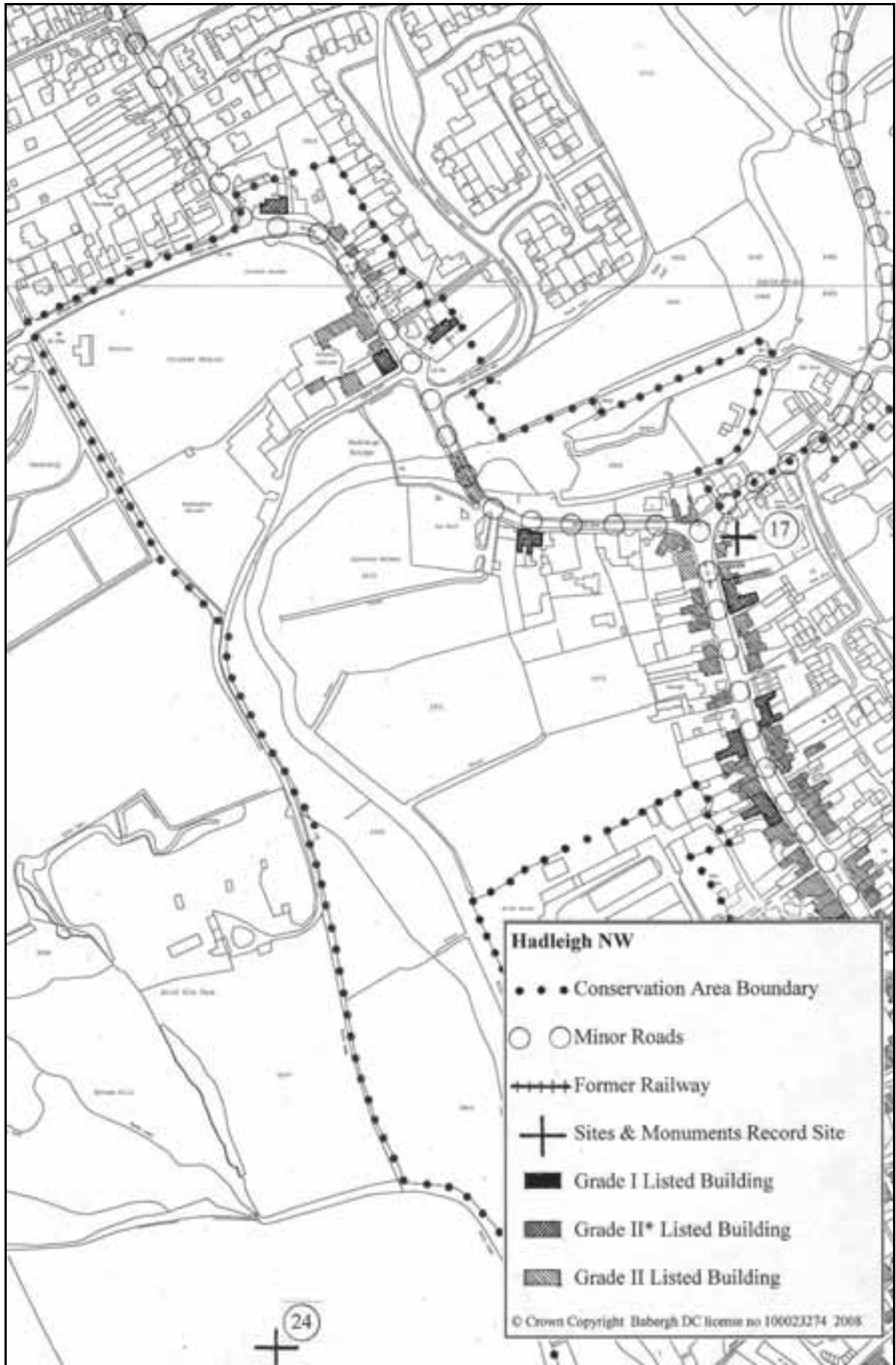




conservation area appraisal



Hadleigh NW

- • • Conservation Area Boundary
- ○ Minor Roads
- Former Railway
- ⊕ Sites & Monuments Record Site
- Grade I Listed Building
- ▨ Grade II* Listed Building
- ▩ Grade II Listed Building

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Introduction

The conservation area in Hadleigh was originally designated by West Suffolk County Council in 1969, and inherited by Babergh District Council at its inception in 1974. The boundary was revised by Babergh in both 1981 and 1998.

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

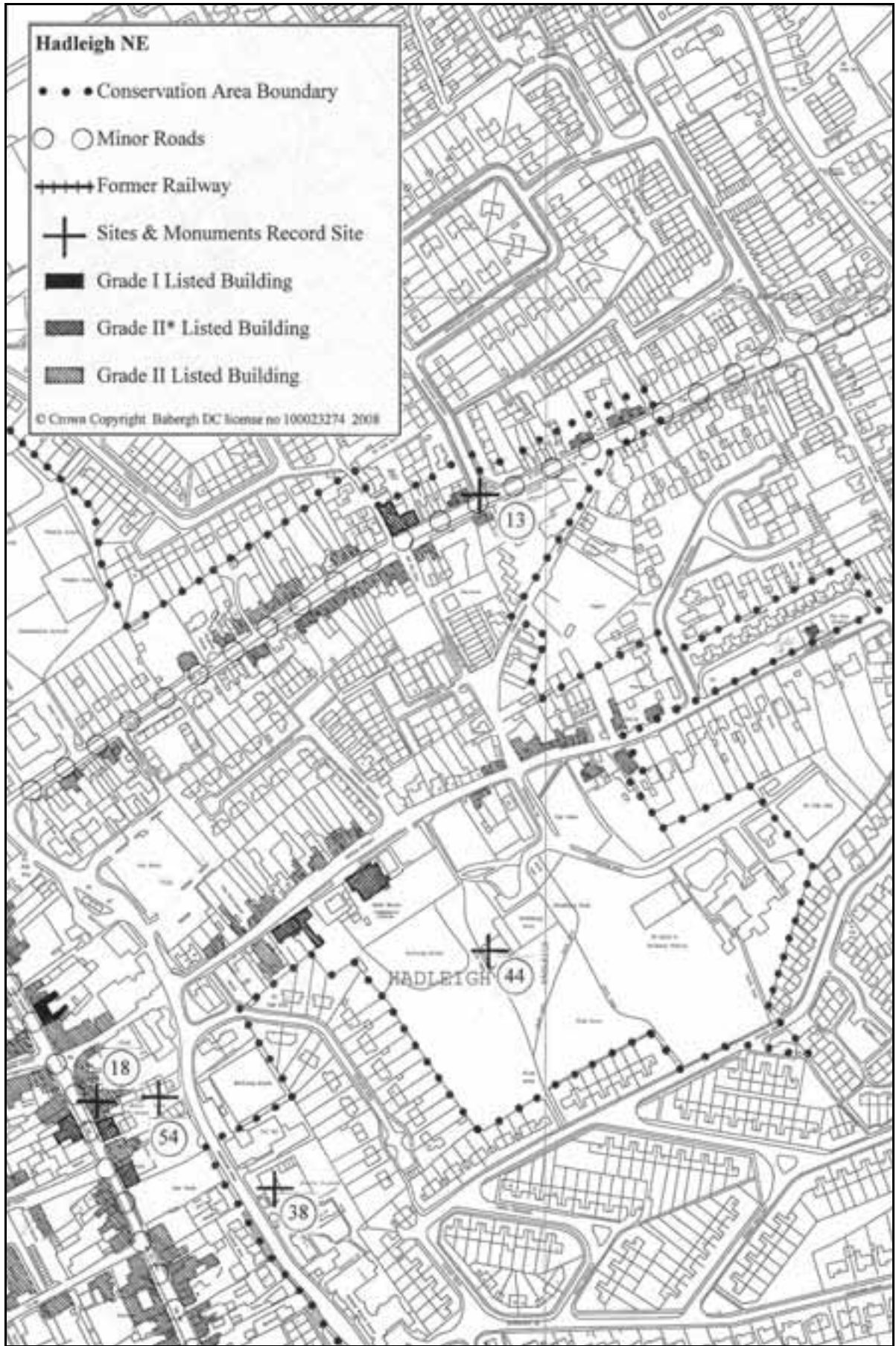
As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Hadleigh's built environment in conservation terms and is essentially an update on a document produced in 1997, when the town was the subject of a CAPS grant scheme.



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 2008.



Topographical Framework

The small market town of Hadleigh is situated in south-central Suffolk, on the north-eastern bank of the River Brett, a tributary of the Stour.

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

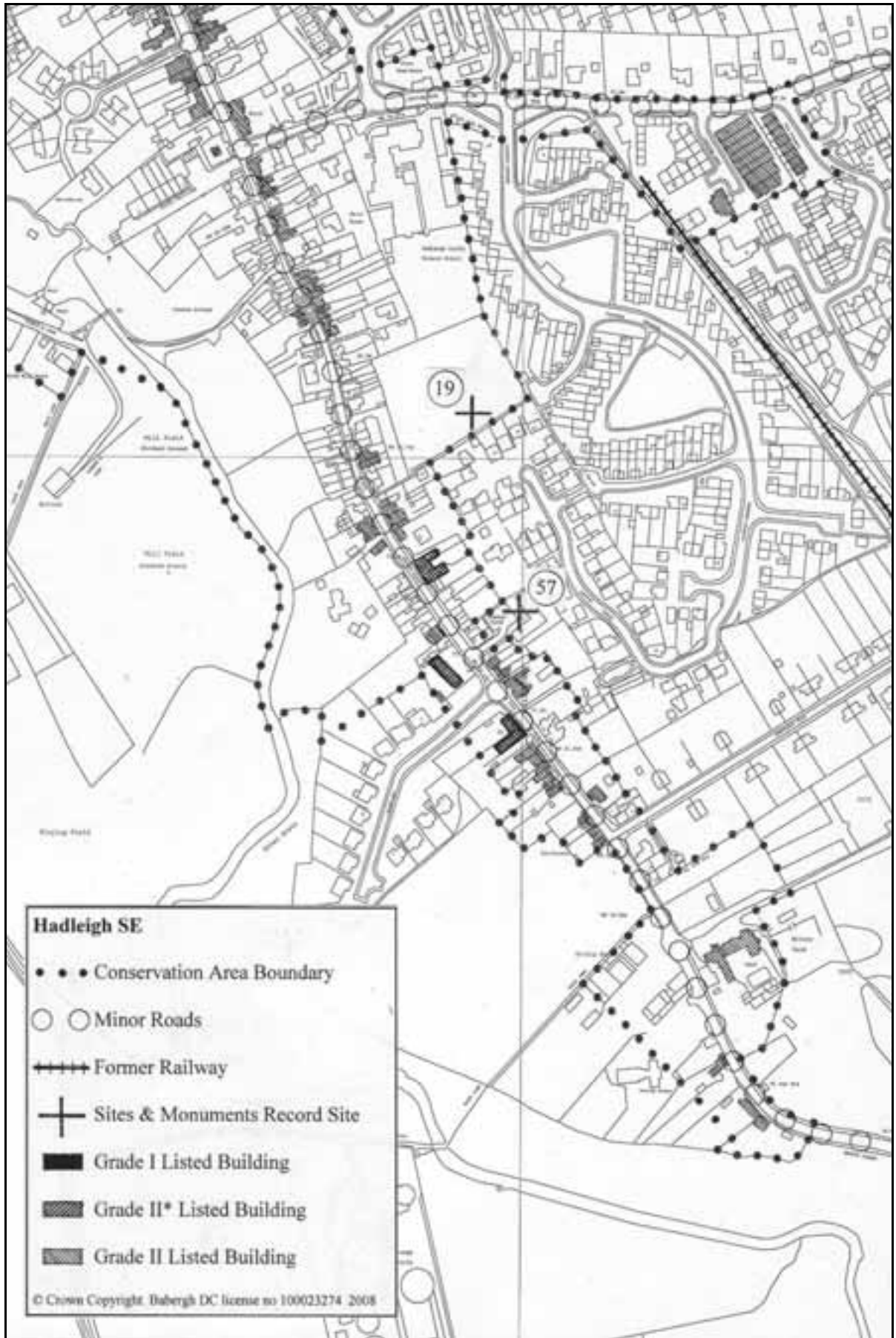
The town centre sits on the alluvial floodplain adjacent to the river, the main High Street running north-west to south-east at about 20 metres above OD. Other streets perpendicular to this lead gently uphill to the north-east to approximately 50 metres above OD.



Approaching Hadleigh from most directions, the 40 metre high church spire is visible from some distance and has led to the oft-quoted description of 'Hadleigh in the Hole'.

The town today consists of an historic core adjoining the river, with old industrial areas immediately up and down stream, the main commercial area along the High Street and a rectangle of housing up the hill to the north-east.

The road west from Ipswich to Sudbury by-passes the town to the north, much of the space between it and the town now filled with a modern industrial estate.

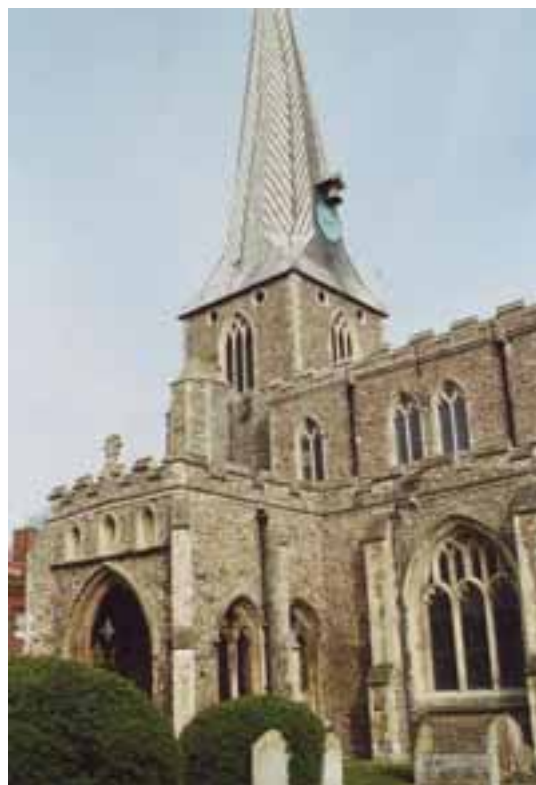


Archaeological Significance

Although founded as a town during the Anglo-Saxon period, very little actual archaeological investigation has taken place compared to nearby Ipswich or Colchester. Consequently little is known of Hadleigh's detailed historical development.

The majority of Hadleigh town centre is designated in the Local Plan as an area of archaeological interest. This is of major significance whilst the evidence remains locked in the ground, protected as long as the historic fabric above remains conserved.

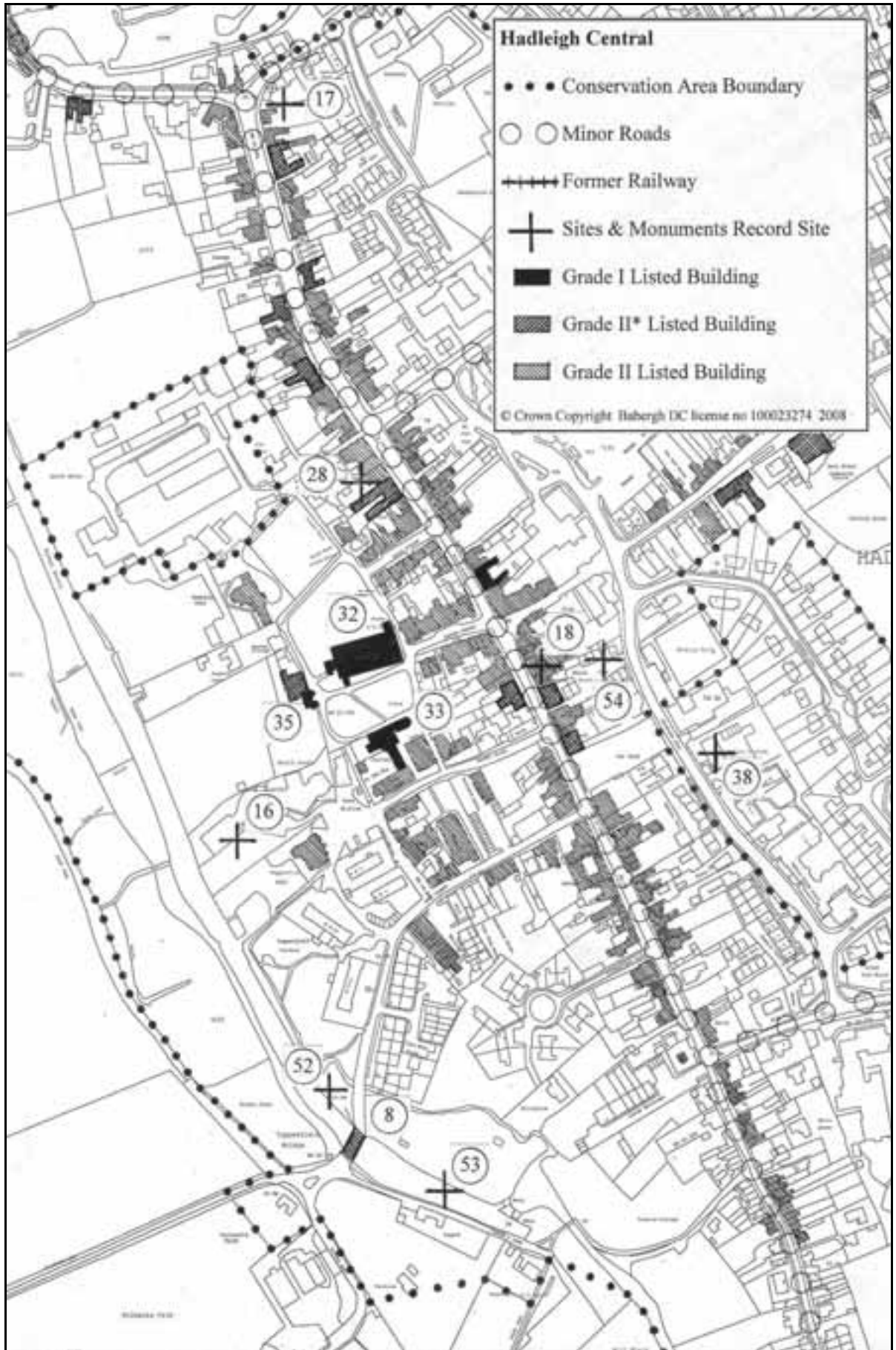
The County Sites and Monuments record lists over 70 archaeological features in the area, many of these being stray pottery and coin finds, with only a handful of actual excavations.



Other than a single Mesolithic Tranchet Axe, the oldest sites listed are probably the dozen or so ring ditches, undated but likely to be Bronze Age, scattered to the north of the town up the river valley.

A late Iron Age silver coin is listed along with several Roman and Saxon finds. The town has one scheduled Ancient Monument in the form of grade II listed Toppesfield Bridge, the southern of the two crossings of the River Brett.*

Hadleigh was listed in the Domesday survey of 1086 as having a manor with two mills and a church with one mill and approximately fifty residents. The adjoining manor of Toppesfield, now part of greater Hadleigh, had a further mill.



Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

Before the decline of the south Suffolk woollen cloth industry at the end of the 16th Century, Hadleigh was one of the largest cloth producers in England, the wealth of that wool trade being reflected in the abundance of timber-framed buildings that have survived to this day.

The town was not comprehensively 'Georgianised', nor even 'Victorianised', with new brick frontages and much original timber-framed construction remains unaltered, so that Hadleigh's buildings include an interesting mix of many ages and styles.

The quality of Hadleigh's buildings is reflected in the majority of the central High Street area being listed grade II or II, although some of these are included principally for group value.*



Domestic, commercial and older industrial buildings all blend well with the unique historic core centred on the churchyard. Here the flint Church of St Mary, red brick Deanery Tower and timber-framed Guildhall are all 15th Century and listed grade I. Hadleigh's other grade I listed building is a 17th Century timber-framed and rendered house with Venetian windows, not far away at 62/66 High Street.

Away from the historic core, no buildings are of exceptionally large scale, however sufficient variety in scale and form occurs to maintain interest and provide a surprise around most corners off the High Street and further afield in the more domestically scaled Angel, George and Benton Streets, all within the overall conservation area and for the most part listed grade II.



Traditional Building Materials

The majority of buildings in the central area are constructed of traditional materials and two main building forms predominate.

Firstly the Suffolk vernacular of steep roofs and gables, mostly timber-framed, some with jetties, some with newer brick fronts and secondly, infilling between these, there are the brick buildings of the 18th and 19th Centuries, with gentler roof slopes, but sometimes larger scale in the more public buildings.

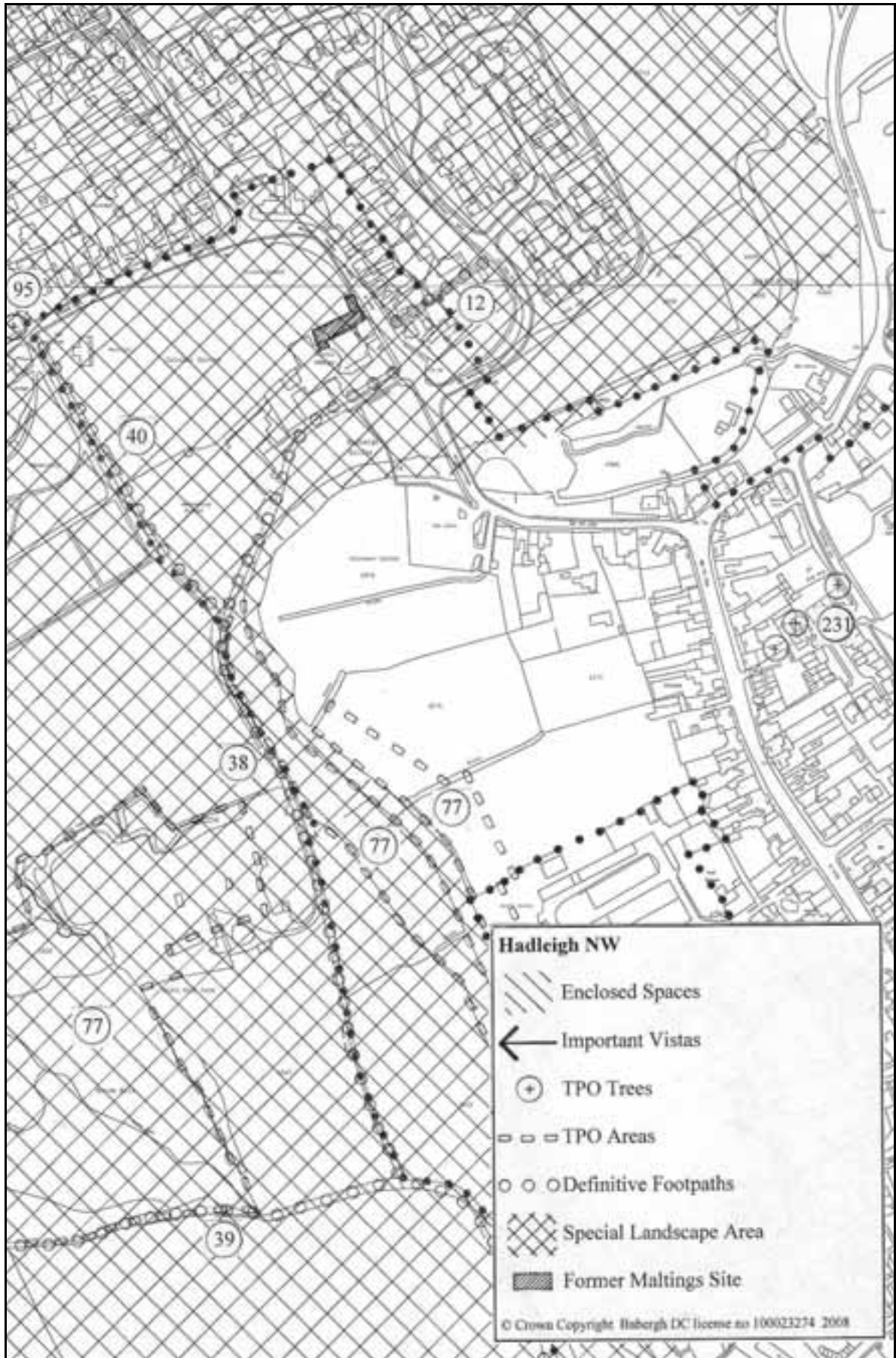
Timber framing is mostly correctly concealed behind colour-washed render, often with pargetting features. Newer buildings are mostly local brick, variously Suffolk soft reds or whites, often rendered and painted to blend in with the colour-washed local vernacular.



The use of modern pastel coloured paints, instead of the more vibrant traditional limewash colours, has diluted much of the interest formally derived in the High Street from the use of colour.

Roof finishes correlate well with wall constructions, following a similar distribution. The majority of roofs are plaintiles, mostly on the timber-framed buildings, the rest generally slated, usually on the brick buildings.

The Church alone differs from the rest, constructed of flint with stone dressings and a lead clad spire and roof.



Hierarchy of Spaces

The main commercial area of High Street, running north-west to south-east, is essentially linear in form with good stop ends to the vistas at 2 Bridge Street and 2 Station Road, both listed.

The historic core to the south-west of the centre of High Street is dominated by the spired Church in its churchyard, with the Guildhall, Deanery Tower and Hadleigh Hall around the perimeter. This area is reached from High Street by a number of short streets, although its existence tucked away behind is by no means obvious when in the High Street.

Returning to High Street, two of these short streets, Pound Lane and Church Street, provide interesting cross vistas to the north-east, up Angel Street and George Street respectively.

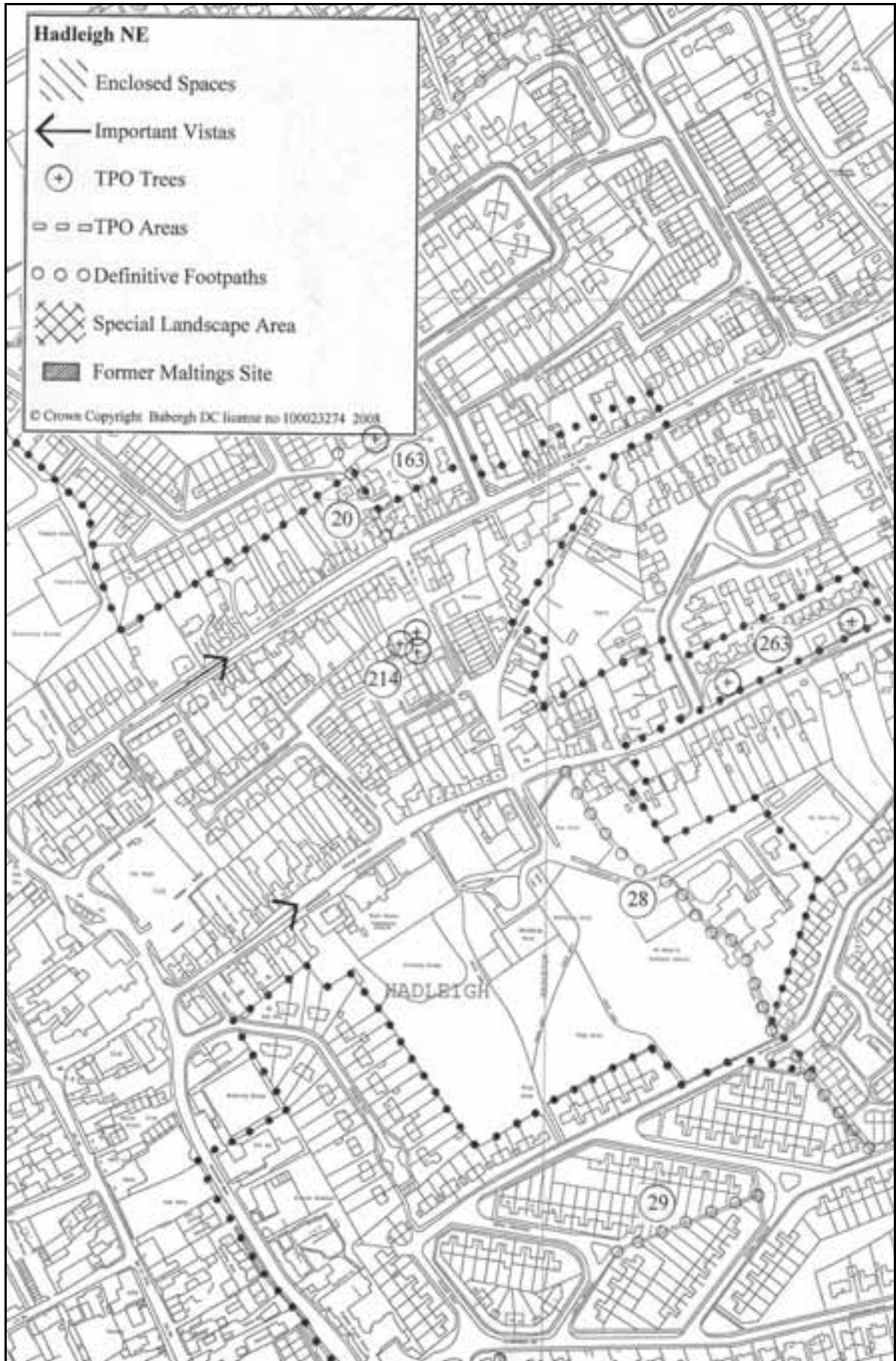


In between these two, Queen Street, which with the adjoining properties in High Street was redeveloped in about 1840, provides a more formal exercise in late Georgian symmetry and was named to commemorate Victoria's accession.

Parallel to High Street, on the south-west side Church Walk links these short streets together, the scale here being essentially pedestrian and intimate through the churchyard, whilst to the north-east Magdalen Road functions as a service area to the rear of High Street.

Away from High Street's commercial area, Angel, George and Benton Streets are more domestic and have a definite village feel to them, George Street perhaps the most pleasant without much traffic through it.





Trees & Planting

The major green space within the town is the churchyard, consisting essentially of gravestones and grass, with a few small trees. On the north side of this the grounds of Hadleigh Hall contain many mature trees, including specimens of Silver Fir, Bhutan Pine, Holm Oak and Wellingtonia amongst the more common Sycamore, Lime, Yew and Horse Chestnut. These are all the subject of a Tree Preservation Order, as are those to the rear of Hadleigh Hall and in the grounds of The Deanery, stretching down to the river.

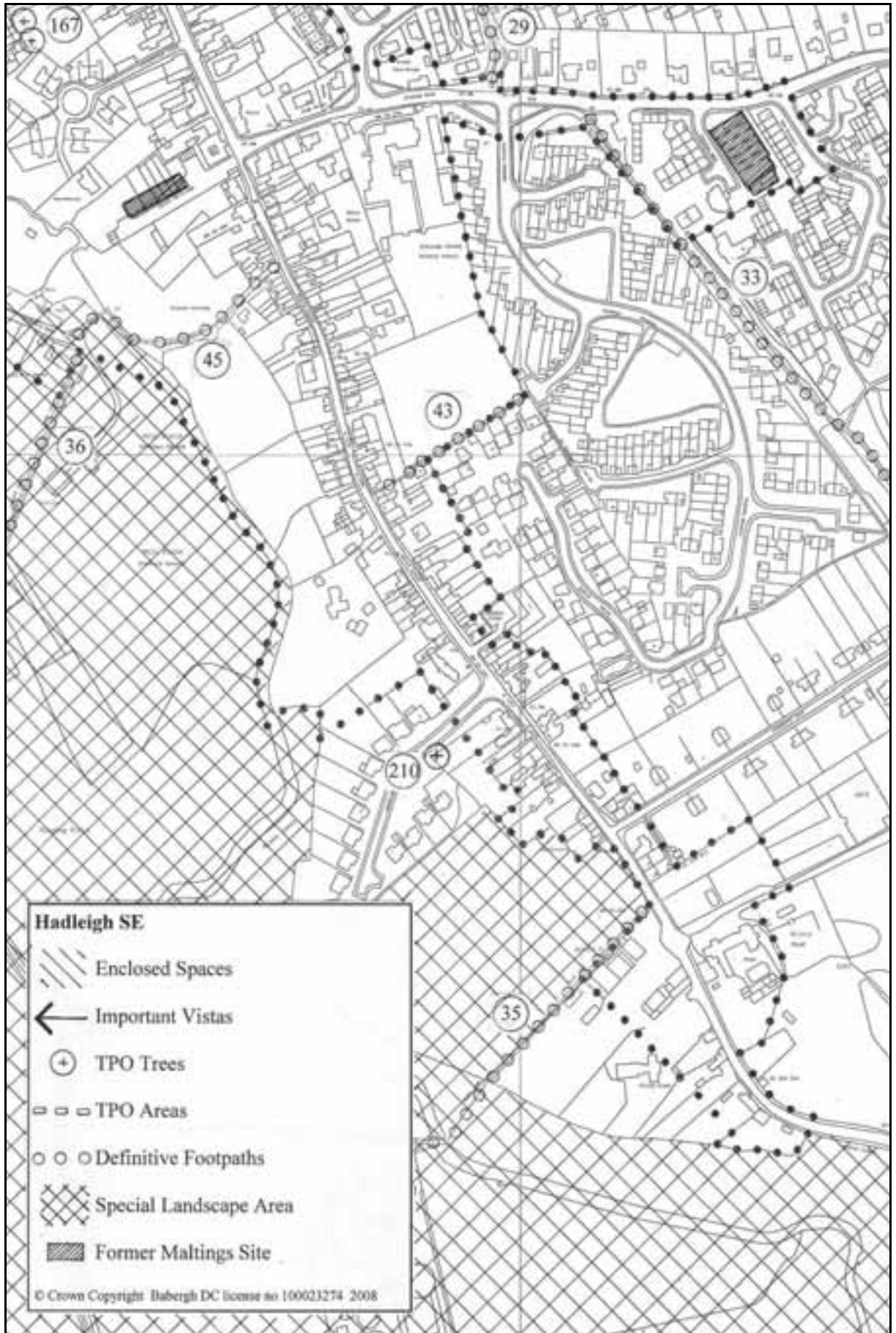
Whilst the abundance of protected mature trees is a definite bonus to the town, there may be a problem in the future with too many over-mature trees, unless steps are taken now to underplant their replacements.



A similar, less concentrated area of trees occurs to the south of the churchyard, around Market Place and Toppesfield Hall. Here can be found Chile Pine, Corsican Pine, Cypress, Poplar and Holm Oak. Nearby on the north-east bank of the river, adjoining Toppesfield Bridge, is Toppesfield Gardens, a formal riverside park with a magnificent native Black Poplar and Alders.



Across the river, the south-west bank is a designated Local Nature Reserve, which contains Hadleigh's Riverside Walk through damp woodland with mostly Willows and Alders. Away to the south-east of the town, starting at the former station, the Railway Walk follows the course of the former branch line through some very pleasant woodland affording good views over the Brett.



Relationship to Open Countryside

To the north and east, the quality of Hadleigh peters out through progressively younger developments and a peripheral industrial estate, in the usual small market town manner.

To the south-east the ribbon development of Benton Street has a very rural setting overlooking the river valley. The situation to the south and west is strikingly different, however, as the town has not crossed the River Brett, which remains to this day as a strong boundary, which should not be breached.

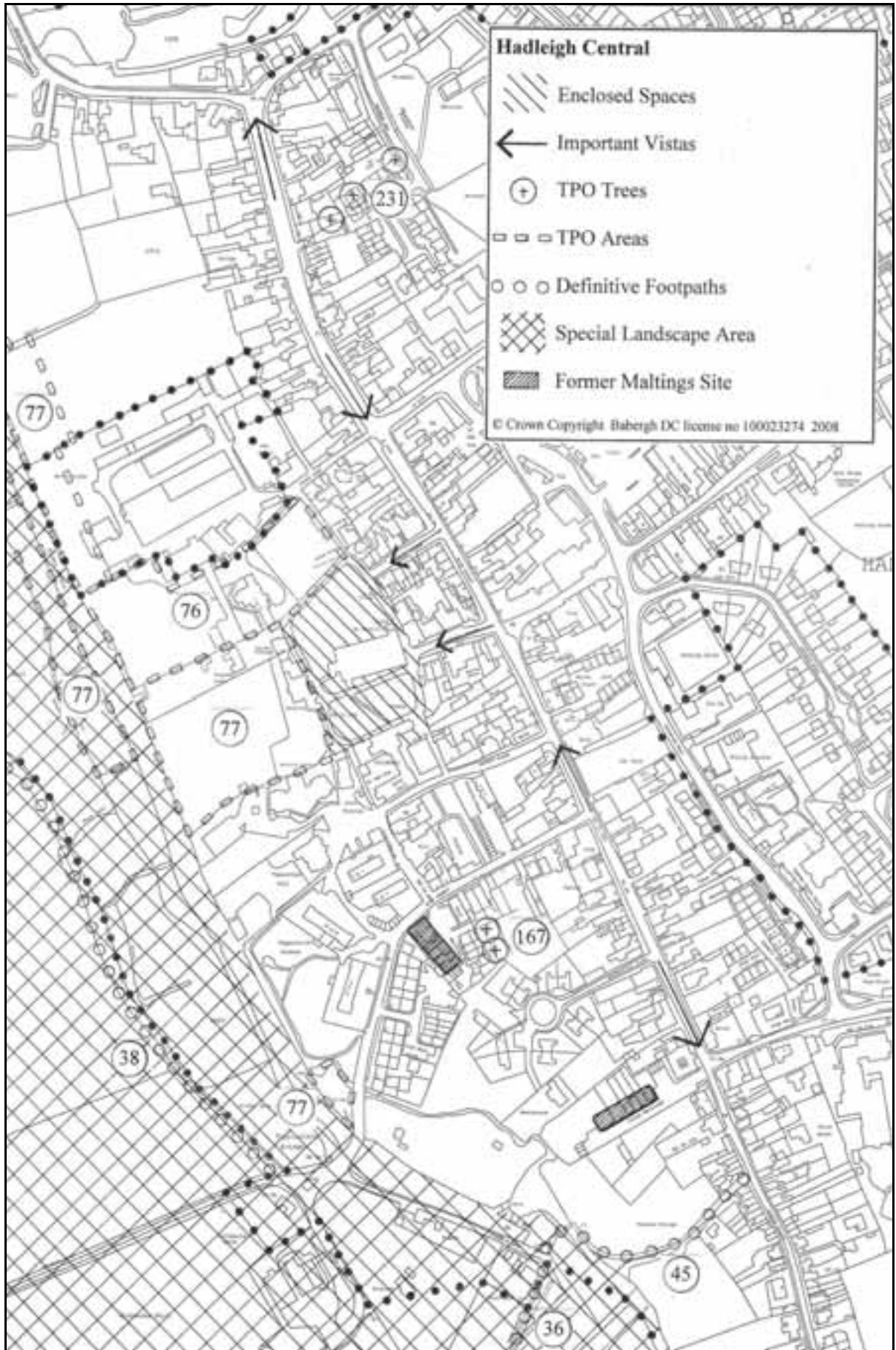
Beyond the strip of damp woodland that encloses the river on both banks, there is open countryside with hedgerows and fields coming as close to the river as do the buildings of the High Street opposite.



This countryside can be viewed rising beyond the spire of the Church from the higher ground of Angel Street, George Street or Station Road, and to a lesser extent along Bridge Street, where it is largely hidden behind Bridge House, which forms a stop to the vista there.

This juxtaposition is unusual and enshrined in Babergh District Council's Local Plan, which has the Brett Valley designated as a Special Landscape Area.

The proximity of this open countryside provides Hadleigh with a valuable recreational resource, which judging by the large number of non-definitive paths up and over the hillside, is well used.



Prevailing & Former Usage

The town has developed from its historic core, essentially by means of ribbon development along the major roads coming in. Timber-framed houses, built mostly for those in the wool trade, are to be found not only along the High Street, but in its continuation down Benton Street and up the hill in both Angel and George Streets, these latter three remaining essentially domestic in character to this day.

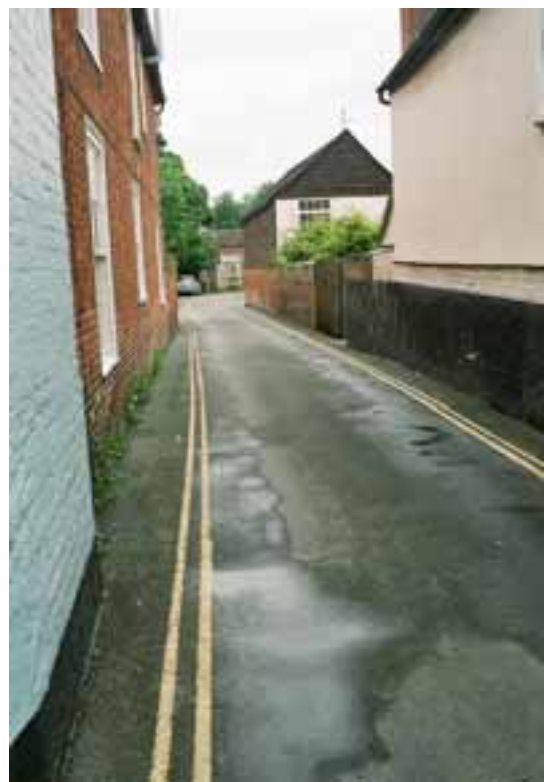
Hadleigh's second boom as a market town, in the 18th and 19th Centuries, brought with it many new brick and slate buildings and the refronting of many timber-framed ones. This period also saw the expansion of industrial areas along the riverside, north and south of the historic core, and around the railway terminus to the south-east of the town.



Brett Works, to the north of the churchyard, was originally a rope and coir matting works, whilst to the south of the church and around the railway terminus, there are several former maltings, a number of warehouses and at one time a former silk mill.

These industries can be seen to be predominantly agriculturally based, dealing either with grain, its storage and processing, or with wool and other fibres and their manufacture into cloth.

Hadleigh's relative isolation and lack of progress to become a major centre, however, has probably been its salvation, resulting in the wealth of historic buildings that survive to testify to its former importance.



Losses & Possible Gains

There are a few modern buildings in Hadleigh, mostly on infill sites, some of which are slightly incongruous, with concrete floors exposed (112 High St), flat roofs (4 George Street) or the out of place bungalow at 42 Benton Street.

Intrusions and damage are mostly of a minor nature. A number of shopfront stall risers are in foreign materials and some shopfronts are crudely designed and poorly executed. There is a rash of uPVC windows in Benton Street, which is fortunately unlikely to invade the High Street with its fewer unlisted buildings.

To the rear of 8 Market Place an area of corrugated asbestos roofing could be replaced in tiles, enhancing the building and the setting of the Church, Deanery Tower and Guildhall complex.



This historic area was enhanced in the 1990s and nearby Pound Lane would benefit from a similar treatment in York stone and granite setts. Magdalen Road, which provides rear servicing to many of the High Street properties, is a rather desolate area of expansive tarmacadam.

The area of High Street between Angel Street and Market Place has York Stone at either end and should be made continuous through.

In Benton Street, there remains an extensive area of visually intrusive overhead wiring, which should be put underground when resources permit. Despite a heavy goods ban, this area also suffers from occasional lorry traffic, largely the result of satellite navigation systems on foreign lorries.

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