



conservation area appraisal

Introduction

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

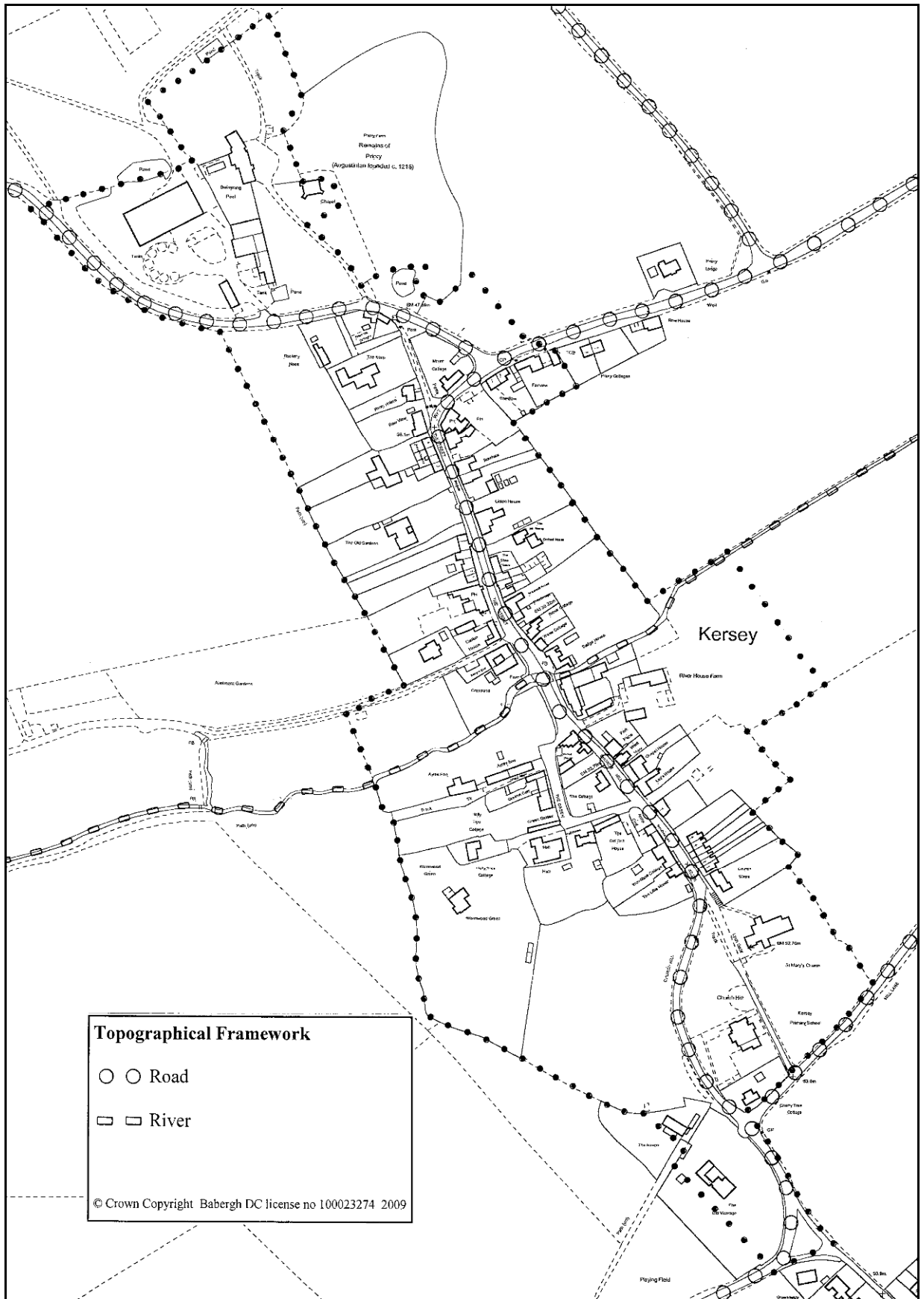
As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Kersey's built environment in conservation terms.



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 2010.

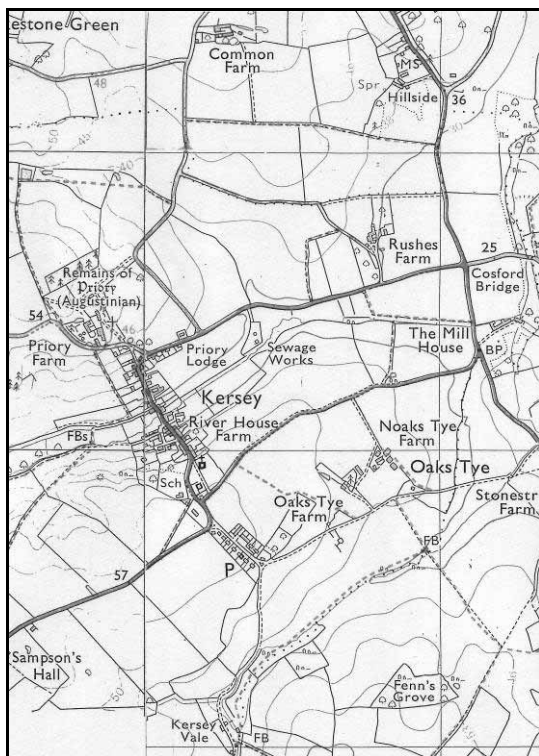


Topographical Framework

The village of Kersey is situated in south-central Suffolk, about two miles north-west of the market town of Hadleigh.

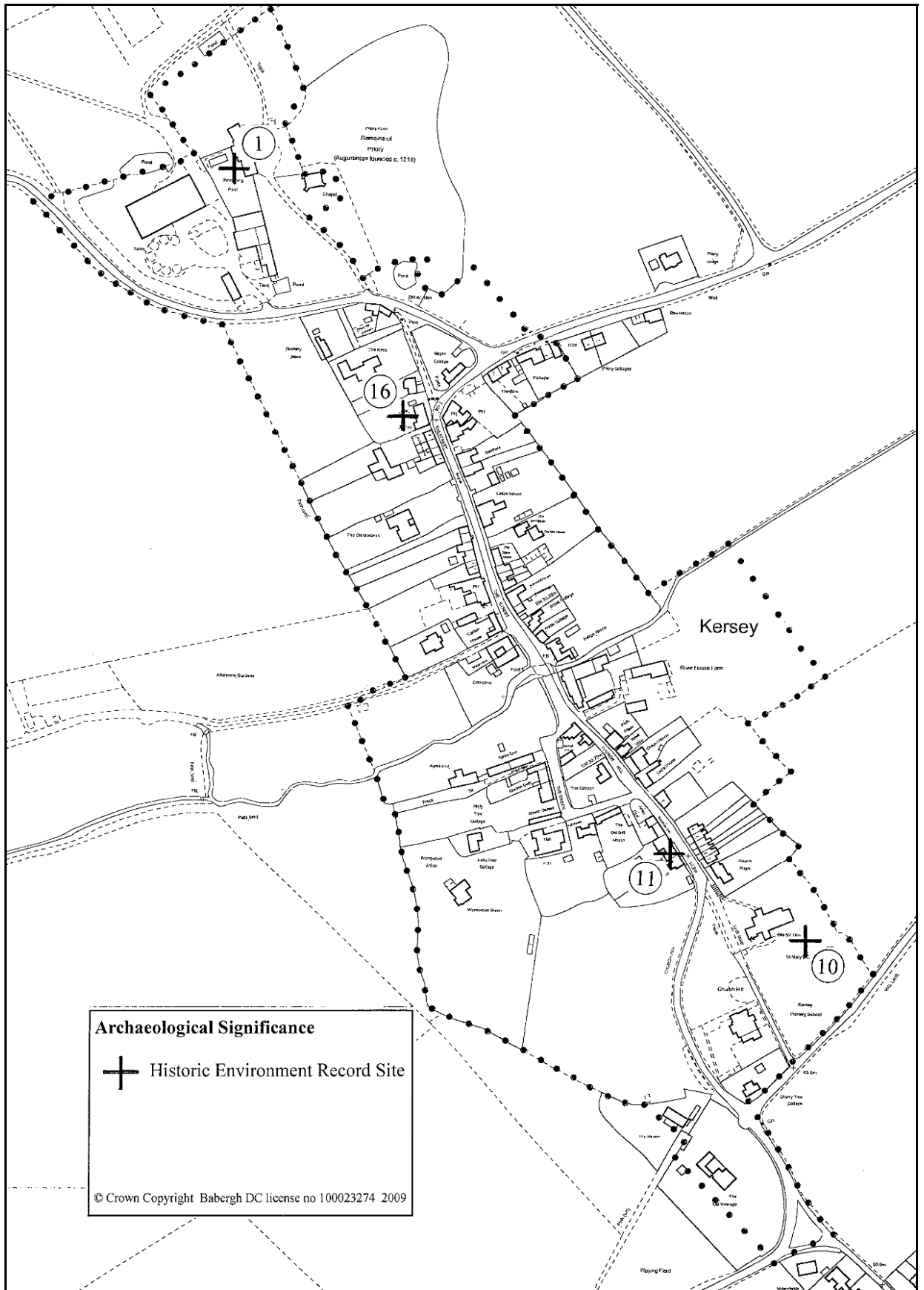
Famous for its 'Splash', a ford where the road through crosses a tributary of the River Brett, itself a tributary of the Stour, Kersey is linear in form with two halves of the village facing each other up hills either side of the water.

The river valley has cut down some thirty metres through the overlying boulder clay of 'High Suffolk' to reveal locally gravels, crags and pockets of older London Clay. With the Splash itself at approximately 25 metres above OD, the adjoining hilltops are at about the 55 metre mark.



Kersey can be approached from off the A1141 road along the Brett valley by either of two minor roads that ascend westwards, the northern one continuing to Lindsey, the southern one to Boxford. The village itself is huddled either side of a road that joins these two routes across the valley. It comprises an historic core either side of the river, with some more recent minor additions at its northern and southern ends.

From the two westbound routes out of the Brett valley the 30 metre high church tower is visible from some distance, especially at night when it is floodlit. This is also quite noticeable from the A1071 road west from Ipswich to Sudbury passing the village about a mile to the south.



Archaeological Significance

✚ Historic Environment Record Site

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Archaeological Significance

The Suffolk County Historic Environment Record lists about twenty archaeological features in the area, but nothing of any great age.

A single tumulus and six ring ditches, all more or less in the area of the northern road link from the A1141, are probably of Bronze Age origin.

A Late Saxon sword was found west of the village near Howe Wood.

Medieval sites seem juxtaposed with the Church atop the southern hill and the remains of an Augustinian Priory atop the northern, each commanding views over the settlement in the valley below. The latter is a Scheduled Monument.



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LANDS OF THE ABBEY OF CHATTERIS

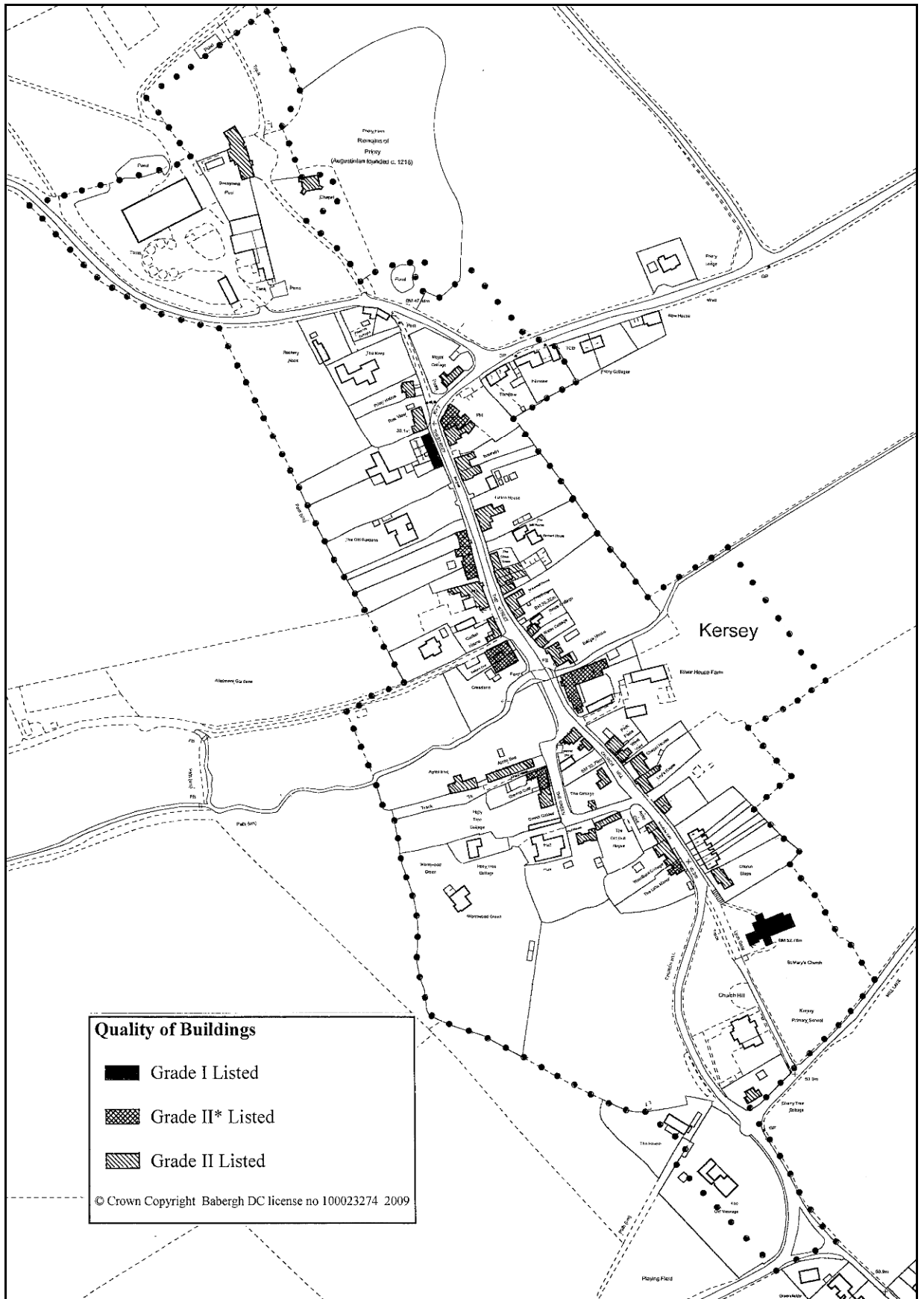
Half-Hundred of COSFORD

1 St. Mary's held KERSEY before 1066; 3½ carucates of land.
 Always 6 villagers; 18 smallholders; 1 slave;
 2 ploughs in lordship; 4 men's ploughs.
 Meadow, 4 acres; woodland, 60 pigs; 1 mill. 1 cob, 10 cattle,
 36 pigs, 140 sheep, 3 beehives.
 A church, 3 acres. 1 Freeman, 2 acres.
 1 free man, 20 acres. 1 plough.
 Meadow, 1 acre.
 Value of this manor then £4; now 100s. (Value) of the free man 4s
 less 4d.
 It has 8 furlongs in length and 6 in width; 7½d in tax.

There is an ancient woodland site to the south-east, a Medieval green south-west towards Boxford, at Wicker Street Green, and nearby at Williams Green a Post-Medieval windmill site.

Other than this the record lists some undated burnt flint patches, a worked stone and a Medieval house.

Kersey was listed in the Domesday survey of 1086 as belonging to the Abbey of Chatteris, and included woodland for 60 pigs, a mill (which would have been a watermill at that time) as well as a church with 3 acres of land.



Intrinsic Quality of Buildings

Kersey was one of the major players in the south Suffolk woollen cloth industry, which eventually went into decline at the end of the 16th Century. Indeed it had its own 'Kersey' cloth and the wealth of the woollen cloth trade is reflected in the abundance of timber-framed buildings in the village and in its grand church.

Because of the subsequent decline, many of the buildings remain much as they were, and have not been refronted in brick in Georgian or Victorian times, as happened to many a historic building in towns that continued to grow.

Kersey's buildings are thus of such outstanding quality that many of them warrant the higher grade I or II listing status.*



The grade I Church of St Mary dates from the 14th and 15th Centuries, with the chancel having been rebuilt in 1862. Pevsner states that the “chancel windows are Dec[orated] too” but wonders “are they correctly renewed?”. It has fine flint chequerwork to the tower and south porch, but the main body of the church is rendered with a lead roof.

The other grade I listing in the village covers the Ancient Houses, at the north end of The Street. Now converted to three houses, this was a 15th or 16th Century timber-framed building with exposed very straight studwork and an overhanging jetty along the front with brick bays and steps up to front doors below.



Traditional Building Materials

The majority of older buildings in Kersey are traditionally constructed: timber-framed and rendered with either thatch or plaintile roofs.

The timber framing is in some cases correctly concealed behind colour-washed render, often with pargetting features, whilst in others with straighter more regular timbers it is designed to be seen and remains exposed, although this does have consequences for the long term survival of the buildings.

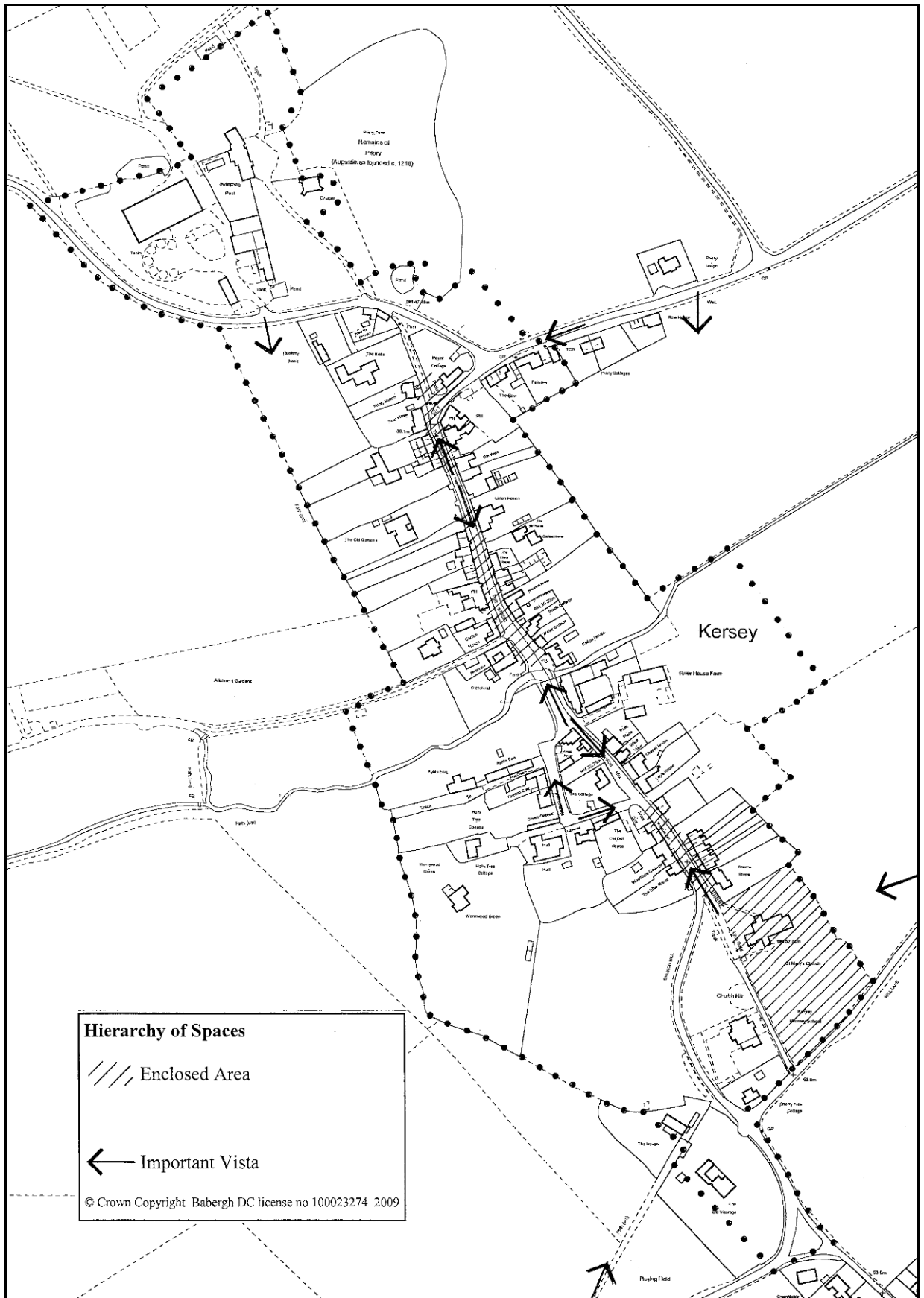
A few timber-framed buildings have been reclad in the local soft Suffolk Red brick, which also appears on various 19th Century cottages, the School and the Reading Room.



The other local brick, the harder Suffolk White, makes an appearance on the Old Vicarage, using the red for polychrome detail work. These 19th Century buildings are mostly roofed in slate.

Pantile, the other usual Suffolk vernacular roofing material, can be found on the Village Hall and a number of outbuildings, including a black weatherboarded barn at Priory Farm.

As with most villages, the Church alone differs from the rest, constructed of flint with stone dressings, partly rendered and all under a lead roof.



King Farm
Remains of
Priory
(Augustinian founded c. 1218)

Kersey

Hierarchy of Spaces

/// Enclosed Area

← Important Vista

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Hierarchy of Spaces

The focal point of Kersey is very much The Splash in the valley between the two hills.

Church Hill and The Street adjoining this to the south and north respectively are very much contained, each by the other. The former has the Church as its hilltop focal point whilst the latter has the now far less apparent former Priory.

Nearer the centre on each side there are two hilltop clusters of buildings that define pinch points at which either road begins the descent to The Splash. Thus below the Church we find the house called Church Steps and its adjoining Victorian cottages facing across to Little Manor and its adjoining houses.

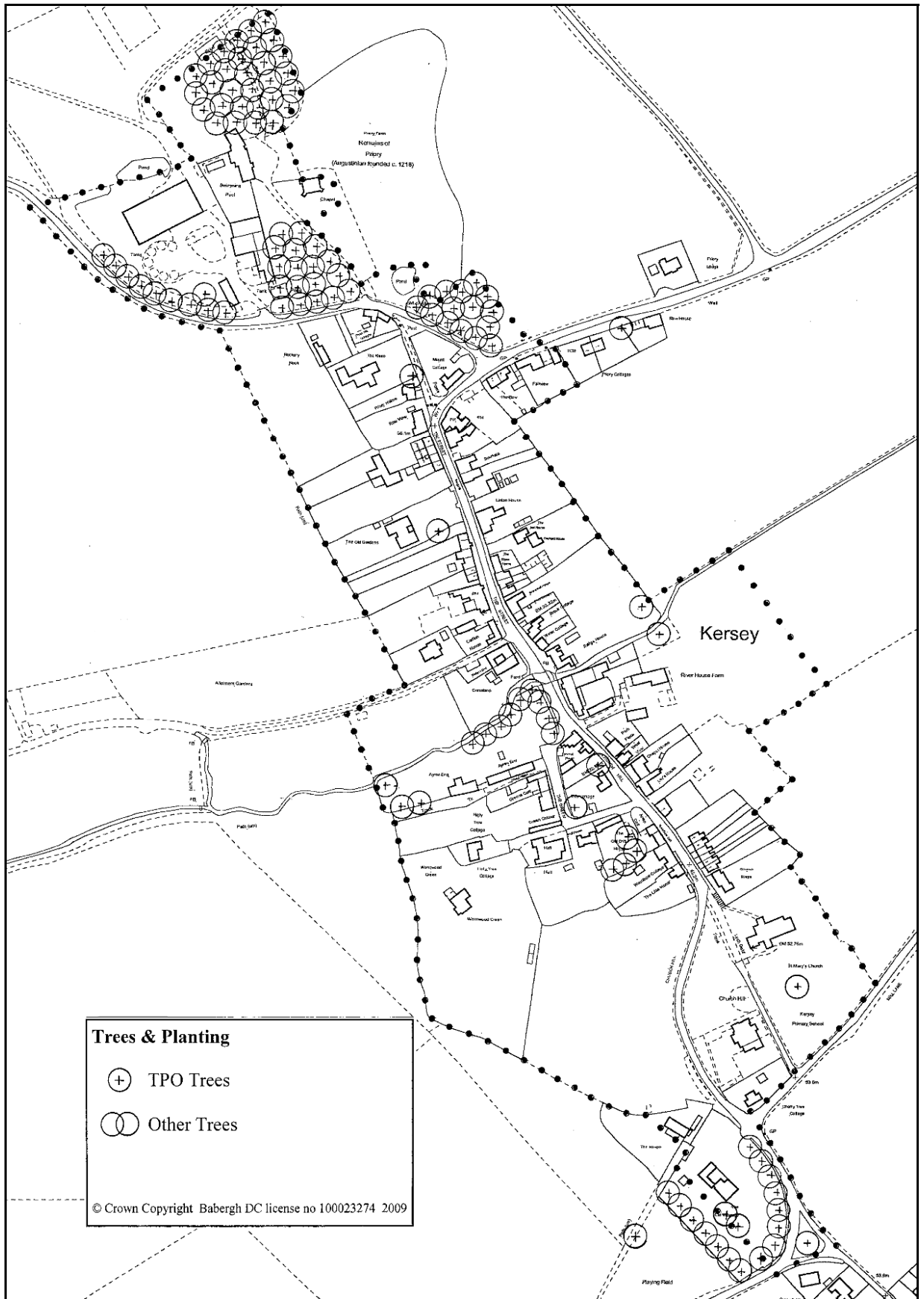


Similarly at the northern end Ancient Houses and the adjoining houses face across to Corner House and the former White Horse Inn.

Below this The Street is fairly linear in nature down to The Splash with buildings both sides of the road for the most part set directly onto the pavement. This more urban feel, especially towards The Splash is punctuated by gaps between the buildings giving views into the countryside beyond.

The lower parts of Church Hill are similar, but here to the west a second layer of development has formed a loop in behind at The Green.





Trees & Planting

The majority of the trees in the village of Kersey are protected by Tree Preservation Order no.243 put in place by West Suffolk County Council in 1973.

This includes a number of groups of trees of various species around the Priory site at the north end of the village along with many single trees to the rear of properties in The Street and Church Hill.

These include such diverse species as Yew, Oak, Beech, Hawthorn, Ash and Cherry on the higher ground with Walnut, Alder, Willow and Poplar in the wetter valley.



Whilst often not immediately visible from The Street and Church Hill, these backland trees contribute to the many views through and between the buildings here, softening the otherwise urban character.

Also included at the southern end of the village are a fine Corsican Pine in the Churchyard and Horse Chestnut, Wellingtonia, Sycamore, Lime, Holly, Oak and Beech around the Old Vicarage.

Further afield but just within the parish, TPO no.197 was made by Babergh in 1992 to protect a group of White Poplar near Butcher's Lane, Boxford.



Relationship to Open Countryside

Seen from afar, the most common view of Kersey is of the Church with its tower standing high in its hilltop location, seemingly remote. You have to get closer up to see the village itself tucked into the valley below.

The essentially linear plan of the settlement means that to the rear of most properties there is countryside at hand. Downstream to the east this is not at all accessible, however to the west up the valley there are a number of definitive footpaths giving good access.

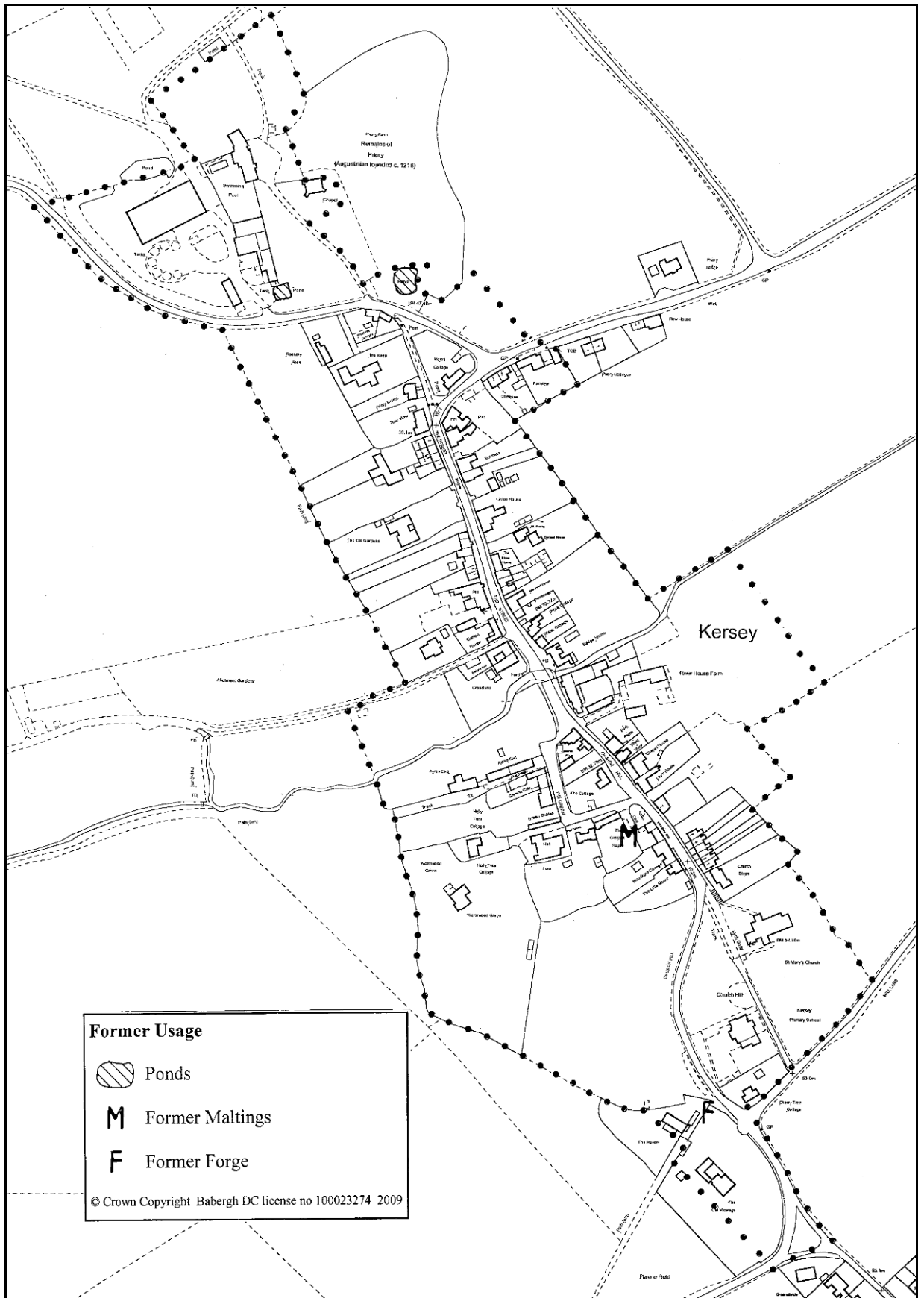
Footpath 25 from near the Market Place heads westwards and then as footpath 10 follows the river further upstream.



Footpath 12 crosses this, coming southwards from the Priory down the field behind the west side of The Street before heading off south-westwards up the opposite valley side towards Kersey Upland.

At the south end of the village two short footpaths, nos. 13 and 24, cut off corners in the road system going behind the Old Vicarage and linking to the lane serving the Church. Slightly further east footpath 14 sets off from near the Church south-eastwards towards Hadleigh.





Former Usage

The village nestles in the valley between the Church, which dates back at least as far as the Domesday survey of 1086, and the Priory founded in 1218 as a hospital, dissolved in 1443. Its many timber-framed houses, built mostly for those in the wool trade, are to be found in The Street and Church Hill.

Early 17th Century records indicate the usual rural Suffolk occupations carried on in the village with 8 yeomen, 3 husbandmen, 2 shearmen, and one each of butcher, clothier, glover, carpenter, joiner, labourer and blacksmith.

Later in the 17th Century there were other occupations represented there, still predominantly agriculturally based, such as fellmonger, cordwainer, tanner and malster.



By the 19th Century, directories give a similar picture of an agriculturally based economy with 14 farmers, 3 joiners, 2 blacksmiths and 2 corn millers amongst those present.

The Tithe map and apportionment of 1840 mentions a 'Mill Field' at Kersey Mill, the water mill site east of the village on the River Brett, along with another 'Mill & Yard' at the former windmill site at Williams Green, south-west of the village towards Boxford.

There is also a 'Malting & Yard' shown west of Church Hill and a 'Hop Ground' indicative of the brewing industry, along with 'Clay Pits', 'Kiln Piece' and 'Gravel Pit Grove' indicative of various extractive industries.



Losses & Possible Gains

Overall in Kersey intrusions and damage are mostly of a minor nature. A couple of buildings have proved a little vulnerable to ivy growth (one now being dealt with) which will lead to structural damage if not controlled.

In some areas, there remains visually intrusive overhead wiring, which should be put underground when resources permit.

The area around the Splash was sensitively enhanced in the 1990's and other parts of the village have benefited from a low key surface materials enhancement using a chipping finish to replace extensive tarmac, although the latter material has been used to repair patches.



Some of the modern infill that has been built could have better respected the local vernacular in terms of its proportions and materials. Modern materials such as foreign bricks, concrete roof tiles, plastic windows and solar collectors do not belong in such a fine historic village: fortunately this is mostly in backland locations.

Other backland areas are at risk of overdevelopment and this should not be permitted where views through to the countryside setting would be lost, or where the very linear form of the village would be compromised.

References & Further Reading

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Tithe Map & Apportionment 1840 Kersey Suffolk Records Office

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*This Appraisal adopted as
Supplementary Planning Guidance by
Babergh District Council Strategy
Committee 17 June 2010*