ash at Wingfield Priory (TPO 192) and at Pallant's Farm (TPO 274).

Northwards along Church Road, the houses on the west side have their share of trees and shrubs in the gardens, effectively blocking any views, whilst to the east side a field without a hedge leaves the views into the adjoining countryside wide open.



Relationship to Open Countryside

Accessible only by minor roads, set away from any major traffic routes or built development, Wingfield is essentially rural in character. It presents an oasis of trees and shade in the heart of an area of intense industrial agriculture with its wide open vistas and little to relieve the eye.

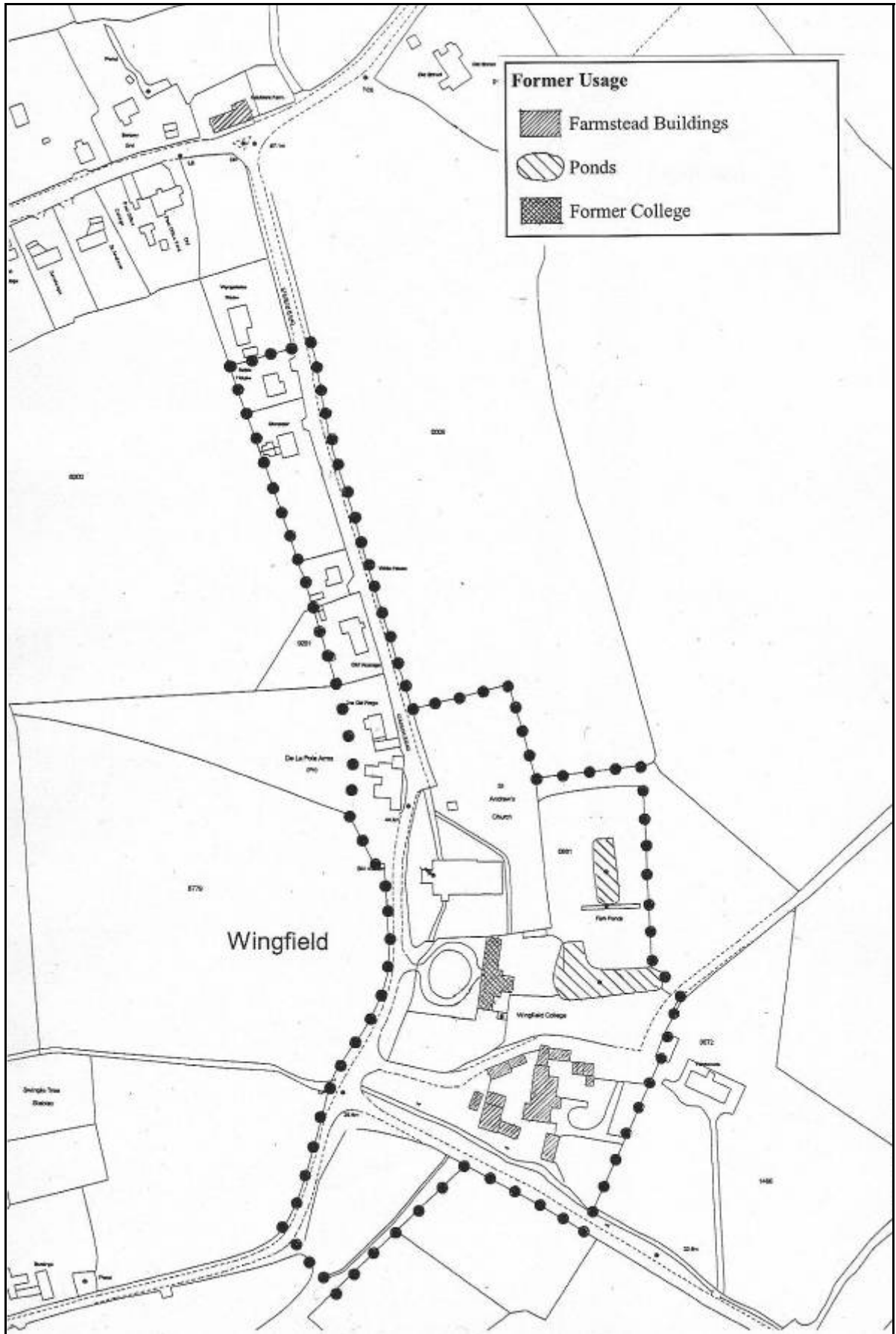
Access to this 'countryside' is relatively easy by way of these minor roads which are augmented by a footpath network along old green lanes that did not quite make it as roads.

To the north of the church, footpath 17 heads off eastwards, becoming footpath 16 as it approaches Abbey Farm towards Fressingfield.



Adjoining Goulder's farm at the north end of Church Road, footpath 9 continues northwards into a large area effectively without any roads before meeting footpath 7 from Wingfield Green towards Upper Weybread.

The valley area immediately south-east of the conservation area boundary is part of a Special Landscape Area covering the Waveney Valley and its tributaries.



Prevailing & Former Usage

With the Castle further afield, the historic nucleus of Wingfield was essentially Church, College and the adjoining farm. Other than the ribbon development along Church Road, this has not really been added to in more recent times.

The wider parish was essentially mixed agricultural, arable and pasture, in its uses of the land. The tithe map apportionment of 1842 gives good clues to the supporting rural economy with field names such as Saw Pit Meadow, Mill Hill and Smith's Shop. A number of fields called 'Hempland' indicate that the Waveney valley linen industry was also carried on here.



More recently the College building and adjoining barns have been used as an Arts Centre, which has allowed some good rural investment and secured the upkeep and repair of these important historic buildings, soon to be continued under the District Council's guidance .

The nearby De La Pole Arms had also recently endured a short closedown and uncertain future, but stands empty no more, thriving under new ownership.



Losses & Possible Gains

With the key buildings listed and grouped so closely together, there has been little scope for loss of historic fabric, although damage may ensue through neglect if an economic downturn was to return.

Along Church Road the buildings are of lesser quality, historically speaking, and a number of plots have been infilled, some more in keeping than others.

If the conservation area is to be extended as proposed to include the grade II listed Goulder's Farm that closes the vista of Church Road to the north, care will need to be taken to ensure the maintenance of good design standards on any future infill.



The only other feature that is potentially detrimental to the conservation area in Wingfield is the car park serving the Arts complex. As previously noted this would benefit from some tidying up or better still screening with perhaps a hedge around it.

Opposite the car park entrance adjoining the tree belt along the stream, there is a small area of footway contained by concrete kerbing, which is curiously out of place in this predominantly rural location.



References & Further Reading

Chatwin, C P 1961 East Anglia and Adjoining Areas British Regional Geology HMSO

D.o.E. & D.o.N.H. 1994 Planning Policy Guidance: Planning & the Historic Environment (PPG 15) HMSO

D.o.E. 1988 List of Buildings of Special Architectural or Historical Interest: District of Mid Suffolk: Parish of Wingfield

Domesday Book 1986 Suffolk Phillimore

Dymond, D & Martin, E (eds.) 1988 An Historical Atlas of Suffolk Suffolk County Council

English Heritage 1995 Conservation Area Practice HMSO

English Heritage 2006 Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals HMSO

Flint, B 1979 Suffolk Windmills Boydell

Goult, W 1990 A Survey of Suffolk Parish History Suffolk County Council

Pevsner, N 1976 The Buildings of England: Suffolk Penguin

Suffolk County Council 1997 Sites and Monuments Record

Tithe Map & Apportionment 1842 Wingfield Suffolk Records Office

The maps in this document are based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. M S D C Licence no 100017810 2006



Proposed extension to Conservation Area designated and this Appraisal adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance by Mid Suffolk District Council Environmental Policy Panel 27 May 2008