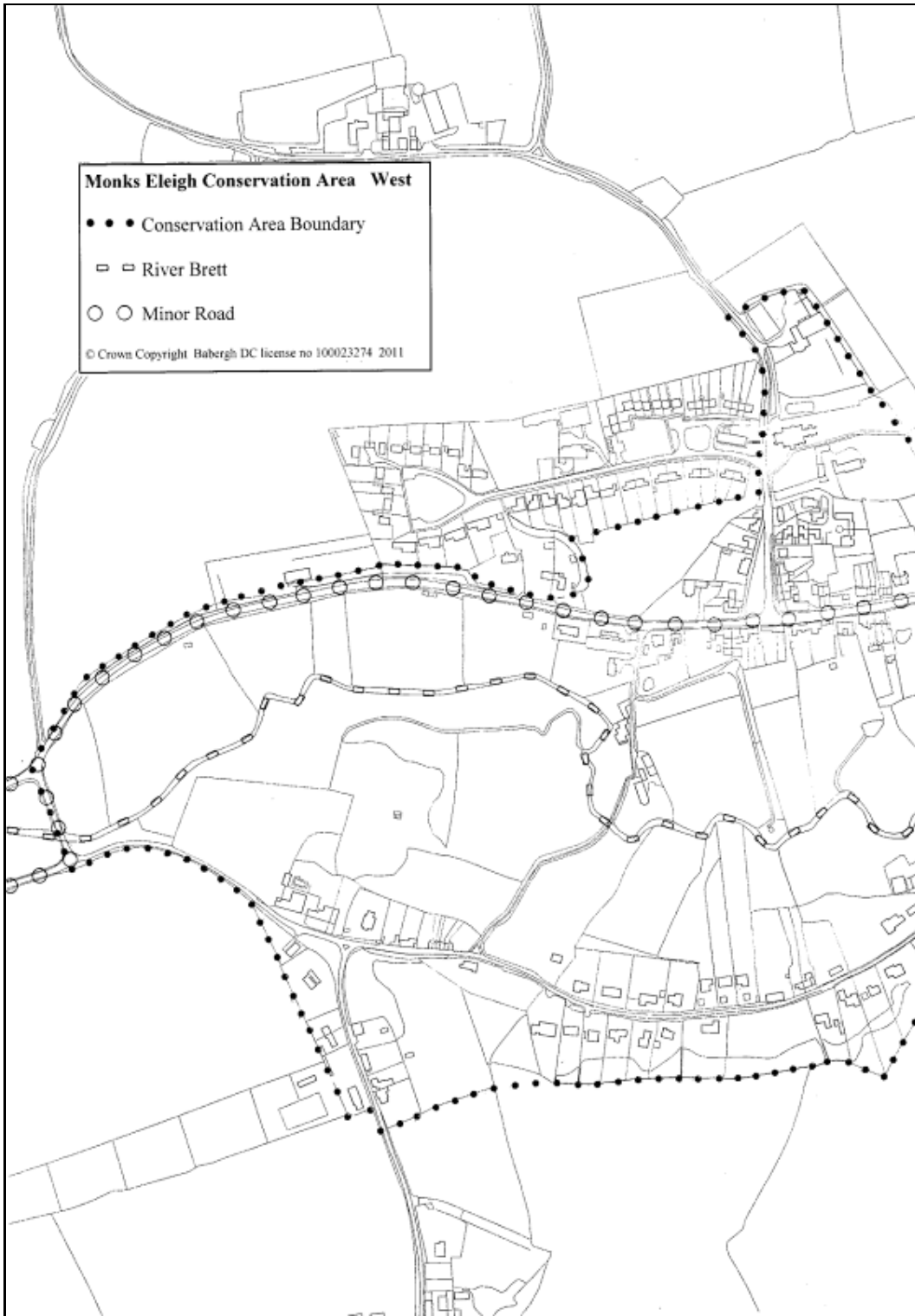




*conservation area appraisal*



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# Introduction

*The conservation area in Monks Eleigh was originally designated by West Suffolk County Council in 1973, and inherited by Babergh District Council at its inception in 1974. It was extended in 1991.*

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

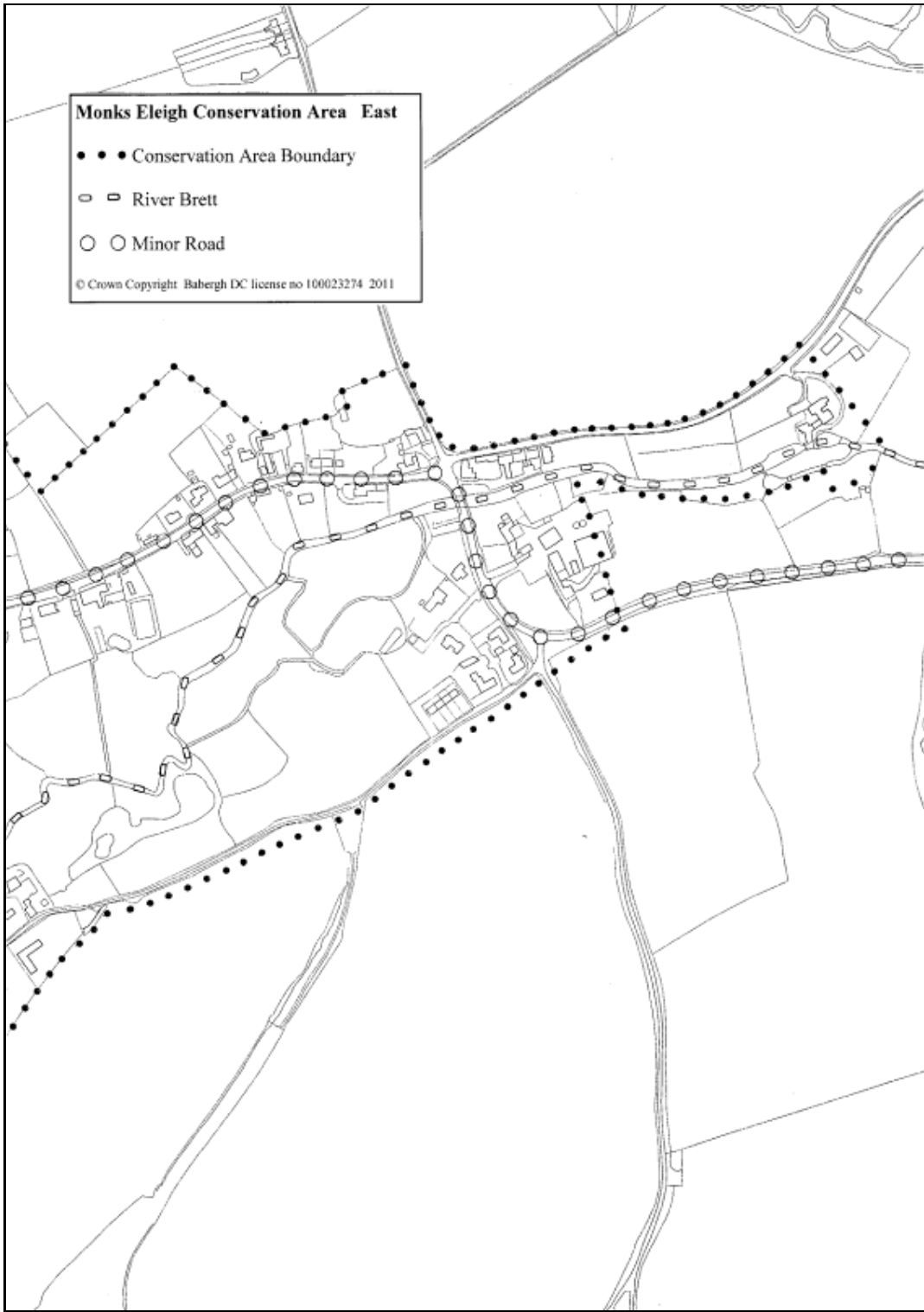
*As such it is a straightforward appraisal of Monks Eleigh's built environment in conservation terms.*



*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 2011.*



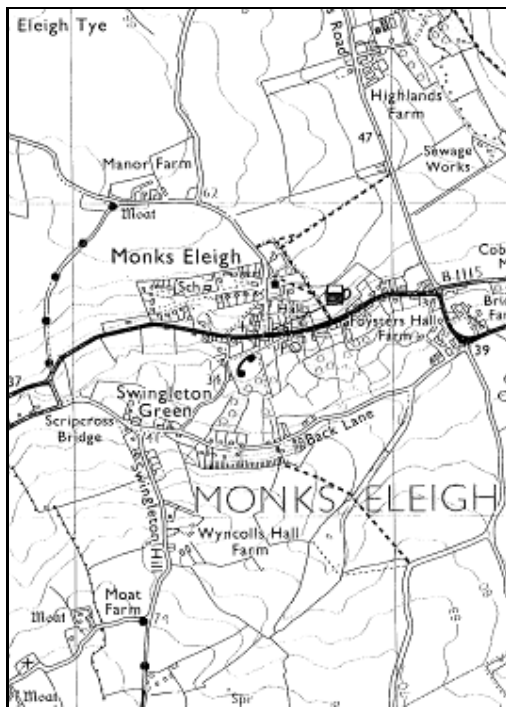
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# Topographical Framework

*The village of Monks Eleigh is situated in south-central Suffolk, about six miles north-west of the market town of Hadleigh and three miles east of Lavenham.*

*Both Hadleigh and Lavenham were at one time served by branch lines of the eastern railway, both now closed down.*

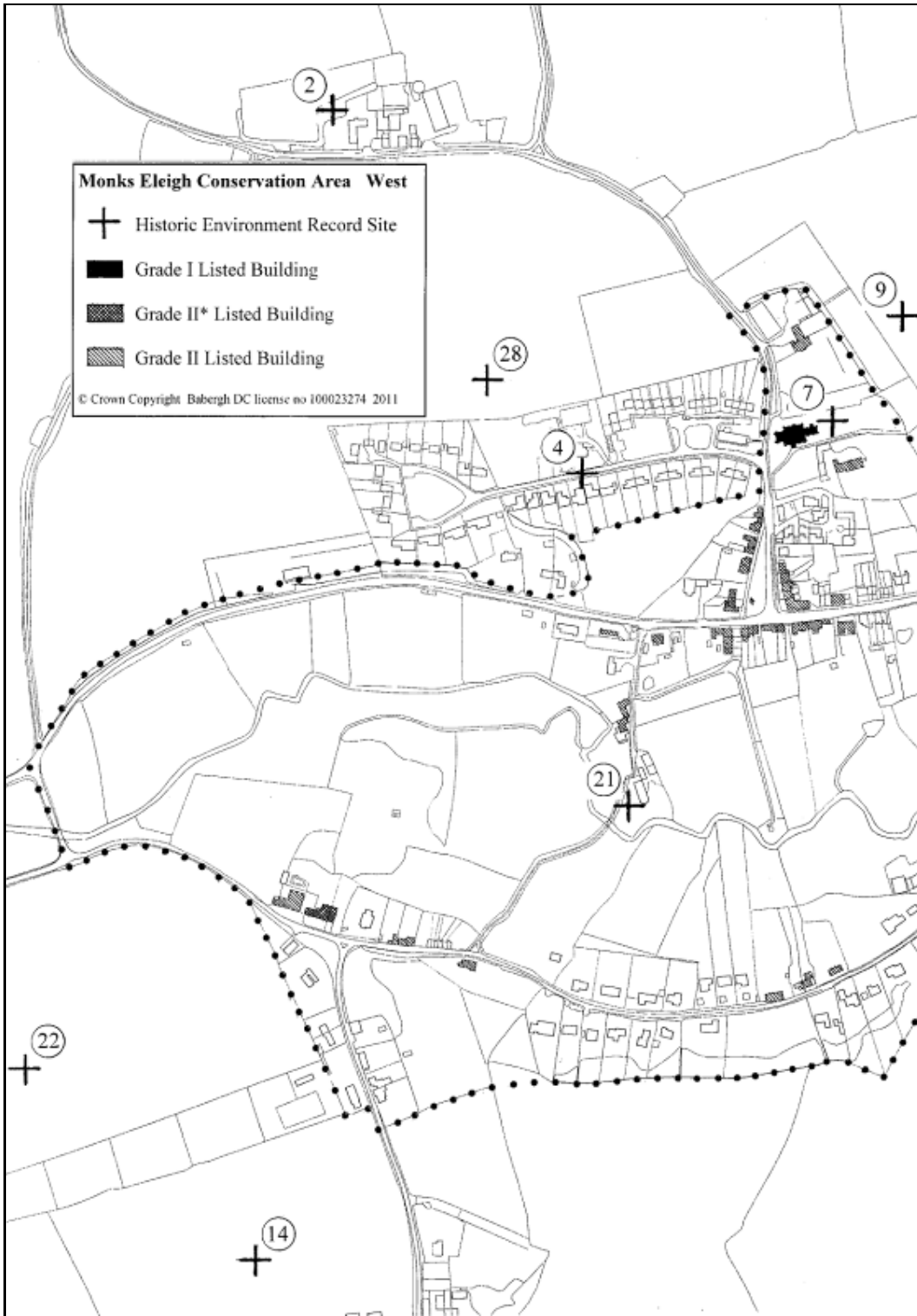
*The main part of the settlement sits either side of the main A1141 Hadleigh to Lavenham road, running east to west along the north bank of the River Brett. A parallel secondary settlement also in the conservation area lies at Swingleton Green and along Back Lane on the south bank.*



*The River Brett flows from Lavenham in the west, effectively through the centre of Monks Eleigh between the two areas of settlement, down to Hadleigh and on southwards to join the Stour at Higham.*

*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.*

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



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# Archaeological Significance

*The Suffolk County Historic Environment Record lists a couple of dozen sites of archaeological interest in the area, but nothing seriously prehistoric. Two cropmarks delineating ring ditches are given as undated, but could easily be the oldest if Neolithic or Bronze Age in origin. Actual Bronze Age remains have been found south of the village towards Lindsey Tye, comprising a spearhead and an arrowhead.*

*An Iron Age harness was found further south at Stackyard Green and a short section of Roman Road is identified north of the village, fitting within a line of other remnants, south of Lavenham and east of Bildeston, leading on east to the camp on the Gipping near Coddtenham.*



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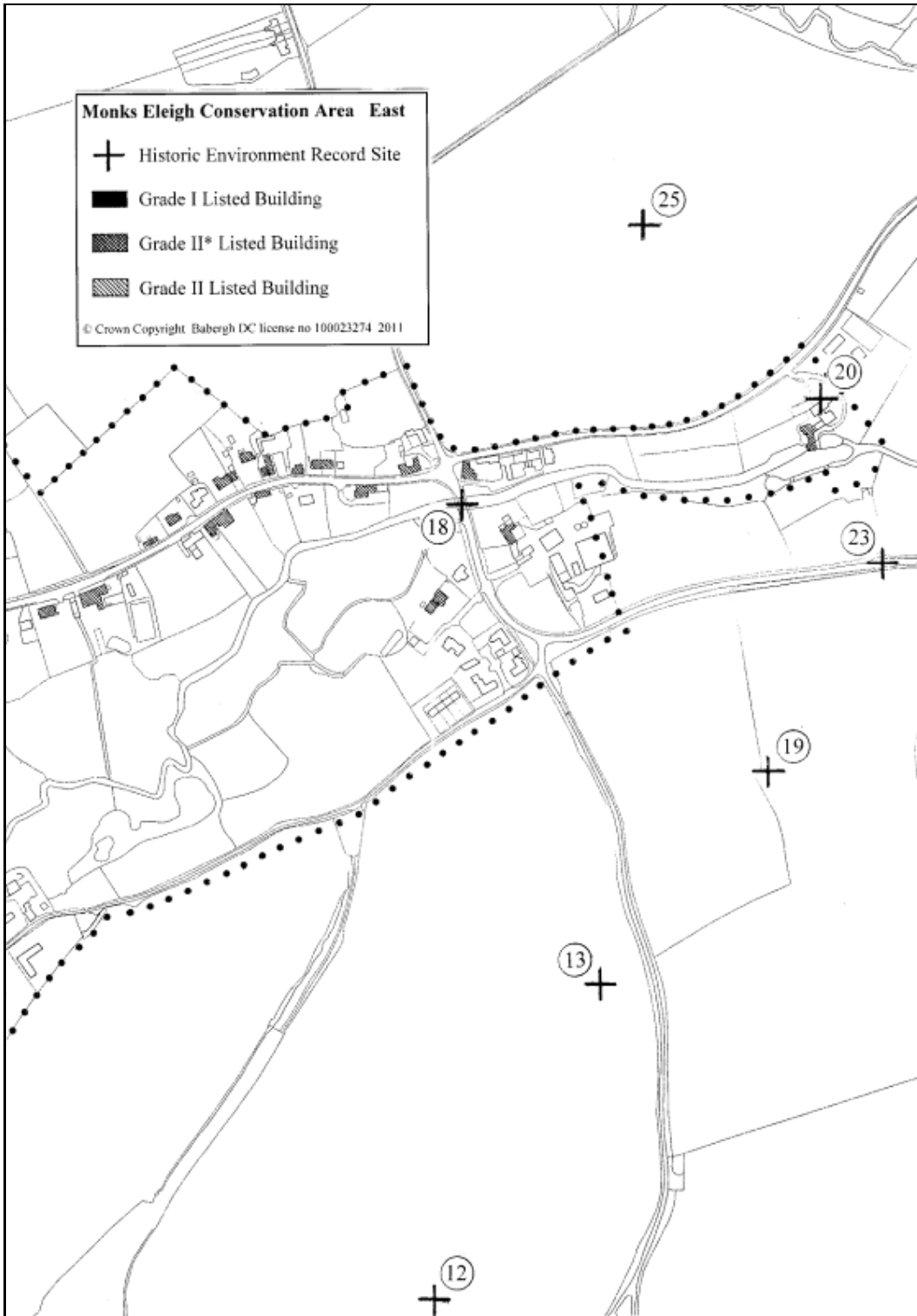
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**BABERGH Two Hundreds**  
 Holy Trinity held ELEIGH before 1066 as a manor; 2 carucates with full jurisdiction.  
 Then 21 villagers, now 13; then 13 smallholders, now 12; then 4 slaves, now 3.  
 Always 2 ploughs in lordship. Then 21 men's ploughs, now 13. Meadow, 12 acres; always 1 mill. Now 2 horses, now 19 cattle, now 20 pigs, now 160 sheep.  
 A church with 22½ acres.  
 Value then £15; now [£] 20.  
 It has 1 league in length and 5 furlongs in width; 14d in tax.

Wulfward, a free man under Stigand, held ELEIGH before 1066 as a manor; 3 carucates of land.  
 Always 5 smallholders; 2 slaves.  
 Always 2 ploughs in lordship.  
 Meadow, 3 acres; 1 mill. 2 horses at the hall, 6 cattle, 20 pigs, 100 sheep.  
 Value then 40s; later and now 80s.  
 It has ½ league in length and 4 furlongs in width; 3½d in tax.

*Other Roman remains include scatters of building materials, pottery and a brooch and the Late Saxons have left us a Pin. Medieval remains include the Church and a couple of moated sites, both on the higher ground north of the village, one at Manor Farm, the other at Monks Eleigh Tye, adjoining the Roman Road.*

*The remainder of sites listed are Post-Medieval and include two watermill sites, a windmill, a milestone and three bridges. Monks Eleigh and the adjoining village of Brent Eleigh were simply listed in the Domesday survey of 1086 as 'Eleigh'. Five separate holdings include amongst them three mills (which would have been watermills at that time) as well as a church with 22½ acres of land.*



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# *Intrinsic Quality of Buildings*

*Monks Eleigh has but one grade I listed building, the Church of St Peter built in flint rubble with stone dressings and a slate roof. It is mostly 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Century in date and has flushwork decoration to the tower. 'A big church' according to Pevsner, he also says the 13<sup>th</sup> Century font is 'an odd form'.*

*One other building is of sufficient quality to justify listing at grade II\*: The Fenn at Swingleton Green is a 16<sup>th</sup> Century timber-framed and plastered house with a plaintile roof. The west wing was refronted in header bond blue and red brick forming a parapet in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.*



*Grade II listed Monks Eleigh Hall adjoining the churchyard is built where a gildhall might normally be sited. The present building dates from 1656, as shown on its fine octagonal-shafted set of chimney stacks. Timber-framed and plastered, it has a slate roof and Suffolk White brickwork facing the ground floor, probably added in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.*

*The other listed buildings in the village are grade II, mostly timber-framed houses with the usual Suffolk covering of render, although a few have some exposed framing and others have been refronted in mainly Suffolk White brick. The roofs to these are most often plaintiles or thatch, but there are also examples of pantile and slate.*



# *Traditional Building Materials*

*Overall the village exhibits the majority of local materials found in Suffolk.*

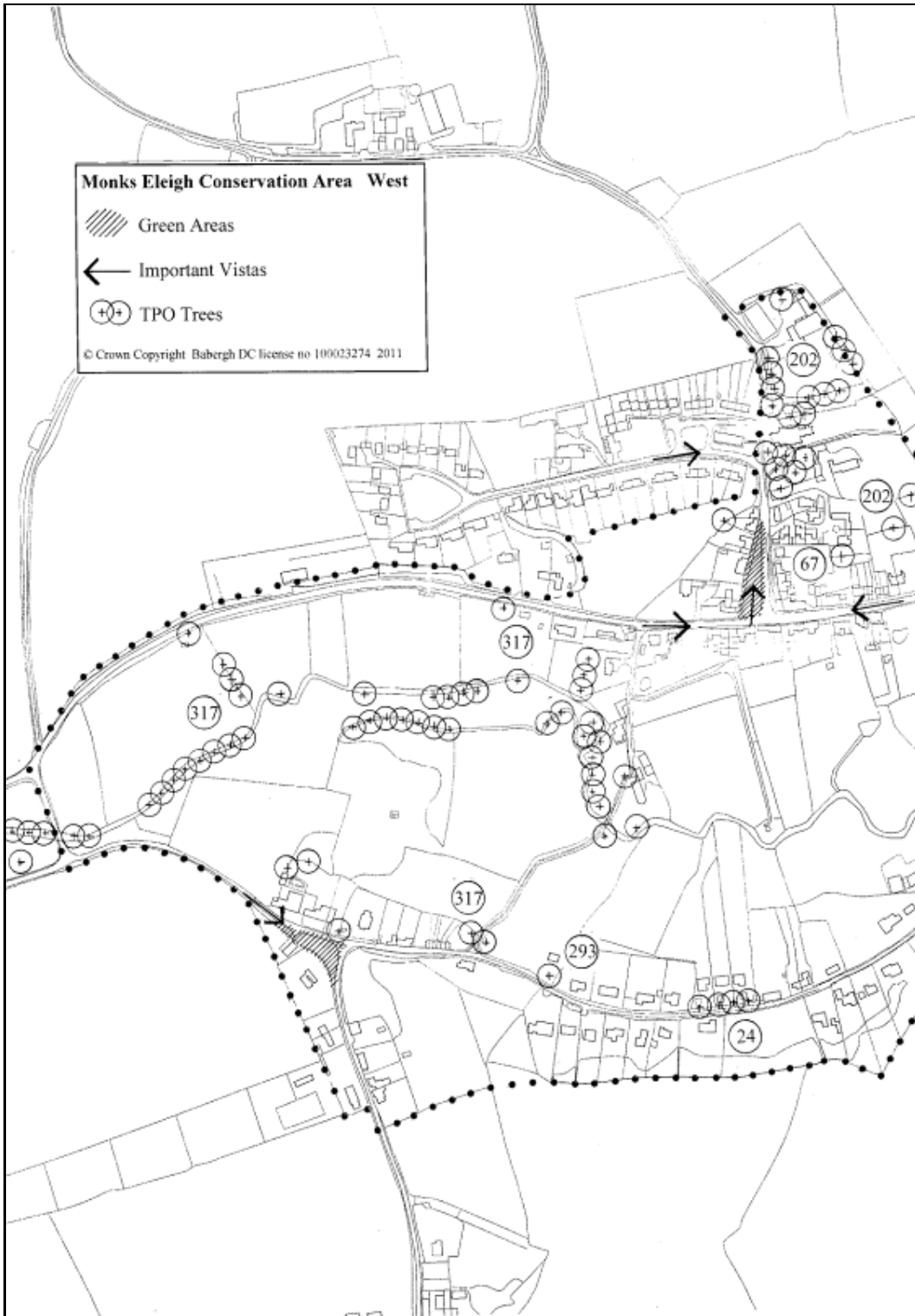
*A number of Victorian cottages and the unlisted United Reformed Church are in the soft Suffolk Red brick with harder Suffolk White brick used to good effect for detailing. One red brick cottage at Swingleton Green is built in Rat-trap bond and unusually has stone quoins.*

*Some of the brick cottages no longer show off their local materials as they have unfortunately been painted or rendered. These do at least match the colour-washed local vernacular of the rendered timber-framed buildings.*



*Black weather-boarding can be found on a number of outbuildings and barns, one example with a well patinated corrugated iron roof.*

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



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# Hierarchy of Spaces

*With a row of listed buildings either side and the Church at its apex, the main focal point of Monks Eleigh is undoubtedly the triangular area adjoining Church Hill, a Registered Village Green.*

*Approaching the base of this triangle along The Street from either direction there are other clues that this is the centre of the village, as the buildings are close together and sited at back of pavement giving this area a much more urban feel.*

*To the east the buildings are more spread out and set back from the road, the lower density allowing views through, especially southwards across the low lying flood plain of the river.*

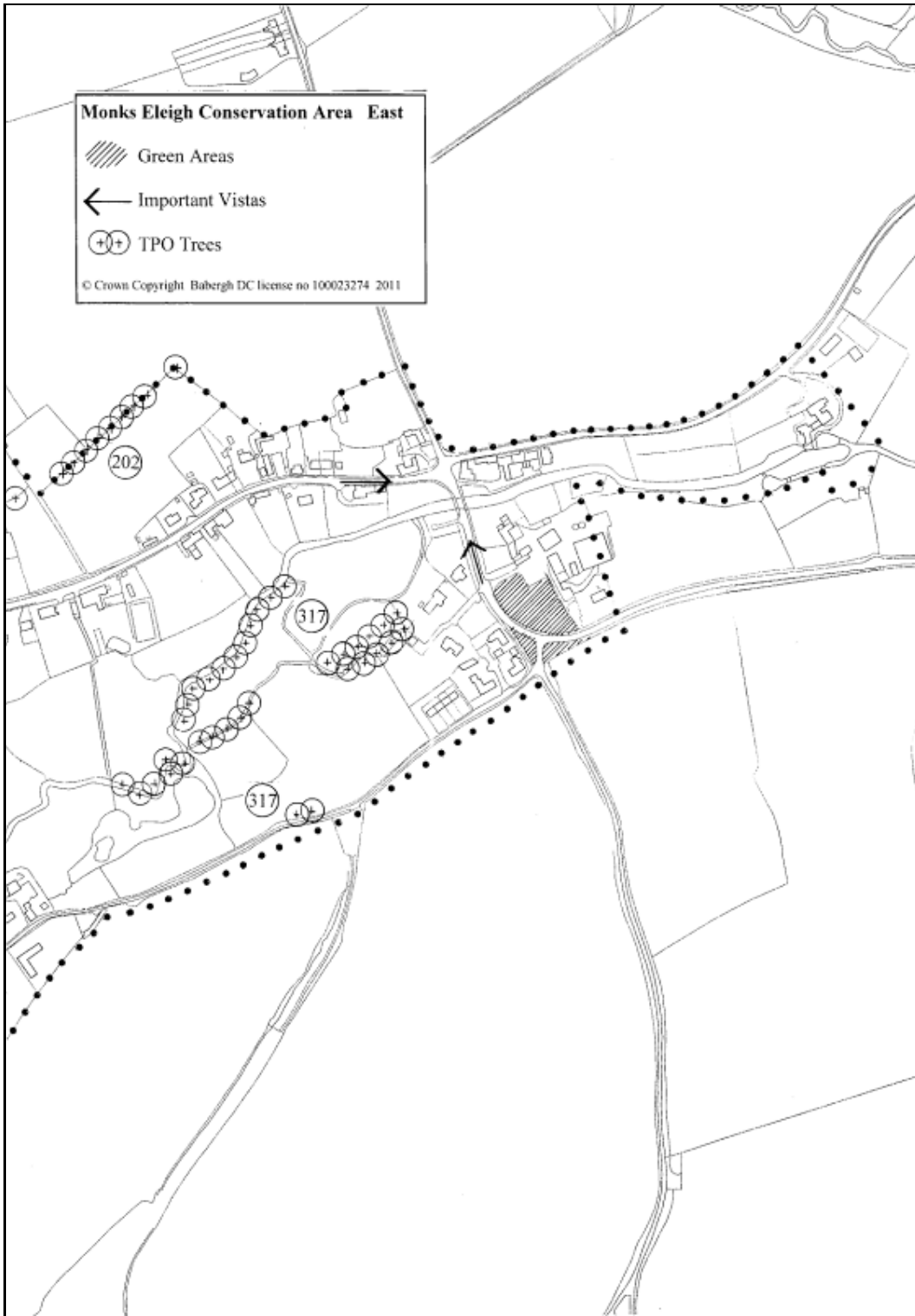


*The second focal point within the conservation area is another smaller grassed triangular area at Swingleton Green. This lies at the western end of the development along Back Lane, which follows the southern bank of the river.*

*Here two original clusters of now listed buildings have more recently been joined into a more continuous stretch by infill development, although much of this is set back from the lane producing a rather suburban feel.*

*The two parallel areas of The Street and Back Lane are joined at either end of the conservation area by road bridges over the river and somewhere near the middle by a footbridge off Mill Lane.*





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# Trees & Planting

*The majority of trees in the conservation area are to be found in the wetland areas either side of the central river. The entire river valley here is designated in the Babergh Local Plan as part of the River Brett Special Landscape Area.*

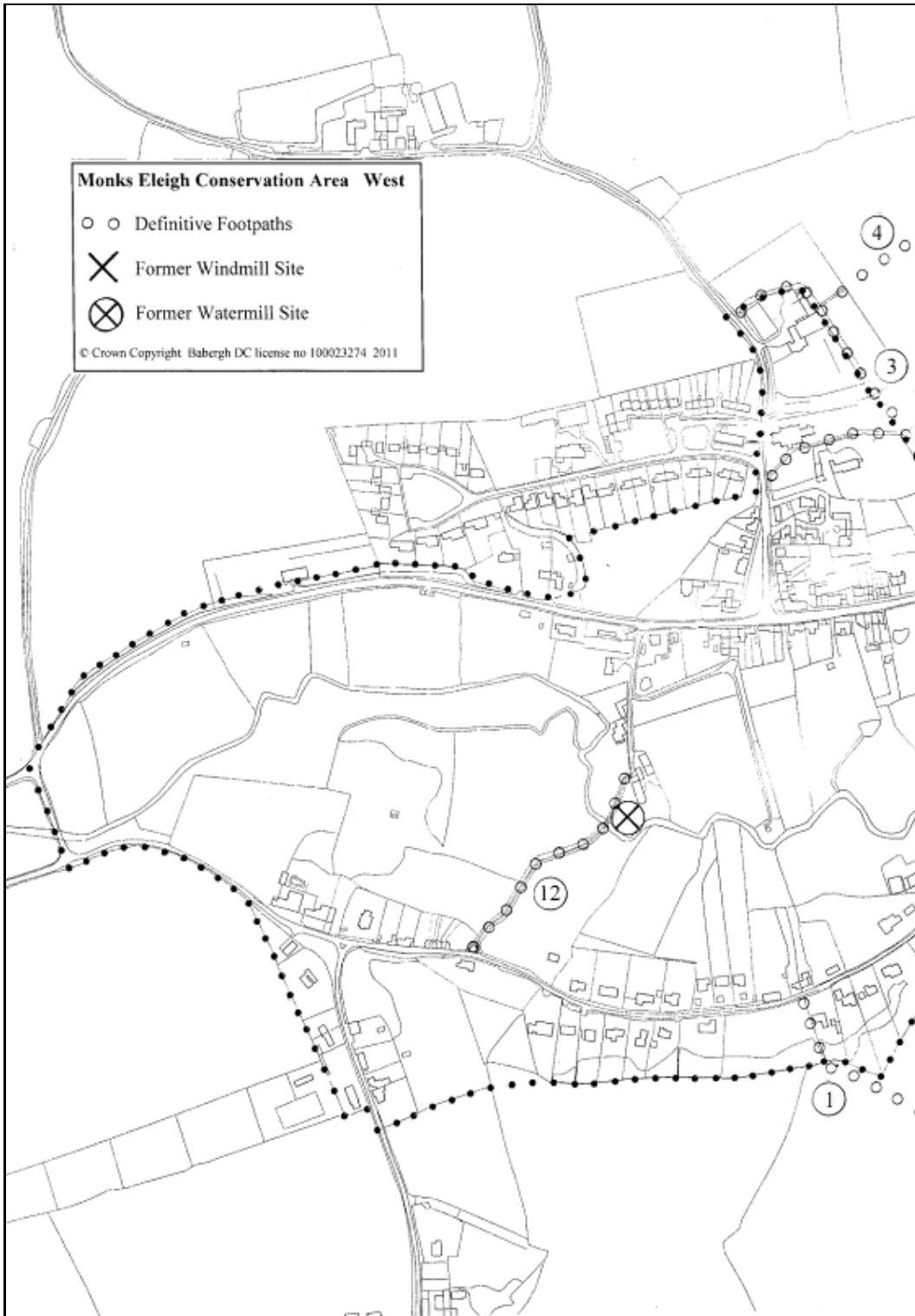
*These trees are very much the typical wetland species of Alder and Willow, but include a fair proportion of Poplar and Ash.*

*Most of these were given the protection of Tree Preservation Order 317 made in 1973 by West Suffolk County Council.*



*The earlier 1972 TPO 202 made by the same Council covered the trees around Monks Eleigh Hall, Church and Old Rectory at the top of Church Hill. These included species such as Oak, Yew, Walnut, Cedar of Lebanon, Sycamore and Horse Chestnut and an avenue of Limes leading to the church door.*

*A number of these TPO trees have been lost over the intervening years and current policy is to require replanting with suitable species.*



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# Relationship to Open Countryside

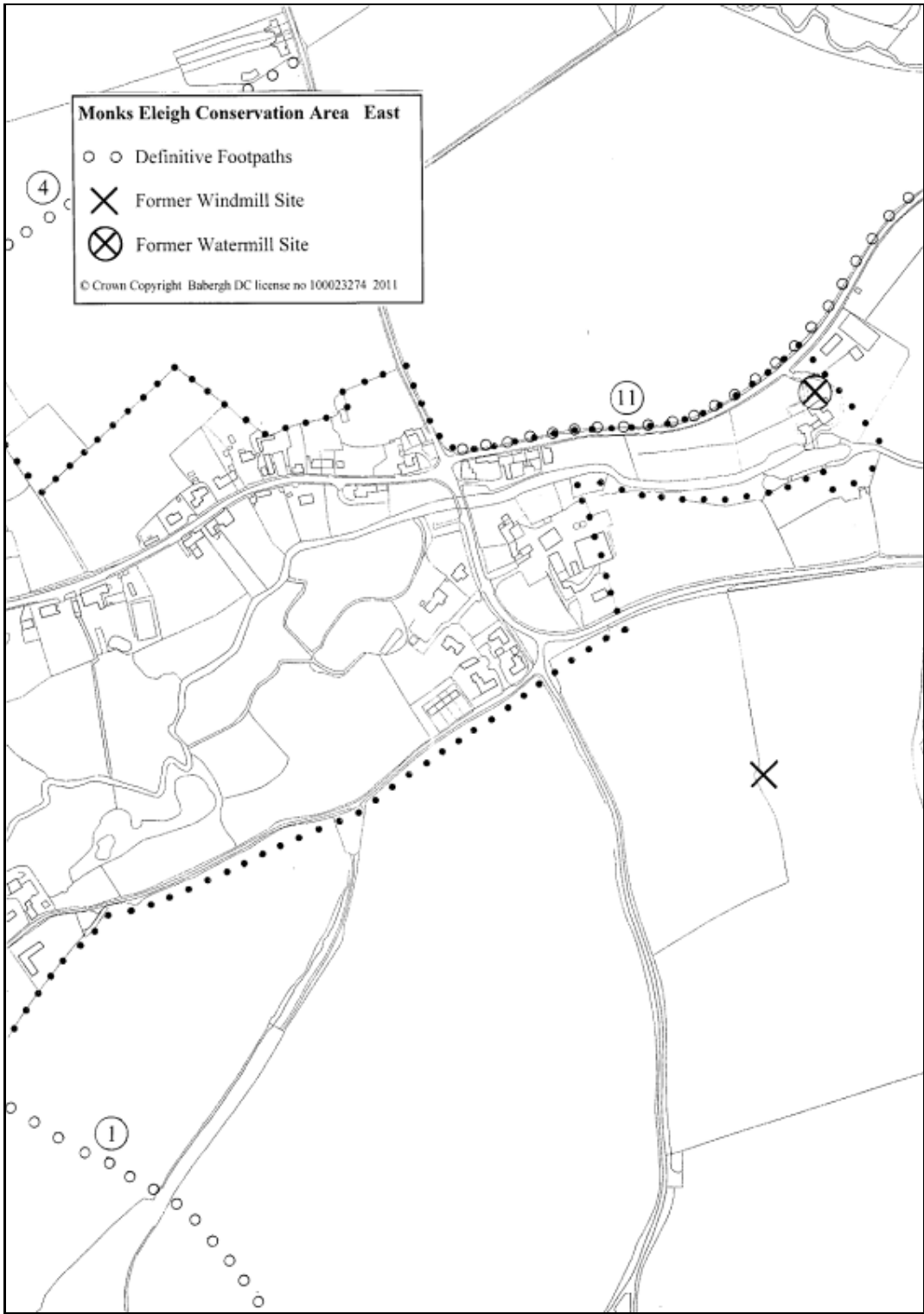
*The central river valley is mostly only glimpsed and can only be inspected close up at the two road bridges or the footbridge off Mill Lane that carries definitive footpath 12 over the water. It does however have an element of wilderness about it, which the agricultural fields on the northern and southern hillsides lack.*

*Because of Monks Eleigh's linear form and mainly single plot depth development, most of the properties there have either this valley or farmland to the rear. One exception to this is the west side of Church Hill which has the modern cul de sac of Church Road in behind it, albeit separated by a small green area.*



*With numerous roads and lanes joining the two roads north and south of the river, footpath links into the countryside are relatively scarce. About midway along Back Lane definitive footpath 1 leads southwards up the hill and is one of the few links that has not been upgraded to tarmacadam.*

*Footpath 11 runs eastwards from Bridge Farm adjoining the road to Chelsworth, whilst footpath 3 runs up the hill to the north of The Street behind the east side of Church Hill. At its top it joins footpath 4 running eastwards off Church Hill across to the Kettlebaston road.*



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# Prevailing & Former Usage

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

*Indeed early 16<sup>th</sup> Century records show the presence in the village of a cloth-maker, a dyer and a fuller. 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 8 farmers, several shopkeepers, 2 wheelwrights, 2 millers, a castrator and a blacksmith present.*



*The two watermills were at either end of the village, whilst the windmill was on the hill south of the eastern watermill.*

*The tithe records of 1842 confirm this picture with field names indicating the presence of mills, hop grounds, maltings, a dovehouse and ozier growing. Fields called 'Hempland' and 'Winding Piece' are indicative of a continuing cloth trade in linen.*

*A number of extractive industries are also indicated by the likes of 'Tile Pit Field', 'Gravel Pit Field' and 'Brick Kiln Field'.*



## Losses & Possible Gains

*Overall Monks Eleigh has suffered relatively little loss of historic fabric in recent times, but there are a few minor visual intrusions, which perhaps should not be repeated.*

*Two of these are particularly relevant to the grade I listed Church. Not only does it suffer the indignity of incongruous overhead wiring on Church Hill, but being right on the boundary of the conservation area, the view of the Church from the estate to the west is somewhat compromised by the concrete panels and asbestos roofing of the Village Hall. Corrugated roofing is also a less than ideal roofing to the grade II listed barn just west of grade II\* The Fenn at Swingleton Green. Hopefully it will mellow in time.*



*Nearby in Back Lane an otherwise good terrace of unlisted cottages in red and white brick is spoiled by a coat of paint and plastic windows on one.*

*Elsewhere in Back Lane the suburban nature of some of the infill development is to be questioned, some of it particularly visible where driveways have been opened up with overgenerous visibility splays. These could be softened by the addition of some screen planting to bring back the rural aspect of the lane.*

*In contrast one particular house here has almost been lost behind the overgrowth: this grade II listed cottage, now in very poor repair with ivy growth getting onto the thatched roof, should be on the 'Buildings At Risk' register.*



# References & Further Reading

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*Goult, W 1990 A Survey of Suffolk Parish History Suffolk County Council*

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*Suffolk County Council 2009 Historic Environment Record: Monks Eleigh*

*Taylor, P 2005 Living in a Conservation Area Babergh District Council*

*Tithe Map & Apportionment 1840 Monks Eleigh Suffolk Records Office*

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*This Appraisal adopted as  
Supplementary Planning Guidance by  
Babergh District Council Strategy  
Committee 12 January 2012*