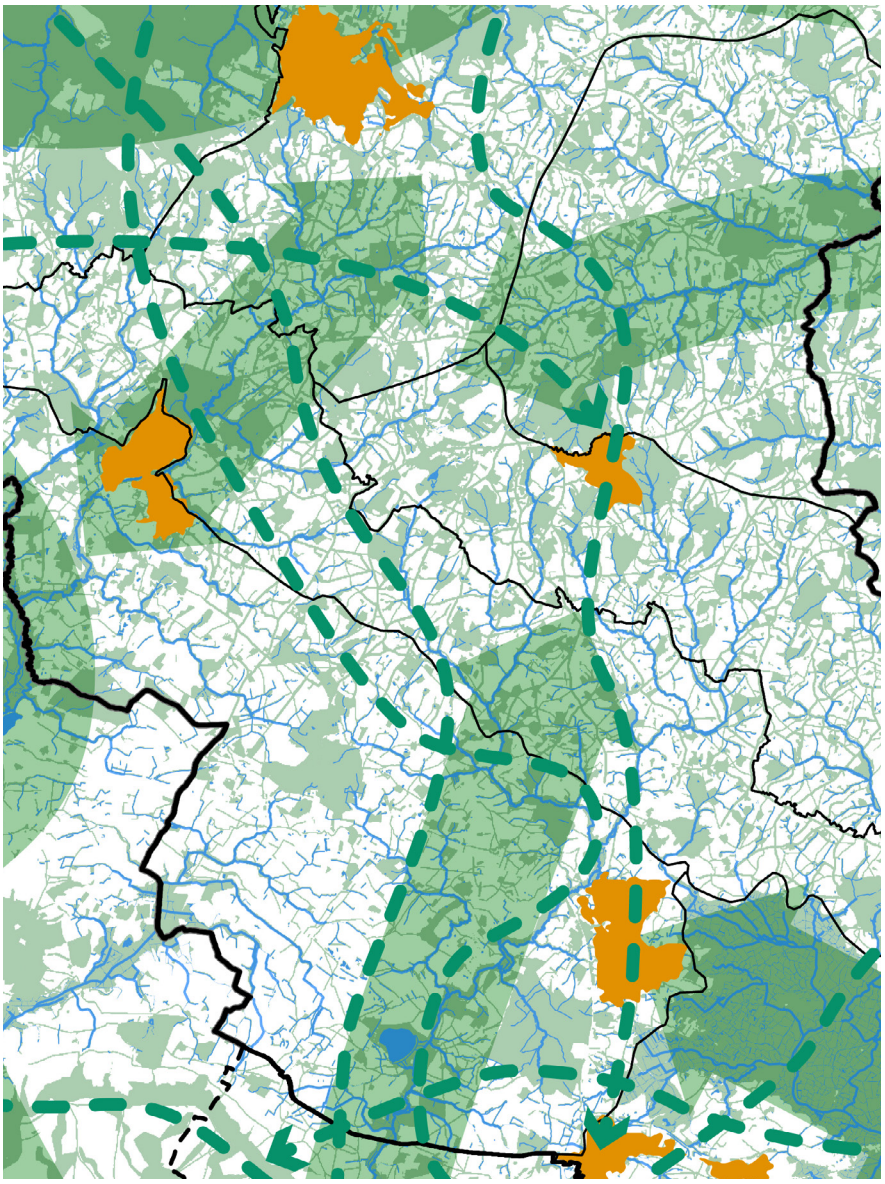
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Wealden District Council

Wealden Green Infrastructure Study



May 2017

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Wealden District Council

Wealden Green Infrastructure Study

Approved

Dominic Watkins

Position Director

Date 10th May 2017

Revision FINAL V2

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

In June 2016, Wealden District Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates to undertake a strategic assessment of the quantity, quality and accessibility of current Green Infrastructure provision within Wealden District, and identify opportunities for addressing deficiencies.

The purpose of the Study is to assist the Council in meeting the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework and associated guidance with regards to its plan making and, where relevant, making planning decisions.

What is Green Infrastructure?

Green Infrastructure is the multi-functional network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities. Individually, these elements are Green Infrastructure assets, and the roles that these assets play are Green Infrastructure functions.

Green Infrastructure has an important role to play in delivering sustainable development. When appropriately planned, designed and managed, Green Infrastructure assets and the functions (or ecosystem services) derived from natural systems and processes have the potential to deliver a wide range of benefits integral to the quality of life for Wealden's communities. These benefits include:

- An improved natural environment, including well-connected ecological networks.
- Strengthened landscape character and enhanced appreciation of historic environment assets.
- Local energy and food production opportunities.
- Flood attenuation, water resource management and adapting to climate change.
- Contributing to the health and well-being of communities through improved access to nature.

Green Infrastructure is a holistic approach to planning and managing the natural environment that acknowledges the multiple benefits and functions it provides for the economy, wildlife, local people, communities and cultural heritage assets. Investment in the provision of new and enhanced Green Infrastructure is therefore an essential part of planning for sustainable development.

Green Infrastructure Assessment

An assessment of Green Infrastructure assets, needs and opportunities within Wealden District was undertaken at three related scales:

- **District Scale Green Infrastructure** – a high level assessment and overview of Green Infrastructure assets, needs and opportunities at a strategic scale, taking into account needs and opportunities for Green Infrastructure provision in adjoining areas where relevant. The study area includes Wealden District but excludes the area that lies within the South Downs National Park.

- **Sub-District Scale Green Infrastructure Zones** – a more detailed assessment of Green Infrastructure assets, needs and opportunities within eight discrete zones of broadly similar Green Infrastructure assets and landscape types within the study area. These zones can provide a framework for neighbourhood planning at the Parish level.

- **Town Scale Green Infrastructure** – a more detailed assessment of Green Infrastructure assets, needs and opportunities focussed on the five main towns within the District (Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield and Hailsham & Polegate).

Green Infrastructure Network

Informed by the assessment, the Study sets out a proposed Green Infrastructure Network for Wealden District at the various scales. The network comprises broadly defined strategic green and blue corridors containing a mosaic of land uses, natural and semi-natural wildlife habitats and access links. The corridors act as linkages and stepping stones for dispersal of wildlife, provide sustainable transport linkages through provision of footpaths and cycle routes connecting local communities to natural greenspace, and enable strategic linkages with Green Infrastructure networks in adjoining areas. The proposed Green Infrastructure Network provides a recommended framework for the delivery of Green Infrastructure to support the planning of sustainable development. It is not a statement of Council policy.

Recommendations

Drawing on the findings of the Study, advice and recommendations to assist in the development and implementation of Green Infrastructure policies in the Wealden Local Plan are provided, which includes planning guidance on principles and standards for embedding Green Infrastructure into development for use by planners, developers and local communities. The Study also provides advice on developing a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Wealden.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Purpose of the Study

1.1.1 Wealden District Council (WDC) commissioned Chris Blandford Consultants (CBA) to undertake an assessment of Green Infrastructure (GI) in Wealden District.

1.1.2 The purpose of the assessment is to assist Wealden District Council in meeting the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated guidance with regards to its plan making and, where relevant, making planning decisions. The provision of an up-to-date assessment will also provide baseline information to inform the production of a GI Strategy, which it is anticipated will be undertaken by the Council following adoption of the Wealden Local Plan.

The Wealden District Local Plan

1.1.3 Wealden District Council adopted its Core Strategy in February 2013. An early review was built into the Core Strategy to re-assess the strategic provision of development in the District. Accordingly, the Council is now preparing its new Local Plan called the Wealden Local Plan.

1.1.4 The Wealden Local Plan will identify policies for housing, the economy, the environment and infrastructure (including GI), and allocate land for new homes in the plan period up until 2028. The Local Plan covers the area of Wealden District, excluding that part which is within the South Downs National Park and will include land use allocations.

1.1.5 The focus for the majority of this housing growth is likely to be within the south of the District around the Hailsham and Polegate area. In addition, a number of other settlements within the District will also be allocated growth. Brownfield sites will continue to be utilised where possible, however the significant growth proposed will most likely result in developing greenfield sites due to limited brownfield land in the District.

1.1.6 The policies set out in the new Local Plan will provide a basis for decision making when determining planning applications, alongside national policy.

1.2 What is Green Infrastructure?

1.2.1 The Landscape Institute's Green Infrastructure Position Statement (2013) provides the following definition of GI, which is generally in line with the GI definitions referred to in the 2014 East Sussex Green Infrastructure Study[1][2]:

Green Infrastructure

*'GI is the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and cities. Individually, these elements are **GI assets**, and the roles that these assets play are **GI functions**. When appropriately planned, designed and managed, the assets and functions have the potential to deliver a wide range of **benefits** – from providing sustainable transport links to mitigating and adapting the effects of climate change'.*

1.2.2 The Landscape Institute's Green Infrastructure Position Statement (2013) also provides a number of useful definitions for key GI terms as follows:

Green Infrastructure Assets

*'**GI assets** range from country parks, lakes and woodlands to urban interventions such as green roofs and street trees. They can be specific sites at the local level or broader environmental features at the landscape scale within and between rural and urban areas such as wetlands, moors and mountain ranges'.*

Green Infrastructure Functions and Ecosystem Services

*'**GI functions** are the roles that assets can play if planned, designed and managed in a way that is sensitive to, and includes provision for, natural features and **ecosystem services**. They may have obvious primary functions, but each asset can perform different functions simultaneously – a concept known as multifunctionality'.*

1.2.3 Underpinning the multiple functions that GI assets can perform is the concept of ecosystem services. Ecosystem services are defined as the benefits provided by the natural environment's assets that contribute to making life possible (e.g. clean air, water, food and materials). These services may include:

- **Supporting services** essential to the functioning of ecosystems and indirectly responsible for all other services - includes water and nutrient cycling, soil formation and the processes of plant growth.
- **Regulating services** - includes regulating climate, flooding, water and air quality, soil erosion and pollination.

[1] http://sussexlnp.org.uk/documents/EastSussexGIStrategyFinal.pdf

- **Provisioning services** - includes the supply of goods such as food, timber, fresh water, fuel and pharmaceuticals.

- **Cultural services** are the non-material direct benefits of importance to the wider social and cultural needs of society - includes recreational space, tourism, spiritual enrichment, inspiration and employment.

1.2.4 The ecosystem services approach to GI planning and management recognise that natural or semi-natural systems can provide services with equivalent or similar benefits to conventional "grey" infrastructure[3]. Furthermore, it also recognises the benefits of restoring and reconnecting fragmented wildlife habitats at the landscape-scale to create stronger and more resilient ecological networks.

Green Infrastructure Connectivity and Benefits

1.2.5 Whilst individual GI assets can serve one or more functions, the Landscape Institute's Green Infrastructure Position Statement notes:

*'**Connectivity** between different GI assets can help maximise the benefits that they generate. Well-connected GI assets create infrastructure that is adaptive and resilient to changes in climate. Physical connections make the most impact, often by creating ecological 'stepping stones' that encourage biodiversity migration and connect places with sustainable walking or cycling routes.'*

*'A GI approach enables landscapes to deliver social, economic and environmental benefits simultaneously and then looks at how those **benefits** can be multiplied by being connected to a wider network of spaces'*

1.2.6 For example, the network of footpaths and cycleways often coincide with green corridors and spaces, providing opportunities for people to gain health and well-being benefits from active recreation while experiencing nature and the landscape.

1.3 National Policy Context

Natural Environment White Paper

1.3.1 The Government's Natural Environment White Paper 'The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature (2011) recognises that the benefits and services that a healthy natural environment provides is the foundation of sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing in England. The White Paper sets out how the value of nature can be mainstreamed across society by facilitating greater local action to protect and improve nature;

[3] Grey infrastructure comprises transport, energy and water utilities

creating a green economy, in which economic growth and the health of our natural resources sustain each other, and markets, business and Government better reflect the value of nature; strengthening the connections between people and nature to the benefit of both; and showing leadership to protect and enhance natural assets globally.

National Planning Policy Framework

1.3.2 The Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out a number of requirements for local planning authorities in their plan making.

1.3.3 With respect to GI, the NPPF sets out the benefits of GI and identifies its importance in delivering sustainable development for individuals, society, the economy and the environment. The NPPF requires local authorities to:

'*Set out a strategic approach in their Local Plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and Green Infrastructure*'[4].

Planning Practice Guidance on Green Infrastructure

1.3.4 The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on GI supporting the NPPF states[5]:

'To assist in planning positively for green infrastructure local planning authorities may wish to prepare an authority-wide green infrastructure framework or strategy. This should be evidence-based by, for example, including an assessment of current green infrastructure provision that identifies gaps in the network and the components and opportunities for improvement. The assessment can inform the role of green infrastructure in local and neighbourhood plans, infrastructure delivery plans and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) schedules.

Local Plans should identify the strategic location of existing and proposed green infrastructure networks. Where appropriate, supplementary planning documents can set out how the planning, design and management components of the green infrastructure strategy for the area will be delivered.

This strategic approach to green infrastructure may cross administrative boundaries. Therefore neighbouring authorities, working collaboratively with other stakeholders including Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), may wish to consider how

[4] National Planning Policy Framework, paragraph 114.
[5] Planning Practice Guidance, Natural Environment. Reference ID: 8-029-20160211

wider strategies for their areas can help address cross-boundary issues and help meet the Duty to Cooperate.'

1.4 Study Methodology

Study Area

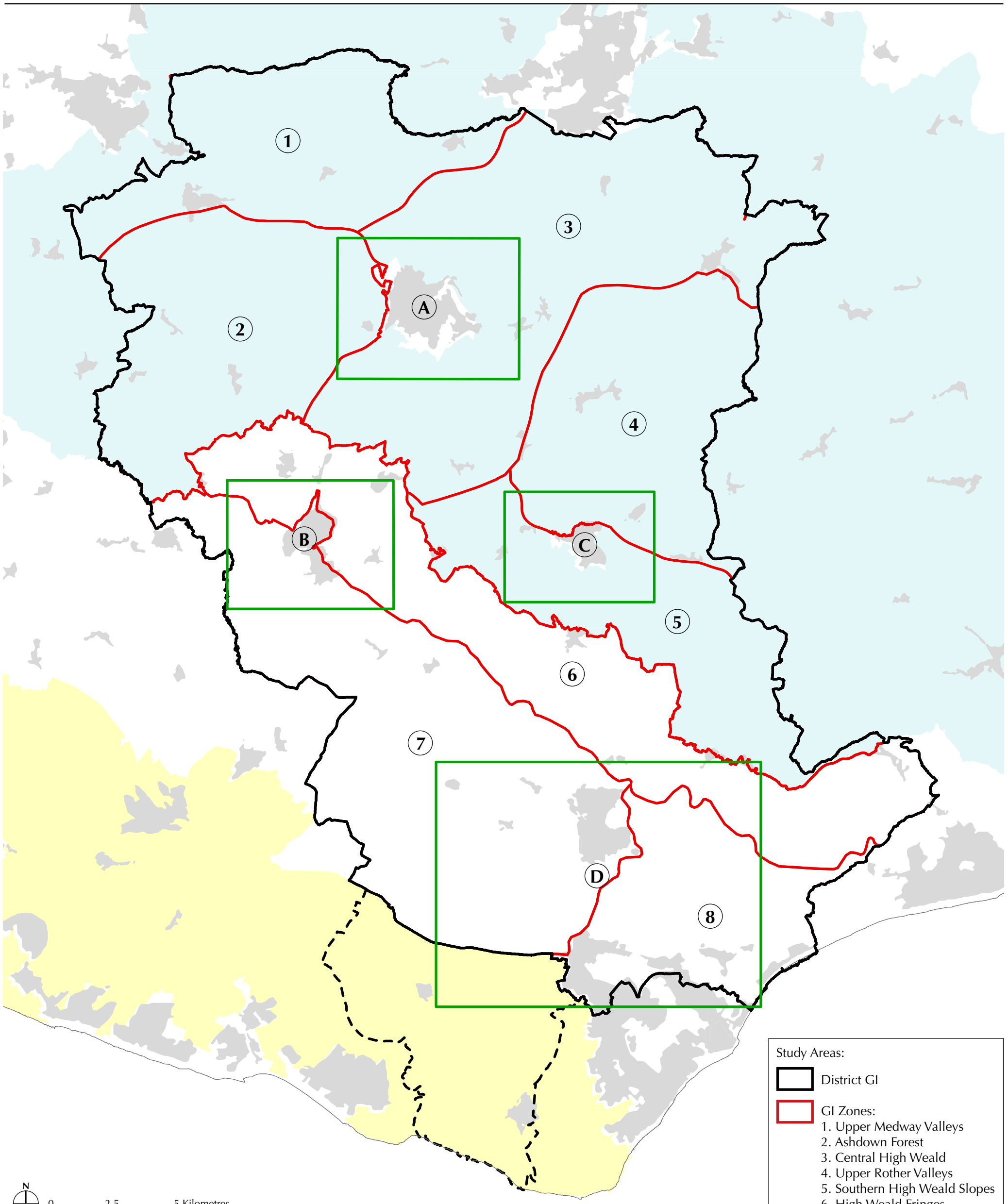
1.4.1 The assessment of GI assets, needs and opportunities within Wealden District was undertaken at three related scales:

- **District Scale GI** – a high level assessment and overview of GI assets, needs and opportunities at a strategic scale, taking into account needs and opportunities for GI provision in adjoining areas where relevant. The study area includes Wealden District but excludes the area that lies within the South Downs National Park as shown on **Figure 1.1**.
- **Sub-District Scale GI Zones** – a more detailed assessment of GI assets, needs and opportunities within eight discrete zones of broadly similar GI assets and landscape types within the study area as shown on **Figure 1.1**. These zones can provide a framework for GI planning at the Parish level (see **Figure 1.2**).
- **Town Scale GI** – a more detailed assessment of GI assets, needs and opportunities focussed on the five main towns within the District (Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield and Hailsham & Polegate). The study areas for each town (see **Figure 1.1**) broadly reflect the settlement assessment areas defined by the Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2014), adjusted as necessary to take into account key GI assets and areas of potential growth around the towns.

Green Infrastructure Themes

1.4.2 Taking into account the definition of GI (see **Section 1.2**), the NPPF (see **Section 1.3**), and priorities identified in the Council's and other relevant strategies and studies (see **Appendix B**), the following five GI themes have been identified to provide a framework for auditing existing GI assets, assessing the functionality of GI assets in terms of the ecosystem services that they can provide, and in identifying needs and opportunities for GI provision in the study area:

- Biodiversity & Geodiversity
- Landscape & Historic Environment
- Energy & Food
- Water Resources
- Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links



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WEALDEN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY
WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

FIGURE 1.1
GREEN INFRASTRUTURE STUDY AREAS - OVERVIEW

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WEALDEN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY
WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

FIGURE 1.2
WEALDEN PARISHES

April 2017

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Audit of GI Assets

1.4.3 The audit of GI assets in the study area involved mapping the primary GI assets within each theme at the relevant scale using the most up-to-date datasets available, as recorded in **Appendix A**. The GI assets considered within the scope of this study are as follows:

- Natural and semi-natural greenspaces
- Green and blue corridors
- Productive landscapes (farmland, coppice woodlands and allotments)
- Cemeteries and churchyards
- Parks and gardens
- Amenity greenspaces
- Heritage sites

GI Needs and Opportunities Assessment

1.4.4 Using the GI audit as a starting point, an assessment of needs and opportunities for GI provision in the study area is undertaken at the following scales.

- District Scale GI
- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Town Scale GI

1.4.5 The needs assessment involves an analysis of gaps and/or deficiencies in the quality, quantity and connectivity of GI provision within the study area at each scale as appropriate, taking into account relevant standards, guidance and latest available evidence. There is currently no agreed national standard for assessing GI provision. For the purposes of this study, the following approach has been adopted:

- **Quality** – the quality of GI provision is assessed generally in relation to the condition of GI assets (using latest available condition monitoring information) and/or the value attributed to them (by reference to relevant designation/classification systems).
- **Quantity** – the provision of GI in quantitative terms is assessed using the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards (ANGSt) developed by Natural England; these aim to ensure residents have the opportunity to interact with nature, and encourage healthier lifestyles and well-being, by encouraging provision of a range of greenspace types and sizes within walking distance and sustainable transport distances of people's homes.
- **Connectivity** – the connectivity of GI assets for people is assessed in relation to the provision of access links for non-motorised users (pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians); and the connectivity of GI assets in biodiversity terms is assessed in relation to the distribution and type of habitats that provide ecological corridors and stepping stones for the dispersal of wildlife.

1.4.6 The assessment identifies opportunities for the study area's GI network to be improved through management and enhancement of existing assets, or creation of new GI assets, to help address the identified needs, gaps and deficiencies.

1.4.7 The relevant strategies, studies and other information used to inform the assessment are identified in **Section 2.0** and **Appendix B.**

Definition of Green Infrastructure Network

1.4.8 Based on the findings of the audit and assessment work, Wealden District's GI network is identified and mapped at the various scales. The GI network comprises broadly defined green and blue corridors containing a mosaic of land uses, natural and semi-natural wildlife habitats and access links. The corridors act as linkages and stepping stones for dispersal of wildlife, provide sustainable transport linkages through provision of footpaths and cycle routes connecting local communities to natural greenspace, and enable strategic linkages with GI networks in adjoining areas. The GI network is supported by analysis of the benefits that protecting, enhancing, linking and extending the GI network can provide to address future needs for GI provision in the study area.

Recommendations

1.4.9 Drawing on the findings of the Study, advice and recommendations to assist in the development and implementation of GI policies in Wealden District are provided, including advice for developing a GI Strategy for Wealden.

Limitations

1.4.10 The audit of GI assets draws on the latest datasets and information available at the time of the Study and may not be exhaustive. While the mapping and analysis presented in this report is considered suitable for the purposes of this strategic desk-based study, it is recommended that it should be supplemented by appropriate field surveys where the information is used to inform more detailed GI planning and delivery work.

2.0 STRATEGIC GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENT

2.1 General

2.1.1 This section sets out a high level, strategic audit of existing GI assets and assessment of GI needs and opportunities across the study area as a whole, taking into account GI provision in adjoining areas where relevant (see **Figure 2.1a**).

2.1.2 This section should be read in conjunction with **Sections 3.0** and **4.0**, which provide more detailed assessments of GI needs and opportunities within sub-district scale 'GI Zones' and for the five main towns respectively.

Strategic Context

2.1.3 The strategic context for GI planning in Wealden District is summarised below based on the 2013 Core Strategy[6].

Settlements and Communities

2.1.4 Wealden is a large rural district, encompassing a large number of settlements and communities. It has a dispersed and varied settlement pattern with a choice of a number of small market towns, villages and hamlets. Each settlement has its own unique characteristics and functions, depending on its location and historical influences.

2.1.5 Historically, five main towns are identified within Wealden namely Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Polegate and Uckfield (see **Figure 2.1a**). However, because of location, environmental attributes, infrastructure and the close proximity of larger towns/cities (including Brighton and Hove, Eastbourne, Tunbridge Wells and Crawley/Gatwick), Wealden's towns have not grown to be significant centres in the South East. The larger settlements outside the District exert a significant influence in terms of providing for jobs, health care, leisure, further education and shopping.

2.1.6 Unlike other Districts, Wealden is not dominated by any one of its towns and overall it is a District of many centres. The towns generally serve the local population, with interactions between smaller settlements and towns and between the towns themselves.

[6] Wealden District Local Plan: Core Strategy (2013) – see Section 2 for details

TANDRIDGE DISTRICT
SEVENOAKS DISTRICT
Tunbridge Wells
TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH
East Grinstead
A264
River Medway
River Teise
A26
A22
MID SUSSEX DISTRICT
Crowborough
WEALDEN DISTRICT
A275
A267
River Rother
A272
A265
Uckfield
Heathfield
ROTHER DISTRICT
River Uck
LEWES DISTRICT
A271
Waller's Haven
Lewes
Hailsham
River Cuckmere
Bexhill
Polegate
A27
Eastbourne
Seaford
EASTBOURNE BOROUGH

N
0 2.5 5 Kilometres

KEY

Wealden Local Plan Area
South Downs National Park
Rivers
Key Roads
Railways
Main Settlements

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WEALDEN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY
WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

FIGURE 2.1a
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY
CONTEXT PLAN

April 2017
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2.1.7 Wealden attracts a small workforce from outside of the District, with some settlements and areas attracting visitors due to the environmental and historical qualities of the area. In such a large rural District, it is recognised that the rural areas contribute to the general economy by underpinning tourism, which in turn provides opportunities for creating jobs, attracting investment and bringing in wealth.

2.1.8 Half of the District's population of around 146,000 live outside the towns in the rural parts of the District. This dispersed settlement pattern creates particular challenges for local service provision, and makes an efficient and viable public transport system more difficult to provide. The lack of access to a frequent public/sustainable transport system in a number of the rural settlements has led to reliance upon the private motor vehicle. In addition to this, existing networks of main roads and railways tend to focus on routes to London and large towns outside the District, rather than between the towns themselves. This has restricted investment in the local economy, and impacted upon access to employment and leisure opportunities for residents within the District.

2.1.9 The impact of the dispersed settlement pattern and the resulting reliance of the private motor vehicle, including decreasing social mobility, local traffic issues, environmental impact and high carbon emissions, are all strategic challenges for sustainable development in the District.

The Environment of Wealden

2.1.10 One of Wealden's principal assets is the high quality of its environment. This is reflected in the high proportion of the District which is protected for its landscape and biodiversity importance. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the South Downs National Park together cover some 60% of the District, in formal recognition of its landscape quality. The internationally important areas of conservation at Ashdown Forest and the Pevensey Levels are also situated within the District. The location and scale of future development will be restricted by its potential impact on all these designated areas, although opportunities exist to enhance the quality of the District's biodiversity and geodiversity overall.

2.1.11 The countryside is also a recreational resource for residents and visitors, with attractions including the South Downs National Park, Ashdown Forest, High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Pevensey Levels. In this way, Wealden helps makes a unique contribution to the quality of life of those who live outside the District, in more built up areas of the region, as well as to its own residents.

2.1.12 The richness and diversity of its biodiversity, landscape and heritage are significant factors in making the District such a desirable place in which to live. This coupled with a limited legacy of brownfield land places additional pressures on the abundant supply of greenfield land.

2.1.13 Ensuring that growth required to meet local needs makes the best use of resources without compromising future requirements, and makes an overall positive contribution to the environment where possible, is a strategic challenge for environmental sustainability and sustainable development in the District. Working in partnership to manage natural resources is crucial, ensuring that the attractiveness of the resource is not diminished through uncontrolled visitor pressure or development.

2.1.14 Other strategic challenges for environmental sustainability and sustainable development in the District include contributing to mitigating climate change by seeking to reduce carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases through: the appropriate selection of areas for growth; providing sustainable transport alternatives to the private motor vehicle; sustainable construction techniques; and use of renewable and low carbon energy sources. There is also a need for adapting to and mitigating climate change through avoiding inappropriate development in areas of high flood risk and supporting appropriate flood risk infrastructure; providing for a resilient environment within built up areas; protecting the landscape; and planning for the future effects of climate change on biodiversity through the green infrastructure network.

Working in Wealden

2.1.15 The District's economy is heavily dependent on the service sector as well as, to a lesser extent, the construction industry, agriculture, fishing, energy and water sector. Whilst this has helped generate high levels of employment, workplace salaries in the District are relatively low. There are high levels of out-commuting with higher paid earners to the north of the District accessing jobs outside of the District compared to the south.

2.1.16 Although the economy is dominated by small businesses, with only a few employers employing more than 10 people, very few of these are in what are generally regarded as the main business growth sectors. However, Wealden's contribution to the overall East Sussex economy is greater than other East Sussex Authorities.

2.1.17 Three quarters of small businesses in the District are farm based, often in former agricultural buildings converted to business space, and increasing numbers of people work from home. The diversified agricultural sector makes a significant impact on the area both in terms of its economy and by shaping the landscape. Because of its rural character and dispersed settlement pattern, the limited provision of high speed/capacity broadband in the District seriously restricts business development, particularly but not exclusively in the rural areas.

2.1.18 The special features of the District attract visitors to Wealden. The coast, attractive villages, and the South Downs and Ashdown Forest are particularly popular visitor destinations. Employment related to tourism in such activities as hotels, catering, camp sites and other visitor facilities is a significant employment sector.

2.1.19 With an ageing population, prospects for economic growth could be undermined by a workforce of insufficient size and skills. There is also an identified shortage of good quality modern business premises, particularly freehold, and especially those suitable for smaller and starter businesses.

2.1.20 Strategic economic challenges for sustainable development in the District include creating better prospects for economic growth, with particular emphasis on the south Wealden area to reduce out commuting, reduce the wage gap between north and south of the District, as well as tackling pockets of unemployment across the area, and increasing the contribution to the economy, and to enhance the prospects of East Sussex as a whole.

Living in Wealden

2.1.21 Wealden's good quality of life, and its proximity to London and the Crawley/Gatwick growth area, creates a high demand for housing, especially in the north of the District. Demand has in the past exerted considerable upward pressure on house prices, and has caused a widening gulf between local incomes and market prices, and led to severe shortages of affordable housing. Whilst the affordability gap between incomes and house prices can be addressed in part by economic processes, the need to provide affordable housing stock remains. This demand for affordable housing also provides a need to increase the stock of market housing within the District, with an established need for smaller dwellings in north Wealden and family homes in south Wealden.

2.1.22 While the general picture is of an attractive and reasonably affluent area with high car ownership and low population and crime rates, Wealden is not without social problems that also need to be addressed. There are significant inequalities within the District, with areas of relative affluence masking pockets of deprivation and health inequality. There is a sharp contrast between high and low incomes and there are strong geographical disparities, with higher mean incomes in the north contrasting with lower incomes around Hailsham and Polegate in the south. Individual experiences of hardship are no less important, and often more difficult to target in such an extensive rural area. However, it is necessary to seek to reduce inequalities and imbalance in the District's population by addressing problems and creating opportunities for a better quality of life, for example through improved education, health, leisure and recreation. This involves ensuring accessibility to services and determining the best

pattern of development across the District to ensure it is sustainable and supports the future role and function of settlements. There is a need to ensure that the sustainability of development is not compromised by the lack of adequate infrastructure, including public transport, recreational facilities and green space.

2.1.23 Wealden's population comprises around 62,000 households. The District has a comparatively small ethnic minority population. The age structure has a much smaller proportion of the population in the 15-39 age range than the national average, with a significantly above average number of people of pensionable age. Without some intervention, this structure is set to continue with predicted increases in the proportion of the population over 75 years, and continuing net loss of the population within the 15 to 24 year age range.

2.1.24 The ageing population and comparatively low birth rate would result, without in-migration, in an overall reduction in Wealden's population. Even with a net increase in in-migration, assisted by the provision of housing, the ageing population has an impact on the amount of people living in Wealden in the workforce. In order to maintain and enhance the working age population to sustain and grow the economy, and to sustain the District's town centres and services, Wealden is reliant upon in-migration. Coupled with the changing nature of household formation this provides an overall increased need and demand for housing and accompanying growth.

2.2 Green Infrastructure Assets

2.2.1 The existing GI network within and around the study area at the district-scale is illustrated on **Figure 2.1b**. The GI network comprises a range of GI assets that provide multiple functions. These are summarised below based on the GI typology in Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance (2009).

Natural and Semi-natural Greenspaces

2.2.2 Natural and semi-natural greenspaces encompass a broad range of habitat types that can be found both within and outside of designated sites and nature reserves, such as woodlands, heathlands, grasslands and wetlands, and recolonised previously developed land. In addition to supporting a range of habitats for wildlife, these natural and semi-natural greenspaces can also provide access for informal recreation (such as walking and bird watching), provide economic functions (such as land for agriculture and forestry) and provide other environmental and social functions (such as reducing the impact of climate change, providing predominantly undeveloped natural floodplains and connecting people with the countryside leading to mental health and well-being benefits).

2.2.3 The contribution of natural and semi-natural greenspaces to Wealden's GI network is explored under the Biodiversity and Geodiversity theme in **Section 2.3** and the Accessible Natural Greenspace and Access Links theme in **Section 2.7**. Existing natural and semi-natural greenspaces within Wealden District are shown on **Figure 2.2a** (Designated Biodiversity and Geodiversity Sites), **Figure 2.2b** (Wildlife Habitats) and **Figure 2.6a** (Existing Accessible Natural Greenspace).

Green and Blue Corridors

2.2.4 Green and blue corridors are predominantly linear landscape features that typically follow natural features, such as rivers, streams and ditches, or semi-natural features such as road/railway verges, recolonised disused railway lines or hedgerows. In addition to their vital function as 'stepping stones'/corridors for the dispersal of wildlife between otherwise fragmented and isolated habitats within the agricultural landscape and urban areas, these corridors can also provide access links for connecting people between settlements and the surrounding landscape via walking and cycling routes where these functions coincide.

2.2.5 The contribution of green and blue corridors to Wealden's GI network is explored under the Biodiversity and Geodiversity theme in **Section 2.3**, the Water Resources theme in **Section 2.6** and the Accessible Natural Greenspace and Access Links theme in **Section 2.7**. Existing green

N

0 2.5 5 Kilometres

KEY

Wealden Local Plan Area

GI Zones

Existing Green Infrastructure

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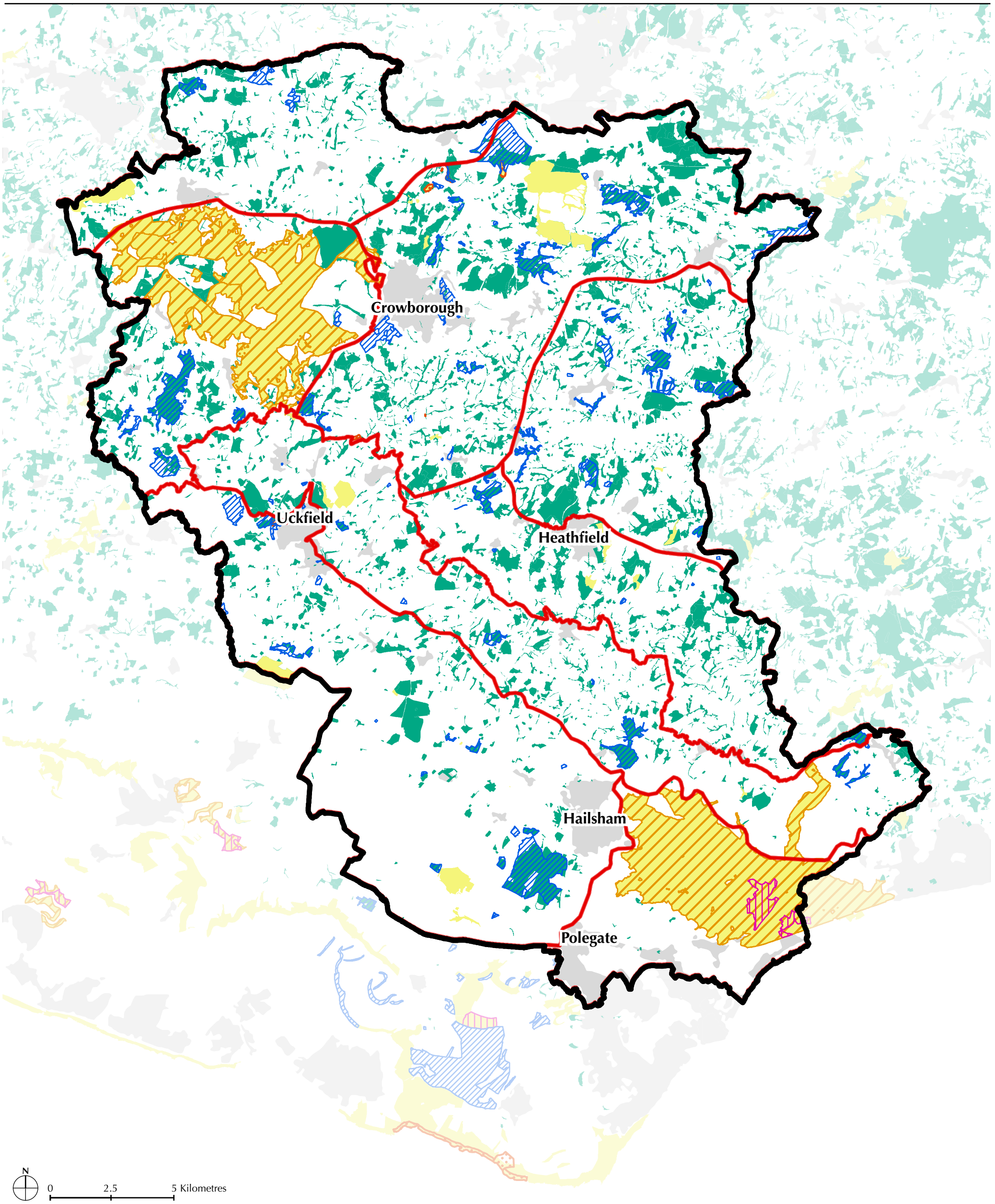
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WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

FIGURE 2.1b
EXISTING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

April 2017

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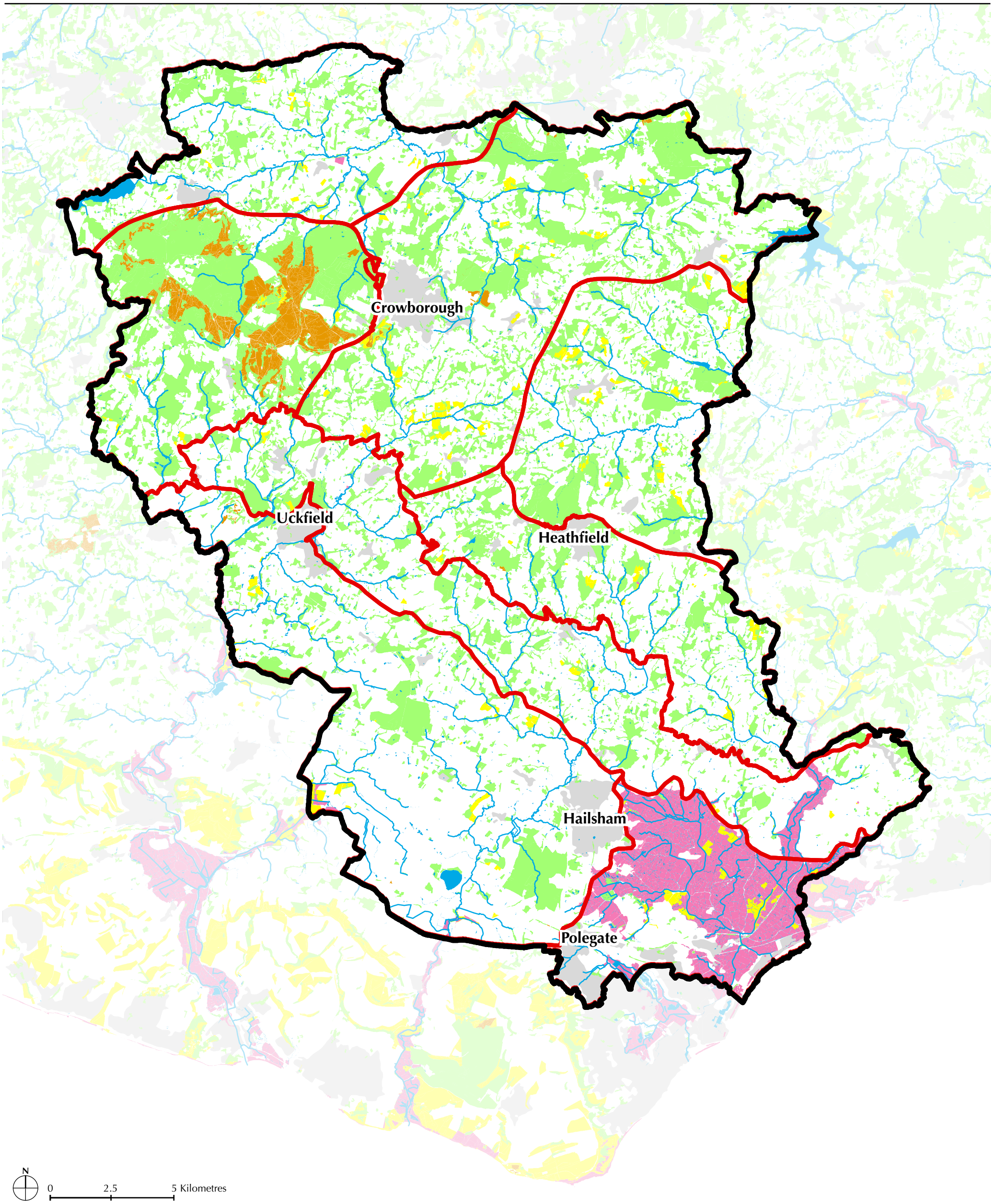
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WEALDEN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY
WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

FIGURE 2.2a
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

April 2017

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KEY

- Wealden Local Plan Area
- GI Zones

Broad Habitat Types:

- Woodland Habitats (National Forest Inventory/ BAP Priority Habitats Inventory)
- Lowland Heathland Habitats (BAP Priority Habitats Inventory)
- Freshwater Habitats (Main Watercourses & Waterbodies)
- Wetland and Coastal Habitats (BAP Priority Habitats Inventory)
- Grassland Habitats (BAP Priority Habitats Inventory)

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FIGURE 2.2b
BIODIVERSITY - WILDLIFE HABITATS

April 2017

11123101_Figures_20-04-17.indd

and blue corridors within the study area are shown on **Figure 2.1a** (Green Infrastructure Study Context Plan), **Figure 2.5** (Water Resources) and **Figure 2.7** (Access Links).

Productive Landscapes (Farmland, Coppice Woodlands and Allotments)

2.2.6 Farmland can contribute to local food production and landscape character. Within the study area, farmland includes both commercial farming businesses and small holdings. Coppice woodlands are a significant feature in the study area and contribute to local energy production and landscape character. Allotments are public open spaces set aside for the purposes of domestic gardening and small scale horticulture, typically for fruit and vegetable production. As well as facilitating local food production, allotments can provide wildlife habitats, green corridors within urban areas and social, health and community benefits. Predominantly located in the main towns within the study area, allotments are generally managed by Town and Parish Councils.

2.2.7 The contribution of farmland, coppice woodlands and allotments to Wealden's GI network is explored under the Energy & Food theme in **Section 2.5**. Existing farmland and coppice woodlands within the study area are shown on **Figure 2.4** (Energy & Food). Allotments are shown at the town scale on **Figure 4.2i** (Crowborough: Open Space Typology), **Figure 4.3i** (Uckfield: Open Space Typology), **Figure 4.4i** (Heathfield: Open Space Typology) and **Figure 4.5i** (Hailsham & Polegate: Open Space Typology).

Cemeteries and Churchyards

2.2.8 Often located adjacent to places of worship, cemeteries and churchyards provide important habitats for wildlife and opportunities for quiet reflection and spiritual enrichment that can contribute to people's mental health and well-being. They also play an important community role, providing a venue for religious ceremonies and practices. The majority have historic connections and are managed by religious organisations. Within the study area, there are urban cemeteries and churchyards associated with small rural parish churches.

2.2.9 The contribution of cemeteries and churchyards to Wealden's GI network is explored under the Accessible Natural Greenspace and Access Links theme in **Section 2.7**. Existing cemeteries and churchyards are shown at the town scale on **Figure 4.2i** (Crowborough: Open Space Typology), **Figure 4.3i** (Uckfield: Open Space Typology), **Figure 4.4i** (Heathfield: Open Space Typology) and **Figure 4.5i** (Hailsham & Polegate: Open Space Typology).

Parks and Gardens

2.2.10 Parks and gardens include formal and informal private, semi-private or public open spaces for sport, leisure and recreation that contribute to people's health and well-being. In addition to

these social functions they can also provide a variety of environmental and economic functions, including provision of habitats for wildlife, reducing the impact of climate change and improving neighbourhoods, enhancing house prices and creating a sense of place. Parks and gardens are generally associated with the main towns within the study area.

2.2.11 The contribution of parks and gardens to Wealden's GI network is explored under the Accessible Natural Greenspace and Access Links theme in **Section 2.7**. Existing parks and gardens are shown on **Figure 2.6a** (Existing Accessible Natural Greenspace), and at the town scale on **Figure 4.2i** (Crowborough: Open Space Typology), **Figure 4.3i** (Uckfield: Open Space Typology), **Figure 4.4i** (Heathfield: Open Space Typology) and **Figure 4.5i** (Hailsham & Polegate: Open Space Typology).

Amenity Greenspaces

2.2.12 Amenity greenspace is publically accessible or private greenspace often without formal designation or categorisation including village greens and play areas, communal greenspaces and street trees within housing areas. Amenity greenspaces primarily provide opportunities for formal outdoor sports and recreation that contribute to people's health and well-being. In addition, amenity greenspace can contribute to the character, structure and setting of settlements, often also providing important habitat corridors through urban areas. Amenity greenspace is predominantly located in the main towns within the study area.

2.2.13 The contribution of amenity greenspace to Wealden's GI network is explored under the Accessible Natural Greenspace and Access Links theme in **Section 2.7**. Existing amenity greenspace is shown at the town scale on **Figure 4.2i** (Crowborough: Open Space Typology), **Figure 4.3i** (Uckfield: Open Space Typology), **Figure 4.4i** (Heathfield: Open Space Typology) and **Figure 4.5i** (Hailsham & Polegate: Open Space Typology).

Heritage Sites

2.2.14 Heritage sites provide opportunities for informal recreation and intellectual access to history that contributes to people's health and well-being. Examples within the study area include historic estates, parks and gardens managed by organisations such as the National Trust, listed buildings, conservation areas and scheduled monuments.

2.2.15 The contribution of heritage sites to Wealden's GI network is explored under the Landscape & Historic Environment theme in **Section 2.4**. Heritage sites within the study area are shown on **Figure 2.3b** (Historic Environment).

2.2.16 The primary roles that the above GI assets play in contributing to the District's GI network are explored under the GI themes set out in **Sections 2.3-2.7** below. As illustrated in **Box 2.1**, reflecting the multi-functional nature of GI, it should be noted that there is often overlap between GI themes. For example, 'Biodiversity & Geodiversity' and 'Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links' are often related to the same GI assets (e.g. 'Natural & Semi-natural Greenspace and/or Green Corridors).

Box 2.1 – GI Assets and GI Themes

GI Assets	**GI Themes**				
	Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Landscape & Historic Environment	Energy & Food	Water Resources	Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links
Natural & Semi-natural Greenspaces	✓	✓	✓		✓
Green Corridors	✓	✓			✓
Blue Corridors	✓	✓		✓	✓
Productive Landscapes		✓	✓		
Cemeteries & Churchyards	✓	✓			✓
Parks & Gardens	✓				✓
Amenity Greenspaces	✓		✓		✓
Heritage Sites	✓	✓			

2.3 Biodiversity & Geodiversity

2.3.1 Wealden's varied geology and its rural environment supports a rich variety of habitats and wildlife. Around 24% (18,780ha) of the study area is designated as an international, national or local site of biodiversity and geodiversity value, and there are also a range of habitats of conservation importance within and outside of these designated areas that are also afforded high priority for protection. These natural and semi-natural habitats are a key GI asset and make a significant contribution to Wealden's GI network, although there are considerable opportunities to further improve the condition of biodiversity and geodiversity assets within the study area.

Audit

2.3.2 The biodiversity and geodiversity resources within the study area are outlined below. As shown on **Figure 2.2a**, there are many sites of nature conservation value that have more than one designation and are protected at the international, national and local level as described below.

International/European Nature Conservation Sites

2.3.3 **Special Areas of Conservation** (SAC) are areas given special protection under the European Union's Habitats Directive, which is transposed into UK law by the Habitats and Conservation of Species Regulations 2010. There are two SACs within the study area with a combined total area of 5,826ha – Ashdown Forest SAC and Pevensey Levels SAC.

- **Ashdown Forest SAC**[7] – 2,729ha of Ashdown Forest was designated as a SAC in 2005 primarily for its heath habitats, which comprise one of the largest single continuous blocks of lowland heath in south-east England (approximately 1589ha). The qualifying features of Ashdown Forest SAC are: (i) Northern Atlantic wet heaths (comprising bog-mosses, bog asphodel, common cotton-grass, marsh gentian and marsh clubmoss that support important assemblages of beetles, dragonflies, damselflies and butterflies, including the nationally rare silver-studded blue); (ii) European dry heaths (comprising heather, bell heather and dwarf gorse that support important lichen assemblages and the most inland remaining population of hairy greenweed in Britain); and (iii) a significant presence of great crested newts. The conservation objectives for the Ashdown Forest SAC[8] are to *'avoid the deterioration of the qualifying natural habitats and the habitats of qualifying species, and*

[7] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6357909449474048
[8] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6746917321048064

the significant disturbance of those qualifying features, ensuring the integrity of the site is maintained and the site makes a full contribution to achieving Favourable Conservation Status of each of the qualifying features by maintaining or restoring the extent and distribution of qualifying natural habitats and habitats of qualifying features'. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) often coincide with the European sites and therefore, can be used as a guide to determine the current condition of the habitats within Ashdown Forest SAC. Although it should be noted that SSSIs are designated for national (as opposed to international) nature conservation interest. Therefore, while favourable condition of a SSSI cannot guarantee favourable conservation status of a European site, it can help to illustrate the situation. The condition of the 127 units within the Ashdown Forest SSSI has been assessed by Natural England and the information was last reviewed on 1st March 2013. Currently, 14.6% of the units are in favourable condition and 85.4% are considered to be in an unfavourable but recovering condition[9]. It should be noted that the impacts of air pollution on the condition of SSSIs are considered to be substantially under-represented given the complex interactions between pollution impacts, management and abiotic influences (JNCC, 2006a). The Ashdown Forest SAC's extensive areas of lowland heath are vulnerable to nitrogen dioxide pollution associated with emissions from motorised vehicular traffic. The majority of units have been classified as 'unfavourable recovering condition', which means that these SSSI units are not yet fully conserved but all the necessary management measures are in place. Provided that the recovery work is sustained, the SSSI will reach favourable condition in time. The remaining units are deemed to be in 'favourable condition', which means that the SSSI land is being adequately conserved and is meeting its 'conservation objectives'; however, there is scope for the enhancement of these units.

- **Pevensey Levels SAC[10]** – the Pevensey Levels was designated in 2016 as a SAC primarily for its importance in supporting the largest known population of Little whorlpool ram's-horn snail in the UK, which is found in both a wide spatial distribution and in good population density across a number of the levels, including at Hooe level, Manxey level, Glynleigh and Horse Eye Levels. The SAC designation covers approximately 3585ha. The conservation objectives for the Pevensey Levels SAC[11] are to '*Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring the extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species; the structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species; the supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely; the populations of qualifying species; and the*

[9] Details of the condition assessment for each unit can be found on www.naturalengland.org.uk
[10] https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/497844/pevensey-levels-sac-documents.pdf
[11] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5358500674797568

distribution of qualifying species within the site. The condition of the 37 units within the Pevensey Levels SSSI has been assessed by Natural England. Currently, 99.50% of the units are considered to be in an unfavourable but recovering condition, which means that these SSSI units are not yet fully conserved but all the necessary management measures are in place.

2.3.4 **Special Protection Areas** (SPA) are areas which have been identified as being of international importance for the breeding, feeding, wintering or the migration of rare and vulnerable species of birds found within European Union countries. They are European designated sites, classified under the Birds Directive. There is one SPA within the study area which extends to 3,207ha:

- **Ashdown Forest SPA**[12] – Ashdown Forest was designated in 1996 as a SPA primarily for its importance in regularly supporting nationally important numbers of breeding populations of Dartford warbler and European Nightjar, which are both Annex 1 species protected under the European Birds Directive. Other Annex 1 species include woodlark, hen harriers and great grey shrike. The SPA also supports an important assemblage of other breeding bird species including hobby, tree pipit, redstart, stonechat and wood warbler. The conservation objectives for the Ashdown Forest SPA[13] are to '*Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the aims of the Wild Birds Directive, by maintaining or restoring the extent and distribution of the habitats of the qualifying features; the structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features; the supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely; the population of each of the qualifying features; and the distribution of the qualifying features within the site*. As described above, the majority of the 127 units within the Ashdown Forest SSSI have been classified as 'unfavourable recovering condition', which means that these SSSI units are not yet fully conserved but all the necessary management measures are in place. Provided that the recovery work is sustained, the SSSI will reach favourable condition in time. The remaining units are deemed to be in 'favourable condition', which means that the SSSI land is being adequately conserved and is meeting its 'conservation objectives'; however, there is scope for the enhancement of these units.

[12] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6015157973024768
[13] http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6291482747076608

2.3.5 **Ramsar Wetland sites** are wetlands of international importance, designated under the 1971 Ramsar Convention. There is one Ramsar site within the study area which extends to 3,099ha:

- **Pevensey Levels Ramsar Site** – Pevensey Levels represents one of the largest and least fragmented lowland wet grassland systems in South East England. The low-lying grazing meadows are intersected by a complex system of reed/scrub fringed ditches, which support a variety of important wetland communities. The Pevensey Levels was designated as a Ramsar site in 1999 covering approximately 3585ha. It is of international importance because (a) the site supports an outstanding assemblage of rare, vulnerable and endangered invertebrate species, including many British Red Data Book species (such as the of Little whorlpool ram's-horn snail and the fen raft spider, one of Britain's largest and rarest spiders); and (b) the site is of special value as probably the best site in Great Britain for freshwater molluscs, one of the five best sites for aquatic beetles and supports an outstanding assemblage of dragonflies; it also supports 68% of the 160 vascular plant species in Great Britain that can be described as aquatic. Other features of non-qualifying interest supported by the site include an important assemblage of birds typical of lowland wet grassland such as wintering lapwing, snipe and golden plover and breeding sedge warblers and reed warblers. A small area of shingle and intertidal muds and sands is also included within the site[14].

National Nature Conservation Sites

2.3.6 **Sites of Special Scientific Interest** (SSSI) are designated by Natural England under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). There are 26 SSSIs within the study area with a total combined area of 7,897ha. The condition of these SSSIs is summarised in **Table 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Condition of SSSIs[15]

SSSI	Condition Summary[16]
Ashdown Forest (also SAC/SPA)	**99.60%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Pevensey Levels (also SAC/Ramsar site)	**99.50%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Arlington Reservoir	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Binglett's Wood	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Bream Wood	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Burgh Hill Farm Meadow	**100%** is in an **unfavourable – declining** condition.

[14] http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/RIS/UK11053.pdf
[15] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017
[16] The condition of SSSI land in England is assessed by Natural England using six reportable condition categories: favourable; unfavourable recovering; unfavourable no change; unfavourable declining; part destroyed and destroyed. See glossary for definitions https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SSSIglossary.aspx

SSSI	Condition Summary[16]
Buxted Park	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Eridge Green (also RIGS)	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Eridge Park	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Hastingford Cutting (also RIGS)	**100%** of the SSSI is in an **unfavourable – no change** condition.
Heathfield Park	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Herstmonceux Park	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
High Rocks (also RIGS)	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
High Woods	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Lower Dicker	**100%** of the SSSI is in an **unfavourable – declining** condition.
Milton Gate Marsh	**76.25%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition. **23.75%** is in an **unfavourable – declining** condition.
Penn's Rocks (also RIGS)	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Plashett Park Wood	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Paines Cross Meadow	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Park Corner Heath	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Rock Wood	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Sapperton Meadows	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
St. Dunstan's Farm Meadows	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Stockland Farm Meadows	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Waldron Cutting (also RIGS)	**100%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition.
Weir Wood Reservoir	**25.46%** of the SSSI is in a **favourable** or **unfavourable but recovering** condition. **74.54%** is in an **unfavourable – no change** condition.

2.3.7 Overall, the SSSIs within the study area are identified by Natural England to be in a favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition. 'Favourable condition' means that the designated feature(s) are being adequately conserved in line with all the mandatory site specific monitoring targets). 'Unfavourable but recovering condition' means that the designated feature(s) are not yet fully conserved but all the necessary management mechanisms are in place.

2.3.8 **National Nature Reserves** (NNR) are areas which are among the best examples of a particular habitat in the country. There is one NNR within the study area extending to 177ha:

- Pevensey Levels NNR

Local Nature Conservation Sites

2.3.9 **Local Nature Reserves** (LNR) are designated by local authorities under the Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949, and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. There are 6 LNRs within the study area with a total area of 256ha:

- Arlington Reservoir LNR
- Crowborough Country Park LNR
- Hempstead Meadows LNR
- Old Lodge, Nutley LNR
- West Park, Uckfield LNR
- Weir Wood Reservoir LNR

2.3.10 In addition to the LNRs identified above, there are also 91 **Local Wildlife Sites** within the study area with a total area of 2,479ha. These sites are of local importance for nature conservation but are not legally protected except through the planning system.

Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees

2.3.11 Woodland and trees classed as 'ancient' or 'veteran' are irreplaceable. Ancient woodland takes hundreds of years to establish and is considered important for its wildlife, soils, recreation, cultural value, history and contribution to landscapes.

2.3.12 **Ancient Woodland**[17] is 'any wooded area that has been wooded continuously[18] since at least 1600 AD. It includes:

- 'Ancient semi-natural woodland' mainly made up of trees and shrubs native to the site, usually arising from natural regeneration.
- 'Plantations on ancient woodland sites' areas of ancient woodland where the former native tree cover has been felled and replaced by planted trees, usually of species not native to the site.

[17] Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees - Standing Advice for Planning Authorities (Natural England and Forestry Commission, updated October 2015)
[18] 'Wooded continuously' doesn't mean there has been a continuous tree cover across the entirety of the whole site. Open space, both temporary and permanent, is an important component of woodlands.

2.3.13 Ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites have equal protection under the National Planning Policy Framework.

2.3.14 Ancient wood pastures and historic parkland can be a distinct form of ancient woodland. Many have not been included on the Ancient Woodland Inventory because their low tree density meant that they didn't register as woodland on historical maps. Where ancient wood pastures are identified they have the same consideration when determining planning applications as other forms of ancient woodland.

2.3.15 There are 2,713 Ancient Woodlands within the study area included on Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory, collectively occupying 11,492ha (14%) of land and representing 61% of all woodland. Ancient Woodland is protected from loss or damage through the planning system.

2.3.16 **Veteran trees**[19] are trees which, because of their age, size or condition are of cultural, historical, landscape and nature conservation value. They can be found as individuals or groups within ancient wood pastures, historic parkland, hedgerows, orchards, parks or other areas. There are a number of veteran trees within the study area included on the Ancient Tree Inventory[20].

Biodiversity Conservation

2.3.17 **UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats** are a range of semi-natural habitat types identified by the UK BAP as being at most threat and requiring conservation action. There are 11 UK BAP priority habitats within the study area represented within the five broad habitat types shown on **Figure 2.2b**, which collectively cover 26% (2,0497ha) of the study area. A number of these are also Habitats of Principal Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

2.3.18 **Figure 2.2b** highlights the significance of **woodland habitats**, which cover 18,755ha (24%) of the study area. Whilst they are common throughout the area, larger woods are more frequent and woodland density is generally greater in the northern part of the study area within the High Weald AONB. These patterns reflect the underlying character of the landscape, with large woodlands on ridge-tops and smaller often narrow woods on slopes and along steep-sided

[19] Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees - Standing Advice for Planning Authorities (Natural England and Forestry Commission, updated October 2015)
[20] http://www.ancient-tree-hunt.org.uk/

stream corridors (gills). Many woods form part of wider landscape-scale woodland complexes which extend beyond the study area boundary.

2.3.19 **Lowland heathland habitats** cover 1,722ha (2.2%) of the study area, and as shown on **Figure 2.2b** are found particularly in the north of the study area concentrated around Ashdown Forest.

2.3.20 As shown on **Figure 2.2b**, **freshwater habitats** include the main rivers of the Medway, Rother, Ouse and Cuckmere and their tributaries, numerous small ponds and the Weir Wood, Bewl and Arlington Reservoirs.

2.3.21 **Wetland and coastal habitats** cover 3,730ha (4.8%) of the study area, and are found in the south of the study area concentrated around the Pevensey Levels, and include the network of ditches and the coastal zone.

2.3.22 **Grassland habitats** cover 1,236ha (1.6%) of the study area, and are also an important element of the mosaic of habitats found within the study area. Some grassland habitats are generally small and fragmented, typically associated with water courses and woodland.

2.3.23 A strong link exists within much of the study area between biodiversity and landscape history. As noted in the High Weald Biodiversity Statement[21], the High Weald AONB is essentially medieval in origin and it is likely that many of its extant **hedgerows** pre-date the 18th and 19th century Parliamentary Enclosures that created straight, uniform hawthorn hedges. An important consequence of this is that a significant proportion of the study area's hedgerows, particularly in the north, are likely to be both ancient and species-rich.

2.3.24 There are also over 150 **UK BAP priority species** recorded in the study area, including legally protected species and Species of Principal Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Geodiversity Conservation

2.3.25 Geodiversity is the variety of rocks, fossils, minerals, natural processes, landforms and soils that underlie and determine the character of the landscape and environment. **Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites** (RIGS) are locally designated sites of local, and regional and national importance for geodiversity. As shown on **Figure 2.2a**, there are 10 RIGS within the study area with a total area of 32ha: In 2011, condition surveys of East Sussex RIGS

[21] High Weald AONB Biodiversity Statement, High Weald JAC (2014)

were completed by the Sussex Geodiversity Partnership in conjunction with East Sussex County Council. This information is currently not publically available.

Needs and Opportunities

2.3.26 The existing natural and semi-natural habitats and geodiversity sites identified within the study area, including the Ashdown Forest SPA/SAC/SSSI and the Pevensey Levels Ramsar site/SAC/SSSI, are key GI assets that make a significant contribution to Wealden's GI network. In addition to contributing to biodiversity and geodiversity services, these assets also contribute to a number of other important ecosystems services including climate regulation; regulating water quality and flow; regulating soil quality and erosion; pollination; pest regulation; genetic diversity; sense of place/inspiration; tranquillity; and recreation.

2.3.27 European and national legislation and guidance set out how sites of biodiversity and geological importance will be protected and enhanced. Furthermore, Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a statutory duty on all local authorities to have regards to biodiversity in the carrying out of all their functions.

2.3.28 Future development within the study area has the potential to contribute to the further fragmentation, loss and deterioration of important habitats and species. The creation, protection, enhancement and management of ecological networks to link areas of high biodiversity value can help to militate against fragmentation, biodiversity loss and climate change in accordance with the NPPF. Adopting such as approach can assist Wealden District Council in meeting its statutory duty.

2.3.29 There are opportunities to ensure the continued protection and management of the study area's statutory and non-statutory sites through partnership working with the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership to deliver improved connectivity between these sites at the landscape-scale.

2.3.30 Conflict can often occur between conservation objectives of a site; for example a site of biodiversity importance and using it for recreational use. Through the development of a GI Strategy there is an opportunity to protect those sites which are ecologically sensitive and require appropriate protection and sensitive management, whilst balancing increased accessibility to sites to enable greater opportunities for human interaction with nature. This will often relate to site level management.

2.3.31 With increased development pressure, important biodiversity and ecological assets could be under threat within the study area. As part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, a number of studies have been undertaken to assess the potential effects of housing allocations and growth

scenarios on the Ashdown Forest SPA/SAC and the Pevensey Levels SAC. Some of the key needs and opportunities that this presents are explored below.

Ashdown Forest SPA

2.3.32 The qualifying features of the Ashdown Forest SPA (breeding birds) are vulnerable to disturbance from recreational and other activities.

2.3.33 The Council is currently developing a strategy to mitigate the impact of recreational pressure on Ashdown Forest SPA with regards to residential and tourism related development. This includes work to deliver Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) relevant to Ashdown Forest, which is supported by guidelines agreed by Natural England. The SANGS Guidelines[22] identify the type of site that can constitute a SANGS and identifies measures that can be taken to enhance sites so that they are suitable to be used as SANGS provision whilst ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Habitats Regulations. The Council is also working with partner authorities and organisations to identify and implement a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) for Ashdown Forest.

Ashdown Forest SAC

2.3.34 The qualifying features of the Ashdown Forest SAC (heath habitats, plant communities and plant species) are vulnerable to air pollution in the form of nitrogen deposition from motorised vehicular traffic emissions.

2.3.35 The Council is committed to investigating the impacts of nitrogen upon the Ashdown Forest SAC so that its effects on development in the longer term can be more fully understood and mitigated if appropriate. In 2014, the Council implemented a programme of monitoring, modelling and assessment to determine the effects of atmospheric pollution on the Ashdown Forest SAC. The programme involves: regular monitoring of air quality and vegetation along certain road corridors within and adjacent to the SAC; evaluating the results to identify the effects of atmospheric pollution on habitat and vegetation diversity; and modelling the current and future impacts that road traffic associated with future developments will have on ambient concentrations and nitrogen deposition within the SAC. The results of this monitoring and research is demonstrating that the impact on the Ashdown Forest SAC is significant in the immediate vicinity of the roads across the Forest with high levels of nitrogen deposition recorded and consequent ecological damage. Taking into account existing levels of traffic and development commitments that are in place, the Council considers that there is already an unacceptable level of impact from nitrogen deposition in the areas close to the Forest's roads.

[22] http://www.wealden.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.aspx?lID=13843&sID=3484

2.3.36 In this context, there is a need to adopt an approach which is based on delivering development over the plan period at a level which will be below that which, applying the precautionary principle, would be deemed to be potentially damaging to the SAC overall. Following full consideration of alternative development scenarios and mitigation measures to protect the SAC, it may be in the public interest to consider putting in place measures to provide equivalent comparable habitat to that being lost in order to compensate for the damage already being done to the SAC in the vicinity of the Forest's roads. In conjunction with this, there is also a need to set a level of development across the district which will ensure that the overall integrity of the SAC is not damaged due to traffic movements and the consequent nitrogen deposition.

Pevensey Levels SAC/Ramsar site

2.3.37 There is also a need to maintain and enhance the conservation features of the Pevensey Levels SAC/Ramsar site in accordance with its conservation objectives to meets its requirements under the Habitats Regulations. The key environmental conditions of importance in sustaining the integrity of the Pevensey Levels SAC/Ramsar site are: unpolluted water; low levels of nutrient enrichment (primarily from surface runoff and hydrological pathways, but also from atmospheric deposition); control of non-native species (e.g. pennywort); maintenance of an appropriate hydrological regime; and control of recreational disturbance.

2.3.38 It may be appropriate to consider developing policies for more stringent water efficiency measures in new housing development than specified in Building Regulations, together with phasing of additional wastewater treatment capacity alongside housing development, should information on water availability and wastewater treatment capacity identify concerns in relation to protecting the integrity of the Pevensey Levels SAC/Ramsar site.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas

2.3.39 In addition to a high percentage of designated sites, there are also numerous Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats present within the study area. The majority of these BAP habitats are reflected in Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs). Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) are priority areas for the enhancement, restoration and creation of BAP habitats identified in the South East Biodiversity Strategy[23]. Outside of the formally designated sites, BOAs are considered to be the most important areas for habitat enhancement, restoration and creation of BAP habitats and provide an opportunity to positively contribute to national BAP targets, create links between sites of biodiversity value to allow species to respond to changing conditions such as climate change and also increase the quality of habitats within the District. The Sussex

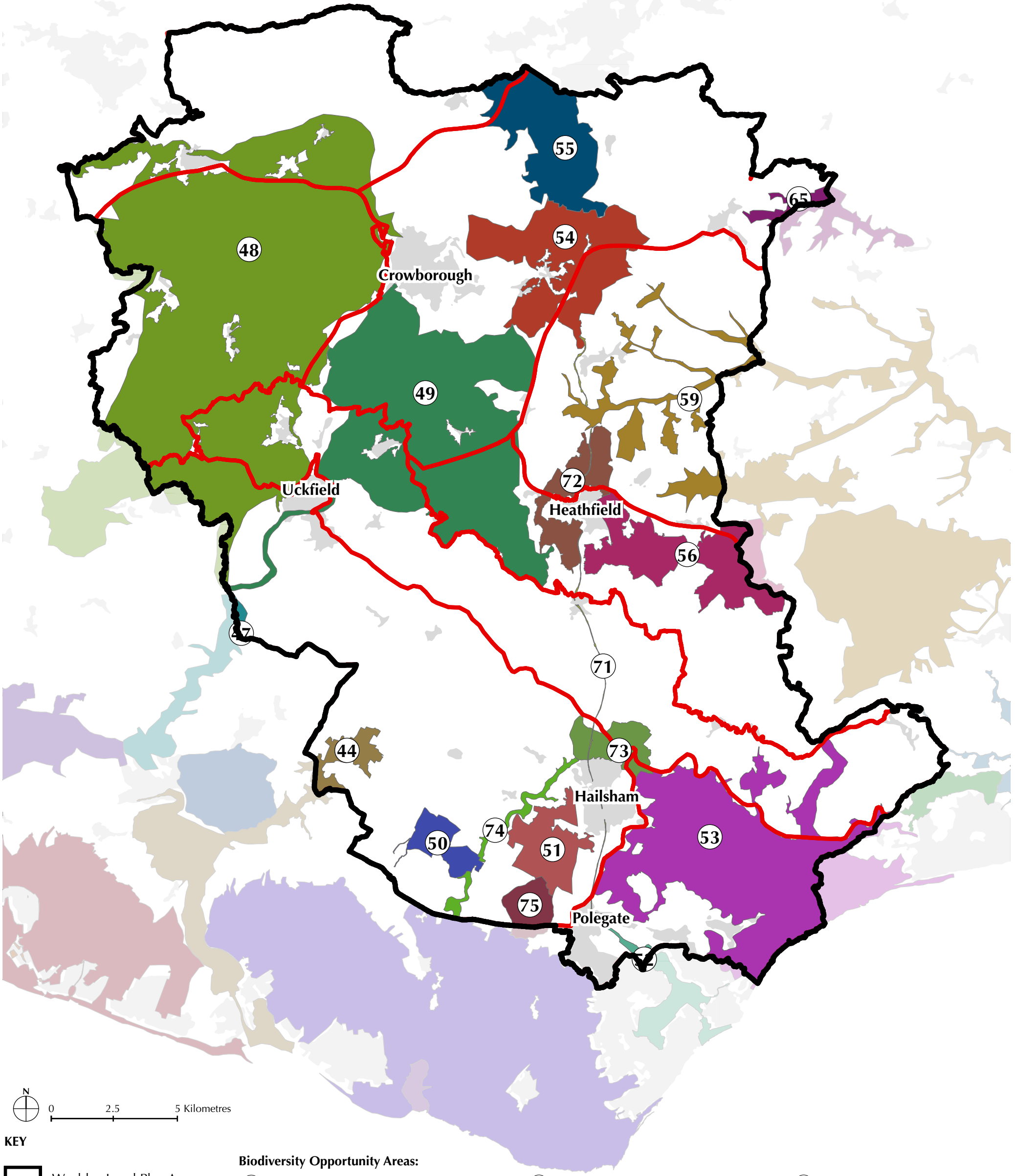
[23] South East Biodiversity Strategy (South East England Biodiversity Forum, undated)

BAP[24] provides targets for maintaining, restoring and creating BAP habitats in Sussex, and gives priority to actions in the BOAs. As shown on **Figure 2.2c**, there are 18 BOAs within the study area. The full statements can be found on the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership's website[25] and a summary is provided in **Table 2.2**.

Table 2.2: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in the Study Area

BOA Name	Summary Description	Relevant Opportunities
Lewes Brooks and the Ouse Valley (44)	*The River Ouse is heavily embanked, which is currently protecting freshwater habitats in a tidal floodplain. The area around Iford has good ditch ecology being particularly rich in dragonflies.*	• *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Education and community engagement* • *Landowner advisory and agri-environment schemes* • *Floodplain restoration and reconnection* • *Water quality improvement*
Mid Ouse Floodzone (47)	*This area, upstream of Lewes is severely affected by flooding. The River Ouse is heavily embanked here with some historic meanders still evident in the landscape. The area is agricultural with some existing wet grassland.*	• *Education and community engagement* • *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Floodplain restoration and reconnection* • *Water quality improvement*
Western Ouse Steams & Ashdown Forest (48)	*European protected heathland, Ashdown Forest consists of a matrix of open heath, ancient woodland, gill woodland and wetlands. The eastern River Ouse and its headwaters.*	• *Heathland management, restoration and creation* • *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Woodland management and restoration* • *Floodplain restoration and reconnection* • *Access improvements* • *Water quality improvement* • *Grazing management* • *Education and community engagement* • *Landowner advisory and agri-environment schemes* • *Working with and attracting new businesses*
River Uck & its Headwaters (49)	*This area contains tributaries of the River Uck and has a scattering of ancient woodland, gill woodland and lowland meadows. The River Uck passes through the urban area of Uckfield and through the agricultural land of the Low Weald*	• *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Woodland management and restoration* • *Control of non-native invasive*

[24] Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan (Sussex Biodiversity Partnership, undated)
[25] https://www.biodiversitysussex.org.uk/landscapes/wealden-district



KEY

Wealden Local Plan Area

GI Zones

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas:

- 44 Lewes Brooks and the Ouse Valley
- 47 Mid Ouse Floodzone
- 48 Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest
- 49 River Uck and its Headwaters
- 50 Cuckmere Ouse Watershed
- 51 Wilmington Woodlands and Watershed
- 52 Eastbourne Marshes
- 53 Pevensey Levels
- 54 Medway, Ouse, Rother Watershed
- 55 Eridge and Broadwater
- 56 Pevensey, Rother, Cuckmere Watershed
- 59 Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods
- 65 Bewl Water
- 71 Cuckoo Trail Habitat Link
- 72 Heathfield Habitat Link
- 73 Pevensey & Cuckmere Valley Link
- 74 River Cuckmere Habitat Link
- 75 Wooton Manor Grasslands Link

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WEALDEN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY
WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

FIGURE 2.2c
BIODIVERSITY OPPORTUNITY AREAS

April 2017
11123101_Figures_20-04-17.indd

BOA Name	Summary Description	Relevant Opportunities
	until the confluence with the River Ouse north of Lewes.	*species* • *Water quality improvement* • *Education and community engagement* • *Working with and attracting new businesses*
Cuckmere Ouse Watershed (50)	*This area is dominated to the southeast by Arlington Reservoir, with rest of the area included for its role as a watershed between the Cuckmere and Ouse rivers. It is comprised of Low Weald agricultural land with streams and small ancient woodlands.*	• *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Access improvements*
Wilmington Woodlands & Watershed (51)	*This BOA traverses the Pevensey and Cuckmere watershed and includes large ancient woodland at Abbots and Wilmington Wood which dominates the south. To the east the area is bounded by the A22 yet follows a small stream connecting the area to Pevensey Levels.*	• *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Woodland management and restoration*
Eastbourne Marshes (52)	*This wetland area is confined by the urban extent of Eastbourne. The area comprises open water, reedbed and wet grassland.*	• *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Coastal habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Education and community engagement* • *Access improvements* • *Flood alleviation* • *Control of invasive species on vegetated shingle* • *Survey and monitoring*
Pevensey Levels (53)	*Pevensey Levels is a site of international importance for its wetland ecology that is badly afflicted by the invasive aquatic weed Floating Pennywort.*	• *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Coastal habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Control of non-native invasive species* • *Wetland bird interest* • *Landowner advisory and agri-environment schemes* • *Access improvements*
Medway, Ouse & Rother Watershed (54)	*The Ouse, Rother and Medway headwaters all meet in this area of small ancient woodland and gill woodland. There is a high density of ponds in the eastern area. This watershed could have an important role to play in the migration of key species between river catchments.*	• *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Heathland management, restoration and creation* • *Woodland management and restoration* • *Access improvements*

BOA Name	Summary Description	Relevant Opportunities
Eridge & Broadwater (55)	*Eridge Park contains modern and medieval wood pasture. Exposed sandstone outcrops are rich in bryophytes and lichens. Extensive heathland restoration at Broadwater Forest and Hargate Forest. Rhododendron clearance is an important aspect of woodland restoration in this part of Sussex.*	• *Heathland management, restoration and creation* • *Woodland management and restoration* • *Access improvements* • *Landowner advisory and agri-environment schemes* • *Working with and attracting new businesses* • *Education and community engagement*
Pevensey, Rother & Cuckmere Watershed (56)	*In this area three Sussex catchments meet. In the agricultural landscape several small ancient woodlands are found, including gill woodlands. A heathland remnant is all that remains of a once more heathy landscape.*	• *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Access improvements*
Rother, Brede & Tillingham Woods (59)	*The River Rother flood zone is an area that is rich in opportunity for wetland restoration; and its tributaries and those of the Brede and Tillingham flow through the heavily wooded landscape of the High Weald. Within this area there are also many lowland meadows.*	• *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Meadow management, restoration and creation* • *Woodland management and restoration* • *Education and community engagement* • *Working with and attracting new businesses* • *Access improvements*
Bewl Water (65)	*This reservoir is the largest expanse of open water in Sussex and was created by damming the River Bewl and flooding its three main tributary stream valleys. Bewl Water is extremely important for large numbers of waders and wildfowl during the winter and as a stopping point during migration.*	• *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation* • *Access improvements*
Cuckoo Trail Habitat Link (71)	*The Cuckoo Trail passes through two major towns and penetrates a third urban area. Bringing benefits for urban wildlife and also for facilitating species movement. It provides key links for the conservation and enhancement of wildlife habitats in the area between Hailsham and Polegate.*	• *Access management* • *Education and community engagement*
Heathfield Habitat Link (72)	*This area identifies opportunities for continuing a habitat link around Heathfield.*	• *Access management*

BOA Name	Summary Description	Relevant Opportunities
Pevensey & Cuckmere Valley Link (73)	*This opportunity area straddles the Cuckoo Trail and is an area in which many enhancements for wildlife are possible amongst, the woodlands, streams and small developments of this area of Sussex. Biodiversity value could be increased considerably through providing connections to major natural networks like the Cuckoo Trail and the Cuckmere Valley.*	• *Access management* • *Minimising development impacts*
River Cuckmere Habitat Link (74)	*This BOA follows the mid reaches of the River Cuckmere, eastward towards the Pevensey catchment covering the natural floodplain of the river.*	• *Access management* • *Wetland habitat management, restoration and creation*
Wooton Manor Grasslands Link (75)	*This small opportunity area has several small ancient woodlands and shaws within it, but is predominantly composed of agricultural land and some hedgerows.*	• *Access management* • *Woodland management and restoration* • *Meadow management, restoration and creation* • *Landowner advisory and agri-environment schemes*

Embedding Biodiversity into Development

2.3.40 Development that successfully plans for and subsequently incorporates biodiversity into its design can also contribute to the creation of new wildlife habitats and corridors and also restoration of degraded habitats. This is particularly important in and around urban areas where existing GI can be enhanced so that it can better contribute to the ecological network. Both existing and new green spaces, such as urban verges, amenity planting and formal landscaped zones, have the potential to be of value when considering green corridors through urban areas and improving links with rural areas. Whilst these amenity greenspaces may not always have as much value as natural habitats, they are very useful when planning links to rural areas. There is therefore an opportunity to carefully consider and ensure that these areas are of value for biodiversity, and can contribute to climate change adaptation through use of appropriate plant species.

2.3.41 Opportunities for embedding biodiversity into new development schemes should be informed by the GI design principles set out in **Section 6.3**. Specific opportunities for retaining and enhancing existing wildlife habitats, and/or creating new habitats, related to GI provision for residential development sites in the new Local Plan are detailed in the Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment Studies[26].

[26] Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment Studies (CBA and TLP for Wealden DC, 2017)

Summary

2.3.42 In summary, working with partners, developers, local communities, landowners and other relevant bodies, the key strategic opportunities for GI to help address identified needs for protecting biodiversity and geodiversity, and enhancing the condition and connectivity of wildlife habitats within the study area, are considered to be:

High Weald

- Maintain and enhance habitats and species of European importance within the Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA through appropriate management.
- Provide equivalent comparable habitat to compensate for impacts of the damage already being done to the Ashdown Forest SAC in the vicinity of the Forest's roads due to nitrogen deposition from existing traffic, and to address the ecological impacts of traffic generated by new development on the SAC where appropriate.
- Consider setting a level of development across the District which will ensure that the overall integrity of the Ashdown Forest SAC is not damaged due to increased nitrogen deposition from traffic.
- Manage recreational pressures at key sites in the High Weald recognised for their sensitive habitats and species, in particular Ashdown Forest SPA.
- Where required to mitigate the impacts of recreational pressure from new residential and tourism development likely to affect the Ashdown Forest SPA, encourage provision of SANGs in line with the Council's 'Guidelines for the Creation of Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space'[27].
- Retain and enhance key habitats in the High Weald's green and blue corridors to provide improved connectivity for wildlife to allow species to disperse and adapt to climate change, giving priority to the identified BOAs.
- Restore and enhance suitable habitats in the High Weald to support key species and reduce their vulnerability to fragmentation through development, giving priority to the identified BOAs.
- Deliver landscape-scale biodiversity restoration and enhancement projects for priority BAP habitats in the High Weald, giving priority to the identified BOAs.
- Improve the biodiversity value of greenspaces and green corridors within the High Weald for the benefit of wildlife, ensuring in particular the sensitive management of Ancient Woodland, veteran trees and hedgerows.

[27] http://www.wealden.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.aspx?lID=13843&sID=3484

- Ensure that, wherever possible, new development delivers net gains in biodiversity that contribute to BAP targets in the High Weald.
- Enhance ecological networks, including the condition and connectivity of habitats along routeways for wildlife.
- Maintain the extent and prevent further loss or degradation of unimproved grassland and heathland, and increase the favourability of designated sites by appropriately managing all sites and expanding, linking and buffering them where appropriate.
- Establish ecological habitat networks to assist vulnerable species such as heathland birds and lichens and bryophytes in parkland and on rocky outcrops in adapting to climate change, including connectivity beyond the AONB.
- Enhance, buffer and connect the High Weald habitats, and ensure that ecological networks also contribute positively to landscape character.
- Explore opportunities for working with landowners to ensure sympathetic management of semi-natural grasslands such as mowing for hay, low intensity grazing by livestock, or a combination of both management techniques as appropriate.
- Encourage opportunities that provide wildlife benefits such as bird boxes and bat roosts through the repair, restoration and conversion of buildings.
- Control invasive non-native species to prevent or reduce damage to native species populations and habitats.
- Maintain views of and access to geological features and exposures and where appropriate, improve access to cuttings, quarries and other exposures of geological features to enable improved understanding and enjoyment of geodiversity and sense of history.
- Develop further understanding and appreciation of sandrock exposures to help reduce threats and or inappropriate use and management.
- Maintain the nationally important sandrock exposures to conserve the fern, moss and liverwort communities they support and protect their value as some of the most significant sites of prehistoric archaeology in the area.
- Maintain and enhance all existing rock exposures and natural land forms that are important for understanding the origin and geological development of the High Weald.

Low Weald

- Retain and enhance key habitats in the Low Weald's green and blue corridors to provide improved connectivity for wildlife, allowing species to disperse and adapt to climate change, giving priority to the identified BOAs.
- Restore and enhance suitable habitats in the Low Weald to support key species and reduce their vulnerability to fragmentation through development, giving priority to the identified BOAs.

- Deliver landscape-scale biodiversity restoration and enhancement projects for priority BAP habitats in the Low Weald, giving priority to the identified BOAs.
- Improve the biodiversity value of greenspaces and green corridors within the Low Weald for the benefit of wildlife, ensuring in particular the sensitive management of Ancient Woodland, veteran trees and hedgerows.
- Manage recreational access at key sites in the Low Weald recognised for their sensitive habitats and species.
- Ensure that, wherever possible, new development delivers net gains in biodiversity that contribute to BAP targets in the Low Weald.
- Enhance or reinstate woodland management, including restoration of rides and glades where appropriate, and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland.
- Ensure planned development includes high quality green and blue infrastructure that benefits well-being and access to nature of local communities as well as enhancing biodiversity.
- Protect the area's historic parkland and wood pasture sites by supporting restoration projects and initiatives.
- Support the creation and restoration of ponds, particularly those with high biodiversity or historical interest.
- Restore meadows and create margins to fields and roads to buffer farmland and rivers watercourses and continuing to support projects such as the Weald Meadows Initiative.
- Identify, monitor and control non-native invasive species and diseases.
- Promote use of locally sourced building materials as an expression of local geodiversity.
- Maintain and enhance earth science features by seeking to enhance existing exposures and agreeing retention of conservation sections in active and disused quarries.
- Improve access to, interpretation of and promote the use of geological sites as an important educational and research resource to improve understanding and appreciation of geodiversity.
- Ensure that the importance and sensitivity of earth science SSSIs and RIGS are recognised in the planning process.

Pevensey Levels

- Maintain and enhance habitats and species of European/national importance within the Pevensey Levels SAC/Ramsar site through appropriate management of water levels and water quality.
- Manage recreational access within the Pevensey Levels SAC/Ramsar site to protect sensitive habitats and the species supported by these habitats.

- Retain and enhance key habitats in the Pevensey Levels' blue corridors to provide improved connectivity for wildlife to allow species to adapt to climate change.
- Deliver landscape-scale biodiversity restoration and enhancement projects for priority BAP habitats in the Pevensey Levels BOA.
- Improve the biodiversity value of greenspaces and green corridors within the Pevensey Levels BOA for the benefit of wildlife.
- Ensure that, wherever possible, new development delivers net gains in biodiversity that contribute to BAP targets within the Pevensey Levels BOA.
- Encourage the reinstatement of permanent pasture from arable to help extend and link wetland habitats.
- Encourage best practice farming methods to reduce use of pesticides and fertilizers and reduce agricultural run-off.
- Seek opportunities to improve sites and deliver multiple benefits through incentives such as agri-environment schemes, for example by raising water levels and creating new features for wading birds.
- Establish new areas of reed beds and wet meadows, including giving consideration to the encouragement of seasonal inundation in appropriate areas.
- Maintain water levels in ditches and encourage appropriate dredging regimes to maintain optimum conditions.
- Support local farmers to build on recent improvements and work towards restoring the Pevensey Levels Important Bird Area status.
- Support measures to maintain and enhance hydrological links between Pevensey Levels and surrounding areas, encouraging movement of key species while promoting vigilance against spread of non-native invasive species.
- Support control of Dutch elm disease and encourage research initiatives to prevent infection and breed resistant strains.
- Support measures to maintain and extend protected areas of vegetated shingle.
- Increase allotment provision, and seek to ensure that allotment management provides long-term benefits for biodiversity.
- Ensure that coastal defence plans have regard for geological and geomorphological interests where possible, and discourage aggregate extraction which would affect sensitive geomorphological and coastal sediment processes.

2.4 Landscape & Historic Environment

2.4.1 Wealden is a predominately rural district characterised by a number of different types of landscape extending from the coast and low-lying wetlands of Pevensey Levels in the south; the gently undulating countryside of the Low Weald within the central part of the district (which provides the setting for the adjacent South Downs National Park); and the ridge and valley landscapes of the High Weald in the north. Approximately 58% (44,624ha) of the study area is designated as part of the nationally protected landscape of the High Weald AONB, which includes the distinctive open heathland of Ashdown Forest. Wealden also has a rich and varied historic environment that makes a significant contribution to the character of the study area's landscapes; GI provides greenspaces that conserve, enhance and preserve the cultural value of historic places and their settings. These landscapes and historic environment features are key assets of Wealden's GI network that make a significant contribution to well-being and sense of place. There are considerable opportunities to strengthen the character of the landscape and improve the condition of historic environment assets within the study area.

Audit

Landscape Character

National Character Areas

2.4.2 From a regional landscape perspective, the study area is covered by three National Character Areas (NCAs) defined by Natural England:

- The **High Weald** (NCA 122) extends across the northern part of the study area.
- The **Low Weald** (NCA 121) extends through the central part of the study area.
- The **Pevensey Levels** (NCA 124) extends into the south-eastern part of the study area.

2.4.3 These NCAs are summarised below:

- **The High Weald** – *the High Weald NCA encompasses the ridged and faulted sandstone core of the Kent and Sussex Weald. It is an area of ancient countryside and one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in northern Europe. The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers 78 per cent of the NCA. The High Weald consists of a mixture of fields, small woodlands and farmsteads connected by historic routeways, tracks and paths. Wild flower meadows are now rare but prominent medieval patterns of small pasture fields enclosed by thick hedgerows and shaws (narrow woodlands) remain*

fundamental to the character of the landscape[28]. Within the study area, the High Weald landscape is characterised by two bold sandstone ridges running east-west. The northern ridge runs from the Ashdown Forest to Wadhurst with Crowborough Beacon being the highest point of the High Weald. The area is geologically complex with numerous streams, valleys, gills and scattered outcrops of Sandstone nodes. It is a unique landscape of rolling ridges and deeply incised valleys. There is a mosaic of woodlands, small fields divided by hedgerows and thick shaws, sunken lanes and scattered villages. The majority of the High Weald within the study area is designated as an AONB. A detailed assessment of the High Weald landscape outside of the AONB within the study area is provided by the Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2014)[29].

- **The Low Weald** – *the Low Weald NCA is a broad, low-lying clay vale which largely wraps around the northern, western and southern edges of the High Weald. It is predominantly agricultural, supporting mainly pastoral farming owing to heavy clay soils, with horticulture and some arable on lighter soils in the east, and has many densely wooded areas with a high proportion of ancient woodland*[30]. The Low Weald NCA extends across East Sussex into West Sussex, Surrey and Kent. Within the study area, the Low Weald landscape is characterised by broad low lying and gently undulating clay vales. It is a small-scale, intimate landscape enclosed by small woodlands, a patchwork of fields and hedgerows. The landscape is essentially rural in character and settlements are mainly villages or small hamlets. A detailed assessment of the Low Weald landscape within the study area is provided by the Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2014)[31].

- **The Pevensey Levels**[32] – *The term 'Pevensey Levels' refers to the low-lying area between Eastbourne and Bexhill in East Sussex. It is a wetland of national and international conservation importance and 37 per cent of the NCA is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Ramsar site. The Levels are predominantly rural and mostly grazed pasture, and consist of extensive drainage networks and flood plain. The NCA also includes the urban centre of Eastbourne which is a busy seaside town with a population of nearly 100,000 and up to 5 million visitors each year. A coastline of shingle beach stretches along the length of the area, punctuated by settlements, historic military buildings and sea defence structures. The area is framed by the steep scarp of the South Downs in the west and the higher ground of the High Weald in the north, with views of the English Channel to the south.* The majority of the Pevensey Levels lies within the study area, with the remainder extending into Rother District to the east. A detailed assessment of the Pevensey Levels

[28] National Character Area Profile 122: High Weald http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/publications/nca/high_weald.aspx
[29] http://www.wealden.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.aspx?lID=16777&sID=2131
[30] National Character Area Profile 121: Low Weald http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5212877774389248
[31] http://www.wealden.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.aspx?lID=16778&sID=2131
[32] National Character Area Profile 124: Pevensey Levels http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/5850781349576704

landscape within the study area is provided by the Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2014)[33].

2.4.4 The South Downs NCA[34] lies to the south and outside of the study area. The dramatic chalk escarpment and open skyline of the South Downs provides the backdrop to many views from within the study area. The majority of the South Downs NCA falls within the South Downs National Park, recognising its natural beauty and importance for access and recreation,

East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment

2.4.5 The East Sussex Landscape Character Assessment (2016)[35] sub-divides the three NCAs within the study area into 13 broadly defined County Landscape Character Areas as shown on **Figure 2.3a**. The current condition of the County Landscape Character Areas is summarised in **Table 2.3**. The variations in the character of the landscape reflected in these Landscape Character Areas are strongly influenced by the study area's underlying topography, soils and woodland cover.

Table 2.3: Condition of Landscape Character in the Study Area

County Landscape Character Area	Current Condition
Upper Medway Valley (1)	*This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and farm steads. Some areas of more intensive agriculture have larger fields due to shaw and hedgerow removal. Creeping suburbanisation and urban fringe pressures are evident around the towns and larger villages detracting from local distinctiveness. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Many woodlands have been affected by lack of management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.*
Ashdown Forest (2)	*Ashdown Forest is a fragile landscape vulnerable to continuous change in management and recreational disturbance. The special duty of the Conservators to regulate and manage the forest as an amenity and place of resort helps protect the forest from encroachments and to conserve it as a quiet and natural area of outstanding beauty. The Conservators help to protect the historic rights of common and therefore the continuation of the historic management of the area which has contributed to the unique sense of place. The board works with Natural England and in 2006 was given a 10 year contract to bring the heathland into 'favourable condition'.*

[33] http://www.wealden.gov.uk/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.aspx?lID=16779&sID=2131
[34] National Character Area Profile 125: South Downs http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6754252288425984
[35] https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/landscape?acc=1&ae=1&ah=1&al=1&ar=1&aw=1



KEY

- Wealden Local Plan Area
- GI Zones
- High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- South Downs National Park

East Sussex County Landscape Character Areas:

- 1 Upper Medway Valley
- 2 Ashdown Forest
- 3 Upper Ouse Valley
- 4 Central High Weald
- 5 South Slopes of the High Weald
- 6 Upper Rother Valley
- 7 Bewl Water
- 8 Dudwell Valley
- 10 Coombe Valley Haven
- 14 Western Low Weald
- 15 Eastern Low Weald
- 24 Eastbourne Levels
- 25 Pevensey Levels

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FIGURE 2.3a
LANDSCAPE CHARACTER & PROTECTED LANDSCAPES

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County Landscape Character Area	Current Condition
Upper Ouse Valley (3)	*This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and farmsteads. Creeping suburbanisation and urban fringe pressures are evident around the towns and larger villages detracting from local distinctiveness. As with most of the Wealden landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Many woodlands have been affected by lack of management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.*
Central High Weald (4)	*This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and farm steads. Creeping suburbanisation and urban fringe pressures are evident around the towns and larger villages detracting from local distinctiveness. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Many woodlands have been affected by lack of management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.*
South Slopes pf the High Weald (5)	*This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. Agricultural change has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and loss of landscape features. Ribbon development and roadside clutter has added to suburbanisation on the edges of villages. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact.*
Upper Rother Valley (6)	*This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. The lack of main roads and large settlements in the heart of the area means that it retains a relative remoteness. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some fragmentation of farm steads. There is evidence of creeping suburbanisation around the villages and on country estates which detracts from local distinctiveness. As with most of the Wealden landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact, apart from in the wider more fertile river valleys where farming is more intensive. Woodlands have been affected by lack of traditional coppice management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.*
Bewl Water (7)	*This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The reservoir has become an established natural and recreational feature. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. The lack of main roads and large settlements in the area means that it retains a relative remoteness. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some fragmentation of farm steads. There is evidence of creeping suburbanisation around the villages and on country estates which detracts from local distinctiveness. As with most of the Wealden landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Woodlands have been affected by lack of traditional coppice management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation. Historic designed landscapes contribute to the character of the area.*

County Landscape Character Area	Current Condition
Dudwell Valley (8)	*This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. The lack of main roads and large settlements in the area means that it retains a relative remoteness. Agricultural change and diversification has led to some fragmentation of farmsteads. There is evidence of creeping suburbanisation around the villages and on country estates which detracts from local distinctiveness. As with most of the Wealden landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact. Woodlands have been affected by lack of traditional coppice management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation. The historic designed landscape contributes to the character of the area.*
Coombe Valley Haven (10)	*This is a largely unspoilt and tranquil rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with some surviving historic structure. Agricultural change has led to some gentrification of the rural landscape and villages. As with most of the High Weald landscape the historic field patterns of small fields and significant hedgerows remain intact in the northern part of the area. The Combe Haven Valley is a farmed landscape and generally in positive management. Woodlands have been affected by lack of traditional coppice management, rhododendron invasion and coniferisation.*
Western Low Weald (14)	*This is a largely unspoilt and pleasant rural landscape with few intrusive features. The landscape is in generally good condition and well managed as farmland with a strong historic structure. This is reflected in the southern part of the area which is in the South Downs National Park and is the setting for the downland scarp. The larger villages have some modern urban edges which intrude into the rural countryside. In areas with more intensive arable agriculture the hedgerows and hedgerow trees have been removed which detracts from the distinctive pattern and character of the landscape. In areas around settlements and on large estates the replacement of hedges with wire fencing for horse paddocks dilutes field patterns. Loss of trees along the rivers and especially in the southern part of the Ouse Valley and creation of engineered flood defences and channels has detracted from the landscape. Some farms have intrusive modern buildings and associated clutter. Lack of traditional woodland management has led to a decline in the condition of the Wealden woodland with the significant exception of Plashett Wood. The Low Weald is identified in the NCA as of outstanding priority for woodland conservation.*
Eastern Low Weald (15)	*A largely unspoilt tract of countryside with much of the historic rural character intact. The distinctive pattern of rural lanes and scattered unspoilt villages reinforces the historic character. Agricultural intensification has caused the removal of some hedgerows and hedgerow trees which has detracted from the historic character in some areas. Farm diversification on small holdings and estates has led to the replacement of hedges with wire fencing for horse paddocks which dilutes field patterns. Lack of management and under exploited productivity of some farm land. The Cuckmere River channel follows a meandering route across the area. The river and drainage channel management has in places removed water side trees and vegetation. Some farms have intrusive modern buildings and associated clutter. There is a programme of woodland management for Abbotts Wood to fell and replant conifer plantations with native deciduous species. Other smaller woods remain largely unmanaged. The few detracting features are related to scattered modern development spreading along the main road corridors. The Low Weald is identified in the NCA as of outstanding priority for woodland conservation.*

County Landscape Character Area	Current Condition
Eastbourne Levels (24)	*The areas of green infrastructure are managed as public open space. The rest of the Levels are grazed and generally in good management. Typical urban edge problems encroach on the area with horsiculture, small holdings, intrusive ad hoc development and fly tipping. The hard urban edges are intrusive with most views terminating in views of factories and houses. Traffic on the main roads intrudes into the tranquillity. Two power lines cross the area and are dominating in the flat landscape.*
Pevensey Levels (25)	*This is largely unspoilt and pleasant rural landscape with few intrusive features and areas of relative remoteness. The Pevensey Levels area is generally a well-managed pastoral landscape. The landscape is largely intact with many historic features which provide a sense of place and local distinctiveness. The nationally important wildlife designations over much of the area have improved the management of the Levels and water bodies. The scattered hamlets and villages have a strong sense of place and there are few intrusive suburbanising elements to detract from this. The coastal areas have a scatter of typical holiday development but these areas are generally well managed and have a seaside character of their own. The A259 is the busiest road in the area but does not detract from the more remote parts of the levels or the coast. The rural lanes serving the coast can be congested and busy at the height of summer. The coastal habitats on the shingle are in good condition where not disturbed by coastal defence works.*

Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment

2.4.6 The Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2014) provides a more detailed assessment of the character, sensitivity and value of the District's landscapes outside of the High Weald AONB and the South Downs National Park. The assessment sub-divides the broad brush County Landscape Character Areas within the study area outside of the AONB into finer grained Local Landscape Character Types and more detailed Local Landscape Character Areas as outlined in **Table 2.4.** Full details can be found in the Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment[36].

Table 2.4: Local Landscape Character Areas in the Study Area

Local Landscape Character Types	Local Landscape Character Areas	County Landscape Character Areas	National Character Areas
A: Ridges and Valleys	• A1: Fletching and Maresfield • A2: Budlett's Common and Five Ash Down • A3: Buxted • A4: Blackboys and Framfield • A5: Hawkhurst Common • A6: Horam	• 3. Upper Ouse Valley • 4. Central High Weald • 5. South Slopes of High Weald	**122: HIGH WEALD**

[36] www.wealden.gov.uk/Wealden/Residents/Planning_and_Building_Control/Planning_Policy/CoreStrategy/CoreStrategyLibrary/Planning_Evidence_Base_Landscape.aspx

Local Landscape Character Types	Local Landscape Character Areas	County Landscape Character Areas	National Character Areas
B: Ridges and Slopes	• B1: Cowbeech Hill • B2: Magham Down and Flowers Green • B3: Herstmonceux Castle and Wartling • B4: Ninfield and Hooe	• 5. South Slopes of High Weald • 10. Combe Haven Valley • 25. Pevensey Levels	
C: Gently Undulating Wooded Valleys	• C1: Fletching and Piltdown • C2: Uck Valley • C3: High Cross • C4: Little Horsted	• 3. Upper Ouse Valley • 14. Western Low Weald	**121: LOW WEALD**
D: Wooded Clay Vales	• D1: East Hoathly and Halland • D2: Laughton • D3: Upper and Lower Vert Wood • D4: Golden Cross • D5: Chiddingly • D6: Upper Dicker • D7: Wilmington and Abbots Wood	• 15. Eastern Low Weald	
E: Open Clay Vales	• E1: Laughton Place • E2: Selmeston, Chalvington and Ripe • E3: Arlington • E4: Wilmington Green • E5: Hailsham and Lower Horsebridge • E6: Hellingly		
F: Open Levels	• F1: Down and Whelpey • F2: Waller's Haven • F3: Manxey and Hooe • F4: East Polegate Levels	• 25. Pevensey Levels	**124: PEVENSEY LEVELS**
G: Settled Levels	• G1: Pevensey and Hankham	• 24. Eastbourne Levels • 25. Pevensey Levels	
H: Coastal Levels	• H1: Pevensey Bay	• 25. Pevensey Levels	

2.4.7 The Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2014) provides a detailed assessment of the character, sensitivity and value of more detailed Landscape Setting Areas identified around all the main towns and many of the villages within the study area. Full details can be found in the Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment[37]. The key findings of these assessments have been used to inform the town scale GI assessments in **Section 4.0.**

Tranquillity and Dark Skies

2.4.8 The character of the landscape within the study area is also influenced in many places by the perceived sense of tranquillity and remoteness. Ashdown Forest, Pevensey Levels and a large

[37] www.wealden.gov.uk/Wealden/Residents/Planning_and_Building_Control/Planning_Policy/CoreStrategy/CoreStrategyLibrary/Planning_Evidence_Base_Landscape.aspx

area of the Low Weald to the west of Hailsham are the most extensive tranquil areas within the study area[38]. Within East Sussex as a whole, the area of land affected by noise and visual intrusion has increased from 22% in the early 1960s to 56% in 2007[39].

2.4.9 The nocturnal character of the study area is influenced by light pollution from artificial sources of lighting, primarily associated with towns and villages, transport corridors and other land uses. Opportunities for enjoyment of the night sky in areas of intrinsically dark landscape are becoming increasingly limited within the study area. The Campaign to Protect Rural England's (CPRE) Night Blight mapping data[40] shows much of the study area's rural locations are some of the darkest in the country; Wealden District is placed 20th in the top 20 darkest districts, with an average brightness value of 0.64[41]. The unusually dark skies over the High Weald AONB have been identified as worthy of conservation by the International Dark Skies Association[42], and the South Downs National Park adjacent to the study area was awarded Dark Sky Reserve status in May 2016. Within the study area, Wadhurst is seeking to maintain its dark skies through an initiative led by the local Astronomical Society.

2.4.10 Large settlements produce significant light pollution which spills into the surrounding landscape. Uckfield, Polegate, Hailsham and Crowborough are all particularly bright, where light pollution ranges from between 4 and 16 nano watts/cm^2/sr (the brightest in the country is over 32). Main transport corridors throughout the study area can be distinguished through relatively higher light levels, in particular the A22 and parts of the A267. Significant urban areas outside the District also affect the study area's Dark Skies as light pollution extends into the study area, notably from Tunbridge Wells, East Grinstead and Eastbourne.

2.4.11 Parts of landscapes within the study area suffer from recreational pressures, for example the erosion of sandstone outcrops through walking and rock climbing, and the increasing demand for recreational activities on Ashdown Forest.

High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2.4.12 As illustrated on **Figure 2.3a**, over two-thirds of the study area is the nationally protected landscape of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) designated in 1983. The Statement of Significance in the High Weald AONB Management Plan[43] defines the natural beauty of the AONB, its character and the special qualities associated with it as being:

[38] Tranquillity Map (CPRE, 2007)
[39] Tranquillity Map (CPRE, 2007)
[40] Night Blight: Mapping England's light pollution and dark skies CPRE (June 2016)
[41] Brightness values are measured in nanowatts/cm2/steradian (nw/cm2/sr). This calculates how the satellite instruments measure the light on the ground
[42] http://www.highweald.org/look-after/dark-skies.html
[43] High Weald AONB Management Plan 2014-2019 (High Weald JAC 2014)

'characterised by dispersed historic settlement, ancient routeways, an abundance of ancient woodland, wooded heaths and shaws, and small irregularly shaped fields. These are all draped over a deeply incised and ridged landform of clays and sandstones with numerous gill streams, and are closely related to socio-economic characteristics that have roots extending deep into history.' The Management Plan identifies five character components that are fundamental in defining the High Weald's natural beauty and special qualities:

- Geology, landform, water systems and climate
- Settlement
- Routeways
- Woodlands
- Fields and heath

2.4.13 The 2012 High Weald AONB Condition Monitoring Report[44] provides an assessment of the condition of the AONB's character components. The key findings show that across the High Weald the condition of the character components is 'average' or 'good', but the remainder (35%) is in 'poor' condition. Only 18% of the AONB's character components are considered to be in a 'stable' state, with the remainder (58%) under threat and 24% considered vulnerable or declining. While the overall condition is reasonably good, most of the AONB's landscape is under threat, at a severe risk of being damaged or its condition deteriorating. This includes features within the study area. Further details are provided in **Table 2.4**.

Table 2.4: Condition of AONB Character Components

Character Component	Summary Condition Assessment
Geology, landform, water systems and climate	***River catchments: 'Poor' condition and 'under threat'*** *The major river catchments are well understood and actively managed by the Environment Agency, however practice is not generally compatible with AONB objectives. Condition is controlled but not ideal in approach. Ghyll streams are more vulnerable and less well 'policed' and vulnerable from neglect. Catchment Management Plans are beginning to have a positive effect. There is a threat to landform and water courses from agricultural practices flattening the landscape by repeatedly ploughing soil downhill when following the contours and causing erosion and stream pollution when they plough across contours.* ***Sandrock: 'Good' condition but 'under threat'*** *Geology is a stable component but the ecological value of sandstone outcrops and gill streams is vulnerable to change. Climate is a significant variable into the future but its impact on the components is hard to predict with certainty.* ***Climate Change: 'Poor' condition and 'under threat'*** *Management policies and approaches should be seeking more sustainable and low carbon impact solutions to contribute to offsetting the impacts of climate change. Little detailed knowledge of the impacts and threats from climate change, and confusion between mitigation and adaptation and the appropriate responses.*

[44] High Weald AONB Condition Monitoring Report, High Weald AONB Unit (2012)

Character Component	Summary Condition Assessment
Settlement	***Reconnect settlements with surrounding countryside: 'Average' condition 'stable'*** *Desire for rural quality of life and personal privacy are threats to a connected rural community. Climate change and local supply green awareness are all helping to educate and raise awareness of what the local environment can supply. However economic and service supply trends present considerable barriers to achieving a local lifestyle based on rural services.* ***Dispersed Settlement Pattern (including Historic Farmsteads): 'Average' condition but 'vulnerable'*** *Extensive loss of farmsteads to residential use has already occurred with a high proportion of very affluent owners. Farmsteads command very high market prices and lead to variable quality conversion and adaptation. Farmsteads are vulnerable to change and redevelopment and are at risk. Key settlement planning threatens to isolate and marginalise rural settlement by assuming they are inherently unsustainable. The High Weald retains a landscape of settlement pattern that is the most coherent surviving example of a medieval landscape - this condition is threatened by the current policy direction.* ***Historic Built Form: 'Average' condition but 'under threat'*** *Current protectionist approaches to historic buildings concentrate on the architecture in isolation which helps to protect individual features but not the use and character of the historic stock. A wider appreciation of the role buildings play in the landscape and contribution to rural character will assist in raising the profile. Poor understanding at a local level leaves these features under threat.*
Routeways	***Tracks and paths: 'Average' condition and 'Stable'*** *Lack of understanding and appreciation means that features may be being affected or damaged in isolation. Recreational use is probably expanding and placing an additional burden on existing and known routes. Undirected highway management is a threat to the character and quality of routeways where they coincide with rural lanes, increasing threat of small hard engineering and highway management systems.* ***Ecology of routeways: 'Poor' condition and 'under threat'*** *Cutting of lane verges in spring/early summer is allowing large vehicles to ride the banks to pass each other and, because the cut is so severe, it destroys much of the floral diversity. A late summer cut once a year would save the flowers, save the councils money and ensure control of tree/bush invasion.*
Woodlands	***Woodland extent: 'Good' condition and 'stable'*** *High profile of woodland and major resources has established a solid foundation for on-going woodland management and protection.* ***Woodland ecology: 'Average' but 'vulnerable'*** *Undermanaged/unmanaged status of the majority of woods in the High Weald, dramatic fall in woodland bird populations the AONB needs to be pushing hard for more grant aid to manage woodlands.* ***Woodland archaeology: 'Good' condition and 'under threat'*** *Growing awareness and local action with dedicated local groups but lack of recording and official recognition leaves it vulnerable.* ***Timber economy: 'Poor' Condition but 'under threat'*** *Poor economic conditions in recent years with currently improving prices and market conditions, a changing situation.*

Character Component	Summary Condition Assessment
Fields and heath	***Agriculturally productive use of fields: 'Poor' and 'Vulnerable'*** *Changing economics of farming make this a very challenging time for the efficient and economic use of farmland and the future is highly changeable* ***Historic field boundaries: 'Good' condition but 'under threat'*** *Substantial survival but not well understood or appreciated in policy. The biggest threat to these boundaries is probably where they are (or become) part of a domestic curtilage, and are outside the scope of the Hedgerow Regs.* ***Unimproved & semi improved grassland: 'Poor' condition and 'vulnerable'*** *Changing agricultural practices and economy. Productive small scale use of fields – local goods and services from the land by Hobby farmers, threat or positive force if harnessed. A new ELS+ stewardship scheme is being mooted which could contain capital payments for things like fencing.* ***Heathland: 'Good' condition and 'under threat'*** ***Archaeology of field and heath: 'Average' condition and 'under threat'*** *Lack of recording and profile of these features make them highly vulnerable and are also very sensitive to changes in farming practices and mechanisation. Awareness is increasing but no adequate protection or recognition.*

The Historic Environment

Listed Buildings

2.4.14 Designated and protected by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. Listed buildings have special architectural or historic interest. Within the study area there are a total of 1975 listed buildings across all three grades of listing as identified in **Table 2.5**.

Table 2.5: Listed Buildings within the Study Area

Grade	Total Number	Description	Examples
Grade I	36	Grade I buildings are of exceptional interest, sometimes considered to be internationally important. Just 2.5% of listed buildings are Grade I.	The Parish Church of All Saints, Waldron
Grade II*	98	Grade II* are particularly important buildings of more than special interest. 5.5% of listed buildings are Grade II*.	Ashdown House School, Forest Row
Grade II	1841	Grade II buildings are nationally important and of special interest. 92% of all listed buildings are in this class and it is the most likely grade of listing for a home owner.	Framfield Place, Framfield

Conservation Areas

2.4.15 Conservation Areas are designated by Local Planning Authorities, and represent areas of particular architectural or historic interest. Many of the Conservation Areas within the study area are typically associated with the historic core of settlements and Listed Buildings. Following a review of Conservation Areas within Wealden District[45], there are a total of 33 Conservation Areas within the study area as shown on **Figure 2.3b** and listed in **Table 2.6**.

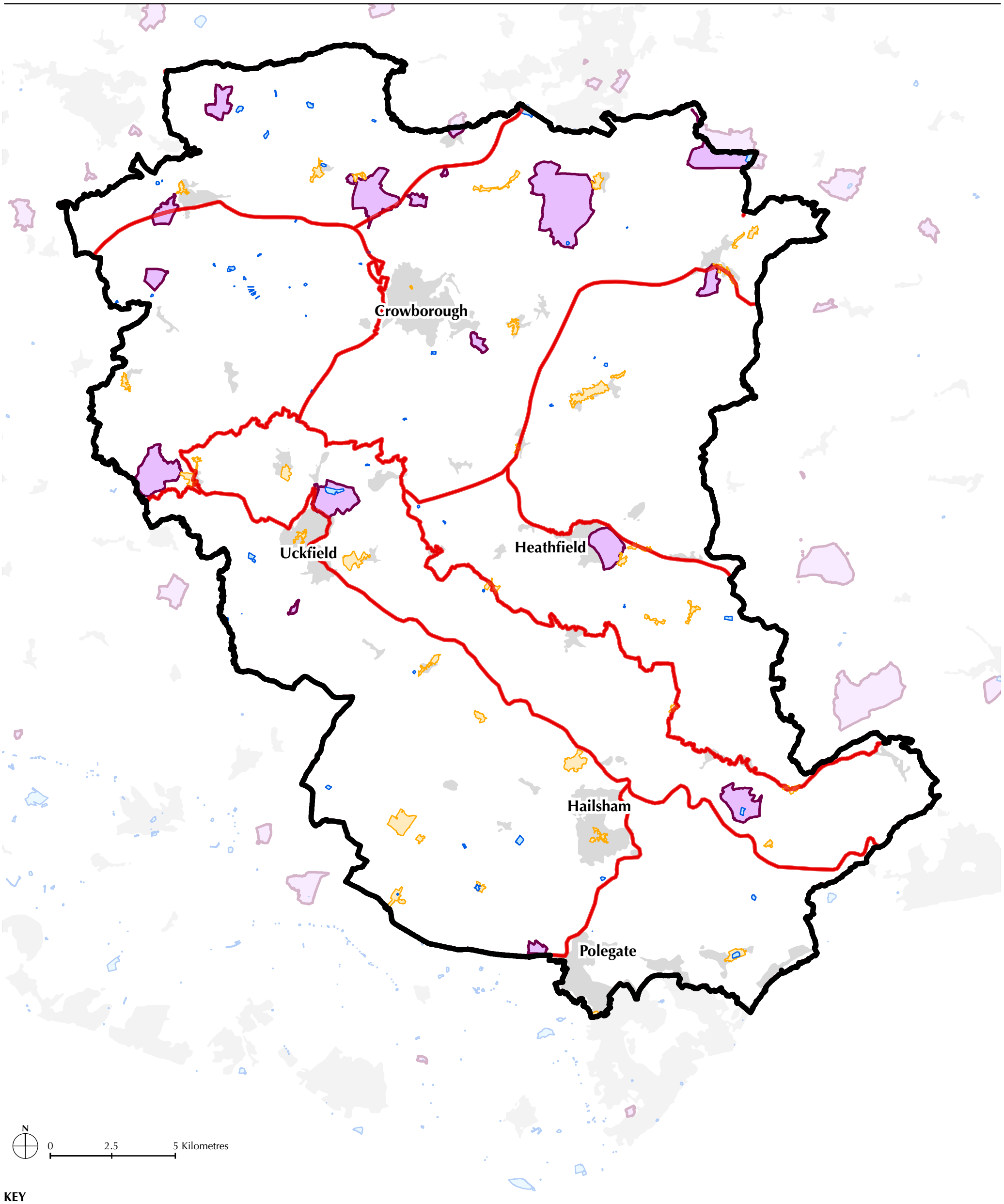
Table 2.6: Conservation Areas within the study area

Conservation Area	Conservation Area
Arlington	Maresfield
Boreham Street	Mayfield and Coggins Mill
Chalvington	Old Heathfield and Cade Street
Chiddingly and Muddles Green	Pell Green and Cousley Wood
Cowbeech	Pevensey and Westham
Crowborough	Ripe
Danehill	Rotherfield
East Hoathly	Rushlake Green
Eridge Green and The Forstal	Selmeston
Five Ashes	Uckfield
Fletching and Splaynes Green	Wadhurst
Forest Row	Waldron
Framfield	Warbleton
Frant	Wartling
Hailsham	Willingdon, Church Street
Hartfield	Withyham
Hellingly	

Scheduled Monuments

2.4.16 Scheduled Monuments are protected under the Ancient Monument and Archaeological Areas Act (1979) and the Secretary of State has responsibility for compiling and maintaining the Schedule. Within the study area there are a total of 54 Scheduled Monuments as shown on **Figure 2.3b**.

[45] On 22nd March 2017, Full Council resolved to approve the designation of the new conservation area boundaries across the District.



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FIGURE 2.3b
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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Registered Parks and Gardens

2.4.17 The Register of Parks and Gardens is managed by Historic England under the Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act (1953). The majority of sites within the study area are or were originally the grounds of private houses, but the register also includes public parks and cemeteries. Registered Parks and Gardens are not necessarily accessible by the public.

2.4.18 Registered Parks and Gardens within the study area are shown on **Figure 2.3b**. As listed in **Table 2.7**, in total there are 19 Parks and Gardens, which cover an area of 2065 hectares. Of these 19, one is listed as Grade I, 8 are Grade II listed, and 10 are listed as grade II*.

Table 2.7 Registered Parks and Gardens within the Study Area

Name	Grade	Area (Ha)
Bayham Abbey	II	368.11
Groombridge Place	II*	43.04
Herstmonceux Castle and Place	II*	26.13
Horsted Place	II	8.97
Penns in the Rocks	II*	12.12
Wych Cross Place	II*	47.60
Eridge Park	II*	546.02
Rotherfield Hall	II*	27.22
Buckhurst Park	II*	215.36
Wootton Manor	II	28.90
Hammerwood Park	II	81.50
Sheffield Park	I	208.32
Heathfield Park	II	144.55
Kidbrooke Park	II	65.65
Wadhurst Castle	II	58.85
Buxted Park	II*	172.98
The Hoo	II*	0.41
Glen Andred Garden	II*	5.25
Frant Court	II	3.82

The Historic Landscape

2.4.19 The Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC)[46] provides a detailed assessment of the historic character of the East Sussex landscape. Much of the High Weald, Low Weald and the

[46] Sussex Historic Landscape Characterisation, N. Bannister (2010)

Pevensey Levels landscape within the study area has a strong historic time-depth where their history is evident in landscape features that survive today.

2.4.20 The High Weald is essentially a medieval landscape. Its character was established by the 14th Century and has largely survived despite major historical events, and social and technological changes[47]. The High Weald is considered to be one of the best surviving medieval landscapes in Northern Europe[48]. Ashdown Forest has a rich landscape history as a medieval deer park[49].

2.4.21 Historic farmsteads are a particular feature of the historic landscape[50].

Heritage at Risk

2.4.22 Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register (South East) 2016[51] identifies listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, and conservation areas at risk. Heritage assets at risk within the study area are shown in **Table 2.8**. Overall, this shows there are currently 5 heritage assets at risk within the context of 36 heritage assets at risk within East Sussex as a whole.

Table 2.8: Heritage Assets at Risk within the Study Area

Heritage Asset	Designation	Condition
Argos Hill Windmill[52], Argos Hill, Mayfield	Listed Building Grade II*	Poor
Parish Church of All Saints, Heathfield and Waldron	Listed Place of Worship Grade I, Conservation Area	Poor
Parish Church of St Nicolas, Church Lane, Pevensey	Listed Place of Worship Grade I, Conservation Area	Very bad
High Rocks Camp, Frant	Scheduled Monument	Extensive significant problems
Kidbrooke Park, Forest Row	Registered Park & Garden Grade II, 2 Listed Buildings	Extensive significant problems

[47] Making of the High Weald, R. Harris (2003)
[48] High Weald AONB Management Plan 2014-19, High Weald JAC (2014)
[49] Medieval Deer Parks and Designed Landscapes in the High Weald; HLC Analysis Stage 1 & 2, N. Bannister (2009)
[50] South East Farmstead Character Statement, Historic England (2014)
[51] Heritage at Risk Register South East , Historic England (2016)
[52] Despite being included on the 2016 at risk register, Argos Hill Windmill has been recently restored http://www.argoshillwindmill.org.uk/

Needs and Opportunities

2.4.23 The character and quality of the landscape and historic environment within the study area, including the High Weald AONB, are key GI assets that make a significant contribution to Wealden's GI network. These assets contribute to a number of important ecosystems services including sense of place/inspiration; sense of history; tranquillity; recreation; and biodiversity and geodiversity.

Managing Landscape Change

2.4.24 There is continued pressure for development within the sensitive rural landscapes of the study area that includes the High Weald AONB, the fragile landscapes of the Ashdown Forest and Pevensey Levels and the setting of the South Downs National Park. Opportunities for protecting and strengthening the District's landscape character within new development schemes should be informed by the GI design principles set out in **Section 6.3**. Specific opportunities for enhancing landscape features related to GI provision for residential development sites in the new Local Plan are detailed in the Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment Studies[53].

2.4.25 There are a number of threats to the landscape within the study area. These include the fragmentation or loss of characteristic landscape features/habitats, a rapidly decreasing extent of farmland, non-agricultural use of farmland, lack of sensitive land management, agricultural intensification and a lack of sensitive or traditional grazing. It is therefore important to ensure that the study area's landscapes and habitats are managed appropriately and enhanced where possible.

2.4.26 The landscapes within the study area are ultimately characterised by woodlands, including a high percentage of designated Ancient Woodlands, and hedgerows. Meadows and heathland are an important characteristic of the study area, typically being historic. These features need to be protected, enhanced and restored as a valuable landscape asset. These characteristic landscape features represent a shared natural heritage, still surviving today and showing how the landscape used to be managed. The historic land management practices contribute to the management of the greenspaces and green corridors that underpin Wealden's GI network.

Tranquillity and Dark Skies

2.4.27 The main tranquil areas within the study area (Ashdown Forest, Pevensey Levels and a large area of the Low Weald to the west of Hailsham provide important well-being benefits for

[53] Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment Studies (CBA and TLP for Wealden DC, 2017)

Wealden's communities and visitors, and there is a need to protect these areas from excessive noise and visual intrusion that can reduce their perceived sense of tranquillity and remoteness.

2.4.28 The nocturnal character of the study area is influenced by light pollution from artificial sources of lighting, primarily associated with towns and villages, transport corridors and other land uses. Opportunities for enjoyment of the night sky in areas of intrinsically dark landscape are becoming increasingly limited within the study area, and there is a need to examine the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation in more detail.

High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

2.4.29 Action and intervention to mitigate the threats and vulnerabilities to the condition of the AONB's character components identified in the 2012 High Weald AONB Condition Monitoring Report[54] is needed to continue to conserve and enhance the AONB's character components within the study area.

Historic Environment

2.4.30 Opportunities for protecting the District's historic environment, such as farmsteads, settlements and semi-natural landscape features of historic value, in new development schemes should be informed by the GI design principles set out in **Section 6.3**.

2.4.31 There is a need to take action to improve the condition of the heritage assets within the study area identified as being at greatest risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register (South East) 2016[55].

[54] High Weald AONB Condition Monitoring Report, High Weald AONB Unit (2012)
[55] Heritage at Risk Register South East , Historic England (2016)

Summary

2.4.32 In summary, working with partners, developers, local communities, landowners and other relevant bodies, the key strategic opportunities for GI to help address identified needs for enhancing the character and condition of the landscape and historic environment assets across the study area are considered to be:

High Weald

- Identify, protect and reinforce the distinctive elements and features of the landscape that are essential to maintaining the distinctive and inspirational character of the area in line with the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.
- Ensure that new development respects local settlement patterns and building materials to avoid the loss of historic evidence through insensitive development or management.
- Maintain the dispersed settlement pattern by managing the setting of villages together with the integrity of their vernacular styling.
- Maintain the historic division of field patterns.
- Ensure that the repair, restoration or conversion of vernacular buildings is carried out with due regard to their historic environment, using local materials and techniques to maintain local distinctiveness, construction techniques and traditions.
- Encourage the continuation of traditional land management practices and land uses that are intrinsic to the High Weald landscape and sense of place.
- Explore opportunities to conserve the cultural heritage of local authors and artists by maintaining the traditions that create the High Weald's distinctive landscape and local sense of place.
- Give due regard to the core components of natural beauty in relation to planning of development for towns and villages within and adjacent to the High Weald AONB.
- Increase protection of above and below ground archaeology and designed parkland.
- Provide recreational opportunities such as circular walks linked to the positive management and conservation of historic features to aid understanding, enjoyment and sense of well-being.
- Increase protection for and awareness of the best preserved examples of networks of historic routeways.
- Increase identification, recording, management, promotion and understanding of the historic environment.
- Ensure that new development enhances the setting, interpretation and legibility of heritage assets.

- Promote the widespread use of local timber in construction with support for good design and specification, and merging of traditional skills with new management practices.
- Promote information on the historical development of towns, villages, hamlets, farmsteads and their hinterlands, and historic parks and gardens, including historic maps and accessible online information.
- Improve the condition of heritage assets identified as being at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change.
- Promote improved design quality through High Weald AONB specific design guidance on built form, architectural detail, composition and layout of space and local materials.
- Maintain the tranquillity of the area and limit the visual impacts of large infrastructure through careful design and planning.
- Support projects that contribute to the conservation and management of the area's special qualities and locally valued features such as dark skies and historic farmsteads.

Low Weald

- Restore and create, where appropriate, hedgerows, shaws and areas of woodland within existing and new developments to maintain boundaries and protect the characteristic wooded feel of the area.
- Support the protection of heritage assets such as traditional farmsteads and historic oast houses from inappropriate conversion where they make a significant positive contribution to the landscape.
- Ensure that new development does not intrude upon the essential character of and views from the surrounding protected landscapes (the High Weald AONB and South Downs National Park[56]).
- Identify opportunities to enhance the setting and interpretation of heritage assets.
- Promote the appreciation and understanding of historic sites and nationally important industrial heritage.
- Encourage preservation of historic buildings and the use of traditional building materials such as locally produced bricks and tiles and stone from local quarries in their conservation.
- Support efforts to protect intact extremely rare examples of unconverted oast houses with surviving hop industry equipment.
- Encourage protection of characteristic field patterns and boundary features.

[56] South Downs National Park View Characterisation and Analysis Study, LUC (2015)

- Retain the remaining sense of tranquillity associated with wooded farmland and protect villages from excessive light and noise pollution by buffering development with woodland and shaws.
- Encourage improvement of the public transport network to reduce disturbance of increased traffic on rural roads and lanes.

Pevensey Levels

- Protect from inappropriate development the open, exposed character of the low-lying wetland landscape, with its strong sense of remoteness and wide open views to the coast, South Downs and High Weald.
- Conserve the distinctive irregular field boundary network of drainage ditches and banks to enhance cultural heritage and sense of place.
- Promote interpretation to ensure that visitors and local people are aware of the key interest features of the coastal shingle areas.
- Encourage local schools to participate in environmental education opportunities and management of wildlife habitats.
- Conserve the historic landscape features (such as evidence of early reclamation), early sea defences (such as the 14th century "Crooked Ditch") and mounds left by the salt-making industry.
- Ensure development does not undermine the fragile structure of surviving Martello towers and preserves their settings.
- Ensure land management activities such as ditch clearing and ploughing do not damage important historic features.
- Support continued research and promotion of the Shinewater bronze-age site through interpretation and education.
- Improve the condition of heritage assets identified as being at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change.
- Incorporate measures into new development that integrates green and open space to enhance and extend the network of existing undisturbed and tranquil places.
- Realise opportunities to introduce greenspace, and particularly tree planting, into existing developments to buffer and minimise the effects of noise and light pollution on the Levels.

2.5 Energy & Food

2.5.1 Wealden's rural environment and greenspaces support a rich variety of productive landscapes including farmland, coppice woodlands and allotments in and around towns within the study area. As well as supporting local energy and food production, these GI assets can make a significant contribution to Wealden's GI network through provision of wildlife habitats, green corridors and a range of social, health and community benefits. There are a number of opportunities to further improve the provision of these assets within the study area.

Audit

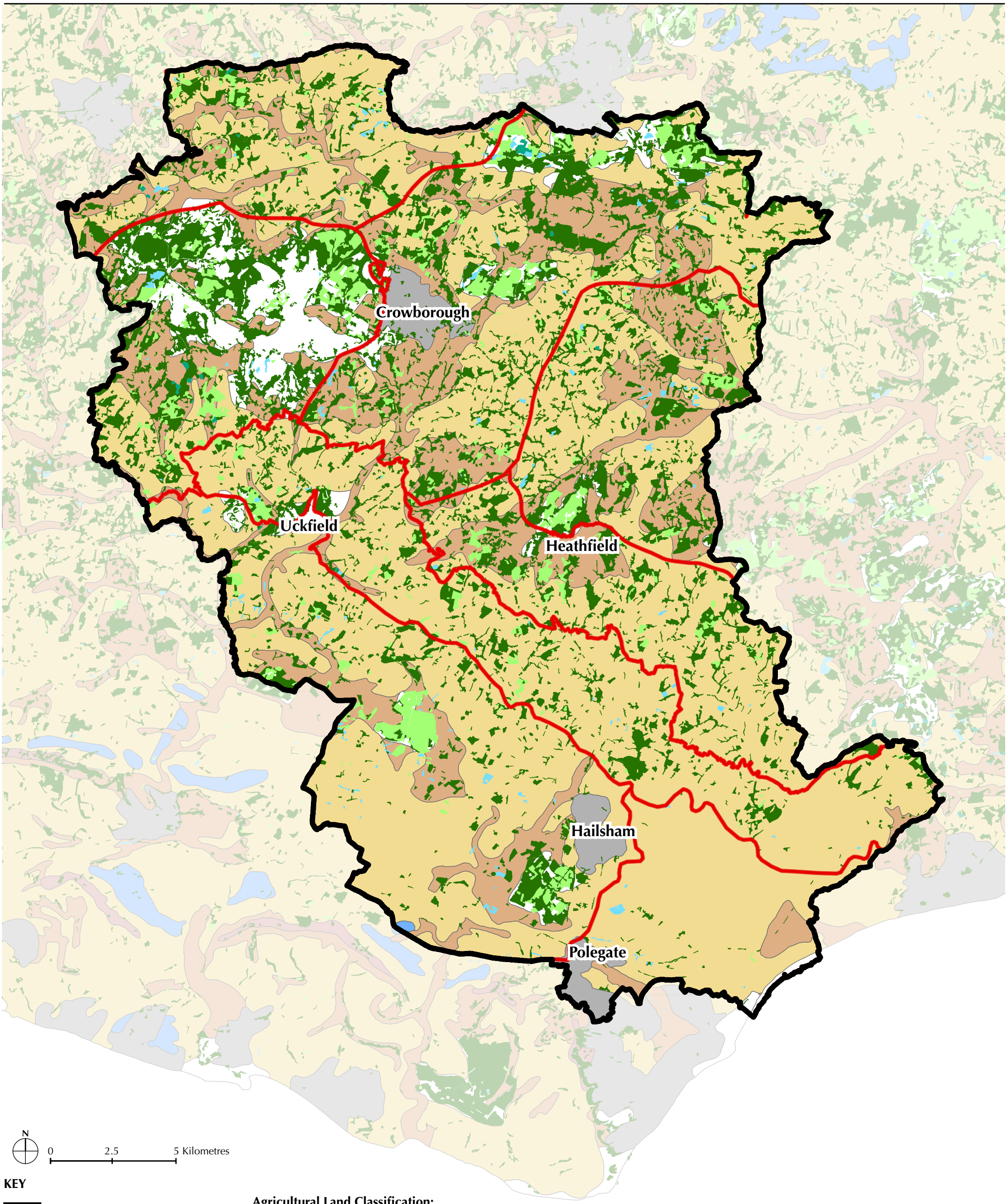
Local Energy Production

2.5.2 Energy use is an important consideration when tackling climate change and local authorities are required to adapt to the effects of climate change through planning, and mitigate through adopting proactive strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions[57]. In 2014, Wealden District produced the highest CO_2 emissions in East Sussex (828kt) but the lowest CO_2 emissions per capita (5.3t)[58]. Whilst the emissions in Wealden and across East Sussex have been declining, as the largest Wealden produces almost twice the emissions of other Districts and Boroughs in the County. In 2014 energy consumption in Wealden District was 3,088GWh[59], which represents nearly twice as much as neighbouring authorities in the County. A significant proportion of this energy is derived from petroleum products, which relates mainly to transport and vehicle use. In Wealden, there is a known culture of dependence upon private car use[60] primarily as a result of its size and predominantly rural nature.

2.5.3 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, deciduous woodlands are a significant feature in the study area, contributing around 75% of the total woodland resource. Many of these woodlands have been managed over considerable periods of time as coppice, and therefore represent a potential significant source of local fuel. The decline in coppicing and ride management of Ancient Woodland is identified in the High Weald AONB Management Plan[61] as one of the top five issues in the High Weald, caused in part by barriers to affordable housing for coppice workers, policy to support rural forestry practices and pressure from increasing deer populations.

2.5.4 Improved management of the woodland resource can also contribute to climate change targets, helping to improve the ability of trees to absorb carbon emissions, and is a good example of

[57] Climate Change Act (2008)
[58] East Sussex in Figures, (October 2016)
[59] East Sussex in Figures (October 2016)
[60] Wealden Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal, Scoping Report, WDC (2015) – para 3.3.50
[61] High Weald AONB Management Plan, High Weald JAC (2014-19)



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WEALDEN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY
WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

FIGURE 2.4
ENERGY & FOOD

April 2017

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the multiple benefits generated by improved woodland management. Across the High Weald, if production were increased to 50% of the potential sustainable level of production, it would mitigate 96,000 tonnes of CO_2 emissions each year. More information on the carbon account of woodlands in the High Weald is provided in the High Weald Woodlands Carbon Report[62].

2.5.5 Whilst the woodlands within the study area are numerous, on average many are relatively small. Woodlands are typically associated with a long history of management, supporting the iron-industry from the Roman period onwards. As such these woodlands have a high potential for landscape archaeology to be preserved within them[63]. The combination of the small size and potential for archaeology, lend these woodlands to small-scale, sensitive and/or traditional woodland management.

2.5.6 There is anecdotal evidence that deer populations are increasing in the south-east of England, and on Ashdown Forest there are estimated to be over 500 deer collisions with vehicles annually and the number is rising every year[64]. Deer numbers are having a significant impact upon woodlands through excessive browsing of young shoots of recently coppiced trees, preventing natural regeneration of trees and threatening ground flora; the Forestry Commission estimates the cost of deer damage to forestry woodlands nationally is £4.5 million per year[65].

2.5.7 The towns within the study area all have poorer air quality than the surrounding countryside.[66] Trees have a significant ability in terms of their potential for 'pollutant scrubbing' and helping to remove airborne pollutants from vehicle emissions, for example. This is explored further and guidance provided within the Woodland Trusts Urban Air Quality Report.[67] This guidance recommends trees with a high propensity to remove pollutants from the air, and suitable for incorporating into new and existing urban landscapes and streetscapes.

Local Food Production

2.5.8 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the majority of the study area is generally good to moderate quality agricultural land (Grade 3) intermixed with areas of poor quality agricultural land (Grade 4). In the northern part of the study area, the extensive areas of poorer quality agricultural land support mainly pastoral farming within the distinctive patchwork of small-scale, irregular-shaped fields characteristic of farmland within the High Weald. In the southern parts of the study area, the generally better quality agricultural land (Grade 3), intermixed with smaller pockets of poorer quality agricultural land (Grade 4), supports mixed arable farming within the

[62] High Weald Woodlands Carbon Report, Sandy Greig (2010)
[63] The Cultural Heritage of Woodlands in the South East, N. Bannister (2007)
[64] Ashdown Forest Deer Leaflet (undated)
[65] EWGS Support for Deer Management, Forestry Commission (2008)
[66] Underlying indicators for Indices of Multiple Deprivation, DECC (2015)
[67] Urban Air Quality, Jim Smith for the Woodland Trust (2012)

larger-scale fields characteristic of farmland in the Low Weald. In general, the richer soils in the southern part of Wealden support larger more arable-dominated farming and food production. Further north, the significant woodland cover offers opportunities for livestock rearing, smaller-scale market gardening or fruit-growing.

2.5.9 Small-mixed farming systems are uncompetitive in the current market with economic pressures favouring industrial-scale farming. The traditional small-scale farming that dominates a significant part of the District is under threat[68].

2.5.10 Allotments are public open spaces set aside for the purposes of domestic gardening and small scale horticulture, typically for fruit and vegetable production. As well as facilitating local food production, allotments can provide wildlife habitats, green corridors within urban areas and social, health and community benefits. Predominantly located in the main towns within the study area, allotments are generally managed by Town and Parish Councils. Allotments are shown on **Figure 4.2i** (Crowborough: Open Space Typology), **Figure 4.3i** (Uckfield: Open Space Typology), **Figure 4.4i** (Heathfield: Open Space Typology) and **Figure 4.5i** (Hailsham & Polegate: Open Space Typology).

Needs and Opportunities

2.5.11 Farmland (fertile grasslands and arable systems), coppice woodlands, orchards and allotments supporting local energy and food production within the study area are key GI assets that make a significant contribution to Wealden's GI network. In addition to contributing to biomass and food provision services, these assets also contribute to a number of other important ecosystems services including biodiversity; climate regulation; regulating water quality; regulating soil quality and erosion; pollination; pest regulation; genetic diversity; sense of place/inspiration; sense of history; tranquillity; and recreation.

Local Energy Production

2.5.12 In respect of energy, 8% of households in Wealden are recorded as being in fuel poverty[69] this equates to just over 5000 homes. This percentage varies widely across the study area, but peaks at 16% of households in east Heathfield. Many areas experiencing fuel poverty are those in deprived areas, or within isolated rural settlements. This in percentage terms is the lowest in East Sussex, but still represents a significant proportion of people struggling to afford the cost of heating their homes. Wood fuel, particularly logs which require no additional energy inputs (unlike processed pellets for example), are a simple carbon neutral form of energy. Cleaner or

[68] Restocking the Weald, Dr Bill Vorley IIED (2013)
[69] East Sussex in Figures, (Accessed October 2016)

carbon neutral forms of energy can also help to improve air quality. Overall air quality within Wealden District does not exceed the relevant air quality objectives[70]. However, carbon dioxide emissions are known to be high within the study area and air quality within towns has the potential to be poor[71].

2.5.13 The timber economy across the AONB is considered to be under threat. Poor economic conditions, increased mechanisation and a decreasing skills base are cited as some of the drivers for this change.

Local Food Production

2.5.14 In respect of food, and particularly larger scale farm production, social as well as economic impacts are affecting the study area. 'Lifestyle' or 'hobby'[72] farmers now make up at least 75% of the High Weald AONBs land managers[73] . This statistic clearly has implications for land management and food production within the study area. The trend is most notable within easy reach of London. This trend has led to a gradual reduction in skills and loss of social or knowledge capital in relation to small-scale farming and woodland management within the High Weald.

2.5.15 However the economic significance of historic farmsteads being in primarily residential use should not be underestimated as these properties are highly sought after. In the High Weald AONB, 38 in every 100 residential historic farmstead addresses are owned by directors of £1million turn over companies, particularly around Tunbridge Wells and Crowborough[74]. Whilst supporting the study area economically this trend is raising land values and continuing to push new farmers away, and making only the biggest intensive farms economically viable. Support for small-scale mixed farmers in the High and Low Weald is further reduced through agri-environment schemes where payments are made on acreage. Farmers markets and supporting local growers and growing cooperatives or community supported agriculture schemes is needed to ensure the study area remains part of a viable and valued food producing region. There are 11 regular farmers/country markets within the study area, many of which are held in the main towns and larger villages.

2.5.16 Restocking the Weald is a project seeking to address some of the barriers to new up and coming livestock farmers across the Weald. Livestock and farming support and maintain landscape character across the Weald by managing hedgerows and grasslands. Food

[70] Updating and Screening Assessment for Wealden District Council Air Quality Report, AECOM (2015)
[71] Updating and Screening Assessment for Wealden District Council Air Quality Report, AECOM (2015)
[72] Farmers with a smallholding or small farm that is maintained without expectation of it being a primary source of income
[73] Farmstead Assessment Guidance South East England, English Heritage (2014)
[74] Historic Farm Complexes in Current Socio-Economic Context: High Weald, Dept. of Town and Regional Planning, University of Sheffield (2007)

production is considered to be vulnerable[75], primarily as a result of changing economics and the decline in agricultural ownership.

2.5.17 The importance of pollinators to both direct food production from large-scale arable cultivation to orchards and allotments, as well as producing 'wild foods' along hedgerows for example is underlined by the number of national pollination-focused projects, such as B-Lines and Polli:Nation. Agriculture continues to form an important part of the economy of the study area, and therefore healthy invertebrate populations remain important. Pollinators are affected by changing land management practices, habitat loss and the use of insecticides. Related to understanding sustainable food production, the High Weald AONB Unit investigated[76] the potential for the landscape to feed its own population, under both conventional and organic means. Whilst clearly reliant upon numerous external factors, in principle the report concluded the local landscape could support local food production under all scenarios. As a result this demonstrates there is potential for further increase and diversification in sustainable and sensitive food production within the study area.

2.5.18 Each family in East Sussex throws away food worth £420 per year[77]. Opportunities to allow communities, individuals and schools to have the choice to grow their own produce not only improves knowledge of food growing and the value of food, but also provides numerous mental health and well-being benefits. Gardening and food growing has long been successfully used therapeutically to tackle depression, stress and anxiety and other mental health conditions. The mental health charity Mind's economic analyses of their Ecotherapy Programme highlights that getting 254 people from the programme back in to full-time employment resulted in £1.46 million worth of savings and contributions to the state in a single year[78]. The benefits of gardening and growing plants and food are far-reaching and include physical, social and behavioural benefits; a summary of key evidence has been produced by the federation of city farms and community gardens[79]. Wider health benefits of greenspace more generally are covered in **Section 2.7**.

2.5.19 In addition to community spaces, private gardens also have a key role to play by providing opportunities for local food production, representing a valuable resource particularly within the urban environment. Even balconies and small patios can be used to grow a wide variety of produce.

[75] High Weald AONB Condition Monitoring Report, High Weald JAC (2012)
[76] The Potential of the High Weald to Supply the Food Needs of its Population under Conventional and Organic Agriculture, University of Reading (2009)
[77] Environment Strategy for East Sussex (2011)
[78] www.mind.org.uk/ media/338566/The-EconomicBenefits-of-Ecominds-report.pdf
[79] https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/

Summary

2.5.20 In summary, working with partners, developers, local communities, landowners and other relevant bodies, the key strategic opportunities for GI to help address identified needs for the provision of local energy and food production across the study area are considered to be:

High Weald

- Encourage jobs and economic growth in local low-carbon industries, promote markets for local timber, wood fuel, High Weald venison, wine and fisheries.
- Enhance the profitability of farming businesses, for example by supporting expansion of small-scale horticulture enterprises.
- Encourage flexible, adaptable and multi-functional food production systems particularly on underused improved pasture.
- Increase awareness and enthusiasm for local food and the benefits of short supply chains, improving understanding of the links between a farmed landscape and biodiversity benefits.
- Incorporate new allotments or community orchards within greenspaces as part of new development proposals.
- Support and encourage the use of locally sourced timber in housing development and building restoration projects.
- Support a sustainable woodland industry in the High Weald by developing new markets and products for locally sourced timber, wood fuel and underwood, and marketing to connect local woodland owners with local customers.
- Retain the genetic resource of traditional cattle that provide breed options suitable for quality meat.
- Encourage the use of traditional breeds on High Weald grasslands to contribute to the sustainable management of soils and benefits for biodiversity.
- Rebuild populations of traditional varieties of top fruit where appropriate, maintaining genetic diversity, biodiversity, pollination and sense of place and sense of history.
- Bring local woodlands under traditional coppice management, at the same time improving the woodland habitat for wildlife by extending the area of appropriately managed woodland to enhance habitats and species populations.
- Promote sustainable woodland management techniques (such as coppicing, pollarding and wood fuel production) to increase carbon sequestration and the resilience of tree species to climate change and disease.
- Maintain, and where appropriate expand, the area of woodland and permanent pasture to ensure continued contributions to carbon storage.

- Encourage further research to understand the role of trees and woodlands in a changing climate and impact of climate change on the woods themselves.
- Retain, and where appropriate extend, the area of permanent grassland, woodland and heath to protect soils, particularly in areas where a reduction in condition would result in erosion and subsequent impacts on productivity and watercourses.
- Identify and apply grazing regimes that increase sward diversity and increase the deposition and overall levels of organic matter.
- Encourage extensive grazing regimes to reduce stocking densities and avoid soil compaction, and also avoid compaction through unnecessary machinery use particularly during protracted periods of wet weather.
- Maintain areas of permanent pasture and be alert to the risks of soil erosion associated with any changes in land use, maintaining pasture in areas particularly prone to soil erosion or adjacent to rivers and streams.
- Maintain and enhance the floristic diversity of hedgebanks, where possible, to increase the range of flowering plants and increase the area, range and connectivity of habitat mosaics making connections between existing sites attractive to pollinators.
- Maintain and expand the area of semi-natural habitats throughout the High Weald to provide a range of niches to support pest regulating species, including invertebrates, birds and mammals.
- Work with partners to encourage the use of field margins and beetle banks and headlands in arable land to encourage pest regulating species in close proximity to food crops.

Low Weald

- Encourage management of the agricultural landscape to retain its distinctive character and productivity, while improving its contribution to biodiversity and protection of vulnerable soils and historical evidence (for example by restoring boundaries such as shaws and hedgerows, returning arable land to pasture where appropriate and creating field margins to buffer fields and improve connectivity).
- Encourage woodland conservation within the Low Weald, particularly in relation to coppice restoration.
- Encourage positive and sensitive management of existing woodlands to increase the commercial production of quality hardwood timber and benefit biodiversity, woodland structure and the local economy.
- Extend the area of broadleaved woodland to create new and sustainable sources of timber on less sensitive woodland sites, further supporting the market for quality hardwood timber.

- Selectively fell conifer plantations on former ancient woodland sites to provide a one-off source of timber and replant with appropriate native broadleaved species.
- Support brewers and growers to exploit the resurgence in interest in traditional ales, local produce and current research into new hop varieties to revive the hop industry.
- Support initiatives to promote local, historical varieties of fruit.
- Promote creation of new allotments or restoration of community orchards within greenspaces as part of quality GI and recreation provision in new development.
- Encourage use of Sussex cattle for conservation grazing locally and commercial beef production, supporting local marketing initiatives which promote its local and heritage qualities.
- Incorporate short rotation coppice into the existing pattern of mixed types of woodland, including coppice, taking care to maintain the balance between woodland and other land uses and avoid over-planting which could adversely affect character.
- Encourage opportunities for increasing provision of woodfuel by increasing the area of native woodland, improving management of existing woodlands and supporting initiatives to explore and promote local markets for sustainable woodfuel.
- Support the potential Low Weald "Forest District" initiative for creation of woodland for woodfuel, including reinstating traditional coppice management to produce woodfuel in appropriate locations for local use.
- Identify opportunities for the restoration and creation of wetlands as identified by the Low Weald Wetland Vision.
- Work with partners to enhance carbon sequestration by increasing soil organic matter on cultivated soil and reducing the frequency or area of cultivation.
- Encourage extensive grazing and best practice in soil management, particularly in areas prone to flooding, to reduce compaction and capping and increase water infiltration rates.
- Increase regulation of soil erosion through landscape-scale improvements in soil management and more informed nutrient management, including the application of Nitrate Vulnerable Zone guidelines.
- Encourage agricultural practices that retain permanent cover and build up organic matter on cultivated land, especially on free draining loamy soils.
- Restore hedgerows, shaws and buffer farmland to control velocity of cross-land water flows to reduce soil erosion risks.
- Improve agricultural practices to reduce problems of localised soil compaction (e.g. by reducing cultivation where appropriate and adopting extensive grazing regime), reduce soil erosion risks around watercourses and increase organic matter content to improve soil structure and cohesion.
- Enhance the network and connectivity of suitable habitats in the agricultural landscape by creating conservation headlands, arable field margins and meadows to provide biodiversity

benefits by linking and creating a network of habitats and provide foraging, resting and breeding sites for pollinators.

- Encourage nectar rich planting in domestic gardens and public spaces.
- Re-link the fragmented landscape by restoring hedgerows and shaws and creating corridors using field margins, road verges and rivers to allow dispersal and movement of predator species.
- Maintain and expand the area of semi-natural habitats, including the restoration of ponds, throughout the Low Weald to provide a range of niches to support pest regulating species including invertebrates, birds and mammals.
- Maximise the effectiveness of mechanisms such as agri-environment schemes, by encouraging the use of field margins, beetle banks and headlands in arable land to encourage pest regulating species in close proximity to food crops requiring pollination.

Pevensey Levels

- Support and extend existing "local food brand" initiatives, such as Farmer's Weekly Dairy Farmer of the Year awards for the marketing of organic produce and forging local identity, or the RSPB's wildlife-friendly farming award
- Control Dutch elm disease and encourage research initiatives to prevent infection and breed resistant strains.
- Support promotion and use of traditional breeds such as Sussex cattle within the Pevensey Levels.
- Incorporate new allotments or community orchards within greenspaces as part of new development proposals.
- Explore opportunities for planting short-rotation coppice in wetter, less fertile areas where it compliments existing habitat and helps regulate water flow and quality, but does not impact heavily on the characteristic open landscape, damage buried archaeological features or obscure heritage assets.
- Increase carbon sequestration by increasing organic matter inputs on cultivated land where this does not impact on the fragile ecology of the area and by reducing the frequency and/or area of cultivation.
- Maintain the integrity of the hydrological system in order to protect and improve soil quality.
- Encourage creation of significant areas of attractive wetlands with restoration and further expansion of reed beds and wet grassland, both on the Levels and as part of sustainable urban drainage systems within adjacent built up areas.

- Encourage reinstatement of permanent pasture from arable to reduce soil erosion and need for artificial fertilizer, and encourage reduced fertiliser inputs on cultivated soils by ensuring Nitrate Vulnerable Zone guidelines are followed by farmers and land managers.
- Encourage best practice farming methods to reduce agricultural run-off such as the use of shallow cultivation techniques; maintenance of ditches and associated water control structures, and/or reinstatement of permanent pasture and introduction of grassland margins to arable fields.
- Maintain high water levels, particularly in areas with soils with high peat content, to avoid desiccation and oxidisation.
- Encourage agricultural practices that build up organic matter, reduce the risk of soil compaction and thus improve water infiltration.
- Ensure that livestock numbers are appropriate to prevent problems associated with over-grazing.
- Create multi-functional green spaces incorporating sympathetic management for pollination including appropriate management of road verges into cutting regimes, adding to the network of nectar sources close to pollinated food crops.
- Support the East Sussex Elm Protection Scheme and other measures to control tree diseases and pests.

2.6 Water Resources

2.6.1 Wealden's water resources provide a vital function in supporting the health of the natural environment and well-being of communities within the study area. For example, the numerous rivers and streams provide important blue corridors for the dispersal of wildlife between otherwise fragmented and isolated habitats within the agricultural landscape and urban areas. These blue corridors can also provide access links for connecting people between settlements and the surrounding landscape via walking and cycling routes. The network of drainage ditches within the Pevensey Levels is also of international nature conservation importance as wetland habitats for rare and endangered invertebrates and other fauna. These 'blue infrastructure' assets make a significant contribution to Wealden's GI network, although there are a number of opportunities to further improve the condition of water resources within the study area.

Audit

Catchment Areas

2.6.2 There are a number of rivers which either have their source within or pass through the study area. The main rivers and their catchment areas are outlined within **Table 2.9** below.

Table 2.9: Main River Catchments within the Study Area

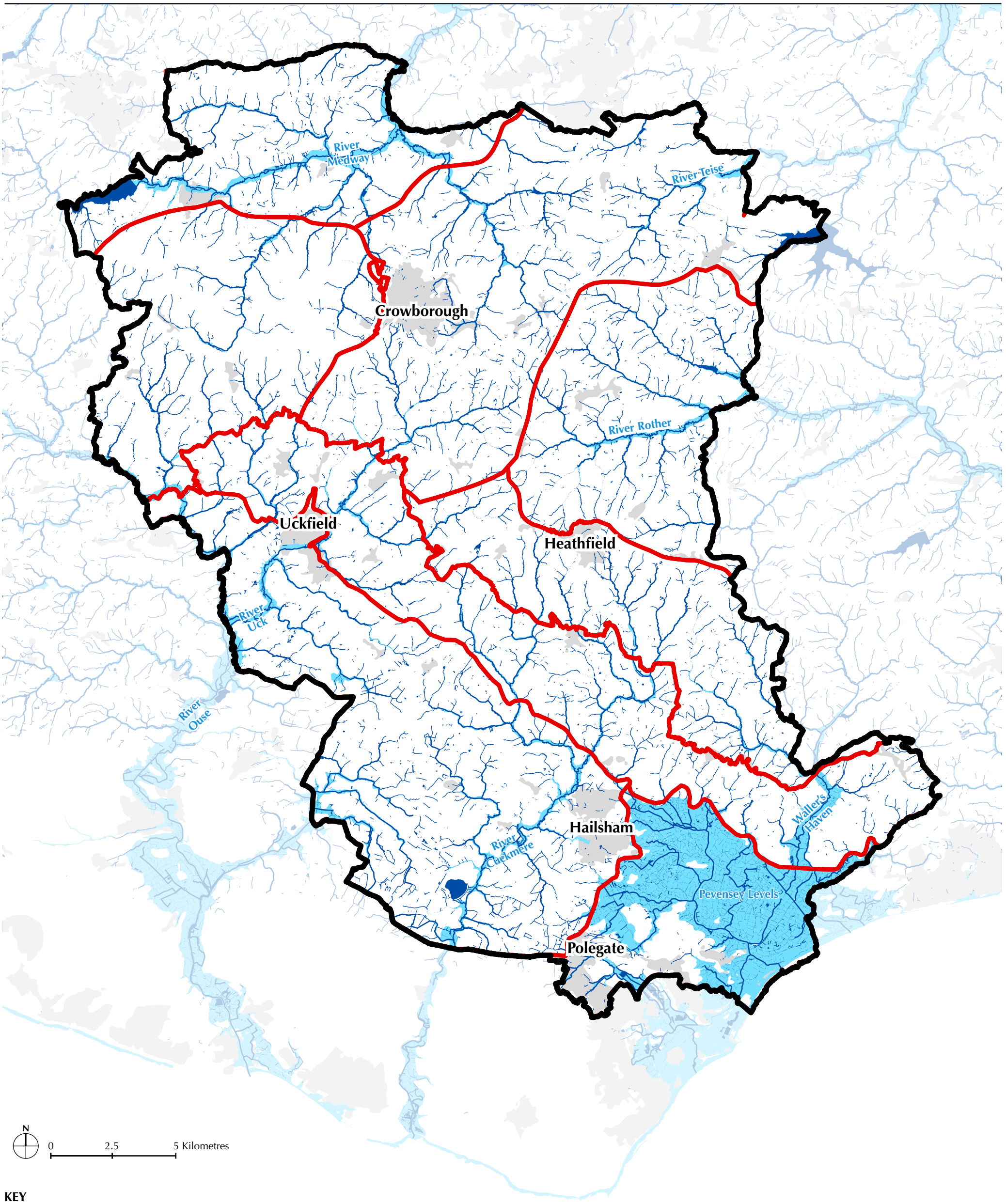
Catchment	Description
*The **River Uck***	*The Uck rises from tributaries surrounding Huggets Furnace and flows south-west and is joined by other streams before flowing through Uckfield. It is joined by the Framfield Stream from the south at Uckfield. This catchment includes the larger urban area of Uckfield and the smaller urban areas of Buxted and Hadlow Down.*
*The **River Ouse***	*The Ouse rises in the Mid Sussex District and flows in a south east direction forming the western boundary of the WDC SFRA study area. It flows through the study area near Fletching and then flows south along the study boundary. It is joined at Sharpesbridge by the Shortbridge Stream and converges with the River Uck and the Isfield Mill Stream north of Isfield. The catchment includes the urban areas of Nutley, Danehill, Maresfield and Isfield.*
*The **River Medway***	*The Medway flows from the Sevenoaks District along the northern boundary of the WDC SFRA study area and enters the study area near Groombridge, where it is joined by an unnamed tributary from the south. The Medway flows along the Sussex Border path and passes the village of Hartfield to the south. It continues west and flows through the centre of Forest Row. The River Medway catchment includes the urban areas of Forest Row, Rotherfield Groombridge and Hartfield. There has been significant historic*

Catchment	Description
	flooding along the River Medway; notably in 1960, 1968 and 2000.
River Teise	*Flows from the north-east of the study area into Tunbridge Wells District. It flows along the north-eastern boundary near Bayham Lake. The River Teise does not flow through Wealden District however, its catchment's and headwaters are located within Wealden. Approximately 30% of the River Teise catchment area is within the Wealden District. The catchment includes the urban area of Wadhurst and a number of smaller rural settlements.*
River Rother	*Rising near Mayfield in the east of the study area the Rother flows in an easterly direction before flowing into Rother District. 30% of the River Rother's catchment area is within the study area. The catchment of the River Rother includes the urban area of Mayfield and a number of smaller rural settlements.*
Waller's Haven	*Waller's Haven is the eastern most catchment. It drains an upland catchment of grazing marsh into the Pevensey Levels.*
Willingdon Levels	*This is the low lying area between the South Downs to the west and the Pevensey Levels to the east. The catchment is heavily urbanised including the towns / settlements of Eastbourne, Willingdon and Polegate.*
Pevensey Levels	*Pevensey Levels consists of a network of artificially drained channels and constitutes some of the lowest lying topography in the area. Pevensey Bay and parts of Hailsham are within the catchment area.*
Cuckmere River	*The Cuckmere rises from tributaries around Heathfield and flows south through the South Downs to its outfall into the English Channel west of Eastbourne. The lower catchment is tidal and the upper catchment is fluvial with many tributaries. The catchment is predominately rural with a few urban areas including Heathfield, Hailsham and Alfriston.*

2.6.3 As shown on **Figure 2.5 and Table 2.7**, there are nine main rivers with associated floodplains in the study area - the Medway, Rother, Ouse, Uck, Teise and Cuckmere, as well as the Pevensey and Willingdon Levels and Waller's Haven. There is also a dense pattern of smaller watercourses, notably in the north of the study area where there are numerous streams within steep sided wooded valleys or gills. These gill streams are typically flashy in nature as they react quickly to heavy rainfall events, a characteristic which can be seen further downstream on rivers such as the Uck where gradients are sufficiently steep. Weir Wood, Arlington and Bewl Reservoirs are major waterbodies within the study area.

Water Quality

2.6.4 The Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000) is a European Union Directive, committing member states to achieve good water quality and quantity across all water bodies, including



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FIGURE 2.5
WATER RESOURCES

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coastal marine water. The Directive steers much of the work of the Environment Agency, which produces catchment and river basin management plans.

2.6.5 At the regional scale, the study area is covered by Thames and the South East River Basin Districts (RBDs). The Environment Agency produced the South East RBD River Basin and the Thames RBD River Basin Management Plans, which together identify the pressures facing the water environment within the study area. The South East RBD Plan[80] highlights that 98% of water bodies are in good chemical status. However, only 15% of water bodies are in 'good' ecological status. Equally within the Thames RDB[81]; 99% of water bodies are in 'good' chemical status. However, only 8% of water bodies are in 'good' ecological status.

2.6.6 Water quality within the study area is shown in **Table 2.10**. Overall, this shows a similar picture to that occurring at a regional scale. The majority of water bodies have 'poor' to 'moderate' ecological status or potential, whilst the most water bodies have 'good' chemical status.

Table 2.10: Water Quality in the Study Area[82]

Catchment	**Water Quality**						
	Ecological Status or Potential					Chemical Status	
	Bad	Poor	Moderate	Good	High	Fail	Good
Upper Ouse Catchment Area Number of waterbodies: 26	3	8	14	1	0	0	26
Pevensey Catchment Area Number of waterbodies: 8	0	3	5	0	0	0	8
Upper Rother Number of waterbodies: 6	0	3	2	1	0	0	6
Upper Cuckmere Number of waterbodies: 7	0	2	4	1	0	1	6
Teise Number of waterbodies: 9	0	1	8	0	0	0	9
Upper Medway Number of waterbodies: 12	1	3	7	1	0	0	12

2.6.7 In terms of marine water quality, bathing water at Pevensey Bay along the coast of the study area is 'excellent' quality based on 2016 sample data[83].

[80] Water for Life and Livelihoods, Part 1: South East RBD River Basin Management Plan (2015)
[81] Water for Life and Livelihoods, Part 1: Thames RBD River Basin Management Plan (2015)
[82] (Environmental Agency, 2015 Cycle II)
[83] https://environment.data.gov.uk/bwq/profiles/profile.html?site=ukj2201-14400

2.6.8 Farming practices can affect water quality. Within the study area, two catchments have been identified as priority catchments for catchment sensitive farming where water quality is particularly likely to be affected by farming practices. The Pevensey Levels Catchment is a priority due to the risk of livestock manures and effluent entering bathing waters at Pevensey Bay, abstraction and flow regimes, and inputs from water treatment works. The Medway Catchment is also a priority as a result of high levels of metaldehyde (found in slug pellets)[84].

Flood Risk

2.6.9 Wealden District Council has a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment[85] as part of its Local Plan evidence base. This assessment identifies areas potentially at risk from flooding across the study area. Within the study area, flood risk is experienced from three main sources; fluvial, surface and groundwater and tidal flooding. Each type of flooding presents its own type of risk and management solution.

2.6.10 Fluvial flood risk is the main source of flooding in the study area. Forest Row, Crowborough, Hailsham, Heathfield, Pevensey Bay and Uckfield are all identified as having some of the highest flood risk in the County. The Sussex Resilience Forum has identified six areas of high risk for multi-agency response planning. These include Uckfield and Pevensey Bay within the study area[86].

2.6.11 The whole of the Pevensey Levels is low lying and vulnerable to the effects of climate change, particularly coastal flooding. Sea defences consist mainly of open beach managed by periodic shingle replenishments, maintenance of groynes, recycling of material around the beach and re-profiling during and after storms. In the long term, these measures may need reviewing as sea levels rise. Managing the environmentally important Pevensey Levels is dependent on careful and continuous water management through a system of sluices and pumps.

2.6.12 Historically, Pevensey has seen numerous major breaches along the coastline[87]. These areas suffer from 'tidal locking' where high tides prevent the discharge of water to the sea after periods of heavy rainfall. The Shoreline Management Plan's policy is to 'hold the line' along this stretch of coast by maintaining the current management of the coast in the long-term. Ultimately, as a result of climate change, this will involve increasing coastal engineering works to retain the freshwater habitats and infrastructure behind the sea defences[88].

[84] Priority Catchment Target Summary, Natural England (2011-15)
[85] Wealden Local Plan SFRA (in preparation)
[86] East Sussex Flood Risk Strategy, ESCC (2016-2026)
[87] South Foreland to Beachy Head Shoreline Management Plan Environment Agency (2006)
[88] South Foreland to Beachy Head Shoreline Management Plan Environment Agency (2006)

2.6.13 In summary, the areas potentially at risk from fluvial and tidal flooding across the study area include:

- **River Teise:** there have not been any flooding incidences to date within the study area.
- **River Cuckmere**: flooding occurs fairly frequently to a small number of properties, although there are no major urban areas at risk. Most of the areas susceptible to flooding are outside of the study area (east of Alfriston, west of Litlington and west of Westdene). The settlement of Horam floods from the Cuckmere River due to a lack of capacity of culverts under roads. Parts of Hellingly are also often flooded due to a number of properties being located on the floodplain.
- **River Uck (Ouse)**: major flooding events have previously occurred in Uckfield due to channel capacity being exceeded.
- **River Rother**: there have not been any flooding incidences to date within the study area.
- **Pevensey Levels:** the area is the most significant floodplain in the study area, where ground water levels can be very high. In addition to the international value of the Levels for wildlife, it also provides important ecosystem services such as flood attenuation and protection from both fluvial and coastal flooding. Therefore the water systems within the Pevensey Levels are very vulnerable to change.
- **Willingdon Levels:** Polegate and developments on the margins of the Willingdon Levels are considered to be at flood risk. Past flooding has occurred as a result of lack of capacity of the river systems in the area.
- **Waller's Haven:** there is no identified flood risk to properties from the Waller's Haven, although some transport links may be exposed.
- **River Medway:** previous flooding events have occurred in Forest Row, Hartfield, Groombridge, Eridge Station and Bells Yew Green due to general causes such as insufficient channel capacity, constrictions at structures (e.g. bridges), debris blockages or inappropriate development in areas vulnerable to flooding.

2.6.14 Other sources of flooding within or adjacent to the study area include:

- The areas surrounding Polegate, Willingdon, Eastbourne and Hailsham suffer from flooding as a result of lack of capacity in the existing drainage infrastructure and/or the speed at which storm water is delivered to the Brooks.
- The areas around Pevensey and Willingdon suffer from flooding through overland flow.
- Uckfield is identified at being at risk of flooding from overland flow from urban areas.
- Buxted is also at risk of overland flow.

- The settlements of Uckfield, Crowborough, Mayfield, Wadhurst, Forest Row and Hartfield have suffered from flooding as a result of lack of capacity in the existing drainage infrastructure and/or the speed at which storm water is delivered to watercourses[89].

Needs and Opportunities

2.6.15 Water resources within the study area, including the internationally important wetland of the Pevensey Levels, are key GI assets that make a significant contribution to Wealden's GI network. These assets contribute to a number of important ecosystems services including regulating water quality and flow; regulating coastal erosion and flooding; biodiversity; geodiversity; climate regulation; regulating soil quality and erosion; sense of place/inspiration; sense of history; tranquillity; and recreation.

Water Quality

2.6.16 The water systems within the study area contribute significantly to the GI network, as a result of the connectivity they provide. Water quality, the natural function of water systems and associated riparian habitats, all have the potential to be integrated into and improved through GI in support of the Environment Agency's relevant catchment and river basin management plans.

2.6.17 The South East RBD River Basin Management Plan[90] and the Thames RDB River Basin Management Plan[91] set targets to improve water resources. GI planning and catchment management have many complementary aims. Development of GI networks can deliver multiple benefits for water environments including reducing water pollution and helping to meet water quality targets. As a result of their overall status, there is both a need and the potential opportunity to use GI to help to address water quality, particularly in terms of ecology to improve the water environment and assist in meeting the EU Water Framework Directive targets.

2.6.18 There are considerable opportunities to work with the two Rivers Trusts in the study area (the Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust[92] and the South East Rivers Trust[93]) and local communities to deliver some of the WFD water quality objectives by making improvements to riparian habitats and fisheries.

[89] Green Infrastructure Background Paper, Wealden District Council (2011)
[90] Water for Life and Livelihoods, Part 1: South East RBD River Basin Management Plan (2015)
[91] Water for Life and Livelihoods, Part 1: Thames RBD River Basin Management Plan (2015)
[92] http://www.oart.org.uk/
[93] http://www.southeastriverstrust.org/

Flood Risk

2.6.19 East Sussex County Council is a Lead Local Flood Authority with a role to provide a strategic overview of local flooding and to work in partnership to manage local flood risk. As part of this role, ESCC have produced a Local Flood Risk Management Strategy[94], providing a 10 year framework for the management of local flood risk.

2.6.20 Community-scale SuDS, rain gardens, green roofs, public wetlands and ponds are all examples of GI assets that have a role to play in local flood risk management. Provisions are made to increase the uptake of new and retrofitted systems in the Flood Water Management Act (2010), providing a framework for their management and maintenance. Well-designed SuDS can increase habitats for biodiversity, provide urban greenspaces and increase community resilience to flood risk.

2.6.21 The study area contains three key upper reaches of rivers prone to flooding, where flooding occurs outside of the Wealden District. These include the Medway, Teise (Medway) and Uck (Ouse). In these areas, partnership landscape-scale approaches to minimising flood risk are likely to be needed.

2.6.22 The NPPF calls for new development to be located away from areas of highest flood risk. Within the study area, flood risk is experienced from three main sources; fluvial, surface and groundwater and tidal flooding. Fluvial flood risk is the main source of flooding in the study area, focused primarily around the River Cuckmere and River Uck. Alongside the physical damage to property and infrastructure caused by flooding, health related impacts (both physical and psychological) and environmental impacts such as pollution of watercourses can also be keenly felt.

2.6.23 GI has the potential to help build local resilience to flood risk within communities. Improving resilience to flood risk can lead to more sustainable communities and help to address likely future changes such as the effects of climate change. The government provides guidance[95] for integrating climate change adaptation and mitigation measures into the Local Planning process. This guidance recommends the use of multifunctional GI to amongst other things, help to manage flooding and enable species to adapt to climate change through the provision of a permeable environment.

[94] East Sussex Local Flood Risk Management Strategy, ESCC (2016-2026)
[95] http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/climate-change/how-can-adaptation-and-mitigation-approaches-be-integrated/

2.6.24 GI forms an important element of flood risk management. Through the enhancement and/or re-creation of functional floodplains, water meadows, floodplain woodland and the provision of integrated Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS), GI can deliver multiple benefits for wildlife, and landscape character whilst reducing flood risk. The combination of water management with GI provision can provide space for flood storage, slowing conveyance which in turn can reduce the causes and impacts of flooding. Water People Places is a guide for masterplanning SuDS into developments[96], which offers guidance to planners, developers and landscape architects in the south east and is promoted by East Sussex County Council alongside their own guidance[97].

Summary

2.6.25 In summary, working with partners, developers, local communities, landowners and other relevant bodies, the key strategic opportunities for GI to help address identified needs for the sustainable management of water quality and flood risk across the study area are considered to be:

High Weald

- Increase water retention and reduce run-off to increase percolation of water and thereby increase availability in periods of low rainfall.
- Work across sectors and in a coordinated and strategic way to protect water resources including through the promotion of efficient and sustainable use of water resources.
- Ensure green and blue infrastructure measures are embedded into new developments to help safeguard water resources, harvest and store water and promote water efficiency.
- Encourage adoption of integrated water and land management strategies for the High Weald river catchments in accordance with the Water Framework Directive.
- Encourage the integration of environmentally sensitive water policy objectives through land management practices such as agri-environment schemes, water resource and land use planning to ensure an appropriate balance is maintained between water supply and demand.
- Encourage the use of winter water storage reservoirs on farms and restore and expand the network of ponds.
- Protect the water resources of the High Weald by promoting good agricultural and land management practices.
- Promote sustainable use of water resources, protecting the aquifer, reservoirs and surface waters from over abstraction and safeguarding water supply.

[96] https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/flooding/sustainabledrainagesystems
[97] https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/media/1995/guide-to-sustainable-drainage-systems-in-east-sussex2.pdf

- Promote the sustainable recreational use of reservoirs within the High Weald.
- Work at the catchment scale to reduce surface and groundwater pollution, while simultaneously improving aquifer recharge, sharing best practice and adopting a collaborative approach to sustainable water management.
- Identify the potential of naturally functioning rivers and flood plains in the High Weald to regulate water quality, reduce flood risk and enhance wildlife and fisheries.
- Promote the sustainable water principles of the Environment Agency's River Basin Management Plans, Catchment Flood Management Plans and Water Companies' Water Resource Management.
- Explore opportunities to buffer watercourses and reservoirs and restore natural river geomorphology to improve water quality and reduce flood risk in settlements by regulating water flow.
- Work with land owners, farmers and domestic property owners with private waste water systems to address issues arising from point source pollution (such as improving farm infrastructure and finding innovative solutions to the treatment of domestic waste water).
- Promote river restoration policies that encourage use of natural processes to reduce flooding, improve aquatic systems, increase amenity value, provide ecosystem services and reduce costs of maintaining current flood management systems.
- Seek opportunities for integrated water and land management strategies for river catchments to reduce flood risk and increase water retention within catchments, learning from best practice examples.
- Maximise opportunities for natural processes to take place by restoring and expanding the functional flood plains along the rivers to bring about a reduction in flooding and increases in biodiversity, water quality and amenity value.
- Explore opportunities in the valley bottoms for pushing flood flows out of eroded water courses onto grassland and woodland to slow down flood flows.

Low Weald

- Encourage sustainable water use by homes and businesses supplied from the catchments in the Low Weald.
- Investigate opportunities for increasing water provision through additional storage for seasonal flood waters in the Low Weald.
- Ensure future development addresses water resource planning and encompasses the highest standards for water efficiency and flood resilience measures, such as incorporation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS), green roofs, and rain gardens for example into the design of new buildings and other infrastructure.

- Manage farmland in line with the principles established under the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative, such as improved drainage, hard bases for livestock feeders and gateways, roofing of manure stores, better pesticide treatment and providing alternative drinking sources to keep livestock away from watercourses.
- Buffer watercourses and reservoirs by building up vegetation, including woodland on banks to slow run-off and improve water quality, regulate soil erosion and reduce subsequent sedimentation.
- Promote responsible use of water by domestic and business users and ensure new development includes sustainable urban drainage systems.
- Control spread of non-native invasive species along riverbanks.
- Identify where there is scope for mitigating existing flood risk through a combination of measures, including expanding and managing areas of semi-natural habitats that help to reduce cross-land water flows and have increased water infiltration properties.
- Avoid inappropriate development in flood risk areas, and minimise runoff from new development, by integrating water storage features in the form of semi-natural habitats into new developments.

Pevensey Levels

- Manage the drainage network on the Pevensey Levels to control water levels for the benefit of wildlife and to ensure community resilience from both fluvial and coastal flood risks.
- Maintain and enhance water levels and quality in new development such as the provision of buffer areas to development and limits to discharge rates to protect the integrity of the Pevensey Levels.
- Reduce the demand for water abstraction through promoting public awareness of water conservation and creating more on-farm water storage.
- Promote water conservation measures in new and existing development to support existing water resources and help manage demand.
- Safeguard natural water supplies, such as springs.
- Create extensive wet grassland to contribute to resource protection under the Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative.
- Encourage reduced fertiliser inputs on cultivated soils by ensuring Nitrate Vulnerable Zone guidelines are followed by farmers and land managers in Pevensey Levels and also in adjacent areas which supply much of the area's fresh water.
- Eradicate non-native invasive species, particularly along riverbanks and promote awareness of the importance of biosecurity, particularly in areas of heavy public usage, to prevent their spread.
- Support initiatives to reduce pollutants such as improvements to water treatment systems.

- Explore greater utilisation of the Pevensey Levels floodplain as a flood storage area in line with the Catchment Flood Management Plan.
- Encourage sustainable land use practices to reduce run-off rates from agricultural land.
- Develop a plan for river restoration and naturalisation, with the objectives of reducing run-off and contributing to wider catchment benefits.
- Manage water bodies, including ditches, to increase structural diversity and help retain winter floodwater for longer and provide refuges for species vulnerable to inundation events.
- Encourage agricultural practices that build up organic matter, reduce the risk of soil compaction and improve water infiltration.
- Ensure that sustainable urban drainage systems are incorporated into new and existing development.
- Reflect the priorities of the Shoreline Management Plan and promote the natural adaptation and regeneration of coastal habitats as sea levels rise.
- Explore ways of assimilating new or reinforced flood defences into local landscapes with minimum visual impact and disruption to existing habitat or species movement.
- Prevent aggregate extraction which would reduce the effectiveness of the sea defences, and discourage activities that may compromise the flood protection abilities of wetland behind the coastal defences.

2.7 Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

2.7.1 There is growing evidence that access to and enjoyment of natural and semi-natural greenspaces enhances people's health and well-being, particularly in areas of social deprivation. Providing access to natural greenspace and a network of green access routes within and surrounding the study area, particularly for communities in areas of social deprivation, is a key priority of the Wealden Community Strategy and Wealden Corporate Strategy.

Audit

Accessible Natural Greenspace

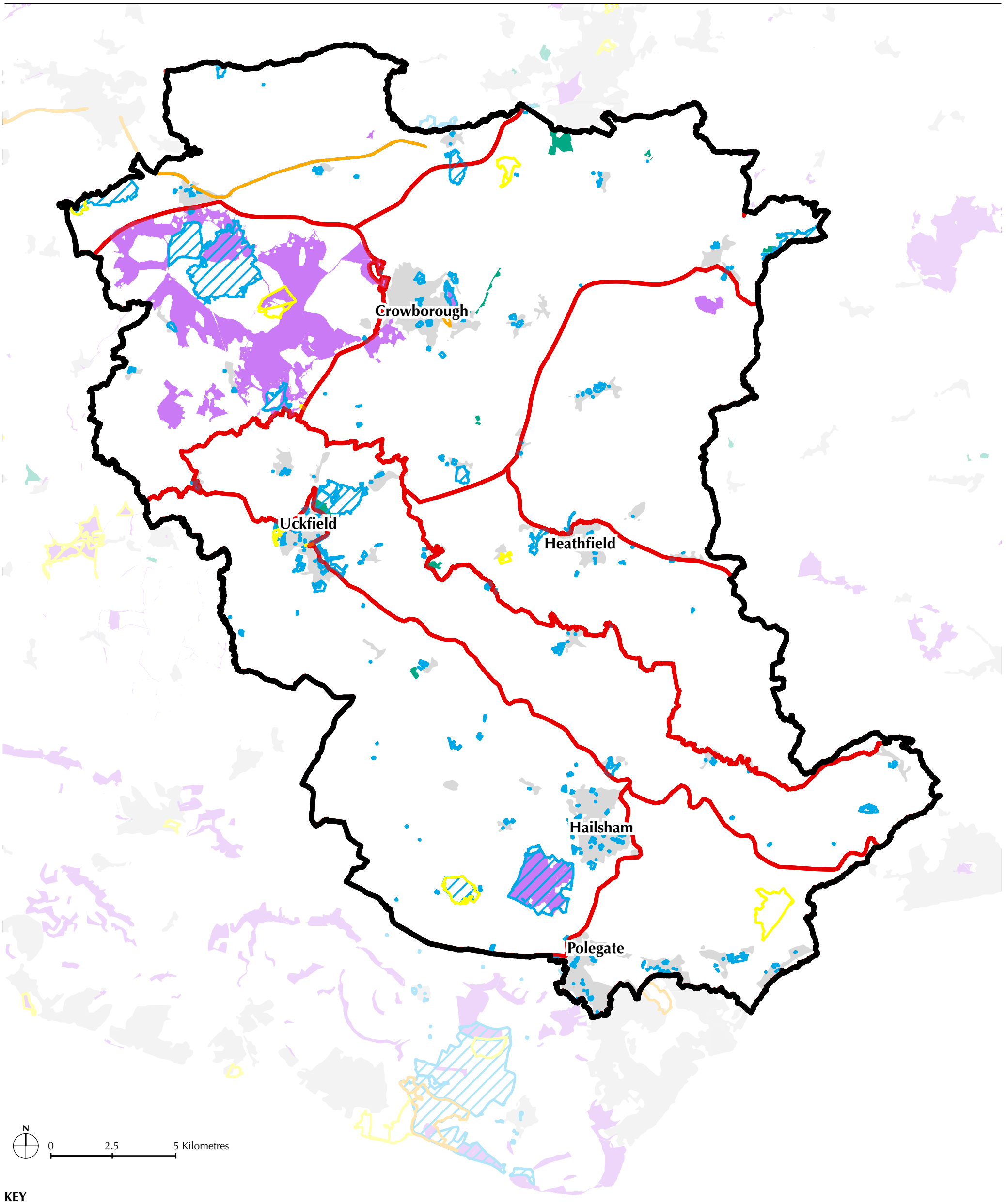
2.7.2 For the purpose of this GI Study, Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANG) refers to natural greenspace (largely outside urban areas) that is normally available for public access on foot, providing opportunities for open access for informal recreational activities[98]. Open access may be provided to the public either under statutory provision (e.g. under the Countryside and Rights of Ways Act), dedication by public landowners (e.g. by local authorities) or via voluntary access agreements with private landowners (e.g. under Environmental Stewardship agreements). The permanence of these access arrangements varies from permanent rights of access secured through legislation, to temporary access secured through voluntary arrangements.

2.7.3 Whether a natural greenspace is accessible or not was considered against Natural England's definition of accessible greenspace, which states that *'accessible greenspace are places that are available for the general public to use free of charge and without time restrictions (although some sites may be closed to the public overnight and there may be fees for parking a vehicle)'*[99].

2.7.4 For the purpose of this Study, natural greenspace is defined as *'places where human control and activities are not intensive so that a feeling of naturalness is allowed to predominate'*[100].

2.7.5 Existing ANG in Wealden District was identified and mapped by CBA using a Geographic Information System to build an inventory of ANG using available digital datasets. Only sites with open access to the general public have been included. **Figure 2.6a** shows the distribution

[98] Nature Nearby: Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (Natural England, 2010)
[99] Nature Nearby: Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (Natural England, 2010)
[100] Nature Nearby: Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (Natural England, 2010)



KEY

Wealden Local Plan Area

GI Zones

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

Open Spaces

CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land

Country Parks

Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves

Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

*From the Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2016) - Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

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FIGURE 2.6a
EXISTING ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

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of existing ANG within the study area. These include the following accessible natural greenspace types:

- Open Spaces (allotments; amenity greenspace; churchyards and cemeteries; parks and recreation grounds[101])
- Open Access Land (designated under the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000)
- Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

2.7.6 Approximately 5,283ha (6.8%) of land within the study area (77,542ha) is ANG[102]. The distribution of existing ANG within the study area by parish is shown in **Table 2.11**. Overall, this shows that distribution of ANG is not consistent across the District, with much of the ANG concentrated in parishes in the northeast and south.

Table 2.11: Existing Accessible Natural Greenspace within the Study Area by Parish

Parish	Accessible Natural Greenspace (Ha)
Alciston*	46.7ha
Arlington	301.4ha
Berwick*	1.0ha
Buxted	221.2ha
Chalvington with Ripe	0.5ha
Chiddingly	7.4ha
Crowborough	167.8ha
Danehill	600.4ha
East Hoathly with Halland	14.7ha
Fletching	129.2ha
Forest Row	717.3ha
Framfield	44.8ha
Frant	100.2ha
Hadlow Down	35.1ha
Hailsham	29.5ha
Hartfield	1017.5ha
Heathfield and Waldron	48.6ha
Hellingly	22.2ha
Herstmonceux	3.4ha
Hooe	13.1ha
Horam	10.0ha
Isfield	2.4ha
Laughton	0.7ha
Little Horsted	0.3ha
Long Man*	365.7ha
Maresfield	825.4ha
Mayfield and Five Ashes	14.4ha
Ninfield	3.0ha
Pevensey	164.4ha

[101] As identified and mapped for the Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (Ethos for Wealden DC, forthcoming)
[102] Includes all ANG, not just sites >2ha

Parish	Accessible Natural Greenspace (Ha)
Polegate*	21.1ha
Rotherfield	47.9ha
Selmeston	0.3ha
Uckfield	76.6ha
Wadhurst	141.2ha
Warbleton	0.8ha
Wartling	0.8ha
Westham	10.7ha
Willingdon and Levington*	59.2ha
Withyham	250.4ha

* These include areas of the parish that fall outside the study area.

Access Links

2.7.7 As shown on **Figure 2.7**, both the study area and its surroundings within East Sussex are well-connected by an extensive network of Public Rights of Way (PRoW). There is approximately 1395km of rights of way within the study area, which includes bridleways and long-distance promoted routes. Overall East Sussex County has 3,558km of PRoW[103]. The study area is broadly covered by a fairly uniform spatial distribution of rights of way; however the network is more fragmented in places.

2.7.8 The urban areas within the study area are generally well-connected to the countryside via the network of rights of way and National Cycle Network (NCN) Routes. Uckfield and Crowborough both lack a green route running through the town centre. Town-scale access links are discussed further in **Section 4.0**.

2.7.9 Two long-distance green corridors provide shared-use access through the study area linking together a number of settlements. These routes provide connectivity for wildlife, particularly through settlements alongside access and recreation links for people. The Cuckoo Trail links Heathfield to Eastbourne and the Forest Way runs from Groombridge to East Grinstead along the north of the study area. **Table 2.12** identifies the promoted routes and National Cycling Network (NCN) Routes within the study area.

Table 2.12: Long Distance Promoted Routes within the Study Area

Route	Description
Promoted Routes and Trails	
1066 Country Walk	50km walk running from Rye to Pevensey; exploring sites linked with the Battle of Hastings and includes Pevensey, Westham, Willingdon and Wartling. This route links through to Rother District.

[103] Rights of Way Improvement Plan, ESCC (2007-17)

Route	Description
Sussex Border Path	256km route exploring the inland border of Sussex from Thorney Island in West Sussex to Rye including Forest Row, Hartfield and Withyham. This includes part of the Bewl Water Circular - a 20km multi-user trail around Bewl Water reservoir.
Sussex Ouse Valley Way	42km continuous path starting at the river Ouse at Lower Beeding in West Sussex to Seaford Bay in East Sussex. It runs along the study area's western boundary and passes close to Fletching and Isfield.
Tunbridge Wells Circular	44km circular walk. Within the study area it passes through Frant, Withyham and Eridge Green.
Vanguard Way	This 107km runs from Croydon to Newhaven running through Wealden District.
Wealdway	130km walk from Gravesend, Kent to Eastbourne. The walk passes north to south through the study area, and runs through the Ashdown Forest.
High Weald Landscape Trail	A 145km route that meanders through the AONB from east to west linking key ridge-top villages and historic gardens. This route passes through Eridge Green, Groombridge and Hartfield.
Cycle Routes	
South Coast National Cycle Network Route 2	The route runs from Brighton to Camber including the Cuckmere Valley, Alfriston, Berwick, Arlington and Polegate.
London to Eastbourne National Cycle Network Route 21	The route runs from London to Eastbourne running north to south through the district including Eridge, Heathfield, Hailsham and Polegate. The route also includes the Forest Way, which runs from East Grinstead to Groombridge and the Cuckoo Trail.

2.7.10 Across the study area, there are numerous shorter self-guided walks, circular routes and cycling routes developed and promoted by different organisations. Examples include Welly Walks produced for local schools, promoting family friendly local walks which provide local landscape interpretation, and are used by schools to teach key parts of the curriculum. These routes are produced and interpreted by the High Weald AONB Unit. The long-distance multi-user route around Bewl Water lies partly within the study area. East Sussex County Council's 'Paths to Prosperity' initiative promotes attractive, short, circular walks aimed at boosting the rural economy. The Wealden Walks[104] publication promotes walking routes within each of the parishes, providing interpretation in the free guidebook.

[104] http://www.wealden.gov.uk/Wealden/Leisure/Walking_in_Wealden/PHCS_Wealden_Walks.aspx

2.7.11 In 2009/10, a baseline condition survey was undertaken of the condition of Public Rights of Way within East Sussex. According to this survey, 99% of the network is available to path users, and results from the 2010/11 survey shows that within the 'High Priority' heavily used routes, 90% of assets (bridges, signposts, gates and stiles) are in good condition. This highlights the rights of way network for East Sussex is broadly in 'good' condition.

Needs and Opportunities

Health and Well-being

2.7.12 Accessible natural greenspace provision and access links within the study area are key GI assets that make a significant contribution to Wealden's GI network by providing important health and well-being benefits. In addition to the provision of recreation services, these assets also contribute to a number of other important ecosystems services including sense of place/inspiration; sense of history; tranquillity; biodiversity; and geodiversity.

2.7.13 The health and well-being benefits of access to greenspace are increasingly recognised. There is a growing body of evidence that greenspace in urban and rural areas enhances child development and improves physical and mental health outcomes[105]. The evidence suggests that good access to greenspaces can assist with the delivery of national and local government priorities for increasing life expectancy and reducing health inequality through increased levels of physical activity and mental health and well-being improvements. Investment in the provision of accessible and well-managed greenspace can provide multiple benefits and has the potential to provide cost savings across multiple sectors, particularly in health care. A recent study by the Land Trust[106] has demonstrated that every £1 invested in greenspace contributed £30 in health and well-being benefits.

2.7.14 The Marmot Review[107] builds a strategic review of health inequalities in England post 2010. It concludes that focusing solely on the most disadvantaged will not sufficiently reduce health inequalities. Action must be universal, but proportionate to the level of disadvantage. The Marmot Review promotes a number of objectives to address health inequalities. Environmental conditions are significant in achieving sustainable communities and reducing health inequalities, and many relate to GI such as access to greenspaces, air and water quality, flood risk and biodiversity. The Review encourages local authorities to tackle these objectives through policy development and integrated decision-making.

[105] UK National Ecosystem Assessment (UNEP-WCMC, 2011)
[106] http://thelandtrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/The-Value-of-our-Green-Spaces-January-2016.pdf
[107] Fair Society, Healthy Lives, The Marmot Review Executive Summary (2010)

2.7.15 Within the study area, areas of deprivation are mostly concentrated in the south around Hailsham where some areas are recognised as the most deprived 20% of areas in England[108]. Parts of the coast and areas within Polegate and Uckfield are also deprived. The Index of Multiple Deprivation shows a summary of deprivation based upon seven domains covering indicators such as health deprivation and living environment deprivation. People exposed to poor quality environments are more likely to experience poorer health outcomes than people who enjoy good quality environments[109]. Pevensey and Westham have significantly higher than expected elective admissions for mental and behavioural disorders compared to East Sussex as a whole.

2.7.16 Within the District as a whole, 85.2% of adults (aged 16 or over) walk for at least 10 minutes once a week and 23% of adults (aged 16 or over) walk for at least 30 minutes at least five times per week[110]. In addition, 7.4% of adults cycle at least once a week[111].

Accessible Natural Greenspace

2.7.17 In order to understand how well the population of Wealden is provided for in terms of ANG and help plan for better provision, an analysis of ANG was undertaken by CBA based on the latest available open space study data[112] and projected population data for Wealden District[113]. The analysis was undertaken using the accessibility and quantity standard provided by the 'Access to Natural Greenspace Standard' (ANGSt) promoted by Natural England[114]. This analysis does not consider the quality of ANG provision[115]. The ANGSt model is based on distance thresholds and defines the maximum distance that any resident should have to travel from their home to reach accessible natural greenspace.

2.7.18 The ANG Standard provides a national benchmark against which local ANG provision can be assessed, areas of deficiency identified and, where necessary, rectified. The ANG Standard emphasises the importance for people of being able to have easy access to natural (and semi-natural) greenspace close to where they live. The Standard states that *'everyone, wherever they live, should have an accessible natural greenspace:*

- *of at least 2 hectares in size, no more than 300 metres (5 minute walk) from home;*
- *at least one accessible 20 hectare site within two kilometres of home;*
- *one accessible 100 hectare site within five kilometres of home; and*

[108] Wealden District Local Needs Profile (2014)
[109] Local Action on Health Inequalities: Improving Access to Green Spaces, Public Health England/UCL Institute of Health Equity (2014)
[110] East Sussex in Figures (Accessed October 2016)
[111] East Sussex in Figures (Accessed October 2016)
[112] Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study, Ethos Environmental Planning for Wealden DC (2017)
[113] Supplied by Wealden District Council, email dated 9th May 2017.
[114] See the Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2017) for assessment of open space quality.

- *one accessible 500 hectare site within ten kilometres of home; plus*
- *a minimum of 1 hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves per thousand population.'*

2.7.19 The four distance thresholds in the ANGSt model were applied to the different sizes of ANG sites and scale of provision across the study area (see **Table 2.13)**, and also in relation to the main towns of Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield and Hailsham & Polegate.

Table 2.13:

Scale of provision	ANG Size	Distance
Sub-Regional	Sites over 500ha	Within 10km
County	Sites over 100ha	Within 5km
District	Sites over 20ha	Within 2km
Neighbourhood	Sites over 2ha	Within 300m

2.7.20 It should be noted that ANG sites smaller than 2ha in size have been excluded from the analysis. Whilst some natural greenspaces are private or semi-private and may not be accessible by the public, they often can be visually appreciated from a distance and therefore contribute to visual amenity. In addition, it is important to note that the Public Rights of Way network and other countryside access links are not included in the ANGSt model. It is therefore necessary to consider the ANGSt analysis in conjunction with an analysis of Access Links to build a complete picture of the accessibility of the countryside within the study area.

2.7.21 The following figures show the analysis of ANG against the Standard:

- **Figure 2.6b** shows the analysis of ANG at the neighbourhood scale (sites over 2ha within 300m of residents)
- **Figure 2.6c** shows the analysis of ANG at the district scale (sites over 20ha within 2km of residents)
- **Figure 2.6d** shows the analysis of ANG at the county scale (sites over 100ha within 5km of residents)
- **Figure 2.6e** shows the analysis of ANG at the sub-regional scale (sites over 500ha within 10km of residents)

2.7.22 Deficiencies of ANG at the neighbourhood, district, county and sub-regional scales are summarised in **Table 2.14**. Overall, these show the central and north-eastern parts of the study area have deficiencies in ANG at all scales. 19.7% of the study area (by area) has no provision that contributes to meeting the ANG standard, whilst just 14.5% of the study area (by area) meets all parts of the standard. It should be noted that parts of Crowborough, much of Uckfield and smaller parts of both Hailsham and Polegate meet all components of the standard.

N

0 2.5 5 Kilometres

KEY

- Wealden Local Plan Area
- GI Zones
- 300m catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >2ha
- Accessible Natural Greenspace >2ha

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FIGURE 2.6b
ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE - ANALYSIS:
NEIGHBOURHOOD SCALE
(>2HA - 300M CATCHMENT)

April 2017

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N

0 2.5 5 Kilometres

KEY

Wealden Local Plan Area

GI Zones

2km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >20ha

Accessible Natural Greenspace >2ha

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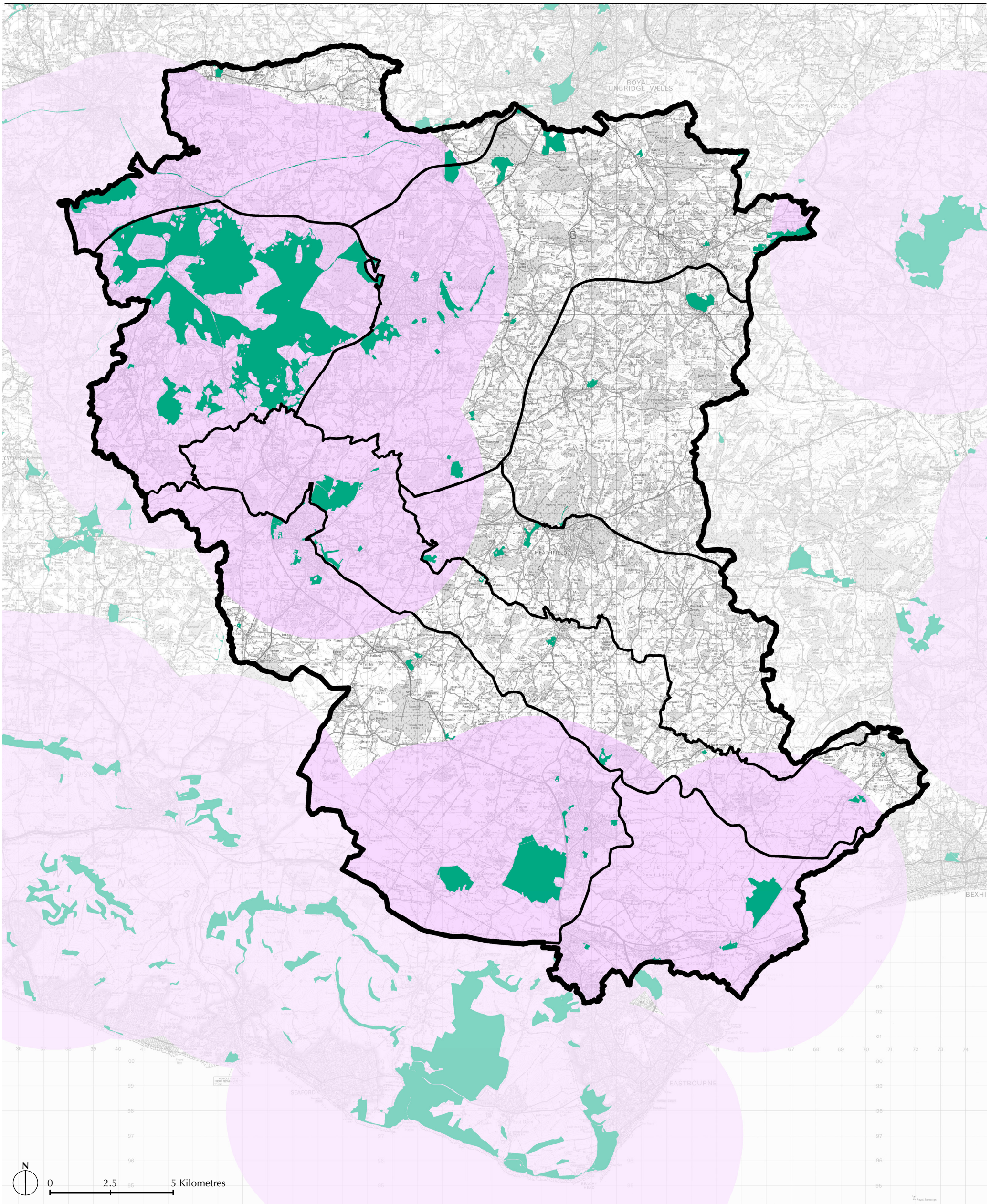
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FIGURE 2.6c
ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE - ANALYSIS:
DISTRICT SCALE
(>20HA - 2KM CATCHMENT)

April 2017

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KEY

- Wealden Local Plan Area
- GI Zones
- 5km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >100ha
- Accessible Natural Greenspace >2ha

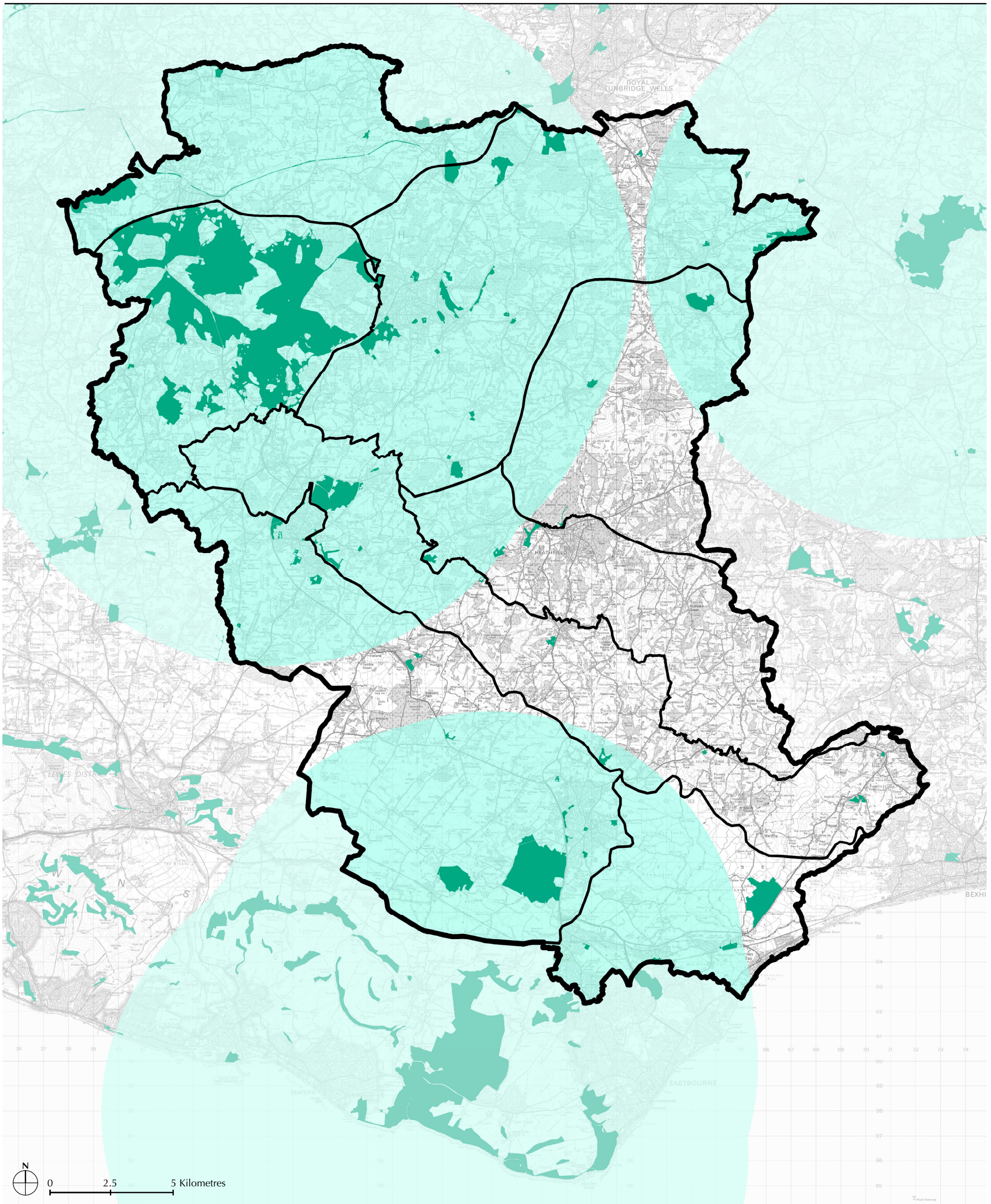
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FIGURE 2.6d
ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE - ANALYSIS:
COUNTY SCALE
(>100HA - 5KM CATCHMENT)



KEY

- Wealden Local Plan Area
- GI Zones
- 10km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >500ha
- Accessible Natural Greenspace >2ha

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FIGURE 2.6e
ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE - ANALYSIS:
SUB-REGIONAL SCALE
(>500HA - 10KM CATCHMENT)

April 2017
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Table 2.14: Accessible Natural Greenspace Deficiencies within the Study Area

Scale of Provision	Deficiency
Sub-regional provision	**Deficient in the east and centre of the study area.** Adequate provision elsewhere from the Ashdown Forest in the northwest; Bedgebury Forest (outside the study area) in the north east; and Abbot's Wood and the Seven Sister's Country Park/Friston Forest (outside the district) in the south. **c.27% of the study area (by area) has no provision at this scale. Heathfield is the only main town significantly affected by this deficiency.**
County provision	**Deficient in the east and centre of the study area.** Adequate provision elsewhere from the Ashdown Forest, Buxted Park and Sheffield Forest in the northwest; and Abbot's Wood and Pevensey Marshes in the south. **c.41% of the study area (by area) has no provision at this scale. Heathfield is the only main town significantly affected by this deficiency.**
District provision	**Scattered areas of deficiency across the study area, particularly in the centre and east. c.53% of the district (by area) has no provision at this scale. Heathfield, Hailsham and Polegate are the main towns significantly affected by this deficiency.**
Neighbourhood provision	Much of the study area is deficient in this scale of provision. c.**81%** of the study area (by area) has no provision at this scale. Parts of all the five main towns are affected by this deficiency.

2.7.23 The study area is most deficient in the neighbourhood scale provision of ANG, with a large proportion of the population having no access to these smaller sites which meet the standard within walking distance. However, the study area is better served by large-scale greenspace such as Ashdown Forest and Wilmington Wood. Beyond the study area, surrounding greenspaces offer important contributions to some communities within the study area. These include Bedgebury Forest (in Tunbridge Wells Borough) and the Lullington Heath NNR/SSSI (in the South Downs National Park).

2.7.24 The ANG deficiencies in relation to the main towns within the study area are shown in **Table 2.15**. Many of the existing ANG sites are also designated for their nature conservation value and therefore have carefully managed public access. These sites are likely to be sensitive to additional recreational pressures, which needs to be recognised in relation to meeting current and future needs, particularly for the main towns of Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield, Hailsham and Polegate. Whilst planned growth is likely to create further pressure on existing sites it also offers opportunities for new greenspaces. It should be noted that Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield, Hailsham and Polegate all currently have some deficiencies in the various scales of ANG, particularly neighbourhood scale sites. Heathfield has significant deficiencies in all scales of ANG, though there is some intermittent level of provision at the district and

neighbourhood scales. New and enhanced accessible natural greenspace sites will need to be provided to meet current and future needs, particularly in the east and south of the district.

Table 2.15: Deficiencies of Accessible Natural Greenspace in relation to the Main Towns

Scale of Provision	Crowborough	Uckfield	Heathfield	Hailsham/ Polegate
Sub-Regional	No deficiencies	No deficiencies	**Deficiency of sub-regional scale sites for all of Heathfield.**	No deficiencies in or around Hailsham and Polegate. **To the far east and north-east of the settlements there is a deficiency of sub-regional scale ANG for small villages and also at Pevensey Bay.**
County	No deficiencies around Crowborough itself. **Deficiency of county scale sites approx. 1.5km to the east of the town (including Rotherfield).**	No deficiencies	**Deficiency of county scale sites for all of Heathfield.**	No deficiencies in or around Hailsham and Polegate. **Approx. 2km to the north-east of Hailsham, there are smaller settlements deficient in this scale of provision, including Herstmonceux.**
District	No deficiencies around the Crowborough itself. **Deficiency of county scale sites approx. 1.5km to the east of the town (including the eastern edge of Rotherfield).**	No deficiencies around Uckfield itself. **Deficiency of district scale sites to the west of the A22, including for Shortbridge and Buckham Hill.**	**Deficiency of district scale sites for the south-eastern corner of Heathfield, and the north-eastern edge along the A265 to Broad Oak.**	**Deficiency of district scale sites for the northern half and eastern edge of Hailsham, and a small area of deficiency in central Polegate**.
Neighbour-hood	**Deficiency of neighbourhood sites for central and parts of northern Crowborough, as well as at Alderbrook in the south.** Many of the residents in the south and east of Crowborough have access to more than one of the larger sites at the neighbourhood scale. The areas in the town that meet this part of the standard also meet the standard for other scales of provision.	**Areas of deficiency in the centre and parts of the northern edge of Uckfield, as well as parts in the south (at New Town and Ridgewood). Small settlements to the west, south and east also lack provision,** with the exception of Framfield in the east. Most of the areas in Uckfield that meet this part of the standard also meet the standard for other scales of provision.	**Deficiency of neighbourhood scale sites for most of Heathfield.** Small areas in the north and west have some provision.	**Deficiency of neighbourhood scale sites for most of northern, parts of central and much of the area south of Hailsham. Deficiency in this scale of provision across most of Polegate,** with the exception of small areas in the central south and south west of the town.

2.7.25 The fifth tier of the ANG Standard states that there should be *'a minimum of one hectare of statutory Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) per thousand population'*. The study area as a whole currently includes c.225.7ha of statutory LNRs and a population of c.157,710[116] which means that there is a current provision of 1.6ha/1000 population of statutory Local Nature Reserves, which meets the standard. With a projected population of 176,511 by 2028[117] (or 184,675 by 2028[118]), there is enough provision to meet the need of future populations. However, it should be noted that whilst there is currently no deficiency of statutory LNRs for the study area's population, provision is afforded by only six sites, two of which (Arlington Reservoir and Old Lodge, Nutley) provide more than 203ha of the total 255.7ha provision, and these are both more than 6km from the nearest main settlements. Much of Wealden's population therefore does not have a statutory LNR close to where they live.

2.7.26 As noted in **Section 2.4**, parts of the landscape that are ANG within the study area suffer from recreational pressures, for example the erosion of sandstone outcrops through walking and rock climbing, and the increasing demand for recreational activities on Ashdown Forest. Notwithstanding this, the study area also has a large amount of countryside, which has good recreational potential. It is important to maximise recreation where it is most needed and can be best absorbed and to ensure that sensitive landscapes and features are protected and managed effectively.

Access Links

2.7.27 The East Sussex Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP)[119], East Sussex Local Transport Plan[120] and the East Sussex Countryside Access Strategy[121] set out aspirations for ensuring that public rights of way and countryside sites in Wealden are maintained, enhanced and promoted to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

2.7.28 The study area is well served by public rights of way as shown in **Figure 2.7** and there are opportunities to strengthen and enhance the connectivity between potential development and the surrounding landscape through the creation or enhancement of rights of way. This can benefit health and well-being as well as strengthening people's appreciation of the natural environment.

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[116] Population taken from ONS 2014 based subnational population projections
[117] Population taken from ONS 2014 based subnational population projections
[118] Population estimate calculated on the basis of 2014 based subnational population projections (ONS) for Wealden (predicted population by 2016 of 157,710) and projected additional 11,724 new dwellings (which, based on the average number of people living in a household being 2.3, equates to 184,675) - based on email correspondence from Wealden District Council 09/05/2017.
[119] https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/rightsofway/rights-of-way-in-east-sussex/local-access-forum/rights-of-way-improvement-plan/
[120] https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/localtransportplan/ltp3/downloadltp3
[121] https://consultation.eastsussex.gov.uk/economy-transport-environment/shaping-the-future-of-our-countryside-access/supporting_documents/Countryside%20Access%20Strategy.pdf

Crowborough

Uckfield

Heathfield

Hailsham

Polegate

N

0 2.5 5 Kilometres

KEY

- Wealden Local Plan Area
- GI Zones
- Roads
- Railways
- Main Settlements
- National Trails
- Promoted Routes
- National Cycle Network Routes
- Bridleways/Byways
- Public Footpaths

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FIGURE 2.7
ACCESS LINKS

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2.7.29 There is a strategic gap in the rights of way network within Ashdown Forest itself; however this large area of open access land contains its own network of way-marked routes and trails. Other areas of deficiency at this scale include; the area south of Tunbridge Wells, south of the Ashdown Forest and within the Pevensey Levels. There is also a deficiency in access through the study area, between the Low Weald and South Downs National Park.

2.7.30 There is a general lack of joined up bridleways and byways throughout the study area. Many bridleways and byways are isolated within the wider rights of way network, There is a lack of north-south orientated footpath access in the north of the study area.

2.7.31 The projected increase in the population of the District and the surrounding towns (Tunbridge Wells, East Grinstead, and Eastbourne) put significant pressures upon Wealden's rights of way network. This has been identified as an issue in the County ROWIP and Local Transport Plan.

2.7.32 The Local Transport Plan sets out key areas where sustainable access (via bus, rail, cycling and walking) is most needed. These are focused upon areas receiving growth, particularly in South Wealden and Eastbourne (outside of the study area). The Plan sets out the following high level objectives:

- Improve economic competiveness and growth
- Improve safety, health and security
- Tackle climate change
- Improve accessibility and enhance social inclusion
- Improve quality of life

2.7.33 The County-wide approach for the rights of way network identified in the Local Transport Plan is to:

- Ensure that the footpaths, bridleways and byways around the county are **safe** and **accessible** for public use.
- **Improve access for all** and make the network available to people with **differing abilities**, by taking the needs of disabled people into account and promoting a series of routes designed with disabled people in mind.
- Improve safety and convenience through **improved road crossings**, making verges safer for horse riders, and adjustments to the network.
- Provide **good quality information and education** on access to the countryside to the public through the internet, including making online access to the rights of way network more accessible and improving the 'on the ground' information.

- Improve **partnership working** by encouraging volunteers, working with land managers and liaising with town and parish councils, other authorities and organisations including the SDNP.
- Improve and promote key **long distance** and circular walking routes.
- Continue to take the actions needed to fulfil the objectives in the **Rights of Way Improvement Plan**.

2.7.34 Overall, the study area is well-served for public rights of way, particularly in terms of quantity of routes. According to the Rights of Way Improvement Plan, while East Sussex has a higher than average number of horse-riders the fragmented bridleway network is one of the key issues facing horse-riders (see **Figure 2.7)**. An improved network for both cyclists and horse-riders is a strategic need. The key strategic gaps in the access route network, and barriers to its use, are:

- Access from the Low Weald to the South Downs.
- Busy main roads and railways can frequently be a significant barrier.
- Gaps in the cycling network, particularly at key settlements (Uckfield and Crowborough).
- Accessibility difficulties.
- A fragmented bridleway network.
- Poor signage on some long-distance routes.

2.7.35 Access links and greenspace provision surrounding the study area play a significant role in provision of access and greenspace both for existing populations in Wealden and for visitors alike. Also pressures (deficits and surplus) within neighbouring authorities (shown on **Figure 2.1a**) have the potential to affect the study area both positively and negatively.

2.7.36 Strategically, in the central part of the study area there is a lack of any linked cycle routes between neighbouring authorities, particularly east-west, and links to the existing network outside the study area. Cycle routes to key destinations such as Bewl Water are also lacking. Significant areas of greenspace outside the study area and upon which some scales of the ANGSt relies, include; Bedgebury Forest (in Tunbridge Wells Borough), Lullington Heath NNR (in the South Downs National Park).

Summary

2.7.37 In summary, working with partners, developers, local communities, landowners and other relevant bodies, the key strategic opportunities for GI to help address identified needs for the provision of accessible natural greenspace and access links across the study area are considered to be:

- Retain and enhance existing accessible natural greenspace sites, particularly those serving rural and/or deprived populations where appropriate.
- Address deficiencies in access to neighbourhood scale natural greenspace by investigating opportunities for provision of new sites in areas of planned growth and areas experiencing higher levels of health deprivation.
- Address the need to enable better access to the countryside for local communities by improving existing access links from the main towns and larger villages into the countryside, without compromising the need to protect vulnerable landscapes and habitats.
- Use and promote historic routeways for non-vehicular users in order to join up key gaps in the network, specifically for cyclists and horse-riders.
- Explore opportunities to improve sustainable and affordable travel choices, particularly in areas of planned growth and areas experiencing higher levels of health deprivation.
- Deliver improved access to countryside sites for all, including less-abled people to help achieve objectives within the ROWIP and Local Transport Plan.
- Build on projects such as the High Weald Heroes Welly Walks project to develop sustainable walking and cycling access routes to schools.

2.7.38 Other area-specific opportunities are:

High Weald

- Maintain the current access network and create additional links, particularly those that relieve pressure on sensitive sites through a network of accessible natural greenspaces and linear access.
- Provide greater cycling links in the central and western part of the study area between towns (e.g. Crowborough, Uckfield) and existing routes (e.g. the Cuckoo Trail).
- Explore opportunities to improve rights of way in heavily utilised areas within the High Weald in line with the East Sussex Rights of Way Improvement Plan.
- Increase understanding and enjoyment of natural greenspaces through access, education and interpretation provision that helps highlight the sensitive features of designated sites, ensuring that access for recreational enjoyment is balanced with protection of biodiversity, geodiversity and historic features.

- Develop and improve the quality of greenspace and rights of way to meet the demands and needs of locals and visitors alike.
- Promote integrated management of accessible natural greenspaces for informal outdoor recreation and facilitate 'green' access and use by residents and visitors.
- Promote sustainable tourism initiatives that target a broad range of visitors and, where practical, reduce car dependency and contribute to conserving and enhancing the landscape's character, tranquillity and biodiversity.

Low Weald

- Ensure access balances recreational enjoyment, with the protection of geological and historical features as well as biodiversity.
- Promote sustainable tourism and recreational activities that minimise impacts on the environment, while helping to generate income and employment.
- Improve the physical and mental health and well-being of local communities through promoting use of the rights of way network, connecting green spaces, commons, parkland and accessible woodland.
- Develop outdoor recreation facilities in conjunction with creation of new GI assets, such as new wetland areas for flood management or the restoration of former transport infrastructure corridors.
- Enhance rights of way and open access throughout the area in line with the East Sussex Rights of Way Improvement Plan, particularly improving links to the Wealdway and South Downs National Trails.
- Support plans for extending cycle networks throughout the Low Weald.

Pevensey Levels

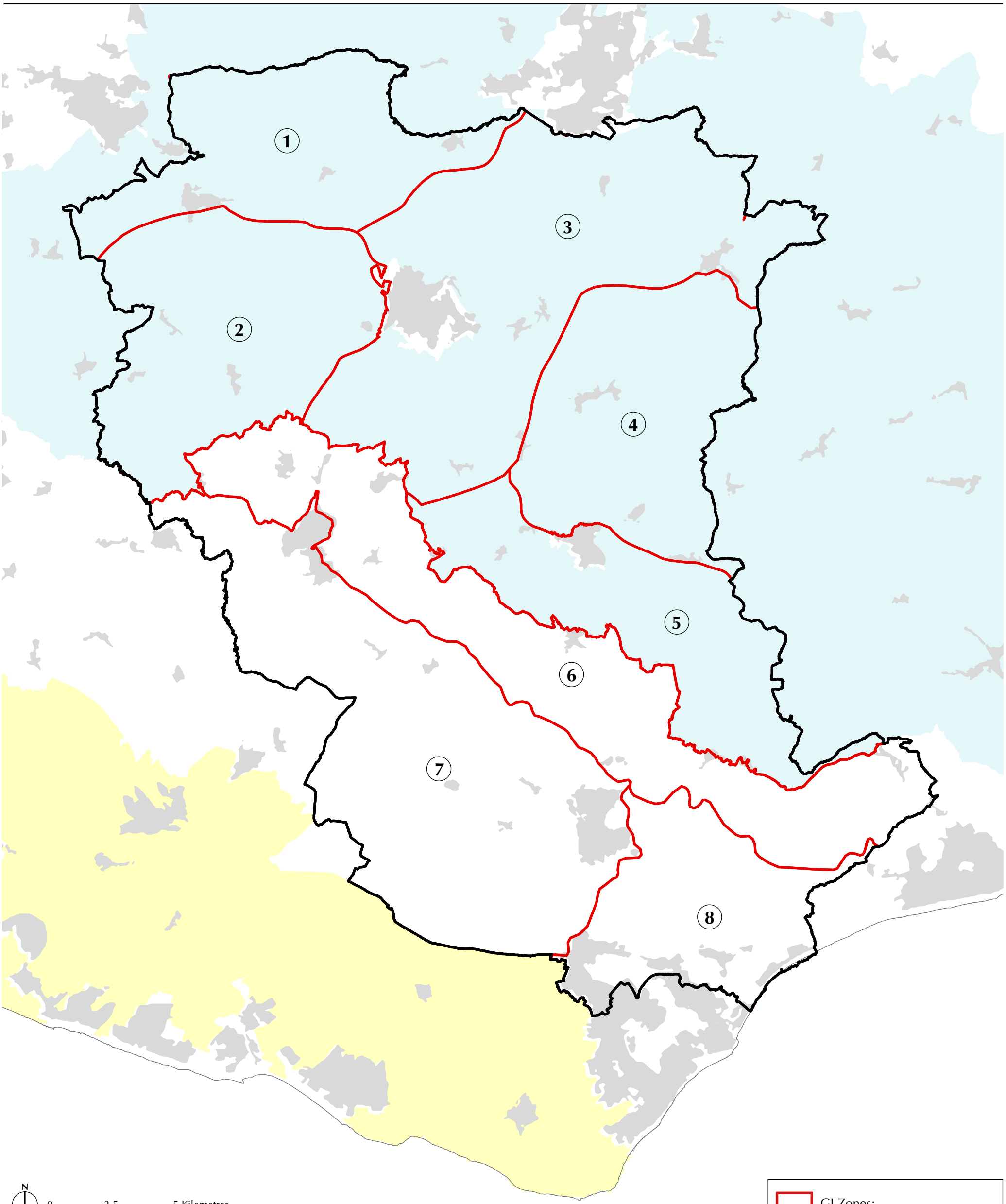
- Maximise the recreational benefits provided by the coastline, particularly the sense of tranquillity provided by the shoreline, while ensuring that coastal access is managed to minimise damage from excessive recreational pressure.
- Support well planned GI that provides sustainable access routes that enhance community safety, foster community cohesion and contribute to physical and mental health.
- Support measures to strengthen sustainable travel networks and improve access links to the nearby South Downs National Park, providing opportunities to enjoy the Park's natural beauty and experience its dark night skies.
- Link public footpaths, cycle paths, settlements and long distance paths, especially on higher ground to reduce impact of rising water levels.

3.0 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ZONES ASSESSMENTS

3.1 General

3.1.1 This section sets out a more detailed assessment at the sub-district scale of GI assets, needs and opportunities within eight discrete zones of broadly similar GI assets and landscape types as shown on **Figure 3.1**. These zones provide a framework for GI planning at the Parish level. The relationship between the GI Zones and parishes are shown on **Figure 1.2**.

3.1.2 This section should be read in conjunction with **Sections 2.0** and **4.0**, which provide assessments of GI needs and opportunities for the study area as a whole and for the five main towns respectively.



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FIGURE 3.1
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ZONES

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3.2 Zone 1: Upper Medway Valleys

Overview

3.2.1 As shown on **Figure 3.2a**, the Upper Medway Valleys GI Zone is a ridge and valley landscape associated with the River Medway and its tributaries within the northern part of the District, bordering Tunbridge Wells Borough, Sevenoaks District, Tandridge District and Mid Sussex District. The Zone is located within the High Weald AONB, and includes the villages of Forest Row, Hartfield and Groombridge. Tunbridge Wells is situated approximately 4km to the east of the Zone, with East Grinstead approximately 2km to the west. This zone includes parts of the following Parishes (see **Figure 1.2**):

- Forest Row
- Hartfield
- Withyham

Audit

Existing Strategic Green Infrastructure Initiatives

- **High Weald Welly Walks (Withyham, Hartfield, Ashurst)** - These landscape walks, starting and ending at the school gate, provide opportunities for children to learn more about their unique local landscape.
- **Weald Meadows Partnership (WMP)** - Over the last 20 years the WMP has developed a wide range of knowledge and expertise that has helped stem the decline of traditional grassland and ensure the successful establishment of new species-rich meadows. As a direct result, many meadows have been recognised, protected, enhanced or created within the Weald utilising native wild harvested local provenance seed. Today, the WMP provides practical support to landowners with the management, enhancement and creation of lowland meadow across the Weald.
- **High Weald AONB Land Management Advice** - For owners of land within the High Weald AONB, the AONB Unit offers bespoke advice and site visits to enable individuals, farmers and organisations to improve the management of the landscape features within their ownership.
- **Restocking the Weald** - A project which runs across the Weald enabling the establishment of viable new livestock enterprises on under-utilised pasture across multiple land-holdings.
- **Upper Medway Catchment Water Quality Improvement Projects** - Environment Agency led projects addressing water quality issues within the upper Medway, specifically to meet objectives within the Water Framework Directive.

KEY

Sub-District Scale GI Zones

Parish Boundary

1. Forest Row
2. Hartfield
3. Withyham
4. Frant

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.2a
ZONE 1 - UPPER MEDWAY VALLEYS:
CONTEXT PLAN

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Biodiversity

3.2.2 The Upper Medway Valleys GI Zone contains the following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites (see **Figure 3.2b**):

- Fifty Acre Wood LWS
- Holtye Common LWS
- Chantlers Farm Meadows LWS
- Tunbridge Wells South Lagoons LWS
- The Warren and Broadwater Forest (part) LWS
- Weir Wood Reservoir SSSI
- Weir Wood Reservoir LNR

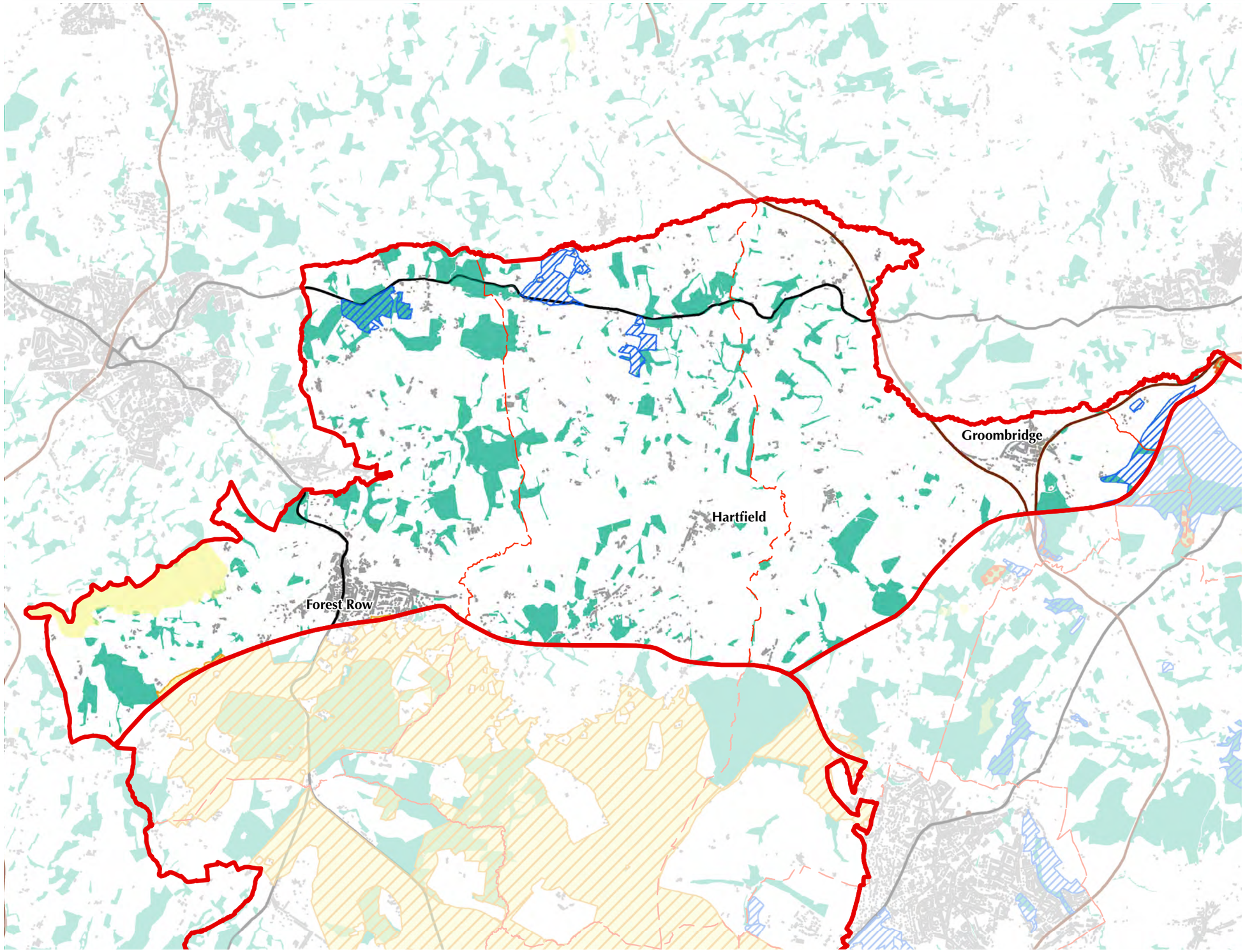
3.2.3 The designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites within Zone 1 are overall in moderate condition. The condition of Local Wildlife Sites designated for their grassland habitats within this zone is moderate to good[122]. However, Weir Wood Reservoir SSSI is predominantly (74.5%) in 'unfavourable – no change' condition[123].

3.2.4 As shown on **Figure 3.2c**, the wildlife habitats within Zone 1 are dominated by woodland, notably deciduous woodlands with some mixed or coniferous woodland. Watercourses associated with the river Medway and Weir Wood Reservoir provides a network of wetland habitats. However, habitats along the watercourses are generally fragmented, where farming dominates. Grassland habitats include semi-improved grassland, lowland meadows and some floodplain grazing marsh associated with the river Medway. Some small traditional orchards remain, particularly close to Forest Row. Key barriers to the movement of wildlife within the zone include main roads such as the A264 and railways.

3.2.5 As shown on **Figure 2.2c**, Zone 1 lies partially within the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) (48) and the Eridge and Broadwater BOA (55). The southern part of Zone 1 is dominated by open heath, dry acid grassland, Ancient Woodland and wood pasture and parkland. In total over 100 BAP species have been recorded within BOA 48, including Turtle Dove and the Silver-studded Blue butterfly. Watercourses are a characteristic features of this zone, and out of 24 invasive species identified within the BOAs, those associated with watercourses include:

- Parrot's-feather *Myriophyllum aquaticum*
- Curly Waterweed *Lagarosiphon major*

[122] High Weald Grasslands SNCI Landowner Liaison Project , Dolphin Ecological Surveys (2013)
[123] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement

Designations:

- Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation/Ramsar
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Ancient Woodland
- Regionally Important Geological Sites

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

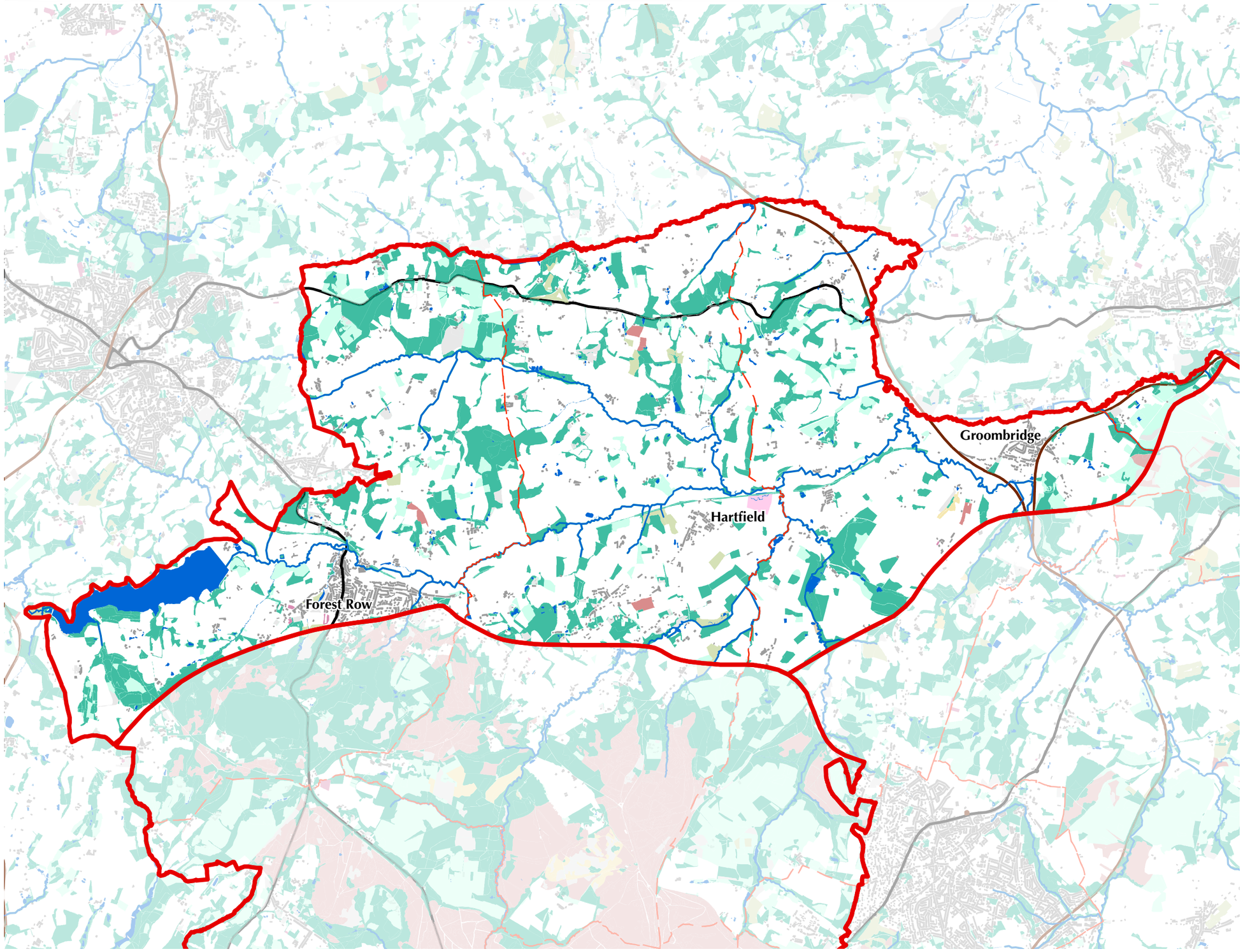
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FIGURE 3.2b
ZONE 1 - UPPER MEDWAY VALLEYS:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

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KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement
- Main Roads
- Railways

Main BAP Priority Habitats:

- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Saltmarsh
- Coastal Vegetated Shingle
- Deciduous Woodland
- Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Fens
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Meadows
- Maritime Cliff and Slope
- Mudflats
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures
- Reedbeds
- Saline Lagoons
- Traditional Orchard
- No Main Habitat but Additional Habitats Present

Mixed and Coniferous Woodland Habitats (National Forest Inventory)

Freshwater Habitats (Main Watercourses & Waterbodies)

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.2c
ZONE 1 - UPPER MEDWAY VALLEYS:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

April 2017

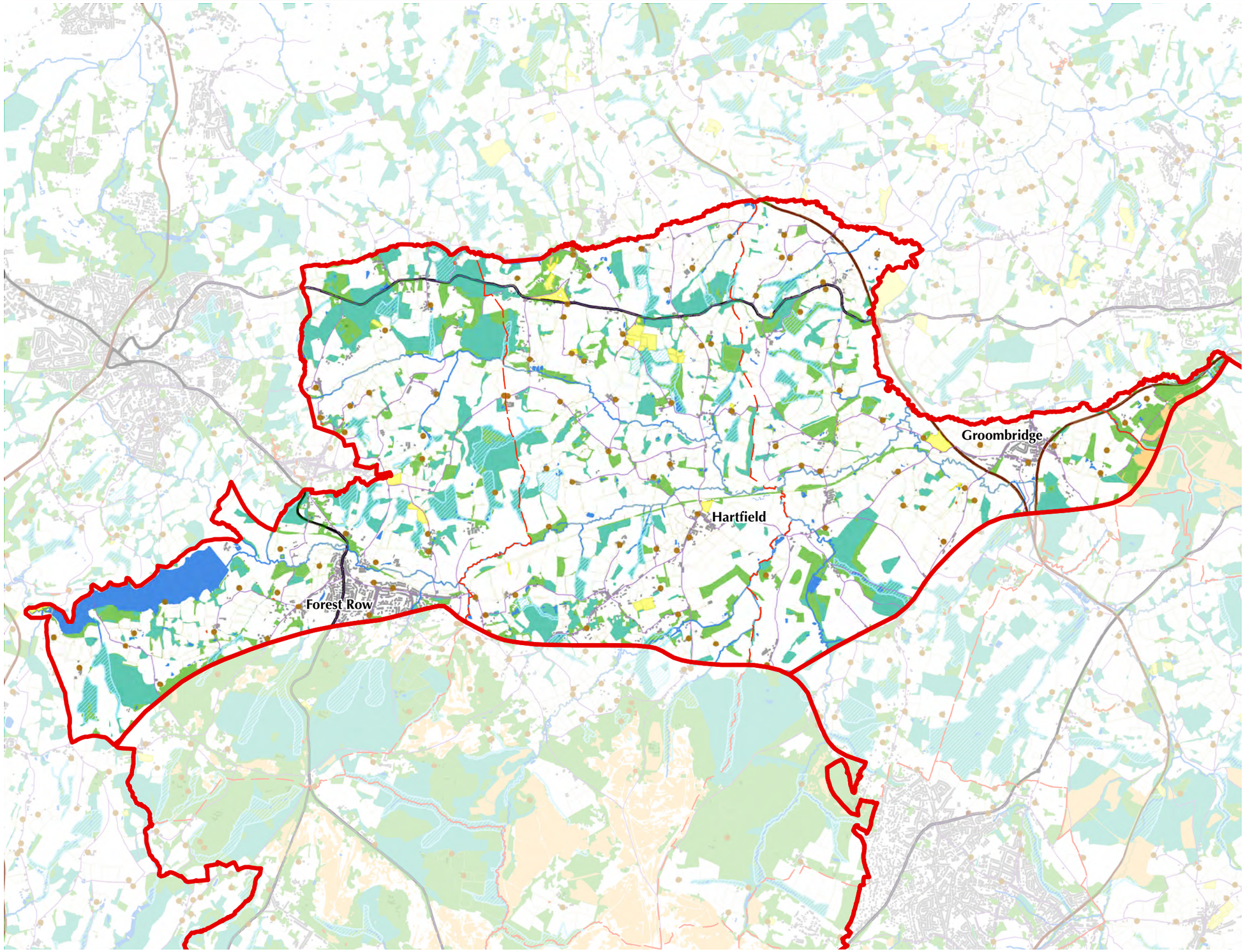
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- Floating Pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*
- Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*
- Canadian Waterweed *Elodea canadensis*

Landscape & Historic Environment

3.2.6 **Figure 3.2d** shows the patterns of character components in Zone 1 which contribute to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape as defined by the High Weald AONB Management Plan. These are summarised below:

- **Geology, landform, water systems and climate** - the east-west pattern of the river Medway's upper tributaries within steep-sided wooded valleys is a notable feature of the landscape. Weir Wood Reservoir is a major waterbody within the zone. Ponds are a notable feature and many hammer ponds remain in the landscape as relics of the iron industry and characteristic of the High Weald. Sandstone outcrops are generally small in scale but scattered throughout this zone.
- **Settlement** - the dispersed pattern of settlements (historic farmsteads, hamlets and the villages of Forest Row, Hartfield and Groombridge) is strong within the zone. Settlement has a noticeable relationship with the historic routeways and watercourses, and overall farmsteads are typically isolated.
- **Routeways** - historic routeways create a framework for the pattern of the High Weald's landscape in this zone, linking the watercourses, settlements and woodlands. Of historic origin, the routeways are often sunken through years of use and erosion by water. Alongside watercourses, historic routeways and gills provide important corridors for dispersal of wildlife throughout this zone.
- **Woodlands** - woodland is a key component of the AONB landscape within this zone and much of this is Ancient Woodland. Gills, steep-sided ravines which are often wooded are small but fairly numerous, located along the very upper reaches of watercourses. As a result of their cool, damp micro-climates they can harbour a unique assemblage of plants which are more typically associated with the western coast of the UK. Some gill woodlands and associated watercourses in this zone may suffer from neglect and poor management.
- **Fields and heath** - there are remnants of unenclosed heathland and some meadows within the distinctive pattern of small-scale, irregular shaped fields in this zone that are characteristic of the pastoral farmland within the High Weald. Many of these fields retain their historic field boundaries within this zone. However some historic field patterns were lost during the 18th-19th Centuries to the numerous Historic Parks and Gardens in this zone as they were removed to create designed parkland landscapes.



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Main Roads
- Railways

Geology, Landform, Water Systems & Climate:

- Sandstone Outcrops
- Main Watercourses and Waterbodies

Settlement:

- Historic Farmsteads
- Villages

Routeways:

- Historic Routeways

Woodland:

- Gill Woods
- Ancient Woodland
- National Forest Inventory Woodland

Fields & Heath:

- Meadow
- Heathland
- Historic Field Boundaries

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.2d
ZONE 1 - UPPER MEDWAY VALLEYS:
AONB CHARACTER COMPONENTS

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3.2.7 The historic environment assets in the Upper Medway Valleys GI Zone shown on **Figure 3.2e** also make an important contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape. These include:

- Hammerwood Park Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II)
- Buckhurst Park Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)
- Kidbrooke Park Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II) – part
- Groombridge Place Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II) - part
- 10 Scheduled Monuments – such as Faulkner's medieval settlement at Runaway Fields, 600m south west of Tye Farm; and Medieval moated site and adjoining fishponds, Blackham Court.
- 3 Conservation Areas – Hartfield, Forest Row and Withyham
- The Spa Valley historic steam railway runs through part of this Zone from Tunbridge Wells to Groombridge and Eridge.

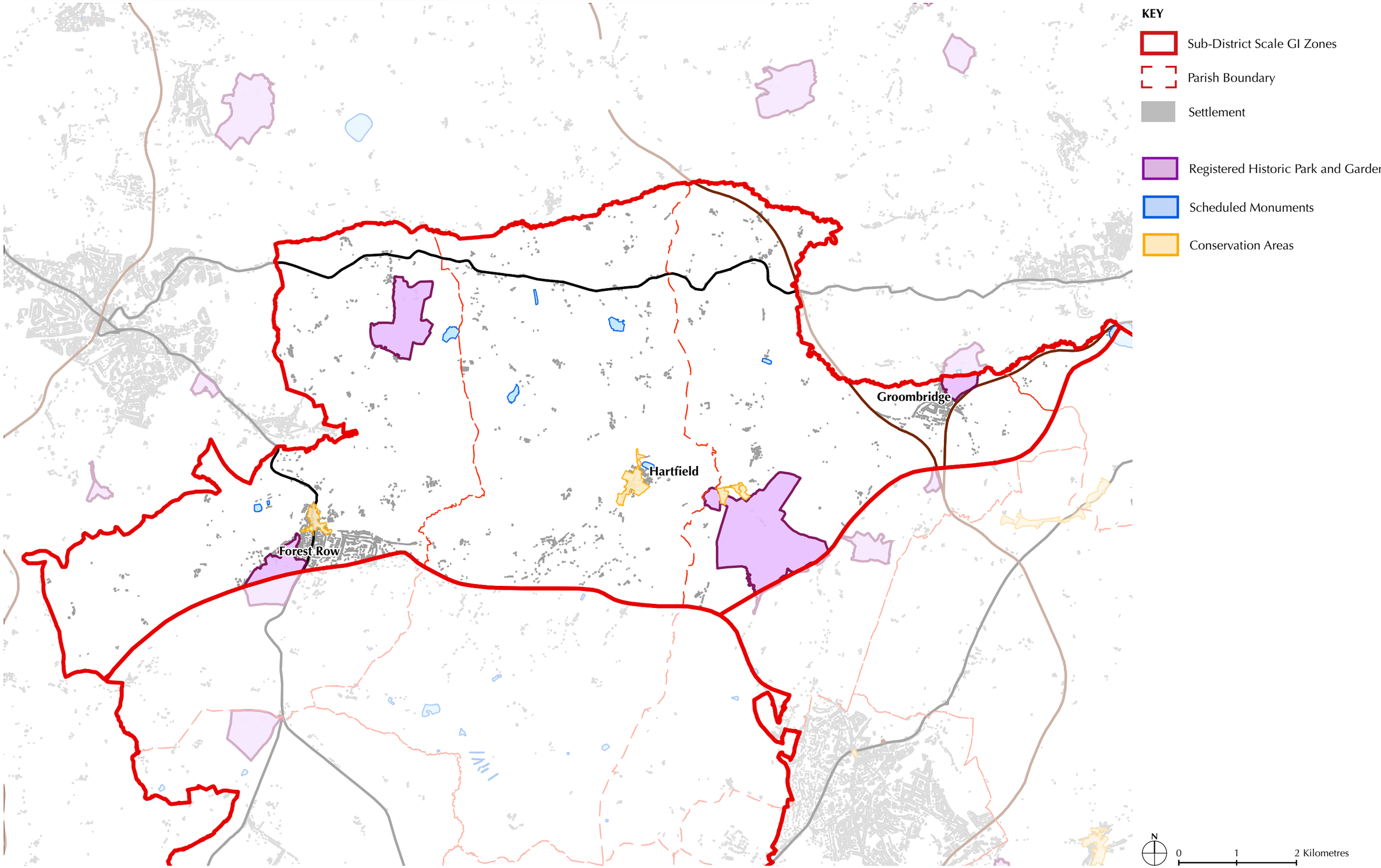
3.2.8 These heritage assets are generally not at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change, with the exception of Kidbrooke Park, which is on the national heritage at risk register.

Energy & Food

3.2.9 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, there are numerous deciduous woodlands within the Upper Medway Valleys GI Zone. Woodlands are not as large or dense as in neighbouring zones; this demonstrates that the large floodplain of the upper Medway is driving the character of this zone. However, of the woodlands that are present many are small and fragmented which makes their management sometimes uneconomical[124]. Many of these woodlands would have been managed over considerable periods of time as coppice, and therefore represent a potential significant source of local fuel, particularly for small-scale woodworkers. **Figure 2.4** shows only a small proportion of woodland in this zone has been recently coppiced (in the northern part), although young trees have been planted, reinforcing local character.

3.2.10 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the majority of Zone 1 is generally grade 3 agricultural land intermixed with areas of grade 4 agricultural land. This is typical of this part of the study area where sands and clays dominate. The floodplain character of this zone has been exploited and arable is a common land use here. Some of the Designed Landscapes within this zone have been turned from parkland to arable. Grassland remains an important resource in this zone, and the lowland meadows and small grazing meadows, historically supporting livestock. Small scale orchards remain, although they were once more common within this zone.

[124] The Cultural Heritage of Woodlands in the South East, Dr. Nicola Bannister (2007)



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FIGURE 3.2e
ZONE 1 - UPPER MEDWAY VALLEYS:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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Water Resources

3.2.11 As shown on **Figure 2.5**, the river Medway flows through Zone 1 and there are also a number of smaller streams/tributaries. Weir Wood Reservoir is a major water body within this zone. The most significant floodplain in the Upper Medway Valleys GI Zone is associated with the river Medway.

3.2.12 Water quality within the Upper Medway Valleys GI Zone is generally in 'moderate' ecological condition and in 'good' chemical condition[125].

Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

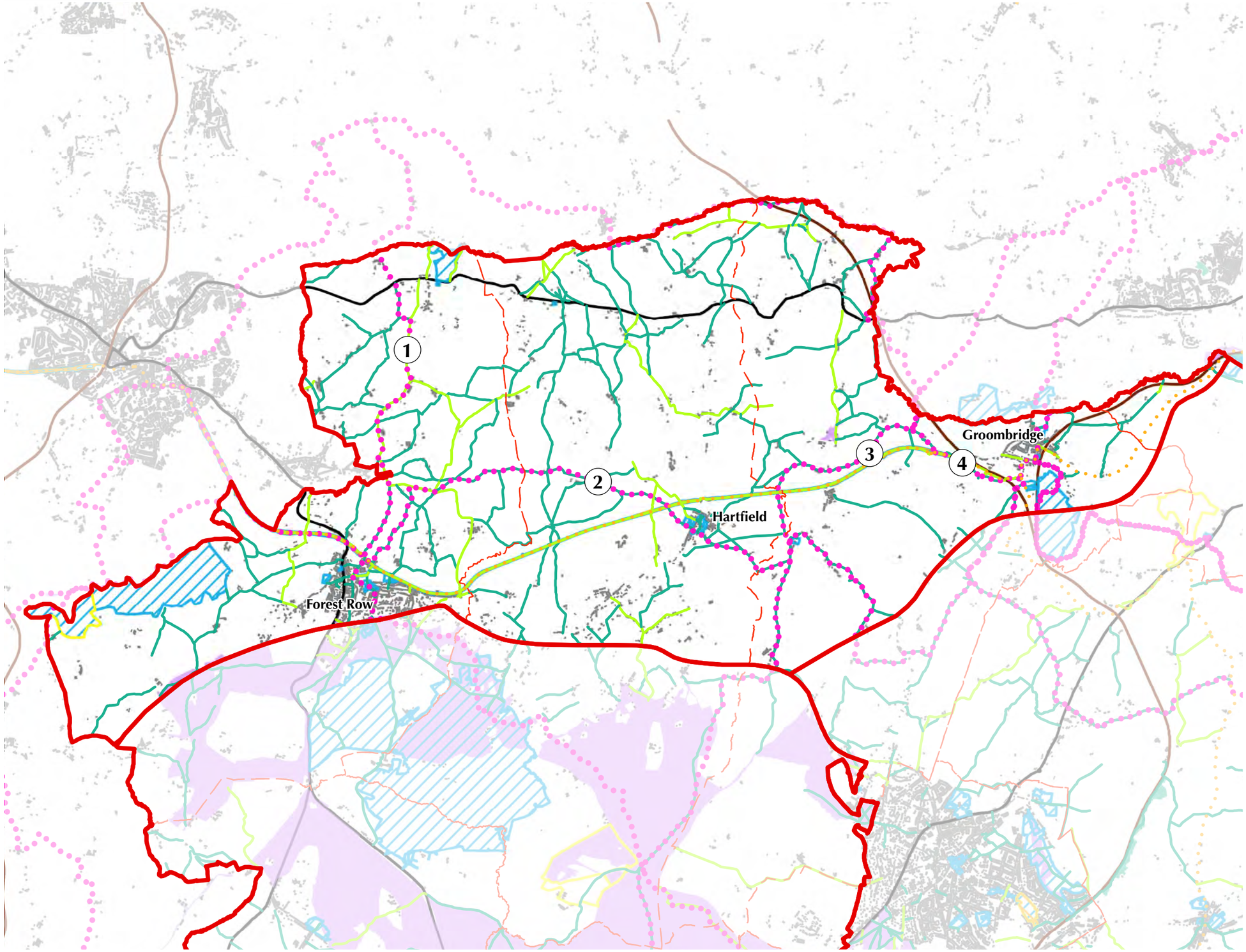
3.2.13 The existing provision of accessible natural greenspace within the Upper Medway Valleys GI Zone and adjoining areas is shown on **Figure 3.2f.** This shows that access to neighbourhood and district scale greenspaces is limited within this zone. Access to country and sub-regional scale spaces however is well-provided for the majority of the population within this zone as a result of its proximity to Ashdown Forest to the south.

3.2.14 The key deficiencies in provision of accessible natural greenspace identified within the Upper Medway Valleys GI Zone are:

- Neighbourhood-scale access is poorly provided for within this zone, particularly in the north.
- District-scale access is also poorly provided for with the majority of sites of greater than 20ha located outside of this zone. Within the zone Weir Wood Reservoir in the far west and Birchden Woods in the far east offer access, so again the central part of this zone remains deficient at this scale.
- County-scale accessible greenspace is generally well provided for within this zone as a result of its proximity to Ashdown Forest. Small areas to the far north and east of this zone lack any provision at this scale.
- Sub-regional scale accessible greenspace is well provided for throughout this zone, as a result of its proximity to Ashdown Forest.

3.2.15 As shown on **Figure 3.2f**, Zone 1 is a well-connected landscape with numerous access links, particularly to the north of Forest Row which shows a well-connected dense network of footpaths. In addition to numerous Public Rights of Way, there is a high proportion of Promoted Routes including the High Weald Landscape Trail, Sussex Border Path, the Vanguard

[125] http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/ Environmental Agency, 2015 Cycle II



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement

Access Links:

- Footpath
- Bridleway/Byway
- Sustrans National Cycle Route
- Promoted Route

1. Vanguard Way
2. High Weald Landscape Trail
3. Wealdway
4. Sussex Border Path

- National Trail
- Main Roads
- Railways

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

- Open Spaces*
- CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land
- Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.2f
ZONE 1 - UPPER MEDWAY VALLEYS:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

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Way and the Wealdway. In addition the Tunbridge Wells Circular Path follows part of the Sussex Border Path close to Tunbridge Wells and The Forest Way is a multi-user route that forms part of National Cycle Network Route 17.

3.2.16 The key gaps in the access route network within the Upper Medway Valleys GI Zone are:

- The southern part of this zone, south of the Forest Way is less well-connected by rights of way, offering a much sparser network than in other parts of the zone.
- There are few direct links from the Forest Way onto Ashdown Forest by foot.
- Bridleway access from the Forest Way.

Needs and Opportunities

3.2.17 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network within the Upper Medway Valleys GI Zone include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI within this Zone are considered to be:

- Work in partnership with neighbouring organisations such as the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership to help control invasive species along the upper reaches of the River Medway, and help achieve targets within the BOA.
- Seek opportunities to work in partnership to address heritage at risk (Kidbrooke Park in Forest Row) within this zone, and consider ways in which enhancing landscape condition and improving access and interpretation could be carried out in parallel.
- Expand and link appropriate semi-natural habitats along the Upper Medway to offer appropriate flood water storage on the floodplain and improve biodiversity.
- Encourage the management and restoration of landscape features in poor condition within this zone, such as improving sensitive coppicing regimes within Ancient Woodlands to generate a source of local wood fuel.
- Encourage and support the use of fruit trees within community greenspaces in new residential development schemes.
- Seek the creation of new accessible natural greenspace (of at least 2 and 20ha) close to where people live to address deficiencies.
- Seek opportunities through partnerships to improve the function of road and railway verges by introducing sensitive management to promote biodiversity, air quality and minimise infrastructure as visual detractors.

- Explore opportunities to integrate multifunctional community greenspaces/growing spaces into settlements and new developments that provide health and well-being benefits and help reinforce a strong sense of place.
- Promote opportunities to use SuDS and green roofs within new developments, integrated within landscaping schemes and designed to achieve ecological gains.

3.3 Zone 2: Ashdown Forest

Overview

3.3.1 As shown on **Figure 3.3a**, the Ashdown Forest GI Zone is a substantial area of high ground forming part of the Weald Forest Ridge and dominated by significant ridges and valleys within the northern part of the study area and bordering Mid Sussex District to the west. The zone is located within the High Weald AONB, and includes the villages of Nutley, Chelwood Gate and Wych Cross. Crowborough is situated adjacent to the east of the zone, with Forest Row to the north. The zone includes parts of the following Parishes (see **Figure 1.2**):

- Forest Row
- Hartfield
- Withyham
- Danehill
- Maresfield
- Fletching
- Buxted
- Crowborough

Audit

Existing Strategic Green Infrastructure Initiatives

- **Restocking the Weald -** A project which runs across the Weald to enable the establishment of viable new livestock enterprises on under-utilised pasture across multiple land-holdings.
- **High Weald AONB Land Management Advice -** For owners of land within the High Weald AONB, the AONB Unit offers bespoke advice and site visits to enable individuals, farmers and organisations improve the management of the landscape features within their ownership.
- **Welly Walks (Nutley) -** These landscape walks, starting and ending at the school gate, provide opportunities for children to learn more about their unique local landscape.
- **B-Lines and Landscapes for Wild Pollinators and Farm Wildlife Project -** Buglife projects in the south-east concerned with restoring and recreating connected wildflower meadows and pollinator habitats.
- **Ashdown Forest Silver-studded Blue Project -** A research and habitat restoration project being undertaken by Butterfly Conservation. Within the High Weald, the silver-studded

KEY

Sub-District Scale GI Zones

Parish Boundary

1. Forest Row
2. Hartfield
3. Withyham
4. Crowborough
5. Danehill
6. Maresfield
7. Buxted
8. Fletching

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.3a
ZONE 2 - ASHDOWN FOREST:
CONTEXT PLAN

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blue is only known to exist in the Ashdown Forest. Habitat restoration works are being carried out at Broadwater and Chailey Common.

- **Restoration of the River Ouse and Flood Meadows -** In order to restore the natural fauna and flora of the river, Sheffield Park is embarking on a restoration project to improve the river and floodplain, and re-connect the Ouse to its local communities. The project hopes to encourage natural processes back onto the site, improving habitats for river and terrestrial species.
- **Grazing and access management of Ashdown Forest -** Continued sensitive and traditional management of the Forest using appropriate livestock to maintain the open heathland landscape and prevent it from reverting to woodland. On-going monitoring of key species dependent upon this habitat.

Biodiversity

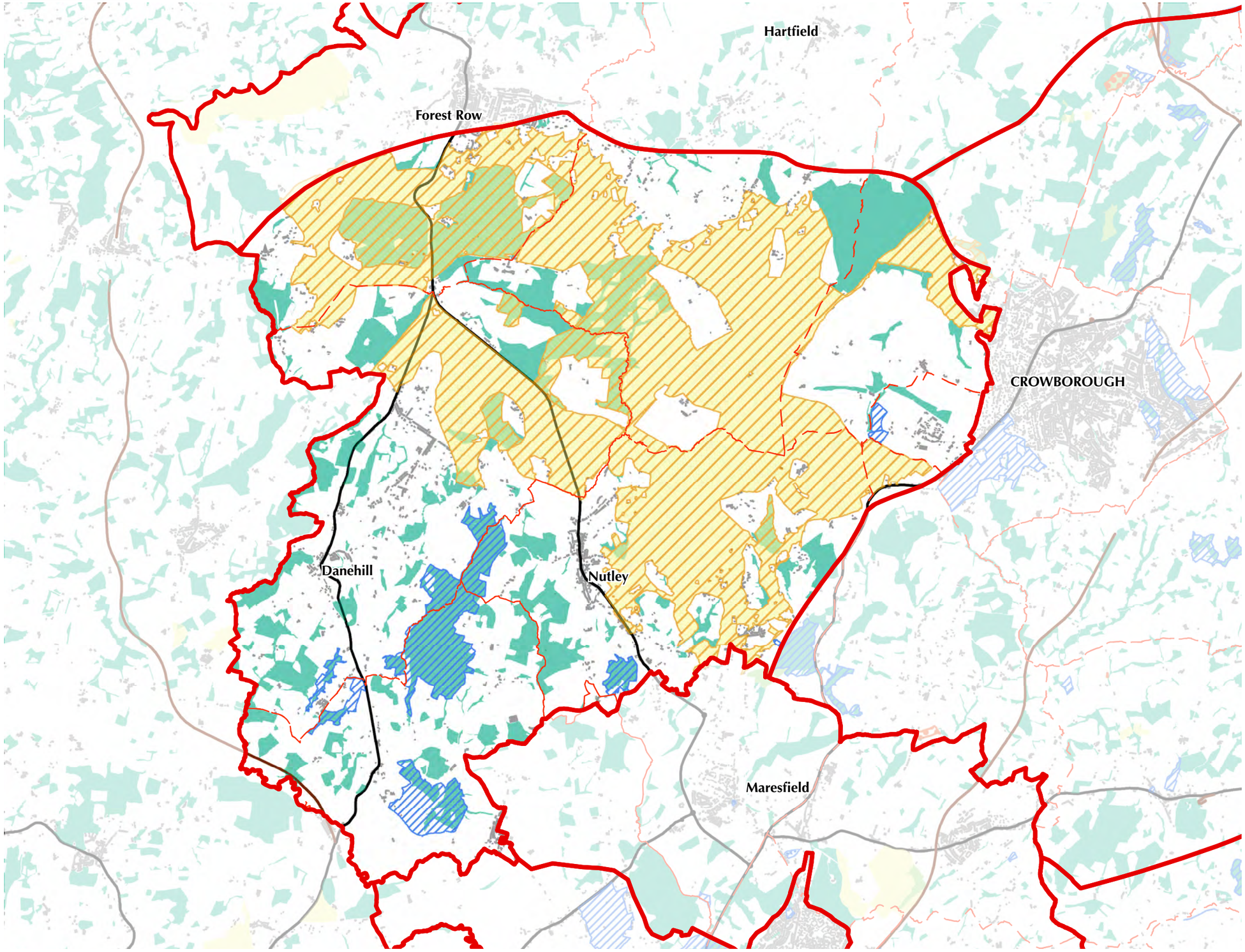
3.3.2 The Ashdown Forest GI Zone contains the following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites (see **Figure 3.3b**):

- The Ashdown Forest SAC, SPA and SSSI
- Huggets Wood and The Toll LWS
- Pound and Furzefield Wood LWS
- Sheffield Park Garden LWS
- Sheffield Forest Complex LWS
- Brown Knoll Farm Meadow LWS
- Courtland Wood LWS
- Brickfield Meadow LWS

3.3.3 The condition of the designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites within Zone 2 is generally mixed. Sheffield Park Garden LWS, designated for its grassland habitat, is in 'good' condition, however other meadow LWS within farmland are in 'poor' condition and declining[126]. The Ashdown Forest SAC, SPA and SSSI is in 'unfavourable-recovering' condition[127].

3.3.4 As shown on **Figure 3.3c**, the wildlife habitats within Zone 2 are dominated by a mosaic of woodland and lowland heath, notably with coniferous woodland plantation often on the steeper slopes or where heathy characteristics dominate. Watercourses and hammer ponds – relics from historic iron industry, provide wetland habitats, particularly in the southern part of the Zone. Dry acid grassland can be found in relatively few sites on Ashdown Forest. Habitats along the watercourses are generally fragmented and include a mixture of woodlands and

[126] High Weald Grasslands SNCI Landowner Liaison Project, Dolphin Ecological Surveys (2013)
[127] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017



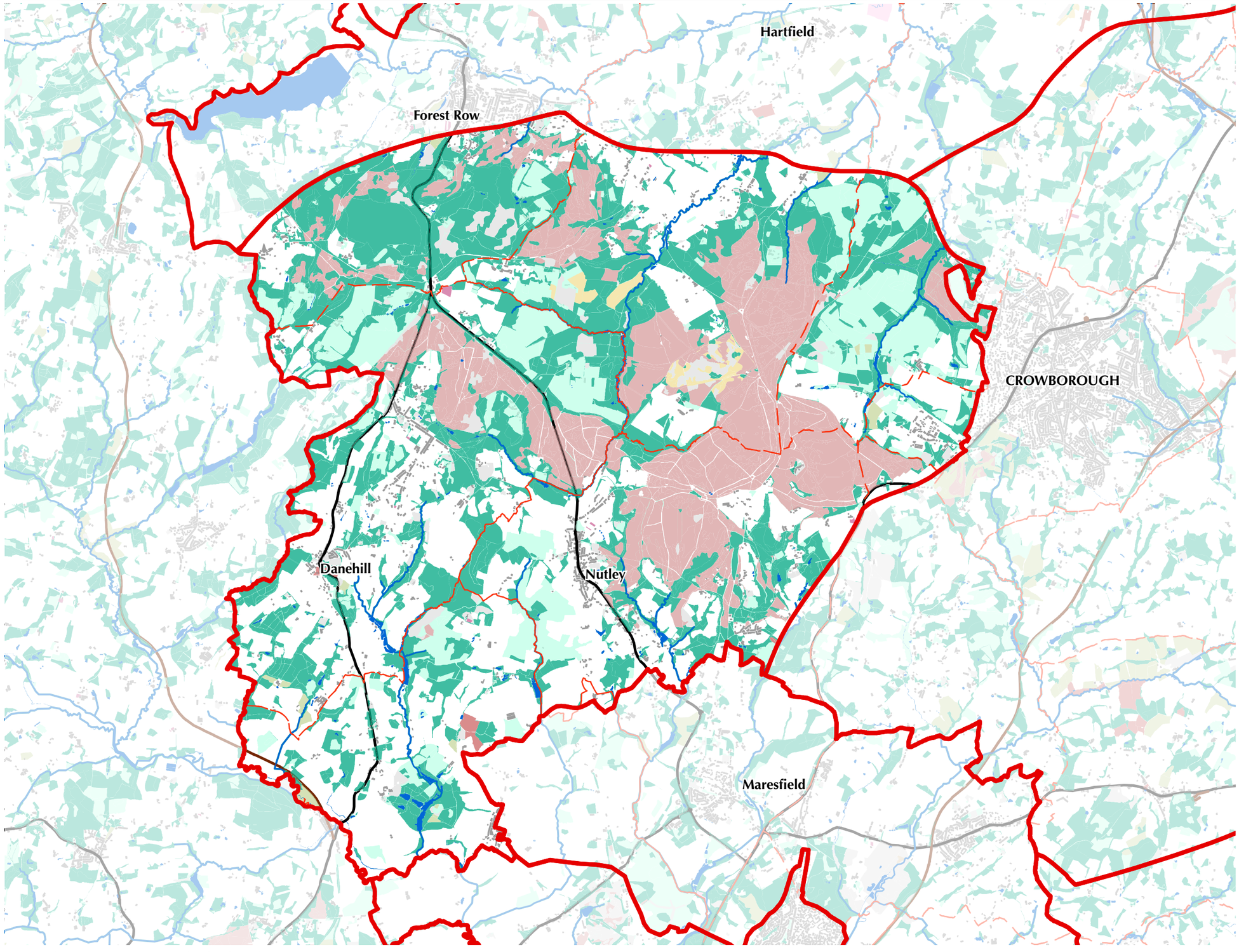
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FIGURE 3.3b
ZONE 2 - ASHDOWN FOREST:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

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FIGURE 3.3c
ZONE 2 - ASHDOWN FOREST:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

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grassland/arable. Key barriers to the movement of wildlife within the zone include main roads such as the A275 and A22. The mainline railway also skirts along the far south-western edge of this zone. Woodlands are smaller and more fragmented in the south of the zone, where farming is more frequently arable.

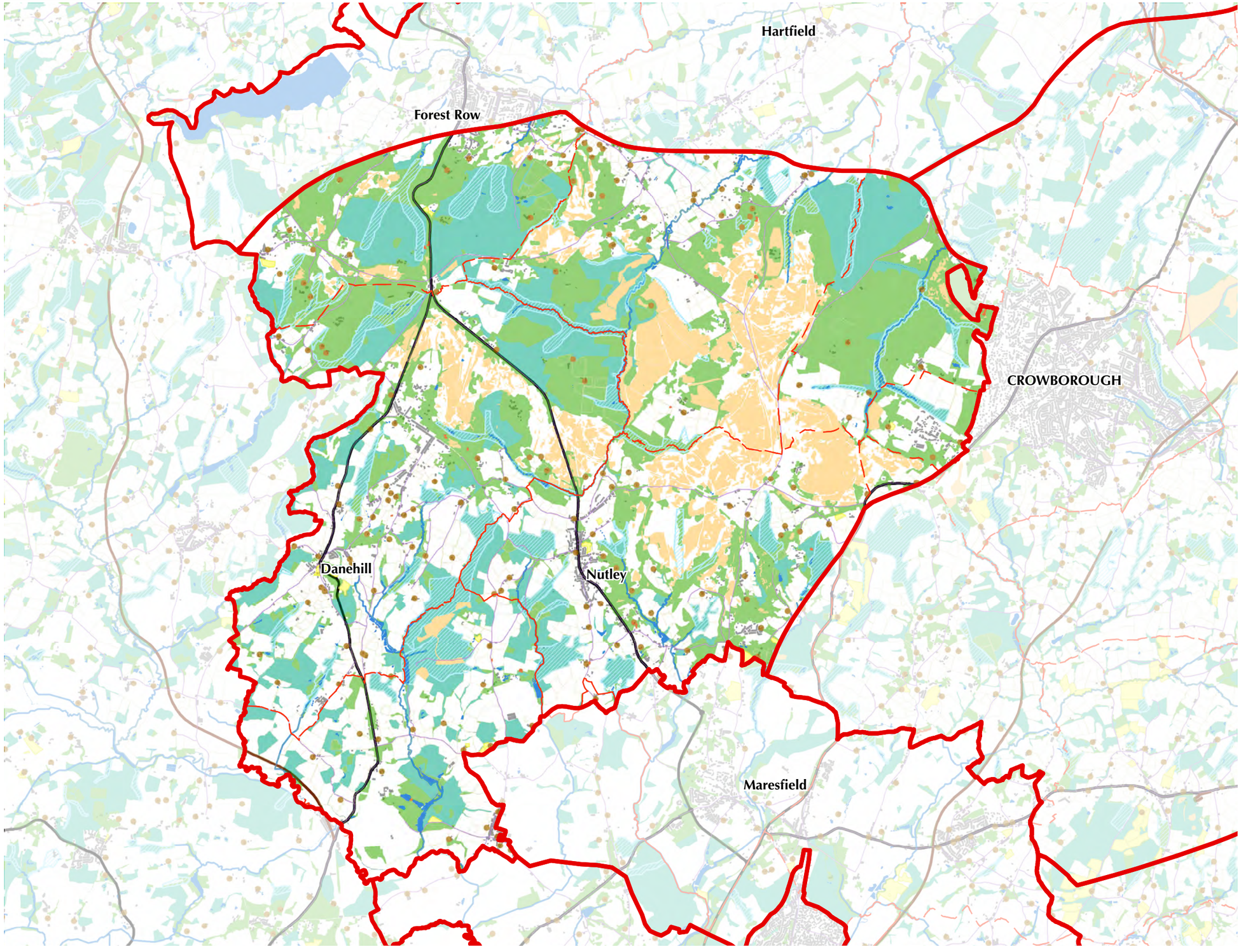
3.3.5 As shown on **Figure 2.2c**, Zone 2 lies almost wholly within the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area (48). In total 114 species have been recorded in this BOA including Nightjar and Adder. Over 20 invasive species have been identified within this zone, including:

- Muntjac deer *Muntiacus reevesi*
- Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*
- Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*
- Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*
- Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*

Landscape & Historic Environment

3.3.6 **Figure 3.3d** shows the patterns of character components in Zone 2 which contribute to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape as defined by the High Weald AONB Management Plan. These are summarised below:

- **Geology, landform, water systems and climate** - the pattern of north-east south-west orientated river valleys form the upper tributaries of the Medway and Ouse. These valleys are typically steep-sided and associated with ancient gill woodlands. Chains of hammer ponds, particularly around Sheffield Forest Complex LWS are characteristic of this zone.
- **Settlement** - the dispersed pattern of settlements (historic farmsteads, hamlets and the villages of Danehill, Chelwood Common and Nutley) within the zone is not uniform but it has a strong relationship with the dense pattern of historic routeways running down from the ridge-tops. Few settlements are present on the Forest, and many of those found close by take a linear form such as Chelwood Common and Nutley. Settlement names reflect their location around the edges of the Forest; 'Gate' and 'Hatch' being particularly common. Historic farmsteads are particularly dense in pattern around Chelwood Common and Nutley.
- **Routeways** - historic routeways create a framework for the pattern of the High Weald's landscape in this zone, linking key GI resources such as watercourses and woodlands to settlements. Of historic origin, the routeways are often sunken through years of use and erosion. Alongside watercourses, historic routeways and gills provide important corridors for dispersal of wildlife throughout this zone.



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Main Roads
- Railways

Geology, Landform, Water Systems & Climate:

- Sandstone Outcrops
- Main Watercourses and Waterbodies

Settlement:

- Historic Farmsteads
- Villages

Routeways:

- Historic Routeways

Woodland:

- Gill Woods
- Ancient Woodland
- National Forest Inventory Woodland

Fields & Heath:

- Meadow
- Heathland
- Historic Field Boundaries

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.3d
ZONE 2 - ASHDOWN FOREST:
AONB CHARACTER COMPONENTS

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- **Woodlands** - woodland is a key component of the AONB landscape and it is particularly plentiful within this zone, much of this is Ancient Woodland, however large-scale plantation or secondary woodlands are common in the north on top of the ridge. Gills are typically steep-sided and are often wooded, and are more common in the south and west of this zone. As a result of their cool, damp micro-climates they can harbour a unique assemblage of plants which are more typically associated with the western coast of the UK. Some gill woodlands and associated watercourses in this zone may suffer from neglect and poor management.
- **Fields and heath** - there are large areas of lowland heathland particularly on the higher ground within this zone. The distinctive patchwork pattern of small-scale, irregular shaped fields characteristic of the pastoral farmland within the High Weald are more typical in the far north and south-west of this zone.

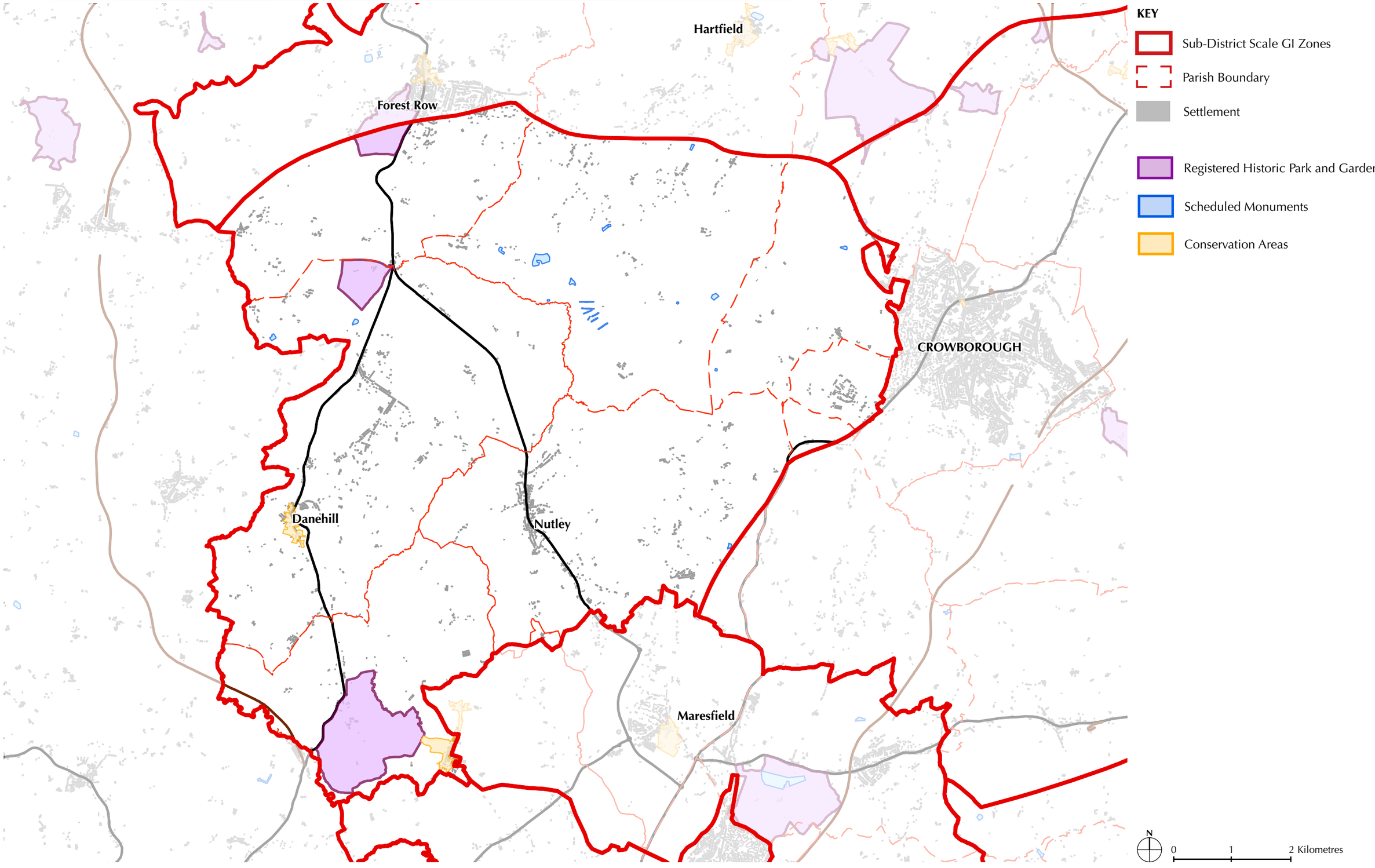
3.3.7 The historic environment assets in the Ashdown Forest GI Zone shown on **Figure 3.3e** also make an important contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape. These include:

- Sheffield Park Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade I)
- Kidbrooke Park Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II)
- Wych Cross Place Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)
- 15 Scheduled Monuments – such as Pillow mounds on Ashdown Forest; and Crowborough Forge, 160m south-east of Forest Lodge Cottage.
- 2 Conservation Areas – Fletching and Splaynes Green, and Danehill
- Ashdown Forest Park Pale – a deep ditch and bank, still visible in places, marking the historic boundary of the hunting forest.

3.3.8 These heritage assets are generally not at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change, with the exception of Kidbrooke Park which is on the National Heritage At Risk Register, see **Table 2.6**.

Energy & Food

3.3.9 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, there are numerous large deciduous and coniferous woodlands within the Ashdown GI Zone. Many of these woodlands have a long history of being managed, and therefore represent a potential significant source of local fuel. In addition the Forest's considerable resource of lowland heath is managed for its wildlife value; as such removal of scrub and pioneer species such as birch is required to manage the heathland, either through grazing or mechanical means. This on-going management produces material which has the potential to be used as a local fuel.



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FIGURE 3.3e
ZONE 2 - ASHDOWN FOREST:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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3.3.10 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the majority of Zone 2 is classified as non-agricultural (heathland) which is surrounded by grade 4 agricultural land, with grade 3 land being found only around the edges of this zone, in the lower lying areas. Whilst arable farming is therefore not undertaken in most of this zone, the Forest offers significant opportunities for sheep and deer, complementary to the management and up-keep of the Forest for its biodiversity and landscape. Wild deer are particularly common within the Forest and here they can damage heathland and many deer get hit by cars on the Forest.

Water Resources

3.3.11 As shown on **Figure 2.5**, a number of tributaries rise within Zone 2, particularly for the Ouse (which flows away from Wealden District into Mid Sussex) along the zone boundary and the Medway which flows north into Tunbridge Wells Borough. Both of these rivers represent a significant flood risk further downstream, outside of the study area therefore this zone is important location for improving land management around the upper reaches.

3.3.12 Water quality within the Ashdown Forest GI Zone is generally in 'moderate' to 'poor' ecological status, and in 'good' chemical status[128].

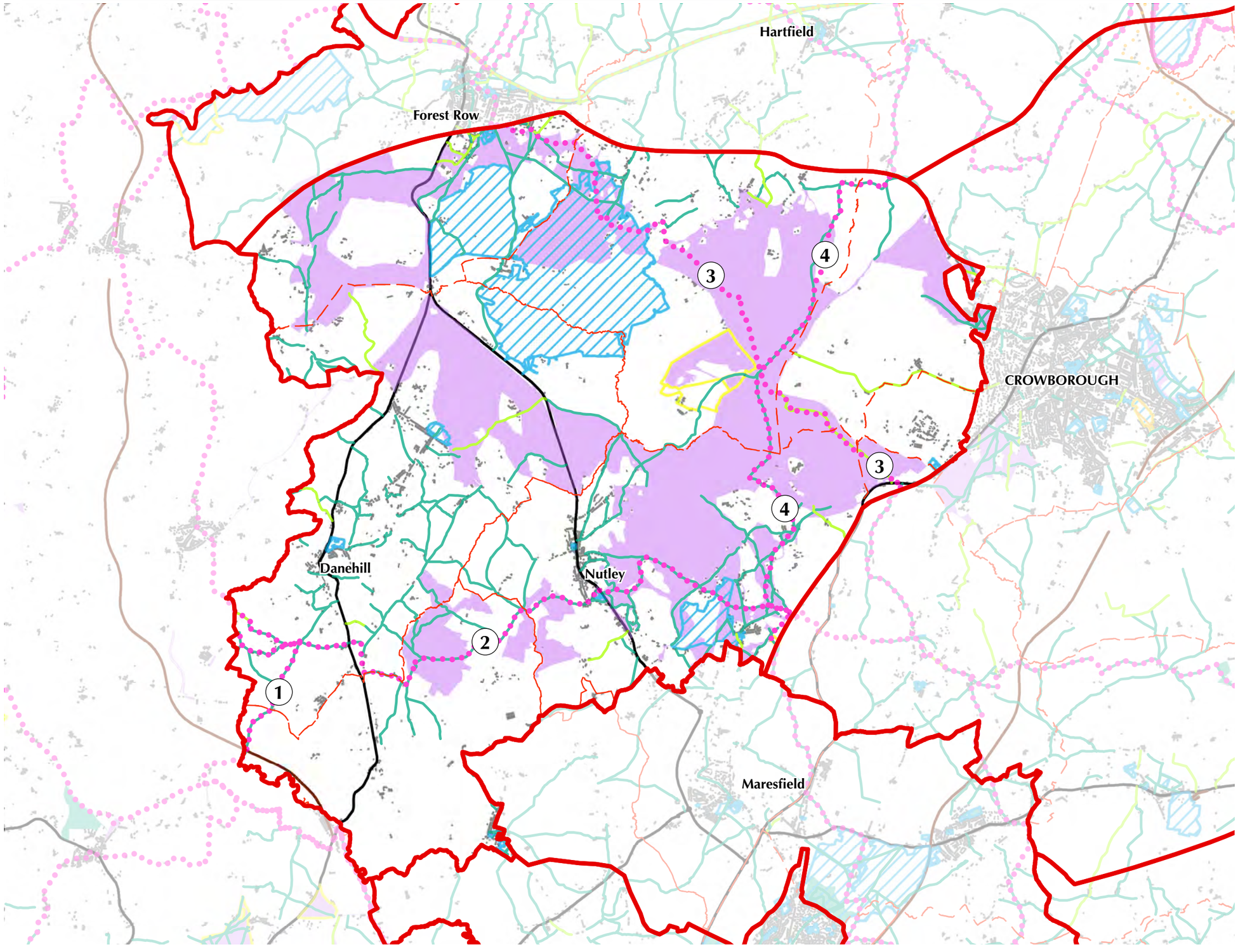
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

3.3.13 The existing provision of accessible natural greenspace within the Ashdown Forest GI Zone and adjoining areas is shown on **Figure 3.3f.** This shows that there are deficiencies in natural greenspace accessible at a neighbourhood scale within the south-west of this zone, and in small pockets in the north and east. Access to larger sites is, however well-provided for the majority of the population within this zone as a result of its proximity to Ashdown Forest.

3.3.14 The key deficiencies in the provision of accessible natural greenspace identified within the Ashdown Forest GI Zone are:

- Neighbourhood-scale access is poorly provided for within the south-west of the zone and an area of the zone in the north-east adjacent to Crowborough.
- District-scale access is well provided for across the vast majority of this zone, with the exception of the far south-west.
- County-scale provision of accessible natural greenspace is well provided for across the entire zone.

[128] http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/ Environmental Agency, 2015 Cycle II



KEY

Sub-District Scale GI Zones

Parish Boundary

Settlement

Access Links:

Footpath

Bridleway/Byway

Sustrans National Cycle Route

Promoted Route

1. Sussex Border Path
2. Sussex Diamond Way
3. Vanguard Way
4. Wealdway

National Trail

Main Roads

Railways

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

Open Spaces*

CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land

Country Parks

Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves

Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

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FIGURE 3.3f
ZONE 2 - ASHDOWN FOREST:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

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- Sub-regional scale provision is also well-provided for across the entire zone.

3.3.15 As shown on **Figure 3.3f**, Zone 2 is a landscape with large areas of open access land, formed of a mixture of heathland, commons and greens. The majority of these areas are either directly well connected to one another, or via public rights of way. There are a number of long-distance Promoted Routes including the Vanguard Way, the Sussex Diamond Way, the Sussex Border Path and the Wealdway in this zone.

3.3.16 The key gaps in the access route network within the Ashdown Forest GI Zone are:

- The southern part of this zone, around Sheffield Park (National Trust land) is poorly-connected by rights of way, both within this zone and in to Zone 6 and Mid Sussex District.
- There are gaps in walking or cycling routes from Crowborough on to Ashdown Forest.

Needs and Opportunities

3.3.17 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network within the Ashdown Forest GI Zone include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI within this Zone are considered to be:

- Seek opportunities to improve fragmented ecological networks within the BOA such as woodland along the Western Ouse tributaries and grassland around Danehill, together with improving access links within the southern part of this zone.
- Develop opportunities to support and promote local produce, such as wild venison, which can also contribute to woodland management objectives.
- Investigate opportunities to maintain and deliver positive management of key landscape features within this zone, notably the lowland heath within Ashdown Forest.
- Investigate opportunities to develop ways to use conservation brash from Ashdown Forest as a local source of fuel, to produce a carbon neutral form of energy.
- Where appropriate address the need to maintain and where possible enhance the condition of designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites by tackling invasive non-native species for example.

- Seek opportunities through partnerships to improve the function of road and railway verges by introducing sensitive management to promote biodiversity, air quality and minimise infrastructure as visual detractors.
- Explore opportunities to integrate multifunctional community greenspaces/growing spaces into settlements and new developments that provide health and well-being benefits and help reinforce a strong sense of place.
- Promote opportunities to use SuDS and green roofs within new developments, integrated within landscaping schemes and designed to achieve ecological gains.

3.4 Zone 3: Central High Weald

Overview

3.4.1 As shown on **Figure 3.4a**, the Central High Weald GI Zone is a large area dominated by significant ridges and valleys within the northern part of the District. The zone borders Tunbridge Wells District to the north and is located within the High Weald AONB. Crowborough town lies in the west of this zone along with the villages of Wadhurst and Frant. This zone contains the following Parishes (see **Figure 1.2**):

- Withyham
- Rotherfield
- Frant
- Hadlow Down
- Wadhurst
- Mayfield and Five Ashes
- Buxted
- Crowborough

Audit

Existing Strategic Green Infrastructure Initiatives

- **Crowborough SANG -** An area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace to the south-east of Crowborough, primarily providing recreation opportunities.
- **Weald Meadows Partnership -** Over the last 20 years the WMP has developed a wide range of knowledge and expertise that has helped stem the decline of traditional grassland and ensure the successful establishment of new species-rich meadows. As a direct result, many meadows have been recognised, protected, enhanced or created within the Weald utilising native wild harvested local provenance seed. Today, the WMP provides practical support to landowners with the management, enhancement and creation of lowland meadow across the Weald.
- **High Weald AONB Land Management Advice -** For owners of land within the High Weald AONB, the AONB Unit offers bespoke advice and site visits to enable individuals, farmers and organisations improve the management of the landscape features within their ownership.
- **Weald PAWS Restoration -** Free advice, guidance and support to woodland owners, managers and forestry professionals in particular to find out how restoring plantations on ancient woodland sites can complement on-going woodland management.

KEY

Sub-District Scale GI Zones

Parish Boundary

1. Withyham
2. Rotherfield
3. Frant
4. Wadhurst
5. Crowborough
6. Maresfield
7. Buxted
8. Hadlow Down
9. Mayfield & Five Ashes

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FIGURE 3.4a
ZONE 3 - CENTRAL HIGH WEALD:
CONTEXT PLAN

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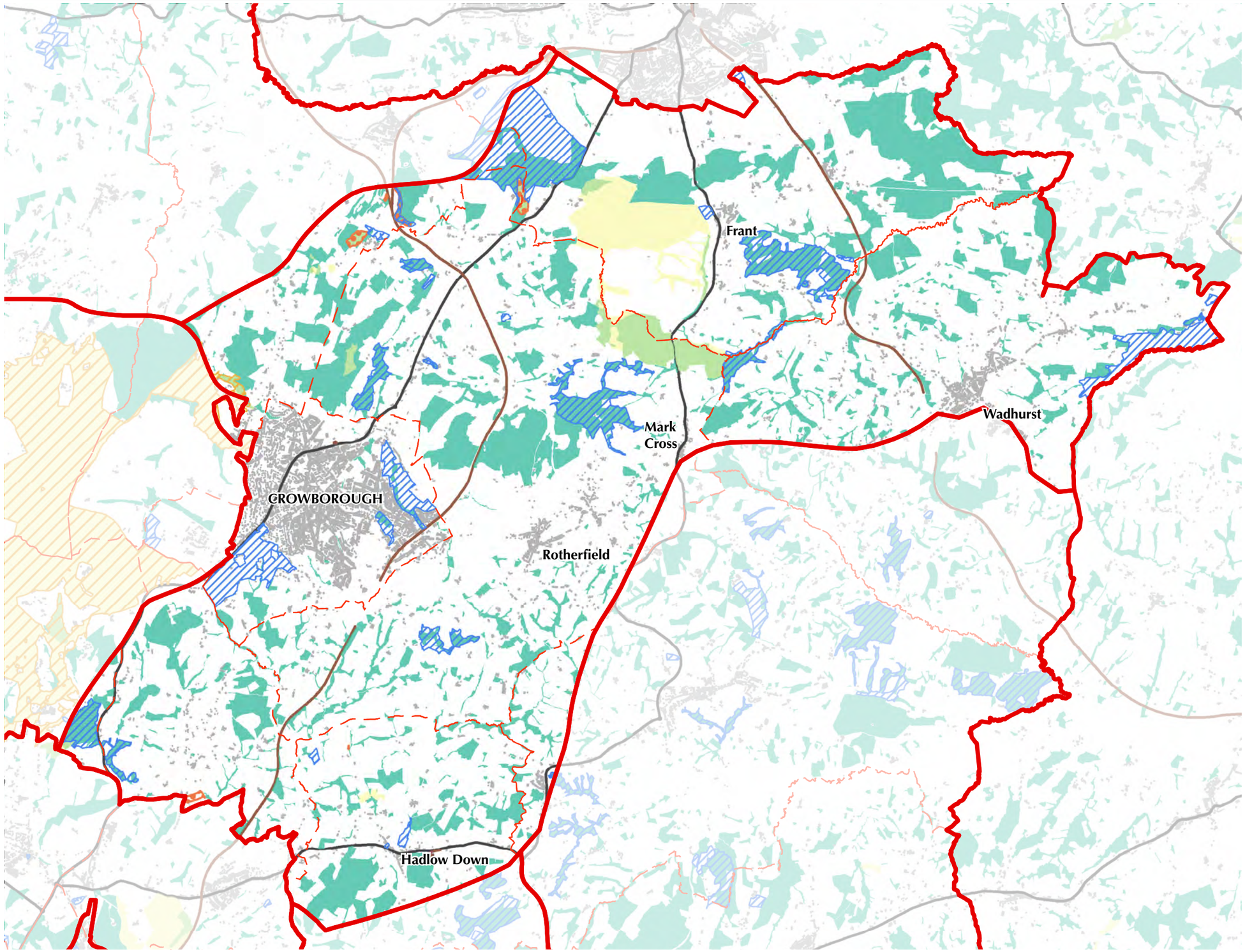
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- **Heathland Restoration at Broadwater Warren & Hargate Forest -** Large-scale on-going habitat restoration of PAWS to heathland by the RSPB and Woodland Trust respectively.
- **High Weald Welly Walks (Hadlow Down, Rotherfield, Crowborough x3, High Hurstwood, Frant and Wadhurst) -** These landscape walks, starting and ending at the school gate, provide opportunities for children to learn more about their unique local landscape.

Biodiversity

3.4.2 The Central High Weald GI Zone contains the following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites (see **Figure 3.4b**):

- The Ashdown Forest SAC and SSSI (part)
- Eridge Park SSSI
- Stockland Farm Meadows SSSI
- Bream Wood SSSI
- Penn's Rock SSSI
- Eridge Green SSSI
- Hastingford Cutting SSSI
- Crowborough Common LWS
- Furnace Wood LWS
- Stonehouse Wood LWS
- Hastingford Meadow LWS
- Cantersand Meadows and Gillthorpe Bank Wood Gill LWS
- Hadlow Down Churchyard LWS
- Lodge, Wet and Treblers Wood LWS
- Jarvis Brook Country Park LWS
- Crowborough Ghyll LWS
- Boars Head, Hodges and Cage Wood LWS
- Entryhill Wood Complex LWS
- Hamsell Lake LWS
- Boarshead Rocks LWS
- Rowland Wood Meadow LWS
- Holden Wood LWS
- Leyswood Rocks LWS
- Harrison's Rocks LWS
- The Warren and Broadwater Forest LWS
- Frant Meadows LWS



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement

Designations:

- Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation/Ramsar
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Ancient Woodland
- Regionally Important Geological Sites

N

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FIGURE 3.4b
ZONE 3 - CENTRAL HIGH WEALD:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

April 2017

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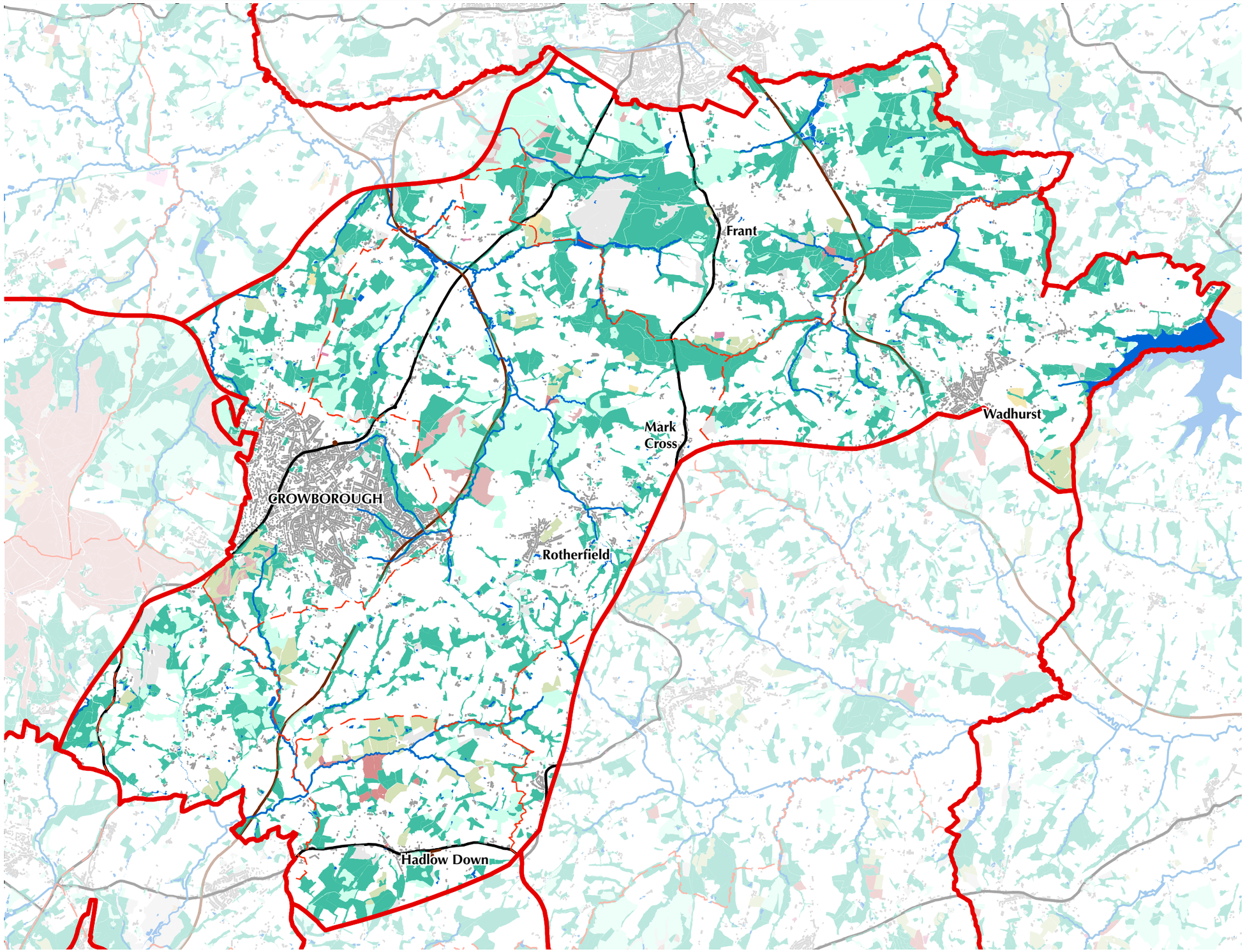
- Clays Wood LWS
- Colesgrove Wood Complex LWS
- Bewl Water Reservoir LWS
- Hawkenbury Farm Meadows LWS
- Hastingford Cutting, Hadlow Down RIGS
- Harrison's Rocks RIGS
- Glen Andred Rocks, Groombridge RIGS
- Eridge Rocks, Eridge Green RIGS
- Rocks Wood, near Groombridge RIGS
- The Hermitage, High Hurstwood, Buxted RIGS

3.4.3 The condition of the designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites within Zone 3 overall is 'moderate'. The grasslands habitats within Local Wildlife Sites are in 'moderate' to 'poor' condition[129]. Those isolated sites within private ownership are at the most risk of neglect or change. The SSSIs within this zone are generally in 'unfavourable-recovering' condition[130].

3.4.4 Hastingford Cutting, Rocks Wood and Eridge Rocks RIGS within the zone are also designated as Geological SSSIs; these are in a favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition (Rocks Wood and Eridge Rocks), and an unfavourable – no change condition (Hastingford Cutting)[131]. Three of the RIGS are publically accessible (Hastingford Cutting, Harrison's Rocks and Eridge Rocks RIGS).

3.4.5 As shown on **Figure 3.4c**, the wildlife habitats within Zone 3 are dominated by woodland, meadows, lowland heath, and grassland. In the north, coniferous woodland plantation and larger blocks of Ancient Woodland are associated with the significant ridgelines found to the south of Tunbridge Wells. To the west of this area heathland is characteristic, as it marks two of the key five ancient hunting forests of the Weald; Broadwater and 'Waterdown' (now Hargate Forest). Zone 3 includes part of Bewl Water reservoir on its eastern edge and watercourses include tributaries of the Teise and the upper reaches of the river Uck and Rother. Hammer ponds, relics from historic iron industry, provide wetland habitats, and are particularly noticeable within the Eridge Estate. The upper reaches of the Uck in particular includes numerous valuable semi-natural habitats such as semi-improved grassland and lowland meadows. Key barriers to the movement of wildlife within the zone typically run north-south. These include two mainline railways; one through Bells Yew Green in the east and on through Jarvis Brook and Eridge in the west. Main roads share this orientation and the A267 and A26 in particular are likely to be barriers to species.

[129] High Weald Grasslands SNCI Landowner Liaison Project, Dolphin Ecological Surveys (2013)
[130] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017
[131] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement
- Main Roads
- Railways

Main BAP Priority Habitats:

- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Saltmarsh
- Coastal Vegetated Shingle
- Deciduous Woodland
- Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Fens
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Meadows
- Maritime Cliff and Slope
- Mudflats
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures
- Reedbeds
- Saline Lagoons
- Traditional Orchard
- No Main Habitat but Additional Habitats Present

- **Mixed and Coniferous Woodland Habitats** (National Forest Inventory)
- **Freshwater Habitats** (Main Watercourses & Waterbodies)

N

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FIGURE 3.4c
ZONE 3 - CENTRAL HIGH WEALD:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

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3.4.6 As shown on **Figure 2.2c**, Zone 3 lies within the following Biodiversity Opportunity Areas; Medway, Ouse and Rother Watershed (54), Eridge and Broadwater (55), River Uck and its Headwaters (49).

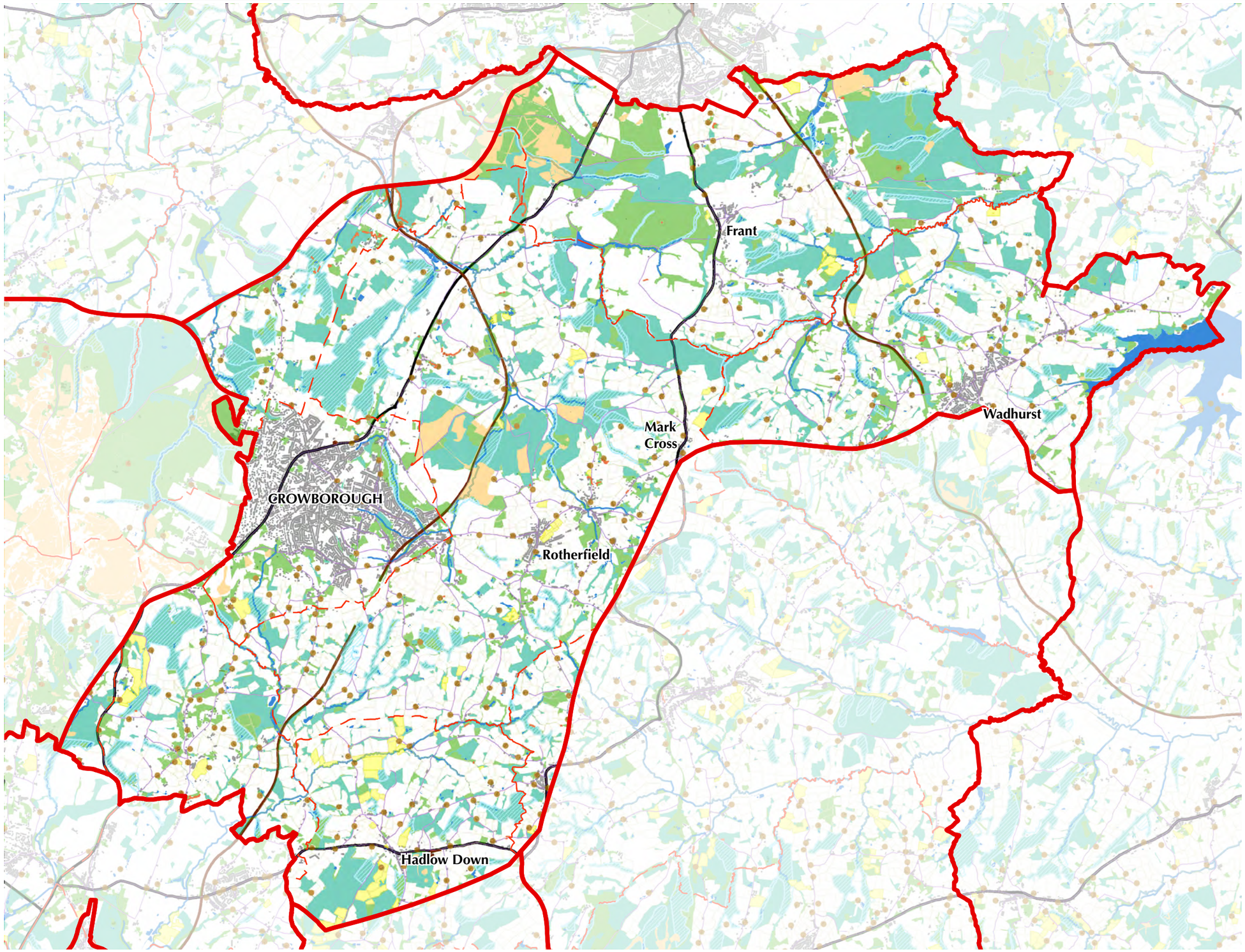
3.4.7 BAP species such as Spiked Rampion, Common Toad and White Admiral have been recorded within this zone. Eleven non-native invasive species have been recorded in this zone including the following, which cause management problems for ancient woodlands;

- Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*
- Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*

Landscape & Historic Environment

3.4.8 **Figure 3.4d** shows the patterns of character components in Zone 3 which contribute to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape as defined by the High Weald AONB Management Plan. These are summarised below:

- **Geology, landform, water systems and climate** - the pattern of ridges and valleys within this zone is complex, but the typical east-west ridges and valleys are concentrated in the north of this Zone, creating the dominant landform. These valleys form tributaries of the River Grom, Teise and Medway. Ponds are particularly common in the east and south of this zone, which also includes part of Bewl Reservoir. Larger waterbodies associated with designed landscapes can be seen particularly in the north.
- **Settlement** - the dispersed pattern of settlements (historic farmsteads, hamlets and the villages of Frant, Wadhurst and Hadlow Down) is strong within this zone, however Crowborough has become nucleated. The pattern of historic farmsteads is particularly dense in the south-west and north-east of this zone, and less frequent in the heathy, heavily wooded and designed landscapes in the north of the zone.
- **Routeways** - historic routeways create a framework for the pattern of the High Weald's landscape in this zone, amplifying the east-west orientation of the ridges and valleys, particularly in the north. Further south routeways form distinctive radiating patterns from settlements and have a strong association with historic farmsteads. Of historic origin, the routeways are often sunken through years of use and erosion by water. Alongside watercourses, historic routeways provide important corridors for dispersal of wildlife throughout this zone.
- **Woodlands** - woodland is a key component of the AONB landscape and within this zone, much of this is Ancient Woodland. In the north, large-scale coniferous plantations have historically exploited the acidic soils, and many of these are now undergoing restoration back to heathland. Gills are typically steep-sided ravines which are often wooded and



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Main Roads
- Railways

Geology, Landform, Water Systems & Climate:

- Sandstone Outcrops
- Main Watercourses and Waterbodies

Settlement:

- Historic Farmsteads
- Villages

Routeways:

- Historic Routeways

Woodland:

- Gill Woods
- Ancient Woodland
- National Forest Inventory Woodland

Fields & Heath:

- Meadow
- Heathland
- Historic Field Boundaries

N

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FIGURE 3.4d
ZONE 3 - CENTRAL HIGH WEALD:
AONB CHARACTER COMPONENTS

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common throughout this zone. As a result of their cool, damp micro-climates they can harbour a unique assemblage of plants which are more typically associated with the western coast of the UK. Some gill woodlands and associated watercourses in this zone may suffer from neglect and poor management.

- **Fields and heath** - there are large areas of lowland heathland particularly around the northern and central parts of this zone. The distinctive patchwork pattern of small-scale, irregular shaped fields characteristic of the pastoral farmland within the High Weald are more typical in the far north and south-west of this zone. Historic field boundaries create a strong field pattern throughout, except within designed landscapes to the south of Tunbridge Wells.

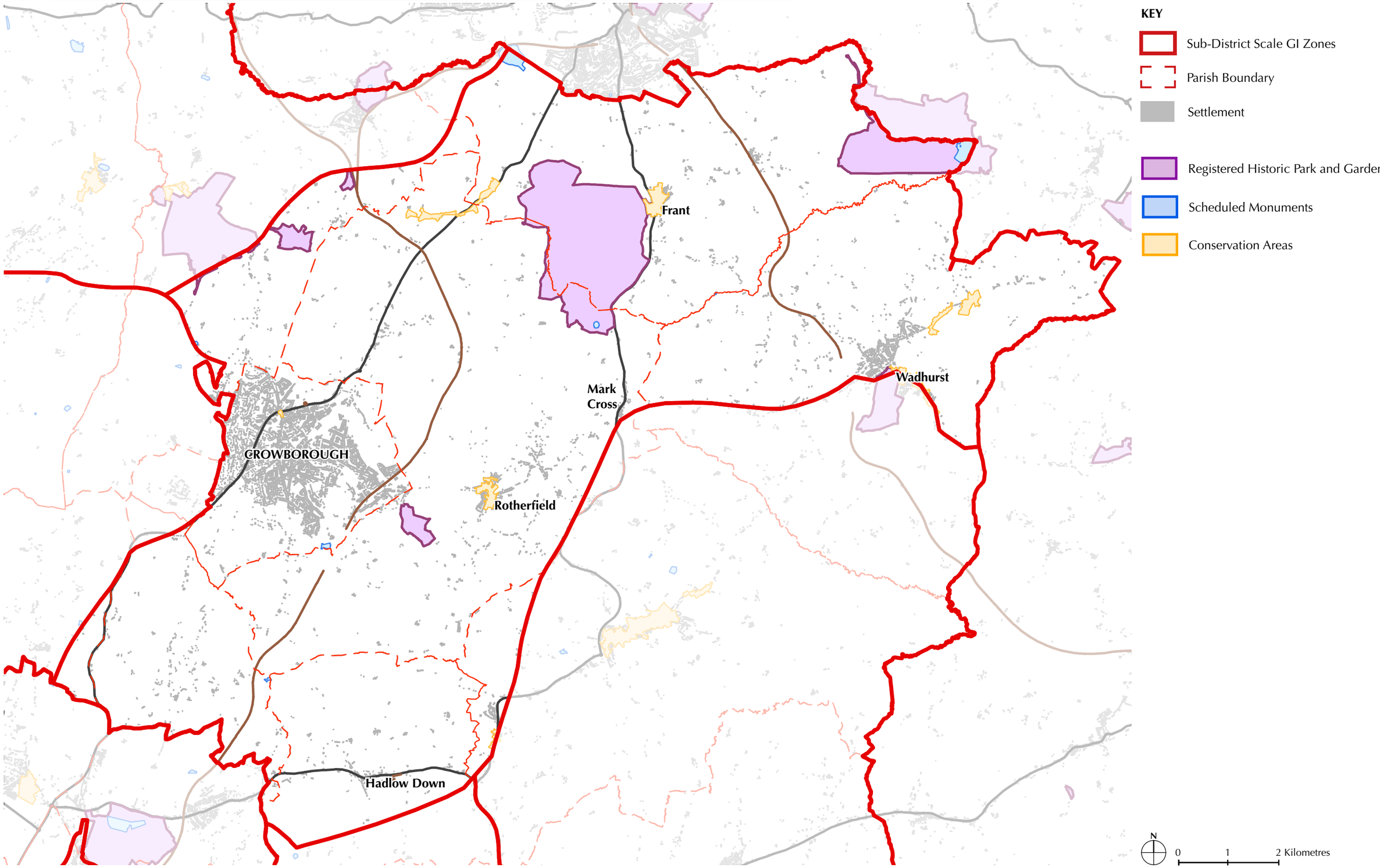
3.4.9 The historic environment assets in the Central High Weald GI Zone shown on **Figure 3.4e** also make an important contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape. These include:

- Buckhurst Park Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)
- Penns in the Rocks Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)
- Bayham Abbey Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II)
- Eridge Park Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)
- Rotherfield Hall Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)
- Frant Court Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II)
- Wadhurst Castle Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II)
- Glen Andred Garden Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)
- 8 No. Scheduled Monuments – such as Riverhall blast furnace, and the Premonstratensian Abbey at Bayham.
- 7 No. Conservation Areas – Wadhurst, Frant, Rotherfield, Five Ashes, Pell Green and Cousley Wood, Eridge Green and Crowborough.

3.4.10 These heritage assets are generally not at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change, with the exception of High Rocks which is listed on the Heritage at Risk Register. Many of these sites are in private ownership, and therefore at risk of changes in ownership.

Energy & Food

3.4.11 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the northern part of this zone includes numerous large deciduous and plantation woodlands. Many of these woodlands are remnant historic hunting forests and have been managed over a significant period of time. Within this part of the zone some woodlands such as Broadwater are being partly restored to heathland, which is producing timber (softwoods mostly) as a by-product.



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FIGURE 3.4e
ZONE 3 - CENTRAL HIGH WEALD:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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3.4.12 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the majority of Zone 3 is classified as roughly equal amounts of Grade 3 and Grade 4 agricultural land. Larger-scale arable agriculture within this zone is focused in the areas around the Uck headwaters and south-west of Tunbridge Wells and close to Bewl Water.

Water Resources

3.4.13 As shown on **Figure 2.5**, a number of tributaries rise within Zone 3, particularly the headwaters of the Uck, Medway, Teise and Rother. The southern part of this zone around the headwaters of the Uck is considered to be particularly important for flood alleviation, given the flood risk present within Uckfield. Bewl Water Reservoir is a major water body, part of which is located in the far north-east of this zone, on the border with Kent. The most significant floodplain within this zone is that of the Uck in the south.

3.4.14 Water quality within the Central High Weald GI Zone is generally in 'good' for chemical status and in 'poor to moderate' for ecological status.

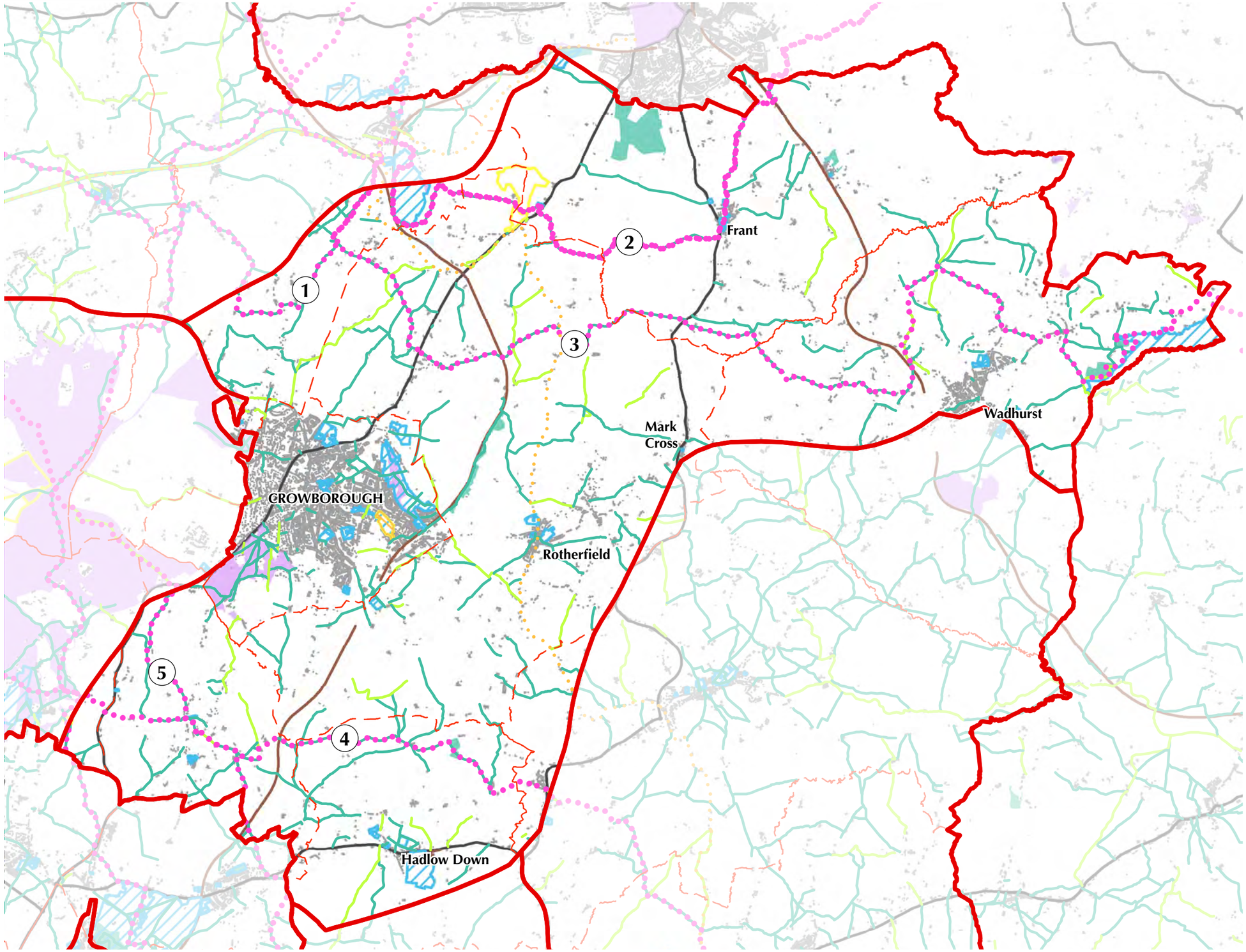
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

3.4.15 The existing provision of accessible natural greenspace within the Central High Weald GI Zone and adjoining areas is shown on **Figure 3.4f.** This shows that in general access to greenspace is better provided for in the west of this zone, particularly around Crowborough. Access to greenspace is much poorer in the eastern half of this zone.

3.4.16 The key deficiencies in provision of accessible natural greenspace identified within the Ashdown Forest GI Zone are:

- Neighbourhood scale access is poorly provided within the north-east and south-west of the zone.
- District-scale access follows a similar pattern, with much better provision in the west of the Zone, where populations can easily access larger sites within Zone 2.
- County-scale access is only well provided for in the south-west of the Central High Weald Zone, as a result of its proximity to the Ashdown Forest in neighbouring Zone 2.
- At a Sub-Regional scale populations within this zone rely upon large (over 500ha) sites outside of this Zone, one (Ashdown Forest) Wealden and one (Bedgebury) in Kent.

3.4.17 As shown on **Figure 3.4f**, Zone 3 includes some open access land to the south of Crowborough - Crowborough Common, a golf course crossed by public rights of way. Additional natural greenspace is provided by a number of sites such as; Crowborough Country Park, Eridge Rocks,



KEY

Sub-District Scale GI Zones

Parish Boundary

Settlement

Access Links:

Footpath

Bridleway/Byway

Sustrans National Cycle Route

Promoted Route

1. High Weald Landscape Trail
2. Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk
3. Sussex Border Path
4. Sussex Diamond Way
5. Vanguard Way

National Trail

Main Roads

Railways

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

Open Spaces*

CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land

Country Parks

Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves

Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

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WEALDEN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY
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FIGURE 3.4f
ZONE 3 - CENTRAL HIGH WEALD:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

Wildlife Trust Reserve and Hargate Forest Woodland Trust Reserve in the far north. Overall, the countryside within Zone 3 is fairly well-connected by rights of way. However significant deficiencies in rights of way access exist in large areas of the north and north-east of this Zone. The majority of these areas are well connected via public rights of way, with the exception of Nap Wood and Hargate Forest. There are five Promoted Routes within this zone, including the Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk, High Weald Landscape Trail and the Vanguard Way. The Sustrans NCN Route 21 provides one of the few north-south access routes through the centre of this zone.

3.4.18 The key gaps in the access route network within the Central High Weald GI Zone are:

- The northern part of this zone, particularly around Tunbridge Wells is less well-connected by rights of way and whilst it contains some open access land, much of this is not connected to the rights of way network.
- Access from Wadhurst and Tunbridge Wells into the countryside via rights of way is particularly poor, with a lack of footpaths rather than poor connectivity.

Needs and Opportunities

3.4.19 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network within the Central High Weald GI Zone include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI within this Zone are considered to be:

- Seek opportunities to expand and link appropriate semi-natural habitats along the upper reaches of the Uck to offer appropriate flood water storage on the floodplain and attenuation and improve biodiversity.
- Where appropriate take opportunities to enhance and restore characteristic landscape features such as historic field boundaries (as hedgerows and shaws) particularly in the north of this zone.
- Increase appropriate woodland management such as introducing sensitive coppicing regimes to improve woodland condition and produce local sources of wood fuel, improve biodiversity and remove invasive woodland species within this zone.
- Seek opportunities to work in partnership to address heritage at risk (High Rocks) within this zone, and consider ways in which enhancing landscape condition and improving

access and interpretation to this nationally significant prehistoric site could be carried out in parallel.

- Seek the creation of new accessible natural greenspace (of at least 2ha) close to where people live and/or areas of growth to address current deficiencies. Consider provision of larger site 20ha plus as alternatives to Ashdown Forest within the central part of this zone.
- Opportunities exist to strengthen and improve access links around the southern edge of Tunbridge Wells and Wadhurst.
- Ensure the effects of new development and associated infrastructure (light, noise and air pollution) have minimal impact on the remote rural landscape of the High Weald (including the Dark Skies).
- Work in partnership to help manage sustainable recreational use of sandstone outcrops for climbing within this zone.
- Seek opportunities through partnerships to improve the function of road and railway verges by introducing sensitive management to promote biodiversity, air quality and minimise infrastructure as visual detractors.
- Explore opportunities to integrate multifunctional community greenspaces/growing spaces into settlements and new developments that provide health and well-being benefits and help reinforce a strong sense of place.
- Promote opportunities to use SuDS and green roofs within new developments, integrated within landscaping schemes and designed to achieve ecological gains.

3.5 Zone 4: Upper Rother Valleys

Overview

3.5.1 As shown on **Figure 3.5a**, the Upper Rother Valleys GI Zone is a large area of the High Weald AONB, characterised by significant ridges and valleys. Lying in the north-east of the District, this Zone borders Rother District to the east and includes the villages of Mayfield, Five Ashes and Broad Oak. This is a predominantly rural zone, with Mayfield located to the west and Five Ashes right on the border with the Central High Weald Zone. The zone includes parts of the following Parishes (see **Figure 1.2**):

- Mayfield and Five Ashes
- Wadhurst
- Heathfield and Waldron
- Warbleton
- Rotherfield

Audit

Existing Strategic Green Infrastructure Initiatives

- **B-Lines and Landscapes for Wild Pollinators and Farm Wildlife Project -** Buglife projects in the south-east concerned with restoring and recreating connected wildflower meadows and pollinator habitats.
- **Weald Meadows Partnership** - Over the last 20 years the WMP has developed a wide range of knowledge and expertise that has helped stem the decline of traditional grassland and ensure the successful establishment of new species-rich meadows. As a direct result, many meadows have been recognised, protected, enhanced or created within the Weald utilising native wild harvested local provenance seed. Today, the WMP provides practical support to landowners with the management, enhancement and creation of lowland meadow across the Weald.
- **AONB Land Management Advice** - For owners of land within the High Weald AONB, the AONB Unit offers bespoke advice and site visits to enable individuals, farmers and organisations improve the management of the landscape features within their ownership.
- **Weald PAWS Restoration** – A Woodland Trust project of free advice, guidance and support to woodland owners, managers and forestry professionals in particular to find out how restoring plantations on ancient woodland sites can complement on-going woodland management.

KEY

Sub-District Scale GI Zones

Parish Boundary

1. Rotherfield
2. Wadhurst
3. Mayfield & Five Ashes
4. Heathfield & Waldron
5. Warbleton

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.5a
ZONE 4 - UPPER ROTHER VALLEYS:
CONTEXT PLAN

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- **Restocking the Weald** - A project which runs across the Weald it enables the establishment of viable new livestock enterprises on under-utilised pasture across multiple land-holdings.
- **High Weald Welly Walks (Mayfield, Broad Oak)** - These landscape walks, starting and ending at the school gate, provide opportunities for children to learn more about their unique local landscape.

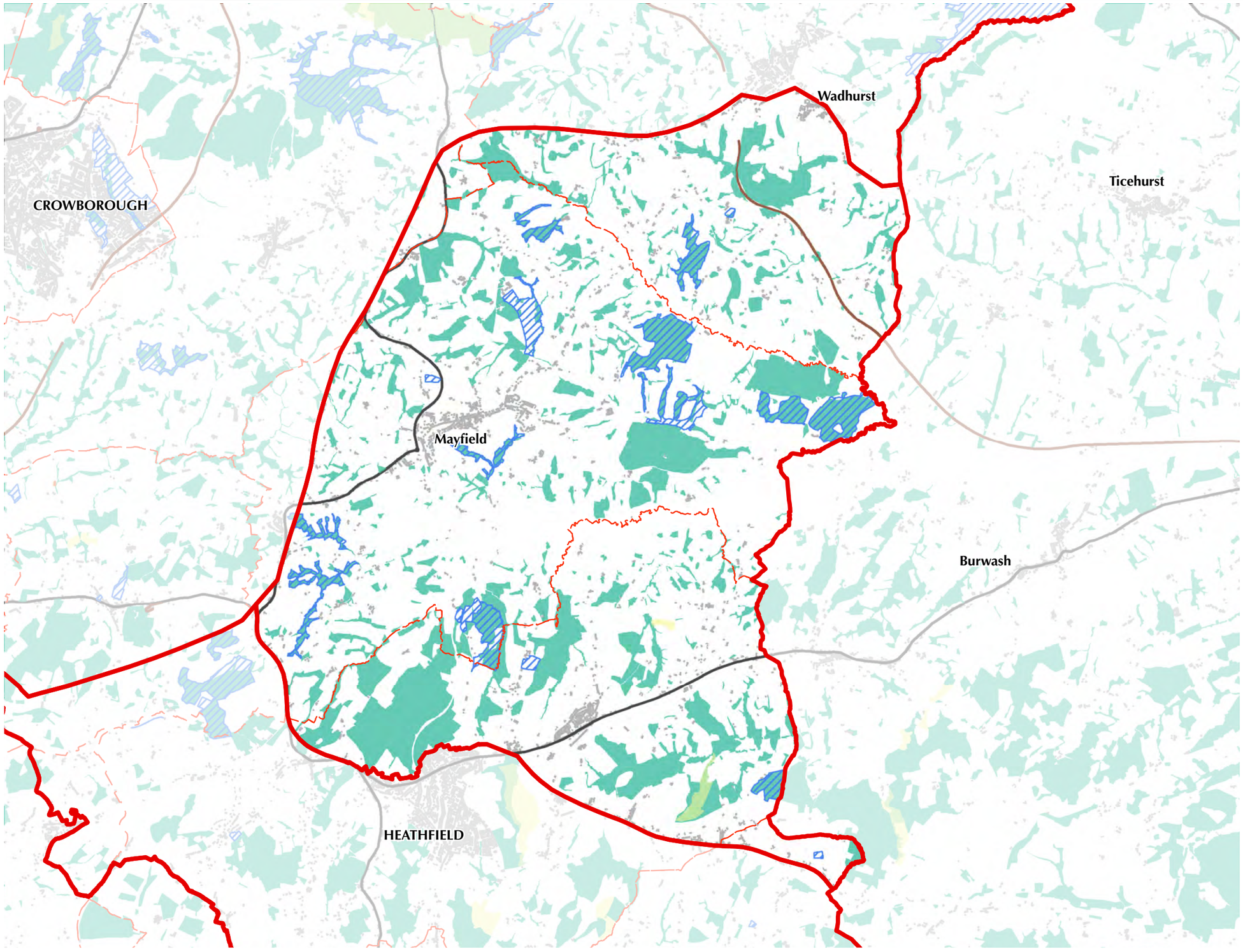
Biodiversity

3.5.2 The Upper Rother Valleys GI Zone contains the following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites (see **Figure 3.5b**):

- Paines Cross Meadow SSSI
- Bingletts Wood SSSI
- Newick Lane Meadow LWS
- Upper Old Mill Meadows LWS
- Three Cups Corner Meadow LWS
- Clay, Ten Acre & Newbridge Wood LWS
- Lakestreet Wood & Devils Gill LWS
- Oaken & Furlong Woods LWS
- Snape House Meadow LWS
- Almonds Wood Complex LWS
- Meer's & Hornslodge Gill Complex LWS
- Mayfield College Playing Field & Gill LWS
- Bramble Cottage Meadow LWS
- Green Wood LWS
- Combe Wood LWS
- Cranesden Gill Complex LWS
- Butcher's Wood, Wadhurst LWS
- Rolf's, Twelve Acre & Sandall's Ghyll LWS

3.5.3 The condition of the designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites within Zone 3 is generally 'moderate'. The Local Wildlife Sites designated for their grassland habitats within this zone are overall in Moderate Condition, with some declining and others improving in their condition[132]. SSSIs within this zone are improving or within favourable management condition[133]. There are no RIGS within this zone.

[132] High Weald Grasslands SNCI Landowner Liaison Project, Dolphin Ecological Surveys (2013)
[133] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017



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FIGURE 3.5b
ZONE 4 - UPPER ROTHER VALLEYS:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

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3.5.4 As shown on **Figure 3.5c**, the wildlife habitats within Zone 4 are dominated by woodland, with small areas of lowland meadows and semi-improved grassland. Large blocks of mixed and coniferous woodlands are notable, in particular to the south-west of this zone. The majority of woodlands however, are narrow and orientated perpendicular to the main watercourses, which in the zone run roughly east to west. Numerous ponds and some lakes such as that at Wadhurst Park, provide wetland habitats, particularly within woodlands. BAP Habitats along the main watercourses are fragmented and much less frequent than in the upper reaches, particularly along the Rother itself. This area includes more farmland and notably arable. Key barriers to the movement of wildlife within the zone include main roads (A265 and A267).

3.5.5 As shown on **Figure 2.2c**, Zone 4 lies within part of the Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods (59), the Medway, Ouse and Rother Watershed (54) and the Heathfield Habitat Link (72) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.

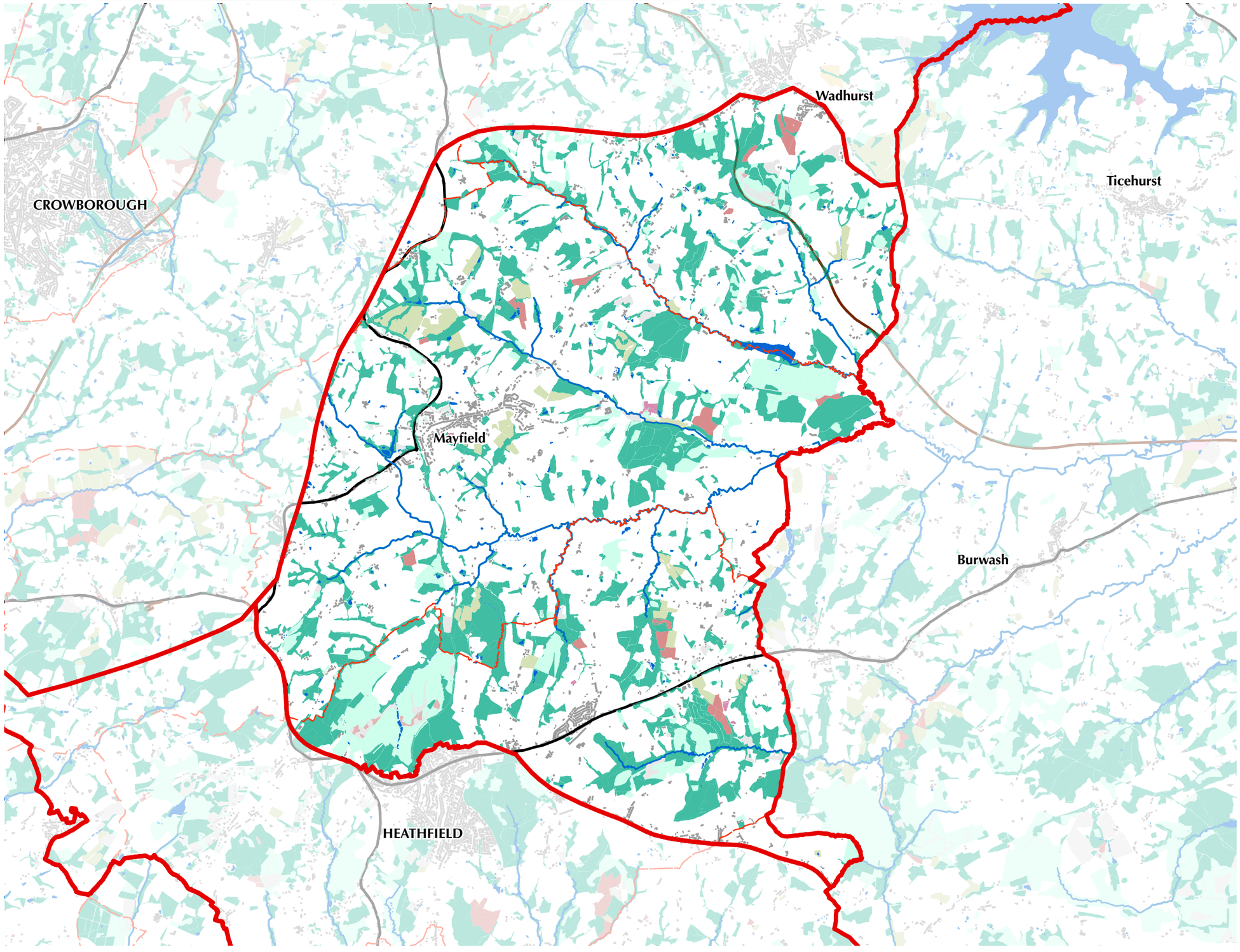
3.5.6 Numerous BAP species have been recorded within these BOAs, including Water Vole, Great Crested Newt and White Admiral. Over 20 non-native invasive species have been recorded in these BOAs including the following, which cause management problems in Ancient Woodlands;

- Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*
- Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*

Landscape & Historic Environment

3.5.7 **Figure 3.5d** shows the patterns of character components in Zone 4 which contribute to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape as defined by the High Weald AONB Management Plan. These are summarised below:

- **Geology, landform, water systems and climate** – this zone has a clear east-west pattern to its landform of ridges and river valleys which form the upper reaches of the river Rother. Ponds are common within this zone, both along the flood plains and within woodlands higher up the valley sides. The Lake at Wadhurst Park is a significant waterbody within this zone. Strings of hammer ponds are noticeable in the gill woods north of Heathfield characteristic of this zone. Small scattered outcrops of sandstone are found throughout this Zone.
- **Settlement** - the dispersed pattern of settlements in this zone is predominantly made up of hamlets and farmsteads. Mayfield and Broad Oak are the only villages within this zone. Historic farmsteads are scattered throughout this zone, and have a strong relationship with historic routeways which is particularly noticeable in Heathfield and Waldron Parish.



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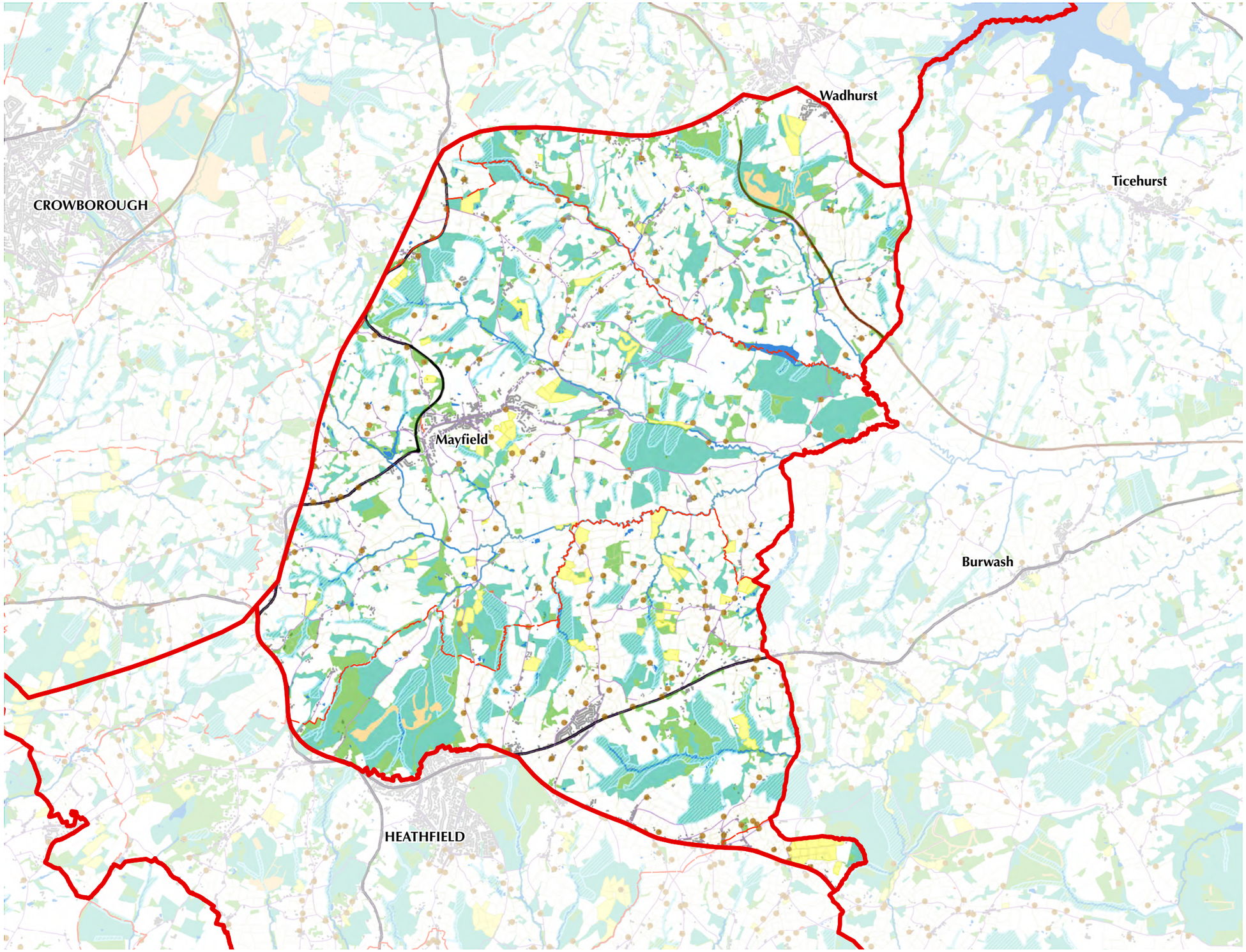
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FIGURE 3.5c
ZONE 4 - UPPER ROTHER VALLEYS:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

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KEY

Sub-District Scale GI Zones

Parish Boundary

Main Roads

Railways

Geology, Landform, Water Systems & Climate:

Sandstone Outcrops

Main Watercourses and Waterbodies

Settlement:

Historic Farmsteads

Villages

Routeways:

Historic Routeways

Woodland:

Gill Woods

Ancient Woodland

National Forest Inventory Woodland

Fields & Heath:

Meadow

Heathland

Historic Field Boundaries

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.5d
ZONE 4 - UPPER ROTHER VALLEYS:
AONB CHARACTER COMPONENTS

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- **Routeways** - historic routeways create a framework for the pattern of the High Weald's landscape in this zone, running along ridge-tops and then dropping down perpendicular to this into river valleys. These perpendicular routes are often sunken through years of use and erosion by water. Alongside watercourses, historic routeways and gills provide important corridors for dispersal of wildlife throughout this zone.
- **Woodlands** - woodland is a key component of the AONB landscape and this is reflected within this zone. A significant proportion of woodland in this zone is Ancient Woodland; however some plantation or secondary woodlands are found particularly to the north of Heathfield and south of Wadhurst. Gill woodlands, surrounding steep-sided valleys are numerous in this Zone, and particularly sensitive to change. As a result of their cool, damp micro-climates they can harbour a unique assemblage of plants which are more typically associated with the western coast of the UK.
- **Fields and heath** – this zone contains a significant proportion of coherent surviving historic field boundaries reflecting the distinctive patterns of small-scale irregular shaped fields so characteristic of the High Weald, in particular within the central belt of this zone. Areas of heathland exist within Ancient Woodlands on the higher ground south of Wadhurst and north of Heathfield. The meadows within this zone are significant in their number and typically found alongside or close to watercourses within floodplains.

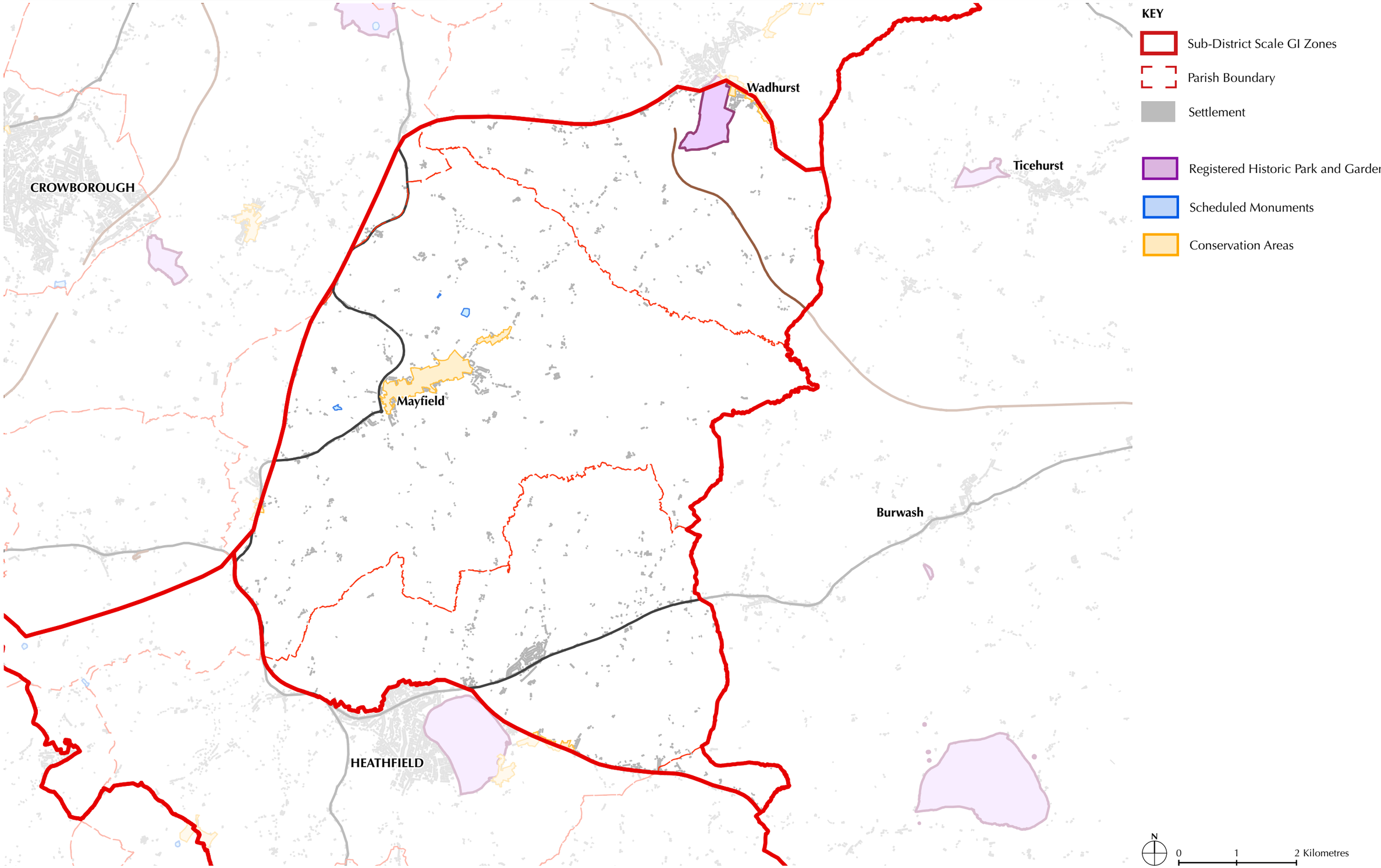
3.5.8 The historic environment assets in the Upper Rother Valleys GI Zone shown on **Figure 3.5e** also make an important contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape. These include:

- Wadhurst Castle Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II)
- 2 No. Scheduled Monuments – such as Woolbridge furnace and Mayfield iron furnace
- 4 No. Conservation Areas – Mayfield, Wadhurst, Old Heathfield and Cade Street, and Five Ashes

3.5.9 These heritage assets are generally not at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change.

Energy & Food

3.5.10 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, there are numerous large deciduous and plantation woodlands spread throughout the Upper Rother Valleys GI Zone. Woodland is highly characteristic of this landscape and many of these woodlands have been managed over considerable periods of time as coppice, and therefore represent a potential significant source of local fuel.



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FIGURE 3.5e
ZONE 4 - UPPER ROTHER VALLEYS:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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3.5.11 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the pattern of agricultural land has a strong association with watercourses within this zone. The majority of Zone 4 is classified as grade 3 (good to moderate) and grade 4 (poor) agricultural land offering good to poor quality. The majority of farming within this zone is livestock farming.

Water Resources

3.5.12 As shown on **Figure 2.5**, tributaries of the river Rother, such as Tide Brook rise within Zone 4, which confluence close to Stonegate Station on the edge of the study area, and continue to flow east through Rother District. The river Rother is the main floodplain within this zone. A small area of flood zones 2 and 3 is present along the Rother and its tributaries, but the majority of settlements such as Mayfield are located on ridges as is characteristic of the High Weald AONB.

3.5.13 Water quality within the Upper Rother Valleys GI Zone is generally in 'good' chemical status and in 'poor to moderate' ecological status.

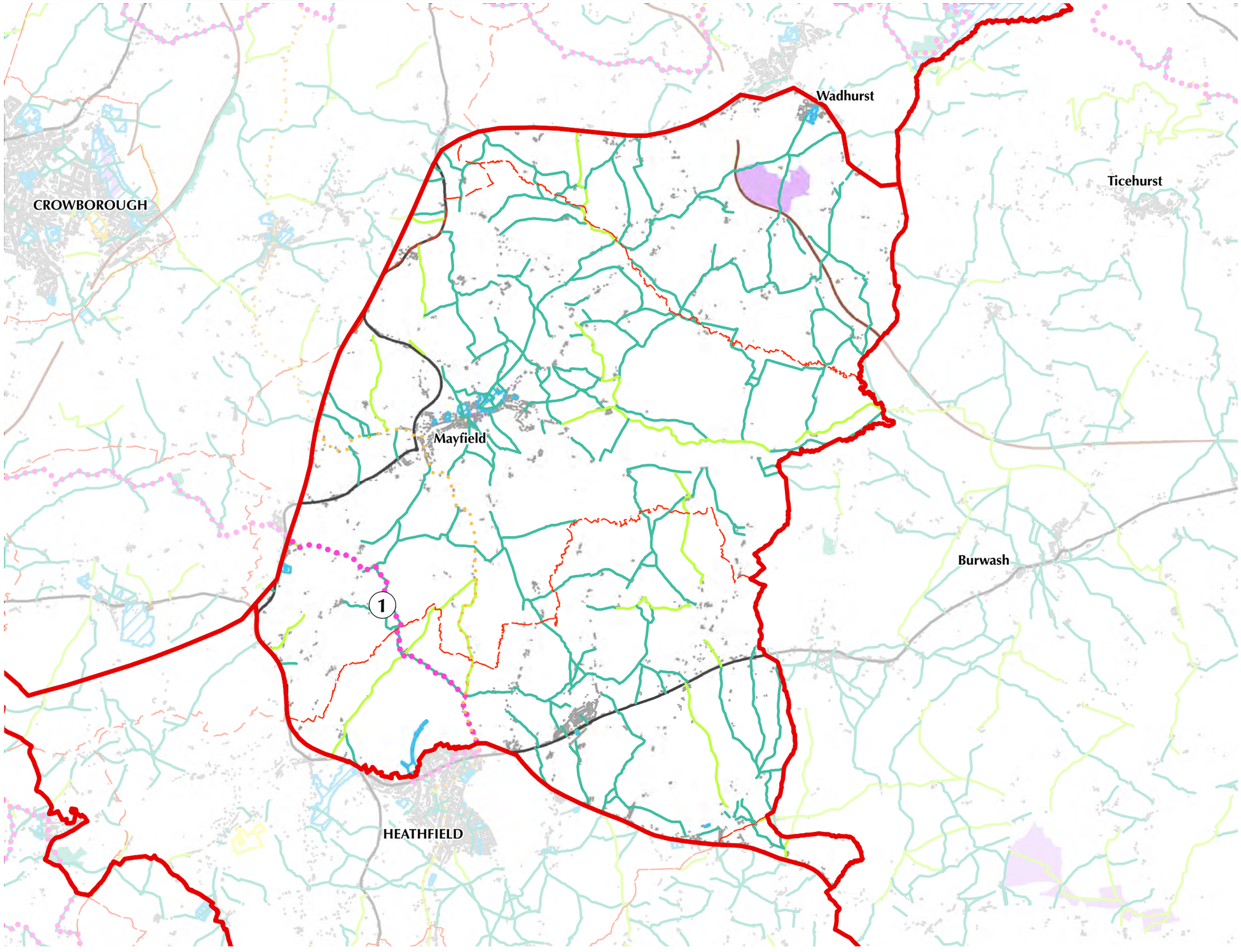
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

3.5.14 The existing provision of accessible natural greenspace within the Upper Rother Valleys GI Zone and adjoining areas is shown on **Figure 3.5f.** This shows that there are two accessible greenspace sites within this zone, including Snape Wood, a Forestry Commission site to the south of Wadhurst. Snape Wood is fairly well-connected to the wider countryside by rights of way but these do not link to Wadhurst, just within Zone 3.

3.5.15 The key deficiencies in provision of accessible natural greenspace identified within the Upper Rother Valleys GI Zone are:

- Neighbourhood scale access is poorly provided for across this zone.
- District-scale access is also significantly under-provided, particularly for residents within Mayfield, the zones largest settlement.
- County-scale access highlights no provision for residents or visitors within this zone.
- At the sub-regional scale roughly half (by area) of this zone is provided for, but these sites are at the farthest extent of the 10km catchment.

3.5.16 As shown on **Figure 3.5f**, the accessible greenspace sites within Zone 4 are well connected to the wider countryside via public rights of way, particularly around Mayfield. The rights of way network itself is numerous but not always connected to key settlements and therefore populations. The Upper Rother Valleys GI Zone includes one long distance Promoted Route,



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement

Access Links:

- Footpath
- Bridleway/Byway
- Sustrans National Cycle Route
- Promoted Route
  1. Sussex Diamond Way
- National Trail
- Main Roads
- Railways

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

- Open Spaces*
- CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land
- Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.5f
ZONE 4 - UPPER ROTHER VALLEYS:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

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the Sussex Diamond Way. Some of the more significant gaps in the network within this zone are in the far north close to Wadhurst and in the south-west.

3.5.17 The key gaps in the access route network within the Upper Rother Valleys GI Zone are:

- The southern side of Wadhurst, which lies just outside the boundary of this zone, has no connectivity to the wider countryside provided for by rights of way.
- The northern side of Heathfield, which lies just outside the southern boundary of this zone, has no connectivity to the wider countryside through public rights of way.
- There are some gaps in the bridleway network within this zone, particularly in the south-east and north-west.

Needs and Opportunities

3.5.18 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network within the Upper Rother Valleys GI Zone include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI within this Zone are considered to be:

- Seek opportunities to expand and improve networks of characteristic semi-natural habitats such as floodplain/lowland meadows along the river Rother to offer appropriate flood water storage on the floodplain and improve biodiversity.
- Increase appropriate woodland management such as sensitive coppicing regimes and PAWS restoration to; improve woodland condition and produce local sources of wood fuel, improve biodiversity and remove invasive woodland species within this zone.
- Seek the creation of new accessible natural greenspace at all scales, close to where people live and/or areas of growth to address current deficiencies.
- Explore opportunities to improve presentation, interpretation and sustainable access to heritage assets within this zone, such as Wadhurst Castle and the iron-working scheduled monuments around Mayfield.
- Seek opportunities to retain and enhance/restore characteristic landscape features such as historic field boundaries (as hedgerows and shaws), meadows and heathland, particularly around settlement fringes.
- Address deficiencies in the rights of way network around key settlements within this zone, by seeking opportunities to develop sustainable access links between where people live

and accessible natural greenspace. For example around the south of Wadhurst and south-east of Mayfield.

- Seek opportunities through partnerships to improve the function of road and railway verges by introducing sensitive management to promote biodiversity, air quality and minimise infrastructure as visual detractors.
- Explore opportunities to integrate multifunctional community greenspaces/growing spaces into settlements and new developments that provide health and well-being benefits and help reinforce a strong sense of place.
- Promote opportunities to use SuDS and green roofs within new developments, integrated within landscaping schemes and designed to achieve ecological gains.

3.6 Zone 5: Southern High Weald Slopes

Overview

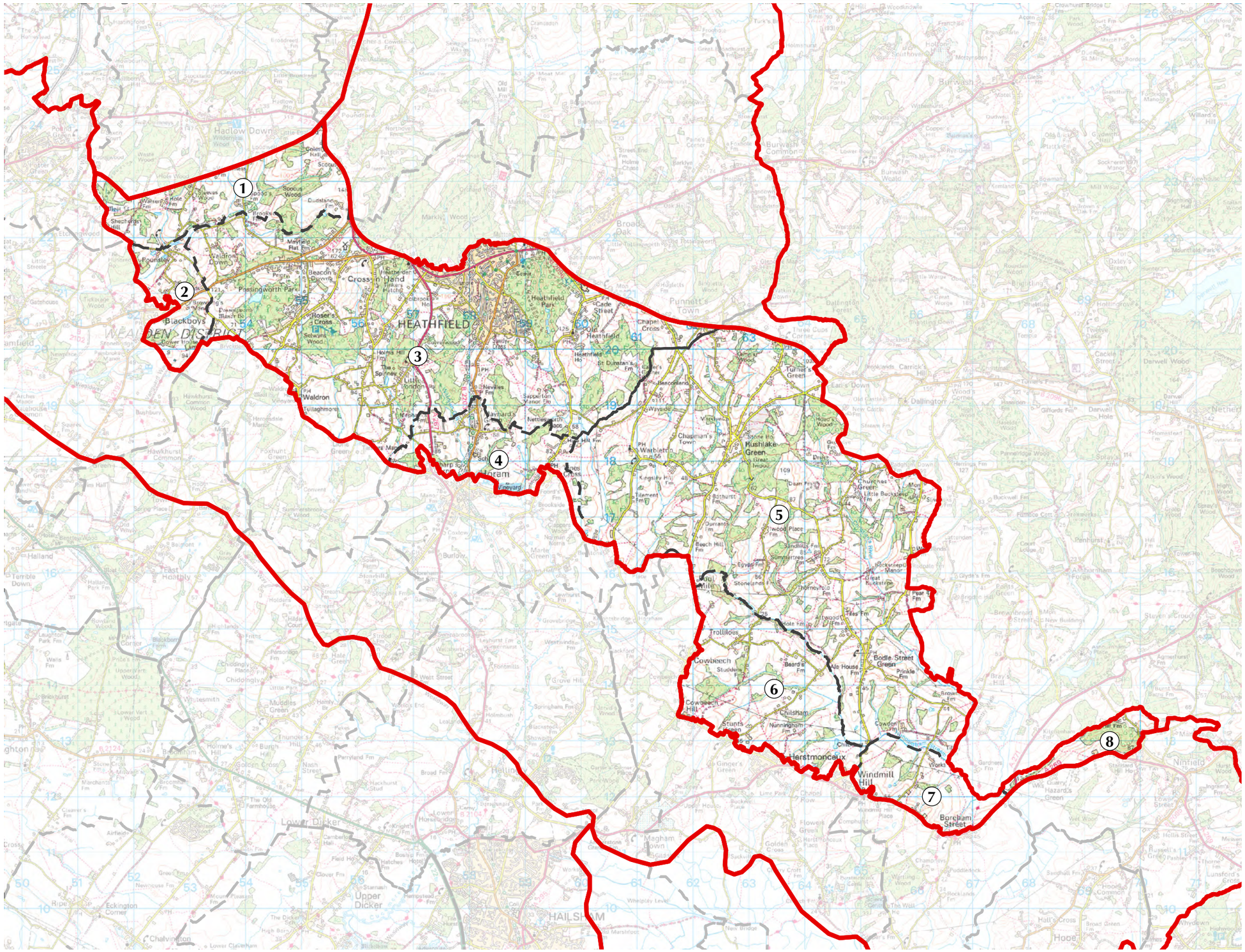
3.6.1 As shown on **Figure 3.6a**, the Southern High Weald Slopes GI Zone is a linear area covering the southern extent of the High Weald AONB. It is a gently undulating landscape of ridges and valleys on the edge of the Low Weald. Lying in the centre of the District, this Zone borders Rother District to the east and includes the large settlement of Heathfield and villages of Broad Oak and Punnett's Town. Heathfield is located to the north-central part of the Zone and Herstmonceux lies right on the border with the High Weald Fringes Zone. The Zone includes parts of the following Parishes (see **Figure 1.2**):

- Hadlow Down
- Warbleton
- Heathfield and Waldron
- Herstmonceux
- Horam
- Wartling
- Ninfield
- Framfield

Audit

Existing Strategic Green Infrastructure Initiatives

- **Weald Meadows Partnership -** Over the last 20 years the WMP has developed a wide range of knowledge and expertise that has helped stem the decline of traditional grassland and ensure the successful establishment of new species-rich meadows. As a direct result, many meadows have been recognised, protected, enhanced or created within the Weald utilising native wild harvested local provenance seed. Today, the WMP provides practical support to landowners with the management, enhancement and creation of lowland meadow across the Weald.
- **B-Lines and Landscapes for Wild Pollinators and Farm Wildlife Project -** Buglife projects in the south-east concerned with restoring and recreating connected wildflower meadows and pollinator habitats.
- **AONB Land Management Advice -** For owners of land within the High Weald AONB, the AONB Unit offers bespoke advice and site visits to enable individuals, farmers and organisations improve the management of the landscape features within their ownership.



KEY

Sub-District Scale GI Zones

Parish Boundary

1. Hadlow Down
2. Framfield
3. Heathfield & Waldron
4. Horam
5. Warbleton
6. Herstmonceux
7. Wartling
8. Ninfield

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.6a
ZONE 5 - SOUTHERN HIGH WEALD SLOPES:
CONTEXT PLAN

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- **Restocking the Weald -** A project which runs across the Weald it enables the establishment of viable new livestock enterprises on under-utilised pasture across multiple land-holdings.
- **High Weald Welly Walks (Heathfield) -** These landscape walks, starting and ending at the school gate, provide opportunities for children to learn more about their unique local landscape.

Biodiversity

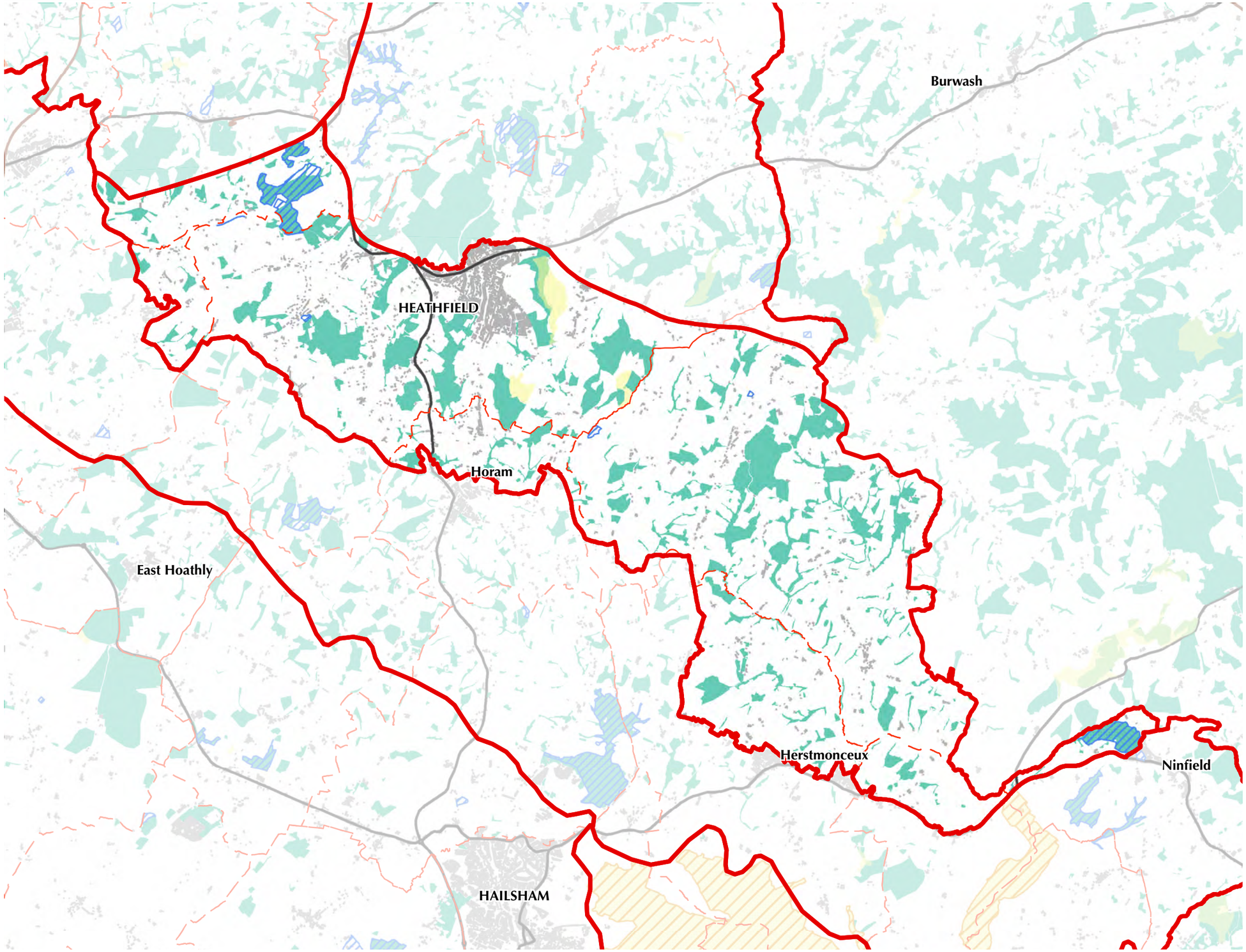
3.6.2 The Southern High Weald Slopes GI Zone contains the following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites (see **Figure 3.6b**):

- Heathfield Park SSSI
- Sapperton Meadows SSSI
- St. Dunstan's Farm Meadows SSSI
- Waldron Cutting SSSI
- Fosters Meadow LWS
- Furnace Lane Meadow LWS
- Combe Wood LWS
- Selwyns Wood Meadow LWS
- Southern part of Hadlow Deep Wood LWS
- Wildings & Scocus Wood Complex Local LWS
- Riverside Road Verge LWS
- Waldron Cutting, Tullaghmore RIGS

3.6.3 The condition of the designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites within zone 5 is generally 'good'. The Local Wildlife Sites designated for their grassland habitats within this zone are also overall in 'good' condition[134] SSSIs within this zone are 'improving' or within 'favourable' management condition[135].

3.6.4 As shown on **Figure 3.6c**, the wildlife habitats within Zone 5 are dominated by woodland, with small areas of lowland meadows and semi-improved grassland. Large blocks of mixed and coniferous woodlands are notable, particularly in the north western half of this zone. The largest woodlands are located close to Heathfield. Further south and east woodlands become smaller and narrower and more fragmented, typically running down slopes towards watercourses.

[134] High Weald Grasslands SNCI Landowner Liaison Project, Dolphin Ecological Surveys (2013)
[135] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017



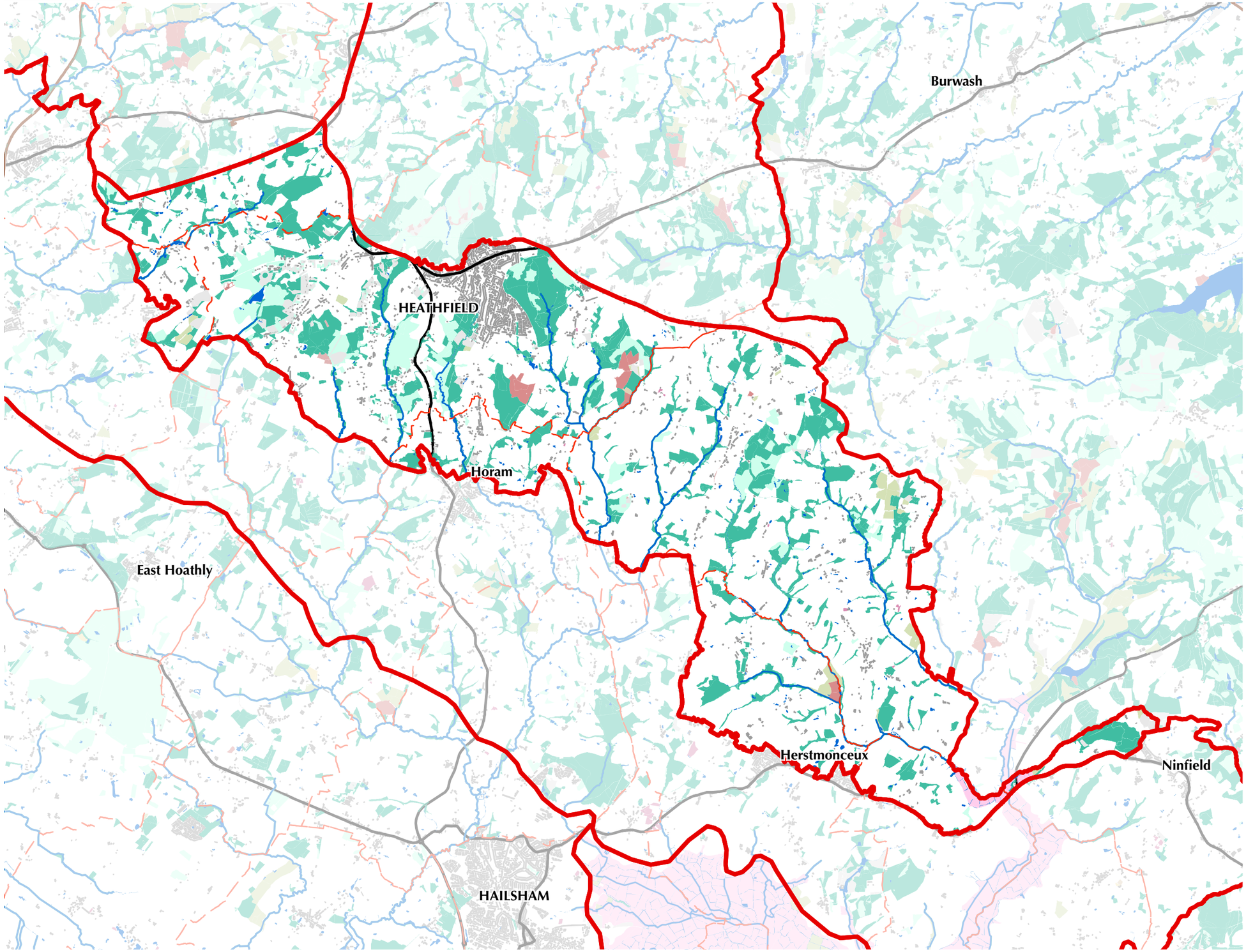
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FIGURE 3.6b
ZONE 5 - SOUTHERN HIGH WEALD SLOPES:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

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KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement
- Main Roads
- Railways

Main BAP Priority Habitats:

- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Saltmarsh
- Coastal Vegetated Shingle
- Deciduous Woodland
- Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Fens
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Meadows
- Maritime Cliff and Slope
- Mudflats
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures
- Reedbeds
- Saline Lagoons
- Traditional Orchard
- No Main Habitat but Additional Habitats Present

Mixed and Coniferous Woodland Habitats (National Forest Inventory)

Freshwater Habitats (Main Watercourses & Waterbodies)

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.6c
ZONE 5 - SOUTHERN HIGH WEALD SLOPES:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

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3.6.5 Zone 5 is dominated by small tributaries of the Cuckmere and Dudwell, which run roughly in a north-south orientation. Numerous ponds – frequent in the east of this zone and larger waterbodies often associated with designed landscapes such as Possingworth Park, provide important wetland habitats. Meadows and semi-improved grassland are found throughout this zone, but they are small and sometimes fragmented. A small area of grazing marsh is present in the far south-east of this zone, along Nunningham Stream. Key barriers to the movement of wildlife within this zone include main roads (A265 and A267).

3.6.6 As shown on **Figure 2.2c**, Zone 5 lies within part of the River Uck and its Headwaters (49), Heathfield Habitat Link (72) and the Pevensey, Rother and Cuckmere Watershed (56) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.

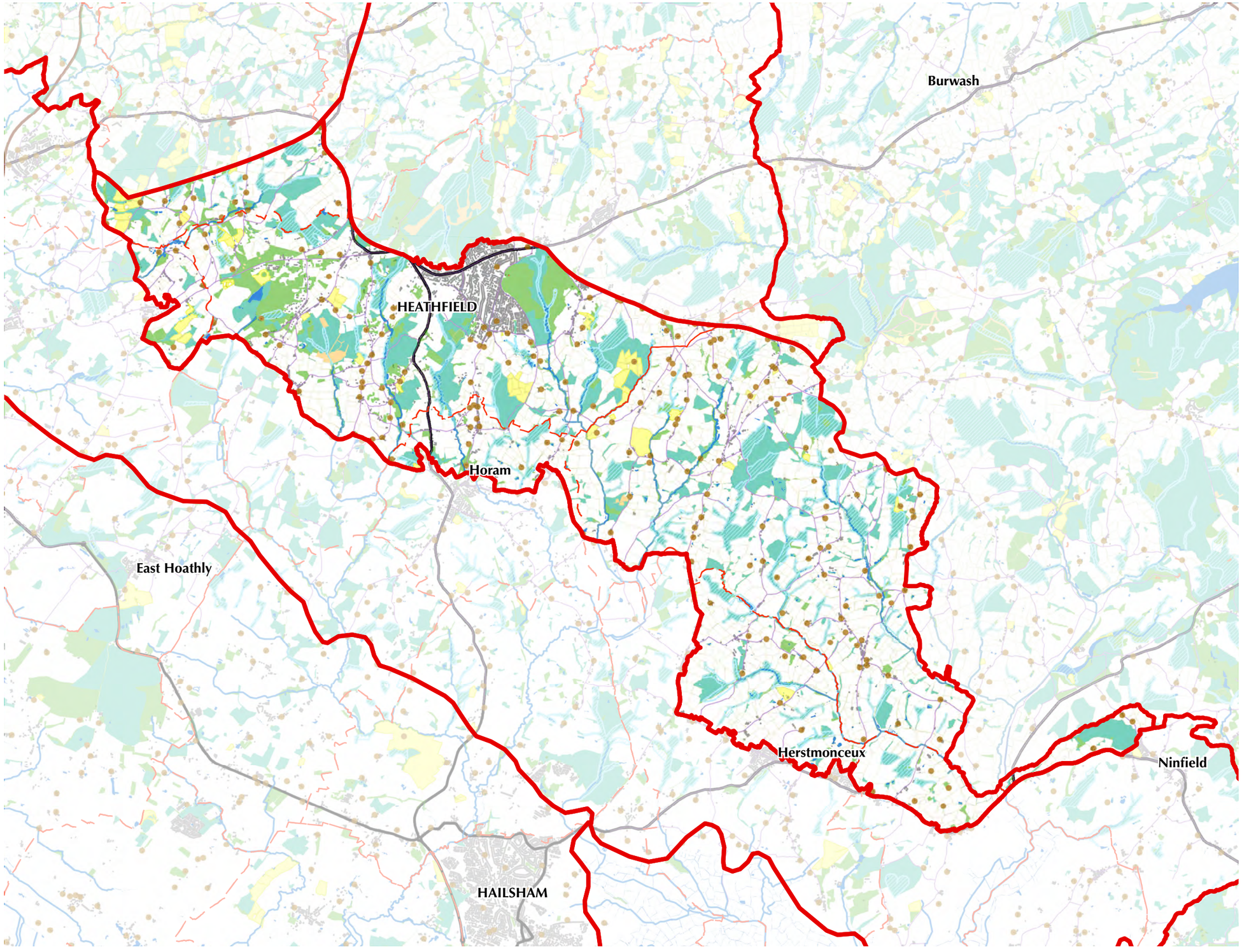
3.6.7 Numerous BAP species have been recorded within these BOAs, including Nightjar, Common Toad and Brown Long-eared Bat. The majority of non-native invasive species recorded within these BOAs are associated with woodland and watercourses, including the following;

- Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*
- Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*
- Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*

Landscape & Historic Environment

3.6.8 **Figure 3.6d** shows the patterns of character components in Zone 5 which contribute to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape as defined by the High Weald AONB Management Plan. These are summarised below:

- **Geology, landform, water systems and climate** - the pattern of north-south orientated river valleys form the upper tributaries of the Dudwell and Cuckmere. These valleys are typically steep-sided and associated with ancient gill woodlands. Strings of hammer ponds, particularly within Heathfield Park are characteristic of this Zone.
- **Settlement** - the dispersed pattern of settlements (historic farmsteads, hamlets and the villages of Rushlake Green and Punnett's Town, developing around greens) within the zone has a strong relationship with the dense pattern of north-south historic routeways and watercourses running from the ridge-tops.
- **Routeways** - historic routeways create a strong framework for the pattern of the High Weald's landscape in this Zone, following the ridges between watercourses, and linking settlements and woodlands. Of historic origin, where they run down valleys the routeways are often sunken through years of use and erosion by water. In this location, historic



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Main Roads
- Railways

Geology, Landform, Water Systems & Climate:

- Sandstone Outcrops
- Main Watercourses and Waterbodies

Settlement:

- Historic Farmsteads
- Villages

Routeways:

- Historic Routeways

Woodland:

- Gill Woods
- Ancient Woodland
- National Forest Inventory Woodland

Fields & Heath:

- Meadow
- Heathland
- Historic Field Boundaries

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.6d
ZONE 5 - SOUTHERN HIGH WEALD SLOPES:
AONB CHARACTER COMPONENTS

routeways and gills provide important corridors for dispersal of wildlife throughout this zone.

- **Woodlands** - woodland is a key component of the AONB landscape contributing to natural beauty within this zone. The majority is Ancient Woodland; however there are some large-scale plantations or secondary woodlands in the north-west of this zone. Gills are typically steep-sided ravines which are often wooded and common-place in the south-east. As a result of their cool, damp micro-climates they can harbour a unique assemblage of plants which are more typically associated with the western coast of the UK. Gill woodlands are common in this zone, particularly in the east, where small and isolated gill woods are likely to be sensitive to change.
- **Fields and heath** - there are a number of isolated meadows within this zone, particularly in the northern half. These fields and their boundaries produce distinctive patterns of small-scale, irregular shaped fields characteristic of the High Weald.

3.6.9 The historic environment assets in the Southern High Weald Slopes GI Zone shown on **Figure 3.6e** also make an important contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape. These include:

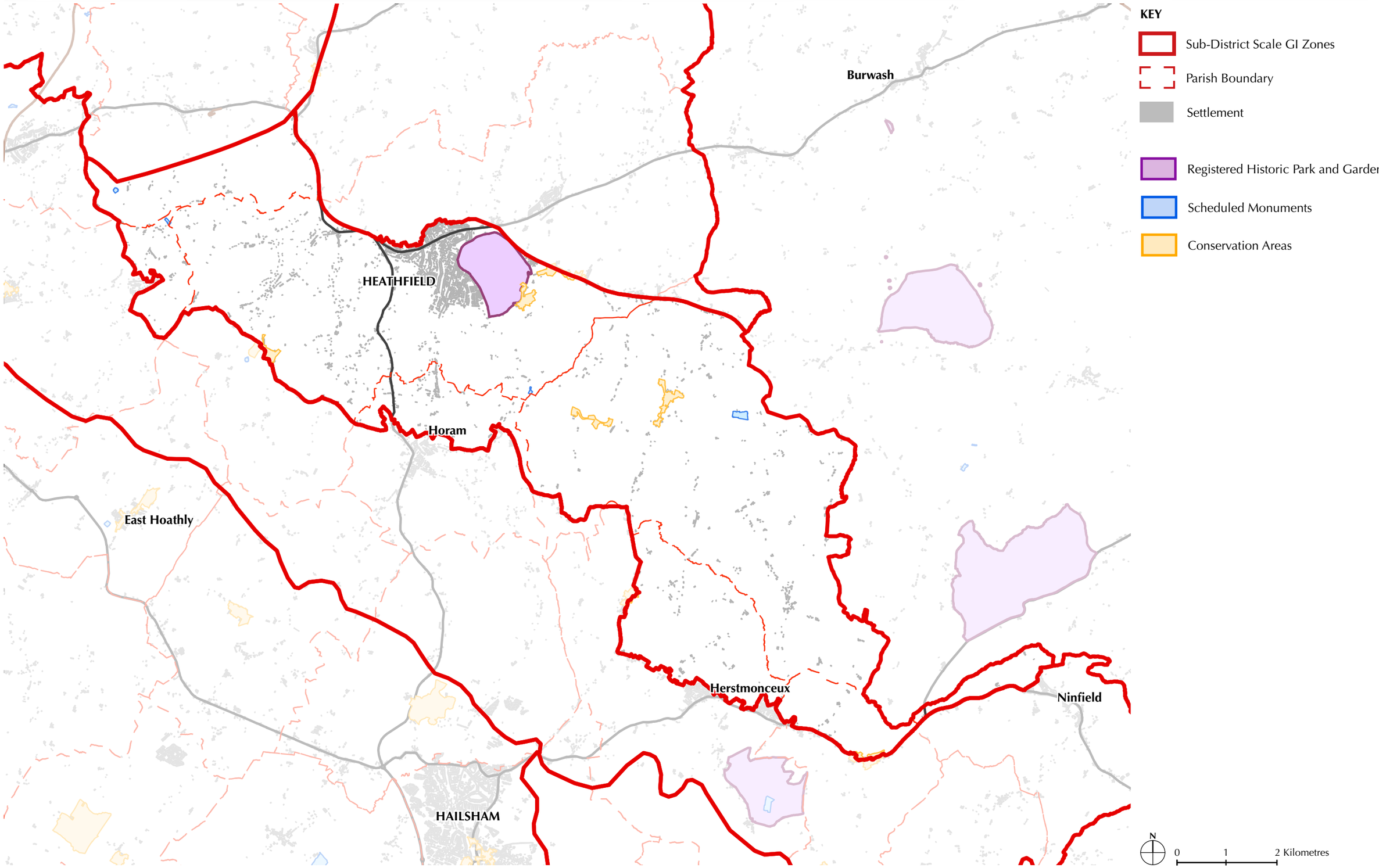
- Heathfield Park Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II).
- 4 No. Scheduled Monuments – such as Holy Trinity Priory; and the medieval moated site, Warren Farm, Shepherd's Hill.
- 7 No. Conservation Areas – Rushlake Green, Cade Street, Cowbeech, Cade Street and Old Heathfield, Waldron, Warbleton, and Boreham Street.

3.6.10 These heritage assets are generally not at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change.

Energy & Food

3.6.11 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, there are numerous woodlands within the Southern High Weald Slopes GI Zone, particularly in the northern half. Many of these woodlands have been managed over considerable periods of time as coppice, and therefore represent a potential significant source of local fuel. There's a mix of broadleaved and conifer woodland within this zone, small pockets of young trees have been planted.

3.6.12 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the majority of Zone 5 is classified as grade 3 land (good to moderate) and grade 4 land (poor) surrounds the settlement of Heathfield.



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FIGURE 3.6e
ZONE 5 - SOUTHERN HIGH WEALD SLOPES:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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Water Resources

3.6.13 As shown on **Figure 2.5**, a number of tributaries rise within Zone 5, particularly for the Cuckmere which flows south towards Seaford, and the River Dudwell which flows east into Rother District. Many of these streams flow south from the High Weald into the Low Weald. Small parts of this Zone are within flood zones 2 and 3, mainly along the upper reaches of the Cuckmere in the southern part of the zone and along the Nunningham Stream in the south-east, close to Windmill Hill.

3.6.14 Water quality within the Southern High Weald Slopes GI Zone is generally in 'good' (chemical status) and in 'moderate to poor' (ecological status).

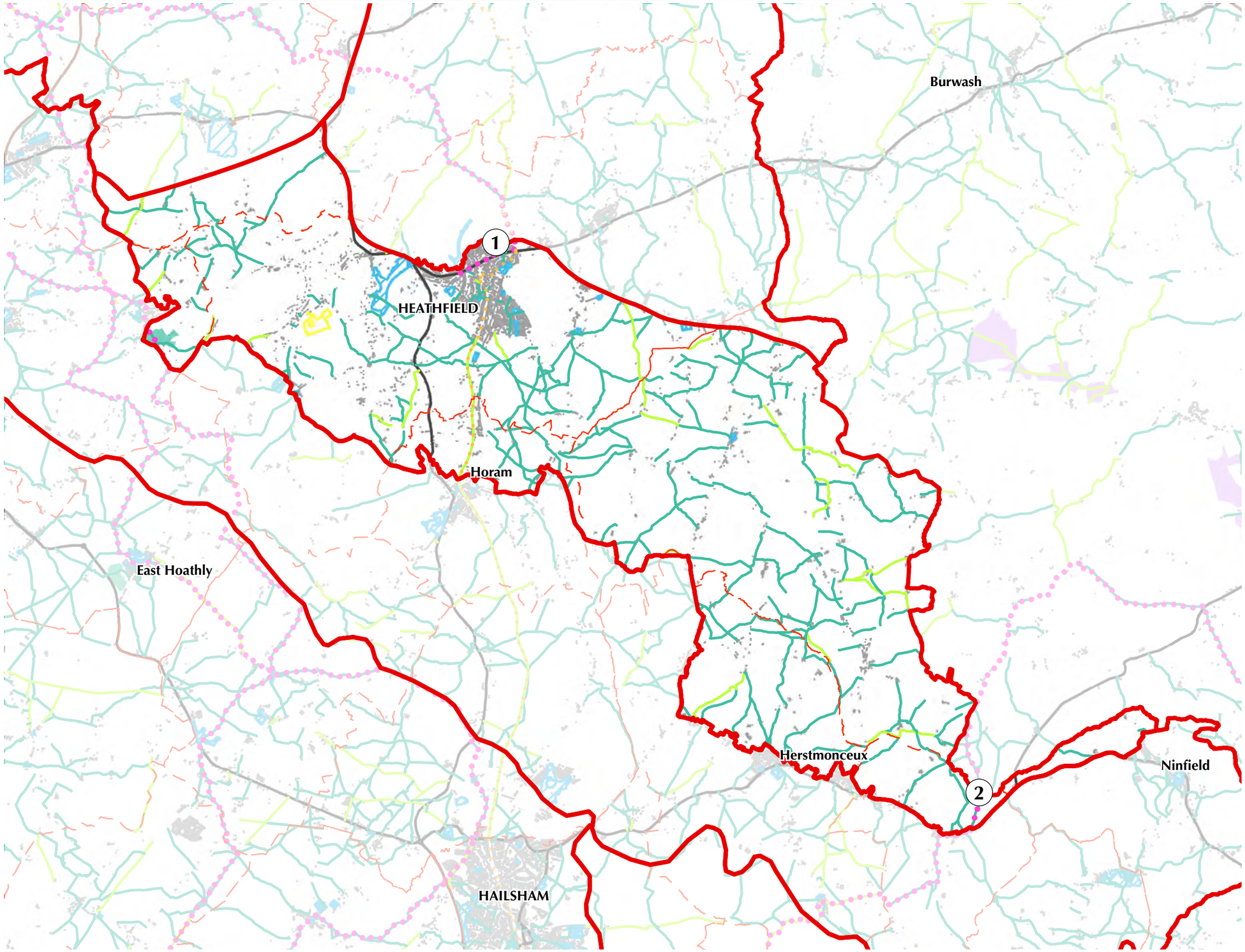
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

3.6.15 The existing provision of accessible natural greenspace within the Southern High Weald Slopes GI Zone and adjoining areas is shown on **Figure 3.6f.** This shows that there are significant deficiencies in access to natural greenspace at all scales, particularly within the south-eastern half of this zone. Only three small greenspace sites exist within this zone, including Selwyn's Wood Wildlife Trust Reserve, together these provide Neighbourhood-scale access in the north-west of this zone. This part of the zone lies within the 10km catchment of Ashdown Forest. The majority of the population do not have accessible greenspace provision at each scale.

3.6.16 The key deficiencies in provision of accessible natural greenspace identified within the Southern High Weald Slopes GI Zone are:

- Neighbourhood scale access is poorly provided for across the whole zone, with the exception of a small area west of Heathfield.
- District scale access is poorly provided for across the southern edge and the whole of the eastern half of the zone.
- County scale access is poorly provided for across all but the furthest north-west of this zone.
- Sub-Regional scale access is poorly provided for across all but the furthest north-west of this zone.

3.6.17 As shown on **Figure 3.6f**, Zone 5 is a landscape with very limited areas of accessible natural greenspace, restricted to the north west of the zone. Overall, this zone is fairly well connected by public rights of way to the wider countryside and includes the NCN Route 21 which runs through the centre of Heathfield connecting to Hailsham via the Cuckoo Trail (a former railway



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement

Access Links:

- Footpath
- Bridleway/Byway
- Sustrans National Cycle Route
- Promoted Route

1. Sussex Diamond Way
2. 1066 Country Walk

- National Trail
- Main Roads
- Railways

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

- Open Spaces*
- CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land
- Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.6f
ZONE 5 - SOUTHERN HIGH WEALD SLOPES:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

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line). In addition to this route there are two long distance Promoted Routes; the Sussex Diamond Way runs along the north of Heathfield and the 1066 County Walk passes through the south east of this zone.

3.6.18 The key gaps in the access route network within the Southern High Weald Slopes GI Zone are:

- The few areas of accessible greenspace are poorly connected by the rights of way network.
- The south-east of this zone contains a denser network of rights of way, however these are not always well-connected to the wider countryside and this area contains no accessible natural greenspace.
- The bridleway network is fragmented with no connections between the Cuckoo Trail and wider countryside for horse riders within this zone.

Needs and Opportunities

3.6.19 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network within the Southern High Weald Slopes GI Zone include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI within this Zone are considered to be:

- Seek opportunities, particularly in the BOAs within this zone, to support the sensitive management and enhancement of gill woodlands in order to maintain water quality and flood resilience and improve the condition of these characteristic landscape features.
- Seek the creation of new accessible natural greenspace at all scales of provision, close to where people live and/or areas of growth to address current deficiencies.
- Encourage the management and restoration of landscape features in poor condition within this zone, such as improving sensitive coppicing regimes within Ancient Woodlands to generate a source of local wood fuel, and expanding the network of meadows.
- Seek opportunities to enhance the provision of access to key heritage assets within this zone. Improve interpretation and presentation of opportunities, particularly where these assets help to tell local landscape stories, for example Heathfield Park.
- Where appropriate address the need to maintain and where possible enhance the condition of designated wildlife sites by tackling invasive non-native species particularly associated with woodlands for example.

- Investigate opportunities to address poor water quality within this zone through improved land management advice and practices and encouraging integrated water management schemes within new developments.
- Seek opportunities through partnerships to improve the function of road and railway verges by introducing sensitive management to promote biodiversity, air quality and minimise infrastructure as visual detractors.
- Explore opportunities to integrate multifunctional community greenspaces/growing spaces into settlements and new developments that provide health and well-being benefits and help reinforce a strong sense of place.
- Promote opportunities to use SuDS and green roofs within new developments, integrated within landscaping schemes and designed to achieve ecological gains.

3.7 Zone 6: High Weald Fringes

Overview

3.7.1 As shown on **Figure 3.7a**, the High Weald Fringes GI Zone covers a large linear strip of the Low Weald stretching almost right across the District. It is a gently undulating landscape of ridges and valleys on the edge of the Low Weald. Lying in the centre of the District, this zone borders Rother District to the east and includes the villages of Maresfield, Buxted, Framfield, Blackboys, Horam, Herstmonceux, Ninfield and Hooe. The zone includes parts of the following Parishes (see **Figure 1.2**):

- Fletching
- Maresfield
- Buxted
- East Hoathly with Halland
- Warbleton
- Heathfield and Waldron
- Hellingly
- Hailsham
- Hooe
- Herstmonceux
- Horam
- Wartling
- Ninfield
- Framfield

Audit

Existing Strategic Green Infrastructure Initiatives

- **Weald Meadows Partnership -** Over the last 20 years the WMP has developed a wide range of knowledge and expertise that has helped stem the decline of traditional grassland and ensure the successful establishment of new species-rich meadows. As a direct result, many meadows have been recognised, protected, enhanced or created within the Weald utilising native wild harvested local provenance seed. Today, the WMP provides practical support to landowners with the management, enhancement and creation of lowland meadow across the Weald.

KEY

Sub-District Scale GI Zones

Parish Boundary

1. Fletching
2. Maresfield
3. Buxted
4. Uckfield
5. Framfield
6. East Hoathly with Halland
7. Heathfield & Waldron
8. Chiddingly
9. Horam
10. Hellingly
11. Warbleton
12. Hailsham
13. Herstmonceux
14. Wartling
15. Hooe
16. Ninfield

N

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FIGURE 3.7a
ZONE 6 - HIGH WEALD FRINGES:
CONTEXT PLAN

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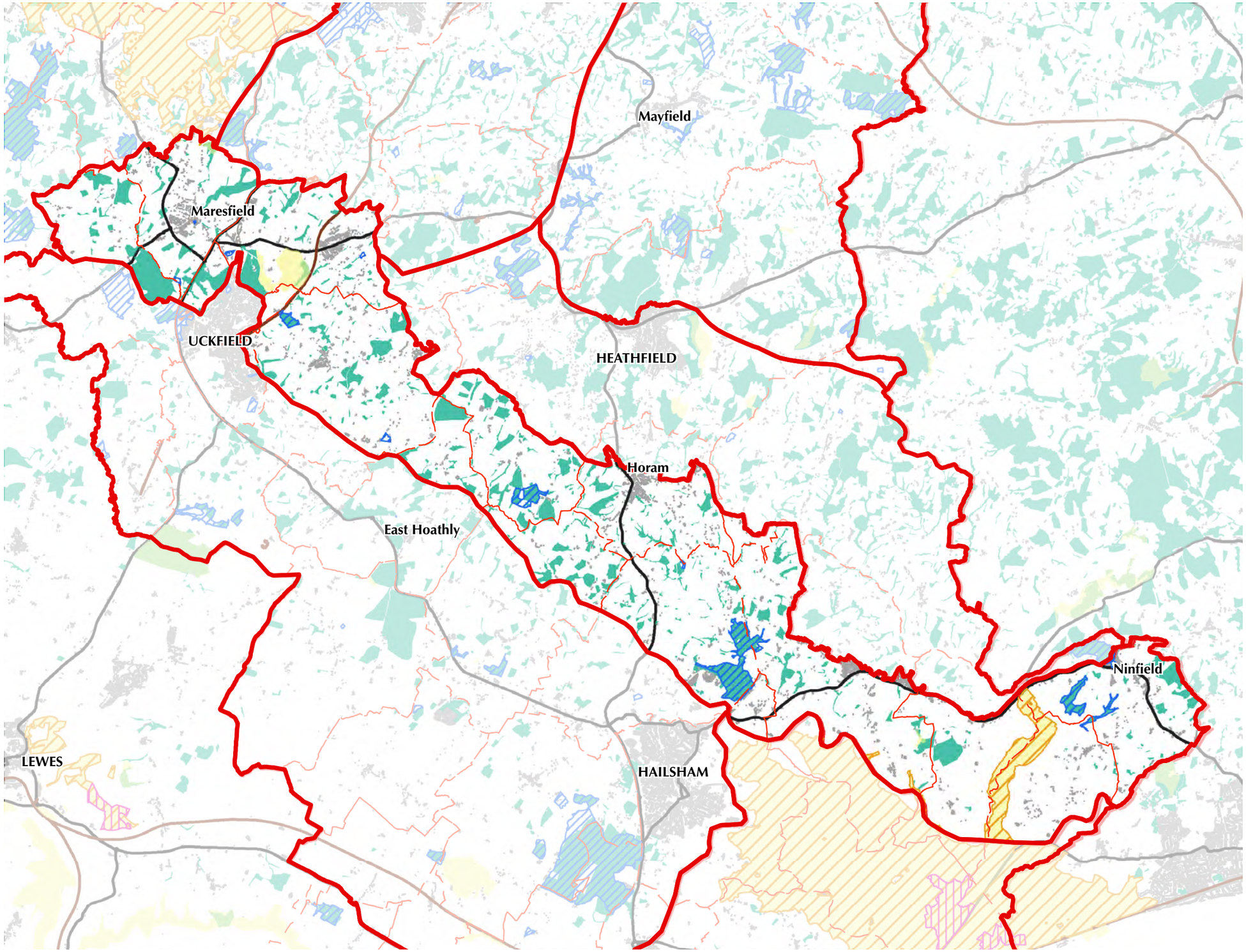
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- **B-Lines and Landscapes for Wild Pollinators and Farm Wildlife Project -** Buglife projects in the south-east concerned with restoring and recreating connected wildflower meadows and pollinator habitats.
- **AONB Land Management Advice -** For owners of land within the High Weald AONB, the AONB Unit offers bespoke advice and site visits to enable individuals, farmers and organisations improve the management of the landscape features within their ownership.
- **Restocking the Weald**
  A project which runs across the Weald it enables the establishment of viable new livestock enterprises on under-utilised pasture across multiple land-holdings.
- **High Weald Welly Walks (Buxted) -** These landscape walks, starting and ending at the school gate, provide opportunities for children to learn more about their unique local landscape.
- **Weald PAWS Restoration –** A Woodland Trust Project providing free advice, guidance and support to woodland owners, managers and forestry professionals in particular to find out how restoring plantations on ancient woodland sites can complement on-going woodland management.

Biodiversity

3.7.2 The High Weald Fringes GI Zone contains the following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites (see **Figure 3.7b**):

- Waldron Cutting SSSI
- Buxted Park SSSI
- Rock Wood SSSI
- Herstmonceux Park SSSI
- Pevensey Levels SSSI (part)
- Barnet Wood Common LWS
- Long Wood and Wet Wood LWS
- Ninfield Reservoir LWS
- Popeswood Marsh LWS
- Shortbridge Stream Meadow LWS
- Rough Wood and Whites Wood LWS
- Summersbrook Wood LWS
- Lake Wood LWS
- Butcher's Wood, Uckfield LWS
- Hempstead Wood LWS
- Cowden Wood Meadow LWS



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FIGURE 3.7b
ZONE 6 - HIGH WEALD FRINGES:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

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- Budlett's Common Rocks LWS
- Uckfield Cemetery LWS
- Jarvis's Wood, Nobody's Wood & Park Wood Complex LWS
- Maresfield Churchyard LWS
- Waldron Cutting, Tullaghmore RIGS

3.7.3 The condition of the designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites within Zone 6 is generally moderate to good. The Local Wildlife Sites designated for their grassland habitats within this zone are also overall in good condition; however the condition of a few remains unknown[136]. SSSIs within this zone are generally in poor condition but improving[137].

3.7.4 As shown on **Figure 3.7c**, the wildlife habitats within Zone 6 are dominated by small to medium woodland, with small areas of semi-improved grassland and a few traditional orchards. Medium to large blocks of mixed or coniferous woodlands are notable, in particular in the far north west of this zone. Further south and east woodlands become smaller, sparser and are more frequently deciduous.

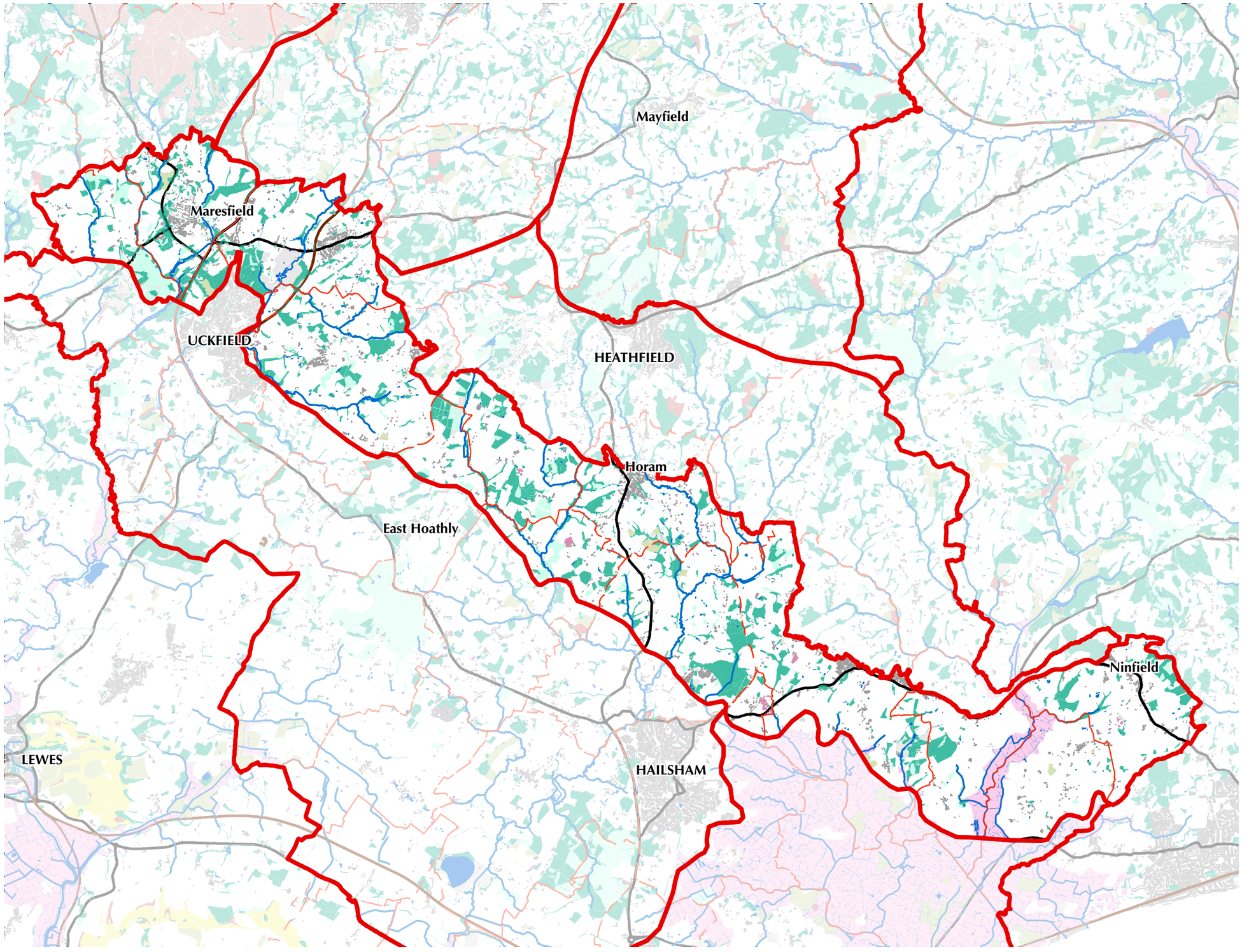
3.7.5 This zone is dominated by numerous small tributaries of Waller's Haven and the River Uck, which run roughly in a north-south orientation. Numerous field ponds within this zone provide wetland habitats. Some small and fragmented semi-improved grassland is found throughout this zone, but in relatively small and fragmented amounts. This zone includes some larger arable fields. Key barriers to the movement of wildlife within the zone are numerous and include a number of main roads which run north-south, including A271, A267, A272, A26 and A22, alongside the mainline railway running from Uckfield northwards.

3.7.6 As shown on **Figure 2.2c**, Zone 6 lies within part of the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest (48), River Uck and its Headwaters (49), the Cuckoo Trail Habitat Link (71) and the Pevensey Levels (53) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.

3.7.7 Numerous BAP species have been recorded within these BOAs, including Nightjar, Common Toad, Fen Raft Spider and Brown Hare. The majority of non-native invasive species recorded within these BOAs are associated with woodland and watercourses, including the following;

- American Mink *Mustela vison*
- New Zealand Pigmyweed *Crassula helmsii*
- Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*

[136] High Weald Grasslands SNCI Landowner Liaison Project, Dolphin Ecological Surveys (2013)
[137] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement
- Main Roads
- Railways

Main BAP Priority Habitats:

- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Saltmarsh
- Coastal Vegetated Shingle
- Deciduous Woodland
- Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Fens
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Meadows
- Maritime Cliff and Slope
- Mudflats
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures
- Reedbeds
- Saline Lagoons
- Traditional Orchard
- No Main Habitat but Additional Habitats Present

- **Mixed and Coniferous Woodland Habitats** (National Forest Inventory)
- **Freshwater Habitats** (Main Watercourses & Waterbodies)

N

0 1.5 3 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.7c
ZONE 6 - HIGH WEALD FRINGES:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

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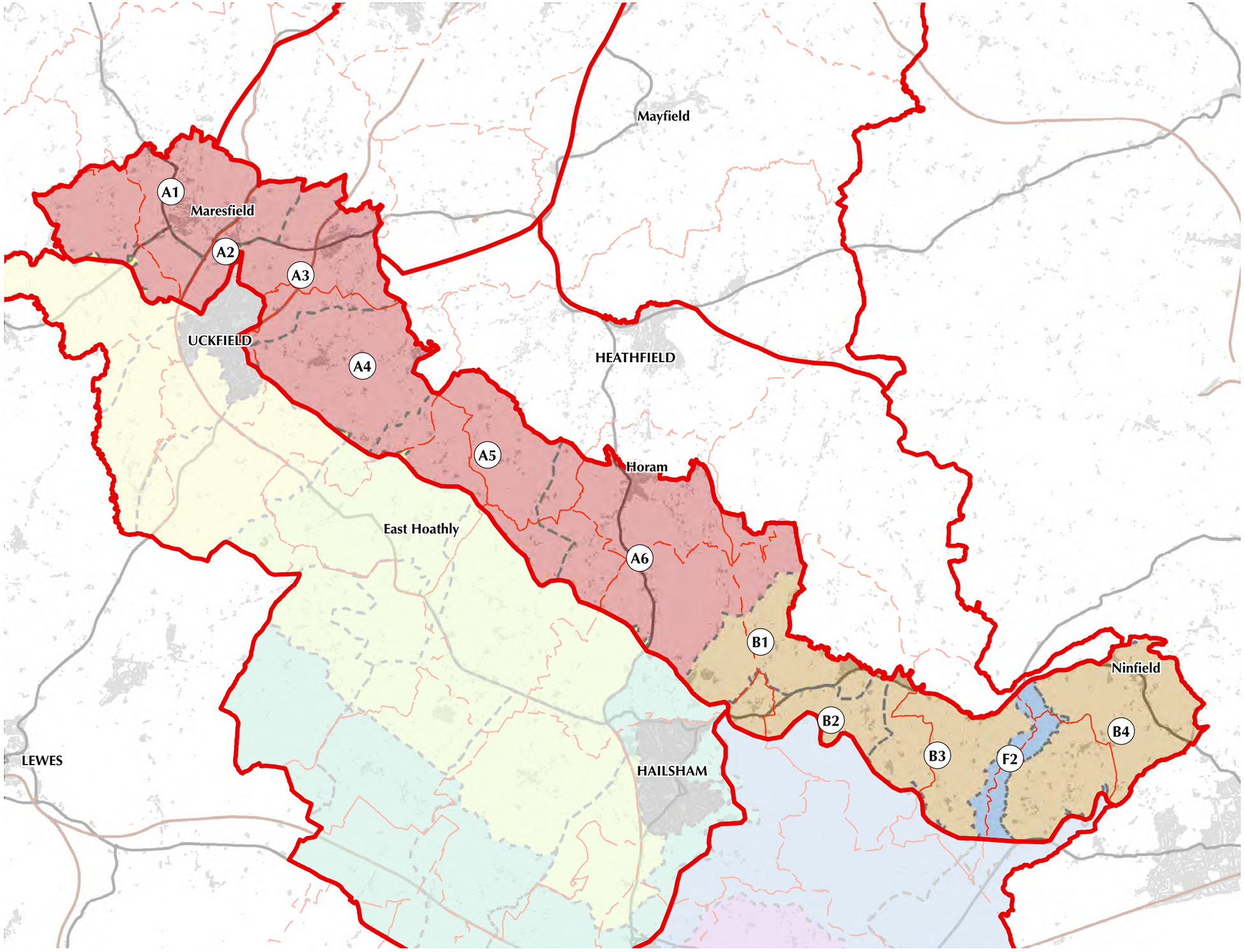
3.7.8 As shown on **Figure 3.7d**, Zone 6 lies mostly within the Ridges and Valleys (in the west of the zone) and Ridges and Slopes (in the east of the zone) Local Landscape Character Types (LLCTs)[138]. The key characteristics of the Ridges and Valleys LLCT are summarised below:

- **Topography**: A series of narrow, incised northeast-southwest oriented river valleys which dissect the surrounding landscape of rolling fields and valley side woodlands. Overall, the topography comprises a ridge and valley landscape pattern, with the stream corridors gently meandering through their adjacent valleys.
- **Settlement Pattern:** Small to medium-sized linear villages mainly located on higher ridges of land between the valleys.
- **Views and Visibility:** Views from settlements and higher land into and across the valleys is often limited by abundant small blocks and linear swathes of woodland which line the valley sides. These patches of woodland also provide a strong sense of visual containment from locations along the valley floor.
- **Communications:** The landscape is crossed by an interconnected network of minor rural roads which tend to follow the valley floors or ridges, connecting ridge-top settlements.
- **Tranquillity and Remoteness:** Within much of this LLCT, there is a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity; however this is less apparent in close proximity to the large town of Uckfield, which abuts its south-western edge.

3.7.9 The key characteristics of the Ridge and Slopes LLCT are summarised below:

- **Topography:** A small-scale landscape of predominantly pastoral fields, which forms the southern slopes of the High Weald (which is situated immediately to the north of the area). The topography slopes from north to south, with the landscape falling away towards the lower Open Levels LLCT (F) to the south.
- **Settlement Pattern:** comprises a series of linear villages which are situated on an east-west orientated ridge at the northern edge of the LLCT. In addition, there are a number of small hamlets and farmsteads dotted throughout the landscape.
- **Views and Visibility:** Panoramic, open views southwards across the Levels are characteristic of the southern part of this LLCT, contributing to recognisable sense of place. Views northwards from the landscape and settlements along the ridge, comprise a foreground of small scale fields and woodlands which form part of the High Weald AONB. Patches of small to medium-sized woodlands provide an intermittent sense of enclosure within this predominantly rural landscape.

[138] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)



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FIGURE 3.7d
ZONE 6 - HIGH WEALD FRINGES:
LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES & AREAS

- **Communications:** The landscape is crossed by a network of rural, sometimes sunken lanes, which are lined with mature trees and hedgerows.
- **Tranquillity and Remoteness:** There is a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout most of the landscape.

3.7.10 The historic environment assets in the High Weald Fringes GI Zone shown on **Figure 3.7e** also make an important contribution to the special qualities of the High Weald Fringes landscape. These include:

- Buxted Park Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*).
- Herstmonceux Castle and Place Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*).
- 5 No. Scheduled Monuments – such as the medieval settlement site in Buxted Park; and Herstmonceux Castle.
- 7 No. Conservation Areas – Maresfield, Framfield, Fletching and Splaynes Green, Waldron, Wartling, Cowbeech and Boreham Street

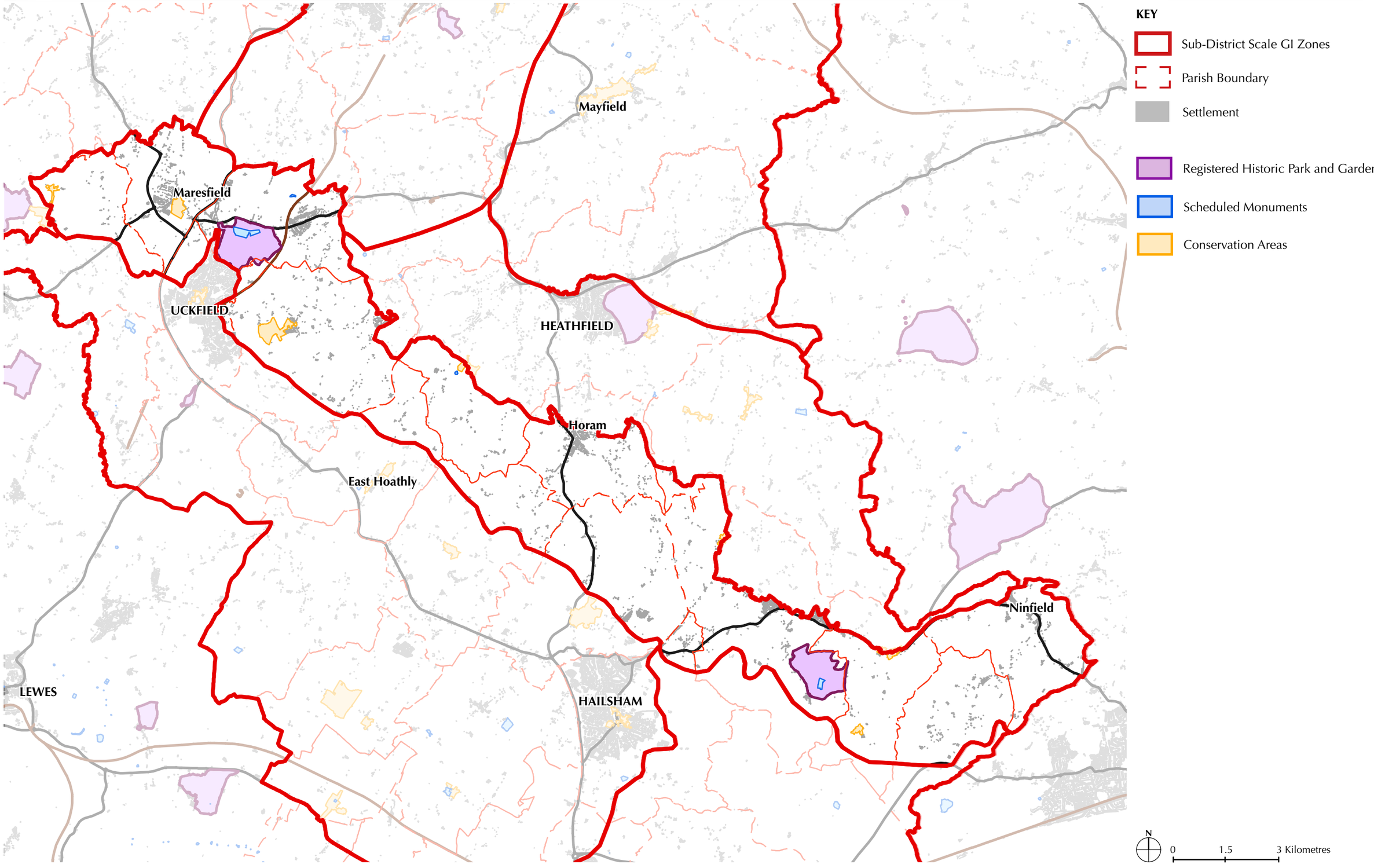
3.7.11 These heritage assets are generally not at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change.

Energy & Food

3.7.12 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, there are numerous small to medium-scale woodlands within the High Weald Fringes GI Zone. Many of these woodlands are smaller than in other zones, and their density reduces further south and east towards the Pevensey Levels. Woodlands in the northern part of this zone are likely to have been managed over considerable periods of time as coppice, and therefore represent a potential significant source of local fuel. There are limited opportunities for solar and wind energy generation, because this zone's landscape character is highly sensitive to solar farm development and wind energy development[139].

3.7.13 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the vast majority of Zone 6 is classified as grade 3 (good to moderate) land and some narrow strips of grade 4 (poor) land exists particularly around Uckfield. Some fields within this landscape have historically and more recently been amalgamated facilitating more intensive arable cultivation.

[139] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)



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FIGURE 3.7e
ZONE 6 - HIGH WEALD FRINGES:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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Water Resources

3.7.14 As shown on **Figure 2.5**, a number of watercourses run through Zone 6, notably Waller's Haven in the south-east, which includes coastal and floodplain grazing marsh. This is also the area's most significant floodplain, and includes flood zones 2 and 3. Other areas of flood zone 2 and 3 are located along the upper reaches of the river Uck, close to Buxted and Uckfield.

3.7.15 This zone cuts across three catchments; the Upper Ouse, Upper Cuckmere and the Pevensey Levels. Water quality within the High Weald Fringes GI Zone is generally in 'good' chemical status and in 'moderate to poor' ecological status.

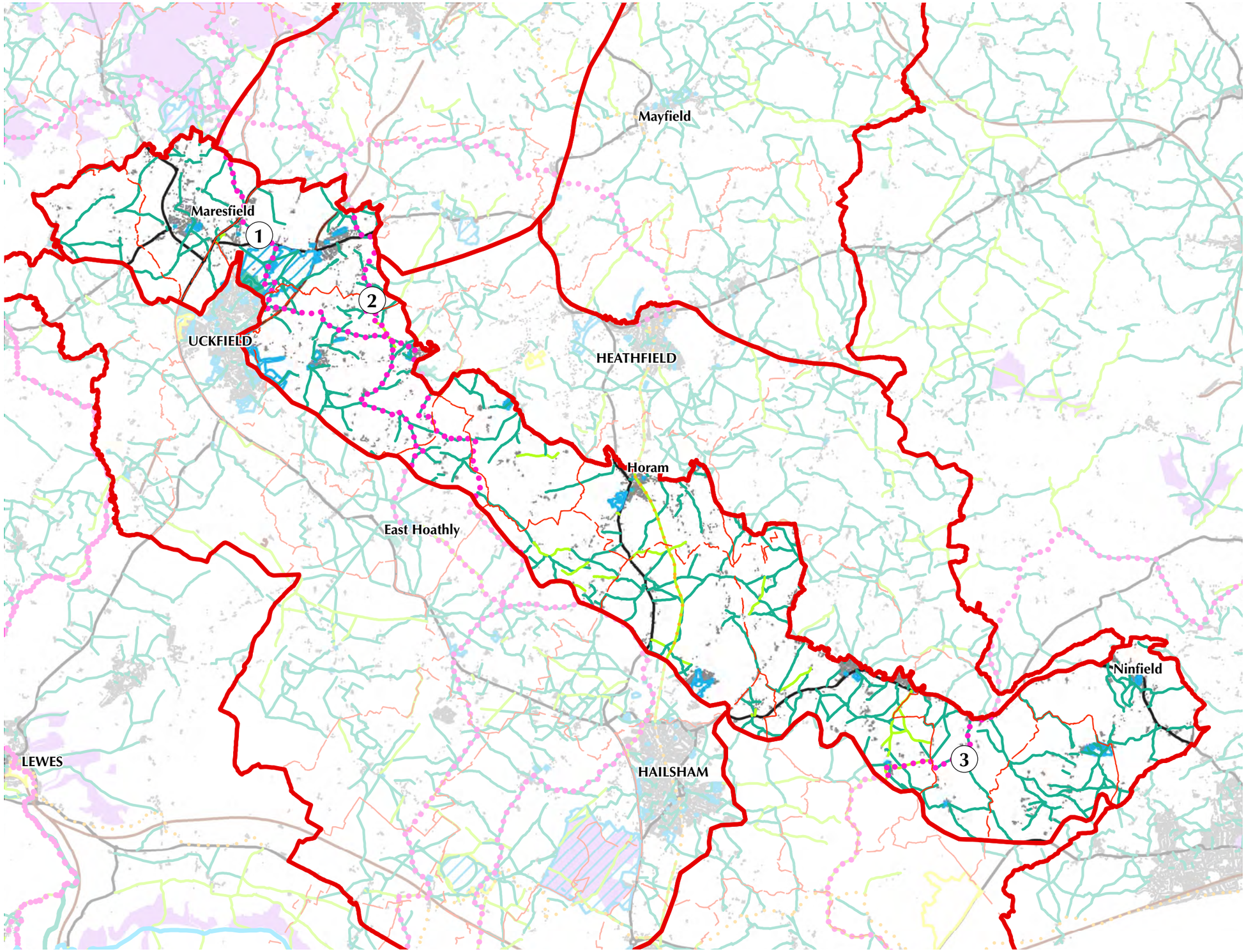
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

3.7.16 The existing provision of accessible natural greenspace within the High Weald Fringes GI Zone and adjoining areas is shown on **Figure 3.7f**. This shows that the accessible natural greenspace sites are generally concentrated within and to the west of Heathfield. Here the lack of access links between these sites means they are poorly connected.

3.7.17 The key deficiencies in provision of accessible natural greenspace identified within the High Weald Fringes GI Zone are:

- Neighbourhood-scale access is poorly provided for across the whole zone, with the exception of some parts of Uckfield (in Zone 7), Buxted and East Hoathly.
- District scale access is poorly provided for across the eastern half of the zone, with some access provision in the west around Maresfield and Buxted.
- County-scale access is poorly provided for across all but the furthest west and east of this zone, access at this scale is provided for populations within Maresfield and Buxted.
- Sub-Regional scale access is poorly provided for across all but the furthest west of this zone, access at this scale is provided for populations within Maresfield and Buxted.

3.7.18 As shown on **Figure 3.7f**, Zone 6 is a landscape with very limited areas to accessible natural greenspace, restricted to relatively small sites to the west of the zone. Overall, the zone is fairly well connected by public rights of way to the wider countryside. In addition to the multi-user Cuckoo Trail (NCN Route 21), there are three long distance promoted routes within this zone, including the Vanguard Way and Wealdway in the west and the 1066 County Walk passes through to the east of Zone 6.



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement

Access Links:

- Footpath
- Bridleway/Byway
- Sustrans National Cycle Route
- Promoted Route

1. Wealdway
2. Vanguard Way
3. 1066 Country Walk

- National Trail
- Main Roads
- Railways

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

- Open Spaces*
- CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land
- Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 1.5 3 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.7f
ZONE 6 - HIGH WEALD FRINGES:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

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3.7.19 The key gaps in the access route network within the High Weald Fringes GI Zone are:

- The few areas of accessible greenspace are poorly connected to the wider countryside by the rights of way network in the west of this zone.
- The A267 is a barrier to people accessing the countryside on foot from the western part of Heathfield.
- Few rights of way offer access from Heathfield into the countryside to the east, north and west.
- The south-east of this zone contains a denser network of rights of way, however these are not always well-connected to the wider countryside and this area contains no accessible natural greenspace.
- The central part of this zone contains numerous short but fragmented stretches of bridleway, to the east and west there are limited/no opportunities for horse-riding.

Needs and Opportunities

3.7.20 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network within the High Weald Fringes GI Zone include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI within this Zone are considered to be:

- Opportunities exist to expand and improve networks of characteristic semi-natural habitats such as floodplain/lowland meadows and wet woodland along the river Uck north of Uckfield to improve flood water storage on the floodplain and biodiversity.
- Seek opportunities through partnerships to improve the function of road and railway verges by introducing sensitive management to promote biodiversity, air quality and minimise infrastructure as visual detractors.
- Enhance and improve connectivity of small isolated woodlands throughout this zone, through sensitive management approaches such as natural regeneration.
- Investigate opportunities to address poor water quality within this zone through improved land management advice and practices and encouraging integrated water management schemes within new developments.
- Seek opportunities to create new accessible natural greenspace at all scales of provision, close to where people live and/or areas of growth to address current deficiencies.

- Seek opportunities to improve multi-user access links within this zone, in particular to address poorly connected routes between existing towns such as Uckfield and existing or new greenspaces, and to tackle barriers such as main roads.
- Explore opportunities to integrate multifunctional community greenspaces/growing spaces into settlements and new developments that provide health and well-being benefits and help reinforce a strong sense of place.
- Promote opportunities to use SuDS and green roofs within new developments, integrated within landscaping schemes and designed to achieve ecological gains.

3.8 Zone 7: Low Weald

Overview

3.8.1 As shown on **Figure 3.8a**, the Low Weald GI Zone covers a large part of south-west Wealden. It is a gently undulating landscape of low ridges and open valleys between the High Weald and South Downs. This Zone borders that part of Wealden District within the South Downs National Park to the south, and Lewes District to the west. Zone 7 includes the large settlements of Hailsham and Uckfield, the village of East Hoathly and small hamlets such as Chiddingly. The Zone includes parts of the following Parishes (see **Figure 1.2**):

- Uckfield
- Fletching
- Isfield
- Little Horsted
- East Hoathly with Halland
- Laughton
- Chalvington with Ripe
- Selmeston
- Alciston
- Berwick
- Arlington
- Chiddingly
- Hellingly
- Long Man
- Polegate
- Hailsham
- Framfield

Audit

Existing Strategic Green Infrastructure Initiatives

- **Weald Meadows Partnership -** Over the last 20 years the WMP has developed a wide range of knowledge and expertise that has helped stem the decline of traditional grassland and ensure the successful establishment of new species-rich meadows. As a direct result, many meadows have been recognised, protected, enhanced or created within the Weald utilising native wild harvested local provenance seed. Today, the WMP provides practical

KEY

Sub-District Scale GI Zones

Parish Boundary

1. Fletching
2. Uckfield
3. Framfield
4. Isfield
5. Little Horsted
6. East Hoathly with Halland
7. Laughton
8. Chiddingly
9. Hellingly
10. Chalvington with Ripe
11. Arlington
12. Hailsham
13. Selmeston
14. Alciston
15. Berwick
16. Long Man
17. Polegate

Ninfield

N

0 1.5 3 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.8a
ZONE 7 - LOW WEALD:
CONTEXT PLAN

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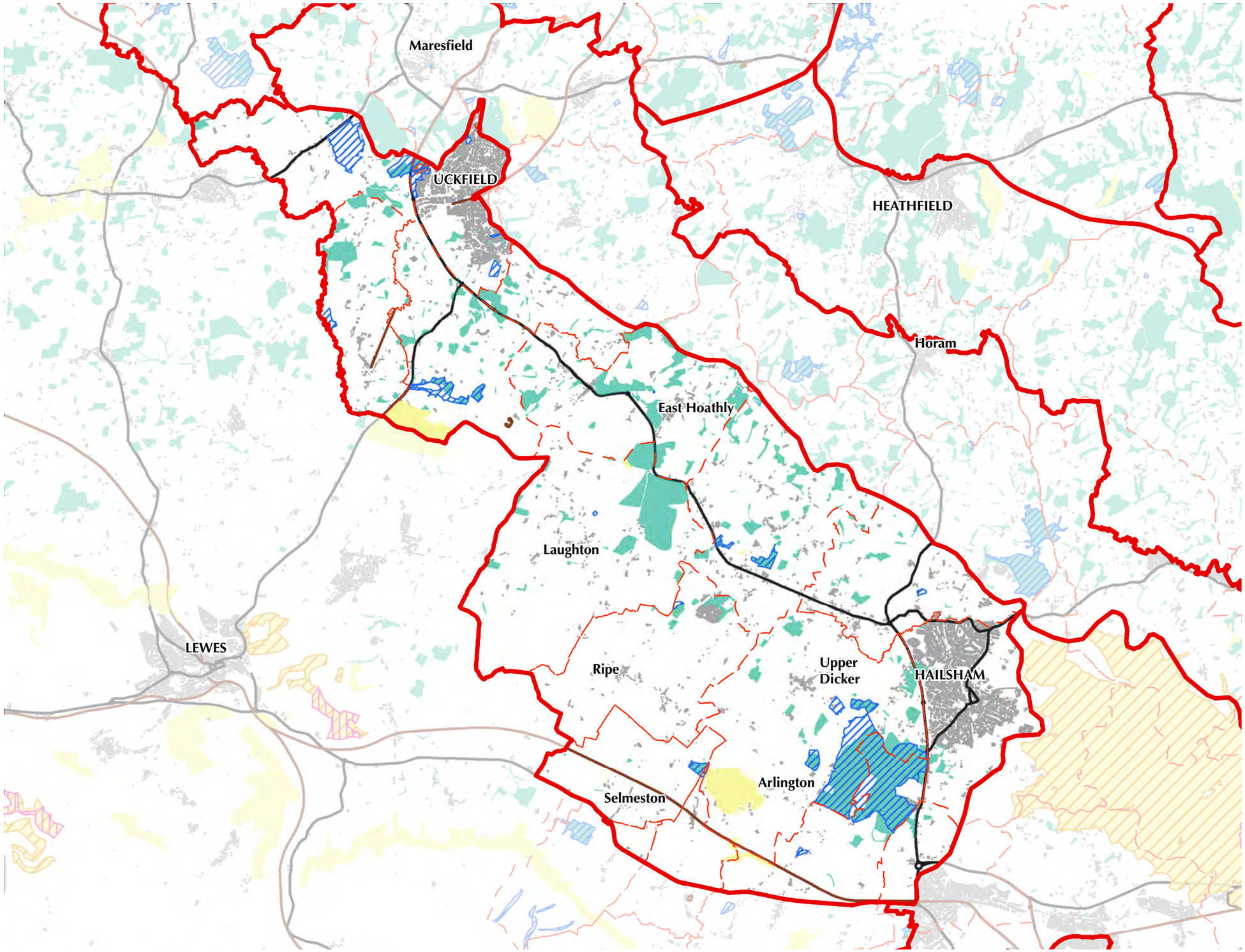
support to landowners with the management, enhancement and creation of lowland meadow across the Weald.

- **B-Lines and Landscapes for Wild Pollinators and Farm Wildlife Project -** Buglife projects in the south-east concerned with restoring and recreating connected wildflower meadows and pollinator habitats.
- **Weald PAWS Restoration -** Free advice, guidance and support to woodland owners, managers and forestry professionals in particular to find out how restoring plantations on ancient woodland sites can complement on-going woodland management.
- **Uckfield Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace -** An area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace close to Uckfield, primarily providing recreation opportunities.

Biodiversity

3.8.2 The Low Weald GI Zone contains the following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites (see **Figure 3.8b**):

- Plashett Park Wood SSSI
- Park Corner Heath SSSI
- Burgh Hill Farm Meadow SSSI
- Arlington Reservoir SSSI
- Milton Gate Marsh SSSI
- Lower Dicker SSSI
- Croom Cottage Meadow LWS
- Tollgate Meadow LWS
- Hellingly Cemetery LWS
- Monkyn Pin LWS
- Beatons Wood LWS
- Bramble Grove LWS
- Kiln Wood LWS
- Twenty Acre Wood LWS
- Lake Wood LWS
- Butcher's Wood, Uckfield LWS
- West Park LWS
- Plashett Park Lakes & Woodland LWS
- Ridgewood Clay Pit LWS
- Michelham Priory LWS
- Uckfield Cemetery LWS
- Abbots & Wilmington Wood & Milton Hide LWS



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FIGURE 3.8b
ZONE 7 - LOW WEALD:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

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- Ludlay Coppice LWS
- Land at Isfield Church LWS
- Veals Wood Scrub LWS
- Harlands Farm Pond & Stream LWS
- Piltdown Common LWS
- Lake Wood Rocks RIGS
- Rocks Park RIGS

3.8.3 The condition of the designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites within Zone 7 is generally 'moderate'. SSSIs within this zone are generally in 'unfavourable condition', with the exception of Arlington Reservoir and Park Corner Heath, which are both in 'favourable' condition[140].

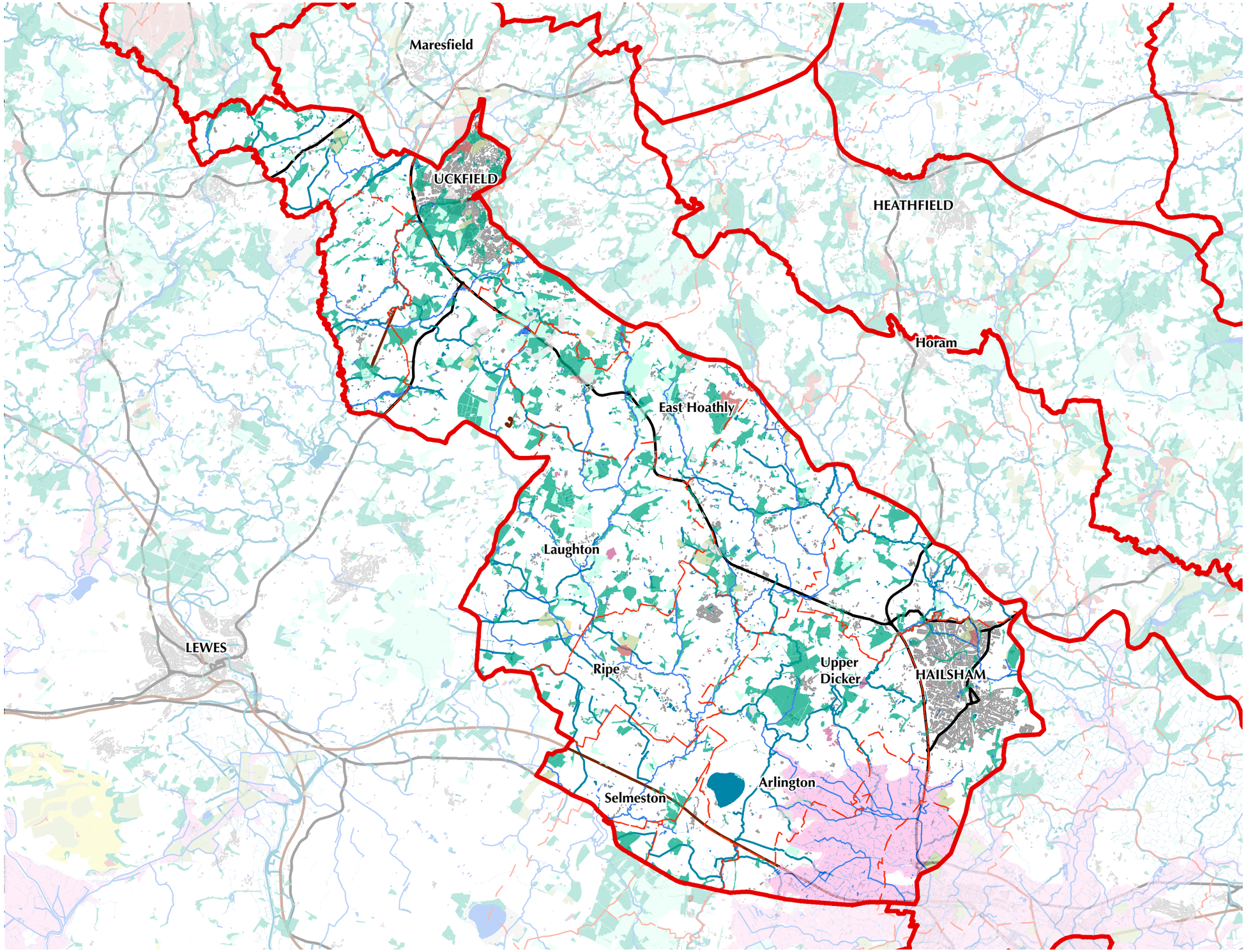
3.8.4 As shown on **Figure 3.8c**, the wildlife habitats within Zone 7 are dominated by small to medium-sized woodlands, particularly along the boundary with Zone 6. Arlington Reservoir is a significant waterbody within the south of this zone and numerous watercourses run through the zone, mostly in a north-east, south-west direction. The far south-east of the Low Weald GI Zone is very different in character and therefore habitats to the rest of the zone. This area is primarily floodplain grazing marsh to the south of Hailsham.

3.8.5 Scattered through the zone are good quality semi-improved grassland, lowland meadows and traditional orchards, likely to be remnants of historic agriculture. Key barriers to the movement of wildlife within the zone include a number of main roads including A267, A272, A26 and A22. In the far south of this zone the railway is also a significant barrier to wildlife.

3.8.6 As shown on **Figure 2.2c**, Zone 7 lies within part of the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest (48), River Uck and its Headwaters (49), Mid Ouse Flood Zone (47), the Cuckoo Trail Habitat Link (71) the Pevensey Levels (53), Lewes Brooks and Ouse Valley (44), Cuckmere Ouse Watershed (50), River Cuckmere Habitat Link (74), Wilmington Woodlands and Watershed (51), Wooton Manor Grasslands Link (75) and Eastbourne Marshes (52) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.

3.8.7 Numerous BAP species have been recorded within these BOAs, including Turtle Dove, Common Toad, Fen Raft Spider and Hedgehog. The majority of non-native invasive species recorded within these BOAs are associated with woodland and watercourses, including the following;

[140] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017



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FIGURE 3.8c
ZONE 7 - LOW WEALD:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

- American Mink *Mustela vison*
- New Zealand Pigmyweed *Crassula helmsii*
- Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*

Landscape & Historic Environment

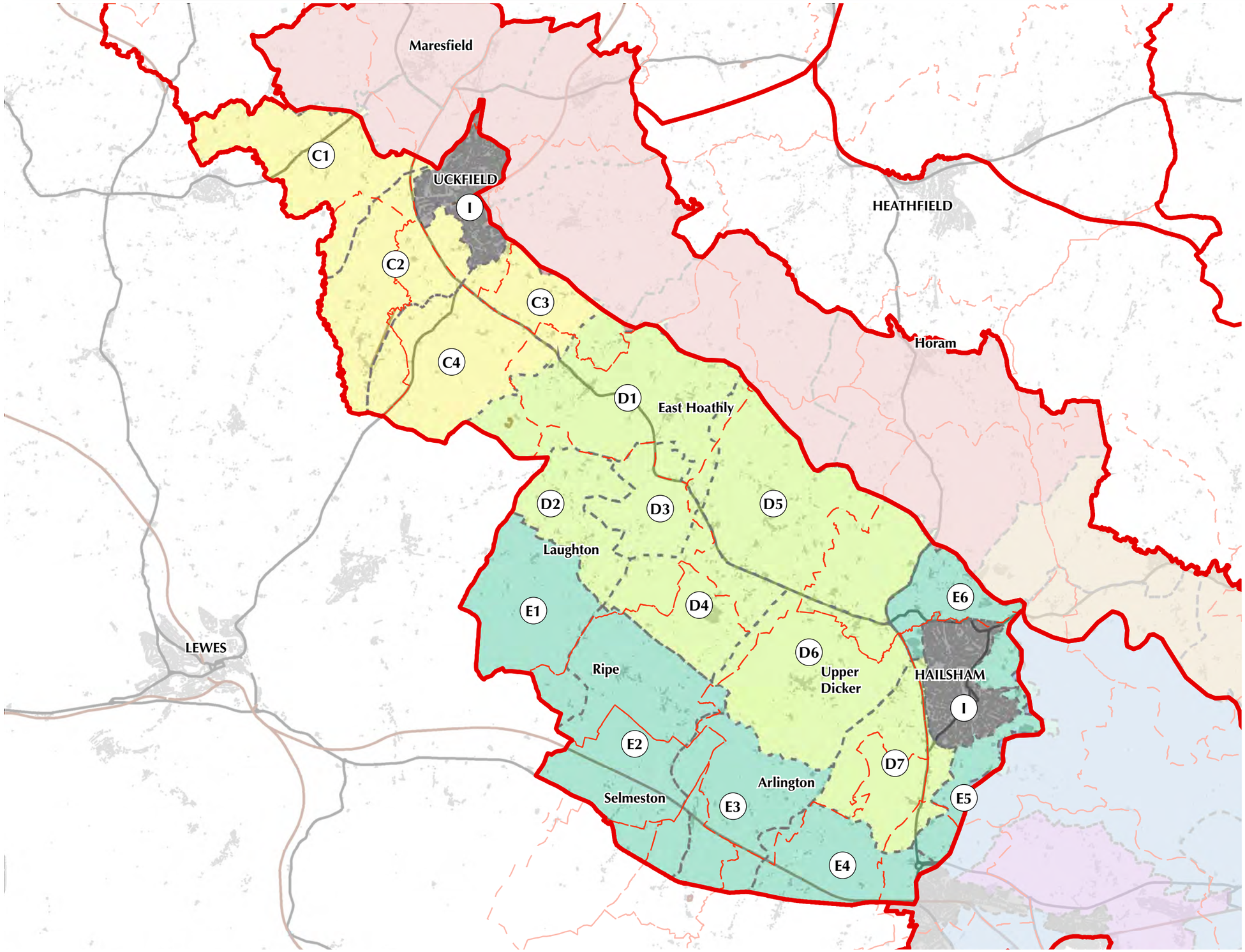
3.8.8 As shown on **Figure 3.8d**, Zone 7 lies within the Ridges and Valleys and Ridges and Slopes Local Landscape Character Types (LLCTs)[141] in the west and east of the zone respectively. The key characteristics of the Ridges and Valleys LLCT are summarised below:

- **Topography**: A series of narrow, incised northeast-southwest oriented river valleys which dissect the surrounding landscape of rolling fields and valley side woodlands. Overall, the topography comprises a ridge and valley landscape pattern, with the stream corridors gently meandering through their adjacent valleys.
- **Settlement Pattern:** Small to medium-sized linear villages mainly located on higher ridges of land between the valleys.
- **Views and Visibility:** Views from settlements and higher land into and across the valleys is often limited by abundant small blocks and linear swathes of woodland which line the valley sides. These patches of woodland also provide a strong sense of visual containment from locations along the valley floor.
- **Communications:** The landscape is crossed by an interconnected network of minor rural roads which tend to follow the valley floors or ridges, connecting ridge-top settlements.
- **Tranquillity and Remoteness:** Within much of this LLCT, there is a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity; however this is less apparent in close proximity to the large town of Uckfield, which abuts its south-western edge.

3.8.9 The key characteristics of the Ridge and Slopes LLCT are summarised below:

- **Topography:** A small-scale landscape of predominantly pastoral fields, which forms the southern slopes of the High Weald (which is situated immediately to the north of the zone). The topography slopes from north to south, with the landscape falling away towards the lower Open Levels LLCT (F) to the south.
- **Settlement Pattern:** comprises a series of linear villages which are situated on an east-west orientated ridge at the northern edge of the LLCT. In addition, there are a number of small hamlets and farmsteads dotted throughout the landscape.
- **Views and Visibility:** Panoramic, open views southwards across the Levels are characteristic of the southern part of this LLCT, contributing to recognisable sense of place. Views

[141] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)



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FIGURE 3.8d
ZONE 7 - LOW WEALD:
LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES & AREAS

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northwards from the landscape and settlements along the ridge, comprise a foreground of small scale fields and woodlands which form part of the High Weald AONB. Patches of small to medium-sized woodlands provide an intermittent sense of enclosure within this predominantly rural landscape.

- **Communications:** The landscape is crossed by a network of rural, sometimes sunken lanes, which are lined with mature trees and hedgerows.
- **Tranquillity and Remoteness:** There is a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout most of the landscape.

3.8.10 The historic environment assets in the Low Weald GI Zone shown on **Figure 3.8e** also make an important contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the Low Weald landscape. These include:

- Horsted Place Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II)
- Wootton Manor Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II)
- 10 No. Scheduled Monuments – such as Michelham Priory; and Isfield Pound.
- 9 No. Conservation Areas – Ripe, Hailsham, Arlington, Chalvington, Chiddingly and Muddles Green, East Hoathly, Hellingly, Selmeston and Uckfield.

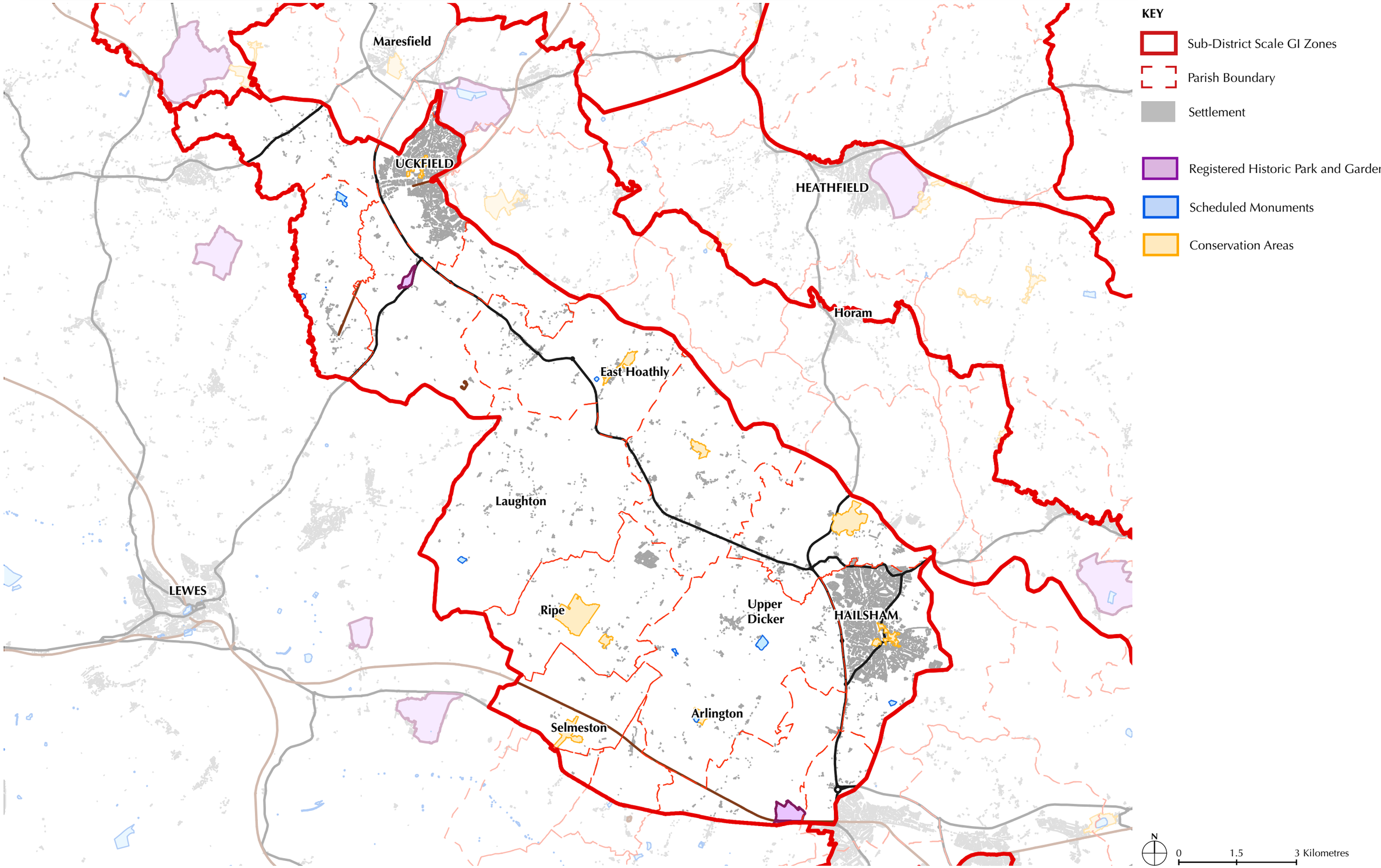
3.8.11 These heritage assets are generally not at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change.

Energy & Food

3.8.12 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, there are two significant blocks of woodland within this zone one south-west of Hailsham (Wilmington Wood) and one in the centre of the zone, south of East Hoathly. Numerous smaller woods are also present, particularly along the boundary with Zone 6, but woodland cover is very sparse in the south. Many of these woodlands are smaller than in other zones. There are limited opportunities for solar and wind energy generation, because this zone's landscape character is highly sensitive to solar farm development and wind energy development[142].

3.8.13 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the vast majority of Zone 7 is classified as grade 3 (good to moderate) land and some narrow strips of grade 4 (poor). A small area of Grade 2 (very good) land is situated right of the southern edge of this zone where it borders the South Downs. Some fields within this landscape have been amalgamated and fairly intensive and predominantly arable cultivation is the dominant land use.

[142] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)



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FIGURE 3.8e
ZONE 7 - LOW WEALD:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

Water Resources

3.8.14 As shown on **Figure 2.5**, a significant number of watercourses run through this zone, mostly associated with the River Uck, and the River Cuckmere which flows south towards Seaford. Arlington Reservoir is a major waterbody within this zone and the most significant floodplain within this zone is that of the Uck in the south.

3.8.15 This zone covers two main river catchments, the Upper Ouse and Cuckmere. Water quality within the Low Weald GI Zone is generally in 'good' chemical status and in 'moderate to poor' ecological status.

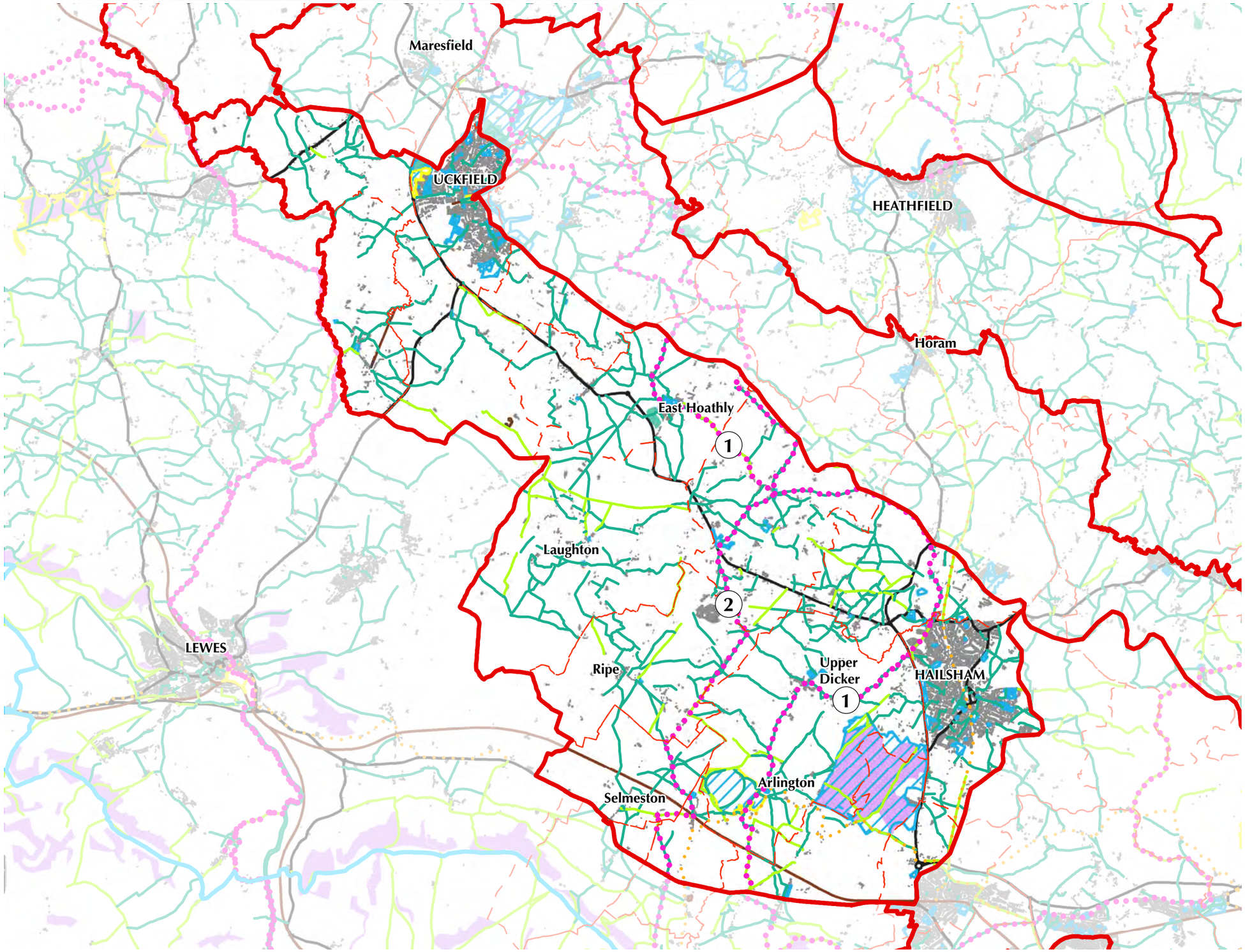
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

3.8.16 The existing provision of accessible natural greenspace within the Low Weald GI Zone and adjoining areas is shown on **Figure 3.8f**. This shows that the accessible natural greenspace sites outside of urban areas are generally concentrated in the south-east of this zone.

3.8.17 The key deficiencies in provision of accessible natural greenspace identified within the Low Weald GI Zone are:

- Neighbourhood-scale access to natural greenspace is well-provided around the fringes of Uckfield and Hailsham.
- District-scale access is poorly provided for across the central part this zone, with some access provision exists for residents within Uckfield and the southern part of Hailsham.
- County-scale access is generally well provided for across much of this zone, with the exception of an area in the centre of this zone. County-scale access is provided for residents in Uckfield and Hailsham.
- Sub-Regional scale access is generally well provided for across all but the central part of this zone, access at this scale is provided for populations within Uckfield and Hailsham.

3.8.18 As shown on **Figure 3.8f**, Zone 7 has some large areas of accessible natural greenspace restricted to sites to the south-west of the Hailsham. Smaller sites including the Lake Wood Woodland Trust site lies along the fringes of Uckfield. Overall, the zone is well connected by public rights of way to the wider countryside and includes the NCN Route 21 which runs through Hailsham. There are two long distance Promoted Routes within this zone, the Wealdway passes through the central and eastern part, close to Hailsham and the Vanguard Way cuts through the centre of this zone from Zone 6 heading up into the South Downs. The majority of accessible greenspace is generally well linked by the rights of way network.



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement

Access Links:

- Footpath
- Bridleway/Byway
- Sustrans National Cycle Route
- Promoted Route

1. Wealdway
2. Vanguard Way

- National Trail
- Main Roads
- Railways

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

- Open Spaces*
- CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land
- Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 1.5 3 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.8f
ZONE 7 - LOW WEALD:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

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3.8.19 The key gaps in the access route network within the Low Weald GI Zone are:

- Connectivity into Lewes District is particularly poor in this zone.
- There is poor connectivity from the south-east side of Uckfield into the countryside.
- There is poor connectivity from within this zone, particularly Uckfield to the Sussex Ouse Valley Way Promoted Route, which runs just outside of this zone.
- Whilst the bridleways are numerous in this zone, they remain fragmented and there are very few bridleways around Uckfield in the western part of this zone.
- Limited opportunities for cycling around Uckfield.
- The A22 is a barrier to accessing the countryside south west of Uckfield.

Needs and Opportunities

3.8.20 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network within the Low Weald GI Zone include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI within this Zone are considered to be:

- Seek the creation of new accessible natural greenspace at 2ha and 20ha scales, close to where people live and/or areas of growth to address current deficiencies.
- Explore opportunities to integrate multifunctional community greenspaces/growing spaces into settlements and new developments that provide health and well-being benefits and help reinforce a strong sense of place.
- Promote opportunities to use SuDS and green roofs within new developments, integrated within landscaping schemes and designed to achieve ecological gains.
- Where appropriate expand and improve networks of characteristic semi-natural habitats such as floodplain/lowland meadows and wet woodland along the river Uck south of Uckfield to improve flood water storage on the floodplain and biodiversity to help to protect communities further downstream.
- Opportunities exist to improve and enhance key recreation access links, such as from this zone towards the South Downs National Park and from Uckfield to the Sussex Ouse Valley Way promoted route.
- Seek opportunities to retain and improve the condition of existing characteristic habitats within this zone through suitable management and, where appropriate, create new habitats links such as grassland/lowland meadow networks to the east of Polegate for example.

- Seek opportunities through partnerships to improve the function of road and railway verges by introducing sensitive management to promote biodiversity, air quality and minimise infrastructure as visual detractors.

3.9 Zone 8: Pevensey Levels

Overview

3.9.1 As shown on **Figure 3.9a**, the Pevensey Levels GI Zone covers an area in the south-east of study area. It includes the only stretch of coastline within the study area and is a predominantly low-lying landscape of watercourses and ditches within the setting of the gently rising land of the Low Weald to the north. This zone borders Rother District to the east and includes the settlements of Stone Cross and the smaller villages of Westham and Pevensey. The significant settlement of Eastbourne lies just south of this zone and Hailsham lies to the north-west. The zone lies in the shadow of the South Downs National Park and includes parts of the following Parishes (see **Figure 1.2**):

- Herstmonceux
- Westham
- Pevensey
- Willingdon and Jevington
- Wartling
- Hooe
- Polegate
- Hailsham

Audit

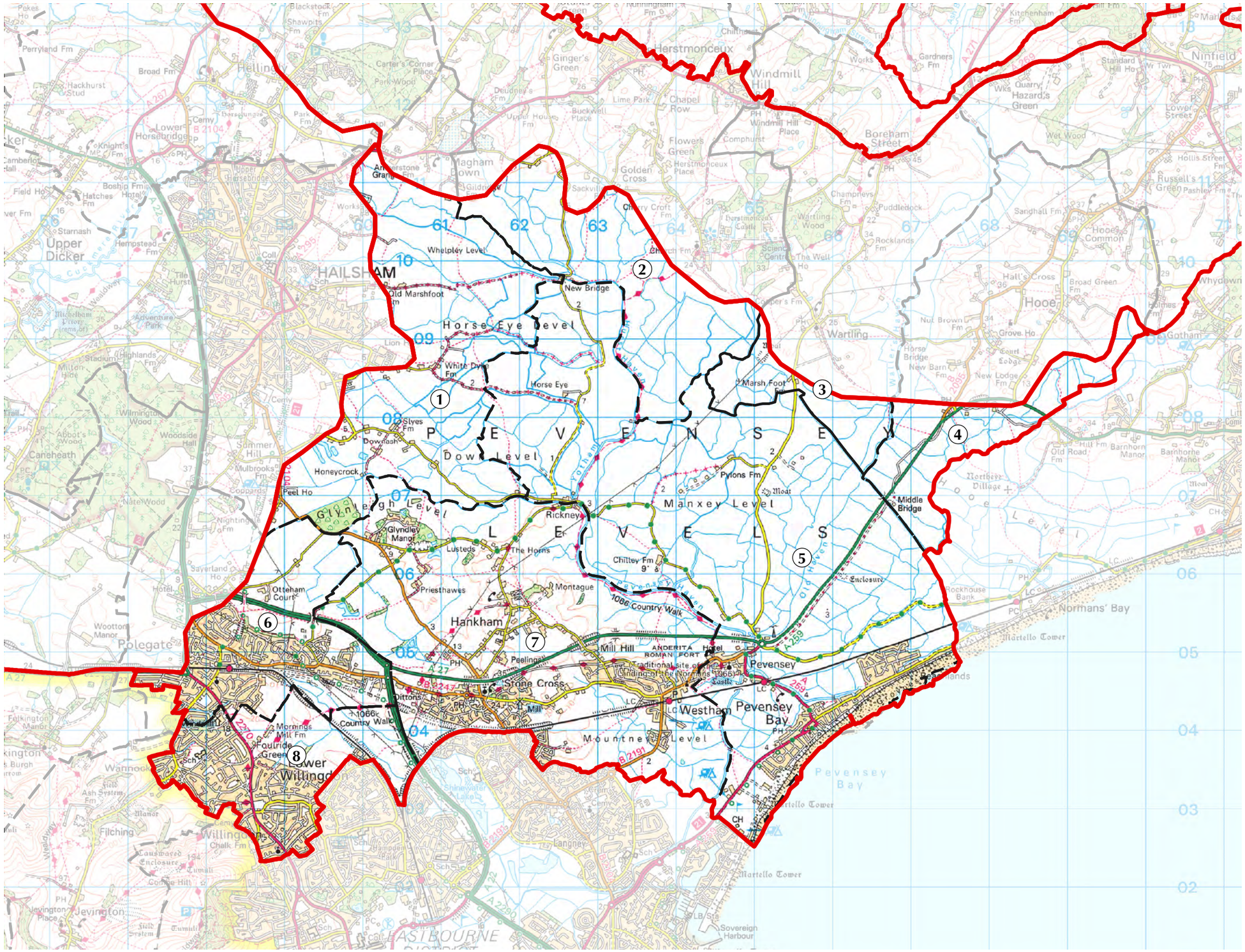
Existing Strategic Green Infrastructure Initiatives

- **Invasive Species Control on the Pevensey Levels** – a partnership of on-going management of the Levels, in particular to address significant populations of floating pennywort.

Biodiversity

3.9.2 The Pevensey Levels GI Zone contains the following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites (see **Figure 3.9b**):

- Pevensey Levels SAC, Ramsar site, NNR and SSSI
- Diplocks Wood LWS



KEY

Sub-District Scale GI Zones

Parish Boundary

1. Hailsham
2. Herstmonceux
3. Wartling
4. Hooe
5. Polegate
6. Westham
7. Pevensey
8. Willingdon & Jevington

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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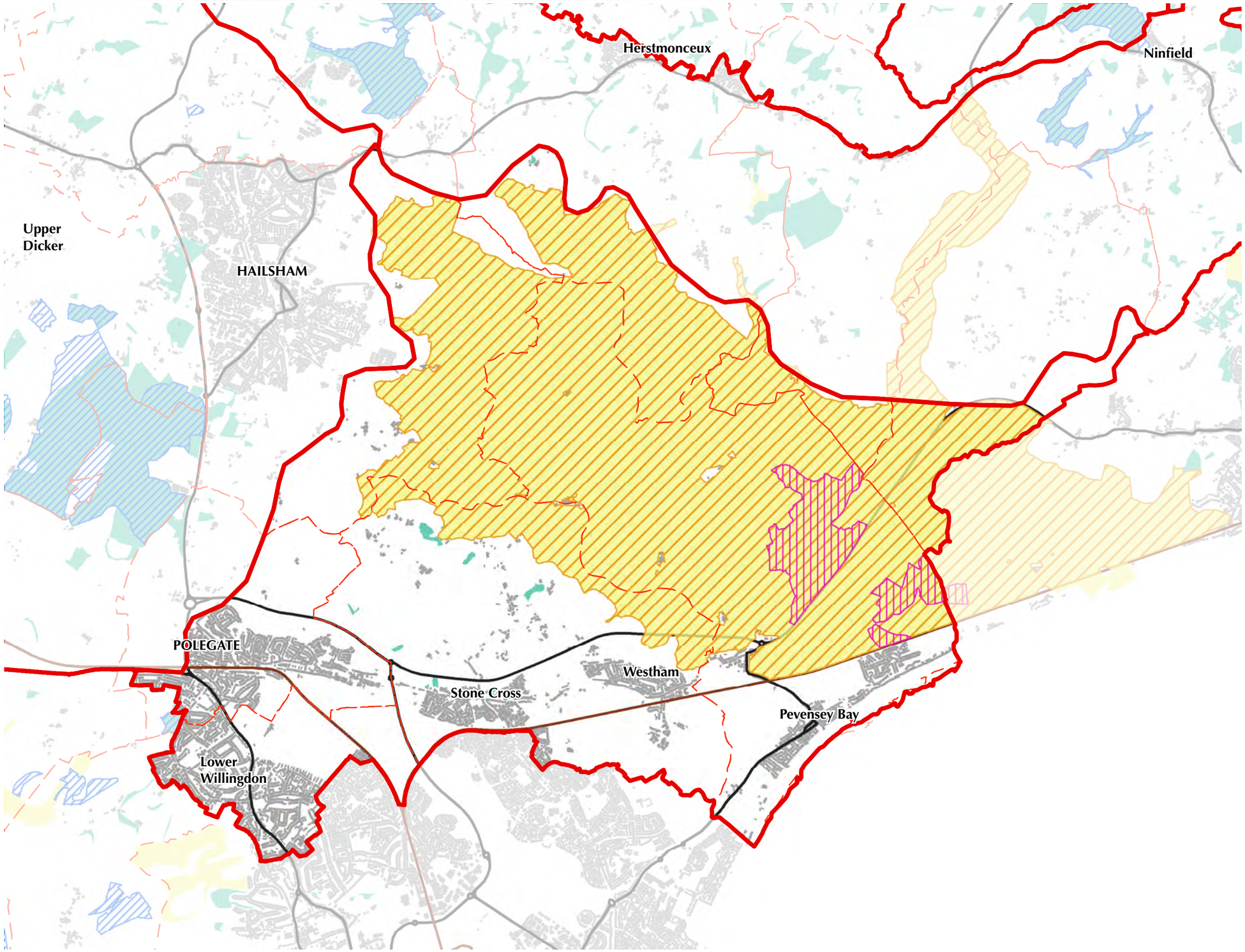
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FIGURE 3.9a
ZONE 8 - PEVENSEY LEVELS:
CONTEXT PLAN

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FIGURE 3.9b
ZONE 8 - PEVENSEY LEVELS:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

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3.9.3 The condition of the Pevensey Levels SAC, Ramsar site, NNR and SSSI within Zone 8 is 'poor', but improving[143]. There are no RIGS within this zone.

3.9.4 As shown on **Figure 3.9c**, the wildlife habitats within Zone 8 are dominated by coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, and freshwater habitats of watercourses and ditches. The zone includes Waller's Haven watercourse which flows from the north-east in Rother District and flows out to sea at Norman's Bay just east of this zone. Pevensey Haven also runs through this zone from the north and flows to the sea at Pevensey Bay. Vegetated shingle is also present along the coast. Large ponds are common throughout this zone, particularly within the grazing marsh itself.

3.9.5 Semi-improved grassland is present on the marsh in the south and east of this zone, most likely in areas which haven't been under arable land use. Small-scale deciduous woodlands are typical on the higher ground around the edges of settlements, or associated with transport infrastructure. Key barriers to the movement of wildlife within the zone include a number of main roads which run east-west, particularly the A27, and the mainline railway, but also the A259, A271 and A22.

3.9.6 As shown on **Figure 2.2c**, Zone 7 lies within part of the Pevensey Levels (53) and Eastbourne Marshes (52) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas. Numerous BAP species have been recorded within these BOAs, including Grasshopper Warbler, Sharp-leaved Pondweed, Fen Raft Spider and Brown Hare. The majority of non-native invasive species recorded within these BOAs are associated with watercourses, including the following;

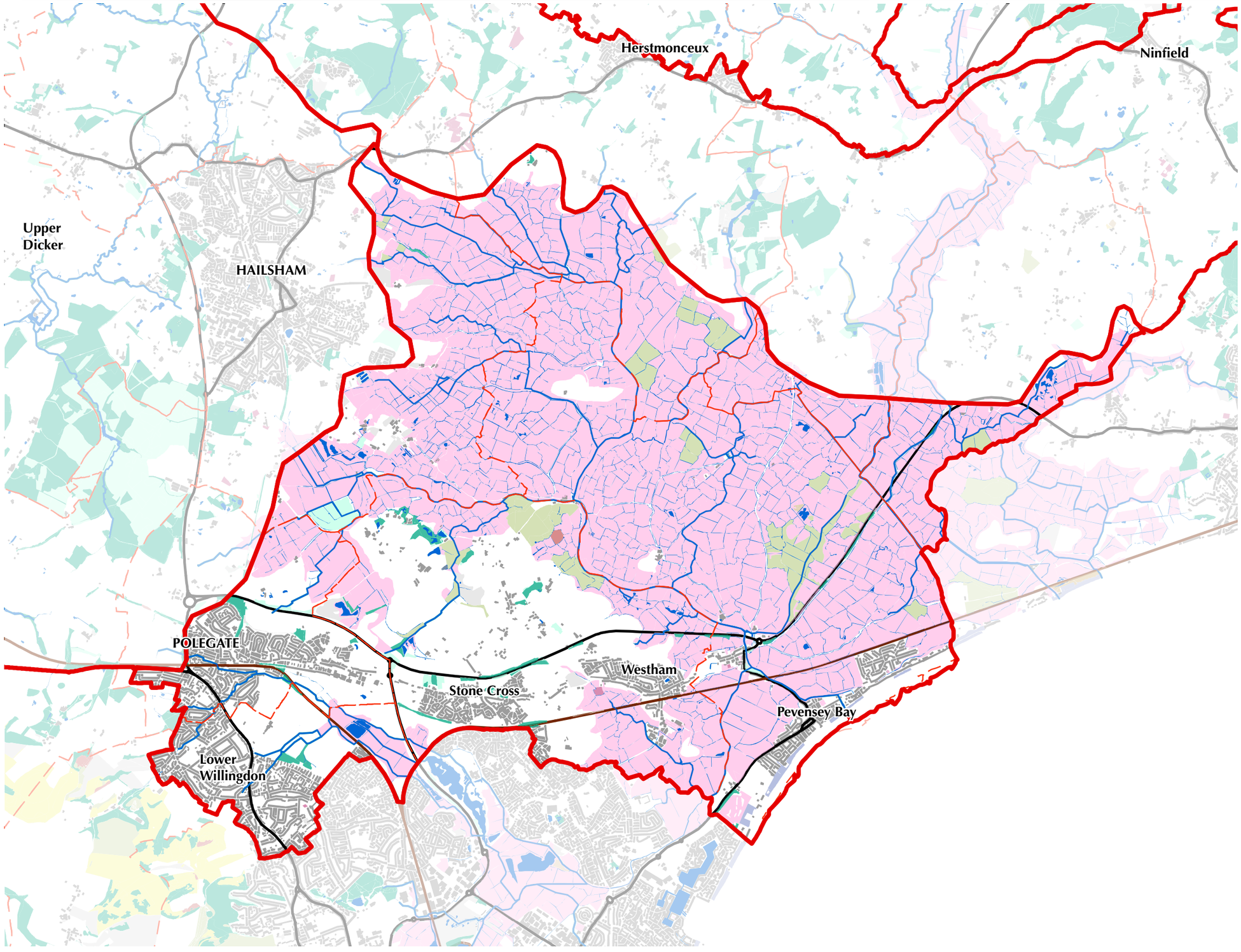
- American Mink *Mustela vison*
- New Zealand Pigmyweed *Crassula helmsii*
- Water Fern *Azolla filiculoides*

Landscape & Historic Environment

3.9.7 As shown on **Figure 3.9d**, Zone 8 lies predominantly within the Open Levels Landscape Character Type[144], the key characteristics of which are summarised below:

- **Topography:** Low-lying, predominantly flat landscape encompassing a patchwork of alluvial grazing marshes which are drained by purpose-built drainage channels and ditches. The marshes give rise to a network of wetland habitats which often attract flocks of birds.

[143] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017
[144] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)



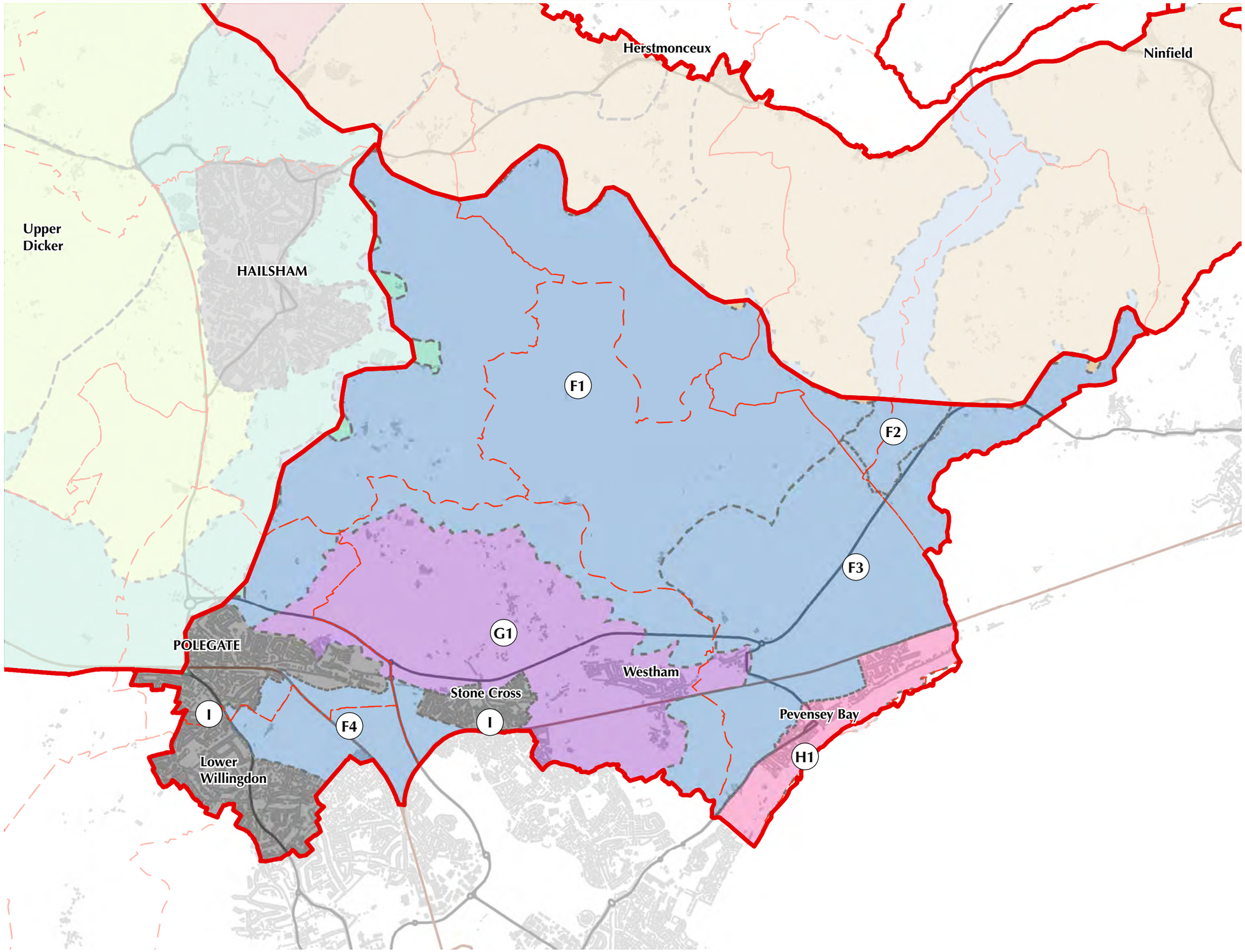
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FIGURE 3.9c
ZONE 8 - PEVENSEY LEVELS:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

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FIGURE 3.9d
ZONE 8 - PEVENSEY LEVELS:
LOCAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER TYPES & AREAS

- **Settlement Pattern:** An absence of large-scale settlement within the LLCT. Existing settlements comprise primarily isolated farmsteads, which are often situated at the junctions of minor road corridors, on higher islands or 'eyes' of land. Brick and flint buildings, weatherboarding and tiles are the predominant building materials within the Open Levels.
- **Communications:** Crossed by a network of national and local recreational routes and footpaths including the 1066 Country Walk, facilitating access to this landscape.
- **Views and Visibility:** A large-scale, predominantly open landscape facilitating open views north and eastwards to surrounding higher landscapes and southwards across the Coastal Levels. Wide, open skies contribute to local sense of place. Views northwards are dominated by the rising slopes of the southern High Weald (LLCT B: Ridges and Slopes), which form a skyline backdrop. To the east, the gently rising landscapes of the Open Clay Vales (LLCT E) provide setting and visual containment to the Open Levels.
- **Tranquillity and Remoteness:** A strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness, particularly in the north of this LLCT, at a distance from the large urban areas of Polegate and Eastbourne.

3.9.8 The historic environment assets in the Pevensey Levels GI Zone shown on **Figure 3.9e** also make an important contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the Pevensey Levels landscape. These include:

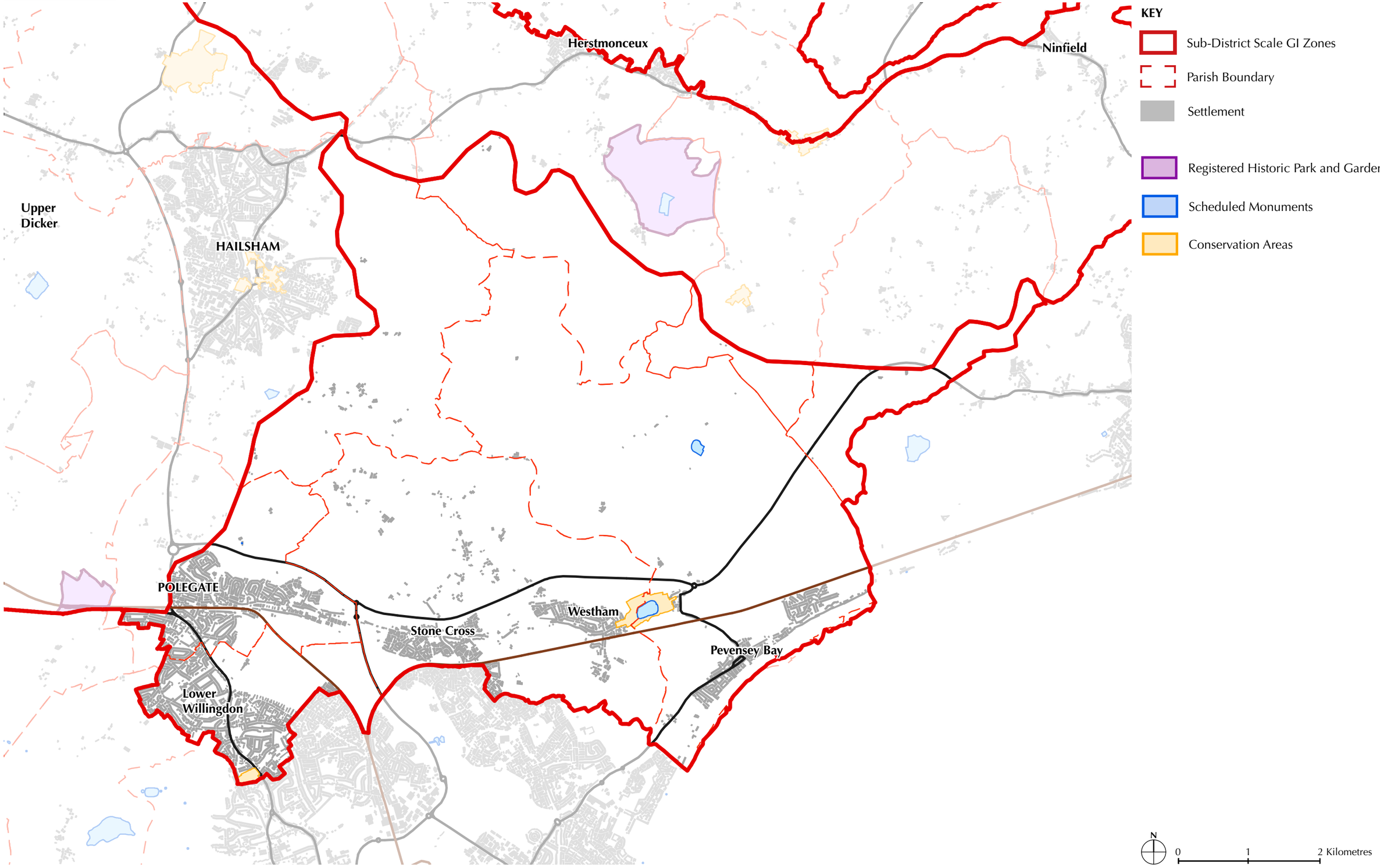
- The Hoo Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)
- 3 No. Scheduled Monuments – such as the Remains of chapel at Otham Court; and the Medieval moated site and associated earthworks, Pound Piece, Manxey
- 2 No. Conservation Areas – Pevensey and Westham, and Willingdon, Church Street.

3.9.9 These heritage assets are generally not at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change.

Energy & Food

3.9.10 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the Pevensey Levels GI Zone includes very few woodlands, and none are of a significant size. Therefore, unlike other parts of the study area, there are no opportunities for wood fuel within this zone. Historically Pevensey Levels is a drained landscape, with ditches created to manage water levels to exploit the fertile soils. There are limited opportunities for solar and wind energy generation, because this zone's landscape character is highly sensitive to solar farm development and wind energy development[145].

[145] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)



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FIGURE 3.9e
ZONE 8 - PEVENSEY LEVELS:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

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3.9.11 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the vast majority of Zone 8 is classified as grade 3 agricultural land (good to moderate). Some grade 4 (poor) agricultural land exists around Polegate and in the east. As a grazing marsh, this landscape is well suited to livestock (sheep and cattle) although many fields are used for arable farming today.

Water Resources

3.9.12 As shown on **Figure 2.5**, a number of watercourses are present within Zone 8, notably the relatively short watercourses of Waller's Haven and Pevensey Haven which flow into the channel between Eastbourne and Bexhill. The Levels is a highly manipulated reclaimed landscape of freshwater ditches and watercourses. These watercourses are typically slow flowing within the Levels. The Levels is a habitat which is reliant upon the maintenance of appropriate water levels and therefore changes in water management and quality of water entering this area can have an impact upon the designation and the landscape's ability to store flood water.

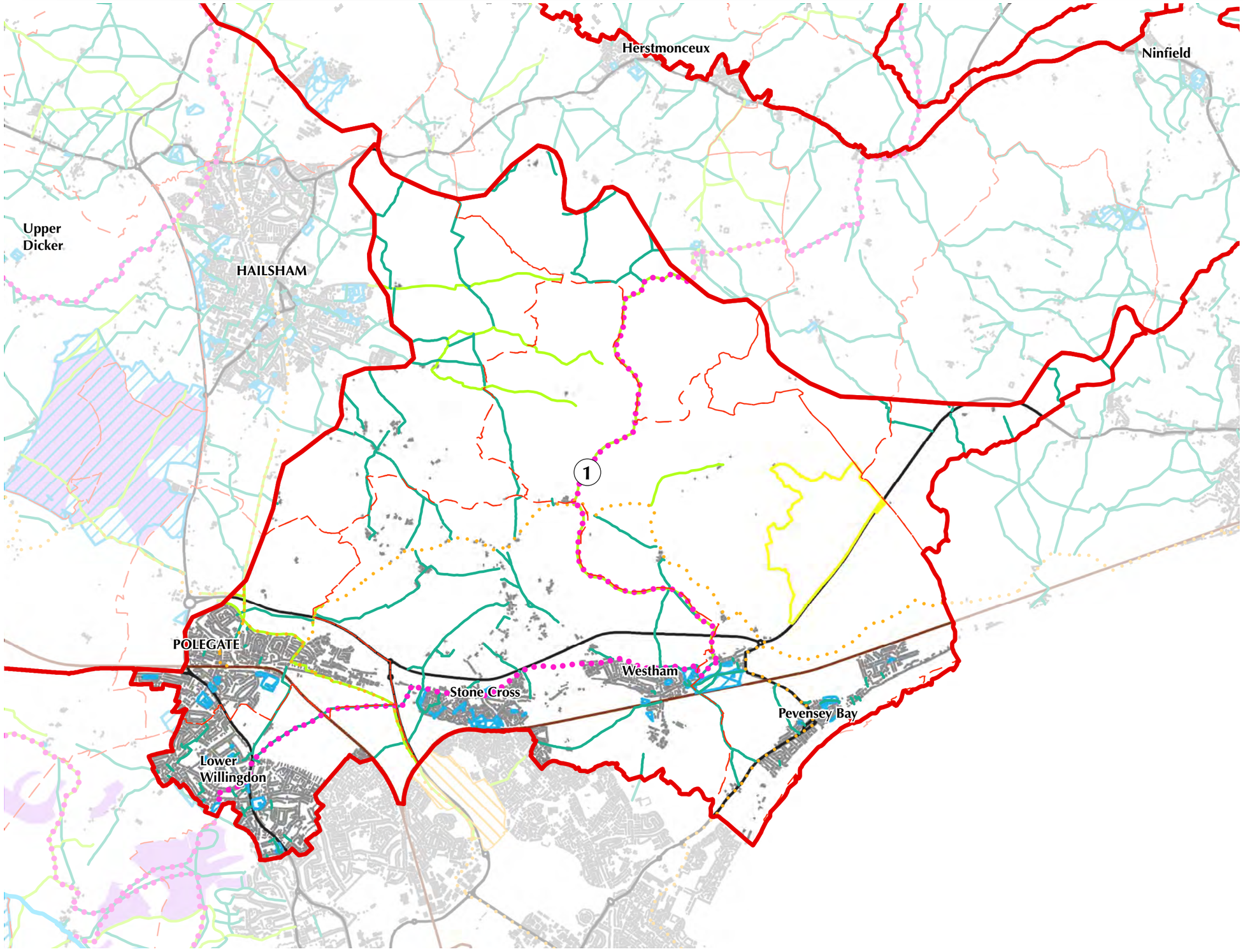
3.9.13 Water quality within the Pevensey Levels GI Zone is generally in 'good' chemical status and in 'moderate to poor' ecological status.

Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

3.9.14 The existing provision of accessible natural greenspace within the Pevensey Levels GI Zone and adjoining areas is shown on **Figure 3.9f**. This shows that the accessible natural greenspace sites are limited within this zone. A single large site (Pevensey Marshes NNR and Wildlife Trust Reserve) is situated away from urban areas and this site is accessed by permit only. Small-scale accessible sites are restricted to sites in the south and south-east of the zone, particularly within the urban areas. The lack of accessible natural greenspace throughout much of this zone is partly a result of the area's use for agriculture and sensitive wildlife habitats.

3.9.15 The key deficiencies in provision of accessible natural greenspace identified within the Pevensey Levels GI Zone are:

- Neighbourhood-scale access to natural greenspace is poorly provided for in this zone, particularly around the main settlements.
- District-scale access to accessible natural greenspace is well-provided for in the south of this zone, covering the majority of residents within the main settlements.
- County-scale access to accessible natural greenspace is well provided for across the whole of this zone.



KEY

- Sub-District Scale GI Zones
- Parish Boundary
- Settlement

Access Links:

- Footpath
- Bridleway/Byway
- Sustrans National Cycle Route
- Promoted Route

1. 1066 Country Walk

- National Trail
- Main Roads
- Railways

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

- Open Spaces*
- CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land
- Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 3.9f
ZONE 8 - PEVENSEY LEVELS:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

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- Sub-Regional scale access to accessible natural greenspace is generally well provided for across all but the eastern part of this zone, including the residents of Pevensey Bay along the coast as a result of its proximity to large sites outside of the study area.

3.9.16 As shown on **Figure 3.9f**, Zone 8 is a landscape which is fairly well-connected by access links. These links include numerous cycle routes including the NCN Route 21 and 2 which run north to south through Hailsham and along the coast respectively. The 1066 Country Walk Promoted Route runs roughly north to south through the centre of this zone, at Bridge Farm it splits in two and one route takes in Pevensey Castle, the other heads west into Polegate and up to Jevington within the South Downs National Park. This route also passes through Zone's 5 and 6 to the north on Zone 8.

3.9.17 The key gaps in the access route network within the Pevensey Levels GI Zone are:

- The A22 is a barrier to accessing the countryside from all three settlements.
- There are no rights of way from Beachlands on the eastern side of Pevensey Bay into the countryside and wider rights of way network.

Needs and Opportunities

3.9.18 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network within the Pevensey Levels GI Zone include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI within this Zone are considered to be:

- Explore opportunities to work in partnership to control invasive species within this zone, in particular those which threaten, water environments and vegetated shingle, for the benefit of key species.
- Where appropriate, expand and improve networks of characteristic semi-natural habitats such as semi-improved grassland/grazing marsh winding through, and linking between existing settlements, to prevent key habitats becoming isolated by development and support biodiversity.
- Seek opportunities through partnership working to improve the function of road and railway verges by introducing sensitive management to promote; characteristic biodiversity, air quality and minimise infrastructure as visual detractors – particularly within the setting of heritage assets, such as Pevensey Castle.

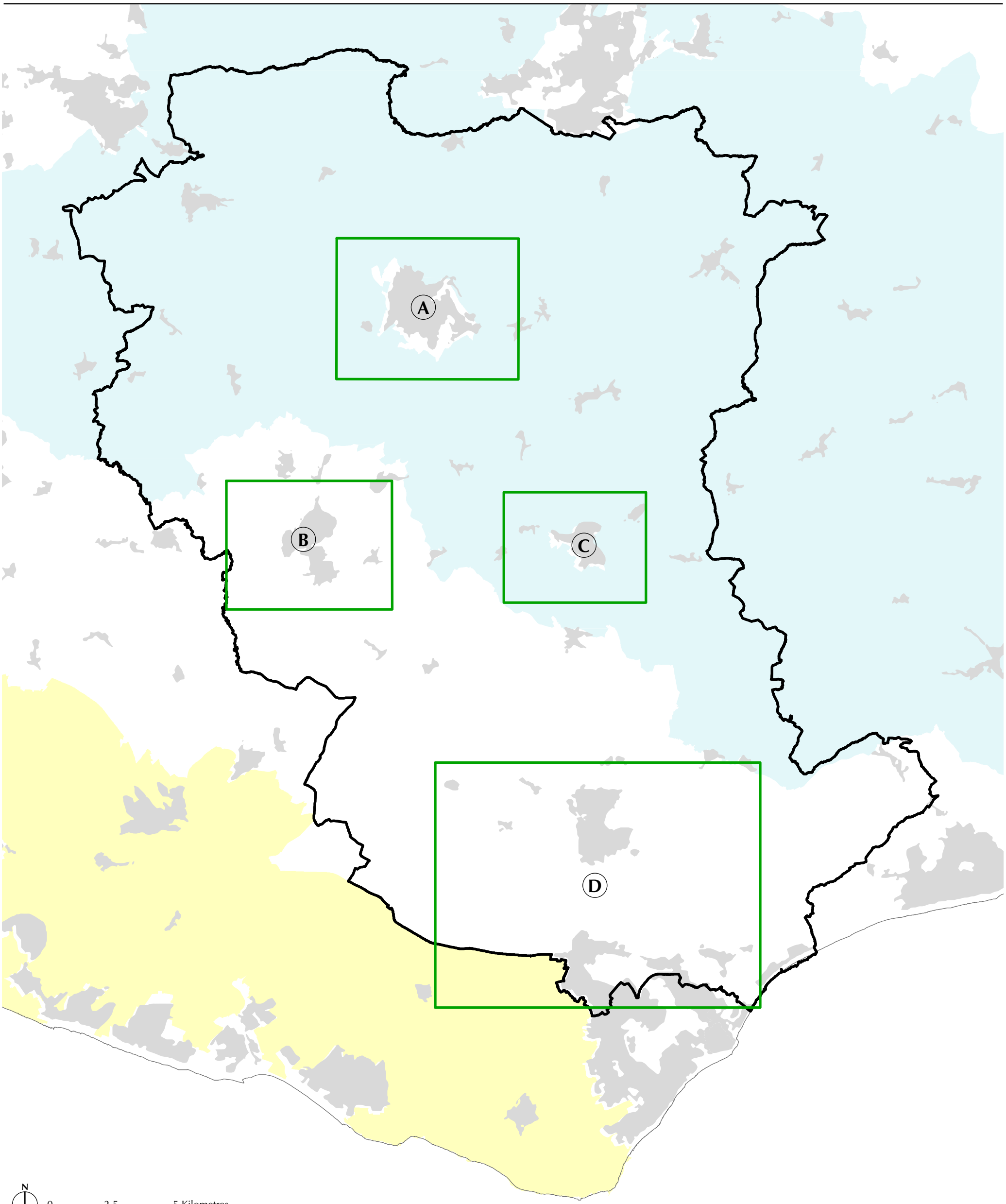
- Promote opportunities to use SuDS and green roofs within new developments, integrated within landscaping schemes and designed to achieve ecological gains.
- Opportunities exist to address poor access links into the countryside for coastal communities by strengthening and improving access links.
- Opportunities exist in this zone to improve ecological networks with surrounding areas, particularly Eastbourne Park, to create a permeable landscape building in enhanced biodiversity and flood resilience.
- Promote opportunities to use SuDS and green roofs within new developments, integrated within landscaping schemes and designed to achieve ecological gains.
- Maintain the strong sense of tranquillity, remoteness and traditional grazing of the Levels as the setting to heritage features such as Pevensey Castle and incorporating important landscape features such as the old salt works.
- Where appropriate seek opportunities to develop and enhance strategic green links between key areas such as the South Downs National Park, Pevensey Levels and south Wealden.
- Explore opportunities to integrate multifunctional community greenspaces/growing spaces into settlements and new developments that provide health and well-being benefits and help reinforce a strong sense of place.

4.0 TOWN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ASSESSMENTS

4.1 General

4.1.1 This section sets out a more detailed assessment of GI assets, needs and opportunities for the towns of Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield and Hailsham & Polegate. The study areas for each town (see **Figure 4.1**) broadly reflect the settlement assessment areas defined by the Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2014), adjusted as necessary to take into account key GI assets and areas of potential growth around the towns.

4.1.2 This section should be read in conjunction with **Sections 2.0** and **3.0**, which provide an assessments of GI needs and opportunities for the study area as a whole and within sub-district scale 'GI Zones' respectively.



KEY

Wealden Local Plan Area

South Downs National Park

High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Settlement

Town GI Areas:
A. Crowborough
B. Uckfield
C. Heathfield
D. Hailsham & Polegate

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FIGURE 4.1
TOWN
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AREAS

April 2017

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4.2 Crowborough

Overview

4.2.1 As shown on **Figure 4.2a**, Crowborough is situated six miles to the south of Tunbridge Wells and approximately nine miles to the northwest of Uckfield, in the north of Wealden District. The town, which is surrounded by the High Weald AONB, occupies a prominent position on the northern forest ridge of the High Weald, approximately six miles to the east of the Ashdown Forest. A large nucleated town, Crowborough is dissected by the A26 main road corridor. The western edge of the town is served by a mainline railway which connects the town of Uckfield in the south, with the London mainline to the northeast. The majority of business activity within the town is contained on the Millbrook, Farningham Road and Lexden Lodge Business Areas and in the Park Road Area of the town centre, which also houses a variety of offices and other businesses. Elsewhere in the town, there are smaller areas of industrial and commercial activity at Park Road, Connors Yard and on the former railway goods yard off Western Road.

4.2.2 The town centre provides the commercial core of the settlement with a variety of shops and offices which have developed in linear form from London Road, north of The Cross, along the High Street, Broadway and Croft Road to the south, and in an east-west direction either side of The Cross. Crowborough also contains a large amount of residential development ranging from Victorian terraces, through post-war to modern housing estates. These housing areas or estates are set out along a network of roads and closes leading east-west off the main A26 road corridor. Crowborough has experienced significant growth over the last decade. On the western side of the town, Crowborough Warren has a distinctive character of detached properties set within extensive gardens, where tree cover, hedgerows and landscaping are the dominant visual elements that result in an arcadian quality. There are several small pockets of woodland and open space scattered within the urban fabric, in addition to Wolfe Recreation Ground to the east of the town, providing one of the largest areas.

Audit

Biodiversity

4.2.3 The following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites are found around Crowborough (see **Figure 4.2b**):

- Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA/SSSI
- Brown Knoll Farm Meadow LWS
- Crowborough Common LWS

KEY



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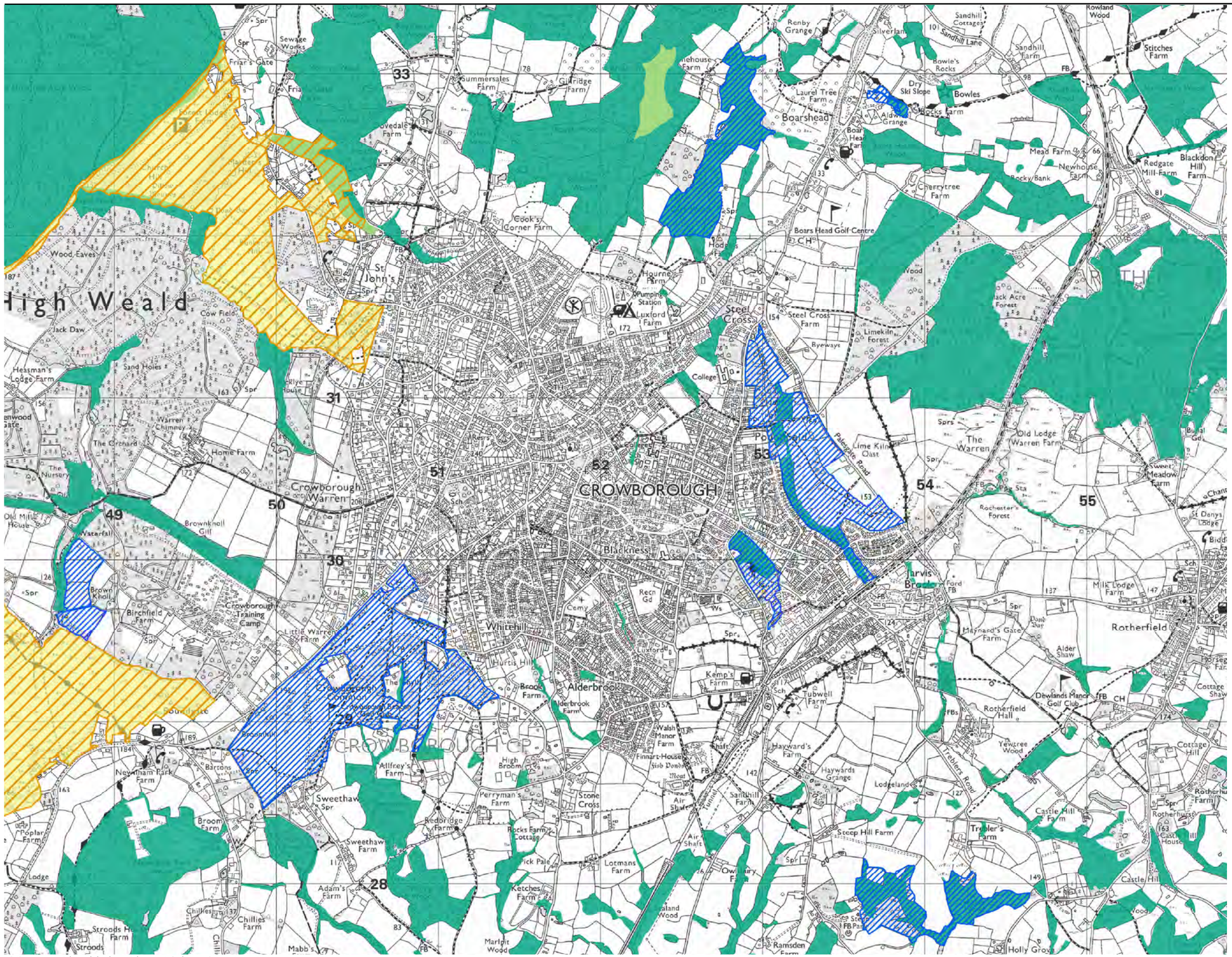
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FIGURE 4.2a
CROWBOROUGH:
CONTEXT PLAN

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FIGURE 4.2b
CROWBOROUGH:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

April 2017

- Crowborough Ghyll LWS
- Lodge, Wet and Trebler's Wood LWS
- Boar's Head, Hodge's & Cage Wood LWS
- Boar's Head Rocks LWS
- Bream Wood SSSI
- Holden Wood LWS

4.2.4 The condition of the Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA/SSSI is 'unfavourable-recovering'[146].

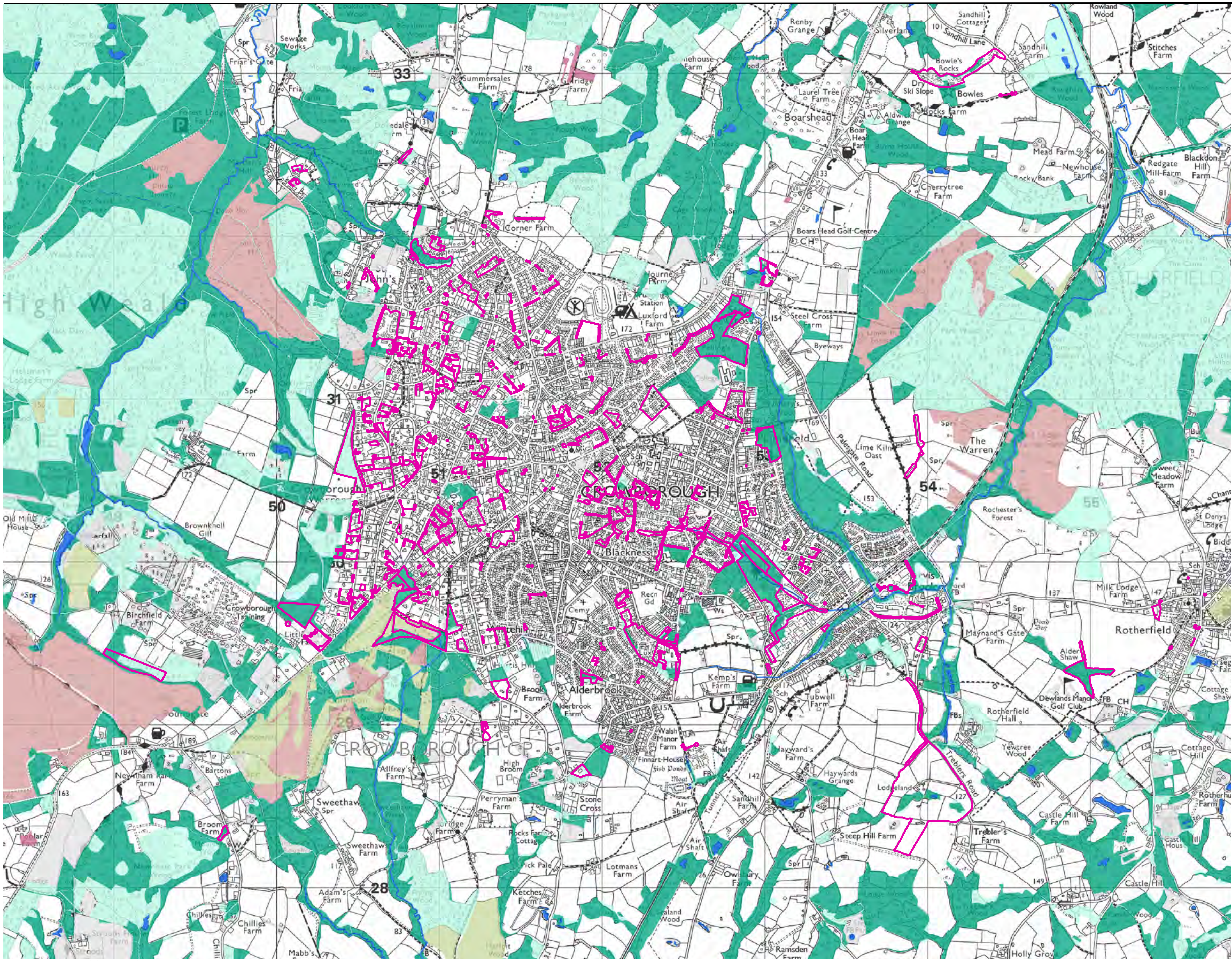
4.2.5 As shown on **Figure 4.2c**, wildlife habitats around Crowborough are dominated by deciduous, mixed and coniferous woodland interspersed with some notable areas of lowland heathland. Freshwater habitats include numerous small tributary streams and ponds. Habitats, particularly woodland are small and fragmented along the south-eastern edge of the town. As shown on **Figure 4.2d** there are a large number of individual trees and tree groups associated with amenity spaces and streets within the urban area, many of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (see **Figure 4.2c)**

Landscape & Historic Environment

4.2.6 The key landscape setting/townscape features and characteristics that contribute to the character of Crowborough and are sensitive to change are summarised below[147]:

- **Remnant Historic Landscapes:** A patchwork of small-scale historic fields surrounds the settlement, often abutting the settlement edge. These are interspersed with large areas of Ancient Woodland, particularly to the north and west of the town. To both the north and south of the town, the historic field pattern between woodlands is predominantly comprised of cohesive and aggregate assarts, and regular piecemeal enclosure.
- **Large areas of woodland** dominate the northern, western and eastern landscape setting of the town, providing a strong sense of enclosure.
- **Culturally Important Landmarks:** Rotherfield Hall, a culturally important historic landmark is situated to the southeast of the Jarvis Brook area of Crowborough.
- **Landscape Detractors:** Several landscape detractors, including buildings at Crowborough Training Camp to the south of Crowborough Warren; buildings associated with the campsite and pumping station at the northern edge of the settlement, close to Luxford Farm; and industrial and commercial buildings at Jarvis Brook industrial estate to the southeast of the town.

[146] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017
[147] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)



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KEY

Main BAP Priority Habitats:

- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Saltmarsh
- Coastal Vegetated Shingle
- Deciduous Woodland
- Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Fens
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Meadows
- Maritime Cliff and Slope
- Mudflats
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures
- Reedbeds
- Saline Lagoons
- Traditional Orchard
- No Main Habitat but Additional Habitats Present

Mixed and Coniferous Woodland Habitats (National Forest Inventory)

Freshwater Habitats (Main Watercourses & Waterbodies)

Tree Preservation Orders

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.2c
CROWBOROUGH:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

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KEY

- Urban Trees
- Woodland
- Shaws
- Ancient Woodland

NB. See Figure 4.2a for Tree Preservation Orders

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.2d
CROWBOROUGH:
TREES & WOODLAND

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- **Urban Edges:** The town is predominantly lined by treed, sensitive soft edges and woodland, with a few pockets of exposed or prominent urban edges along the A26 corridor in the north and at the southern edge of Alderbrook housing area in the south of the town.
- **Watercourses/Waterbodies:** Several small watercourses and ponds permeate the landscape setting of the town.
- **Significant Views/Key Ridgelines:** There is a significant view of Crowborough in its elevated position, set within its landscape setting, looking westwards from the Rotherfield road.
- **Footpaths/Bridleways:** A network of footpaths and bridleways connects Crowborough to its landscape setting. Crowborough is situated in an elevated position and there are therefore numerous key ridgelines within the setting of the settlement.

4.2.7 The key characteristics of the Landscape Setting Areas around Crowborough[148] (see **Figure 4.2e**) are:

Landscape Setting Area	Distinctive Characteristics
1	• Large areas of Ancient Woodland, interspersed with small-scale, predominantly pastoral fields; • The caravan park at Luxford Farm is considered to be a landscape detractor, in close proximity to the settlement edge; • Strong landscape structure of mature hedgerows and trees.
2	• Dense Ancient Woodlands dominate the eastern part of the area, providing a strong sense of enclosure; • Numerous stream corridors are a key feature; • Open views to the settlement edge in the west.
3	• Strong sense of openness from parts of this area, particularly looking west along Rotherfield road, where a key view of Crowborough settlement edge can be gained; • A gently undulating landscape with a strong landscape structure.
4	• Small-scale landscape pattern of ancient fields, lined with mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees; • Narrow, tree-lined road corridors; • An interconnected network of footpaths, connecting Crowborough to its landscape setting.
5	• An undulating patchwork of small-scale, ancient fields and medium-scale Ancient Woodlands, which provide an intermittent sense of enclosure; • An interconnected network of rural, tree lined lanes and mature hedgerows.
6	• Large areas of woodland contribute to an enclosed feel within much of the area; • Human influence on the landscape is apparent at Crowborough Training Camp in the west; • A mixture of historic and ancient, predominantly pastoral fields.

4.2.8 In addition, key historic environment assets that also contribute to the character of the town include (see **Figure 4.2f**):

[148] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)

KEY

Landscape Setting Areas (Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, 2014):

1 Crowborough Landscape Setting Areas

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.2e
CROWBOROUGH:
LANDSCAPE SETTING AREAS

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KEY

- Registered Historic Park and Garden
- Scheduled Monuments
- Conservation Areas
- Listed Buildings

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.2f
CROWBOROUGH:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

April 2017

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- 1 Registered Park & Garden: Rotherfield Hall
- 3 Scheduled Monuments including Crowborough Forge, Crowborough Warren Furnace and a Medieval moated site
- 2 Conservation Areas including Crowborough Conservation Area and Rotherfield Conservation Area

Energy & Food

4.2.9 There are no known areas of coppiced woodlands around Crowborough. However the woodlands present could, with appropriate and sensitive management represent a potential source of local fuel.

4.2.10 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the quality of agricultural land around the town is almost entirely Grade 4, the lowest quality.

Water Resources

4.2.11 Crowborough Beacon, the highest point above sea-level within the High Weald at 225m, lies to the west of the town. Crowborough is situated at the head of the Upper Ouse, Upper Medway and Upper Rother catchment areas. Tributaries of the Rivers Medway and Uck run through the town.

4.2.12 **Table 4.1** shows the water quality within the catchment areas around Crowborough. Ecologically, water quality is much poorer, with most watercourses only reaching moderate quality at best. The chemical status of all watercourses within this catchment is good.

Table 4.1: Water Quality around Crowborough[149]

Catchment	Water Quality						
	Ecological Status or Potential					Chemical Status	
	Bad	Poor	Moderate	Good	High	Fail	Good
Upper Ouse Catchment Area Number of waterbodies: 2	3	8	14	1	0	0	26
Upper Medway Number of waterbodies: 12	1	3	7	1	0	0	12
Upper Rother Number of waterbodies: 6	0	3	2	1	0	0	6

[149] http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/

Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

4.2.13 Accessible natural greenspace sites in and around Crowborough are shown on **Figure 4.2g**. This shows that large areas of Open Access Land associated with commons and the Ashdown Forest; provide accessible greenspace along the western outskirts of Crowborough. On the eastern edge of the town a number of accessible sites exist including, Crowborough Country Park and the Ghyll Open Access Land. Broadly in the areas immediately north and south of Crowborough, there is no provision of accessible natural greenspace.

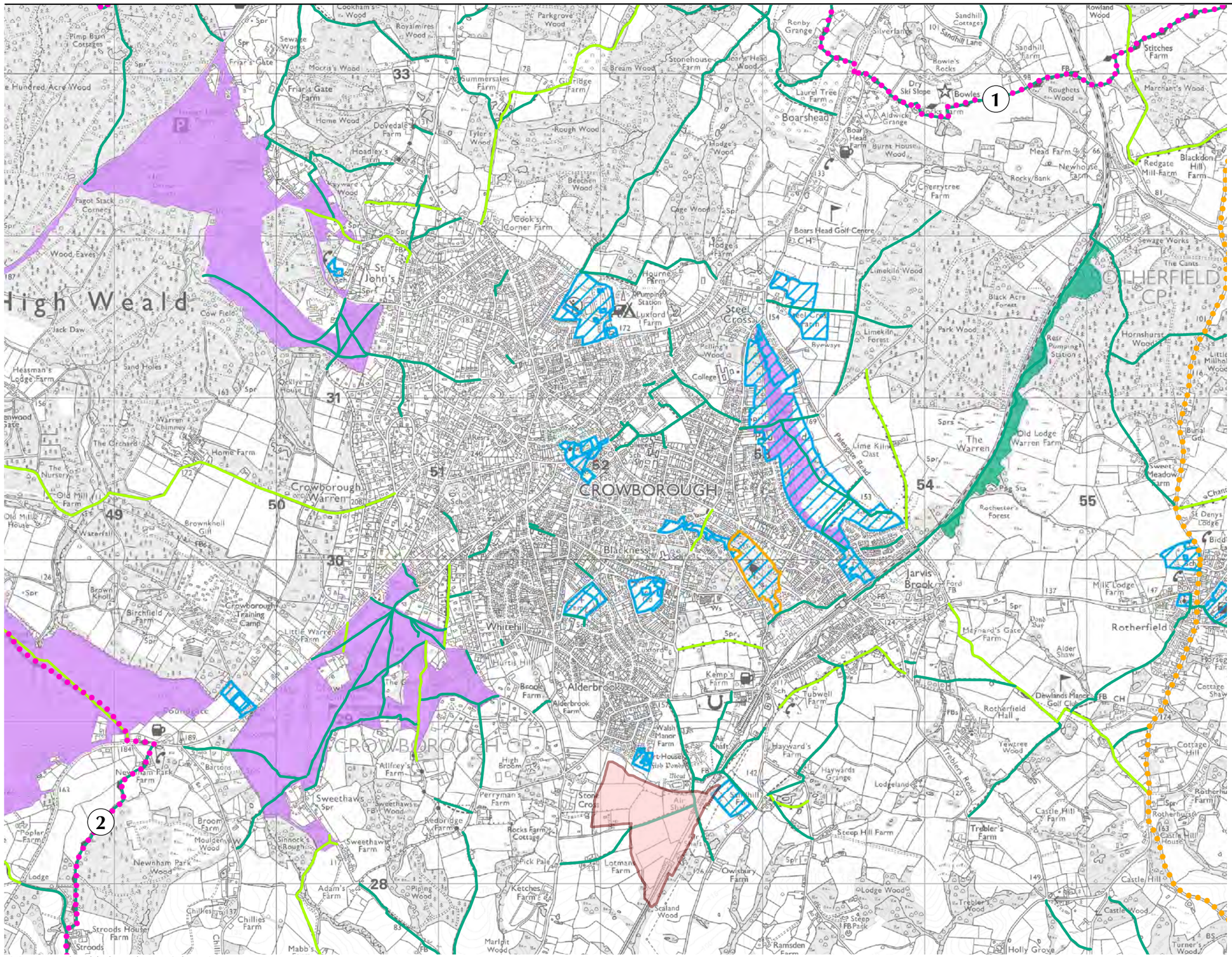
4.2.14 Within the town accessible greenspace is strongly focused on the eastern part of the town with no urban greenspace sites in the west. This part of the town also has limited neighbourhood scale access, as shown in **Figure 4.2h.** Open spaces in and around the town are shown on **Figure 4.2i** and comprise[150]:

- 2 No. allotments (such as Herne Road and Hadlow Down Road Allotments)
- 9 No. amenity greenspaces (such as Crowborough Silver Jubilee Ground and The Warren Playing Field)
- 6 No. churchyards and cemeteries (such as Herne Road Cemetery and St. Mary's Church, Crowborough)
- 6 No. parks and recreation grounds (such as Jarvis Brook Country Park/Playing Fields and Wolfe Recreation Ground)

4.2.15 As shown on **Figure 4.2g**, Crowborough is connected to the surrounding landscape by the following access links that need to be maintained and improved where appropriate:

- Public footpaths between The Ghyll Access Land and the wider countryside.
- Public footpaths between Crowborough and Old Lodge Warren Woodland Trust Site.
- Public footpaths between Crowborough and the countryside to the south of the town.
- Public bridleway access between Crowborough and the countryside through Crowborough Common
- Public footpaths between the Vanguard Way long distance promoted route and Crowborough.
- Cycleway from National Cycle Network Route 21 in to Crowborough.

[150] As identified and mapped for the Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (Ethos for Wealden DC, forthcoming)



KEY

Access Links:

- Footpath
- Bridleway/Byway
- Sustrans National Cycle Route
- Promoted Route

1. Sussex Border Path
2. Vanguard Way

- National Trail

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

- Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2016)*
- CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land
- Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Accessible Woodland Trust Sites
- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Provision

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 300 600 Metres

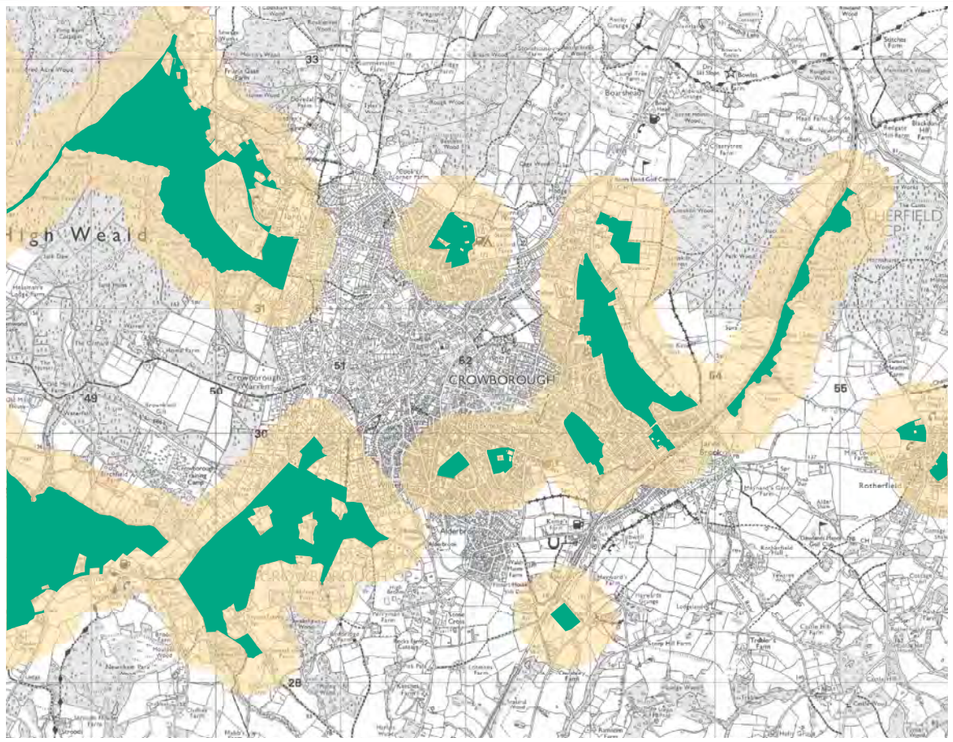
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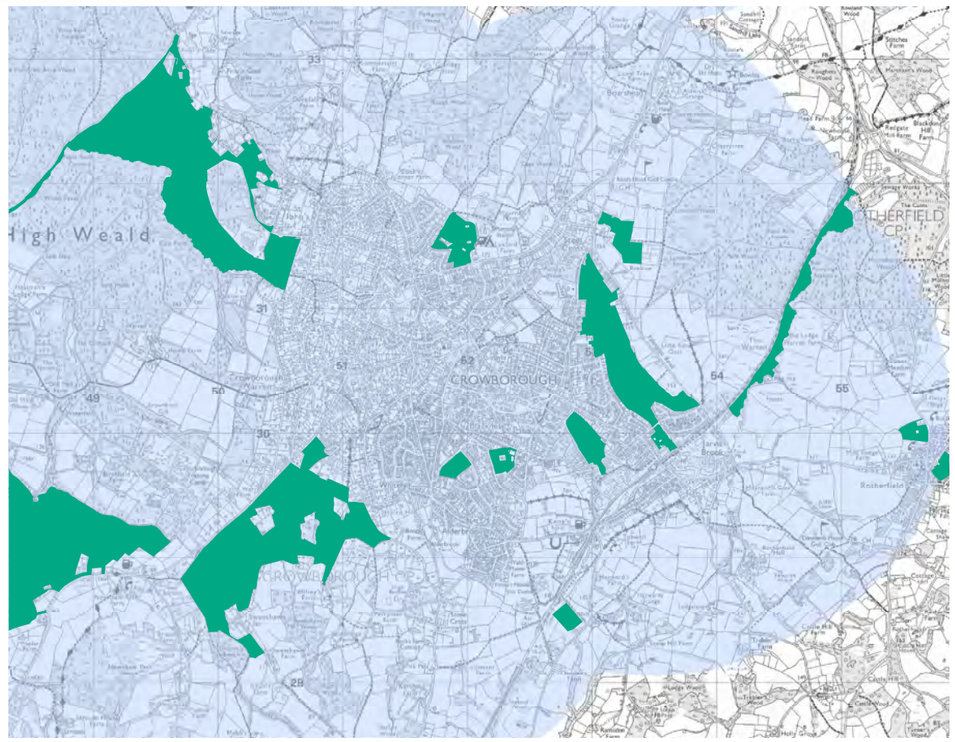
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FIGURE 4.2g
CROWBOROUGH:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

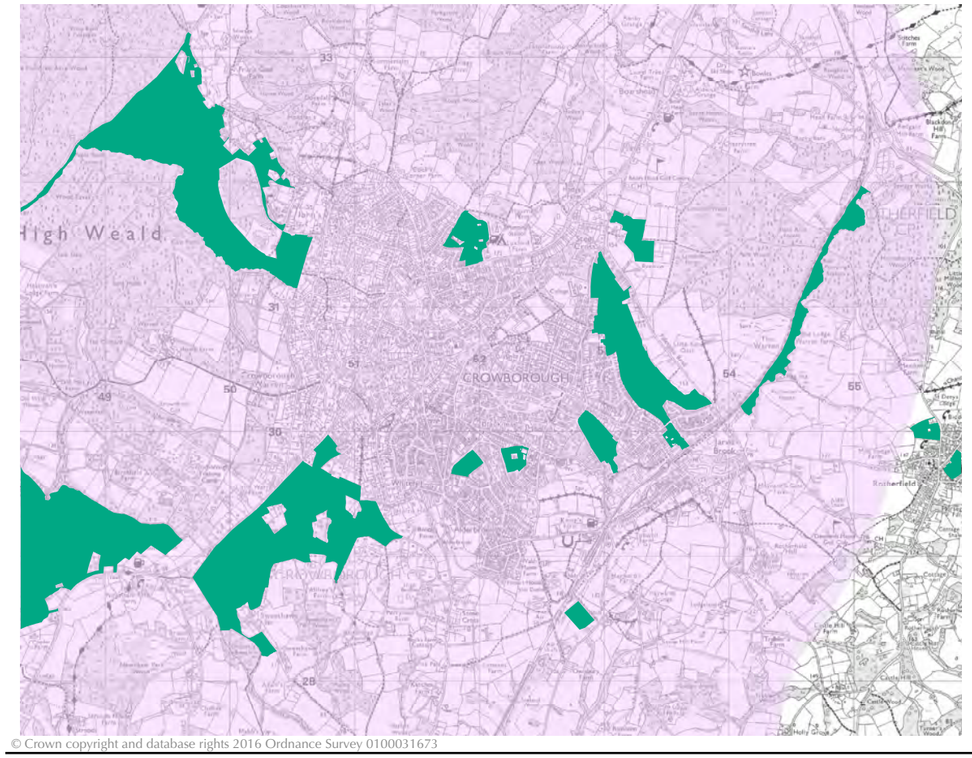
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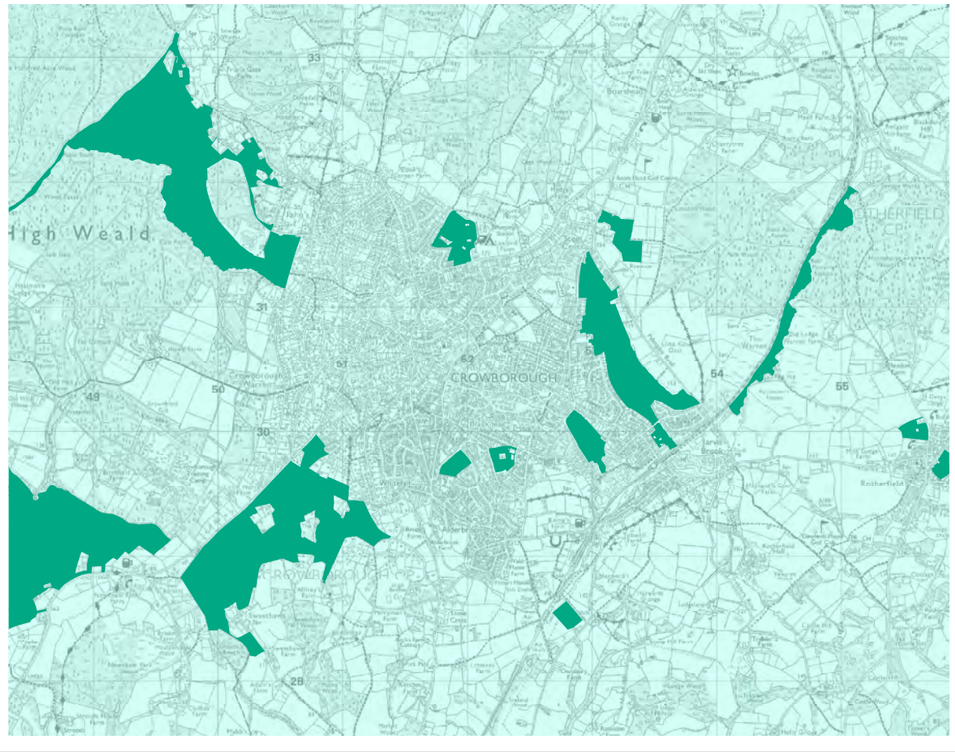




KEY

- Accessible Natural Greenspace >2ha
- 10km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >500ha
- 5km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >100ha
- 2km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >20ha
- 300m catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >2ha





N

0 0.6 1.2 Kilometres

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FIGURE 4.2h
CROWBOROUGH:
ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE ANALYSIS

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KEY

Open Space Typology:

- Accessible Natural Greenspace
- Allotments
- Amenity Greenspace
- Churchyards & Cemeteries
- Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.2i
CROWBOROUGH:
OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY

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Needs and Opportunities

4.2.16 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network in and around Crowborough include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI in and round the town are considered to be:

- Where appropriate, promote opportunities for retaining and enhancing existing wildlife habitats, and/or creating new habitats, related to residential development sites around Crowborough.
- There is scope restore and enhance features which contribute to landscape character around Crowborough through improved management or through development and associated mitigation. There may also be scope to improve the existing urban edges through the provision of new development and green infrastructure.
- Where appropriate, promote opportunities for landscape enhancements related to residential development sites around Crowborough.
- Opportunities exist to protect valued landscape features such as The Ghyll and to enhance/create green corridors in areas to the south of the town.
- There is potential to provide improved ecological connectivity of key characteristic habitats around the town, particularly in the south-east of Crowborough.
- Seek opportunities to address poorer urban air quality through the provision of additional street/car park trees, integrated into designs to perform multiple functions, such as; SuDS and cooling/shading and to act as green corridors for people and wildlife.
- Explore opportunities to promote gardening for wildlife and growing food within existing and new residential areas.
- Where appropriate seek opportunities to safeguard and enhance through appropriate management existing formal and informal public open spaces within the town.
- Opportunities exist to develop and promote improved access links from the town to key villages close by (such as Rotherfield) to improve sustainable access links and join up key greenspaces.
- Seek opportunities to create new small scale (2ha) accessible natural greenspace sites, in particular within the north and/or western half of the town in order to address deficiencies.
- Where appropriate to do so, promote and encourage the use of best practice innovative architectural and planning solutions that take inspiration from local distinctiveness and character.

- Where appropriate improve water quality and local flood risk management through the use of SuDS, green roofs and rain gardens for example within new housing developments.

4.3 Uckfield

Overview

4.3.1 As shown on **Figure 4.3a**, Uckfield is situated in the west of Wealden District, approximately eight miles to the southwest of Crowborough and eight miles to the west of Heathfield. It is one of the largest settlements in the District and serves as a local employment and shopping centre. Uckfield is situated in close proximity to the southern edge of the High Weald AONB.

4.3.2 Uckfield is a large linear town which has developed at the crossroads between two B roads running north-south, east-west. The town is bypassed by the A22 main road corridor which runs to the west of the settlement. Uckfield has experienced significant growth over the last decade, resulting in a pattern of several large-scale housing estates at the edges of the town.

4.3.3 The town centre provides the commercial core of the settlement with a variety of shops and offices which have developed in linear form along the High Street (the former A22). The historic core of Uckfield is situated at the northern end of the High Street, with a concentration of Listed Buildings resulting in a historic character. More recently the focus of shopping activity has shifted southwards at the bottom on the High Street, with a small shopping complex at Bell Walk and the large supermarket to the south of Luxford Field.

4.3.4 There are two main business/commercial centres within Uckfield, at Bellbrook and Ridgewood. These areas comprise modern business units and warehouses. There are several key areas of open space within the town, which provide a range of outdoor recreational facilities. These include Victoria Pleasure Ground, the New Road Recreation Ground at Ridgewood, Hempstead Lane, Luxford Field, New Barn Farm and at West Park.

Audit

Biodiversity

4.3.5 The following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites are found around Uckfield (see **Figure 4.3b**):

- Piltdown Common LWS
- Shortbridge Stream Meadow LWS
- Butcher's Wood LWS
- Lake Wood LWS
- West Park LWS

KEY

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.3a
UCKFIELD:
CONTEXT PLAN

April 2017

KEY

Designations:

- Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation/Ramsar
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Ancient Woodland
- Regionally Important Geological Sites

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.3b
UCKFIELD:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

April 2017

- Budlett's Common Rocks LWS
- Uckfield Cemetary LWS
- Ridgewood Clay Pit LWS
- Harlands Farm Pond and Stream LWS
- Hempstead Wood LWS
- Buxted Park SSSI

4.3.6 The condition of the Buxted Park SSSI is unfavourable recovering[151].

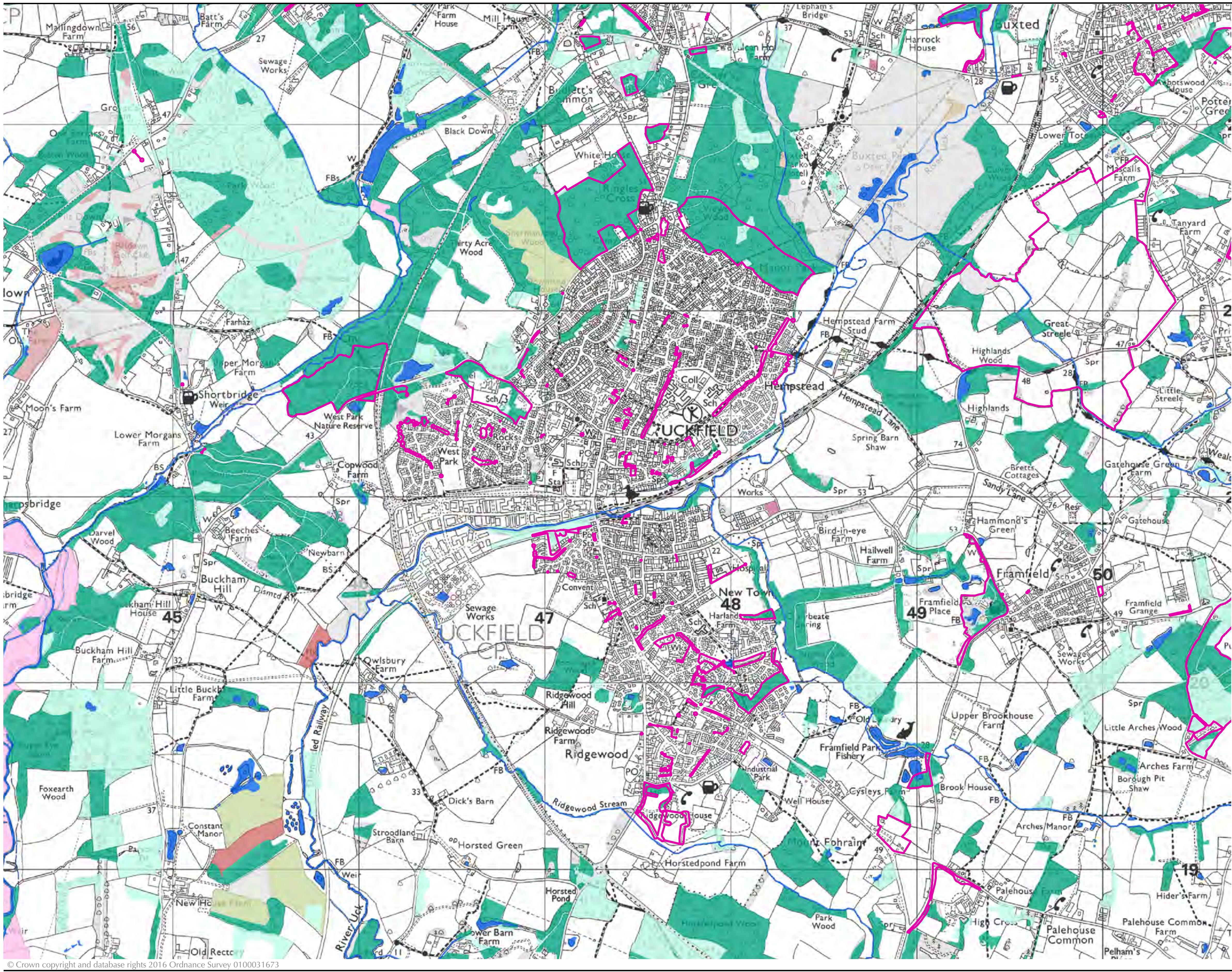
4.3.7 As shown on **Figure 4.3c**, wildlife habitats around Uckfield are dominated by deciduous woodland interspersed with some notable areas of semi-improved grassland. Freshwater habitats around Uckfield are plentiful and include the Ridgewood stream and numerous ponds. As shown on **Figure 4.3d** there are a large number of individual trees and tree groups associated with amenity spaces and streets within the urban area, many of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (see **Figure 4.3c)**

Landscape & Historic Environment

4.3.8 The key landscape setting/townscape features and characteristics that contribute to the character of Uckfield and are sensitive to change are summarised below[152]:

- **Remnant Historic Landscapes:** Pockets of historic landscape within the setting of the town, comprising small-scale fields with intact boundaries, particularly to the northwest, west and southeast of the town. The historic field pattern is a mosaic, predominantly comprised of regular and irregular piecemeal enclosure, and cohesive and aggregate assarts. Historic parkland landscape, associated with Buxted Park to the northeast of the settlement and relatively large areas of Ancient Woodland, further contribute to the historic landscape within the periphery of the town.
- **Culturally Important Landmarks:** Buxted Park Hall(hotel), a culturally important historic landmark is situated to the northeast of the settlement and other important historic landmarks include the church at Framfield and listed buildings within the historic core of the town centre.
- **Landscape Detractors:** Several landscape detractors are present within the setting of the town, including industrial and commercial buildings at Ridgewood and Bellbrook Industrial estates.

[151] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017
[152] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)



KEY

Main BAP Priority Habitats:

- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Saltmarsh
- Coastal Vegetated Shingle
- Deciduous Woodland
- Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Fens
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Meadows
- Maritime Cliff and Slope
- Mudflats
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures
- Reedbeds
- Saline Lagoons
- Traditional Orchard
- No Main Habitat but Additional Habitats Present

Mixed and Coniferous Woodland Habitats (National Forest Inventory)

Freshwater Habitats (Main Watercourses & Waterbodies)

Tree Preservation Orders

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.3c
UCKFIELD:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

April 2017

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KEY

- Urban Trees
- Woodland
- Shaws
- Ancient Woodland

NB. See Figure 4.3a for Tree Preservation Orders

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.3d
UCKFIELD:
TREES & WOODLAND

April 2017

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- **Urban Edges:** The town is predominantly lined by sensitive soft edges and woodland, with a few pockets of exposed or prominent urban edges within the Bellbrook Industrial Area and at the eastern edge of the town, associated with the Hospital.
- **Watercourses/Waterbodies:** The key watercourse running northeast- southwest through the town, is the River Uck, set within its meandering valley. Several smaller tributary streams feed the main river system, including the Chalybeate Spring. There are also numerous small ponds within the setting of the town.
- **Significant Views/Key Ridgelines:** Key views of the edges of the town can be gained looking north-eastwards from the A22 road corridor and northwards from the Framfield Road.
- **Footpaths/Bridleways:** A network of footpaths and bridleways connects Uckfield to its landscape setting.

4.3.9 The key characteristics of the Landscape Setting Areas around Uckfield[153] (see **Figure 4.3e**) are:

Landscape Setting Area	Distinctive Characteristics
1	• Gently meandering corridor of the River Uck, which is lined in places by small linear woodlands; • Buxted Park which is a key landscape feature, with its designed landscape elements and mature parkland trees
2	• A patchwork of woodlands, arable and pastoral fields which are often lined with mature hedgerows. • Intermittent sense of enclosure.
3	• Gently meandering Ridgewood Stream corridor, with several adjacent blocks of mature woodland • A strong landscape structure of hedgerows and trees.
4	• A patchwork of Ancient Woodland and pastoral fields, lined with mature hedgerows.
5	• Topography slopes from south to north, forming the northern valley side of the Ridgewood stream. • A patchwork of sloping, modern, arable and pastoral fields • A22 road corridor forms the southern edge of the area and introduces a source of noise and movement.
6	• The southern section of the Uck River corridor which gently meanders through a fieldscape which is interspersed with patches of woodland; • A22 road corridor forms the northern edge of the area and introduces a source of noise and movement.
7	• A strong sense of enclosure within this ancient landscape as a result of large areas of Ancient Woodland.
8	• A gently meandering tributary of the River Ouse which is lined with mature woodland, providing a strong sense of enclosure; • Park Wood, to the west is a key landscape feature, further contributing to the enclosed feel.

4.3.10 In addition, key historic environment assets that also contribute to the character of the town include (see **Figure 4.3f**):

[153] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)

KEY

Landscape Setting Areas (Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, 2014):

1 Uckfield Landscape Setting Areas

N

0 300 600 Metres

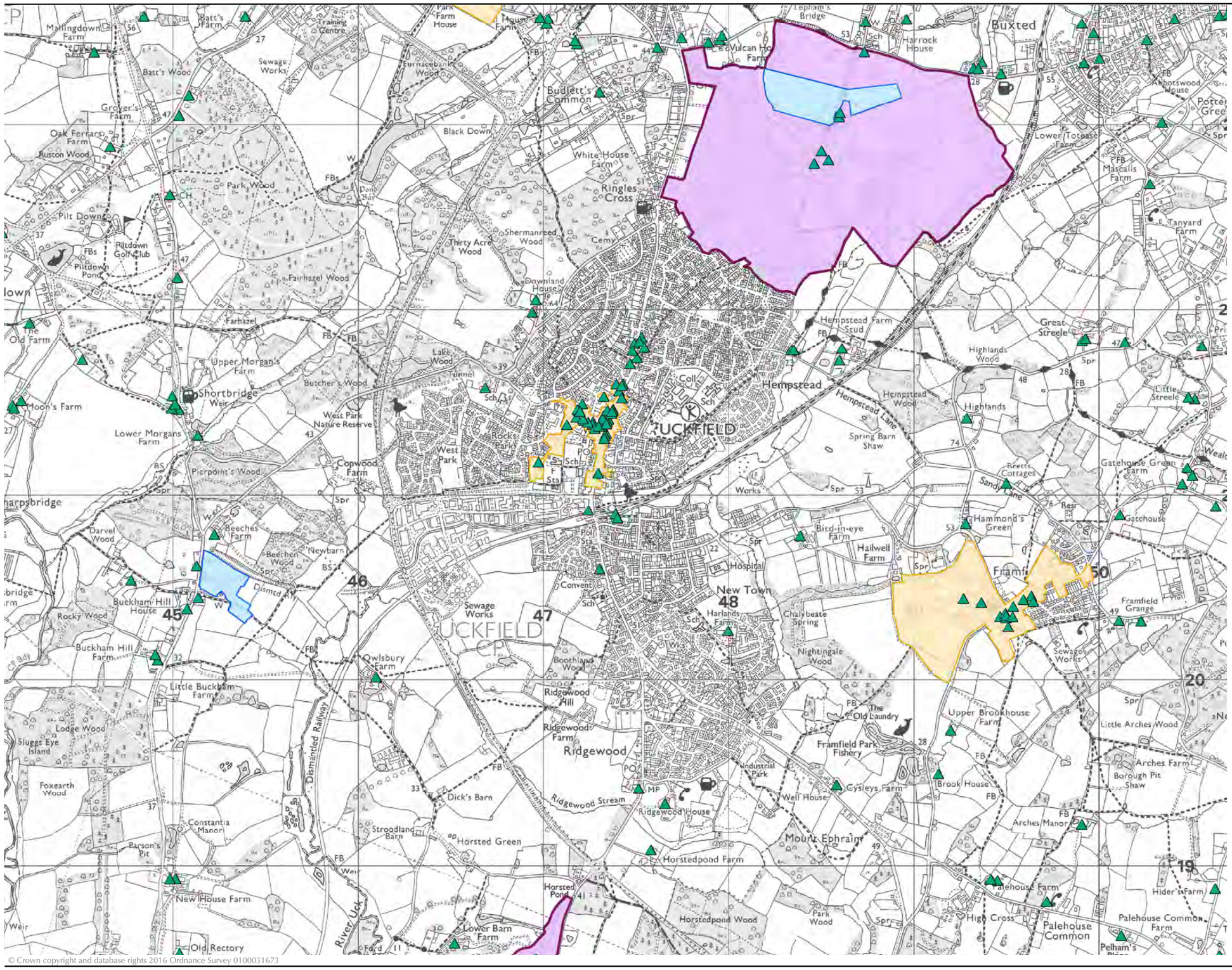
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FIGURE 4.3e
UCKFIELD:
LANDSCAPE SETTING AREAS

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KEY

- Registered Historic Park and Garden
- Scheduled Monuments
- Conservation Areas
- Listed Buildings

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.3f
UCKFIELD:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

April 2017

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- 2 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens: Buxted Park (Grade II* Listed) and Horsted Place (Grade II Listed)
- 2 Conservation Areas including Framfield Conservation Area and Uckfield Conservation Area

Energy & Food

4.3.11 There are 2.9ha of coppiced woodlands around Uckfield that represent a potential source of local fuel.

4.3.12 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the quality of agricultural land around the town is mainly poor quality (grade 4).

Water Resources

4.3.13 The River Uck flows through the town. Other smaller waterbodies which run through the town include Framfield Stream, Ridgewood Stream, Tickerage Stream, Shortbridge Stream, and Batt's Bridge Stream. The River Ouse is a major water body near the town.

4.3.14 **Table 4.2** shows the water quality within the upper Ouse catchment area, which includes Uckfield and the upper reaches of the River Uck. Ecologically water quality is much poorer, with most watercourses only reaching moderate quality at best. The chemical status of all watercourses within this catchment is good.

Table 4.2: Water Quality around Uckfield[154]

Catchment	Water Quality						
	Ecological Status or Potential					Chemical Status	
	Bad	Poor	Moderate	Good	High	Fail	Good
Upper Ouse Catchment Area Number of waterbodies: 2	3	8	14	1	0	0	26

Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

4.3.15 Accessible natural greenspace sites in and around Uckfield are shown on **Figure 4.3g**. This shows that there are significant areas of accessible greenspace adjacent to the town's north-eastern edge, much of which is provided by Buxted Park, a SSSI and Historic Park and Garden.

[154] http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/

To the west of Uckfield West Park Nature Reserve and Lake Wood Woodland Trust Reserve provides accessible greenspace. Much of the southern edge of the town is also well catered for in terms of accessible natural greenspace.

4.3.16 Within Uckfield accessible greenspace is fairly evenly distributed throughout the urban area. Many of these sites however are small, and don't contribute to the town's neighbourhood scale accessible greenspace standard, therefore much of the centre of Uckfield is remains deficient at this scale as shown on **Figure 4.3h.** Open spaces in and around the town are shown on **Figure 4.3i** and comprise[155]:

- 8 No. allotments (such as Bell Lane and Ridgewood East Allotments)
- 12 No. amenity greenspaces (such as Harlands Farm Recreation Ground and The Dene)
- 7 No. churchyards and cemeteries (such as Snatt Road Cemetery and Holy Cross Parish Church)
- 6 No. parks and recreation grounds (such as Victoria Pleasure Ground and West Park Recreation Ground)

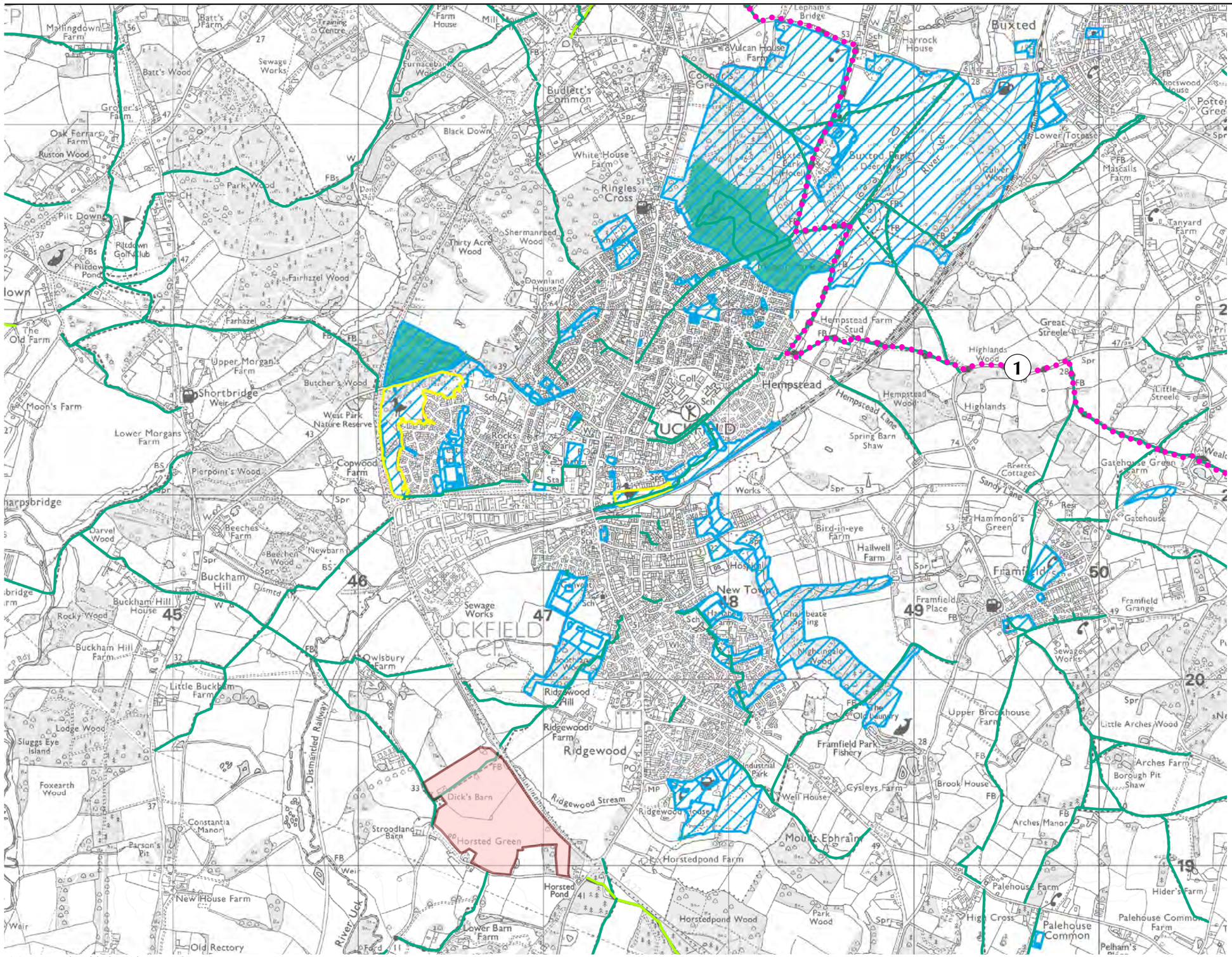
4.3.17 As shown on **Figure 4.3g**, Uckfield is connected to the surrounding landscape by the following access links that need to be maintained and improved where appropriate:

- Public footpaths between Uckfield and Woodland Trust Sites in the north of the town.
- Public footpaths between Uckfield and Buxted Park in the north of the town.
- Public footpaths between Uckfield, open spaces and the countryside in the south of the town.
- Public bridleway between the north and south of Uckfield.
- The Wealdway promoted route which passes through the north-eastern edge of the town.

Needs and Opportunities

4.3.18 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network in and around Uckfield include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI in and round the town are considered to be:

[155] As identified and mapped for the Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (Ethos for Wealden DC, forthcoming)



KEY

Access Links:

- Footpath
- Bridleway/Byway
- Sustrans National Cycle Route
- Promoted Route

1. Wealdway

- National Trail

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

- Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2016)*
- CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land
- Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

- Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Provision

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 300 600 Metres

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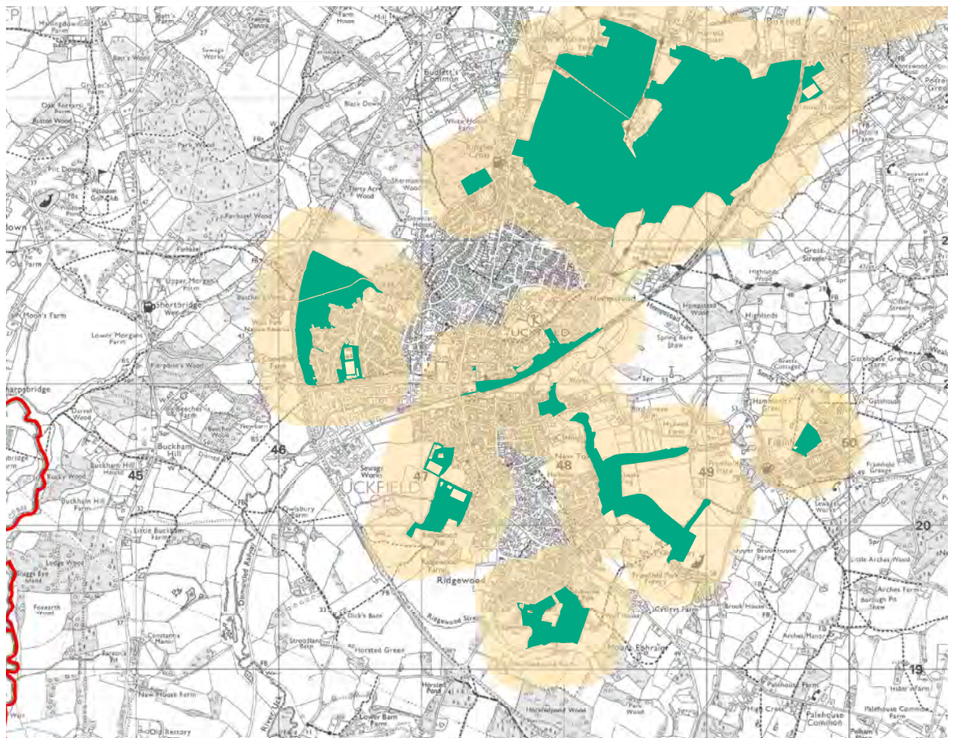
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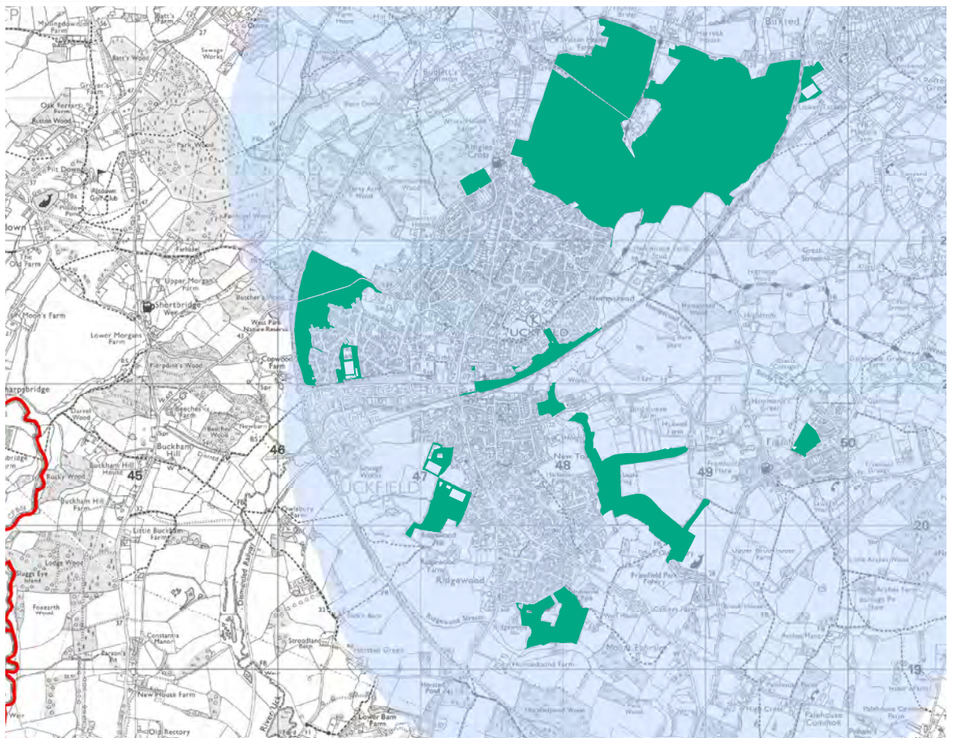
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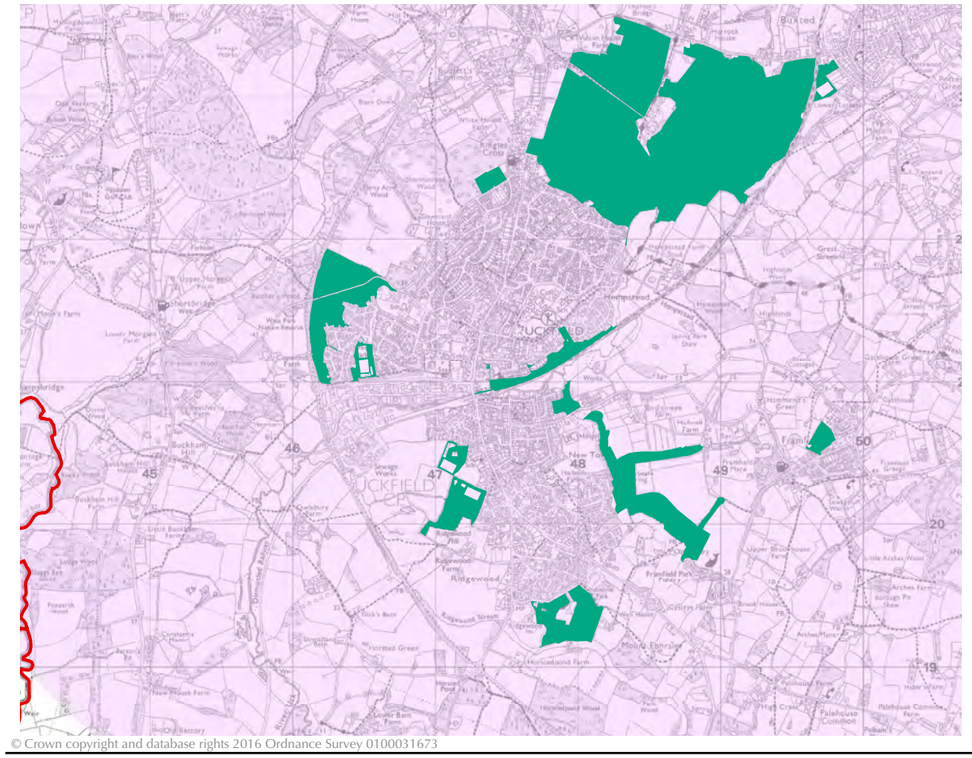
FIGURE 4.3g
UCKFIELD:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

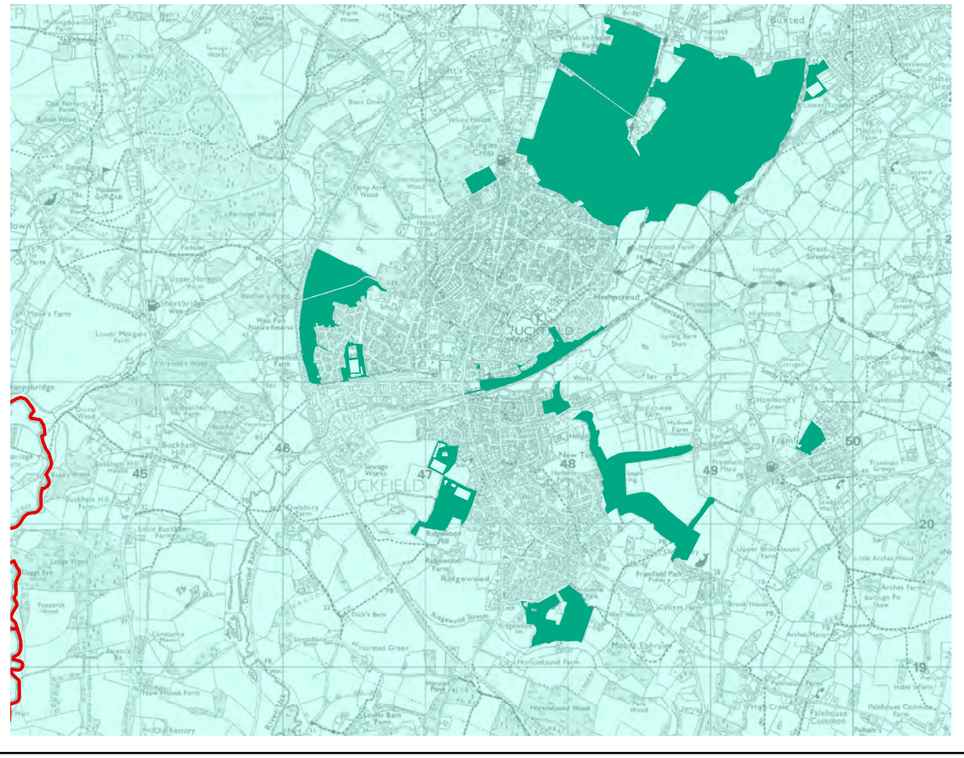
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KEY

- Wealden Local Plan Boundary
- Accessible Natural Greenspace >2ha
- 10km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >500ha
- 5km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >100ha
- 2km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >20ha
- 300m catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >2ha

N

0 0.5 1 Kilometre

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FIGURE 4.3h
UCKFIELD:
ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE ANALYSIS

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KEY

Open Space Typology:

- Accessible Natural Greenspace
- Allotments
- Amenity Greenspace
- Churchyards & Cemeteries
- Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.3i
UCKFIELD:
OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY

April 2017

- Where appropriate, promote opportunities for retaining and enhancing existing wildlife habitats, and/or creating new habitats, related to residential development sites around Uckfield.
- There are opportunities in Uckfield for urban fringe development to provide and enhance green corridors and reinforce the countryside gap with surrounding villages. In addition, links to the countryside and existing GI could also be strengthened.
- Explore opportunities to retain and enhance the floodplain and improve or create multifunctional greenspaces along the Uck river corridor, to provide space for flood storage and attenuation. These spaces could for example provide connectivity for wildlife and people through Uckfield, ensuring people's connection with and understanding of the river is maintained.
- Explore opportunities to use the dismantled railway as a multifunctional strategic green corridor through the town, and to gain improved access into the countryside west of Uckfield.
- Seek opportunities to remove culverts where appropriate and resist new ones within and around Uckfield. Promote the natural functioning of water courses around the town.
- Where appropriate improve water quality and local flood risk management through the use of SuDS, green roofs and rain gardens for example within new housing developments.
- Explore opportunities to promote gardening for wildlife and growing food within existing and new residential areas.
- Where appropriate to do so, promote and encourage the use of best practice innovative architectural and planning solutions that take inspiration from local distinctiveness and character.
- Where appropriate safeguard and enhance through appropriate management existing formal and informal public open spaces within the town.

4.4 Heathfield

Overview

4.4.1 As shown on **Figure 4.4a**, Heathfield is situated within the central eastern part of Wealden District, approximately eight miles to the east of Uckfield and approximately nine miles to the north of Hailsham, in the north of Wealden District. The town occupies an elevated location on one of the principal east-west ridges crossing the High Weald. The settlement is surrounded by the High Weald AONB.

4.4.2 Heathfield is a predominantly residential, nucleated town which has grown around the A265 and B2203 road corridors, which are lined with several local shops and businesses. The town has witnessed considerable growth in housing throughout the 1980's and predominantly comprises a series of housing estates at the edges of the town, adjacent to older terraces within the town centre. There are two business areas within the town, at Ghyll Road and Browning Road. Small pockets of open spaces are scattered within the urban fabric, however, there is an absence of large playing fields within the town.

Audit

Biodiversity

4.4.3 The following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites are found around Heathfield (see **Figure 4.4b**):

- Wildings & Scocus Wood Complex LWS
- Oaken & Furlong Woods LWS
- Newick Lane Meadow LWS
- Heathfield Park SSSI
- Sapperton Meadows SSSI
- St. Dunstan's Farm Meadows SSSI

4.4.4 The condition of the SSSIs in this zone is 'moderate to good'[156].

4.4.5 As shown on **Figure 4.4c**, wildlife habitats around Heathfield are dominated by deciduous, mixed and coniferous woodland interspersed with some notable areas of lowland meadows, characteristic of the High Weald AONB and unusually made up of significant groups of fields.

[156] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017



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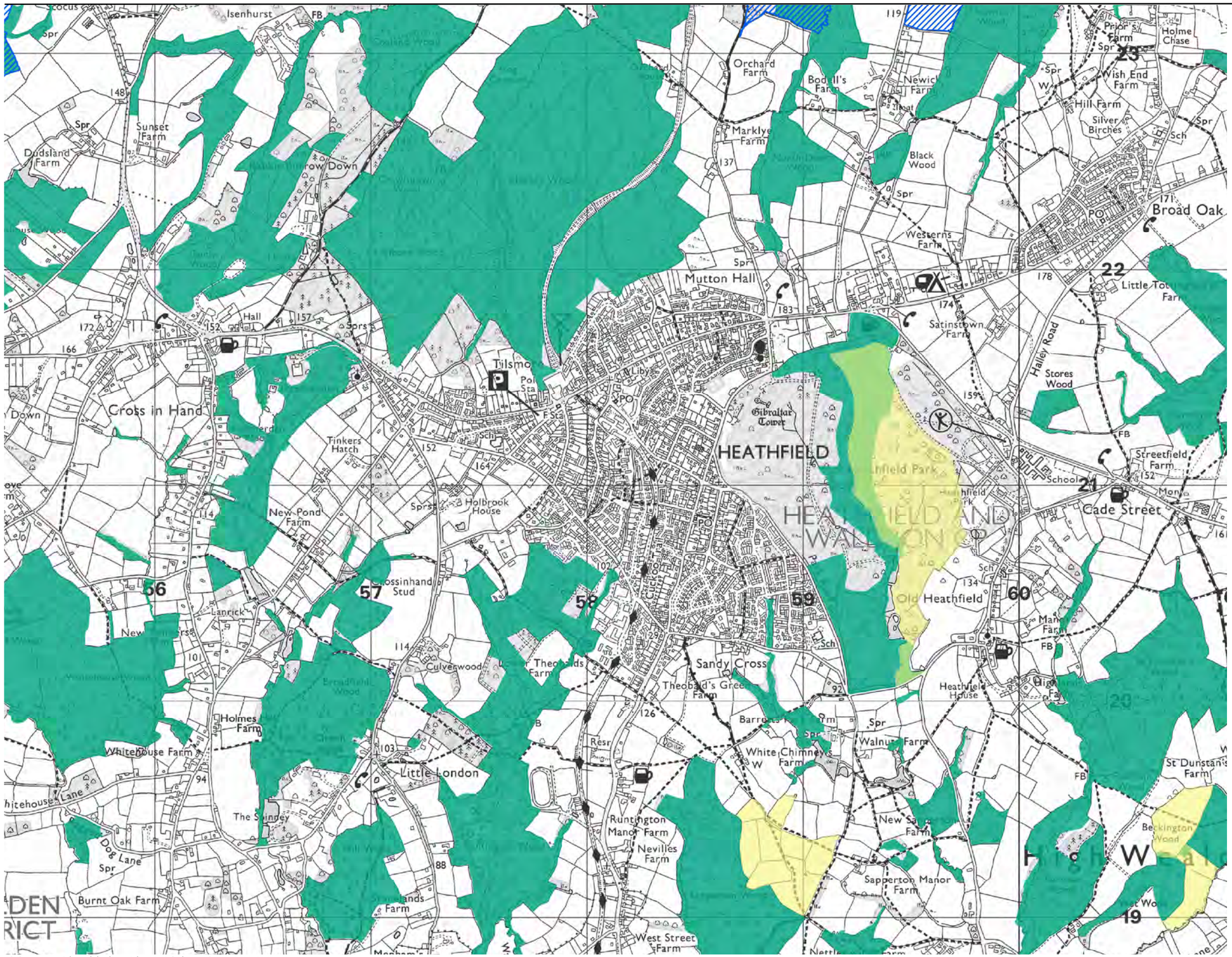
KEY

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FIGURE 4.4a
HEATHFIELD:
CONTEXT PLAN

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KEY

Designations:

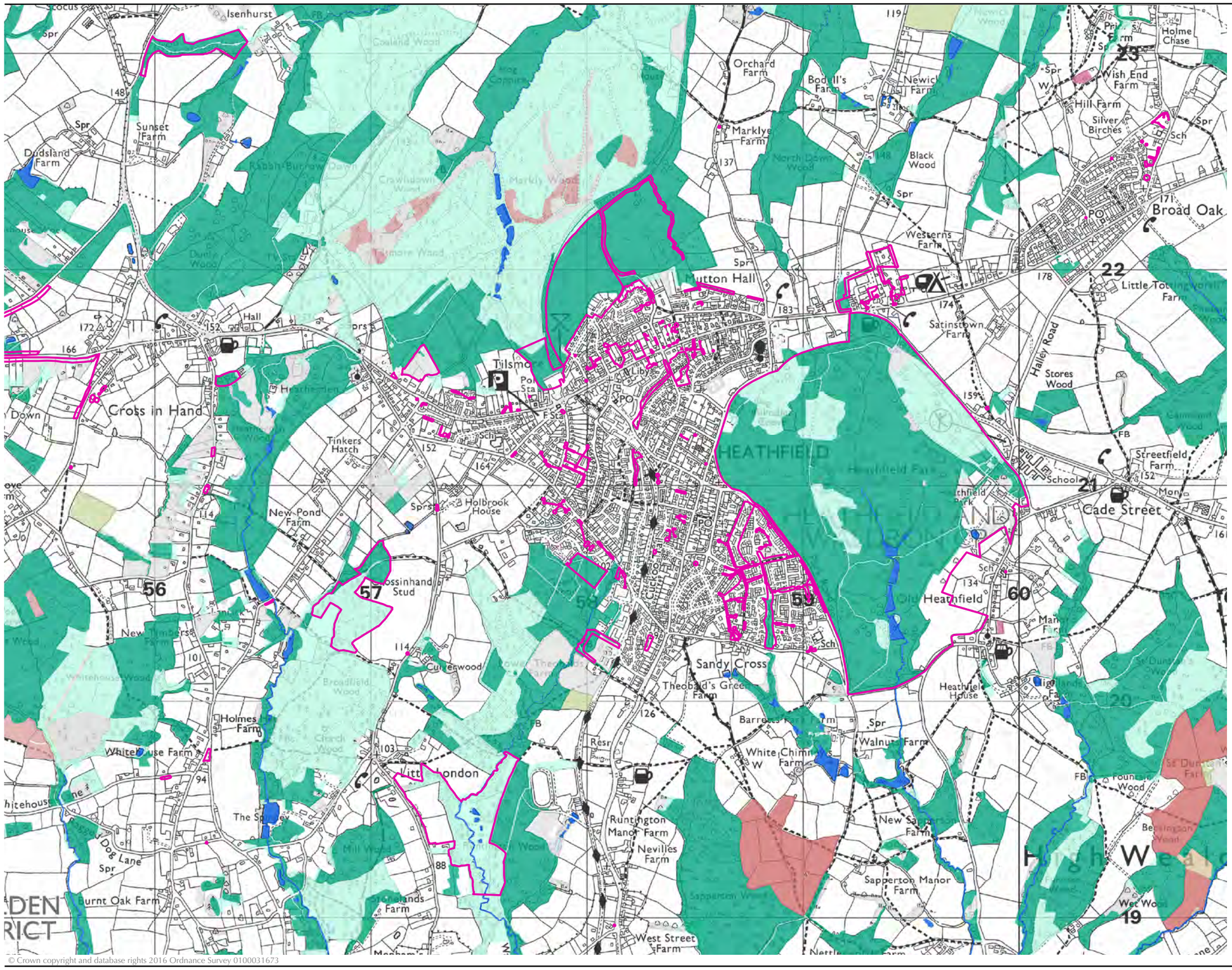
- Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation/Ramsar
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Ancient Woodland
- Regionally Important Geological Sites

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FIGURE 4.4b
HEATHFIELD:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

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KEY

Main BAP Priority Habitats:

- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Saltmarsh
- Coastal Vegetated Shingle
- Deciduous Woodland
- Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Fens
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Meadows
- Maritime Cliff and Slope
- Mudflats
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures
- Reedbeds
- Saline Lagoons
- Traditional Orchard
- No Main Habitat but Additional Habitats Present

Mixed and Coniferous Woodland Habitats (National Forest Inventory)

Freshwater Habitats (Main Watercourses & Waterbodies)

Tree Preservation Orders

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.4c
HEATHFIELD:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

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Small and more fragmented/isolated fields of semi-improved grassland are also present in the landscape around Heathfield. Freshwater habitats include numerous small tributary streams and distinctive chains of hammer ponds, such as those within Heathfield Park - characteristic of the High Weald. As shown on **Figure 4.4d** there are a large number of individual trees and tree groups associated with amenity spaces and streets within the urban area, many of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (see **Figure 4.4c)**. Small traditional orchards lie close to the edge of Heathfield, particularly to the east.

Landscape & Historic Environment

4.4.6 The key landscape setting/townscape features and characteristics that contribute to the character of Heathfield and are sensitive to change are summarised below[157]:

- **Remnant Historic Landscapes:** An ancient landscape comprising a patchwork of small-scale fields, dominated by large tracts of Ancient Woodland. The small-scale field pattern comprises a scattering of regular piecemeal enclosure, with some cohesive assarts to the south, and some parliamentary enclosure to the west. The large historic parkland (Heathfield Park), to the east of the town, provides a significant tract of historic landscape within the town's setting. The historic core of the village of Old Heathfield (to the southeast of the town), which is designated as a Conservation Area, contributes a further historic dimension to the setting.
- **Culturally Important Landmarks:** There are several Culturally Important Landmarks within the setting of the town, including Heathfield Hall and the Gibraltar tower, within Heathfield Park; the church and several Listed Buildings in Old Heathfield and the church at Heatherden at the western edge of the town.
- **Landscape Detractors:** Several landscape detractors, industrial buildings along Ghyll Road, the caravan park to the north of the A265 road corridor and the communications mast within Rabbit Burrow Down woodland, to the northwest of Heathfield.
- **Urban Edges:** The town is predominantly lined by treed, sensitive soft edges and woodland, with one pocket of prominent, exposed urban edge at the southern edge of the town, along Sandy Cross Lane.
- **Watercourses/Waterbodies:** Several small watercourses, usually running in a north-south orientation off the ridge; and ponds permeate the landscape setting of the town. This includes the narrow stream corridor of Waldron Gill.
- **Significant Views/Key Ridgelines:** Several framed views can be gained from the edges of the town, to its landscape setting. A prominent ridgeline runs east west through the town, affording framed views.

[157] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)



KEY

- Urban Trees
- Woodland
- Shaws
- Ancient Woodland

NB. See Figure 4.4a for Tree Preservation Orders

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.4d
HEATHFIELD:
TREES & WOODLAND

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- **Footpaths/Bridleways:** A network of footpaths and bridleways connects Heathfield to its landscape setting. Connecting with the southern edge of the town, the Cuckoo trail provides a key recreational/tourist route.

4.4.7 The key characteristics of the Landscape Setting Areas around Heathfield[158] (see **Figure 4.4e**) are:

Landscape Setting Area	Distinctive Characteristics
1	• A small-scale patchwork of sloping, ancient pastoral fields and Ancient Woodland; • Key, panoramic long distance views northwards across the High Weald.
2	• The historic landscape of Heathfield Park with its mature Ancient Woodland and stream corridor at the centre of the area.
3	• An intricate patchwork of stream corridors, mature hedgerows, sunken lanes, Ancient Woodland, criss-crossed by a network of footpaths and bridleways.
4	• Numerous farmsteads and studs • Large areas of Ancient Woodland provide a strong sense of enclosure.
5	• North-south landscape pattern, including features such as stream corridors, Ancient Woodland, linear settlements and footpaths.
6	• A strong sense of enclosure as a result of large patches of Ancient Woodland and stream corridors.

4.4.8 In addition, key historic environment assets that also contribute to the character of the town include (see **Figure 4.4f**):

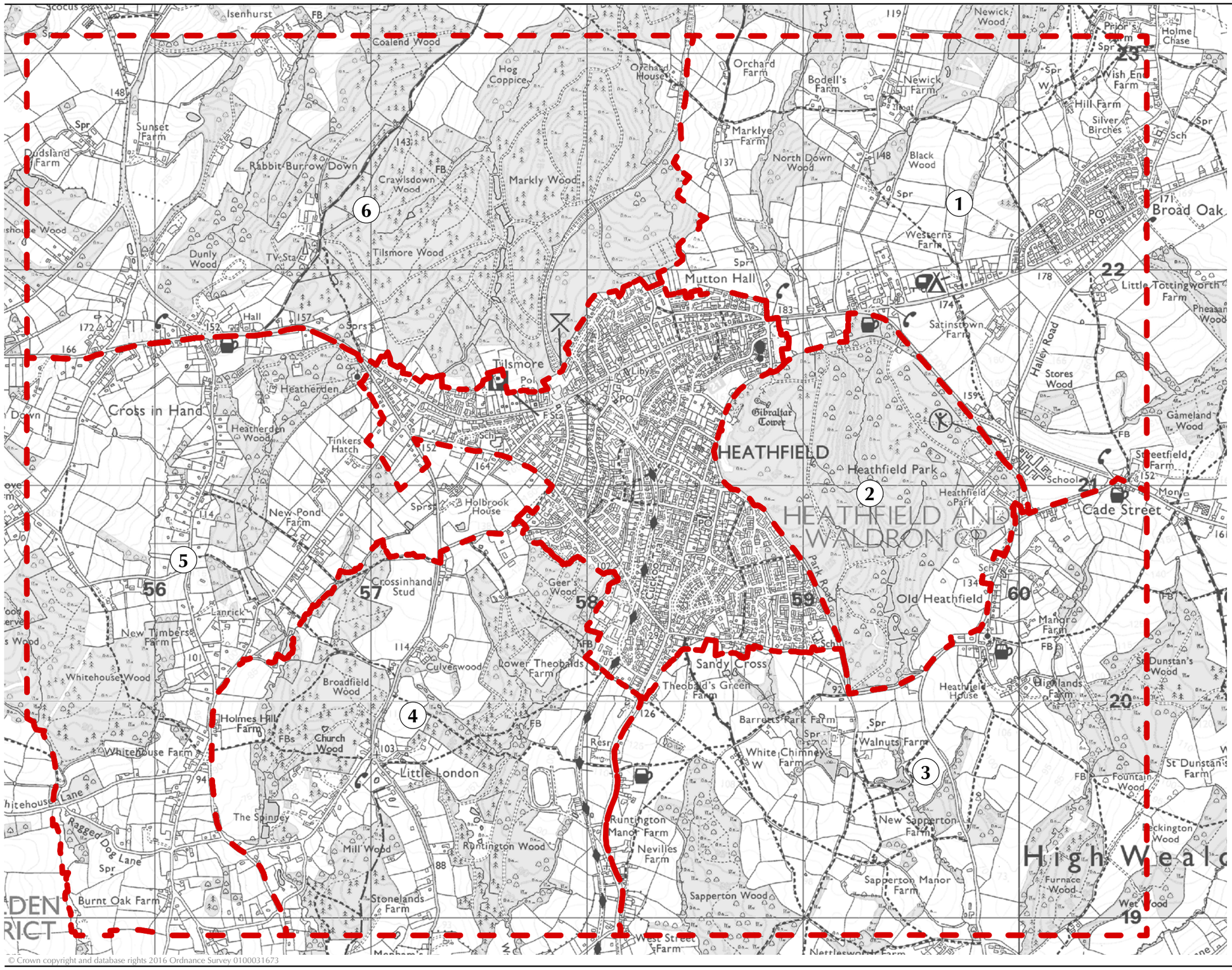
- 1 Registered Historic Park and Garden: Grade II Listed Heathfield Park.
- 1 Conservation Area including Old Heathfield and Cade Street Conservation Area.

Energy & Food

4.4.9 There are no known areas of coppiced woodlands around Heathfield. However the woodlands present could, with appropriate and sensitive management represent a potential source of local fuel.

4.4.10 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the quality of agricultural land around the town is almost entirely Grade 4 (poor).

[158] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)



KEY

Landscape Setting Areas (Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, 2014):

1 Heathfield Landscape Setting Areas

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.4e
HEATHFIELD:
LANDSCAPE SETTING AREAS

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KEY

- Registered Historic Park and Garden
- Scheduled Monuments
- Conservation Areas
- Listed Buildings

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.4f
HEATHFIELD:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

April 2017

Water Resources

4.4.11 Waldron Gill, the River Dudwell and tributaries of the River Cuckmere flow through the town. The River Rother is a major watercourse to the north of the town.

4.4.12 **Table 4.3** shows the condition of watercourses within or close to Heathfield. In terms of chemical status the vast majority of watercourses are in 'good' condition. Ecologically most watercourses within or close to Heathfield are in 'poor to moderate' condition.

Table 4.3: Water Quality around Heathfield[159]

Catchment	Water Quality						
	Ecological Status or Potential					Chemical Status	
	Bad	Poor	Moderate	Good	High	Fail	Good
Upper Rother Number of waterbodies: 6	0	3	2	1	0	0	6
Upper Cuckmere Number of waterbodies: 7	0	2	4	1	0	1	6

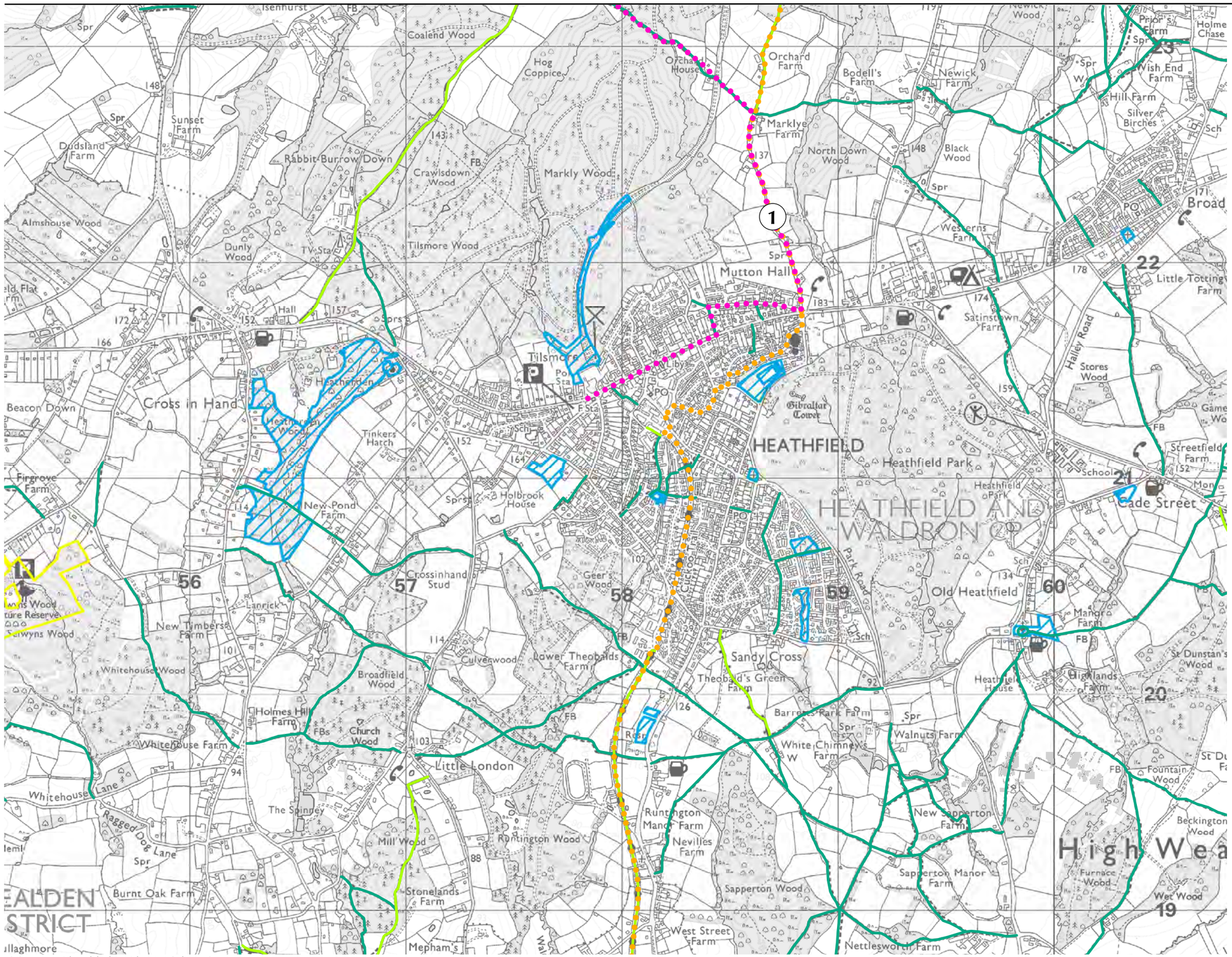
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

4.4.13 Accessible natural greenspace sites in and around Heathfield are shown on **Figure 4.4g**. This shows that there are limited accessible greenspace sites within easy reach of the settlement. Two sites to the north and north-west of Heathfield provide key accessible greenspace within close proximity. Whilst not a publically accessible natural greenspace, Heathfield Park (a SSSI and Registered Historic Park and Garden) makes an important contribution to the town's GI network by providing biodiversity, landscape and historic environment benefits.

4.4.14 Within Heathfield accessible greenspace is fairly evenly distributed throughout the urban area. The Cuckoo Trail, a National Cycle Route and multi-user trail runs through the centre of the town providing a key link for people and wildlife. Many of the sites within Heathfield however are small, and therefore they do not contribute to the town's neighbourhood scale of provision for accessible natural greenspace as shown on **Figure 4.4h.** Communities within Heathfield have limited access to larger accessible natural greenspace at the county and sub-regional scales. Open spaces in and around the town are shown on **Figure 4.4i** and comprise[160]:

- 1 No. allotments (Theobalds Allotments)

[159] http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning /
[160] As identified and mapped for the Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (Ethos for Wealden DC, forthcoming)



KEY

Access Links:

- Footpath
- Bridleway/Byway
- Sustrans National Cycle Route
- Promoted Route
- 1. Sussex Diamond Way
- National Trail

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

- Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2016)*
- CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land
- Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 300 600 Metres

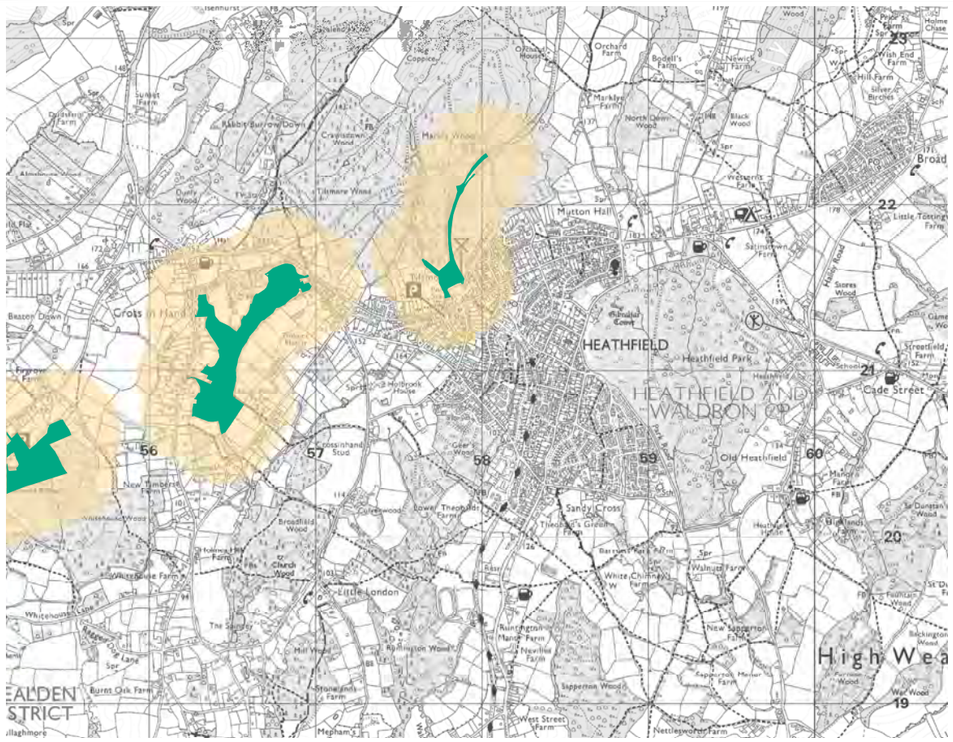
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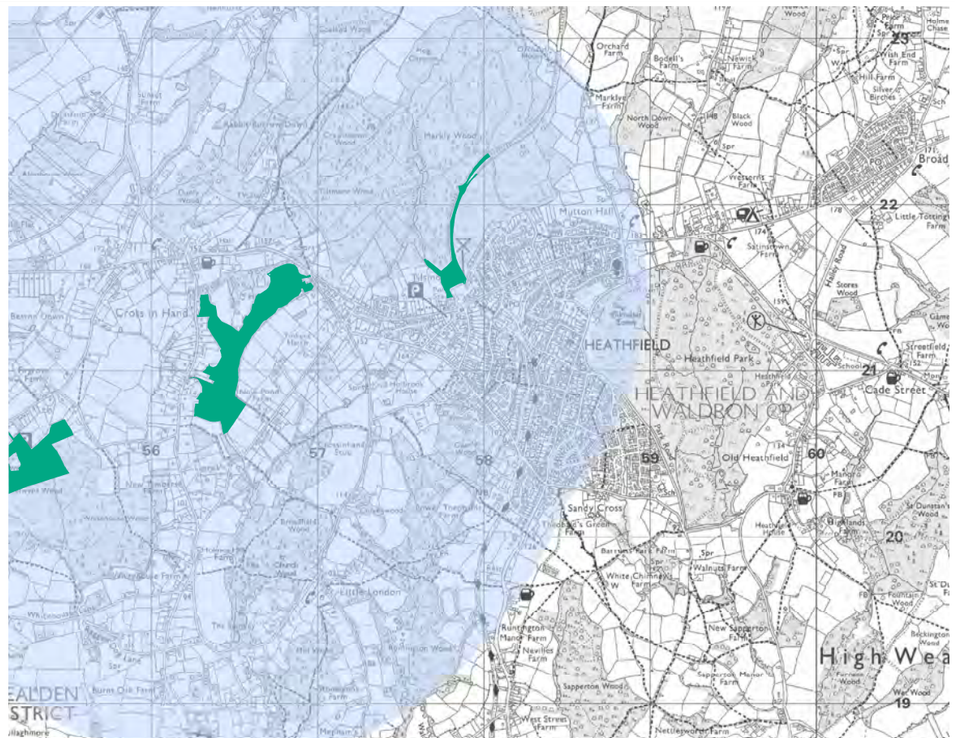
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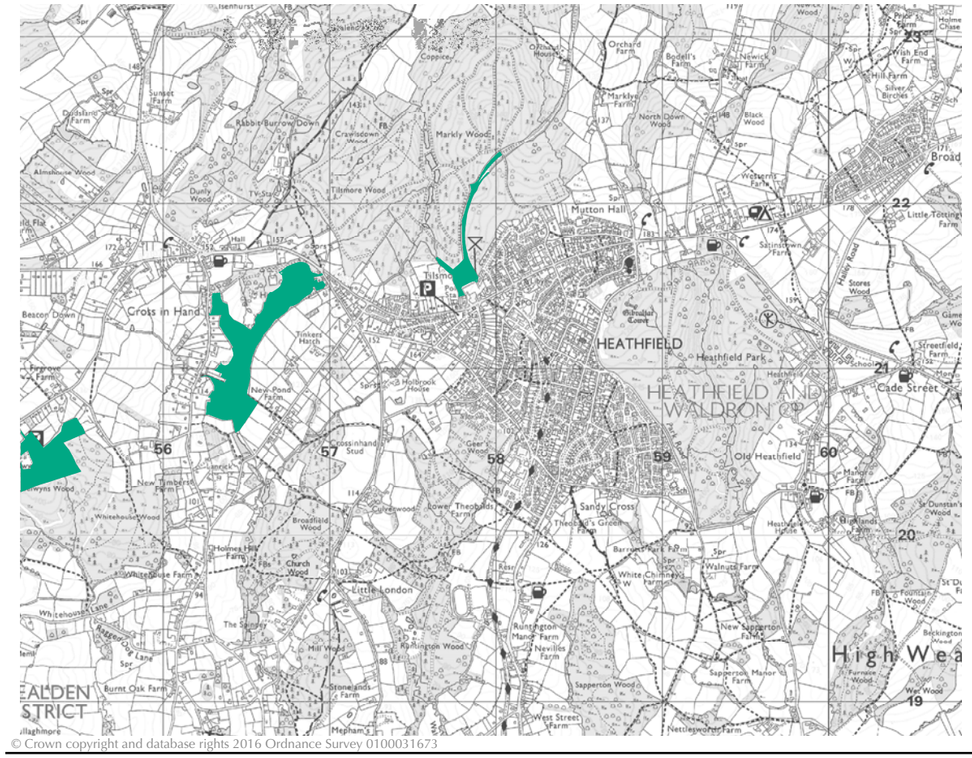
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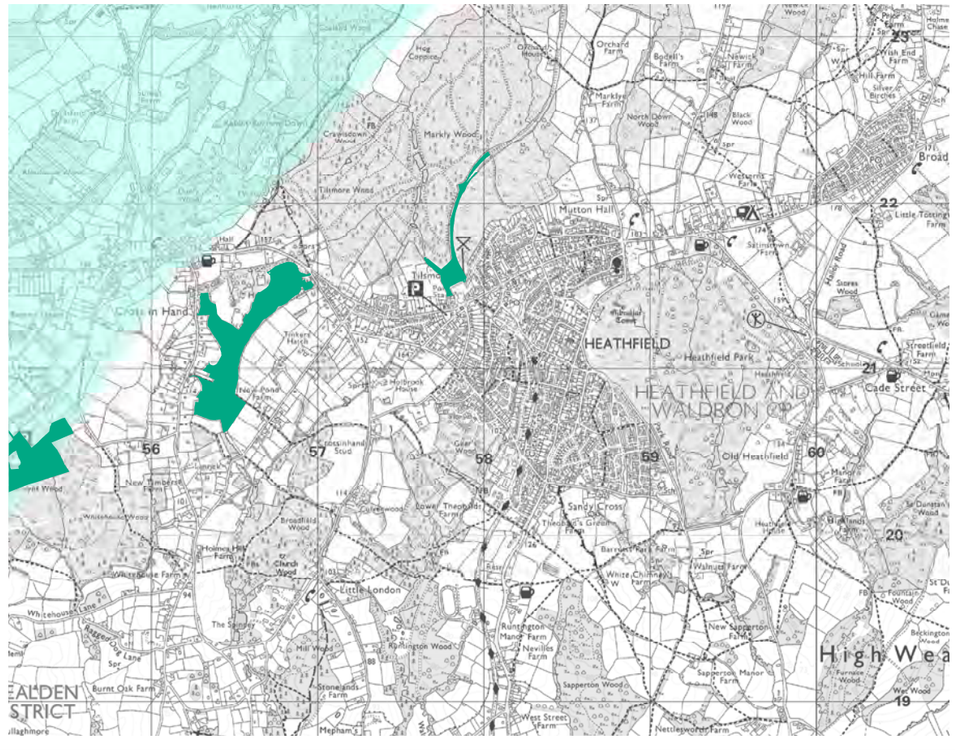
FIGURE 4.4g
HEATHFIELD:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

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KEY

- Accessible Natural Greenspace >2ha
- 10km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >500ha
- 5km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >100ha
- 2km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >20ha
- 300m catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >2ha

N

0 0.5 1 Kilometre

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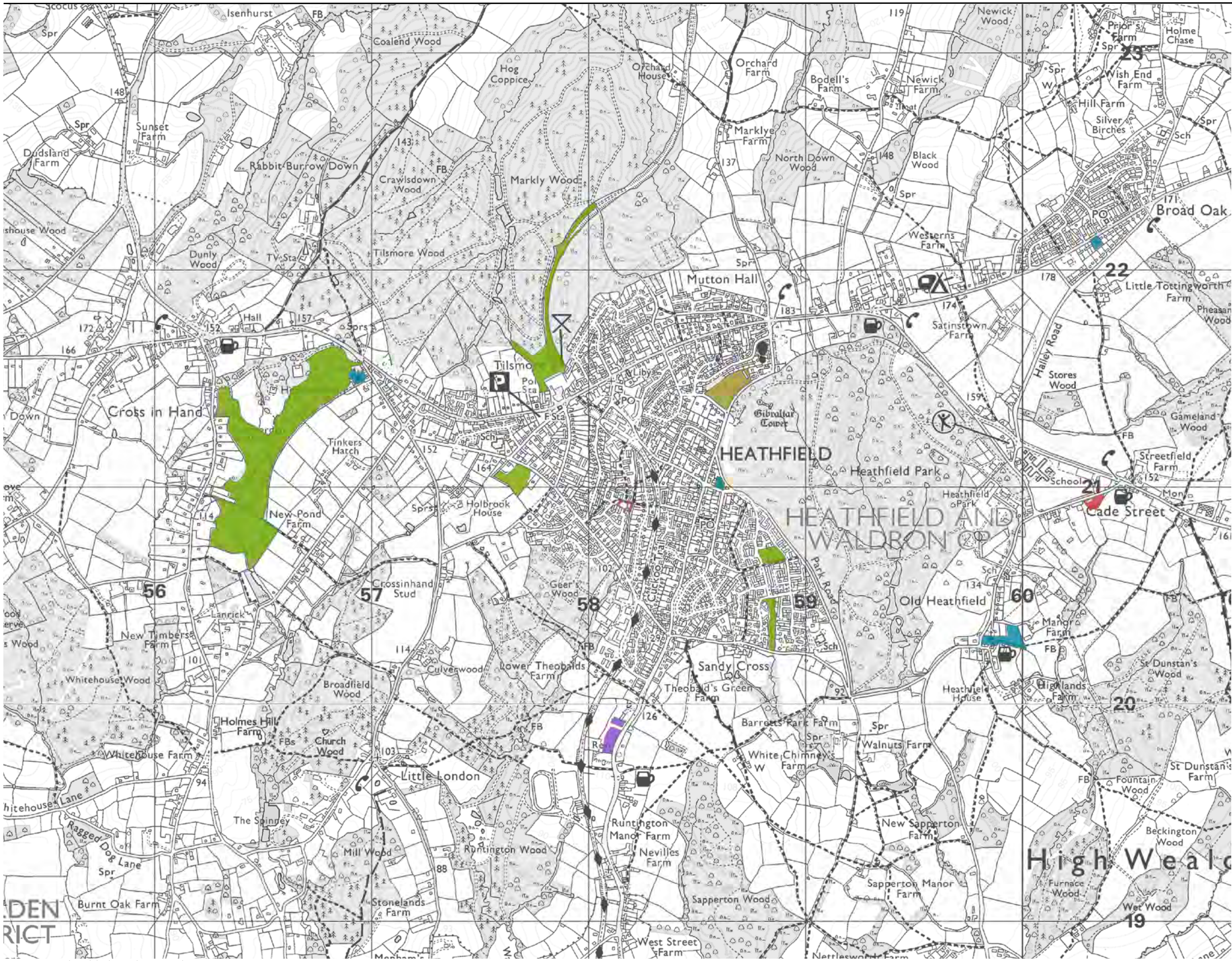
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FIGURE 4.4h
HEATHFIELD:
ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE ANALYSIS

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KEY

Open Space Typology:

- Accessible Natural Greenspace
- Allotments
- Amenity Greenspace
- Churchyards & Cemeteries
- Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 300 600 Metres

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FIGURE 4.4i
HEATHFIELD:
OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY

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- 2 No. amenity greenspaces (such as Cade Street Recreation Ground and Leeves Way)
- 4 No. churchyards and cemeteries (such as St Georges Church, Broad Oak, and St. Richard's Church, Heathfield)
- 2 No. parks and recreation grounds (such as Heathfield Recreation Ground)

4.4.15 As shown on **Figure 4.4g**, Heathfield is connected to the surrounding landscape by the following access links that need to be maintained and improved where appropriate:

- Public footpaths between Heathfield and the key small settlements such as Little London.
- Public bridleways to and from the Cuckoo Trail (NCN 21) into the wider countryside around Heathfield.
- Public footpaths from the Sussex Diamond Way through Heathfield towards the south.
- National Cycle Network Route 21 (the Cuckoo Trail) through the centre of Heathfield.

Needs and Opportunities

4.4.16 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network in and around Heathfield include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI in and round the town are considered to be:

- Where appropriate, promote opportunities for retaining and enhancing existing wildlife habitats, and/or creating new habitats, related to residential development sites in the BOA around Heathfield (see the Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment Studies [161] for details).
- Suburban areas to the south of Heathfield town centre lack a strong local identity and character, and there may also be scope to improve the existing urban edges through the provision of appropriate landscape treatment in association with GI delivered through new development to enhance and conserve the surrounding AONB landscape.
- Where appropriate, promote opportunities for landscape enhancements related to residential development sites around Heathfield (see the Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment[162] for details).

[161] Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment (CBA for Wealden DC, 2017)
[162] Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment (CBA for Wealden DC, 2017)

- Seek opportunities to formally safeguard the trees along the Cuckoo Trail to protect it as a multifunctional green corridor through the centre of Heathfield and as a valuable resource for people and wildlife.
- Explore opportunities to enhance access for horse riders by providing improved links between the countryside and the Cuckoo Trail, particularly to the south of Heathfield.
- Where appropriate seek the creation of new accessible greenspace (of at least 2ha), close to where people live to address deficiencies.
- Where appropriate address degraded or poor condition landscapes around the fringes of Heathfield through restoration and enhancement of characteristic landscape features, for example through removing non-native species from woodlands for the benefit of biodiversity and to maintain landscape character.
- Where appropriate to do so, promote and encourage the use of best practice innovative architectural and planning solutions that take inspiration from local distinctiveness and character.
- Where appropriate improve water quality and local flood risk management through the use of SuDS, green roofs and rain gardens for example within new housing developments.
- Explore opportunities to promote gardening for wildlife and growing food within existing and new residential areas.

4.5 Hailsham & Polegate

Overview

4.5.1 As shown on **Figure 4.5a**, Hailsham is situated approximately three miles to the north of Polegate, in the central southern part of Wealden District. It is the largest settlement in the southern half of the District and is situated between the middle reaches of the River Cuckmere to the west and the Pevensey Levels to the east. The extensive Wilmington Wood abuts the south-western edge of the town.

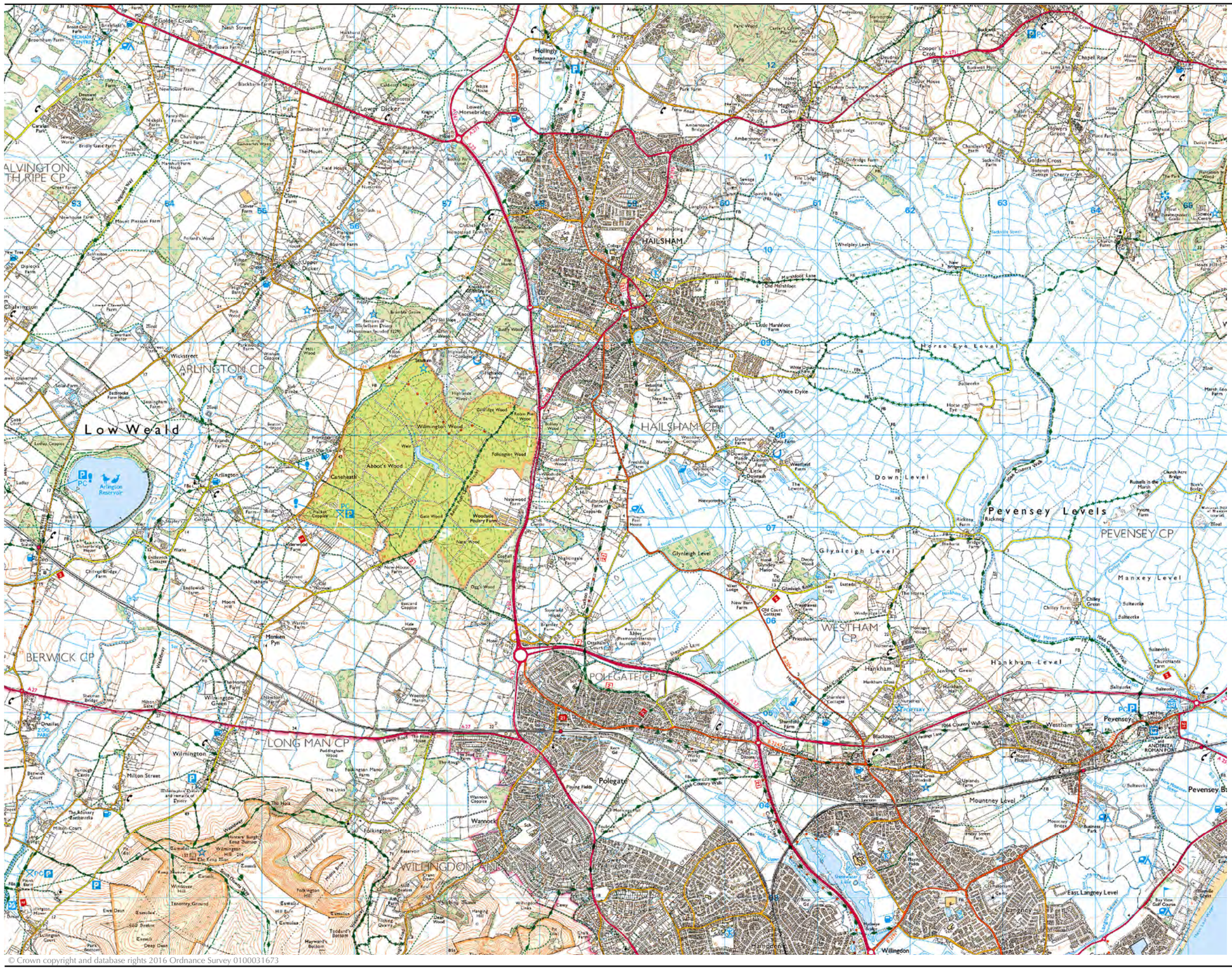
4.5.2 Hailsham is a large nucleated settlement, which has grown around several north-south orientated road corridors. It has been an established market town since 1252 and still retains its historic core around the market square and St Mary's Church. The town has experienced considerable growth during this century, with significant residential estate development occurring in the Post-War years. More recently, house building has taken place on the western and southern edges of the town.

4.5.3 Shops are concentrated within the town centre and also at The Quintins and St Mary's Walk. A variety of shops, offices and other businesses provide facilities for the town. The majority of the town's business activity is contained within two business areas at Diplocks Way and Station Road. A number of smaller, light industrial units are also located at Old Swan Lane and Leap Cross Business Centre on London Road. There are few large areas of recreational open space or playing fields within the town.

4.5.4 As shown on **Figure 4.5a**, Polegate is situated at the south-eastern edge of Wealden District, to the north of Willingdon/Eastbourne and south of Hailsham. The south-western edges of the settlement abut the northern edge of the South Downs National Park. The town is situated on an east-west ridge.

4.5.5 Polegate is a medium-sized linear town, which has developed along the Lewes to Hastings railway line and the A27 main road corridor. The A22 road corridor also passes north to south through the town. The town comprises a series of post-war housing estates, with a High Street shopping area running through the centre of the town. In the east of the town, Chaucer Industrial Estate provides a key employment base. There is some formal recreational use of the large tract of open, relatively low-lying fields between Polegate and Willingdon at the eastern edge of the town; however this area is predominantly agricultural.

KEY



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FIGURE 4.5a
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
CONTEXT PLAN

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Audit

Biodiversity

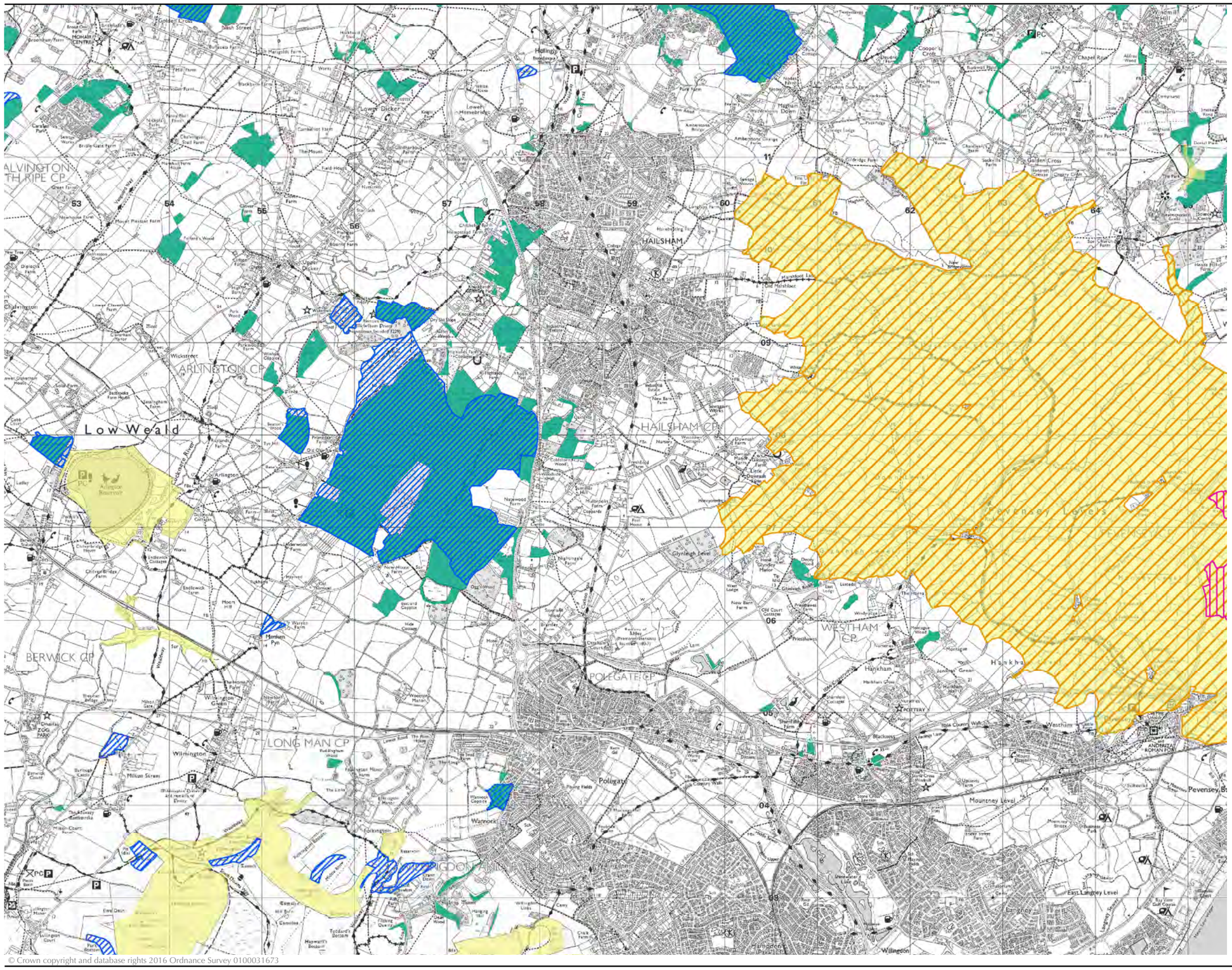
4.5.6 The following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites are found around Hailsham & Polegate (see **Figure 4.5b**):

- Hellingly Cemetery LWS
- Jarvis Wood, Nobody's Wood & Park Wood Complex LWS
- Michelham Priory LWS
- Beatons Wood LWS
- Abbots & Wilmington Wood & Milton Hide LWS
- Bramble Grove LWS
- Diplocks Wood LWS
- Cranedown & Middle Brow LWS
- Pevensey Levels SAC, Ramsar site, NNR and SSSI
- Wilmington Downs SSSI
- Folkington Reservoir SSSI

4.5.7 The condition of the Pevensey Levels SAC, Ramsar site, NNR and SSSI is 'poor' but improving[163]. The condition of the Wilmington Downs SSSI is 100% in a favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition[164]. The condition of the Folkington Reservoir SSSI is 100% in a favourable or unfavourable but recovering condition [165].

4.5.8 As shown on **Figure 4.5c**, wildlife habitats around Hailsham & Polegate are dominated by deciduous and mixed and coniferous woodland to the west and significant areas of floodplain grazing marsh to the east. Freshwater habitats include numerous ponds in Hailsham and small tributary streams/ditches in and around Polegate. Ponds, lakes and watercourses (streams and ditches) are common close to both Hailsham and Polegate. As shown on **Figure 4.5d** there are a large number of individual trees and tree groups associated with amenity spaces and streets within the urban area, many of which are protected by Tree Preservation Orders (see **Figure 4.5c)**, particularly located along the western part of Hailsham and around the edges of Polegate.

[163] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017
[164] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017
[165] https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteSearch.aspx accessed April 2017



KEY

Designations:

- Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation/Ramsar
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- National Nature Reserve
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Ancient Woodland
- Regionally Important Geological Sites

N

0 0.5 1 Kilometre

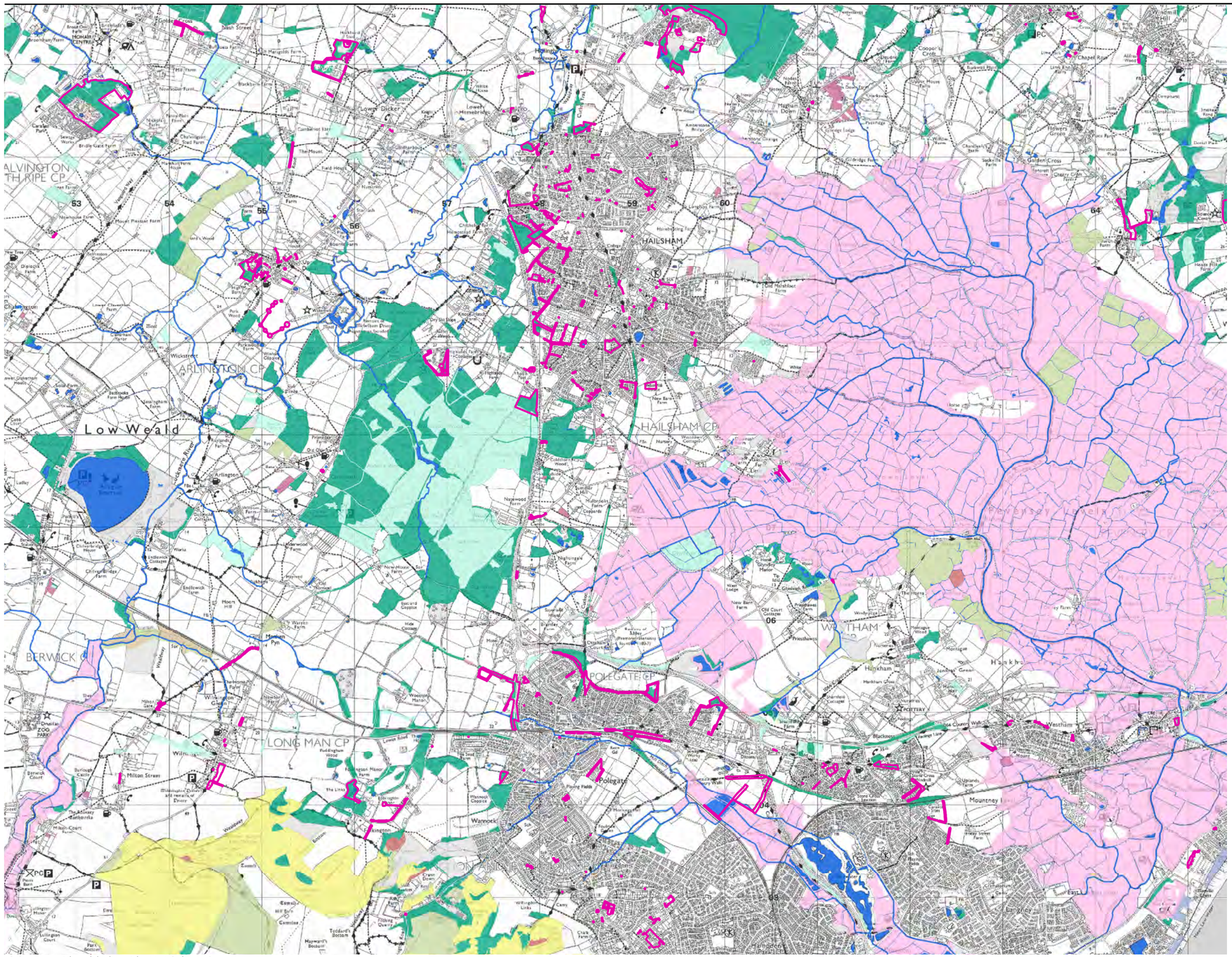
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FIGURE 4.5b
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

April 2017



KEY

Main BAP Priority Habitats:

- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Coastal Saltmarsh
- Coastal Vegetated Shingle
- Deciduous Woodland
- Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland
- Lowland Calcareous Grassland
- Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
- Lowland Fens
- Lowland Heathland
- Lowland Meadows
- Maritime Cliff and Slope
- Mudflats
- Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pastures
- Reedbeds
- Saline Lagoons
- Traditional Orchard
- No Main Habitat but Additional Habitats Present

Mixed and Coniferous Woodland Habitats (National Forest Inventory)

Freshwater Habitats (Main Watercourses & Waterbodies)

Tree Preservation Orders

N

0 0.5 1 Kilometre

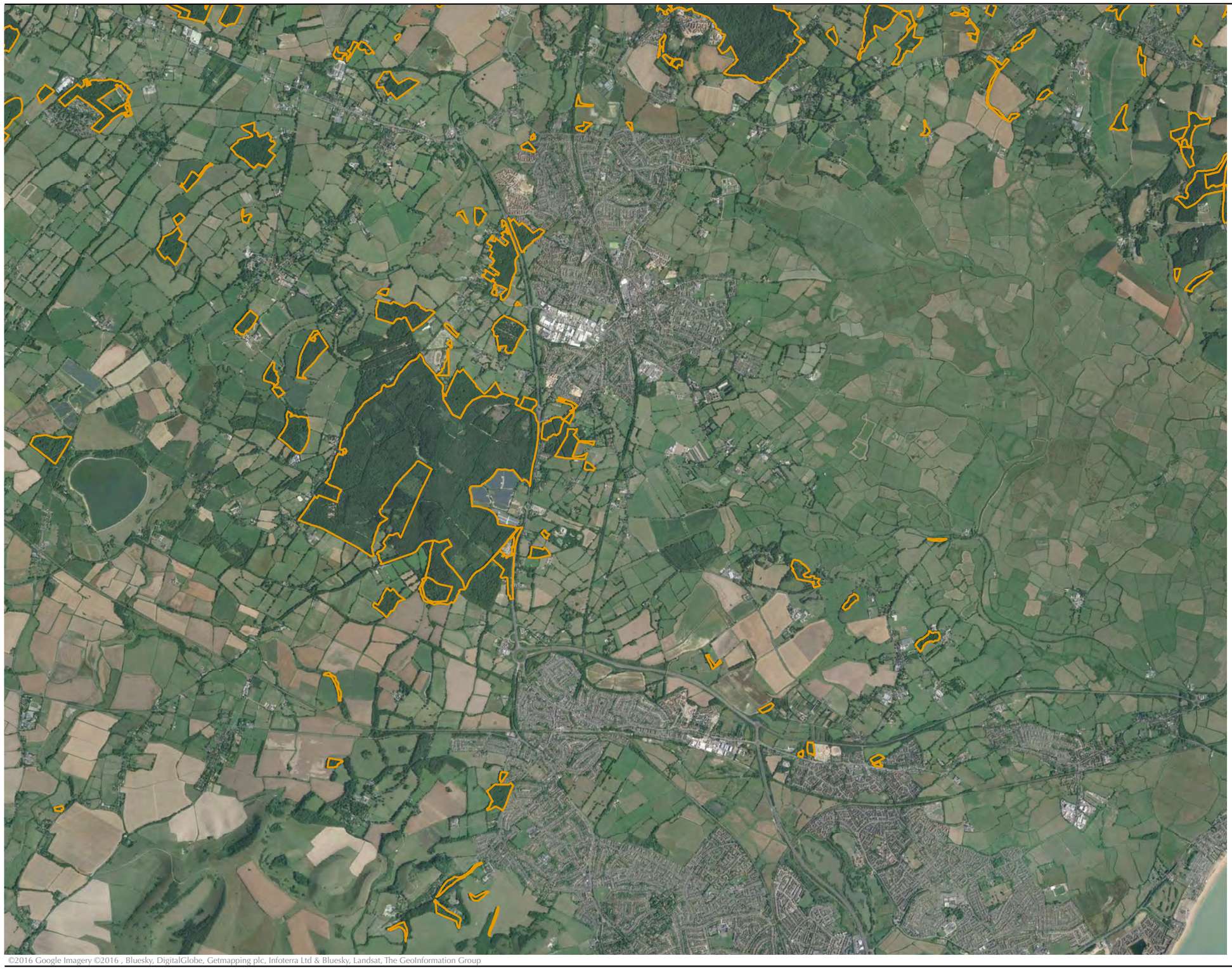
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FIGURE 4.5c
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

April 2017



KEY

- Urban Trees
- Woodland
- Shaws
- Ancient Woodland

NB. See Figure 4.5a for Tree Preservation Orders

N

0 0.5 1 Kilometre

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FIGURE 4.5d
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
TREES & WOODLAND

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4.5.9 The key landscape setting/townscape features and characteristics that contribute to the character of Hailsham and are sensitive to change are summarised below[166]:

- **Remnant Historic Landscapes:** A patchwork of small-scale historic fields surrounds the settlement, often abutting the settlement edge. These are interspersed with large areas of Ancient Woodland, at the south-western edge of the town. The un-wooded ancient landscapes to the west of the settlement are cohesive and aggregate assarts. To the north are scattered areas of regular and irregular piecemeal enclosure, and to the east, regular piecemeal enclosure and consolidated strip fields. Further to the east and south east (within the levels landscape), is a landscape of brooks innings and saltmarsh innings.
- **Culturally Important Landmarks:** Horselunges Manor complex, to the north of the settlement is a key Culturally Important Landmark, as is Michelham Priory, at some distance from the western edge of Hailsham.
- **Landscape detractors** include large industrial and commercial buildings to the south of the town, sewage works to the east of the town and a Chalet Park also at the eastern edge of the town.
- **Urban Edges:** The town is predominantly lined by treed, sensitive edges and woodland, with a few pockets of exposed or prominent urban edges along the northern edges of the town, often associated with new or partially complete new development sites.
- **Watercourses/Waterbodies:** The valley of the River Cuckmere is a key landscape feature, running to the north and west of the town. Several smaller tributaries (and associated ponds) feed this main river system. To the east of the settlement, the vast expanse of Pevensey Levels, with its associated drainage ditches is a key feature.
- **Significant Views/Key Ridgelines:** Key views southwards from the town are dominated by the backdrop of Wilmington Wood.
- **Footpaths/Bridleways:** A network of footpaths and bridleways connects Hailsham to its landscape setting, including the Cuckoo Trail.

[166] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)

4.5.10 The key characteristics of the Landscape Setting Areas around Hailsham & Polegate[167] (see **Figure 4.5e**) are:

Hailsham

Landscape Setting Area	Distinctive Characteristics
1	• A small-scale patchwork of arable and pastoral, ancient fields which are interspersed with small patches of woodland (much of which is ancient). • A strong landscape structure, resulting from the network of mature hedgerows and trees (often lining road corridors).
2	• A small-scale patchwork of arable and pastoral fields which are often lined with mature hedgerows; • Open views eastwards across the Open Levels contribute to recognisable sense of place. • West-east orientated stream corridors that feed the Levels to the east.
3	• A small scale patchwork of predominantly pastoral fields, with stronger historic continuity in terms of field pattern in the north than in the south. • Open views eastwards across the Open Levels contribute to recognisable sense of place.
4	• A caravan park in the east, which is considered to be a landscape detractor. • West-east stream corridor, which is lined in places by mature trees and vegetation. • Open views southwards across the Open Levels contribute to recognisable sense of place.
5	• Several isolated farmsteads and houses; • A patchwork of predominantly pastoral fields with an ancient field pattern; • Open views southwards across the Open Levels contribute to recognisable sense of place.
6	• Small to medium-scale pockets of ancient and more recent, predominantly pastoral fields. • Several narrow rural road corridors.
7	• Strong sense of enclosure as a result of the several large areas of woodland • Numerous stream corridors run through the woodland.
8	• A small-scale, ancient landscape of arable and pastoral fields which are lined with a mature network of hedgerows. In the northwest of the area, ancient strip fields are a feature. • The Knockhatch adventure farm and several other farmsteads are dotted across the landscape.
9	• Gently meandering corridor of the River Cuckmere, which is lined with a patchwork of predominantly pastoral, ancient fields; • A22 road corridor crosses the northern part of the area, introducing a source of noise and movement.

[167] Wealden Landscape & Settlement Character Assessment, CBA (2014)

KEY

Landscape Setting Areas (Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment, 2014):

1 Hailsham Landscape Setting Areas

1 Polegate Landscape Setting Areas

N

0 0.5 1 Kilometre

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FIGURE 4.5e
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
LANDSCAPE SETTING AREAS

April 2017

Polegate

Landscape Setting Area	Distinctive Characteristics
1	• A small-scale patchwork of ancient fields of drained alluvial grazing marsh, lined with reed-fringed ditches; • A strong sense of openness throughout. • Urban fringe land uses (including roadside services and a hotel) associated with the A27 main road corridor which reduces overall sense of remoteness and tranquillity.
2	• Large-scale, drained fields of alluvial grazing marsh; • Reed-fringed drainage ditches; • A series of minor, rural road corridors.
3	• Playing fields and recreation grounds at the settlement edges in the west, with mature trees; • Predominantly pastoral fields, lined with occasional hedgerows.
4	• An intricate landscape pattern of spurs and slopes which form the eastern edge of the South Downs (National Park) and facilitate open views across the settlement and adjacent landscapes; • This area also includes a series of ridges at the top of the slopes. • Patches of Ancient Woodland provide an intermittent sense of enclosure.
5	• A small-scale, ancient patchwork of drained grazing marshes, with reed-fringed ditches at field boundaries.

4.5.11 The key landscape setting/townscape features and characteristics that contribute to the character of Polegate and are sensitive to change are summarised below:

- **Remnant Historic Landscapes:** Pockets of small-scale historic fields, comprising cohesive assart and regular piecemeal enclosure to the northwest, and brooks innings with some regular piecemeal enclosure and consolidated strip fields to the southeast of the town; and the ancient landscape complex of a Premonstratensian Abbey (founded in 1180) to the east of Ottenham Court and north of Polegate. Also of historic interest is an area of prehistoric earthworks on the ridge to the southwest of the town.
- **Culturally Important Landmarks:** Two Culturally Important Landmarks within the setting of the town – the remains of a Premonstratensian Abbey to the north of the town, and Filching Manor at some distance to the south of Polegate and Willingdon; and several landmark churches within the urban fabric.
- **Landscape Detractors:** Several landscape detractors, including industrial buildings to the south of the B2247 at the eastern edge of Polegate and the Motel and services at the large roundabout junction between the A22 and A27 main road corridors at the north-western edge of the town.
- **Urban Edges:** The town is predominantly lined by sensitive, soft, treed/hedged edges, however there are pockets of prominent, harsher urban edges at the eastern edge of the Industrial Area (as above) and along Hyperion Avenue and Sunstar Lane at the western edge of the town.

- **Significant Views/Key Ridgelines:** At the northern and eastern edges of the town, open views north, south and east across a landscape setting of open levels are characteristic. Vice versa, there are several key views to the settlement edge from the Levels. Views southwards from several parts of the settlement are dominated by the steep rising scarp slopes of the South Downs ridge to the southwest of the town. Polegate can also be viewed within the foreground of views from the edges of the South Downs scarp slopes, resulting in high inter-visibility between the town and the South Downs National Park. A ridgeline runs east west through the town.
- **Footpaths/Bridleways:** A network of footpaths and bridleways connects Polegate to its landscape setting. The 1066 Country Walk runs to the south of the town, connecting the settlement within the Levels and settlements to the east and the South Downs to the west. The Cuckoo Trail also joins the northern edge of the town, connecting Polegate with Hailsham and Heathfield to the north.

4.5.12 In addition, key historic environment assets that also contribute to the character of the town include (see **Figure 4.5f**):

- 1 Registered Historic Park and Garden: Grade II Listed Wootton Manor
- 3 Conservation Areas including: Hellingly, Halisham, and Church Street, Willingdon

Energy & Food

4.5.13 There are no known coppiced woodlands around Hailsham & Polegate that represent a potential source of local fuel.

4.5.14 As shown on **Figure 2.4**, the quality of agricultural land around the town is mainly Grade 3 (good to moderate).

Water Resources

4.5.15 The Cuckmere River flows around the northern edge of Hailsham and the Pevensey Haven is a major water body to the east of the towns. Smaller water bodies which run through the towns include Puckeridge Stream, Hurst Haven, Drockmill Hill Gut, Wannock Mill Stream, Shinewater Lake, New Stream Ditch and Mill Ditch. Whelpley Sewer, Horse Eye Sewer, Holm Sewer, Glynleigh Sewer, Saltmarsh Sewer, Willingdon Sewer, Willingdon and West Langney Sewer also run through the towns.

KEY

- Registered Historic Park and Garden
- Scheduled Monuments
- Conservation Areas
- Listed Buildings

N

0 0.5 1 Kilometre

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FIGURE 4.5f
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

April 2017

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4.5.16 **Table 4.4** below shows the quality of watercourses within or close to Hailsham and Polegate. The majority of watercourses are in good condition for their chemical status. Ecologically most watercourses are in moderate to poor condition.

Table 4.4: Water Quality around Hailsham and Polegate[168]

Catchment	Water Quality						
	Ecological Status or Potential					Chemical Status	
	Bad	Poor	Moderate	Good	High	Fail	Good
Upper Cuckmere Number of waterbodies: 7	0	2	4	1	0	1	6

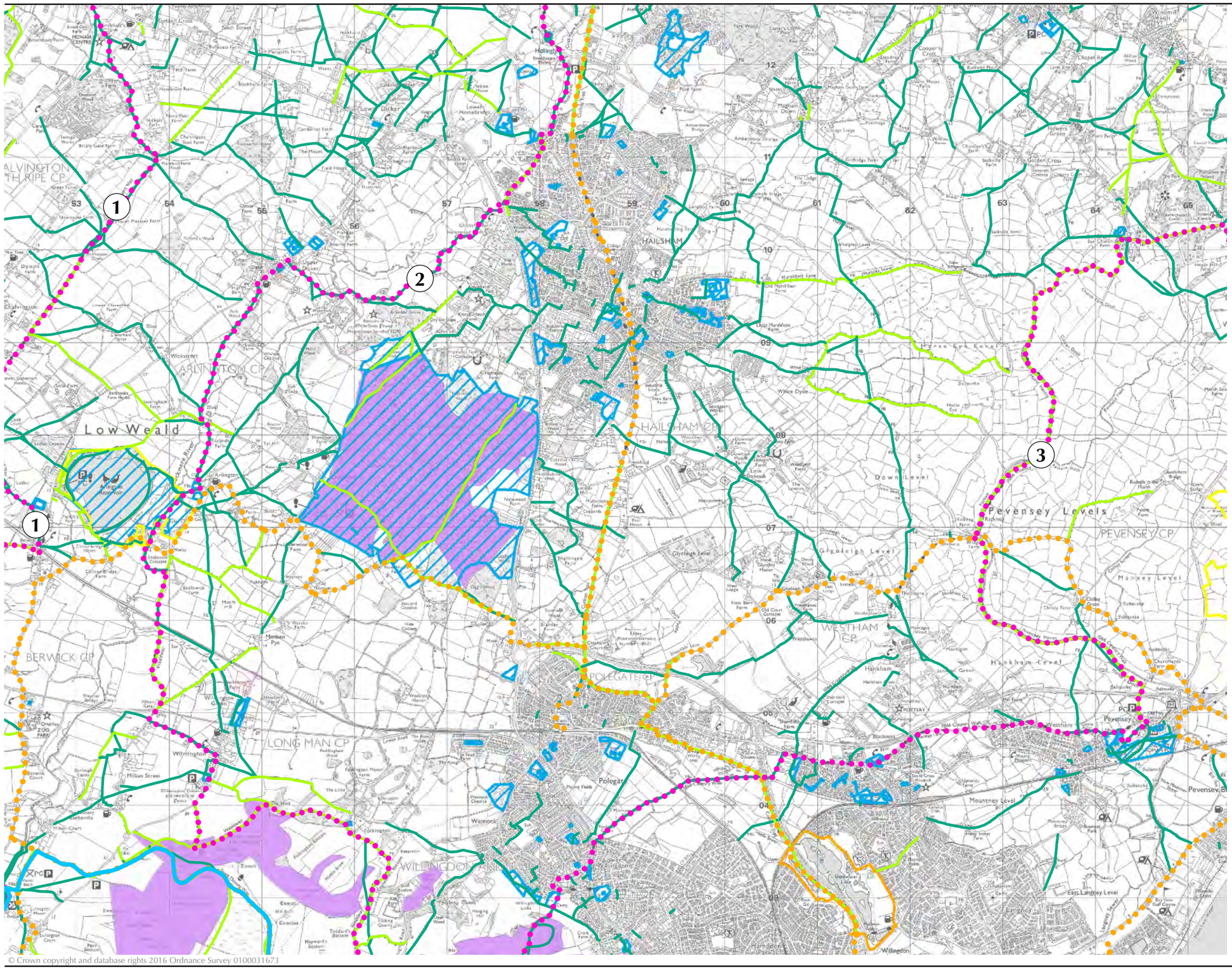
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

4.5.17 Accessible natural greenspace sites in and around Hailsham & Polegate are shown on **Figure 4.5g**. This shows that significant accessible natural greenspace sites are located to the west of Hailsham and Polegate. These include Open Access Land, such as Wilmington Woods at the south-eastern edge of Hailsham and north-west of Polegate. Accessible Natural Greenspace is limited in other directions around Hailsham and Polegate.

4.5.18 Within Hailsham, accessible greenspace is concentrated in the southern part of the urban area. Further north accessible natural greenspace is much more limited. As shown on **Figure 4.5h**, the northern part of the town is deficient in neighbourhood scale accessible natural greenspace. Within Polegate accessible natural greenspace is fairly evenly spread throughout the town, but many of these sites are small. As a result much of Polegate remains deficient in provision at the neighbourhood-scale. Open spaces in and around the towns are shown on **Figure 4.5i** and comprise[169]:

- 8 No. allotments (such as Marshfoot Lane Allotments and Westham Allotments)
- 27 No. amenity greenspaces (such as Land adjacent to Grovelands Primary School and Meadow Road AGS)
- 21 No. churchyards and cemeteries (such as Hailsham Cemetery and St John's Church, Polegate)
- 18 No. parks and recreation grounds (such as Western Road Recreation Ground, Hailsham and Polegate Pleasure Ground)

[168] http://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/
[169] As identified and mapped for the Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (Ethos for Wealden DC, forthcoming)



KEY

Access Links:

- Footpath
- Bridleway/Byway
- Sustrans National Cycle Route
- Promoted Route

1. Vanguard Way
2. Wealdway
3. 1066 Country Walk

- National Trail

Accessible Natural Greenspace:

- Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2016)*
- CRoW Act 2000 Open Access Land
- Country Parks
- Local Nature Reserves and Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Accessible Woodland Trust Sites

*Includes: Accessible Natural Greenspace, Allotments, Amentity Greenspace, Churchyards and Cemeteries, Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 0.5 1 Kilometre

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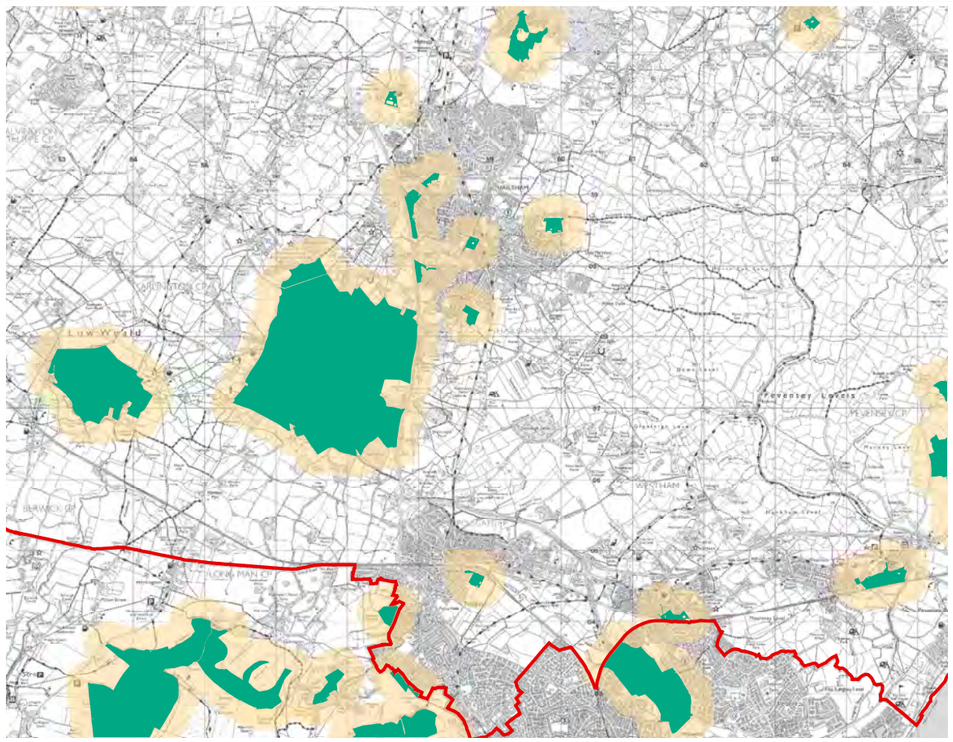
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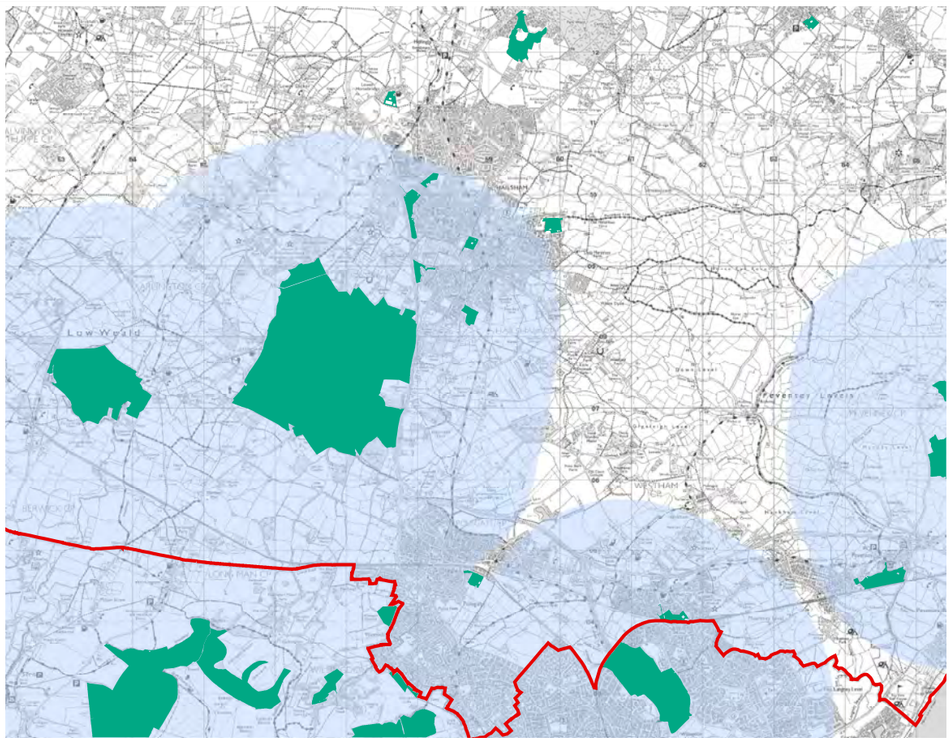
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FIGURE 4.5g
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
ACCESS LINKS & ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE

April 2017

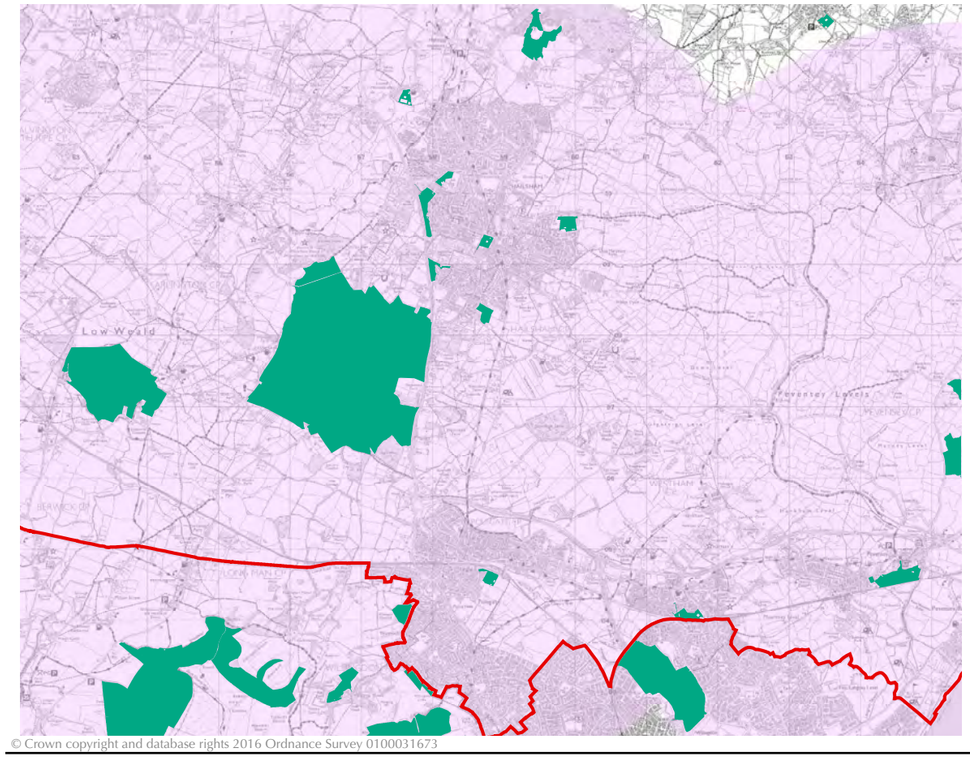
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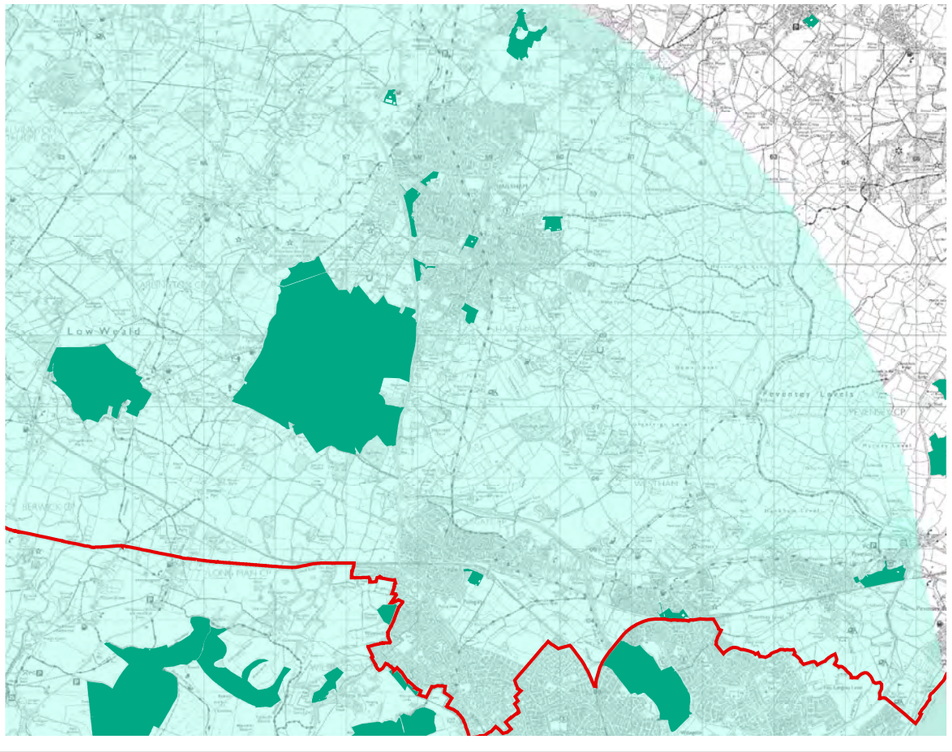




KEY

- Wealden Local Plan Boundary
- Accessible Natural Greenspace >2ha
- 10km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >500ha
- 5km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >100ha
- 2km catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >20ha
- 300m catchment - all accessible natural greenspace >2ha





N

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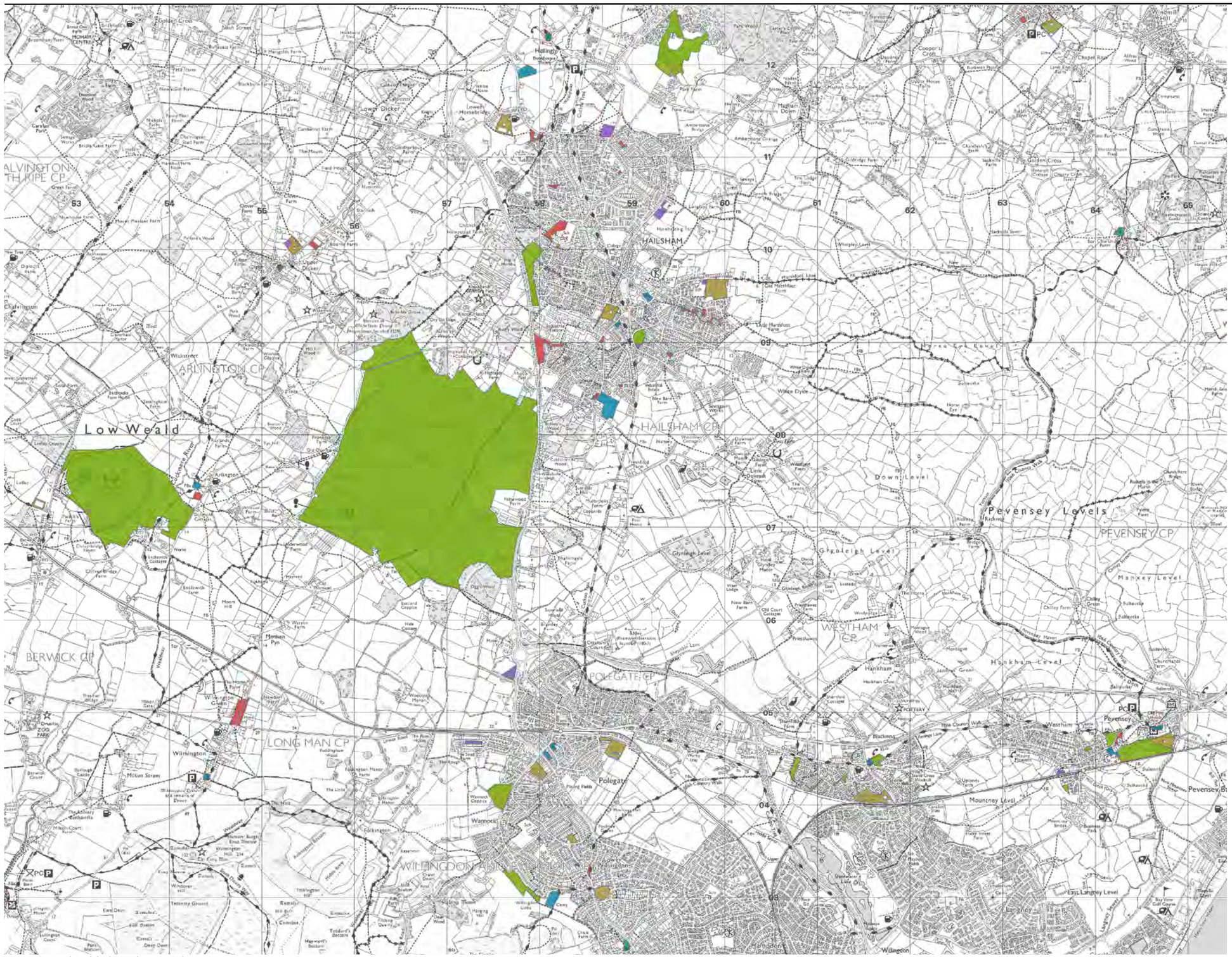
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FIGURE 4.5h
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
ACCESSIBLE NATURAL GREENSPACE ANALYSIS

April 2017

11123101_Town Figures_20-04-17.indd



KEY

Open Space Typology:

- Accessible Natural Greenspace
- Allotments
- Amenity Greenspace
- Churchyards & Cemeteries
- Parks and Recreation Grounds

N

0 0.5 1 Kilometre

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FIGURE 4.5i
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE:
OPEN SPACE TYPOLOGY

April 2017

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4.5.19 As shown on **Figure 4.5g**, the Hailsham & Polegate area is connected to the surrounding landscape by the following access links that need to be maintained and improved where appropriate:

- Public footpaths between Polegate and key sites such as Shinewater Park and Wilmington Woods.
- Public footpaths between Hailsham and key sites such as Arlington Reservoir and Wilmington Woods.
- Public bridleway between the wider countryside and the Cuckoo Trail.
- The Wealdway long distance promoted route which passes along the northern edge of Hailsham.
- The 1066 Country Walk long distance promoted route which passes through Pevensey Levels and into Polegate.
- National Cycle Network Route 2 running along the coast– this route once complete will run from Dover to St. Austell along the south coast.
- National Cycle Network Route 21 (the Wealdway) – this route runs from Greenwich to Eastbourne.

Needs and Opportunities

4.5.20 The GI assets that make a significant contribution to the GI network in and around Hailsham & Polegate include a range of biodiversity, landscape and historic environment features; the farmland, woodland and allotments that provide local sources of energy and food; the 'blue infrastructure' provided by water resources that support a healthy environment; and the accessible natural greenspaces and access links that contribute to health and well-being. In summary, the key needs and opportunities for the provision of GI in and round the towns are considered to be:

- Where appropriate, promote opportunities for retaining and enhancing existing wildlife habitats, and/or creating new habitats, related to residential development sites around Hailsham & Polegate (see the Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment Studies[170] for details).
- Opportunities exist to improve the existing urban edges of Hailsham through the provision of new development and GI associated with growth of the town to enhance the surrounding landscape.

[170] Wealden Local Plan Sites Ecological and Landscape Assessment Studies (CBA and TLP for Wealden DC, 2017)

- Where appropriate, promote opportunities for landscape enhancements related to residential development sites around Hailsham & Polegate (see the Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessment Studies[171] for details).
- Opportunities exist within Hailsham to create improved links between development and GI provision, to restore and improve degraded landscapes by increasing woodland areas, protecting landscape features and creating multifunctional green networks focussed on existing tree belts and hedgerows connected to the Cuckoo Trail green corridor.
- Some of Polegate's rural landscape has been degraded by urban fringe pressures including urban fringe uses and commercial development. The relatively recent road development at Cophall roundabout to the west of the town has also resulted in the loss of landscape structure.
- Opportunities exist to strengthen Polegate's landscape structure and mitigate the visual impact of the A27 through the provision of open space and the creation of multifunctional green networks.
- Seek opportunities to provide better access links between development and green spaces around Polegate through the provision of access routes, and to enhance the landscape in respect of the setting of the South Downs National Park.
- Where appropriate address the need to improve pedestrian access within Hailsham town. Consider how these improvements might be an opportunity to deliver additional multiple benefits in the town such as through incorporating tree planting to improve access for wildlife, drainage, and address poor air quality, whilst improving the experience of walking through green corridors within the town.
- Where appropriate to do so, promote and encourage the use of best practice innovative architectural and planning solutions that take inspiration from local distinctiveness and character.
- Where appropriate, seek to improve water quality and manage local flood risk through promoting the use of SuDS, green roofs and rain gardens for example, particularly within new housing developments.
- Explore opportunities to promote gardening for wildlife and growing food within existing and new residential areas.
- Where appropriate, seek opportunities to safeguard and enhance existing wildlife sites in and around Hailsham and Polegate and through sensitive management improve their overall condition.

[171] Wealden Local Plan Sites Ecological and Landscape Assessment Studies (CBA and TLP for Wealden DC, 2017)

5.0 PROPOSED GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

5.1 General

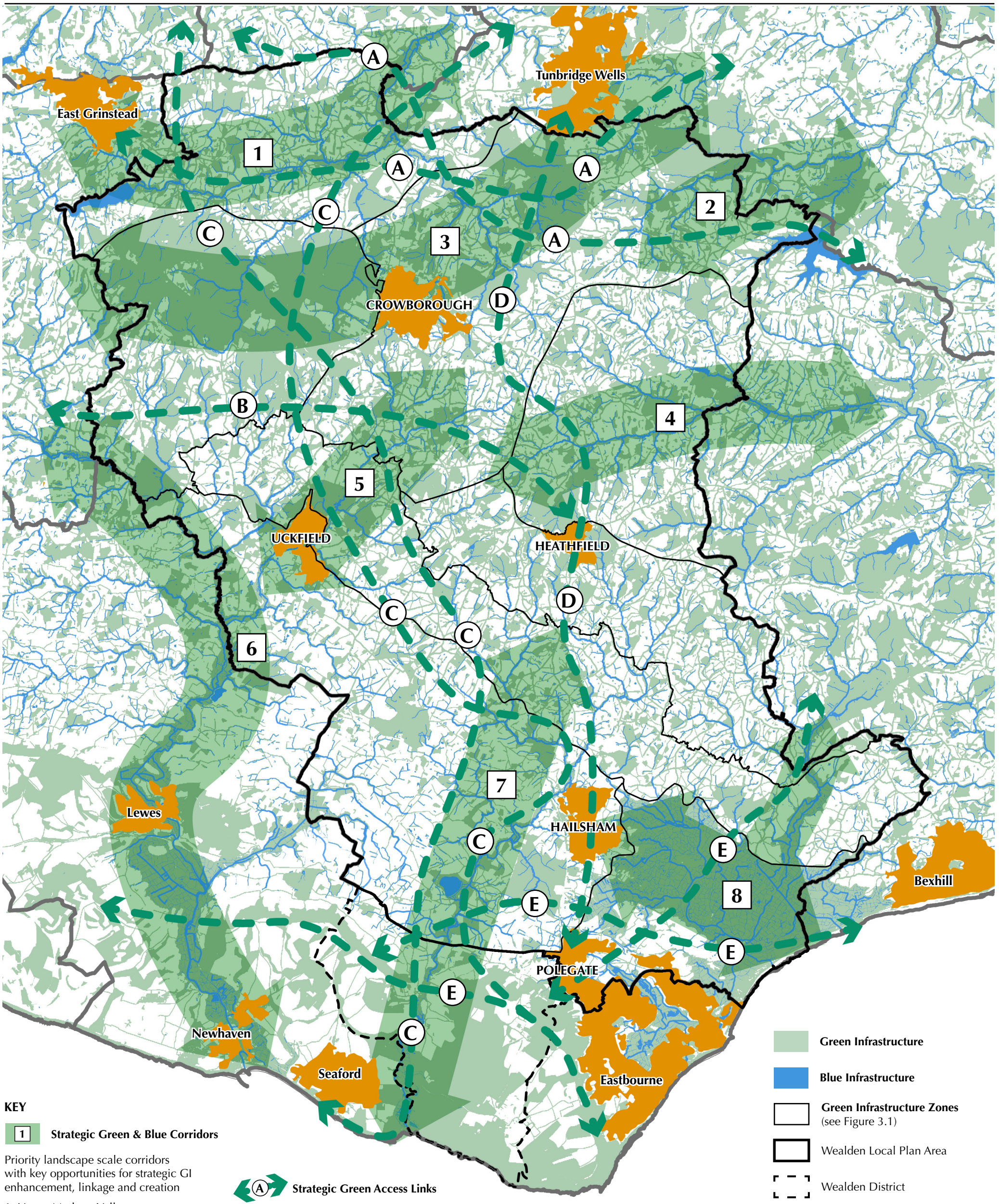
5.1.1 Based on the analysis of existing GI assets, needs and opportunities set out in **Sections 2.0, 3.0** and **4.0**, this section sets out a proposed GI network for Wealden at the district/sub-district and town scales. The proposed GI Network provides a framework for the delivery of GI to support the planning of sustainable development.

5.2 District Green Infrastructure Network

5.2.1 In line with the NPPF, investment in a connected and multi-functional GI network is considered to be necessary in order to support sustainable development within the study area. The proposed GI network for Wealden District (excluding the South Downs National Park) is illustrated on **Figure 5.1**.

5.2.2 The spatial representation of the overall GI Network is illustrated through corridors and linkages, which together provide a 'bigger picture' and strategic framework for the delivery of GI in Wealden. It is intended to help focus attention or priority on land that needs to be safeguarded, managed or secured in positive ways to create a multi-functional network of greenspaces, links and environmental assets for which investment can deliver the greatest range of benefits. It is not a rigid approach. The GI Network is intended to be flexible and responsive to opportunities and constraints - such as land ownership, community aspirations, access to funding, land drainage requirements, development opportunities, nature conservation policy considerations, etc.

5.2.3 The GI concept applies across the whole of Wealden District, and it can operate at any scale. However, the proposed Green Infrastructure Network identifies locations where targeting investment in GI is most likely to deliver multiple benefits across a range of national and local environmental, social and economic policies. Broadly defined strategic corridors are identified, within which investment in enhanced GI provision can be prioritised and delivered over the next 10 years or so. These corridors reflect the identified needs and opportunities for enhancing the connectivity of habitats and greenspaces for biodiversity and public benefit. They provide the context for the delivery of GI initiatives and projects that would provide, in many cases, multiple functions and benefits to meet a range of needs. GI interventions within and adjacent to these corridors would focus on the enhancement of existing GI assets, as well as the creation and restoration of new assets where there is an identified need.



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FIGURE 5.1
WEALDEN DISTRICT
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

April 2017
11123101_District GI Net_20-04-17.indd

5.2.4 It is important to ensure that the integrity of the overall GI Network is not compromised by inappropriate development and/or land management. This means that there needs to be flexibility in how the GI Network is protected and managed. In cases where there is an unavoidable harm to existing GI assets in order to meet social and economic needs, this should be offset by mitigation and compensation measures to enhance the functionality of other environmental assets elsewhere within the GI Network. However, some habitats, such as ancient woodlands, are irreplaceable and need protection. Where development is planned within or in close proximity to a GI assets, it should become an integral feature to the design and 'identity' of the development site to ensure that the connectivity of the network for both public benefit and biodiversity is retained and enhanced.

5.2.5 The proposed GI Network encapsulates a range of GI assets within varied landscape settings. With investment and appropriate management over time, the GI Network will offer more diverse uses, experiences and functions to deliver increased economic, environmental and social benefits within Wealden District (see **Box 5.1**).

Box 5.1 – The Key Benefits of GI for Wealden District

- Contributing to health improvements and well-being through schools, hospitals and health centres promoting opportunities to access greenspaces for exercise.
- Linking housing, schools and bus/train stations to the access network and connecting with accessible greenspaces in the wider countryside.
- Providing an improved image, experience and sense of place through investment in an improved environmental quality for the public realm.
- Opportunities to provide environmental education through parks, nature reserves and farm-based activities.
- Helping address climate change through sustainable management of waste, water and pollution, production of energy crops and creation of woodland to act as carbon sinks.
- Recognising the key role of the agricultural sector in local food production, processing of local produce and provision of farm shops.
- Increasing awareness of, and celebrating, historic environment assets and how they contribute to local distinctiveness and sense of place.
- Ensuring that future development around settlements are well integrated into their landscape settings, and address issues such as indistinct boundaries, poor accessibility, fragmented urban fringe landscapes, etc.
- Providing opportunities for local community involvement through volunteering and gaining new skills through GI project delivery, particularly within deprived communities.
- Strengthening management of wildlife habitats for sites experiencing recreational pressures.

5.2.6 The proposed GI network for Wealden District illustrated on **Figure 5.1** encompasses a range of GI types, functions, locations, sizes and levels of accessibility and use, and operates at every spatial scale and in all geographic areas within the area, both rural and urban. However, the

proposed GI Network identifies locations where targeting investment in GI is most likely to deliver multiple benefits. The main areas for investment are highlighted in **Box 5.2**.

Box 5.2 – Priorities for GI Investment

- To focus investment on GI provision and management to address current deficits of provision and meet needs identified by this Study.
- To meet the GI needs of communities in Wealden District who are likely to experience growth-related pressures.
- To protect and conserve existing valuable GI assets that are under pressure from land use changes, inappropriate management and/or climate change, in particular core biodiversity areas/sites; river valleys; watercourses and wetlands; woodlands, trees and hedgerows; heritage assets; and accessible natural greenspaces.

5.2.7 In response to the above, the proposed GI Network defines specific areas within which it is recommended that investment in enhanced GI provision is prioritised. The main areas for investment and action were identified through an interpretation of the interplay between broad patterns and opportunities arising from the analysis of the existing GI assets, particularly in relation to developing access networks for health and well-being objectives and also green corridors for wildlife. These provide the framework for development of strategic GI initiatives and projects that can provide multiple functions and benefits.

5.2.8 The principal components of the proposed GI Network for Wealden District are outlined below. These should be read in conjunction with the analysis of needs and opportunities for provision of GI at the District Scale (**Section 2.0**), Sub-District Scale (**Section 3.0**) and Town Scale (**Section 4.0**).

Strategic Green and Blue Corridors

5.2.9 A network of Strategic Green and Blue Corridors, priority areas with key opportunities for strategic GI enhancement, linkage and creation, provide the backbone of the GI Network for Wealden District (see **Box 5.3**). They are broadly defined, landscape-scale corridors comprising a mosaic of land uses, natural features and habitats, built heritage, archaeological resources and settlements, and are intended to be fully multi-functional zones with the potential to deliver a wide range of economic, environmental and social benefits. The Strategic Green and Blue Corridors include core areas of designated natural and semi-natural wildlife habitats, opportunities for restoring and re-creating habitats outside of core areas, and provide corridors or stepping stones for the dispersal of wildlife between habitats. These Corridors provide key strategic linkages with GI networks in adjoining areas as defined by the following GI studies:

- East Sussex Green Infrastructure Study[172]
- South Downs National Park Green Infrastructure Framework[173]
- Rother Green Infrastructure Background Paper[174]
- Sevenoaks Green Infrastructure Topic Paper[175]
- Tunbridge Wells Green Infrastructure Plan[176]

5.2.10 The Strategic Green and Blue Corridors within the study area are described in **Box 5.3**:

Box 5.3 - Strategic Green and Blue Corridors

- **1: Upper Medway Valley** – this corridor within the High Weald AONB includes the River Medway valley floodplain and its tributaries, and provides a major strategic connection to GI in adjoining areas within Tunbridge Wells Borough and Mid Sussex District. It comprises key GI assets such as Ancient Woodland, Weir Wood Reservoir and other freshwater and grassland habitats. Opportunities include habitat creation and linkages, strategic access route improvements and the provision of accessible natural greenspace to address identified deficiencies in the parishes of Forest Row, Hartfield and Withyham.
- **2: Teise Valley** – this corridor within the High Weald AONB includes the River Teise valley, floodplain and its tributaries, and provides a major strategic connection to GI in adjoining areas within Tunbridge Wells Borough. It comprises key GI assets such as a large Site of Special Scientific Interest, numerous Local Wildlife Sites and grassland habitat, large areas of Ancient Woodlands, part of Bewl Water and two Registered Historic Parks and Gardens. Opportunities include landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements (including grassland restoration), historic environment enhancements, strategic access route improvements and the provision of accessible natural greenspace to address identified deficiencies in the parishes of Frant and Rotherfield.
- **3: Weald & Ashdown Forest Ridge** – this corridor within the High Weald AONB comprises an extensive mosaic of wooded heathland along a major ridge, and provides a major strategic connection to GI in adjoining areas within Mid Sussex District and Tunbridge Wells Borough. It comprises key GI assets such as the Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation/Site of Special Scientific Interest, numerous Local Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodlands and Scheduled Monuments, and a Registered Historic Park and Garden. Opportunities include landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements, strategic access route improvements and management of the extensive areas of statutory open access land within and around Ashdown Forest that provides accessible natural greenspace for the parishes of Forest Row, Danehill, Hartfield, Maresfield and Withyham; and also opportunities for the provision of accessible natural greenspace to address identified deficiencies in the parishes of Rotherfield and Frant.
- **4: Upper Rother Valley** – this corridor within the High Weald AONB includes the River Rother valley, floodplain and its tributaries, and provides a major strategic connection to GI in adjoining areas within Rother District. It comprises key GI assets such as numerous Local Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodlands and grassland habitat. Opportunities include landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements, strategic access route improvements and the provision of accessible natural greenspace to address identified deficiencies in the parishes of Mayfield & Five Ashes and Hadlow Down.

[172] East Sussex Green Infrastructure Study, East Sussex County Council (2014)
[173] South Downs National Park Draft Green Infrastructure Framework, SDNPA (2016)
[174] Rother Green Infrastructure Background Paper, Rother District Council (2011)
[175] Sevenoaks Green Infrastructure Topic Paper, Sevenoaks District Council (2013)
[176] Tunbridge Wells Green Infrastructure Plan: SPD Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (2013)

- **5: Uck Valley** – this corridor includes the River Uck valley, floodplain and its tributaries, and provides a major strategic connection to GI in adjoining areas within Lewes District, and strategically links the High Weald AONB to the Ouse Green Corridor (6) within the Western Low Weald, providing a connection between Uckfield and Lewes. It comprises key GI assets such as two Sites of Special Scientific Interest, numerous Local Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodlands and grassland habitat, and the two Registered Historic Parks and Gardens. Opportunities include landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements, historic environment enhancements, strategic access route improvements and the provision of accessible natural greenspace to address identified deficiencies in the parishes of Buxted, Uckfield, Isfield and Little Horsted.
- **6: Ouse Valley** – this corridor includes the valley and floodplain of the River Ouse, which runs along the boundary between Wealden District and Lewes District connecting with the coast at Newhaven via Lewes. The Ouse corridor strategically links to the Usk Green Corridor (5), providing a connection with Uckfield and the High Weald AONB. Within Wealden District, it comprises key GI assets such as Ancient Woodland and freshwater/wetland habitats. Opportunities include landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements, strategic access route improvements and the provision of accessible natural greenspace to address identified deficiencies in the parishes of Isfield, Little Horsted and Fletching.
- **7: Cuckmere Valley** – this corridor includes the River Cuckmere valley, floodplain and its tributaries, and provides a major strategic connection to GI in adjoining areas within the South Downs National Park connecting with the coast at Cuckmere Haven. It comprises key GI assets such as two Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and numerous Ancient Woodland, freshwater and grassland habitats. Opportunities include landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements, strategic access route improvements and the provision of accessible natural greenspace to address identified deficiencies in the parishes of Horam, Chiddingly, Arlington, Berwick and Long Man.
- **8: Pevensey Levels & Wallers Haven Valley** – this corridor includes extensive low-lying wetlands and floodplains, and provides a major strategic connection to GI in adjoining areas within Rother District. It comprises key GI assets such as the Pevensey Levels Special Protection Area/Special Area of Conservation/Ramsar/Site of Special Scientific Interest and the Pevensey Levels National Nature Reserve. Opportunities include landscape-scale biodiversity enhancements (including re-establishment of wetland habitats), strategic access route improvements and the provision of accessible natural greenspace to address identified deficiencies in the parishes of Pevensey, Westham and Hailsham.

5.2.11 The width of the Strategic Green Corridors illustrated schematically on **Figure 5.1** are indicative; they are not intended to be rigid, and should be responsive to local circumstances. For example, wherever possible it will be important for the Strategic Green Corridors to provide adequate space in order to reduce the potential negative "edge effects" on wildlife from surrounding intensive land uses by buffering and extending existing habitats.

Strategic Green Access Links

5.2.12 Within and connecting the Strategic Green Corridors, a network of largely existing Strategic Green Access Links provide multi-user, predominantly off-road, strategic access routes (or "greenways") for pedestrians and cyclists, linking and integrating residential and business communities to key services, leisure destinations and greenspaces across the District. The Strategic Green Access Links are described in **Box 5.4**.

Box 5.4 - Strategic Green Access Links

- **A: Northern Wealden Links** – these east-west Strategic Green Access Links connect communities and facilities in the north of the District to the wider countryside and destinations within the High Weald AONB, including East Grinstead and Tunbridge Wells, via the High Weald Landscape Trail and the Sussex Border Path. New access connections along some sections of the Link would need to be established and existing access upgraded where appropriate to accommodate cycle use.
- **B: Central Wealden Link** – this east-west Strategic Green Access Link connects communities and facilities in the central parts of the District to the wider countryside and destinations within the High Weald AONB, including Heathfield and Ashdown Forest, via the Sussex Diamond Way. New access connections along some sections of the Link would need to be established and existing access upgraded where appropriate to accommodate cycle use.
- **C: High to Low Weald Links** – these north-south Strategic Green Access Links connect communities and facilities in East Grinstead, Tunbridge Wells, Uckfield, Hailsham, Seaford and Eastbourne with the wider countryside and destinations in the High Weald AONB and the Low Weald (and the South Downs National Park), via the Wealdway and Vanguard Way. New access connections along some sections of the Link would need to be established and existing access upgraded where appropriate to accommodate cycle use.
- **D: Cuckoo Trail Link** – this north-south Strategic Green Access Link connects communities and facilities in Tunbridge Wells, Crowborough, Heathfield, Hailsham, Polegate and Eastbourne with the wider countryside and destinations in the High Weald AONB and the Low Weald. Whilst this Link follows the route of the Cuckoo Trail for much of its length, new access and connections along some sections of the Link would need to be established and existing access upgraded where appropriate to accommodate cycle use.
- **E: Pevensey Levels to South Downs Link** – this east-west Strategic Green Access Link connects communities and facilities in Polegate within the south of the District to the wider countryside and destinations in the Pevensey Levels and the South Downs National Park, via the 1066 Country Walk, the National Cycle Network Route 2 and the South Downs Way National Trail. New access connections along some sections of the Link would need to be established and existing access upgraded where appropriate to accommodate cycle use.

5.2.13 With investment, the network of Strategic Green Access Links have the potential to link with public transport services to provide an integrated sustainable movement network for Wealden District that will help reduce reliance on car-use. While the Strategic Green Access Links have the primary function of providing access and recreational route linkages, with appropriate management they can also provide important ecological corridors for the dispersal of wildlife. The route alignments of the Strategic Green Access Links illustrated on **Figure 5.1** are indicative, and their specific configuration should respond to their intended uses and local circumstances.

Urban Green Grids

5.2.14 As illustrated on **Figure 5.1**, Urban Green Grids are priority areas within Wealden District with key opportunities for greening of the built environment. The Urban Green Grids comprise multifunctional networks of green (and blue) infrastructure links and spaces threading through

the built environment, weaving together areas where people live and work with public transport networks and the wider countryside. The Urban Green Grids provide urban communities with green areas for recreation and access to nature, a sense of place, education opportunities and help to contribute to sustainable travel by providing safe routes for walking and cycling, and also contribute to improved health and well-being through exercise and access to natural greenspaces. Street trees and greenspace help counter the 'heat island effect' of urban areas by providing shade to regulate the micro-climate, and domestic gardens and green roofs/walls provide linkages for wildlife through the built-up areas. These GI assets also help with managing surface water runoff in urban areas and hence mitigate flooding and conveyance of pollutants to watercourses. With investment and appropriate management, the urban green grids could deliver a range of benefits for the urban communities such as those highlighted in **Box 5.5**.

Box 5.5 – Urban Green Grids GI Benefits

- Reinforcing local identity and enhancing physical character by shaping existing and future development.
- Maintaining visual amenity and increasing the attractiveness of a locality to create a sense of pride.
- Raising property values and aiding urban regeneration and neighbourhood renewal.
- Boosting the economic potential of tourism, leisure and cultural activities.
- Providing a wide variety of cultural, social and community facilities, including seasonal activities such as fairs, festivals and concerts.
- Protecting historical, cultural and archaeological heritage.
- Contribution to health and well-being agendas – e.g. reducing stress levels by providing spaces for formal and informal recreational facilities.
- Providing popular outdoor educational facilities for schools and academic institutions.
- Improving physical and social inclusion including accessibility, particularly for young, disabled and older people.
- Offering networks for walking and cycling and safer routes to schools.
- Raising air quality and moderating extremes of temperatures.
- Protecting and enhancing biodiversity and ecological habitats.
- Incorporating environmental infrastructure to improve water quality and flood control.

5.2.15 The Urban Green Grids are an integral element of the proposed town scale GI networks for Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield and Hailsham & Polegate set out in **Section 5.3** below.

The Wider Countryside

5.2.16 While the proposed GI Network for Wealden District gives particular emphasis to the spatial priorities discussed above, investment in GI provision within other areas that may also have the potential to deliver benefits should be considered where appropriate. Beyond the strategic

corridors, opportunities for targeted environmental and access improvements in the wider countryside should be considered to strengthen the multi-functionality of the countryside as part of the overall GI Network. These improvements would complement and support the priority areas for investment within the GI Network, by focusing environmental land management schemes on addressing the needs and opportunities identified in the relevant GI Zones set out in **Section 3.0**. For example, these aims could be achieved through:

- Conservation and enhancement of landscape character.
- Enhanced management, protection, accessibility and interpretation of the historic environment and geodiversity resources.
- Habitat enhancement, linkage and creation – including woodlands, wetlands, roadside verges and farmland BAP habitats and species.
- Enhanced connectivity of the local rights of way network to the strategic access route network (including public transport) and to accessible natural greenspaces to promote sustainable modes of travel.
- Increased opportunities for sustainable local food and renewable energy crops production.

5.3 Town Green Infrastructure Networks

Crowborough Green Infrastructure Network

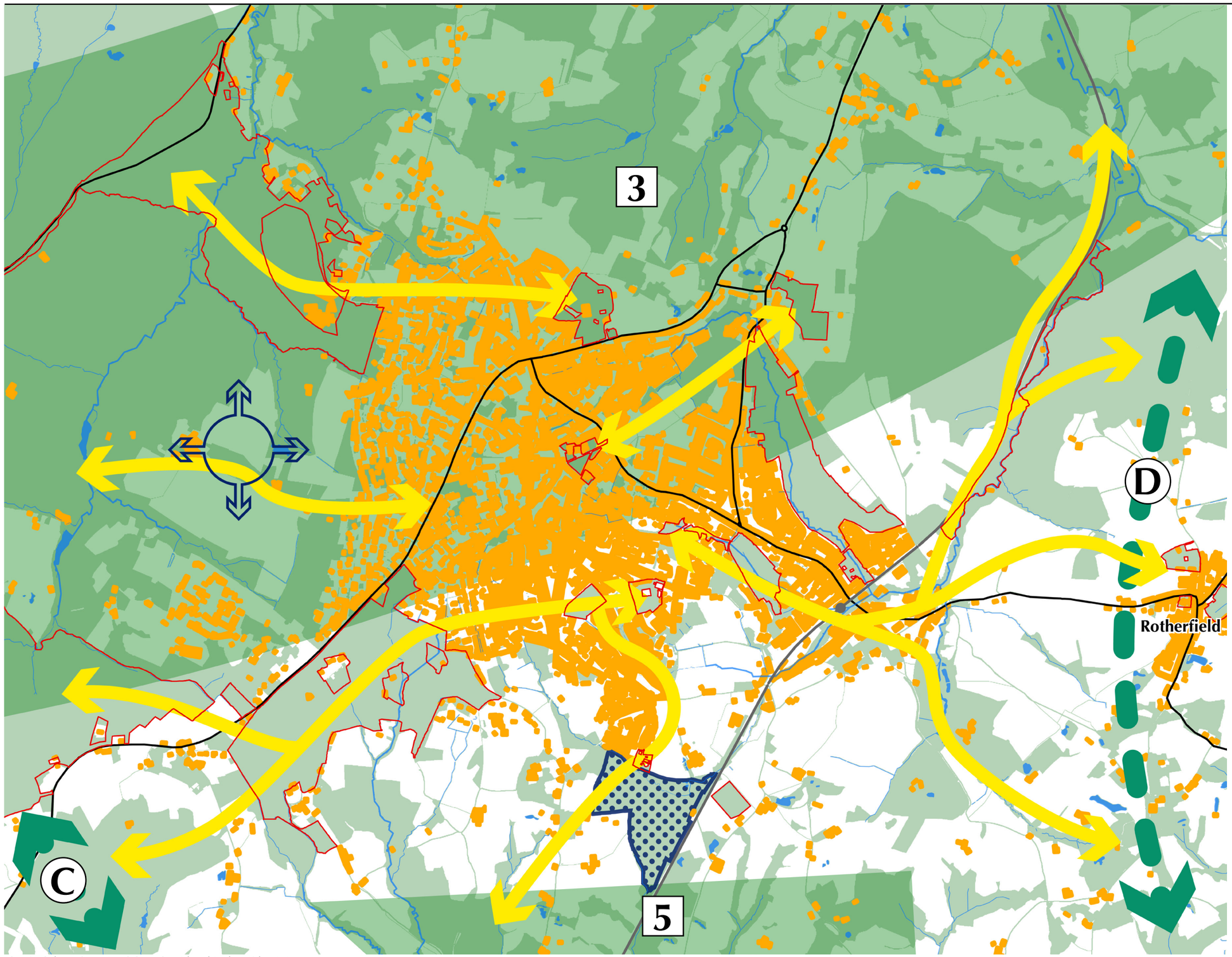
5.3.1 The proposed GI Network for Crowborough is illustrated on **Figure 5.2**. This should be read in conjunction with the analysis of needs and opportunities for provision of GI in and around the town set out in **Section 4.2**.

5.3.2 The town within the Weald & Ashdown Forest Ridge Strategic Green Corridor (3), a priority area with key opportunities for strategic GI enhancement, linkage and creation. The Uck Valley Strategic Green Corridor (5) lies to the south. The following Strategic Green Access Links in the local area connect communities and businesses within Crowborough, and in nearby Rotherfield, to local leisure opportunities/destinations (such as Ashdown Forest), greenspaces and public transport services:

- C: High to Low Weald Links
- D: Cuckoo Trail Link

5.3.3 A network of Local Green Links connects the Crowborough Urban Green Grid to the Strategic Green Access Links, green infrastructure and blue infrastructure within the countryside in and around the town. This network includes local GI linkages connecting the town centre with open spaces throughout the built-up area and in the surrounding countryside, (such as the Jarvis Brook Country Park and Crowborough Common) including the Weald & Ashdown Forest Ridge Strategic Green Corridor (3) in particular. In addition to providing a network of greenspaces and access links, the Crowborough Urban Green Grid concept seeks to promote the provision of green roofs and walls to provide habitats and linkages for wildlife. A proposed area of search for new accessible natural greenspace is also shown to the west of the town on **Figure 5.2**. New accessible natural greenspace in this location is required to address existing deficiencies in the provision of neighbourhood scale accessible natural greenspace identified by the ANGSt analysis (see **Section 2.7** for details).

5.3.4 The protection and enhancement of biodiversity sites, landscape/townscape character and historic environment assets, in line with the needs and opportunities identified for GI Zone 3 (Central High Weald) set out in **Section 3.4**, are intended to support the GI Network for Crowborough.



KEY

3 Strategic Green & Blue Corridors

Priority landscape scale corridors with key opportunities for strategic GI enhancement, linkage and creation

3. Weald & Ashdown Forest Ridge
5. Uck Valley

Strategic Green Access Links

Key opportunities for multi-user, predominantly off-road, strategic access routes/greenways

C. High to Low Weald Links
D. Cuckoo Trail Link

Uckfield Urban Green Grid

Priority areas with key opportunities for greening of the built environment

Local Green Links

Key opportunities for local GI linkages

Green Infrastructure

Blue Infrastructure

Accessible Natural Greenspace

Proposed Areas of Search for New Accessible Natural Greenspace

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Provision

A and B Roads

Railway/Station

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N

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WEALDEN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STUDY
WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

FIGURE 5.2
CROWBOROUGH
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

April 2017
11123101_Town GI Net_20-04-17.indd

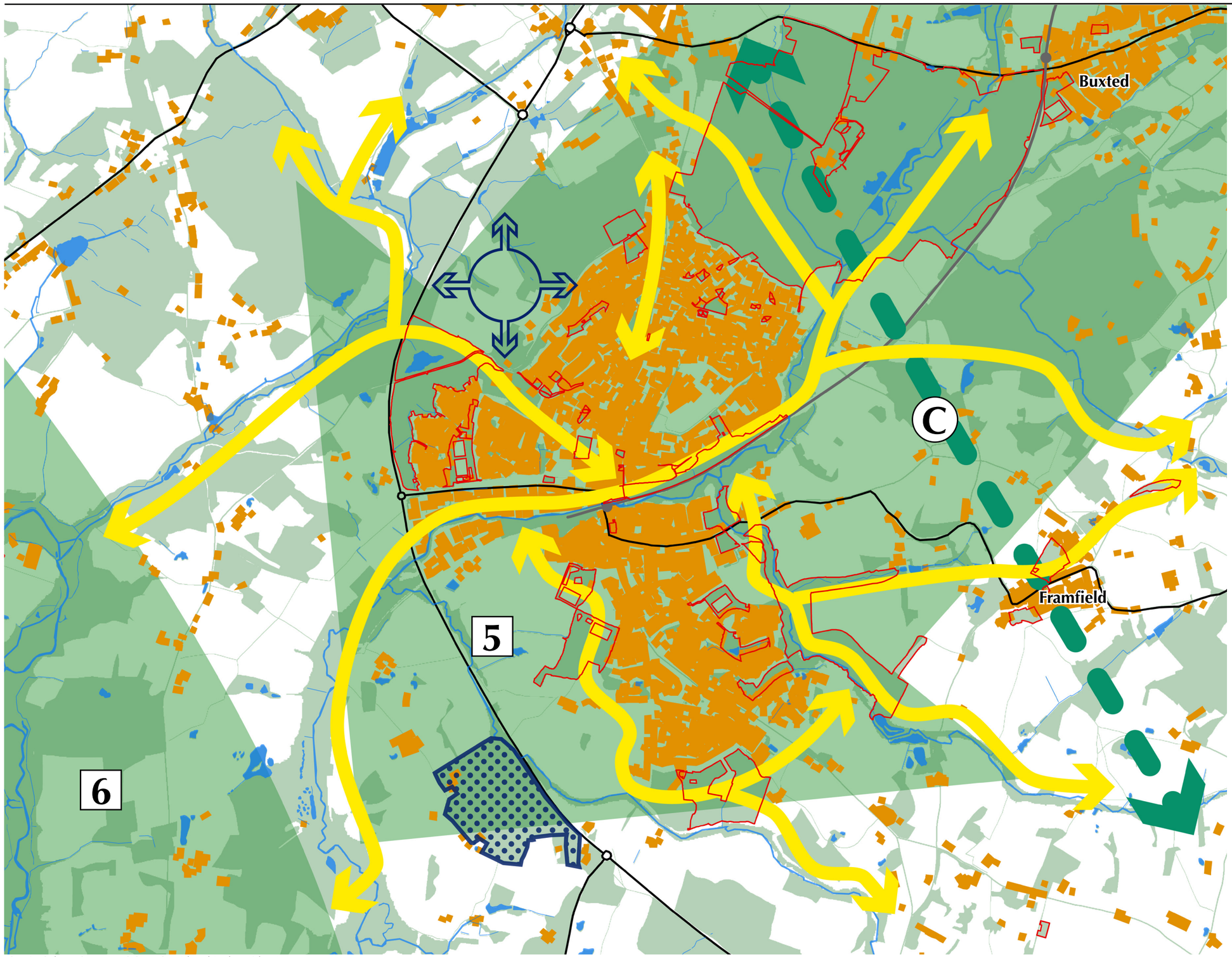
Uckfield Green Infrastructure Network

5.3.5 The proposed GI Network for Uckfield is illustrated on **Figure 5.3**. This should be read in conjunction with the analysis of needs and opportunities for provision of GI in and around the town set out in **Section 4.3**.

5.3.6 The town lies within the Uck Valley Strategic Green Corridor (5), a priority area with key opportunities for strategic GI enhancement, linkage and creation. The Ouse Valley Strategic Green Corridor (6) lies to the south-west. The High to Low Weald Strategic Green Access Links (C) connect communities and businesses within Uckfield, and in the villages around the town, such as Framfield to local leisure opportunities/destinations, greenspaces and public transport services.

5.3.7 A network of Local Green Links connects the Uckfield Urban Green Grid to the Strategic Green Access Links, green infrastructure and blue infrastructure (such as the River Uck and Ridgewood Stream) within the countryside in and around the town. This network includes local GI linkages connecting the town centre with open spaces throughout the built-up area and in the surrounding countryside (such as the West Park Nature Reserve and Buxted Park), including the Uck Valley Strategic Green Corridor (5) in particular. In addition to providing a network of greenspaces and access links, the Uckfield Urban Green Grid concept seeks to promote the provision of green roofs and walls to provide habitats and linkages for wildlife. A proposed area of search for new accessible natural greenspace is also shown to the north-west of the town on **Figure 5.3**. New accessible natural greenspace in this location is required to address existing deficiencies in the provision of neighbourhood scale accessible natural greenspace identified by the ANGSt analysis (see **Section 2.7** for details).

5.3.8 The protection and enhancement of biodiversity sites, landscape/townscape character and historic environment assets, in line with the needs and opportunities identified for GI Zone 6 (High Weald Fringes) set out in **Section 3.7** and GI Zone 7 (Low Weald) set out in **Section 3.8**, are intended to support the GI Network for Uckfield.



KEY

5 Strategic Green & Blue Corridors

Priority landscape scale corridors with key opportunities for strategic GI enhancement, linkage and creation

5. Uck Valley
6. Ouse Valley

C Strategic Green Access Links

Key opportunities for multi-user, predominantly off-road, strategic access routes/greenways

C. High to Low Weald Links

Uckfield Urban Green Grid

Priority areas with key opportunities for greening of the built environment

Local Green Links

Key opportunities for local GI linkages

Green Infrastructure

Blue Infrastructure

Accessible Natural Greenspace

Proposed Areas of Search for New Accessible Natural Greenspace

Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace Provision

A and B Roads

Railway/Station

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FIGURE 5.3
UCKFIELD
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

April 2017
11123101_Town GI Net_20-04-17.indd

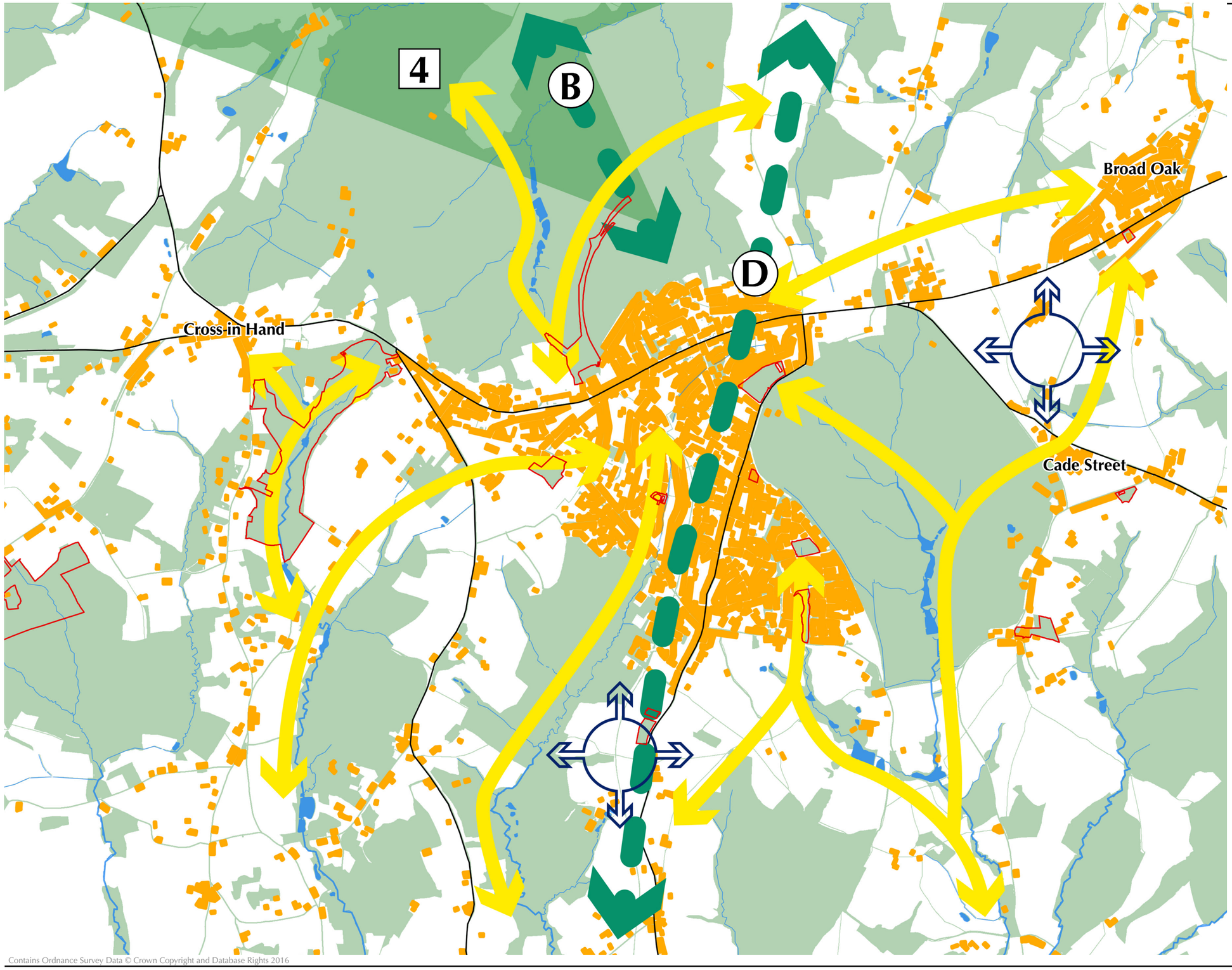
Heathfield Green Infrastructure Network

5.3.9 The proposed GI Network for Heathfield is illustrated on **Figure 5.4**. This should be read in conjunction with the analysis of needs and opportunities for provision of GI in and around the town set out in **Section 4.4**.

5.3.10 The town lies south of the Upper Rother Valley Strategic Green Corridor (4) a priority area with a range of opportunities for strategic GI enhancement, linkage and creation. The Central Wealden Strategic Green Access Link (B) and the Cuckoo Trail Strategic Green Access Link (D) connect communities and businesses within Heathfield, to local leisure opportunities/destinations, greenspaces and public transport services.

5.3.11 A network of Local Green Links connects the Heathfield Urban Green Grid to the Strategic Green Access Links, green infrastructure and blue infrastructure (tributaries of the River Rother and Cuckmere River) within the countryside in and around the town. This network includes local GI linkages connecting the town centre with open spaces throughout the built-up area and in the surrounding countryside (such as Heatherden Wood). In addition to providing a network of greenspaces and access links, the Heathfield Urban Green Grid concept seeks to promote the provision of green roofs and walls to provide habitats and linkages for wildlife. Proposed areas of search for new accessible natural greenspace are also shown to the south and east of the town on **Figure 5.4**. New accessible natural greenspaces in these locations is required to address existing deficiencies in the provision of accessible natural greenspace at a range of scales identified by the ANGSt analysis (see **Section 2.7** for details).

5.3.12 The protection and enhancement of biodiversity sites, landscape/townscape character and historic environment assets, in line with the needs and opportunities identified for GI Zone 4 (Upper Rother Valleys) set out in **Section 3.5** and GI Zone 5 (Southern High Weald Slopes) set out in **Section 3.6**, are intended to support the GI Network for Heathfield.



KEY

4 Strategic Green & Blue Corridors

Priority landscape scale corridors with key opportunities for strategic GI enhancement, linkage and creation

4. Upper Rother Valley

B Strategic Green Access Links

Key opportunities for multi-user, predominantly off-road, strategic access routes/greenways

B. Central Wealden Link
D. Cuckoo Trail Link

Uckfield Urban Green Grid

Priority areas with key opportunities for greening of the built environment

Local Green Links

Key opportunities for local GI linkages

Green Infrastructure

Blue Infrastructure

Accessible Natural Greenspace

Proposed Areas of Search for New Accessible Natural Greenspace

A and B Roads

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FIGURE 5.4
HEATHFIELD
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

April 2017
11123101_Town GI Net_20-04-17.indd

Hailsham & Polegate Green Infrastructure Network

5.3.13 The proposed GI Network for Hailsham & Polegate is illustrated on **Figure 5.5**. This should be read in conjunction with the analysis of needs and opportunities for provision of GI in and around the town set out in **Section 4.5**.

5.3.14 The towns lie between the Cuckmere Valley Strategic Green Corridor (7) and the Pevensey Levels & Waller's Haven Valley Strategic Green Corridor (8), priority areas with key opportunities for strategic GI enhancement, linkage and creation. The High and Low Weald Strategic Green Access Links (C), Cuckoo Trail Strategic Green Access Link (D) and the Pevensey Levels to South Downs Strategic Green Access Link (E) connect communities and businesses within Hailsham & Polegate, and in the villages around the towns (such as Hellingly and Westham), to local leisure opportunities/destinations (such as Michelham Priory), greenspaces and public transport services.

5.3.15 A network of Local Green Links connects the Hailsham & Polegate Urban Green Grid to the Strategic Green Access Links, green infrastructure and blue infrastructure within the countryside in and around the towns. This network includes local GI linkages connecting the town centres with open spaces throughout the built-up areas and in the surrounding countryside (such as Wilmington/Abbot's Wood and Arlington Reservoir). In addition to providing a network of greenspaces and access links, the Hailsham & Polegate Urban Green Grid concept seeks to promote the provision of green roofs and walls to provide habitats and linkages for wildlife. Proposed areas of search for new accessible natural greenspace are also shown between Hailsham and Polegate, and between Polegate and Stone Cross, on **Figure 5.5**. New accessible natural greenspaces in these locations is required to address existing deficiencies in the provision of accessible natural greenspace at a range of scales identified by the ANGSt analysis (see **Section 2.7** for details). Protection of corridors of undeveloped land/countryside as green wedges between the built-up area of Hailsham & Polegate and the surrounding villages, to safeguard the towns' character and landscape setting, provides the opportunity to locate accessible natural greenspace in these areas.

5.3.16 The protection and enhancement of biodiversity sites, landscape/townscape character and historic environment assets, in line with the needs and opportunities identified in for GI Zone 7 (Low Weald) set out in **Section 3.8** and GI Zone 8 (Pevensey Levels) set out in **Section 3.9**, are intended to support the GI Network for Hailsham & Polegate.

Hellingly
Hestmonceux
Hailsham
Polegate
Westham
Stone Cross
C
D
E
7
8

KEY

7 Strategic Green & Blue Corridors

Priority landscape scale corridors with key opportunities for strategic GI enhancement, linkage and creation

7. Cuckmere Valley
8. Pevensey Levels & Wallers Haven Valley

Strategic Green Access Links

Key opportunities for multi-user, predominantly off-road, strategic access routes/greenways

C. High to Low Weald Links
D. Cuckoo Trail Link
E. Pevensey Levels to South Downs Links

Uckfield Urban Green Grid

Priority areas with key opportunities for greening of the built environment

Local Green Links

Key opportunities for local GI linkages

Green Infrastructure

Blue Infrastructure

Accessible Natural Greenspace

Proposed Areas of Search for New Accessible Natural Greenspace

A and B Roads

Railway/Station

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0 0.5 1 Kilometre

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FIGURE 5.5
HAILSHAM & POLEGATE
GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE NETWORK

April 2017
11123101_Town GI Net_20-04-17.indd

6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 General

6.1.1 Drawing on the findings of the Study, this section sets out guidance to assist in the development and implementation of GI policies in the Wealden Local Plan. It also provides and advice and recommendations for developing a GI Strategy for Wealden.

6.2 Green Infrastructure Policies

6.2.1 Taking into account the key needs and opportunities identified by this study, guidance for the development of GI policies are set out below for consideration by the Council.

Overarching GI Policy

6.2.2 In line with the National Planning Policy Framework, the new Local Plan should require development to contribute to the creation, protection, enhancement and management of GI networks. An overarching policy should be included in the new Local Plan to provide the strategic policy direction for the provision of GI to support the delivery of sustainable development.

6.2.3 In line with National Planning Policy Guidance, this GI Study provides an evidence base and proposed strategic framework for GI planning in Wealden District (excluding the South Downs National Park). The Study identifies GI needs and opportunities for the creation of a multi-functional network of green and blue corridors, having regard to factors such as accessibility, existing open spaces, natural and semi-natural habitats, protection of the water environment, landscape and geodiversity, and contribution to ecological networks. These opportunities are reflected in the proposed GI Network set out in **Section 5.0** at a strategic level for the whole of the District, and at a town scale for Crowborough, Uckfield, Heathfield and Hailsham & Polegate where the need for GI to support sustainable communities is greatest.

6.2.4 It is recommended that the overarching GI policy should reflect the following elements:

- The overall aim of the policy should be for development to protect, improve and enhance existing GI assets identified in this GI Study, and to contribute towards the provision of additional GI, to support the multi-functional GI network proposed in **Section 5.0**.
- Proposals should be supported where development:
  - ❖ is designed to respond to the location of existing GI and support and improve its function and benefits;

- ❖ protects and improves the GI network through the provision or enhancement of functional links or corridors between different GI assets; and
- ❖ provides new GI and/or introduces multi-functional use of existing green spaces or links/corridors where opportunities are identified.

- Development should not be permitted where it will result in the loss of existing GI assets or where it may compromise the integrity of the GI network, unless replacement provision or suitable alternative provision can be made that positively contributes to the GI network.
- Where the scale of development would be too small to accommodate on-site GI provision, the Council should seek developer contributions either towards the improvement of existing green spaces or towards the provision of new GI elsewhere.
- Where compensation is required for the loss of existing GI, then the provision of new or enhanced GI as required by the scale of the development should be in addition to the requirement for compensation.
- Where appropriate, the Council should also seek developer contributions for the future management and maintenance of green infrastructure.

Growth Area GI Policies

6.2.5 Where required, the overarching GI policy for the new Local Plan should be supported by GI policies for the main growth areas to support the delivery of sites allocated for residential development. In line with national Planning Policy Guidance, the Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape & Ecological Assessment Studies (CBA and TLP, 2017) identify more detailed opportunities for GI provision associated with potential development sites in and around the following areas:

- Edge of Tunbridge Wells
- Wadhurst
- Ninfield
- Herstmonceaux
- Heathfield
- Mayfield
- Stone Cross
- Horam
- Westham
- East Hoathly
- Hailsham
- Polegate

6.2.6 It is recommended that GI policies for the main growth areas should reflect the following elements:

- New residential development should be required to make an appropriate contribution to addressing local needs and opportunities for GI provision in and around the growth area by retaining, enhancing and creating green spaces and corridors as part of the GI Network defined by this Study.
- Development should be required to contribute to:
  - ❖ enhancing biodiversity by protecting, enhancing and creating habitats to provide a network of well-connected ecological corridors for the dispersal of wildlife in and around the growth area.
  - ❖ enhancing the landscape setting of the growth area by improving the character, appearance and condition of key access corridors/gateways, settlement edges and landscape features, including historic environment assets.
  - ❖ the production of local energy (e.g. fuel from coppiced woodlands) and food (e.g. allotments and community gardens) where appropriate.
  - ❖ the sustainable use of water resources by incorporating sustainable drainage systems, green roofs/walls and other 'green design' features into development proposals where appropriate.
  - ❖ enhancing the connectivity of residential areas, the high street, outdoor sports and recreational facilities, public transport services and the countryside around the growth area by retaining, enhancing and creating a well-connected network of accessible natural green spaces and access links.

6.3 Green Infrastructure Planning Guidance

6.3.1 Planning principles for embedding GI into new development schemes are suggested below, including recommended standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of green space provision. The planning guidance is intended to be of value for planners, developers and local communities in helping inform pre-application discussions and consultations, evaluation of planning applications and implementation of developments in respect of GI provision.

GI Planning Principles

6.3.2 The planning and development management process affords considerable potential to promote and deliver GI. The GI planning principles outlined in **Box 6.1** are intended to inform the provision of GI through the planning process:

Box 6.1 - GI Planning Principles

1. GI should be embedded into the layout of new development alongside the design of the built environment and grey infrastructure from the start of the masterplanning process.

2. Development should retain, enhance and/or create green corridors that contribute to the GI Network and support connectivity with town centres, urban fringe areas and the wider countryside.

3. Development that will cause significant harm to the functioning of the GI Network, particularly in relation to reducing the impacts of and adapting to climate change, should be discouraged.

4. Where an adverse impact on GI is unavoidable, development should provide suitable mitigation measures to ensure the overall multi-functionality and connectivity of the GI Network is maintained.

5. Development should provide or contribute towards the provision of on- or off-site GI as appropriate in locations with identified deficiencies, including arrangements for on-going management and maintenance of green spaces.

6. The amount and quality of GI of different types that is required by a development to ensure residents have the opportunity to interact with nature, and encourage recreation, sports and healthier lifestyles, should reflect Natural England's standards for accessible natural greenspace and the standards for open space provision recommended in the Wealden Open Space, Sports and Recreation Study 2016.

7. Development should deliver a net increase in biodiversity by incorporating opportunities to enhance biodiversity and improve ecological connectivity, including contributing to local Biodiversity Action Plan targets.

8. Development should incorporate measures for adapting to and mitigating against the effects of climate change through innovative GI design solutions, including sustainable water management/drainage systems and urban cooling measures.

9. Development involving the re-use, adaptation or conversion of existing buildings within established built environments should include opportunities for retrofitting GI measures into proposals, such as green roofs and green walls for example.

GI Standards

6.3.3 Provision of a connected and multi-functional network of high quality green spaces that delivers long-term benefits for people and nature should be a key aim for GI provision in Wealden District. This can best be achieved through adoption of the following standards related to the quantity, quality and accessibility of green space provision.

6.3.4 **Accessible natural greenspace standards** are recommended by Natural England to ensure residents have the opportunity to interact with nature and encourage healthier lifestyles. These include the following standards for the quantity, quality and accessibility of greenspace provision:

- **Accessibility and Quantity Standard** – the Access to Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) seeks to improve green space access, naturalness and connectivity by encouraging provision of range of site types and sizes within walking distance and sustainable transport distances of people's homes[177];
- **Service Standards** – national standards for delivery of core services/facilities for specific green space types (e.g. Country Park Accreditation); and
- **Quality Standard** – The Green Flag Award scheme provides a national quality standard for management of existing green spaces.

6.3.5 Full details of the above standards can be found in Natural England's 'Nature Nearby' Accessible Natural Greenspace Guidance (2010).

6.3.6 The **Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study** (2017) recommends local quantitative, qualitative and accessibility standards for different types of open spaces in and around settlements within Wealden District derived from assessments of needs and opportunities. Development schemes in Wealden District should make provision for open space in accordance with the recommended standards for size criteria and distance catchments set out in the Study.

6.3.7 Raising the standard of building and landscape design quality should also be a key aim for GI provision in Wealden District. Good GI design should work with existing features (e.g. retaining hedgerows to define a greenway network or using existing drainage ditches as part of a sustainable urban drainage system), and be appropriate to the desired primary and secondary functions for GI in the locality (e.g. balancing biodiversity and access, landscape character and flood risk management, etc). Green Infrastructure by Design: Adding Value to Developments[178] sets out GI design principles for the masterplanning of new developments based around the seven key functions for GI identified in Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance (2009)[179]. The Guide provides a valuable checklist for use by developers to help raise the quality of design and development, and also help local authority planners evaluate planning applications to ensure high standards in GI design are achieved.

6.3.8 CABE's **Building for Life standards** (2015)[180], developed in conjunction with the House Builders Federation, promote the incorporation of GI into housing developments through measures such as sustainable building materials; renewable energy; green design principles (green roofs, grey water recycling, energy efficiency); and sustainable urban drainage systems. Developers should also be encouraged to consider applying to accreditation schemes, such as The Wildlife Trust's **Biodiversity Benchmark**, to gain recognition of the quality of their work.

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[177] The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard is a complementary accessibility standard to ANGSt endorsed by Natural England (see www.woodlandtrust.org.uk for details).
[178] Green Infrastructure by Design: Adding Value to Developments
[179] http://naturalengland.etraderstores.com/NaturalEnglandShop/Product.aspx?ProductID=cda68051-1381-452f-8e5b-8d7297783bbd
[180] http://www.designcouncil.org.uk/resources/guide/building-life-12-third-edition

GI Design Guidelines

6.3.9 The provision of GI should be delivered in accordance with the planning principles set out above. Developers should fully consider opportunities for adding value to the developments by incorporating high quality, sustainable and multi-functional GI within their schemes at an early stage in the place making process, including how it will contribute to, and connect with, the wider GI Network beyond the development site. To assist in this, the GI design guidelines reflecting the multi-functional aspects of GI provision set out in **Box 6.2** are recommended for use as a good practice checklist for site masterplanning and design. These should be used in conjunction with the analysis of existing GI assets, needs and opportunities set out in **Sections 2.0, 3.0** and **4.0** of this Study.

Box 6.2 – GI Design Guidelines/Checklist

Biodiversity

- Retain and enhance existing habitat corridors and provide ecological buffers through grassland, scrub, trees and woodland habitat creation.
- Create a network of habitat links throughout a development, for example using an existing hedgerow network, and enhancing and extending links through habitat creation, including grassland, scrub and trees in adjoining areas.
- Retain and enhance existing watercourse corridors through incorporation into a site's open space network, and consider opportunities for naturalisation/diversification of habitats, such as wetland, grassland, scrub and trees.
- Conserve, strengthen and enhance veteran trees and the existing native hedgerow network within and around a site, and enhance and extend existing woodland, to safeguard biodiversity assets and maintain the landscape structure of a site.
- Encourage use of ecological building design measures that enhance biodiversity – e.g. green roofs, green walls, and tree planting/habitat creation within green spaces, and nesting and roosting spaces for birds/bats.

Landscape & the Historic Environment

- Incorporate a structural network of linked natural green spaces into development to contribute to and enhance the site's landscape setting, and help integrate townscape and landscape elements.
- Plan for and implement new structural landscape planting of native tree species appropriate to local character at the earliest possible stage, to ensure that development is visually well integrated into its landscape context and is appropriate to the local sense of place.
- Design of structural landscaping elements around residential development areas should create a soft edge linking landscape and townscape elements, with use of continuous bands of thicker screen planting to integrate new development areas into the landscape as experienced from within the site and from the surrounding townscape/countryside.
- Encourage use of natural forms of architectural building design and materials to provide landscape and visual mitigation benefits and contribute to sense of place – e.g. green roofs, green walls, timber construction for walls and claddings.
- Use existing landscape structural features to enhance local landscape character and provide mitigation for environmental impacts – e.g. retain and extend woodlands as landscape buffers to visually screen roads, mitigate traffic noise and improve air quality, and integrate flood attenuation areas into the design of the structural landscape buffers.

- Conserve and enhance existing structural features such as woodland blocks and hedgerows within the site to contribute to a strong landscape edge and setting for developed areas, retaining and managing these for recreational and biodiversity value as part of new accessible greenspaces.
- Extend structural landscape screening using shelterbelts with appropriate native species in more open parts of a site, to filter views of development from elevated areas.
- Avoid or limit lighting as far as possible to conserve dark night skies and minimise sky glow.
- Create positive approaches to new and existing development areas around settlements through avenue planting of native street trees on key gateway routes, and ensure that existing street trees are managed and enhanced to ensure that they are sustained as enduring features of the landscape and townscape.
- Plan and design new development to respect sensitive horizons/skylines and views that provide key elements of a site's visual context and setting, and tie development visually to the historic centre of settlements by safeguarding key views of and from local landmarks.

Energy & Food

- Incorporate measures for local renewable energy production into management of green spaces – e.g. energy crops, Combined Heat & Power plant based on local woodland coppice management, micro hydro-electric schemes and wind turbines/solar panels.
- Specify locally sourced and sustainably manufactured/produced materials and finishes wherever possible in the design, implementation and future management of green space to assist in reducing the carbon footprint of delivering GI.
- Encourage local food production by using green spaces for allotments and community gardens/orchards.
- Encourage local food production by creating links with adjacent farms providing small-scale local food production, local produce sales and educational opportunities for children.
- Encourage local food production by using green spaces to provide location for open air market selling local produce.

Water Resources

- Incorporate green building design measures that help reduce water consumption and provide natural shading/cooling to counter the heat island effect of urban areas (such as green roofs, green walls, timber construction for walls and claddings, water saving devices/rainwater recycling and retaining/planting trees within landscaping schemes).
- Safeguard water quality from potential risks of negative impacts associated with drainage from development.
- Incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) into a site's layout to assist in delivering flood storage and water balancing functions.

Accessible Natural Greenspace and Access Links

- Conserve and enhance existing tracks and field boundaries as green links to provide new footpath and cycle links to connect a development site with its different zones/neighbourhoods, and to link into the wider rights of way and green space network.
- Consider opportunities to create new crossings over/under major transport corridors to provide enhanced pedestrian and ecological connectivity between a site and its wider countryside.
- Provide opportunities to use green spaces and other GI assets as an outdoor classroom by providing access to and interpretation of natural and cultural assets.
- Design community parks to provide a balance between formal and passive recreation and access to nature, and offer varied opportunities for natural play.

- Connect housing and employment areas to wider greenways network to contribute to healthy communities and green travel objectives.
- Provide a hierarchy of access routes, segregated as necessary, for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists.
- Engage local communities at all stages of the planning and design process to foster a sense of ownership and responsibility for the long-term care of green spaces – e.g. design workshops and involvement in implementation through community planting/open days.
- Design recreational and play spaces to have a distinct sense of place, which provides an enjoyable and visually rewarding environment for all users and responds to and reflects its landscape context.
- Design play spaces to provide opportunities for a wide range of types of play, including active and passive or quieter, creative forms of play.
- Design green spaces and links to be accessible and inclusive to all ages and community groups, and to accommodate a wide variety of specific requirements including users with mobility impairments.

6.4 Developing a Green Infrastructure Strategy for Wealden

6.4.1 The Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Green Infrastructure advises that:

'To assist in planning positively for green infrastructure local planning authorities may wish to prepare an authority-wide green infrastructure framework or strategy. This should be evidence-based by, for example, including an assessment of current green infrastructure provision that identifies gaps in the network and the components and opportunities for improvement. The assessment can inform the role of green infrastructure in local and neighbourhood plans, infrastructure delivery plans and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) schedules.

Local Plans should identify the strategic location of existing and proposed green infrastructure networks. Where appropriate, supplementary planning documents can set out how the planning, design and management components of the green infrastructure strategy for the area will be delivered.

This strategic approach to green infrastructure may cross administrative boundaries. Therefore neighbouring authorities, working collaboratively with other stakeholders including Local Nature Partnerships (LNPs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), may wish to consider how wider strategies for their areas can help address cross-boundary issues and help meet the Duty to Cooperate.'

6.4.2 This GI Study provides a baseline for developing a GI Strategy for Wealden District. The analysis of existing GI assets, needs and opportunities set out in **Sections 2.0, 3.0** and **4.0** provide an up-to-date and coherent understanding of existing GI provision within Wealden District.

6.4.3 The focus of the GI Strategy should be to provide a long-term and overarching strategic framework for guiding action in areas of clearly identified need, where investment in a high quality, sustainable and multi-functional GI network can deliver the greatest benefits for people and the natural environment. The proposed GI network for Wealden District set out in **Section 5.0** provides a starting point for developing the GI Strategy in this respect.

6.4.4 The GI strategy should articulate a coherent vision for sustaining and improving GI provision to support sustainable development; encourage effective stakeholder partnerships; advocate the need for innovative GI management and funding; and also facilitate cross boundary working on GI delivery. In addition, the GI strategy should identify priorities for investment based on policies, public benefits and local needs, and outline a clear implementation strategy for delivery of GI. The implementation strategy should identify GI delivery mechanisms and potential funding sources, supported by a costed action plan to guide delivery. A concerted effort over a long period will be necessary to ensure that GI is planned, delivered and managed to fully meet the needs of existing and new communities; protect and enhance the environment; address the challenges of climate change; and underpin the economic stability of the District. Priorities for the successful delivery of GI include:

- Championing the importance, benefits and principles of GI to a wide audience – including the public, private and voluntary sectors.
- Influencing and enabling delivery of GI.
- Marketing and advocacy to promote the GI approach.
- Identification and selection of GI projects for funding.
- Establishing partnerships for the funding, delivery, management and ownership of specific GI projects.
- Identifying and disseminating information on best practice approaches to GI delivery.
- Liaising with neighbouring areas to co-ordinate cross-boundary delivery of strategic GI projects at the regional scale.

6.4.5 Effective strategic governance, leadership and co-ordination through stakeholder partnerships is key to effectively planning, managing and delivering GI. This is particularly important as there is currently no dedicated funding stream for GI. A long-term and strategic approach is also necessary as investment in new and enhanced GI provision is likely to be delivered incrementally, facilitated by, and in step with, development. As mainstream public sector funding for delivery of GI is expected to continue to decline, contributions towards GI provision from new development are increasingly a key delivery mechanism. Funding for delivery of GI related to specific developments may be secured from developer contributions (either through planning obligations or the Community Infrastructure Levy) in line with appropriate Local Plan policies. Investment by the private sector in supporting a high quality environment and moving to a low carbon future through corporate environmental/social responsibility spending also provides a further potential funding source for GI investment.

6.4.6 To ensure that GI is implemented effectively, the relevant findings and recommendations of the GI Strategy should be embedded in spatial planning and development management through inclusion of appropriate GI policies and standards in the Local Plan as suggested in **Sections 6.2** and **6.3** above.

APPENDIX A
Record of Datasets

GI Audit Datasets

GI Theme	Datasets	Mapping Scale(s)	Figure(s)
Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Designations: • Ramsar Sites • Special Areas of Conservation • Special Protection Areas • Sites of Special Scientific Interest • National Nature Reserves • Local Wildlife Sites • Ancient Woodland • Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites	District, Sub-District, Town	2.2a: Designated Biodiversity & Geodiversity Sites 3.2b-3.9b: Designated Biodiversity & Geodiversity Sites 4.2b-4.5b: Designated Biodiversity & Geodiversity Sites
	Broad Habitat Types: • Woodland Habitats (National Forest Inventory/BAP Priority Habitats Inventory) • Lowland Heath Habitats (BAP Priority Habitats Inventory) • Grassland Habitats (BAP Priority Habitats Inventory) • Wetland and Coastal Habitats (BAP Priority Habitats Inventory) • Freshwater Habitats (Main Watercourses and Waterbodies)	District	2.2b: Biodiversity - Wildlife Habitats
	Biodiversity Opportunity Areas	District	2.2c: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas
	• Main BAP Priority Habitats • Mixed and Coniferous Woodland Habitats (National Forest Inventory) • Freshwater Habitats (Main Watercourses and Waterbodies)	Sub-District	3.2c-3.9c: Biodiversity - Wildlife Habitats 4.2c - 4.5c: Biodiversity - Wildlife Habitats
	• Tree Preservation Orders	Town	4.2c - 4.5c: Biodiversity - Wildlife Habitats
Landscape & Historic Environment	East Sussex County Landscape Character Areas	District	2.3a: Landscape Character & Protected Landscapes
	High Weald AONB & South Downs National Park boundaries	District	2.3a: Landscape Character & Protected Landscapes
	Registered Historic Parks and Gardens	District, Sub-	2.3b: Historic Environment

GI Theme	Datasets	Mapping Scale(s)	Figure(s)
		District, Town	3.2e-3.9e: Historic Environment 4.2f-4.5f: Historic Environment
	Scheduled Monuments	District, Sub-District, Town	2.3b: Historic Environment 3.2e-3.9e: Historic Environment 4.2f-4.5f: Historic Environment
	Conservation Areas	District, Sub-District, Town	2.3b: Historic Environment 3.2e-3.9e: Historic Environment 4.2f-4.5f: Historic Environment
	Listed Buildings	Town	4.2f-4.5f: Historic Environment
	Geology, Landform, Water Systems & Climate: • Sandstone Outcrops • Main Watercourses and Waterbodies Settlements: • Villages • Historic Farmsteads Routeways: • Historic Routeways	Sub-District	3.2d - 3.6d: AONB Character Components

GI Theme	Datasets	Mapping Scale(s)	Figure(s)
	Woodland: • Gill Woods • National Forest Inventory Woodland • Ancient Woodland Field & Heath: • Historic Field Boundaries • Meadows • Heathland		
	Wealden District Local Landscape Character Types & Areas	Sub-District	3.7d - 3.9d: Local Landscape Character Types & Areas
	Wealden District Landscape Setting Areas	Town	4.2e-4.5e: Landscape Setting Areas
Energy & Food	Agricultural Land Classification	District	2.4: Energy & Food
	National Forest Inventory (Deciduous Woodland)	District	2.4: Energy & Food
Water Resources	Flood Zone 2 & 3	District	2.5: Water Resources
	All Watercourses (Rivers and Streams)	District	2.5: Water Resources
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links	• Access Land (created under CROW Act 2000 and dedicated by National Trust, Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and other private landowners) • Country Parks • Local Nature Reserves • Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves • National Trust Land • Woodland Trust Land with Access	District	2.6a: Existing Accessible Natural Greenspace
	• Access Land (created under CROW Act 2000 and dedicated by National Trust, Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and other private	Sub-District	3.2f - 3.9f: Access Links & Accessible Natural Greenspace

GI Theme	Datasets	Mapping Scale(s)	Figure(s)
	landowners) • Country Parks • Local Nature Reserves • Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves • National Trust Land • Woodland Trust Land with Access		
	• Access Land (created under CROW Act 2000 and dedicated by National Trust, Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust and other private landowners) • Country Parks • Accessible Natural Greenspace • Allotments • Amenity Greenspace • Churchyards and Cemeteries • Parks and Recreation Grounds • Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace	Town	4.2g - 4.5g: Access Links & Accessible Natural Greenspace
	Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study: • Accessible Natural Greenspace • Allotments • Amenity Greenspace • Churchyards and Cemeteries • Parks and Recreation Ground	Town	4.2i-4.5i: Open Space Typology
	• Public Rights of Way/Promoted Routes/Sustrans National Cycle Routes • National Trails	District	2.7: Access Links
	• Promoted Routes • Sustrans National Cycle Routes • Public Rights of Way • National Trails	Sub-District	3.2f - 3.9f: Access Links & Accessible Natural Greenspace
	• Promoted Routes • Sustrans National Cycle Routes	Town	4.2g - 4.5g: Access Links & Accessible Natural Greenspace

GI Theme	Datasets	Mapping Scale(s)	Figure(s)
	• Public Rights of Way • National Trail		

Datasets Sources

Figure Number	Data	Source	Date data received/ downloaded
1.1, 1.2, 2.3a, 3.1, 4,1	Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Natural England	05/05/2016
1.1, 1.2, 2.3a, 3.1, 4.1	National Parks	Natural England	05/05/2016
1.2, All Zone Figures	Parish Boundaries	Wealden DC	27/04/2016
All District Figures, All Zone Figures	Roads, Rail, Settlement, Rivers	Ordnance Survey Vectormap District	23/05/2016
2.1a	Major Rivers	Ordnance Survey Open Rivers	23/05/2016
2.2a, 3.2b-3.9b, 4.2b-4.5b	Special Areas of Conservation	Natural England	05/05/2016
2.2a, 3.2b-3.9b, 4.2b-4.5b	Special Protection Areas	Natural England	05/05/2016
2.2a, 3.2b-3.9b, 4.2b-4.5b	Ramsar Sites	Natural England	05/05/2016
2.2a, 3.2b-3.9b, 4.2b-4.5b	Sites of Special Scientific Interest	Natural England	05/05/2016
2.2a, 3.2b-3.9b, 4.2b-4.5b	National Nature Reserve	Natural England	05/05/2016
2.2a, 3.2b-3.9b, 4.2b-4.5b	Local Wildlife Sites	Wealden DC	10/03/2017
2.2a,3.2b-3.9b, 4.2b-4.5b, 3.2d-3.6d	Ancient Woodland	Natural England	05/05/2016
2.2a, 3.2b-3.9b, 4.2b-4.5b	Regionally Important Geological Sites	Wealden DC	27/04/2016
2.2b, 3.2c-3.9c, 4.2c-4.5c	Priority Habitats Inventory	Natural England	16/05/2016
2.2c	Biodiversity Opportunity Areas	Wealden DC	27/04/2016
2.3a	East Sussex County Landscape Character	Wealden DC	27/05/2014
2.3b, 3.2e-3.9e, 4.2f-4.5f	Registered Historic Parks and Gardens	Historic England	24/04/2016
2.3b, , 3.2e-3.9e, 4.2f-4.5f	Scheduled Monuments	Historic England	15/07/2016
2.3b, , 3.2e-3.9e, 4.2f-4.5f	Conservation Areas	Wealden DC	Updated April 2017 as per CA review
4.2f-4.5f	Listed Buildings	Historic England	15/07/2016
2.4	Agricultural Land Classification	Natural England	16/05/2016
2.4, 3.2c-3.9c, 4.2c-4.5c	National Forest Inventory	Forest Research	17/06/2016
2.5	Flood Zone 3	Environment Agency	16/05/2016
2.6a, 3.2f-3.9f, 4.2g-4.5g, 4.2i-4.5i	Wealden Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study (2016)	Wealden DC/Ethos	07/10/2016
2.6a, 3.2f-3.9f, 4.2g-4.5g	CRoW Act 2000 Access Land	Natural England	05/05/2016
2.6a, 3.2f-3.9f, 4.2g-4.5g	Country Parks	Natural England	05/05/2016
2.2a, 3.2b-3.9b, 4.2b-4.5b 2.6a, 3.2f-3.9f, 4.2g-4.5g	Local Nature Reserves	Natural England	05/05/2016

Figure Number	Data	Source	Date data received/ downloaded
2.6a, 3.2f-3.9f, 4.2g-4.5g	Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserves	Sussex BRC	19/07/2016
2.6a, 3.2f-3.9f, 4.2g-4.5g	Woodland Trust Sites	Woodland Trust	31/05/2016
2.7, 3.2f-3.9f, 4.2g-4.5g	National Trails	Natural England	11/05/2016
2.7, 3.2f-3.9f, 4.2g-4.5g	Public Rights of Way	Wealden DC	27/04/2016
2.7, 3.2f-3.9f, 4.2g-4.5g	National Cycle Network Routes	Wealden DC	06/05/2016
3.2d-3.6d	Sandstone Outcrops	High Weald AONB Unit	20/05/2016
3.2d-3.6d	Historic Farmsteads	High Weald AONB Unit	25/07/2016
3.2d-3.6d	Historic Routeways	High Weald AONB Unit	20/05/2016
3.2d-3.6d	Gill Woods	High Weald AONB Unit	20/05/2016
3.2d-3.6d	Meadow	High Weald AONB Unit	20/05/2016
3.2d-3.6d	Heathland	High Weald AONB Unit	20/05/2016
3.2d-3.6d	Historic Field Boundaries	High Weald AONB Unit	20/05/2016
4.2c-4.5c	Tree Preservation Orders	Wealden DC	29/04/2016

APPENDIX B
Summary of Relevant Strategies and Studies

SUMMARY OF RELEVANT STRATEGIES AND STUDIES

Existing Wealden District Green Infrastructure Evidence Base

GI related evidence base work undertaken by the Council includes:

- Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (November 2014)[181].
- Wealden Landscape Study (February 2009)[182].
- Habitat Regulations Assessment work associated with Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA)/Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Pevensey Levels SAC (on-going).
- Updated Open Space, Sport and Recreation Stud (in prep).
- Updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (in prep)
- Wealden Local Plan Sites Landscape and Ecological Assessments (2017)

Wealden District Council Community and Corporate Strategies

The Wealden Sustainability Strategy[183] and Corporate Plan[184] provide a number of themes, vision elements and priorities that can be closely linked with the environmental, social and economic benefits of GI including:

- Improving mental health and wellbeing.
- Adapting to climate change and managing flood risk.
- Protecting, maintaining and enhancing rural and urban environments.
- Providing high quality, accessible open space and a safe and comprehensive network of footpaths and bridleways.
- Promotion of the countryside as a sustainable resource for recreation, tourism and other rural enterprise.
- Support for Wealden's farming, forestry and viticulture enterprises.

[181] http://www.wealden.gov.uk/Wealden/Residents/Planning_and_Building_Control/Planning_Policy/CoreStrategy/CoreStrategyLibrary/Planning_Evidence_Base_Landscape.aspx
[182] See Landscape page for footnote 5 for link.
[183] Wealden Sustainability Strategy (undated)
[184] Wealden Corporate Plan, WDC (2015-19)

Other Relevant Strategies and Studies

East Sussex Environment Strategy (2011)

The East Sussex Environment Strategy[185] identifies the following objectives:

- To protect and enhance key biodiversity sites, halt and reverse the decline in biodiversity, and further develop and restore large scale habitats.
- To create well planned GI that supports the landscape, habitats and wildlife.
- To ensure that 90% of the population of the County has access to a natural greenspace within 5 minutes of their home.
- To provide the opportunity to be active outdoors on a regular basis.

To achieve this, the Strategy put forward two specific actions in regards to GI:

- To develop a countywide approach to GI.
- To ensure that the infrastructure (including GI) associated with new development is planned for and that environmental objectives are represented in Local Plans.

East Sussex Green Infrastructure Study (2014)

To meet the Environment Strategy actions detailed above, the County Council produced the East Sussex Green Infrastructure Study[186]. This study provides guidance to local authorities and identifies a number of objectives relating to baseline mapping, assessment scales, key functions of GI and opportunities and gaps in data. The aim is to ensure that a joined up approach to identifying and assessing the provision of GI at a County level can be achieved and contributed to by each local authority within the County - including Wealden District.

South Downs National Park Access Network and Accessible Natural Greenspace Study

The South Downs National Park Access Network and Accessible Natural Green Space Study[187] provides evidence in support of both the South Downs National Park Management Plan and Local Plan, by analysing the access network and elements of the GI network in and around the National Park. The study focuses primarily on one element of the total GI resource, the access components and, in particular, accessible natural greenspace. The study analysed access to accessible natural greenspace against standards set out by Natural England, which states that everyone should have access to some form of accessible natural greenspace. The study identifies areas of deficiency in provision for populations

[185] East Sussex Environment Strategy (2011)

[186] East Sussex Green Infrastructure Study (2014)

[187] http://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/national-park-local-plan/evidence-and-supporting-documents/access-network-and-accessible-natural-green-space-study/

served by the National Park, including those both within and outside the Park – including Wealden District.

South Downs National Park Draft Green Infrastructure Framework (2016)

The Draft Green Infrastructure Framework[188] sets out a roadmap for GI planning related to the South Downs National Park and the wider region. The Framework bridges the divide between urban and rural areas in terms of GI planning, making new connections and bringing greater understanding of the synergies and interactions between them. The Framework aims to support spatial planning by local authorities by bringing together the existing strategies and plans of partners and placing these alongside additional evidence to add depth to the understanding of the area. The Framework is not intended to be prescriptive in the specific actions which partners should take to further GI planning and delivery but, rather, provides an over-arching framework of priorities and principles into which individual plans, strategies and delivery could fit. The Framework provides several GI case study examples as well as identifying proposed GI Investment Areas, including two within Wealden District.

[188] South Downs National Park Draft Green Infrastructure Framework (2016)



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