

**BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**FROM:** Head of Natural and Built Environment

**REPORT NUMBER**     **H168**

**TO:**     **STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

**DATE OF MEETING:** 15 January 2009

**SUDBURY CONSERVATION AREA**

1.     **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To advise Members of the results of the recent public consultation on Sudbury conservation area; to seek approval for the adoption of the appraisal document as non-statutory supplementary planning guidance.

2.     **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 That the Conservation Area Appraisal document (Appendix A) be adopted as non-statutory Supplementary Planning Guidance with immediate effect.

The Committee is able to resolve this matter.

3.     **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 None.

4.     **RISK MANAGEMENT**

<b>Risk Description</b>	<b>Likelihood</b>	<b>Seriousness or Impact</b>	<b>Mitigation Measures</b>
Working on planning applications and appeals with inadequate and outdated (1973) information	High	Marginal	Adopt new appraisal as recommended
Council not fulfilling its duties to 'review from time to time' its conservation areas under section 69 of Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990	Low	Marginal	Undertake further conservation area appraisal work (28 in District)

5.     **KEY INFORMATION**

- 5.1 The purpose of a conservation area appraisal is to define what is important about its character and appearance and to identify its important characteristics. It is also a vital tool to enable the active management of the conservation area. It identifies the area's special features and changing needs through a process which includes researching its historical development, carrying out a detailed townscape analysis and preparing a character assessment.

- 5.2 A public consultation exercise was undertaken in November and December 2008. This included letters to Sudbury Town Council, Babergh's local Members, Suffolk County Council, The Sudbury Society, Suffolk Preservation Society and English Heritage, requesting their views on the draft appraisal and its proposals. In addition an open evening was held as part of a Town Council meeting on 11 November at the Town Hall for members of the public to see the appraisal in exhibition format and give their views. This was publicised locally and on Babergh's website, where the appraisal document was also available to download, and about twenty persons attended, largely representatives of Sudbury Town Council and The Sudbury Society. The exhibition remained on display at the Town Council offices for the following month and the draft appraisal was also available for inspection at Babergh's Planning reception in Hadleigh with comments forms.
- 5.3 Suffolk Preservation Society praised the document as 'concise, informative and easy to read' and expressed its concerns over car parking and traffic management. They also said 'the appraisal highlights the benefits of good conservation management' and hoped Babergh would 'continue to make available resources' for such work.
- 5.4 The Sudbury Society said that the document was 'generally accurate, informative and concise' and offered a number of small corrections to the text. They felt the 'losses' section should be 'balanced by reference to the very real achievements of HERS' over the years in reversing such losses. They also suggested that an Article 4 Direction would help 'prevent further erosion of the quality of place so well described' in the appraisal.
- 5.5 Sudbury Town Council agreed with the comments given by Suffolk Preservation Society and was concerned at poor monitoring of planning applications in respect to conservation area status. This may refer to a boundary error in the Local Plan map for Sudbury, which was recently corrected.
- 5.6 The Appraisal as now presented for adoption has therefore been amended to take account of these comments where possible and corrects any other minor errors brought to our attention.

## 6. **APPENDICES**

(A) Sudbury Conservation Area Appraisal.

## 7. **BACKGROUND PAPERS REFERRED TO:**

Sudbury Conservation Area correspondence and working file.

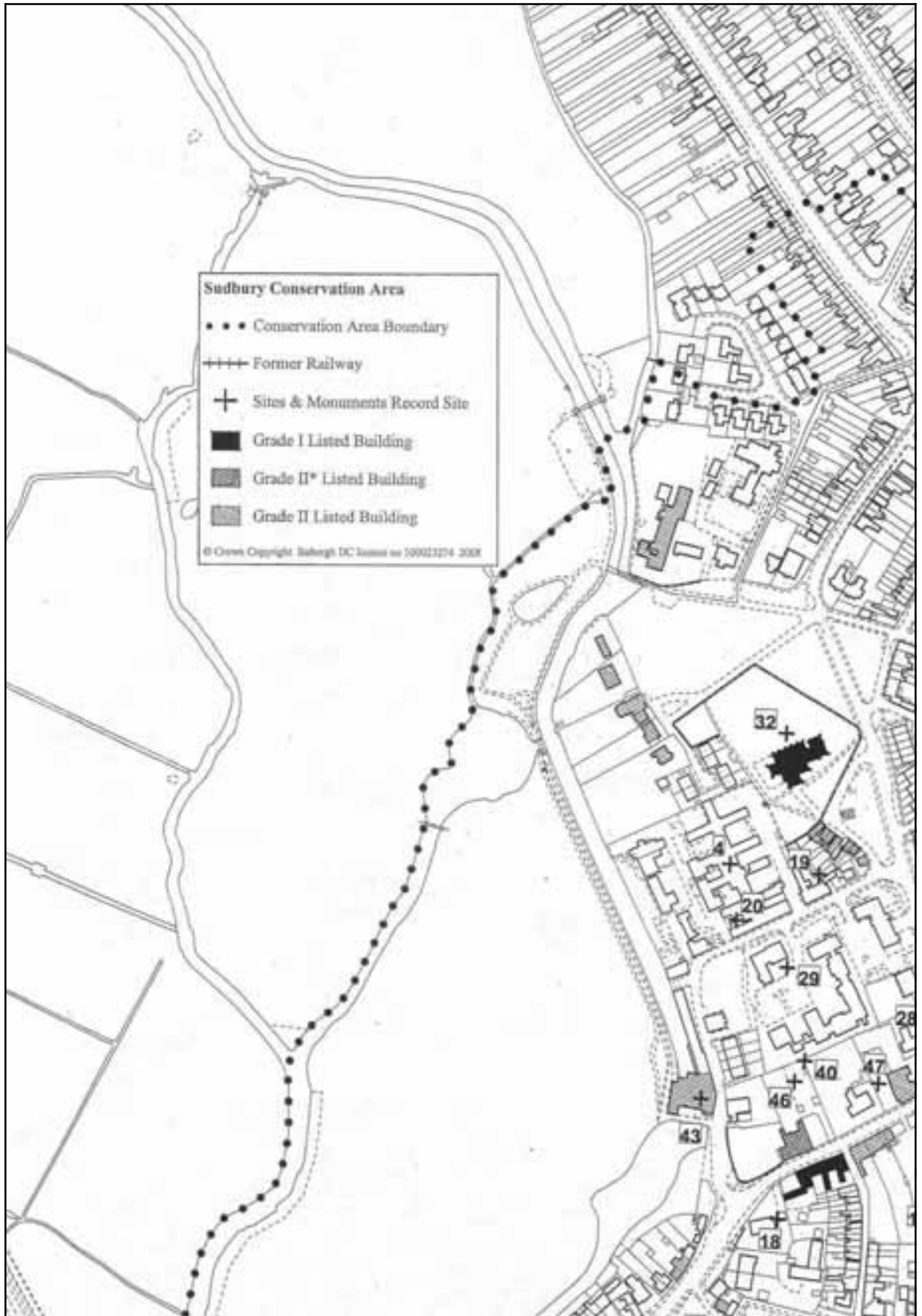
**CONTACT: Patrick Taylor**

**EMAIL: [patrick.taylor@babergh.gov.uk](mailto:patrick.taylor@babergh.gov.uk)**

# *Sudbury*



*conservation area appraisal*



# Introduction

*The conservation area in Sudbury was originally designated by West Suffolk County Council in 1973, and inherited by Babergh District Council at its inception in 1974. The boundary was revised by Babergh in both 1981 and 2003.*

*The Council has a duty to review its conservation area designations from time to time, and this appraisal examines Sudbury 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 Sudbury's built environment in conservation terms and is essentially an update on a document produced in 2002, when part of the town was the subject of a HERS grant scheme, promoting the reinstatement of many traditional details.*

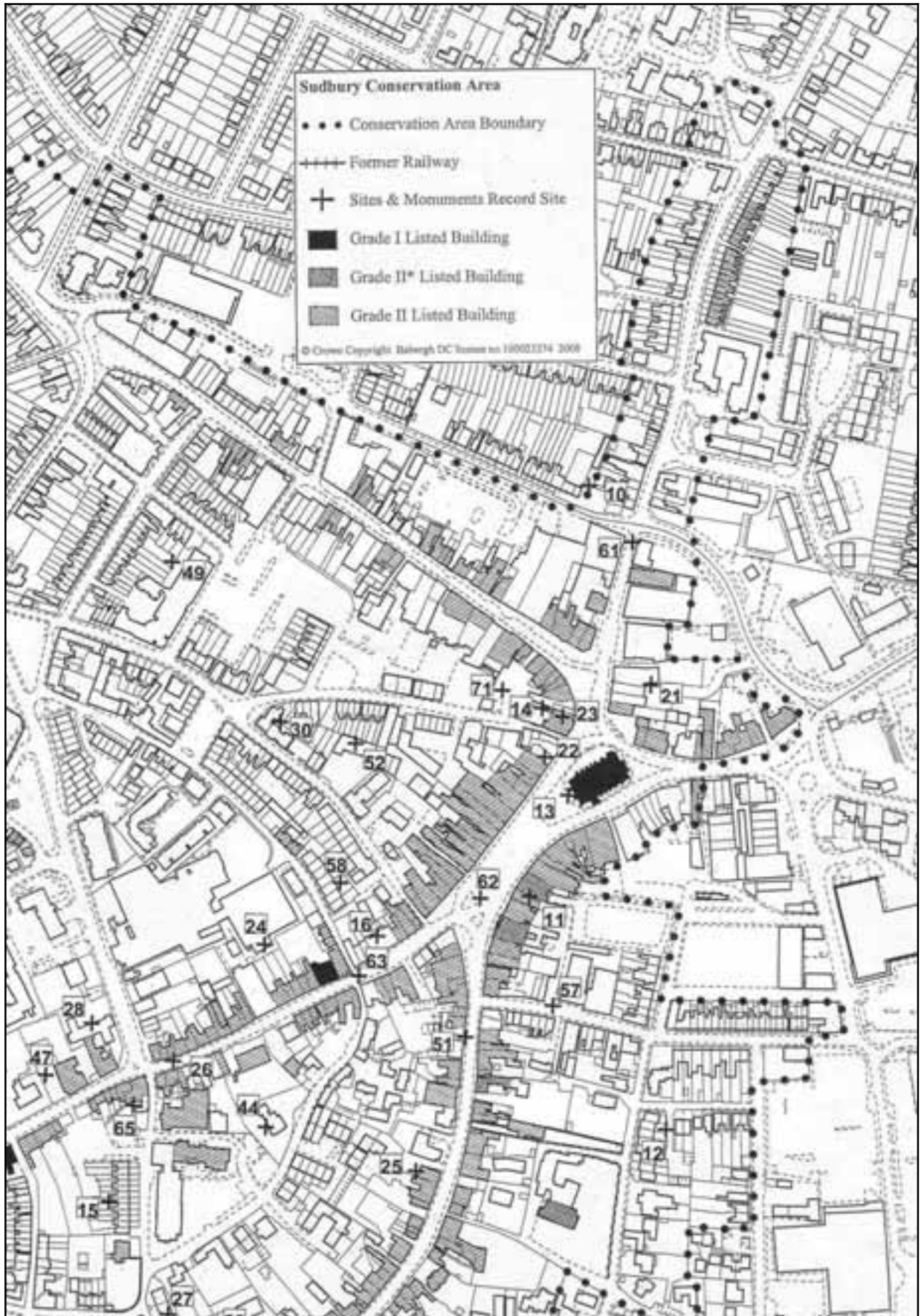


*As a document it is neither prescriptive nor overly descriptive, but more a demonstration of 'quality of place', sufficient for the briefing of the Planning Officer when assessing proposed works in the area. The photographs and maps are thus intended to contribute as much as the text itself.*

*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

*Sudbury is situated in south-west Suffolk adjoining the Essex border, mainly on the eastern bank of the River Stour where it makes a loop to the west. The river valley has cut through the overlying boulder clay of high Suffolk to reveal locally sands and gravels.*

*Immediately below the boulder clay and the sands and gravels of glacial origin lies the chalk to the north of Sudbury, whilst to the south there is an intervening layer of London clay here at the northern edge of its range.*

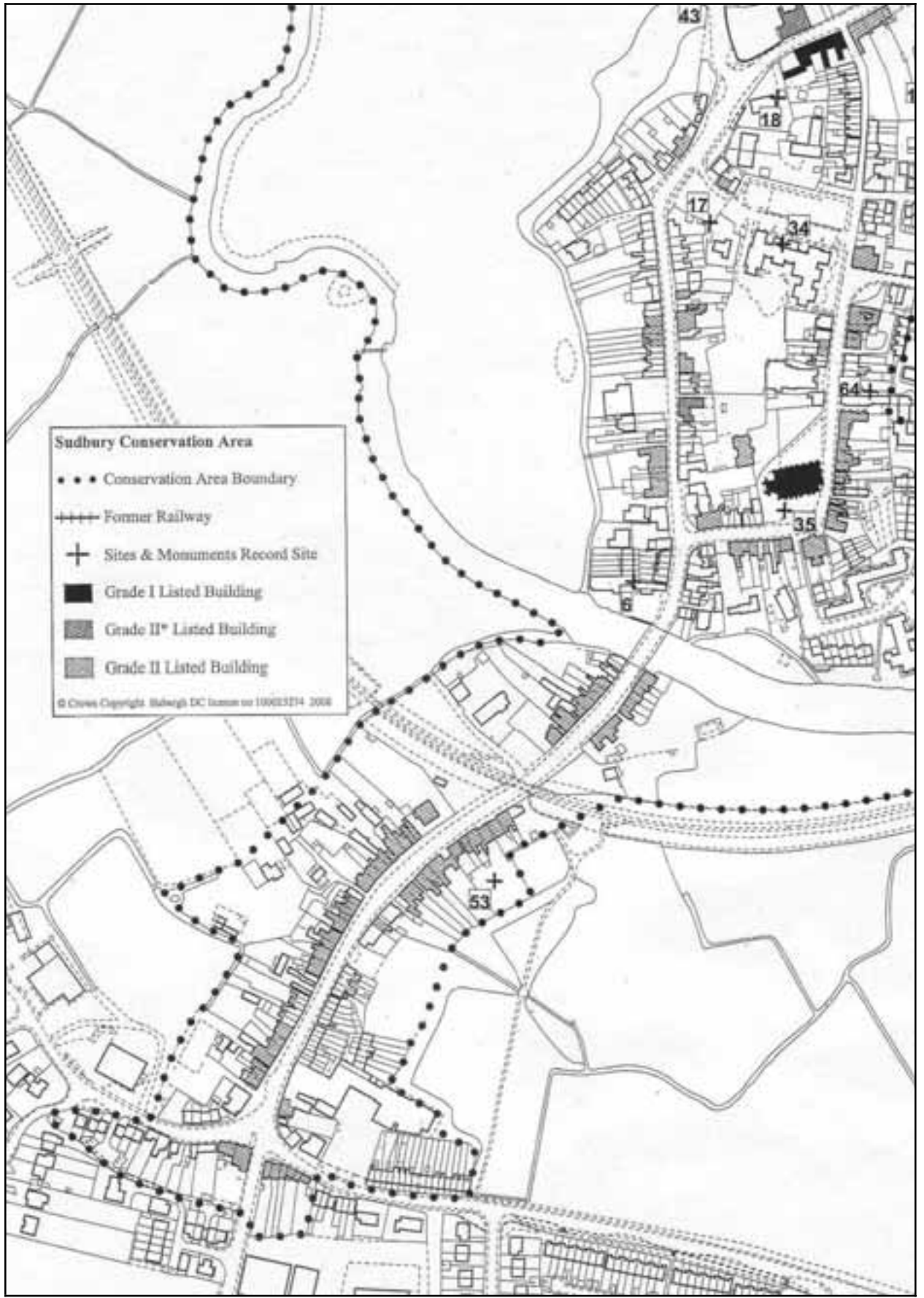
*The town centre area sits on a platform of terraced valley gravels between 25 and 35 metres above Ordnance datum, whilst Ballingdon Street to the south-west actually spans the river valley on recent alluvial deposits.*



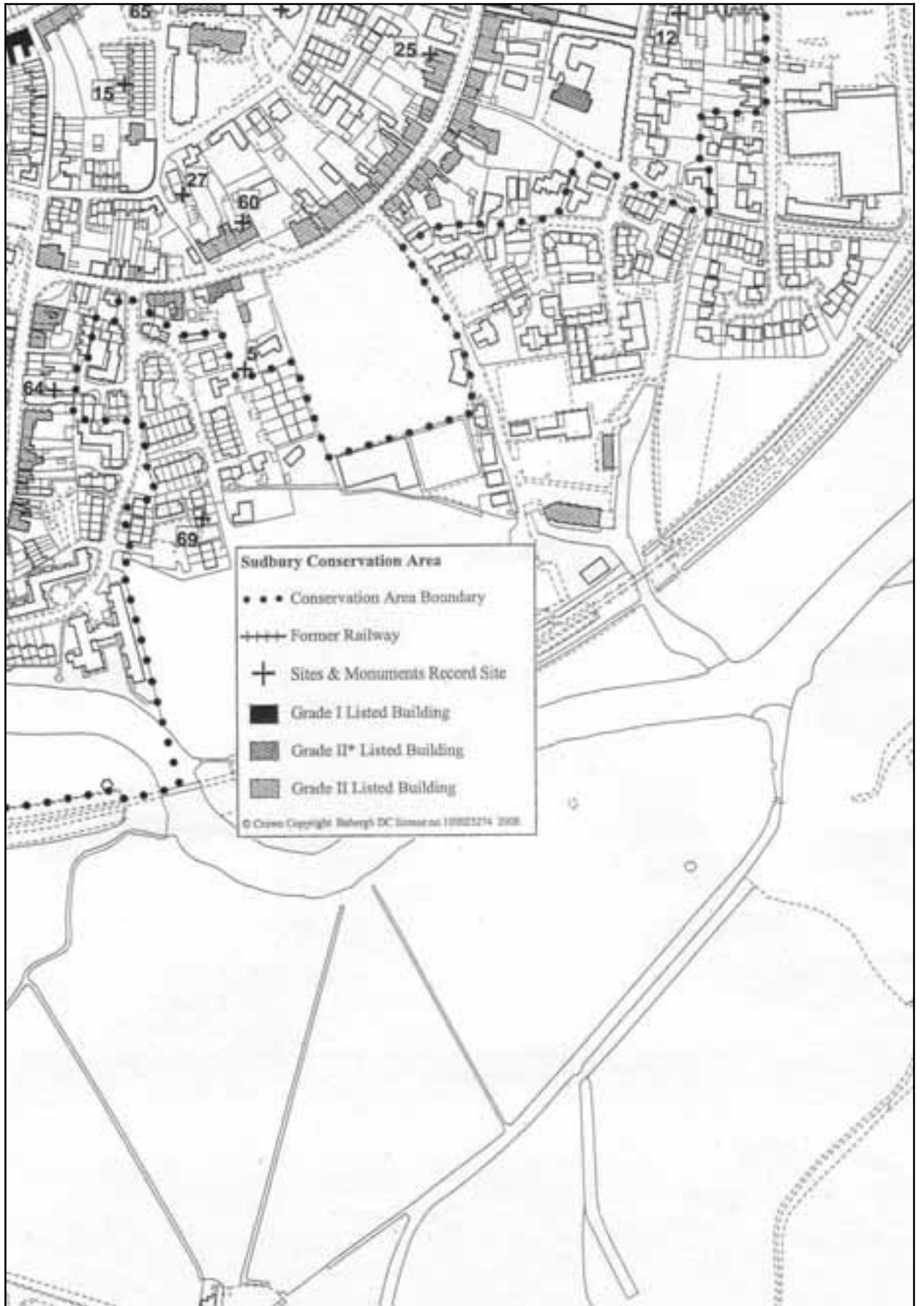
*The Town Centre plan has evolved around this one road coming in from the south-west whilst four other roads fan out between north-north-west and south-south-east from a point to the east of the centre.*

*The historic part of the town is very much sandwiched between these roads to the east and the loop of the river with its adjoining wet grazing marshes to the west and south.*

*The town centre today consists essentially of an elongated market square with shopping streets off to the north, east, west and south-west.*







# *Intrinsic Quality of Buildings*

*Sudbury's buildings include a mix of many ages and styles. Although much of the town appears to be late Georgian and early Victorian, a significant number of earlier timber-framed buildings remain, often hidden behind brick facades.*

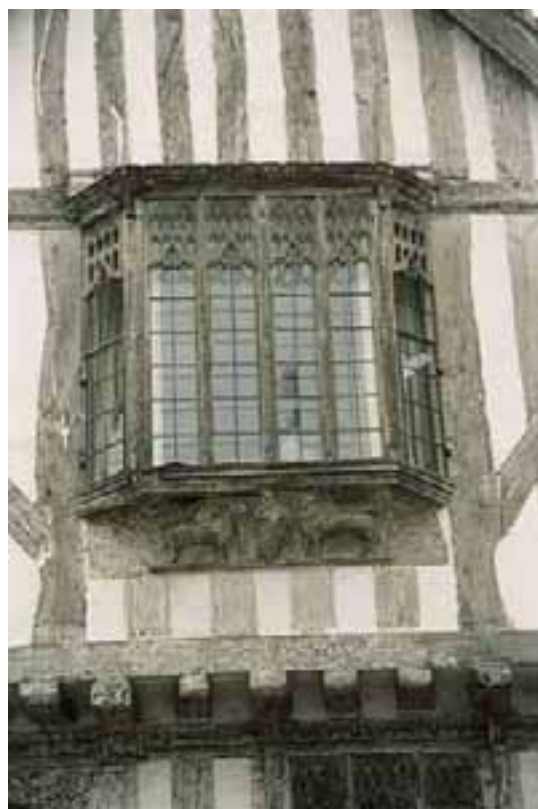
*The majority of buildings in Market Hill and Friars Street, together with many in other streets are listed grade II and II\*.*

*Grade I status is reserved for the three 15<sup>th</sup> Century flint and stone churches plus the mainly 15<sup>th</sup> Century timber-framed Chantry and Salters Hall complex in Stour Street along with Gainsborough's House with its 18<sup>th</sup> Century red brick front hiding a 17<sup>th</sup> Century timber frame.*



*The predominant building form is therefore of Georgian nature in Suffolk white brick with low pitched slate roofs punctuated every now and then with the steep pitched plain tiled gables and rendered timber frames of the earlier Suffolk vernacular. A few 'hybrids' are sprinkled amongst these where the steep pitched plain tiled roof of a timber-framed building has been hidden behind a parapet of brick, often rendered, to comply with Georgian taste.*

*The numerous unlisted buildings, which nevertheless contribute to making Sudbury what it is, are generally of the later Victorian period, either in red or white brick with slate roofs. In recognition of their local importance, some 300, as identified in 'Sudbury, Suffolk: The Unlisted Heritage', have been included in a Local List.*



# Traditional Building Materials

*The majority of buildings in central Sudbury are constructed of Suffolk White brick from the local factories at Ballingdon, sometimes with red brick string courses and detailing in the more recent examples.*

*Wholly red brick buildings are less common and some brick buildings are now rendered. The bulk of the remaining buildings are plastered timber frame usually with plaintiled roofs and in some instances with exposed timbers although this may well not have been their original condition.*

*Steep plaintiled roofs also occur on a number of apparently brick buildings often indicating a timber framed structure internally, whilst lower pitched slate roofs occur almost universally on white brick buildings.*

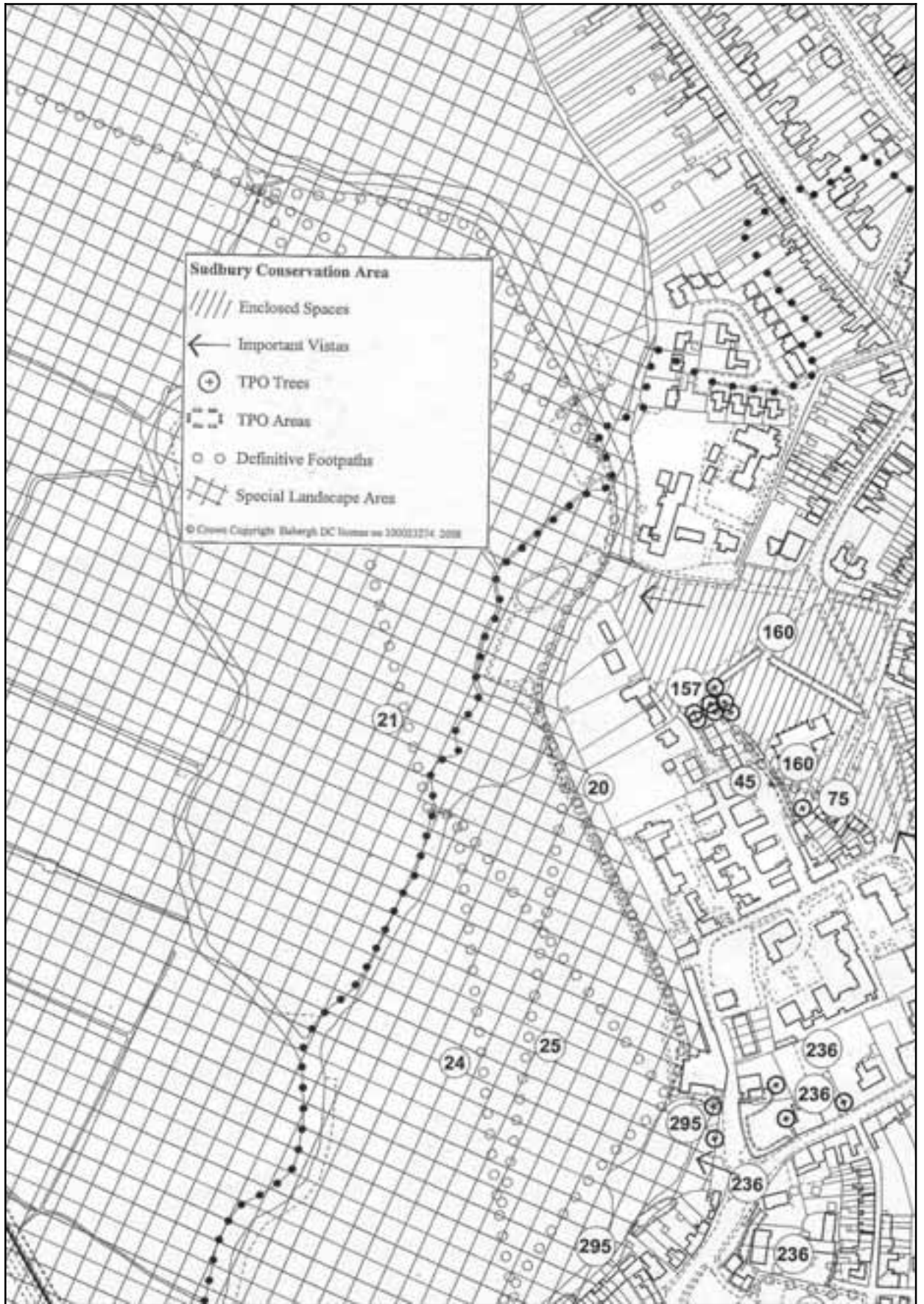


*Of the brick buildings, one type is fairly common, of three storeys and generally in terraces of three or more with one window per floor and the first floor windows unusually wide and very un-Georgian in their proportions. These were weavers' houses serving the local silk industry in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century.*

*Sudbury's churches differ from the other buildings in the area, being constructed of flint with stone dressings with lead or copper clad roofs, although there are instances of stone detailing to some of the larger brick buildings in the town.*

*Sudbury has a number of modern buildings occurring more to the north and east of the main centre which unfortunately pay little heed to the historic materials and do not blend in.*





# Hierarchy of Spaces

*The present focal point of the town centre is Market Hill and the adjoining church of St Peter, originally a chapel of ease.*

*The commercial town centre has effectively moved from its historic position around St Gregory's, eastwards into one of the satellite areas.*

*Whilst this commercial area still thrives in parts of Friars Street and Gainsborough Street and eastwards up Market Hill, it has also now ventured northwards along North Street, one of the original roads into Sudbury.*

*This means that much of the old centre and the southern satellite area, although much improved in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, have not been further disfigured by modern development.*



*They remain today much as they were complete with the surviving medieval street pattern with many small lanes and tight corners. This can be seen to good effect on Friars Street, where the Priory Lodge gateway aligns directly with a narrow lane opposite heading straight into the old town.*

*Across the river to the south-west the ribbon development along Ballingdon Street is of much the same pedigree and remains essentially domestic in nature. Originally the separate village of Ballingdon, this area maintains to this day a more rural quality than Sudbury, which absorbed it in the 1830s. Recent street enhancement works here have sought to maintain that difference, using a softer chipping finish, rather than the more urban York Stone paving adopted in the town centre.*



# Trees & Planting

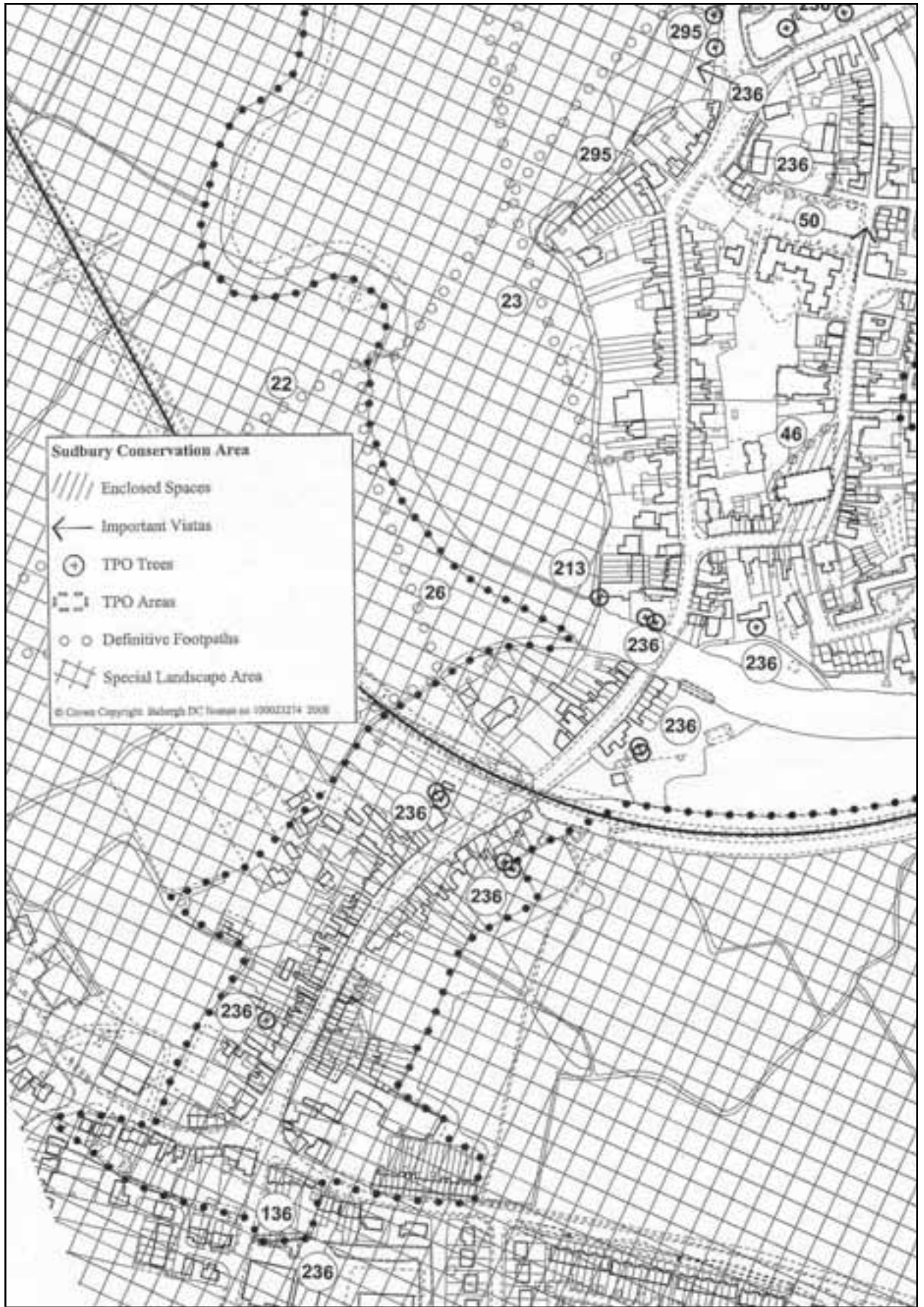
*Other than on the sector occupied by Ballingdon Street, to the west and south, Sudbury is encircled by the extensive historic grazing marshes of the Stour valley which are easily accessed from the town and are overseen by Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Countryside Project.*

*Within the town itself, green space is at more of a premium. St. Peter's Church is very central and urban, its traffic island location only marginally softened by planting. The other two churches however, have larger enclosed green areas which form small oases a little distance from the centre.*



*All Saints has a small churchyard off Church Street with Horse Chestnut, Sycamore and Holm Oak trees. St. Gregory's has a churchyard containing Lime and Sycamore trees set in the midst of a larger green area with Oak trees called The Croft, which leads down to the river and the adjoining marshes.*

*Two other areas also deserve mention; the sports ground off Friars Street has a cricket pitch and a row of pollarded Lime trees along the frontage, whilst some way to the east of the main centre, and very much cut off from it by the traffic system, Belle Vue Park contains the more common trees here augmented by some fine Copper Beech, Bhutan Pine, Holm Oak, Cedar and Corsican Pine trees.*



# *Relationship to Open Countryside*

*To the north and east Sudbury peters out through progressively younger developments and peripheral industrial estates in the usual market town manner.*

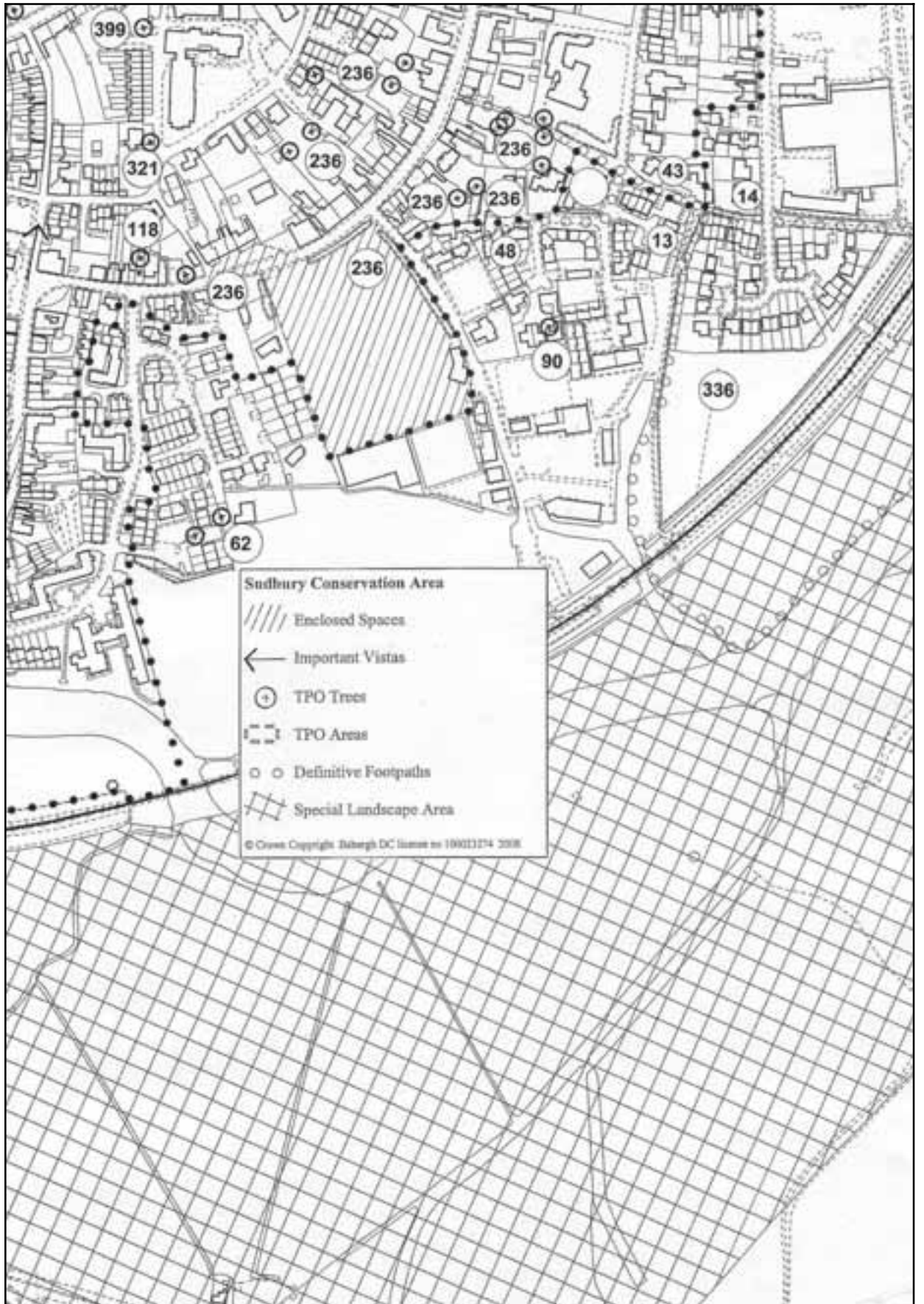
*To the south-east the once separate village of Great Cornard has been absorbed, acting now as a large dormitory to the town, greatly expanded by overspill after the Second World War. The countryside on this side of town is consequently now that much further from the centre.*

*To the south-west at Ballingdon a small area of development has encroached upon the west bank of the Stour, which otherwise sweeps unhindered right around the town to the west and south with its large expanses of open grazing marsh.*



*These areas can be glimpsed from the new Ballingdon Bridge and are managed as the Sudbury Common Lands. They are easily accessible from the town and can be seen to good advantage by walking the disused railway line that also encircles the town to the south and west.*

*The far side of the valley is essentially open countryside coming within the area of the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley Project. It has effectively been saved from development as Sudbury expanded, by both the river and the Essex border.*



**Sudbury Conservation Area**

-  Enclosed Spaces
-  Important Vistas
-  TPO Trees
-  TPO Areas
-  Definitive Footpaths
-  Special Landscape Area

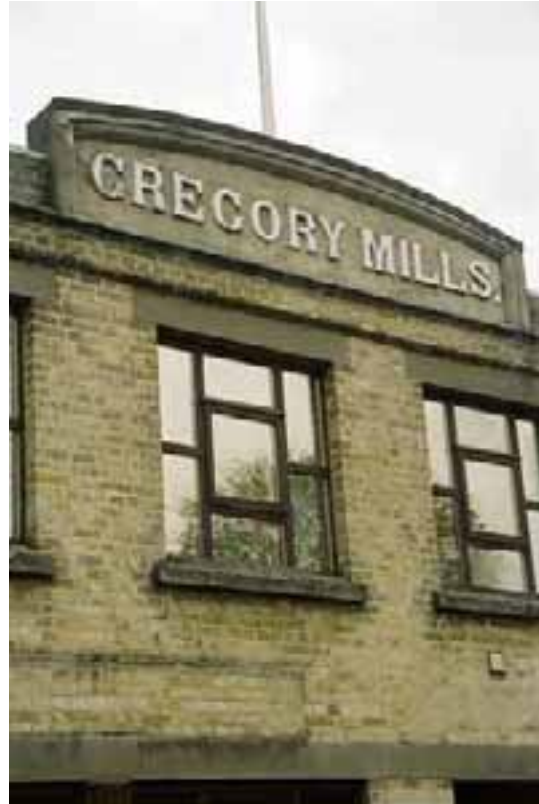
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# Prevailing & Former Usage

*Sudbury has been a market town since Saxon times, a function much boosted by the arising of the medieval South Suffolk woollen industry, which manufactured cloth from the locally produced wool.*

*The wool wealth of the 15<sup>th</sup> Century has left its mark on the town in the form of its fine timber-framed buildings and grand Perpendicular churches. The skills involved in this business continued to be used in the spinning and weaving that took place at various silk mills, originally a 19<sup>th</sup>.Century introduction to the town. Many three storey weavers' houses remain as a record of this industry.*

*Other local industries included malting and brewing using the local agricultural produce.*



*There was also brick making and lime burning, making use of both the underlying London clay and chalk.*

*Such was the draw of Sudbury and its trade that it boasts one of the earliest canal links to the sea in the Stour Navigation of 1706, at one time allowing barge traffic to and from the sea port at Mistley.*

*Other historic trade links include the turnpike trusts, whose routes had toll-houses at Rodbridge on the Bury road northwards and at Bulmer Tye on the route south-west into Essex. These were in turn superseded by a rail link to the Eastern Union Railway that remains in use to this day to the south, although the northern link to Lavenham, Bury St Edmunds and Cambridge is now disused.*





# Losses & Possible Gains

*Sudbury town centre suffered in the sixties with a number of modern buildings being inserted with little heed to the local character and texture. This can be reversed in time, as such sites come up for redevelopment.*

*On North Street in particular are to be found a number of incongruous modern buildings, mostly spread thin amongst older properties. In addition, Sulby House, a large office block at the north end of the street, is fortunately distant enough from the centre not to intrude excessively on the townscape.*

*Other major intrusions on the street scene further from the centre, but in the historic area, comprise two large advertisement hoarding sites, one in Ballingdon Street and the other where Church Street joins Friars Street.*



*Minor intrusions and damage are more numerous and include some poorly executed crude shop fronts and areas where uPVC windows are on the increase on unlisted buildings e.g. Ballingdon Street, Church Street and probably worst of all Cross Street.*

*Many unlisted examples of the three-storey terraced weavers' houses have suffered from their multiple ownerships within the terrace. Here a variety of modern timber and uPVC windows of different designs have been inserted and various facades have been rendered, painted or poorly repaired without reference to the unity of a block.*

*As part of the enhancements, overhead wiring has been put out of sight underground in Ballingdon Street, but remains an eyesore in Church Street.*

# References & Further Reading

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*Wall, B 1998 Sudbury The History Press*

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*This Appraisal adopted as  
Supplementary Planning Guidance by  
Babergh District Council Strategy  
Committee 15 January 2009*