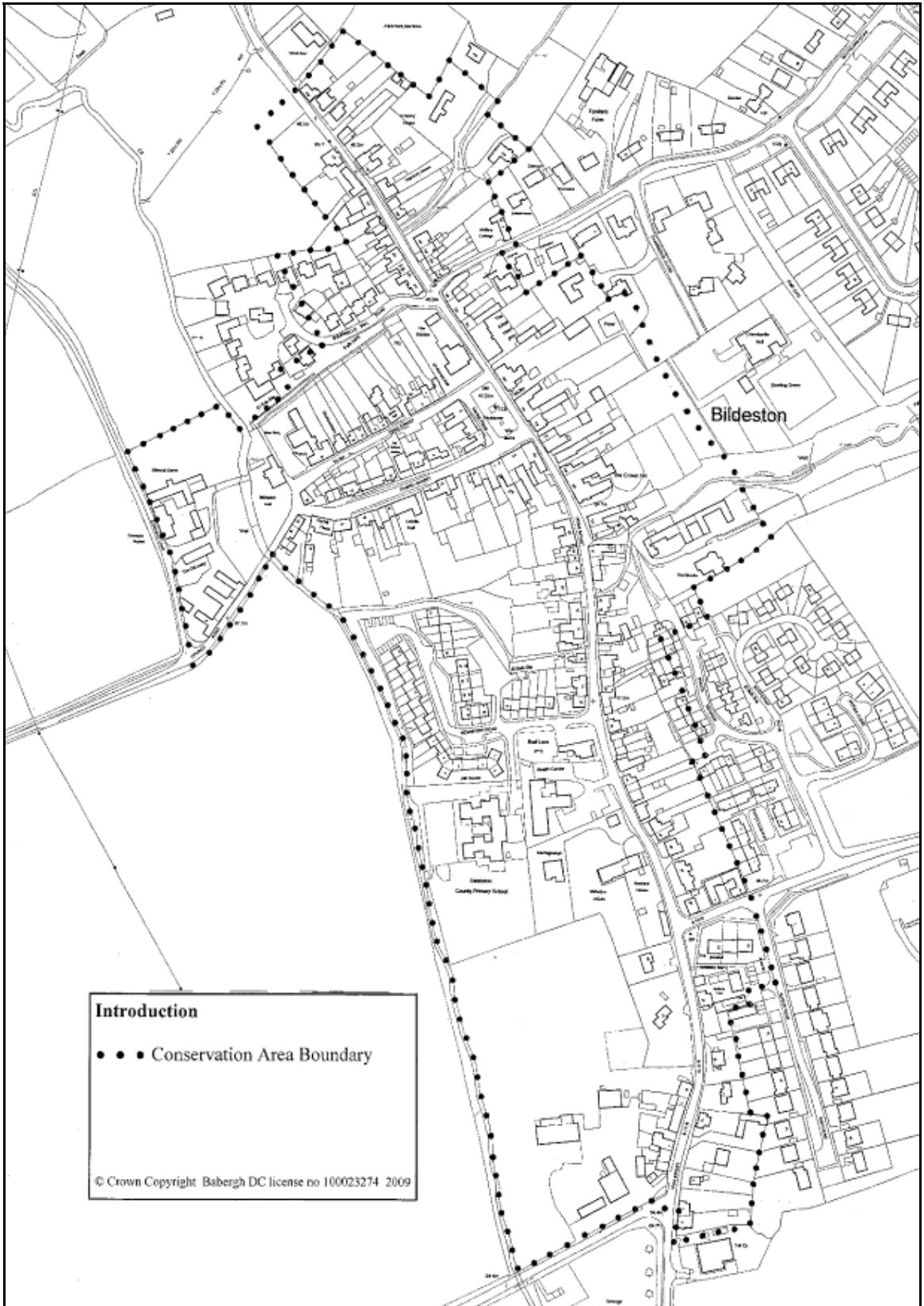


*Bildeston*

*conservation area appraisal*



# Introduction

*The conservation area in Bildeston was originally designated by West Suffolk County Council in 1973, and inherited by Babergh 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 Bildeston under a number of different headings as set out in English Heritage's new 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' (2006).*

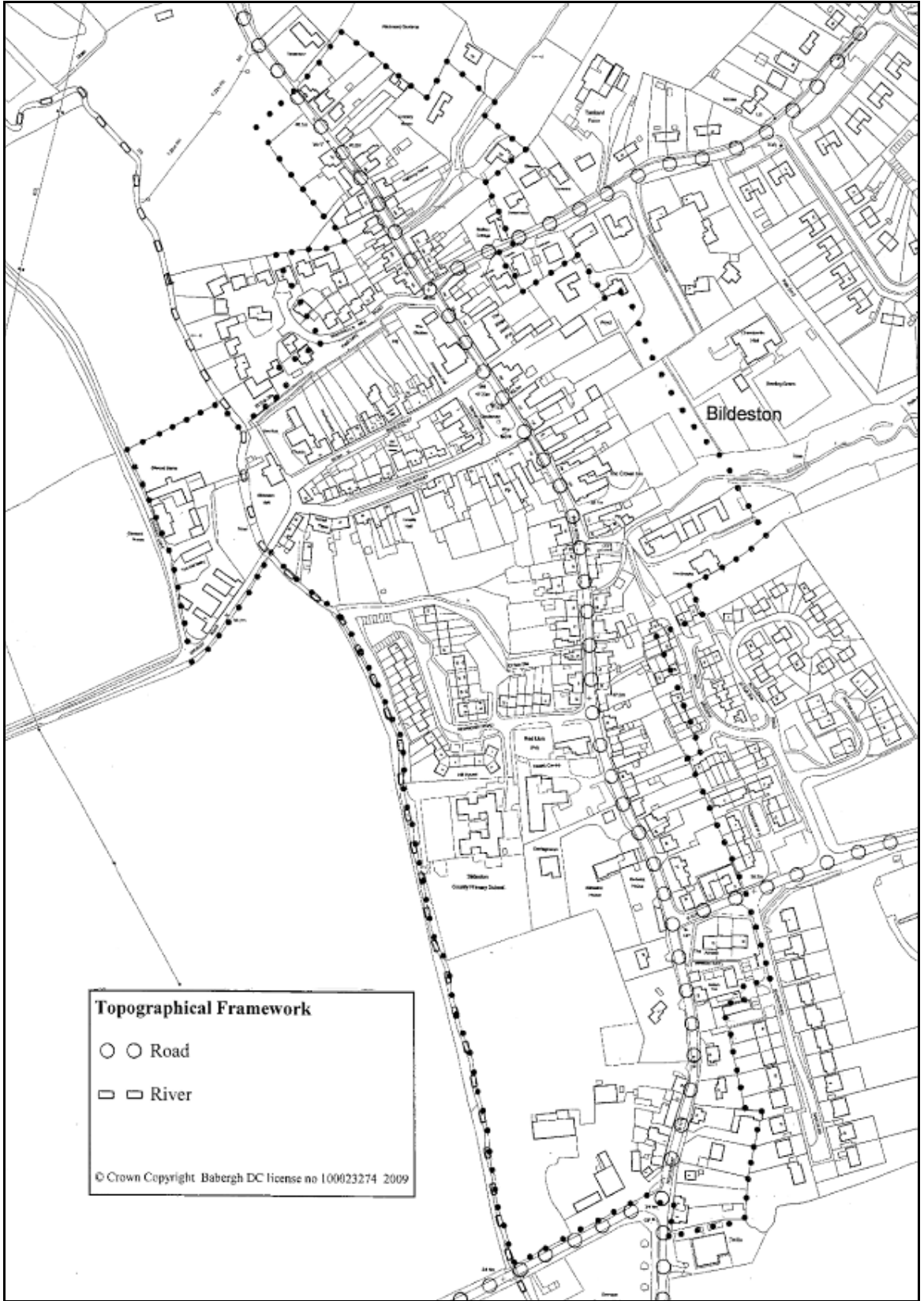
*As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Bildeston's built environment in conservation terms.*



*As a document it 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, Babergh District Council 2010.*

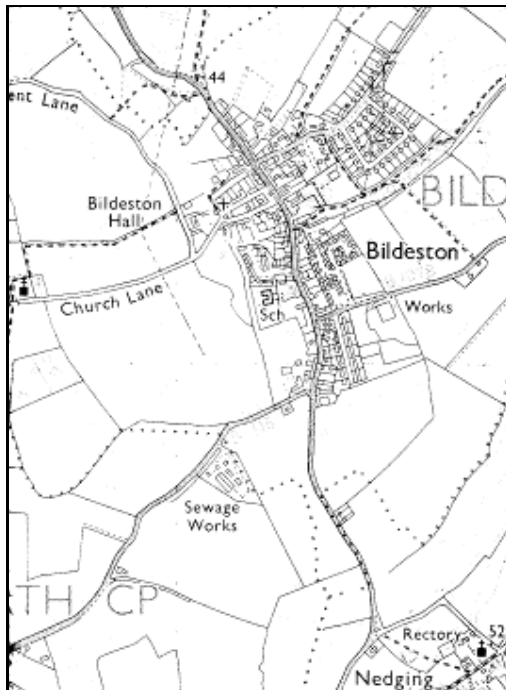


# Topographical Framework

*The village of Bildeston is situated in south central Suffolk, about five miles north of the market town of Hadleigh and seven miles east of Lavenham.*

*The majority of the settlement sits on the east bank of a tributary of the River Brett, which flows south from here down through Hadleigh and onwards to join the Stour at Higham. Only the farm attached to Bildeston Hall sits on the west bank within the village and the remote Church is about half a mile further west.*

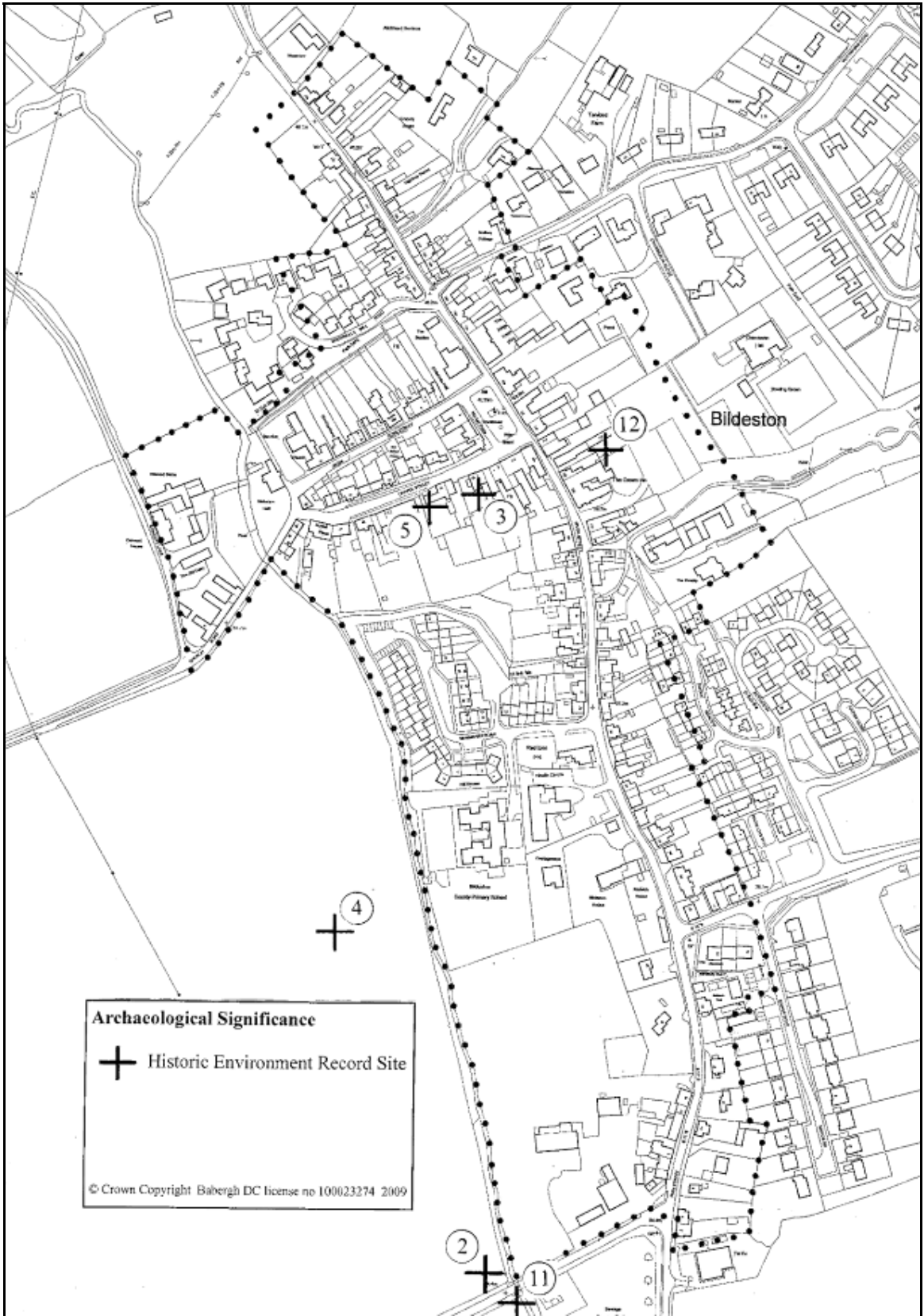
*The river valley has cut down some forty metres through the overlying boulder clay of 'High Suffolk' to reveal locally gravels, crags and pockets of older London Clay.*



*From Stowmarket the B1115 road through the village runs parallel to the river from Hitcham in the north to Hadleigh in the south.*

*Hadleigh was at one time served by a branch line of the Eastern Union Railway, now closed down, making Needham Market and Stowmarket to the north-east the village's nearest stations.*

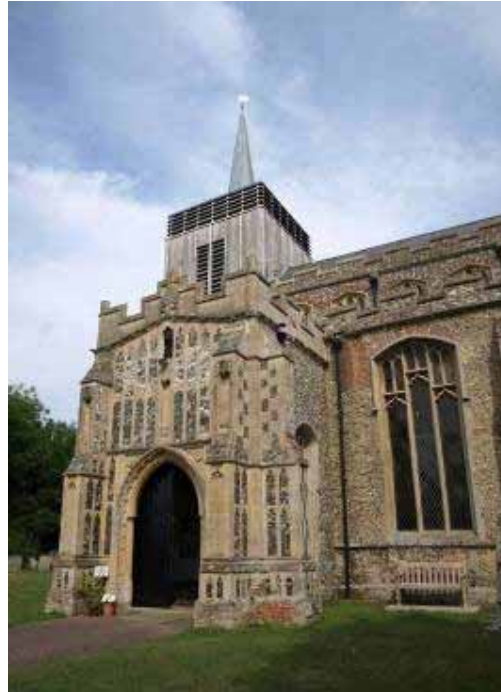
*The village itself is approximately 35 metres above OD, with the adjoining hilltops up to about the 75 metre mark.*



# Archaeological Significance

*The Suffolk County Historic Environment Record lists about a dozen sites of archaeological interest in the parish of Bildeston. The oldest of these are Mesolithic in date: an axehead and scatter of flints, indicating a long if not continuous human occupation of the area.*

*Iron Age and Roman finds include pottery and coins, along with stretches of an old Roman road crossing the valley north of the village. These fit within a line of other remnants, to the west at Brent Eleigh and further east beyond Bildeston in Wattisham parish. Medieval remains include both the remote Church and a Chapel site in the centre of the village.*



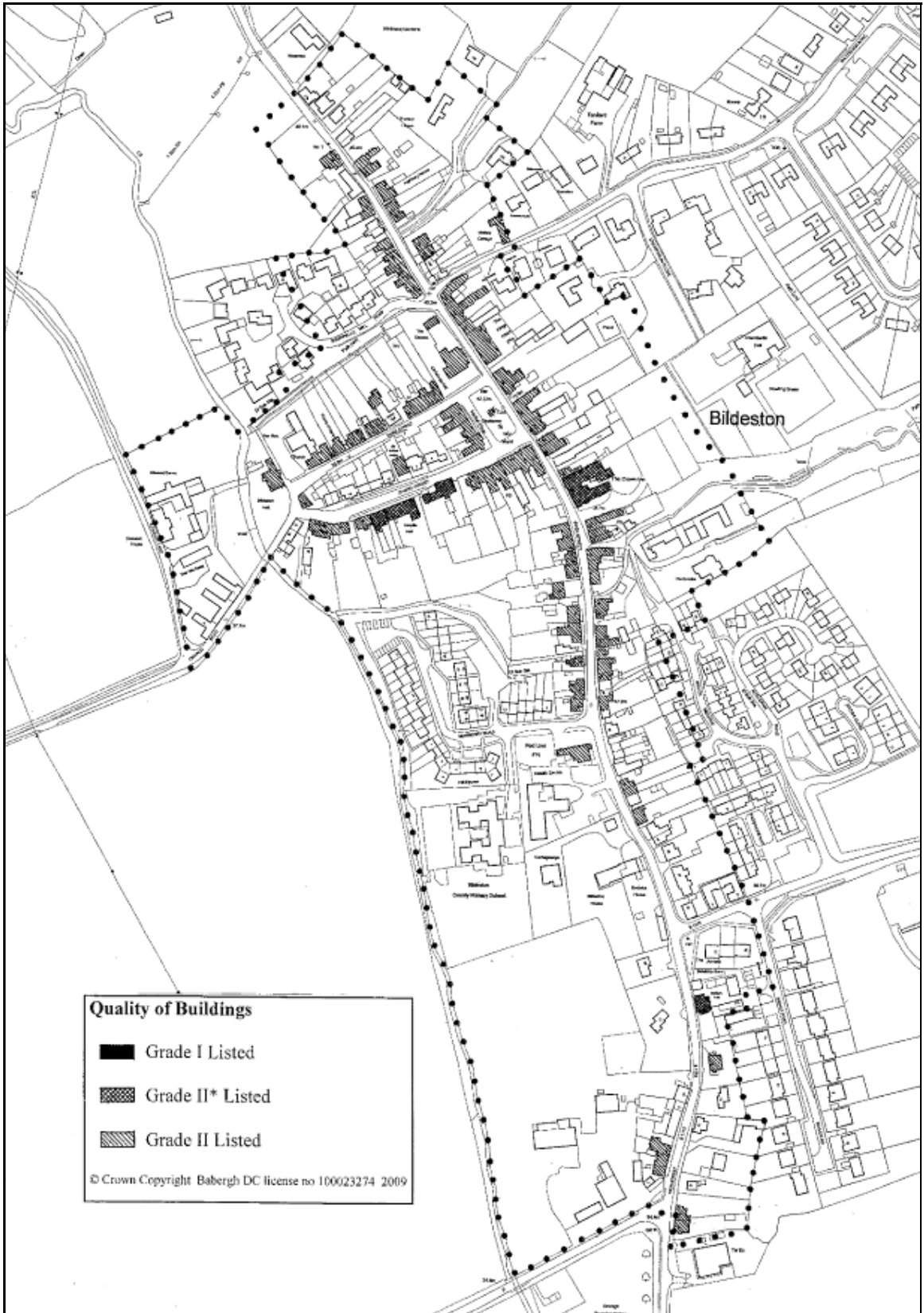
*It is believed that the Church area is the site of a 'Deserted Medieval Village', the present later settlement having arisen around the market place on the road through from Hadleigh to Stowmarket.*

*The remainder of the sites listed are Post-Medieval and include an ancient woodland and the bridge carrying the road to Chelsworth over the river at the south end of the village.*

*Bildeston was listed in the Domesday survey of 1086 as belonging to Queen Edith prior to 1066, and Walter the Deacon at the time. The holding included a meadow of 20 acres and woodland for 10 pigs as well as a church with 40 acres of land.*

*Dist. H. de costore. Bilestun in dno  
tenuit Edith. regina. t. r. e. p. m. vii. ca. s. x. temp. xiiii. uill.  
7. vi. boed. 7. viii. feru. & .iiii. ca. in dmanio. 7. iii. ca. bot. xx. ad  
p. Silas de. x. post. 7. iiii. nunc. & .x. an. 7. x. par. 7. lxxx. ois  
Ecclia xl. an. 7. i. ca. 7. i. ad p. Te val. viii. ab. modo. x. fol. redit  
. xii. h. i. l. in longo. & dist. in loto. & .v. den. de gelno.*

Half-Hundred of COSFORD  
Queen Edith held BILDESTON in lordship before 1066 as a manor;  
6 carucates of land.  
Always 14 villagers; 6 smallholders; 8 slaves;  
5 ploughs in lordship; 3 men's ploughs.  
Meadow, 20 acres; woodland at 10 pigs, 3 cobs, 10 cattle, 40 pigs,  
80 sheep.  
A church, 40 acres, 1 plough, Meadow, 1 acre.  
Value then £8; now [£] 10, but it pays [£] 12.  
It has 1 league in length and 1/2 in width; 5d in tax.





# Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

*Bildeston has but one grade I listed building, the Church of St Mary Magdalene of flint with stone dressings, now with the west tower rebuilt in timber after its collapse in 1975. It is mostly of 15<sup>th</sup> Century date with some 16<sup>th</sup> Century additions. The two storey porch has some good flushwork and a priest's chamber at first floor.*

*'Not a big church' according to Pevsner, he also says the 'doorway is uncommonly ambitious'.*

*Five other buildings are of sufficient quality to justify listing at grade II\*. These are all timber-framed and jettied to the front with plaintile roofs:*



*Two have totally rendered facades: Newbury Farmhouse at 22 High Street was originally the Manor House and nos. 15/17 Chapel Street started as a small medieval hall house.*

*The Crown Inn at 104 High Street started out as a merchant's house in the late 15<sup>th</sup> Century, becoming an Inn by the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, and has exposed timber-framing at first floor level.*

*The other two grade II\* buildings adjoin each other at 23-33 and 35/37 Chapel Street. Both date from the 15<sup>th</sup> Century and have exposed framing to both floors, en masse quite a striking elevation. Nos. 23-33 adjoin the site of the former Chapel and might conceivably have been used as a Gild Hall when first built, which would explain the high quality of timber-framing employed.*





# Traditional Building Materials

*Bildeston has good examples of most of Suffolk's local building materials that have been used through the ages.*

*Timber-framed construction is fairly ubiquitous, but not always in an immediately obvious way. Jettied first floors and exposed timbers can be found on most streets, but in most cases brick or rendered fronts have hidden the clues and steep clay plaintiled roofs are all that remain visible, sometimes hidden behind a parapet wall.*

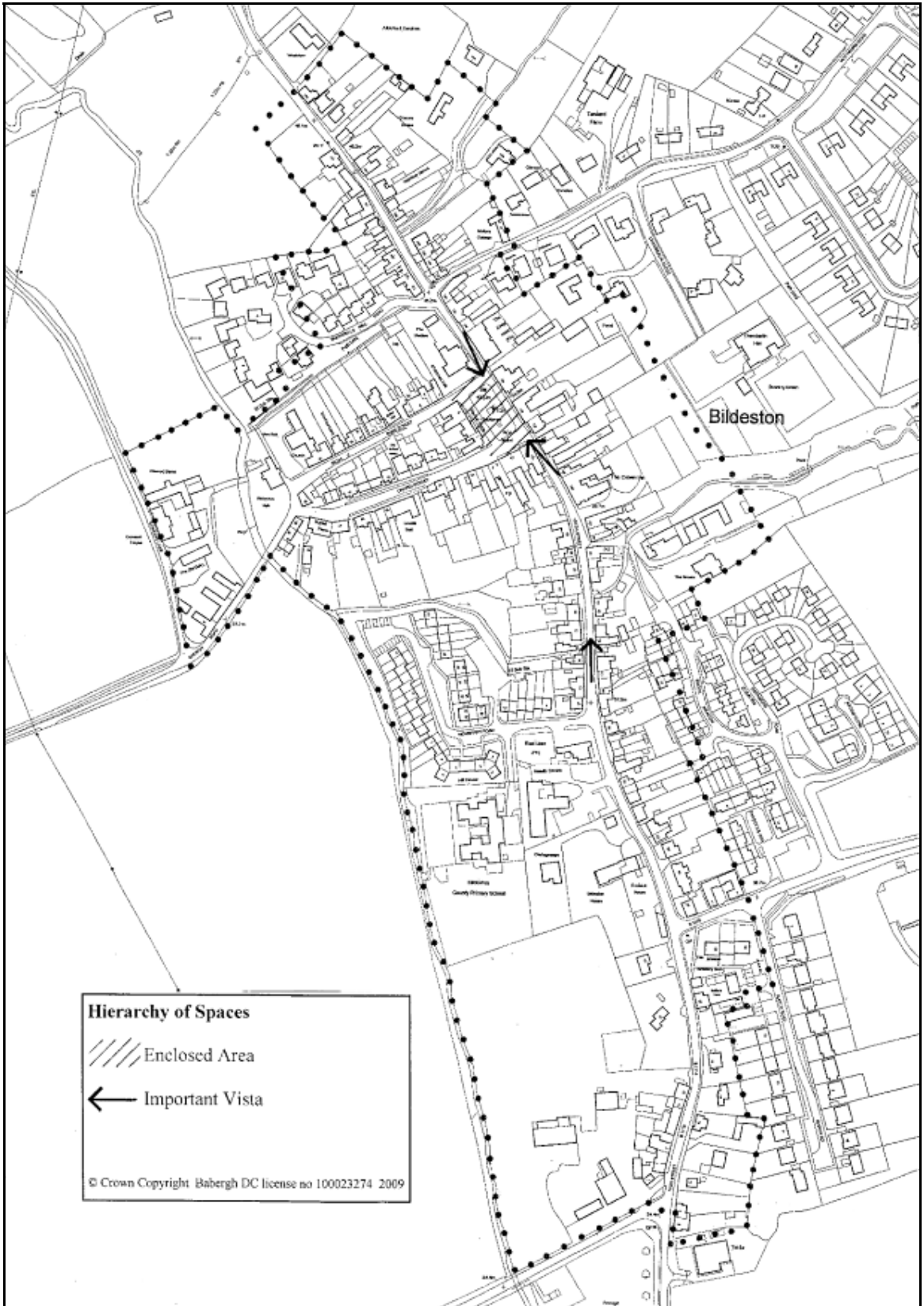
*The more usual Suffolk vernacular employing a finish of lime render on laths covering and protecting the timber framing is mostly used, sometimes with applied patterns in pargetting.*



*Soft 'Suffolk red' bricks appear as chimneys on many buildings, and form the walls of those of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, either solid or refronting many a timber-framed construction, although many of these are now painted over.*

*There are similarly buildings of the harder 'Suffolk white' bricks, probably sourced from Sudbury or Woolpit, the majority of these later buildings having lower pitched slate roofs.*

*As with most similar settlements, the outbuildings and rear wings often employ slightly lower status materials such as black weather-boarding and are usually roofed in pantiles.*



# Hierarchy of Spaces

*Because the road through winds, the linear nature of Bildeston following the east bank of the river is not immediately apparent. High Street through the centre of the village is punctuated on the western side by the large rectangular Market Place with its tall central clock.*

*Off the western side of Market Place to the south-west, two streets head gently downhill towards the river, Duke Street and Chapel Street, merging at their ends before crossing the river and heading back uphill as Church Lane. At the crossing point the character changes abruptly to that of a countryside lane, the other streets being mostly urban in character, lined both sides with buildings along the back of pavement line.*



*To the north-east there are two roads more widely spaced, both climbing quickly out of the river valley.*

*At the northern end, off the higher part of High Street, is Wattisham Road, which a little out of the village takes the line of the old Roman Road for a short distance, before winding through a number of villages and on to Stowmarket.*

*At the southern end of High Street, lower down and nearer the river, the other road north-eastwards (B1078) heads for Nedging, Barking and ultimately Needham Market.*



**Trees & Planting**

- ⊕ TPO Trees
- ⊖ Other Trees

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# Trees & Planting

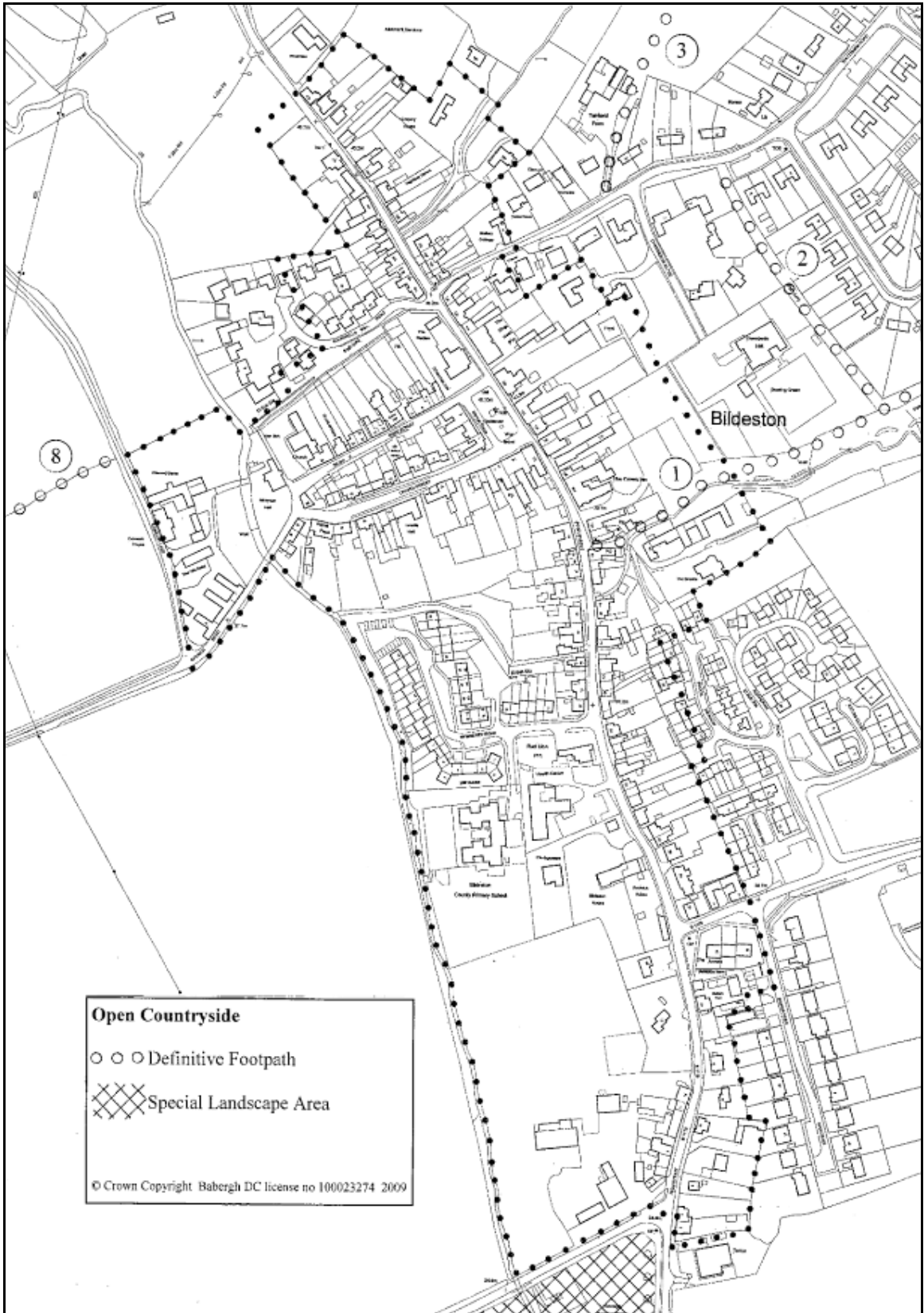
*Because of its largely built up street frontages, trees do not figure very much in the streetscape of Bildeston. They are however there within the conservation area in fairly large numbers in back gardens, often away from view, but occasionally at the front, spilling over walls into the street scene.*

*Many of these have been felt under threat from time to time and become the subjects of several Tree Preservation Orders. These include several Ash, Lime and Copper Beech trees within the built up area and three Oaks in the field adjoining Church Lane just west of the conservation area.*



*One large area of trees not so protected, and probably not threatened by lopping or development, can be found along a steeply banked area at the rear of properties on the north side of Duke Street. These adjoin a new development at Squirrell's Mill Road, mostly outside the conservation area.*

*To the south of the conservation area, the river valley is designated part of the Brett Valley Special Landscape Area, and remains rich in wetland trees such as Willow, Poplar and Alder.*





# Relationship to Open Countryside

*Bildeston's linear form means that with single plot depth development, most of the properties there originally had farmland to the rear.*

*The one historic exception to this was the central island of development between Duke Street and Chapel Street. However nowadays with the modern development of Brookfield off Wattisham Road to the north-east and Newberry Road and Manor Road to the south-west and south-east, this is now the case for far fewer properties.*

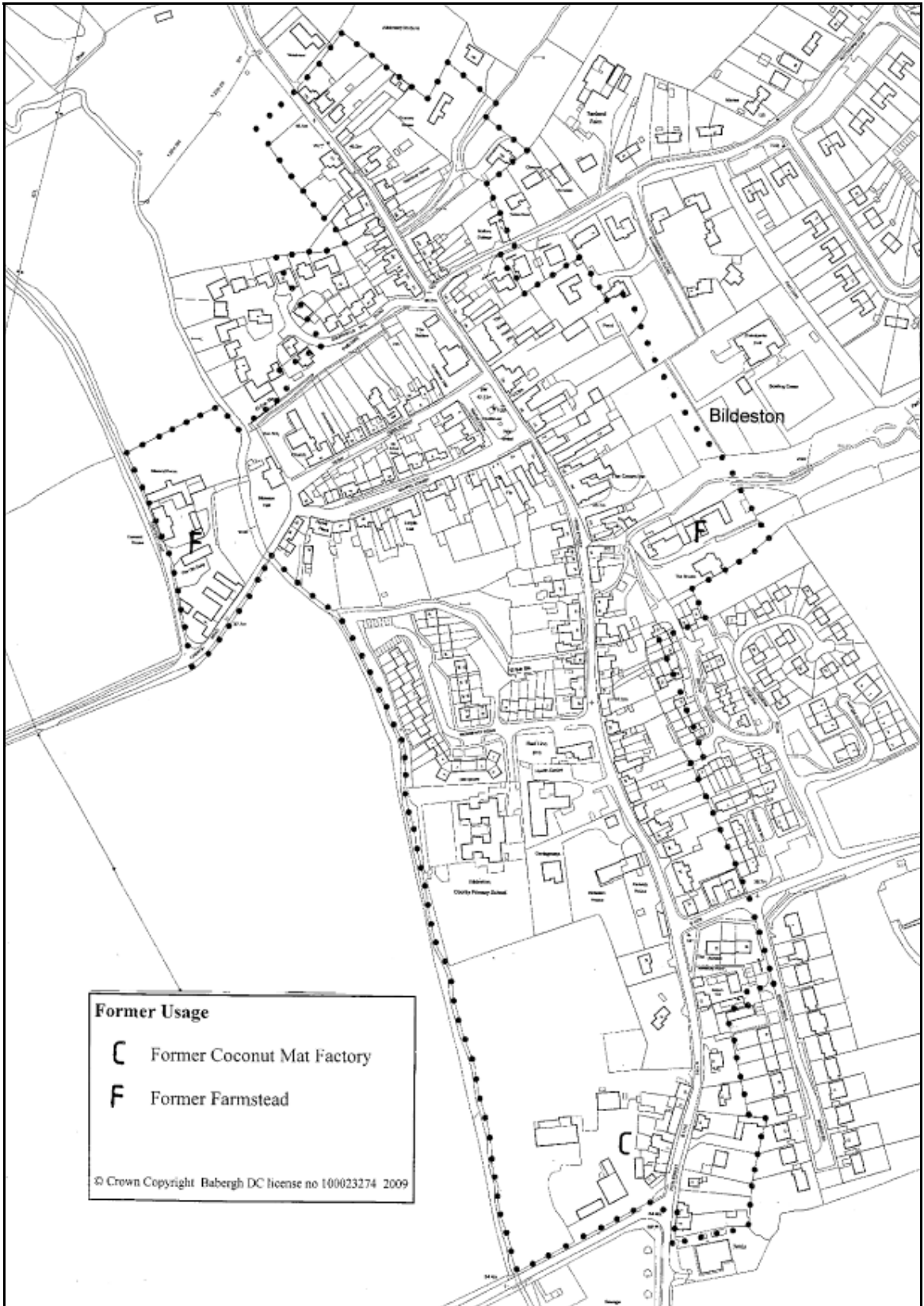
*As well as the five roads that head out into the countryside there are still footpath links from the centre.*



*Just south of the Crown Inn, High Street at its lowest point crosses a small stream coming into the village from the north-east. Along the northern bank, Definitive Footpath 1 follows this stream back up the valley, giving fairly immediate access to farmland.*

*Off this path, Footpath 2 heads north-westwards along the boundary of the Brookfield estate, leading to Wattisham Road. From a little nearer the centre, off Wattisham Road, Footpath 3 leads off north-eastwards forming a parallel route to Wattisham.*

*On the opposite side of the river, off the lane north from Bildeston Hall, Footpath 8 provides another route to the outlying Church, parallel to Church Lane.*



**Former Usage**

C Former Coconut Mat Factory

F Former Farmstead

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## Prevailing & Former Usage

*As one of several villages in the Brett valley below Lavenham, Bildeston was undoubtedly involved in Suffolk's woollen cloth industry that thrived in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries.*

*Indeed early 17<sup>th</sup> Century records show the presence in the village of 3 clothiers, 3 weavers, a dornick weaver and 2 clothworkers. Later that century there were still 3 clothiers, and 3 weavers (2 of wool and one of linen) and a wool comber, along with a number of yeomen and husbandmen. Many of the timber-framed houses in the village would have been the result of this 'wool wealth'.*

*Later evidence from 1844 directories indicates a more general agricultural*



*economy, with 9 farmers, a cattle dealer, 3 saddlers, 2 corn millers and 2 malsters.*

*By this time the village had become more of a local service centre and also had 3 academies, 2 blacksmiths, 2 watch makers, and one each of wine agent, basket maker, hairdresser in addition to the usual shops of butcher, baker and bootmaker. Many of the older buildings still bear the remains of former shopfronts, indicative of the village's former trading importance. These should be retained wherever possible.*

*In 1885 there were still two farmhouses within the village, one adjoining the Hall near the river crossing into Church Road, the other was Brook Farm just east of the Crown Inn next to the brook .*





# Losses & Possible Gains

*Bildeston has thus far suffered relatively little in the way of modern intrusions.*

*Being fairly urban in character, there has been little room for modern infill. Some of the unlisted buildings provide examples of how uPVC windows can mar otherwise traditionally built elevations, whilst conservatories in the same modern material look ill at ease against their older host buildings.*

*Rather too many of the village's brick buildings have been painted over, obscuring the local traditional materials and potentially causing damp problems to historic properties.*



*Overhead wiring is a little intrusive in some places and would benefit from being put underground when funds permit.*

*For the most part the buildings are well looked after, but one or two could do with a little attention and timely repair.*

*One small section of flint walling at the north end of High Street is also in need of some repair and another wall on the southern approach is overloaded with Ivy, probably to its detriment.*



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*Tithe Map & Apportionment 1839 Bildeston Suffolk Records Office*

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*This Appraisal adopted as  
Supplementary Planning Guidance by  
Babergh District Council Strategy  
Committee 13 January 2011*