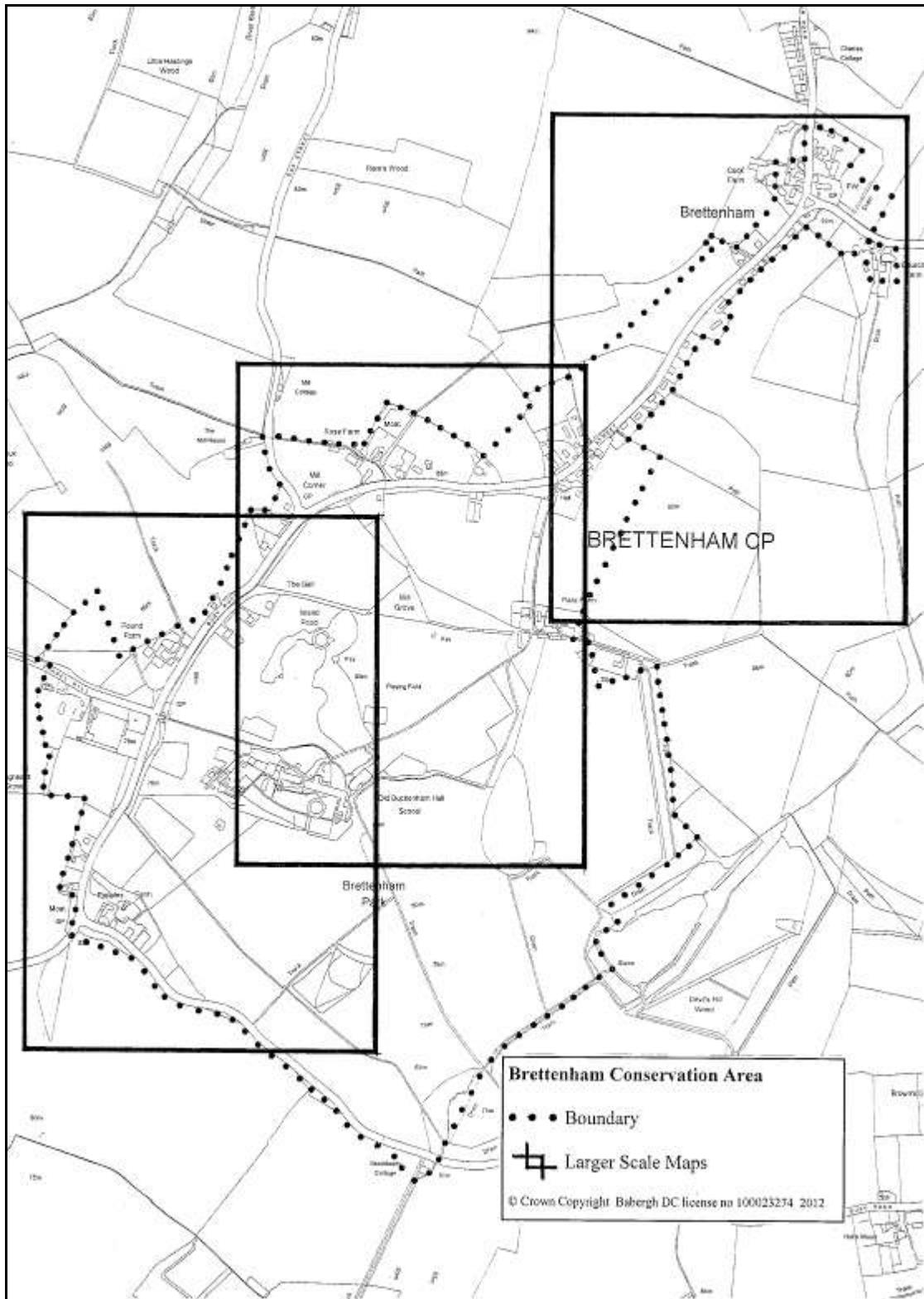




*conservation area appraisal*



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# Introduction

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

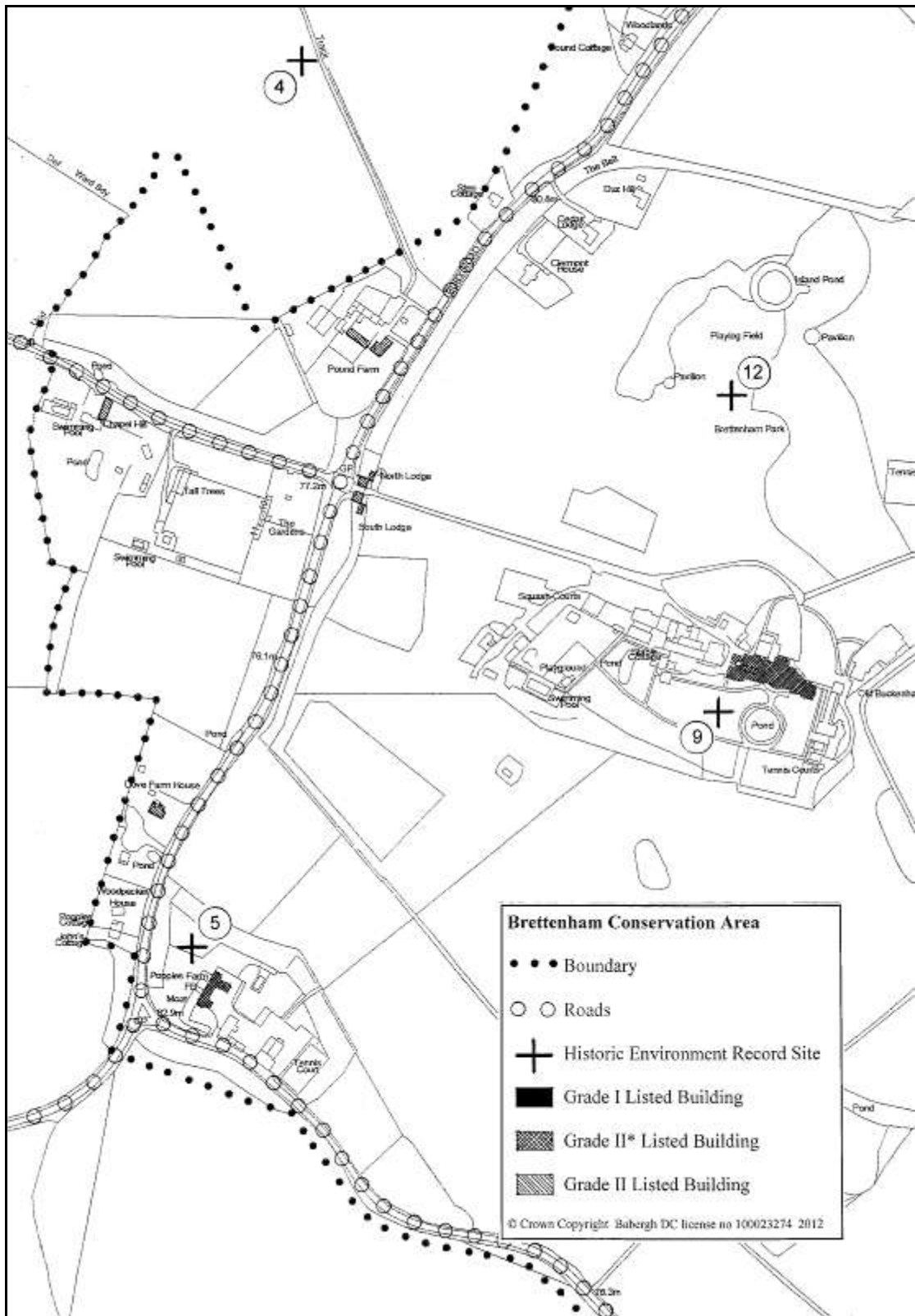
*As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Brettenham's built environment in conservation terms.*



*As a document it is neither prescriptive nor overly descriptive, but more a demonstration of 'quality of place', sufficient to inform those considering changes 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 2012.*



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# Topographical Framework

*Brettenham is a village in west central Suffolk about four miles north-east of Lavenham and five miles south-west of Stowmarket. The local geology is mostly the boulder clay of High Suffolk overlying chalk with mainly alluvial deposits in the valleys to the south.*

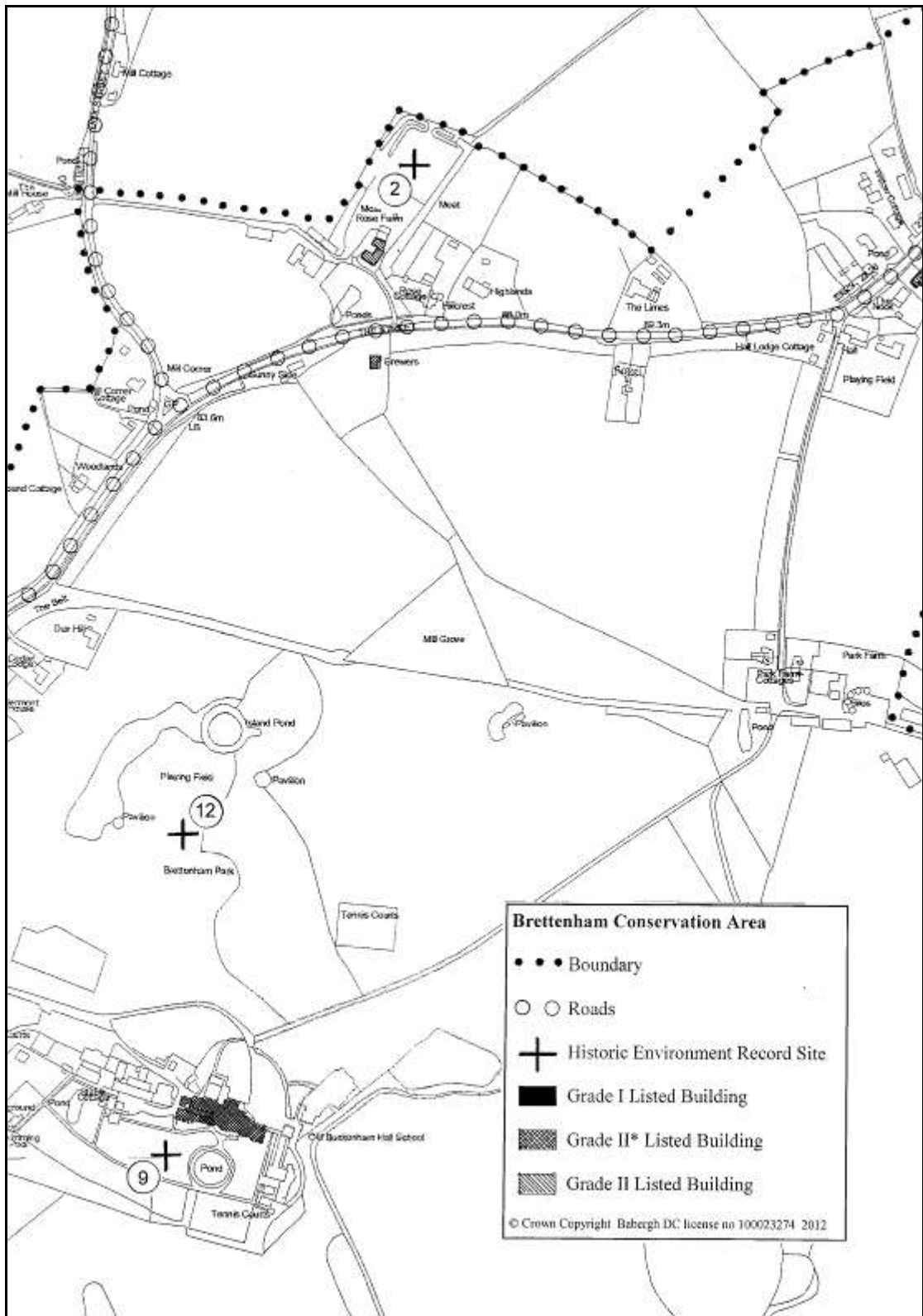
*The parish is set on the watershed between the Stour and Gipping valleys. It lies just above the upper reaches of the River Brett which flows south from here to Chelsworth and continues through to Hadleigh before eventually joining the River Stour at Higham. The Stour then continues eastwards to the estuary at Manningtree and its eventual meeting with the both the Gipping and the open sea at Harwich.*



*Historically the river valleys were the main routes of communication, the Stour valley having been canalized up to Sudbury by 1709 and the Gipping up to Stowmarket by 1793.*

*The London to Norwich railway line still goes through Stowmarket, but Sudbury is now the terminus of the branch line off this, which formerly continued north to Lavenham and onwards to Bury St Edmunds.*

*Fragments of a former Roman Road can be found in the form of lanes running north to south about a mile east of the village, whilst another parallel one about five miles to the west is now the main A143, which had been turnpiked by the Bury St Edmunds to Sudbury Trust in 1765.*



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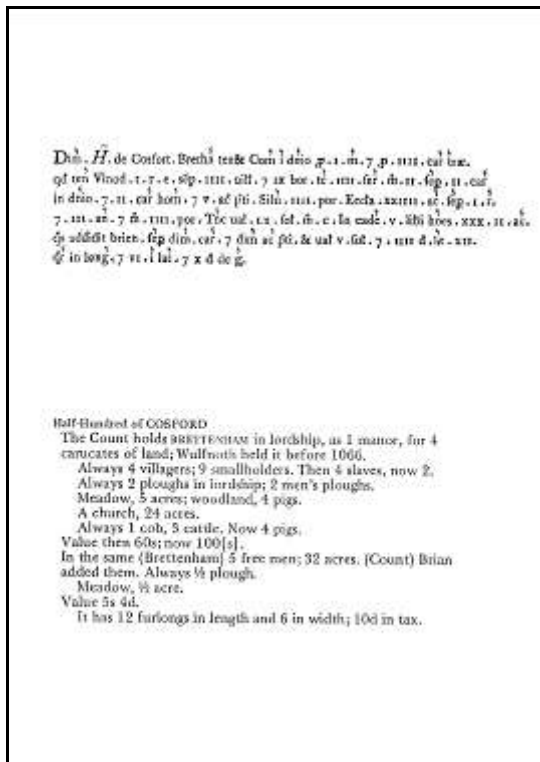
# Archaeological Significance

*The wider parish of Brettenham has about twenty sites listed in the Suffolk County Historic Environment Record.*

*The oldest entry is a Neolithic axehead found near Devil's Hill Wood east of Brettenham Hall.*

*In addition to the Roman road along the eastern parish boundary, running from Rattlesden in the north to Hitcham in the south, there are several burials and cremations of that age.*

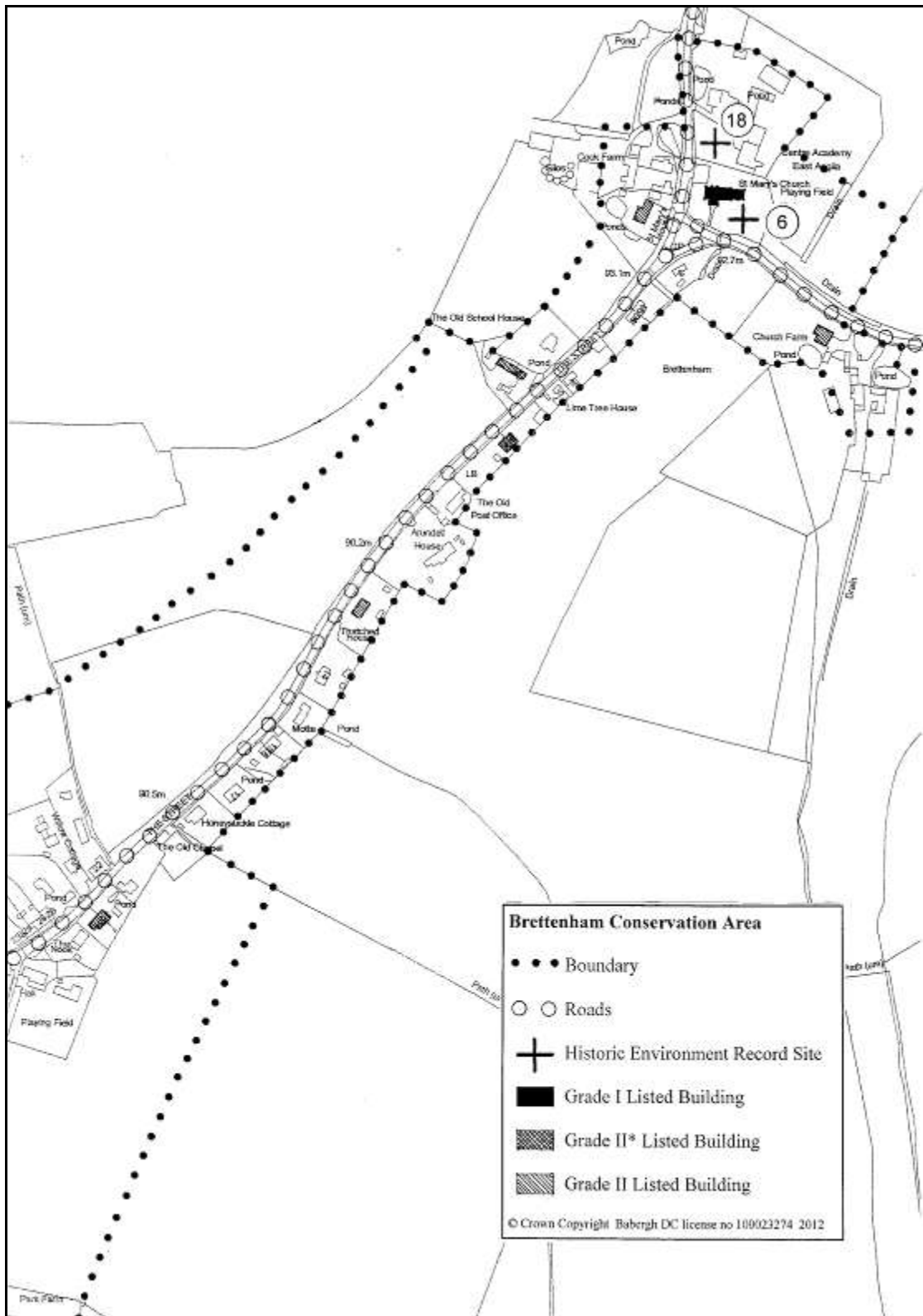
*The Medieval period is represented by the church and seven moated sites. Only two of the latter are in the conservation area, one at Rose's Farm, the other at Popples Farm.*



*Also probably medieval, there are four 'undated' areas of ancient woodland: Knightshill Grove, Morieux Wood and Ram's Wood to the west and north of the conservation area and Oak Grove Wood to the south-east.*

*Finally of Post Medieval date there is the area of Brettenham Park, the landscape setting for Brettenham Hall.*

*Brettenham is described in the Domesday survey of 1086 as a manor held by Robert Count of Mortain with woodland for four pigs and a church with 24 acres.*



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# *Intrinsic Quality of Buildings*

*The listed buildings in Brettenham are mostly grade II listed houses of timber-framed construction.*

*The only grade I building is the Church of St Mary the Virgin, mainly 14<sup>th</sup> Century in flint with stone dressings and a slate roof. The tower is unusually built over the south porch.*

*Set within 150 acres of parkland and about a mile south-west of the church, Brettenham Hall is grade II\*, and now part of Old Buckenham Hall School. It is a large red brick mansion dating from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century, but much rebuilt in the early 19<sup>th</sup> Century.*



*Also grade II\* is Popples Farmhouse, set within its own moat south-west of the hall, which Pevsner describes as a 'Picturesque timber-framed C15 house'.*

*The roof is thatched and the fine straight closely spaced framing is exposed with a long jetty on the west front over a fine carved bressumer.*



# *Traditional Building Materials*

*Brettenham is fairly typical of south Suffolk in terms of the building materials employed there. Many of the older buildings, the majority of those listed, are rendered timber frames, some of the finer ones with exposed studwork, not otherwise much seen in Suffolk.*

*Around the village some less fine studwork has now also been exposed and would be better covered back over with a protective layer of render in the traditional Suffolk manner.*

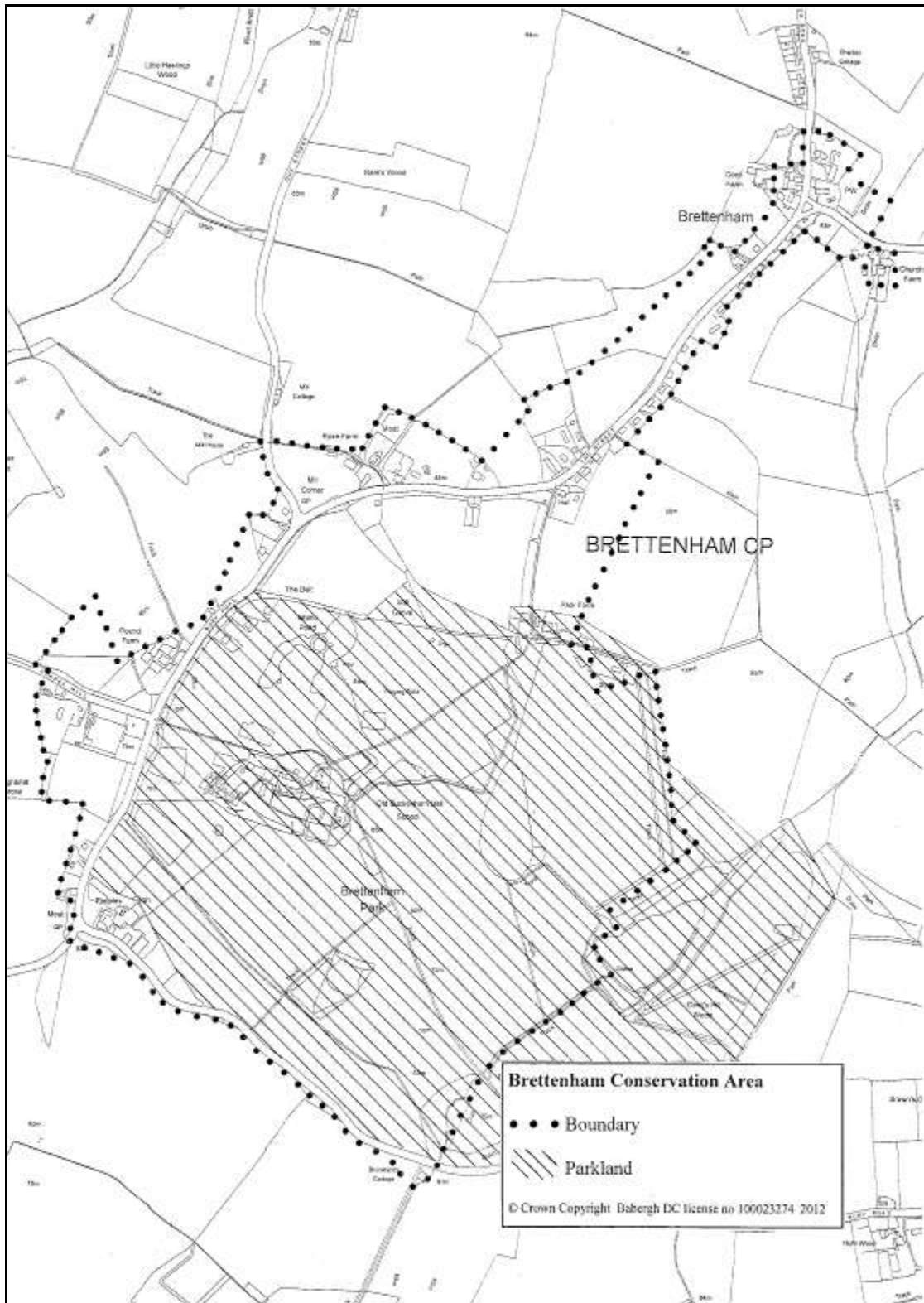
*Later buildings are more often in brick, either the local soft Suffolk red variety or the harder Suffolk white brick and sometimes using both, typically in red with white brick detailing.*



*Other typical Suffolk building materials can be found such as flint on the Church and black weather-boarding on several barns and outbuildings.*

*Roofs are variously thatched on the older buildings, or plaintiles where this has been replaced, and slate on the more recent brick buildings. There is also a scattering of clay pantiles, some plain red, others of the black glazed variety.*





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# Hierarchy of Spaces

*Brettenham village is essentially linear in its historic form, a typical Suffolk village street punctuated at its north-eastern end by a concentration of development around the Church.*

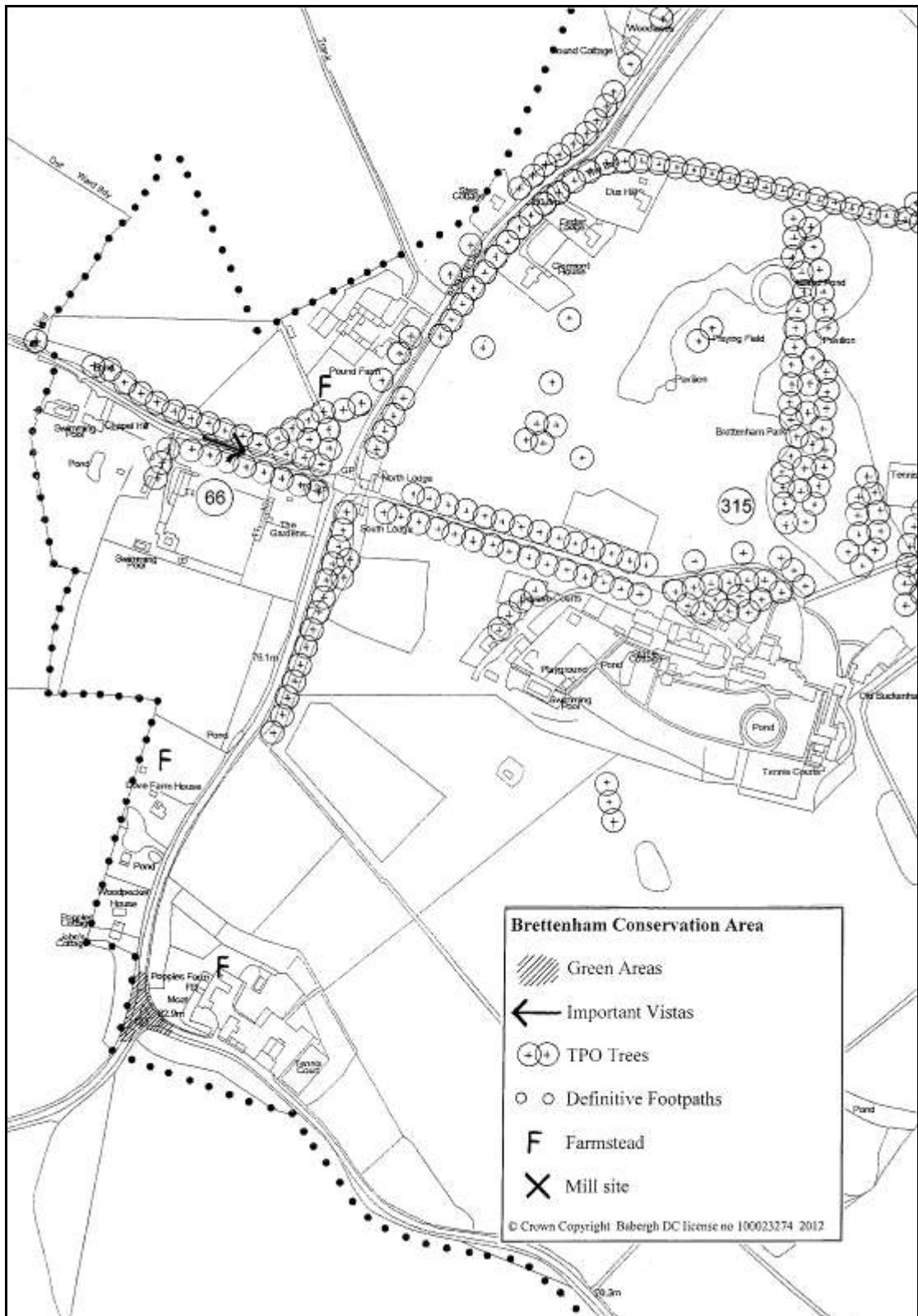
*The less densely developed other end of The Street skirts along the north-west side of the parkland setting of Brettenham Hall, about a mile south-west of the Church.*

*Here tree belts line the road, punctuated by the pair of western lodges guarding the main entrance to the Hall, now used as a school. Opposite this entrance a road heads off westwards through the trees, towards the village of Thorpe Morieux about a mile distant.*



*Beyond the lodges the road continues southwards until a junction is reached adjoining Popples Farm. Here at the south-western extremity of the village, a small triangular green indicates where the road continues south-westwards to the village of Preston St Mary, with a branch off south-eastwards to the village of Hitcham.*

*The village thus has two main foci, the Hall within its parkland setting and the Church adjoining a small triangular green. At the latter the road branches, the route northwards heading to Rattlesden, that eastwards to Cross Green, an outlying hamlet in Hitcham.*



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# Trees & Planting

*To the west of Brettenham village towards Thorpe Morieux there are three ancient woodland remnants: Knightshill Grove and Morieux Wood, both straddling the parish boundary, and Ram's Wood within Brettenham itself.*

*Within the village a number of individual trees and areas of trees have been felt of sufficient importance to be given the protection of Tree Preservation Orders over the years.*

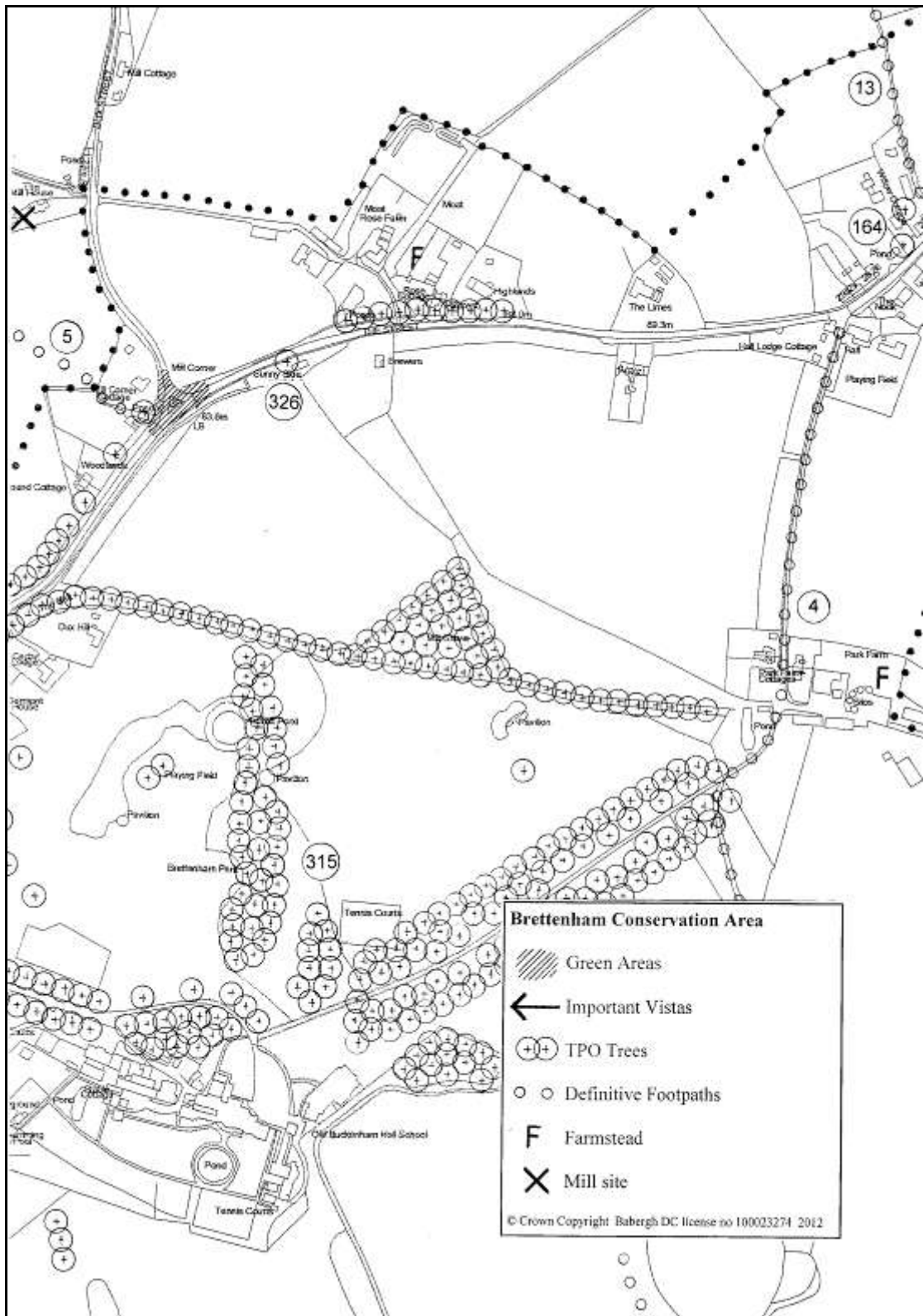
*The earliest of these, TPO 66, was made by West Suffolk County Council covering an area of fir and evergreen oak trees on the south side of the Thorpe road west of the western lodges.*



*The trees on the northern side were covered by the more extensive TPO 315 in 1973 which also included large numbers of trees within and around Brettenham Park. The species included within this later West Suffolk County Council order include Lime, Plane, Beech, Oak, Ash, Maple, Walnut, Horse Chestnut, Robinia, Corsican Pine, Monterey Cypress, Douglas Fir and Norway Spruce.*

*More recent orders, nos. 164 and 326 made by Babergh D.C., have covered individual Willow, Sycamore and Lime trees at properties along The Street.*

*Apart from the trees the small greens provide important grassed areas and visual amenity both maintaining a rural character and providing the setting for some of the listed buildings.*



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# Relationship to Open Countryside

*Brettenham's built up area boundary as defined by Babergh's Local Plan includes only the north-eastern end of The Street, with development mostly on the south-eastern side. The rest of the village including Brettenham Park is classified as 'countryside' and thus remains relatively protected from development.*

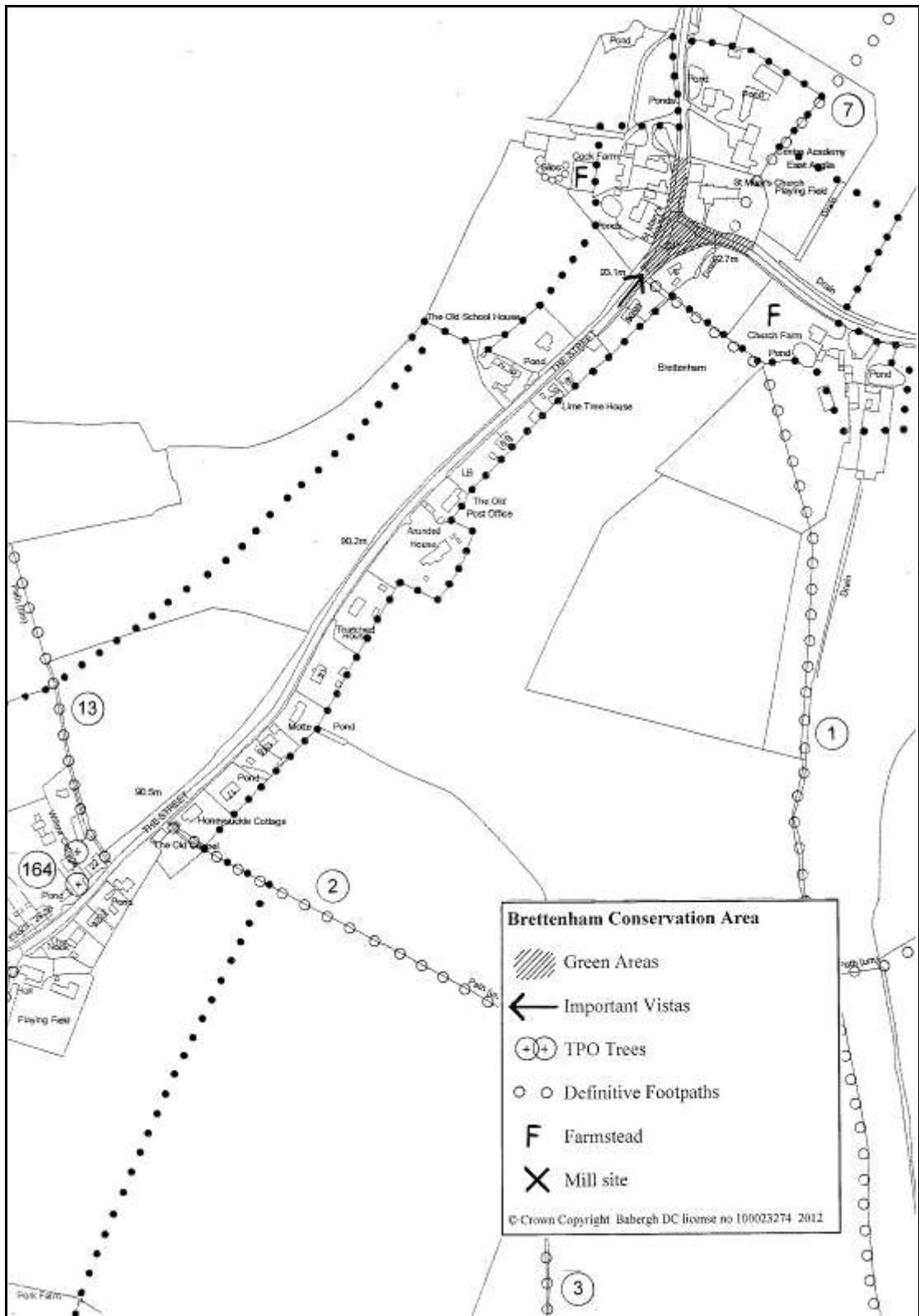
*The limited development there has been is only one plot deep and mostly only one side of the road, so most properties have countryside to both front and rear.*

*The two focal points in the village have led to very different types of linkage with the adjoining countryside. The presence of the hall seems to have precluded the existence of many footpaths.*



*The only definitive route in the south of the parish is FP4 running from the southern lodge on the Hitcham road across the park to the northern lodge midway along The Street. Nearby off The Street FP2 heads off south-eastwards with nearly opposite FP13 heading north-westwards towards Thorpe Morieux.*

*Further north the more usual pattern of radial routes surrounds the Church. The Street, Church Road and the road towards Cross Green, Hitcham are probably upgraded paths, now in use as roads to the south-west, north and east respectively. Remaining as footpaths, FP1 heads to the south and FP7 to the north-east, whilst FP6 and FP11 both head westwards off Church Road.*



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# Prevailing & Former Usage

*Brettenham's past is mainly agricultural, records for the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century showing the presence of just 6 yeomen and a husbandman. Later in that century there were 11 yeomen and 2 spinsters.*

*The long linear form of the village street provides access to seven farms strung along its length. The presence of the big estate seems to have suppressed too much other development there, keeping the economy small scale and rural.*

*According to directory entries, by 1844 there were just 12 farmers, 3 shops, 2 beerhouse keepers and one each of corn miller, shoemaker, wheelwright and blacksmith.*



*An early post-type mill just off Dux Street was replaced in 1804 by a smock mill, eventually demolished in 1939.*

*The mill appears on the tithe record of 1844, where there are also entries for 'Brick Field', 'Tile Pits' and 'Gravel Pits', indicative of various extractive industries.*

*The several instances of 'Winding Field' and 'Winding Meadow' probably relate to some earlier activity there as part of Suffolk's woollen cloth industry.*





# Losses & Possible Gains

*The use of modern materials such as concrete roof tiles or uPVC windows and bargeboards on many of the unlisted but otherwise traditionally built buildings along The Street has detracted from the overall appearance of the settlement, and further degradation of this type should be discouraged.*

*Such intrusions are more apparent where cottages are paired or in terraces, and any change to one amplifies the difference. Such visual disruption can even be brought about by changes in paint finish or render, covering up original fair-faced local brick finishes and unfortunately sometimes aggravating the dampness the new finishes are supposed to keep out.*



*Newer infill has also brought in modern materials and non-traditional forms, but fortunately this is often successfully screened by native hedging or other suitable boundary treatments. Wide vehicular entrance drives can thwart this, opening up views towards these more recent buildings, and sometimes the screening itself in the form of 'leylandii' hedging can be intrusive.*

*The Street also suffers from an excess of overhead wiring, supplying the homes there with their power and telephone services. These should be put underground if the opportunity (and funding) arises.*

# References & Further Reading

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*This Appraisal adopted as  
Supplementary Planning Guidance by  
Babergh District Council Strategy  
Committee 14 February 2013*