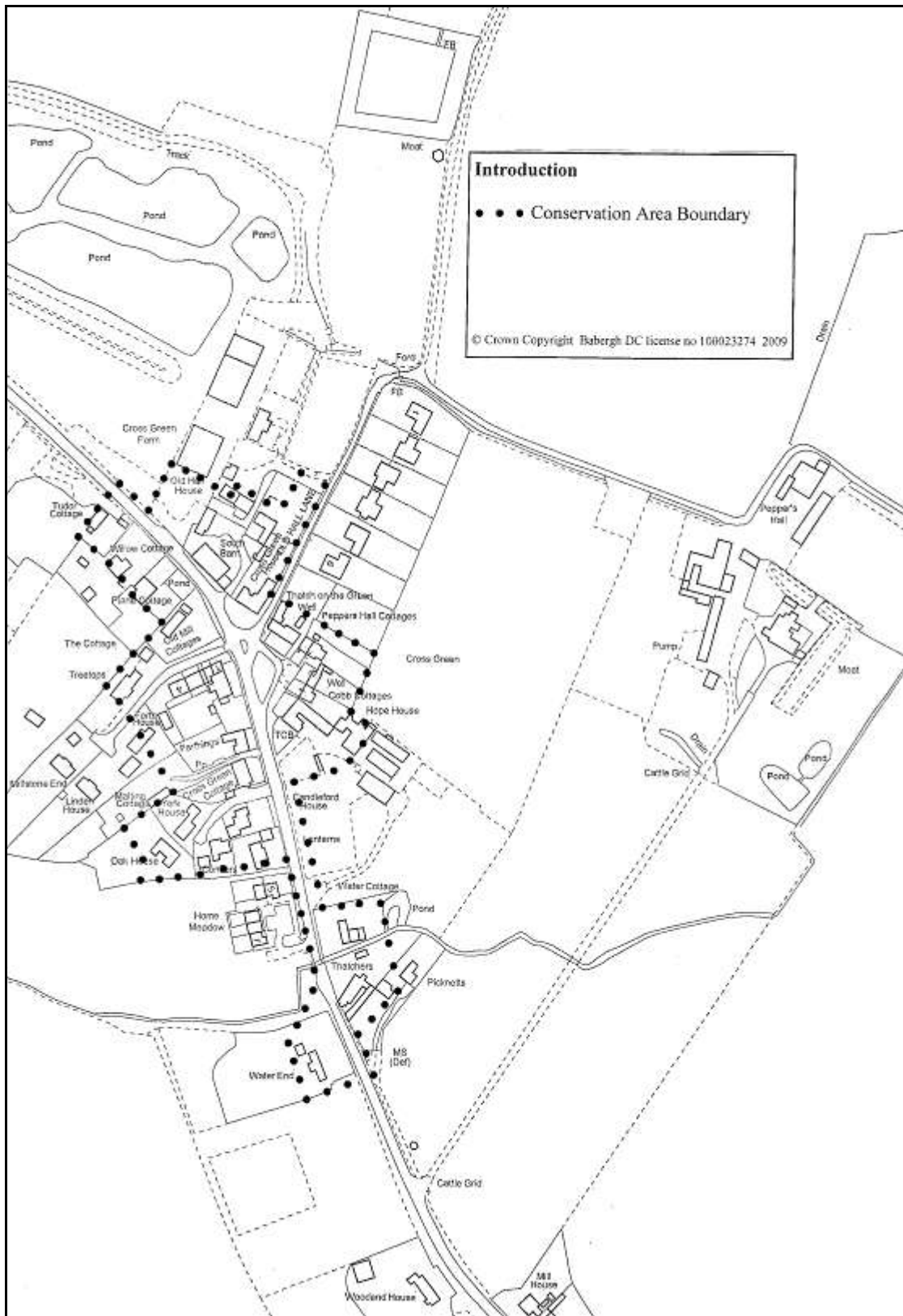




conservation area appraisal



Introduction

The conservation area at Cross Green, Cockfield 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 Cockfield under a number of different headings as set out in English Heritage's new 'Guidance on Conservation Area Appraisals' (2006).

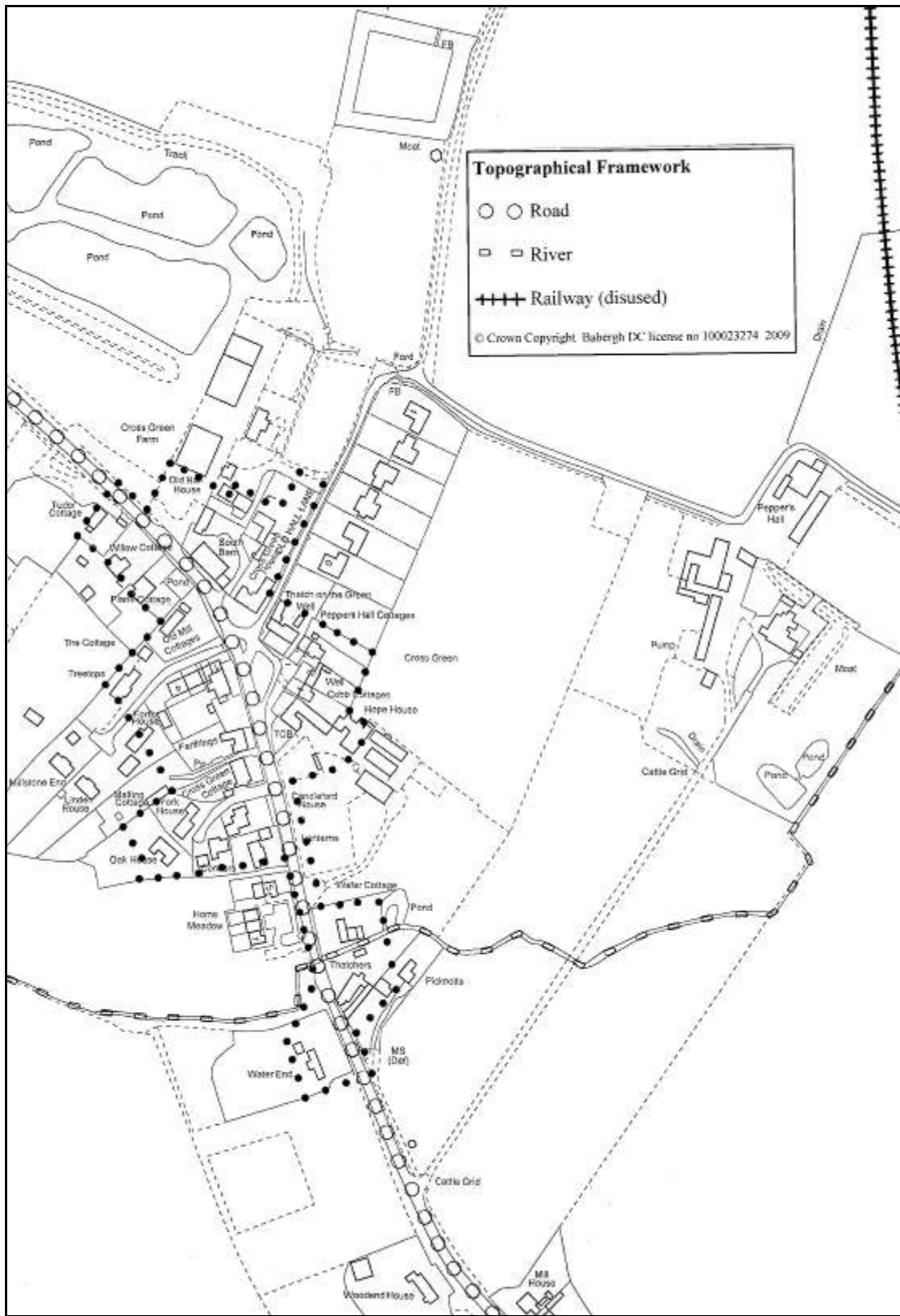
As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Cockfield's built environment in conservation terms.



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.

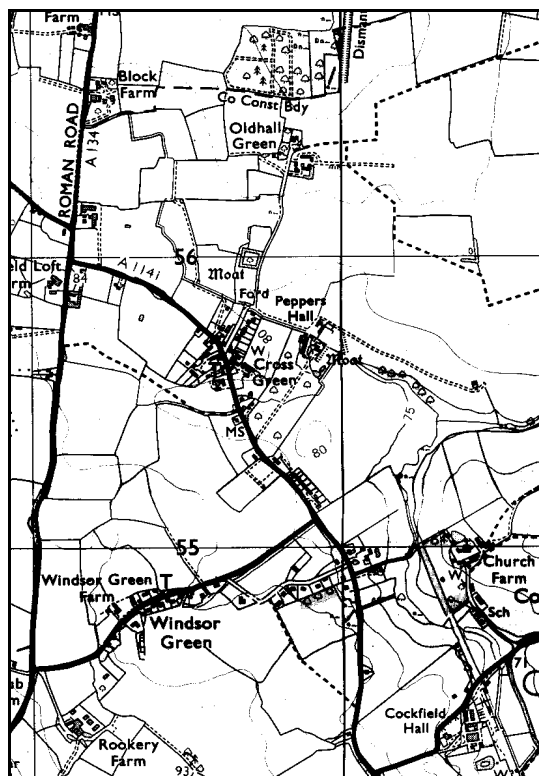


Topographical Framework

Cockfield is a village in west Suffolk about four miles north of Lavenham, comprised of several hamlets, one based at the church, with others around several greens of which Cross Green is but one.

The parish is set in the upper reaches of the valley of the River Brett, which flows south from here through Lavenham and Hadleigh to eventually join the River Stour at Higham. This then continues eastwards to the estuary at Manningtree and its eventual meeting with the open sea at Harwich.

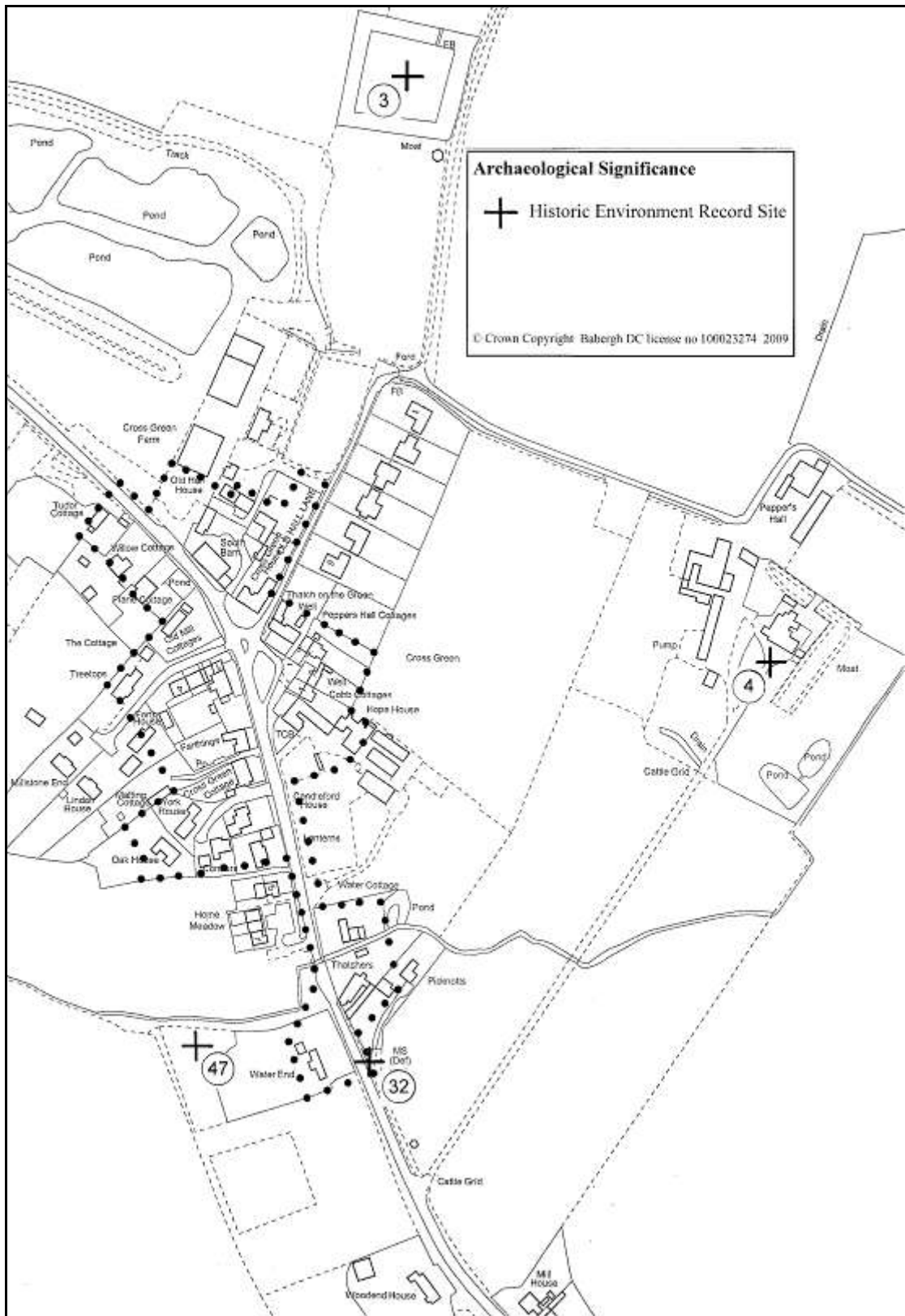
The local geology is mostly the boulder clay of High Suffolk overlying chalk with mainly alluvial deposits in the valley. There is also a north-south intermittent band of glacial sands and gravels, mostly on the west bank.



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

Sudbury is now also the terminus of the 1849 railway branch line off the east coast line, which from 1865 continued north to Lavenham and through Cockfield, passing just to the east of Pepper's Hall, on its way to Bury St Edmunds.

The former Roman Road that forms the western parish boundary is now the A143, which had been turnpiked by the Bury St Edmunds to Sudbury Trust in 1765.



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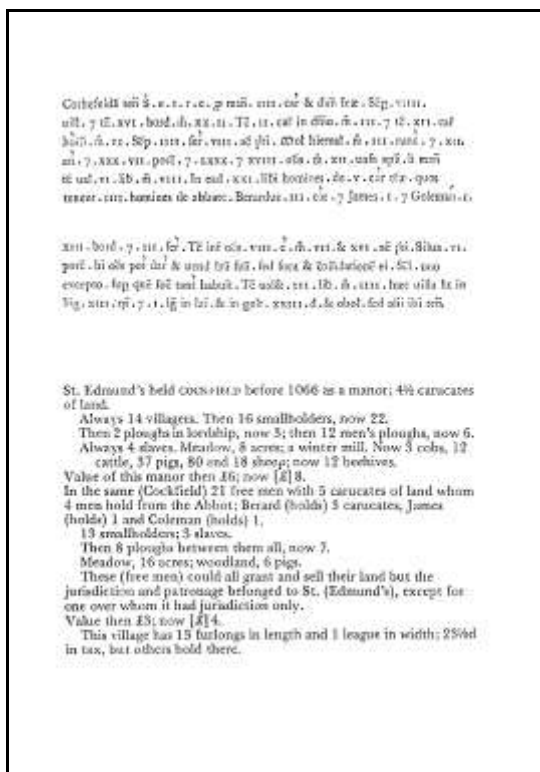
Archaeological Significance

The wider parish of Cockfield has about fifty sites listed in the Suffolk County Historic Environment Record, only a few of which are near Cross Green.

The oldest entry is a Neolithic polished axehead from Button's Green in the south-east of the parish.

Another axehead and a sword from the centre of the parish near the church both date from the Bronze Age and are probably contemporary with the cropmarks out in the fields indicating three ring ditches and an enclosure, all given as 'undated'.

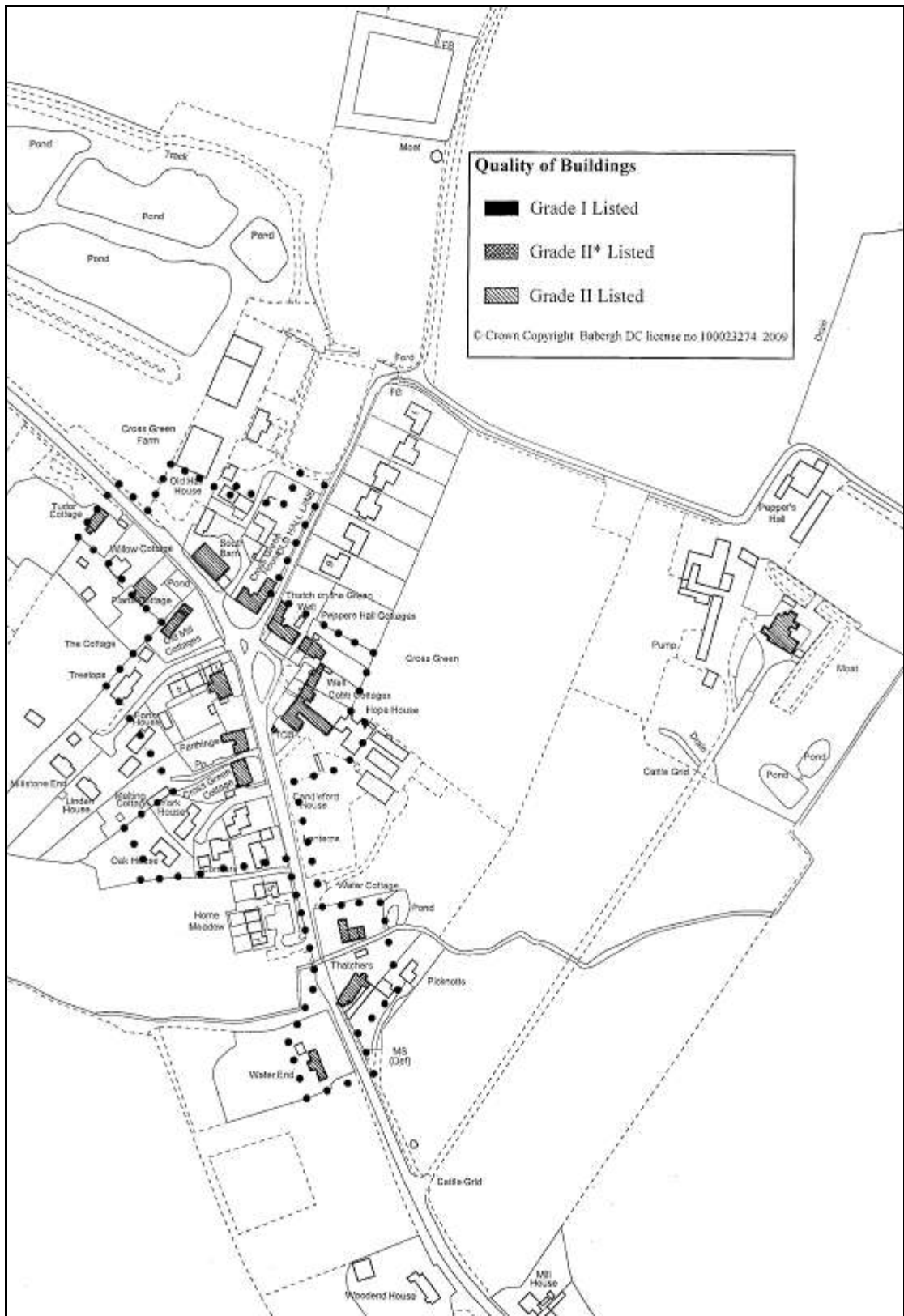
Iron Age and Roman remains comprise scatter finds, a brooch and a number of coins, whilst from the Saxon period there is an Arabic coin.



The Medieval period is represented by the church, a ditched house platform, a tile/brick kiln, a watermill site and eight moated sites. The moated site off Old Hall Lane just north of Cross Green is a scheduled monument and has a WWII pillbox next to it. There is also an 'undated' area of ancient woodland at Bull's Wood, east of the church.

Finally of Post Medieval date there is a hundred stone, a brick making works, two milestones and the site of Cockfield Hall.

Cockfield is described in the Domesday survey of 1086 as a manor held by St Edmund's with a winter mill, various livestock and 12 beehives.



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Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

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

The only grade I building is the Church of St Peter, mainly 14th Century in flint with stone dressings and a slate roof. It has a 15th Century south aisle and west tower all with chequered flushwork and embattled parapets. Pevsner describes it as 'Quite big'.

Nearby facing the churchyard, Church House is grade II, and is believed to have been the Church-house or Gildhall for the parish. Timber-framed with a plaintile roof it is jettied to the north over the churchyard wall with brick nogging infill between the studs.*



There are 17 grade II listings specifically around Cross Green, which include Pepper's Hall on its moated site to the east just outside the conservation area.

This has a timber-framed and plastered wing at the rear but was refronted in Suffolk White brick and given a slate roof in the early 19th Century. Within the conservation area the same refronting treatment has been applied to Cross Green Farmhouse, whilst Old Mill House facing it across the road is in the same materials, but newly built at that time.

Also grade II listed is a red K6 cast iron telephone box at the southern tip of the green.



Traditional Building Materials

Cross Green Farmhouse's rear wing was also new in the early 19th Century, and is correspondingly in Suffolk White brick, but with a plaintiled roof.

In most Suffolk settlements such later buildings are more often in brick and usually the local soft red variety. This otherwise common material seems confined at Cross Green to chimney stacks and garden walls, including one Crinkle Crackle (albeit modern) example at Tudor Cottage.

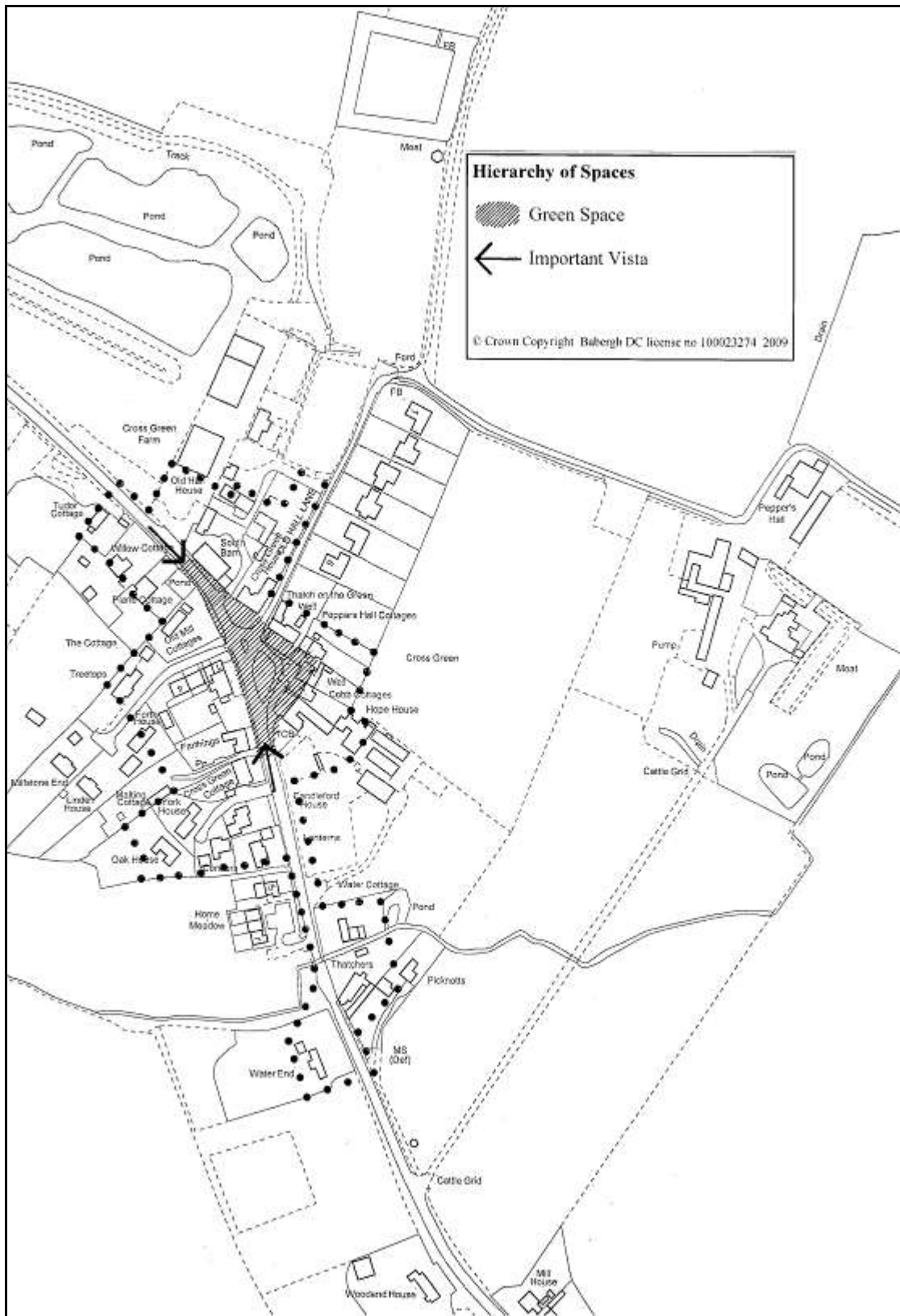
The smaller domestic buildings at Cross Green are generally in flint, either knapped or as cobbles, with red or white brick dressings.



Timber-framed buildings that have not been refronted retain their painted render finishes and the barn adjoining Cross Green Farm has traditional black stained weather-boarding.

Roofs are variously thatched on the older buildings or plaintiles where this has been replaced, with slate on the more recent brick and flint buildings. There is also a scattering of clay pantiles on some cottages and outbuildings.





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Hierarchy of Spaces

The hamlet of Cross Green is centred around a small triangular green, where Old Hall Lane forms a junction on the east side of the A1141.

Cross Green Farm at the northern end was probably the start of development here and to its south there are now two ranges of historic buildings clustered along the north-east and south-east sides of the green.

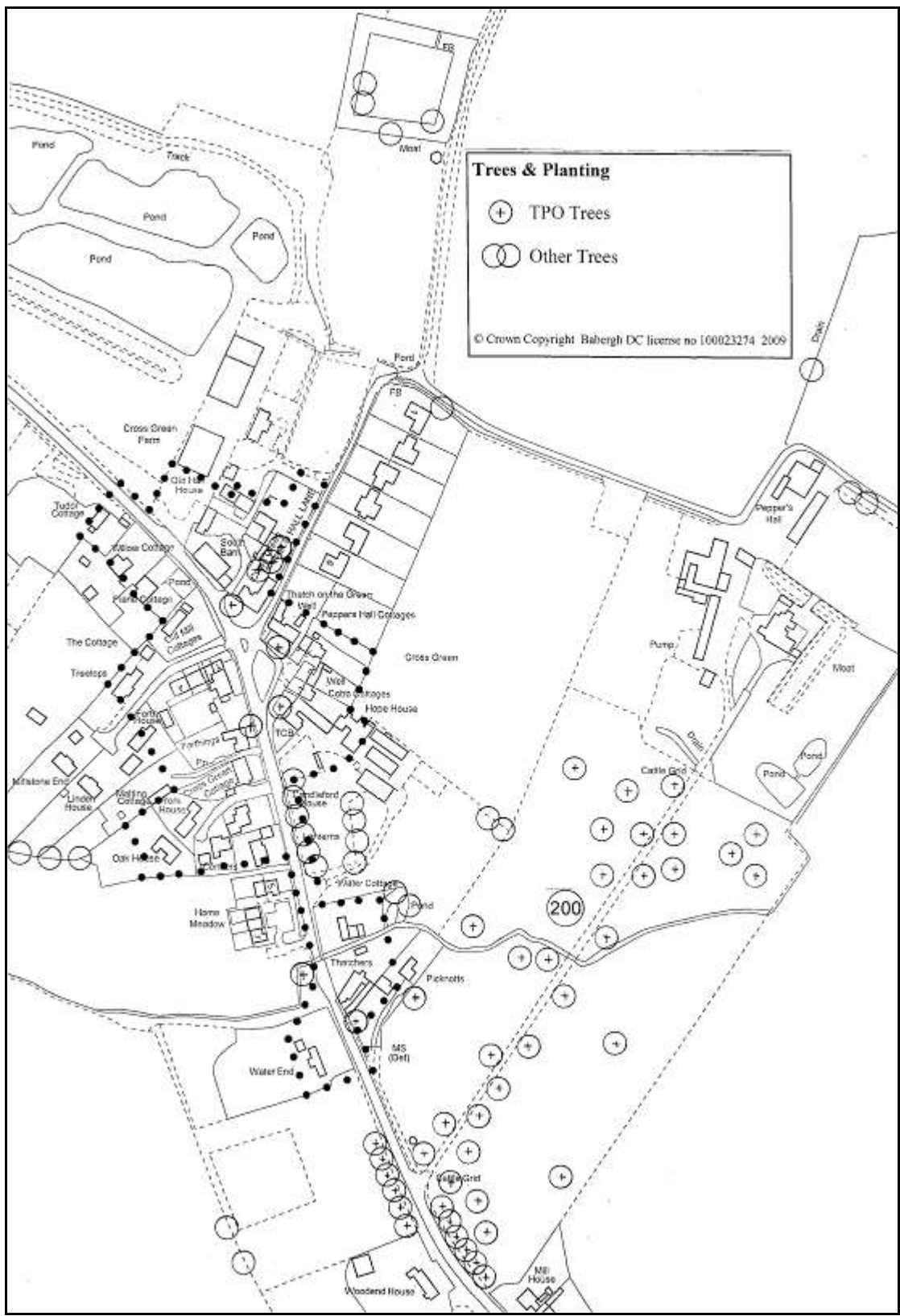
These provide good enclosure to the space, whilst the western side of the road has further historic buildings a little more widely spaced, with some infill development to the rear and southwards along the main road, including Home Meadow south of the old garage site and actually outside the conservation area.



This leads to a second group of historic buildings further south clustered around the former King's Head public house (more recently Thatchers Restaurant), where the road crosses a stream.

Further south again, on the east side of the road, but outside the conservation area, there is the frontage to Pepper's Hall. The grade II listed house itself is set due east of the green, some distance back from the road and approached by a long formal tree-lined drive. Both Pepper's Hall and its parkland setting might make a useful future addition to the conservation area.





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Trees & Planting

Because the conservation area boundary is fairly tightly drawn around the two clusters of historic buildings, there are not many trees of any size within it. Many of the back gardens have shrubs and small trees, but nothing at all substantial.

Around the edge of the green the front gardens originally contained a Yew, a Western Red Cedar and two Sycamores protected by Tree Preservation Order no.200 created by West Suffolk County Council in 1972. Only the Yew and one Sycamore remain here, the others replaced by more recent planting.

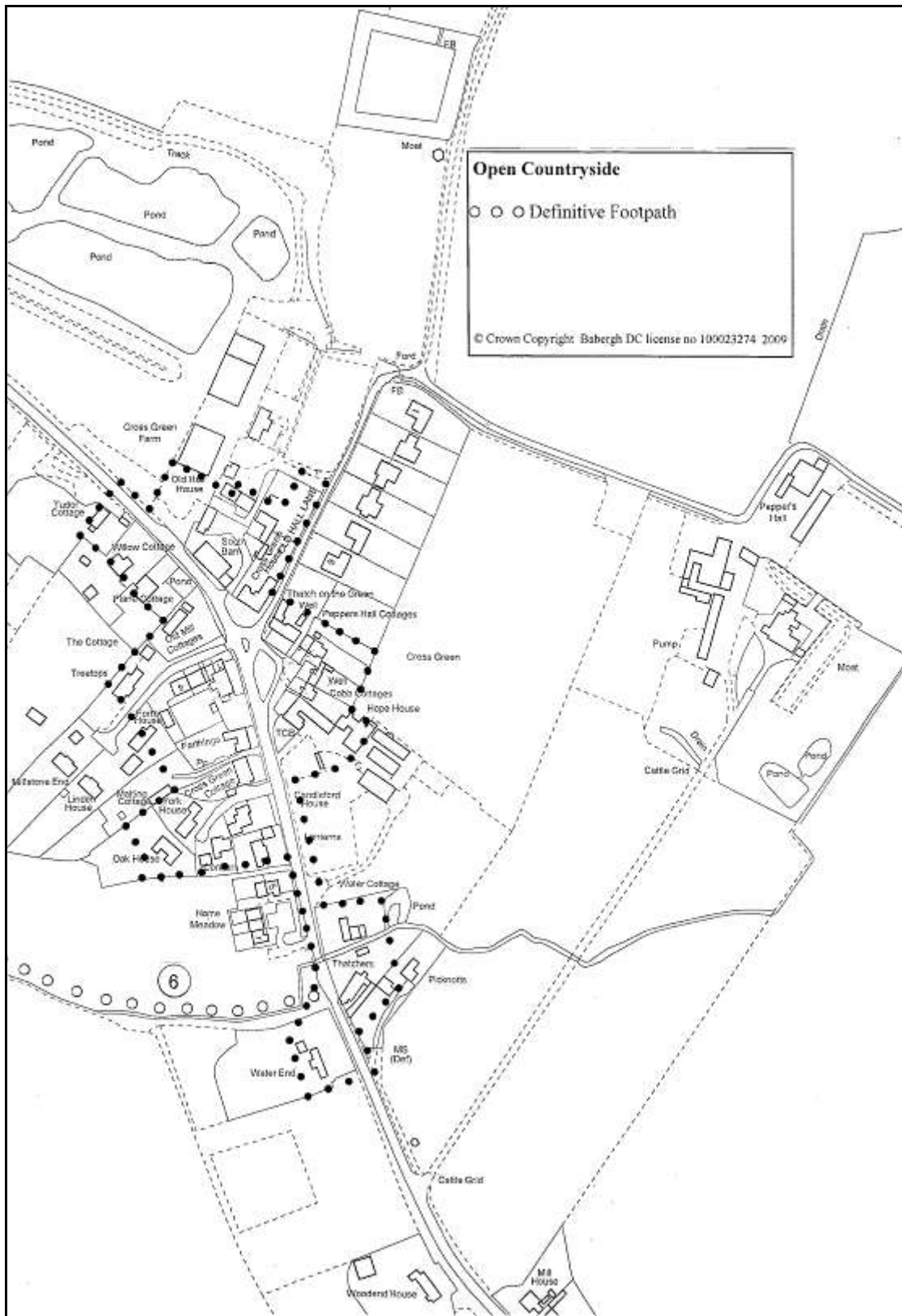


Just south of the green on the east side of the road through, one parcel of land has trees all around it, but only the western edge with its Scots Pine, False Acacia and Oak next to the road is actually in the conservation area.

Further south the parkland approach to Pepper's Hall does have substantial specimens, although these are fairly spread about and only partly form an avenue containing the drive.

Here individual trees and groups are also protected by TPO 200 and include examples of Copper Beech, Lime, Horse Chestnut and Scots Pine, with a strip of Larch and Pine along the road frontage.





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Relationship to Open Countryside

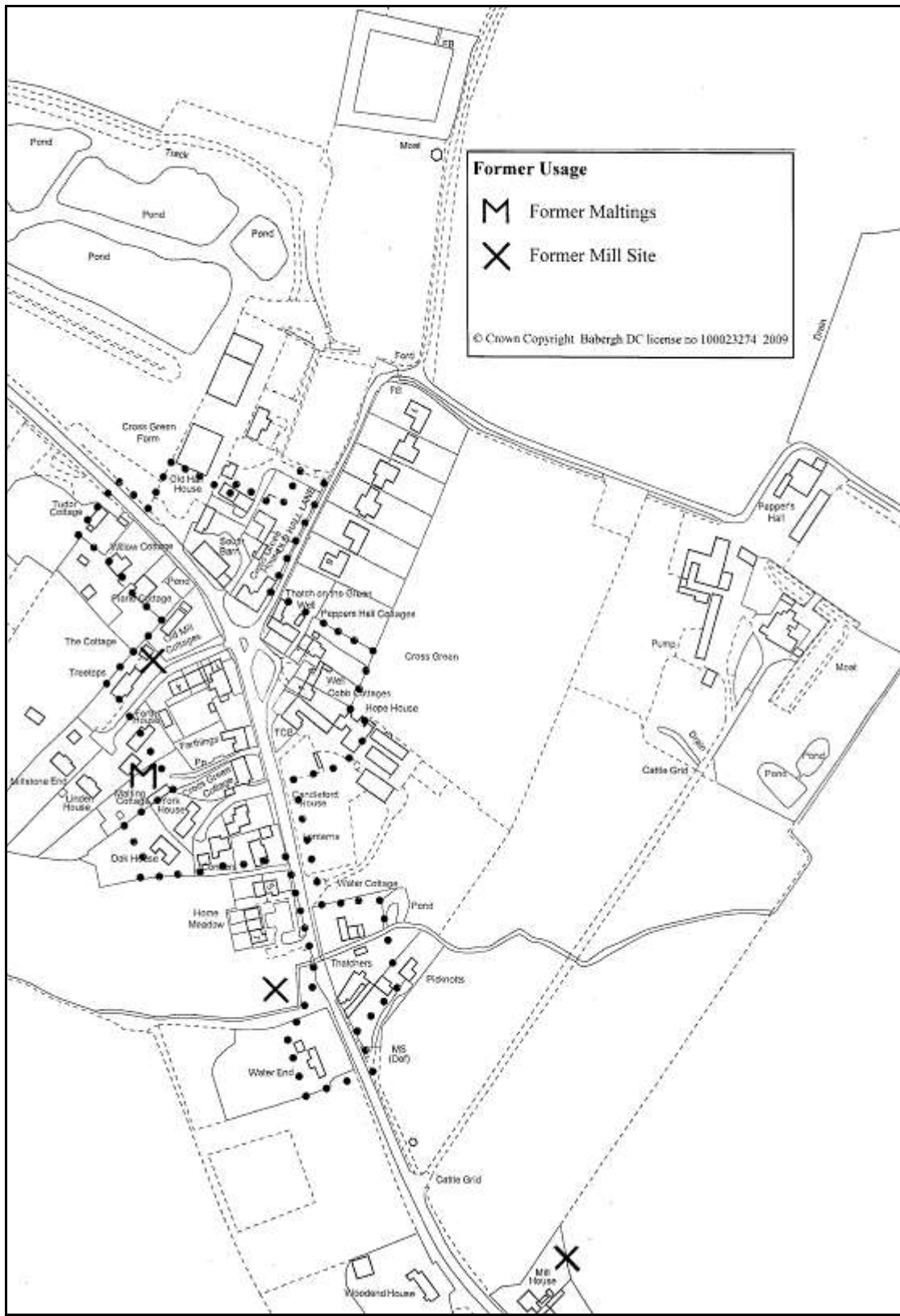
The original settlement at Cross Green had countryside immediately behind one plot deep development. This now remains so only around the southern cluster of buildings, as around the green itself there has been later development both to the west of the main road and to the north-east along Old Hall Lane.

Despite the buildings, the triangular green maintains its rural feel and there are still some views through to open countryside. Any attempts to provide more permanent surfacing to the tracks around the green should be resisted.



Because Cross Green is without a church, there is not the usual village network of radial footpaths and/or roads which have been upgraded from one time footpaths.

The only definitive footpath there (FP6) runs from the southern part of the conservation area, parallel to the stream, westwards across to the main A134 on the parish boundary.



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Prevailing & Former Usage

Although it is a fairly spread out parish, Cockfield as a whole did form a small part of Suffolk's woollen cloth industry, which explains the quality of some of its timber-framed buildings.

Records from the early 17th Century show 30 yeomen, 7 husbandmen and a miller there along with a clockmaker, 3 tailors and a cordwainer. Later that century there were the same number of yeomen with 5 husbandmen, a cooper, a brickburner, 2 blacksmiths and a little more emphasis on the cloth industry with 2 spinsters, 2 woolcombers, 2 say weavers and a linen weaver.

Directory entries from 1844 paint a similar picture with 21 farmers, 2 wheelwrights, 2 blacksmiths, 2 millers and a malster amongst those present.



Of the four windmill sites known in the parish, only the stump of one brick built tower mill remains. Known as Pepper Mill, this adjoins the Lavenham road, about half a mile south of the church. Two post-type mills were situated a little further north, not too far from the former railway station, and a smock mill just south of Cross Green was on the site of the medieval watermill.

The tithe map places the maltings complex just south-west of the main Cross Green settlement where Malting Cottage remains today, whilst the early OS maps show 'Corn Mill' (presumably power driven) a little to the north of this in behind Old Mill House and another just south of the entrance to Pepper's Hall.





Losses and Possible Gains

Extensive overhead wiring providing electricity to the settlement is somewhat intrusive and would benefit from being undergrounded, particularly the pole-mounted substation at Home Meadow.

The large asbestos clad barn, north of Cross Green Farmhouse, is also just outside the conservation area but does little to complement the open space in front of it which is inside the area. Some suitably designed frontage development or boundary screening here would help.

There has been infill development, some of which is recent and could be better screened. On the other hand some older infill development is perhaps too well screened, with oversized non-native 'leylandii' hedges now dominating and impinging on the visual amenity.



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