

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

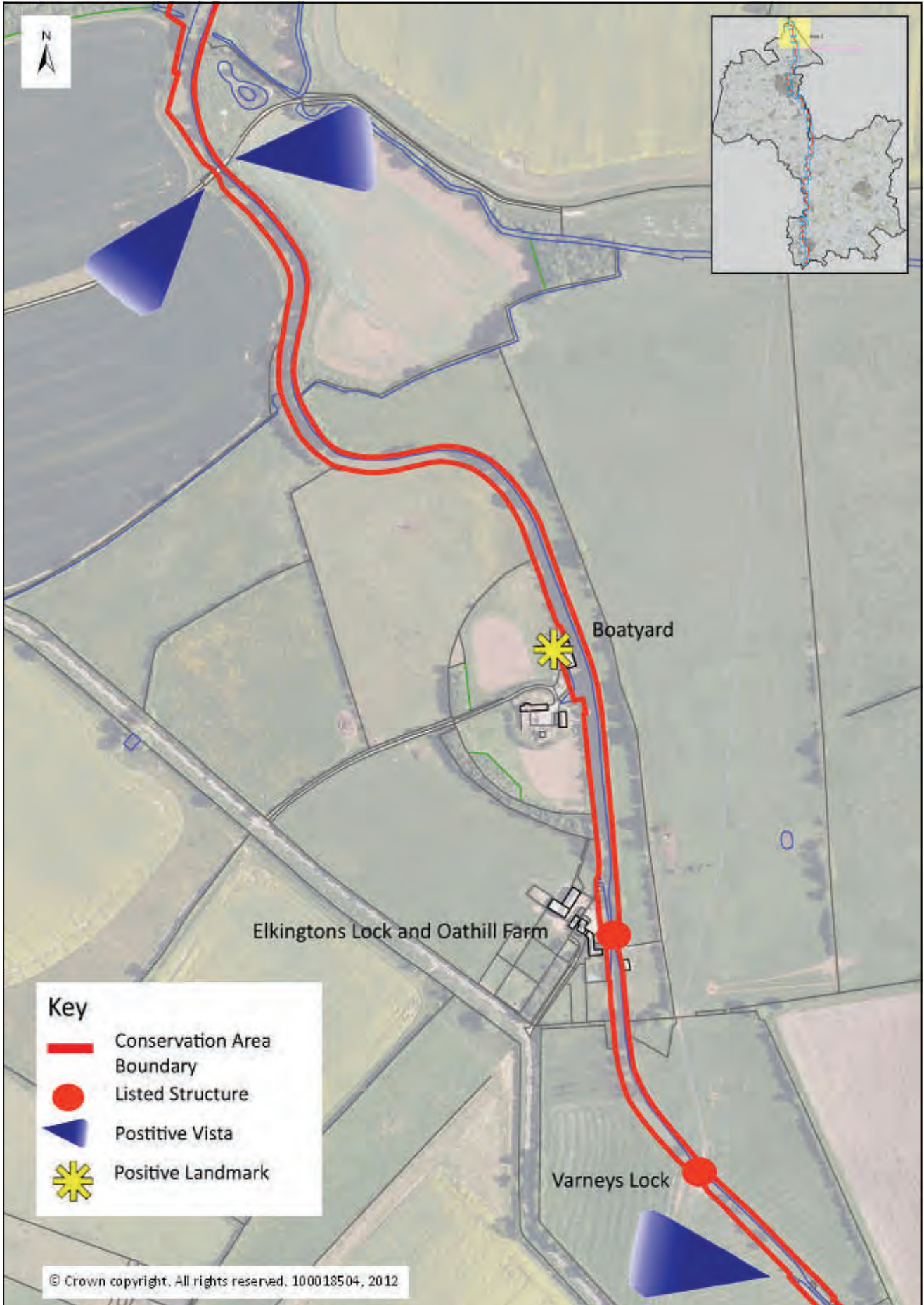


Fig. 11 Route Assessment Area 1: Boundary Bridge (Bridge 141) to ex-Bridge 151, north of Croppedy

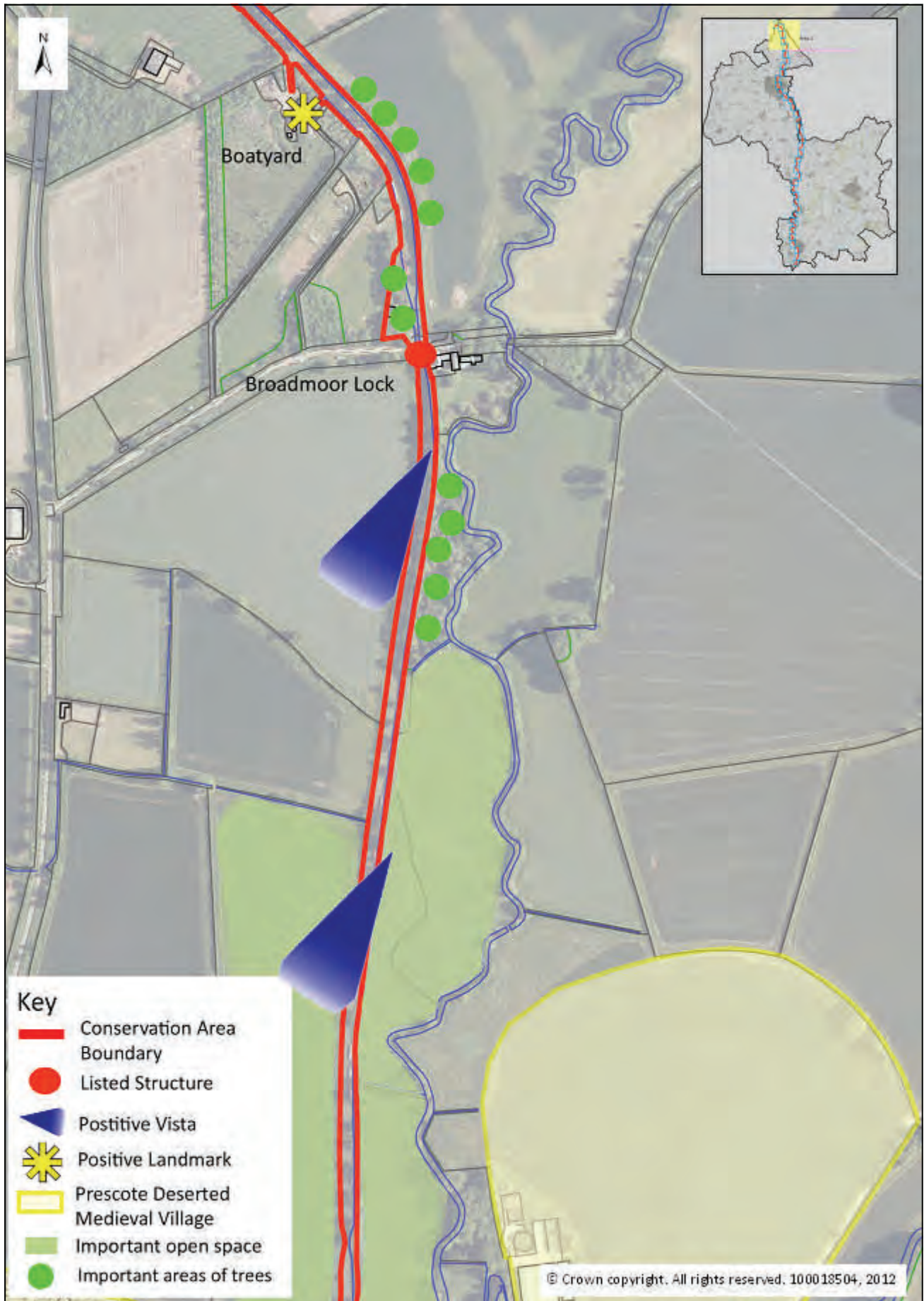


Fig. 12 Route Assessment Area 1: Boundary Bridge (Bridge 141) to ex-Bridge 151, north of Croppedy

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

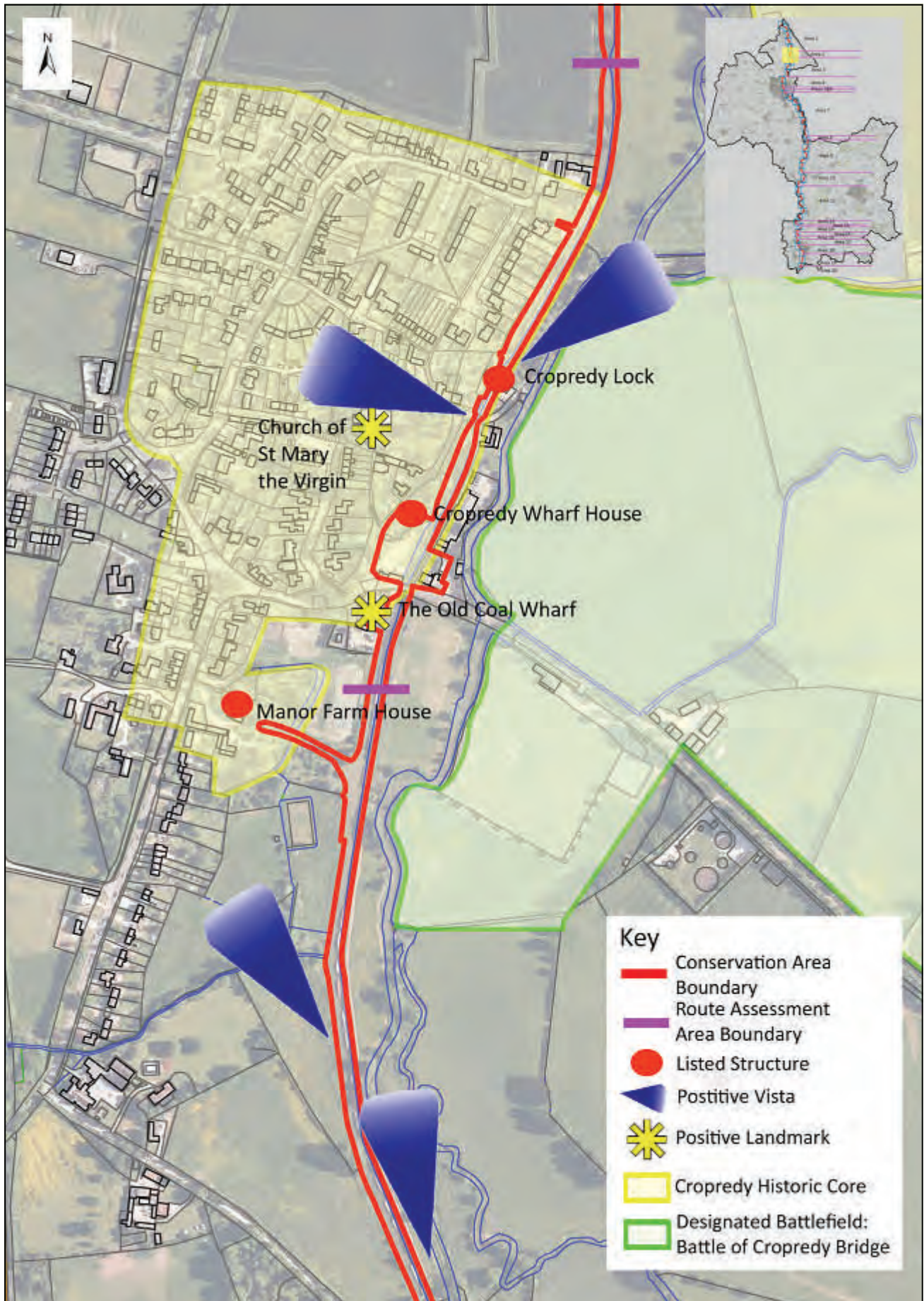


Fig. 13 Route Assessment Areas 2 & 3: Cropredy Village; Cropredy to Hardwick Lock

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

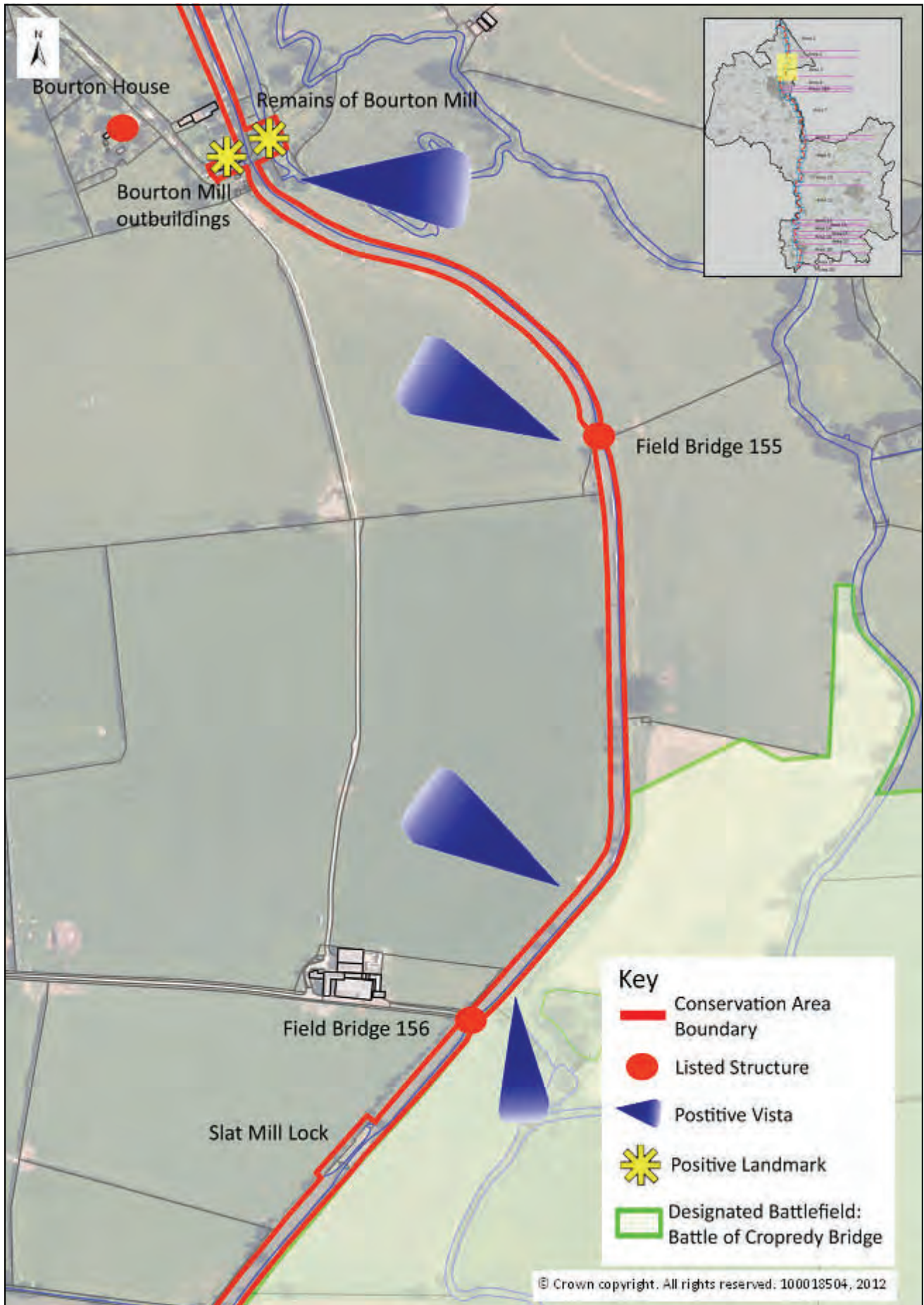


Fig. 14 Route Assessment Area 3: Cropredy to Hardwick Lock

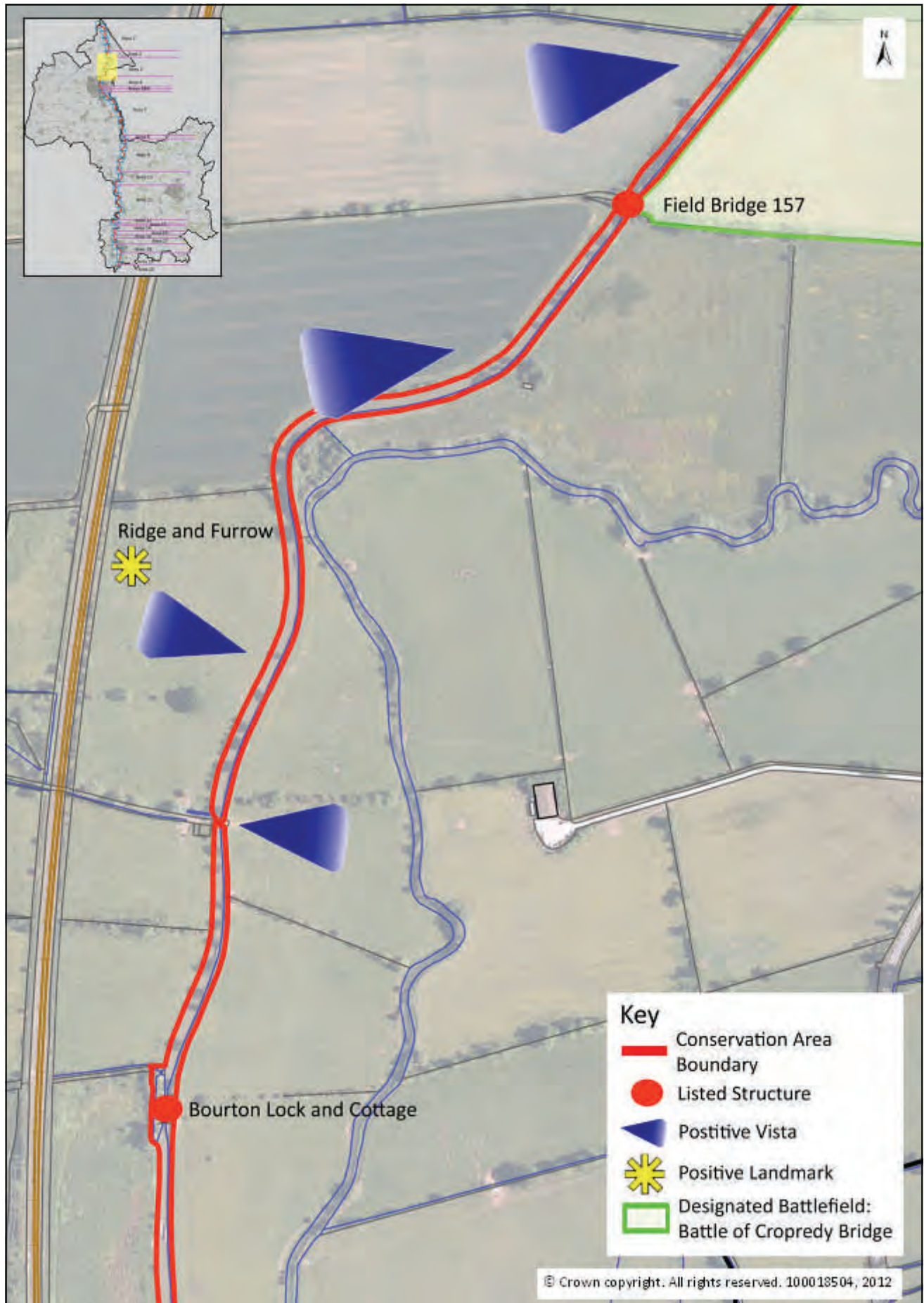


Fig. 15 Route Assessment Area 3: Cropredy to Hardwick Lock

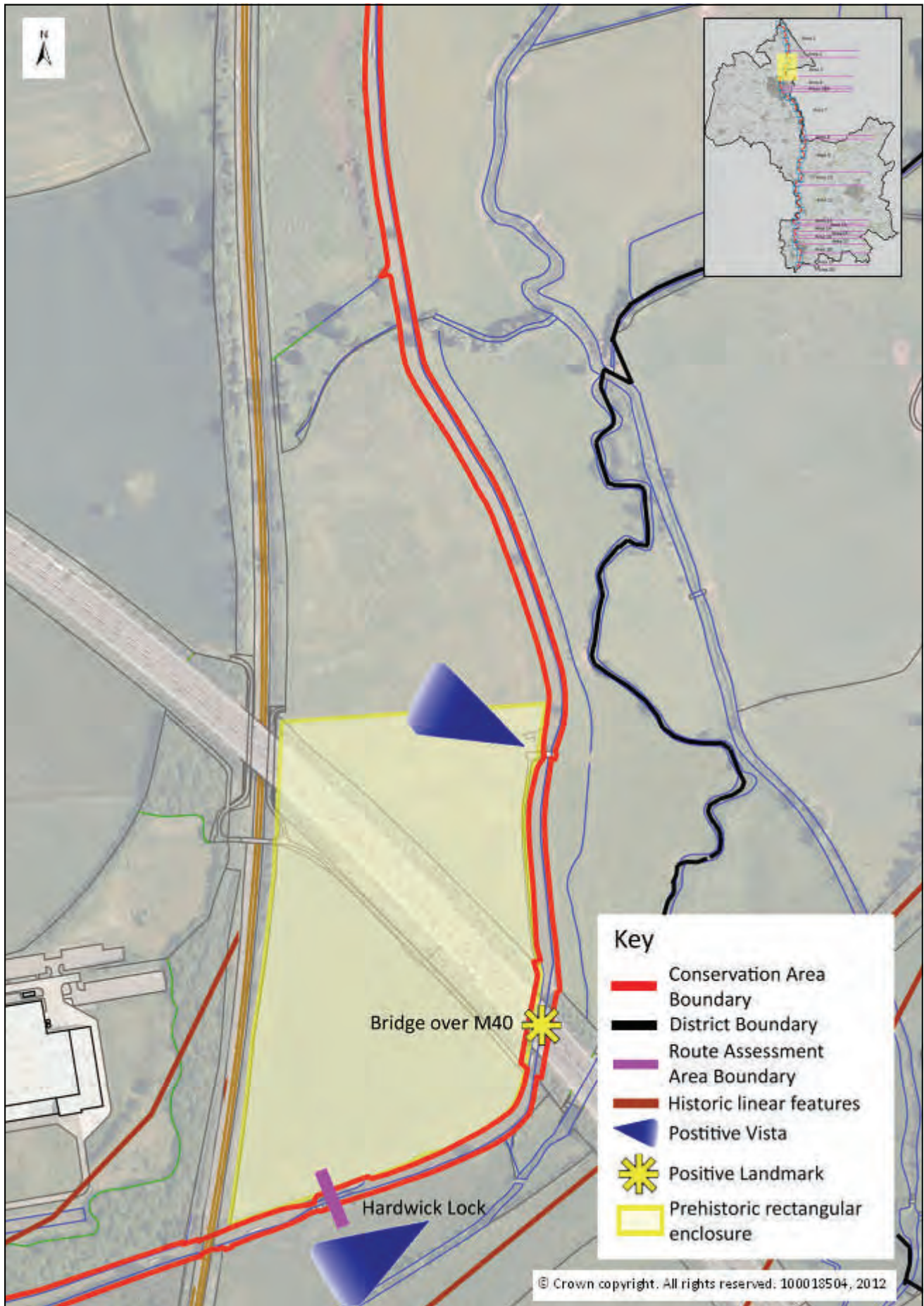


Fig. 16 Route Assessment Areas 3 and 4: Cropredy to Hardwick Lock; North of Banbury

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

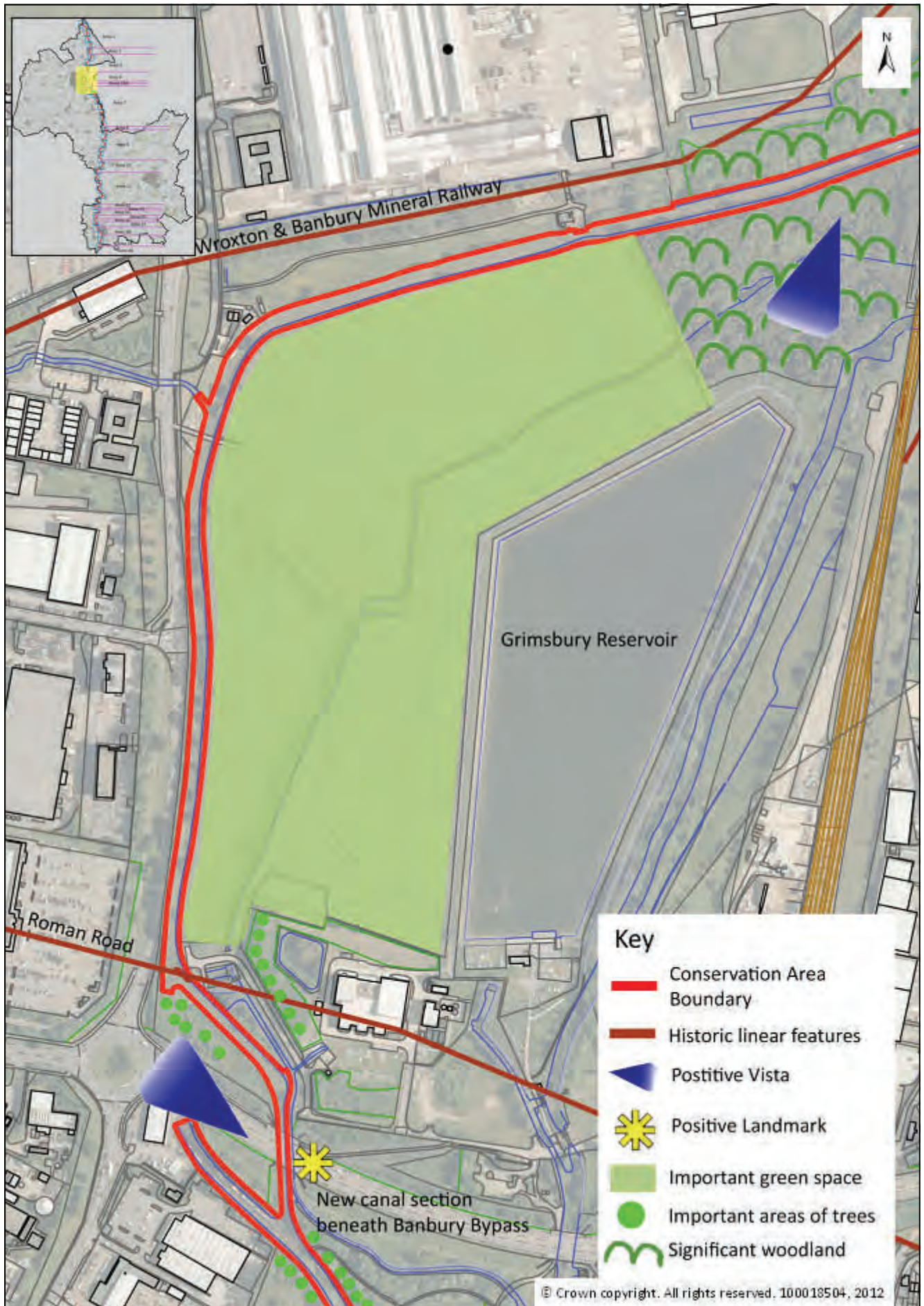


Fig. 17 Route Assessment Area 4: North of Banbury

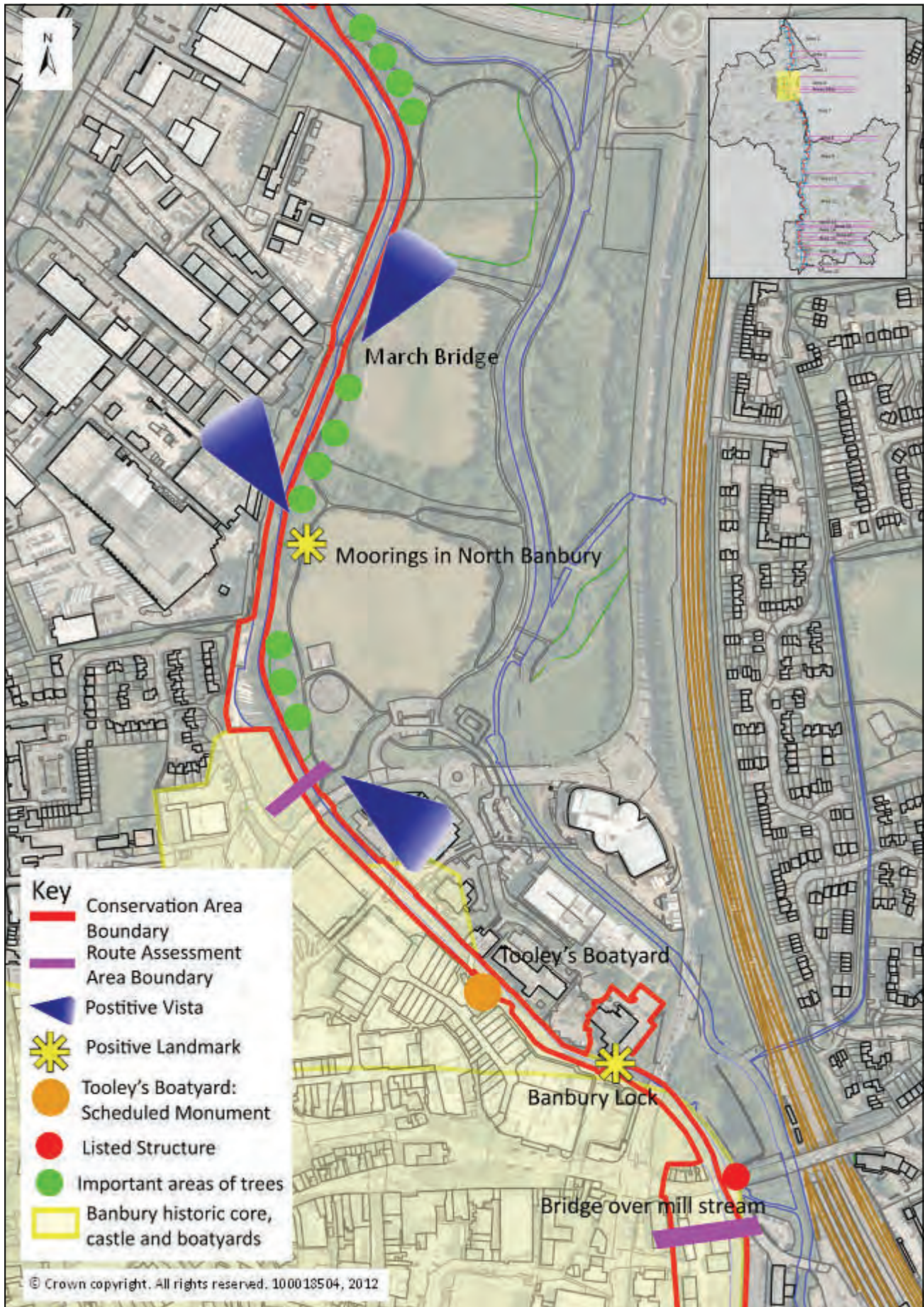


Fig. 18 Route Assessment Areas 4 and 5: North of Banbury; Banbury

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.

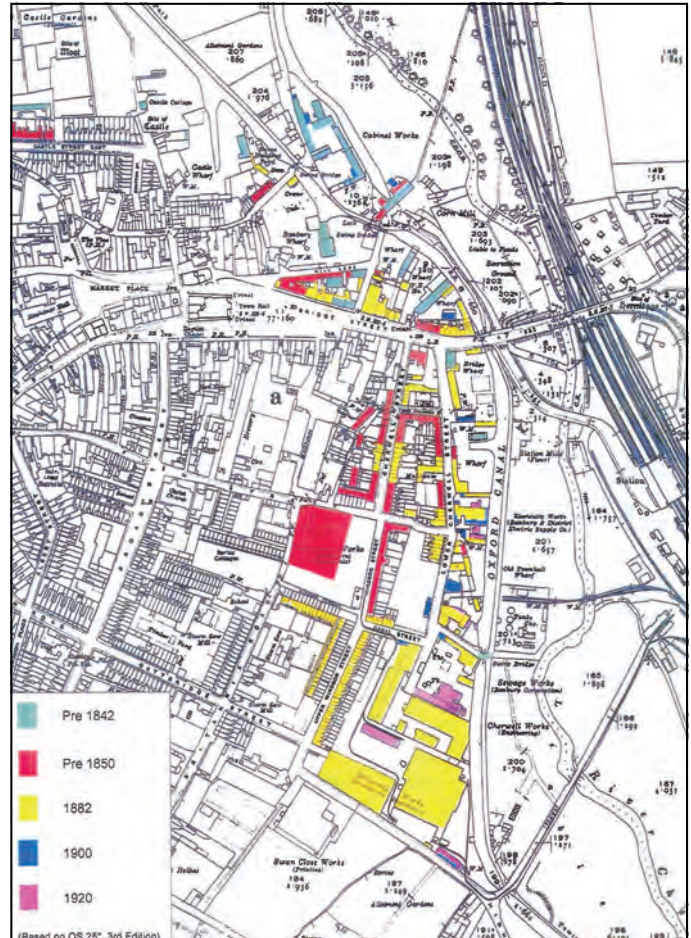


Fig. 19: The development of Banbury from the early 19th century showing the phases of construction which in-filled the area between the market town and at first the new canal and later the railway (from Hewitson *et al.* 2001)

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

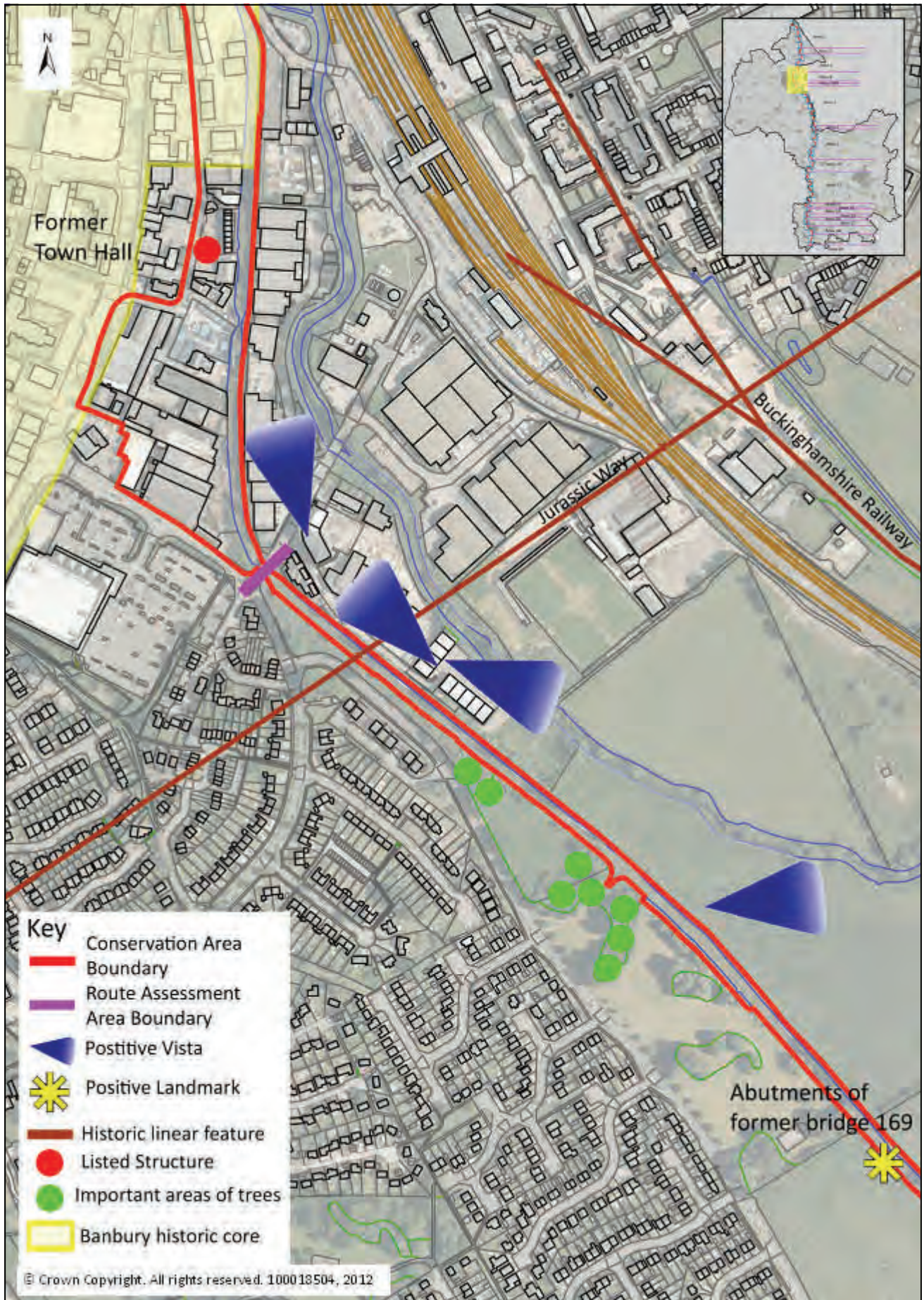


Fig. 21 Route Assessment Areas 6 and 7: Banbury South, Bridges 166-168; Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

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

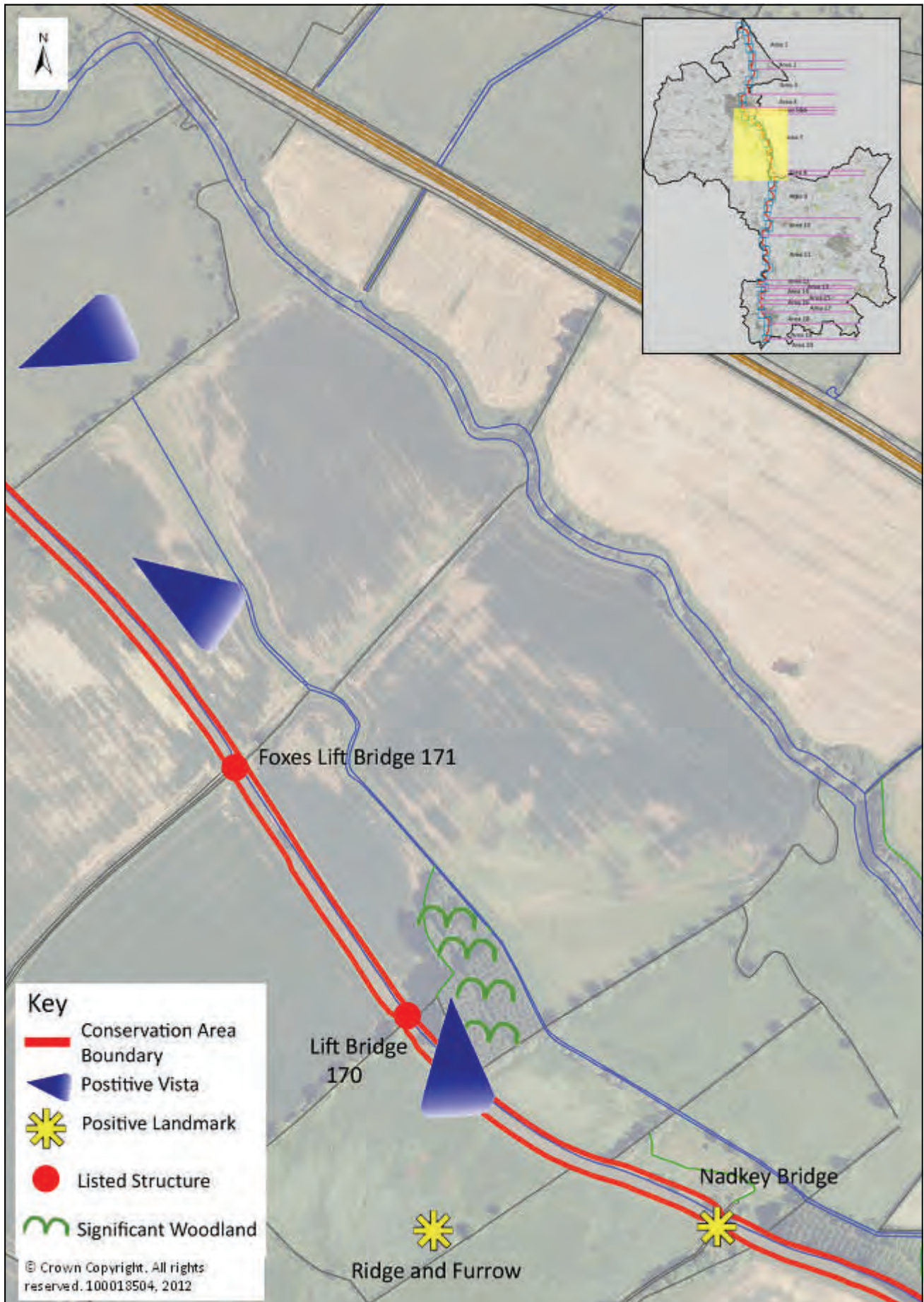


Fig. 22 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

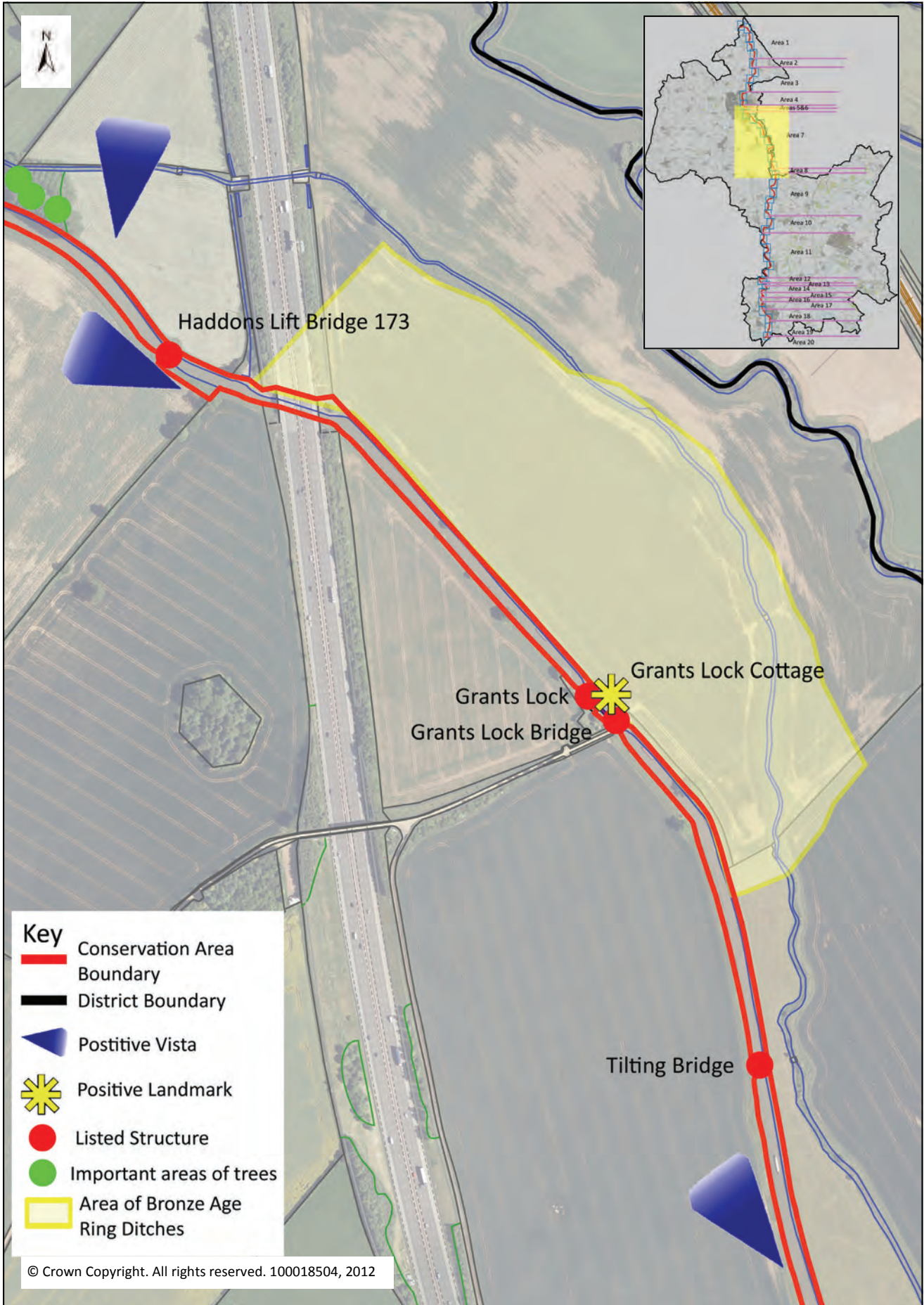


Fig. 23 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

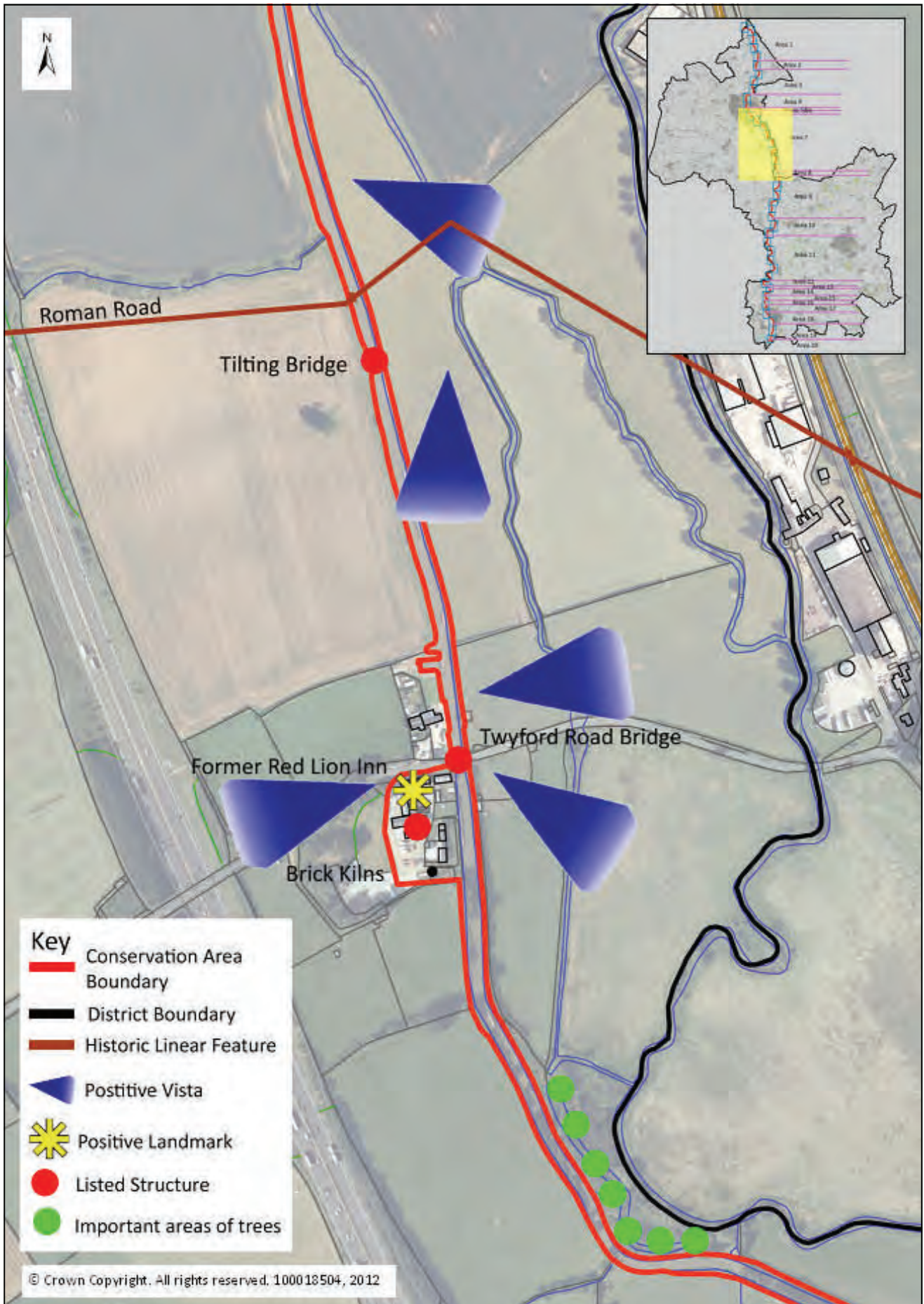


Fig. 24 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

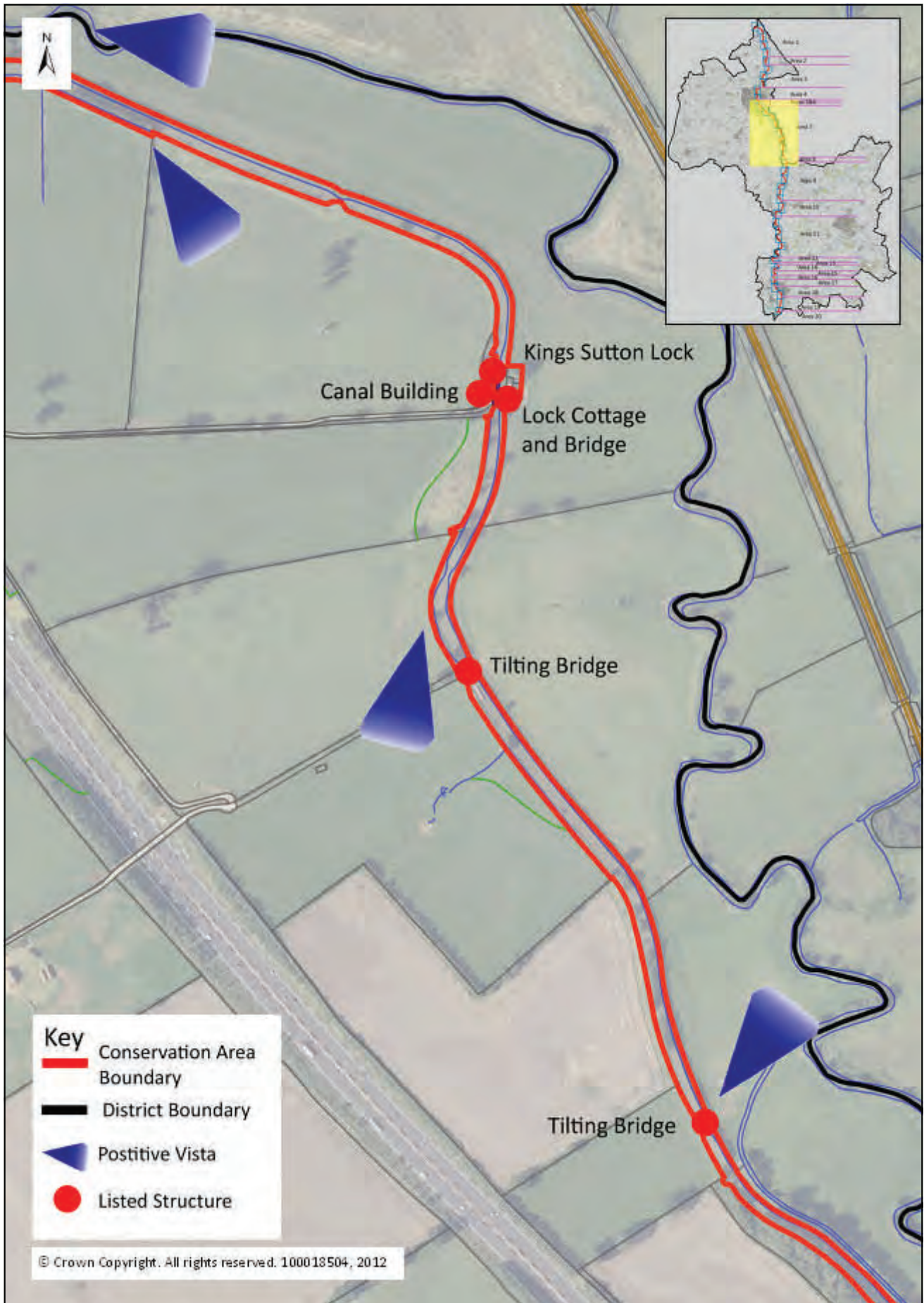


Fig. 25 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

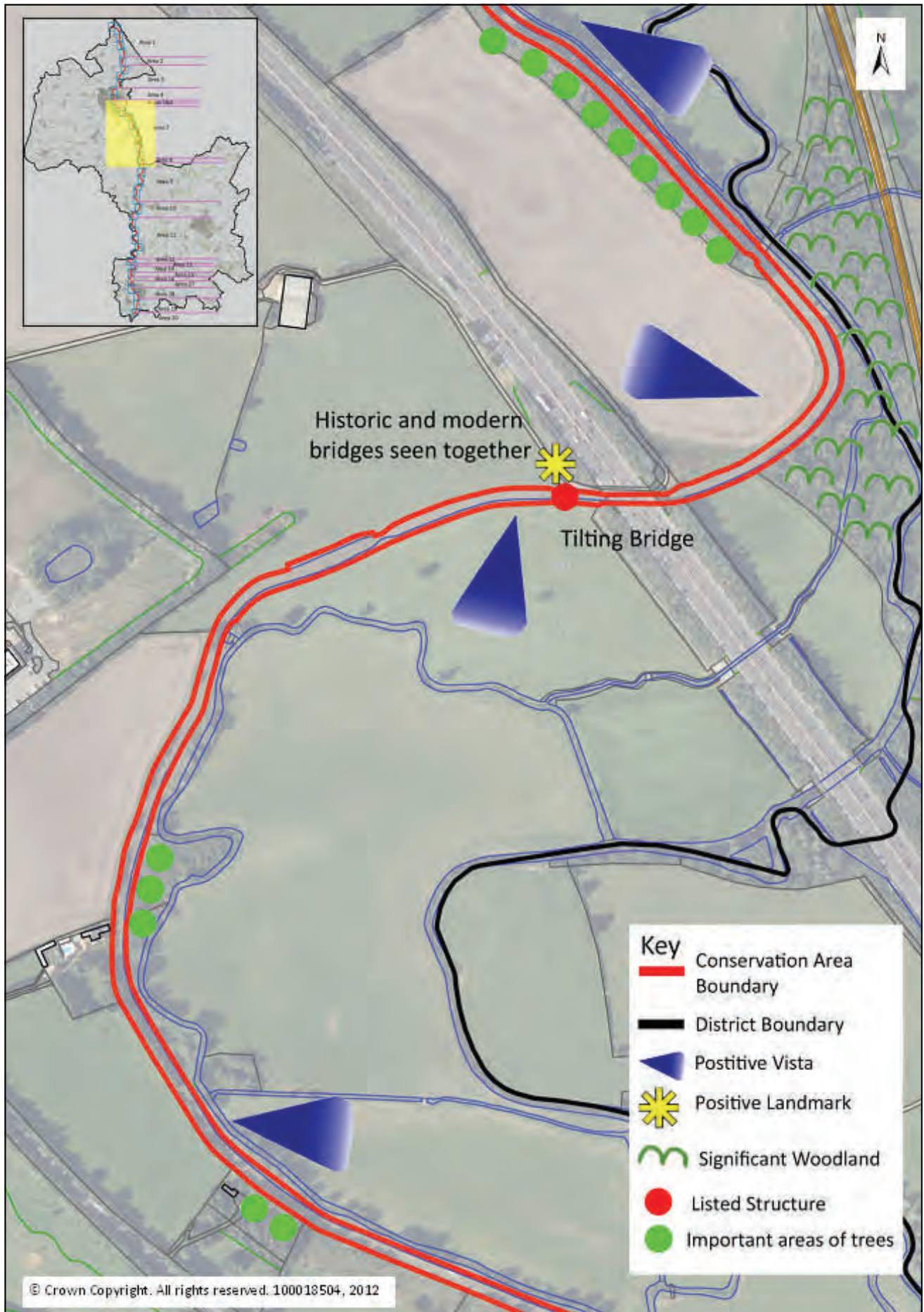


Fig. 26 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

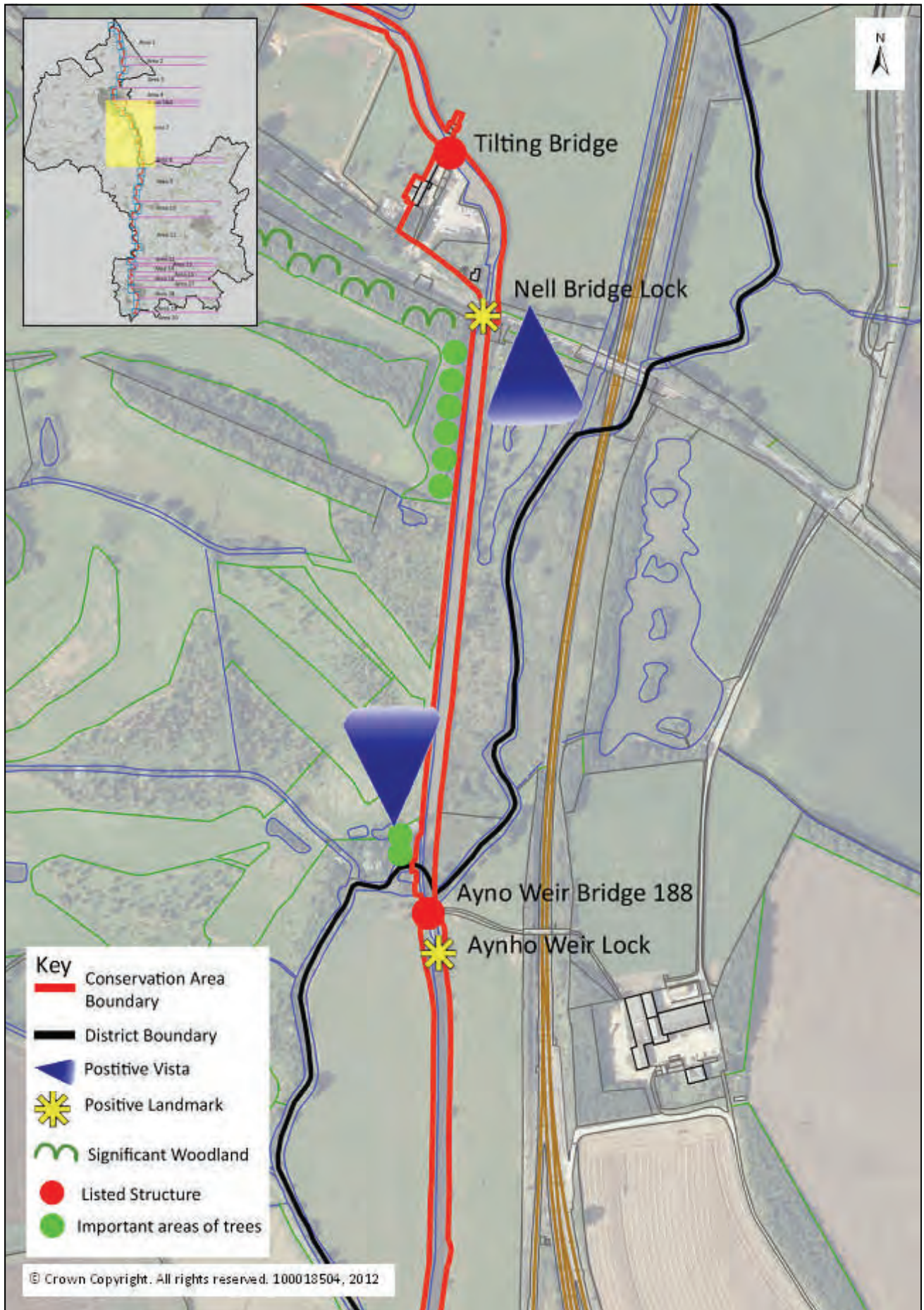


Fig. 27 Route Assessment Area 7: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf

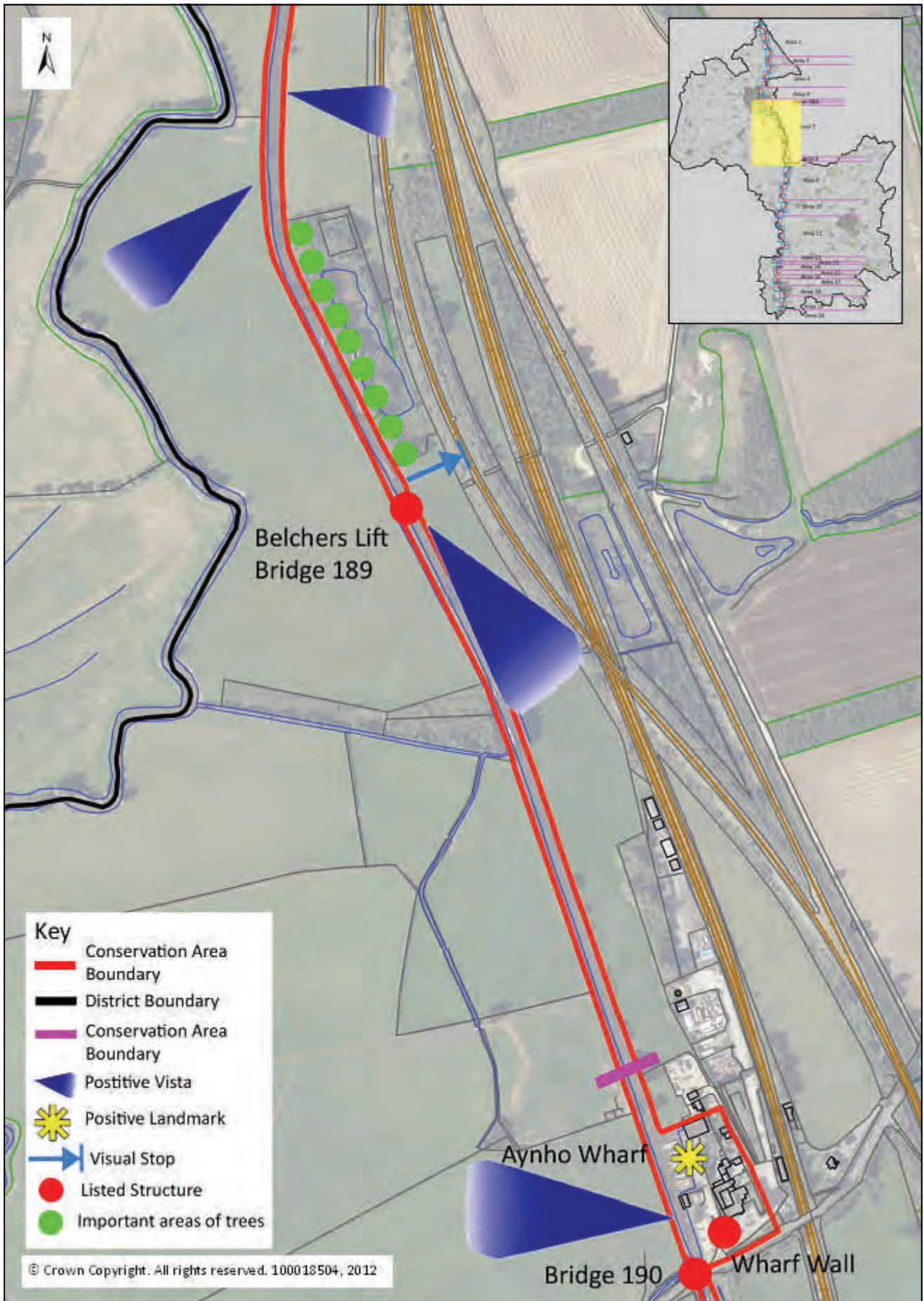


Fig. 28 Route Assessment Areas 7 & 8: Bridge 168 to Aynho Wharf; Aynho

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

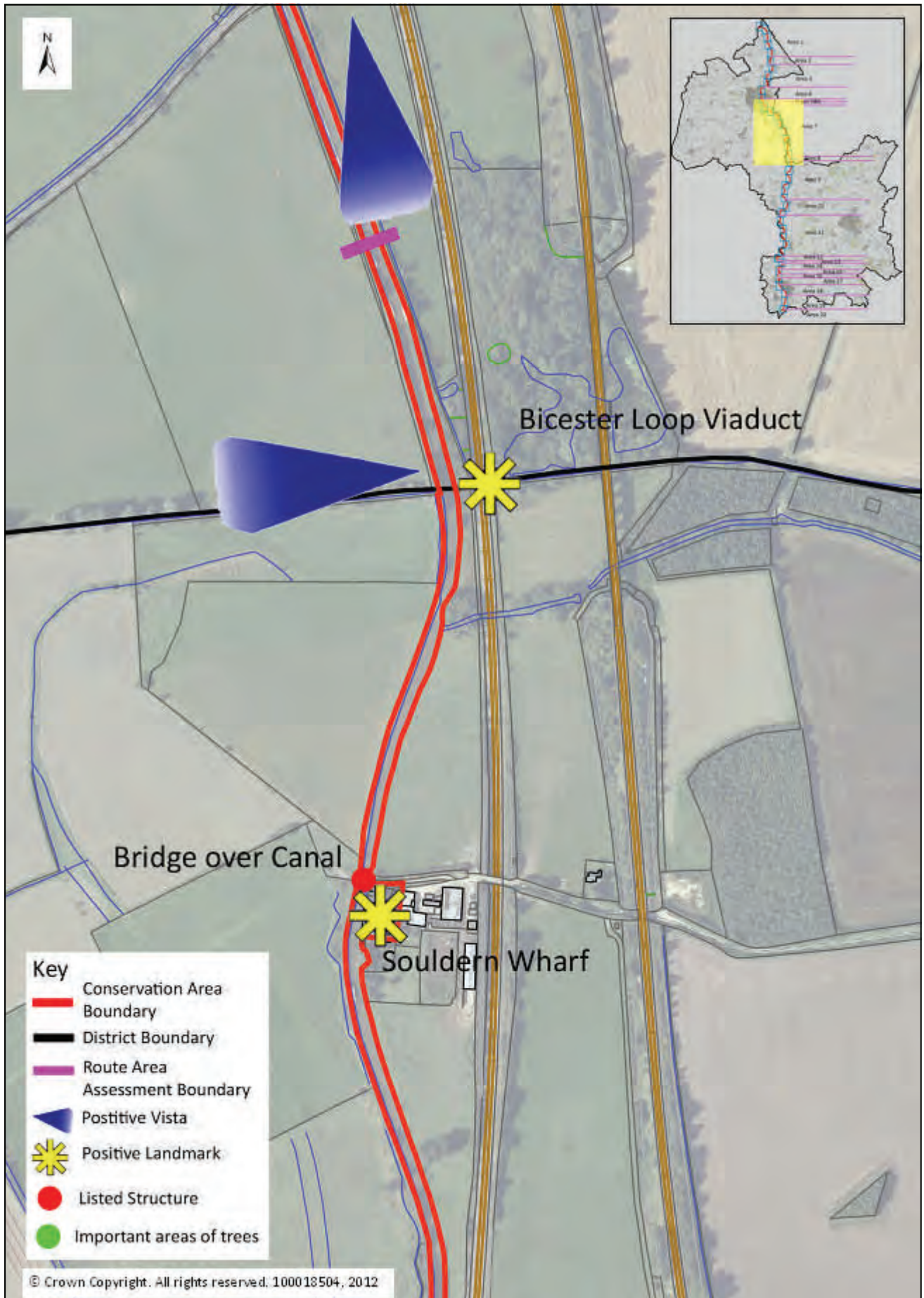


Fig. 29 Route Assessment Areas 8 & 9: Aynho; Aynho to Allen's Lock

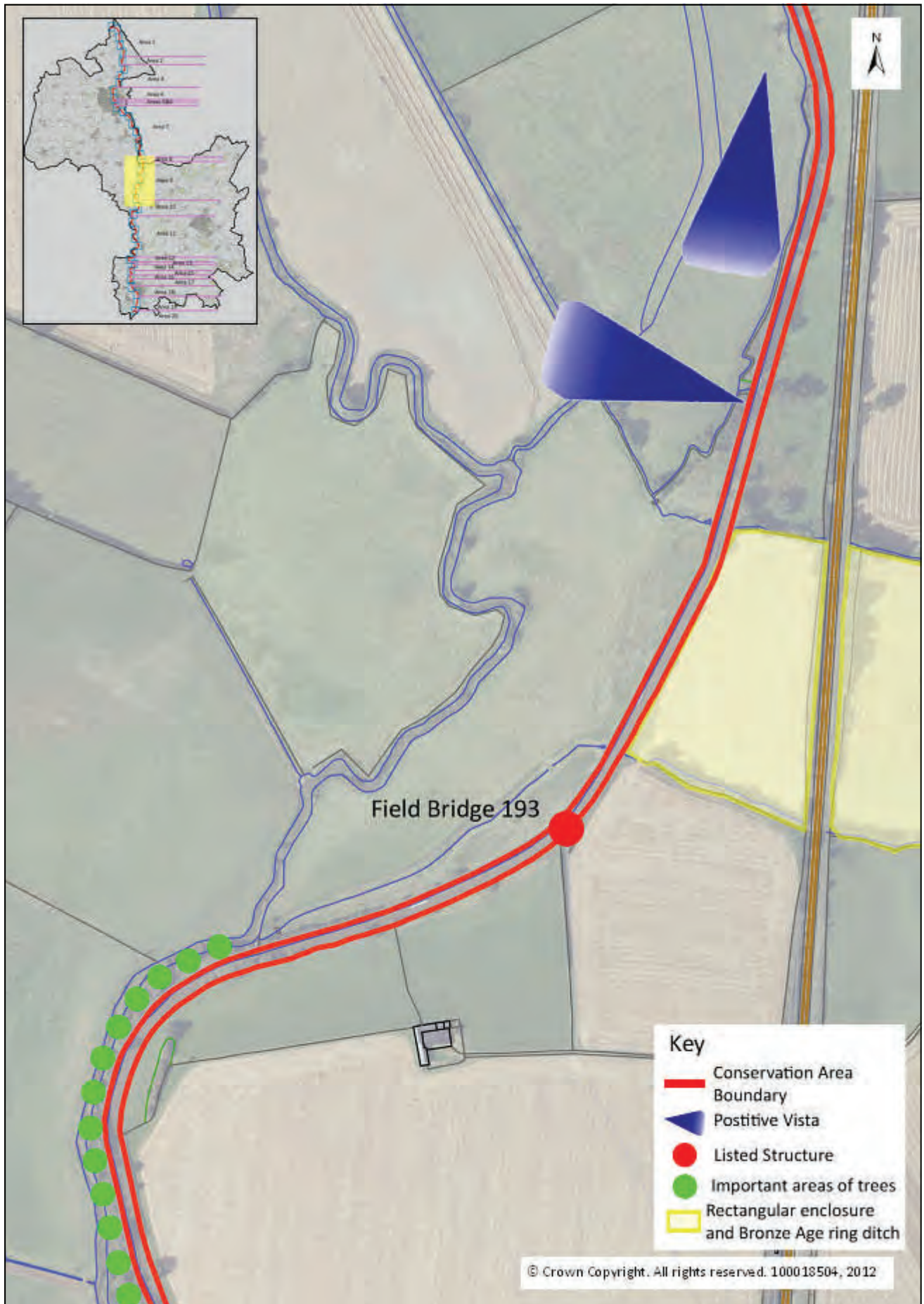


Fig. 30 Route Assessment Area 9: Aynho to Allen's Lock

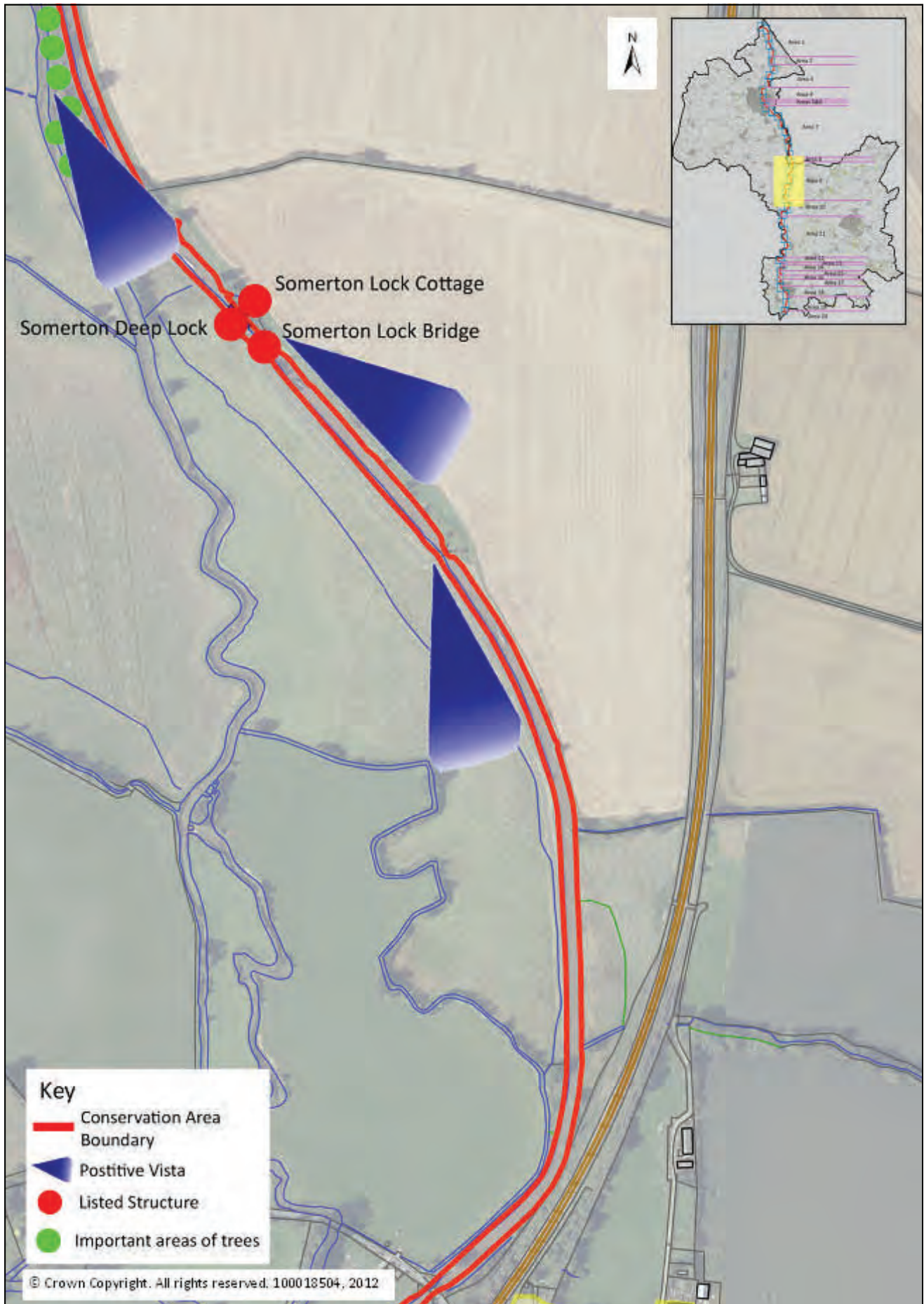


Fig. 31 Route Assessment Area 9: Aynho to Allen's Lock



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

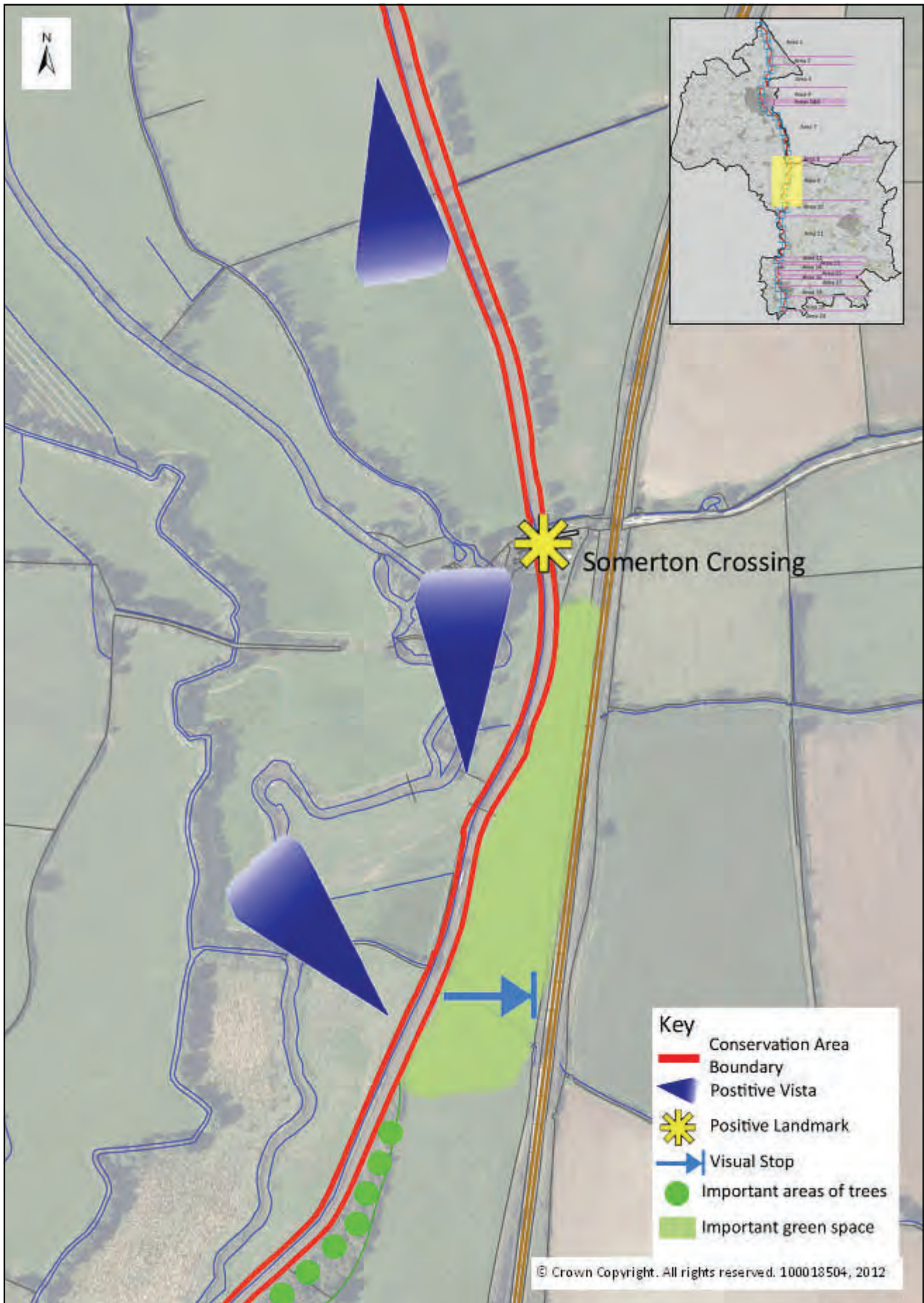


Fig. 33 Route Assessment Area 9: Aynho to Allen's Lock

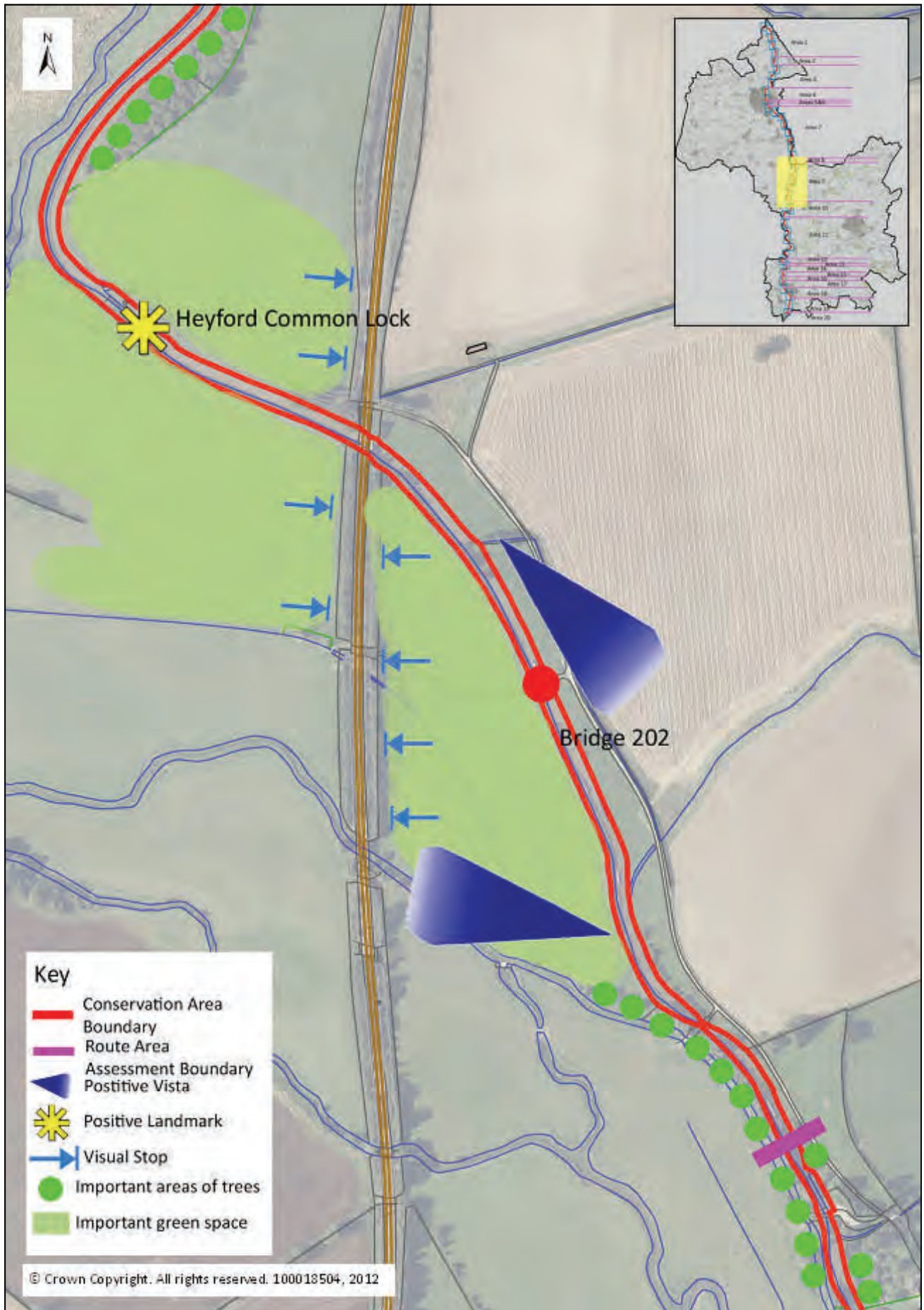


Fig. 34 Route Assessment Area 9 & 10: Aynho to Allen's Lock; The Heyfords

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 parts of 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

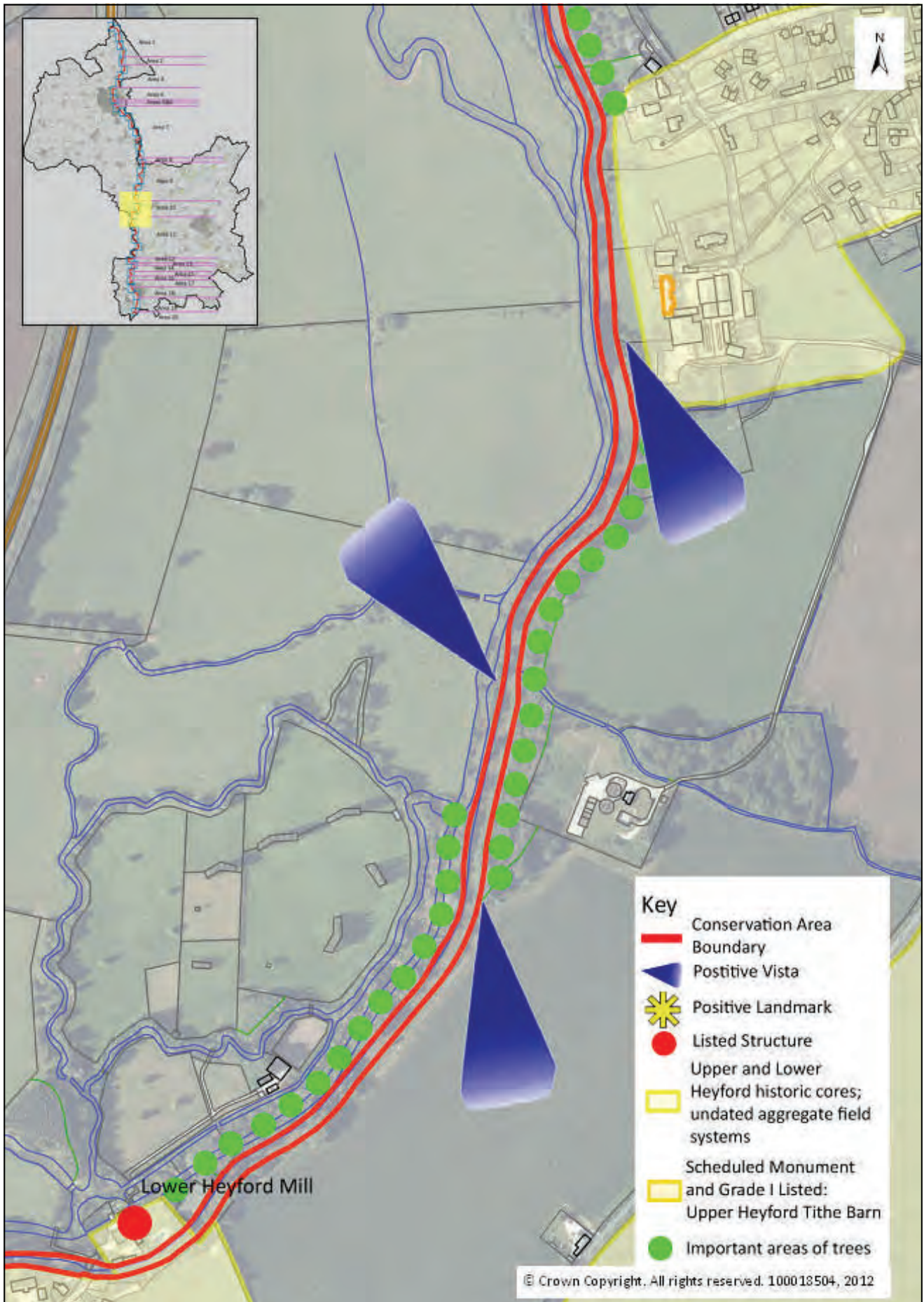


Fig. 35 Route Assessment Area 10: The Heyfords

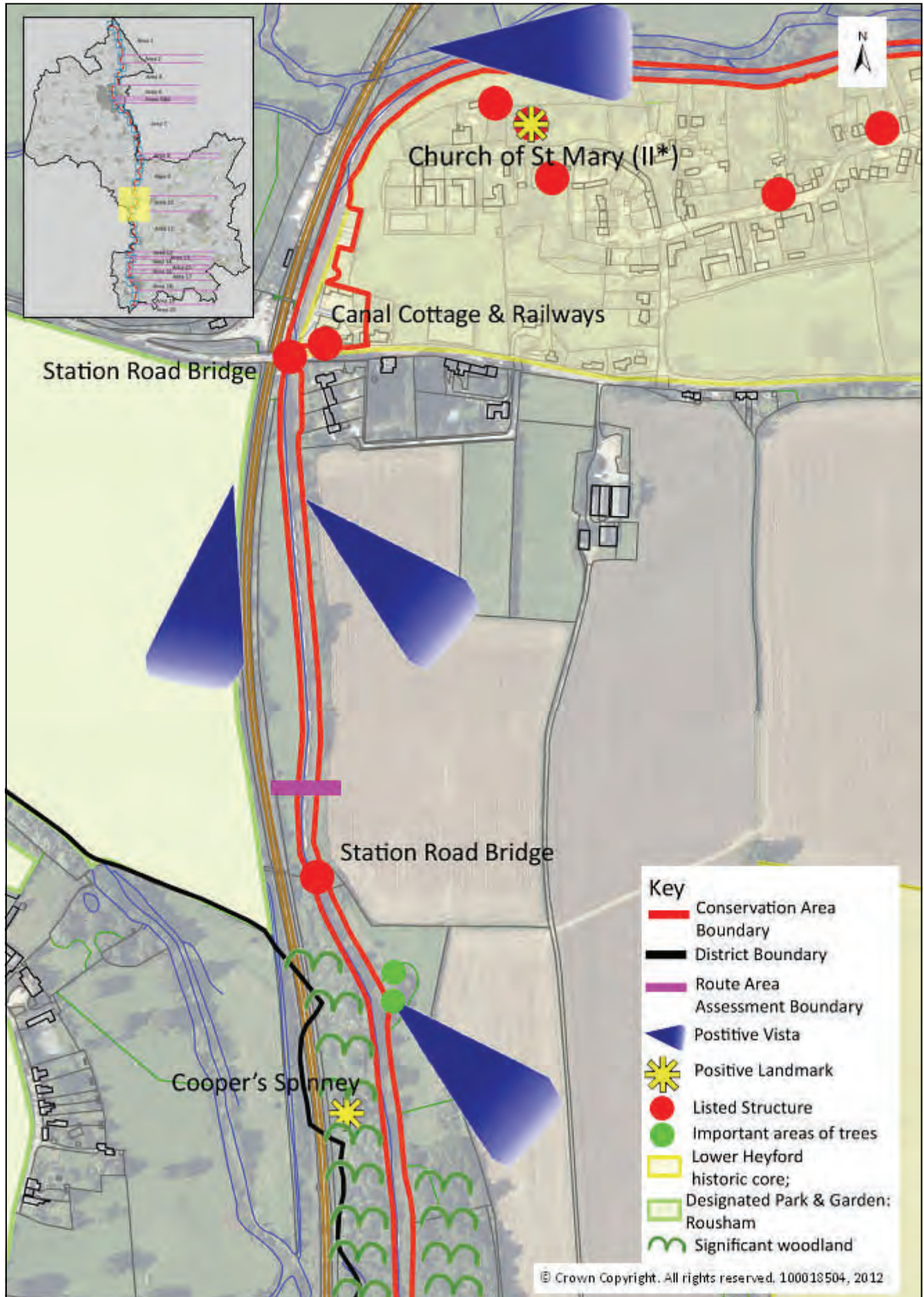


Fig. 36 Route Assessment Area 10 & 11: The Heyfords; Lower Heyford to Enslow

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