



Oxford Canal Conservation Area Appraisal October 2012



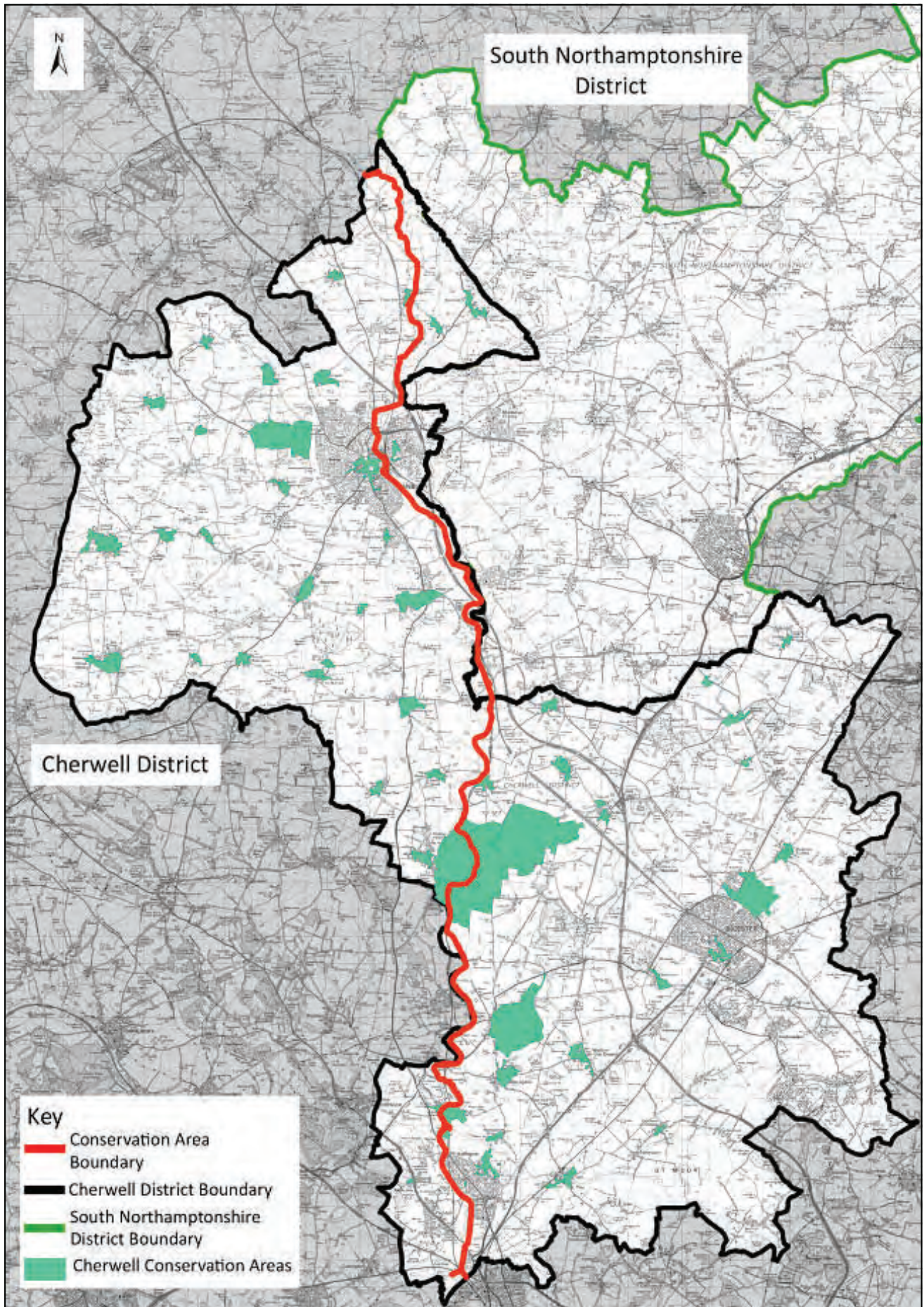
South
Northamptonshire
Council

Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

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Abbreviations

SNDC – South Northamptonshire District Council

CDC - Cherwell District Council

CLP – Cherwell District Local Plan 1996

NCLP – Non-Statutory Cherwell District Local Plan

GWR – Great Western Railway

BW (BWB) – British Waterways is the abbreviated form of the British Waterways Board, 64 Clarendon Road, Watford, Herts WD17 1DA soon to become the Canal and River Trust, see British Waterways Board (Transfer of Functions) Order 2012 and the Draft Inland Waterways Advisory Council (Abolition) Order 2012.

1. Introduction and Planning Policy Context

1.1 Section 69 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to identify *areas of special architectural or historic interest the character and appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance* through an appraisal process and to designate them as Conservation Areas. Since 1967 some 9600 Conservation Areas have been designated in England, including 59 in Cherwell District.

1.2 The **purpose** of this Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan is:

- to provide a clear definition of the area's special architectural or historic interest;
- to identify ways in which the unique characteristics can be preserved and enhanced;
- to justify the designation in terms of how important the canal is to the locality;
- to create a clear context for future development in accordance with conservation area policies in the Local Plan;
- and to provide a vehicle for engagement and awareness raising

1.3 This assessment and management plan aims to promote and support developments that are in keeping with, or enhance, the character of the **Oxford Canal Conservation Area**, that section of the Oxford Canal where it runs through Cherwell District and a small part of South Northamptonshire District. It is not an attempt to stifle change. The aim is to strike a balance so that the interests of conservation are given their full weight against the needs for change and development. This document is concerned with the reasons for designation, defining the qualities that make up its special interest, character and appearance. The omission of any reference to a particular building, feature or space should not be taken to imply that it is of no interest.

1.4 This document should be read in conjunction with the Proposed Submission Draft Cherwell Local Plan (August 2012), and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

1.5 The appraisal was the subject of public consultation. The Parish Council, English Heritage, local residents and interested groups were asked to consider the document and contribute their views. It has since been adopted by the Council and is used to help determine planning applications and appeals within the Conservation Area and its setting.

1.6 This appraisal is different from the remainder of Cherwell's Conservation Areas in that it deals with a single man-made feature of one period in time and its associated infrastructure, rather than a village focussed around an early core with later development. Due to its historic interest and individual form of architecture, these are perceived to be characteristics that are worthy of protection. The canal dates from before the railways, and as such, had a great impact on the socio-economic development of the district, particularly Banbury. It now has a place in the recreation, culture, water management and tourism which brings people to the district.



Iconic view of Haddons Lift Bridge 173, Bodicote looking south (above) and north (below)



2. Location

2.1 The canal runs from Hawkesbury Junction with the Coventry Canal southwards to the middle of Oxford and junctions with the River Thames. The southern section of the summit level crosses into Oxfordshire and from the watershed it drops downwards towards the valley of the River Cherwell, which it follows to the Thames valley, and to Oxford itself.

2.2 The conservation area is mainly within the boundaries of Cherwell District Council, Oxfordshire, apart from a section that crosses into South Northamptonshire near Aynho. The canal is the most rural of canals, for it passes through only two sizeable towns – Rugby and Banbury – on its circuitous route to the outskirts of Oxford, and even tends to avoid most of the villages as well.

2.3 The Oxford Canal is one of the most popular leisure canals in the country, passing through the beautiful countryside of the southern Midlands of England. It is alive for much of the year with pleasure boats of all shapes and sizes, its towpath also provides a well-used route for cyclists and hikers, and the surviving pubs along the route provide focal points for all those who use the canal and others from further afield.

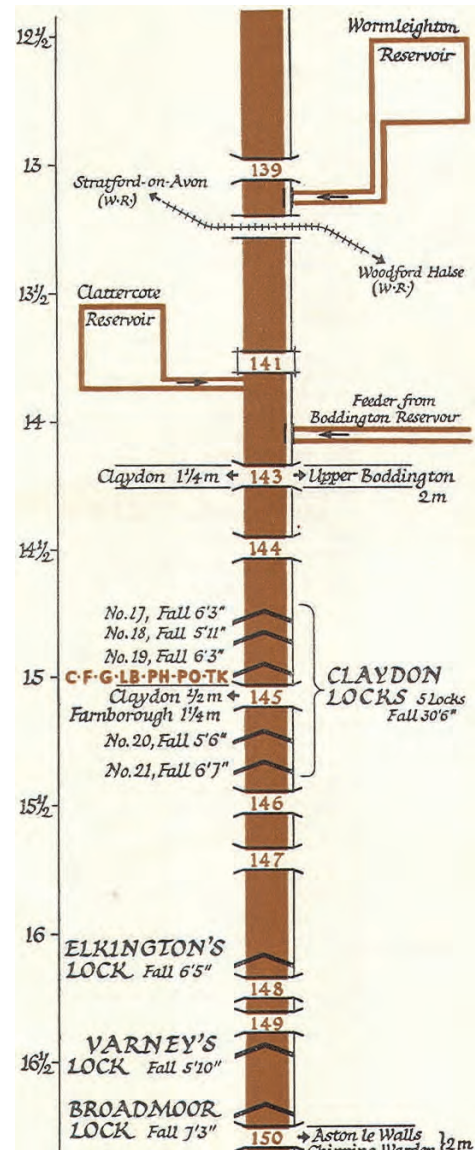
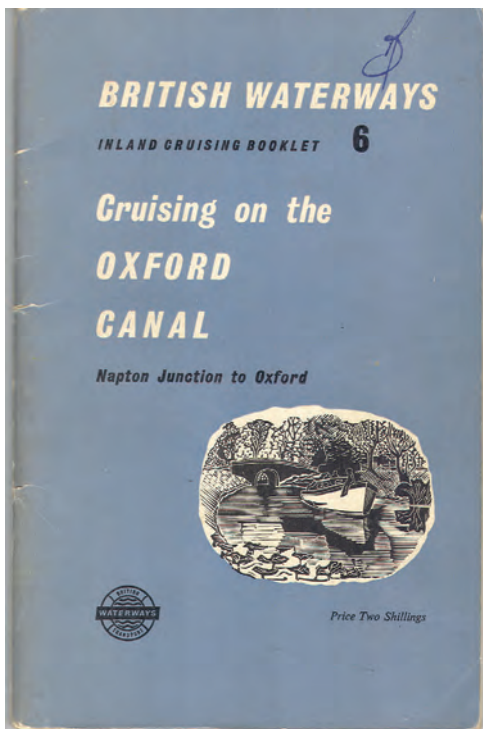
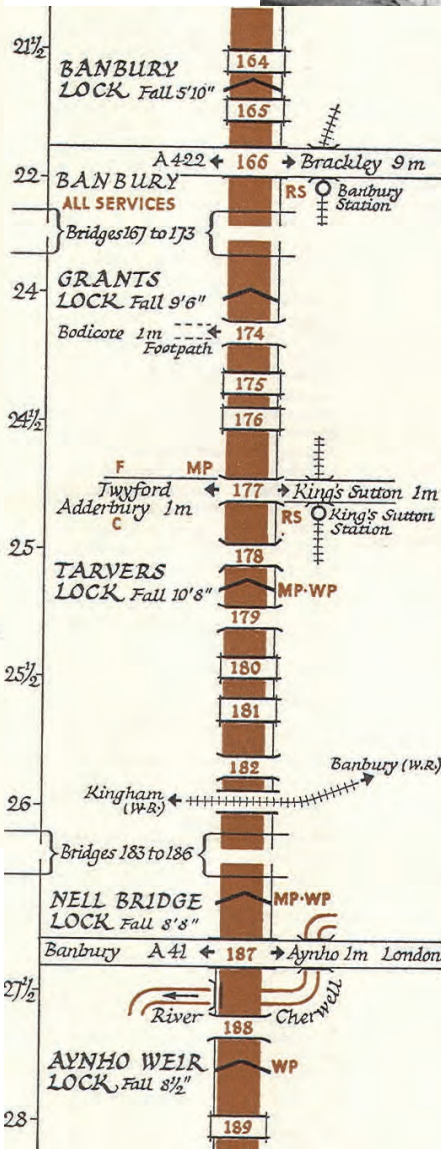
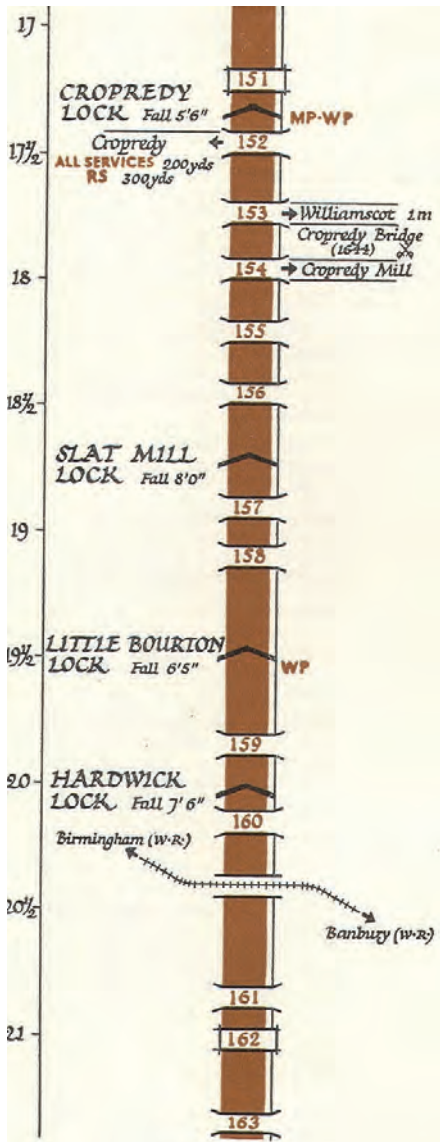


Fig. 2 (above and next 2 pages) This stylised plan is taken from the British Waterways Inland Cruising Booklet, first published after 1956 and shows the locks and bridges by number. The Conservation Area starts at Boundary Bridge 141 in the north and stretches as far as of bridge 233 south of the Dukes Cut.

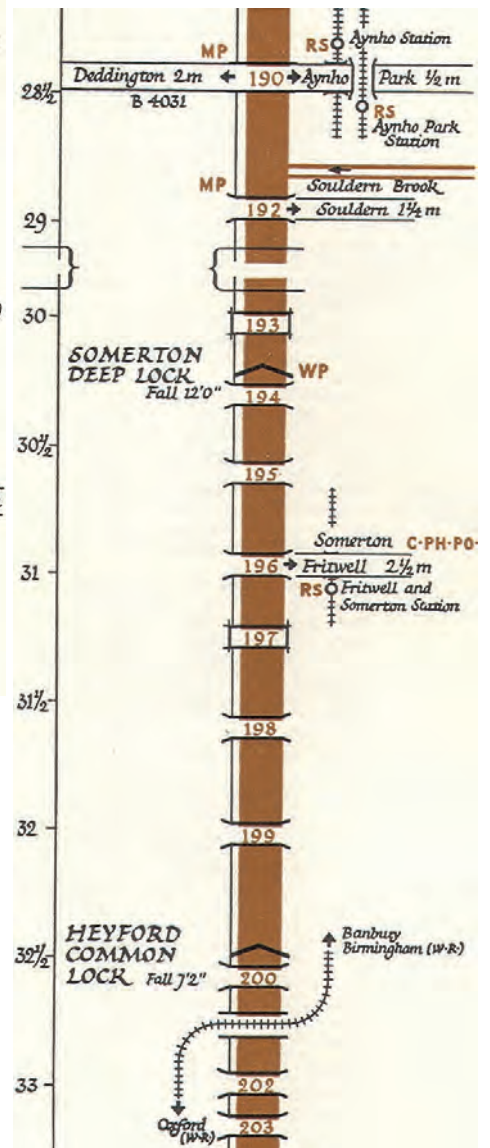
The bridge numbers on this plan are those cited in the text, but there is evidence that historically other numbering systems have been used.



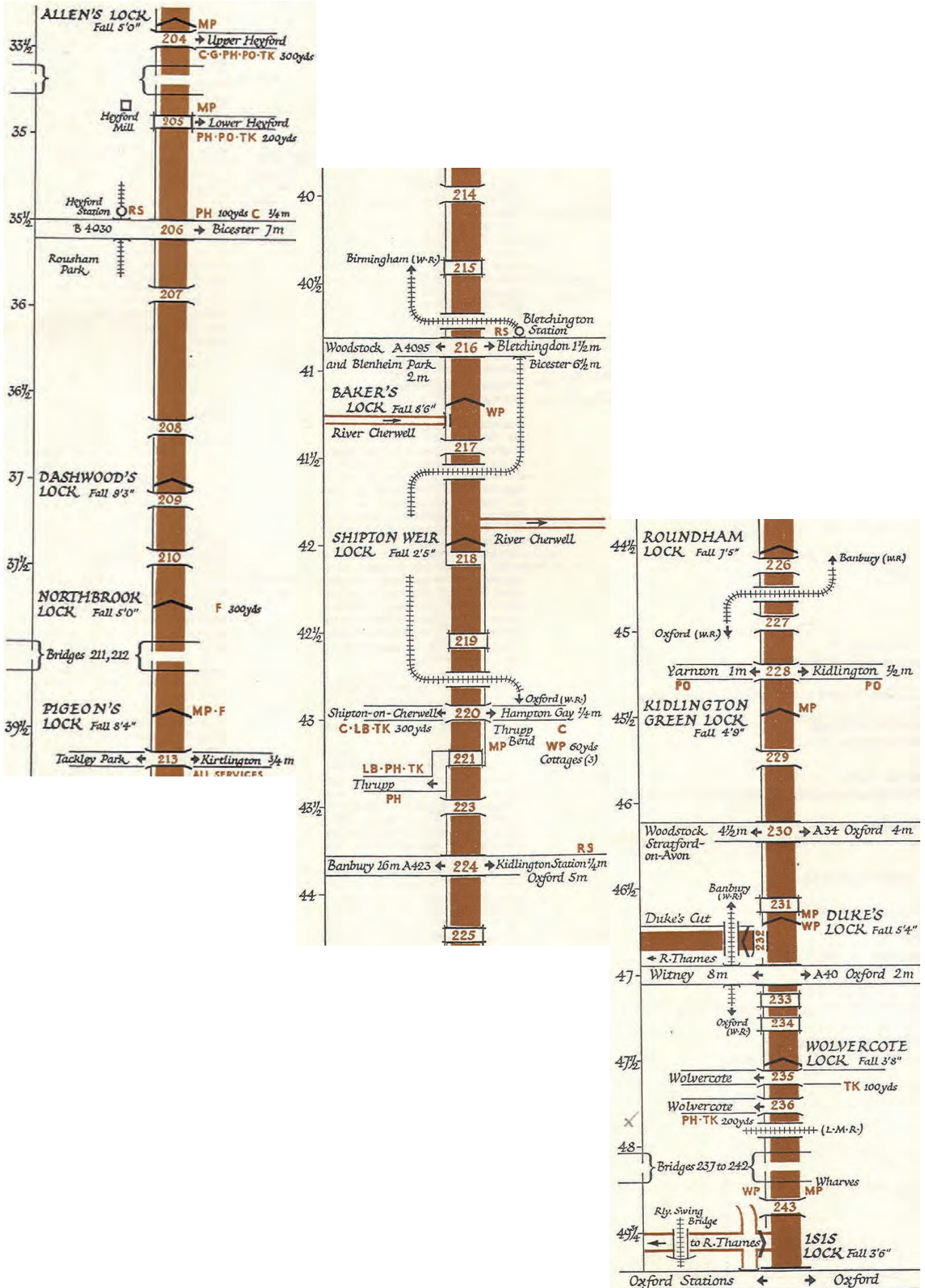
Information booklet from 1956



Tooleys Boatyard, Banbury between 1910 & 1930



Aynho between 1910 & 1930



3. Landscape and Local Architecture

3.1 The Oxford Canal follows the valley of the River Cherwell, which drains the land as it flows southwards to join the broad, low-lying vale landscapes of the upper Thames north of Oxford. The land rises and falls gently from the ironstones and mudstones of the north district to the limestones and clays of the south.

3.2 Although the Cherwell District has a complex topography, with steep valley sides and open upland areas rising to a height of around 200m in places, the canal follows the contours of the land: as level a route as possible, at least half of which lies below 80m. The valley is generally fairly wide and flat between the low undulating hills of the valley sides, with occasional raised terraces on which the settlements mainly lie. The scenery is pleasant, stretching back from the canal in rural areas with wide agricultural and pastoral fields, dotted with occasional wharf sites and associated canal buildings adjacent the canal. Immature woodland clusters in areas on the banks provide sporadic visual barriers which hide the canal from wider view.

3.3 The topography and geology of the district has led to settlements being sited on higher ground, in part to provide better drainage. Therefore, few rural settlements are within sight of the canal, with mill sites and their hamlets close to the river, and wharfs beside the canal. Banbury and Kidlington are the two urbanised areas which the canal touches, again reflecting the contoured nature of the engineering.

Local Architecture and Materials

3.4 The variety of styles and materials used in the structures of the canal reflect the variety of materials in the local vernacular, though in general most of the older buildings are built of the local stone, ironstone in the north and limestone in the south, usually faced with worked or coursed rubblestone. The more common use of standard brick was probably mainly the result of the construction of the canal, and there are surviving brick kilns of some age at Twyford Wharf. A couple of slightly grander late-Georgian farmhouses are built of brick.

3.5 Most of the pre-20th century rural buildings are fairly humble in character, usually of 2 or 3 storeys and with simple detailing, including casement windows, wooden doors, and a variety of roof treatments, including thatch, stone slate, clay tile and natural slate.

3.6 Alongside several fine parish churches, there is another grand medieval building close to the line of the canal: the tithe barn of around 1400 built for New College, Oxford, next to the parish church and manor house of Upper Heyford.

3.7 The section of the canal through Banbury retained many 18th and 19th century canal-related buildings, including wharves and warehouses, well into the 20th century. Redevelopment of the area in the late 20th century has led to their loss, removing much of the town's original canalscape, but the scheduled monument of Tooley's boatyard retains its dry dock. The canal is now a popular tourist attraction within the town.

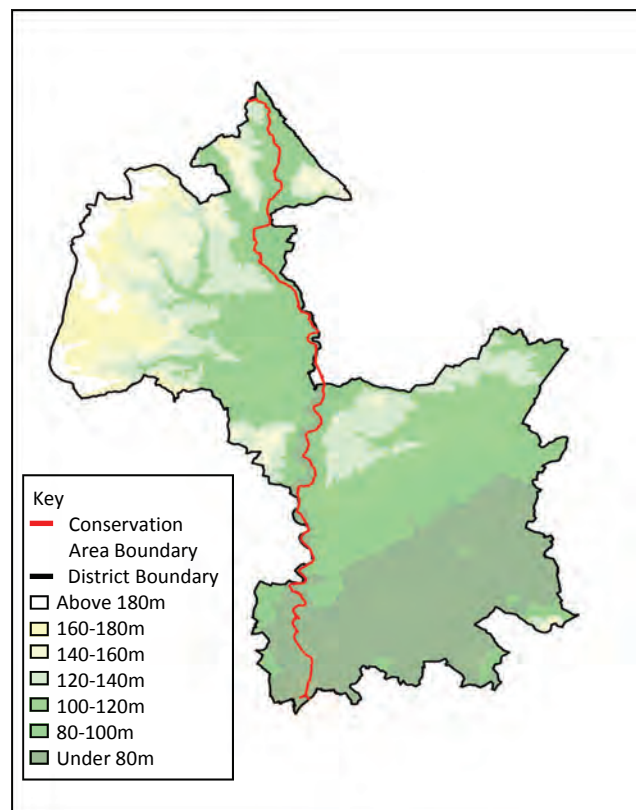


Fig. 3 Approximate topography of the district
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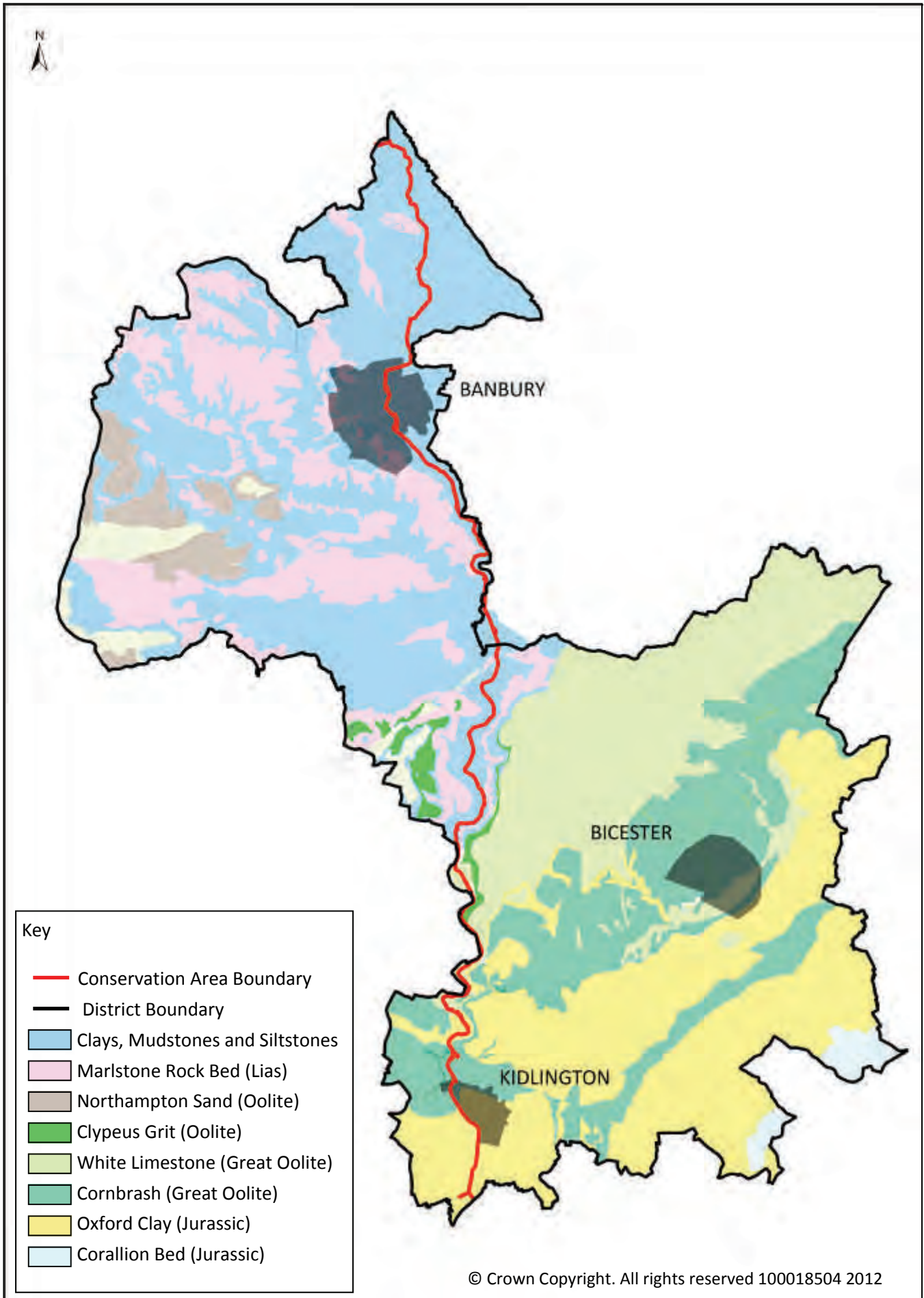


Fig. 4 Simplified Geology of the Conservation Area

4. Archaeology

4.1 Although a good deal of industrial archaeology from the time of the canal's construction and beyond still remains in certain areas of the district, due to the destructive nature of canal construction, it is unlikely that a good quantity of buried ancient archaeology has survived along the route. The construction a contour canal requires terracing to create the level line. This destroys the upper side of the sloping ground level and builds up the lower section, though only after a solid foundation has been created usually through excavation. As a result the buried archaeological resource would either be destroyed or buried beneath the embanked towpath.



Ridge and furrow on south side of canal between Banbury and Aynho

4.2 To either side of the canal itself, it is possible that more archaeological remains have survived, as few major changes appear to have been made to the rural landscape. This is certainly evident in the extensive medieval ridge-and-furrow field systems surviving within the later enclosures in close proximity to the canal.

4.3 Much of Banbury's industrial canal landscape has been redeveloped. Whilst there are some fragmentary standing structures there will be surviving buried archaeological deposits in some areas where redevelopment has not resulted in their removal. It is believed that the buried remains of the two main wharves in Banbury, Castle Wharf and the main Banbury Wharf, were protected when the Castle Quays Development was built by raising the general ground level of the new buildings. Due to the age of the works,



Tooley's Boatyard dry dock © nbepipany.co.uk

it is not known how much was found or removed during earlier redevelopment works. Tooley's Boatyard was retained and embedded in the Castle Quays development, including the dry dock, one of the oldest in the country.

4.4 It is possible that there are the buried remains of wharf buildings at Grimsbury Wharf to the north of the town centre, as well as a buried wharf inlet south of Bridge Street once accessed from Lower Cherwell Street. To the south of Bridge Street are the remains of several other wharves on the offside (west bank) of the canal and some associated standing structures, including those connected with the recently redeveloped former Town Hall Wharf.

4.5 Other possible significant canal-related remains could survive but few are well documented. For example, there appears to have been a side pond at Kings Sutton Lock probably installed as an experiment in saving water but subsequently in-filled. There was also a second wharf at Lower Heyford but its precise location is uncertain, though a house on the offside south-west of Mill Lane Bridge (205) has some similarities with a drawing of the wharf house.

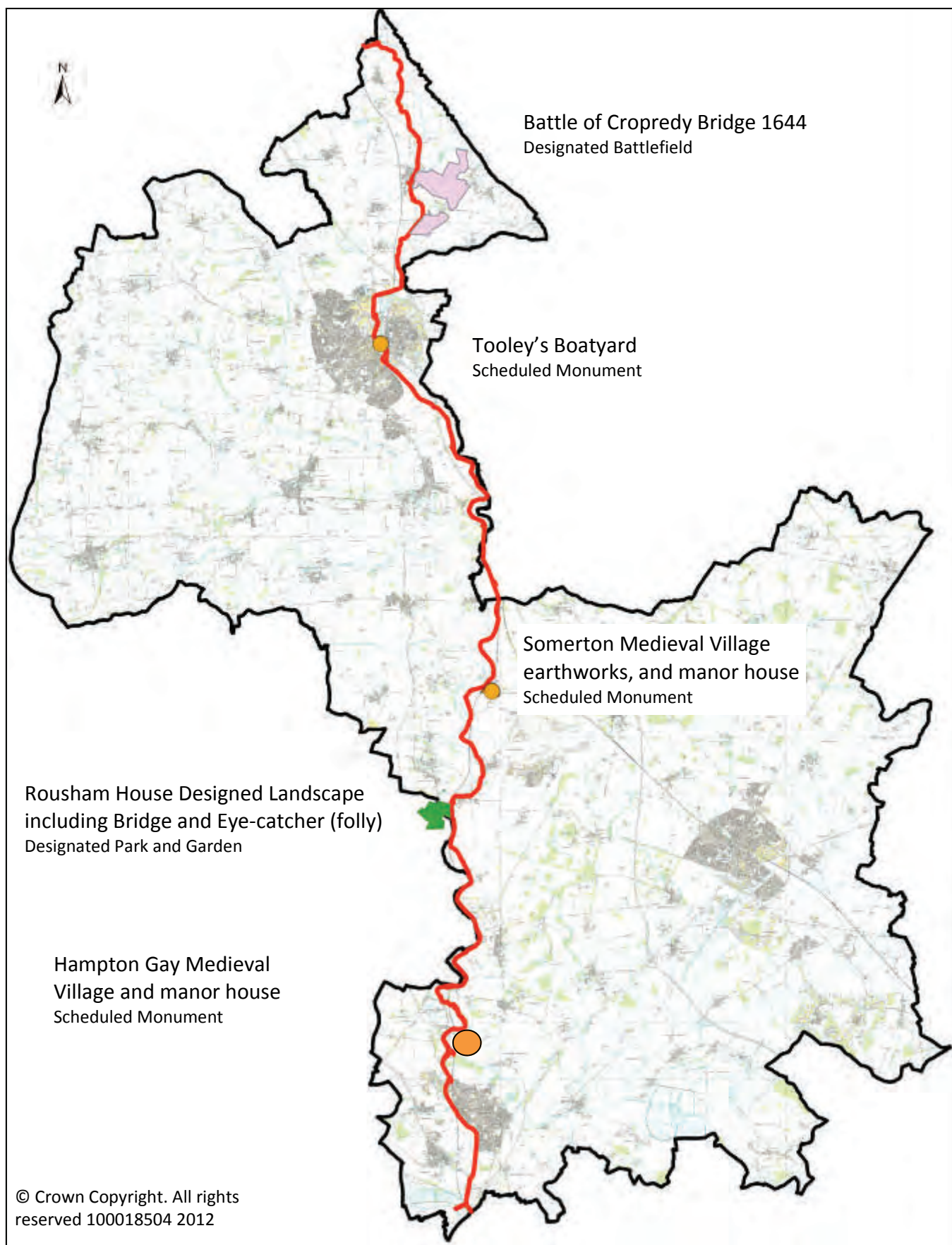


Fig. 5 Substantial Designated Heritage Assets adjacent to the conservation area

5. History and Development

The Cherwell valley forms a natural and historic routeway through the district. Its rural agricultural character was established during a time of relative prosperity in the medieval period, with inclosure occurring early in several parishes. The significant urban area in the valley is the market town Banbury, the canal passing through its former wharfage and industry with the coal load. Other smaller industries along the valley were water-related: corn mills and a paper mill, using leats or mill races taken off the river.

Although flat-bottomed boats found the river reasonably navigable, it was not until the late 1760s that the canal was proposed as part of the Grand Cross across England, linking rivers and waterways. This would eventually link London with Oxford, Liverpool, Hull and Bristol. Along this section of the Oxford Canal, the River Cherwell fed the canal, making it a more reliable waterway.

The Oxford Canal Company was the second of two companies created to enable this project. James Brindley, a former millwright (1716-1772), was hired as the Engineer and General Surveyor, having already worked on the Trent & Mersey Canal. Work began at the northern end of the route, and by 1771 ten miles had been completed. Brindley died the following year, and work slowed due to lack of ready funds. Banbury was reached by March 1778, with a wharf being established close to the site of the castle.



James Brindley 1770 © National Portrait Gallery

Following a period of inactivity due to finances and slow work on other canals, work started again from Banbury in 1786, this time with James Barnes as resident engineer. The line was officially opened throughout on New Year's Day 1790. With the opening of the Isis Lock in 1796, the canal and the Thames were linked within Oxford, with an interchange wharf to change goods between the narrowboats of the canal and the river boats of the Thames.

While the canal construction clearly had an impact on the country's landscape and infrastructure, the wider benefits included the teaching of specialist building and carpentry techniques, spreading these skills throughout the country.



Brass seal of the Oxford Canal Company

By far the most important cargo of the Oxford Canal was coal. The canals allowed the rapid expansion of the coalfields in the Midlands and the North-West. These had previously been hampered by poor transport links in comparison to the ones in the North-East, which sent coal by sea. Coal prices in Banbury and Oxford almost halved with the opening of the canal because it could be sourced from the coalfields to the north of Coventry and further afield. Whilst the fall in coal prices benefited most people, others were less happy with the impact of the canal. Even 1809, the loss of meadow land required for its construction was felt by some to have spoilt the countryside and it was thought that such actions would have a negative impact on agriculture.

The sinuous route of the canal, and the increased time and distance that this necessitated, was threatened by new canals in the early 19th century. A series of shortcuts were constructed in the northern section, cutting the overall distance from 91 to 77½ miles by 1834. Traffic in the section south of Napton declined slightly, and this part became primarily for local traffic and coal, although cheese from the Midlands to London still travelled along this route.

The major threat to the canals was the railways. The mid-19th century saw the opening of the LNWR and the GWR. Tolls were dramatically reduced to ensure continuity, but deliveries requiring reliability rather than speed, such as coal, still travelled by narrowboat. Although the gross tonnage being carried increased slightly, the income of the canal gradually fell as the railways took hold.

The advent of the car, and the glut of second-hand military trucks after the First World War had a major impact on the remaining canals. Traffic reduced drastically, maintenance standards fell. By the time Tom Rolt began his campaign to restore the inland waterways, there was only one regular working boat on the Oxford Canal: a weekly coal boat. Rolt's 1944 work *Narrowboat* indicates that the canal was a lonely place, and that repairs had not been undertaken in some time, as locks were starting to come apart.

The Second World War gave the canal a reprieve, being put under the control of the Ministry of Transport. As an independent company, the Oxford Canal managed to exert some emergency maintenance works before being taken over in 1942.

The British Transport Commission was created after the war, and the Oxford Canal was nationalised in 1948. Due to its poor condition and lack of use, the commission deemed it as being worthy of closure in 1955.



Weir rebuilt in 1940 [86]

The British Transport Commission was broken up gradually in the late 1950's, and most inland navigation came under the control of the new British Waterways Board (BWB). The works of Tom Rolt and Charles Hadfield had brought the canals to the attention of the public, who were keen to retain them. After more reports, by the powers of the 1968 Transport Act, the waterways were officially divided into those considered to be mainly commercial and those considered to be 'cruiseways', 'to be principally available for cruising, fishing, and other recreational purposes'; the Oxford Canal, already popular with recreational boaters, was naturally placed in that latter category. Since then the Oxford Canal has continued to be one of the busiest and most popular cruiseways in the country, so much so that in high summer during times of low rainfall, water levels can become problematic due to the sheer number of boats using the locks.



1960s postcard showing south of Somerton Deep Lock depicting the canal as picturesque

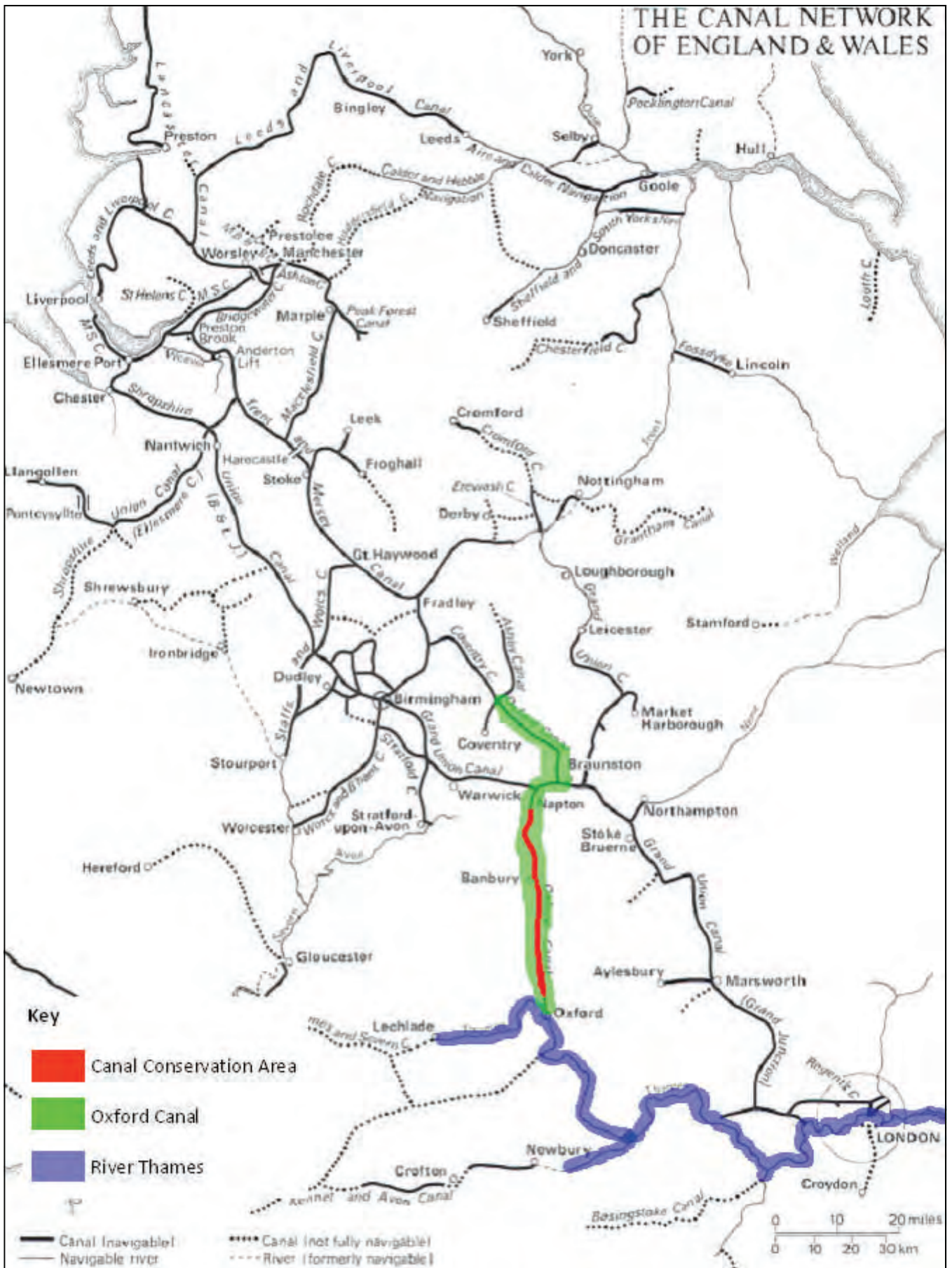


Fig. 6 The Canal Network of England and Wales at the end of the Grand Canal Project c.1790-1800

6. Architecture and Established Character of the Canal

Engineering

6.1 As already stated, the Oxford Canal is a classic contour canal, utilising the existing landscape to minimise the amount of expensive engineering required in locks, cuttings, tunnels, embankments and aqueducts. It is one of the canals usually referred to in accounts of the historical development of canals.

6.2 All of Brindley's canals were of this type, due mainly to issues of costs rather than lack of engineering skills. He had demonstrated his engineering skills on earlier canals, such as the Bridgewater and the Trent & Mersey, and pioneered the construction of major aqueducts and tunnels. Even on the Oxford Canal, Brindley and his successors had constructed a major aqueduct at Brinklow and several tunnels; all of these, however, are on the Warwickshire section of the route, north of the conservation area.



In several sections the towpath is on a bank between the canal and River Cherwell, as here near Enslow

6.3 A meandering contour canal still required a great deal of engineering skill, in terms of choosing a level route and keeping it well supplied with water. Very rarely are no earthworks required. The Oxford Canal was mainly built on the sides of the valley, trying to avoid the flood plain as much as possible. As a result, the route lies across the slope, and a shallow terrace had to be formed for the canal.

6.4 This was achieved by digging into the upper part of the slope and using the spoil to build up the lower part, effectively creating a continuous embankment on the lower side. Throughout most of the route, the towpath runs along the top of the embankment, which appears to be built simply of re-deposited natural gravels and soil. This construction method has resulted in the towpath's inherent instability, requiring ongoing maintenance, which has not always succeeded in repairing the fault.



Typical section of canal south from Nell Bridge: the towpath on the right is built up on a low embankment and the hedgerow is quite impervious

6.5 There are no major engineering features along the canal, apart from those related with water supply and the adjacent river. In some quite long sections, the towpath runs along a tall embankment between the canal and the river below. Special engineering was required to raise the river level to match the canal on the level above Weir Lock (near Aynho); further south, the adaptation of the river for the navigation also proved challenging.

6.6 There are some sections of very shallow cuttings and some sections, such as at Clattercote in the north of the proposed conservation area, are on low raised embankments. However, the only significant cutting is just south of Somerton, and known to the company, perhaps ironically, as the Deep Cutting. Problems with the towpath through the cutting mean that the original canalside route has effectively been abandoned and it now climbs erratically up to and along the edge of the cutting instead.

Water and Engineering

6.7 One of the core skills of a canal engineer was the utilisation of water. The canal had to provide ample depth of water throughout its length and throughout the year. At the same time, too much water could lead to considerable damage to the canal infrastructure.



The ironically named 'Deep Cut' at Somerton

6.8 This section of the Oxford Canal obtains most of its water from the Cherwell and its tributaries. The long summit level acted as a linear reservoir and was fed by several reservoirs; there was also a pumping engine near Napton on the Hill (Warkwickshire) with a navigable cut feeding the canal. Within the conservation area the summit level was fed by two feeders from reservoirs. A small pond near to Clattercote Priory was enlarged to create a larger reservoir; its owner, Thomas Cartwright, was one of the proprietors of the canal company. Curiously, the outlet stream from the reservoir seems to pass under the canal in a culvert and run into a larger tributary of the Cherwell.

6.9 To the east, another larger reservoir was built across the valley of that same tributary, close to the villages of Upper and Lower Boddington in Northamptonshire. The tributary still flowed from below the dam of the Boddington Reservoir on its natural course, but a separate feeder channel was carefully engineered to join the canal on the level just to the north of Claydon. Other streams have been diverted to join the canal on the level to the south of the summit, the most significant being the Hanwell Brook just north of Banbury, and the Souldern Brook south of Aynho.

6.10 In two places the Cherwell was directly 'tapped' for water. Above Aynho the river crossed the canal from east to west on an artificially created level; on the towpath side a high and long weir with sluices was formed to allow the river to drop back to its natural level, and the towpath crosses the top of this is a long brick bridge, presumably a later replacement for an earlier crossing. Immediately to the south of this crossing is Weir Lock, one of the unusual slender octagonal locks with a very shallow fall; some of the river water runs directly into the lock chamber, helping to feed the canal below it.



Aynho Weir Lock

6.11 For a mile, north of Shipton-on-Cherwell, the river Cherwell was adapted for navigation. The canal was locked down into the river at Baker's Lock and then left it again at Shipton Weir lock, the other shallow octagonal lock. Using the river in this manner helped with the water supply, but it caused problems for boats during times of flooding. Whilst maintaining sufficient depth of water in the canal was important, so was ensuring that it did not overflow and potential damage its banks. The by-washes around



The towpath bridge over the Boddington Feeder north of Claydon looking south: it is probably original but not listed

the locks help in this process, as do a series of other 'gauge' or overflow weirs spaced out at long and irregular intervals along the canal. These are usually, sited where the embanked towpath side of the canal is close to the river or one of its channels; some are on the offside.

6.12 Some of these overflow weirs and sluice systems now form a characteristic element in the canal-scape, though usually these appear to have been rebuilt in the first half of the 20th century by the canal company; some are long, linear features along the side of the canal with culverts at their lower ends; others are more compact with both steps and sluices.

6.13 Because they are usually on the towpath side, most are protected by railings, generally of tubular steel rails threaded through cast concrete uprights, some of which are stamped 'OCC' – Oxford Canal Company. With the posts painted white and the rails black, they form an attractive part of the canal scene. One of the rebuilt sluice systems, to the south of King's Sutton, is dated 1940, indicating that improvements were being made in the emergency period at the start of the Second World War.

6.14 Relatively hidden elements of water management in the canal corridor are the many culverts taking streams beneath it; some of these may be original to the canal, but with their entrances usually repaired or rebuilt. Most are difficult to see because of vegetation and difficulties of access.



Double arched culvert under the canal at the southern end of a shallow embankment near Clattercote

Locks

6.15 The development of the pound lock was one of the key breakthroughs in the development of canals, allowing far greater flexibility in their routes and allowing them to cross watersheds. The earliest forms known in England were built on the Exeter Canal in the 1560s. The standard lock with mitre gates had been well established by the time the Oxford Canal was constructed.



Bourton Lock

6.16 Locks allow the narrow boats to move up and down stream, coping with changes in water levels. The 'pound' is the stretch of water between the two lock gates, and rises and lowers as the water levels change to move the boat to the next section of the canal.



Claydon Middle Lock, typical of those north of Banbury, with double gates at the tail

6.17 Locks use a vast quantity of water. To minimise waste, they were made as narrow as possible, barely larger than the boats that use them. Due to its construction, the Oxford Canal uses only 28 locks which are well-spaced along its length, excepting the flight of five at Claydon.



Varneys Lock, Cropredy

6.18 The locks vary in their depth (the difference between the water levels at either end) considerably. The majority are 7-10 feet (2-3m); Somerton Deep is the greatest, at 12ft (3.6m), whereas the next lock north, Aynho Weir, is just 1ft (0.3m) deep.

6.19 The lock chambers are lined with brick and show the signs of being much-repaired. Some have stones set into the entrances to prevent damage to the remainder of the chamber. Due to continuous use, ongoing maintenance and repair, 20th century concrete and brick can be seen throughout the canal as patch-repairs. For the most part, this was due to reasons of economy and speed to enable the canal to keep functioning in its present role.

6.20 The wooden lock gates are standard ones with balance beams, the long arms projecting over the towpath which help to manoeuvre the gates and balance them in their sockets. All have single gates at their heads (upstream), but whilst the locks down from the summit level as far as Banbury Lock have double gates at their tails (downstream), further south the tail gates are singles. This is presumably related to the gap in the construction of the southern extension of the line, and the more limited resources available.

6.21 The locks have paired ground paddles (sluices in the chamber walls) at the head above the top gates, all the gearing being on concrete posts that probably relate to a mid-20th century refurbishment. The lower gates have gate paddles.

6.22 Most of the locks have bypass weirs (by-washes) on the offside, usually open but with a few partly culverted. The by-wash at Grant's Lock, south of Banbury, seems to go under the lock-keeper's cottage, and that at Claydon Top Lock at the northern end of the area possibly once powered a waterwheel associated with the blacksmith's shop at the company's small repair works.

6.23 Where there are bridges across the tails of the locks, there are usually steps down to the towpath as well as a horse ramp on the towpath side, and boarding steps to canal level on the offside. The retention of these features is a neat touch to remind users of the canal's historic association with horse power.



Banbury Lock



The tail of Somerton Deep showing the single lock gates of locks south of Banbury



Somerton Deep is one of the few locks to have a lock keeper's cottage

6.24 Whilst only seven of the locks in the proposed conservation area retain their lock-keeper's cottages, most have some form of rectangular enclosure spanning both sides of the canal. To the north of Banbury these are often walled in the local ironstone, contrasting with the otherwise ubiquitous brick used for construction elsewhere on this section of the canal.

6.25 At Claydon Top Lock is a collection of canal company maintenance buildings, possibly original, and there is also a large warehouse on the offside at King's Sutton Lock. Many other ancillary buildings by the locks, such as stabling or stores, are either ruinous or have been demolished.

6.26 The unusually shaped octagonal locks at Aynho Weir and Shipton Weir are much wider than others on the canal, and are the shallowest locks on the main line. This is probably to do with their shallow falls and because they are positioned immediately below where the canal and the Cherwell meet on the level. Above Aynho Weir the river crosses the canal, and Shipton Weir marks the point where the canal diverges from the river again after being part of it for about a mile. The additional area allowed for by the shape of these locks presumably ensured an adequate amount of water would be available for the next pound as boats locked through them, and also may have acted as a safety reservoir in times of high river levels.

6.28 The lock on the Duke's Cut link to the Thames north of Wolvercot has single gates at either end but there is some evidence also to indicate that there was a third gate a few metres up from the tail gate, presumably designed to deal with shorter craft to save water. The lock was designed to rise or fall either way depending on river levels.

6.29 The locks are numbered from the start of the canal in Warwickshire and all are named. Their origin of their names, like those of the bridges, are either geographical or relate to some family or individual; whilst most of these people were probably local farmers, it is quite probably that some were long-serving lock-keepers.

Bridges

6.30 One of the most important defining features of the Oxford Canal are its bridges. The lift bridges in fields have become the iconic symbols of the canal, despite being built as cheaply as possible to save money. The bridges distinguish the canal from the similarly sized and equally winding River Cherwell in open views of the valley. Along the route of the conservation area there are only a handful of bridges across the river that pre-date the construction of the M40, yet there were ninety-five built across the canal.

6.31 Across a river, bridging points were generally dictated by geographical factors, such as the existence of a ford, or an area of shallows. Quite often these natural river crossing points would influence the lines of prehistoric trackways and later routes and possibly attract settlement; a bridge would then seem a sensible improvement. In the Cherwell valley, however, most settlements are sited well above the flood plain and away from the river. A canal, as well as being a transport artery in its own right, can become an obstacle to existing routes, together with splitting up established fields. It was the responsibility of the canal companies to rectify the matter by building the necessary bridges to maintain the course of a road or path and to provide enough 'accommodation bridges' to link the fields on either side.

6.32 On the Oxford Canal, the bridges were either fixed bridges of brick or stone, or moveable timber lift-bridges. As the canal was passing through generally flattish fields, the bridges needed to allow adequate head room over the 'cut' and the towpath to allow the boats and their tow horses through. Ramps were needed at either side of the crossing to achieve this.



Diminutive lock tail bridge at Allen's Lock, Upper Heyford



Lift bridge 170, Banbury

6.33 Typically, to save costs, the canal was narrowed at the bridging point, and the bridges were also usually built to cross at right-angles to it, no matter what the alignment of any existing road or track; this allowed the bridges to be smaller, if more 'hump-backed', thus saving on costs. The resulting narrow 'bridge-hole' was also a convenient place at which to close off a section of the canal with stop-planks slotted into vertical grooves in the sides of the canal bank for maintenance or following an accidental leak.



High Bush Bridge, between Lower Heyford and Northbrook

6.34 This simple type of canal bridge had been perfected by Brindley on his earlier canals, and no doubt was the type of structure which the builders of the first part of the Oxford Canal were trained how to build when taken to look at canal construction in Staffordshire. The 'hump-backed' masonry bridges were mostly of a similar design; each consisted of a single arch, usually segmental but sometimes elliptical, protected by a drip-mould. The wing walls of the abutments were built with a slight inward 'batter' and curved slightly outwards to terminal pilasters.

6.35 Most of these fixed bridges were built of brick, which was a reasonably cheap and available material. Just under a third of them were built instead of locally quarried stone, and three are mainly iron. Excluding the railway bridges and the modern road bridges, there are 54 fixed bridges across the canal in the conservation area.



Langford Lane (Bridge 224)

6.36 Although it is possible that the bridge bricks were made in local kilns such as at Twyford Wharf, it is more likely that the majority of these were made in Warwickshire and transported down the canal. The bricks are mainly hand-made but most of these bridges have been patched, repaired and in some cases, effectively rebuilt. There is a mixture of grey-blue bricks and drip moulds for the arches, and repairs undertaken in hand- and machine-made engineering brick. It is possible that some burnt-ended headers were used for effect in the original brickwork; however, most of these appear to be the result of later patch repairs. Similarly, it is possible that many of the present brick coping stones to the bridge parapets are replacements. It seems that where there is a broad projecting band course, roughly following the angle of the main bridge deck between the top of the arch and the base of the parapets, this is also probably the result of repair or rebuild, the brickwork often being of the grey-blue sort.

6.37 The stone bridges were presumably built of locally derived stone and probably indicate separate build contracts for individual lengths of the canal. These are faced in well-coursed rubblestone but generally have ashlar springers and voussoirs beneath a drip-mould; their arches are topped by simple but elegant ashlar keystones. None of the stone bridges have a band course at deck level beneath the parapets.



Relatively poor stonework at Yarnton (Bridge 228)



Better quality stonework: relatively unaltered of bridge 207 near Heyford Wharf

6.38 In general, the stone bridges seem to have lasted better than the brick ones, and have suffered less repair and rebuilding. However, the various repairs to the brick bridges do form part of their architectural character. In contrast, the concrete rendering of several bridges, probably dating from the early-20th century, does detract from their aesthetic appeal and such treatment cannot be good for the long term survival of their brickwork.



Allen's Lock (Bridge 204), Upper Heyford

6.39 Some bridges deviate from the general built form. There are two bridges across the tails of locks which are too narrow to accommodate a towpath: one, in stone, at Nell's Bridge Lock (Bridge 187) and the other, in brick, at Allen's Lock (Bridge 204). North of Banbury, the unnamed Bridge 149 crosses the canal at an angle and has an elliptical arch. To achieve this angle of direction, the brick arch is a 'skew arch', which requires much more careful and expensive brickwork. The outward ends of the skew brickwork are expressed in the stepping out of the courses of the voussoirs (wedge-shaped stone forming the arch curve).



Bridge 149, Cropredy



Abutments of former lift bridge 169, south of Banbury



*Lift bridge 193 in the raised position
½ mile (800m) from Somerton Deep Lock*

6.40 It is the lift-bridges or draw-bridges on the southern Oxford Canal give it much of its visual and architectural character. Whilst picturesque features within the landscape, they were not popular with the working boats; because they were once quite vital to the farmers and other local people, they were usually left in the 'down' position, which meant that boat crews had to spend a great deal of their time dealing with them. A large number of them were removed between the 1950s and 70s. Now the surviving ones are generally left open due to modern agricultural practices and canal usage. Together they form the largest collection of such bridges surviving in the country. Within the conservation area there are 18 surviving lift bridges, clear evidence of 11 others, and possible indications of two more.

6.41 The most northerly on the canal (Bridge 141) is a few yards outside the boundary of the conservation area, in Warwickshire, but close enough to impact upon it visually. There are the abutments of two removed bridges to the north of Banbury and a replaced modern version above the town's lock, but the rest are all on the part of the canal extended southwards at the end of the 1780's.

6.42 There are many different types of drawbridges and the Oxford Canal's are quite distinct. Typically the canal was narrowed at the bridge into a brick or stone lined bridge hole to save costs. The bridge consists of a timber-framed boarded deck attached to a diagonal pair of heavy balance beams extending over the offside abutments. In addition, there are iron rods on either side of the bridge and a fairly ephemeral railing. Beneath the beams and attached to the top of the abutments are interlocking segments of cast-iron gearing. Normally, the weight of the beams ensures that the bridge deck is in the 'up' position.



Bridge 189 [94]

6.43 The lift bridge design is very simple but quite effective, and visually distinctive, especially when the bridges are well maintained and painted in the corporate black and white colour scheme. They do require periodic replacements, a process often neglected for as long as possible in the period before the waterway began to flourish again. The bridge by Banbury Lock was removed in 1975 but replaced by a modern hydraulically operated one when the Castle Quay shopping centre was built. The modern lift bridge at Thrupp is electric powered. Mill Lane Bridge in Lower Heyford is a modern version made of aluminium which replaced an earlier iron version installed early in the 20th century.

6.44 Complete bridge replacements are rare; where bridges have proven to be inadequate for modern traffic, the majority have been widened or bypassed. At Lower Heyford and Nell's Bridge a new bridge has been added immediately alongside the older one and the original bridge at Enslow Wharf has been bypassed completely.

6.45 Most of the bridges have names, the origins of which are often unknown, but usually relate to villages on the route, as well as the names of local farms and families from the past. None have name plates, but virtually all of the surviving bridges have cast iron bridge plates of historical style but of unknown date.

6.46 The numbering sequence in use begins at the northern end of the canal but appears not to be the original one. It generally ignores railway bridges, so may predate the construction of the railways; it also seems to ignore the shortening of the northern end of the canal in the 1830's, and was certainly in use by the 1880's and the first editions of the large scale Ordnance Survey maps.



Earlier numbering scheme evident in the key stone of bridge 206

6.47 Modern bridges have numbers in the sequence, usually suffixed by an A. Usually, it is the bridge after an existing one that gets this suffix: a new bridge after Bridge No.123 would be given the number 123A. However, in several cases the bridge numbering on the Oxford Canal is awry, with a number and suffix assigned to a bridge in front, rather than after, in the sequence.

6.48 Some of the brick bridges have inset stone plaques which may have related to earlier bridge numbering. Two original stone bridges, separated now by a railway bridge, are Lower Heyford (Bridge No.206) and Cleeve Bridge (Bridge No.207); they have the numbers 7 and 8 respectively carefully carved into their keystones. Similarly, at least two other bridges seem to have remnants of carved three figure numbers beginning '15' in their keystones. Most keystones, however, are too weathered to have any surviving numbers.

6.49 Other more unusual bridges include a much repaired but original one (Bridge 142) across the main feeder from the Boddington Reservoir; the unusual brick-built viaduct of several arches taking the towpath across the Cherwell where it crosses on the level above Weir Lock near Aynho; the rather elegant Nadkey Bridge (Bridge 172) which was rebuilt with brick abutments, a shallow segmental arched deck, supported on cast-iron girders, and iron hand rails; and the elegant arched steel of Horse Bridge (Bridge 217), presumably a replica of an earlier one, across the Cherwell where it joins the canal below Baker's Lock. It was built in 1907



Drinkwaters's Bridge 231: a replacement of the original



Nadkey Bridge 175



Bridge 202, Upper Heyford [119]

6.50 There are also other bridges of varying types across the canal, including several railway bridges, mainly of very simple steel girder construction. In all cases the present girders and the decking date to 20th century improvements, but parts of the brick-faced abutments are primary to the construction of the railway line. There are some elegant mid-1930's rubble-faced but concrete road bridges on the northern outskirts of Oxford across the canal and the city's northern by-pass crosses it and the adjacent railway line of a tall and airy reinforced concrete viaduct. The M40 bridges of the late-1980's are far more utilitarian structures. Modern pedestrian bridges occur mainly in Banbury, associated with the modern shopping centre.



M40 bridge north of Banbury [46]



Shipton lift bridge in the closed position

The Architectural Style of the Canal

6.51 Excluding structures such as bridges and locks, the buildings along the line of the canal that are directly related to it vary in design and there is no sense of a company house style. This absence of a corporate design is typical of the early canals, which were functional rather than stylish modes of transport. They were built to carry goods and reduce carriage costs; passengers were extremely rare and it was only with the arrival of the railways in the 1830's and 40's that corporate styles for transport concerns became desirable.



Cottages at Thrupp

6.52 Some of the canal buildings on the line of the Oxford Canal, such as the stone-built cottages on the canalside at Thrupp, were probably already standing and simply acquired by the company. New buildings were confined mainly to a handful of lock keepers' cottages and some wharfage buildings. The majority of these were built in brick with simple detailing and functional plan forms.

6.53 Six lock keepers' cottages survive. Apart from the cottage at the junction between the canal and the Duke's Cut, the others are built parallel to the lock chambers on the towpath or offside as dictated, presumably, by the lie of the land. All of the cottages are brick with a plain gabled slated roof. The exception is the one at King's Sutton, which has an original stone façade. Individual detailing varies, though apart from King's Sutton, all have dentilled eaves; windows are usually timber casements, window heads vary in design, including segmental heads and flat arches of rubbed brick, and some cottages have first-floor band courses and others do not. They have been altered slightly over the years: a few have been extended, one rendered and another painted white. The evidence suggests that, despite



The stone faced brick cottage at King's Sutton Lock

slight differences in detail, they were all built to a simple and similar plan. Each seems to have started off as a plain two-bay plan with similar accommodation on two floors. At ground floor level there was a doorway and a single window in the front elevation, with two matching windows above. Each had a chimney stack at one gable end.

6.54 The two cottages at Somerton Deep and the Duke's Cut were built to a slightly higher quality of design than the other ones, but only in that they had windows with chamfered brick surrounds and vaguely Tudor Gothic four-centred heads. Apart from the cottages at King's Sutton and the Duke's Cut locks, the others were extended by one bay, leaving the original doorway in the centre of a symmetrical three-bay facade. Additional outbuildings have also been added to the rear and side of some of the cottages, but their basic character remains intact despite some decorative finishes.

6.55 These cottages are of fairly humble design, and built using the typical local materials. However, they did have a simple regularity of scale that would have set them slightly apart from the local farm buildings, especially given their direct association with the canal. There are small groups of buildings at other places along the canal, usually at the wharfs.



The lock keepers cottage at Little Bourton, little altered since being extended (single storey to the right)

6.56 The wharfs were built both by the canal company and by private stakeholders. Their layout often seems to utilise and reinforce pre-canal property boundaries. For example, at the former Langford Lane wharf by Kidlington occupies a triangular plot of land between the canal and the lane and the buildings are laid out along the edges of the available space; its position on the towpath side could be related to the availability of land, or the fact that the wharf also served the small town of Woodstock, a few miles to the west.



The cottages at Kidlington Wharf

6.57 At Langford Lane, the buildings are mainly of rubblestone and include a terrace of two-storey cottages, originally thatched but rebuilt after a fire with lower-pitched slate roofs. Similarly, at Thrupp, the main canal settlement in the proposed conservation area, most of the buildings are of rubblestone as well, though some clearly pre-date the canal itself and were associated with the large formerly manorial farm and mill.

6.58 Other canalside buildings were also evidently in existence before the canal and many of these were never taken over by it, especially the several farms and a couple of mills close to it. In some cases, a new building has been added by or near the canal within an existing farmstead to take advantage of it.

6.59 The best surviving wharf is that at Cropredy, which retains many of its buildings as well as its basic layout, still partly walled. This has the one building of architectural extravagance surviving on this section of the canal: the three-bay brick-built and hip-roofed wharf house, which retains a bay window extension overlooking the cut. It is possible that this building might also have spent a short time as the Navigation Inn. There is a surviving gateway to the wharf to the south, built or rebuilt in the mid-19th century, as well as other brick buildings probably once used for



Aynho Wharf

stabling and warehousing. It now retains its links with the canal by being used in part by a local canoe club.

6.60 The busiest traditional wharves are at Aynho, Lower Heyford, Enslow and Thrupp. These retain a handful of much altered older buildings but have been modernised to meet the requirements of a 'cruiseway'. Thrupp is the most canal-orientated settlement on the route and has an interesting collection of buildings of varying dates, both pre- and post-dating the canal. Some of the former commercial buildings appear to have been adapted for residential use; all are distinctly vernacular in character and mostly built of the local rubblestone.

6.61 There are also occasional canalside buildings built or adapted for smaller and more isolated wharves along its route. At Twyford, for example, there are surviving remains of large brick kilns that could date to the early days of the canal. At the diminutive Souldern Wharf the farm probably predates the canal but there is a small warehouse building on the offside with a 'taking-in' doorway at water level that clearly is associated with it. A good group of simple canal buildings survives at Claydon Top Lock; there is no lock-keeper's cottage, but on the offside is a collection of maintenance buildings, including the former forge, still in use.



Cropredy Wharf

Minor Historic Features

6.62 Unfortunately, few minor historic features such as mooring rings, rubbing strakes on bridges, or historic signage remain along the canal. This is likely to be due to the low-key maintenance programme contrasting with over 200 years of constant use.

6.63 Five stone milestones or mile-markers were identified in the conservation area. Others may be awaiting rediscovery under vegetation. The markers were all plain rectangular stone uprights with indents to take the missing cast-iron mileage plates; these were fixed with four leaded dowels and the indents for these survive. Milemarkers were a commercial feature of the canal, as most cargoes would be charged by the mile. Where they do survive, they are an important reminder of the canal's commercial history.

6.64 Bridges seem not to have been fitted with iron or timber strakes to prevent too much wear on the corners of the masonry in the bridge arch. This may be because most bridges were on fairly straight sections of the canal, although the large extent of brick repairs to the bridge arches in the late-19th century could have removed much of the damage caused by towropes; similarly, relatively limited traffic and the use of powered craft in the 20th century may have led to little additional wear.



Surviving milestone: devoid of its plate



Distance marker

6.65 The canal boundary is usually marked by a thick and overgrown hedge on the towpath side and often left open on the offside. In some sections the towpath hedge has been replaced by modern fencing, or removed completely. There is evidence of stone walls at many of the locks, often repaired in brick. Much of the fencing around weirs is 20th century steel tubular rail threaded through concrete posts. On the towpath there are triangular sectioned cast-iron posts embedded into the ground, usually 200 yards on either side of a lock or flight of locks. These have the letters 'DIS' cast into them, short for 'distance'. Whoever passed the marker first on the approach to the lock had priority over a boat coming the other way; this seems to have applied initially to the faster 'fly boats' who paid higher tolls. It is unclear what date these posts are but they could date to the mid-19th century.

6.66 Within Banbury, much of the older towpath boundary is made up of fragments of brick wall, though this is incomplete and virtually removed entirely north of Bridge Street. On much of the offside, private and public wharves ran down to the canal bank and there are some remnants of brick boundary walls between them.



A mix of old and new features at Cropredy



A handful of commercial boats still ply the canal



A British Waterways dumb barge with a balance beam for a lock on board

Canal Craft

6.67 Whilst the tranquillity of the broader setting and the intrinsic historic interest of its infrastructure are both very important elements of its character and significance, it is the boats that use it that give the canal its purpose. The days of horse-drawn and later powered working boats have long gone, although there are a handful of narrowboats that do provide services and goods along the canal. These are mainly for other boat users, except for the ‘cheese boat’ which can often be seen tied up in Banbury. There are also occasional maintenance boats to be seen.

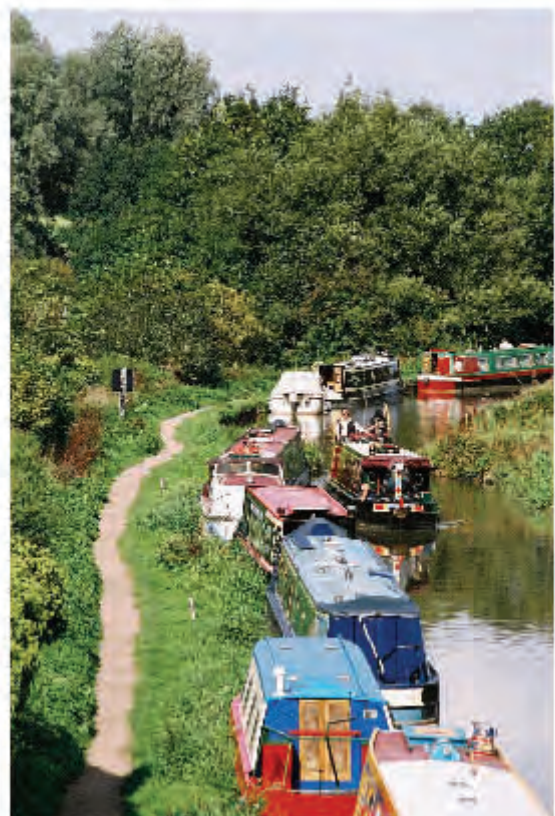


Live-aboards at Thrupp

6.68 Two main types of craft now use the canal, virtually indistinguishable as their functions are interchangeable. These are the cruising craft, the majority of which are hired, and the semi-permanent or permanent ‘live-aboards’. Both craft are usually residential designs based on the parameters of the traditional working narrowboats of the past. The main difference is the variety of colour schemes and individual touches in the individually owned boats. There are, of course, smaller craft and day craft as well, including kayaks and canoes, mainly in the summer months.



The canal at Cropredy is still a hive of boating activity



The colourful boats contrast with the vegetation

Key Views

6.69 In a more typical Conservation Area, the identification of key views is an important part of any appraisal. In this linear Conservation Area, the views into and out of the canal zone are virtually endless where there is no towpath hedge or woodland.

6.70 In the rural sections, the natural view points along the canal itself are up and down the canal. Such views, usually framed by a hedge on one side and open country on the other, can be very rewarding, and there is usually a good focal point to the view. This can often be one of the main bridges, or even a simple bend in the line of the cut, and there is always the hope of seeing a moving narrowboat.

6.71 Where there is public access across them, the bridges over the canal offer the opportunities for views into the distinctive, almost secretive, world of the canal from the wider world beyond its banks. Conversely, there are views from bridge parapets out from the canal and over any hedgerows. Often there is a gateway in the towpath hedge even at accommodation bridges, again allowing views through.



Views of the canal incorporate the towpath, hedges and open countryside beyond



6.72 Away from such bridges views from the line of the canal vary, mainly according to the condition of the towpath hedge. For much of the length, the quickset hedge is tall, overgrown and impenetrable, even in winter when it loses most of its leaves.

6.73 Just occasionally, there are sections of towpath where there is either no hedge at all or a lower modern fence, and the views across the valley are then panoramic, matching those usually prevailing over the offside bank. The longest stretch without a towpath hedge is from the bridge at Souldern Wharf (Bridge 192) to south of Heyford Common lock.



Lift bridge 186 close to Nell's Bridge Lock



Langford Lane Wharf, Kidlington, with live-aboard narrowboats and a former canal outbuilding

6.74 There is a succession of fine views on the offside of the canal throughout, apart from some sections that are well wooded. As well as the wider view there are interesting features closer to the bank, especially, in the northern section of the conservation area, the large areas of medieval ridge and furrow. Generally, the views to either side of the canal in the rural areas are terminated in the distance by the higher ground of the valley sides, but they can be extensive where there are no trees or tall scrub in the way. The distance depends on the position of the canal from the valley sides as it meanders down the valley trying to keep to the same contour for as long as possible.



View to the church at Kings Sutton

6.75 Whilst most of the villages along the route of the canal lie well away from it and the flood plain, occasionally their chimneys and roof tops can be seen, the latter mainly covered in slate and tile but with the occasional ones with thatch or Stonesfield slate tilestones. Occasionally, church towers form viewpoints in the scenery, such as those of the Heyfords or Somerton especially, though none can match the spire of King's Sutton church on the Northamptonshire side of the county boundary. A less attractive landmark of similar dominance is the tall chimney of the redundant and semi-ruinous cement works near Enslow.



Peace and tranquillity of the rural landscape (above) sits well with the pace of daily life on the canal (below)

6.76 Apart from where public roads or paths cross the canal, views into the canal zone are less distinctive or remarkable. For most of its route, the line of the canal is very indistinct from the surrounding landscape, usually seen as just another hedgerow in a well-hedged valley. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish the canal from the equally sluggish and meandering River Cherwell. It is only the regular procession of bridges interrupting the hedge line that helps to pick out the canal – and especially the distinctive black-and-white painted lift bridges.



Landscapes and Biodiversity

6.77 Much of the length of the Oxford Canal is rich in aquatic and waterside flora and fauna and the route of the Oxford Canal has considerable biodiversity value. These have national, regional and local levels of protection. At a national level there are designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), with a variety of designations both statutory and non-statutory along the entire length of the canal.



Fauna near Somerton

6.78 In the southern section the Oxford Canal passes into the Oxford Green Belt. The Green Belt designation is land which is protected in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework (Sec. 9) in order to check unrestricted sprawl of built-up areas, safeguard the countryside from encroachment (neighbouring towns merging), preserve the setting and character of historic towns, and assist urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land. The protection of the Green Belt helps to create popular areas for people to access the countryside and enjoy the quiet and solitude away from lively towns whilst acting to help protect the character and appearance of the Oxford Canal.

6.79 The Oxford Canal runs through a very attractive, largely rural landscape which was designated an Area of High Landscape Value in the Cherwell Local Plan (1996). This is a non-statutory designation which the Proposed Submission Cherwell Local Plan 2012 proposes to replace with a more general policy which seeks to conserve and enhance the character of the wider landscape. The particular value of the Oxford Canal and its setting is recognised in the supporting text.



Riverbank vegetation near Cropredy

6.80 Of particular significance to the Conservation Area is the Conservation Target Area (CTA) which identifies the most important areas for wildlife conservation in Oxfordshire and where targeted conservation will have the greatest benefit in the delivery of the Oxford Biodiversity Action Plan (2006). The Biodiversity Action Plan for Oxfordshire is hosted by Oxfordshire Nature Conservation Forum (ONCF). Initiatives which constitute part of the delivery of the CTA may be considered part of the mechanism to promote the preservation and enhancement of the Conservation Areas character and appearance.

6.81 In addition, due to its location along the River Cherwell Valley and its aquatic and rural character the canal zone is host to a number of protected species.



The farming landscape is apparent when seeing the canal in its wider context

Positive & Negative Factors

Positive Contributors

6.82 Because the proposed Conservation Area is tightly focussed on the canal itself, virtually every structure directly or indirectly associated with it makes an impact and a contribution to the area and its setting. It is preferred that these are protected, especially in the less altered rural stretches. The more modern structures make less of a positive impact than their more historic counterparts, but they are still a contributory factor in the canal's history.



Tarver's Bridge

Bridges

6.83 All the bridges on the canal make a positive contribution to it, whether or not they have any intrinsic historical or architectural value. This is because each bridge represents the interface between the canal and other forms of transport as well as the historic divisions of earlier field systems. In addition, each bridge is a focal point for views along the line of the canal.

6.84 Many of the bridges are of intrinsic historical value and many are listed; some others are not due to their lack of national significance. The remainder will have a degree of protection from the conservation area designation, making them part of a designated heritage asset. Some examples stand out as being candidates for a local register of undesigned heritage assets, such as the 1930's road bridges near Kidlington, which are striking features and exemplar versions of their type in this area.

Engineering Infrastructure

6.85 All of the engineering infrastructure of the canal is of intrinsic historical importance as part of this pioneering piece of civil engineering, no matter how much they have required repair and maintenance over the past two and a half centuries. With this designation, it is hoped that more sympathetic maintenance could be sought for those structures which have suffered.



Aynho Lock elevated towpath

The Rural Setting

6.86 It is accepted that the original character of the canal has been lost, due to its change from an industrial carriageway to a leisurely cruiseway. However, the rural setting of most of the canal and the intimate relationship between it and the River Cherwell also positive factors that enhance the conservation area. Apart from a derelict cement factory, the ongoing flood prevention scheme, and the M40, there is little in the setting that harms the current character of the canal.

Negative Contributors

6.87 Identifying negative factors can be problematic, as those factors are already in existence. Therefore, they could be thought of as areas for improvement.

Rural Sections

6.88 The rural sections of the canal are relatively tranquil and pass through countryside scenery. Occasionally the canal passes historic villages constructed in a local architectural style and through already designated conservation areas. The architecture and engineering are all 'low key', matching the typical and non-dramatic scenery of the Cherwell valley.

6.89 There are few buildings that seriously detract from the character of the canal, apart from the derelict cement factory to the south of Enslow. The concrete repairs to many of the original brick bridges does detract from their appearance. Other buildings require simple yet regular maintenance to bring them up to an acceptable standard, and would then be considered to be positive features.



Town Hall wharf, Banbury - in need of some maintenance

6.90 The main negative factor is noise from the traffic on the M40 motorway. The earthworks of the motorway are now fairly matured and have been colonised by vegetation, meaning the scale of the engineering is not really visible from within the proposed conservation area, except at the bridges. However, during most of the day the incessant roar of its traffic seriously impacts on the tranquillity of the valley, especially from just north of Banbury to a mile or so to the south of Somerton.

Urban

6.91 The historic character of the canal zone within Banbury has already been largely eradicated to the north of Bridge Street and fragmented to the south of it. The main negative factor in the southern section is the poor condition of many of the surviving buildings and the unwelcoming nature of the towpath.

The Condition of the Tow Path

6.92 The towpath of the Oxford Canal has been causing concern for many years but British Waterways (BWB) have made real efforts to improve it in the last 20 or 30 years. However, the path is built up on a fairly unstable embankment in parts and can be very muddy and uneven. It is unsuitable in many stretches for bikes, and use of bikes could, in fact, make matters worse.



The informal nature of the towpath is a visual asset but in practical terms this can reduce its usability in adverse weather conditions

Potential Threats

Tow Path Repairs

6.93 The towpath requires constant maintenance and there could be a wish to rectify matters more permanently. However, the only way this could be done would be to create a hard standing with a metalled, tarmac or gravelled surface. Whilst such surfaces are acceptable for the sections of moorings, such as on the Thrupp Wide, in the rest of the rural stretches of the canal they would be obtrusive and impact adversely on the 'soft engineering' character of the canal.

Rural Residential

6.94 Pressure for development is a constant threat to any rural area, which has to balance the requirements of local people and potential new residents against the appearance of the area. Whilst potential development would mainly involve the existing settlements along the route, which are usually at a distance from the canal itself, there may still be pressure for developments at 'brown field' sites nearer to the canal, such as the industrial units at Enslow Wharf, the former concrete factory near Enslow, and several areas near to Kidlington. All development should be carefully considered against the existing policies at both councils.

Urban Development

6.95 It is assumed that there will be more potential for development in Banbury, especially opposite the Castle Quay centre and in the area to the south of Bridge Street, both immediately adjacent to the canal. The northern approach of the canal into the town still retains its historic and semi-rural atmosphere, and is well used by walkers, cyclists and boaters, providing access to the local parks and countryside. Any potential development should be restricted to the west side of the canal in this section. Redevelopment of the southern section should ideally be aimed at revitalising the area. However, careful high-quality design solutions would be required to prevent pastiche or warehouse-type structures which are often typical of redeveloped waterfronts.



View south from Somerton Deep showing the decayed state of the towpath

Development of Marinas

6.96 There are several successful marinas on this section of the canal, catering for the growing needs of recreational boating. Two of these, at Aynho Wharf and Lower Heyford, are fairly large and in a rural setting, but they have no adverse impact on the character of the canal. Similarly, there are also some smaller ones on the line that are also more positive than negative in their impact. It is strongly suggested that any future development of marinas in the rural areas be very carefully designed and quite limited in their capacity. Otherwise they will be obtrusive and inappropriate. It is further recommended that large marina development should be within urban areas, such as Banbury or Kidlington.

Restoration

6.97 There is a danger that the ongoing philosophy of repairs to the canal infrastructure and its buildings, presently undertaken on a fairly *ad hoc* basis, could change. The danger of restoration as opposed to repair is that it can be potentially damaging to the appearance of the area if undertaken in an inappropriate manner. The Oxford Canal has never had a real house style that can be recreated, excepting its simplicity of form. Over its life time there has seldom been adequate resources to undertake comprehensive repairs to any of its structures. This fact is a key element in the distinctive appearance of this particular waterway and ideally this simplistic and traditional form of preservation should be encouraged above the comprehensive remodelling of the canal.

7. Route Assessment

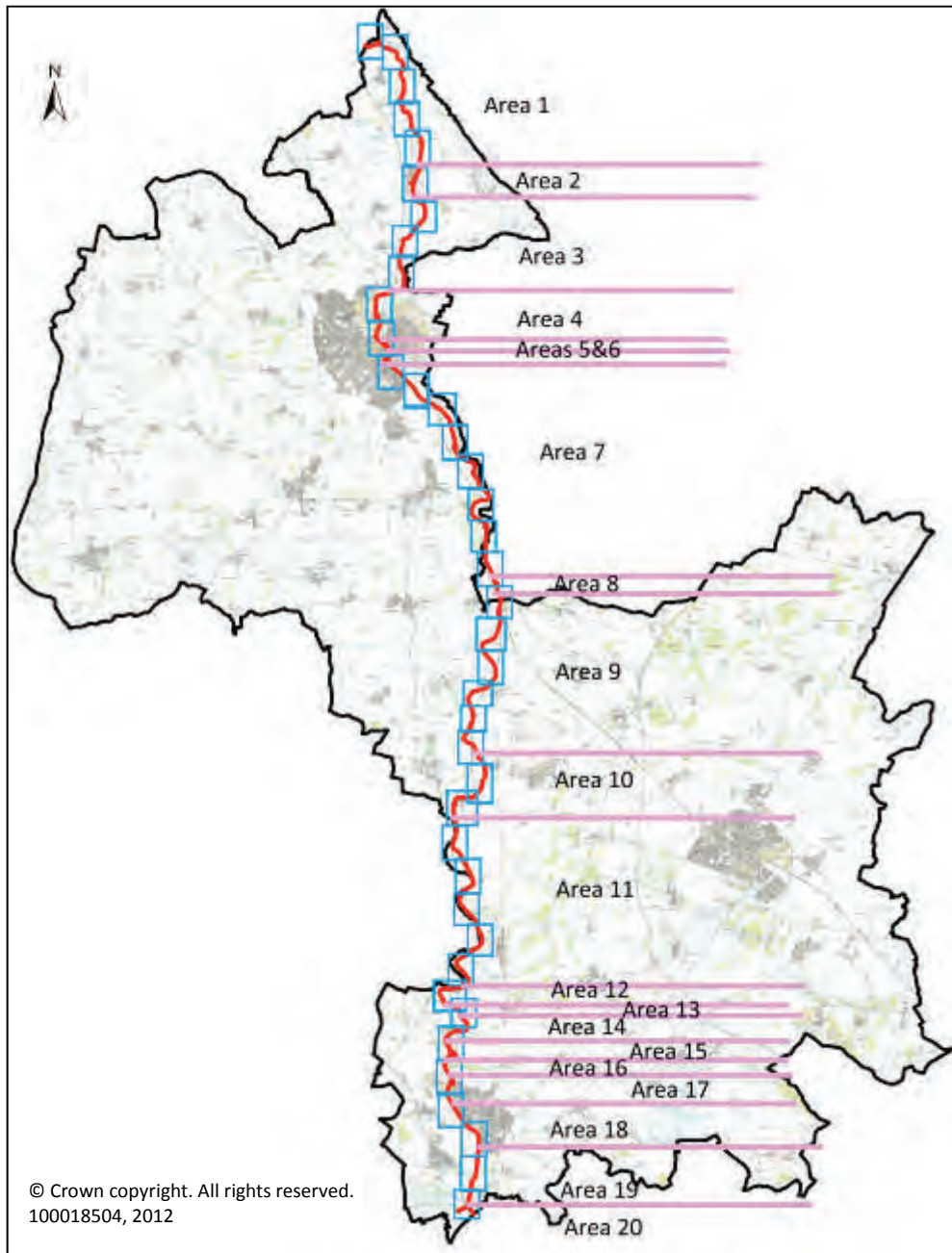


Fig. 7 Route Assessment map with locations of map sections

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 The conservation area is a long winding zone that starts high up on the watershed between the tributaries of the Thames to the south and the Warwickshire Avon to the north. It mainly runs down the valley of the River Cherwell and ends in the northern suburbs of Oxford, in the low-lying meadows by an arm of the River Thames. Apart from passing through Banbury, it is almost entirely rural, and indeed, quite isolated, until it meets the outer suburbs of Oxford. For much of the route, the general character of the canal and its setting is very

similar, with just some subtle variations; this consistency and calm within the landscape of the route forms a very important part of its distinctiveness.

7.1.2 The canal is punctuated by bridges along its length. Due to the linear nature of the designation, the views along the canal towards the next bridge are key elements of the conservation area, especially from a boat or on the towpath.

7.2 Route Assessment Area 1: Boundary Bridge (Bridge 141) to ex-Bridge 151, north of Cropredy

7.2.1 The northern end of the area is about 120m above sea level and starts near the canal's summit level. This is in the northernmost tip of Oxfordshire, less than a mile from where it and the adjacent counties of Warwickshire and Northamptonshire meet.

7.2.2 Despite the height above sea level and the fact this is the canal's summit level, it runs in a fairly flattish area bounded by taller hills to either side – Stoneton to the north-east and Windmill Hill to the south-west – giving the impression that it is in a valley setting. Historically, this provides one of the easiest crossings through the Cotswolds ridge.

7.2.3 The focal point at this end of the proposed conservation area is the first of the distinctive lift bridges for which the Oxford Canal is renowned, although Boundary Bridge (No.141) is actually just a few yards over the county boundary in Warwickshire.



Positive landmark: Boundary Bridge in Warwickshire

7.2.4 The canal passes fairly close to the village of Claydon, which is not visible from the canal; this sets a precedent for the rest of the conservation area, as the sinuous line of the canal generally stays away from the villages. The occasional sound of a train on the main line between Oxford and Birmingham can be heard, and the line is a constant companion to the canal throughout due to the similar land gradients required for both.



Positive landmark: Tow path bridge over leat

7.2.5 Close to Claydon, the canal drops down over 30 feet (9 metres) from its summit level in the leisurely Claydon flight of five locks. At the top lock is a small canal workshop, housed in buildings that could date back to the late-18th century and the construction of the canal. There are also ruins of stabling, but no lock-keeper's cottage.



Positive landmark: workshop at Claydon Top Lock

7.2.6 Above Elkington's Lock is a small boatyard on the offside with an inlet, a large covered dry-dock, a brick building and modern moorings lit by replica Victorian street lamps. By the lock of Oathill Farm, the elegant late-18th century farmhouse seems to ignore the canal alongside it, turning a blank gable and exterior chimney to the feature.

7.2.7 Elkington's Lock is the first of three widely spaced locks which take the canal down to Cropredy. On the offside through this section are well-preserved traces of medieval ridge and furrow, especially fine near the isolated Verney's Lock. Traces of this continuing on the towpath side can sometimes be seen through the gaps. Above



Positive landmark: Elkington's Lock and Oathill Farm

Broadmoor Lock, which once had a lime kiln, is a relatively modern covered slip, and, nearer to the head of the lock, a narrow inlet with one floating and one sunken barge; here too is a small concentration of 'live aboard' boats on the offside.

7.2.8 At this point the towpath is on the eastern side of the canal and remains so until Nell Bridge Lock to the south of Banbury. For most of the remaining length of the canal the towpath is flanked by a tall and thick hedge which virtually eliminates any general views through it on that side.

7.2.9 In this section the views over to the large fairly level but rolling fields on the offside, set both for arable and pastoral farming, are sometimes obscured by tree and scrub. After the bottom of the flight the canal is briefly quite straight as it goes over a shallow embankment with an attractive belt of mixed woodland on the opposite bank which hides the hamlet of Clattercote, with the remains of its Gilbertine priory, from the canal.



Varney's Lock: ridge and furrow can be seen to the east beside the towpath, while the hedgerow to the west prevents outward views across the valley

7.2.10 Only in areas where there has been some deliberate removal or thinning of the towpath hedge are wider views possible, apart from the occasional gap, for example, those by bridges crossing over the canal. In this section of the canal, the derelict embankment of the railway line just a short distance away to the north-east is virtually invisible, as are the sheep pastures in between. Conversely, on the opposite, or offside, of the canal the views are often panoramic, terminated by the hills at the valley side.



Boatyard north of Broadmoor Lock

7.2.11 Below Broadmoor Lock the tall towpath foliage on one side and the overgrowth and occasional tree on the offside bank in front of the rolling fields give the canal the appearance of a peaceful river. On the offside, the medieval church tower of Cropredy is visible in the distance. Although fairly modest in height, it is the only individual landmark of note in this section of the canal, and is visible from the canal to the north and the south of it.



View south to Cropredy with the tower just visible in the distance

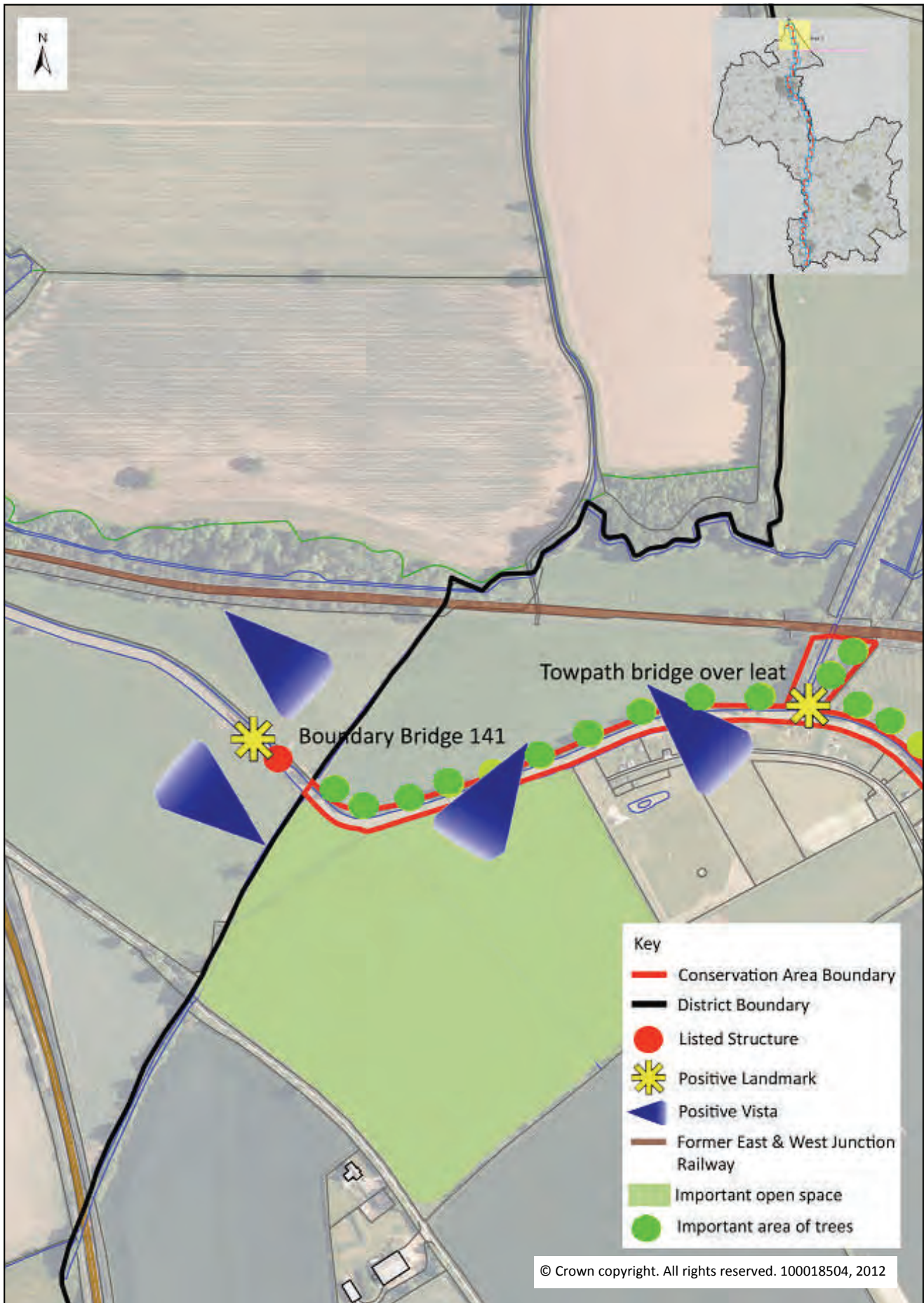


Fig. 8 Route assessment area 1: Boundary Bridge (Bridge 141) to ex-Bridge 151, north of Cropredy



Fig. 9 Route assessment area 1: Boundary Bridge (Bridge 141) to ex-Bridge 151, north of Cropredy

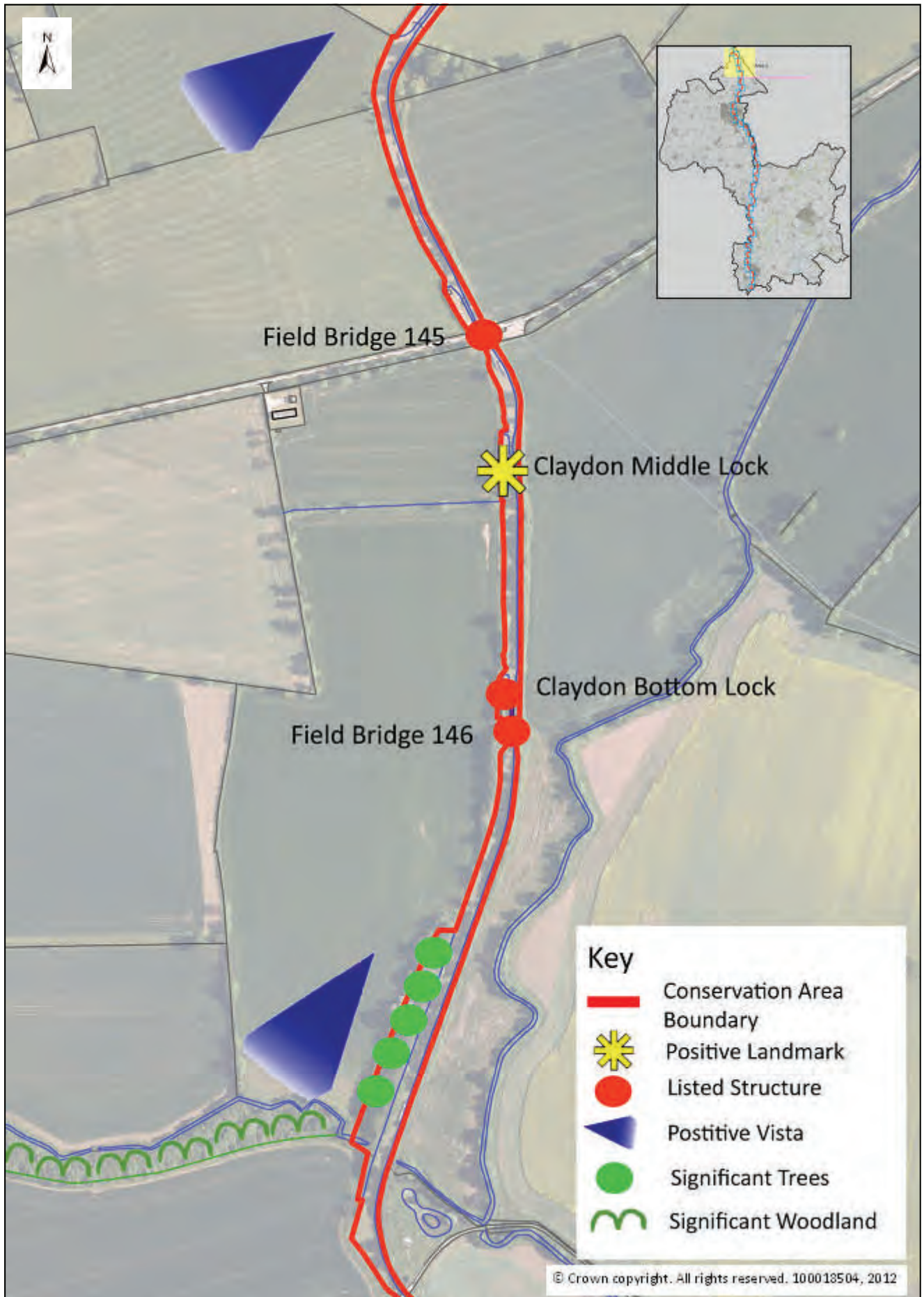


Fig. 10 Route Assessment Area 1: Boundary Bridge (Bridge 141) to ex-Bridge 151, north of Cropredy

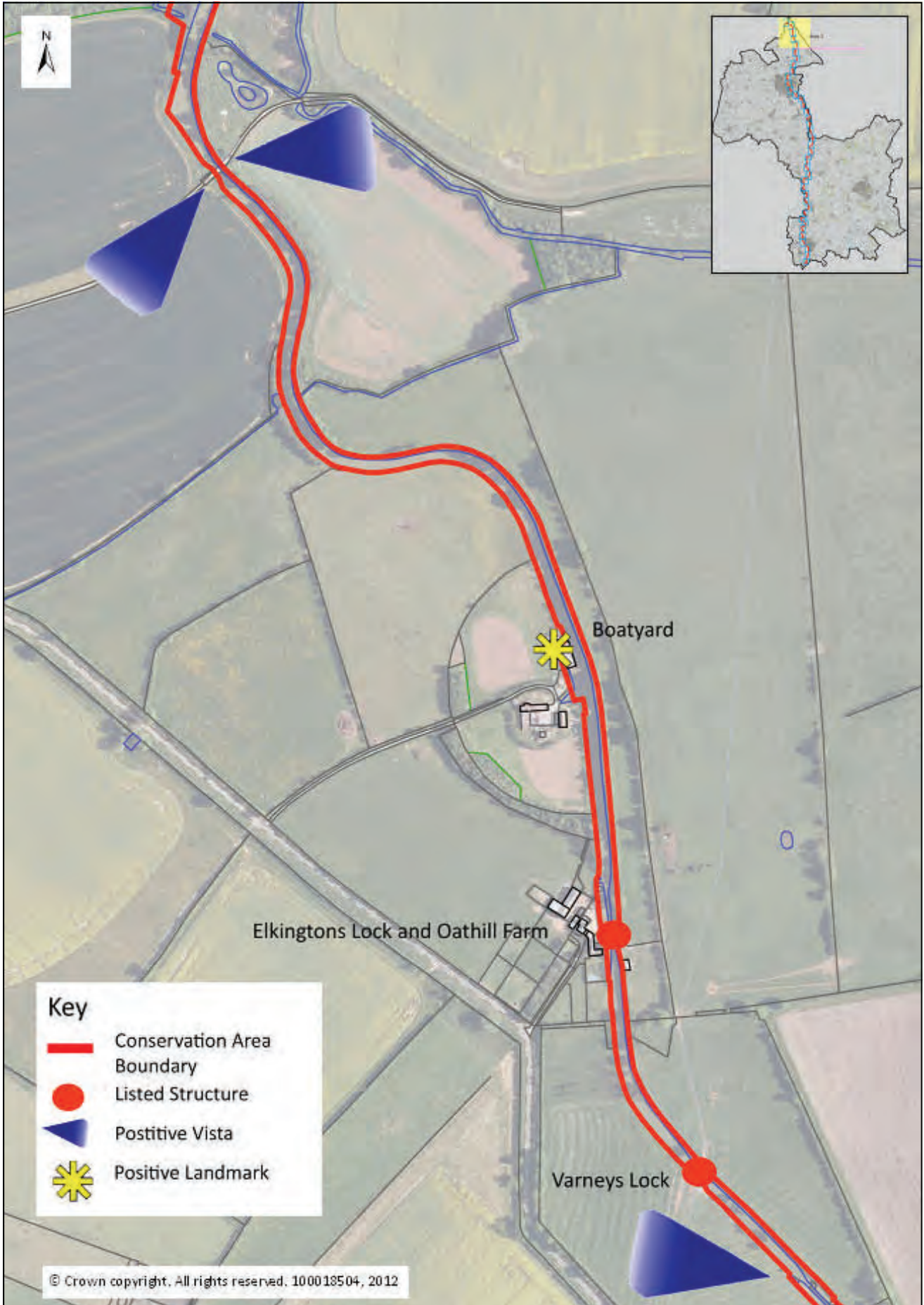


Fig. 11 Route Assessment Area 1: Boundary Bridge (Bridge 141) to ex-Bridge 151, north of Cropredy

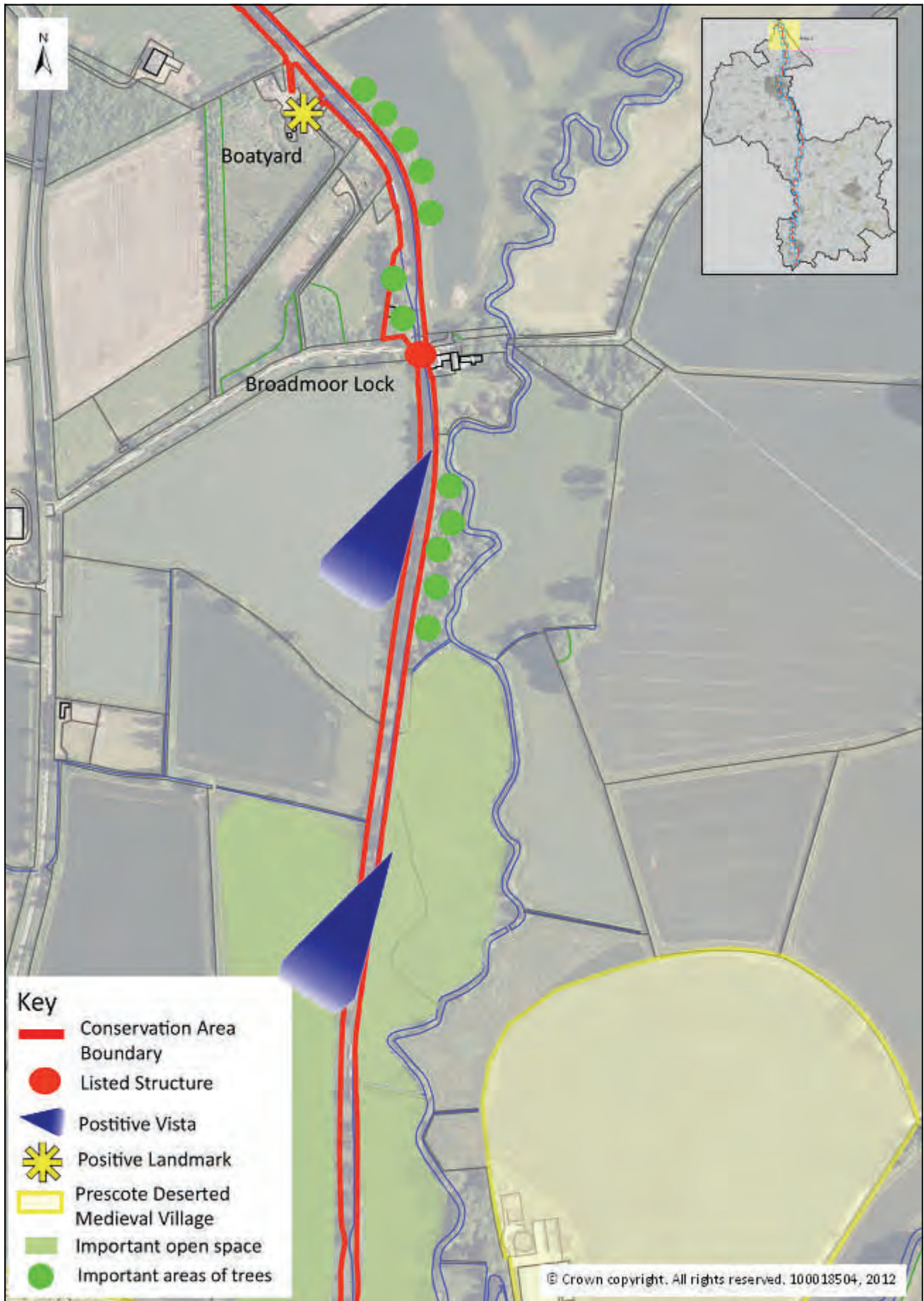


Fig. 12 Route Assessment Area 1: Boundary Bridge (Bridge 141) to ex-Bridge 151, north of Croppedy

7.3 Route Assessment Area 2: Cropredy

7.3.1 Sited unusually close to the river, Cropredy, the first and one of very few villages actually on the route of the canal, was a well established village long before the canal came. It has a simple street plan, with three roads leading to/from the canal and river beyond. The church is a visual landmark set above the lock and wharf. The Red Lion Inn dates back to the 18th century, and is located amongst a terrace of cottages which can be seen looking west from the bridge just south of the lock.

7.3.2 The canal runs round the eastern edge of the village, separating it from the River Cherwell – and the rebuilt bridge where an indecisive battle was fought in 1644 during the English Civil War. Modern development has occurred just north of the lock, but the village has the best preserved wharf on the canal, the only one which retains its original open layout and most of the perimeter buildings, including the wharf house. It also has a traditionally picturesque lock with a standard-plan lock-keeper's cottage in red brick.



Cropredy Wharf with bridge and outbuildings visible in the distance

7.3.3 The large and simply-detailed early-19th century brick building on the towpath side of the wharf bridge, now a shop, and a collection of Victorian and modern industrial buildings on the eastern side of the canal have historic links to the canal. These contribute to the character of the area by continuing the semi-industrial appearance of the wharf. Manor Farm House, with its leat-fed moat, is often mistaken for a second wharf.

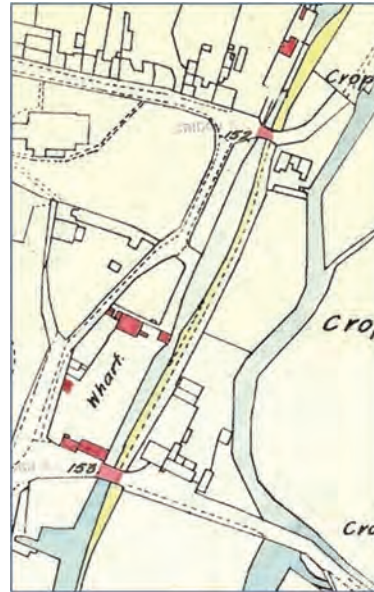


Fig. 14: Cropredy in 1925. The properties owned by the Oxford Canal Company are indicated in red. It includes the wharf house



Cropredy Wharf House - retaining much of its historic character despite the modern accretions

7.3.4 There are key views up and down the canal from the two bridges in the village: Bridges 152 and 153, with the lock visible from the former and the old wharf from the latter. Apart from these vantage points, views into the village itself from the canal are very limited, as are views of it from the village streets.



The view west from bridge 152 up Red Lion Street, past the Church and Red Lion Inn

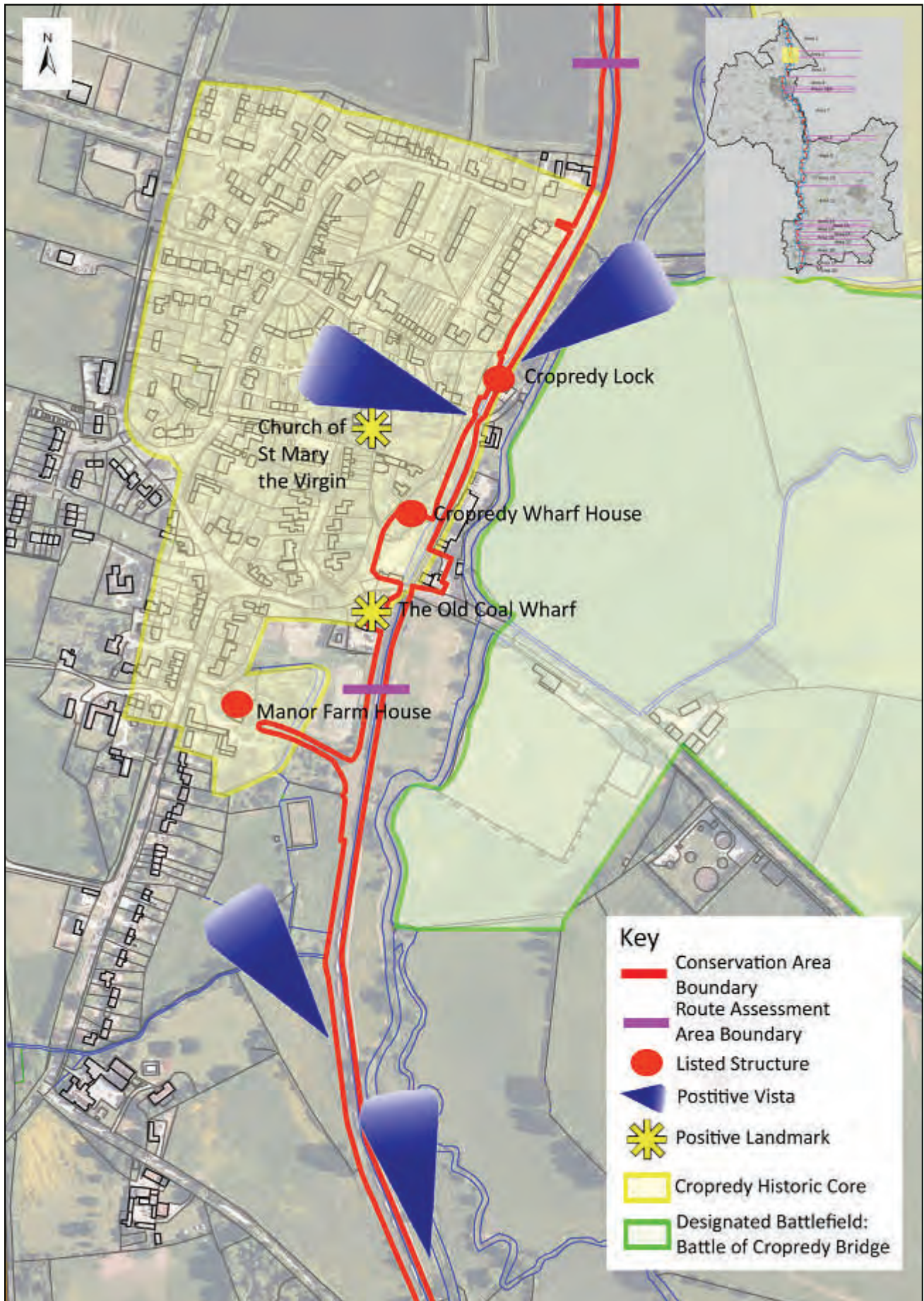


Fig. 13 Route Assessment Areas 2 & 3: Cropredy Village; Cropredy to Hardwick Lock

7.4 Route Assessment Area 3: Cropredy to Bridge 160, Hardwick Lock

7.4.1 South of Cropredy the Cherwell, and then a large mill leat running off it, are close to the east, or towpath, side of the canal, but virtually invisible from the towpath because of the thick hedge. There are also many long-term moorings on the towpath side on the straight section of canal south of the village.



Long-term moorings south of Cropredy

7.4.2 The leat-fed Bourton Mill, a large brick-built corn mill on the towpath side, is located some distance from the village. This burnt down in the 1890's and in 1905 was bought by the canal company, who also bought the fields between the leat and the river. The heavily overgrown mill ruins remain and, just over the bridge along the lane leading to the mill, is a large semi-derelict brick building which may have been associated with the mill.

7.4.3 This building was built by the mill owner in early-19th century, and is most likely to have been the storehouse for the mill. Its dominating presence in the area forms a focal point from the towpath. South of the mill, through a gap in the towpath hedge, the historic Williamscot House is visible on the opposite side of the river.



Bourton Mill and adjacent bridge

7.4.4 Generally, the character of this area is the same as the other rural sections in the Cherwell Valley. On the offside of the canal to the south of the mill there is more ridge-and-furrow in what are presently fields for grazing; there are several live-aboard narrowboats moored on this bank, some with perfunctory timber railed plots on the adjacent bank. From Keen's Bridge (Bridge 155) there are good views over the towpath to the fields beyond, which roll up gradually to the higher ground on the other side of the valley.



View north from the south of Cropredy - the towpath here is in good condition and the open field to the west adds a sense of openness to the area



Ridge and furrow visible from Keen's Bridge

7.4.5 The canal continues to pass through tranquil scenery, now well away from moored boats and houses, passing the rare isolated bridge. The towpath hedge continues to block the views eastwards, but cattle graze the open fields on the offside, most of which have evidence of ridge-and-furrow. Slat Mill Lock lies seemingly in the middle of nowhere; the mill itself in ruins in the fields close to the river.



Slat Mill Lock set in an expanse of fields

7.4.6 At this stage on its journey south, aural and visual indications of the canal's industrial past become apparent. The adjacent railway cuts through the landscape adding a degree of alternative life and interest. The persistent hum of traffic on the M40 is a reminder that the canal was not always as tranquil as its present-day cruiseway identity.

7.4.7 Bourton Lock survives relatively little altered and its lock-keeper's house, though secure, is empty. It too seems to have been changed little since the original block was extended. South of the lock, the canal continues and crosses under the motorway via a new bridge. Between this and the railway bridge to the west is Hardwick Lock, where several boats moor over winter on the towpath side.

7.4.8 Apart from the views along the canal and the wide panoramas on the offside, or west bank, there are no other key views or key landmarks visible in this section other than the tower of Cropredy church to the north. The only negative view is the embankment of the M40, but the main detractor is the noise of its traffic.



View south between the canal and river emphasising the open and relatively flat landscape



View north from Slat Mill



Bourton Lock and its associated lock-keeper's cottage

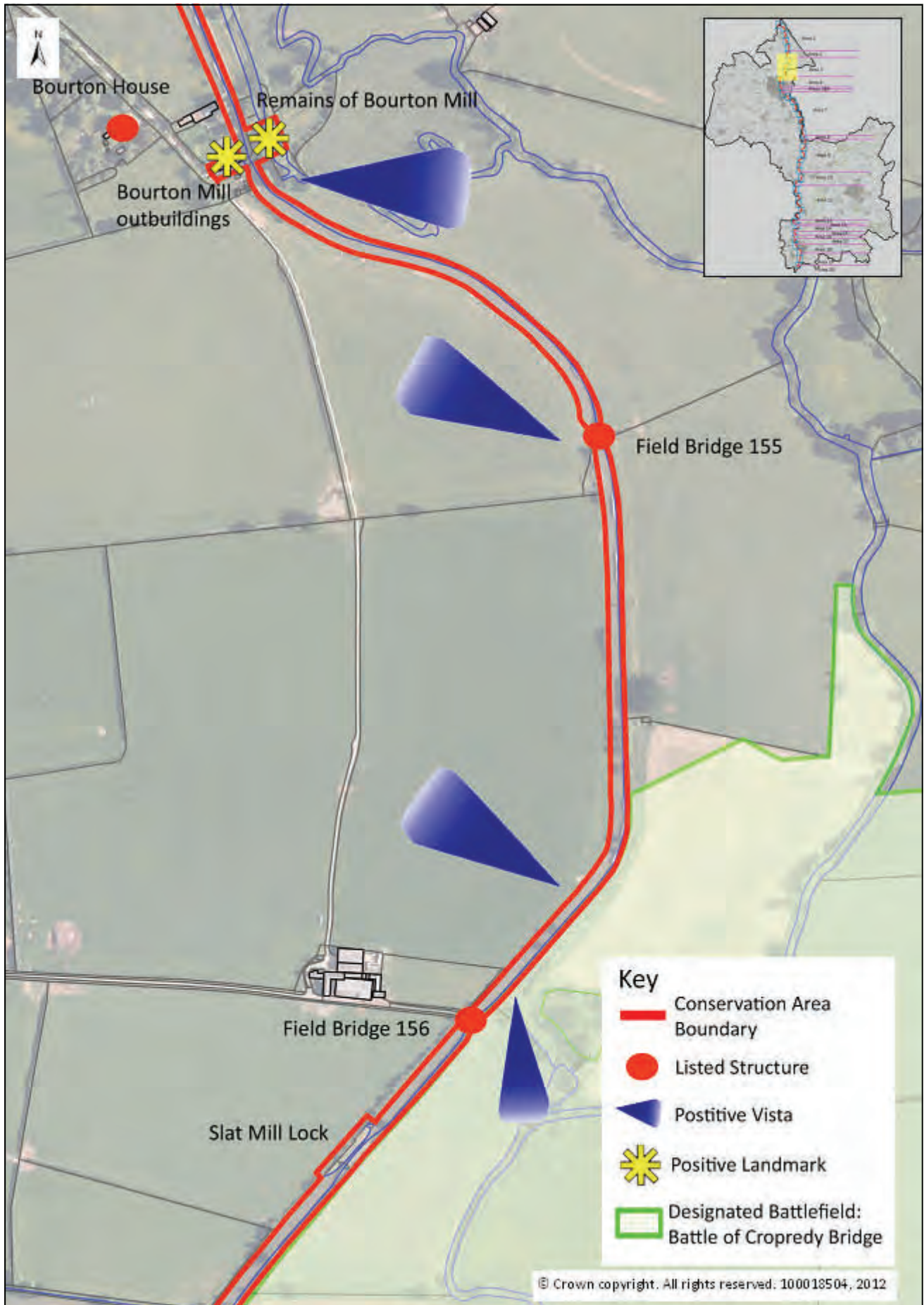


Fig. 14 Route Assessment Area 3: Cropredy to Hardwick Lock

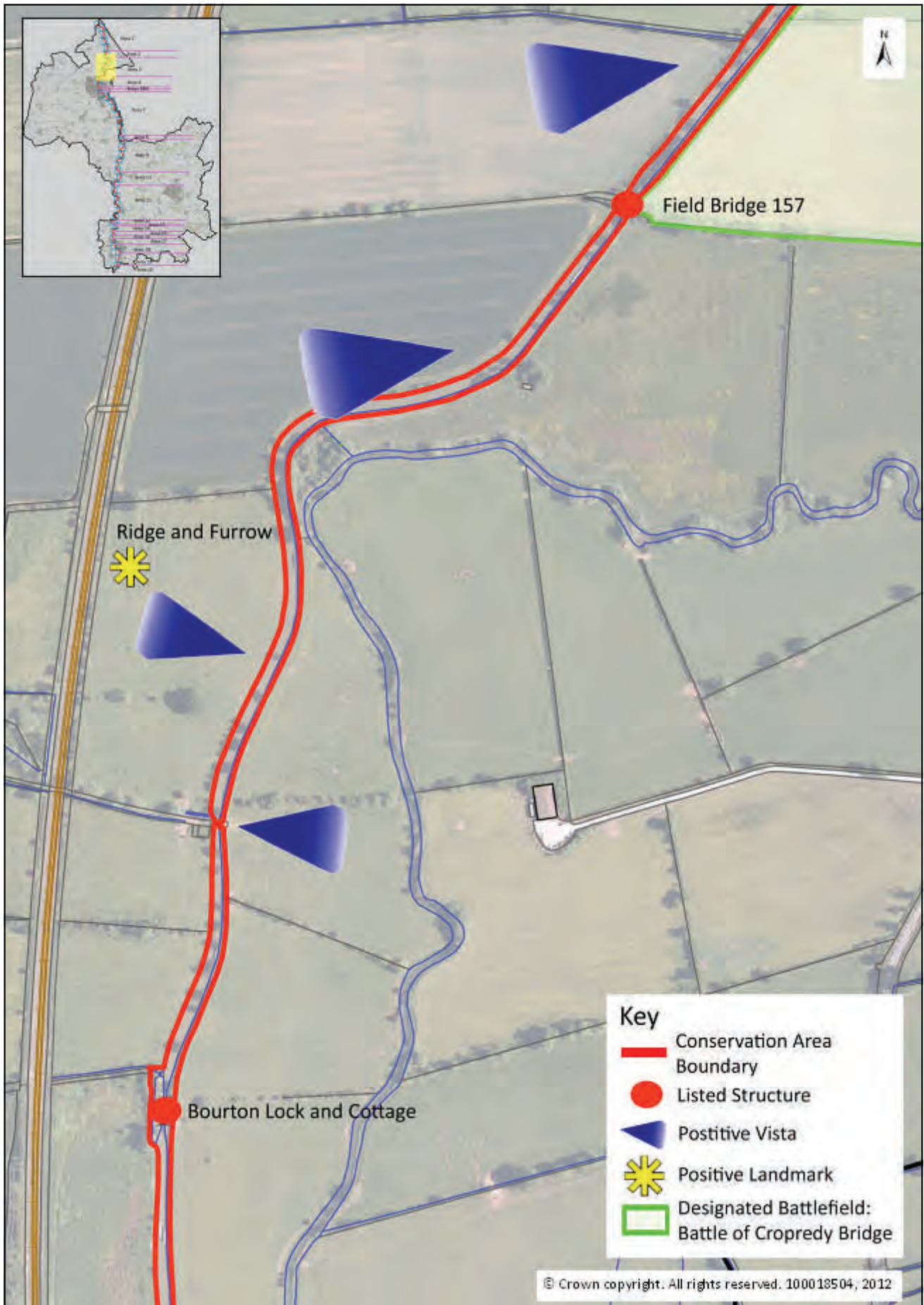


Fig. 15 Route Assessment Area 3: Cropredy to Hardwick Lock

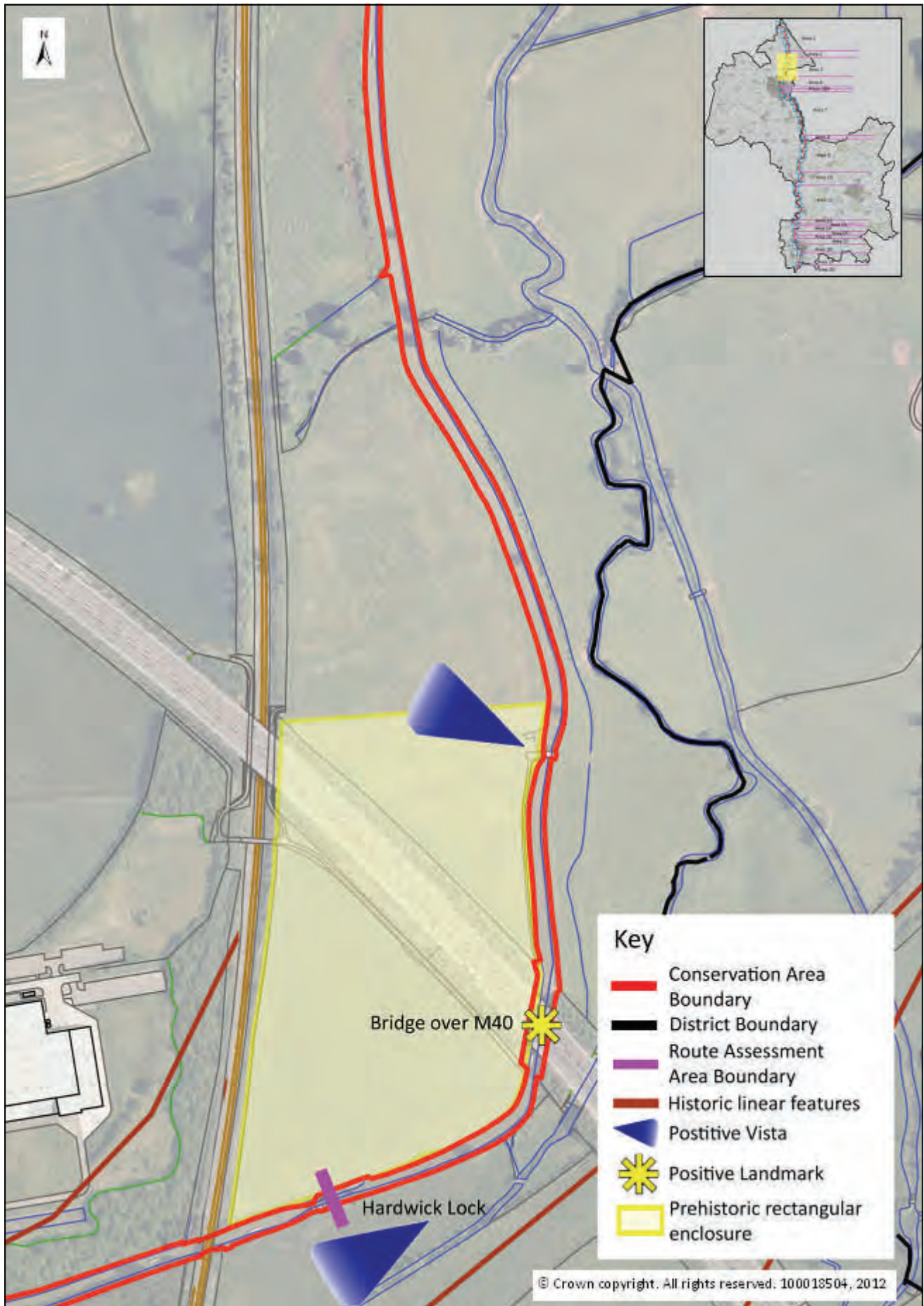


Fig. 16 Route Assessment Areas 3 and 4: Cropredy to Hardwick Lock; North of Banbury

7.5 Route Assessment Area 4: The Northern Approaches to Banbury

7.5.1 Beyond the railway bridge below Hardwick Lock the character of the canal changes fundamentally. Behind the woods on the towpath side is a large reservoir, serving Banbury rather than the canal; this area is the Grimsbury Wood Nature Reserve. To the west of it, the tow-path hedge has been cut to expose a vista of very large fields in the valley floor with a back drop of the industrial buildings of northern Banbury.



View towards Banbury from the north east

7.5.2 After a small collection of moored boats and a canal side cottage close to the outlet into the canal of the Hanwell Brook, the next few miles of the canal snake through the eastern side of the town and are bounded by urban structures.

7.5.3 On the west is the main A423 road with large industrial estates on its opposite side; it is mostly shielded from the canal by scraggy tree and shrub growth which, in summer, give this stretch an enclosed, woodland feeling. Where the A432 meets the A361 there is a large roundabout, beneath which is the site of Grimsbury Wharf and its short basin. The canal had to be diverted eastwards, closer to the Cherwell. At the southern end of the diversion, south of the bridge, part of the old line is visible, used as a marina.

7.5.4 Further in towards the centre of Banbury, the fields on the towpath side give way to public parkland scenery and this side of the canal is lined with narrowboats, many of them live-aboards. In front of the factories on the offside further to the south there are more marinas, particularly just to the north of the site of the original Castle Wharf closer to the centre of the town.

7.5.5 This area ends at the new Bridge 164, which replaced an original lift bridge (removed 1975). The new bridge, built at the end of the 20th century to carry the inner ring road over the canal, is appropriately named after the canal restoration pioneer Tom Rolt, who started his journey along the canal system in 1939 close to this point.



New canal section beneath the Banbury Bypass: distinctly more modern in its appearance, with kerbing and railing to the towpath

7.5.6 This area has few long-distance views, other than those along it from bridge to bridge or to significant corners. Despite the urban appearance of the adjacent roads and the glimpses of modern buildings through the irregular screens of trees on the offside, its character remains essentially similar to other part of the canal and is a long green finger into the heart of the town.



View north from March Bridge to the moorings



Former canal course to Grimsbury, now a marina

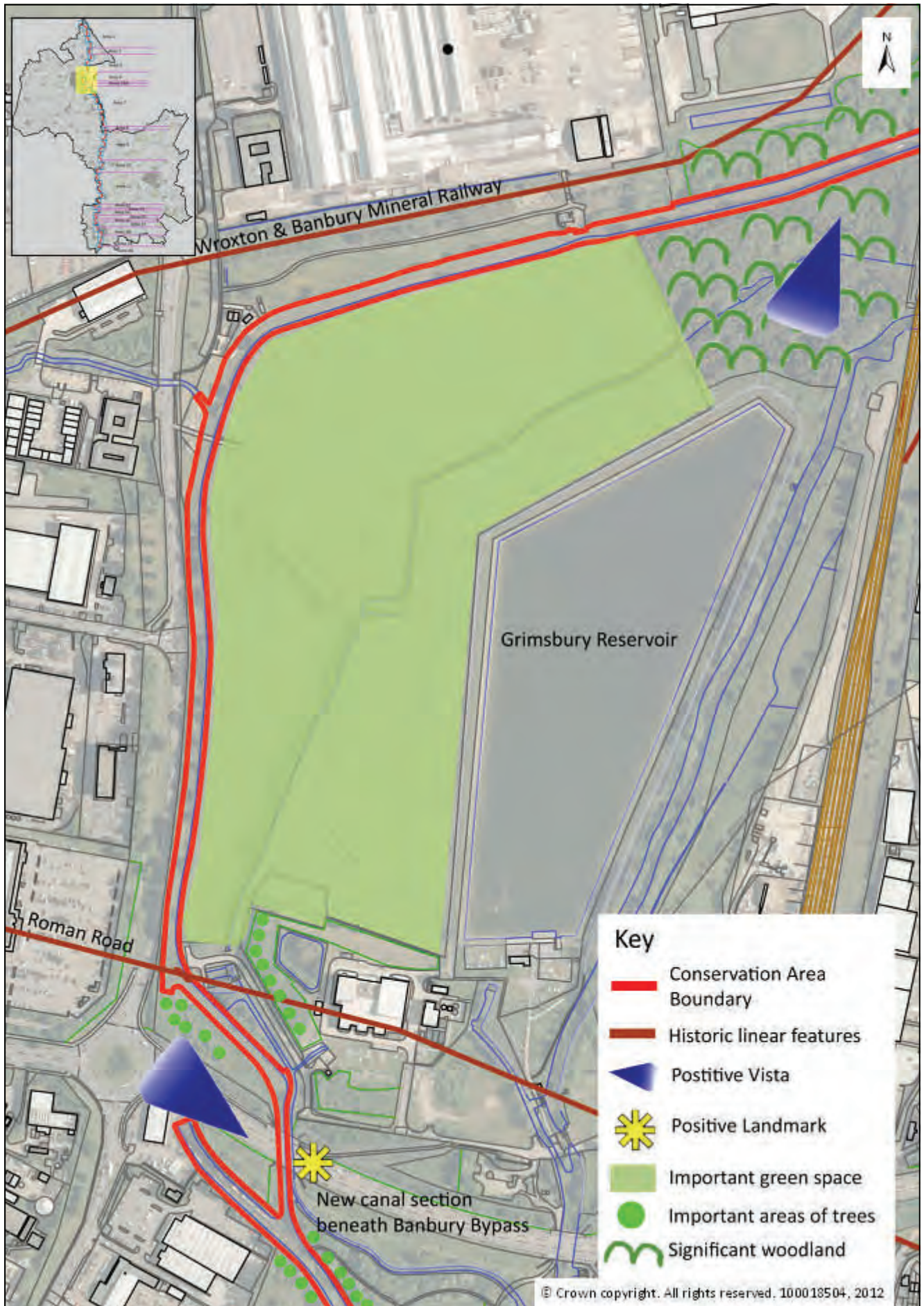


Fig. 17 Route Assessment Area 4: North of Banbury

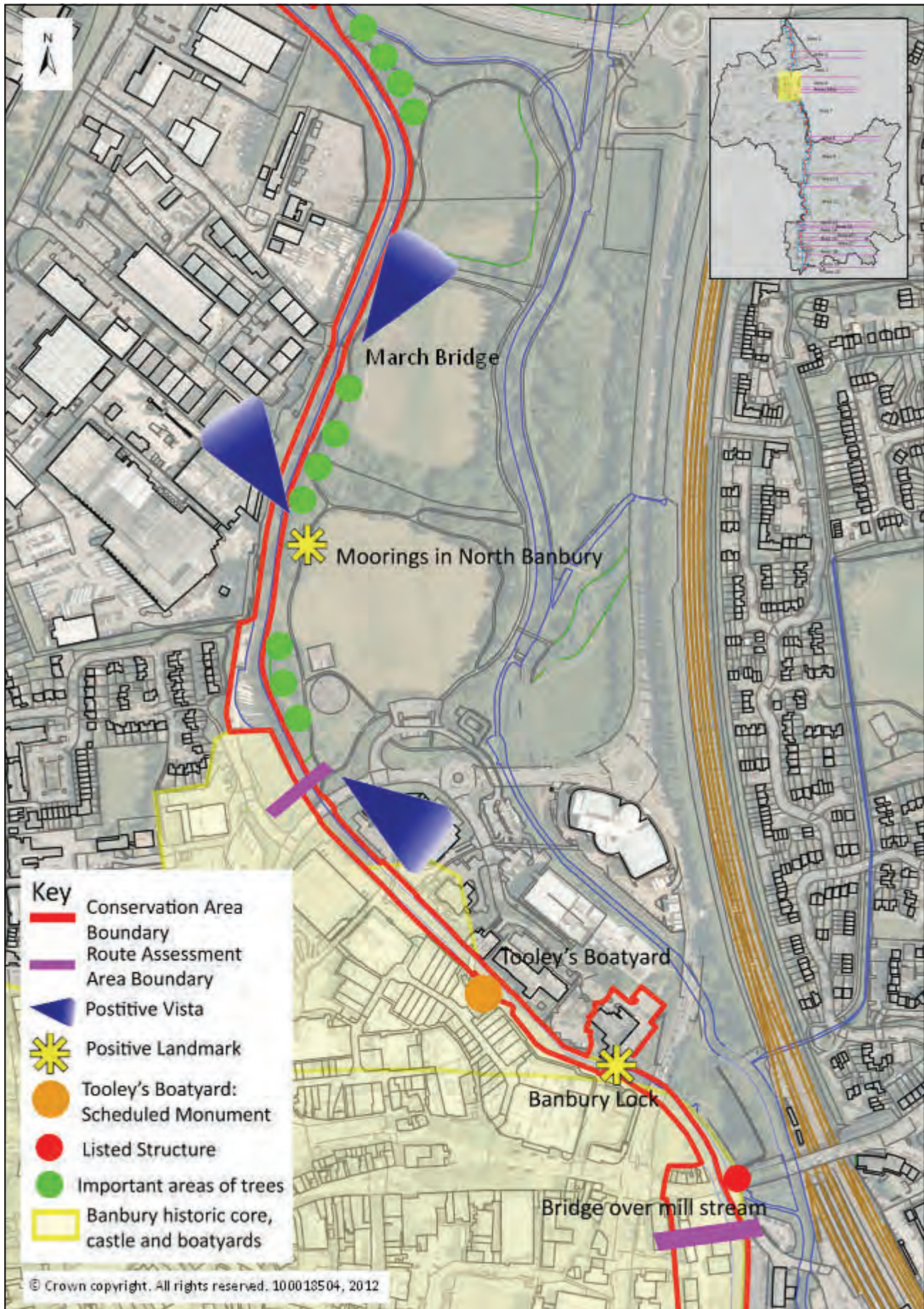


Fig. 18 Route Assessment Areas 4 and 5: North of Banbury; Banbury

7.6 Route Assessment Area 5: Central Banbury & Castle Quay (Bridges 164 to 166)

7.6.1 The canal used to sneak virtually unnoticed through the middle of Banbury, passing through an almost secretive canalscape with a rather fine collection of canalside, wharfage and warehouse buildings. Many of these were in a poor state by the mid-20th century and the main company warehouse was damaged by the bombing raid in September 1940, which also severely damaged the town's lock. The warehouse, and the former 'canal colony' of houses on Factory Street, were finally demolished at the start of the 1960's to make way for a bus station, and two large warehouses were demolished shortly afterwards.



Banbury 1920 showing the Oxford Canal Company warehouse and wharf now filled. Lift bridge 165 is in the foreground with lift bridge 164 with Tooleys boat yard and Castle Wharf behind

7.6.2 More recently, a large retail development, Castle Quay, has taken place on the section of canal between Bridges 164 and 166 which previously formed an area of canal-related land between the canal and the town centre. Most of the remaining structures associated with the town's main Banbury Wharf were removed during its construction. The 19th-century Rope Works on Castle Street (now builder's yards) were an exception, although the Castle Quay north carpark now physically separates them from the canal. Most of the retail units face away from the canal, but there are wide brick paved paths on both sides of this section and new pedestrian bridges enabling lively interaction. The town lock and the adjacent lift bridge have been rebuilt.

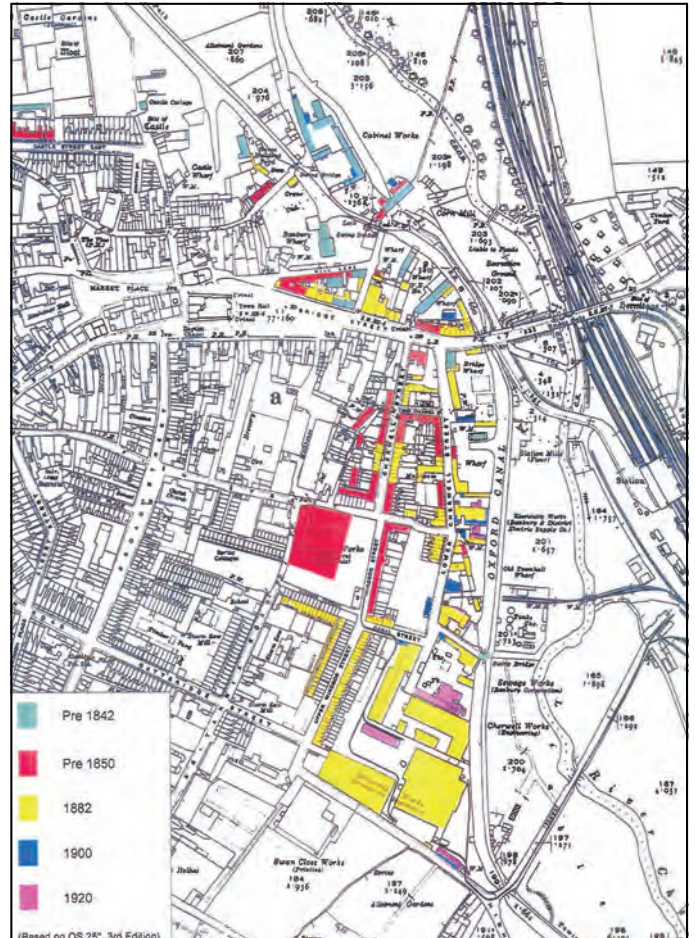


Fig. 19: The development of Banbury from the early 19th century showing the phases of construction which in-filled the area between the market town and at first the new canal and later the railway (from Hewitson *et al.* 2001)

7.6.3 Within the Castle Quay centre is the Banbury Museum and the remains of the stone-lined dry dock of Tooley's boatyard. This area is probably an original, or certainly early, feature of the canal and is now a scheduled ancient monument. It is one of the iconic sites on the canal system, partly because of its rarity value and partly because it was in this dock that Tom Rolt's boat *Cressy* was reconditioned in 1939; the adjacent smithy also survives.



Banbury Lock with Castle Quay on the eastern side



Fig. 20 Banbury in 1925 showing the Oxford Canal Company's ownership in red. The Inland Waterways Association (IWA) rally in Banbury in 1947 is considered a seminal event in the revival of the canals.



Castle Quays Development with the lock in the background

7.6.4 The activity generated by the narrowboats moored at the wharf and moving through the locks creates an air of interest behind the shopping centre. Both carparks lead shoppers past or over the canal, resulting in improved interaction and a ready-made gathering space for the popular Canal Days. The replacement lift bridge is an item of interest, being possibly the only hydraulically operated one of this type on the entire canal network. Due to post-war and late 20th century developments, historic buildings are relatively scarce. An 18th century former brick-built watermill remains on the towpath side, on an ancient site fed by a leat off the Cherwell; it would have used the canal for transporting grain and flour, especially after the conversion to steam power in the early-19th century increased its output. Although its adjacent granary has been demolished, the rest has been converted into a lively Arts Centre. There is also a cluster of late-18th century buildings on the north side of Bridge Street and to the west of Albion Bridge (Bridge 166).



The Paving & Lighting Commission stoneyard building established in 1825 seen in 1974 (Trinder 1982)

7.7 Route Assessment Area 6: Banbury South (Bridges 166 to 168)



View northwards along the canal from south of Banbury [56]

7.7.1 The section to the south of Bridge Street is strongly influenced by its industrial past, bounded either side with former industrial buildings, modern warehousing and a mobile home park. However, the area between the west bank of the canal and Lower Cherwell Street retains greater historical and architectural interest than the previous section, due to the lack of modern development. This area was largely empty until the 1830's, when wharves were formed south of Bridge Street, notably Parker's Wharf and Bridge Wharf. Further development to the south took place slightly later, much of it after the arrival of the railways. Until the railways arrived there had been virtually no development on the opposite, towpath, side of the canal.



Banbury wharves in 1974 (Gagg 1971)

7.7.2 There are few traces of the wharves surviving above ground, apart from some decaying and often much altered brick built boundary walls, minor fragments of wharf edging, mainly hidden beneath decayed concrete and baulks of timber. The occasionally odd alignment of some of the property boundaries indicates former canal land, and some surviving, but generally much altered, mid-19th century buildings show the former extent of the canal company ownership.



Town Hall Wharf

7.7.3 Until recently the former Town Hall Wharf retained much of its canal character, with three surviving structures adjacent to an open yard area fronting the canal. The former Town Hall is an early example of a brick building being dismantled piece by piece and being rebuilt in replica in 1860. A small office building and a warehouse, very rare survivals of canal-related architecture within the town, also remain. In addition, the former open area has recently been regenerated and a long brick terrace of houses has been built across it, parallel to the canal where the wharfside had been. There are other industrial buildings of the later-19th century indirectly associated with the canal between it and Lower Cherwell Street, most of this area being laid out in



View south of Banbury, with former and modern industrial units visible to the left

19th century. The majority of these have been altered, particularly on the canal elevations, due to conversions. The former wharfs along this section, including the long inlet of the Bridge Wharf, are now difficult to identify. Formerly, there were large areas of working class housing laid out in this area, but these have now gone.

7.7.4 There are two large engineering works close to, but not properly visible from, the canal: the Cherwell Works established in the 1860s and represented by one large later-19th century range, and the larger Britannia Works, built in the later-1850s and specialising in agricultural implements. Both were established after the town was linked to the railway network, but both would also have initially been served by the adjacent canal as well as the railway. This section of the canal itself seems to be relatively confined compared to the rest of the canal, but there are no true vistas out of it, only along it. South of this section is Samuelson's Bridge (Bridge 168). Significantly this was also known as Tramway Bridge, because by 1875 the Britannia Works was relying more on the railway and a tramway was built to connect it to the railway sidings on the east side of the canal.



Canal leaving Banbury



Abutments of former bridge 169



View south east of Banbury

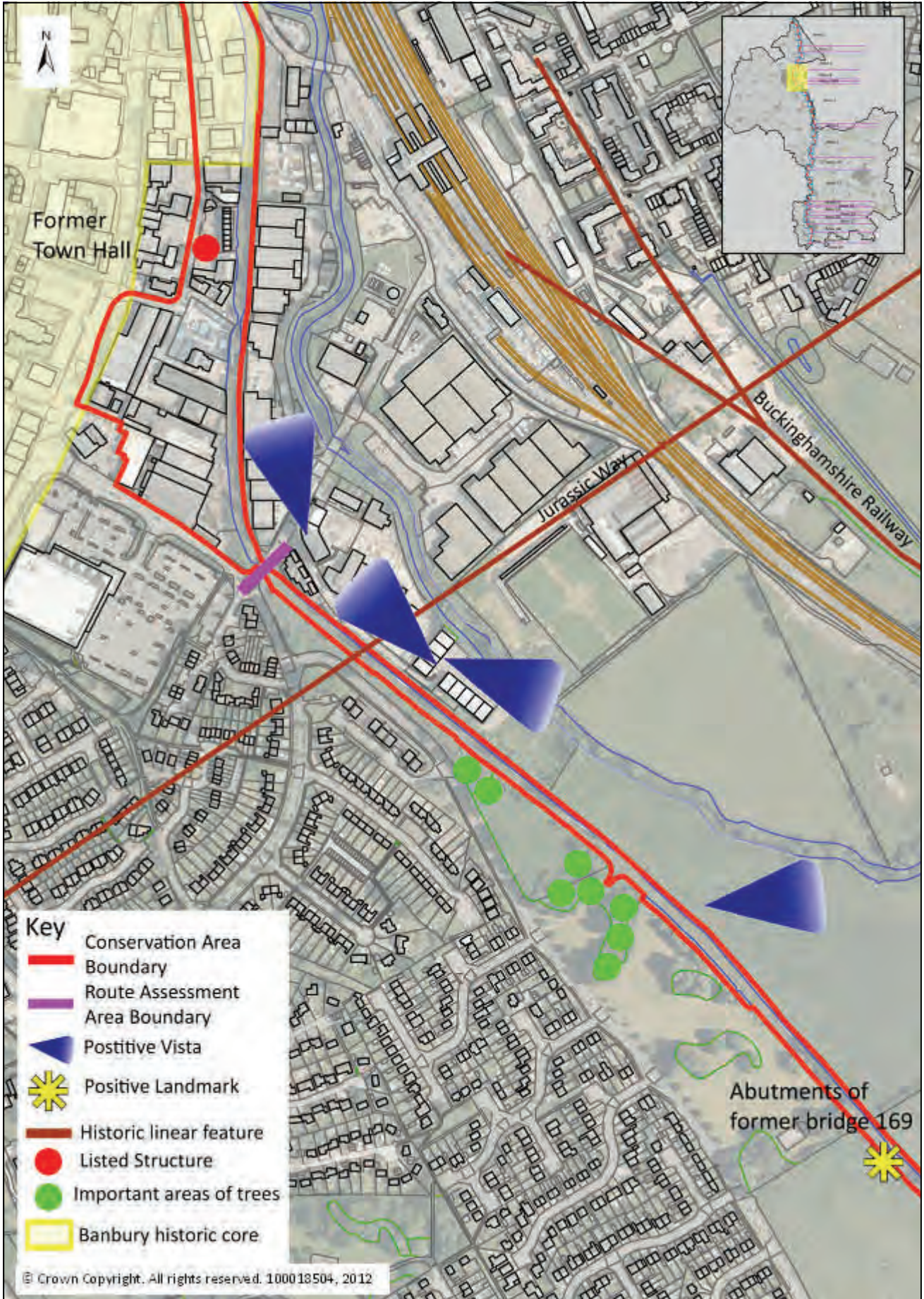


Fig. 21 Route Assessment Areas 6 and 7: Banbury South, Bridges 166-168; Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

7.8 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

7.8.1 South of the rebuilt Samuelson's, or Tramway, bridge (Bridge 168), the rural aspect of the canal begins to return; the modern factories on the towpath side and some housing gradually merging with more public parkland. In this section, long-term moorings have been established, adding some colour to the scene.



View north from Haddons Bridge, the land rising to the east and retaining its rural character

7.8.2 On the towpath side, again largely hidden by the boundary hedge, are meadows down to the Cherwell, which for several miles forms the boundary between Oxfordshire and Northamptonshire. Beyond the canal lies the railway, which changed sides with the canal to the north of Banbury. On the offside, behind the parkland and largely hidden by it, are the suburban houses of Cherwell Heights. Following this, the canal leaves Banbury to cut through the open countryside.



View to King's Sutton church

7.8.3 Visually this stretch is one of the more attractive ones on the rural cruiseway; with large open fields visible on the offside, and the continuous hedgerow on the towpath side, the vistas are punctuated by the distinctive lift bridges.



Twyford Wharf [76]

7.8.4 Shortly after crossing under the motorway again, the canal reaches Twyford Wharf, where there is a small but interesting collection of buildings by the canal. Some structures pre-date the canal, and others appear to be the remains of a wharf south of the stone-built original bridge, including brick kilns that are probably of mid-19th century date. Nearby, on the road to Adderbury is the former Red Lion Inn, now a house.

7.8.5 A little to the south of the wharf the canal passes virtually unseen between the historic villages of Adderbury on the Oxfordshire side and King's Sutton in Northamptonshire, both villages sited well above the flood plain, although a lock is named after the latter, and has a brick-fronted keeper's cottage.

7.8.6 The roofs of some of the houses of Adderbury are just about visible from the canal, but little else, not even the striking church spire. Conversely, the magnificent spire of King's Sutton church is visible from the canal for several miles and is also the focal point of most views of this section of the valley.

7.8.7 On the offside to the north of King's Sutton is another landmark of historical importance; this is the large 19th century mill on the Northamptonshire side of the river, much altered but quite imposing when viewed from the bridge at Twyford and through occasional gaps in the towpath hedge. The isolated King's Sutton, or Tarver's, Lock has the only stone-fronted lock-keeper's cottage on this section, as well as a warehouse on the offside.

7.8.8 Further south, after another sharp turn to the west the canal passes under the M40 again before making a broad sweep back to the south-east. Close to the motorway the towpath hedge has been grubbed out and replaced by open timber fencing, so there is a fine view across the river meadows on this side.

7.8.9 These views show how the canal cuts across the relatively flat land, and how close a mill race from the river is to its towpath bank. An overflow weir with sluices in this section on the towpath side was rebuilt in 1940. At this point the canal is close to the western edge of the valley floor and the fields and woods on the offside slope up steeply. A large house with moorings on the offside is a radical remodelling of the buildings of a small wharf.

7.8.10 The A41 crosses the canal at Nell's Bridge, just below the lock. The original bridge is a diminutive original bridge at the lock tail and is where the towpath switches sides; there is no room for a towpath beneath the bridge itself. A new bridge has been built alongside the old. Above the lock on the offside is a small repair wharf.



Cherwell Crossing over Aynho Weir Lock south of Nell's Bridge

7.8.11 Further south of a fairly straight section, unusually well-wooded on both sides, the River Cherwell crosses the canal on the level, from east to west, just above one of the two rare octagonal locks, which has a fall of just a foot (30cm).



Wooded area

7.8.12 At this point the towpath crosses over the river on top of a weir and sluice system on a multi-arched bridge. The river remains as the county boundary, so at this point the canal enters into Northamptonshire for a little over a mile. This is a fascinating piece of canal engineering and ingenuity, and is quickly followed by some equally interesting railway engineering to the east.

7.8.13 The main line is on the offside of the canal. It was the main GWR route from London Paddington to Birkenhead, via Oxford and Birmingham, until the start of the 20th century, when the company decided to make a series of short cuts to speed up the time taken on this key route to rival the LNWR's more direct route from Euston. Oxford was by-passed by a new line via Bicester, which joins the old route near Nell Bridge on an ambitious flyover junction. This required extensive engineering of embankments and viaducts, as well as a large steel bridge across the original line, which remained an important cross-country route. The new viaducts and embankments terminate the offside view from canal level and add interest to it.



Two modes of transportation: the canal and bridge 189 in the foreground, the LNWR on its raised embankment beyond, creating a visual backdrop to the open field

7.8.7 On the offside to the north of King's Sutton is another landmark of historical importance; this is the large 19th century mill on the Northamptonshire side of the river, much altered but quite imposing when viewed from the bridge at Twyford and through occasional gaps in the towpath hedge. The isolated King's Sutton, or Tarver's, Lock has the only stone-fronted lock-keeper's cottage on this section, as well as a warehouse on the offside.

7.8.8 Further south, after another sharp turn to the west the canal passes under the M40 again before making a broad sweep back to the south-east. Close to the motorway the towpath hedge has been grubbed out and replaced by open timber fencing, so there is a fine view across the river meadows on this side.

7.8.9 These views show how the canal cuts across the relatively flat land, and how close a mill race from the river is to its towpath bank. An overflow weir with sluices in this section on the towpath side was rebuilt in 1940. At this point the canal is close to the western edge of the valley floor and the fields and woods on the offside slope up steeply. A large house with moorings on the offside is a radical remodelling of the buildings of a small wharf.

7.8.10 The A41 crosses the canal at Nell's Bridge, just below the lock. The original bridge is a diminutive original bridge at the lock tail and is where the towpath switches sides; there is no room for a towpath beneath the bridge itself. A new bridge has been built alongside the old. Above the lock on the offside is a small repair wharf.



Cherwell Crossing over Aynho Weir Lock south of Nell's Bridge

7.8.11 Further south of a fairly straight section, unusually well-wooded on both sides, the River Cherwell crosses the canal on the level, from east to west, just above one of the two rare octagonal locks, which has a fall of just a foot (30cm).



Wooded area

7.8.12 At this point the towpath crosses over the river on top of a weir and sluice system on a multi-arched bridge. The river remains as the county boundary, so at this point the canal enters into Northamptonshire for a little over a mile. This is a fascinating piece of canal engineering and ingenuity, and is quickly followed by some equally interesting railway engineering to the east.

7.8.13 The main line is on the offside of the canal. It was the main GWR route from London Paddington to Birkenhead, via Oxford and Birmingham, until the start of the 20th century, when the company decided to make a series of short cuts to speed up the time taken on this key route to rival the LNWR's more direct route from Euston. Oxford was by-passed by a new line via Bicester, which joins the old route near Nell Bridge on an ambitious flyover junction. This required extensive engineering of embankments and viaducts, as well as a large steel bridge across the original line, which remained an important cross-country route. The new viaducts and embankments terminate the offside view from canal level and add interest to it.



Two modes of transportation: the canal and bridge 189 in the foreground, the LNWR on its raised embankment beyond, creating a visual backdrop to the open field

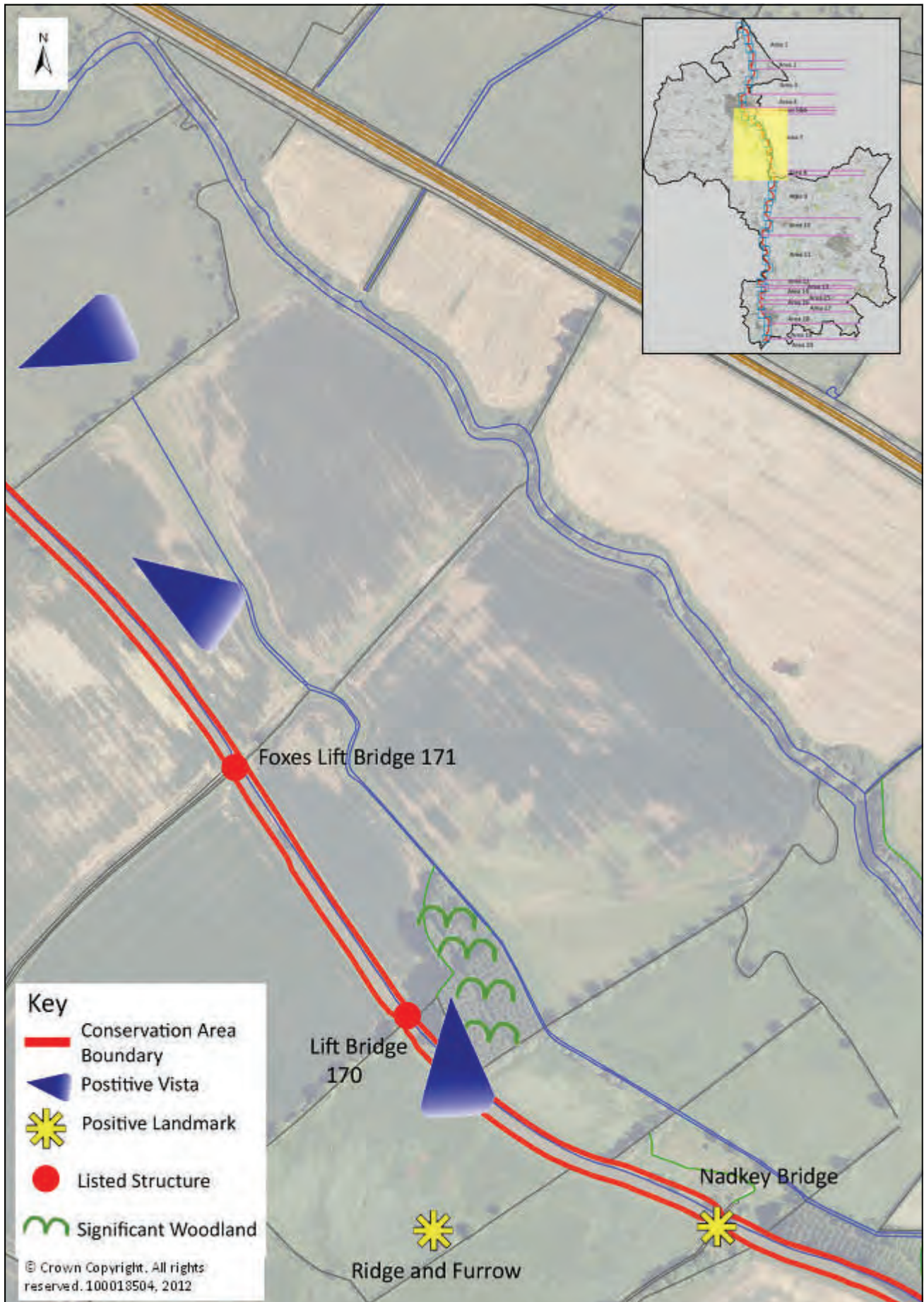


Fig. 22 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

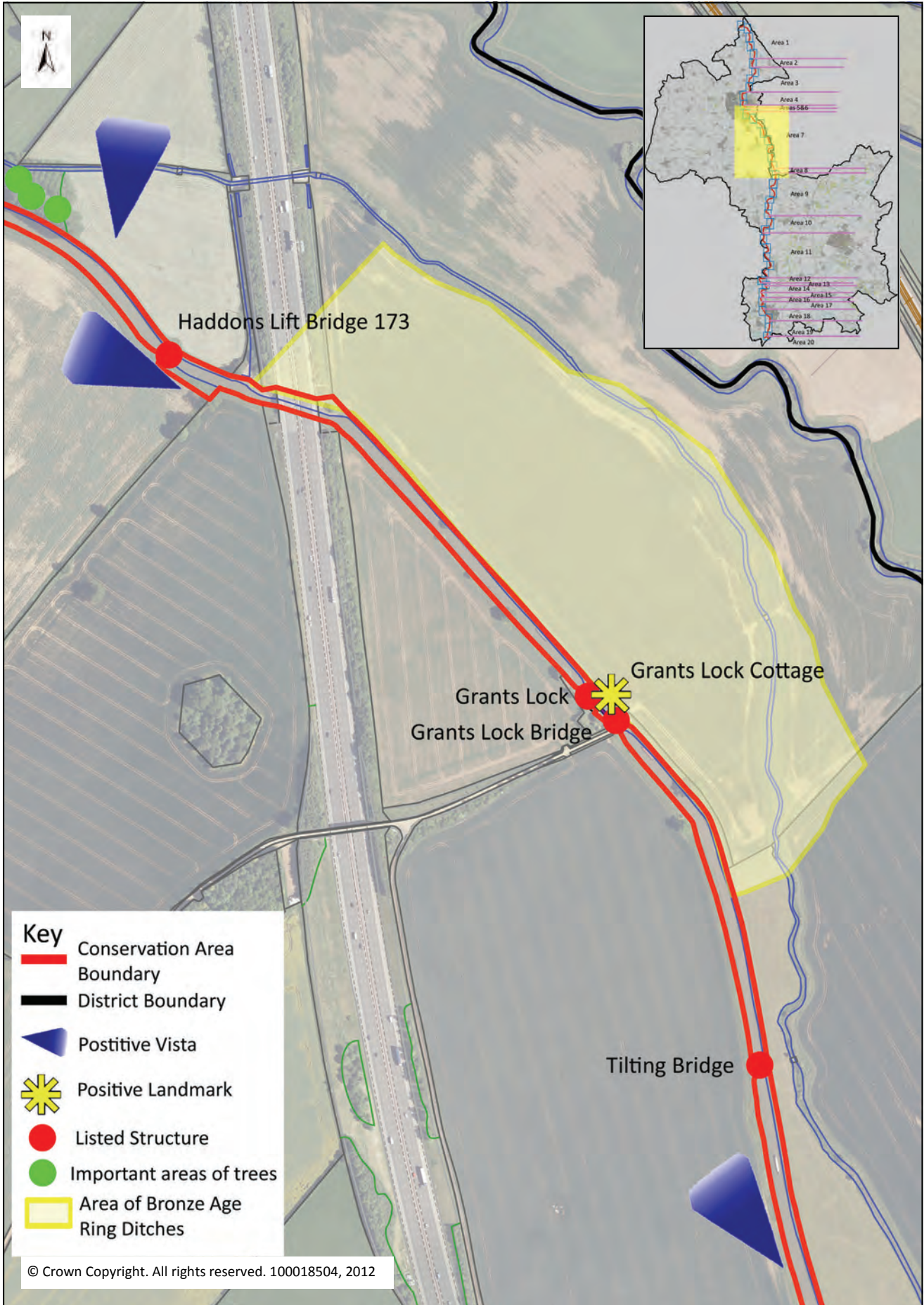


Fig. 23 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

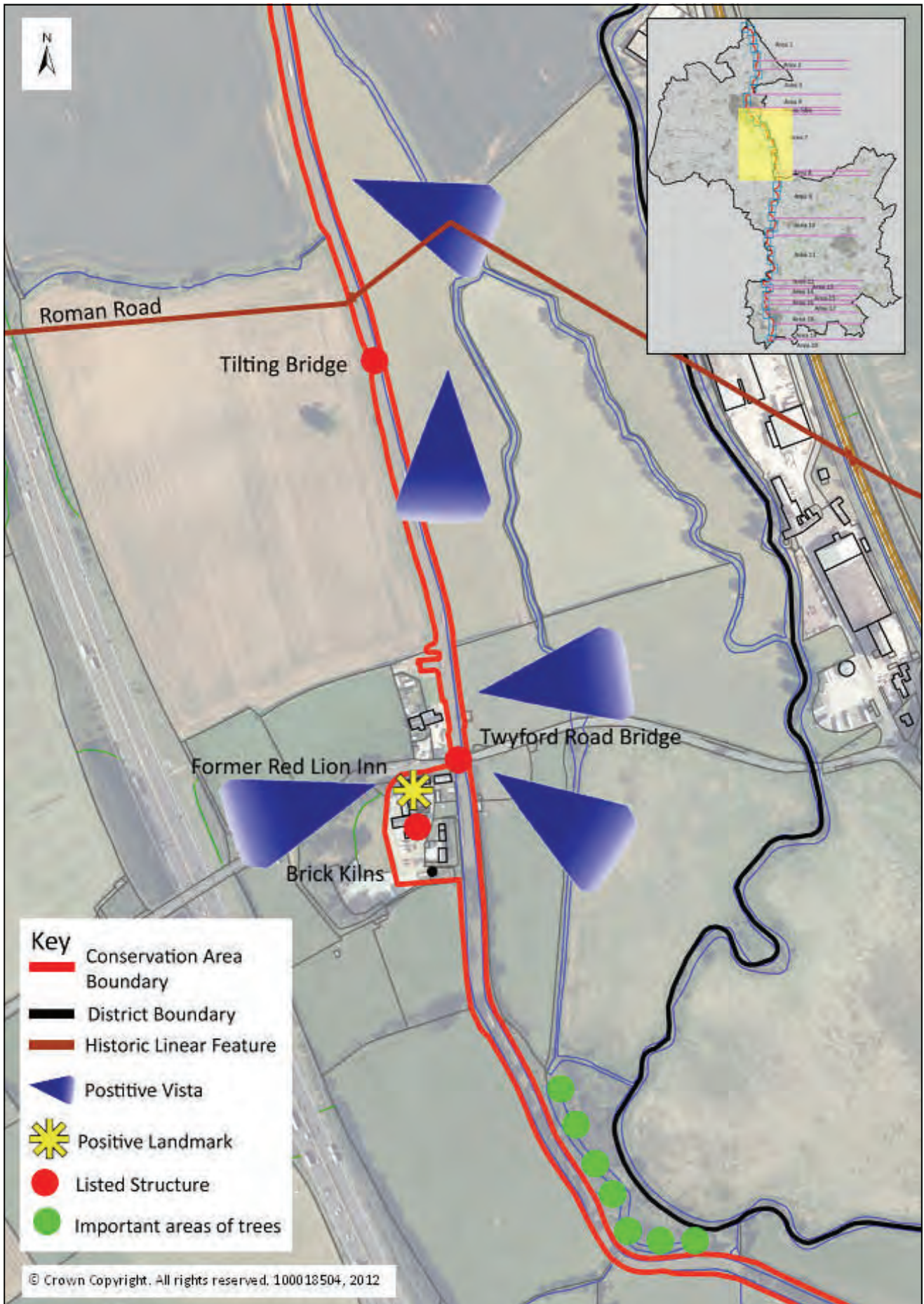


Fig. 24 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

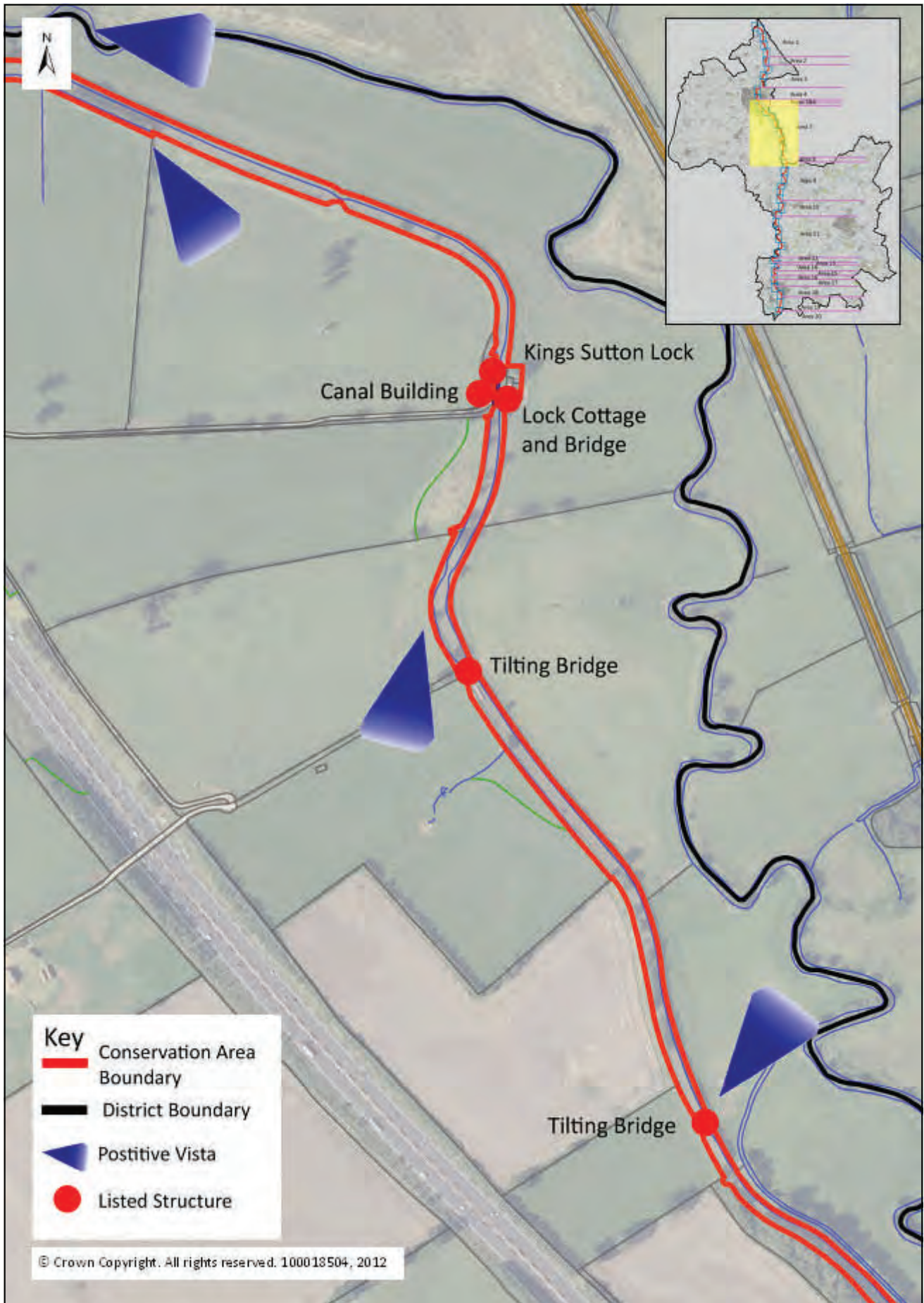


Fig. 25 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

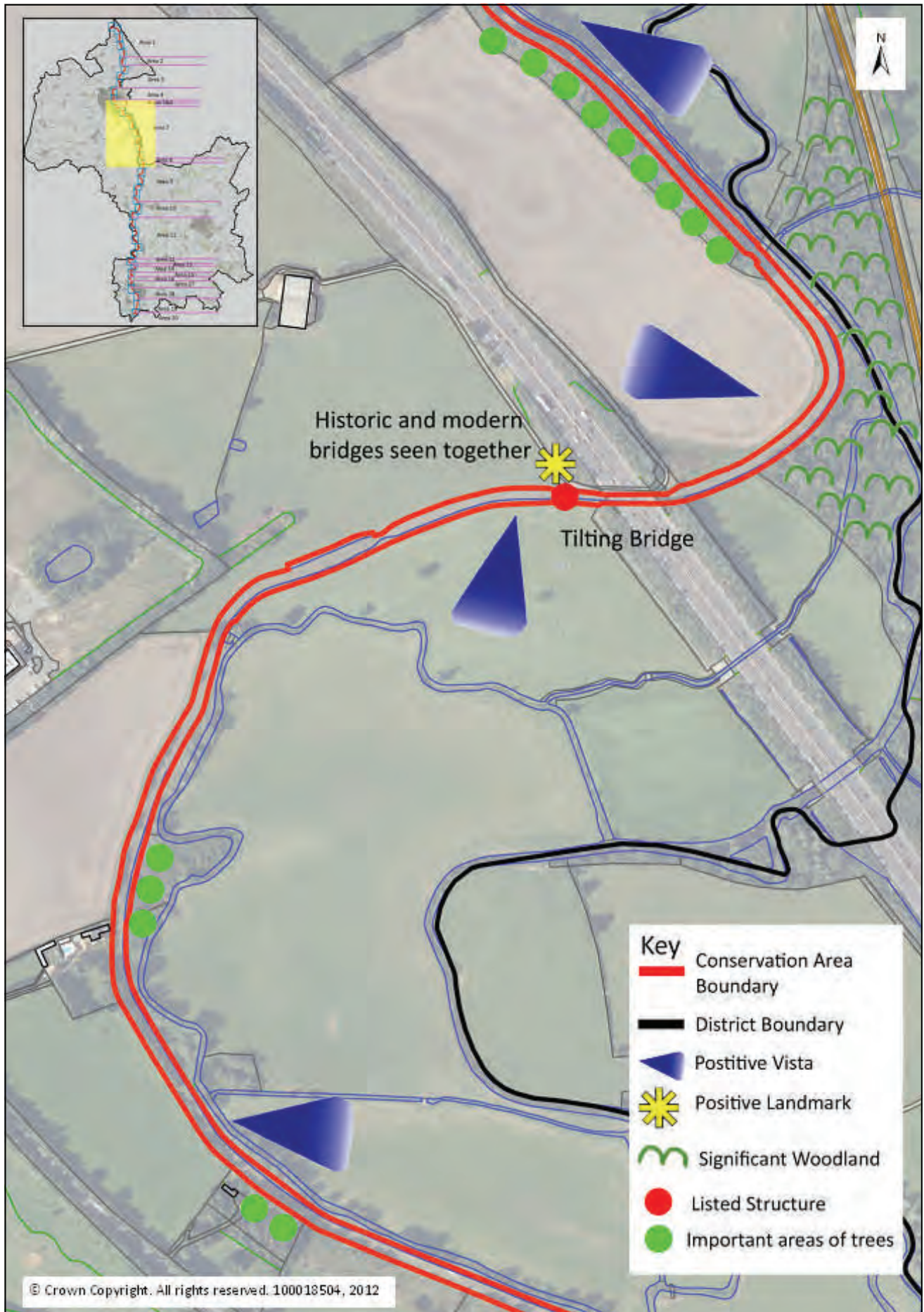


Fig. 26 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

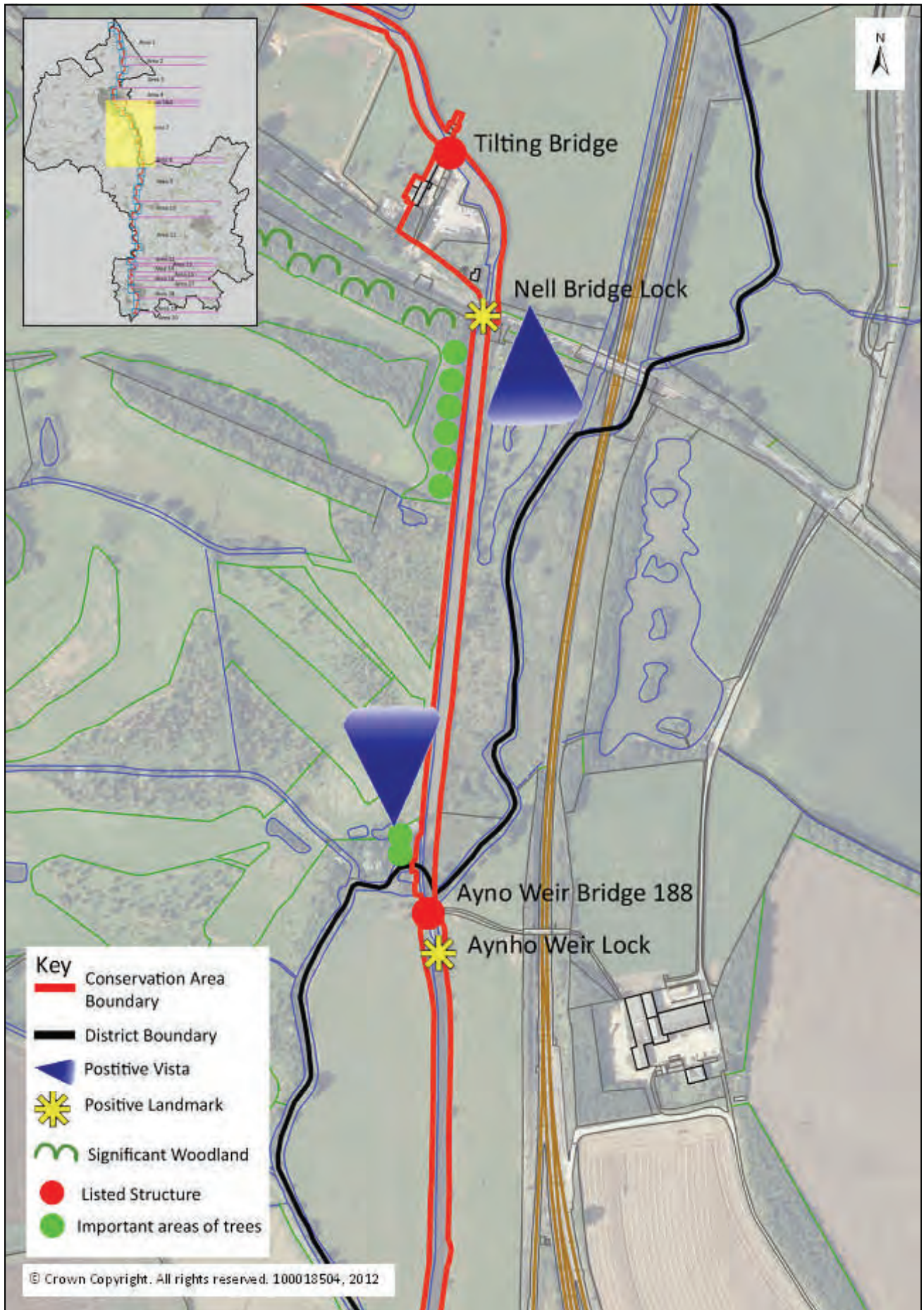


Fig. 27 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

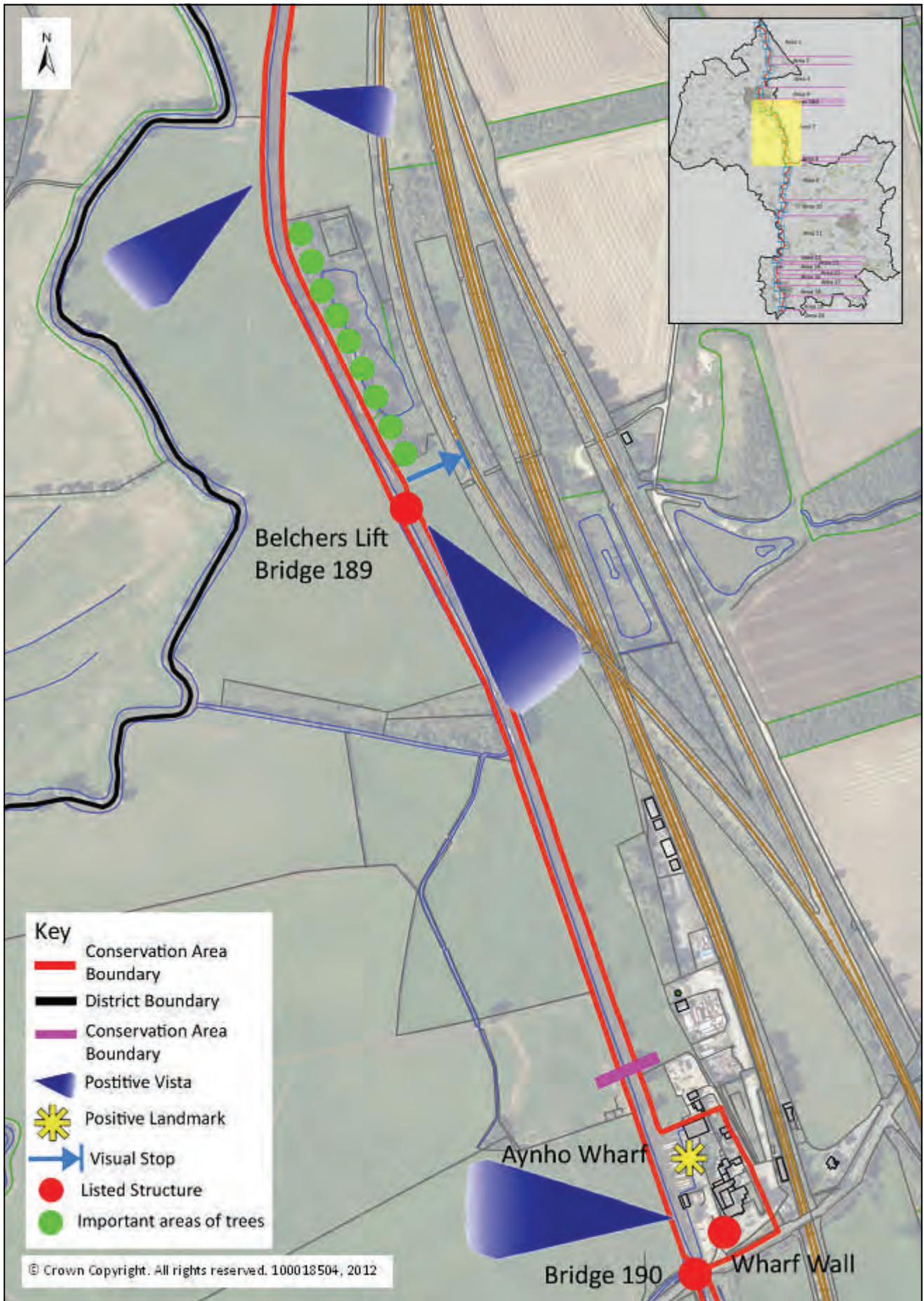


Fig. 28 Route Assessment Areas 7 & 8: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf; Aynho

7.9 Route Assessment Area 8: Aynho Wharf

7.9.1 Just to the south of the railway junction is Aynho Wharf, about a mile to the west of the historic and architecturally important village. There is a busy boatyard and dock on the offside with a handful of restored buildings, including one with a roof that overhangs the cut; most of the facilities are quite modern, indicating that the canal is in demand enough to warrant the upkeep and regeneration or replacement of the buildings.

7.9.2 Next to the wharf, accessed off the road, is the Great Western Arms; this was originally owned by the canal company but was sold to the Great Western Railway and renamed when the railway was opened in 1850 ; the site of the station is close by, and whilst some of the station building survives it was closed to passengers in the 1960s.

7.9.3 South of the wharf is a long line of live-aboard and long-term moorings on the offside, most with minor facilities on the bank, such as rubbish bins, barbecues, small storage areas and so forth.



Mooring to the south of Aynho Wharf

7.9.4 There are also some long-term moorings on the tow-path side, making this settlement with very few houses a very busy canal-orientated place. The colourful narrowboats and the busy residents add much to the area's distinct character.

7.9.5 All of the views are directly canal related, looking up or down the line. There is a limited view up the lane leading to the station and Aynho, but the canal is virtually invisible from outside the conservation area.



Aynho Wharf



View north west from Aynho Wharf



View west from the south of Aynho Wharf across open fields to the tree line beyond

7.10 Route Assessment Area 9: Aynho to Allen's Lock, Upper Heyford

7.10.1 South of Aynho much of the offside is given over to scrubby woodland and then to pasture, the former due probably to the construction of the railway; the newer line is built partly on an impressive brick viaduct visible from the canal.



Bicester Loop Viaduct

7.10.2 Much of the towpath hedge is grubbed out, allowing the views to suddenly open out on this side of the canal. Close to the entrance of the Souldern Feeder on its east, or offside, bank the canal re-enters Oxfordshire, the boundary being more arbitrary and no longer following the line of the river. By Bridge 192, the remains of the small Souldern Wharf are fairly well preserved.



Souldern Wharf

7.10.3 There is virtually no towpath hedgerow from here on for many miles, making this section more attractive for anyone walking along the canal, as the views encompass both sides of the canal and as far as the valley slopes. In some sections there is no boundary at all to the towpath, and it is absorbed into the adjacent fields.

7.10.4 The attractiveness is further enhanced by the fact that the M40 has now turned away from the canal and the noise of its traffic has receded into the distance. This makes Somerton Deep Lock one of the most pleasant places on the canal, with an attractive lock cottage set in fine, panoramic scenery – and the route of the Cherwell visible to the west, marked by trees.



View west from towpath

7.10.5 From the north, Somerton itself is hidden by the railway embankment and the houses by the canal bridge seem to have no obvious historical links with the canal; close by is the road crossing of the Cherwell, guarded by a World War Two pillbox. Somerton is visible from the south, with its church tower rising above the houses and trees on the offside.



Somerton Church visible in the distance past live-aboard moorings

7.10.6 Further south is the Deep Cutting, which is not particularly deep at all and runs through a small wooded area. It is virtually inaccessible to anyone not in a boat as the towpath has disintegrated and been replaced by a rather uneven undulating path through the trees at the top of the cutting. Further on, the towpath continues to either be absorbed into the fields or separated from them by ephemeral fencing until beyond Somerton Mill and the railway continues to keep the canal company on the offside.



Somerton Deep Cutting bounded by trees



View north towards Somerton Mill and bridge

7.10.7 After the isolated Heyford Common Lock, the towpath hedgerow begins to reassert itself as a visual barrier, and the offside scenery is rather flat, made up of very large fields.

7.10.8 The tower of Upper Heyford church becomes visible on the offside a couple of miles from the village, and at Allen’s Lock it forms the background to a fine view from the north of lock, bridge and church.



Heyford Common Lock



Somerton Deep Lock



Bridge 202 with Upper Heyford church tower visible in the distance

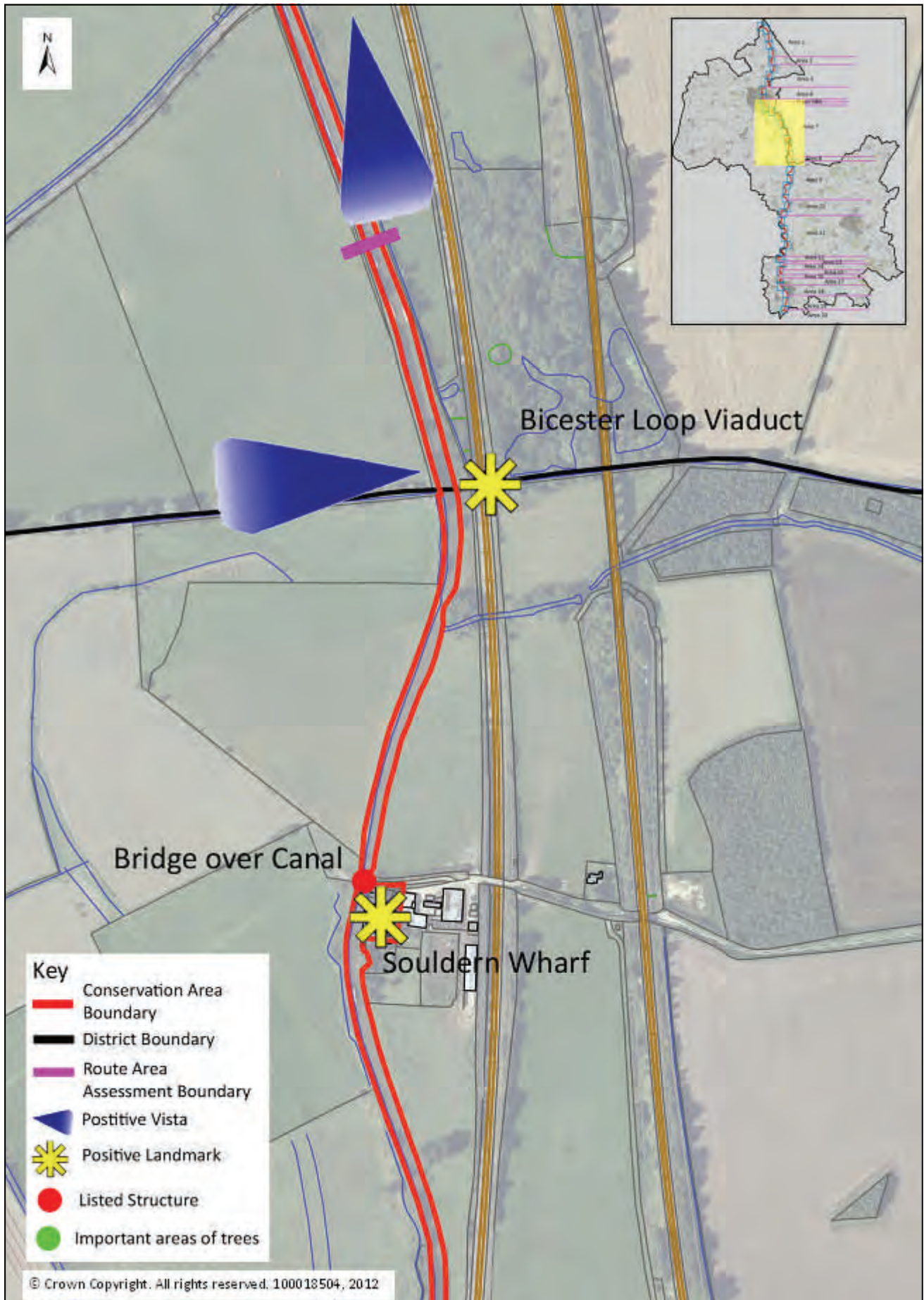


Fig. 29 Route Assessment Areas 8 & 9: Aynho; Aynho to Allen's Lock

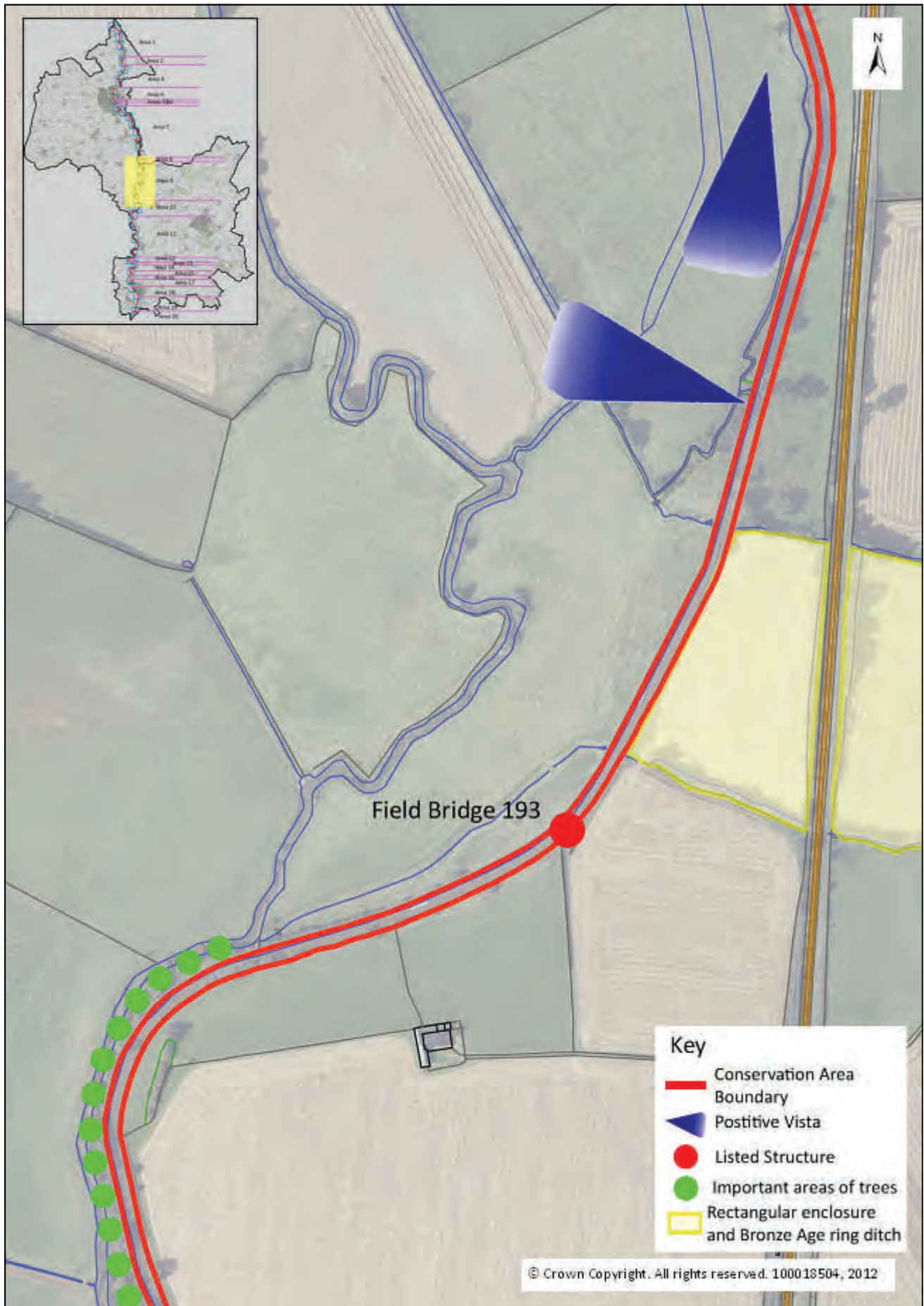


Fig. 30 Route Assessment Area 9: Aynho to Allen's Lock

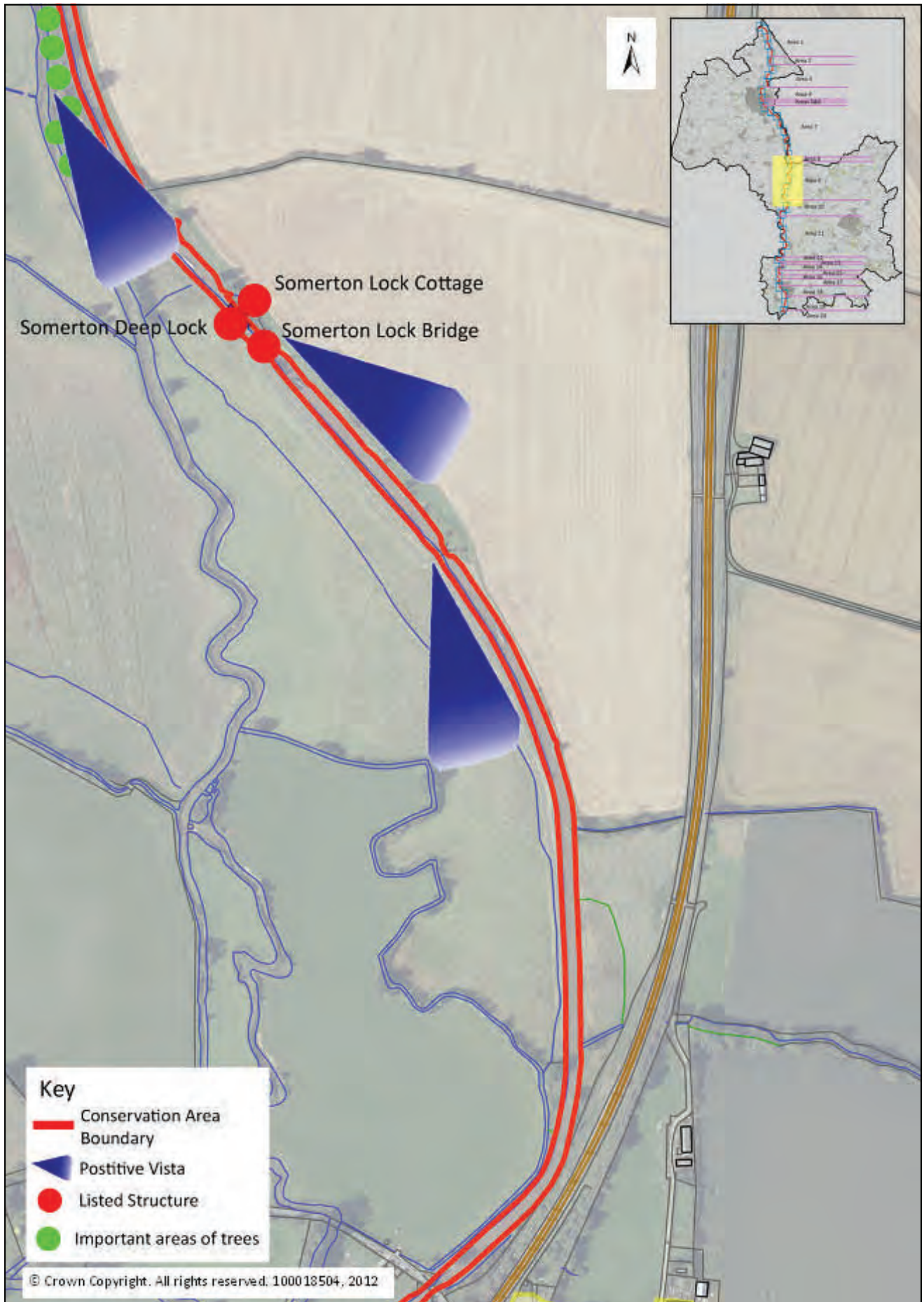


Fig. 31 Route Assessment Area 9: Aynho to Allen's Lock

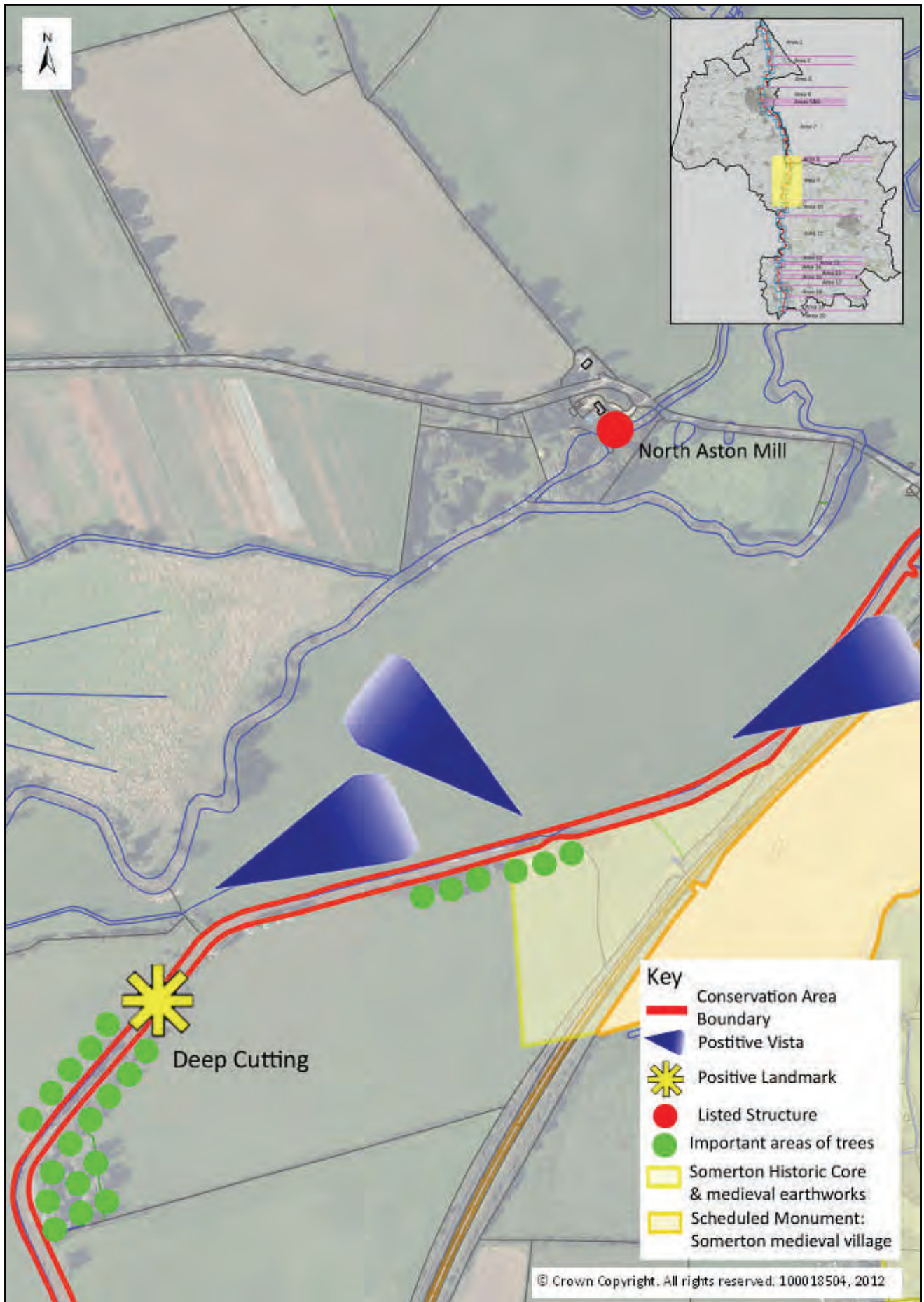


Fig. 32 Route Assessment Area 9: Aynho to Allen's Lock

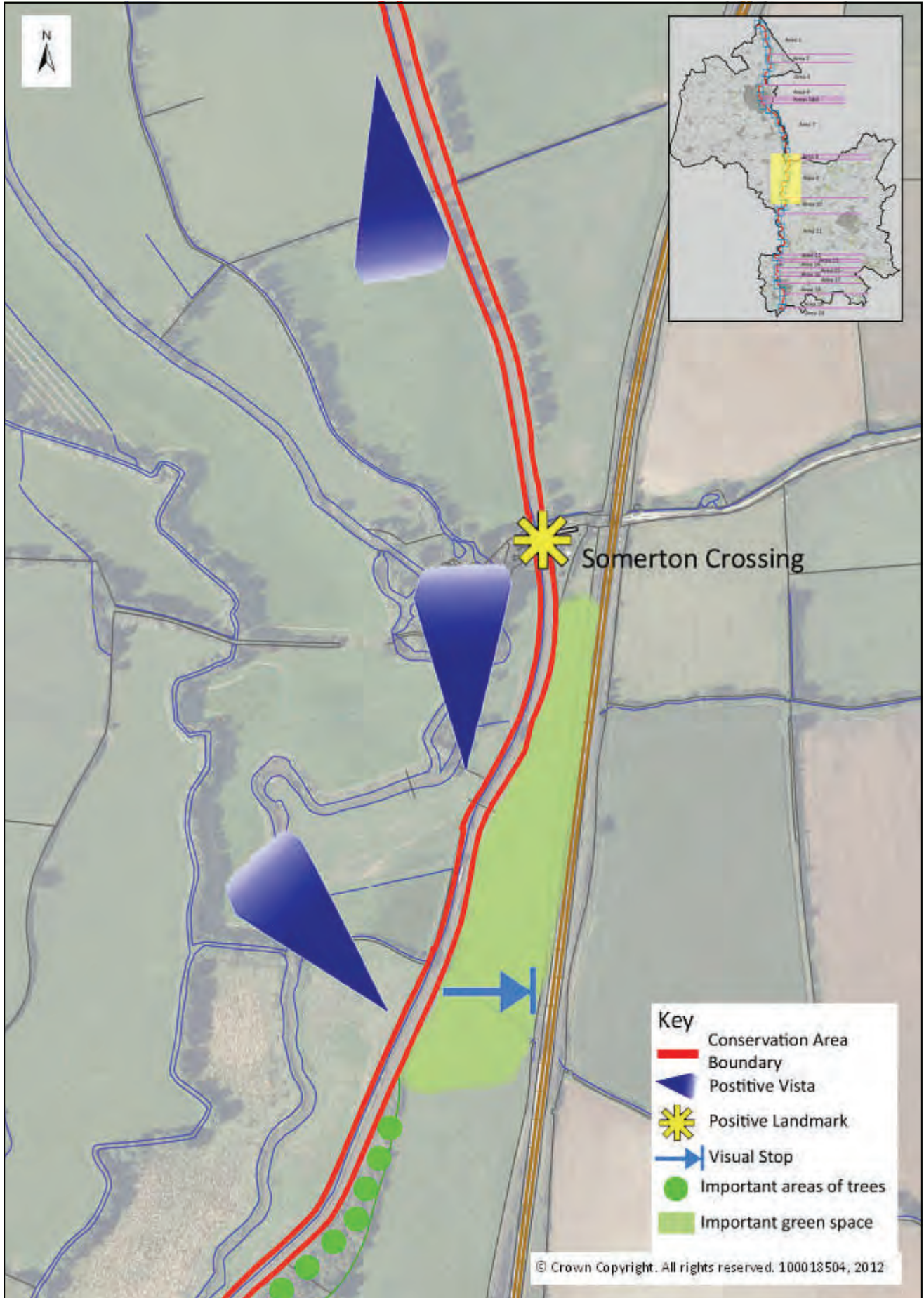


Fig. 33 Route Assessment Area 9: Aynho to Allen's Lock

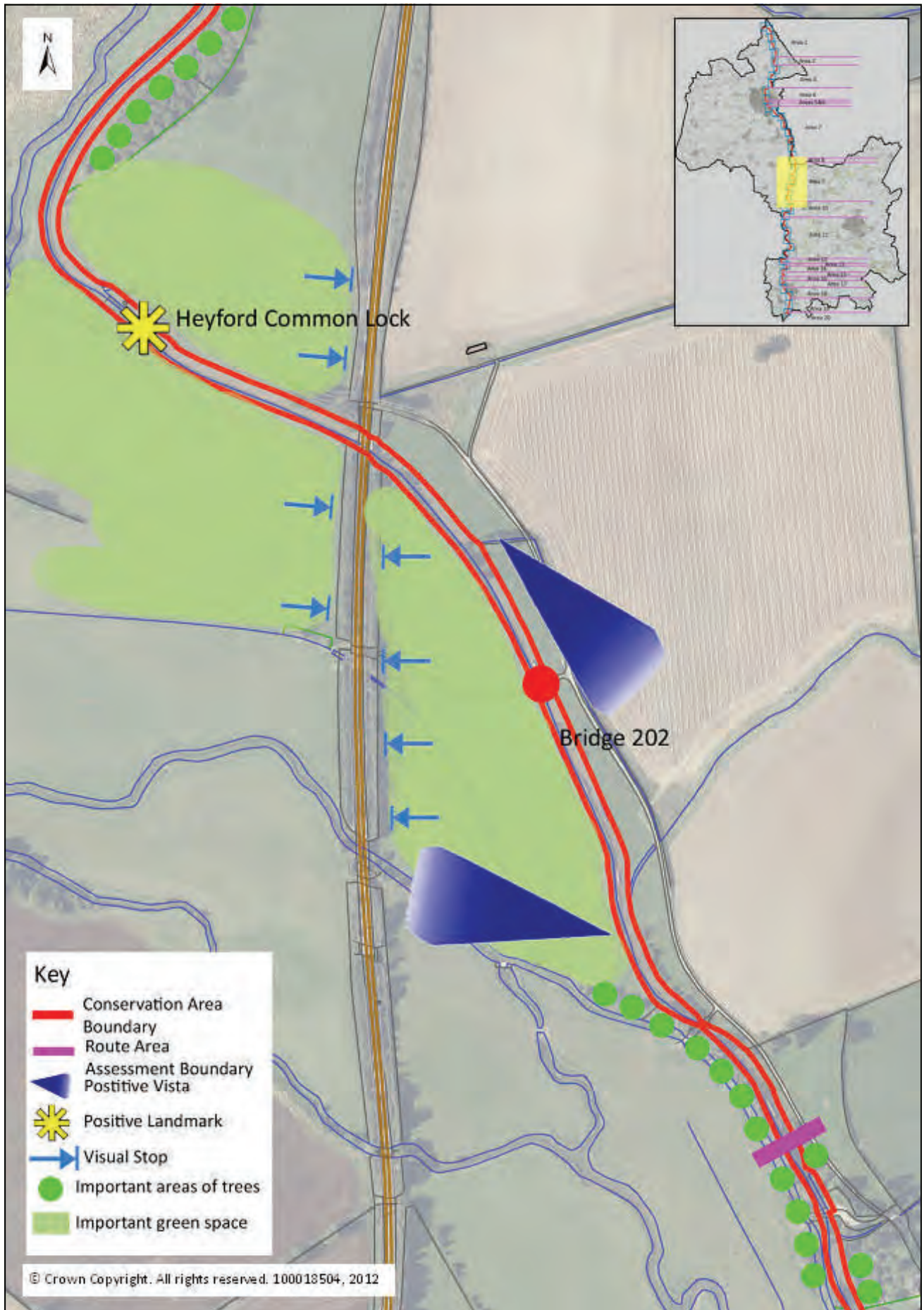


Fig. 34 Route Assessment Area 9 & 10: Aynho to Allen's Lock; The Heyfords

7.11 Route Assessment Area 10: The Heyfords



Allen's Lock

7.11.1 Allen's Lock was sited close to Upper Heyford Mill but, whilst there is still a bridge across the adjacent river, the mill is no more. The main part of Upper Heyford is sited on the eastern slope above the flood plain and the canal passes between it and the river, which at this point is quite close.

7.11.2 From the canal there are fine views of St Mary's church, manor house and magnificent tithe barn on the steep slope on the offside, all built in the local stone. Although there is a lock and a bridge there seems to be little real contact between the village and the canal.



Upper Heyford Tithe Barn and Church

7.11.3 South of Upper Heyford, the towpath is on an embankment between the canal and a millrace off the river some distance below it. It turns to go around Lower Heyford, another village of stone houses.



Approaching Lower Heyford

7.11.4 For a while there are woods on the offside and a tall modern fence followed a tall stone wall on the towpath side, hemming the canal in until the bridge. An attractive lane leads around from the bridge to the former mill at the east end of the village, forming one of the few village streetscapes visible from the canal towpath. There is more scrub land between the canal, river and wood, with scrub on the offside until the church becomes visible, sited in similar fashion in relation to the canal as that at Upper Heyford.

7.11.6 Heyford Wharf is another well equipped boatyard which retains several older buildings on the offside of the canal, including a wharf house, stores and possible former stables, all once owned by the canal company. Much of its character again comes from the narrowboats that use it. The railway runs close to the towpath and the station is next to the canal bridge.

7.11.7 Both the railway and the canal are clearly on the edge of the village and are not integral to its character. A little up the lane to the east, the former Red Lion Inn may well have been there before the canal as well; it ceased to be a pub in the 20th century and is now converted into houses. The view up this lane, only possible from the combined bridge over the railway and canal, is of a loose-knit settlement of stone-built houses.



Lower Heyford Moorings

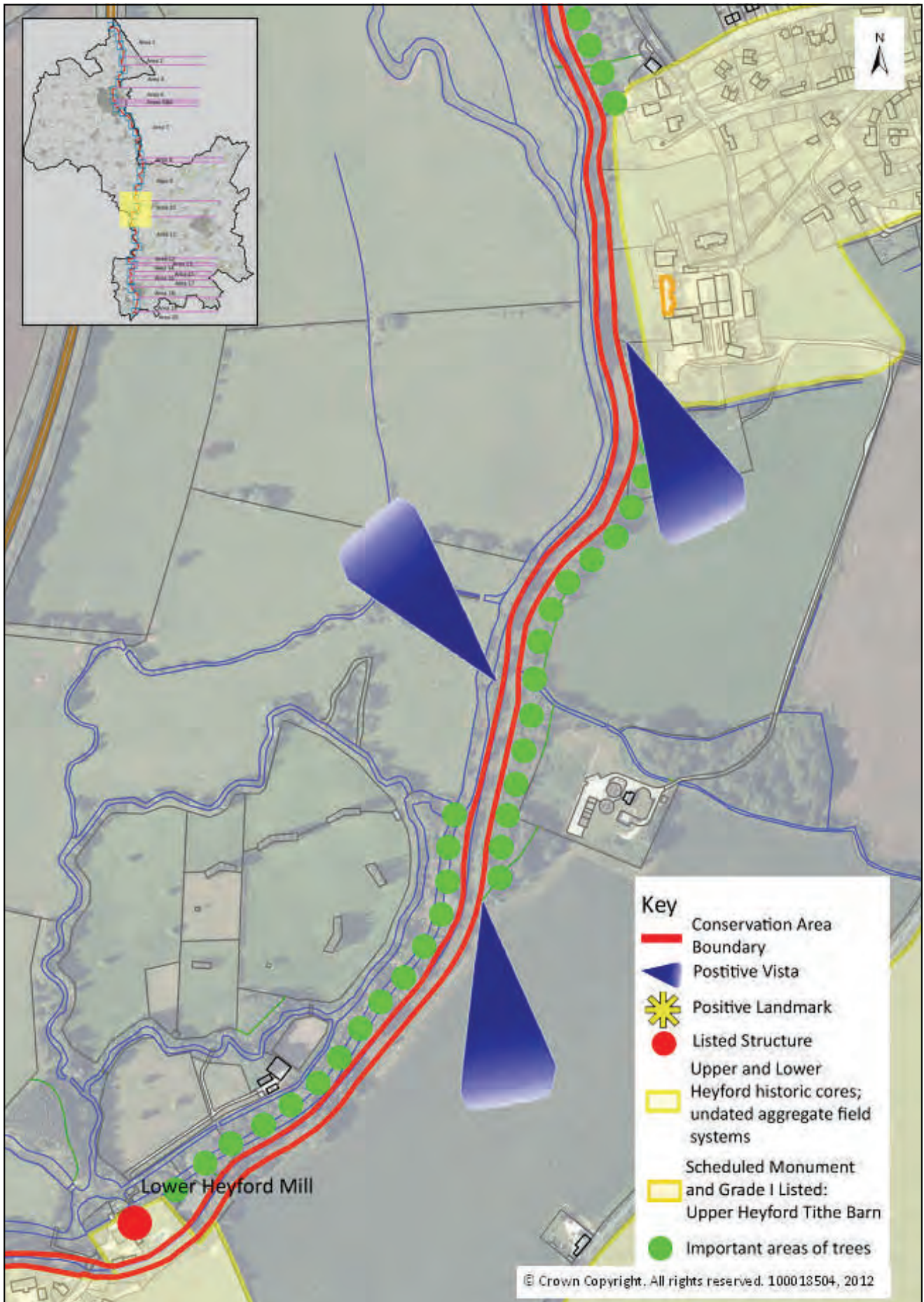


Fig. 35 Route Assessment Area 10: The Heyfords

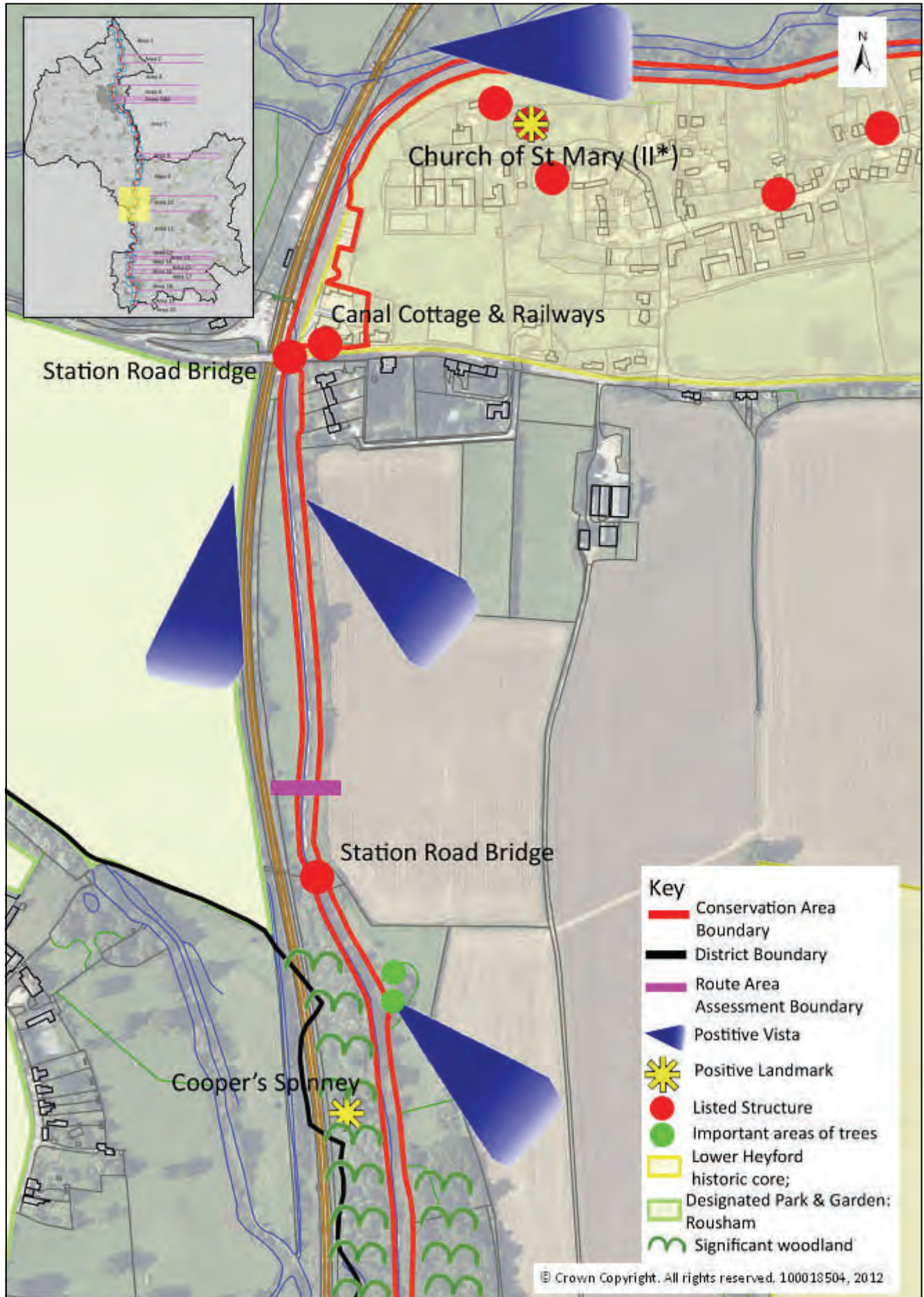


Fig. 36 Route Assessment Area 10 & 11: The Heyfords; Lower Heyford to Enslow

7.12 Route Assessment Area 11: Lower Heyford to Enslow

7.12.1 A long section of this woodland, opposite Rousham, is called Cooper's Spinney, after which the canal's setting opens out again on either side of the remote Dashwoods Lock before woodland returns on both sides on the approach to Northbrook Lock. At this point the canal runs in a narrow gap between the river and the steep wooded east side of the valley.



Coopers Spinney, south of Lower Heyford

7.12.2 The route of the Roman Akeman Street crosses the canal nearby and the river but its position is not marked in any way. Just to the south of this there is now a large nature reserve in the woods on the offside where there were once quarries. Little remains of the wharf that served them. The large cement works built along the bank which operated between 1907 and 1928 was served by the canal but the development of motorised road transport after the First World War led to it being replaced by a new and more conveniently sited works further south between Enslow and Shipton-on-Cherwell. The extensive buildings by the canal bank have now been demolished.

7.12.3 The woods continue on the offside as far as Pigeons Lock and generally woody scrub on the towpath side where there is room for it on the fairly narrow embankment between the canal and the river.



The large cement works at Lower Heyford in 1970: now demolished and a nature reserve (Gagg 1971)



Northbrook Bridge over the River Cherwell

7.12.4 Beyond Pigeons Lock the offside woodland ceases, partly because there is now a large golf course which has led to the removal of much of the woodland and the field boundaries. On the towpath side the hedgerow has again become more impenetrable, isolating the canal again from the broader landscape until it is confined to a narrow embankment again between it and the river.



Northern approach to Pigeons Lock

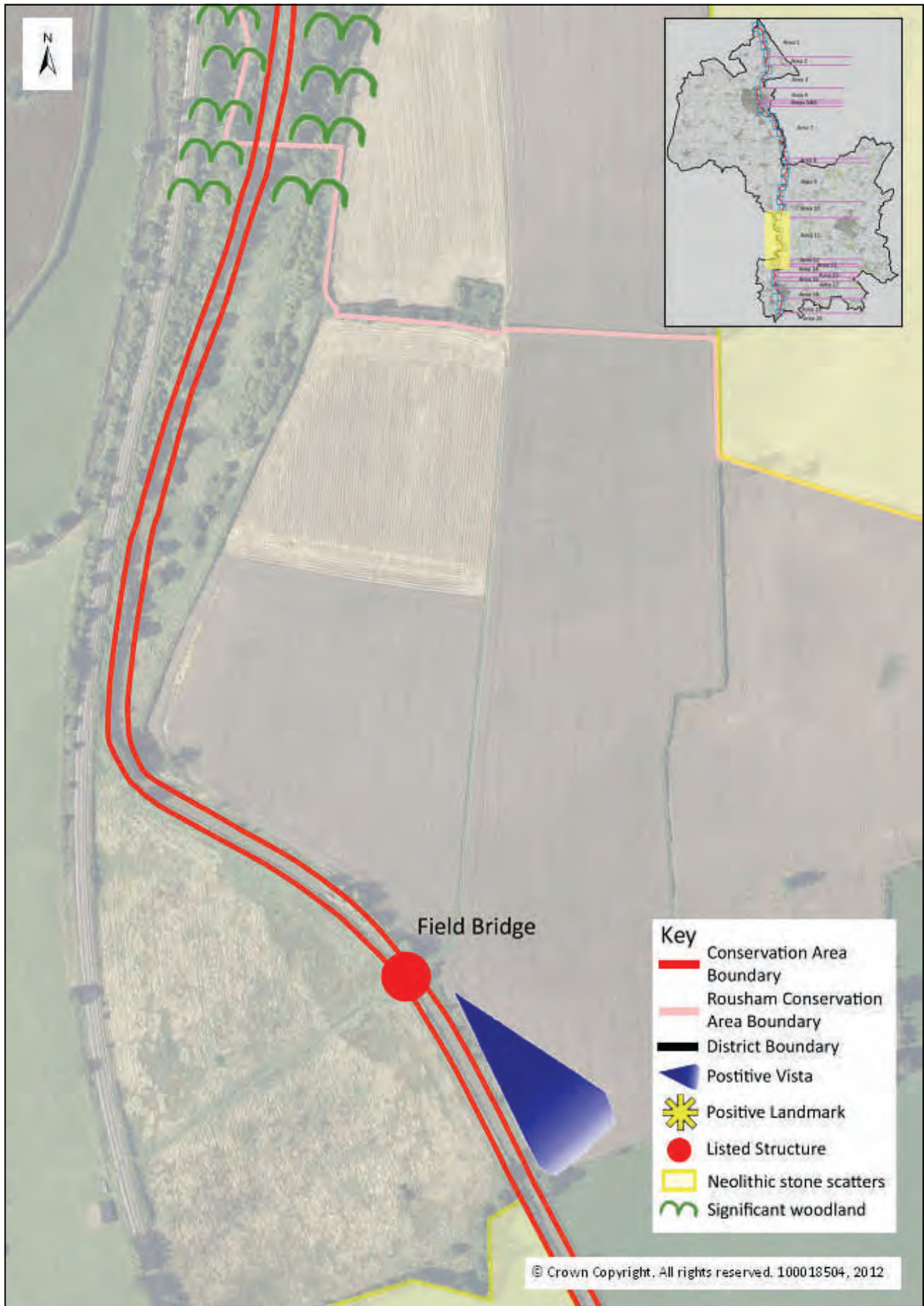


Fig. 37 Route Assessment Area 11: Lower Heyford to Enslow

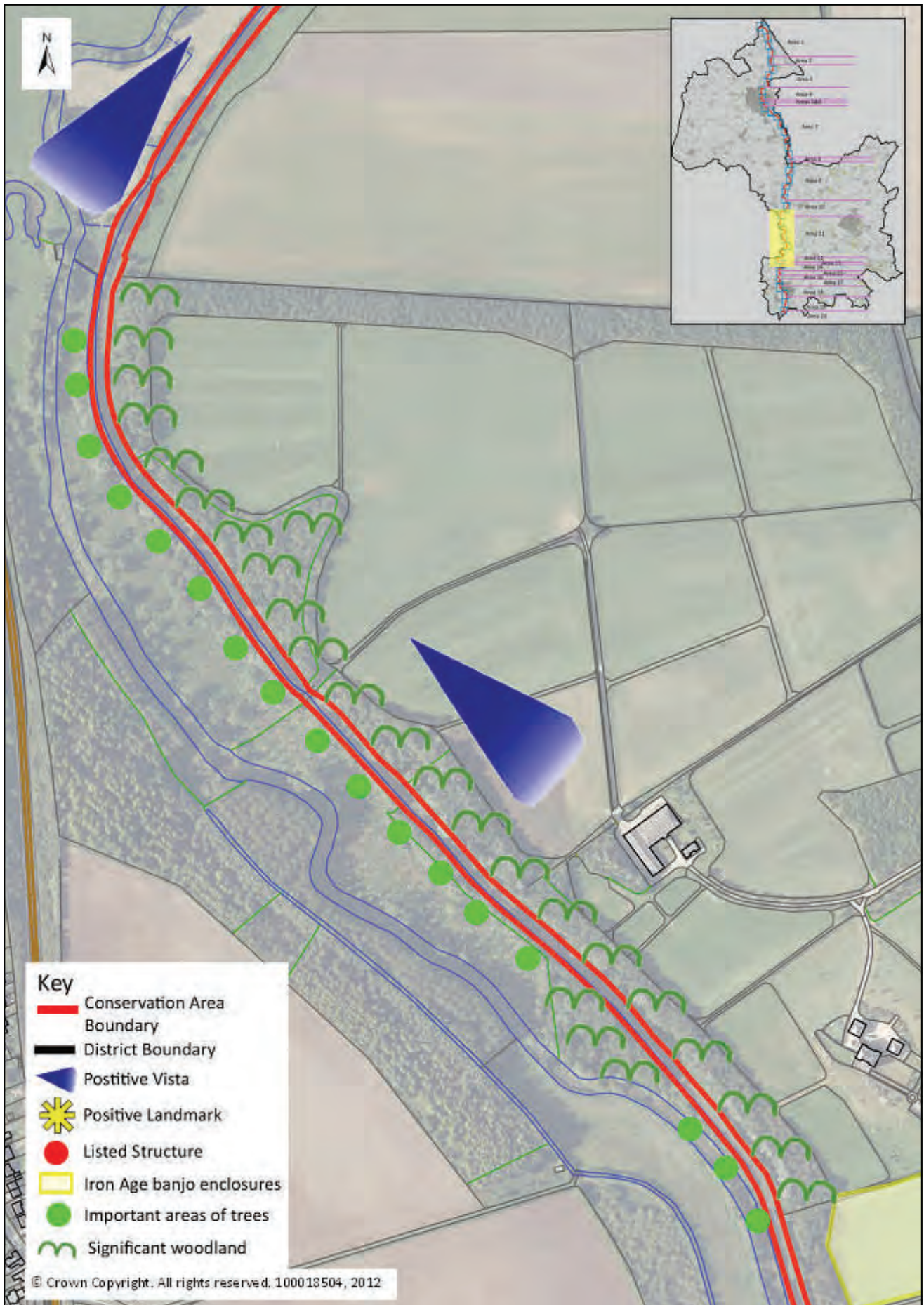


Fig. 38 Route Assessment Area 11: Lower Heyford to Enslow

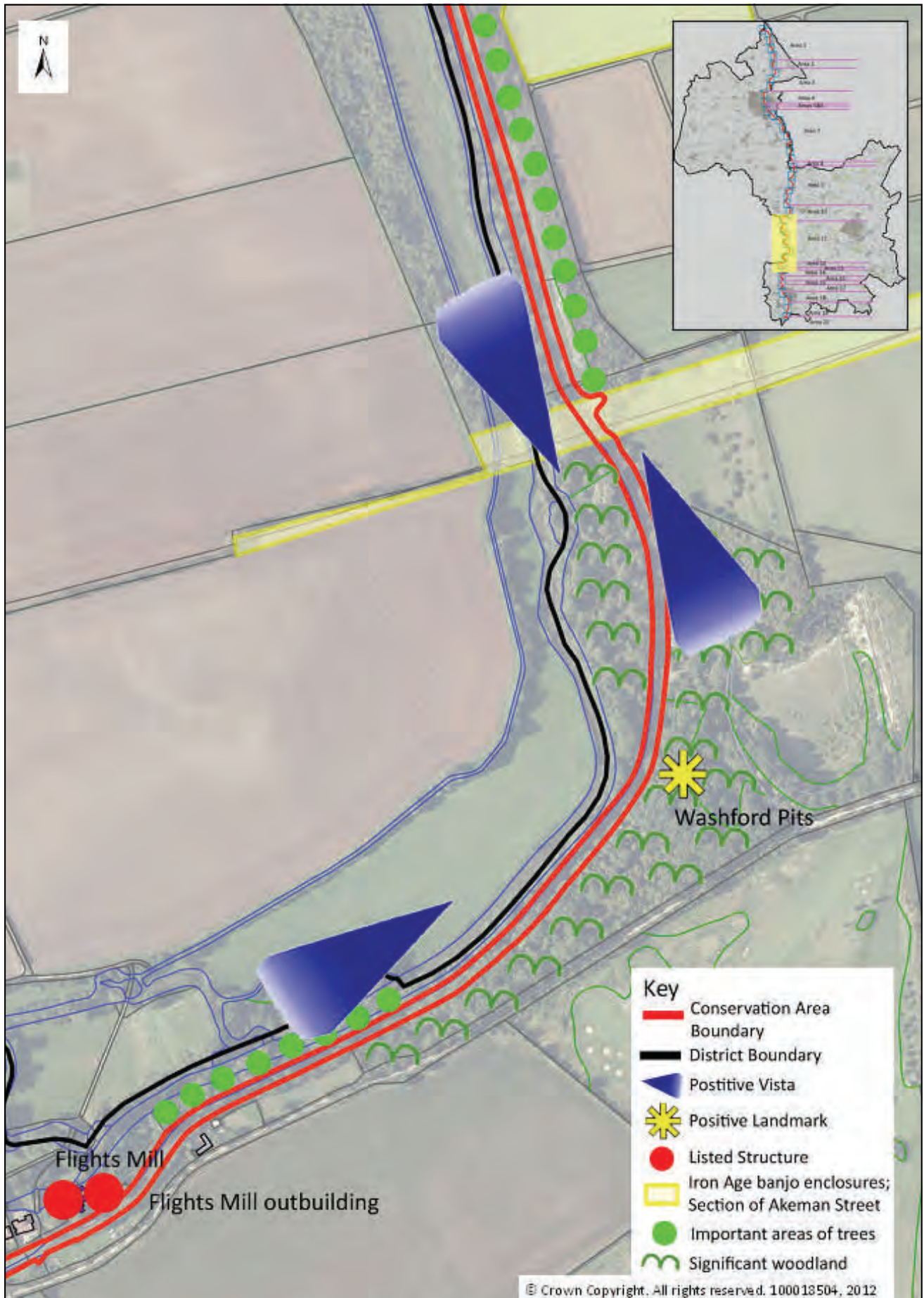


Fig. 39 Route Assessment Area 11: Lower Heyford to Enslow

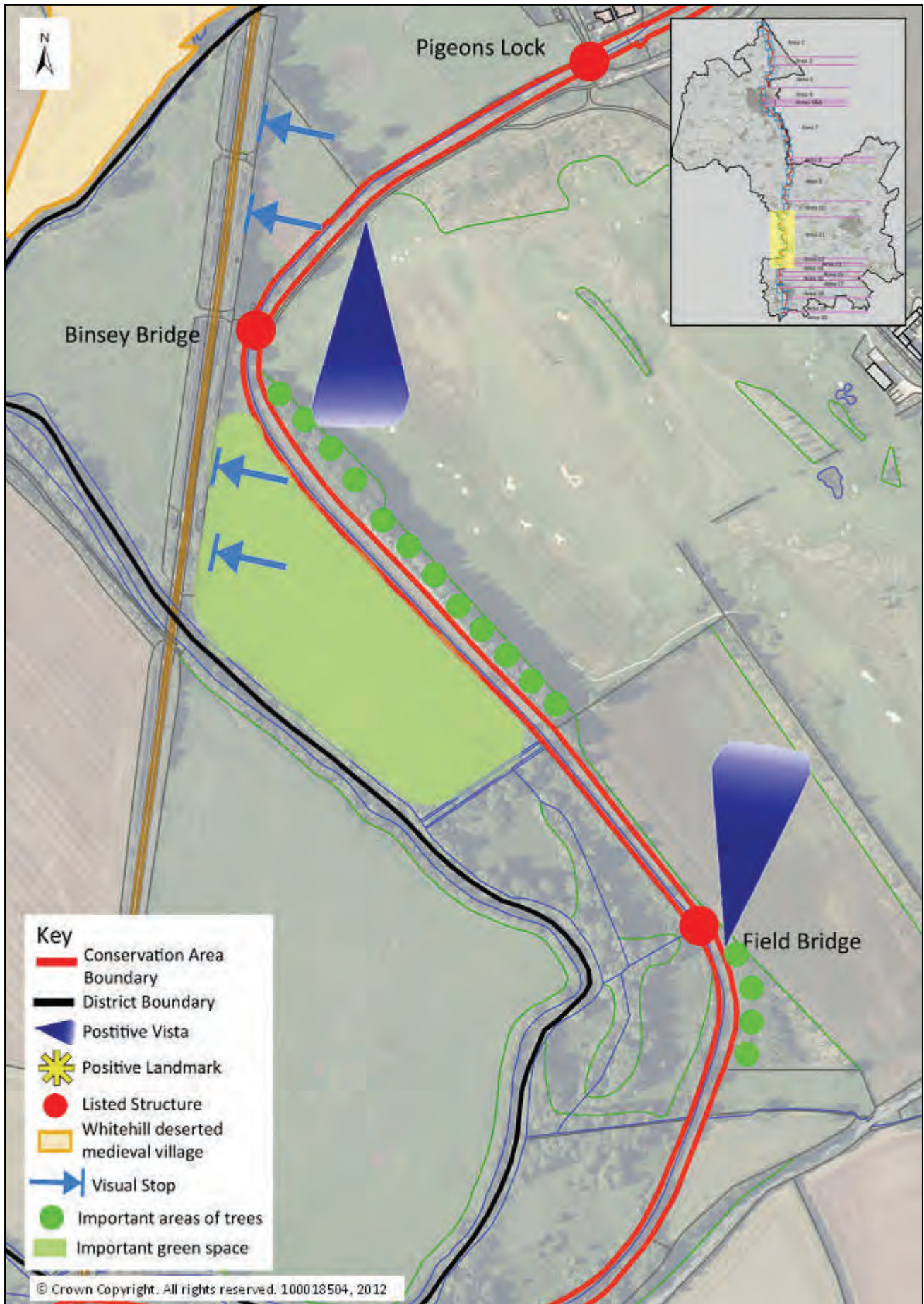


Fig. 40 Route Assessment Area 11: Lower Heyford to Enslow

7.13 Route Assessment Area 12: Enslow to Baker's Lock and Horsebridge (Bridge 217)

7.13.1 Enslow is another busy place for modern narrowboats, with a relatively new boatyard to the north-east of the railway bridge and boats moored on both sides of the canal beyond. At this point the canal and the river are very close. Opposite the wharf, there is also the start of the leat serving the former mill.



Enslow Wharf

7.13.2 The village retains a stone-built canal-side warehouse on the offside, converted into a house, as well as some ancillary buildings behind it associated with the wharf – and the Rock of Gibraltar public house. The wharf and the pub once belonged to the Oxford Canal Company.



The Rock of Gibraltar public house overlooks the canal, river and flood plain

7.13.3 Modern industrial workshops and houses occupy the site of the mill. The railway station, formerly for the nearby village of Bletchington, is closed.



View northeast from Enslow Wharf

7.13.4 The original stone-built canal bridge survives as a footbridge, the road being carried over the canal by a new bridge to the south-west. Below the wharf is another long row of long-term moorings on the tow-path side.

7.13.5 As elsewhere along the canal, the main vistas are still along the canal, with limited views on the offside because of the scrubby woodland. There is no view of any significance through the scattered settlement.

7.13.6 The very large flat arable fields opposite are dominated by the tall chimney and derelict bulk of a cement factory, its chimney dominating the views from the canal. It replaced the one near Kirtlington at the end of the 1920's. Also visible in the vicinity are large radio dishes.



Junction of canal and River Cherwell near Baker's Lock

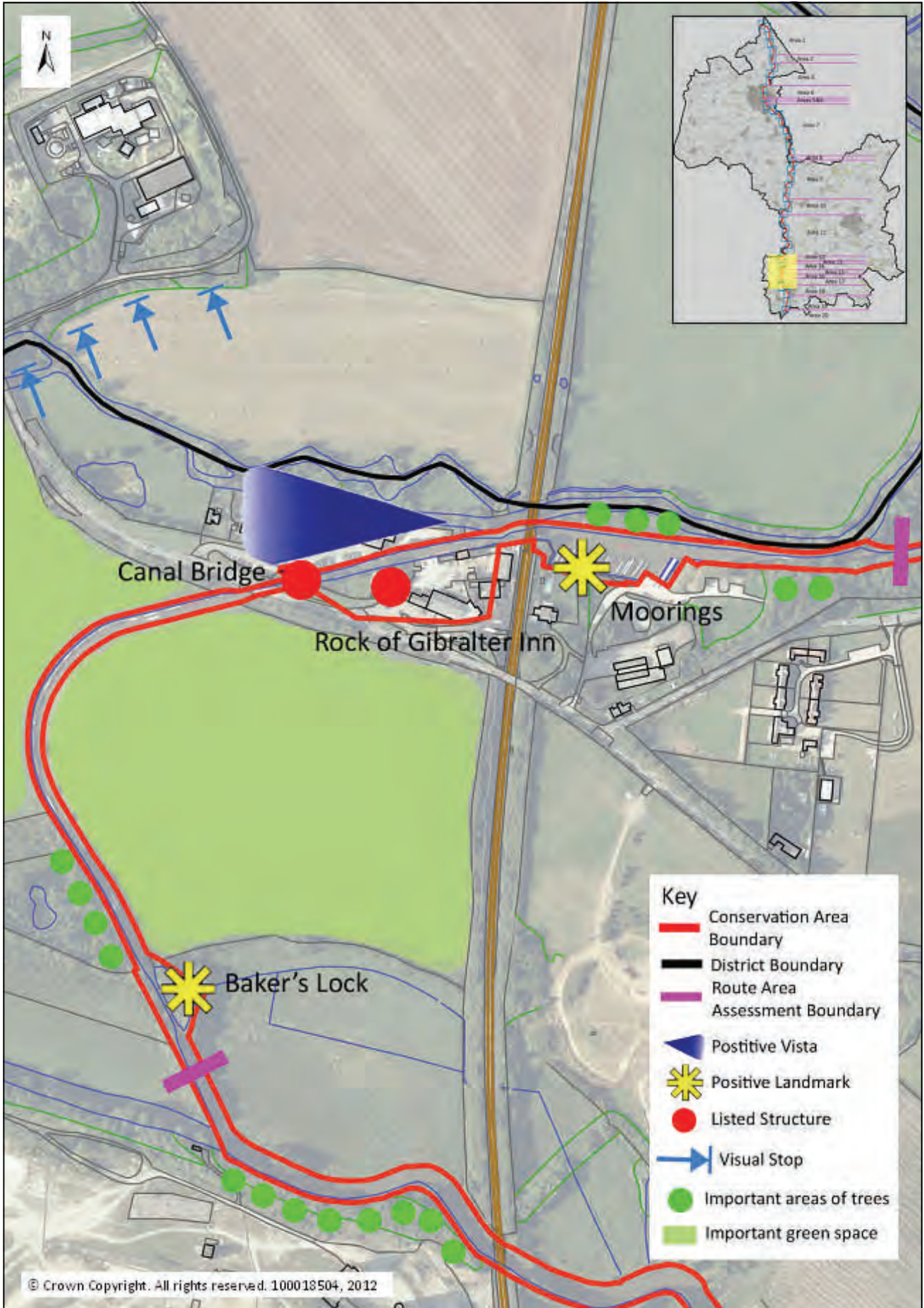


Fig. 41 Route Assessment Area 12 & 13: Enslow to Baker's Lock & Horsebridge; Horsebridge to Shiptonweir Lock

7.14 Route Assessment Area 13: Horsebridge (Bridge 217) to Shiptonwier Lock (Bridge 218)

7.14.1 Below Baker's Lock, the canal joins the River Cherwell and the navigation uses the river for about a mile. This section, despite the bulk of the cement works occasionally being visible, completely unlike any other canalscape.



River section: wide and fast flowing

7.14.2 The river is wider than the canal, faster flowing, with quite sharp bends and pleasant tree-lined meadows on the opposite side to the towpath. Its banks are quite irregular and the towpath is some distance from the bank, enhancing the river-like scenery.

7.14.3 The towpath hedgerow is wildly overgrown, and there is a degree of scrubby woodland between it and the fields as well. The whole scene is rather idyllic and more woods reappear on the offside towards the southern end of this section.



River Cherwell looking downstream: the trees and scrubby vegetation give the area a closed-in atmosphere

7.14.4 The river is not, however, entirely natural; the towpath is on a shallow embankment and there was clearly a degree of engineering required to ensure that there was a minimum depth of water. It is noted as being a little hazardous in times of heavy rainfall and can occasionally flood.

7.14.5 The canal leaves the river at Shiptonwier Lock, the second of the unusual shallow octagonal locks on the canal. The Cherwell continues southwards whilst the canal loops back towards the western side of the valley floor.



Shiptonwier Lock

7.14.6 Views in this section are mainly up and down the meandering river or across from the towpath to the offside and the fields beyond, ending in the low hills of the valley side. The towpath hedge and scrubby woodland adjacent to it restrict views in this direction, but through gaps can be seen large flat fields with few hedges.



Derelict cement works visible in the distance

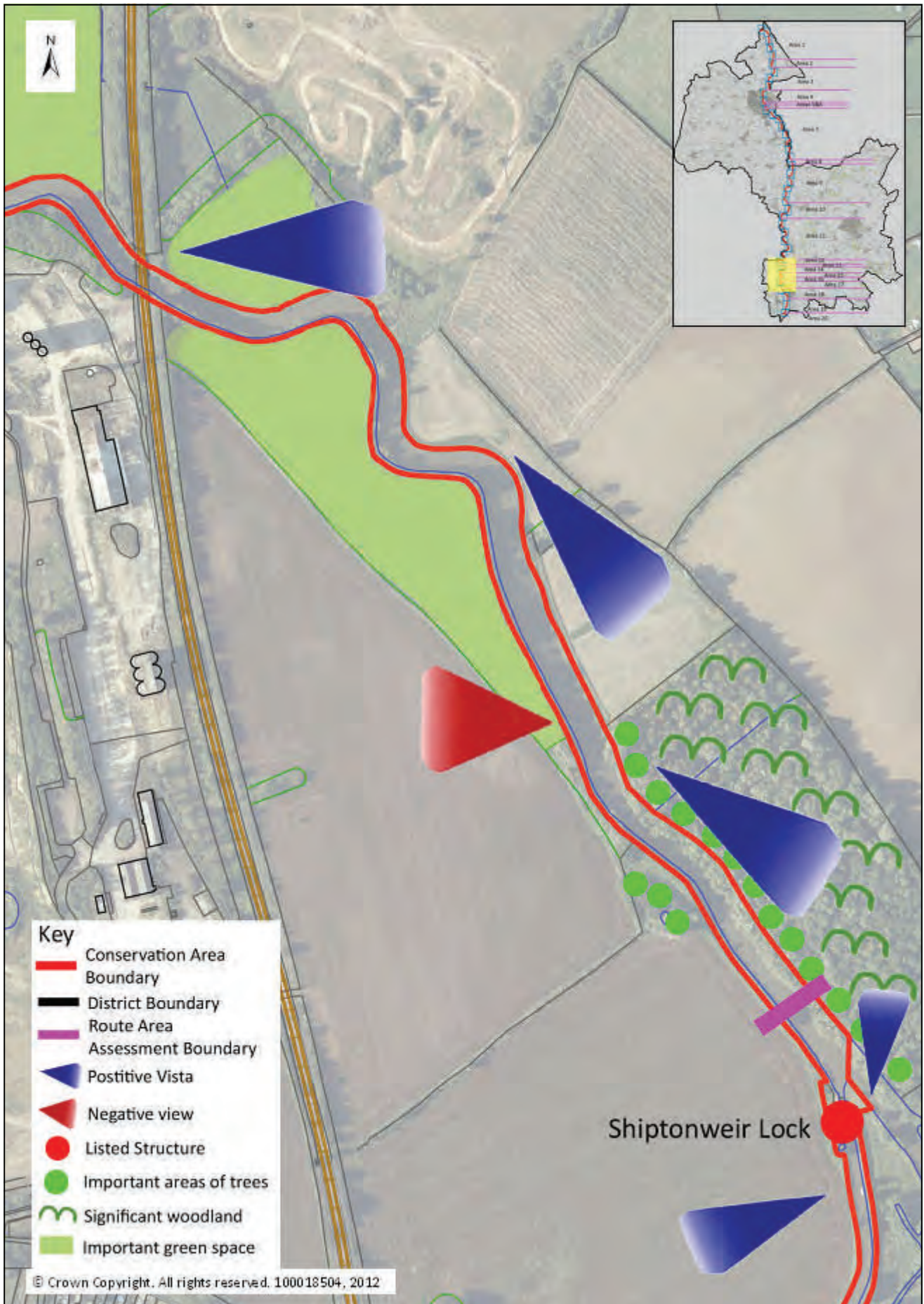


Fig. 42 Route Assessment Area 13: Horsebridge to Shiptonweir Lock

7.15 Route Assessment Area 14: Shiptonweir Lock to Shipton

7.15.1 The towpath changes sides at the lock by a cast-iron footbridge of uncertain date; the canal then loops round almost 180 degrees before turning again towards Shipton on Cherwell. From the towpath the lift bridge before the village (Bridge 219) is clearly visible from some distance away, as is the long curve of the towpath hedge. Unfortunately, it is difficult to see through the hedgerow to look closely at the lonely little church of Hampton Gay or the gaunt ruins of the nearby mansion.



7.15.2 The railway crosses again just past the lift bridge. This was the scene of a fatal accident in the 1870's when a train derailed and some carriages fell into the canal. Beyond this are the abutments of the shorter lived branch line to Woodstock.



The railway crash on Christmas Eve 1874 at Shipton was the worst in the history of the Great Western Railway

7.15.3 The canal then passes through the edge of Shipton-on-Cherwell and right by the eastern end of its medieval church on the west bank. Despite its proximity to the village there is little interaction between canal and settlement, although a few gardens do run down to the canal bank on the offside east of the church.

7.15.4 The main canal interest in Shipton is the stop gate above the bridge, designed to close off a section of canal in emergencies or for maintenance; it is the only one in the conservation area.



Shipton Stop Gate

7.15.5 On the towpath side the views of the valley floor are still restricted by the overgrown hedge, and the views over to the offside, though extensive, are of large fields with few features of note other than the cement works, its chimney and flat fields with few hedges.



View from River Cherwell to the canal

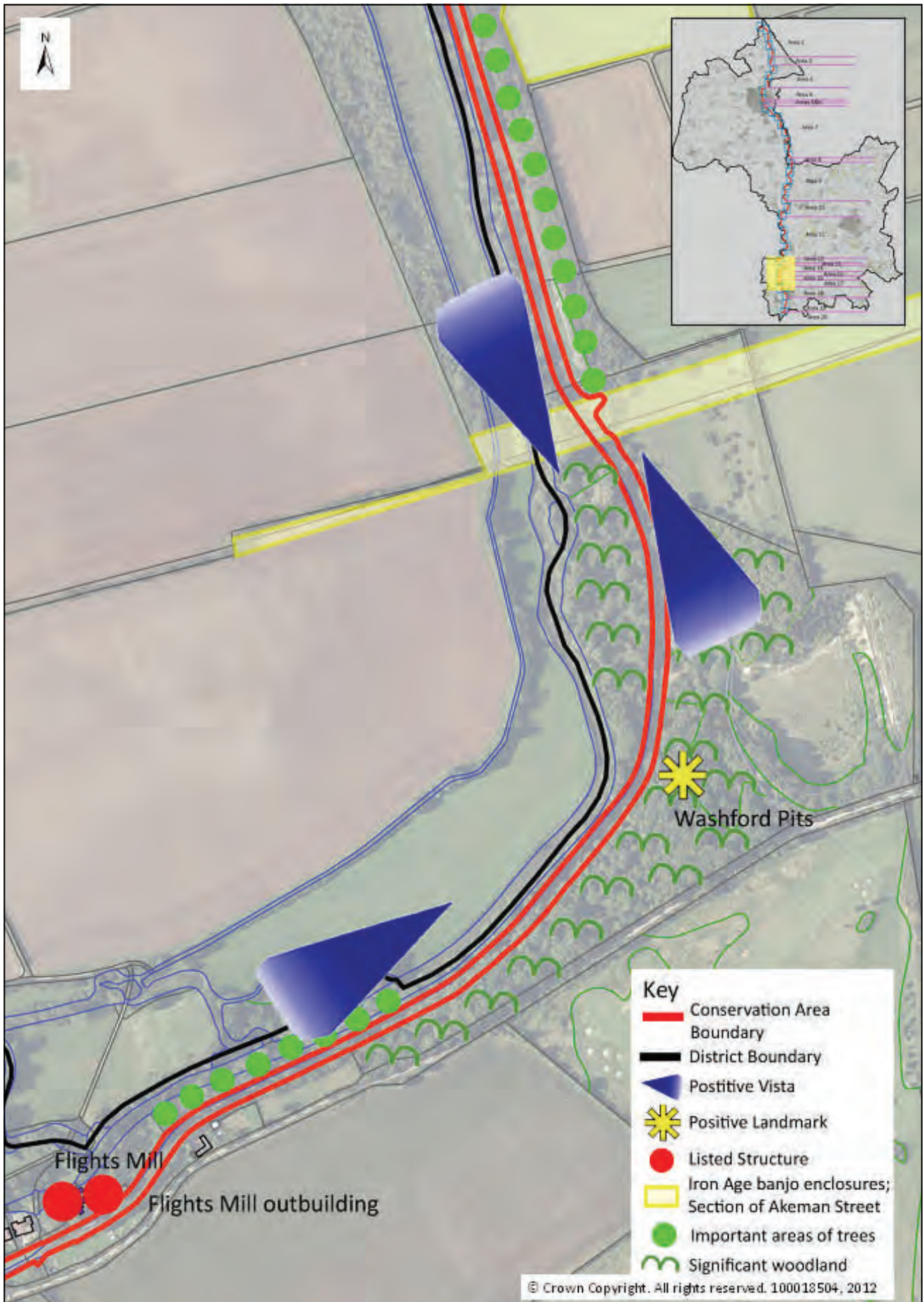


Fig. 43 Route Assessment Area 14: Shiptonweir Lock to Shipton

7.16 Route Assessment Area 15: Thrupp

7.16.1 From Shipton there are moored boats virtually all the way to Thrupp on the towpath side. After a bend in the canal there is a long straight section called Thrupp Wide, and this is, as its name suggested, wider than most sections of the canal.



Looking south along the canal at Thrupp

7.16.2 On the offside there are woods and a low but steep bank. The towpath runs on the embankment between the canal and the river but at this point is tamed with modern gravel surfaces and the domestic facilities for those using the moorings, which are private. At the end of the Wide the canal makes a right-angled turn by the wharf.



Looking north through the trees to the church

7.16.3 Thrupp is considered to be one of the finer canal villages, and considered to have developed simply because of the canal. Whilst there is some truth in this, it does seem that the thatched stone-built cottages in the canal yard predate the canal and could be conversions of agricultural buildings.

7.16.4 At the canal end of the yard the small buildings were built for the canal and have been converted to new canal-related uses, such as a cafe. All of this yard area was owned by the canal company, who also owned two small buildings on the opposite side of the canal by the wharf.

7.16.5 Immediately to the south of these remodelled wharf buildings is a former farmyard with a large former threshing barn; this may also predate the canal. It may even be that the existence of these earlier buildings partly accounts for the very sudden right-angled bend for which Thrupp is notorious.



Thrupp Yard

7.16.6 From the turn and the renewed lift bridge, the lane between the towpath and the tall stone wall of the farmyard makes an attractive contrast with the moored boats. Further on to the south other buildings include a pleasant terrace of stone built cottages parallel to the canal, possibly partly converted from a salt warehouse, together with a pub, and a former Baptist chapel, now converted to a house. South of the village is a section of canal with trees or overgrown hedgerows on either side curving round to meet the main road.

7.16.7 The views in the Thrupp section are mainly canal related, up and down 'the cut' and into the canal yard. In the Thrupp Wide section to the north-west of the turn the views are restricted on the offside by trees but open out after the turn to fields in the valley bottom and the railway embankment beyond, contrasting with the rubblestone buildings and boundary walls on the towpath side of the canal.

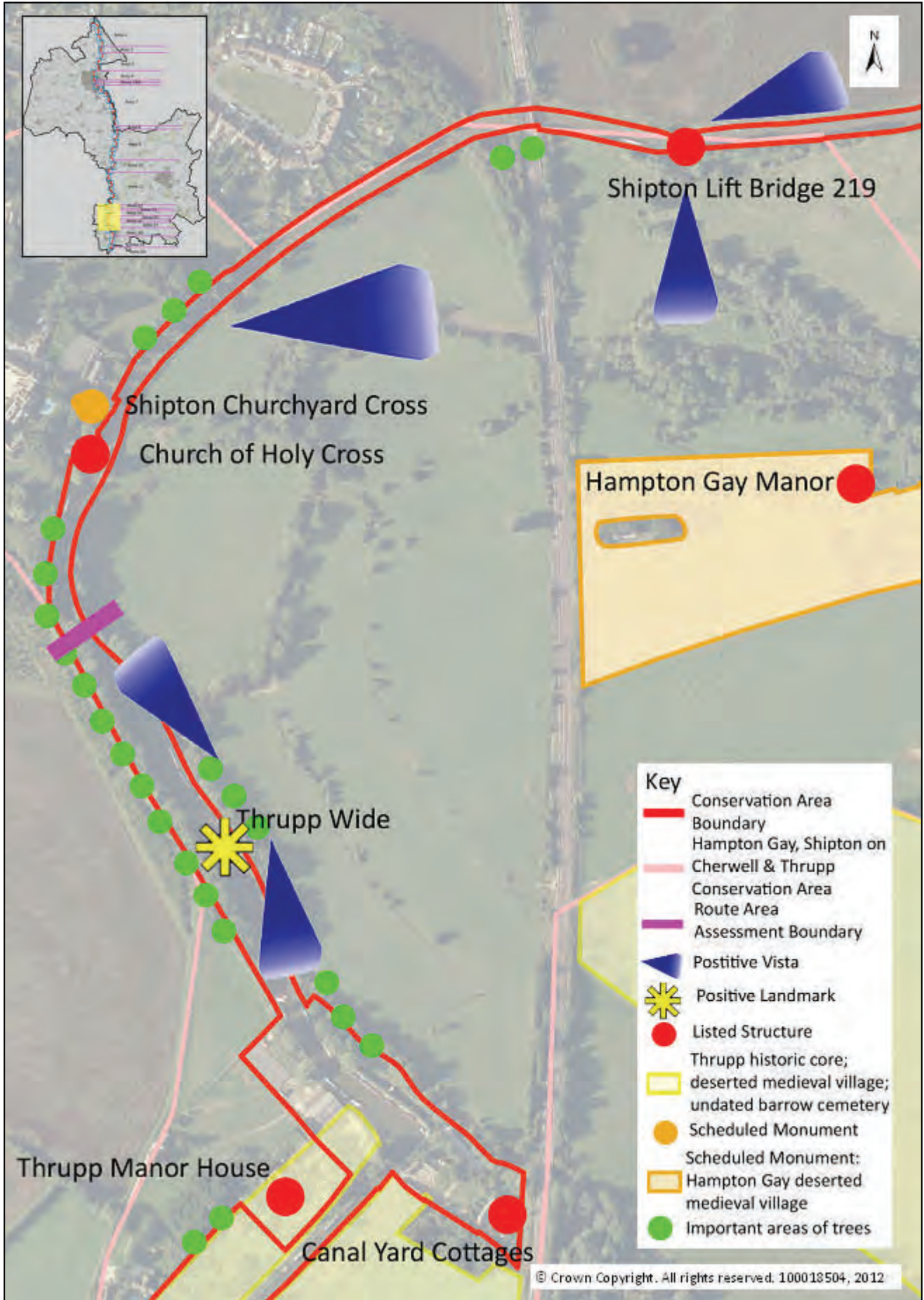


Fig. 44 Route Assessment Area 15: Thrupp

7.17 Route Assessment Area 16: Sparrow Gap Bridge (Bridge 223) to Langford Lane

7.17.1 Narrowboats are moored to the towpath side all the way from Thrupp with only a few gaps as far as Langford Lane bridge. The canal turns to the south-east and for a while runs parallel to the busy A423; the Jolly Boatman pub is sited between the canal and the road and is popular with boaters, especially in the summer, though was not built as a pub.



Jolly Boatman pub and bridge

7.17.2 The canal then approaches Kidlington, a large village on the northern edge of Oxford. In this short straight section the busy traffic impacts adversely on the character of the canal. The traffic is close to the towpath, though visually hidden by the towpath hedge. Offside views are also partly hidden by overgrown hedges.



View south towards Kidlington

7.17.3 The bridge taking the main road across the canal is a well-designed example from the 1930s, beyond which are the surviving stone-built buildings of Langford Lane wharf, which is no longer canal related. The angle of the short terrace probably respects earlier property boundaries; these cottages were thatched until being rebuilt after a fire. There are also buildings on the opposite bank, including a pub, and there was probably some wharfage on that side as well. This was the closest the canal came to a roadside conveniently situated for the small town of Woodstock to the north-west.



Cottages at Kidlington Wharf: former warehouses

7.17.4 For about a mile after the wharf, the canalscape is fairly unattractive; there are moored boats on the towpath side, overhung by the overgrown hedgerow. On the offside are modern industrial units, roughly screened by overgrown hedges and trees, providing limited views.



Kidlington Wharf

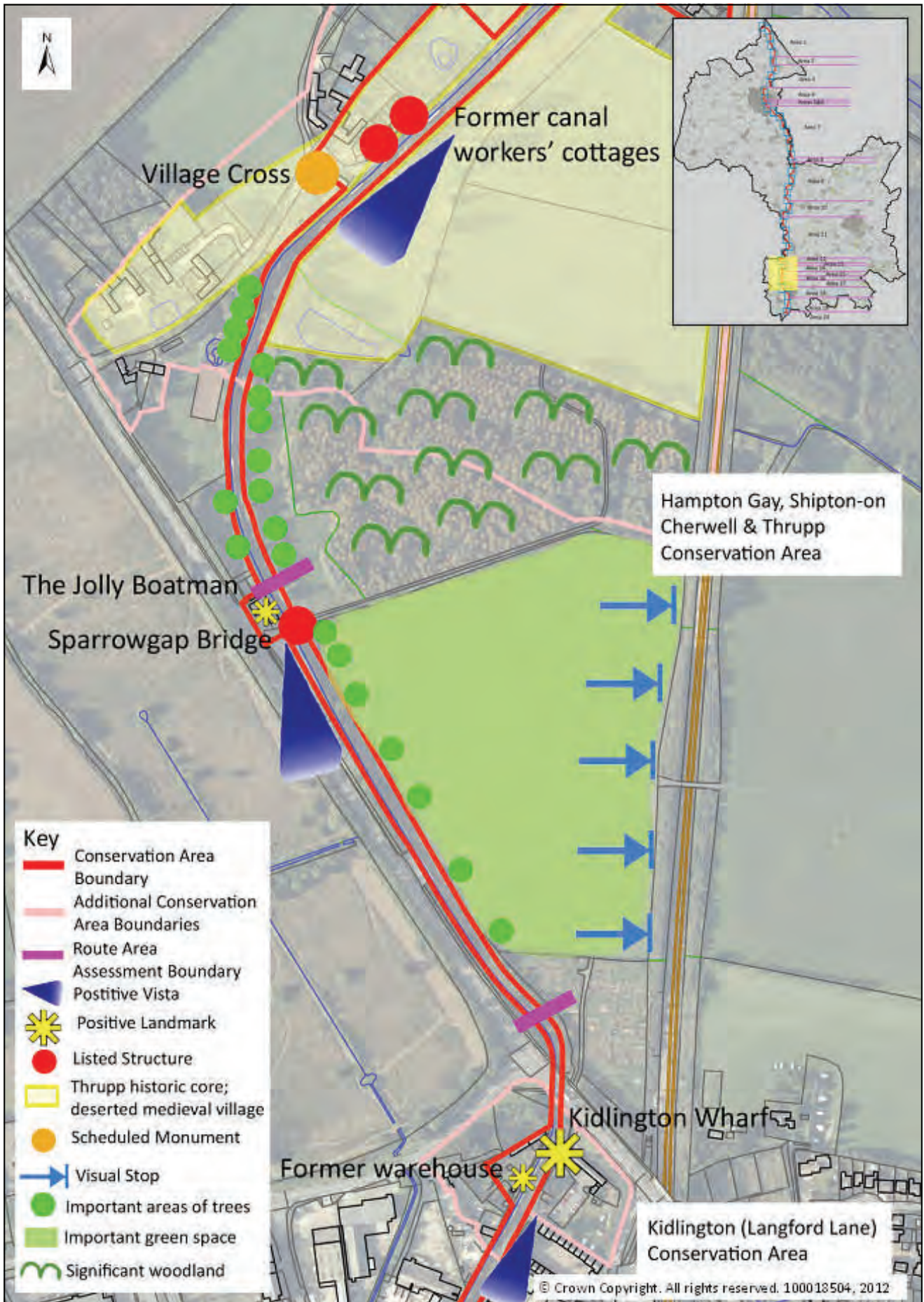


Fig. 45 Route Assessment Area 16 & 17: Sparrowgap Bridge to Langford Lane; South of Langford Lane to Roundham Lock

7.18 Route Assessment Area 17: South of Langford Lane to Roundham Lock

7.18.1 To the south of a modern road bridge the setting of the canal becomes fairly rural again as far as Roundham Lock. There are overgrown shrubs and hedgerows on both sides and, for about the first time within the study area, the canal line is consistently straight for several quite long stretches.

7.18.2 Views are still limited, mainly due to the overgrowth on the offside, which also has the benefit of hiding modern urban developments further away from the canal, and the overgrown towpath hedge. Occasionally there are gaps in the hedge to allow views over quite scrubby fields.

7.18.3 By the surviving abutments of former lift bridge No.225 is a World War Two pill box on the offside; this presumably dates from 1940 and the only one actually on the line of the canal to survive.



Pillbox and bridge abutments



Roundham Lock

7.19 Route Assessment Area 18: Roundham Lock to Kidlington Green Lock

7.19.1 Evidently, until the second half of the 20th century, the next section as far as Kidlington Green Lock would have been very similar in character to Areas 17 and 19, and, indeed, large sections of the canal.



The canal sits between it's the open fields and modern housing; similarly to Banbury, this area sees great activity levels due to this heightened interaction

7.19.2 However, there have recently been major housing developments on the offside, and the canal becomes the boundary between modern housing estates on the east and the water meadows to the west, beyond which is the railway.

7.19.3 As there are very few crossing points, this boundary is almost impermeable and the differences between the two landscapes is quite marked. There are few opportunities for views through the towpath hedge. The views across to the housing show how near to the canal the land has been developed.



View west from Bullers Bridge across the fields

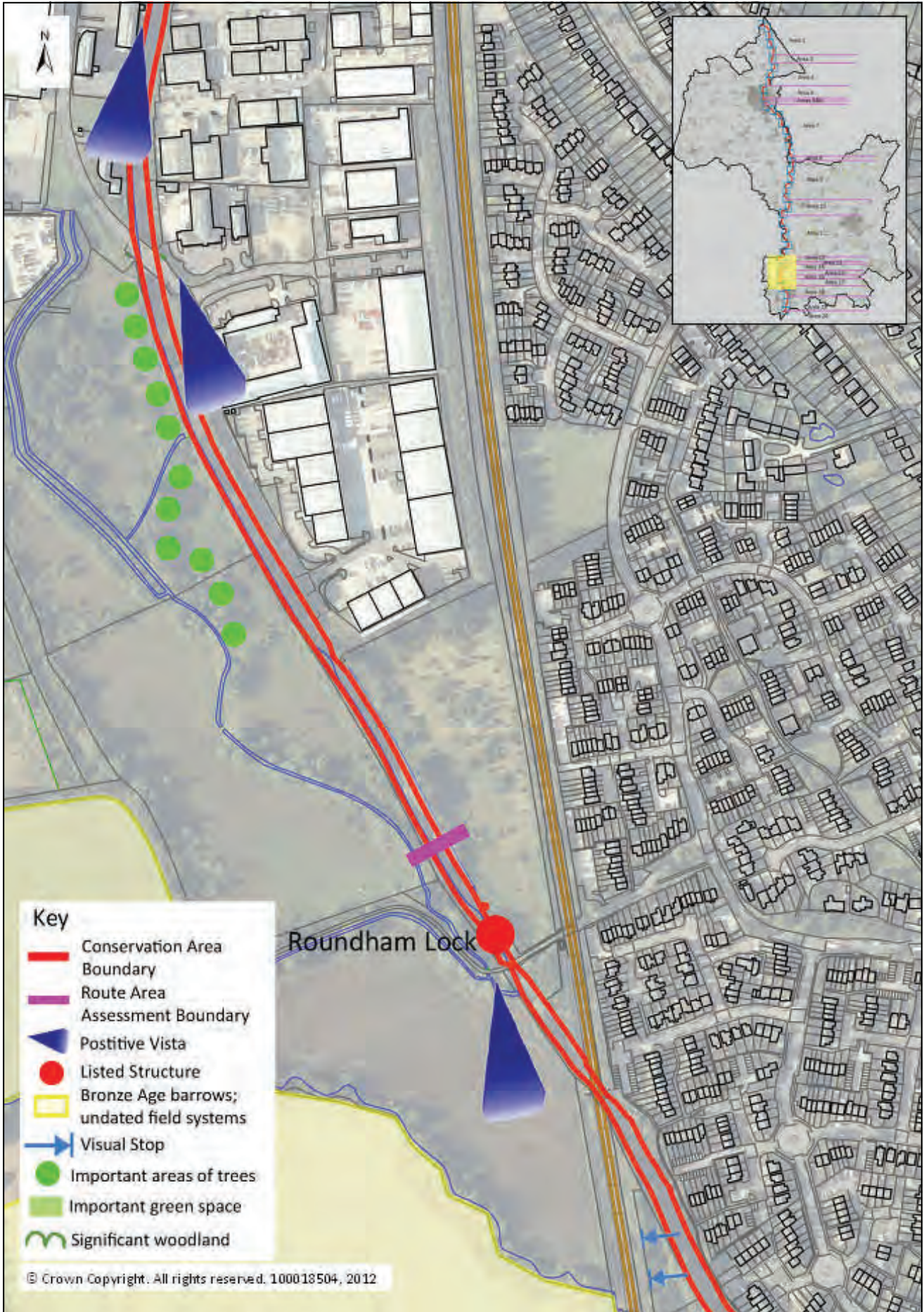


Fig. 45 Route Assessment Area 17 & 18: South of Langford Lane to Roundham Lock; Roundham Lock to Kidlington Green Lock

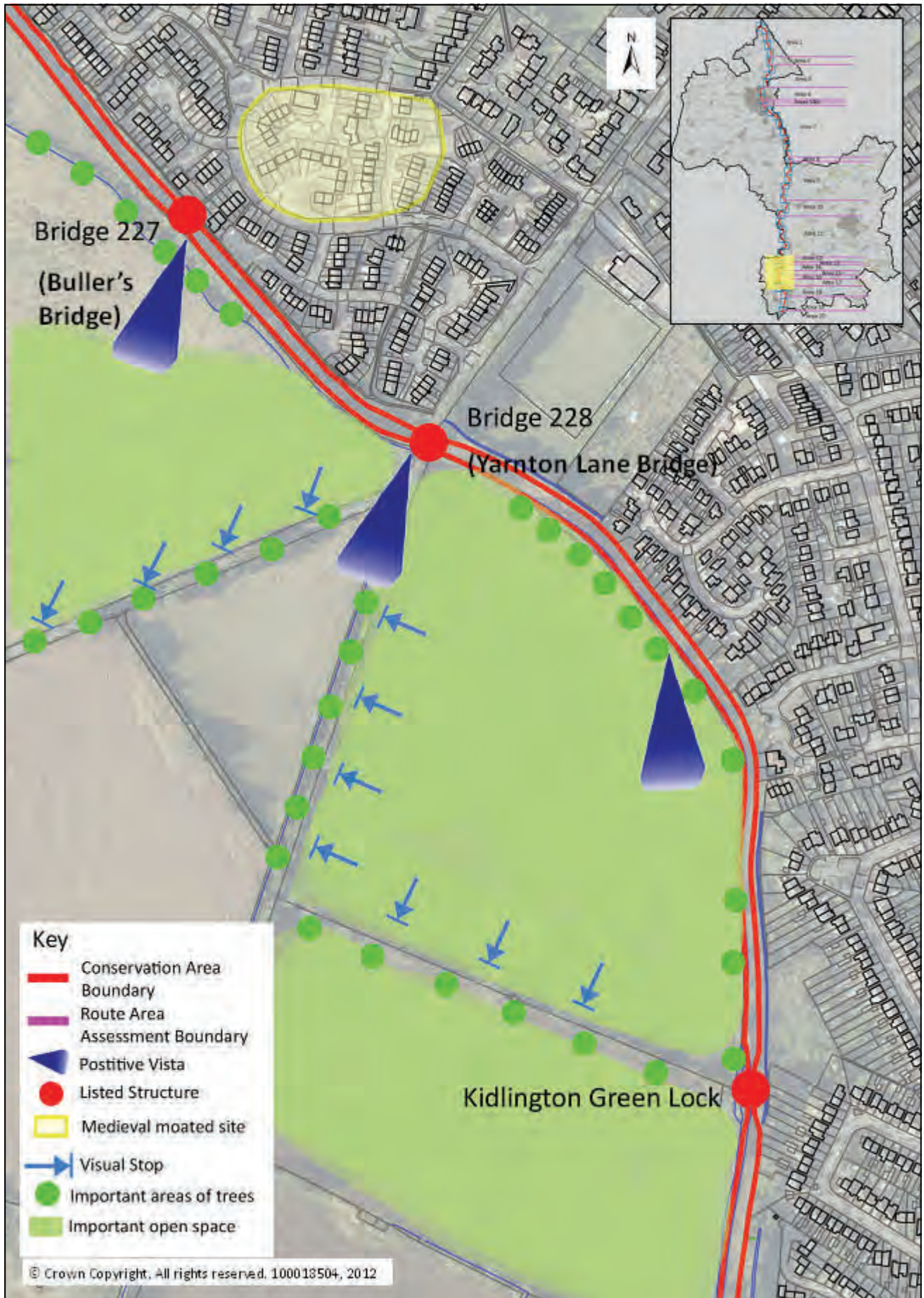


Fig. 47 Route Assessment Area 18: Roundham Lock to Kidlington Green Lock

7.20 Route Assessment Area 19: Kidlington Green Lock to the Oxford By-pass

7.20.1 South of Kidlington Green lock is another long straight section of canal with fairly scrubby fields and overgrown hedges on both sides, but few houses. Beyond the offside fields, however, the Oxford bypass becomes visible and audible. Nevertheless, this is still rural rather than suburban in character. Moored live-aboard boats appear on the towpath side above Duke’s Lock.



Rural stretch south of Kidlington

7.20.2 The terrain is much flatter in this area, where the Cherwell valley merges with that of the flat meadows of the Thames. The views are mainly to the offside, where there are breaks in the trees, and of large open fields with the earthworks and bridgeworks of the by-pass visible in the background. Beyond the hedge on the towpath side, the railway gradually rejoins the canal and the very limited views through the hedge are terminated by earthworks.



King’s Bridge



Junction with Duke’s Cut

7.20.3 The vistas open out slightly to the south of Duke’s Lock and the junction with the Duke’s Cut, forming an attractive canalscape in its own right with the locks and the lock-keeper’s cottage. However, most views are mainly of fields on the offside with 20th century earthworks and viaducts of roads as a back drop.



View from Bridge 231



Remains of King’s Wharf

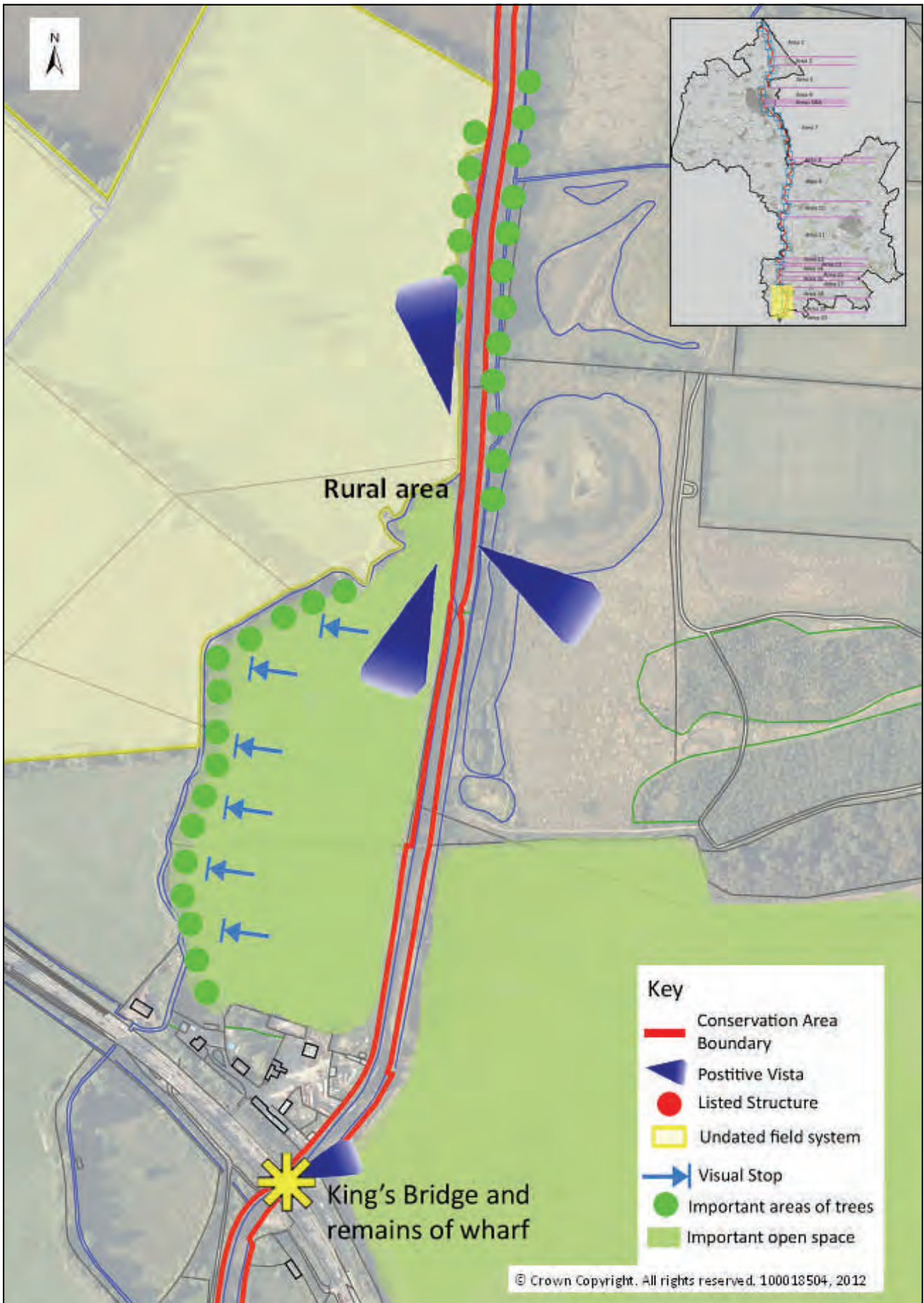


Fig. 48 Route Assessment Area 19: Oxford Bypass

7.21 Route Assessment Area 20: The Duke's Cut



View north past the Duke's Cut

7.21.1 The end of the conservation Area is at the redrawn southern boundary of Cherwell District. Towering over the last lift bridge in this section is the not unattractive viaduct of the Oxford by-pass, a fairly good example of concrete engineering which does not intrude too much on the vistas along the valley. However, of course, like all such features, it brings with it the virtually incessant roar of traffic.

7.21.2 Below Duke's Lock the short Duke's Cut provides a link from the canal to an arm of the Thames. The junction is guarded by the lock keeper's house and the main towpath crosses the Cut on a brick bridge.

7.21.3 The Cut has its own lock – which can fall either way depending of river levels; this is now crossed by the main railway line and another main road crosses it close by. The Cut has a few moored barges and a very muddy towpath. On its offside, to the south, is a large lake, only just visible through the offside trees even in winter.

7.21.4 The junction with this branch of the Thames is not exactly dramatic and hemmed in by trees on all sides. The river meadows are only visible after a short walk through scrubby woodland and out of the conservation area. All the other views are restricted to the canal arm.



Bridge 233, the Oxford Bypass and southern end of the conservation area



The Duke's Cut



Duke's Cut Lock

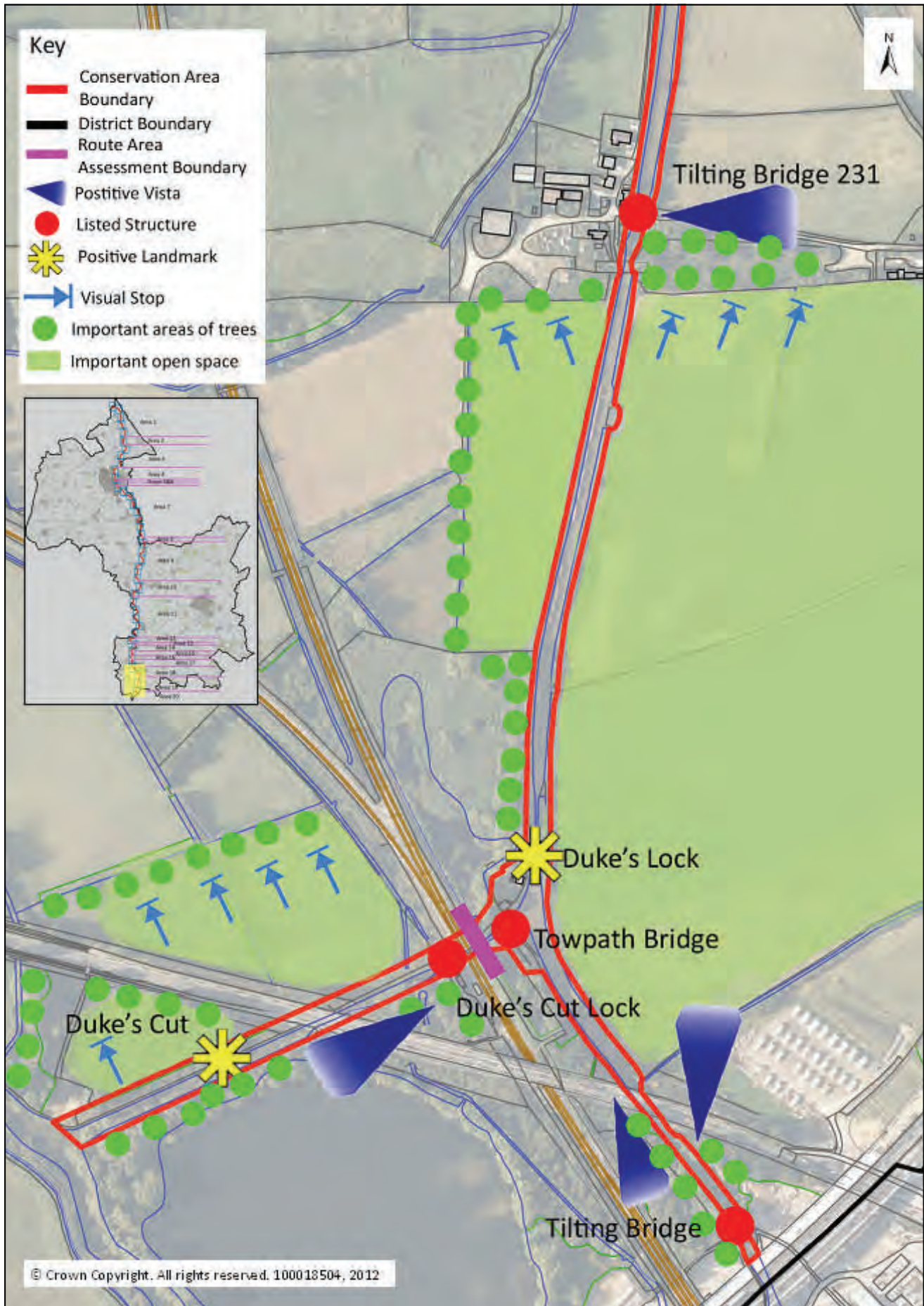


Fig. 49 Route Assessment Area 19 & 20: Oxford Bypass; The Duke's Cut

8. Management Plan

Opportunities for Management and Enhancement

The canal is an attractive feature that bisects the district. It has two principle aspects: its general homogeneity, and the pragmatic use of local materials in structures without any architectural pretensions. While its special historic character is clear, it is important that the features which contribute to its character are formally recognised and celebrated. It can also be useful to identify opportunities to enhance the conservation area. Positive conservation management will ensure the ongoing protection of the canal's special character.

1. Boundaries and hedges

The boundaries to the canal are generally thick hedges on the towpath side and left open on the offside. In some areas, this hedge has been removed and replaced by modern fencing, although some brick wharf walls in Banbury survive. Willow trees near Clattercote could be the remnants of paling used to keep cattle away from the canal. This strong boundary is a significant element of the character of the canal. All attempts should be made to retain it if possible or replace it if not. Existing walls taller than one metre next to a highway and two metres elsewhere in the conservation area are protected from unauthorised demolition.

ACTION: Boundaries which make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area should be retained. New boundary treatments should match the character of the existing boundaries.

2. Tree management

Conservation area designation affords protection to trees from unauthorised felling or lopping. The wooded sections (such as at Clattercote and Somerton) and the informal trees along the length of the canal make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area. There are also several attractive shrubs and hedges along the route which act as a landmark and enhance the conservation area.

ACTION: The existing wooded areas and hedges along the route of the canal should be retained. The trees should be managed to promote their longevity and to ensure that they do not become a danger to canal users. Opportunities should be taken as

appropriate to plant young trees in order to ensure the continued presence of mature trees in the future.

3. Sensitive new development within the conservation area

The greater majority of the conservation area will not be suitable for development. However, there are small areas of wharfs and similar where future development may be considered. To be successful, any future development within the conservation area needs to be mindful of the character of the canal.

Successful new development in historic areas should:

- Relate well to the geography and history of the place and the lie of the land
- Sit happily in the pattern of existing development and routes through and around it
- Respect important views
- Respect the scale of neighbouring buildings
- Use materials and building methods which are as high in quality as those used in existing buildings
- Create new views and juxtapositions which add to the variety and texture of their setting

ACTION: New development should respond sensitively and creatively to the historic environment while at the same time being distinctly of the 21st century and addressing issues such as sustainability and energy efficiency.

4. Development affecting the setting of the conservation area

Development at the edges of the conservation area can have a significant impact on the character of the area and its sense of place. Development affecting the setting of the conservation area should have regard to its historic context and make use of traditional materials, appropriate scale, massing and plot layouts to reinforce the distinctive character of the canal.

ACTION: The impact of development on the character and appearance of the conservation area will be a consideration in the planning process. This applies equally to development outside the conservation area if it is likely to affect the setting.

5. Land use

The character of the proposed conservation area relies largely on the existing pattern of land uses established within sight of the canal. While continuing pressure for development across the district is also true along the route of the canal, sympathetic re-use of existing buildings and the continued agricultural use of the land could enhance its character. Finding new uses for buildings can be difficult due to their size, complexity and accessibility, but economically viable complementary alternative uses are preferable to loss of structures and open land.

ACTION: Change of use of buildings and areas can impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area, and as such will be a consideration in the planning process.

6. Specific issues

Specific issues which have the potential to affect the historic character and appearance of the conservation area have been identified as follows:

- Towpath condition
- Availability of parking
- Minor alterations to buildings and canal structures
- Choice of materials for structures and accompanying canal furniture (signage etc)
- Archaeology
- Development in Banbury
- Canal related dwellings
- Marinas
- Canalside housing
- Residential mooring
- Bridge replacement
- Ecology

ACTION: Open a dialogue between CDC, residents, landowners, tourists and the Canal & Rivers Trust to work on an enhancement and management plan for the length of the canal, including maintenance.

7. Enforcement and remediation

If changes in the appearance and condition of the conservation area are monitored regularly, action can be taken promptly to deal with any problems as they arise.

Such areas may include:

- Dialogue with service provider, stakeholders and Canal & Rivers Trust
- Maintenance of the towpath
- Archaeological investigation and recording prior to development
- Programme of monitoring changes
- Maintenance of empty, abandoned or neglected structures
- Consider development of a management protocol to address the improved management of live-aboard moorings
- Review the conservation area boundary periodically as part of the Council's ongoing programme

ACTION: Work with appropriate parties such as the County Councils, English Heritage, the Trust and Network Rail to monitor the canal and prepare for any emergency works.

8. Heritage Partnership Agreement

The question of management and responsibilities is a key issue along the length of the canal. Day-to-day management is the responsibility of the Canal and Rivers Trust, whereas the District Councils are responsible for planning matters. To ensure that these issues are addressed consistently, the negotiation of a Heritage Partnership agreement is suggested. This non-statutory agreement has potential benefits, such as creating a common approach to management and regulatory authority, while establishing a core document to which reference can be made.

Such agreements usually contain action plans which deal with issues of key management and long-term visions. For the Oxford Canal, it might cover the following topics:

- Range and scope of repairs, materials, methodologies and approach
- Mechanisms to deal with visitors and tourism
- Design and the public realm
- Trees, hedges and the natural environment
- Residential moorings
- Towpath improvements
- Boundary treatments
- Water quality

ACTION: Work with the Canal & Rivers Trust to help produce a Heritage Partnership Agreement to help with the long-term preservation and continuation of the canal.

9. Conservation Area Boundary Justification

9.1 Linear features such as the Oxford Canal differ from the typical conservation areas in that they do not relate to a specific settlement of part thereof. This conservation area can be thought of as a consistent thread linking a whole series of areas, and also as a coherent historic element in its own right.

9.2 The appraisal and designation of such areas therefore needs to initially assess the balance between these two aspects of the proposed linear conservation area. That balance will be influenced by several things, including the nature and significance of the canal infrastructure, the character of the landscape through which it runs, and the interface between the two.



Canal infrastructure sits in the rural landscape near Cropredy

9.3 Apart from its passage through Banbury and the brush with Kidlington at its southern extremity, it is essentially rural in character. That character is fairly homogenous, reflecting the valley around it.

9.4 The valley flows between relatively low and rolling hills. Its sides are gently sloped and the river meanders across the gravels of its flood plain. The large hedged fields continue uninterrupted up the slopes, and the agriculture is mixed, with cattle and sheep as well as large areas of arable.

9.5 The settlement pattern is also similar throughout the valley above and below Banbury, with the villages deliberately sited on the higher ground above the flood plain and often well away from the river. The only significant sites close to the river are, inevitably, the mill sites, many clearly of great antiquity and all with long and often meandering leats and tail races.

9.6 The relationship between the canal and its setting also changes little throughout its journey down the valley, the Banbury section again excepted. It takes broad sweeping meanders down the valley as it attempts to keep as long as possible to the same contour level, sometimes veering towards the villages at the valley sides but generally avoiding earlier established settlements. Where it does occasional come close to a village it tends to pass along its edge, such as at Upper and Lower Heyford.



Cottages at Lower Heyford

9.7 Whilst small hamlets grew up at wharf sites, usually on the edge of villages or where roads leading to them crossed the canal, there were no completely new settlements created because of the canal. Even Thrupp, often considered to be a classic new canal village, was a well established manorial complex before the arrival of the canal. The large farm complex remains close to the wharf, and in the main canal yard former agricultural buildings, probably part of the manorial mill, were acquired by the canal company and converted to housing.

9.8 It is therefore suggested that the historical geography and landscape of the rural areas in the Cherwell valley had little direct influence on the route of the canal, for which topography and water supply issues were far more important. Similarly, the construction of the canal had surprisingly little impact on the wider landscape or its settlement patterns.

9.9 It is considered that the main justification for the creation of a conservation area is the intrinsic historical importance, heritage and amenity value of the Oxford Canal itself. Its value as a long-distance link through the whole valley, linking several established conservation areas, is important but secondary.



Cropredy wharf and cottage: the boundary line extends to include the house as part of the conservation area

9.10 As a result, the suggested boundaries of the conservation area are tightly drawn mainly along the canal. For most of the route, on the towpath side the towpath hedge or, in places, its former position, marks a logical boundary to the area but the earthworks of the canal usually extend a little further and should be included within the conservation area; on the offside, a nominal 1m on the bank has been chosen unless there are canal related earthworks.

9.11 Where there are canal related features, such as historic wharfs and locks, the boundary is extended to encompass them. In a handful of cases the area has also been extended to include historic canal related woodland, notably the shallow embankment near Clattercote and the adjacent section of the Boddington feeder.

9.12 Where there are canal related features, such as historic wharfs and locks, the boundary is extended to encompass them. In a handful of cases the area has also been extended to include historic canal related woodland, notably the shallow embankment near Clattercote and the adjacent section of the Boddington feeder.



The area behind Castle Quay teeming with life at the Banbury Canal Day

9.13 Within Banbury, most of the canal-related landscape and developments north of Bridge Street have been lost, especially after the construction of the Castle Quays development. Apart from the included Tooley's boatyard, none of the former wharf areas have been included. In contrast, there is still fragmentary survival of canal-related landscape within the town south of Bridge Street, between the canal and Lower Cherwell Street, and this area has been included.



Atmospheric scenery on the outskirts of Banbury

10. Effects of Conservation Area Designation

Special Controls

10.1 In order to protect the special environment, stricter controls exist within the Conservation Area. These are not intended as a hindrance to change, but as positive management to safeguard the character of the area as a whole. These include:

- ◆ Additional powers of control to dwelling houses for extensions, roof extension and alterations, cladding, garages and satellite dish locations
- ◆ Most works involving total demolition require Conservation Area Consent. Consent for demolition will not normally be granted until it is known what form redevelopment will take
- ◆ Work to trees requires six weeks notice to be given to the Council

With all proposal for development and the display of advertisements in a conservation area, greater care is necessary to ensure that scheme enhance and preserve the area's special character. Design and choice of materials are of particular importance in this respect.

Detailed effects of designation can be obtained from the Council's Planning department (contact details on back cover).

Listed Buildings

10.2 A Listed Building is a building that is considered to be of 'special architectural or historic interest' and as such requires special protection. Once listed, a building is protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Listing protects the entire building both externally and internally irrespective of the reason for listing as well as any object or structure fixed to it or any object or structure within the 'curtilage' of the building, which has existed since before 1st July 1948. This is to ensure that the special character of both the building and its setting are protected.

10.3 Where works are proposed to a Listed Building, it is always advisable to check with the Council's Design and Conservation Team whether Listed Building Consent is required. In any works proposed, special regard must be given to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting and special features of interest.

10.4 In considering any works to a listed building the principle objective must be to retain all original features and fabric of the building wherever possible. Listed Building Consent is required for the demolition of a listed building or for alteration, which would affect the building's character, integrity or special interest. This could include changing windows and doors, changing roofing materials, painting brickwork, moving or replacing internal walls, fireplaces or staircases. Like-for-like repairs may not need consent but it is always advisable to check prior to undertaking any works as the carrying out of works without the necessary consent is a criminal offence with significant penalties for those involved following a successful prosecution.

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Appendix 1: Policies

Main Legislation	National Policy Guidance	Local Policy
Town and Country Planning Act 1990	NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework)	Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990		South Northamptonshire Local Plan 1997
Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979		Cherwell Non-Statutory Local Plan 2011
		West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Pre-Submission Draft Plan 2011
		The Cherwell Local Plan Proposed Submission Draft May 2012

Specific Local Policies

Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 1996:

C5, C13, C18, C23, C28, C29, C30, H26, TR11, R7, R9
ENV7

South Northamptonshire Local Plan 1997

EV10, EV11, EV25

Cherwell Non-Statutory Local Plan 2011

TR20, R2, R14, R16, EN12, EN13, EN28, EN34, EN35,
EN39, EN40, EN42, EN43, EN45, EN45A, EN47, EN51,
D10, D11, S5

West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Pre-Submission Draft Plan 2011

C3

The Cherwell Local Plan Proposed Submission Draft May 2012

SLE2, SLE3, BSC10, ESD6, ESD8, ESD10, ESD11, ESD13,
ESD16, ESD17, Banbury 1, Banbury 4, Banbury 7,
Banbury 9, Banbury 14

Appendix 2: Listed Buildings

within the Conservation Area

List Entry	Name	Grade	List Date
1216144	Field Bridge 145, Claydon	II	26.02.1988
1215892	Lock to the North of Bridge 146, Claydon	II	26.02.1988
1287882	Field Bridge 146, Claydon	II	26.02.1988
1216170	Elkington Lock, Cropredy	II	26.02.1988
1287687	Field Bridge 148, Cropredy	II	26.02.1988
1216171	Field Bridge 149, Cropredy	II	26.02.1988
1216172	Road Bridge 150, Appletree Lane, Cropredy	II	26.02.1988
1216332	Cropredy Lock	II	26.02.1988
1253432	Wharf House, Cropredy	II	24.08.1994
1215874	Field Bridge 155, nr Cropredy Mill	II	26.02.1988
1215934	Field Bridge 156, School Lane, Cropredy	II	26.02.1988
1215875	Field Bridge 157, Williams Scot	II	26.02.1988
1215937	Bourton Lock	II	26.02.1988
1287876	Bourton Lock Cottage	II	26.02.1988
1199858	Old Town Hall, Lower Cherwell Street, Banbury	II	14.02.1986
1369563	Haynes Lift Bridge 170, Banbury	II	19.11.1992
1249079	Foxes Lift Bridge 171, Banbury	II	19.11.1992
1277612	Haddons Lift Bridge 173, Bodicote	II	19.11.1992
1248369	Grant's Lock, Bodicote	II	14.11.1985
1277942	Grant's Lock Bridge, Bodicote	II	14.11.1985
1200121	Tilting Bridge 800m north of Twyford Road, Adderbury	II	05.05.1988
1046362	Tilting Bridge 400m north of Twyford Road, Adderbury	II	05.05.1988
1300907	Twyford Road Bridge, Twyford Wharf	II	05.05.1988
1046337	Brick Kiln, Twyford Wharf	II	05.05.1988
1365853	Brick Kiln, Twyford Wharf	II	05.05.1988
1369819	King's Sutton Lock	II	05.05.1988
1046363	Canal building 10m west of lock, King's Sutton Lock	II	05.05.1988
1300910	Lock keeper's cottage, King's Sutton Lock	II	05.05.1988
1200132	Bridge at King's Sutton Lock	II	05.05.1988
1046364	Tilting Bridge, northeast of Home Farm, Aynho Road, Adderbury	II	05.05.1988
1369820	Tilting Bridge, north by northeast of Sydenham Farm, Aynho Road, Adderbury	II	05.05.1988
1200139	Tilting Bridge, southeast of Sydenham Farm, Aynho Road, Adderbury	II	05.05.1988

List Entry	Name	Grade	List Date
1046365	Tilting Bridge east of Nell Bridge Farm, Aynho Road, Adderbury	II	05.05.1988
1193078	Bridge over canal, Wharf Lane, Souldern	II	03.10.1988
1369802	Chisnell Lift Bridge 193, Wharf Lane, Souldern	II	19.11.1992
1066590	Somerton Lock	II	26.02.1988
1357139	Somerton Lock Cottage	II	26.02.1988
1066592	Somerton Lock Bridge	II	26.02.1988
1226118	Bridge 500m north of Allen's Lock, Upper Heyford	II	26.02.1988
1266243	Station Road Bridge and approach walls, Lower Heyford	II	26.02.1988
1266244	Bridge 1.7km north of Dashwood Lock, Lower Heyford	II	26.02.1988
1225638	Bridge 400m north of Dashwood Lock, Lower Heyford	II	26.02.1988
1200261	Canal Bridge at Dashwood Lock, Kirtlington	II	09.12.1987
1369771	Northbrook Bridge, Kirtlington	II	09.12.1987
1200266	Canal Bridge at Pigeon Lock, Flight's Mill, Kirtlington	II	09.12.1987
1046505	Pinsey Bridge, west of Kirtlington Golf Course, Kirtlington	II	09.12.1987
1300862	Tilting Bridge 750m south of Pigeon Lock, Kirtlington	II	09.12.1987
1291166	Canal Bridge, Enslow Wharf, Bletchingdon	II	26.02.1988
1290453	Shiptonweir Lock, Shipton on Cherwell	II	26.02.1988
1211261	Shipton Lift Bridge 219, Shipton on Cherwell	II	19.11.1992
1290391	Cottages, 1-3 Canal Yard, Canal Road, Thrupp	II	26.02.1988
1290394	The Boat Public House, Canal Road, Thrupp	II	26.02.1988
1210631	Cottages, 1-9 Canal Road, Thrupp	II	26.02.1988
1210769	Village Cross, Canal Road, Thrupp	I	07.12.1966
1210436	Sparrowgap Bridge, Thrupp	II	26.02.1988
1210420	Roundham Lock, Kidlington	II	26.02.1988
1220542	Bridge 227, west of Grovelands, Kidlington	II	26.02.1988
1290142	Road Bridge 228, Yarnton Road, Kidlington	II	26.02.1988
1290953	Kidlington Green Lock, Kidlington	II	26.02.1988
1192665	Tilting Bridge, west of Woodstock Road, Yarnton	II	10.04.1987
1286500	Towpath Bridge, Duke's Cut Lock, Woodstock Road, Yarnton	II	10.04.1987
1046560	Tilting Bridge northeast of Wolvercote Viaduct, Gosford	II	10.04.1987

Appendix 3: Recommendations for Local List of Non-Designated Heritage Assets

Recommendations for Local Listing

The following structures are recommended for inclusion on a non-statutory local list of non-designated heritage assets. The existing listing appears inconsistent, with certain bridges, for example, being listed but virtually identical ones being omitted from the list.

These recommendations are to be considered in line with the Council's upcoming guidance and criteria for locally listed heritage assets. It is possible that some may also be worthy of statutory listing, but the designation of local listing will afford these structures a degree of protection under the NPPF.

Unless otherwise already statutorily listed, it is recommended that all locks on the route should be locally listed because of their intrinsic historical and architectural significance.

Many of these bridges in this section do not initially appear to be of significance as they are concrete covered brick canal bridges. However, it is clear that these date to the origins of the canal and are of late-18th century date and substantially intact. It is only the concrete repair coat that hides their true significance, and it is further recommended that eventually a more sympathetic repair should be undertaken and a strategy is developed for their long term preservation, including removal of the concrete.

The structures in this section are, at this stage, thought to be worthy of consideration for a local list. Full justification will be made when the list is published, based on the Council's strict criteria to assess their worthiness. Whether or not a structure in this section is eventually locally listed, all make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and are in that case significant features in their own right.

Unlisted Canal Bridges throughout conservation area:

Bridge 142, over Boddington feeder
Bridge 143, Hay Bridge
Bridge 144, Claydon Top
Bridge 147
Bridge 153, Cropredy Bridge
Bridge 158, Bourton Bridge
Bridge 159
Bridge 160, Hardwick Lock Bridge
Bridge 163, Marsh Bridge (abutments only)
Bridge 172, Nadkey Bridge
Bridge 187, Nell Bridge Lock Bridge
Bridge 195, Meadlands Bridge
Bridge 198, Deep Cutting Bridge
Bridge 199, Somerton Mill Bridge
Bridge 200, Heyford Common Lock Bridge
Bridge 204, Allen's Lock Bridge
Bridge 205, Mill Bridge, Upper Heyford
Bridge 211, New Brighton Bridge
Bridge 215a, Enslow Railway and River bridge, GWR
Bridge 217, Horsebridge
Bridge 220, Shipton Bridge
Bridge 221, Thrupp
Bridge 224, Langford Lane Bridge
Bridge 226, Roundham Lock Bridge
Bridge 226a, GWR Railway Bridge
Bridge 230, King's Bridge
Bridge 231a, L&NWR Railway Bridge

Bridges 167, 169, 178, 182A, 184, 191, 197, 225, 229 (abutments only)

Shipton-on-Cherwell GWR railway bridge abutments

Shipton-on-Cherwell GWR Woodstock branch railway bridge abutments

10 Red Lion Street, Cropredy: A former Manor House to the largest estate in Cropredy	Laser Sailboats, Swan Close Road, Banbury - 19th-century Iron Works
Alcan Site, (Alcoa Europe), Southam Road Banbury (east and west of Southam Road) – Aluminium Factory Gates and gate house: 1931 by Wallis Gilbert & Partners (of Firestone and Hoover factory fame). Gates and lamps made of aluminium.	Canal Wharf, Station Road, Lower Heyford – canal wharf and outbuildings
Alcock & Sons, Castle Street - Formerly Wall’s Rope Works.	1 & 3 Langford Lane, Kidlington
67-83 Castle Street, Banbury - Terrace of basemented 3-storey townhouses.	Kings Bridge, Water Eaton, Kidlington
The Mill Arts Centre, Lower Cherwell Street, Banbury - Corn Mill and Miller’s House: Well preserved 18th and 19th century corn mill, now arts centre.	Duke’s Lock, Gosford, Kidlington
56 Bridge Street, Banbury - Former public baths and Temperance Society building:	Duke’s Lock Cottage, Woodstock Road, Gosford
67&68 Bridge Street, Banbury - 3-storey ‘Canal-age’ housing	Nell Bridge Lock
69-74 Bridge Street, Banbury - row of mid to late 19th-century shops	Nell Bridge Lock-keeper’s House and outbuildings
North Signal Box, Station Approach, Banbury: Built c.1906 in imported brick, with blue brick dressings and slate roof.	Aynho Weir Lock
Former Town Hall, Wharf Warehouse and Offices, Lower Cherwell Street, Banbury - Late-18th / early-19th-century, with additions.	Shipton Weir Lock
Former National Tyre Centre, Lower Cherwell Street - Former Power Station: Hipped roofed offices, boiler house and turbine hall.	Shipton-on-Cherwell Stop Gate
Vacant building, owned by BW, Lower Cherwell Street, Banbury - Former sewage pumping station boiler / engine house and yard (Fort Locks Self Storage): Built 1867.	Claydon Top Lock and buildings
Central Tyres, Lower Cherwell Street, Banbury - ‘Corporate Printers’ former corn warehouse: Late-19th-century former canal-side 2- 4-storey granary / corn warehouse.	Cropredy Wharf Gauging Narrows
FH Burgess, Canal Street, Banbury - Former Cherwell Iron Works: 1861 with additions.	Cropredy Mill, stable, coach house and remains
	Former Red Lion PH, Twyford wharf
	Aynho Weir Towpath Bridge
	Milestone, south of Bridge 182A
	Milestone just north of Bridge 159, Bowker’s Bridge
	Aynho wharf and buildings
	Great Western Public House, Aynho
	Souldern Wharf and buildings

Appendix 4: Public Consultation

Public Consultation

Public consultation commenced on 5th March 2012 and was due to close on 16th March 2012. The period was extended by request from consultees to 16th April, to enable more people to comment.

The **draft** document was available through the South Northamptonshire and Cherwell District web sites. Further copies were distributed at the public meetings. It was discussed at a stakeholder meeting in Kidlington on March 12th and at three public meetings:



Publicity included:

- ◆ Posters advertising the date, time and location of the exhibitions and public meetings were sent to each Parish Council of the parishes affected by the proposals for them to erect in their local area. Additional posters were erected by officers in the three areas of the meetings.
- ◆ Stakeholders were invited to the event in Kidlington
- ◆ A press release was issued in the Banbury Guardian and Bicester Advertiser

Questionnaires and comment forms were available at the public meetings seeking comments on the appraisal and asking for any other relevant information.



Upper Heyford Village Hall March 16th 2012

Public exhibitions were held on:

- ◆ March 8th: Banbury Town Hall
- ◆ March 12th: Kidlington Exeter Hall
- ◆ March 16th: Upper Heyford Village Hall

Each exhibition ran 3.30—6.30 and was followed by a **public meeting** at 7pm. These meetings were chaired by the local Council Member, and at each a short presentation was given to introduce residents and interested parties to the document, including the reasons behind the proposed designation and justification of the boundary line.

In addition to the discussions at the stakeholder meeting at Kidlington a special e-mail address OxfordCanal@CgMs.co.uk was set up to allow comments to be e-mailed directly to the consultant team.

Consultation Responses

Eighteen written responses were received, together with brief comments left at the meetings and telephone discussions with consultants. Where applicable, comments were worked into the document and changes were made. All responses have been recorded, held with the Council and can be made available on request.

There was strong support for the designation, from both stakeholders and residents. However, it is clear from comments that residents, users and local societies are under the impression that the designation will either prevent them from using their land in the manner they wish to, or that it will prevent others from using it inappropriately. Restrictions are small and are raised to some degree in section 9. The powers to insist on repair methods etc. are unfortunately outside of the Council's control. However, this appraisal is the first step in

what could be a partnership agreement between the Canals and Rivers Trust and the people living on/next to and using the canal.

The main points raised were:

◆ **Maintenance, either small or comprehensive undertakings:**

Overall maintenance is undertaken by the Canal and Rivers Trust, together with individual land/property owners. With regard to historic structures, the Canal and Rivers Trust is making a determined effort to repair the canal's structures using traditional lime mortar. Although this does not last as long as cement, it is better for the structures as it allows structures to breathe, preventing more damage from damp and allowing small structural movements as the ground dampens and dries. The Council encourages landowners, boatowners and visitors to the canal to treat it as a tangible asset, not to harm its appearance with inappropriate additions, alterations or rubbish dumping.

◆ **Specific towpath and embankment maintenance:**

Due to its construction method, the towpath continues to be a subject of concern from those using it, and those appreciating it as an aesthetic part of the canal. Standard pavement/road maintenance solutions would not be appropriate, but the use of brick or granite setts might also be inappropriate in the very rural locations. It is a topic that is of concern to the Canals and Rivers Trust and could ideally be included within any partnership agreement. As such, a recommendation is made to encourage this form of dialogue, but the Council unfortunately cannot insist on traditional repairs.



The natural but poorly maintained towpath at Somerton

◆ **Boundary line drawn too tightly to contain all the relevant important structures and features:**

Some concern was raised that structures which might pre-date the canal but were associated with or influenced by it after its construction have been left out of the conservation area. Some of these features are already covered by existing conservation areas, but where they are not, consideration has been given to their inclusion. As a result, some areas of the boundary have been amended, others have had the view taken that if they remain in a good condition at the next review date (approximately every 5-10 years) then they would be worthy of inclusion. Areas which are not included but are adjacent to the canal do have a degree of protection as part of the setting of the conservation area.



The wide riverbank verge at Thrupp is an attractive feature which enhances the area but also reduces the amount of possible parking in the village, particularly for day visitors to the canal

◆ **Visitors, in particular parking accommodation:**

Some areas, such as Banbury and Thrupp, do have limited parking provision for visitors to the canal. However, as is common in historic settlements, parking is already limited, and additional parking arrangements are often an inconvenience to residents and other roadusers. It is recognised that encouraging tourism, highway safety, and dissuading the use of large modern car parks is a fine balance, and one which has not successfully been reached in all areas along the canal. This is a topic that is of concern to the Canals and Rivers Trust and could be included within any partnership agreement.

◆ **Health and safety:**

The Canal is a working feature, with many inherent dangers such as locks, bridges and boats. Modern health and safety procedures concerned with issues such as railings, signage and vegetation can often be highly intrusive due to their design and appearance. More traditional methods work just as well - simple low-level timber fencing or wrought-iron railings rather than modern pole-rails, or coppicing trees on a regular basis rather than allowing them to grow to a great height before drastic pruning. A measured approach should be taken, and this could be part of any partnership agreement undertaken.



The balance beam at Kings Sutton

◆ **Continuing the working heritage and allowing evolution of the canal:**

The Canal is first and foremost a mode of transportation where people live, work and travel, and this should be borne in mind at all times. Any attempt to remove these primary functions would alter the character swiftly and detrimentally. This brings with it the need to modernise without harming the character. Alteration does not always have to be harmful, and not all traditional methods will continue to be appropriate. The balance must be struck carefully and reviewed often to ensure that it keeps up to date.

◆ **Livestock and farming:**

Several landowners are affected by this designation in that it includes a metre (or more) of their agricultural or mooring land down to the canal bank. Some farmers allow (or are unaware) that their livestock drink from the canal, leading to bank collapse which requires maintenance. The solution is not an easy one, as animals require some kind of fence at the bank side to prevent them from drinking, and setting a fence further back prevents the farm from using the sum total of their available land. It is another balancing act between use and enhancement, and could be a topic that is included within any partnership agreement.

Alterations to the Boundary

The Revised Appraisal

The appraisal was presented to Cherwell District Council's Executive for consideration on **1st October 2012** together with a report which set out the consultation responses in full, the recommended changes to the appraisal and justification for the boundary. The recommendation to approve the document was approved with immediate effect,

A **letter** explaining the implications of designation was sent to households within the conservation area following the adoption. All affected Parish Councils were informed of the implications, the Council website was updated to include the implications, document and interactive map. A press release was issued to local newspapers and to the London Gazette. Due to landownership situations along the canal bank, it is not possible to obtain ownership details of each parcel of land. Therefore, every effort has been made through Parish Councils, homeowners, stakeholders and press to inform all those affected by the designation.



Somerton Deep Lock

Acknowledgements and Contacts

This document has been produced as part of the District Council's ongoing programme of conservation area appraisals.

Research and fieldwork was undertaken during December 2011 and January 2012 by Richard Morriss of RKMorriss Associates and Michael Dawson of CgMs in consultation with the Conservation teams at both Cherwell and South Northamptonshire District Councils.

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Institute of Historic Building Conservation:
www.ihbc.org.uk

Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings:
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Victorian Society
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