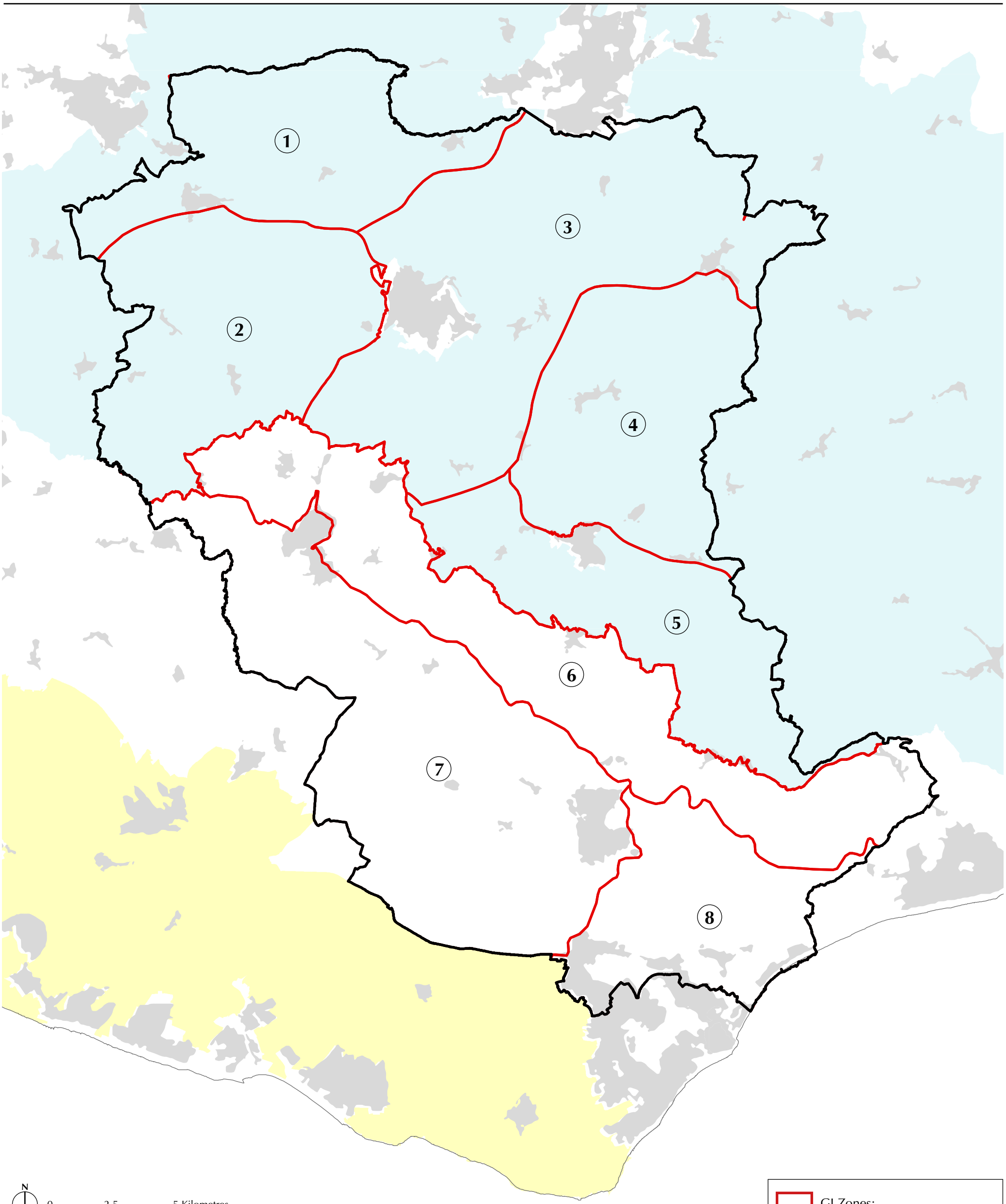
3.0 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE ZONES ASSESSMENTS

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

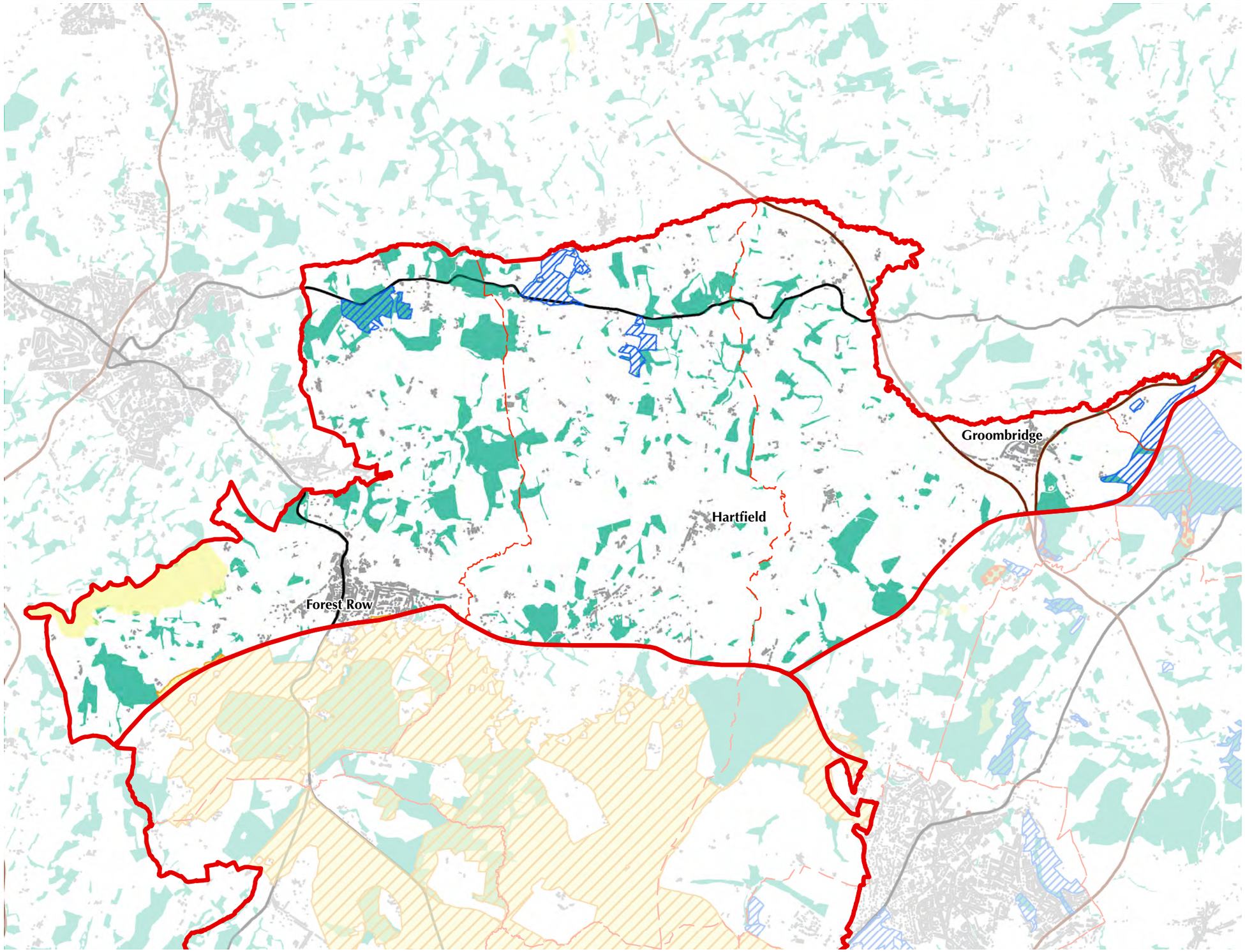
3.2.3 The designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites within Zone 1 are overall in moderate condition. The condition of Local Wildlife Sites designated for their grassland habitats within this zone is moderate to good[122]. However, Weir Wood Reservoir SSSI is predominantly (74.5%) in 'unfavourable – 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

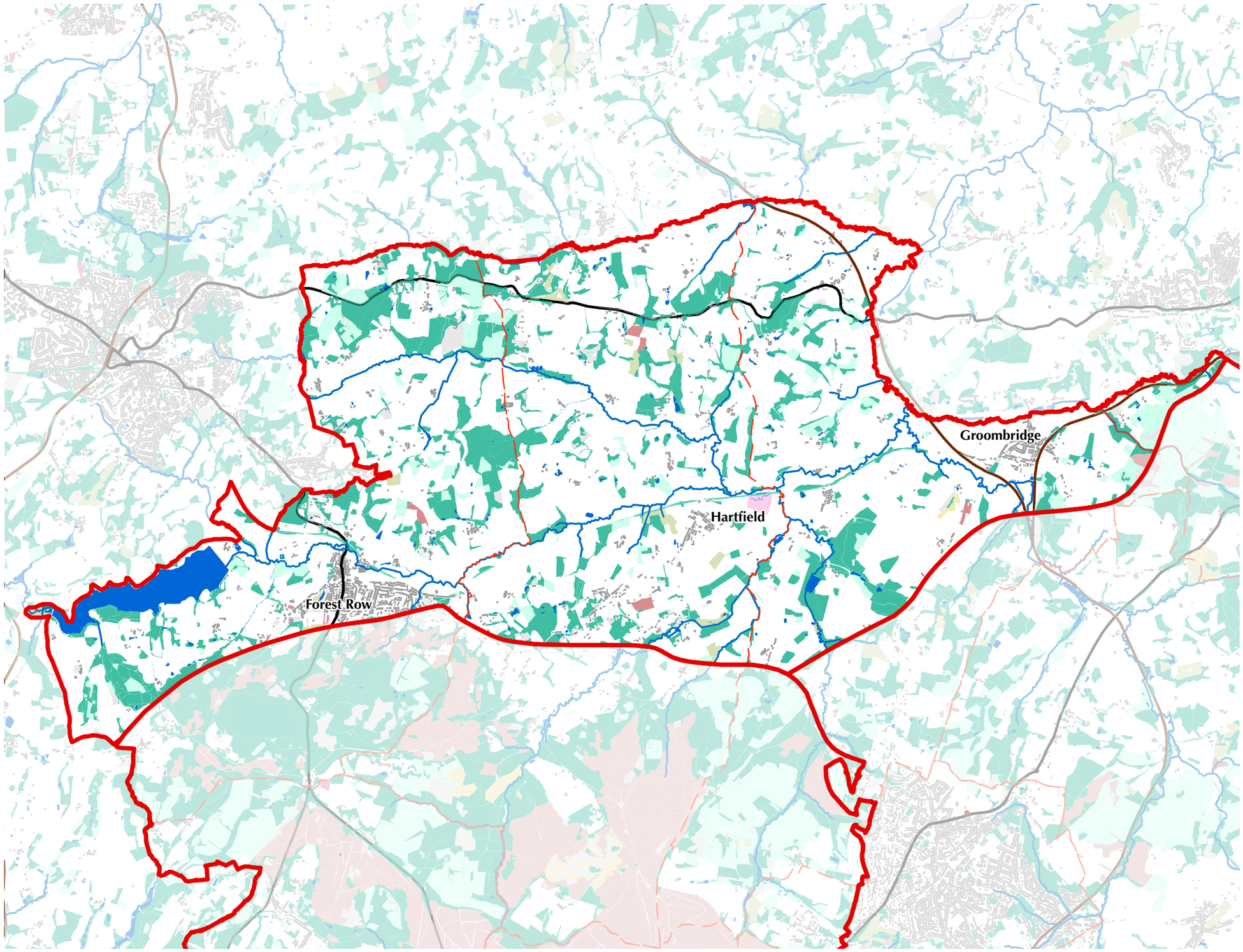
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FIGURE 3.2b
ZONE 1 - UPPER MEDWAY VALLEYS:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

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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

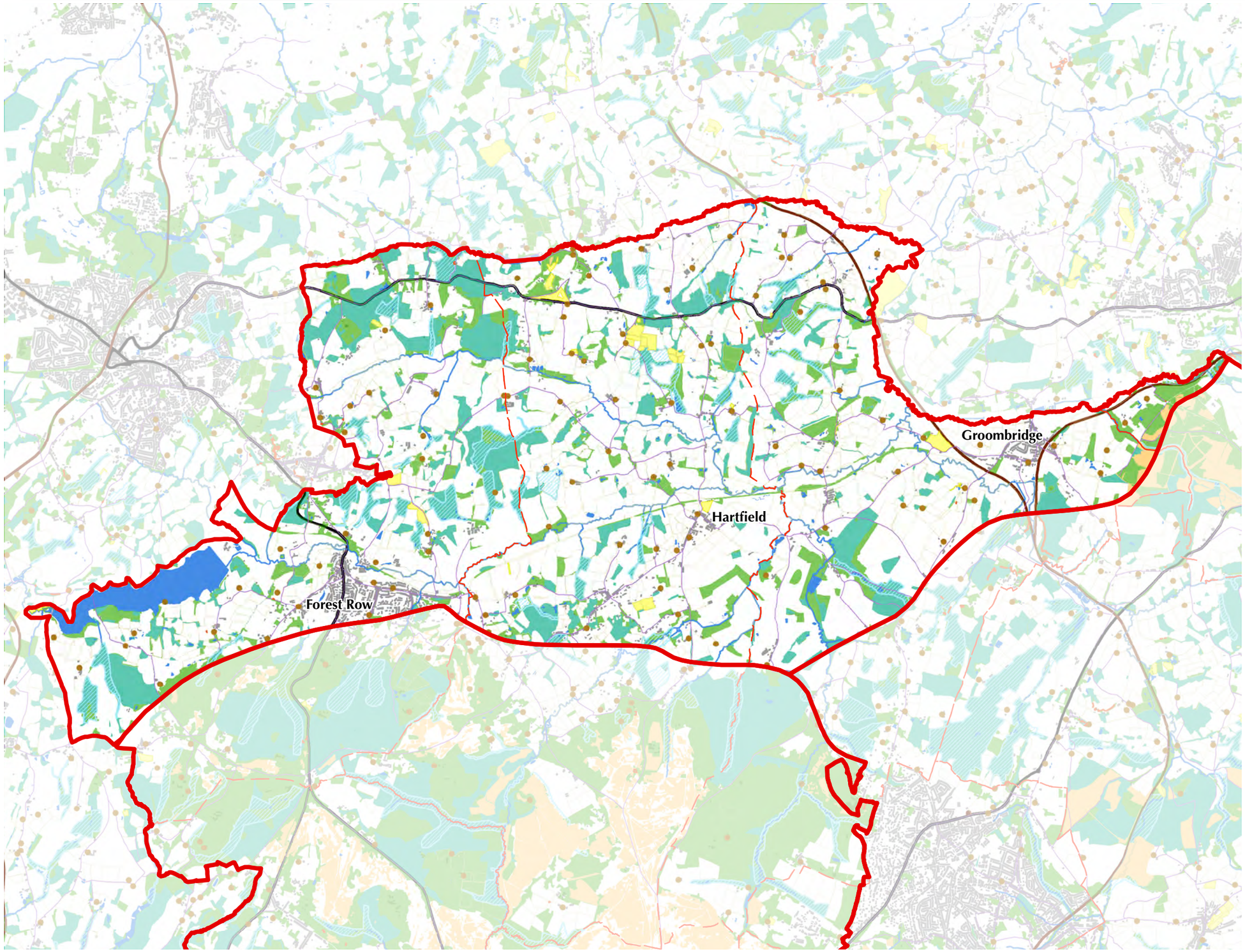
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- Floating Pennywort *Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*
- Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*
- Canadian Waterweed *Elodea canadensis*

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.

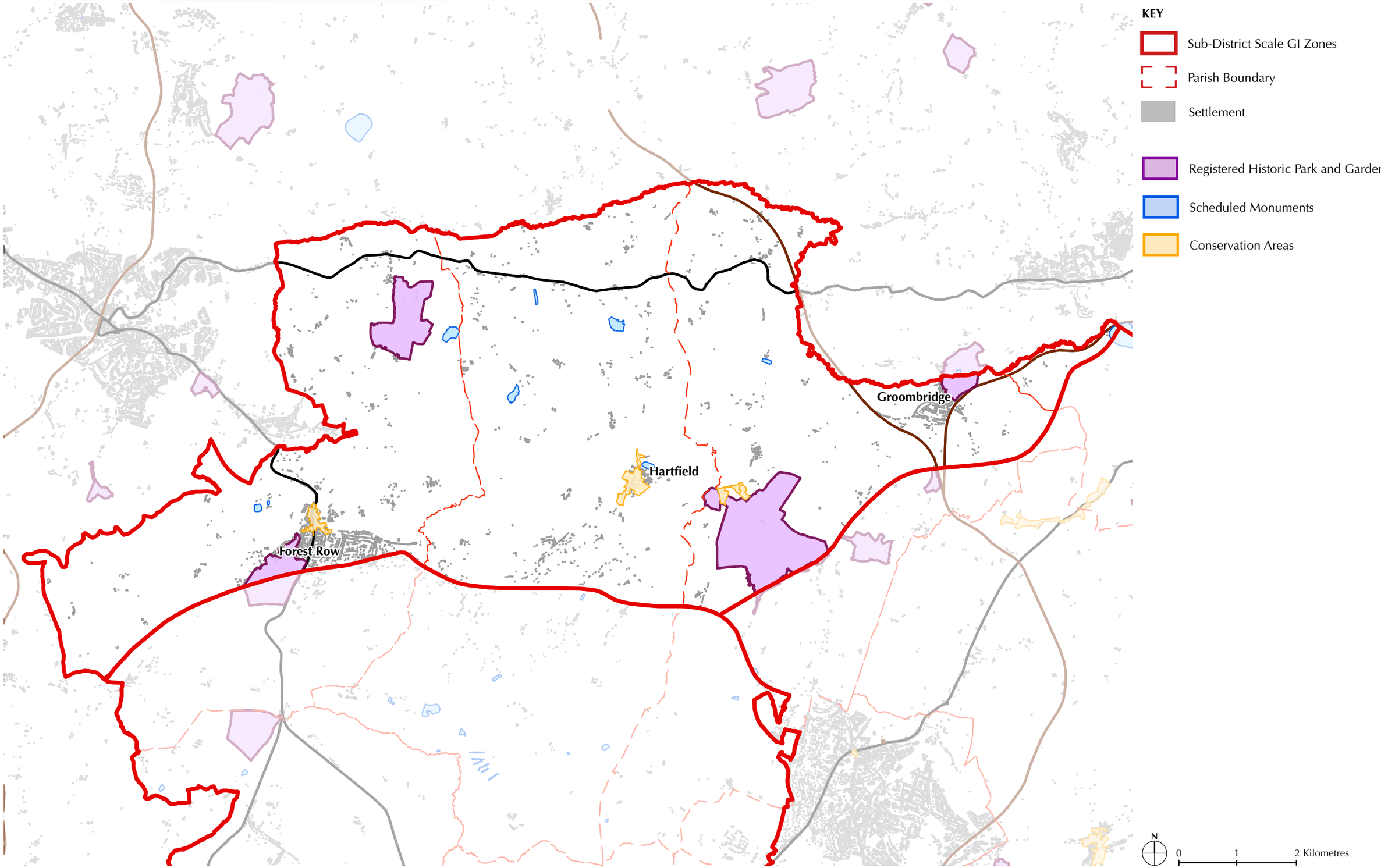
3.2.8 These heritage assets are generally not at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change, with the exception of Kidbrooke Park, which is on the national heritage at risk register.

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

April 2017

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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

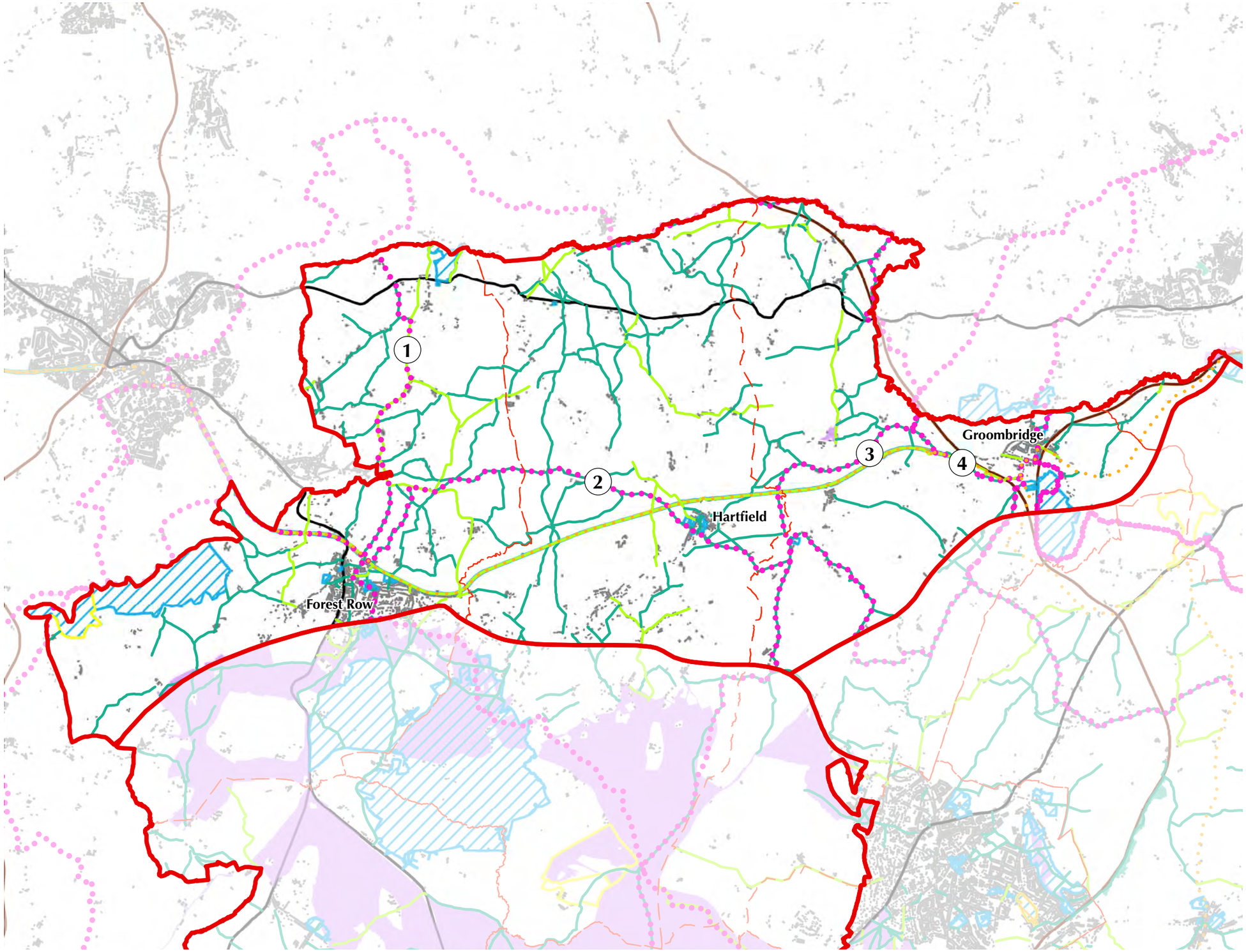
3.2.13 The existing provision of accessible natural greenspace within the Upper Medway Valleys GI Zone and adjoining areas is shown on **Figure 3.2f.** This shows that access to neighbourhood and district scale greenspaces is limited within this zone. Access to country and sub-regional scale spaces however 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

April 2017
11123101_Figures_L_20-04-17.indd

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

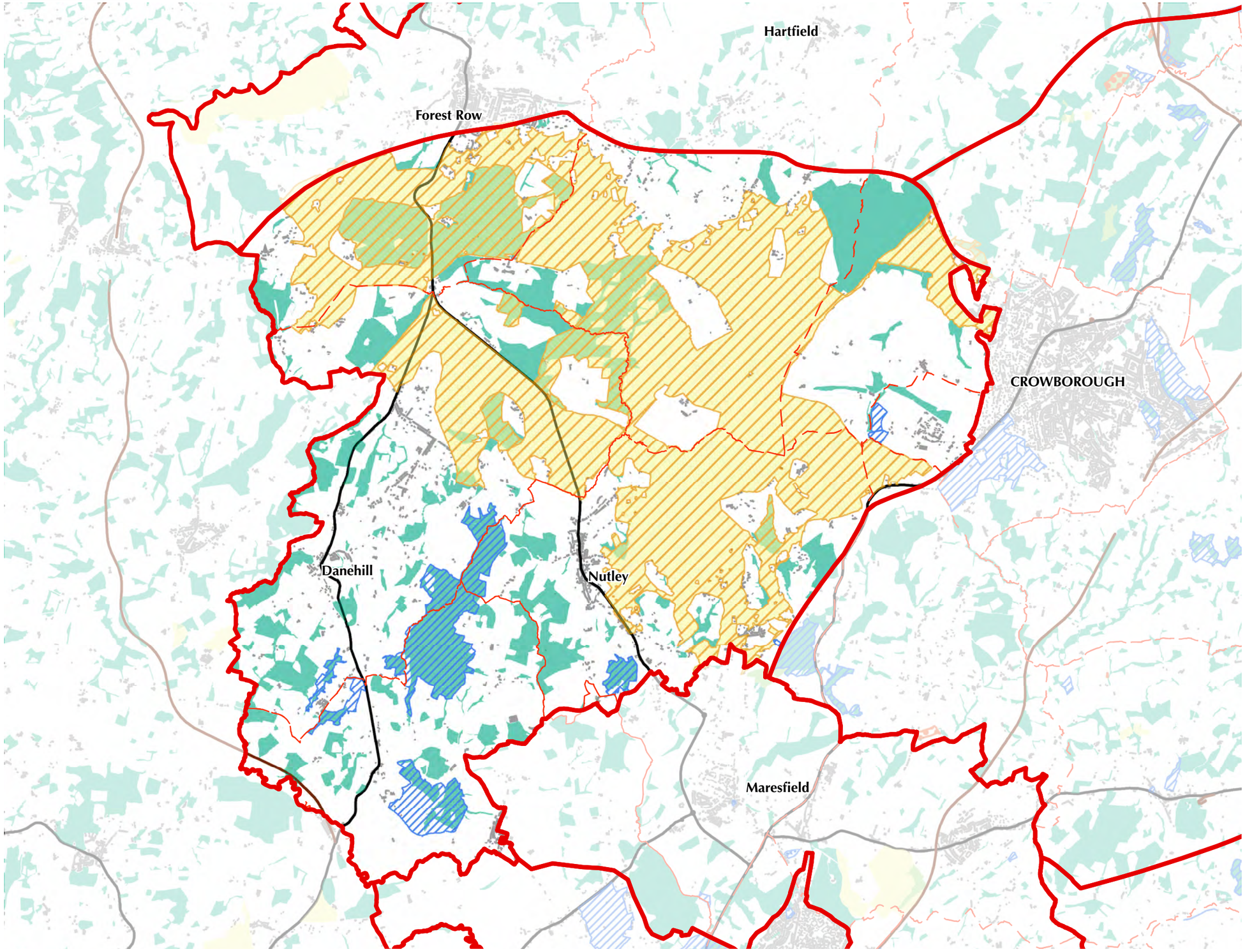
3.3.2 The Ashdown Forest GI Zone contains the following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites (see **Figure 3.3b**):

- 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



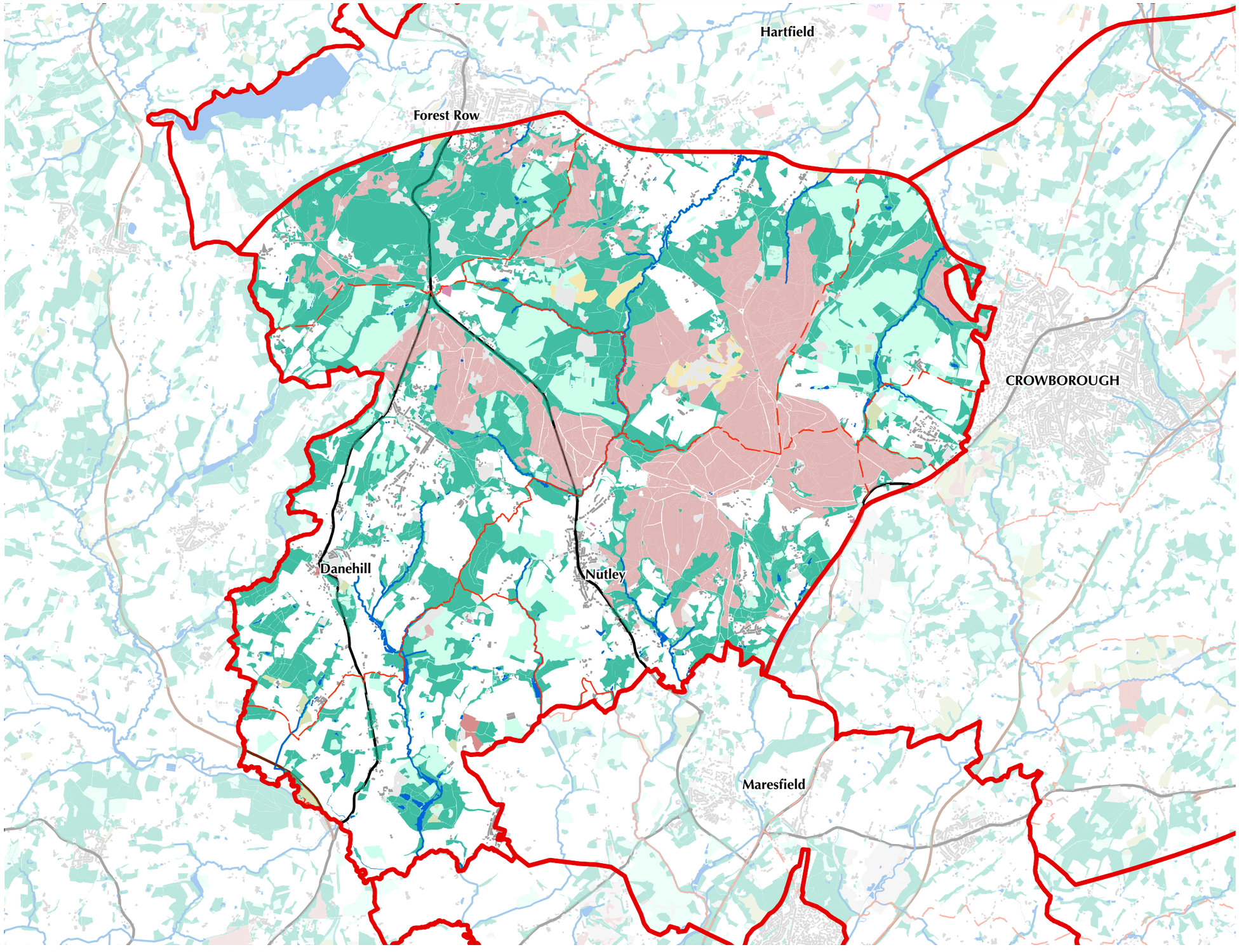
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FIGURE 3.3b
ZONE 2 - ASHDOWN FOREST:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

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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.

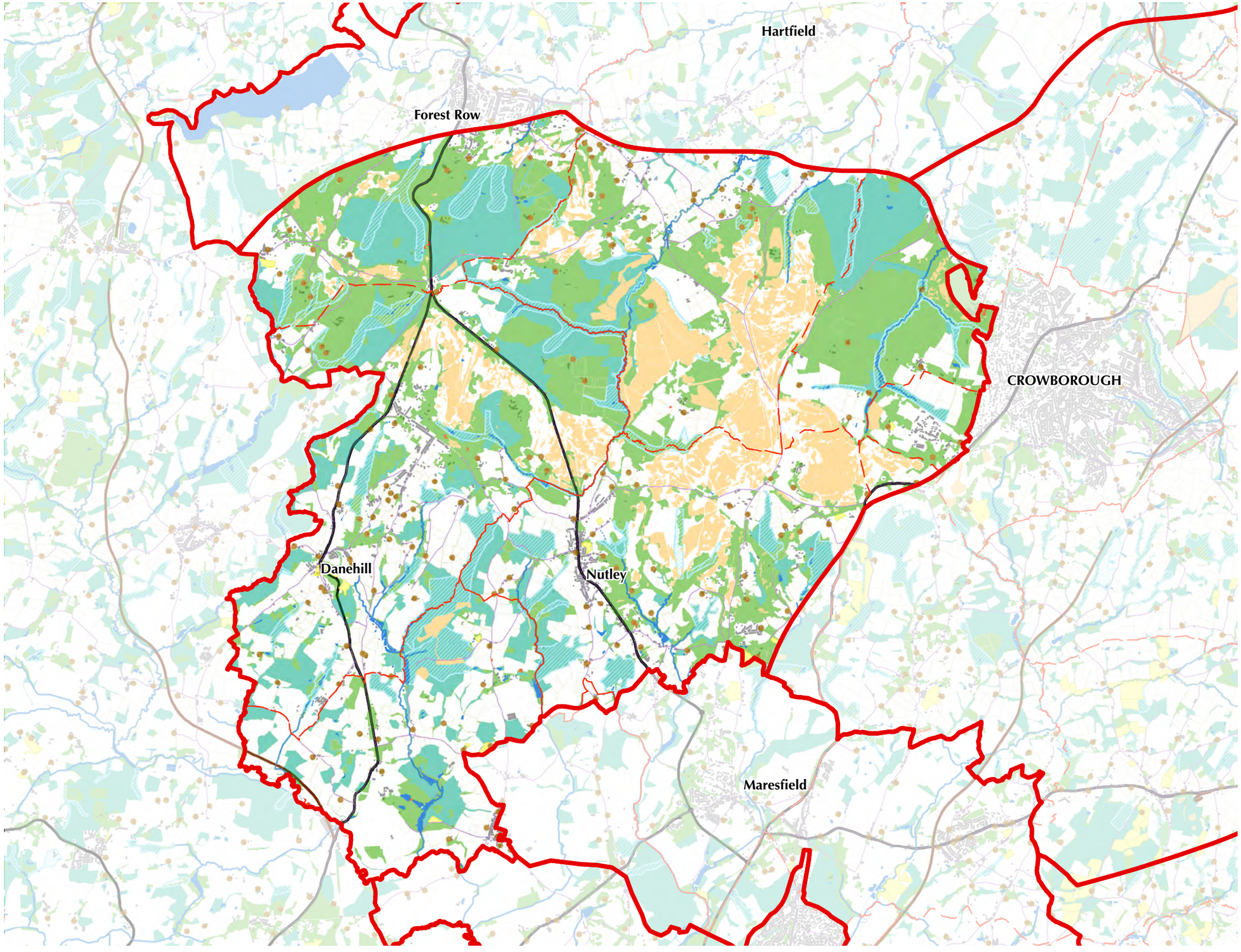
3.3.5 As shown on **Figure 2.2c**, Zone 2 lies almost wholly within the Western Ouse Streams and Ashdown Forest Biodiversity Opportunity Area (48). In total 114 species have been recorded in this BOA including Nightjar and Adder. Over 20 invasive species have been identified within this zone, including:

- 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

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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.

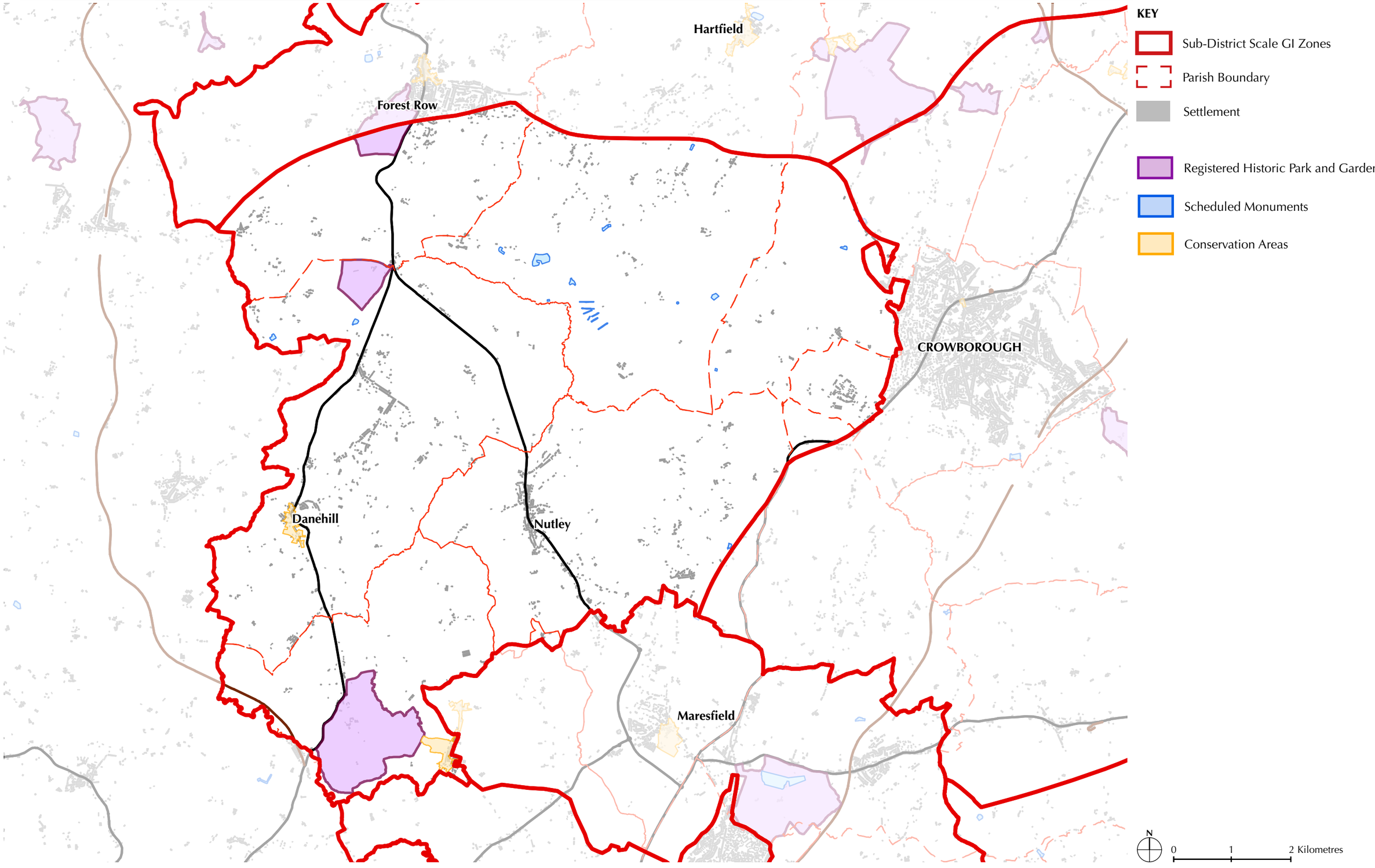
3.3.7 The historic environment assets in the Ashdown Forest GI Zone shown on **Figure 3.3e** also make an important contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape. These include:

- 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].

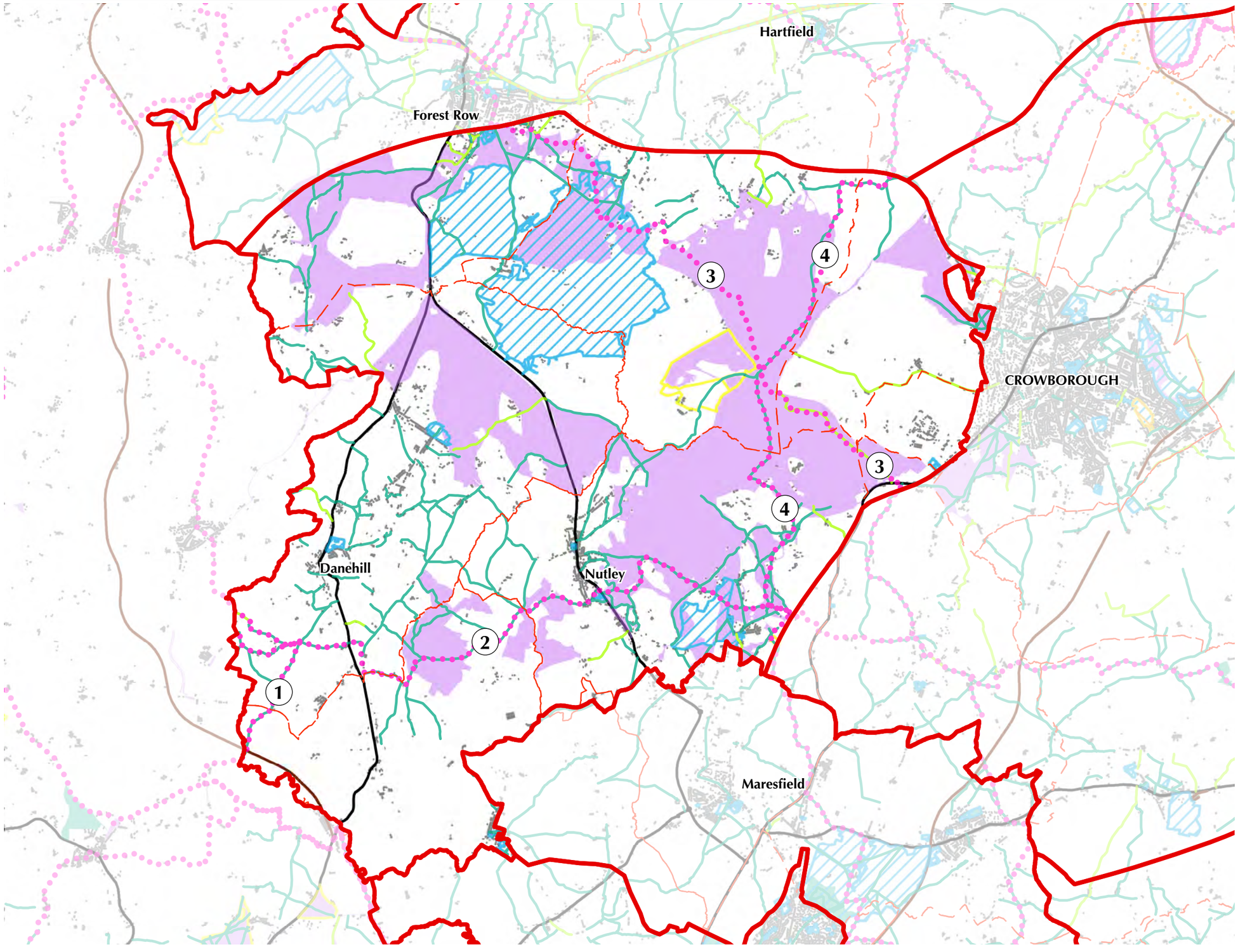
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

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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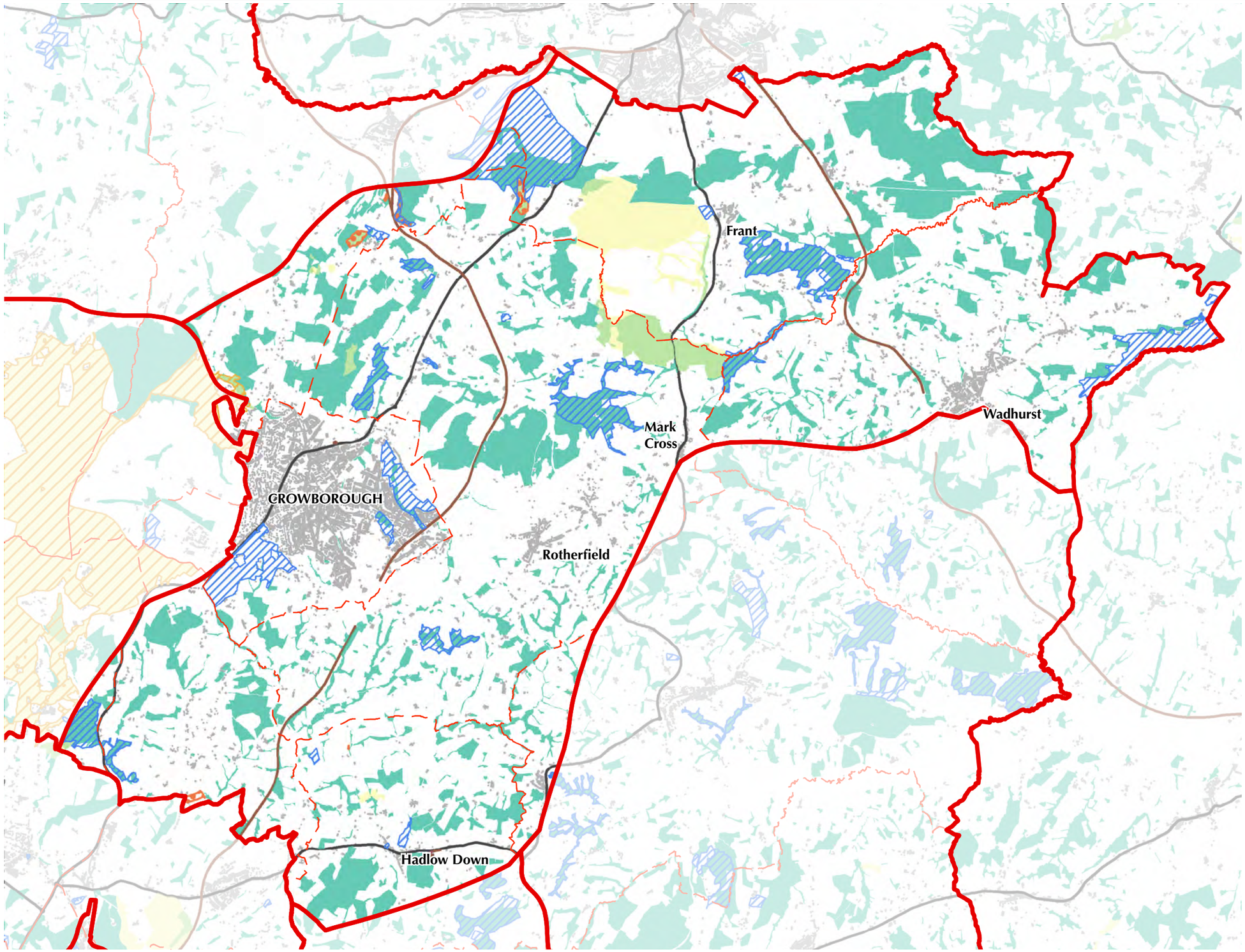
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- **Heathland Restoration at Broadwater Warren & Hargate Forest -** Large-scale on-going habitat restoration of PAWS to heathland by the RSPB and Woodland Trust respectively.
- **High Weald Welly Walks (Hadlow Down, Rotherfield, Crowborough x3, High 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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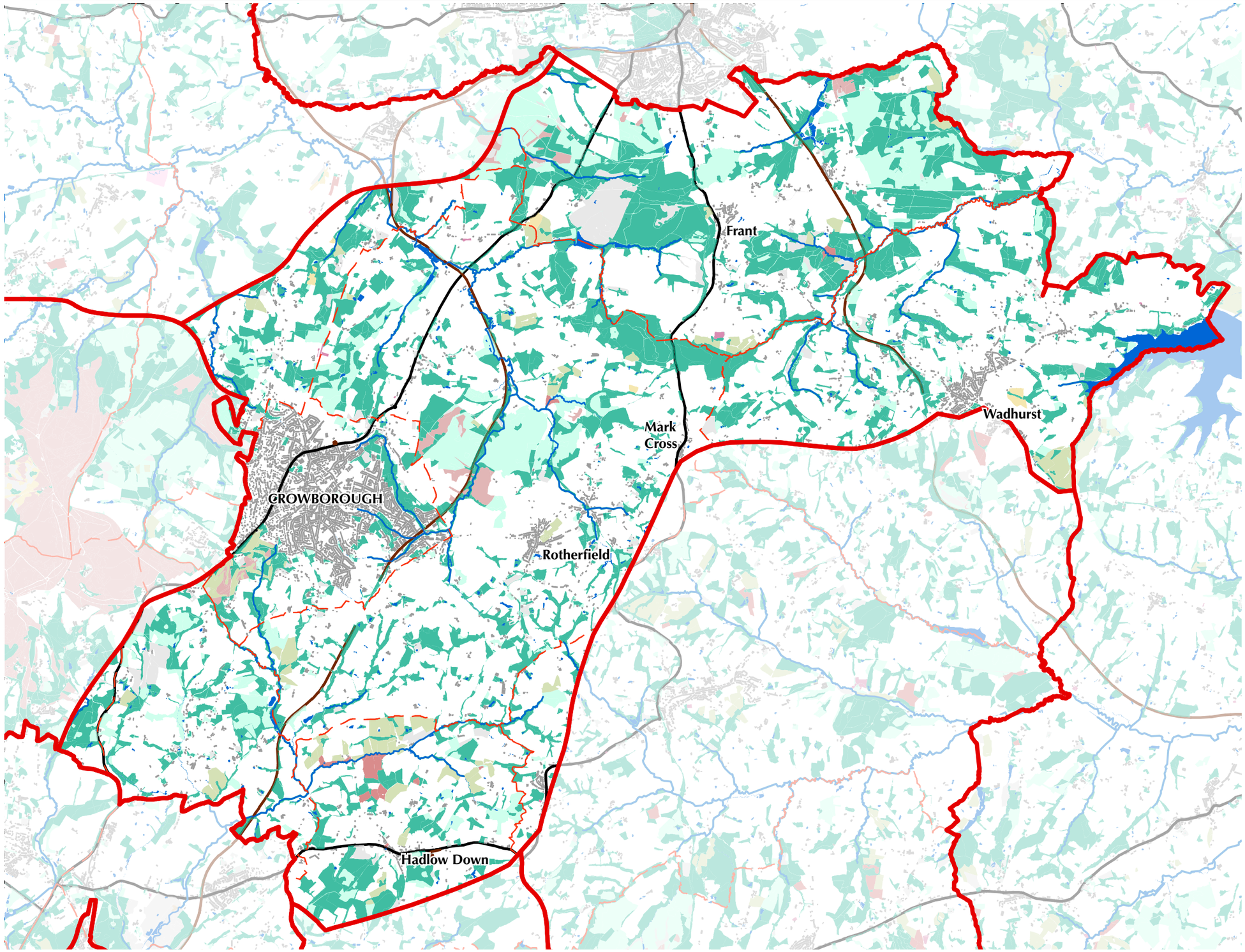
- Clays Wood LWS
- Colesgrove Wood Complex LWS
- Bewl Water Reservoir LWS
- Hawkenbury Farm Meadows LWS
- Hastingford Cutting, Hadlow Down RIGS
- Harrison's Rocks RIGS
- Glen Andred Rocks, Groombridge RIGS
- Eridge Rocks, Eridge Green RIGS
- Rocks Wood, near Groombridge RIGS
- The Hermitage, High Hurstwood, 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

April 2017

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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).

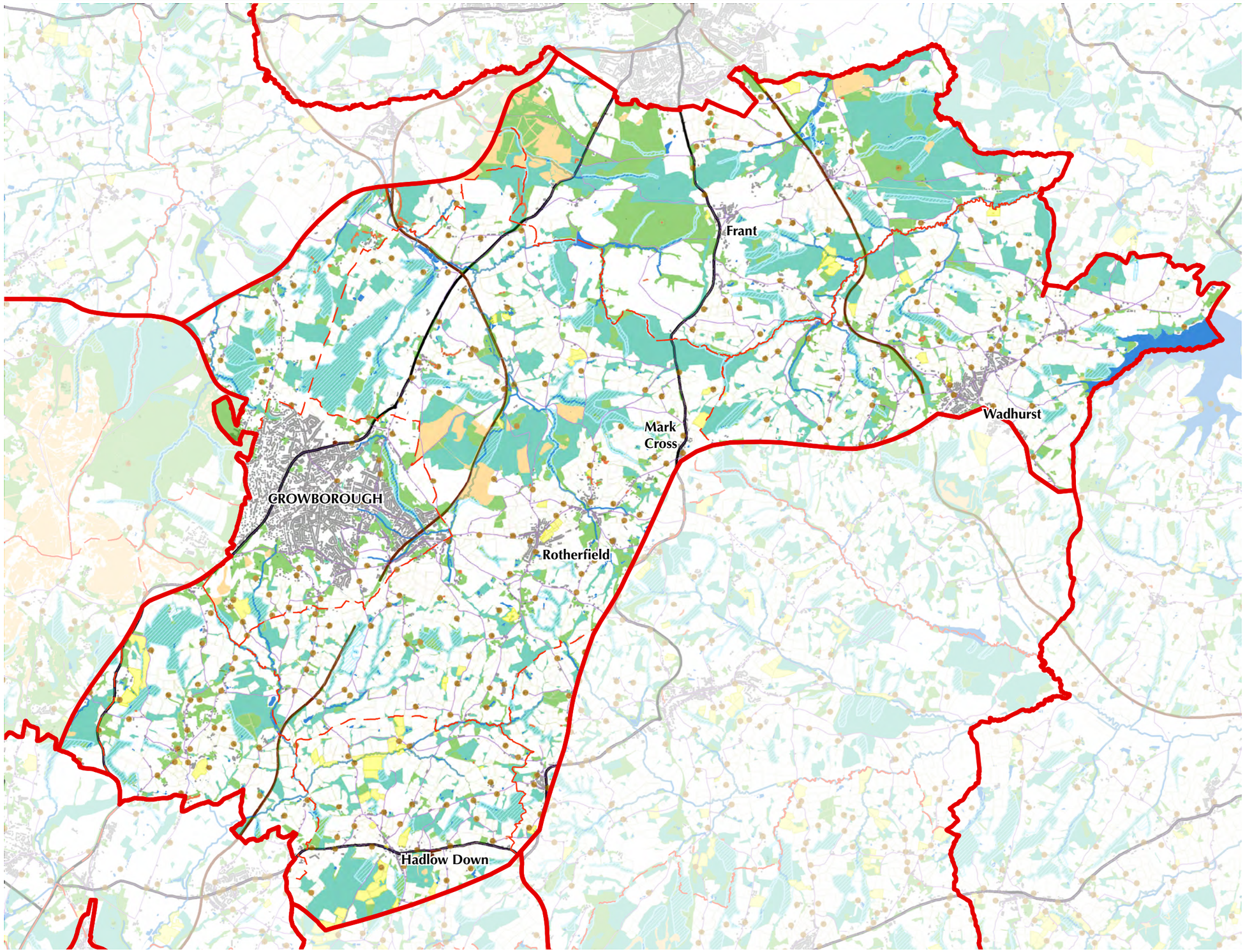
3.4.7 BAP species such as Spiked Rampion, Common Toad and White Admiral have been recorded within this zone. Eleven non-native invasive species have been recorded in this zone including the following, which cause management problems for ancient woodlands;

- 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

April 2017

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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.

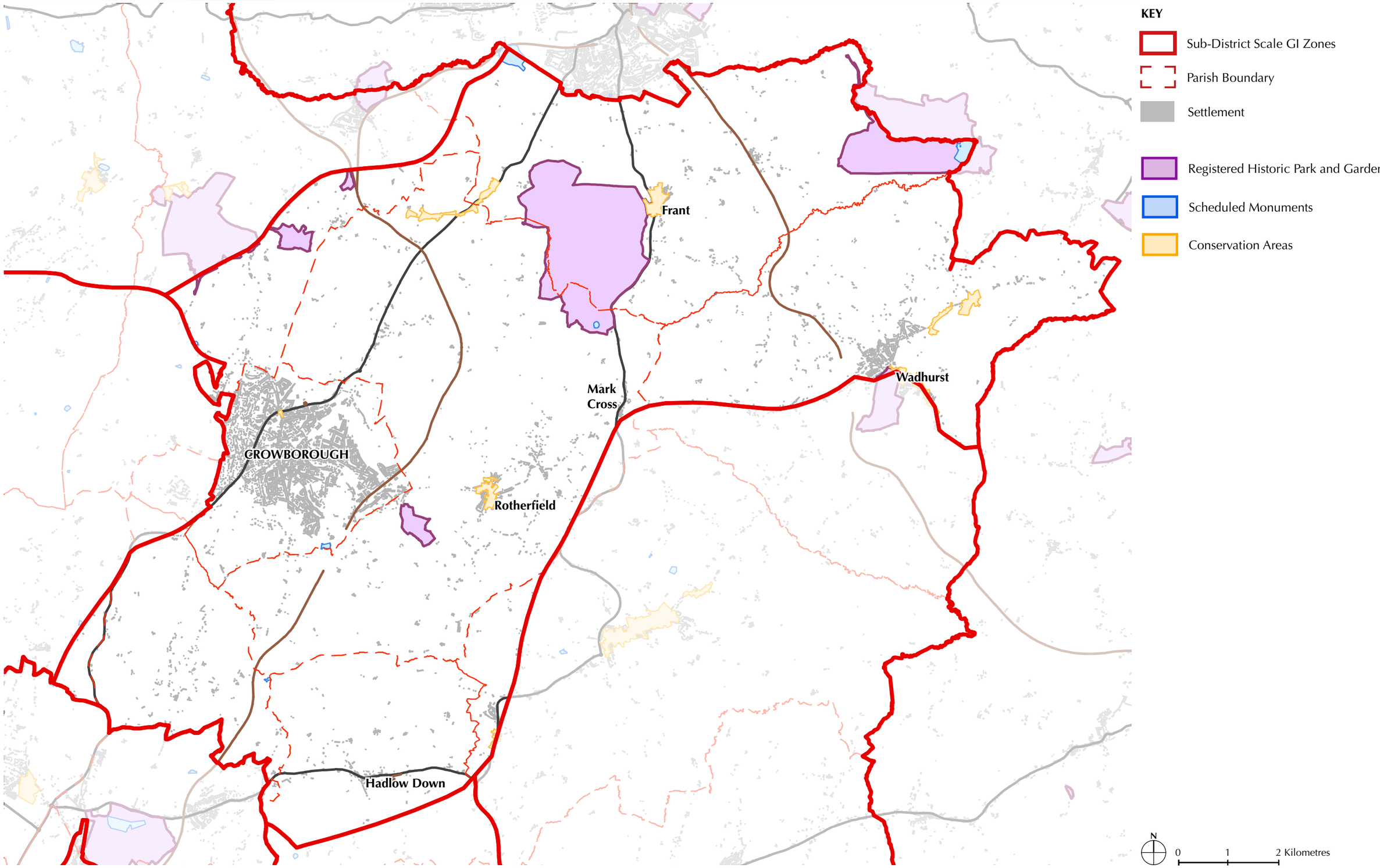
3.4.9 The historic environment assets in the Central High Weald GI Zone shown on **Figure 3.4e** also make an important contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape. These include:

- 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

April 2017
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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.

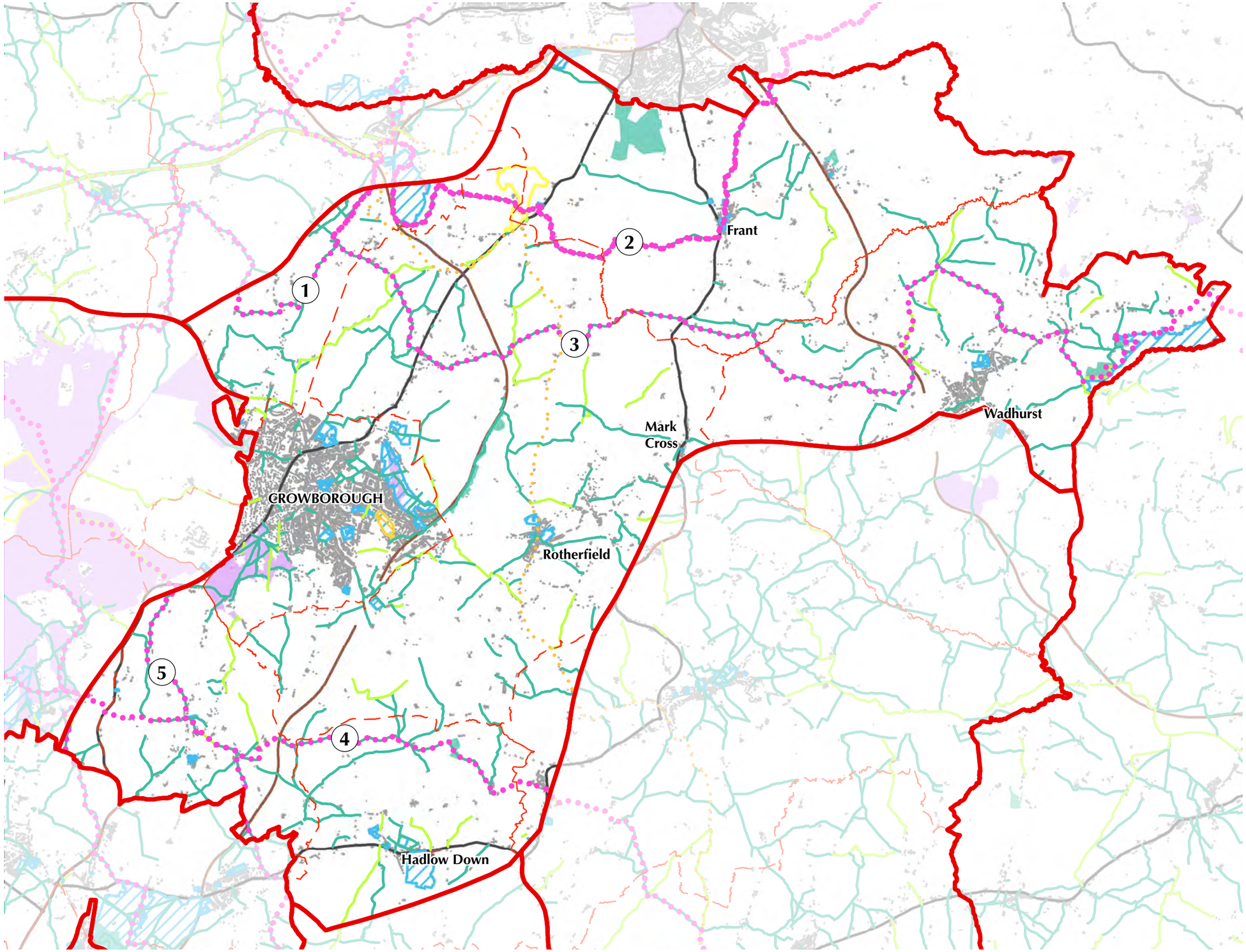
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

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

N

0 1 2 Kilometres

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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.

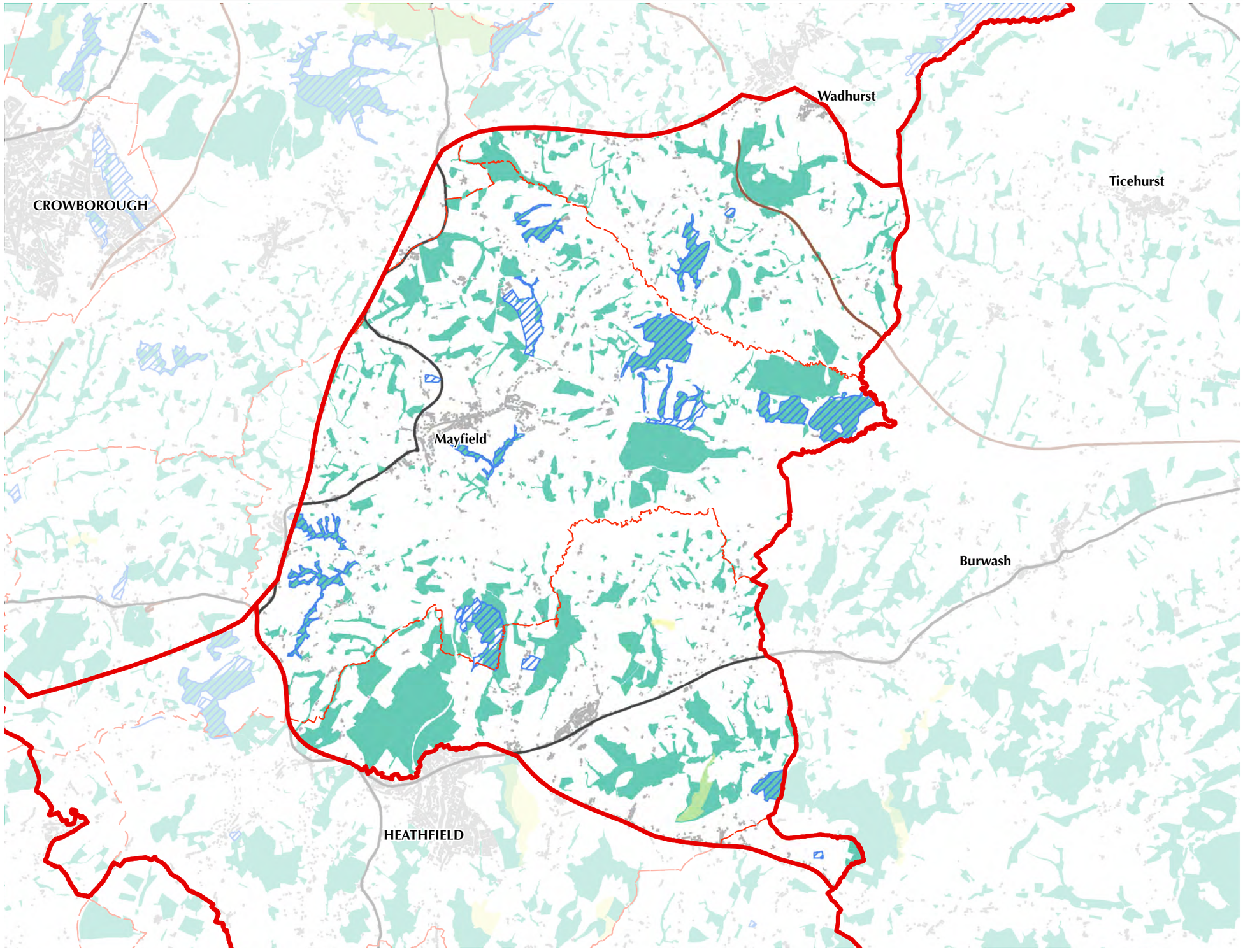
Biodiversity

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.

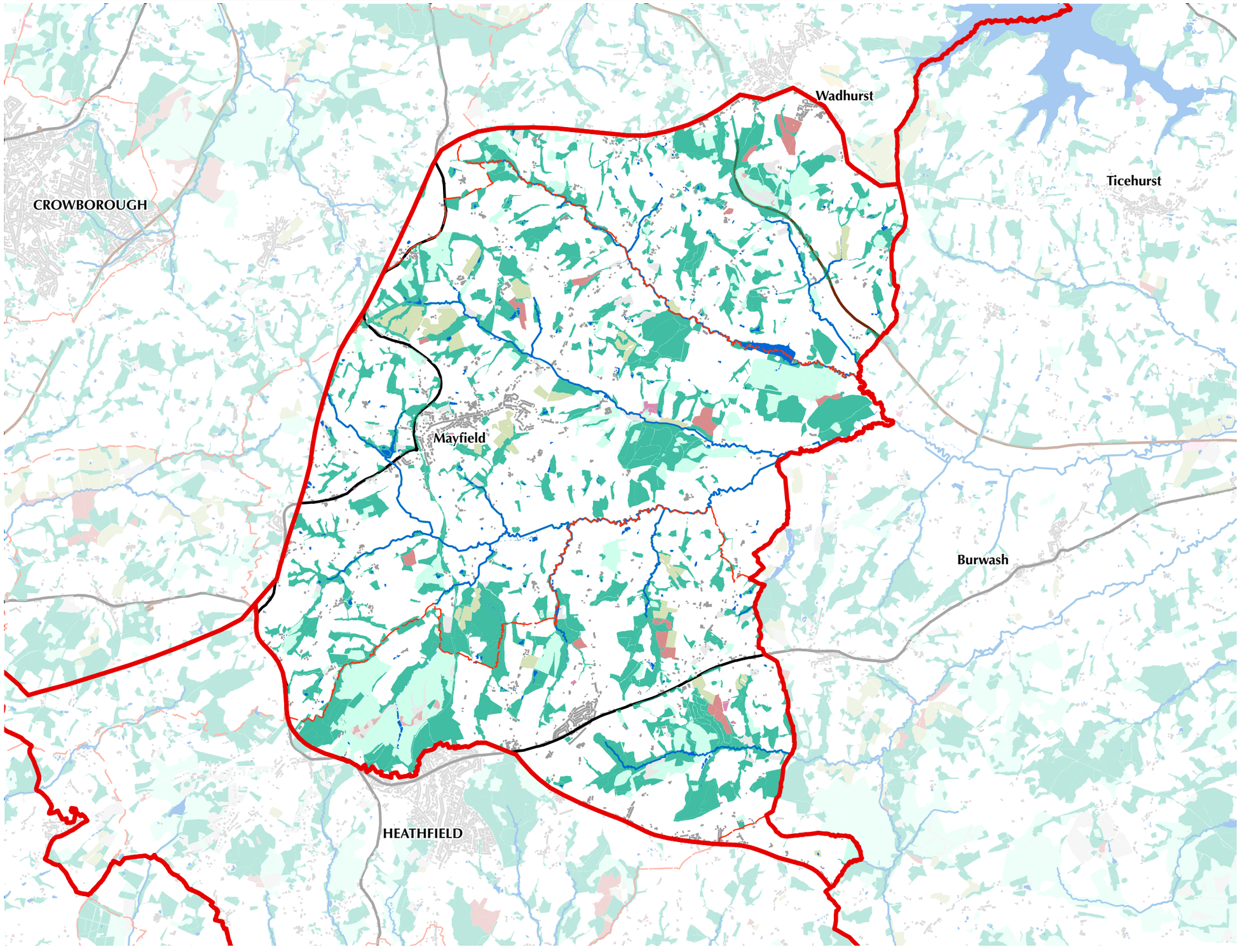
3.5.6 Numerous BAP species have been recorded within these BOAs, including Water Vole, Great Crested Newt and White Admiral. Over 20 non-native invasive species have been recorded in these BOAs including the following, which cause management problems in Ancient Woodlands;

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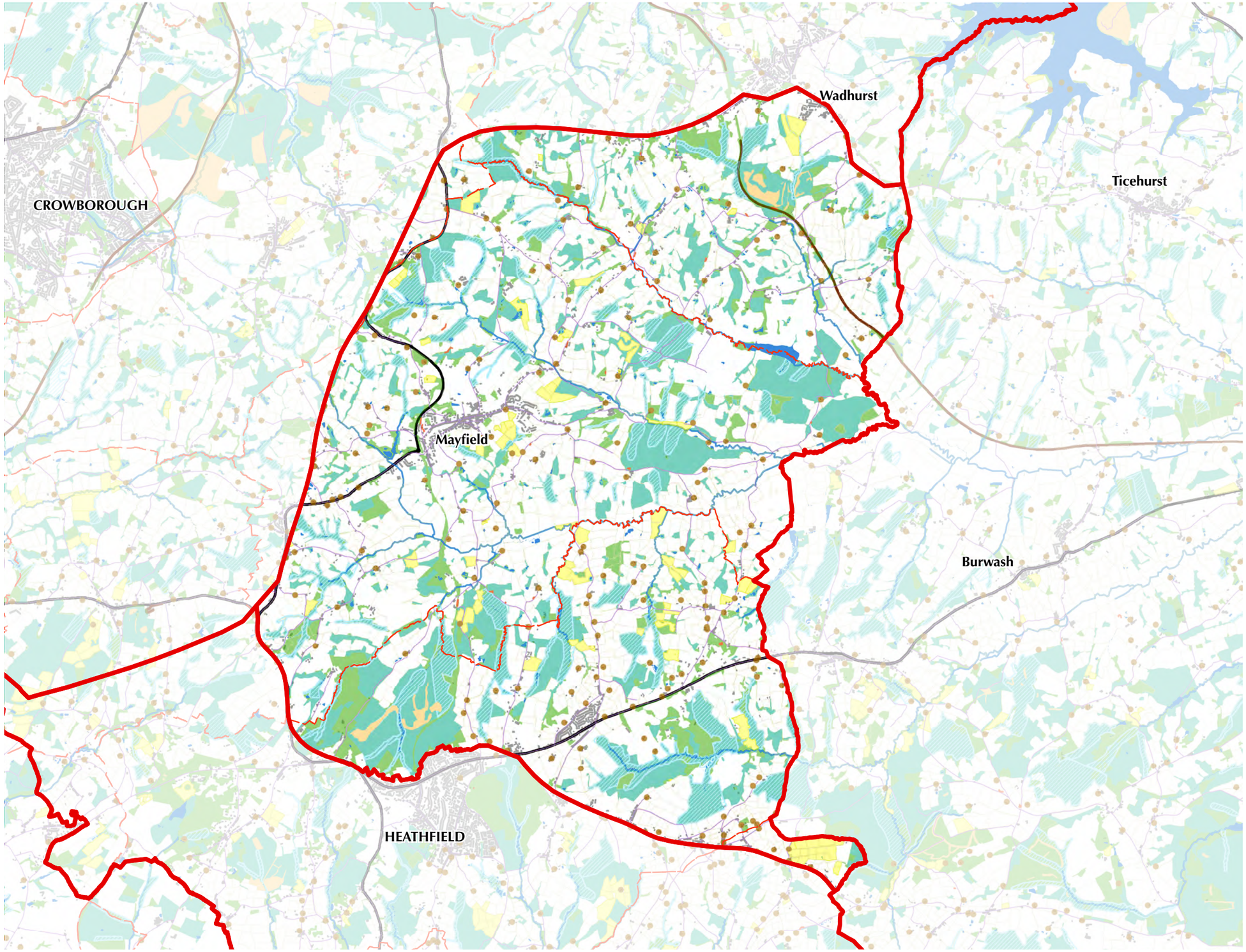
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FIGURE 3.5c
ZONE 4 - UPPER ROTHER VALLEYS:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

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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.

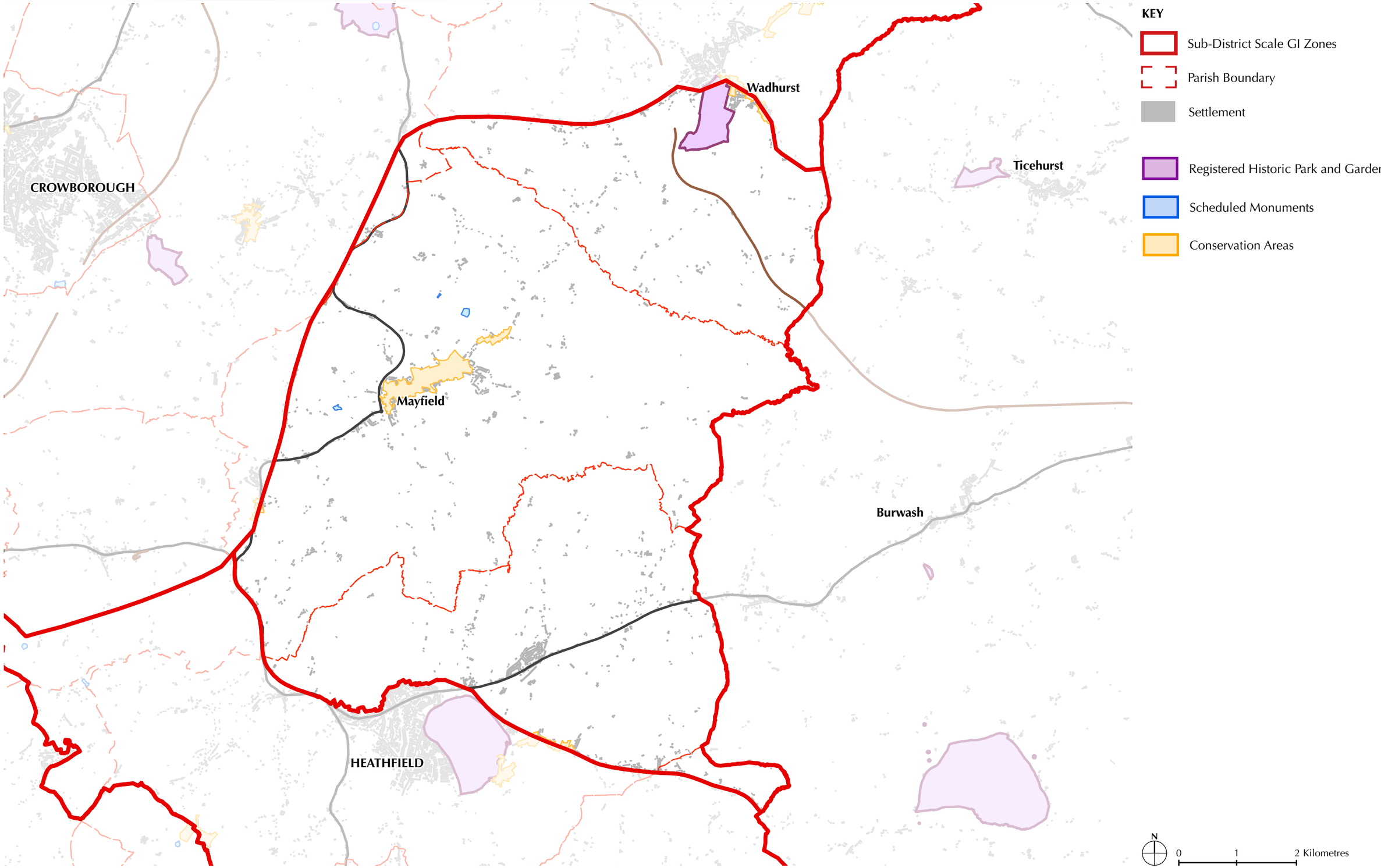
3.5.8 The historic environment assets in the Upper Rother Valleys GI Zone shown on **Figure 3.5e** also make an important contribution to the natural beauty and special qualities of the High Weald AONB landscape. These include:

- 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

April 2017
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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.

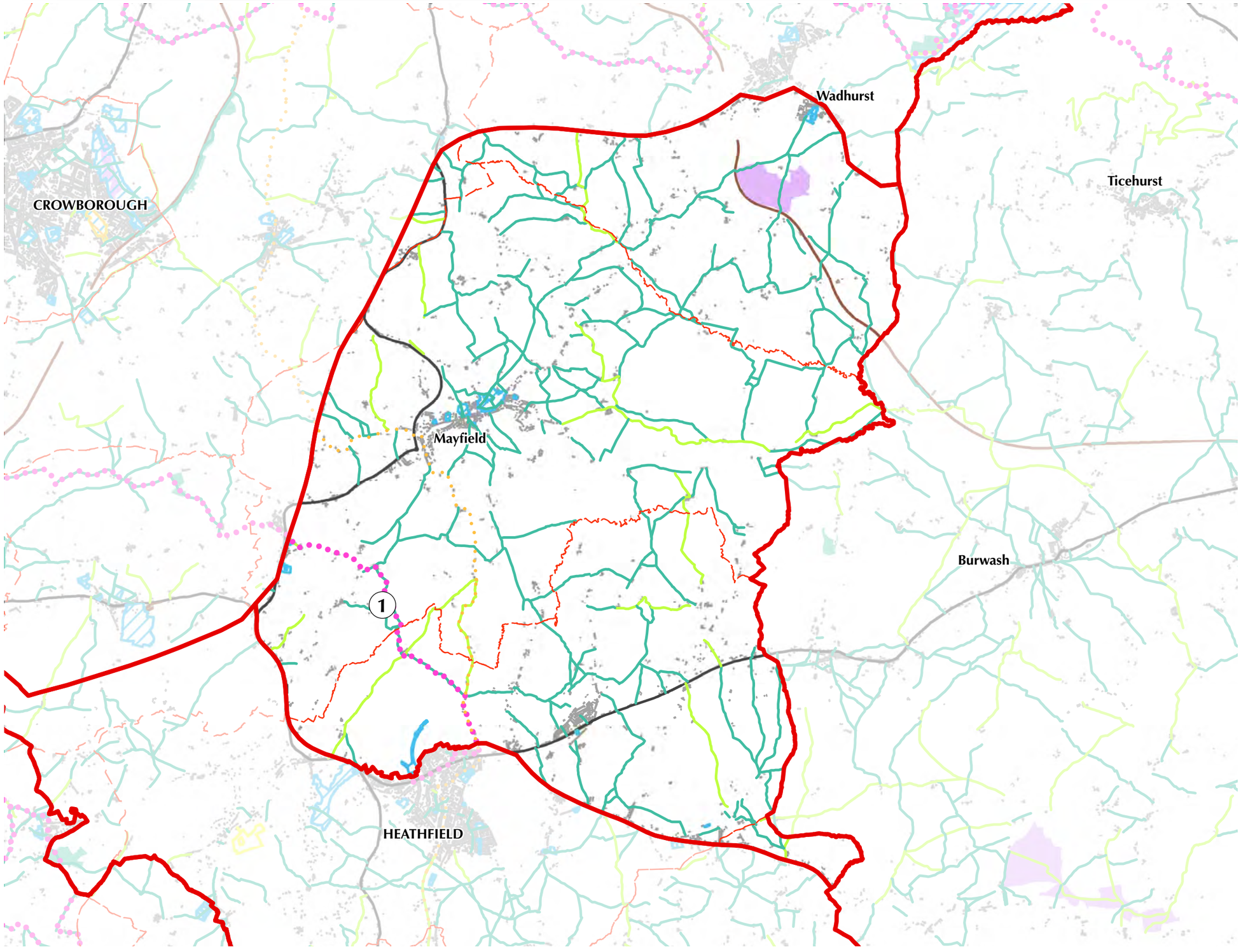
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

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

April 2017
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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

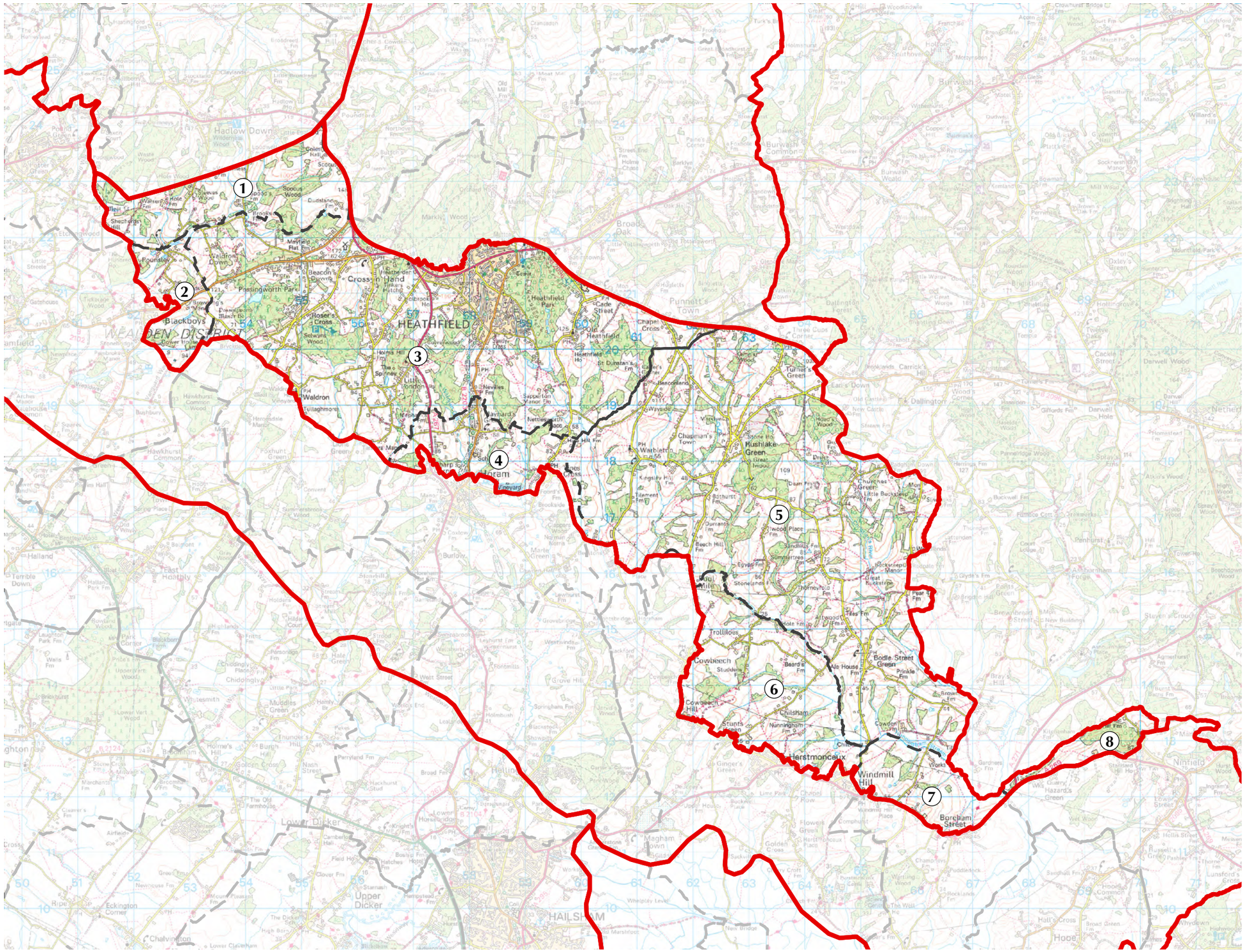
3.6.1 As shown on **Figure 3.6a**, the Southern High Weald Slopes GI Zone is a linear area covering the southern extent of the High Weald AONB. It is a gently undulating landscape of ridges and valleys on the edge of the Low Weald. Lying in the centre of the District, this Zone borders Rother District 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

April 2017

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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

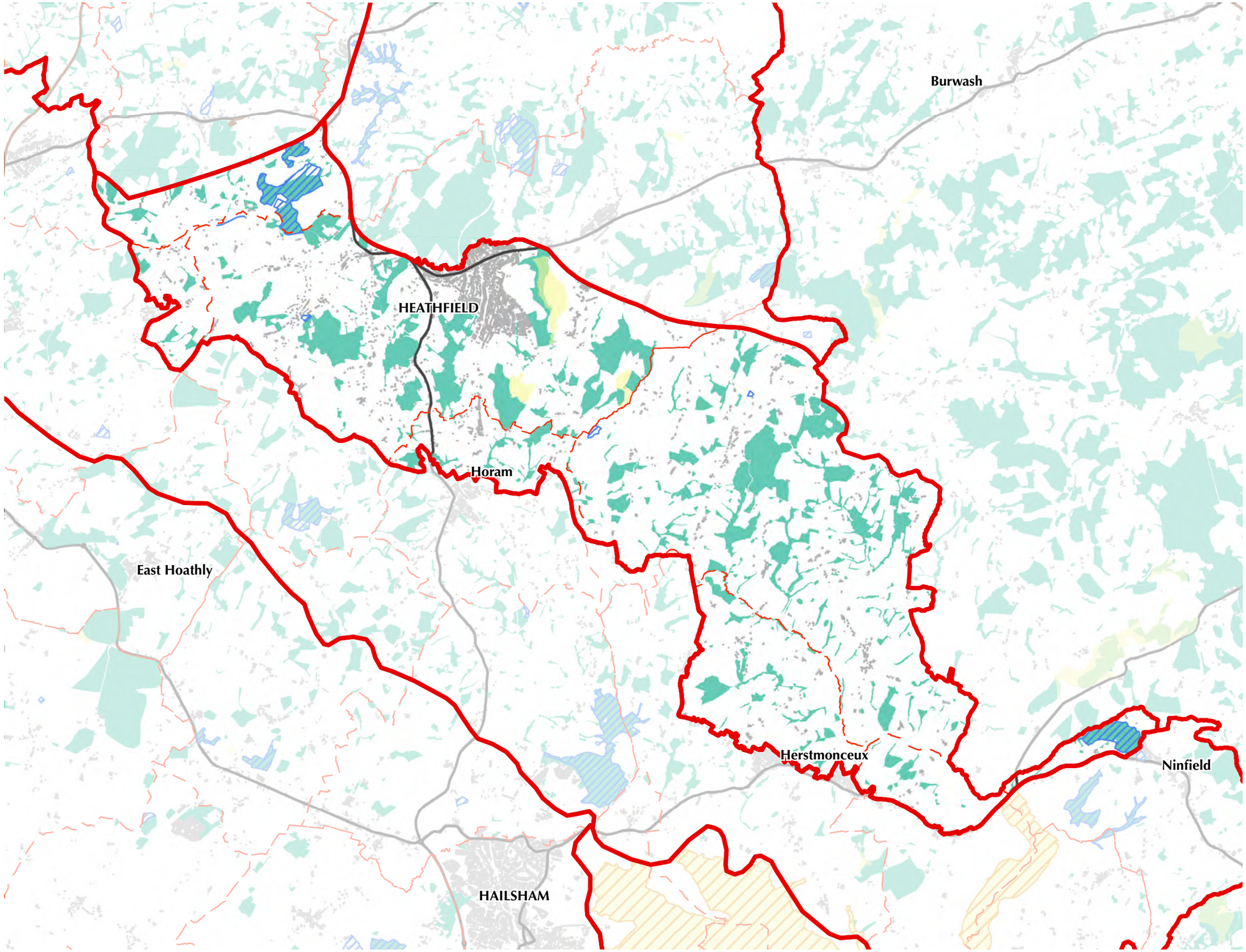
3.6.2 The Southern High Weald Slopes GI Zone contains the following designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites (see **Figure 3.6b**):

- 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



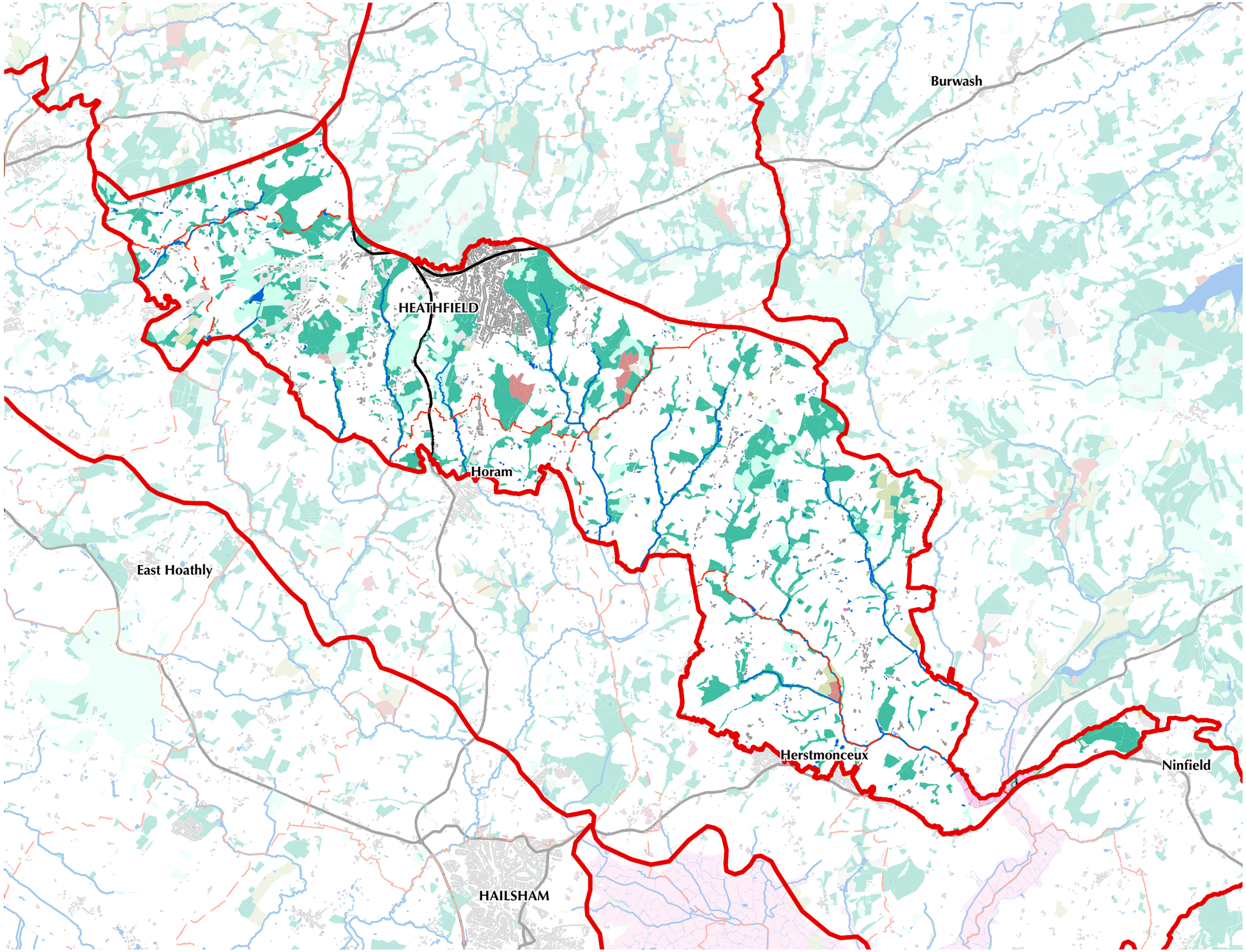
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FIGURE 3.6b
ZONE 5 - SOUTHERN HIGH WEALD SLOPES:
DESIGNATED BIODIVERSITY & GEODIVERSITY SITES

April 2017
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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.

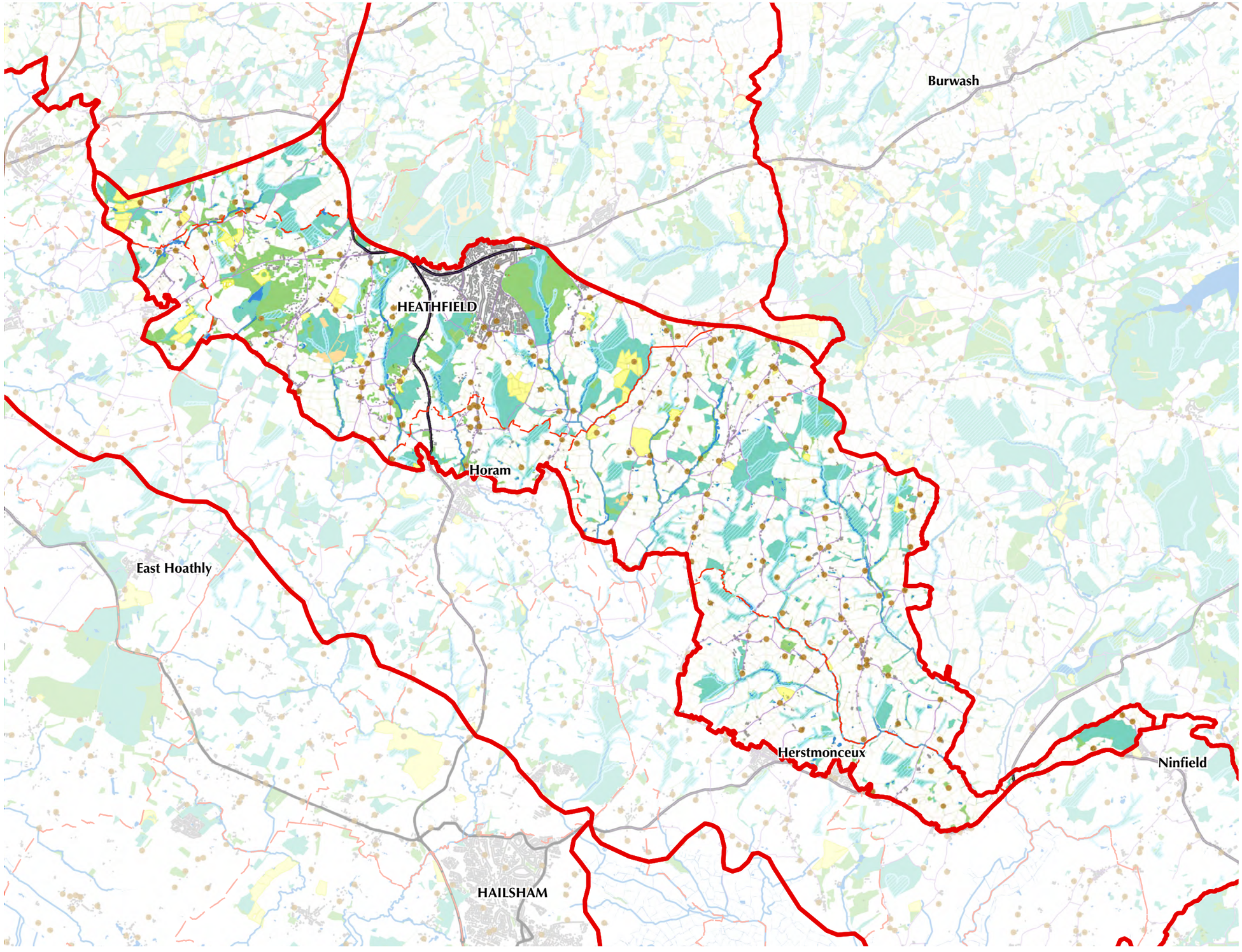
3.6.7 Numerous BAP species have been recorded within these BOAs, including Nightjar, Common Toad and Brown Long-eared Bat. The majority of non-native invasive species recorded within these BOAs are associated with woodland and watercourses, including the following;

- 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:

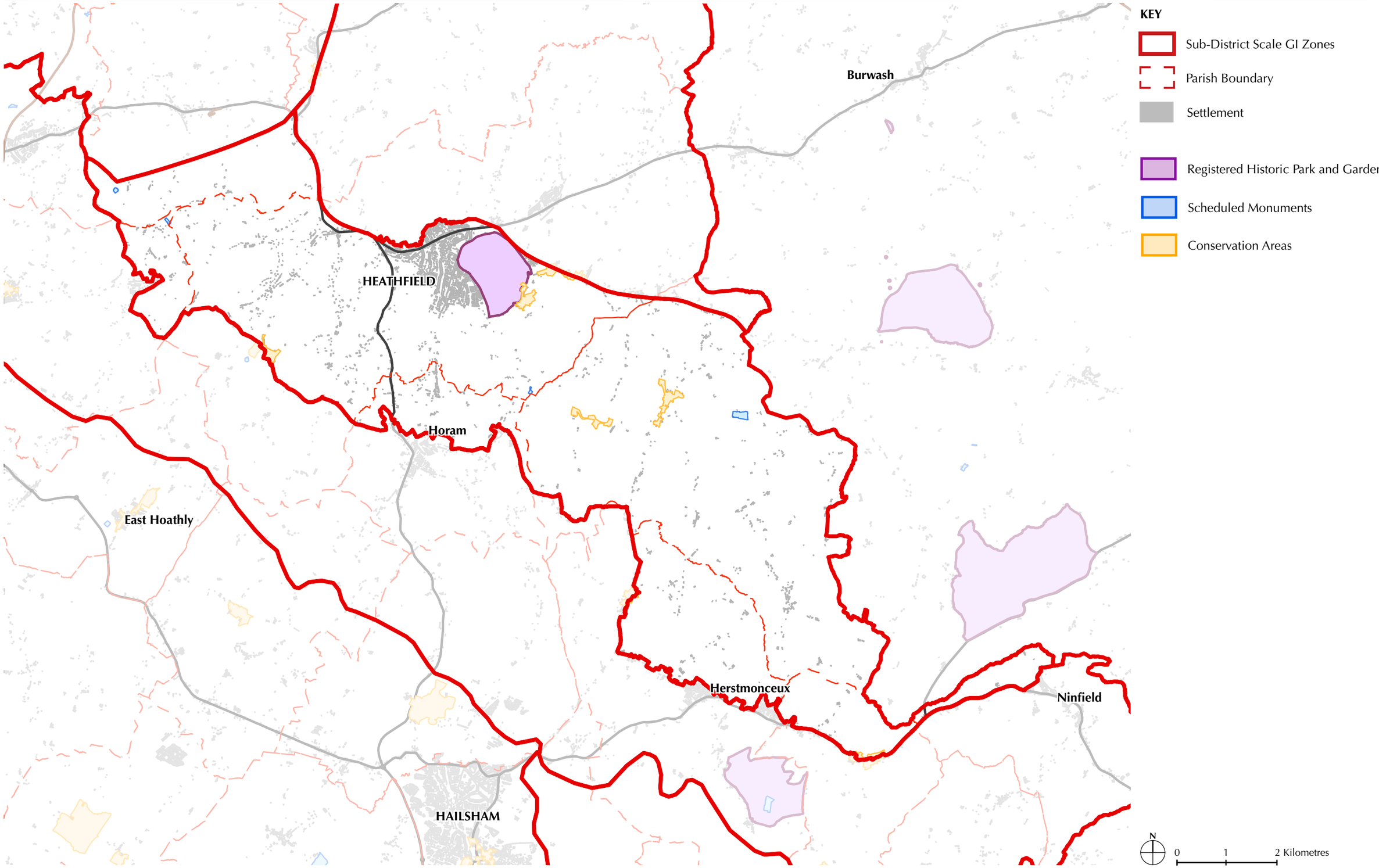
- Heathfield Park Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II).
- 4 No. Scheduled Monuments – such as Holy Trinity Priory; and the medieval moated site, Warren Farm, Shepherd's Hill.
- 7 No. Conservation Areas – Rushlake Green, Cade Street, Cowbeech, Cade Street and Old Heathfield, Waldron, Warbleton,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

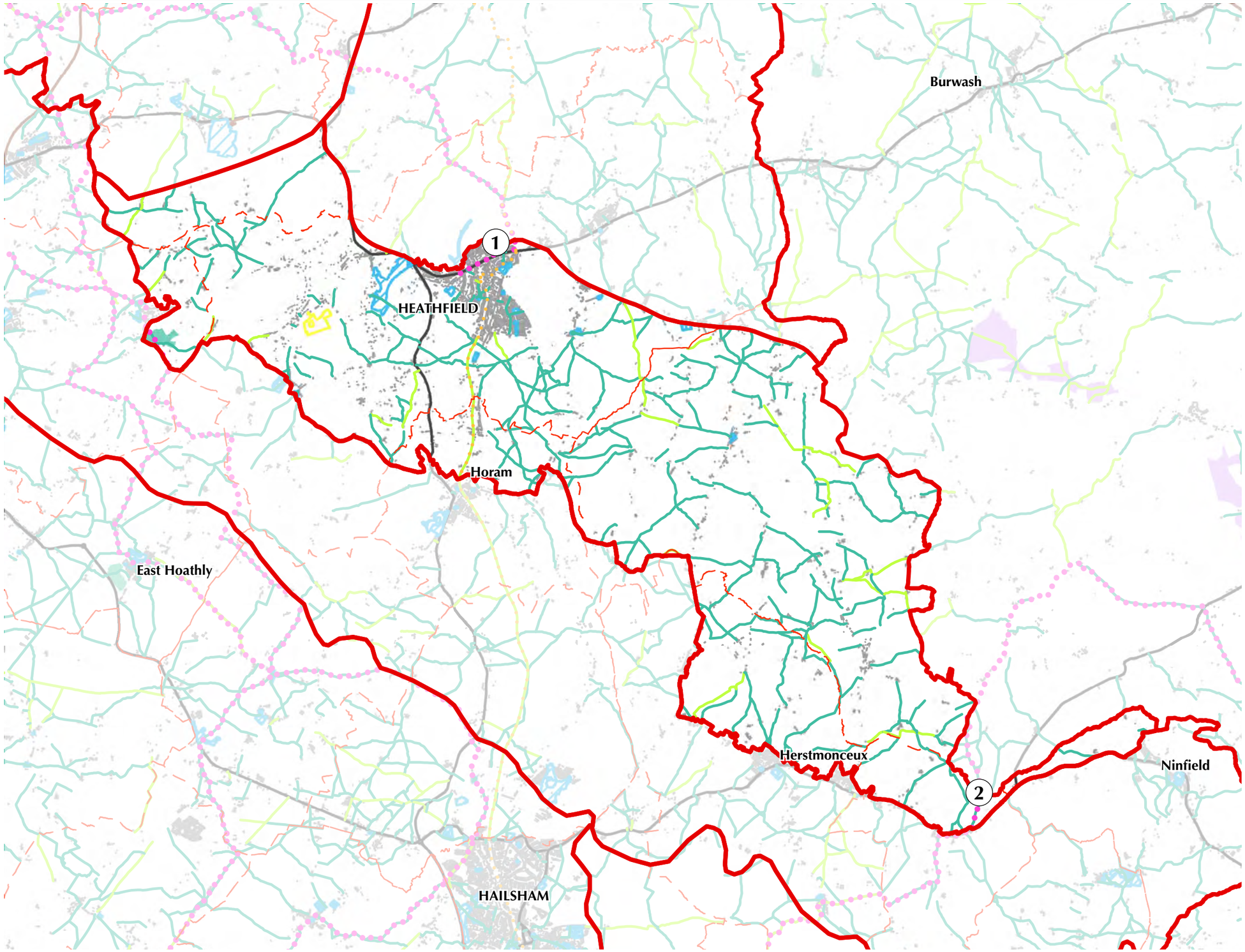
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

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

April 2017
11123101_Figures_L_20-04-17.indd

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

0 1.5 3 Kilometres

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

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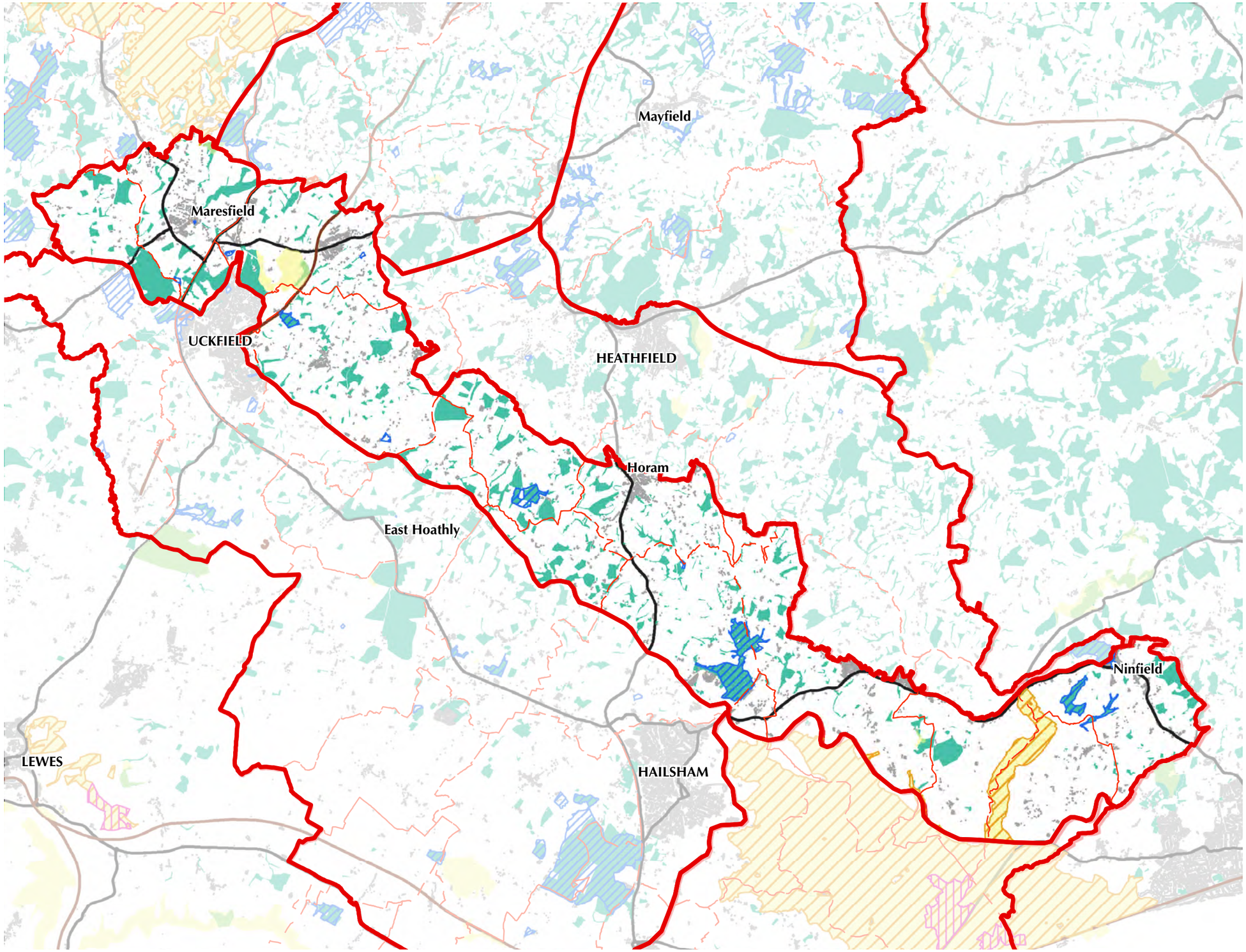
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- **B-Lines and Landscapes for Wild Pollinators and Farm Wildlife Project -** Buglife projects in the south-east concerned with restoring and recreating connected wildflower meadows and pollinator habitats.
- **AONB Land Management Advice -** For owners 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

April 2017
11123101_Figures_L_20-04-17.indd

- 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.

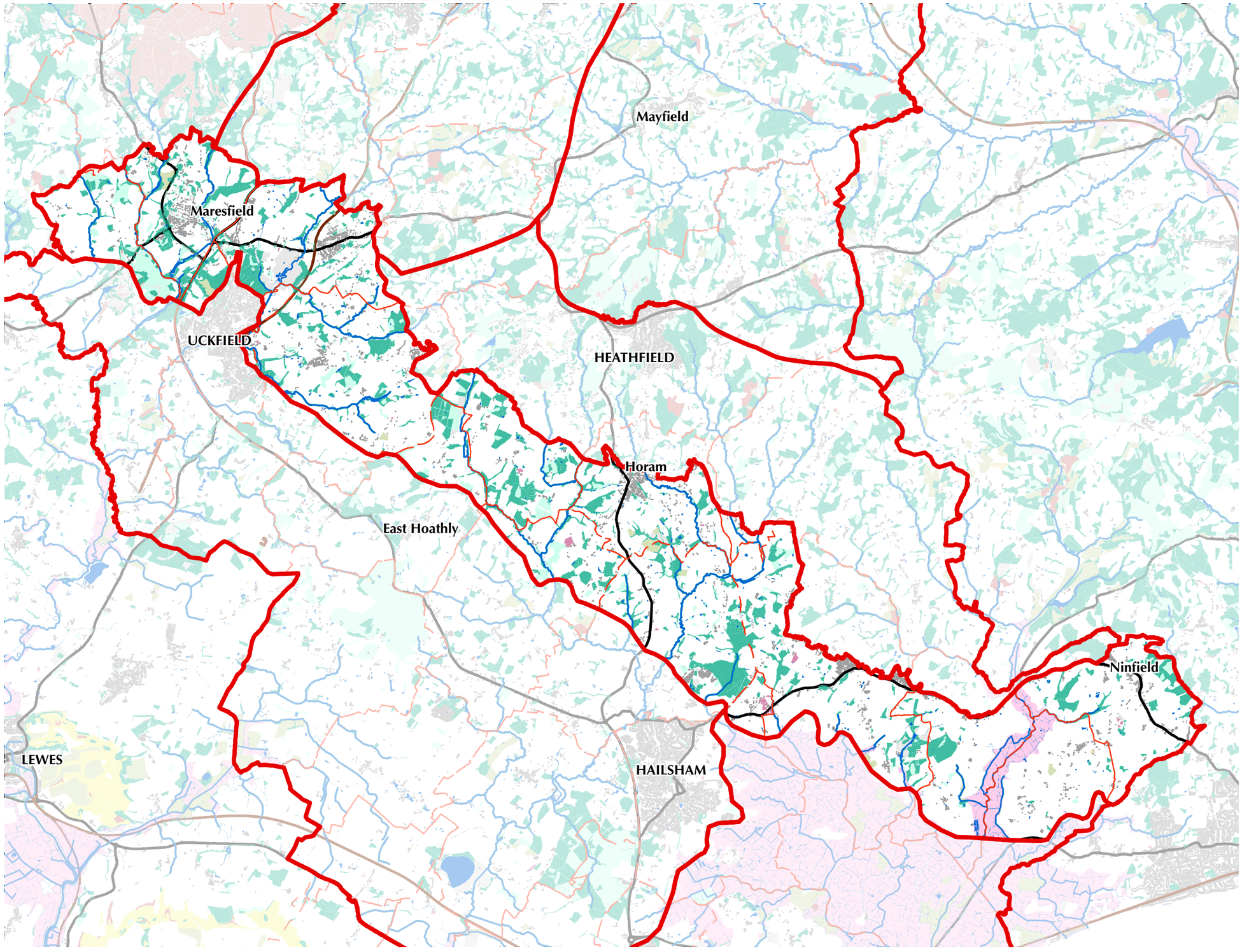
3.7.5 This zone is dominated by numerous small tributaries of Waller's Haven and the River Uck, which run roughly in a north-south orientation. Numerous field ponds within this zone provide wetland habitats. Some small and fragmented semi-improved grassland is found throughout this zone, but in relatively 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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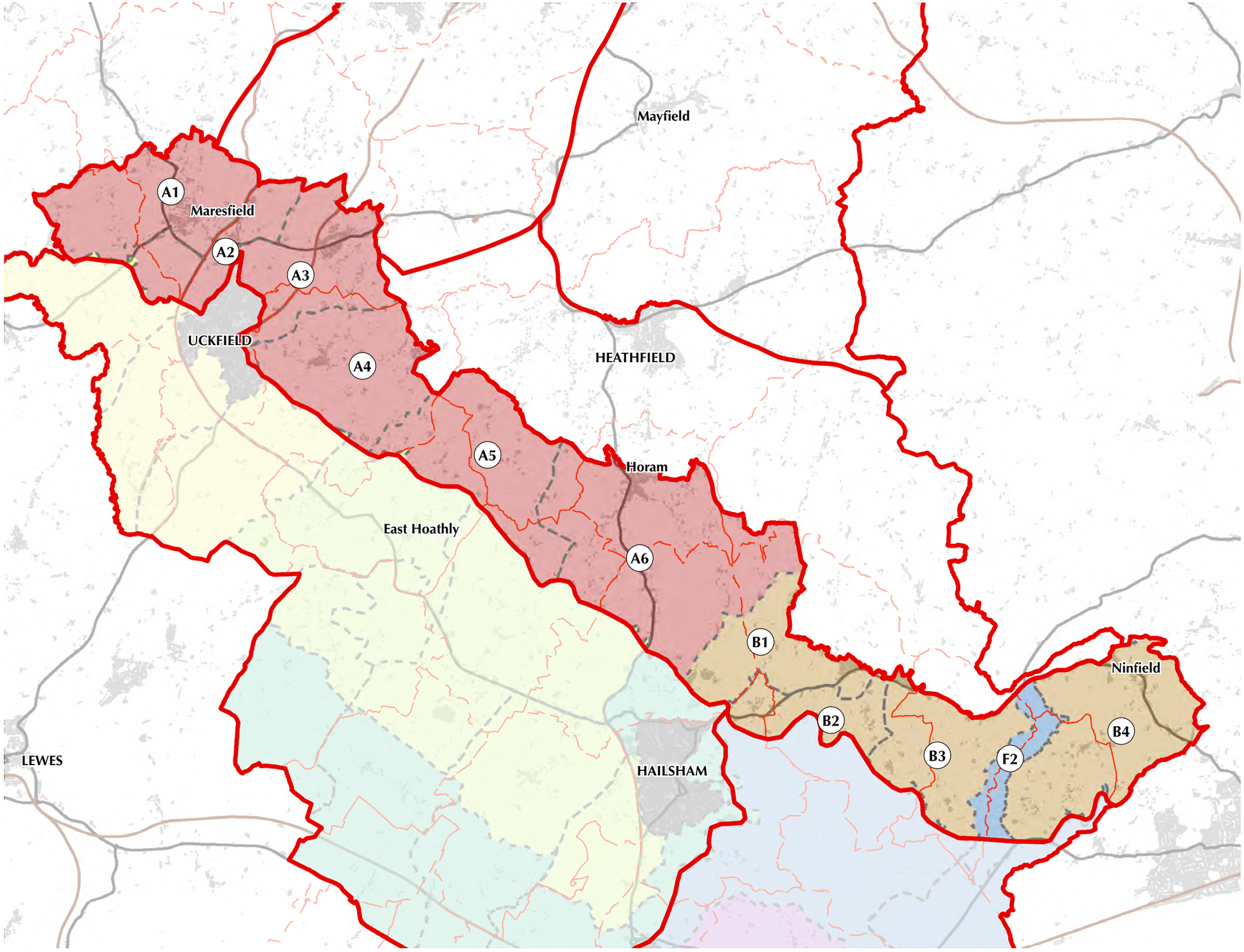
3.7.8 As shown on **Figure 3.7d**, Zone 6 lies mostly within the Ridges and Valleys (in the west of the zone) and Ridges and Slopes (in the east of the zone) Local Landscape Character Types (LLCTs)[138]. The key characteristics of the Ridges and Valleys LLCT are summarised below:

- **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

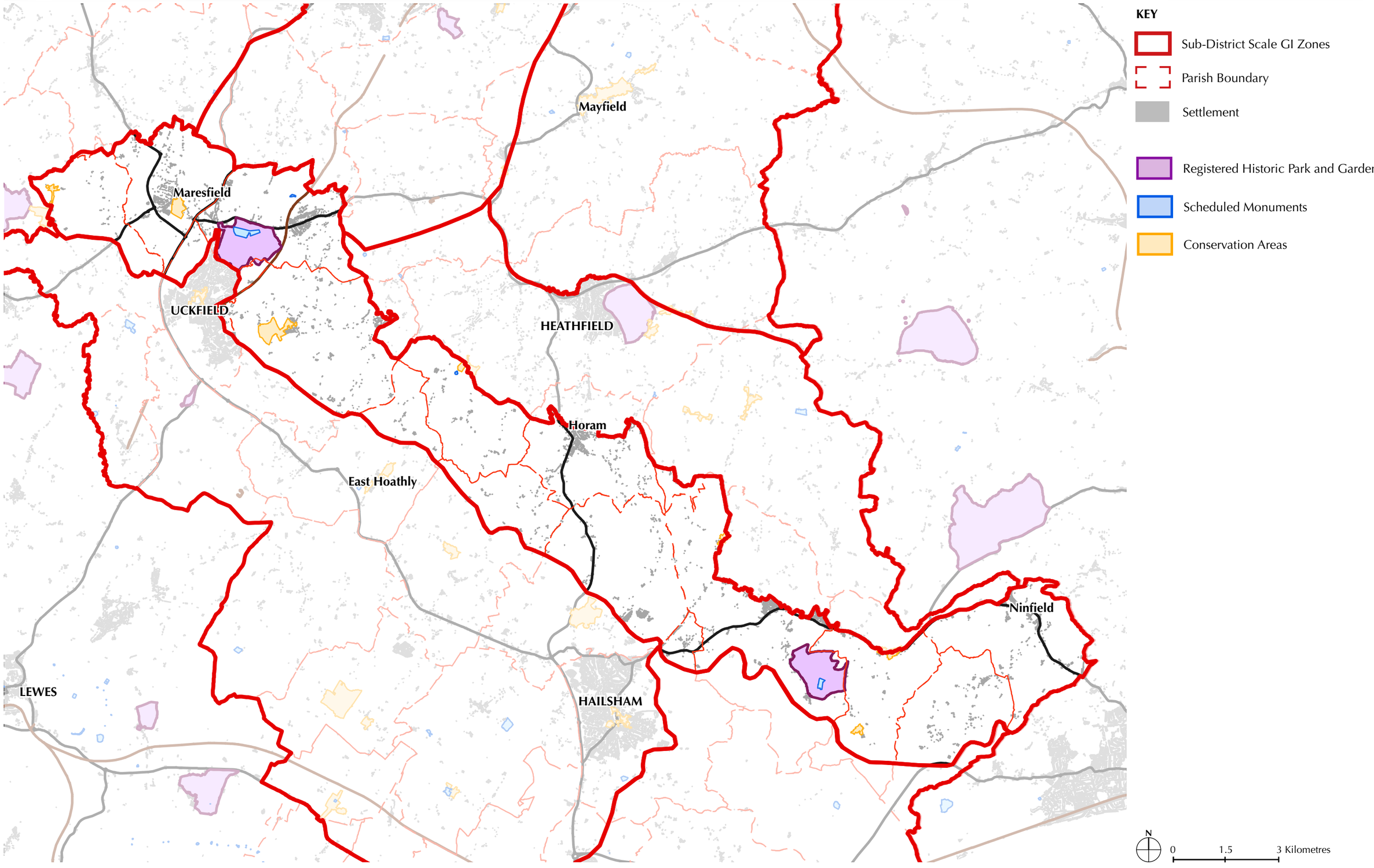
3.7.11 These heritage assets are generally not at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change.

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.

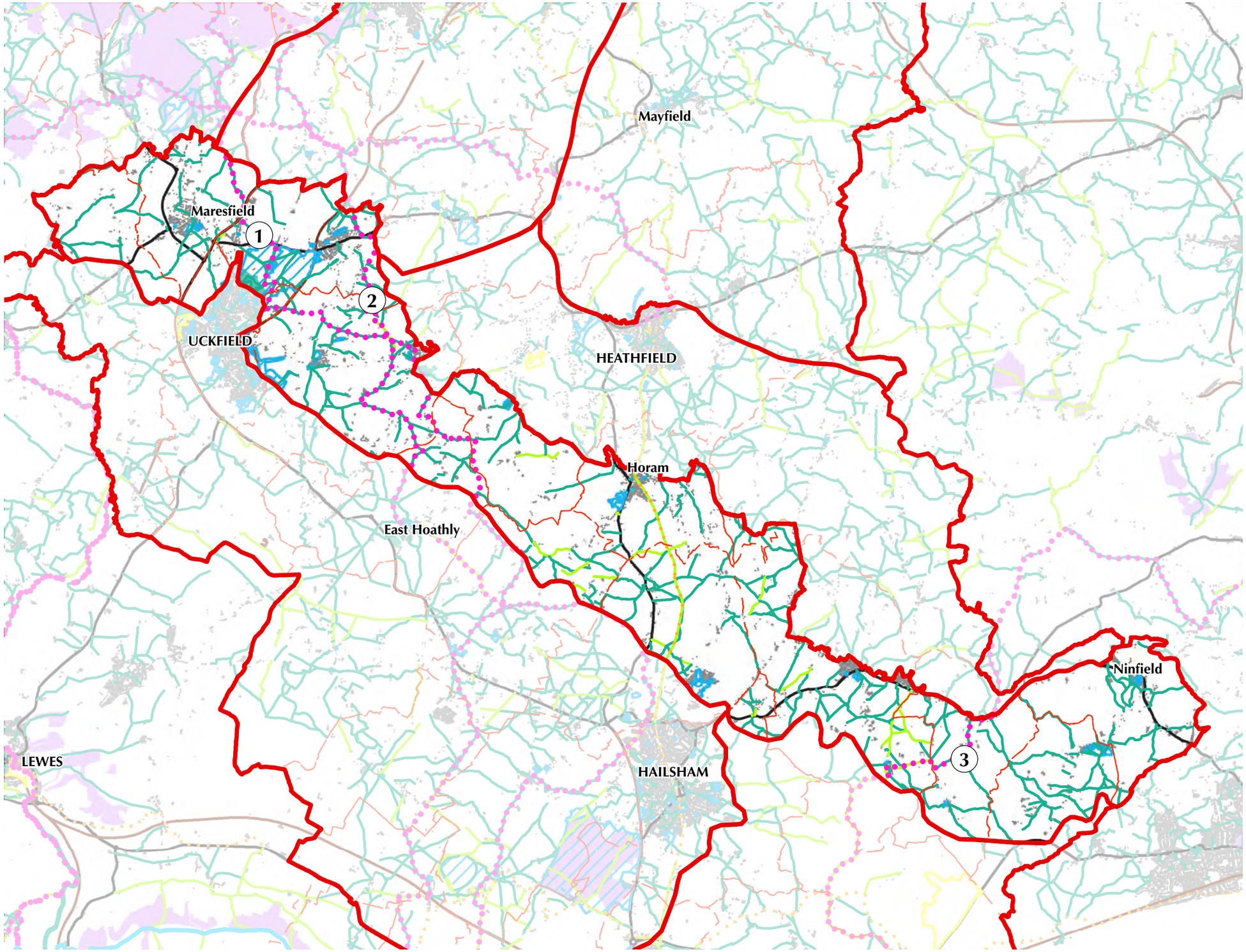
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

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

April 2017
11123101_Figures_L_20-04-17.indd

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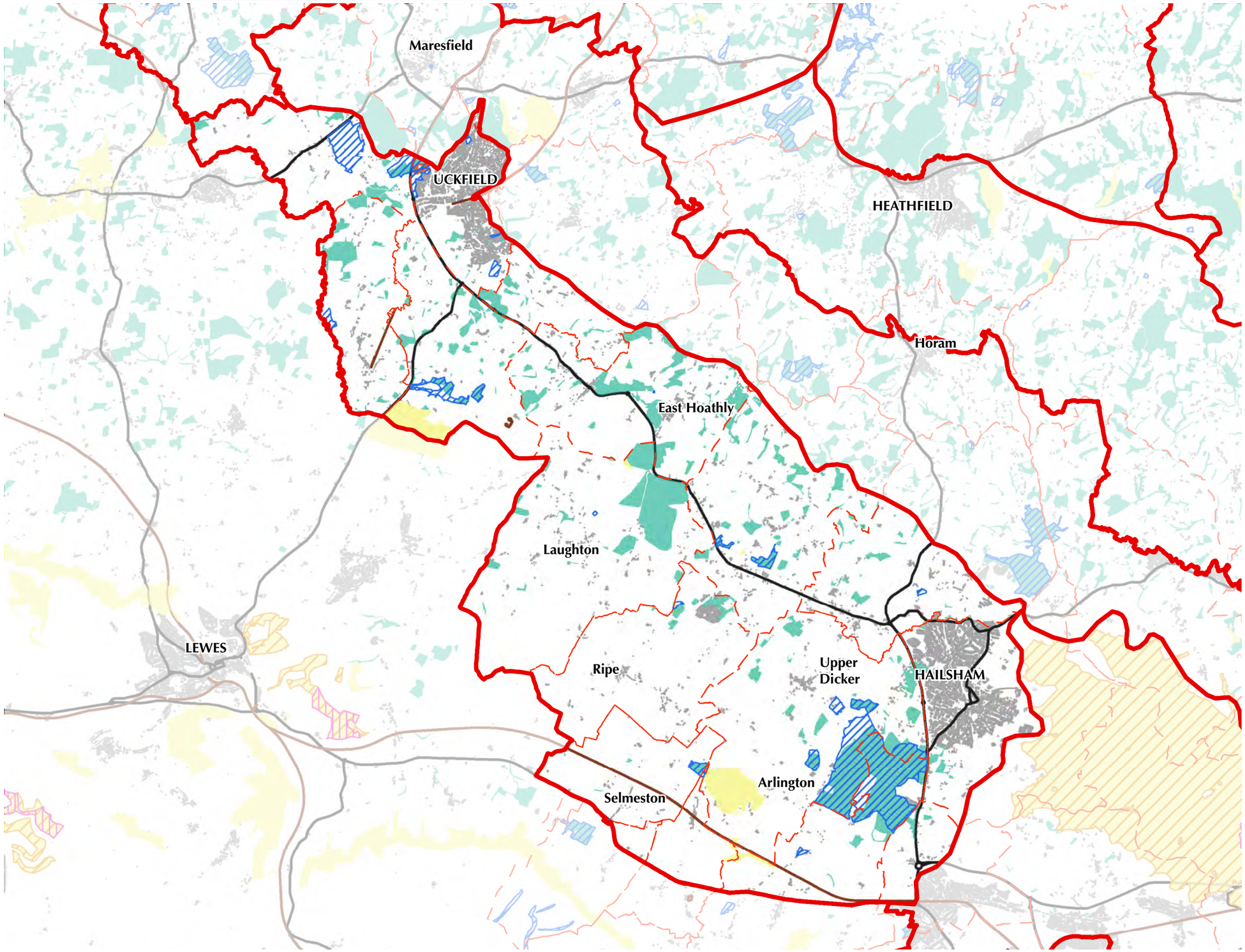
support to landowners with the management, enhancement and creation of lowland meadow across the Weald.

- **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

April 2017
11123101_Figures_L_20-04-17.indd

- 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].

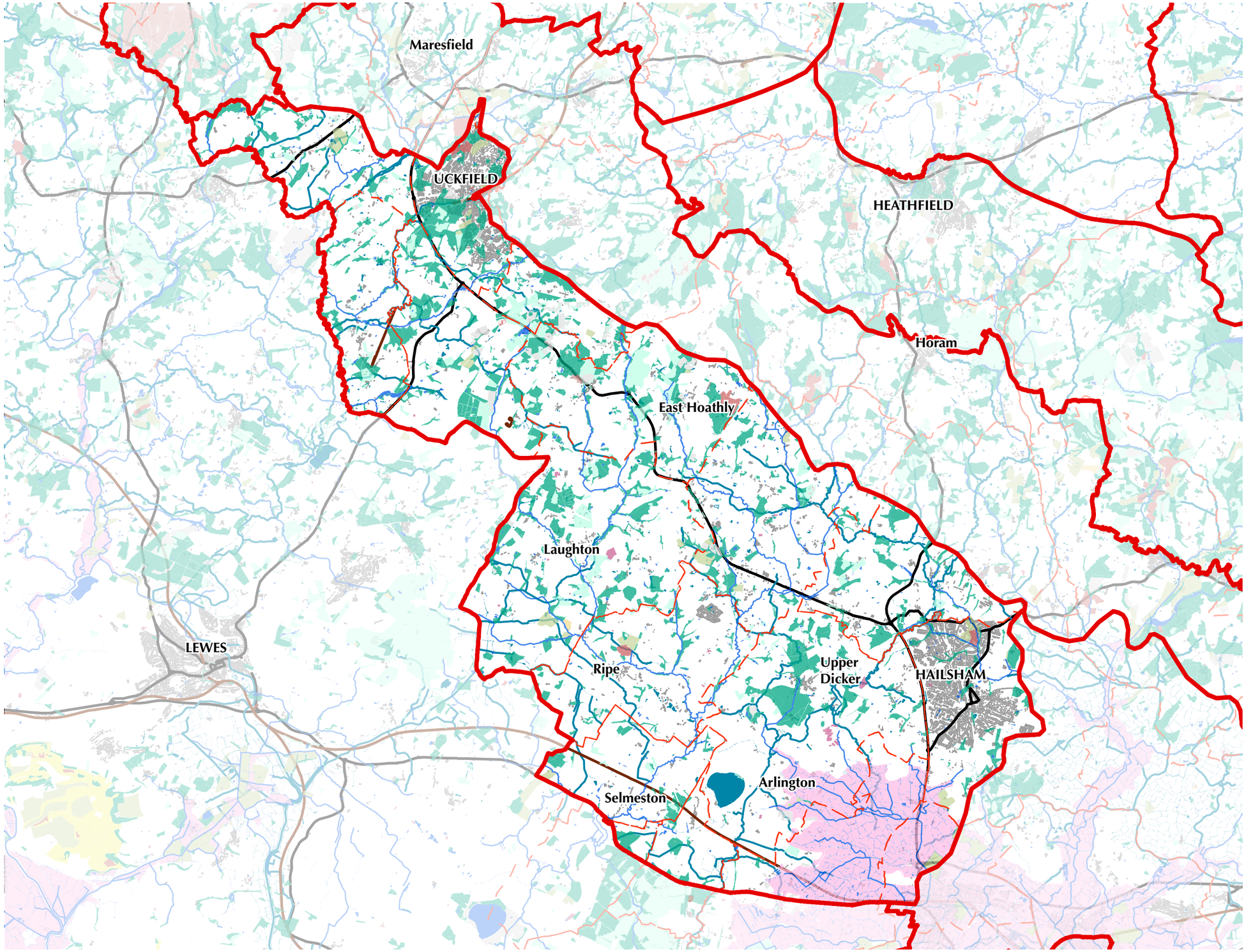
3.8.4 As shown on **Figure 3.8c**, the wildlife habitats within Zone 7 are dominated by small to medium-sized woodlands, particularly along the boundary with Zone 6. Arlington Reservoir is a significant waterbody within the south of this zone and numerous watercourses run through the zone, mostly in 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

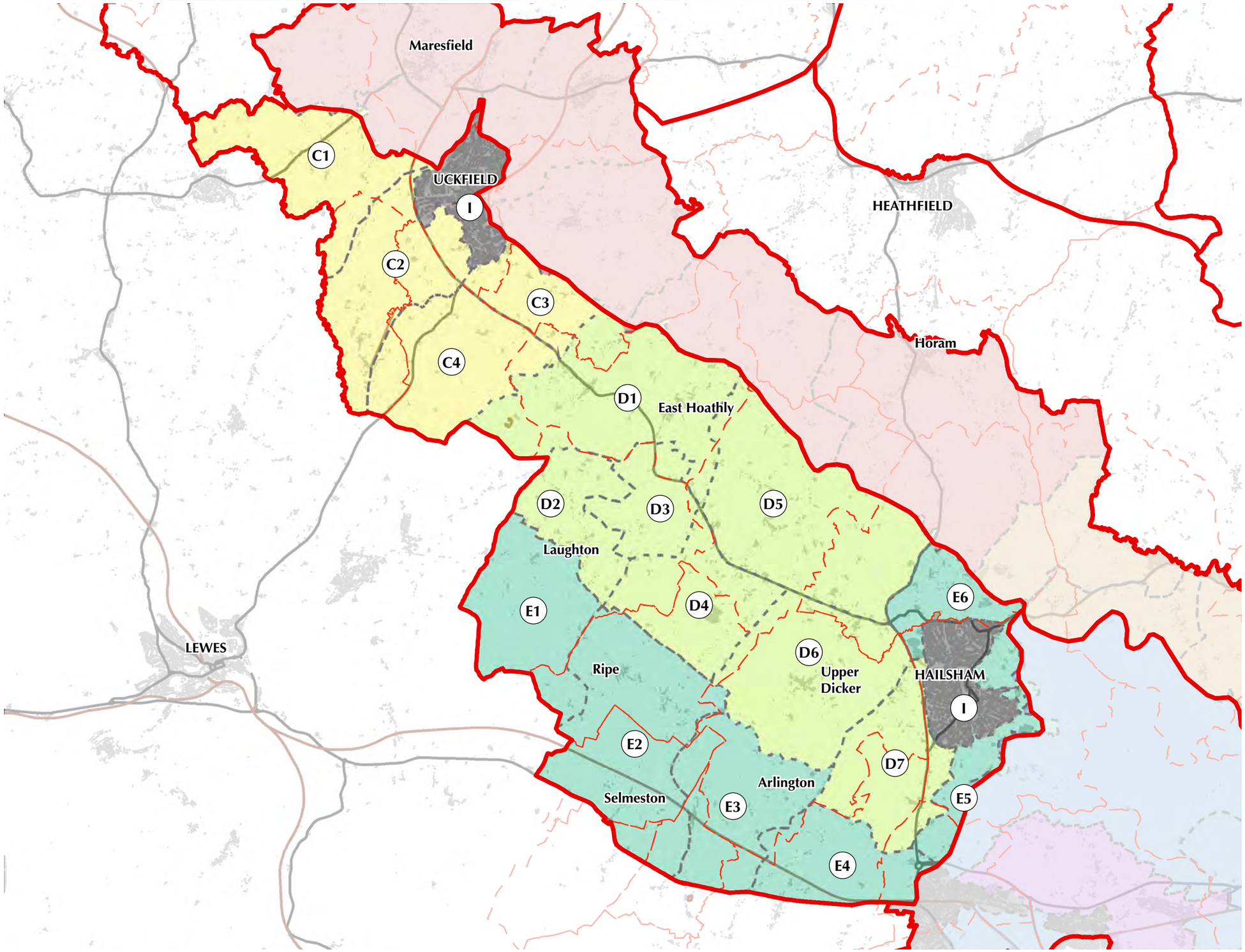
3.8.8 As shown on **Figure 3.8d**, Zone 7 lies within the Ridges and Valleys and Ridges and Slopes Local Landscape Character Types (LLCTs)[141] in the west and east of the zone respectively. The key characteristics of the Ridges and Valleys LLCT are summarised below:

- **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

April 2017
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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.

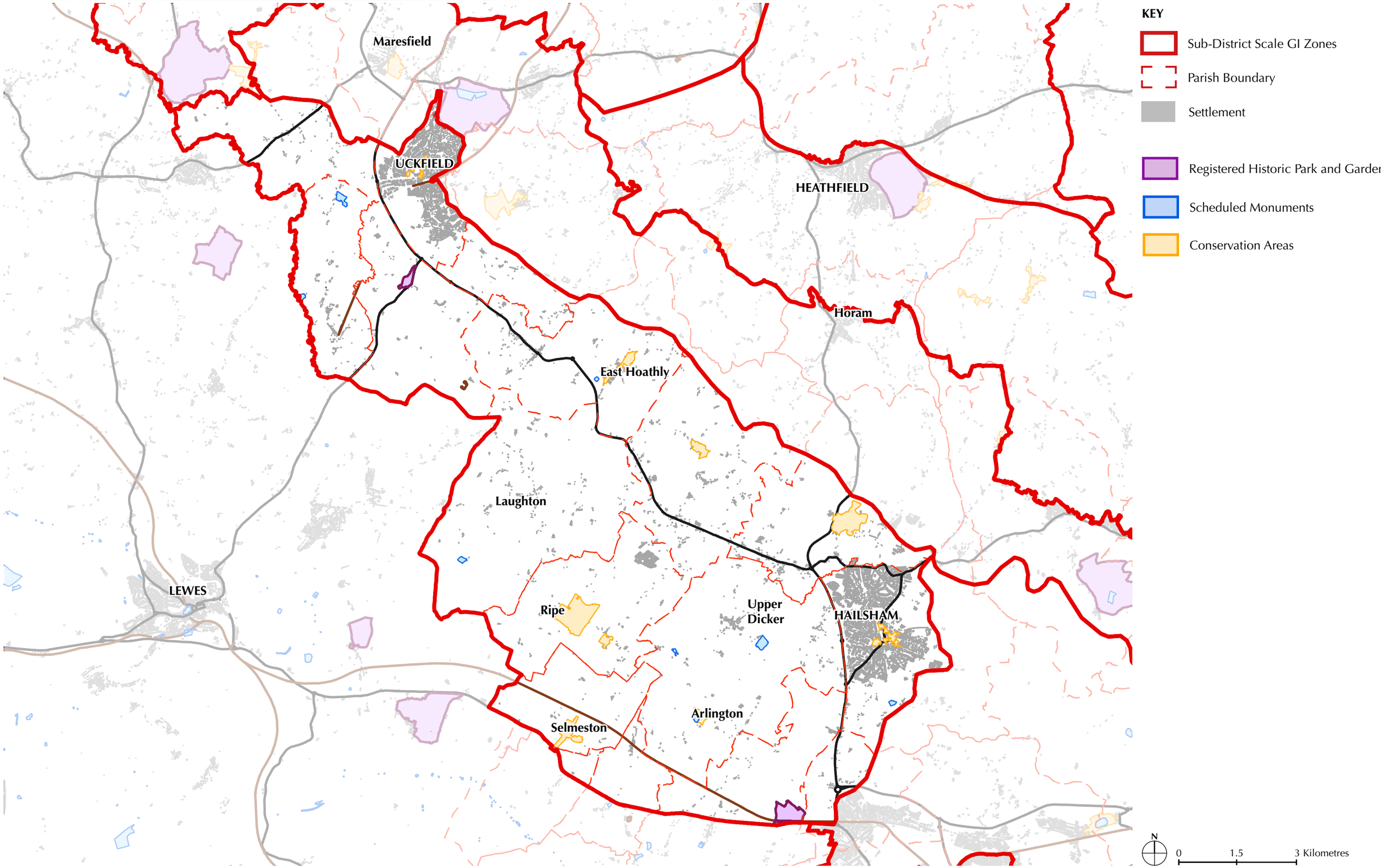
3.8.11 These heritage assets are generally not at risk of loss through neglect, decay or inappropriate change.

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.

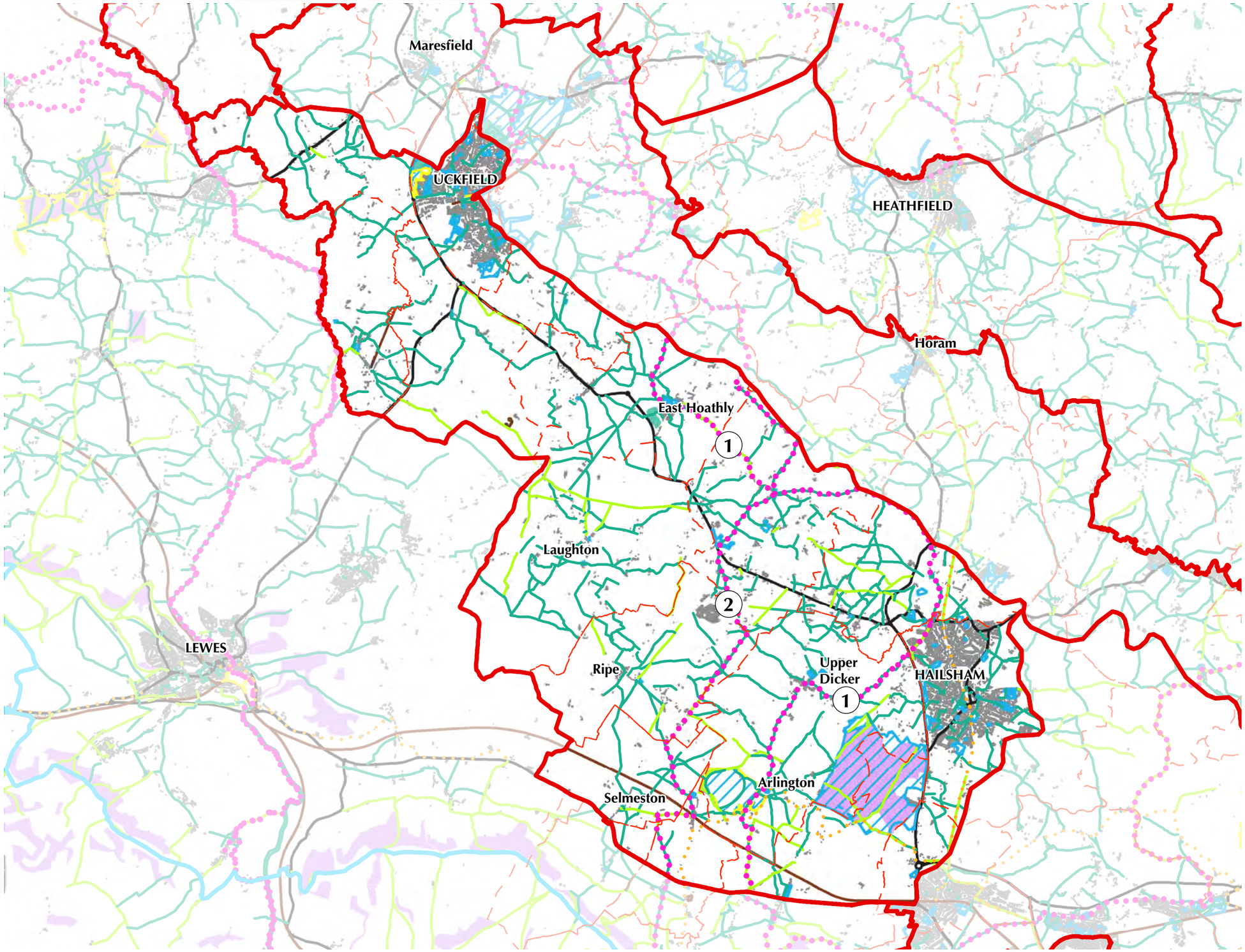
Accessible Natural Greenspace & Access Links

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

April 2017
11123101_Figures_L_20-04-17.indd

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

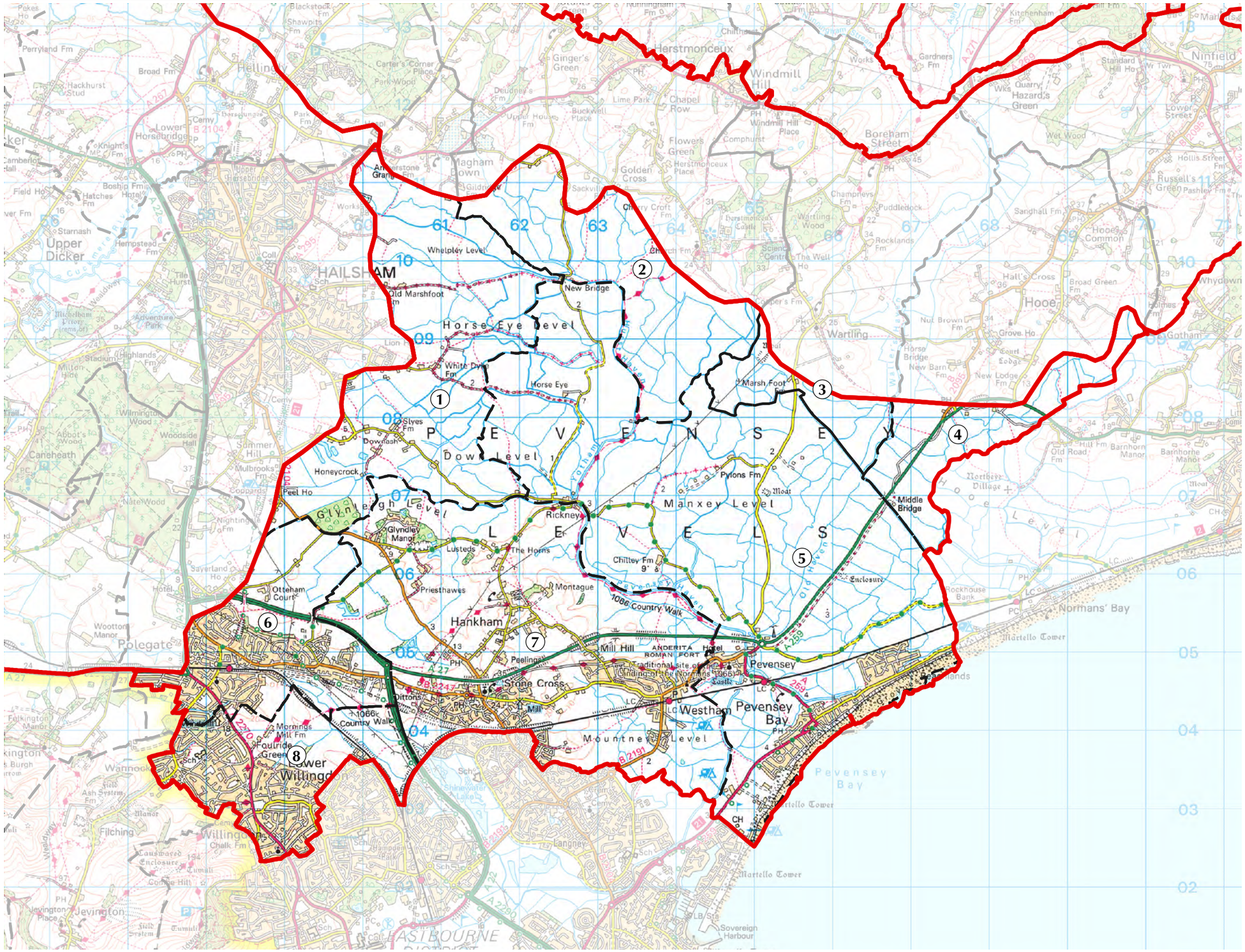
Existing Strategic Green Infrastructure Initiatives

- **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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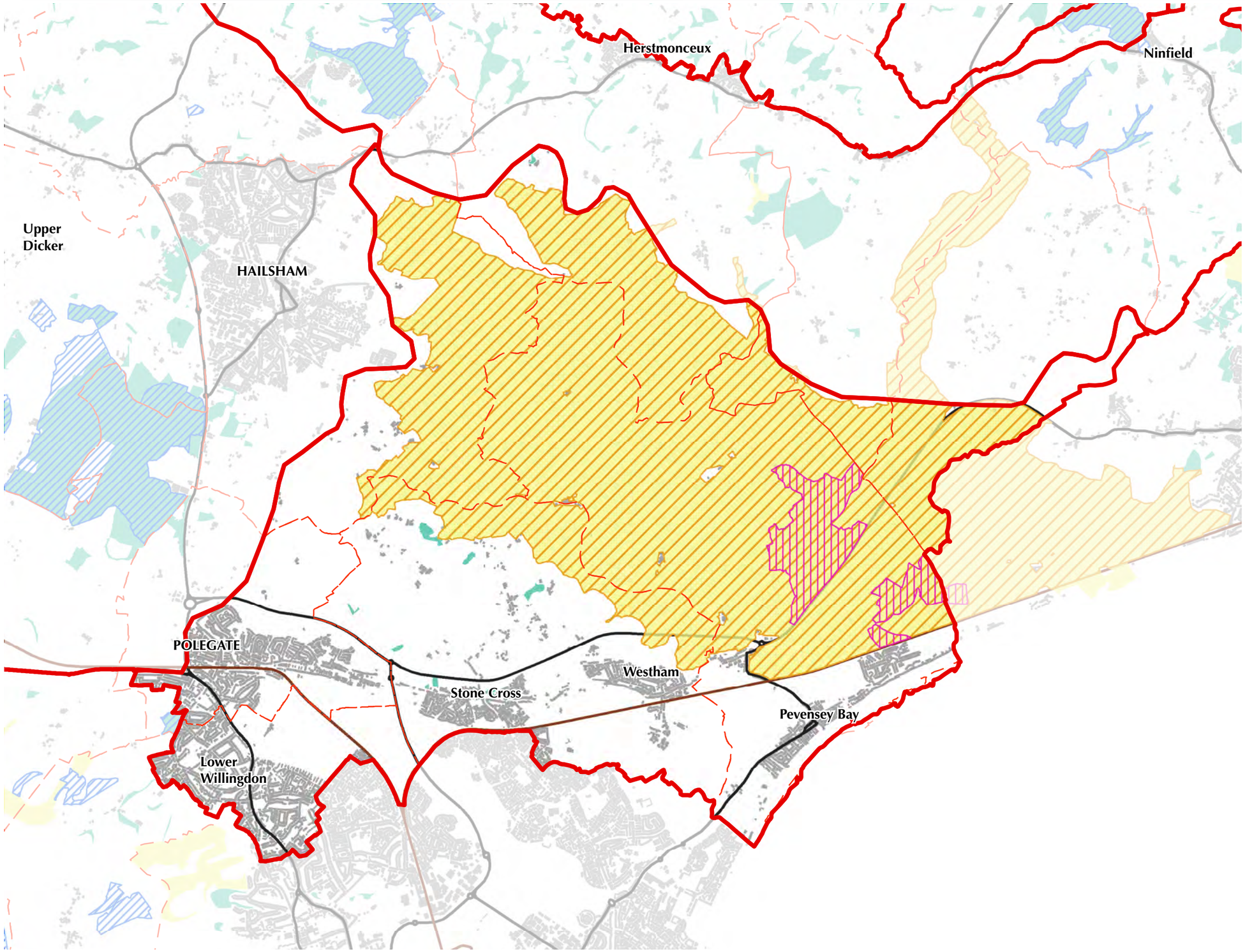
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FIGURE 3.9a
ZONE 8 - PEVENSEY LEVELS:
CONTEXT PLAN

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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;

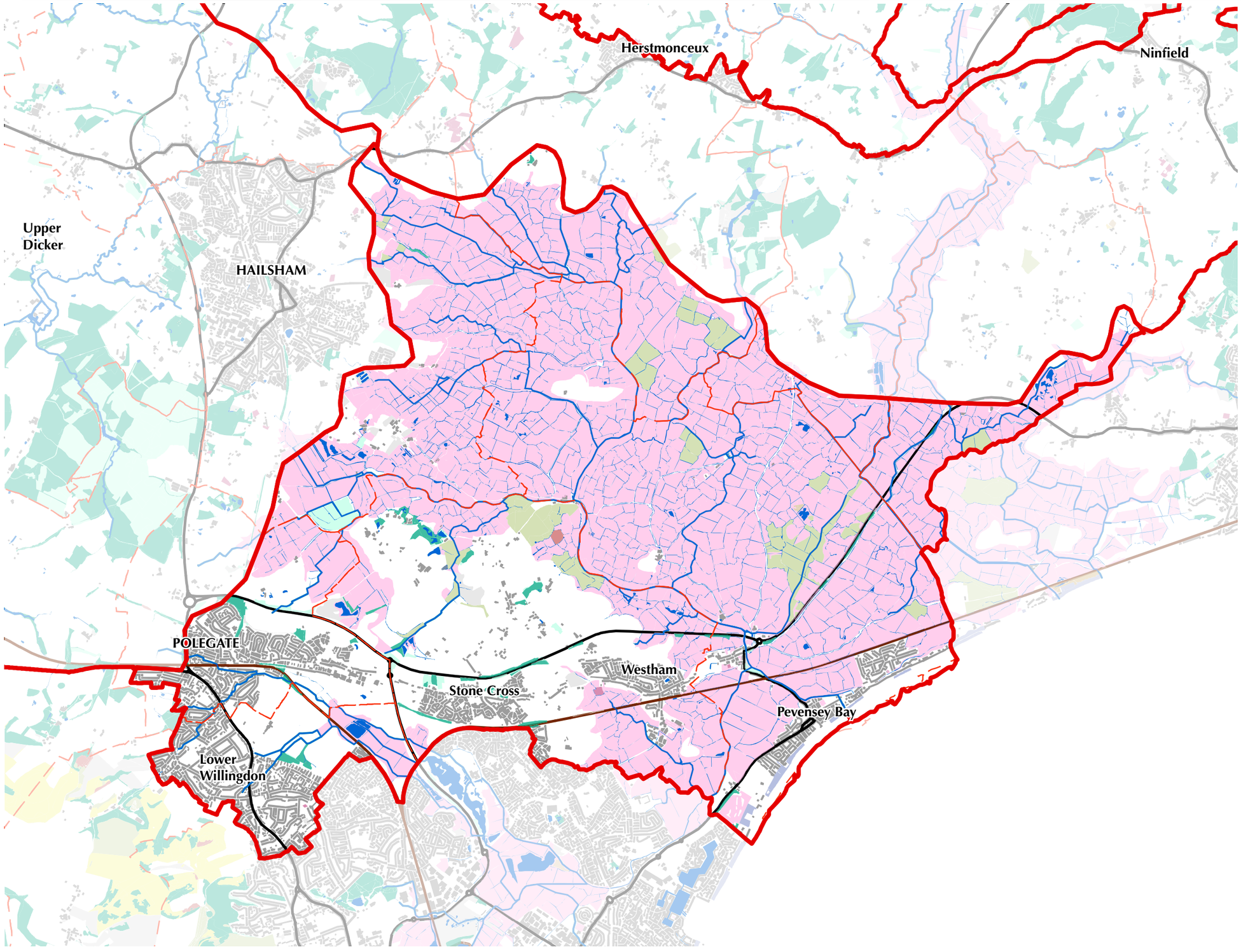
- American Mink *Mustela vison*
- New Zealand Pigmyweed *Crassula helmsii*
- Water Fern *Azolla filiculoides*

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)



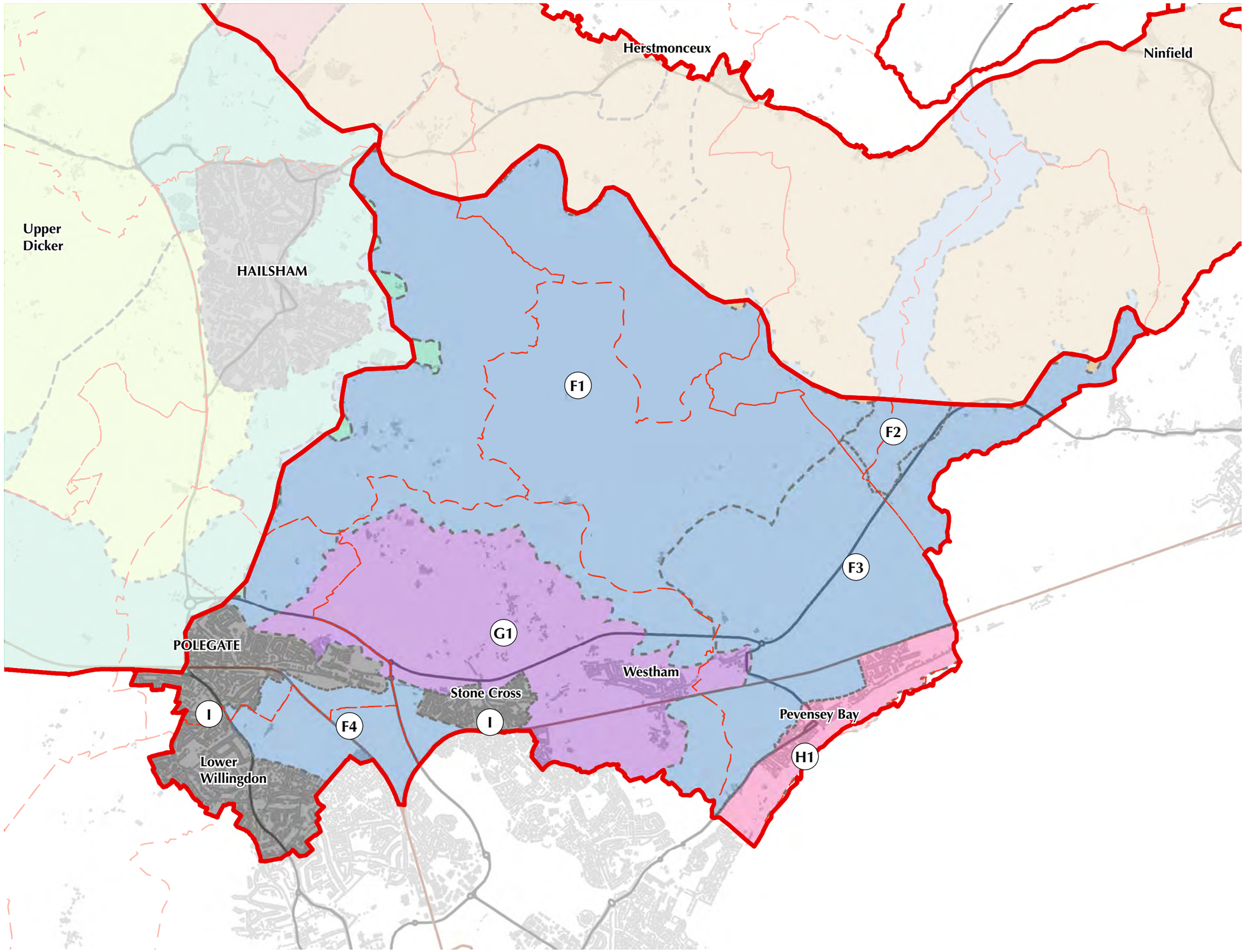
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FIGURE 3.9c
ZONE 8 - PEVENSEY LEVELS:
WILDLIFE HABITATS

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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:

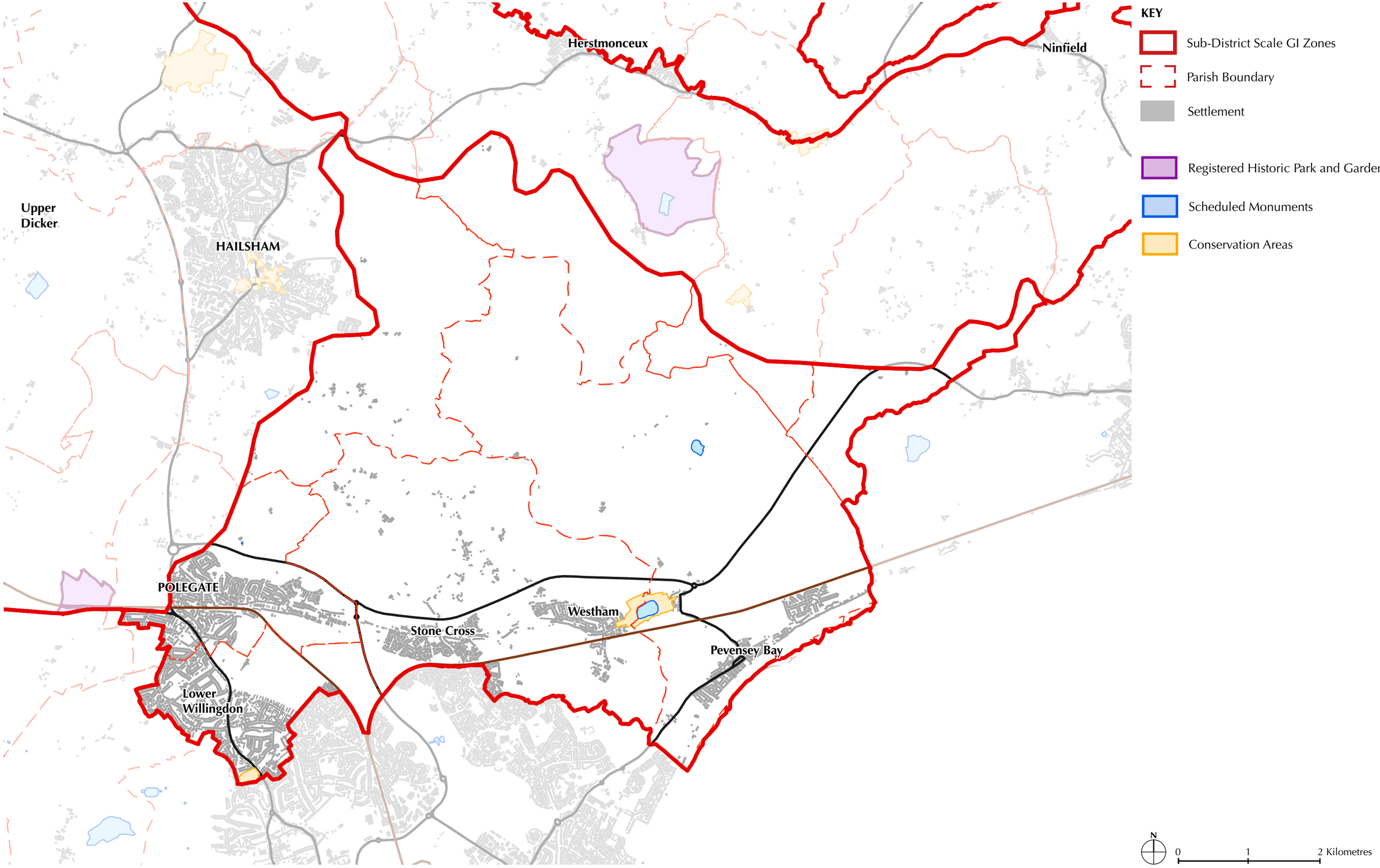
- The Hoo Registered Historic Park and Garden (Grade II*)
- 3 No. Scheduled Monuments – such as the Remains of chapel at Otham Court; and the Medieval moated site and associated earthworks, Pound Piece, Manxey
- 2 No. Conservation Areas – Pevensey and Westham, and Willingdon, Church Street.

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

April 2017
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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.

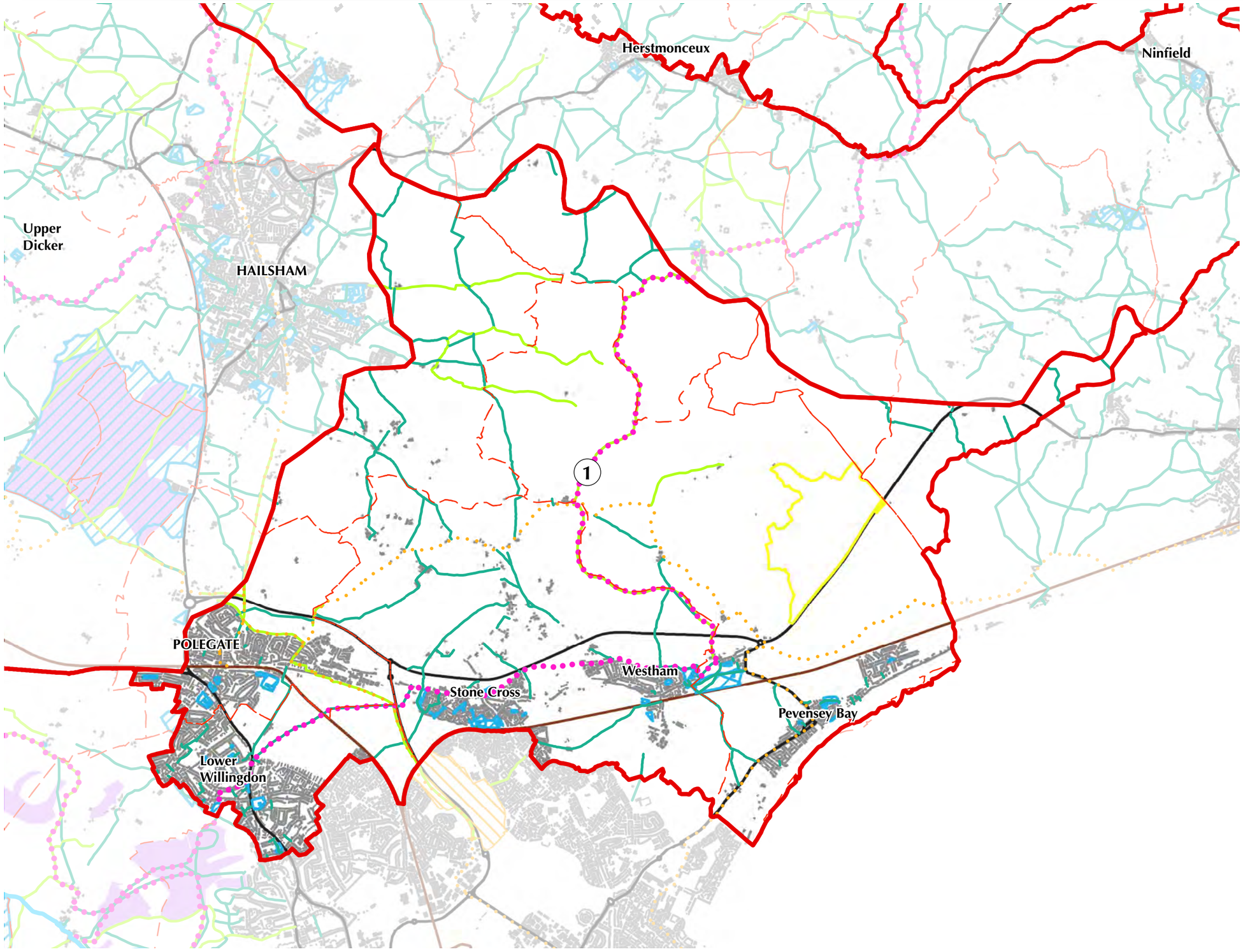
3.9.13 Water quality within the Pevensey Levels GI Zone is generally in 'good' chemical status and in 'moderate to poor' ecological status.

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

April 2017
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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.