



DRINKSTONE

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

LANDSCAPE APPRAISAL

"We see nothing till we truly understand it"
John Constable

NOVEMBER 2019

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1. Introduction

Landscape character is defined as a distinct recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse. Put simply, landscape character is that which makes an area unique. Only by paying proper regard to the existing character can informed and responsible decisions be made about their management, and sustainable future landscapes planned for. Through an understanding of how places differ we can also ensure that future development is well situated, sensitive to its location and contributes to environmental, social and economic objectives.

This appraisal sits within a hierarchy of National and Suffolk Landscape Character Assessments ¹ and follows the same principles used in those studies. We have reviewed existing documentary evidence on the settlement and its landscape and considered its historic evolution. The appraisal goes on to describe the landscape setting, key views and landmarks as well as valued characteristics and spaces. Local character areas have been defined and used as a framework for understanding the relationship between the built form and its landscape setting.



Neighbourhood Plan Area and Parish Boundary

2. History and Evolution of Drinkstone²

The parish of Drinkstone lies half-way between Bury St Edmunds and Stowmarket. On the north it is bounded by the A14 trunk road and the parish of Tostock. To the north and east lies the parish of Woolpit, to the south Rattlesden, and to the west, Bradfield St George, Gedding, Hessel and Beyton. It measures 889 hectares.

In the common Suffolk fashion the village comprises two settlements: to the north, Drinkstone houses the church and a cluster of dwellings, separated by nearly a mile of arable land from Drinkstone Green in the south. The many dwellings of the latter were built round the common land of Drinkstone Great Green. The Green disappeared with the Enclosure Act of 1853 but the dwellings with many subsequent additions remain.

Historical Sources

- a) The history of the village is detailed in two books written by Sheila Wright who was head of the village school before it closed in 1986: *Drinkstone: School and Village, A Suffolk History. 2005*, and *Drinkstone Revisited, More stories from a Suffolk Village. 2007*. Both in print (2016) and published by Greenridges Press. Both are available in Bury St Edmunds Record Office (RO). This is a valuable account with an emphasis on social history, supported by many interviews with parishioners. There are photographs and descriptions of many Drinkstone dwellings.
- b) The village website (VWs) drinkstonevillage.co.uk. The website includes a historical section and an archive of old photographs.
- c) The Drinkstone Local History Group archive is kept in the village hall. The numerous documents and photographs are slowly being digitised.
- d) The Parish Cuttings archive in Bury RO.
- e) Bury Records Office has many other Drinkstone archives including the Tithe Apportionment papers and maps detailing the effect of the Enclosures, finalised in 1853.
- f) White's and Kelly's Directories list the professional and trades people of the parish. Sheila Wright in her first book (Appendix 1) replicates the lists of 13 Directories from 1844 to 1937.

The following short history is taken from the Drinkstone website:

There is some evidence that the Romans settled in Drinkstone and certainly there was a thriving Anglo-Saxon community – fragments of Saxon pottery have been found in the stream that runs through the village.

The three entries for the village in the Domesday Book (1085) show three different spellings – Rengestuna, Drencetuna and Drincestona. The fullest entry records that it was held by St. Etheldreda when there was "... one church and 12 acres, 15 small holders, 6 slaves, woodland at 100 pigs, 2 horses at the hall, 10 cattle, 32 pigs, 8 goats ..."

Robert Bacon, grandfather of the illustrious philosopher Francis Bacon, was born in Drinkstone in the 15th century at a time when it was "the seat of ambitious yeomanry" according to one writer.

In the 18th century Drinkstone became a squirearchy and several wealthy gentlemen built large houses surrounded by beautiful grounds, giving employment locally to grooms, gardeners and servants.

The painter Gainsborough was summoned to make a portrait of a rich businessman, Joshua Grigby, who had built for himself a grand house at Drinkstone Park. Thomas Gainsborough also painted several rural

scenes around the village, the most famous of which, "Drinkstone Park", is currently in the Sao Paulo Museum in Brazil.



Drinkstone Park by Thomas Gainsborough, 1747

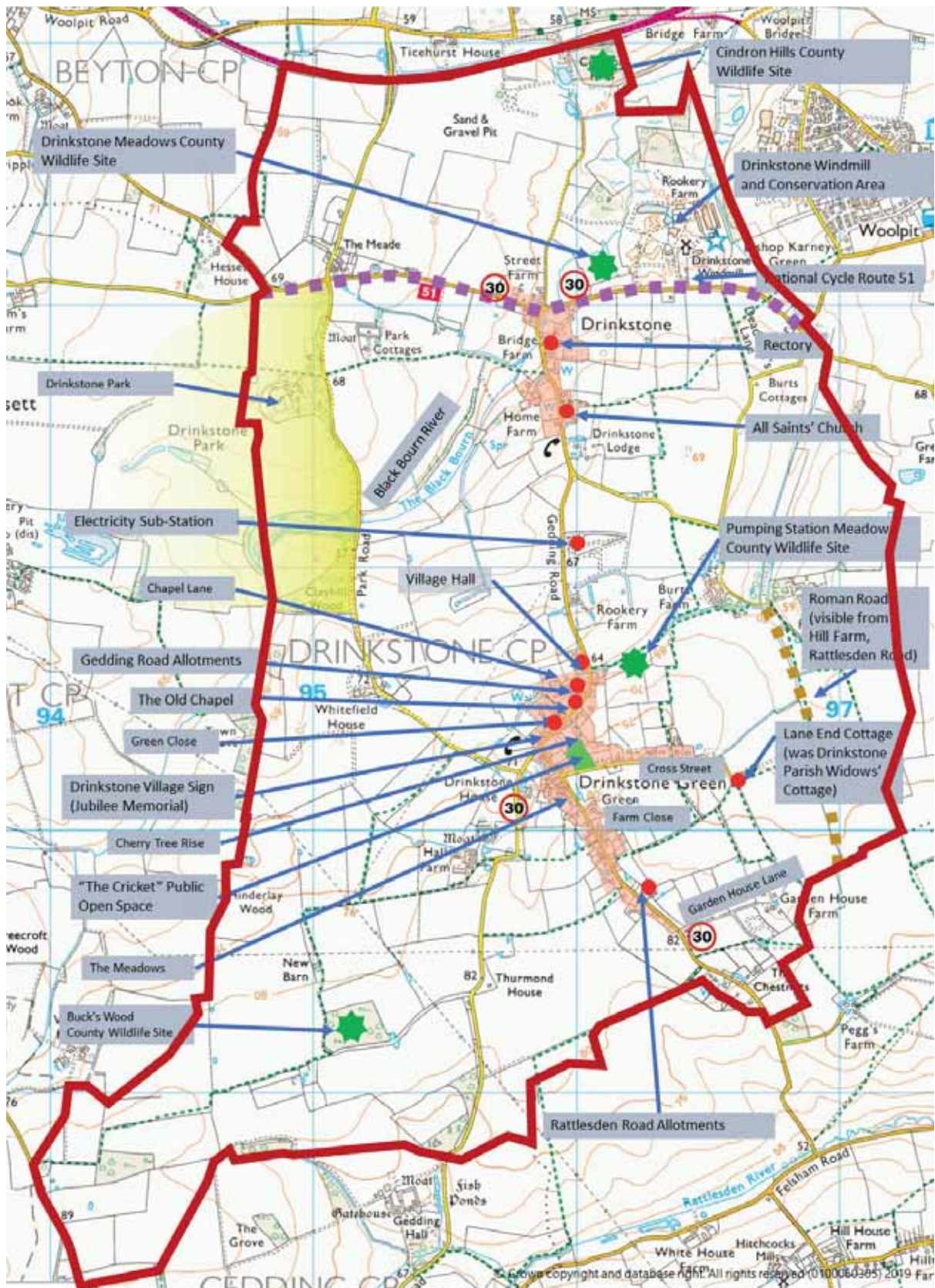
Note Drinkstone Mill and Church in the background

In the nineteenth century the estate of Drinkstone Park was inherited by Joshua Grigby the Third who loved the place and asked to be buried in a corner of his garden. This piece of land was duly hallowed and on his death in 1829 he was buried there beneath a mulberry tree.

During the war the big house at Drinkstone Park housed American servicemen who were attached to Rougham airfield, but was demolished just after the war, having fallen prey to damage by the armed services and death watch beetle.

The lake on the estate is still there and in the grounds homes were fashioned from the converted stable block.

The village school, sited next to the church, was founded in 1859. It closed in 1986 after a valiant fight to keep it open, and has since been converted to a private house.



North-South Segment of Drinkstone Parish

3. Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment

The Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment¹⁾ defines landscape character types. Two types are relevant to the Neighbourhood Plan area of Drinkstone.

- Ancient Rolling Farmlands
- Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze



Suffolk Landscape Character Areas

Suffolk Landscape Type: Ancient Rolling Farmlands

A rolling landscape of medium clay soils studded with blocks of ancient woodland

Key Characteristics:

- Rolling arable landscape of chalky clays and loams, dissected widely, and sometimes deeply, by river valleys
- Field pattern of ancient random enclosure; regular fields associated with areas of heathland enclosure
- Hedges of hawthorn and elm with oak, ash and field maple as hedgerow trees
- Substantial open areas created for airfields and by post WWII agricultural improvement
- Scattered with ancient woodland parcels containing a mix of oak, lime, cherry, hazel, hornbeam, ash and holly
- Network of winding lanes and paths, often associated with hedges, create visual intimacy
- Dispersed settlement pattern of loosely clustered villages, hamlets and isolated farmsteads of medieval origin
- Farmstead buildings are predominantly timber-framed, the houses colour-washed and the barns blackened with tar; roofs are frequently tiled, though thatched houses can be locally significant
- Villages often associated with village greens or the remains of greens.

Suffolk Landscape Type: Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze

Valley landscapes with distinctive areas of grass and gorse heaths

Key Characteristics:

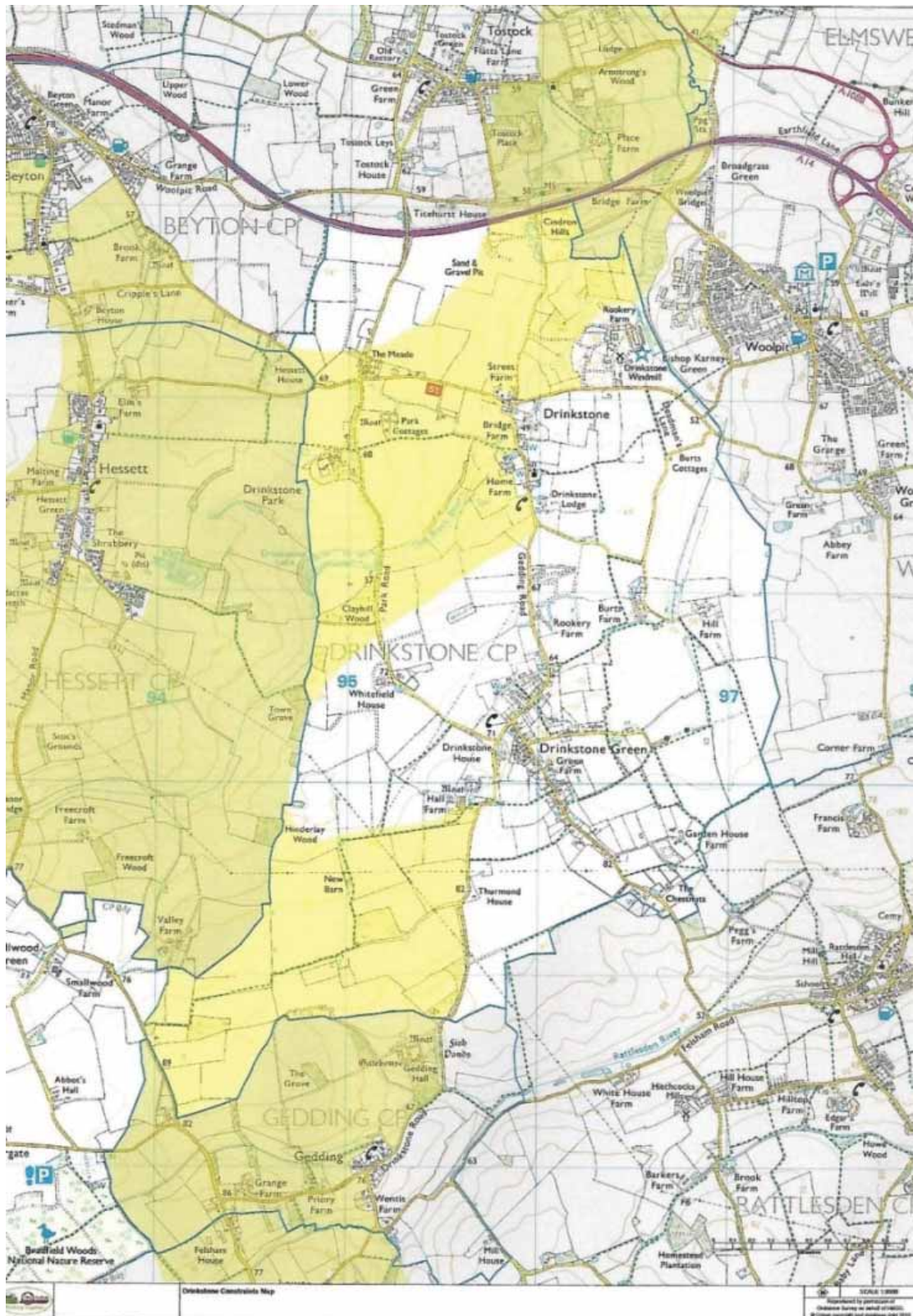
- Valleys with prominent river terraces of sandy soil
- Small areas of gorse heathland in a clayland setting
- Straight boundaries associated with late enclosure
- Co- axial field systems
- Mixed hedgerows of hawthorn, dogwood and blackthorn with oak, ash and field maple
- Fragmentary cover of woodland
- Sand and gravel extraction
- Golf courses
- Focus for larger settlements

4. Special Landscape Area

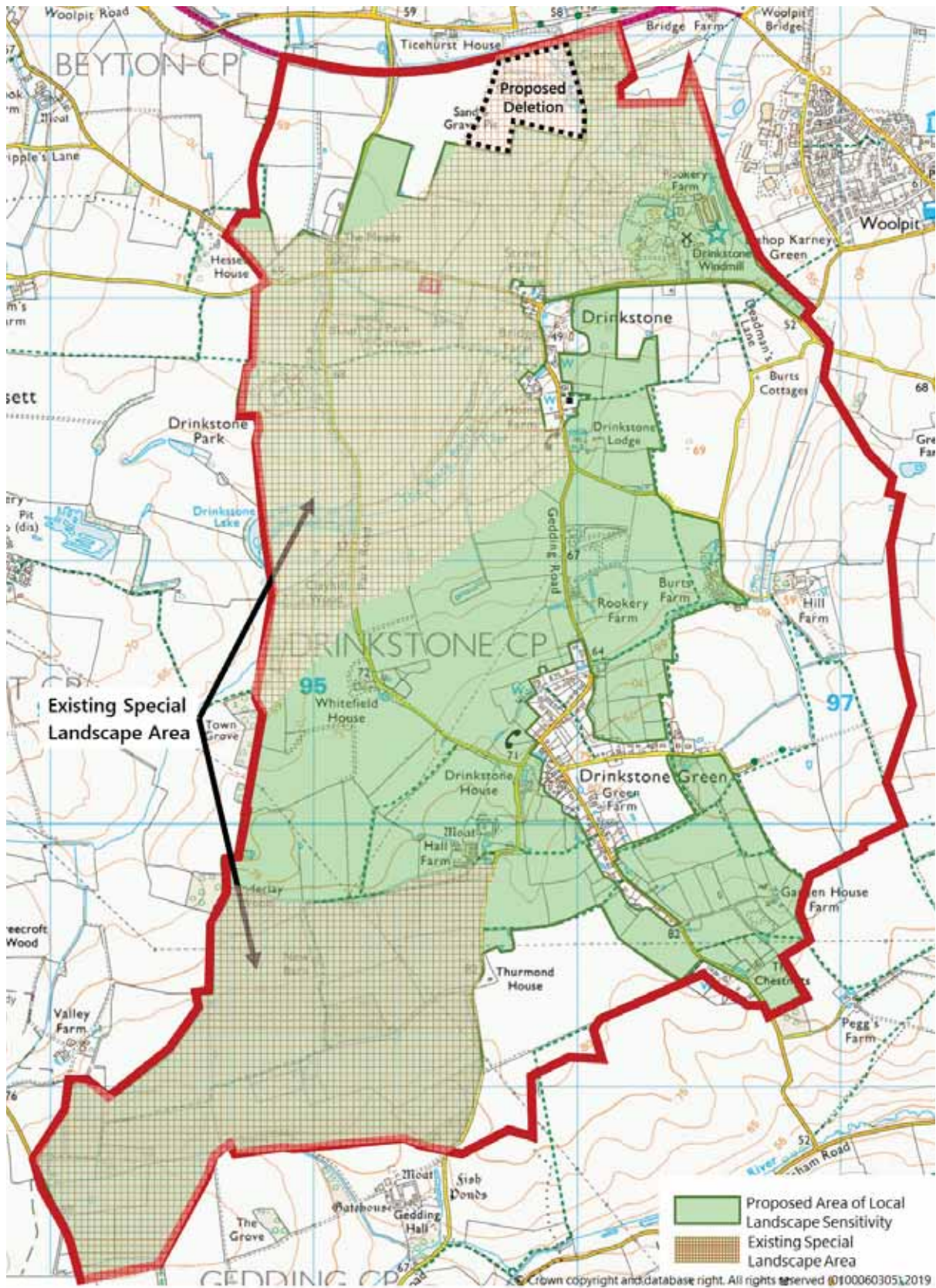
Special Landscape Areas have been designated in Mid Suffolk District Council's Development Plan for a number of years. They tend to relate to historic parks and river valleys or other areas of undulating topography and natural vegetation, particularly broadleaved woodland. In such areas these landscape elements combine to produce an area of special landscape and quality, in contrast to the more intensively farmed areas where trees and hedgerows have been removed. In Drinkstone this covers the Black Bourn valley and the northern side slope of the Rattlesden valley to the west of the Drinkstone Road and bordering Hessett and Gedding. Residents of Drinkstone have demonstrated support to retain this designation which is reaffirmed in Policy DRN6 - Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity. The boundary has been refined, as a result of detailed field survey work to follow physical features on the ground such as field boundaries, and to close the gap in the SLA west of the Gedding Road which shares the same landscape characteristics of small to medium sized fields bounded by species rich hedgerows and hedgerow trees with scattered patches of small woodland and tree belts. The new Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity also incorporates the paddocks and meadows around Drinkstone Green and Drinkstone Street which give rise to so much of the character of the area adjoining the settlement boundaries, as is examined in more detail in Section 6 below.

The area at Rookery Farm around Drinkstone Mills has been painstakingly restored in recent years and now forms part of the pastoral landscape of the Black Bourn Valley, and this has been included in the new Landscape Area of Sensitivity.

The small section of SLA within the former gravel workings next to the A14 has been omitted from the Drinkstone Area of Landscape Sensitivity as it no longer merits classification. (Shaded orange on the second map below)



Mid Suffolk Special Landscape Area Boundary



Drinkstone Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity

5. Settlement Character and Conservation Area

Drinkstone displays many of the typical settlement pattern characteristics of the Suffolk Ancient Rolling Farmlands Landscape Character Type, with dispersed farmsteads of medieval origin. The farms are large but are mainly owner-occupied rather than estate owned. The farmstead buildings are predominantly timber-framed, the houses colour washed and the barns blackened with tar. Roofs are frequently tiled, though thatched houses can be found too. Medieval moats surrounding the farmhouses are common (and are found currently at Park Cottages, Burt's Farm, Rookery Farm, Hall Farm and The Chestnuts) as was the occurrence of small- to moderate-sized greens. In Drinkstone the greens were enclosed in the 19th century, and have been infilled with housing. They now survive only as a place names such as Green Farm, Green Close and of course Drinkstone Green.





Luftwaffe Aerial Photography May 1940.

Note Patchwork of Small Hedged Fields and Relatively Few Houses at Drinkstone Green



Oak trees and native hedging Rattlesden Road



Stotts Cottage



The Old Rectory

6. Detailed Local Landscape Character Area Analysis.

The parish is generally undulating. The two highest points shown on the Ordnance Survey map (OS Explorer Series 211) at 82 metres above sea level are at the junction of Rattlesden Road and Garden House Lane and at Thurmond House on Gedding Road. From there the land slopes down to the south to meet the Rattlesden River, which drains via the River Gipping into the River Orwell at Ipswich. The lowest point in the parish at 45m is on the northern boundary in the flood plain of the Black Bourn. This stream enters the parish from Hessematt to the west, expands into the artificial lake of Drinkstone Park, then turns north into Tostock parish and empties into The Wash via the Little Ouse.

This is a rolling clayland landscape, dissected by small shallow river valleys. Although the main soil type is derived from chalky clays left behind by the Great Anglian Glaciation, dissection of this deposit by the area's rivers has produced a variety of soil types. The heaviest clays that are prone to water logging lie on the interfluvial plateaux. The soils frequently contain a scatter of flints that were used as a local building material for houses barns and walls.

Lighter soils are found on the sides of the Black Bourn Valley, and close to the A14, where there are outwash deposits from the ice-sheets of the Great Anglian Glaciation. These deposits are principally silts, sands and gravels, but also including some chalky till and, in places brickearths from former lakes or meres. At Woolpit the calcareous brickearth deposits were used, particularly in the 19th century, for the production of bricks famously known as 'Woolpit whites'.

The field boundary pattern over a lot of the landscape retains much of the organic pattern of ancient and species-rich hedgerows and associated ditches. The hedges are frequently high and wide and have a strong visual impact. There are however some areas of field amalgamation and boundary loss, especially to the East and North of Lane End Cottage and to the East of Thurmond House.

Settlement

The settlement pattern outside the two settlement boundaries is one of dispersed farmsteads of mediaeval origin. The farms are large but are mainly owner-occupied rather than estate owned. The farmstead buildings are predominantly timber-framed, and the houses colour-washed and the barns blackened with tar. Roofs are frequently tiled. Medieval moats surrounding the farmhouses are found at Park Cottages, Burt's Farm Rookery Farm, Hall Farm, and The Chestnuts.

Trees and woodland cover

The hedgerow trees are typical clayland species: oak, ash and field maple, with suckering elm, which is especially abundant on the lighter soils in the north of the Parish. Oak trees are prominent with many ancient pollards, and complement the parcels of woodland in this area, adding to the generally wooded feel of the landscape.

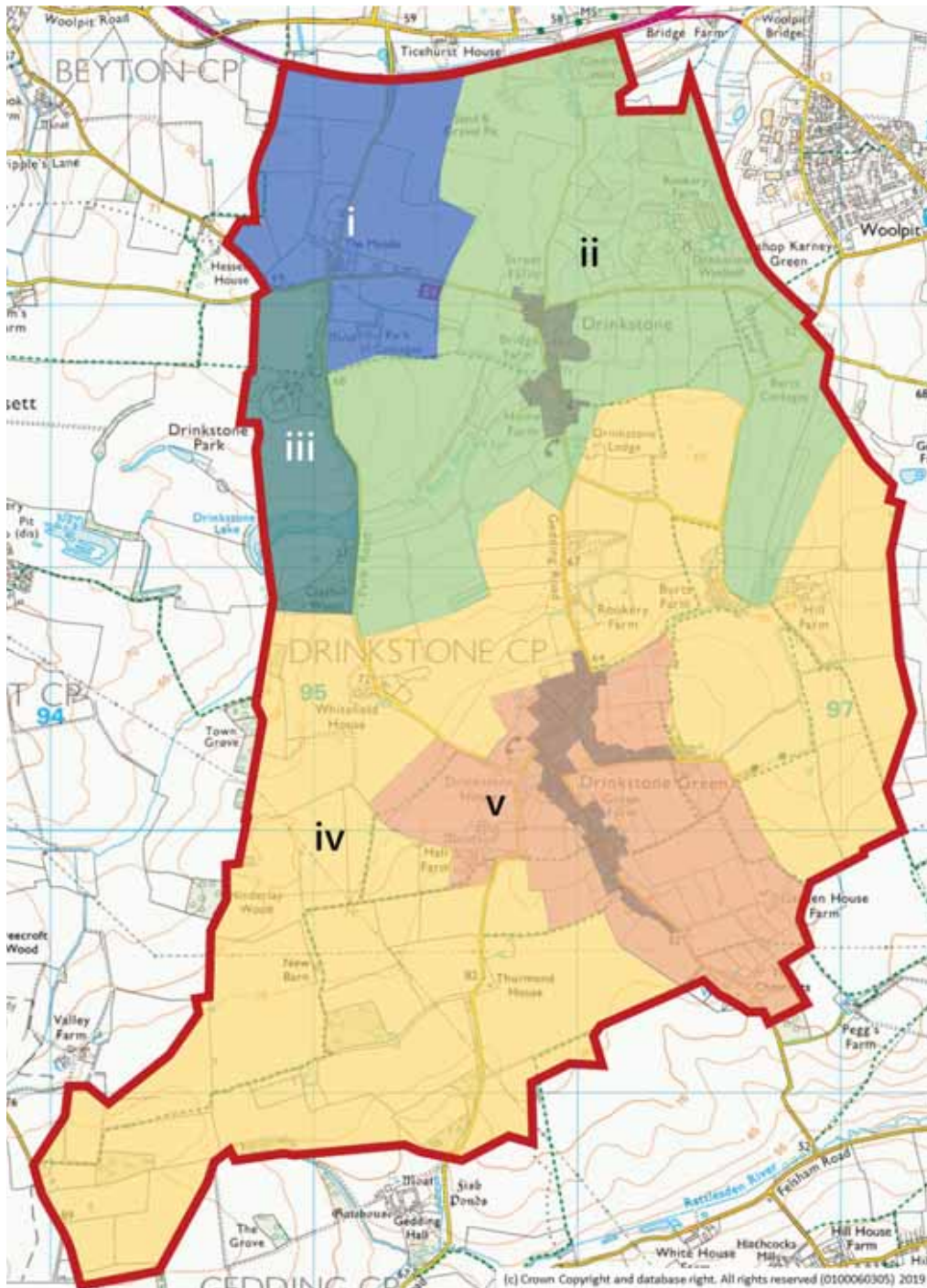
Visual experience

This area has a network of winding lanes and paths often associated with hedges, that together with the rolling countryside, can give a feeling of intimacy. However the areas of field amalgamation have also created longer views of a rolling, lightly wooded countryside.

Condition

Although there are some areas of extensive field amalgamation, overall the landscape is largely intact, and accessible thorough a dense network of public footpaths and winding roads with wide verges. In some places there are significant areas of land use change, for example through the creation of pony paddocks. In these areas the rural agricultural character of the landscape is clearly diluted. High-tension overhead power lines and pylons are a note of discord in the landscape.

The two Suffolk Landscape Character Types that occur in the Drinkstone Neighbourhood Plan Area (Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze and Ancient Rolling Farmlands) have been subdivided according to their land use history, topography and land cover today, into five distinct and unique local landscape character areas as follows:



Local Landscape Character Areas

- i) Meade Farmlands ii) Black Bourn Valley iii) Drinkstone Park
- iv) Drinkstone Ancient Rolling Farmlands v) Drinkstone Green Paddocks and Meadows

i. Meade Farmlands

This local landscape character area is part of the more widespread Suffolk Landscape Assessments “Rolling Valley Farmlands and Furze Landscape Character Type” that occurs on a mixture of outwash deposits from the ice-sheets of the Great Anglian Glaciation. Apart from the disused gravel pit, land use is arable farmland and pony paddocks. The principal views across the former gravel workings area are from the Tostock road, particularly looking eastward across the Black Bourn valley. Field boundaries are less sinuous than elsewhere in the Parish, and there are fewer species in the hedgerows, possibly indicating that their origins are from later Enclosure Acts. Road noise from the A14 intrudes on the quiet rural character of the area.



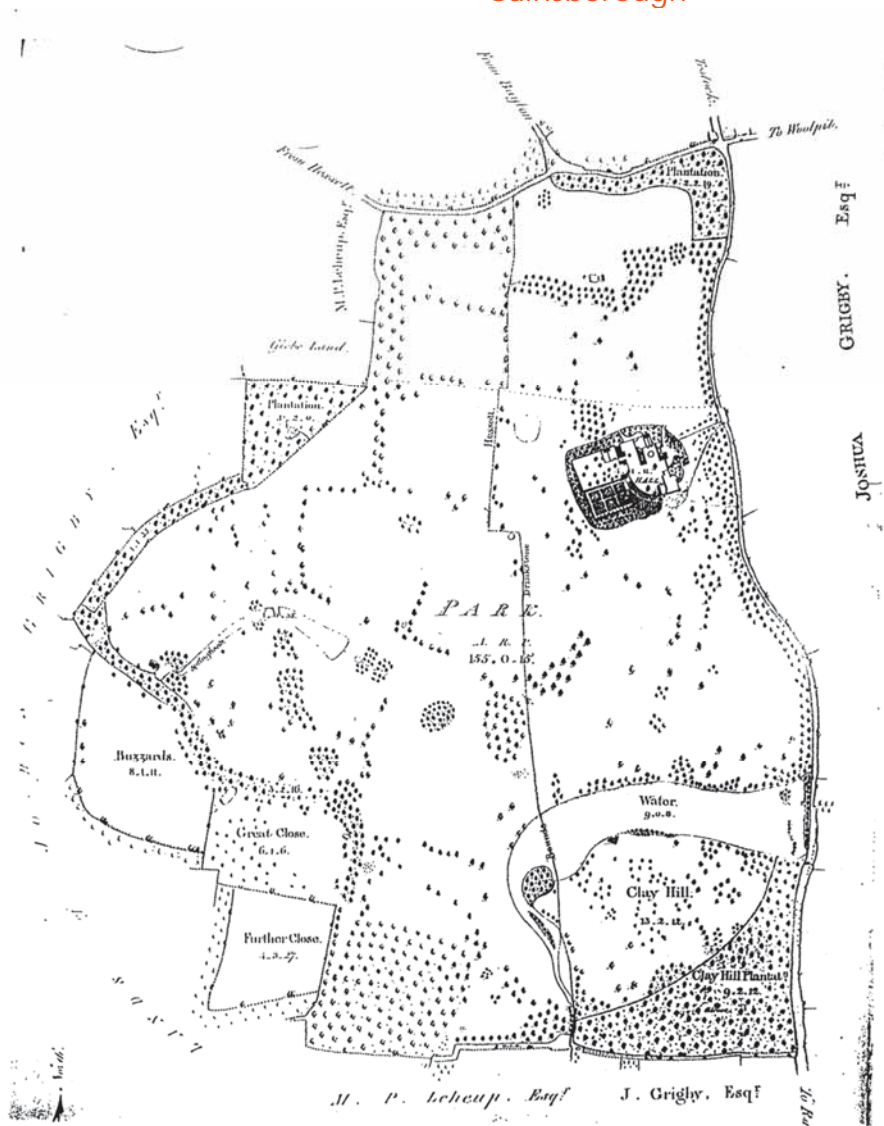
View from Tostock Road across Meade Farmlands to Drinkstone Mills

ii. Drinkstone Park was the seat of Joshua Grigby II a solicitor from Bury St Edmunds. He started to build a new mansion in 1760 and there is evidence that the Park and Lake were well established by 1783. Geographically the park lies within the Black Bourn valley but the pervading character of this mid 18C designed landscape merits separate identification. The Army occupied the house during World War II and apparently it was left in a very poor state which may have contributed to the decision to demolish it in 1953.

The park is now part of an arable farm, but most of the woodland shown on the 1818 estate map has survived. The Eastern tree belts are still intact and exhibit a diversity of tree and shrub species, including some stately conifers.



There are important views towards Drinkstone Church as painted by Thomas Gainsborough



Drinkstone Park Estate Map 1818

iii. Black Bourn Valley and tributaries

These are gently rolling small scale valleys with arable fields on the side slopes and smaller grass fields in valley bottoms grazed by cattle and sheep. The small grass fields with stream side willows, alder and patches of wet woodland create a high quality, intimate pastoral landscape. The presence of livestock in the landscape provides additional character and interest.



Rare Breed Cattle in the Black Bourn Valley

Views from Drinkstone road north to Woolpit are interrupted by the raw edge of development on higher ground at Woolpit Business Park. At night light pollution from the Business Park lights up the horizon. Traffic noise from the A14 intrudes on the tranquillity of the northern part of this character area.



Raw Edge of Woolpit Business Park from C432 Drinkstone Road



Drinkstone Mills from FP 2

iv. Drinkstone Ancient Rolling Farmlands

This is an ancient landscape of lightly wooded, arable countryside with a distinct sense of enclosure. The overall character is of a gently undulating, chalky boulder clay plateau, the undulations being caused by the small-scale river valleys that dissect the plateau. There is a complex network of old species-rich hedgerows with veteran oak pollards, winding lanes, ponds, and scattered broadleaved woodland such as Bucks Wood. Traditional irregular field patterns are still discernible over much of the area, despite field enlargements in the second half of the 20th century. The widespread moderately fertile, chalky clay soils give the vegetation a more or less calcareous character. The predominant crops are winter cereals, sugar beet and oilseed rape which provides a vivid splash of colour in the spring. Pylons are a notable visible detractor across parts of the area. There are small dispersed former farmsteads at Hill Farm, Burts Farm and Whitefield Barn. Hedgerow removal and field amalgamation has created large scale open arable landscapes to the east of Lane End Cottage and to the south of Footpath 16. Scattered broadleaved woodland occurs in the western part of the area at Buck's wood, near Old Bucks Farm, just north of Gedding Hall and on the parish boundary just south of Drinkstone Park. Winding lanes are a feature of the area feature such as the "drift" to Buck's Wood.



Winding lane to Bucks Wood



Open arable farmlands FP 9 Lane End



Roadside Tree Planting, Oaks along Deadman's Lane

v. Drinkstone Green Meadows and Paddocks

The settlement area of Drinkstone Green is surrounded by small grass fields often less than 3 hectares. Many of the fields on the western side of the village are surrounded by tall hedges and old oak trees, including numerous veteran pollards. These ancient hedges and trees provide a sense of enclosure in contrast to the adjacent, more open arable landscapes. Views to the settlement are often softened by tall hedges and trees. Some modern fence field boundaries have been created as the result of the subdivision of former arable fields to create horse paddocks in recent years. The attendant white plastic fencing and animal shelters have eroded both the pattern and quality of this landscape in some places.



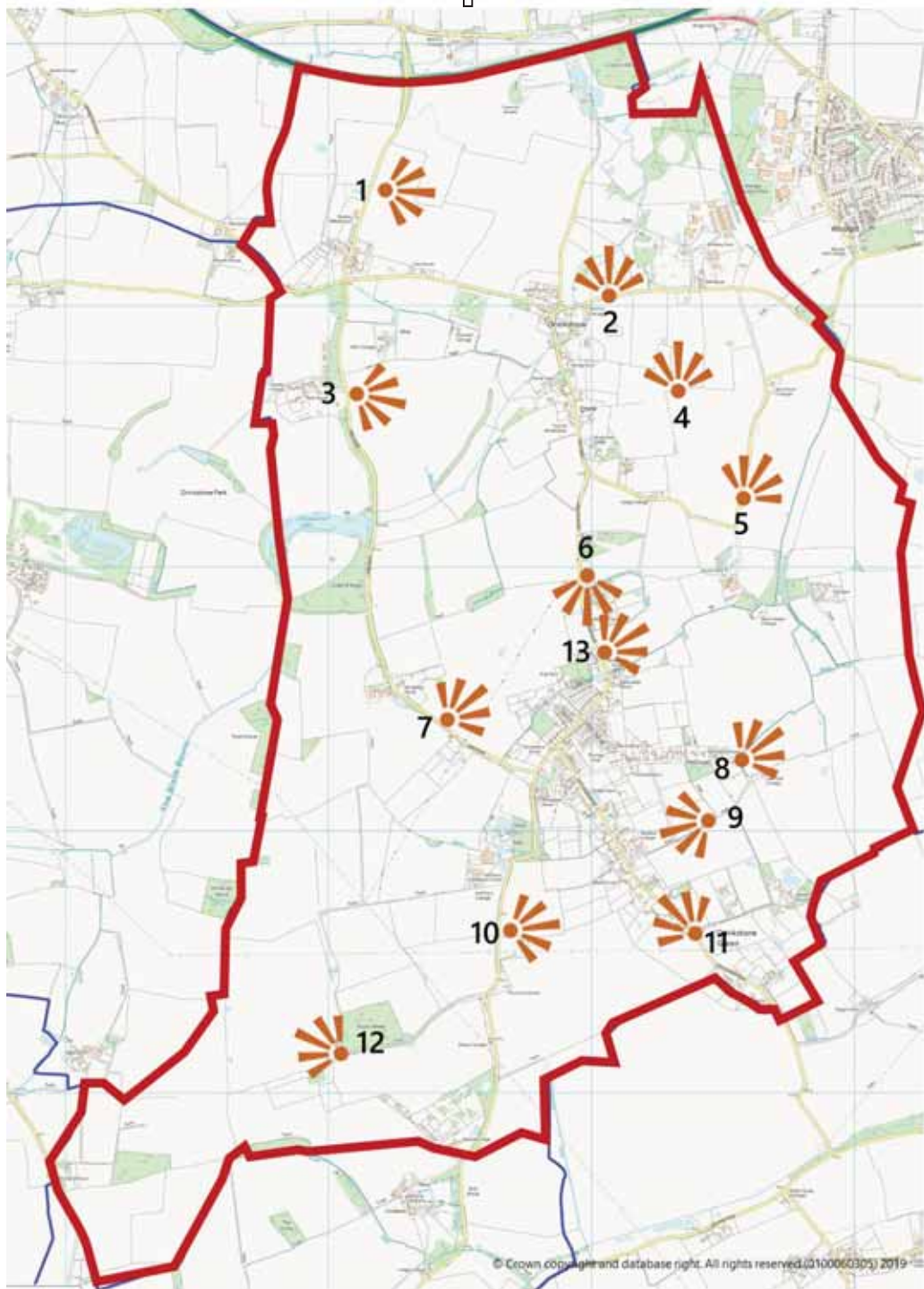
Drinkstone Green Meadows FP 23 Near Garden House Lane



Drinkstone Lake from Park Road circa 1980



Drinkstone Green from Gedding Road near Rookery Farm



Key views

- | | |
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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. View from Tostock Road across Meade Farmlands 2. View along Black Bourn Valley from Drinkstone Road 3. View towards All Saints Church from Park Road 4. View towards Drinkstone Mills from Footpath 2 5. View along Deadman's Lane 6. Views towards Drinkstone Green near Rookery Farm 7. View from Village Hall towards Burts Farm | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. View towards Drinkstone Green from Park Road near Whitefield House 9. View across open farmland from Footpath 9 near Lane End Cottage 10. View towards Drinkstone Green from Footpath 10 11. View to Drinkstone Green from Gedding Road south of Hall Farm 12. View along Rattlesden Road Drinkstone Green 13. View west across farmland from Bucks Wood Footpath 4 |
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7. Summary of Findings

7.1 Forces for Change

- Settlement expansion eroding the characteristic form and vernacular styles
- Change of land use, especially the creation of horse paddocks
- Expansion of garden curtilage
- Construction of large agricultural buildings
- Introduction of new agricultural techniques
- Conversion and expansion of agricultural farmsteads for residential use

7.2 Special Qualities to conserve and enhance

- Protect from development the strategic gap between Drinkstone and Drinkstone Green to conserve the separate identities and characters for the two settlement areas
- Protect from development the meadows and paddocks around Drinkstone and Drinkstone Green to conserve the landscape setting and character of both settlements (see also biodiversity section on ancient trees species, rich hedgerows trees and protected species)
- Protect and enhance the special qualities of the Drinkstone Area of Local Landscape sensitivity as identified above.
- Reinforce the historic pattern of sinuous field boundaries
- Recognise localised areas of late enclosure hedges when restoring and planting new hedgerows
- Maintain and increase the stock of hedgerow trees
- Maintain the extent, and improve the condition, of woodland cover with effective management
- Maintain and restore the stock of moats and ponds in this landscape
- Maintain and enhance the roadside hedges and oak trees along Rattlesden Road.
- Investigate opportunities for landscaping to the south of Woopit Business Park
- Protect "Dark Skies" in the Neighbourhood Plan area
- Press the Highways Agency to carry out surface noise reduction measures on the A14

References

1. Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment. www.suffolklandscape.org
2. The Parish of Drinkstone in Suffolk- initial report by Giles Youngs, Drinkstone Recorder, Suffolk Local History Council. September 2016.
3. Drinkstone: School and Village, A Suffolk History. 2005, and Drinkstone Revisited, More stories from a Suffolk Village. 2007. Author Sheila Wright., Greenridges Press
4. The village website (VWs) drinkstonevillage.co.uk
5. Suffolk Hedgerow Survey. Suffolk Biological Information Service www.suffolkbis.co.uk



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