

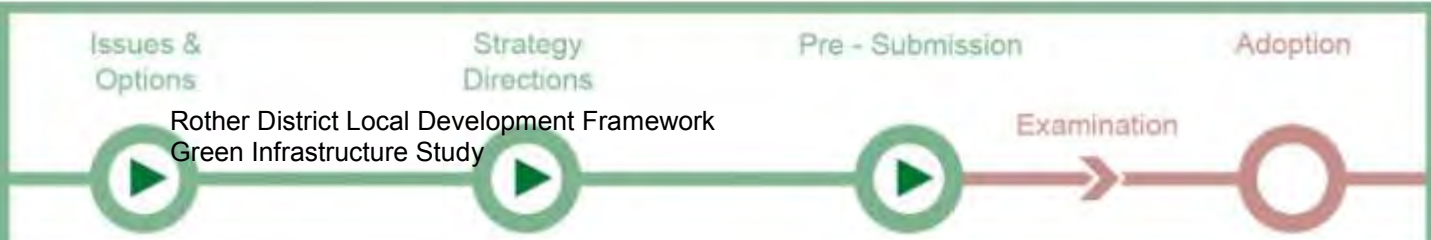
# Green Infrastructure



# Background Paper

August 2011

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# CONTENTS

	Page Number
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>5</b>
1.1 Purpose and Aims of this Study	5
1.2 What is Green Infrastructure?	5
1.3 Key Functions of Green Infrastructure	6
1.4 Benefits of Green Infrastructure	7
Climate Change Adaptation	8
Health, Well-Being and Social Cohesion	9
Economic, Growth and Investment	10
Wildlife and Habitats	10
Stronger Communities	10
1.5 Process – Approach to Preparing Rother’s Green Infrastructure Background Paper	11
<b>2 POLICY CONTEXT</b>	<b>14</b>
2.1 National Policies, Schemes and Guidance	14
Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act	14
DEFRA ‘The Natural Choice – securing the value of nature’	14
National Planning Policy	14
Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Guidance	15
Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship Schemes	16
2.2 Regional Policies, Schemes and Guidance	16
South East Plan	16
The South East Green Infrastructure Framework	19
South East AONB Woodlands Programme, Forestry Commission,	19
Natural England, ‘An Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace Provision in the South East’ February 2007	19
2.3 Introduction to Relevant Standards	20
Natural England Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)	20
Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard	20
Rother District Council Standards	21
<b>3 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE – CURRENT SITUATION AND ASSETS</b>	<b>22</b>
3.1 Sources of Information	22
Rother District Council ‘Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study’ 2007	22
Draft East Sussex County Council ‘Strategic Open Space Study’ 2011	22
Countryside Agency & English Heritage ‘National Character Areas (2004)’	23
The High Weald AONB Management Plan (2nd Edition March 2009)	24
The East Sussex County Council Landscape Assessments	24
North East Bexhill SPD	25
Pebsham Countryside Park Development Strategy	25

<b>3.2</b>	<b>Open Space and Recreational Assets</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANGSt)</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Accessible Woodland</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Green Corridors</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>3.6</b>	<b>Footpaths and Bridleways</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>3.7</b>	<b>Biodiversity and Ecological Assets</b>	<b>47</b>
	Statutory Designations	48
	Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitats	48
	Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)	51
	Countryside & Environmental Stewardship	51
	Protected Species	51
<b>3.8</b>	<b>Landscape Assets</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>3.9</b>	<b>Cultural Heritage &amp; Historical Assets</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>CONCLUSIONS and IMPLEMENTATION</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>4.1</b>	<b>Strategic Green Infrastructure Policy</b>	<b>64</b>
	Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment	64
	Summary of Main Needs and Opportunities for Green Infrastructure across the District	65
	(i) Recreational Open Space	
	(ii) Green Corridors	
	(iii) Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitats	
	(iv) Ancient Woodland Habitat	
	(v) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (Overall Principle)	
	(vi) Countryside/Woodland Access	
	(vii) Landscape Enhancement	
	(viii) Development Sites	
	(ix) Hedgerows	
	(x) Land Management Practices	
	(xi) Flood Risk and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs)	
	(xii) Water Supply	
	(xiii) Links with Culture & Heritage	
	(xiv) Green Roofs	
	(xv) Access and Facilitating 'Green Use' by Residents and Visitors	
	Conclusions	68
<b>4.2</b>	<b>Spatial Green Infrastructure Opportunities</b>	<b>70</b>
	•Bexhill	71
	•Hastings Fringes	77
	•Battle	79
	•Rural Rother (West)	81
	•Rye	84
	•Rural Rother (East)	86
<b>4.3</b>	<b>Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)</b>	<b>89</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>1</b>	Rother Overall Emissions Footprint	<b>9</b>
<b>2</b>	ESCC Classification of Strategic Open Space	<b>22</b>
<b>3</b>	Open Space and Recreational Assets - Recommended Quantity (District Wide)	<b>26</b>
<b>4</b>	Open Space and Recreational Assets - Recommended Recreation Standards (by individual area)	<b>27</b>
<b>5</b>	Open Space and Recreational Assets Recommended Access Standards	<b>27</b>
<b>6</b>	ANGSt results Rother compared to County and Region.	<b>33</b>
<b>7</b>	Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace - Recommended Quantity Standards (District Wide)	<b>38</b>
<b>8</b>	Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace - Recommended Quantity Standards (individual area)	<b>38</b>
<b>9</b>	Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace - Recommended Access Standards	<b>38</b>
<b>10</b>	Areas of Deficit against Woodland Trust Access Standards	<b>42</b>
<b>11</b>	Rother District's Biodiversity Assets	<b>48</b>
<b>12</b>	Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats in Rother	<b>49</b>
<b>13</b>	Special to Sussex non-BAP Habitats	<b>50</b>

## LIST OF MAPS

Map	Title	Page
1	Deprivation - Areas Classed as within the 20% Most Deprived Nationally	12
2	Amenity Greenspace (with accessibility catchment)	29
3	Parks and Gardens (with accessibility catchment)	30
4	Allotments (with accessibility catchment)	31
5	Outdoor Sports Facilities (with accessibility catchment)	32
6	South East Region – Areas which have all or none of their ANGSt requirements met	35
7	Accessible Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace (with accessibility catchment)	36
8	Application of lowest level ANGST standard (2ha+ site with 300 m buffer) – with opportunities for addressing areas of deficit	37
9	Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standard	44
10	Green Corridors (with Amenity Greenspace and Natural Greenspace overlaid for context)	45
11	Footpaths and Bridleways	46
12	Key Environmental Designations	52
13	Proposed New and Extended International Designations	53
14	Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats	54
15	Biodiversity Opportunity Areas	55
16	Countryside and Environmental Stewardship	56
17	Rother District's National Landscape Character Areas	58
18	East Sussex County Council Landscape Assessment Character Areas	59
19	Areas	75
20	North East Bexhill: Plan of Overall Spatial Site Strategy Access Strategy from Pebsham Countryside Park Development Strategy	76

## APPENDICES

A1	20ha Woodland Trust Standard (Draft ESCC Strategic Open Space Study)	90
A2	Strategic Open Space in East Sussex (Draft ESCC Strategic Open Space Study)	91
A3	Areas of Accessible Natural Greenspace 100ha+ (Draft ESCC Strategic Open Space Study)	92
A4	Abbreviations	94

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose and Aims of this Study**

1.1.1 The purpose of this paper is to provide background evidence in support of the Core Strategy and other Local Development Framework (LDF) documents. It is recognised that much evidence already exists or has already been published, so part of the role of this paper is formulating a coherent summary of the key issues of relevance to the provision of green infrastructure in Rother.

1.1.2 The aim of this background paper is:

- To identify the approach to green infrastructure in Rother District.
- Identify key green spaces that contribute to green infrastructure in the district. This exercise will draw on relevant existing evidence sources.
- To identify potential opportunities for green infrastructure in the district and identify any gaps in the data.
- To provide recommendations for a green infrastructure policy and to highlight opportunities for future provision

### **1.2 What is Green Infrastructure?**

1.2.1 Green Infrastructure (GI) means different things to different people, but Natural England sets out in its guidance document, 'Green Infrastructure Strategies' (2008) a definition for local authorities:

*Green Infrastructure is a strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering those ecological services and quality of life benefits required by the communities it serves and needed to underpin sustainability. Its design and management should also respect and enhance the character and distinctiveness of an area with regard to habitats and landscape types.*

*Green Infrastructure includes established green spaces and new sites and should thread through and surround the built environment and connect the urban area to its wider rural hinterland. Consequently it needs to be delivered at all spatial scales from sub-regional to local neighbourhood levels, accommodating both accessible natural green spaces within local communities and often much larger sites in the urban fringe and wider countryside.*

1.2.2 The South East Green Infrastructure Framework also provides a useful definition:

*Green Infrastructure is the active planning, creation, management and protection of green multifunctional spaces in built and urban environments which includes but is not limited to parks and gardens, natural and semi natural urban green spaces, green corridors and outdoor sports facilities.*

*The primary functions of GI are to conserve and enhance biodiversity, create a sense of space and place and support healthy living by increasing outdoor recreational opportunities for people. GI also has an important role to play as one of many tools that can be used to mitigate the effects of climate change with scope for reducing the incidents and severity of flooding, supporting healthy eco systems and reducing energy consumption by regulating the heat in urban spaces by managing micro climates effectively.*

1.2.3 For the purpose of Rother District Council's Green Infrastructure Study, the type of areas considered to make up Green Infrastructure, or have the potential to do so, are:

- Designated sites (national, regional and local) for wildlife, landscape and geological conservation,
- Important landscape features,
- Woodlands,
- Parks (country parks, district parks, historic parks),
- Gardens (church yards, historic grounds and heritage sites),
- Outdoor sports facilities (playing fields etc),
- Village greens,
- Cemeteries and churchyards,
- Allotments,
- Communal and amenity green spaces, greens and landscape areas within developments,
- Green corridors,
- Natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces,
- Rivers, ponds, lakes, reservoirs and other natural water areas
- Accessible countryside in urban fringe areas,
- Habitat rich agricultural land or land being managed for biodiversity improvement.

1.2.4 These environmental resources vary considerably in terms of their size extent, primary purpose and extent of accessibility. The incorporation of cycle ways and pedestrian links contributes to the multifunctional approach to green infrastructure and accessibility to green space.

### **1.3 Key Functions of Green Infrastructure**

1.3.1 The list below identifies the key physical functions of green infrastructure and is taken from Natural England's 'South East Green Infrastructure Framework'. This will be expanded upon later in the document under the relevant headings. The guidance states that green infrastructure should



aim to be multifunctional i.e. delivering more than one function. Analysis of the evidence base gathered should inform what functions are suitable and what should have priority. It should be noted that conflict can arise between unsuitably matched uses, such as public access and fragile habitat locations or species sensitive to disturbance.

### *Key functions of Green Infrastructure*

- Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, including the need to mitigate the potential impacts of new development
- Creating a sense of place and opportunities for greater appreciation of valuable landscapes and cultural heritage
- Increasing recreational opportunities, including access to and enjoyment of the countryside and supporting healthy living
- Improved water resource and flood management and sustainable design
- Making a positive contribution to combating climate change through adaptation and mitigation of impacts
- Sustainable transport, education and crime reduction
- Production of food, fibre and fuel

## **1.4 Benefits of Green Infrastructure**

- 1.4.1 The role of green infrastructure towards creating sustainable communities and tackling climate change has become increasingly important, particularly where there are pressures for development combined with a need to conserve the environment and landscape.
- 1.4.2 Green infrastructure will also provide much broader quality-of-life benefits such as improved public health, opportunities for sustainable transport as well as making the environment a more attractive place to live.
- 1.4.3 There is potential to deliver significant economic benefits through making the area more attractive to business, supporting tourism and reducing health care costs.
- 1.4.4 The recent DEFRA paper 'The Natural Choice' stated that "Around the country local partnerships are seeking to use green infrastructure to drive economic growth and regeneration and improve public health, wellbeing and quality of life".
- 1.4.5 The Forestry Commission<sup>1</sup> has classified five key overall benefits of the integration of high quality green infrastructure into the urban environment. These are:

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<sup>1</sup> Forestry Commission 'Urban Regeneration and Greenspace Partnership, Greenspace in Practice'

- Climate change adaptation/mitigation
- Health, well-being and social cohesion
- Economic growth and investment
- Wildlife and habitats
- Stronger communities

These are discussed in more detail below.

#### Climate Change Adaptation/Mitigation

- 1.4.6 Like all areas, Rother is likely to be affected by climate change which is expected to result in rising temperature as well as an increase in the frequency and intensity of extreme weather, and rising sea levels. Further growth will make demands on water supply and wastewater management.
- 1.4.7 Strategic networks of green infrastructure can provide a wide range of environmental benefits or ecosystem services including flood water storage, sustainable drainage, urban cooling and local access to shady outdoor space which can help to mitigate the effects of climate change and development.
- 1.4.8 Climate change will have a significant impact on the environment in the future and it is therefore necessary to ensure that measures are taken to reduce the effects through adaption and mitigation. PPS1 supplement on Planning and Climate Change requires Local Authorities to mitigate and adapt to climate change through appropriate location and patterns of development. Key planning objectives of relevance to GI include:
- Delivering patterns of urban growth that secure sustainable transport movements; and
  - Sustaining biodiversity.
- 1.4.9 At a District level the majority of emissions arise from the industrial and domestic sectors (67%), and that the sector with the highest portion of emissions is the domestic sector (38%).

Table 1: Rother Overall Emissions Footprint

<b>NI 188 Dec 2007 figures</b>	<b>Total NI188 Carbon footprint thousands of tonnes carbon dioxide per annum (% of UK total)</b>	<b>NI188 Carbon footprint from Domestic and Industrial Sectors - thousands of tonnes carbon dioxide per annum (% of UK total)</b>
Rother District Council	623 (0.14%)	418 (0.13%)
South East Region	55,062 (12.7%)	40,012 (12.4%)
UK Total	432,727 (100%)	323,767 (100%)

1.4.10 The provision of suitable green infrastructure has the potential to assist in climate change adaptation and mitigation as follows:

- Reduce the risks of overheating and associated health problems, particularly in urban areas by improving micro-climates through shading e.g. tree planting and evaporative cooling.
- Supporting healthy ecosystems by increasing habitats area and populations of protected species and by providing green corridors which allow wildlife to migrate and adapt to climate change.
- Improve carbon storage by landscape scale planting schemes.
- Reduce the risk of flooding by the better management of surface water run off and storage of flood water.
- Supply biomass or bio-fuels.
- Reduce the use of cars by providing sustainable transport corridors.
- Safeguarding sources of water supply (surface and groundwater) and maximizing opportunities for associated benefits such as water-based recreation and biodiversity protection.
- Improving air quality.

#### Health, Well-Being and Social Cohesion

1.4.11 There is much evidence of green infrastructure delivering key benefits for public health and well-being, including:

- Increased life expectancy and reduced health inequality
- Improvements in levels of physical activity and health
- Psychological health and mental well-being

1.4.12 In addition, green space offers possibilities in terms of increasing social activity, improving community cohesion, developing local attachment and lowering crime levels, particularly in deprived communities.

## Economic Growth and Investment

1.4.13 As well as environmental and social benefits, green infrastructure can have a positive impact on the local economy. Research funded by DEFRA<sup>2</sup> states that these can be quantified through:

- Inward investment and job creation
- Land and property benefits
- Local economic regeneration

1.4.14 Investments in green space have been shown to help attract and retain high value industries, new business start-ups, entrepreneurs and workers. This in turn increases the scope for leveraging in private sector investment, reducing unemployment and increasing 'Gross Value Added'.

## Wildlife and Habitats

1.4.15 The benefits of Green Infrastructure for 'wildlife and habitats' are obvious, in particular supporting populations of species by providing green corridors which allow wildlife to migrate and adapt to climate change.

## Stronger Communities

1.4.16 It is documented that the benefits of green space are greatest for people from lower socio-economic groups. Health inequalities related to income deprivation are lower in populations living in the greenest areas. The effect holds for all-cause mortality, and mortality from circulatory diseases.

1.4.17 Five Rother super output areas (SOAs) are within the 20% most deprived in the country. They are as follows (most deprived first):

- Bexhill Sidley Central
- Bexhill Sidley South
- Bexhill Central, Station and Town Hall
- Rye NW
- Bexhill Sackville

1.4.18 Four of the five are within relatively close proximity of the Pebsham Countryside Park. In addition, Hastings and St Leonards have several SOAs that fall into the '20% most deprived nationally category'. The distribution of these areas is illustrated on Map 1. The concentration of these areas within this location underlines the wider benefits of developing the Countryside Park.

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<sup>2</sup> Urban Regeneration & Greenspace Partnership 'Benefits of Green Infrastructure' report by Forest Research 2010.

## **1.5 Process – Approach to Preparing Rother’s Green Infrastructure Green Infrastructure**

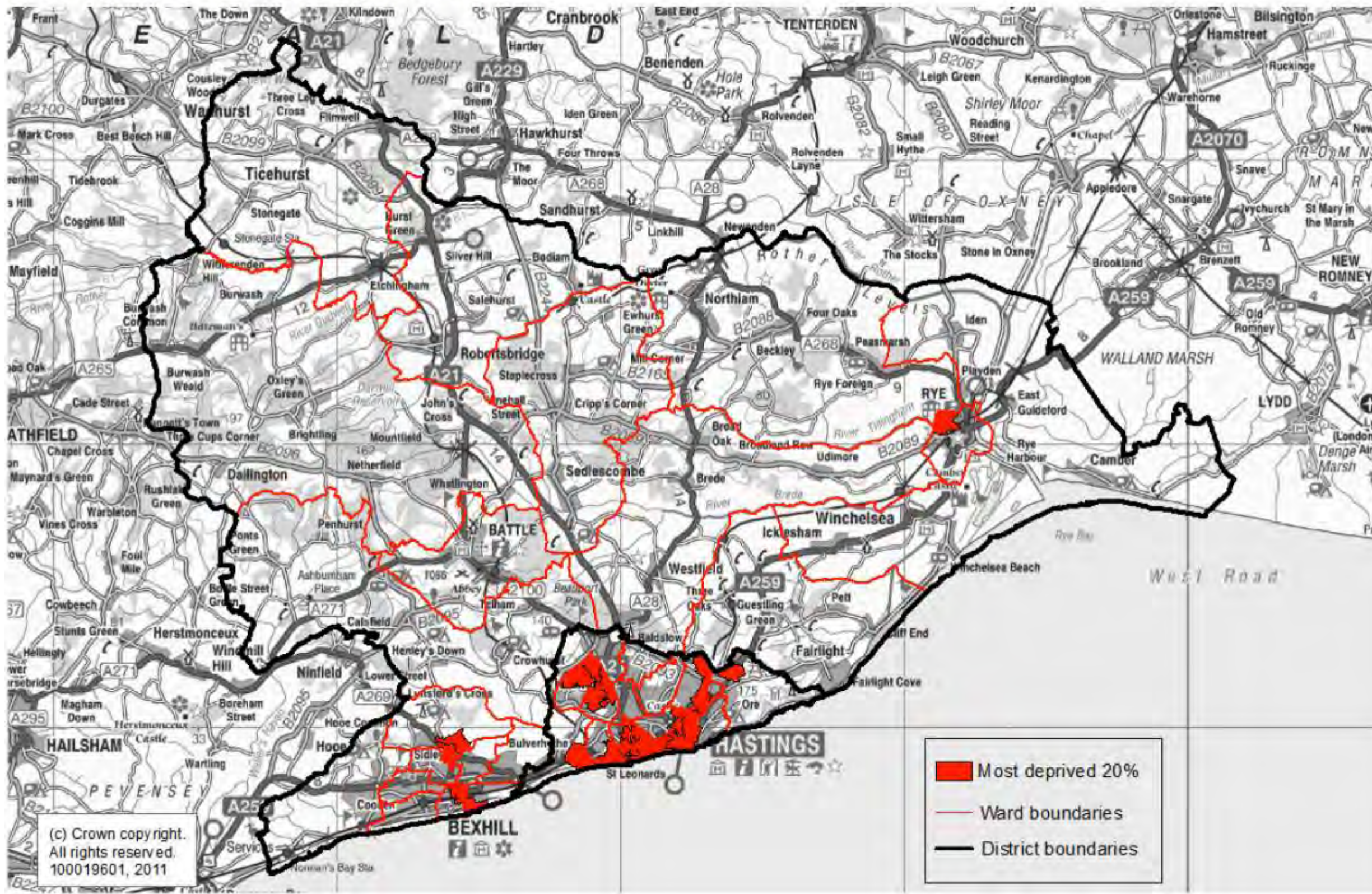
1.5.1 The first stage of preparing a GI policy for the Rother District’s Core Strategy is to review the policy context (chapter 2). In Chapter 3, the environmental assets that contribute to GI in the district are identified and analysed. In this section, GI is considered under the following categories:

- Open Space and Recreational Assets
- Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANGSt)
- Accessible Woodland
- Green Corridors
- Footpaths, Bridleways and Cycle Routes
- Biodiversity and Ecological Assets
  - Statutory Designations
  - Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitats
  - Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)
  - Countryside & Environmental Stewardship
  - Protected Species
- Landscape Assets
- Cultural Heritage & Historical Assets

1.5.2 Finally, Chapter 4 concludes with recommendations for Core Strategy policy and matters to consider in other LDF Development Plan Documents.



Map 1: Deprivation - Areas Classed as within the 20% Most Deprived Nationally



Source: 2010 Indices of Deprivation





## 2 POLICY CONTEXT

### 2.1 National Policies, Schemes and Guidance

#### Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act

- 2.1.1 This act outlines a duty to conserve, restore and enhance biodiversity, which applies to every public authority and reflects the key part they should play in conserving biodiversity.

#### DEFRA 'The Natural Choice – securing the value of nature'

- 2.1.2 Published in June 2011, it stated the intention to “establish a Green Infrastructure Partnership with civil society to support the development of green infrastructure in England.” The document emphasises the importance of urban green infrastructure to complete the links in the ecological network. It notes that urban green space allows species to move around within, and between, towns and the countryside and that even small patches of habitat can benefit movement. Urban green infrastructure is also recognised as one of the most effective tools available to us in managing environmental risks such as flooding and heat waves. It is part of the answer to the challenges posed by a changing climate.

#### National Planning Policy

- 2.1.3 National planning policy provides strong support for green infrastructure provision, recognising its contribution to sustainable development as follows:

*PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development* - Establishes sustainable development to be the core principle underpinning planning and outlines the Government's commitment to developing sustainable communities, protecting the natural and historic environment, the prudent use of natural resources and promoting sustainable economic development. The guidance identifies that development plan policies should take account of the protection of important and valued landscapes, biodiversity and the provision of open space.

*Supplement to PPS1: Planning and Climate Change* - states that spatial strategies and any development should help deliver, amongst other things, green infrastructure and biodiversity as part of a strategy to address climate change mitigation and adaptation. Opportunities for green infrastructure range from urban cooling, sustainable drainage systems, to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

*PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* - Sets out the Government's planning policies for rural areas, including country towns and villages, agriculture, landscape, forestry and tourism and leisure. The document emphasises the role of the planning system in rural



areas to ensure the protection and enhancement of the natural environment and improving quality of life.

*PPS9: Biological and Geological Conservation* - Conservation - calls for an integrated approach to planning for biodiversity in LDF's, including networks of natural habitats as part of a wider provision of strategy for protecting and extending open space and access routes.

*PPS12: Local Spatial Planning* - Establishes that the Core Strategy should be supported by evidence of what physical, social and green infrastructure is needed to deliver sustainable communities. The evidence should cover who will provide the infrastructure and when it will be provided.

*PPG17: Sport and Recreation* - Requires Local Authorities to undertake open space audits and assessments and local authorities should seek opportunities to improve the local open space network, and to incorporate open space within new development. The guidance confirms that such assessments can be used to inform green infrastructure planning at both the strategic and local scale.

*PPS25: Development and Flood Risk* - Sets out the Government's policy on development and flood risk management. It specifically refers to making the most of the benefits of green infrastructure for flood storage, conveyance and sustainable drainage systems, and re-creating functional floodplains and setting back flood defences.

*Planning Policy Consultation paper: Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment* - In March 2010, the Department for Communities and Local Government published a Planning Policy Consultation paper on a new Planning Policy Statement: Planning for a Natural and Healthy Environment. The two key objectives of this new PPS are to bring together related policies on the natural environment and open and green spaces, and to deliver, for the first time, planning policy on green infrastructure. The document also encompasses the vision and objectives of a number of cross governmental documents including the Government's strategy on the quality of place, the Government's forestry policy, its Soil Strategy and a number of other strategies relating to obesity, health, play and the water environment. In addition, the Government signed the Council of Europe's European Landscape Convention, which became binding from March 2007. The consultation document also incorporates these legislative requirements.

- 2.1.4 It is currently uncertain whether the proposals within the consultation PPS will be taken forward by the coalition government.

#### Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance

- 2.1.5 At a national level, Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance sets out its position in relation to green infrastructure planning and

delivery, which is increasingly recognised as an essential part of sustainable spatial planning.

- 2.1.6 The Guidance advises Local Planning Authorities as to how to address such matters within their LDFs. The document sets out the importance of green infrastructure and the drivers for it, the functions it fulfils, the benefits it provides and how successful delivery can be achieved. The guidance advocates the importance of integrating green infrastructure into the spatial planning process from an early stage.
- 2.1.7 It is closely related the 'South East Green Infrastructure Framework' (see section 2.2.2 below) which provides guidance for implementing Green Infrastructure (GI) in the South East region.

### Countryside Stewardship and Environmental Stewardship Schemes

- 2.1.8 Environmental projects carried out by outside agencies contribute to the aims of green infrastructure. Natural England's agri-environment schemes provide funding to farmers and land-owners to deliver environmental improvements.
- 2.1.9 Countryside Stewardship was introduced as a pilot scheme in England in 1991. Payments are made to farmers and other land managers to enhance and conserve English landscapes, their wildlife and history and to help people to enjoy them. The scheme has now closed to new applicants and has been superseded by the Environmental Stewardship scheme. Some existing agreements will, however, continue until 2014.
- 2.1.10 Similarly, Environmental Stewardship is an agri-environment scheme that provides funding to farmers and other land managers in England to deliver effective environmental management on their land.

## **2.2 Regional Policies, Schemes and Guidance**

### South East Plan

- 2.2.1 Draft legislation in the Localism Bill proposes to abolish regional spatial strategies, thus removing this regional tier of planning. However, at this time, the South East Plan remains effective, and a statutory part of the 'development plan', with which the Core Strategy should generally conform. The South East Plan promotes the provision of regional networks of green infrastructure. The plan includes the cross cutting policy CC8, set out below, to ensure that green infrastructure is integral in the planning process.

## POLICY CC8: GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Local authorities and partners will work together to plan, provide and manage connected and substantial networks of accessible multi-functional green space. Networks should be planned to include both existing and new green infrastructure. They need to be planned and managed to deliver the widest range of linked environmental and social benefits including conserving and enhancing biodiversity as well as landscape, recreation, water management, social and cultural benefits to underpin individual and community health and 'well-being'. They will be created and managed as a framework of green spaces and other natural features that will boost the sustainable development of settlements and increase the environmental capacity of the locality and region as a whole, helping communities to be more resilient to the effects of climate change.

The provisions of this policy apply region-wide. However, the successful designation and management of green infrastructure will be particularly important in areas designated as regional hubs, where growth may impact on sites of international nature conservation importance (14) or where there is a need to enhance the existing environmental capacity of an area.

- 2.2.2 Further to this, policies NRM5 and NRM7 set out more detailed direction as to how these networks should be managed and designed to support the conservation and improvement of biodiversity and recognising the importance of woodland to the region. Both policies are set out below:

## POLICY NRM5: CONSERVATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF BIODIVERSITY

Local planning authorities and other bodies shall avoid a net loss of biodiversity, and actively pursue opportunities to achieve a net gain across the region.

i. They must give the highest level of protection to sites of international nature conservation importance (European sites (6)). Plans or projects implementing policies in this RSS are subject to the Habitats Directive. Where a likely significant effect of a plan or project on European sites cannot be excluded, an appropriate assessment in line with the Habitats Directive and associated regulations will be required.

ii. If after completing an appropriate assessment of a plan or project local planning authorities and other bodies are unable to conclude that there will be no adverse effect on the integrity of any European sites, the plan or project will not be approved, irrespective of conformity with other policies in the RSS, unless otherwise in compliance with 6(4) of the Habitats Directive.

iii. For example when deciding on the distribution of housing allocations, local planning authorities should consider a range of alternative distributions within their area and should distribute an allocation in such a way that it avoids adversely affecting the integrity of European sites. In the event that a local planning authority concludes that it cannot distribute an allocation accordingly, or otherwise avoid or adequately mitigate any adverse effect, it should make provision up to the level closest to its

original allocation for which it can be concluded that it can be distributed without adversely affecting the integrity of any European sites.

iv. They shall avoid damage to nationally important sites of special scientific interest and seek to ensure that damage to county wildlife sites and locally important wildlife and geological sites is avoided, including additional areas outside the boundaries selected.

v. They shall ensure appropriate access to areas of wildlife importance, identifying areas of opportunity for biodiversity improvement and setting targets reflecting those in the table headed 'Regional Biodiversity Targets - Summary for 2010 and 2026' below. Opportunities for biodiversity improvement, including connection of sites, large-scale habitat restoration, enhancement and re-creation in the areas of strategic opportunity for biodiversity improvement (Diagram NRM3) should be pursued.

vi. They shall influence and applying agri-environment schemes, forestry, flood defence, restoration of mineral extraction sites and other land management practices to:

- deliver biodiversity targets
- increase the wildlife value of land
- reduce diffuse pollution
- protect soil resources.

vi. They shall promote policies that integrate the need to accommodate the changes taking place in agriculture with the potential implications of resultant development in the countryside.

vii. They shall require green infrastructure to be identified, developed and implementing conjunction with new development.

## POLICY NRM7: WOODLANDS

In the development and implementation of local development documents and other strategies, local authorities and other bodies will support the implementation of the Regional Forestry and Woodland Framework, ensuring the value and character of the region's woodland are protected and enhanced. This will be achieved by:

- i. protecting ancient woodland from damaging development and land uses
- ii. promoting the effective management, and where appropriate, extension and creation of new woodland areas including, in association with areas of major development, where this helps to restore and enhance degraded landscapes, screen noise and pollution, provide recreational opportunities, helps mitigate climate change, and contributes to floodplain management
- iii. replacing woodland unavoidably lost through development with new woodland on at least the same scale
- iv. promoting and encouraging the economic use of woodlands and wood resources, including wood fuel as a renewable energy source
- v. promoting the growth and procurement of sustainable timber products.

### The South East Green Infrastructure Framework

2.2.3 The South East Green Infrastructure Framework is a reference tool for planners, local authorities and other interested parties. It provides *guidance* for implementing Green Infrastructure (GI) in the South East region. It is the result of a project by The South East Green Infrastructure Partnership (SEGIP) that was formed to develop a project to deliver GI policy. The SEGIP is made up of Natural England, Environment Agency, Government Office for the South East, Forestry Commission, Wildlife Trusts in the South East, Groundwork and the South East England Partnership Board, which comprises of South East England Development Agency (SEEDA).

2.2.4 The South East Green Infrastructure Framework seeks to:

- Establish Green Infrastructure as an integral and essential component of sustainable communities;
- Develop a common understanding of the role and importance of green infrastructure;
- Help implement the South East Plan's green infrastructure policy; and
- Will provide detailed guidance on how Green Infrastructure can be delivered through the planning system and local partnerships.

South East AONB Woodlands Programme, Forestry Commission, Natural England, 'An Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace Provision in the South East' February 2007

2.2.5 This study applies the ANGSt standards (as described in section 2.3.1) to the South East region. It excludes sites that are non-natural and sites that are not accessible. Details of its findings as they are relevant to Rother District are discussed in section 3.3.

## 2.3 Introduction to Relevant Standards

### Natural England - Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt)

2.3.1 Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) is a method used to assess provision natural greenspace and identify areas of deficiency. The ANGSt recommends that everyone should have a range of accessible natural open spaces of certain sizes within certain distances:

#### **The Natural England Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards**

- That no person should live more than 300m from their nearest area of natural green space of at least 2ha in size
- Provision of at least 1ha of Local Nature Reserve per 1,000 population
- That there should be at least one accessible 20ha site within 2km from home
- That there should be one accessible 100ha site within 5km of home.
- That there should be one accessible 500ha site within 10km of home.

2.3.2 ANGSt is currently the only nationally accepted standard for strategic open space. Natural England says of the standard –

*The strength of ANGSt is that it can be applied as a national benchmark against which local standards for providing accessible natural greenspace can be assessed, areas of deficiency identified and, where necessary, rectified. The Standard recognises that green spaces can deliver a range of benefits through intelligent design, location and management.*

### Woodland Trust Woodland (WT) - Access Standard

2.3.3 This was developed partly from the ANGSt and partly from the WT's vision for increasing the amount of woodland available for public access and nature conservation purposes. This standard aspires to increase public access to woodland.

#### **The Woodland Trust Woodland Access Standards**

- That no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size.
- That there should be also at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km (8km round trip) of people's homes.

2.3.4 East Sussex County Council have used the 20ha standard in their Draft Strategic Open Space Study, as illustrated in Appendix 1. In section 3.4, there is further discussion regarding the application of the Woodland Trust standard to Rother District.

## Rother District Council Standards

- 2.3.5 In accordance with PPG17 an audit and assessment of Rother's open spaces, sport and recreation facilities was made in 2007 to assess whether existing provision met the needs of local people, and to determine what provision should be made for in the future. The scope of open space strategies and GI strategies are quite different. Open Space strategies consider green spaces and the facilities provided within them from an access, quality and management perspective, focusing primarily on the needs of the local population rather than the consideration of wider environmental benefits and services. These green spaces are, however, important constituents of a green infrastructure network.
- 2.3.6 The use of ANGSt and the Woodland Trust Standard is put forward in Rother's Study as a way of assessing open space provision. However, in accordance with PPG 17 Rother District Council developed locally applicable standards rather than adopting these national standards. Following research and consultation with users, providers and other key organisations within Rother, local standards for quality, quantity and accessibility of provision were set enabling shortfalls in provision to be identified and provide clear recommendations for the setting of local quantitative and qualitative standards for open space, sport and recreation facilities. The standards are set out in more detail in section 3.



Wood Field, Fairlight Cove

### 3 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE IN ROTHER – CURRENT SITUATION & ASSETS

#### 3.1 Sources of Information

- 3.1.1 There are several source materials, produced predominantly at District and County Council level, which set out the current level of green infrastructure provision within Rother. This section gives a brief description of each of these source materials – focusing on their role, purpose and remit.
- 3.1.2 All of the following source documents outlined in 3.1.1 to 3.1.7 have been produced with different aims and purposes, but all have something to tell us about GI provision in the District.
- 3.1.3 Findings from these studies are drawn out in more detail in subsequent sections, in 3.2 to 3.9 in relation to the current situation, and in section 4 in relation to recommendations for the future.

#### Rother District Council ‘Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study’ 2007

- 3.1.4 In accordance with Planning Policy Guidance 17 (PPG17), an audit and assessment of Rother's open spaces, sport and recreation facilities was made in 2007 to assess whether existing provision met the needs of local people, and to determine what provision should be made for in the future.
- 3.1.5 The scope of open space strategies and GI strategies are similar, but different in a key respect. Open Space strategies consider green spaces from access, quality and management perspective, rather than the consideration of wider environmental benefits and services. These green spaces are, however, important constituents of a GI network.

#### Draft East Sussex County Council ‘Strategic Open Space Study’ 2011

- 3.1.6 This recent study examines open space of *county-wide* significance. It classifies the types of strategic open space which make up this resource in East Sussex as follows, together with their primary purpose.

Table 2: ESCC Classification of Strategic Open Space

Type	Primary Purpose
Commons	Public access and recreation
Country parks	Public access and recreation
Golf Courses which are publicly accessible	Sport
Large urban parks	Public access and recreation
Local Nature Reserves	Nature conservation
National Nature Reserves e.g. parts of Pevensey	Nature conservation



Levels	
National Trust countryside	Landscape protection
Open Access Land	Agriculture
RSPB Reserves	Nature conservation
Sussex Wildlife Trust reserves	Nature conservation
Woodland open to the public under Forestry Commission programmes	Forestry
Woodland open to the public under the English Woodland Grant Scheme e.g. Bewl Water Woods	Forestry

3.1.7 With regards to this open space of county-wide significance, the study aims to answer the questions:

- How much do we have?
- What standards exist to help us decide how much we need, and how do we compare?
- How do we achieve an appropriate standard?

3.1.8 The study is primarily a Strategic Open Space Study in accordance with PPG17, although it has elements of a Green Infrastructure (GI) study as well. It fundamentally looks at strategic open space from the point of view of public use and access. It does however touch upon GI in that it considers open space in multifunctional terms. It also considers connectivity and the way in which strategic open space delivers ecosystem services.

3.1.9 ESCC report that as of August 2011 the study is “awaiting review by the lead member prior to adoption”. As a consequence, ESCC have given Rother District Council permission to reproduce some of the maps from their Draft Study. These have been included as appendices to the Study.

#### Countryside Agency & English Heritage ‘National Character Areas (2004)’

3.1.10 England has been divided into areas with similar landscape character, which are called National Character Areas (NCAs); previously known as Joint Character Areas (JCAs).

3.1.11 The 'Character of England Landscape, Wildlife and Cultural Features Map' produced in 2005 by The Countryside Agency, with support from English Heritage, was an update to a 1996 original. This map subdivides England into 159 NCAs providing a picture of the differences in landscape character at the national scale.

3.1.12 Details of the three NCAs that apply in Rother District can be seen in section 3.8.

### The High Weald AONB Management Plan (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition March 2009)

- 3.1.13 The High Weald AONB Management Plan 2009 addresses the primary purpose of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the conservation and enhancement of the special features that represent its natural beauty. In doing so it explains how the landscape was formed and sets out the main policies and guidelines for the management of the landscape.
- 3.1.14 The Management Plan sets out an approach to landscape management by defining Natural Beauty in terms of its key features. The principal components are: geology and water systems, settlement, woodland, routeways and fields and heath, and their combined contribution to forming the cultural landscape of the High Weald. The AONB covers 82% of the district of Rother. It reaches from Horsham in the west to Hastings in the east, crosses 4 counties (West & East Sussex, Kent and a corner of Surrey), a total of 1457 sq. km of countryside. The Management Plan provides valuable cross boundary guidance on the landscape of the High Weald.

### The East Sussex County Council Landscape Assessments

- 3.1.15 The ESCC County Landscape Assessment (2008) seeks to improve understanding of our local landscape character by describing and recording what makes this place distinctive and what is special about it. This is in order to better manage change and to ensure that development does not undermine what is distinctive about the landscape, as well as informing ways of enhancing its character.
- 3.1.16 The assessment identifies a number of distinct landscape character areas within Rother district and recommends specific Landscape Action Priorities tailored to the special characteristics and pressures facing each area. These areas are discussed in more detail in section 3.8.
- 3.1.17 The Landscape Group of the County Council followed up their work on the 2008 landscape assessment by carrying out a more tailored landscape assessment of the previously identified search areas for development to the north of Bexhill and West of Hastings (Wilting Farm area).
- 3.1.18 It was concluded in this study that these developments would generate a loss of countryside and environmental resource for which good practice, if not policy, would suggest that compensation measures should be put in place. Such measures may be through helping to facilitate enhancement of other areas which would be accessible to the community, such as Pebsham Countryside Park and other urban fringe open spaces.

- 3.1.19 The second study in 2009 involved an assessment of the market towns of Battle and Rye together with a range of villages in Rother District. The aims and objectives of the study were to define the relative capacity of the landscape around existing settlements to accommodate housing and business development. In order to do this the quality, value and sensitivity of the landscape, building on existing landscape character assessments of the area, were evaluated. The assessment had regard to the scope for mitigation, opportunities for green infrastructure provision and of potential development.

#### North East Bexhill Supplementary Planning Document

- 3.1.20 Adopted in June 2009, this follows on from the Local Plan adopted in 2006 which identified some 100 hectares of land for a major extension to the north east of Bexhill (Local Plan policies BX2 and BX3). This will include significant areas of open space and green infrastructure, as set out in Map 18 and 19 in the Appendices.
- 3.1.21 The SPD also seeks to retain the various landscape features of woodland, hedgerows, copses, ponds and ditches that form part of an important local habitat mosaic. The intention is that the development will incorporate a green movement network across new publicly accessible open space and new planted landscape. This will help facilitate access from the wider urban area to the new 'Countryside Park' between Bexhill and Hastings.

#### Pebsham Countryside Park Development Strategy

- 3.1.22 Since 2003, the three local authorities concerned with the area – East Sussex, Hastings and Rother – have been working together to make the 'Pebsham Countryside Park' a reality. The 'Development Strategy', including an Access Strategy, was published in March 2008 and approved by the member Councils, as reproduced in Map 20. The boundary as it applies in Rother was also set out in the Adopted Local Plan 2006.
- 3.1.23 The countryside park will be developed for recreational activities and nature conservation alongside continuing agriculture, whilst remaining mainly open. It will comprise four distinct use zones (also visible on Map 20), each of which will require different development and management policies. These are:
- The Activity Park
  - Coastal Park
  - Combe Haven Wildlife Area
  - Upper Wilting Centre

3.1.24 The document is currently subject to a review which will combine the Countryside Park Development and Implementation Strategies. The Review is expected to be published later in 2011.

## **3.2 Open Space and Recreational Assets**

3.2.1 This first category of green infrastructure considered in this study is 'open space and recreational assets'. Essentially, these are areas designed for human enjoyment in and around centres of human habitation. It is important to ensure communities have access to a suitable range and quantity of outdoor recreation opportunities.

3.2.2 The ESCC Draft Strategic Open space Study demonstrated that the east side of the County (Rother and Hastings) have a much more limited supply of strategic open space when compared to the rest of East Sussex. This is visually demonstrated on the County-wide map of Strategic open space in Appendix 2.

3.2.3 Rother's Open Space, Sport and Recreation Audit and Assessment recommended local standards for a number of recreational activities. It is considered that the following four categories outlined in Table 3 comprise the category of 'open space and recreational assets'.

Table 3: Open Space and Recreational Assets - Recommended Quantity Standards (District Wide)

<b>Typology</b>	<b>Existing Provision (per 1,000 population)</b>	<b>Recommended Local Standard (per 1,000 population)</b>	<b>Surplus /Deficit (ha per 1,000 population)</b>
Parks and Gardens	0.25	0.57	0.32 deficit
Amenity Greenspace	0.89	1.73	0.84 deficit
Outdoor Sports & Facilities	2.75	3.90	1.15 deficit
Allotments	0.19	0.31	0.12 deficit

Source: Rother District Council's Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study.

3.2.4 The district-wide locations of the four types of open space and recreational assets can be seen on Maps 2 to 5. These areas are generally small scale, well used and heavily sculpted by people for their own purposes. Ecology and biodiversity is inevitably a secondary consideration at best, but nonetheless these areas can provide key habitats and green corridors for wildlife in areas they may otherwise be excluded from. The RDC Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study did also analyse 'Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace' and the findings regarding this typology are covered in section 3.3 on 'Accessible Natural Greenspace'.

Table 4: Open Space and Recreational Assets - Recommended Recreation Quantity Standards (by individual area)

	Surplus /Deficit hectares (equivalent no of football pitches in brackets)				
Typology	Bexhill	Battle	Rye	West Rother	East Rother
Amenity Greenspace	Deficit 35.64 ha (40.50)	0	Deficit 3.25 (3.69)	Deficit 21.62 (24.57)	Deficit 12.01 (13.65)
Parks and Gardens	Deficit 12.55 ha (14.27)	0	Deficit 1.48 (1.69)	0	Deficit 11.83 (13.45)
Allotments	Deficit 9.72 ha (11.04)	Deficit 0.57 (0.65)	0	Deficit 2.03 (2.31)	0
Outdoor Sports Facilities	Deficit 58.72 ha (66.72)	Deficit 1.82 (2.06)	0	Deficit 5.73 (6.51)	0

Source: Rother District Council's Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study

3.2.5 The standards outlined in Table 3 were also applied to more specific geographies within the District. Table 4 demonstrates a general shortage of open space across the District, with only a few areas having sufficient quantity of some types of open space. There are particularly large deficits of amenity open space and outdoor sports provision in Bexhill.

3.2.6 In addition to 'quantity' standards, the 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study' also applies 'access' and 'quality' standards. The intention is that quantity and accessibility standards should be applied together. Quantity standards enable the identification of areas that do not meet the minimum provision standards, while the accessibility standards help determine where those deficiencies are important. The study recommended the following accessibility standards;

Table 5: Open Space and Recreational Assets - Recommended Access Standards

	Outdoor Sports	Parks and Gardens	Amenity Green-space	Allotments & Community Gardens
Urban	20 mins. walk time	20 mins. walk time	15 mins. walk time	20 mins. walk time
Rural		20 mins. drive time		

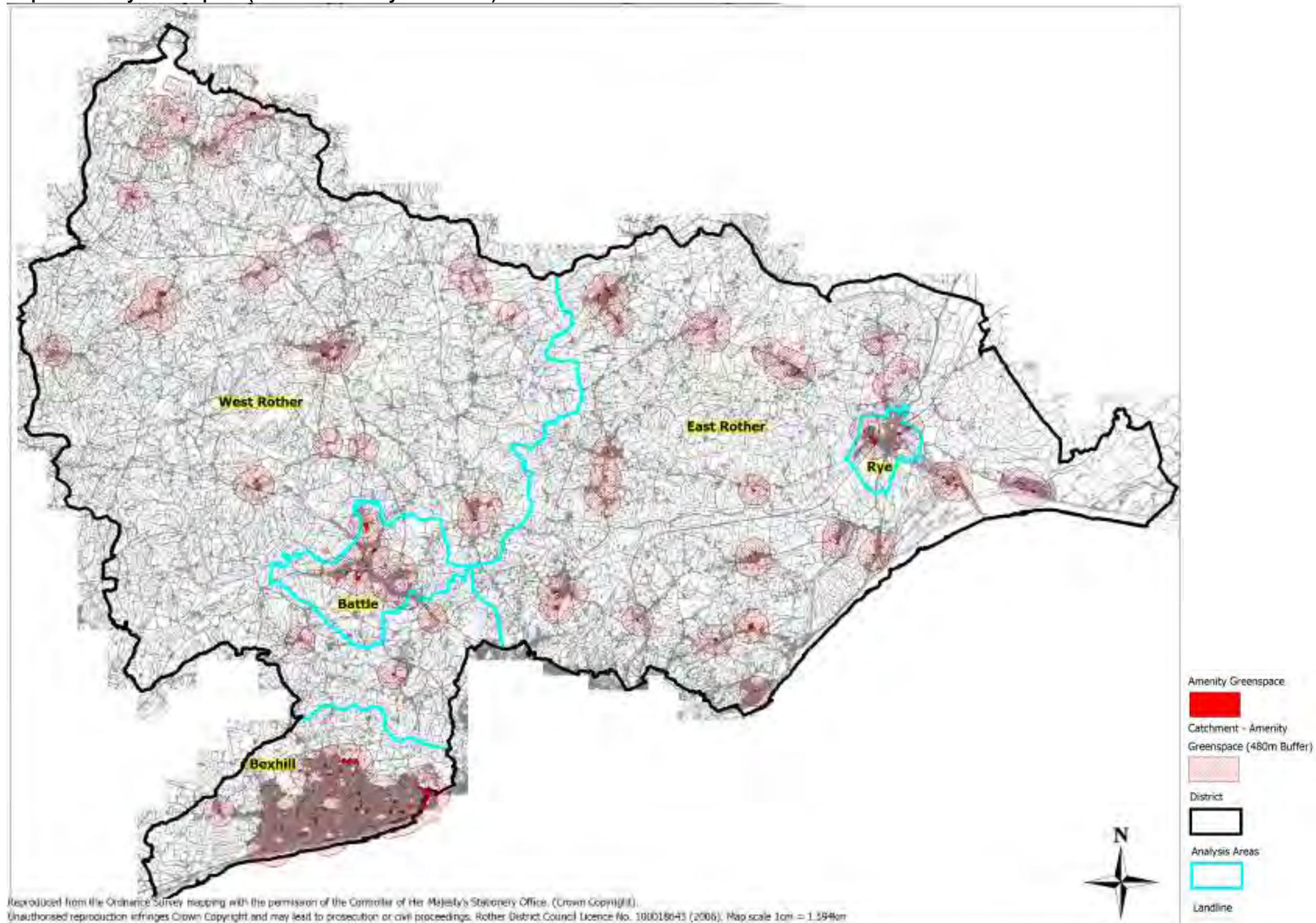
Source: Rother District Council's Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study.

3.2.7 As well as showing the location of these four types of open space, Maps 2 to 5 also demonstrate accessibility. The buffers indicate areas within the catchment of the open space, with the open space itself at the centre of the buffer. The extent of the buffers vary according to the accessibility standards set within the RDC 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study'.

- 3.2.8 For a quality standard, rather than score-based criteria, the Study has recommended a statement setting out the aims and aspirations for each of the types of open space. Cross-reference can be made to the background evidence study 'Open Space, Sport & Recreation Audit and Assessment' for further details.
- 3.2.9 The above standards are useful in assessing the adequacy of GI provision around the District and as a means for justifying either:
- 1) New on-site provision alongside new development
  - 2) Financial contributions from developers to address any open space shortfalls.
- 3.2.10 Based on the application of the three standards (quantity, quality and access) discussed in Section 3.2, the Open Space, Sport & Recreation study did propose a number of recommendations for new open spaces and improvements to existing. Whilst the following list is not exhaustive, it is considered to be the key recommendations regarding open space and recreation assets from the 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study'. The key recommendations from the study regarding Accessible Natural Greenspace are in the later section 3.3.
- Amenity Greenspace: Consider new long term provision west of Robertsbridge and new provision in Broad Oak (albeit as a low priority). The Council is to concentrate upon qualitative improvements to amenity green spaces in the Battle and Rye areas.
  - Allotments: New allotment sites in Hurst Green, Burwash, Fairlight Cove, Westfield and Broad Oak to be of a high priority.  
New allotment sites in Etchingham, Brede and Flimwell of a medium priority.  
Further opportunities will be investigated in other large service villages within western Rother on an opportunity-led basis. Subject to demand, the Council to identify new allotment sites on the west and east of the Bexhill urbanised area. Subject to demand, the Council to provide a new allotment site in south Battle through new provision or the reallocation of existing provision.
  - Playing Pitches: The Council to continue plans for additional pitches in the Bexhill area.
  - Green Corridors, Beaches and Coastal Areas: The Council to improve the accessibility to, and quality of the beach/coastal area in southeast Bexhill. The Council to ensure all new major developments contain green corridors to reduce dependence on cars for short journeys, particularly as part of the Bexhill urban extensions.
- 3.2.11 These recommendations are discussed in relation to individual geographic areas in section 4.2.

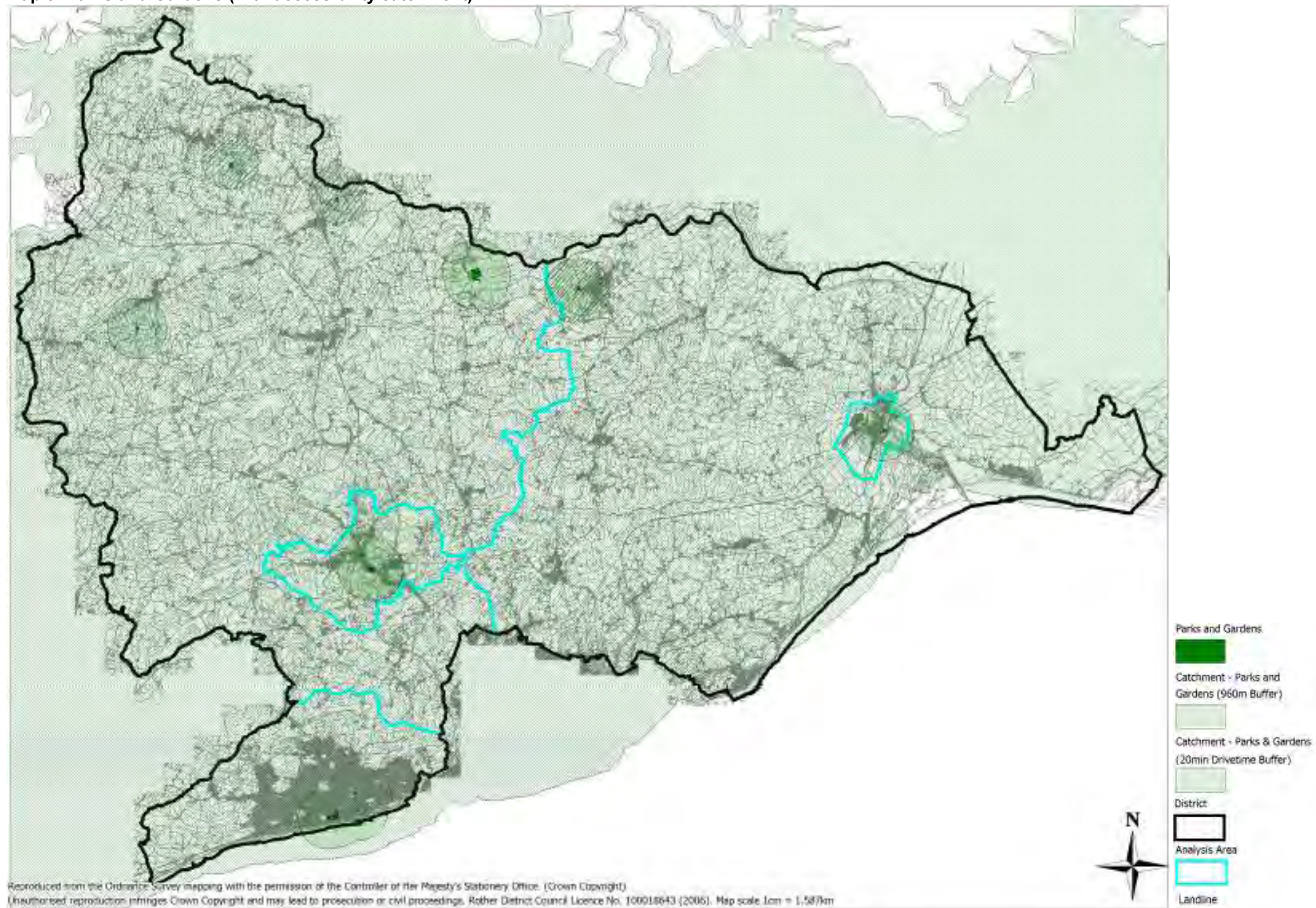


**Map 2: Amenity Greenspace (with accessibility catchment)**



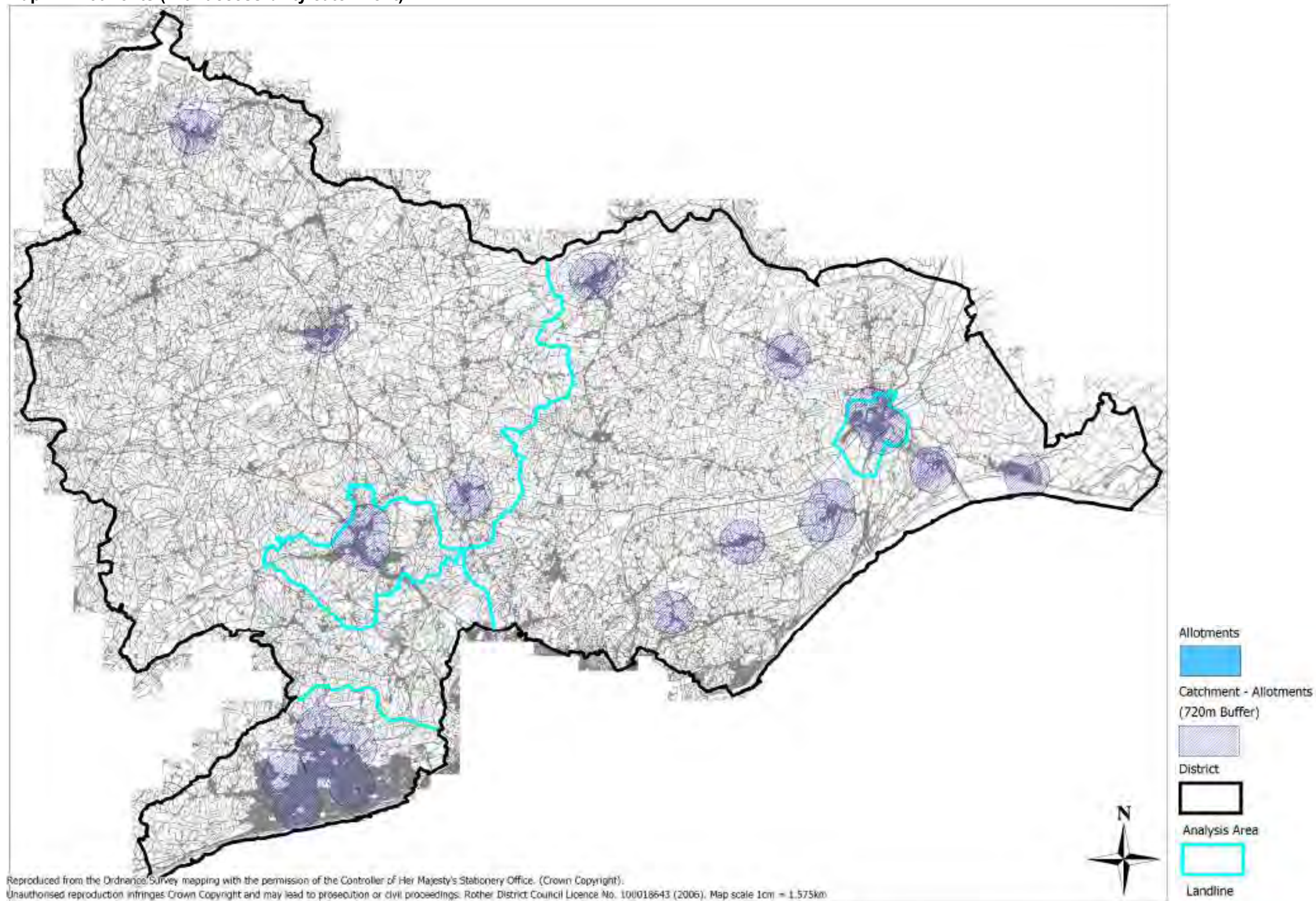


**Map 3: Parks and Gardens (with accessibility catchment)**



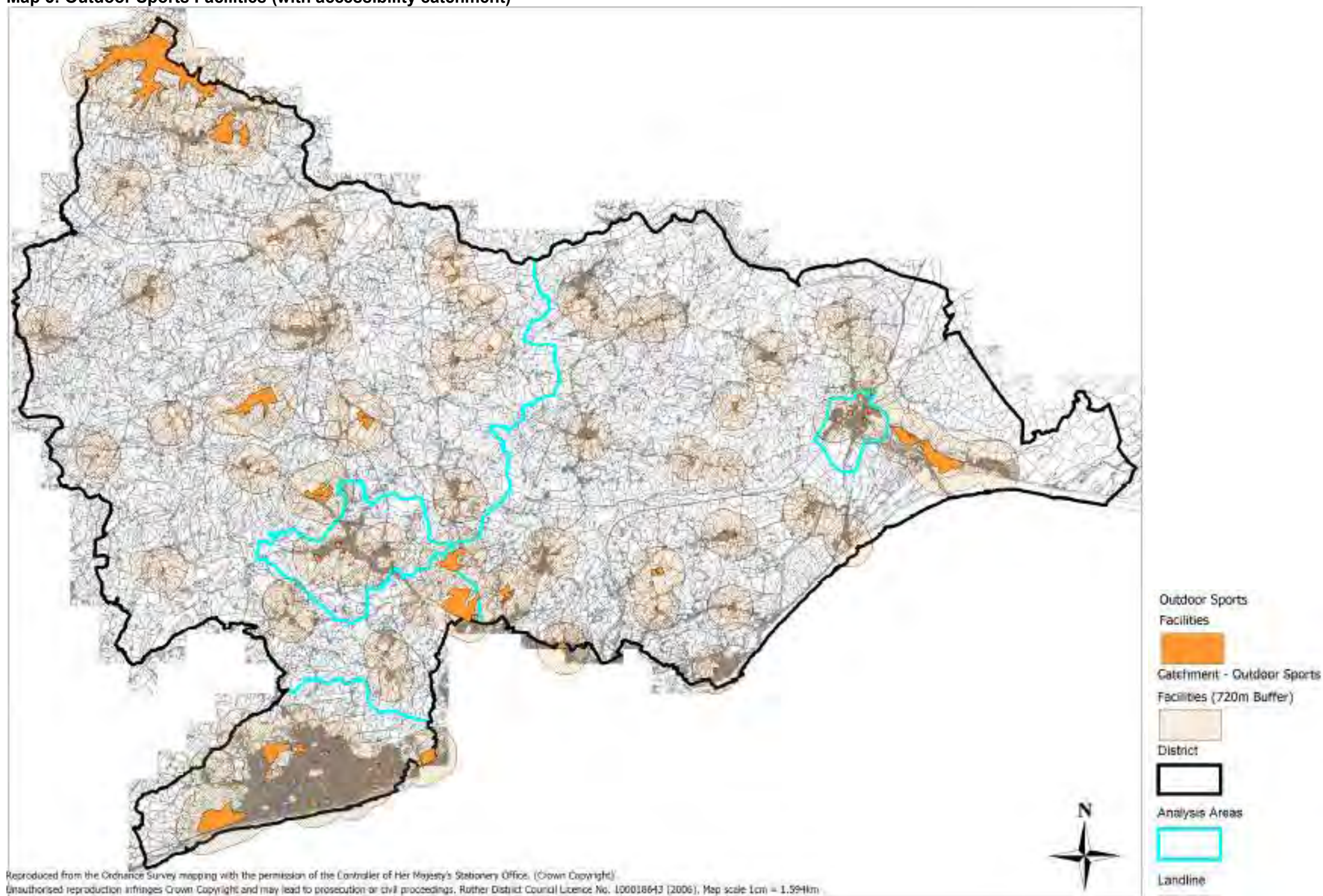


**Map 4: Allotments (with accessibility catchment)**





**Map 5: Outdoor Sports Facilities (with accessibility catchment)**



### 3.3 Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANGSt)

- 3.3.1 The *concept* of ANGSt was explained in detail in section 2.3.1 of this report. This section continues the theme by examining how ANGSt may in practice be applied to Rother District. It is important at the outset to clarify the difference between 'accessible natural greenspace' (as covered in this section 3.2) and 'biodiversity and ecological assets' (as covered by the latter section 3.3). Whilst there is considerable overlap between the two, the difference is perhaps best explained in that ANGSt is primarily concerned with *human access* to, and enjoyment of, nature. However, the ecological assets covered in section 3.3 do not necessarily afford human access, since their primary purpose is the protection of biodiversity – with human access and enjoyment a secondary consideration if at all.
- 3.3.2 Rother District benefits from having the ANGSt standards applied to the District by three different studies;
- I. South East AONB Woodlands Programme, Forestry Commission, Natural England, 'An Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace Provision in the South East' February 2007.
  - II. Draft East Sussex County Council Strategic Open Space Study 2011
  - III. RDC 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study' 2007

*South East AONB Woodlands Programme, Forestry Commission, Natural England, 'An Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace Provision in the South East' February 2007*

- 3.3.3 Table 6 below sets out the results of the ANGSt analysis for Rother from this regional level study. The figures also indicate lower level of provision in Rother than the rest of the county and the rest of the region in the 100ha and 500ha standards. These two standards are dealt with separately in the Strategic Open Space Study carried out by East Sussex County Council which is described below.

Table 6: ANGSt results Rother compared to County and Region.

<b>% of Households</b>	<b>Rother</b>	<b>East Sussex</b>	<b>South East Region</b>
Within 300m of a 2ha+ site	23%	20%	20%
Within 2km of a 20ha+ site	71%	74%	66%
Within 5km of a 100ha+ site	49%	79%	77%
Within 10km of a 500ha + site	27%	61%	45%
Meeting all ANGSt requirements	6%	6%	8%
Meeting none of the ANGSt requirements	14%	3%	10%
Served only by linear greenspace	14%	3%	4%

Source: An analysis of accessible natural green space provision in the South East. (2007)

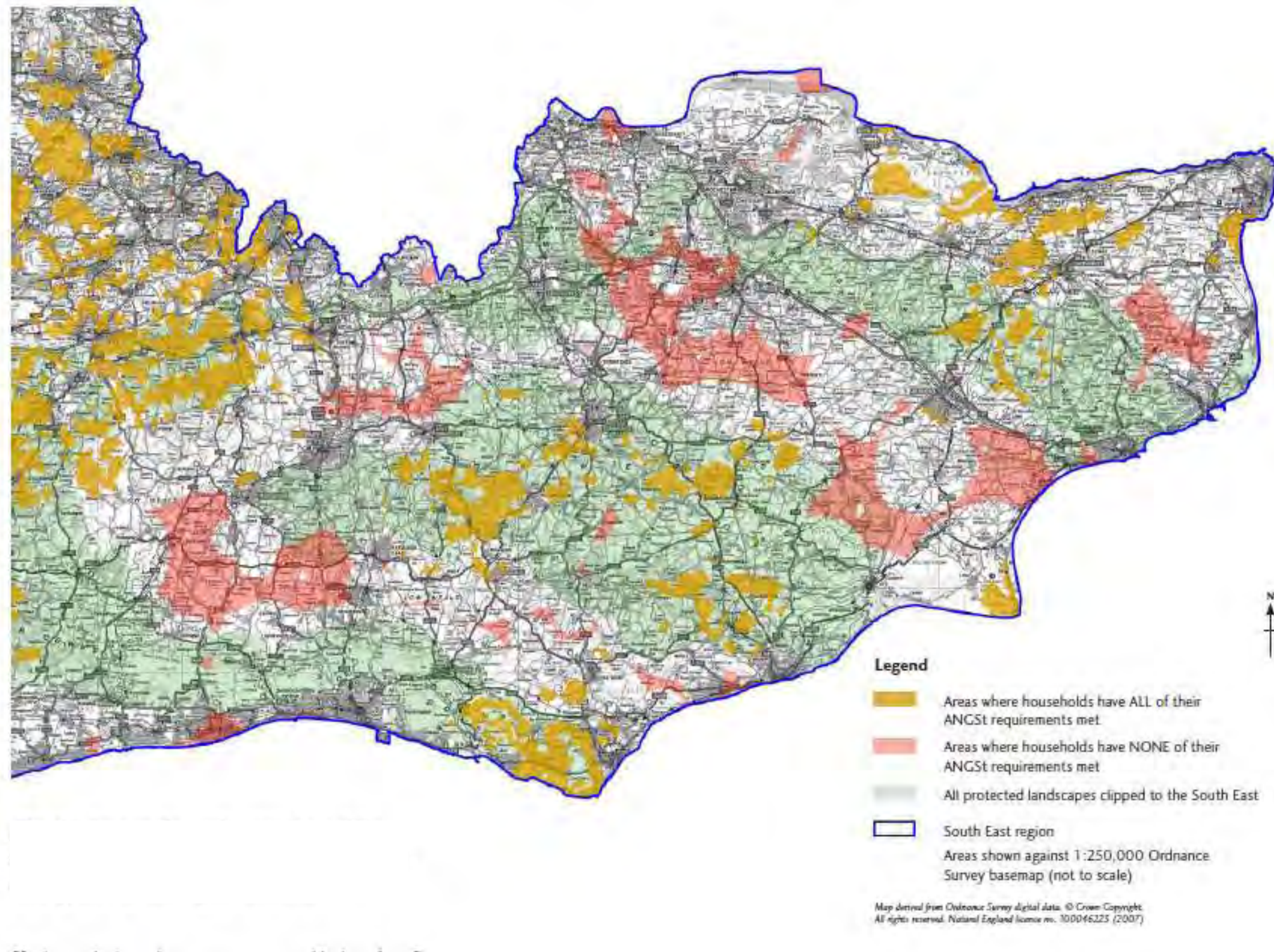
- 3.3.4 Map 5 demonstrates the key findings from this regional level study in terms of areas that meet either all or none of their ANGSt requirements. The areas in Rother identified in the survey where households are meeting none of their ANGSt requirements are to the east and of Bexhill, and to a lesser extent to the west of Bexhill as well. However, several more rural areas to the north of the district meet *all* of the ANGSt standards.

*The 'Draft East Sussex County Council Strategic Open Space Study'*

- 3.3.5 The 'Draft East Sussex County Council Strategic Open Space Study' also looks at ANGSt but in terms of higher level open space of *county-wide* significance. Strategic open space in terms of its quantity is considered in this study to be the larger three categories of the ANGSt standard (details of the standard outlined in section 2.3.1.). The study considered that 2ha sites are only of local importance and are not part of *strategic* open space (hence the lower categories of ANGSt were covered by Rother's Strategic Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study).
- 3.3.6 The ANGSt analysis in the ESCC shows that at the moment, 91% of the county's population achieves the 20ha standard, 85% the 100ha standard and 60% the 500ha standard. This study reveals that a wide band of deficiency exists in Rother between Rye to the east, through Hastings and Bexhill. Appendix 3 demonstrates this deficiency in relation to accessible natural greenspace in the 100ha+ category. However, the ESCC work has demonstrated the deficit could be met by the Pebsham Countryside Park and a proposed extension of Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.
- 3.3.7 With reference to the ANGSt standard (as outlined in section 2.3.1), and more specifically to the largest category of 500ha within 10km of our homes, the study identifies an area of deficiency between Rye to the east through Hastings and Bexhill. It notes that 90% of the County will have access to the largest categories (20ha,100ha,500ha) of the national standard upon the completion of two key projects;
- i) Pebsham Countryside Park. This will extend to over 600ha between Hastings and Bexhill. It will mean that a further 137,000 people will reach the 500ha ANGSt standard. It will also improve performance against the 100ha and 20ha ANGSt standards.
  - ii) Rye Harbour Nature Reserve. Improvements in access management will also increase the proportion of residents who reach the 500ha ANGSt standard.
- 3.3.8 It also suggests the need for a possible new woodland country park east of Heathfield in Wealden District in order to meet an identified shortfall in this part of the county. If this were to be achieved in the future it would also be within 5km of large parts of Rother, including Burwash.

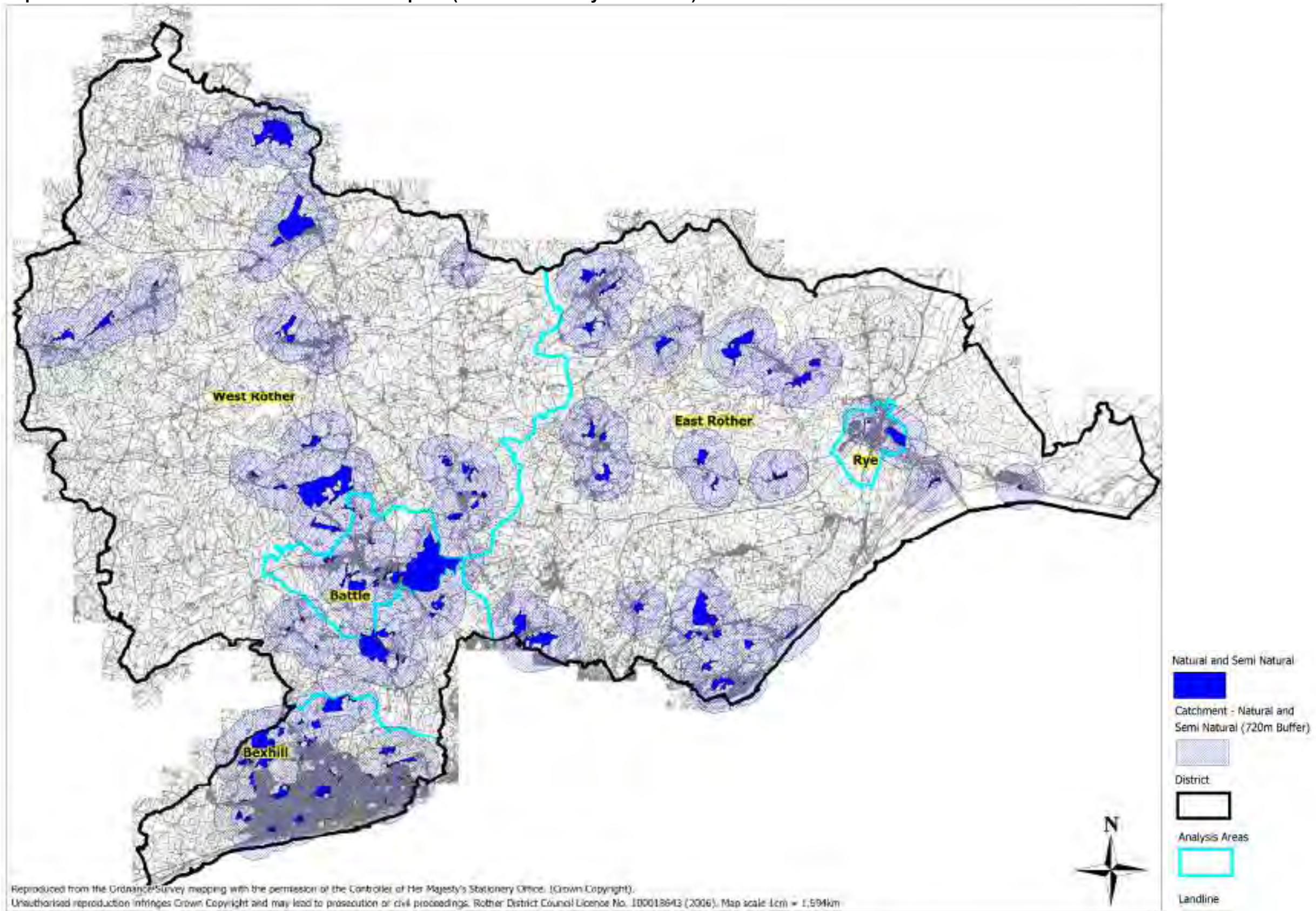


**Map 6 South East Region – Areas which have all or none of their ANGSt requirements met**





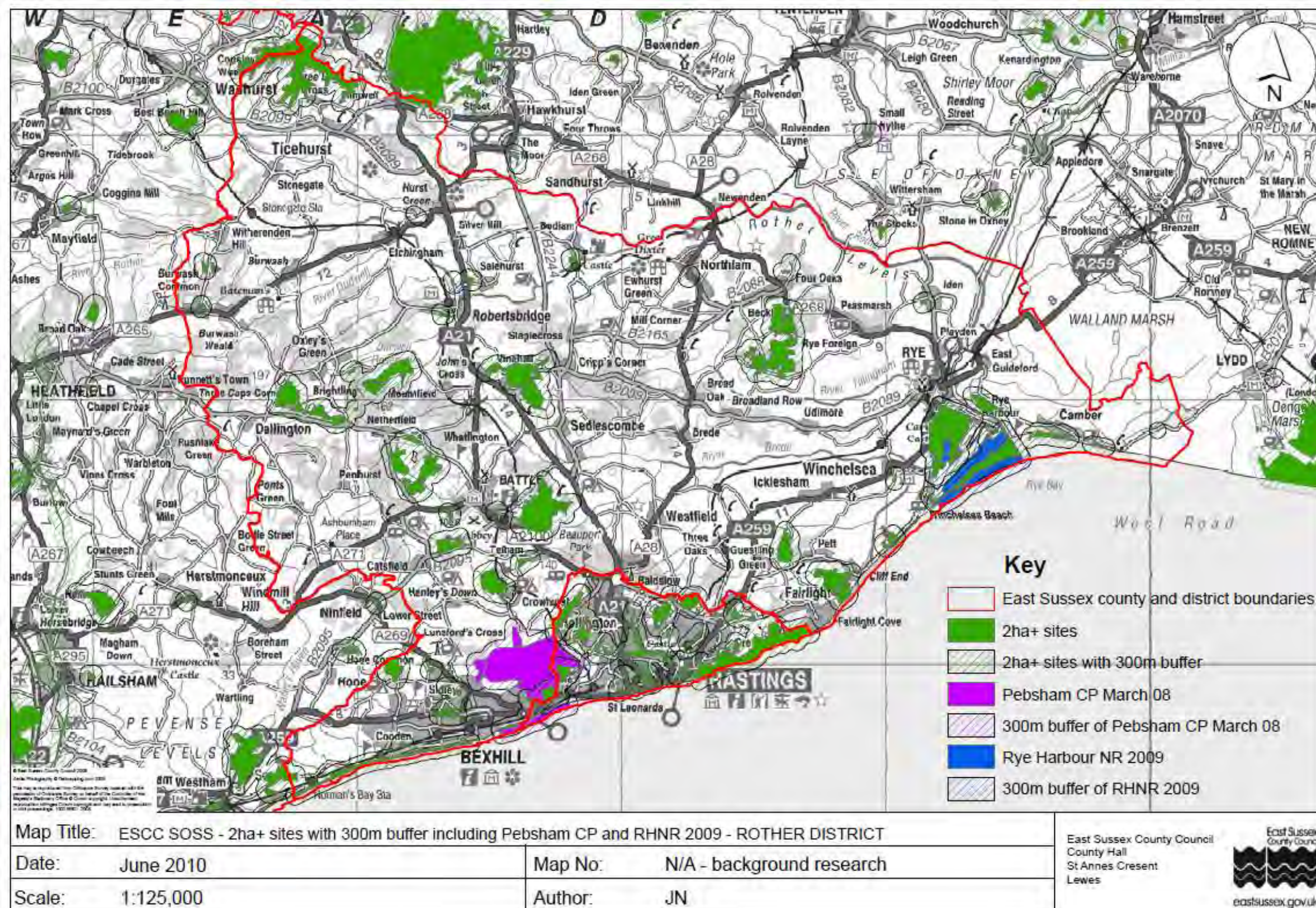
**Map 7: Accessible Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace (with accessibility catchment)**



Source: RDC 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study' 2007



Map 8: Application of lowest level ANGST standard (2ha+ site with 300 m buffer) – with opportunities for addressing areas of deficit



Source: ESCC



## RDC 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study'

3.3.9 In the 'Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study', Rother Council developed its own, locally determined, standards for 'accessible natural greenspace' rather than adopt those set by the Natural England Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard. Map 7 shows the areas of accessible natural greenspace identified in the study.

3.3.10 Following research and consultation with users, providers and other key organisations within Rother, local standards for quantity, accessibility and quality of provision were set enabling shortfalls in provision to be identified and recommendations to be made. The relevant standards are set out in Tables 7 to 9 below.

Table 7: Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace - Recommended Recreation Quantity Standards (District Wide)

Typology	Existing Provision (per 1,000 population)	Recommended Local Standard (per 1,000 population)	Surplus /Deficit (ha per 1,000 population)
Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace	15.53	2.00	13.53 surplus

Source: Rother District Council's Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study.

Table 8: Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace - Recommended Recreation Quantity Standards (by individual area)

Surplus /Deficit hectares (equivalent no of football pitches in brackets)						
Typology	Rother DC	Bexhill	Battle	Rye	West Rother	East Rother
Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace	Surplus 1155.84 (1313.46)	Surplus 109.74 (124.71)	Surplus 226.19 (257.03)	Surplus 16.32 (18.54)	Surplus 475.86 (540.75)	Surplus 322.01 (365.93)

Source: Rother District Council's Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study.

Table 9: Natural & Semi Natural Greenspace - Recommended Access Standards

	Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace
Urban	15 mins. walk time for both
Rural	

Source: Rother District Council's Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study.

3.3.11 The RDC study conducted by PMP in 2007, compared to both the strategic studies, identifies large 'surpluses' of accessible natural greenspace. There are two main reasons for this – Firstly the RDC PMP study included areas of accessible natural greenspace that are less than the Natural England threshold of 2ha. One consequence of this is that the overall quantity identified is high in comparison to the other ANGSt based studies. Secondly, the RDC study adopted an accessibility standard that differed from that recommended by Natural England in that it



recommended an access standard of 15 minutes walking or 1.2km – considerably further than the Natural England recommendation of 300 metres. This approach suggests a much higher degree of accessible natural greenspace, as most areas achieve this access standard, in contrast, to the application of the Natural England standards which suggest more areas of shortfall (see Map 8).

3.3.12 It is also important to bear in mind that ‘Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace’ in this context relates to that which is publicly accessible for human appreciation and enjoyment. Section 3.7 deals with ‘Biodiversity and Ecological Assets’ in terms of their importance from an *ecological* perspective, although there is undoubtedly an overlap between the two purposes. This distinction is also important in light of the ‘surplus’ identified in Table 8 above, which should not be interpreted as an indication that additional spaces may not be valuable in ecological terms, since they serve much wider ecological functions in addition to benefits related to human access.

3.3.13 The RDC ‘Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study’ recommends the Council should prioritise quality and access over quantity issues. The exception is Winchelsea, but here new provision is a low priority. It is recommended that the Council concentrates on qualitative improvements to Collington and Gillham Wood in west Rother to help ensure these sites are accessible to all.

### *Conclusions on ANGSt*

3.3.14 Application of the standards within the RDC ‘Open Space, Sport and Recreation’ Study’ suggests there is generally a good supply of smaller scale and locally accessible natural greenspace. It is stated that there are a large quantity of natural and semi-natural sites in the District and the proposed Pebsham Countryside Park which will contain significant semi-natural areas means that the quantity of this type of open space across the district is not an issue.

3.3.15 It may also be appropriate to have regard to the ANGSt standard insofar as the size banding helps to identify larger areas which would provide a greater range of interest and be of a more sub-regional focus.

3.3.16 For example, the regional study highlights areas to the west and east of Bexhill where none of the requirements of the ANGSt standard are met. The draft East Sussex County Council Strategic Open Space Study also demonstrates a deficiency in the amount of open space at the strategic level between Rye, through Hastings and Bexhill. Both deficiencies identified by the ANGSt and East Sussex County Council Study would be

met by the creation of the Pebsham Countryside Park and the extension to Rye Harbour Nature Reserve.



Sign boards such as this one provided by Sedlescombe Parish Council can increase awareness, enjoyment and educational value of accessible greenspace.

### 3.4 Accessible Woodland

- 3.4.1 This Woodland Trust standard was explained in section 2.3. In Map 9, the more local standard (500 metres distance to a woodland of 2ha+) has been applied to Rother District. It highlights several areas of apparent deficit, and these are discussed in more detail in Table 10.
- 3.4.2 The more strategic standard (4km distance to a woodland of 20ha+) was applied within the ESCC 'Strategic Open Space Study' (as demonstrated in Appendix 1). It showed few areas of deficit, the most significant being the eastern end of the District (Rye, Camber, Winchelsea Beach) – with smaller areas around Bodiam and Normans Bay. Although it is noted in the study that woodland is not part of the landscape character of the Rye and Pevensey Bay areas.
- 3.4.3 Opportunities for addressing these deficits may arise from opening up existing private woodlands to public access. The ESCC Strategic Open

Space Study did consider this in relation to woods over 20ha, and these are also discussed further in Table 10.

- 3.4.4 Further opportunities for addressing deficits in woodland may be via the creation of new woodland habitats alongside development. Any such provision would need to be carefully designed and mindful of both existing landscape characteristics and the need to create suitable habitats for locally important species. Possible options around addressing deficits are discussed in section 4.
- 3.4.5 It is noted that the Council has not adopted the Woodland Trust standard. Also, the assessment does not appear to take account of the network of public footpaths and bridleways that run through woodlands. Even so, the standard may highlight potential needs and opportunities for greater woodland access (see Table 10) that can be further evaluated as part of the consideration of site allocations.

### **3.5 Green Corridors**

- 3.5.1 Green corridors can be an important element of green infrastructure. They can have an important function for the sustainable movement of people as well as habitat connectivity for wildlife, particularly in the urban areas.
- 3.5.2 The Council's Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study states that it is important that all new major developments contain green corridors to reduce dependence on cars for short journeys, particularly as part of the Bexhill urban extensions.
- 3.5.3 A handful of green corridors have currently been identified in Rother (in RDC Open Space Study and ESCC Strategic Open Space Study), as visible on Map 10, including Rye Harbour, Sidley Wood - Dismantled Railway - green corridor, Guldeford Creek and Broomhill Creek (latter two both in Camber). However there are clearly others in existence that have not been formally identified as such; in particular the Royal Military Canal as well as river banks, particularly Rother, Brede and Tillingham. Further opportunities are discussed in relation to individual geographic areas in section 4.

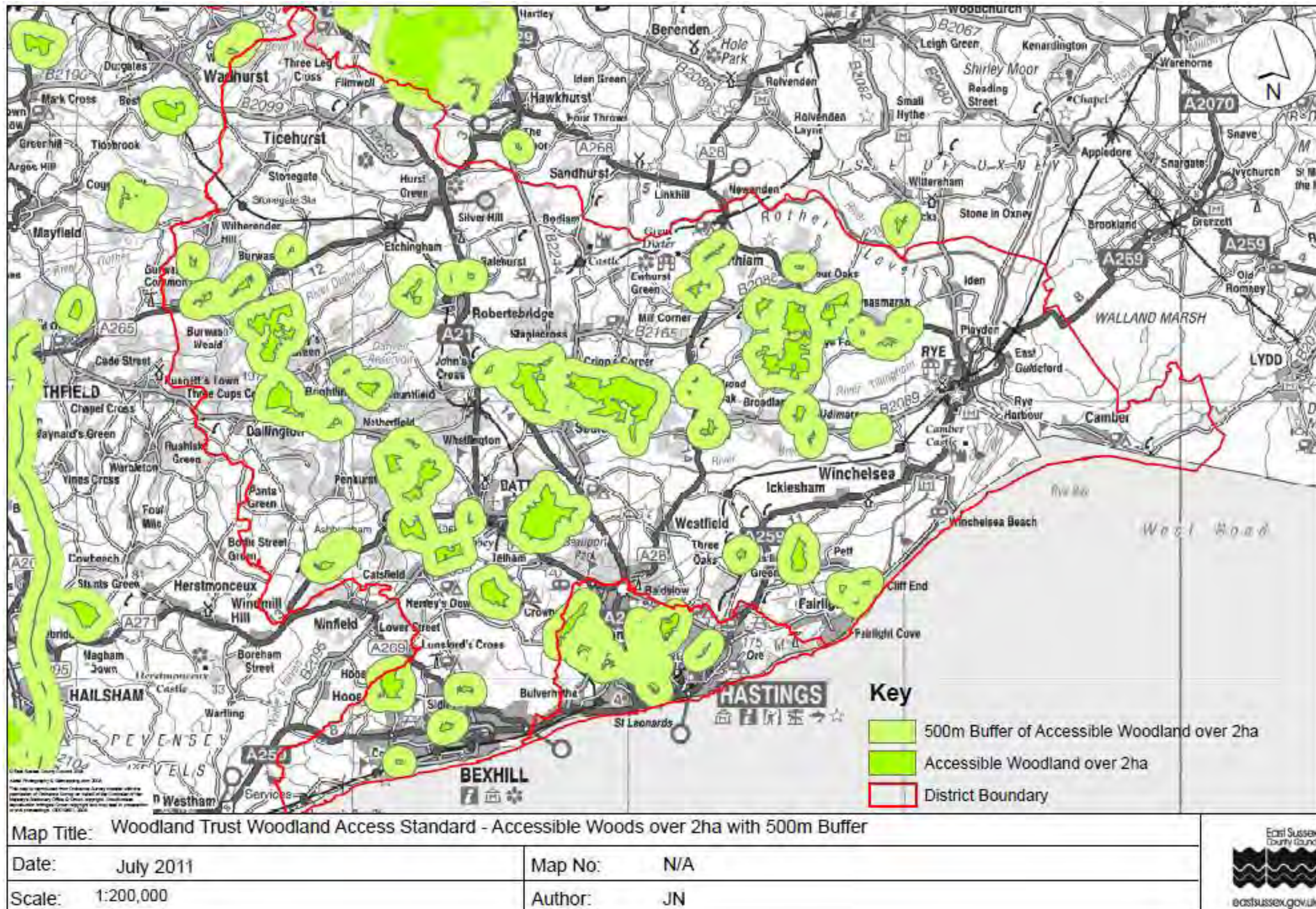
**Table 10: Areas of Deficit against Woodland Trust Access Standards**

<b>Areas where increased woodland access should be sought</b>	
<b>Area</b>	<b>Commentary and Opportunities</b>
West Bexhill	<p>The area around Little Common and West Bexhill exhibits poor accessibility to local woodland, the nearest accessible woods being Gillham Wood, Buckholt Recreation Ground (Bexhill Down) and High Woods. The latter is in excess of 20ha in size and within 4km so meets the more strategic element of the Woodland Trust standard.</p> <p>The urban fringe landscape is characteristic of the south slopes of the High Weald (Area 5 as discussed in section 3.8 and visible on map 17). The ESCC landscape Assessment has indicated that for this area, the management and restoration of small woodlands and ghylls would be a priority.</p> <p>Parts of this area have been identified as ‘broad location’ for future development within the Core Strategy, so there may be opportunities to create areas of accessible woodland at the same time that would have the benefit of serving the wider area.</p>
East Bexhill	<p>A large area of deficit to the local woodland access standard extends right across South East Bexhill, Pebsham and including Bexhill Town Centre. Given the scale of population, this is possibly the most severe area of woodland under-accessibility in the District. The nearest accessible woodlands are Buckholt Recreation Ground (Bexhill Down) and Levetts Wood (Sidley), both of which are in the 2ha – 20ha size range. However, the more strategic Woodland Trust standard is met via High Peartree Wood to the north-west, Fore Wood at Crowhurst, and Marline Wood on the urban fringe of Hastings.</p> <p>The landscape of the urban fringe area is of the ‘Coombe Haven Basin’ and the ESCC Landscape Assessment suggested that a priority should be to ‘Increase tree cover on slopes to help contain development and future link road’. Much of the urban fringe area of South East Bexhill is also part of the Coombe Haven and Marline Biodiversity Opportunity Area. Although this acknowledges the presence of woodland BAP habitat, its priority opportunities focus more on wetland habitat.</p> <p>The urban fringe area has been identified for significant levels of development (which is detailed in the North East Bexhill SPD), as well as the creation of the Pebsham Countryside Park (as detailed in the Pebsham Countryside Park Project Development Strategy, March 2008).</p> <p>There are two areas of woodland within the area covered by the North East Bexhill SPD, which are not currently classed as accessible within the ESCC study. Both are in the 2-20ha size range. Coombe Wood does actually have a footpath through it, so the extent of its ‘accessibility’ is debatable. It is the intention that Pebsham Wood will have a management agreement to open an access path through it.</p> <p>In addition, a design principle for the NE Bexhill area (as set out in the 2009 SPD) is to ‘Protect and add to the significant pockets of woodland, especially in elevated, ridge locations’</p> <p>Not surprisingly, opportunities to address the deficit closer to the town centre are extremely limited. However there are a couple of smaller accessible woods (&lt;2ha), most notably Penland Wood which has a valuable open space function.</p>
Westfield	<p>The village exhibits poor accessibility to local woodland, but achieves the higher level Woodland Trust standard thanks to its proximity to High Wood to the west and Guestling Wood to the east.</p> <p>Nonetheless, large areas of local woodland do exist in the area, most notably Whiteland Wood to the south-west which is just over 20ha in size. Other locally significant woodlands include Horseman’s Wood and Luckhurst Wood. In this context it seems likely that the best chances of achieving the Woodland Trust standard in the Westfield area is to increase public access to an existing wood via a management agreement.</p>
Icklesham Area	<p>This area comprises the eastern end of the Brede Valley. It does not meet the more local Woodland Trust standard, although its proximity to Guestling Wood to the south and Beckley Wood to the north means it achieves the higher end standard.</p> <p>Icklesham village is on a ridge overlooking the valley and woodland is not a major feature of the landscape. Currently inaccessible woods such as Broad Street Wood (7.4ha) to the west and Cock Wood (3.2ha) to the south are the most notable examples which may have potential for increased access.</p>

Ticehurst	<p>The village exhibits poor accessibility to local woodland and central parts of the village also fail to achieve the more strategic standard. Outlying areas of the village just about achieve the higher level Woodland Trust standard thanks to two large woodlands which are both about 4km away. These are the huge Bedgebury Forest to the north-east in Kent and Snape Wood to the west in Wealden. Furthermore, the Draft ESCC Strategic Open Space Study has recommended a possible new woodland country park east of Heathfield in Wealden District which would be reasonably accessible to residents of the Ticehurst area if it were to be implemented.</p> <p>Nonetheless large areas of local woodland do exist in the area, the valleys south of the village are characterised by a series of ghyll woodlands formed by tributaries of the River Rother. In addition Broomden Wood to the north-west amounts to some 11 hectares and Devilsden Wood to the east is about 25ha. None of these examples afford public access. In this context it seems likely that the best chances of achieving the Woodland Trust standard in the Westfield area is to increase public access to an existing wood via a management agreement (map 8).</p>
Etchingham & Hurst Green Area	<p>This is really a continuation of the Ticehurst area of deficit which extends along the Upper Rother Valley. The access issue is slightly less serious here however as both villages achieve the higher level strategic standard due to proximity to Bedgebury Forest in Kent and Bugsell Wood to the south. Despite the area not achieving the more local standard, significant expanses of woodland do exist in the area, notably the 74 hectare Burgh Wood on the northern fringes of Hurst Green. Furthermore, the Draft ESCC Strategic Open Space Study has recommended a possible new woodland country park east of Heathfield in Wealden District which would be reasonably accessible to residents of this area if it were to be implemented.</p> <p>Significant parts of this area are part of the 'Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods' Biodiversity Opportunity Area, for which 'Woodland management and restoration' is an opportunity identified by the Sussex Biodiversity Partnership.</p>
Fairlight Cove	<p>The area does not meet the more local Woodland Trust standard, although its proximity to Guestling Wood near Pett means it does meet the higher end standard. The area forms part of the High Wealden coast landscape. On the sheltered north side of the ridge, woodland is a feature amidst a patchwork of fields typical of the High Weald. To the south, fields separated by wind-bent tree belts are typical, although the ghyll woodland of Fairlight Glen supports 30m oaks.</p> <p>Around Fairlight and Fairlight Cove villages, there are areas of woodland that are currently inaccessible to the public including Knowle Wood, Stonelink Wood, Hoad's Wood and Mallydams Wood. If access were achieved in any of these locations it would help the area meet the local Woodland Trust standard.</p>
<b>Areas where increased woodland cover would not be appropriate</b>	
Rye, Camber and Winchelsea Beach Area	<p>The eastern end of the District is devoid of woodland, accessible or not. On paper, this means a significant population does not achieve either of the Woodland Trust standards. However, the area forms part of the larger Romney Marsh landscape for which woodland is not a feature. Therefore it would not be appropriate to seek to create woodland here – priorities for GI should be to conserve, enhance and restore wetland, pasture and coastal environments.</p>

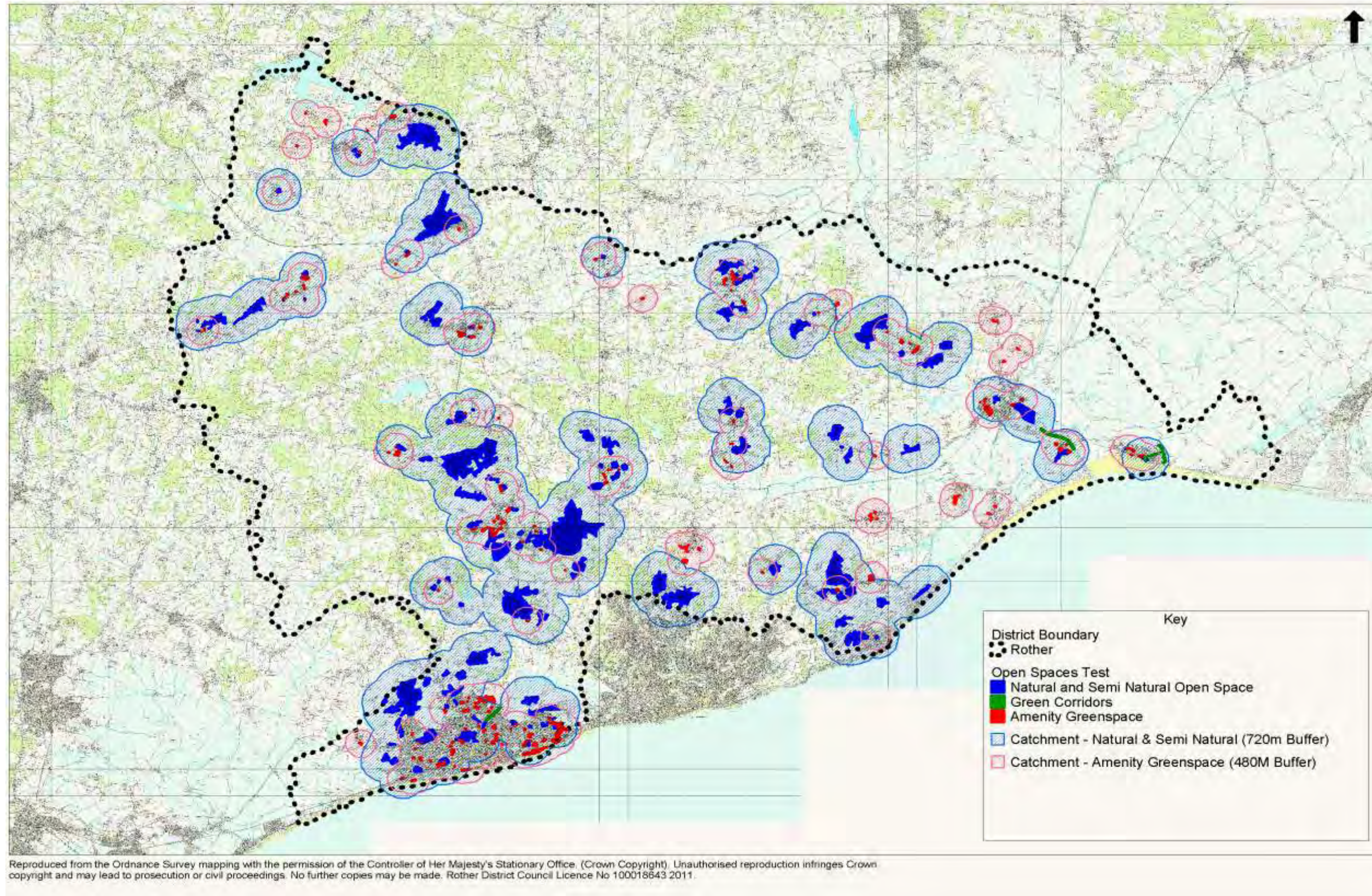


Map 9: Woodland Trust Access Standard





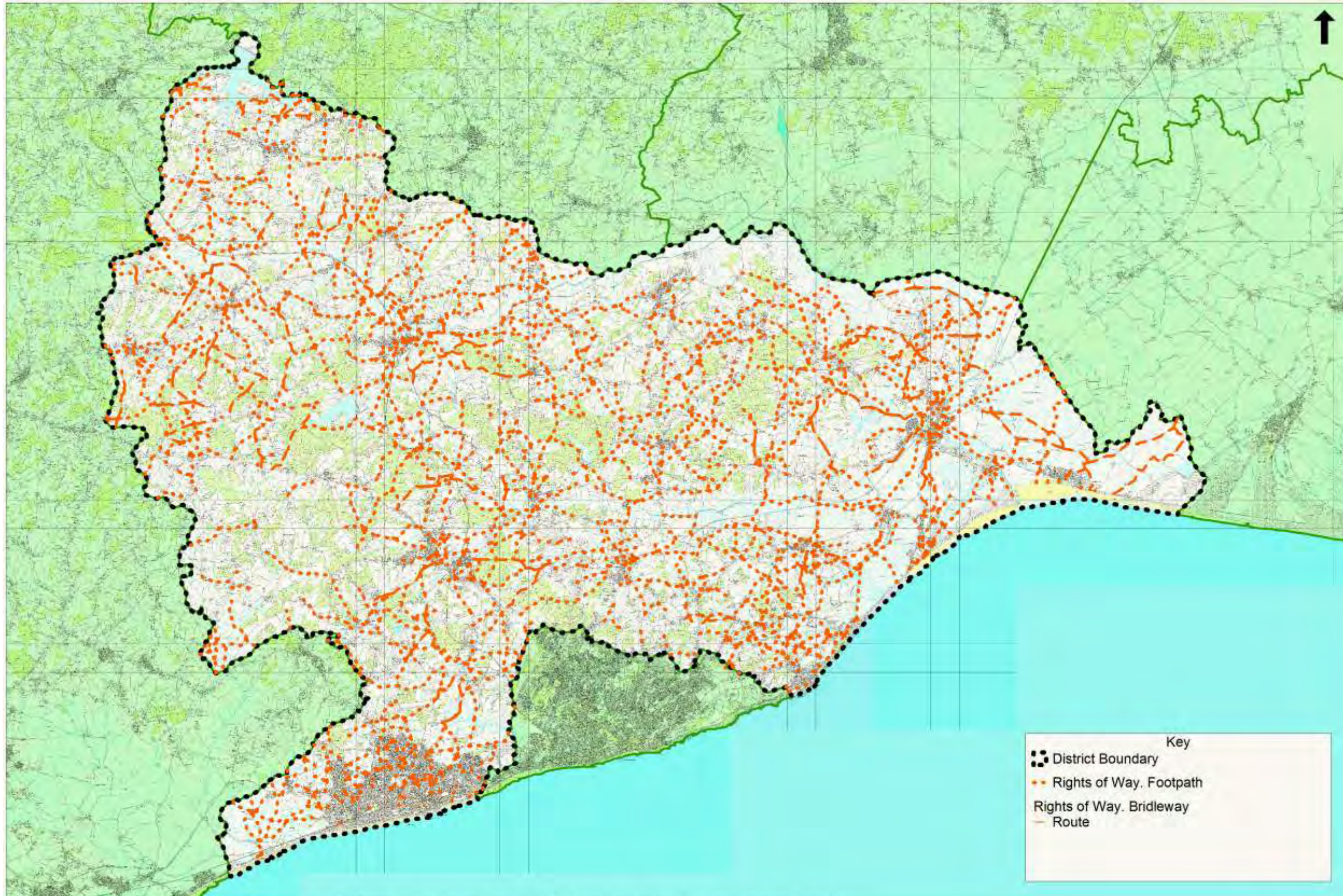
**Map 10: Green Corridors (with Amenity Greenspace and Natural Greenspace overlaid for context)**



Source: Rother District Council's Open Spaces, Sport and Recreation Study.



Map 11 Footpaths and Bridleways



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Scale: 1:114104



### **3.6 Footpaths and Bridleways**

- 3.6.1 Map 11 shows the footpaths and bridleways. They have a critical role in facilitating access to green infrastructure as well as acting as green corridors in their own right. There are some notable gaps in the network which are discussed in relation to individual geographic areas in section 4.



### **3.7 Biodiversity and Ecological Assets and Opportunities**

- 3.7.1 This section sets out Rother District's biodiversity and ecological assets which includes a range of international, national and local designations. European and national legislation and guidance including that contained within PPS9 sets out how biodiversity and geology will be protected and enhanced. Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 to have regard to biodiversity in carrying out their functions. Green infrastructure helps Rother meet these statutory duties by having regard to the fragmentation or isolation of habitats when determining development and by identifying opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and therefore natural habitats by retaining and enhancing or creating green corridors linking green spaces.

### *Distinction from Section 3.3 Accessible Natural Greenspace*

3.7.2 Whilst section 3.3 'Accessible Natural Greenspace' included by definition analysis of many of the District's biodiversity and ecological assets, the ANGSt standard focuses primarily on human access for recreational purposes and benefits. It is also necessary to consider green infrastructure from an ecological perspective. There are also many valuable habitats across the district where human access is either incidental, limited (e.g. where habitats may be viewable from the boundary or a marked footpath) or restricted altogether. Such areas nonetheless have a vital role in terms of 'green infrastructure'. Further analysis is therefore necessary regarding the extent, value and opportunities of areas in this section.

### Statutory Designations

3.7.3 As outlined in Table 11, and in Map 12, the District has two broad areas of international habitat designations focussed around the Pevensey Levels in the south-west of the district and the Rye Bay, Camber and Pett Levels area in the south east of the district.

Table 11: Rother District's Biodiversity Assets

International	RAMSAR (wetland habitats)	2	Pevensey Levels Dungeness to Pett Level (proposed)
International	Special Protection Areas (protection of birds)	1	Dungeness to Pett Level
International	Special Areas of Conservation (protection of species and habitats)	2	Dungeness. Pevensey Levels (proposed)
National	Sites of special scientific interest	21	Across district
National	National Nature Reserve	1	Pevensey Levels
Local	Local Nature Reserve	1	Rye Harbour Nature Reserve
Local	Sites of Nature Conservation Importance	60	Across district

3.7.4 A condition summary of the District's SSSIs has been set out in both the published Sustainability Appraisal and Annual Monitoring Report.

### Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitats

3.7.5 The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) initiated the publishing of a UK list of priority species and habitats in 2007. There are also numerous

BAP habitats present across the District (see Table 12), e.g.; Rother has a significant coverage of woodland which is identified as ‘ancient’.

Table 12: Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats in Rother

<b>BAP Habitat</b>	<b>Locations in Rother</b>
Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows	Widespread.
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	Widespread in Rother, with concentrations in the Pevensey Levels and the wetlands around Rye, Camber and Winchelsea. Other areas include the valleys of the Rivers Rother and Brede, and at Filsham.
Coastal sand dunes	Characteristic of the Romney Marsh area with a notable concentration in Rother District at Camber.
Lowland calcareous grassland	Rare in Rother. One small example between Battle and Hastings.
Lowland meadow	The Sussex Biodiversity Partnership suggests this is a priority habitat in at least three BOAs in Rother – ‘Romney Marsh Area’, ‘Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods’ and ‘Great Wood Area’. Examples of lowland meadow are scattered across the High Weald AONB.
Maritime cliff and slopes	Coastline of Pevensey Levels, Fairlight Cliffs.
Mudflats	Rye Harbour and lower reaches of River Rother.
Reedbeds	Within Rother, there are several areas of reedbeds. Filsham reedbeds (within countryside park boundary) is one of the largest reed beds in Sussex and accessible to the public via boardwalks. There are also patches of reedbed scattered across the Rye Harbour, Winchelsea and Camber areas – effectively the western areas of the Romney Marsh. Also at Ashburnham Park, west of Battle.
Saline lagoons	Just a couple of examples in Rye Harbour.
Woodland (including wet woodland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and lowland beech and yew woodland).	Extensive across the High Weald AONB, but not a characteristic of the coastal marshes.
Coastal salt marsh	Valued stretch along the west bank of Rye Harbour.
Coastal vegetated shingle	Belts across Broomhill Sands, Pevensey Levels beach, Rye Harbour and an isolated patch at Galley Hill and Glyne Gap.

3.7.6 In addition, the following 'Special to Sussex Habitats' have been identified (also visible on Map 14):

Table 13: Special to Sussex non-BAP Habitats

<b>Special to Sussex Habitat</b>	<b>Locations in Rother</b>
Ghyll woodland	Many examples across High Weald AONB area.
Sandstone outcrops	Scattered examples across district, notably at Fairlight Cliffs. It is a specific objective of the HW AONB Management Plan to protect them.
Roadside verges	Extensive.
Ancient woodland	Extensive across the High Weald. 2010 survey has identified many more small scale examples.

3.7.7 A significant habitat feature in Rother and the region is ancient woodland which is a habitat special to Sussex and the south-east region, along with Ghyll Woodlands. The original Inventory of Ancient Woodland for Rother has recently been resurveyed in the Revised Inventory of Ancient Woodland October 2009. This provides a more accurate picture of the extent of ancient woodland in the district which is an important part of the evidence base for green infrastructure. Rother Council would wish to encourage appropriate management of ancient woodland to encourage diversity.



Coastal vegetated shingle at Glyne Gap

### Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

- 3.7.8 The South East Biodiversity Forum has incorporated a large proportion of these BAP habitats in the identification of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) which extend and link sites across the region. Outside of the formally designated sites these areas are considered to be the most important areas for habitat enhancement, restoration and creation of BAP habitats. Using green infrastructure, Rother can positively contribute to national BAP targets, create links between sites of biodiversity value to allow species to respond to changing conditions such as climate change and also increase the quality of habitats within the District. These actions would be in accordance with the Wildlife Trusts Living Landscapes initiative.
- 3.7.9 The BOAs within Rother are visible on Map 15 and listed below. Some of the specific opportunities identified within these BOAs are elaborated upon further in section 4.2 on spatial recommendations.

- *Bewl Water*
- *Bexhill fringe*
- *Combe Haven and Marline*
- *Great Wood area*
- *Hastings fringe*
- *Pevensey Levels*
- *Pevensey, Rother Cuckmere watershed*
- *Romney Marsh area*
- *Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods*

### Countryside & Environmental Stewardship

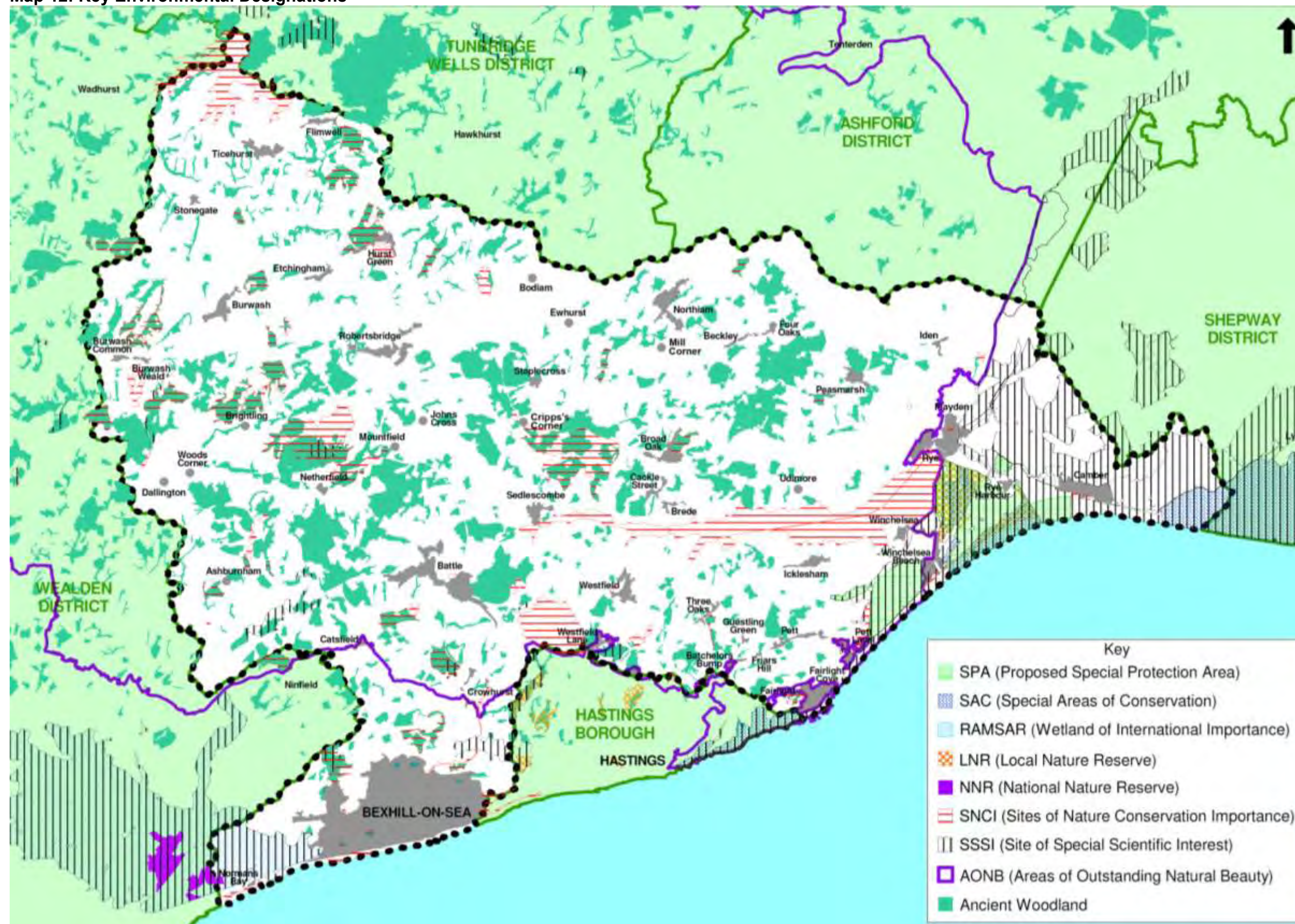
- 3.7.10 The Countryside & Environmental Stewardship schemes were explained in section 2.1.5. Map 16 shows the areas of Rother District Council covered by the schemes as of 2011. It shows that approximately half the rural area of Rother is covered by such schemes.

### Protected Species

- 3.7.11 The Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre holds the Sussex Protected Species Register (PSR). Its consists of species of plants, fungi and animals that are protected under Schedules 5, 6 and 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and other legislation.
- 3.7.12 Rother District Council has access to this information and it has been used to help inform site investigations as part of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA).

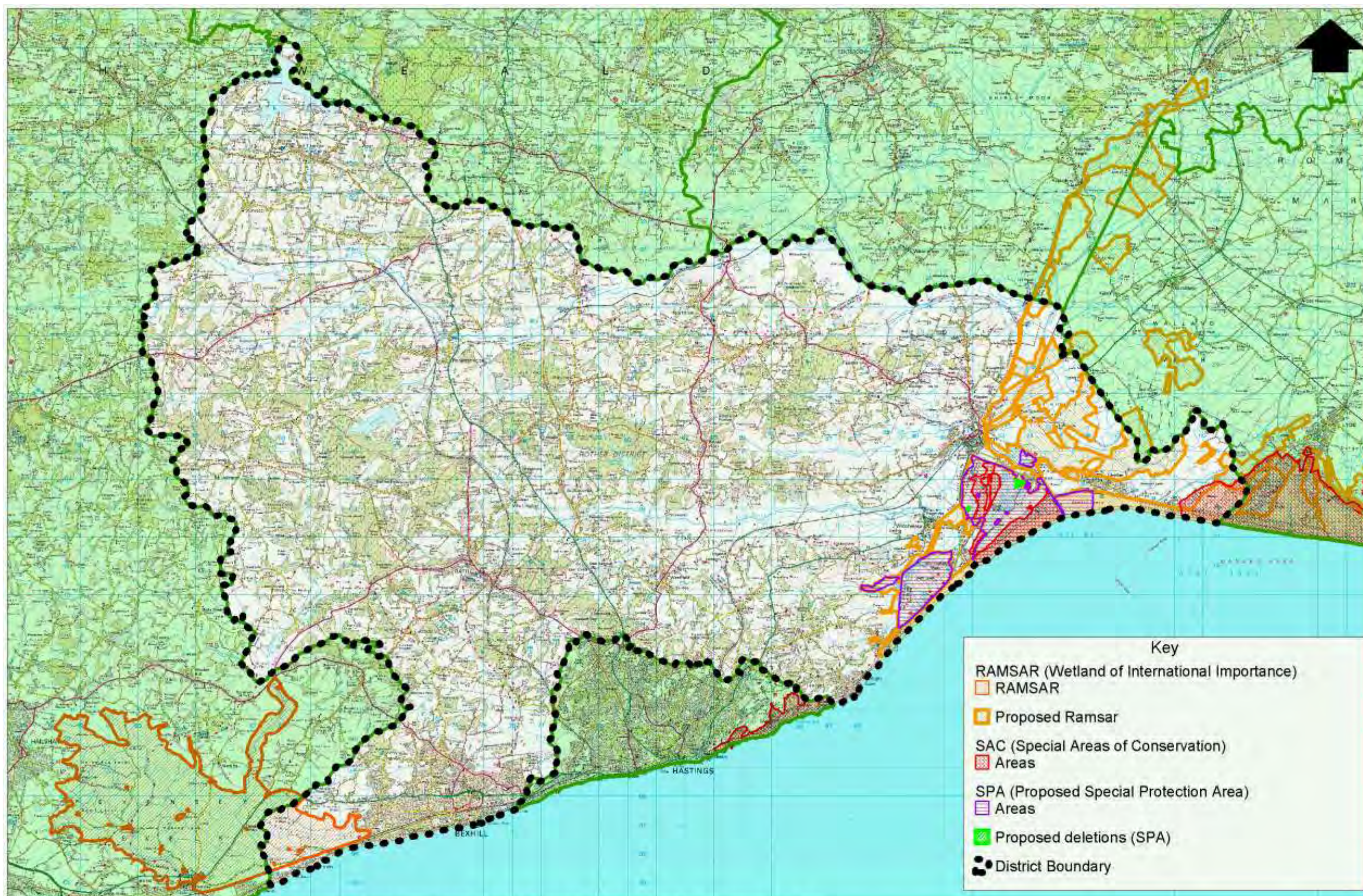


Map 12: Key Environmental Designations





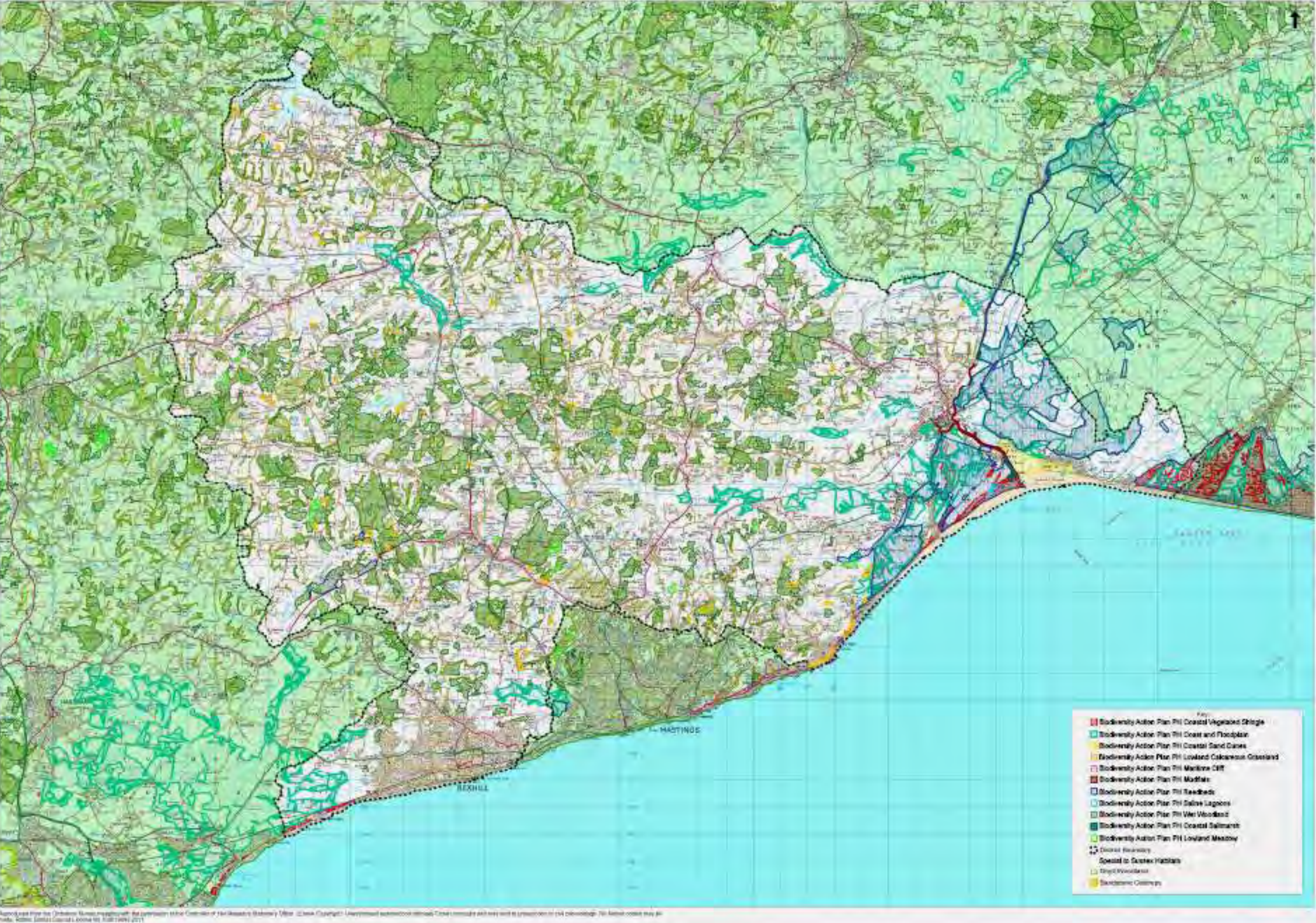
Map 13: Proposed New and Extended International Designations



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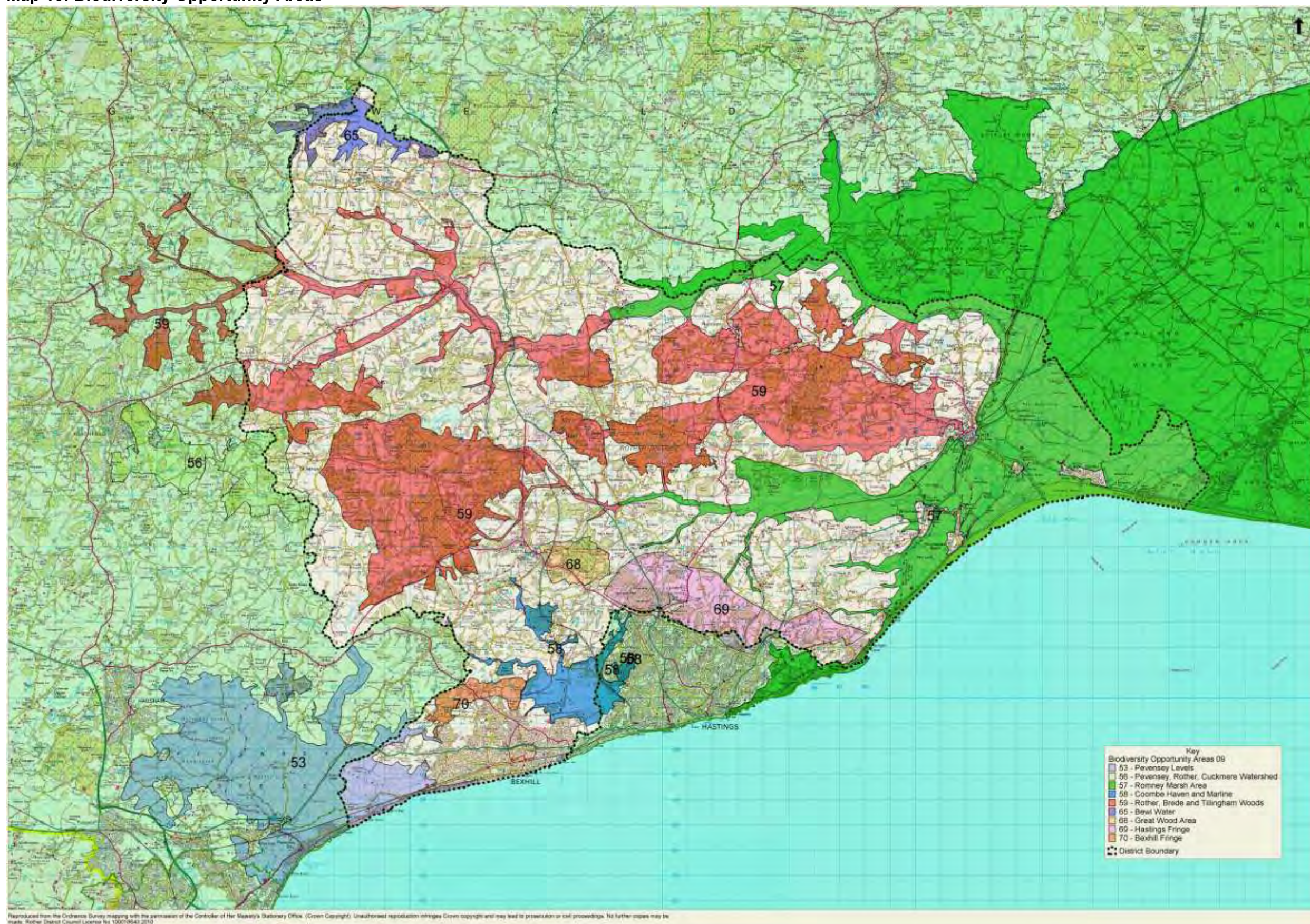


Map 14: Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats



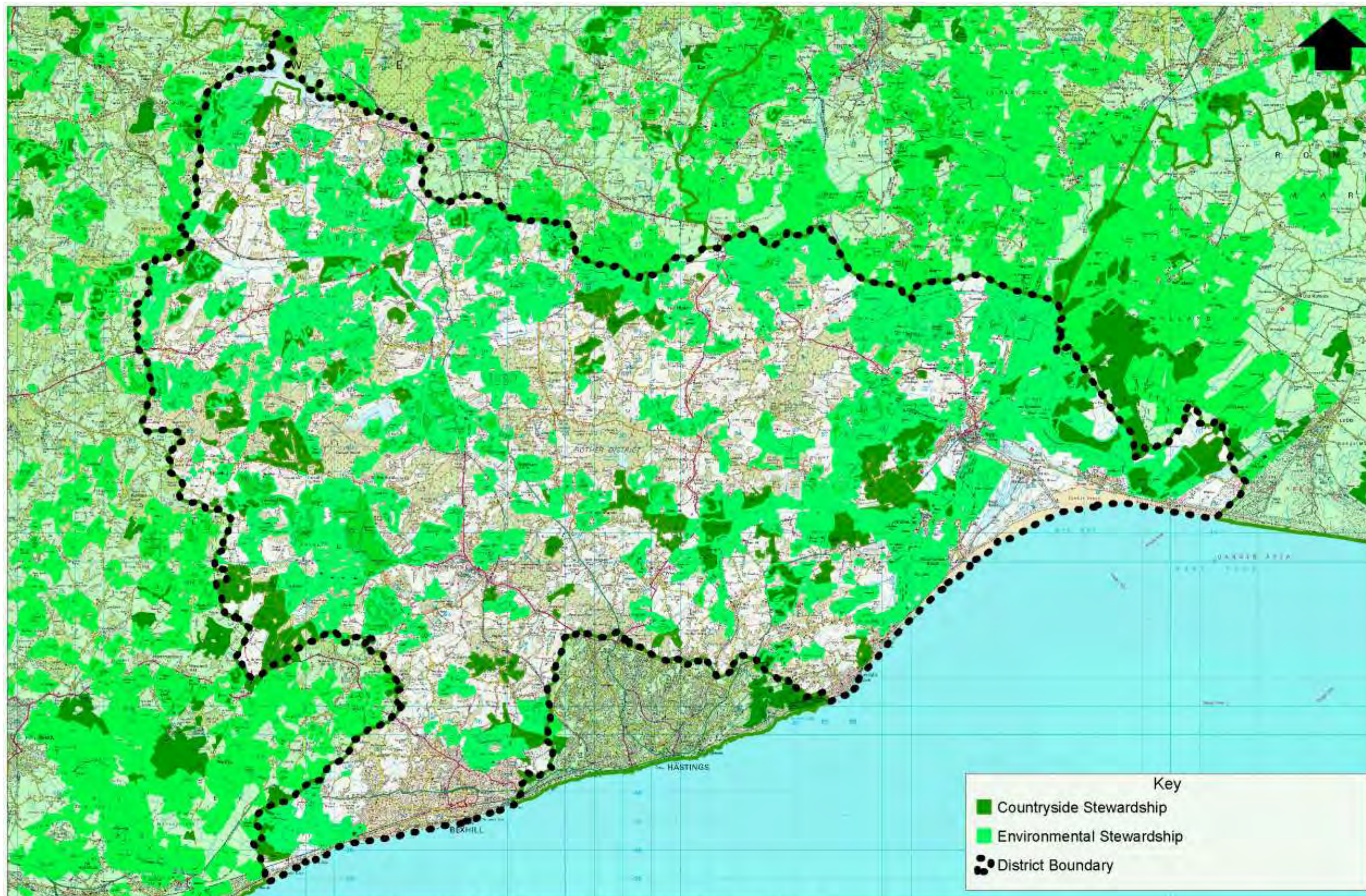


**Map 15: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas**





Map 16: Countryside and Environmental Stewardship



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### **3.8 Landscape Assets**

3.8.1 Landscape is one of the District's greatest resources as recognised by the fact that 82% of Rother District is designated as High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Landscape is key to providing an attractive environment to attract business, to attract tourism and to the health and well-being of residents. Important landscape features are also a component of Green Infrastructure.

3.8.2 The Rother landscape is a combination physical characteristics which have been influenced by the presence of man, which give rise to patterns that are distinctive to particular localities and help to define a sense of place. This relies upon influences including topography, land use land management, ecology, and cultural associations.

3.8.3 An understanding of the landscape character is critical in the design of green infrastructure. The following sources of information were used to assess Rother District's landscape:

- National character areas (2004)
- The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan (2008)
- East Sussex County Council Landscape Character Assessment (2008)
- Bexhill and Hastings Fringes Landscape Assessment (2008)
- Market Towns and Villages Landscape Assessment (2009)

3.8.4 Natural England's National character areas study sets out to map and describe the local distinctiveness of England's countryside. These broadly based "Character Areas" defined as part of a national series take into account landscape, wildlife and natural features. In Rother there are three character areas (Illustrated on map 17):

3.8.5

- 122 - The High Weald
- 123 - The Romney Marshes
- 124 - The Pevensy Marshes

#### *High Weald (122)*

3.8.5 The High Weald developed on the geological outcrop, the Hastings Beds, which provides the foundation for the character of its landscape. The underlying sandstones and clays, and the different rates of erosion of different beds of rock have produced the typical ridges, steep ghylls and valleys in between which characterise the area. The majority of the High Weald is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

#### *The Pevensy Marshes (124)*

3.8.6 The Pevensey Levels are a low lying wetland area with a geology comprising relatively impermeable silts and mudstones. The area is characterised by rivers, streams and ditches ponds and standing water which creates a rich environment for wildlife.

#### *The Romney Marshes (123)*

3.8.7 The marshes consist of shingle, alluvium and sands. They are characterised by a complex drainage system based upon a series of private ditches flowing to a network of Internal Drainage Board sewers and main rivers. These include the Rivers Rother, Brede and Tillingham and the Royal Military Canal. The area contains several national and international designated sites and protected habitats, whose features are influenced by changes in water level and flow.

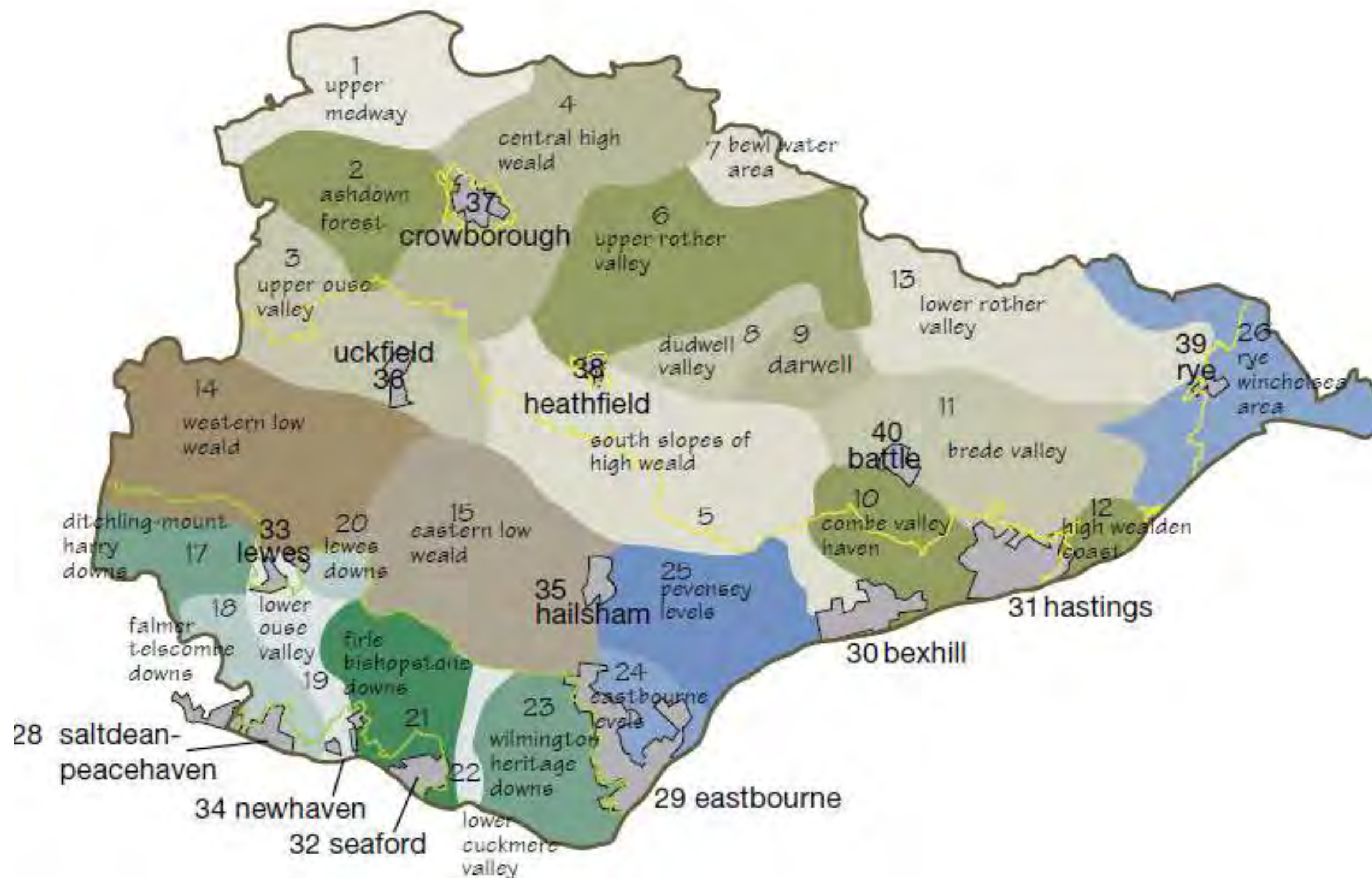
**Map 17: Rother District's National Landscape Character Areas**



Source: Natural England National Character Area (2004).

3.8.8 These three broad landscape areas identified at the national level were broken down further into more discrete landscape areas within the ESCC County Landscape Assessment 2008 (as introduced in section 3.1.5). These more localised landscape character areas are illustrated on map 18. The eleven rural Landscape Character Areas affecting Rother are discussed below.

Map 18: East Sussex County Council Landscape Assessment Character Areas



Source: ESCC Landscape Assessment 2008

- 3.8.9 Of the following eleven County landscape areas that are within rural Rother, nine of them (Areas 5-13) form part of the High Weald, which is a national character area (Area 122 on Map 17).

*3 South Slopes of High Weald (Part of High Weald National Character Area)*

- 3.8.10 The north-western fringes of Bexhill and the rural area south of Netherfield are the only parts of Rother within this area. However, the area extends deep into neighbouring Wealden District. It is an intricate small scale landscape with a strong pattern of hedgerows.

*6 Upper Rother Valley (Part of High Weald National Character Area)*

- 3.8.11 This landscape is dominated by the broad valley of the River Rother, which passes through a rolling richly wooded landscape. Several of Rother's larger villages (including Robertsbridge, Ticehurst, Burwash and Etchingham) benefit from being situated on the edge of this attractive rural landscape, with its associated opportunities for quiet recreation.

*7 Bewl Water (Part of High Weald National Character Area)*

- 3.8.12 A landscape dominated by the Bewl reservoir which is overlooked by well wooded slopes. The area includes the north side of Ticehurst village and Flimwell. The reservoir itself offers opportunities for water-based recreation, walking and cycling.

*8 Dudwell Valley (Part of High Weald National Character Area)*

- 3.8.13 A peaceful and secluded deep narrow valley overlooked by high ridges and spurs patterned with woods, shaws and small fields. Bordered by the villages of Burwash and Etchingham.

*9 Darwell (Part of High Weald National Character Area)*

- 3.8.14 A whimsical and mysterious landscape studded with the follies of 'Mad' Jack Fuller. One of the most densely wooded areas of the High Weald with a large expanse of water in the form of Darwell reservoir. Very sparsely populated. Brightling and Mountfield are the two most notable villages although the landscape also borders Netherfield to the south.

*10 Combe Haven Valley (Part of High Weald National Character Area)*

- 3.8.15 A landscape of small winding high Wealden valleys converging to form a tract of levels at Glyne Gap. Crowhurst and Catsfield are the two most significant villages. The valley contains Filsham reed beds which are the largest area of reed beds in East Sussex and an important wildlife habitat.



At its northern edge it contains the valuable heritage site of Battle Abbey and the 1066 battlefield.

*11 Brede Valley (Part of High Weald National Character Area)*

- 3.8.16 A long, wide valley running from Netherfield in the west to Icklesham in the east. The valley also includes Westfield, Sedlescombe and Brede. There are long views across the predominantly open levels of the valley floor.

*12 High Wealden coast (Part of High Weald National Character Area)*

- 3.8.17 This is a distinctive coastline of crumbling, sandstone cliffs separated by deep glens which fall steeply to the sea. Further inland, scrubby heathland gives way to a patchwork of small fields, woodland and wind-bent trees. A number of rare species are supported by this landscape. Fairlight and Pett are the two main coastal villages.

*13 Lower Rother Valley (Part of High Weald National Character Area)*

- 3.8.18 An area dominated by the broad valleys and the lower reaches of the River Rother, and the secondary reaches of the Tillingham River. The surrounding countryside is well wooded but affording long views to Kent. Bodiam castle dominates the valley floor. Northiam, Peasmarch, Broad Oak, Iden and Beckley/Four Oaks are the most significant settlements.

*25 Pevensey Levels (Pevensey Marshes National Character Area)*

- 3.8.19 In Rother, this is the only 'County' Landscape Assessment Character Area that is also a National Landscape Character Area in its entirety (Area 124 on Map 17). Most of the area is within neighbouring Wealden District, within only the western fringes of Bexhill and the village of Normans Bay within Rother. Grazing marsh and reeds are dominant in this flat, open landscape that includes large areas of protected international habitat.

*26 Rye Winchelsea Area (Part of Romney Marshes National Character Area)*

- 3.8.20 Forming the eastern corner of both Rother and Sussex, this area is an extension of the huge Romney – Walland Marsh and is a wide tract of coastal levels overlooked by islands of high ground. Essentially it is the only area of Rother that is part of the Romney Marshes National Character Area (Area 123 visible on Map 17). It includes the settlements of Camber, Rye Harbour, Winchelsea and Winchelsea Beach. The dunes and sandy beach of Camber are the sole example in East Sussex.

3.8.21 ESCC also recommended opportunities for landscaping improvements and scope to mitigate visual intrusions within their Landscape Assessments of Bexhill/Hastings Fringes and Market Towns/Villages carried out in 2008 and 2009 respectively. These two studies were primarily concerned with highlighting the suitability for development of different geographical areas, although opportunities for associated landscaping were also considered as part of this.



The 'Rye Winchelsea Area' Landscape Character Area and 'Romney Marsh BOA' contains several Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats such as this 'coast and floodplain grazing marsh'

### 3.9 Cultural Heritage and Historical Assets

- 3.9.1 There are Conservation Areas at Battle, Rye, Bexhill Old Town and Town Centre, Burwash, Northiam, Robertsbridge, Sedlescombe Ticehurst and Winchelsea. There are 2,129 Listed Buildings, 44 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, 7 Registered Parks and Gardens of Historic Interest and 1 Registered Historic Battlefield.
- 3.9.2 The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a historic landscape. The High Weald AONB Management Plan recognises the historic features in the landscape across district boundaries over the whole of the High Weald area. There may be future opportunities to integrate cultural heritage and historical assets into the District's GI, including:
- To create and integrate access links to the District's cultural heritage within development.
  - Many sites of cultural importance are located on private land; however it is possible that, working with landowners, that access to these sites could be improved.
  - To improve connectivity between sites of cultural importance. This could include pedestrian/cycle links for Rother district communities and visitors.
  - Important to conserve and where possible improve the setting of Rother's designated cultural heritage including landscape improvements.



## **4.0 CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION**

### **4.1 Strategic Green Infrastructure Policy**

- 4.1.1 National policy supports the provision of green infrastructure and the inclusion of policies in the Core Strategy and LDF documents can help deliver green infrastructure in the district and wider area. The Core Strategy documents can be viewed on the Council's website at [www.rother.gov.uk/corestrategy](http://www.rother.gov.uk/corestrategy).
- 4.1.2 A Core Strategy Directions public consultation took place in 2009 with the aim of getting a broad view of growth options and policy direction. Generally, there was support for green infrastructure as well as biodiversity, landscape protection and for the role of GI in alleviating the impacts of climate change and flood risk.

#### Sustainability Appraisal and Appropriate Assessment

- 4.1.3 Existing legislation requires that all Development Plan Documents shall undergo a sustainability appraisal. So far in the Sustainability Appraisal process a set of sustainability objectives have been used to assess the Core Strategy Plan Objectives, Options and Strategies.
- 4.1.4 The option was taken to deliver green infrastructure with a more proactive approach to the provision of greenspace and conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. The option allows for the elaboration of the idea of areas of strategic opportunity as identified in the South East Plan. The development of a green network across the District is considered important helping to protect wildlife from the potential impact of climate change and from becoming isolation. The SA and Plan Objective assessment supports this.
- 4.1.5 The Core Strategy Appropriate Assessment Screening Report concluded that it could not be discounted that the Rother Core Strategy would have no significant effects on the integrity of European Sites within or adjacent to its boundaries. The potential impacts have been identified as follows and trigger the requirement to proceed to the next stage of Appropriate Assessment:
- impacts on protected species that forage outside the protected site
  - impacts on water quality and quantity that could affect the integrity of the site
  - increased recreational pressure and disturbance that could affect the integrity of the site
  - increased atmospheric pollution.



- 4.1.6 Green infrastructure can be used to help alleviate the effects of these potential impacts.

#### Summary of Main Needs and Opportunities for Green Infrastructure across the District

- 4.1.7 The following are considered generic GI needs. Section 4.2 considers GI needs on a spatial basis.

(i) Recreational Open Space: The PPG17 Study shows deficits of recreational open space in the district. Specific deficits as they apply to individual geographies are discussed elsewhere in the document, particularly section 4.1, and will be addressed when considering site allocations.

(ii) Green Corridors: Both the PPG17 Study and the Study highlight the role of new developments, especially major schemes, to contain accessible green corridors to reduce the dependence on cars for short journeys. The most significant opportunities will be as part of the Bexhill urban extensions, but developments at a smaller scale or in rural settings may also facilitate improvements to the condition and connectivity of fields and heaths and their associated and interrelated habitats (such as hedges, woodlands, ditches, ponds and water systems) for wildlife. Field margins and roadside verges also have considerable potential for the movement of wildlife and the latter is specifically identified as a key habitat by the Sussex Biodiversity Centre.

(iii) Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Habitats: Green infrastructure can positively contribute to national BAP targets, create links between sites of biodiversity value to allow species to respond to changing conditions such as climate change and also increase the quality of habitats within the District. A key example of such a proposal is the [Wildlife Trusts Living Landscapes](#) initiative within the Romney Marsh BOA. Also, Catchment Flood Management Plans identify that BAP habitats can be improved by reducing flood risk using natural mechanisms. Development may also assist, both by avoiding existing BAP and 'Special to Sussex' Habitats (see Map 14) and creating opportunities to link, extend or enhance existing areas of BAP Habitat.



Hemmingfold Meadow near Battle – an example of both ‘lowland calcareous grassland’ and ‘lowland meadow’ BAP priority habitat.

(iv) Ancient Woodland: Ancient woodland is an important biodiversity asset within Rother District, and overlaps substantially with the ‘Wet Woodland’ BAP priority habitat. A revised Inventory of Ancient Woodland has recently been carried out, which encourages woodland management and restoration across the network of woodland in the District. There may also be opportunities to link existing areas of ancient woodland via green corridors alongside development.

(v) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) provide a focus for enhancement, restoration and creation of BAP habitats in the district at a strategic scale. Opportunities to enhance, extend or create habitats may be sought alongside development that is within or adjacent to BOAs.

(vi) Countryside/Woodland Access: Section 4.1 outlined the degree of access enjoyed to woodland in light of the Woodland Trust standard. Although this standard is not adopted, opportunities to increase woodland access, as well as wider access to the countryside, may be further considered as part of consultation on site allocations, particularly in the areas of deficit (see section 3.4). Improvements may be achieved via permissive paths, footpaths and cycle routes alongside development to improve access to the countryside, including woodlands.



(vii) Landscape Enhancement: Development pressure could have an impact on Rother's landscape, particularly in the AONB and on the designated sites at Romney Marshes and Pevensey Levels. Key locations are the urban fringe areas around Bexhill and Hastings, where development can provide opportunities to improve the surrounding landscape and strengthen green infrastructure. The Pebsham Countryside Park will play a key part in providing accessible green space in the local and wider area. Elsewhere, development should retain and, where possible, enhance key landscape features, as identified in the published ESCC Landscape Assessments.

(viii) Development Sites: Development can incorporate biodiversity into its design by retaining, protecting and designing in wildlife, enhancing features of ecological interest, such as species and habitats, including ancient woodland, water features and hedgerows. Generally, where new planting is required, native species should be used, appropriate to the landscape character. Enhancing existing green infrastructure is particularly important in the more urban areas, so that it can better contribute to the ecological network of green space. Development may support green infrastructure by either new on-site provision, compensatory provision to offset<sup>3</sup> impacts and/or financial contributions in particular to address needs identified in section 4.1.

(ix) Hedgerows: In the High Weald AONB they are a particular feature of the habitat mosaic and essentially medieval landscape where they bound small irregularly shaped fields. Therefore it is particularly important in this area that there is no loss or degradation of existing historic field boundaries or patterns. Hedgerows also have considerable biodiversity value both in their own right and as green corridors connecting other habitats. The relevant Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan Targets highlight the need to maintain the net extent of hedgerows in the district, seek to restore previously neglected native, species-rich hedgerows to ensure their integrity for the future, and encourage the planting of new native species-rich hedgerows.

(x) Land Management Practices: The Environment Agency's 'Catchment Flood Management Plans' highlight opportunities for sustainable land management by influencing planting regimes, increasing the uptake of land stewardship schemes, and improving awareness of maintenance

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<sup>3</sup> Biodiversity offsets are conservation activities designed to deliver biodiversity benefits in compensation for losses in a measureable way. It was the subject of DEFRA publications in July 2011. It offers a potential tool by which local authorities compensate for biodiversity loss from development.

responsibilities among landowners. The current uptake of land stewardship schemes is visible on Map 14.

(xi) Flood Risk and Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs): The District's rivers and wetlands areas are an important component of green infrastructure. There are opportunities through green infrastructure to enhance river corridors and improve the water environment, including water quality and biodiversity.

Green infrastructure can also assist with flood risk mitigation through the enhancement of and re-creation of flood plains and provision of multi-functional sustainable drainage systems (SUDs) designed to act as holding areas for flood water. These areas have the potential to enhance or extend wetland habitats and river corridors, and provide opportunities to link up habitat areas. Geographically specific opportunities identified in Catchment Flood Management Plans for the enhancement of green infrastructure are discussed in section 4.1.

(xii) Water Supply: There is a significant threat from pollution from urban and agricultural activities to both surface water and groundwater sources which could potentially impact on the sensitive ecology of the adjacent wetland, lakes and streams. Specific recommendations in relation to Bewl Reservoir can be found in the section on west Rother.

(xiii) Links with Culture and Heritage: There may be future opportunities to integrate cultural heritage and historical assets into the District's green infrastructure, including access links and through conserving and where possible improving the setting of Rother's heritage.

(xiv) Green Roofs: Aside from design considerations in terms of integration with the local vernacular, green roofs may, especially for larger buildings, contribute to the creation of usable local recreational open space, and new habitats for wildlife, particularly in an urban setting.

(xv) Access and Facilitating 'Green Use' by Residents and Visitors: There may be future opportunities for new permissive paths and footpaths which could improve links between residential areas and green infrastructure. This reflects objective UE4 of the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

## Conclusions

- 4.1.8 Rother District's Core Strategy should contain a policy in relation to green infrastructure which will set the strategic direction, inform other local development documents and aid planning decisions in the district. A summary of the main opportunities identified for green infrastructure are set out thematically in the preceding paragraphs and by geographic area



in the following section 4.2. These opportunities align with the multifunctional objectives of green infrastructure provided in the guidance.

- 4.1.9 Generally Rother District Council will support the conservation, enhancement and management of existing green infrastructure resources across the district to sustain diversity of wildlife habitats. An adequate supply of green infrastructure and connectivity between green infrastructure should be maintained.
- 4.1.10 An analysis of the evidence base indicates areas where there are deficiencies and opportunities for improvement. For instance cross-county partners, the Romney Marshes Living Landscape project, are already working to improve the Romney Marshes area. The Romney Marshes is heavily protected with national and international environmental designations. The area is identified as a strategic area for opportunity for improvement in the South East Plan and has been recognised as a Biodiversity Opportunity Area. It represents a priority area for the delivery of Biodiversity Action Plan targets through wetland habitat management, restoration and creation.
- 4.1.11 The Hastings and Bexhill Fringes comprise areas of ancient woodland, Combe Haven and parts of Pevensey Levels some of which are designated as SSSIs or SNCIs. Much of this area is designated as a BOA and close to urban areas it is recognised that there could be opportunities associated with new development and the area would benefit from access management, woodland management and restoration. The creation of the Pebsham Countryside Park would be a key part of this initiative. It is also recognised that landscape improvements can be gained from this initiative.
- 4.1.12 Bewl Water is a strategic reservoir in the north west of the district which has been identified for enlargement. Rother District Council would welcome working with the relevant agencies, water companies and stakeholders to ensure the enlargement of Bewl Reservoir is facilitated in a sustainable manner. The reservoir is designated as a BOA and opportunities have been identified for stakeholders to work together to improve wetland habitat management, restoration and creation and improve access.
- 4.1.13 Ancient woodland has been identified as an important asset for biodiversity and to the green infrastructure network across the district. BAP targets have been set out to protect and enhance ancient woodland.
- 4.1.14 As well as having a specific policy on bio-diversity and green space, other policies in the Core Strategy should also serve to implement the matters of relevance to Green Infrastructure, notably in relation to recreation facilities

(in the Communities chapter) and the retention and enhancement of key landscape features (in the Environment chapter).

## **4.2 Spatial Green Infrastructure Opportunities**

- 4.2.1 A strategic policy in line with the recommendations above will provide a framework for considering individual proposals in terms of their implications for green infrastructure.
- 4.2.2 In addition, the preceding evidence provides valuable baseline information to help the Council work with Parish and Town Councils, the Local Strategic Partnership and other partner organisations and groups to identify priorities and opportunities for the provision and improvement of green infrastructure both in different parts of the district and across a wider area. This will include cross boundary projects as identified at Romney Marshes and Bewl Water reservoir.
- 4.2.3 Specific proposals will be developed in the course of undertaking the forthcoming Development and Site Allocations DPD. Particular needs and opportunities for specific localities that have been identified through this Study are identified below. Any specific proposals will be the subject of public consultation as part of the preparation of the Development and Site Allocations DPD, and do not represent Council policy at this stage.
- 4.2.4 This section draws out the key GI opportunities as they relate to individual geographic areas, as contained in the emerging Core Strategy but, given the extent of the Rural Areas, with separate consideration of opportunities in the western and eastern parts: that is:
- Bexhill
  - Hastings Fringes
  - Battle Area
  - Rural Rother (West)
  - Rye Area
  - Rural Rother (East)



## **Bexhill**

- 4.2.5 Bexhill is relatively poorly served in terms of recreational open space and has a large identified shortage of amenity open space and outdoor sports facilities as well as shortfalls of parks and gardens and allotments (identified through the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study). There is also a shortfall of accessible woodland in east Bexhill when measured against the Woodland Trust standards. It will therefore be important to protect existing open spaces.
- 4.2.6 The provision of new strategic open space on the east side of the town, in the form of the Pebsham Countryside Park, offers the opportunity to meet the needs identified in Bexhill, most obviously in terms of amenity open space and strategic level accessible natural green space, as well as opportunities for green corridors linking with the Bexhill urban area and the restoration of Pebsham Landfill site. Map 19 shows the overall spatial site strategy for the North-East Bexhill area and Map 20 shows the Countryside Park area.
- 4.2.7 Critically, it will mean that a further 137,000 people across East Sussex will reach the 500ha ANGSt standard (as noted in the draft ESCC Strategic Open Space Study). It will also improve performance against the 100ha and 20ha ANGSt standards.
- 4.2.8 There is potential for 'green' access corridors into the park from Bexhill such as from the A259 extending to the beach and hence towards the town centre along the sea-front, capitalising on both the 'Connect 2' cycle-route and enhanced sea-front access in central Bexhill. The planned link road may also be viewed as a green corridor to the extent that it incorporates a "greenway" for cyclists and pedestrians and could function as a movement corridor for wildlife, although limited to the roadside verges.
- 4.2.9 The extent to which the 2007 recommendation for new pitches remains is debatable following the provision of Astro turf pitches at Bexhill High School and assuming the implementation of plans for pitches in the North East Bexhill SPD. The adjacent North East Bexhill development may also offer opportunities to improve access to woodland in east Bexhill, particularly via increased access to existing ancient woodlands.
- 4.2.10 The 2007 recommendation for new allotments had the caveat 'subject to demand'. Current advice from this study indicates that demand is still very high. All Bexhill allotments still have waiting lists, so the need still exists, seemingly on both the west and east of the Bexhill urban area.

- 4.2.11 Green Infrastructure may also be used, in terms of quantity, quality and access, as a tool to help address deprivation issues in Bexhill (particularly in areas identified on Map 1).
- 4.2.12 Although one of few areas in the district not within the AONB, Bexhill is flanked by other statutory designations (see Map 12). To the west, Pevensey Levels is internationally protected Ramsar and SSSI (largely unfavourable recovering condition). Further SSSIs exist to the east in the form of Combe Haven (favourable condition), and to the north in the form of High Woods (recovering condition). Continued monitoring of the SSSIs will be important to ensure improvement.
- 4.2.13 Bexhill is also fringed by examples of Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats (as shown on Map 14), which have a considerable degree of overlap with statutory habitats. Notably, there are large areas of 'Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' to the west in the Pevensey Levels and north of Coneyburrow Lane, and to the east at Filsham – the latter area due to be incorporated into the Pebsham Countryside Park as a wildlife area.
- 4.2.14 There are also valuable areas of 'coastal vegetated shingle' in the Bexhill area, which is another BAP priority habitat. The establishment of the coastal countryside park should support and enhance the isolated examples of this habitat at Galley Hill and Glyne Gap. More extensive and established areas of vegetated shingle can be found along the coast of the Pevensey Levels at Norman's Bay.
- 4.2.15 Pockets of ancient woodland lie on the south slopes of the High Weald beyond the northern boundary of Bexhill, much of which is protected as 'Sites of Nature Conservation Interest' (SNCI) and some of which serves as valued informal community recreation area, particularly High Woods.
- 4.2.16 Opportunities exist for biodiversity improvements and urban fringe management around the Bexhill and urban area. Bexhill is fringed by three Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs). These are 'Combe Haven and Marline' to the east, 'Bexhill Fringe' to the North and 'Pevensey Levels' to the west (as visible on map 15).
- 4.2.17 The Combe Haven and Marline BOA covers approximately 999 hectares. This area contains Filsham Reedbed; the largest reedbed in Sussex and also Combe Haven SSSI. There is scope identified for wetland habitat management, restoration and creation and for floodplain restoration and reconnection in the Combe Haven and Marline BOA, as well as access improvements. Some of these improvements will be brought about via the creation of the proposed wildlife area within the Pebsham Countryside Park Project.



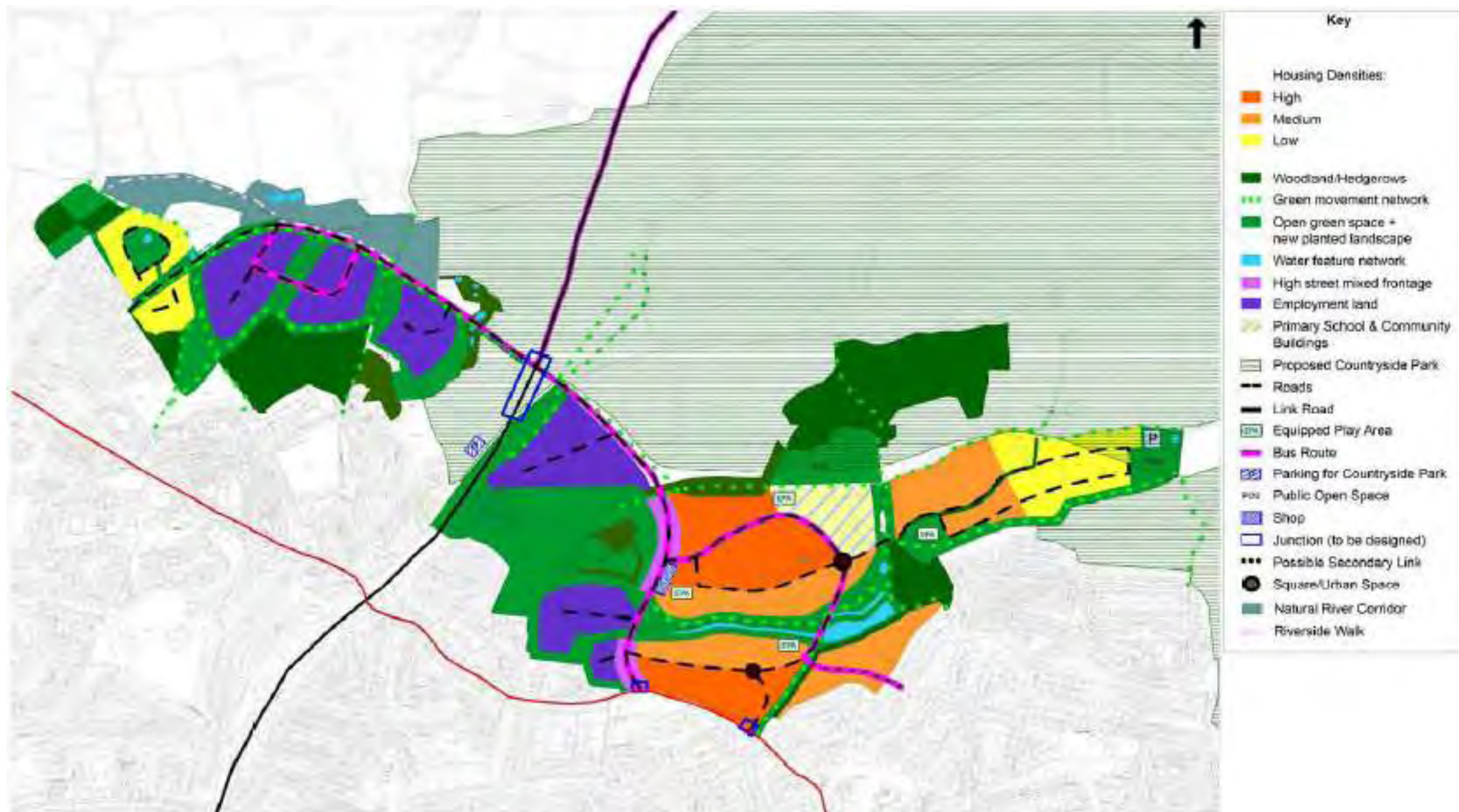
- 4.2.18 Skirting the urban area of Bexhill, the Bexhill Fringes BOA is made up of predominantly woodland and agricultural land. The area is rich in hedgerows. Projects targeted in both the Bexhill Fringes and Combe Haven BOA could be around woodland management and restoration, linking existing woodland parcels and establishing wildlife corridors through the area and then linking these into the urban environment of Hastings and Bexhill, ensuring that development takes place with biodiversity in mind.
- 4.2.19 The Pevensey Levels is a site of international importance for its wetland ecology. Opportunities identified in the Pevensey Levels BOA include wetland and coastal habitat management, restoration and creation, the control of non-native invasive species, wetland bird interest, policy integration and access improvements, including via the west end of Bexhill sea-front as previously mentioned. Within their Catchment Flood Management Plans, the Environment Agency has also identified potential to create new wetland habitat for conservation purposes.
- 4.2.20 The green infrastructure opportunities to be considered in relation to the areas to the north and west of the town that are identified as having potential for future development are:
- a) North Bexhill. In the event of medium or large scale development proceeding, it would be an opportunity to achieve desired improvements within the Bexhill Fringe BOA. This may include linking existing woodland parcels and establish wildlife corridors through the area and then linking both back to the NE Bexhill development site and the Countryside Park, as well as into the existing urban area, ensuring that development takes place with biodiversity in mind. Landscape improvements may include management and restoration of small woods and ghylls on south slopes of the High Weald. At least some of this woodland would benefit from being accessible so as to meet the Woodland Trust standard.
  - b) West Bexhill. In the event of medium or large scale development proceeding, it would be an opportunity to provide amenity open space, accessible woodland and allotments, as well as facilitate improvements to the Pevensey Levels BOA (which contains valuable coastal and floodplain grazing marsh habitats). Landscape improvements may include management and restoration of small woods and ghylls on south slopes of the High Weald, and to link existing woodland parcels and establish wildlife corridors through the area and into the urban environment Bexhill, ensuring that development takes place with biodiversity in mind. Kites Nest Wood could be enhanced as a green corridor linking Bexhill Fringe BOA to Pevensey Levels BOA.

4.2.21 A further long term (beyond the plan period) opportunity for Green Infrastructure lies in the future restoration of clay pits at Ibstock Brickworks.



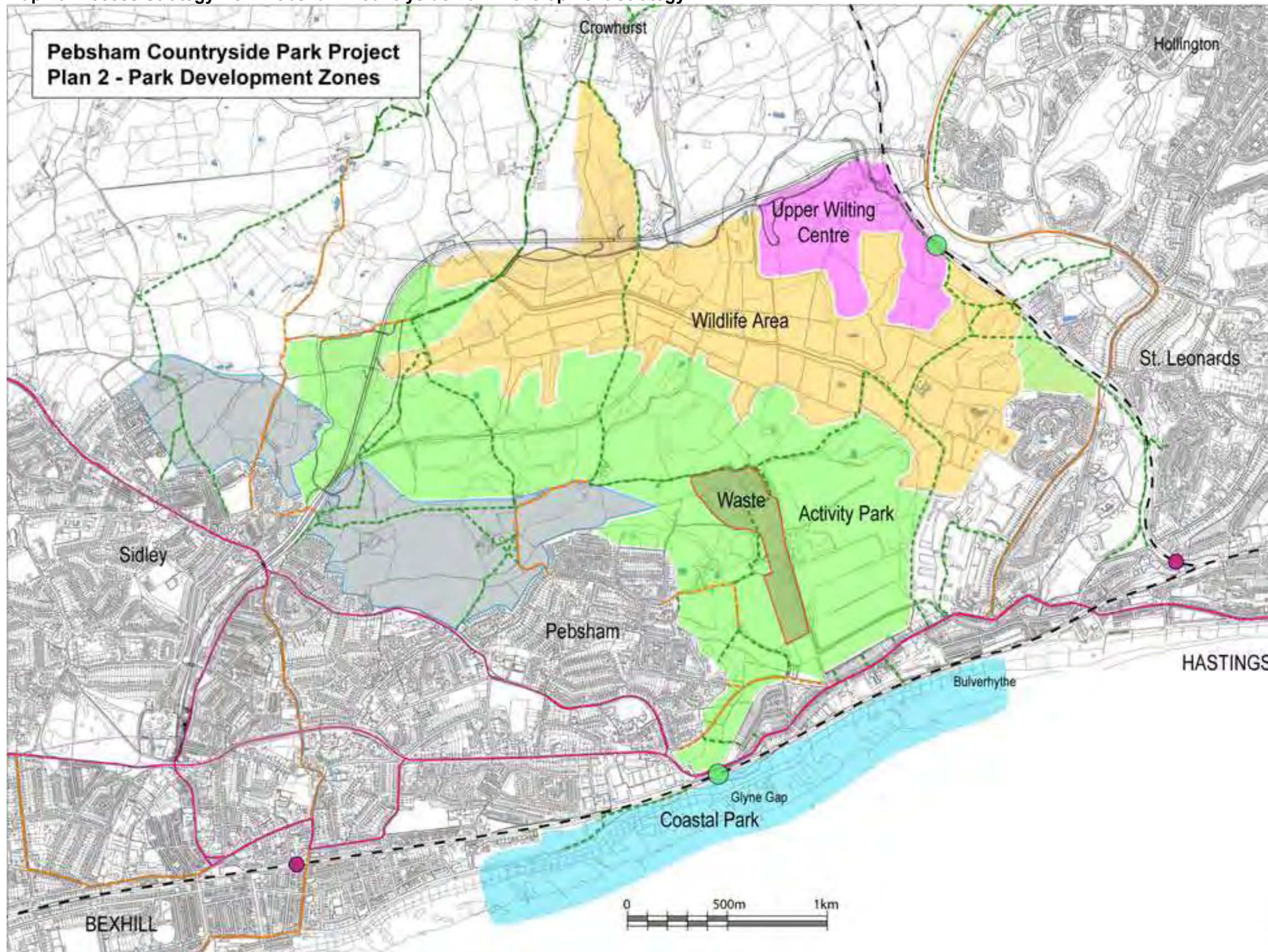
Bexhill seafront

Map 19: North East Bexhill: Plan of Overall Spatial Site Strategy





Map 20: Access Strategy from Pebsham Countryside Park Development Strategy





## Hastings Fringes

- 4.2.22 The Pebsham Countryside Park will be of value to Hastings as it will be to Bexhill residents in providing a much needed strategic open space. In accordance with the Countryside Park Development Strategy, it will increase wetland within the wildlife area adjacent to Hastings and oversee the restoration of Pebsham Landfill site.
- 4.2.23 Another area of potential is for greenspace enhancements to the north of Hastings either side of the railway as it approaches The Ridge, with Rock Lane to the east and Ivyhouse Lane to the west. This area lies within the High Weald AONB, but its quality could be improved. Moreover, it could provide a valuable amenity for the surrounding areas, especially if access opportunities were increased. Potential development in this locality should be viewed in the context of an area-based initiative, and be mindful of the Hastings Fringes Biodiversity Opportunity Area, as well as AONB status.
- 4.2.24 Hastings is fringed by a number of SSSIs, Combe Haven and Marline Woods to the west (both favourable condition), Maplehurst Wood to the north (unfavourable declining condition) and Hastings Cliffs to Pett Beach (mostly favourable, but some unfavourable recovering). Continued monitoring of the SSSIs will be important to ensure improvement.
- 4.2.25 The Hastings Fringes has a number of examples of ancient and wet woodland, typical of the south slopes of the High Weald. Other BAP Priority and Special to Sussex Habitats around Hastings Fringes, include 'Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh', 'Maritime Cliff' and 'Sandstone Outcrops'.
- 4.2.26 In addition, Beauport Park is an extensive area of old parkland which dates back to the late 18th century. It is situated on a north-east facing slope on the very edge of Hastings and lies within the High Weald AONB. It contains an amazingly rich and varied mosaic of habitats. There are large tracks of secondary woodland developing on previously open ground, with remnant areas of ancient woodland, old fields and an Arboretum, which was established in the mid-19th century. Although a valuable area of green infrastructure and protected as a 'Site of Nature Conservation Importance', it is unfortunately not accessible to the public.
- 4.2.27 Smaller, meadow-based SNClS also lie just north of Hastings at Hole Farm and High Lankhurst Farm Meadow, whilst Hastings Borough cemetery is also an SNCl containing semi-natural woodland.
- 4.2.28 Opportunities exist for biodiversity improvements to the three Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) around the Hastings urban area, within Rother District.

- 4.2.29 This Hastings Fringes BOA skirts across the north of the conurbation of Hastings and contains many small woodlands, areas of grassland and a density of hedgerows. There are also several ghyll woodlands, classic of this area of Sussex that cross the BOA, their Atlantic flora making this habitat important. There are opportunities for woodland management and restoration, ecological networks, access improvements and urban biodiversity.
- 4.2.30 There is scope identified for wetland habitat management and restoration and creation floodplain restoration and reconnection in the Combe Haven and Marline Valley BOA.
- 4.2.31 The Romney Marsh area BOA also extends from east Rother into the Borough of Hastings itself, typified by the Maritime Cliff and Slope (a BAP Priority Habitat) of Fairlight Cliffs and Hastings Country Park. This is discussed in more detail in the section on east Rother.





## Battle

- 4.2.32 The Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study suggested that Battle has a sufficient quantity of 'Amenity Greenspace' and of 'Parks & Gardens', but a small shortfall in both allotments and outdoor sports facilities.
- 4.2.33 The study recommended qualitative improvements to amenity open spaces in the Battle area, without real needs for significant areas of new open space, except possibly allotments. The Study suggested the need for allotments was in south Battle, although further work as part of the Battle Town Study suggests the need may equally be met elsewhere in Battle via extensions to existing allotments.
- 4.2.34 Although wholly within the AONB, there are relatively few other statutory designations in the Battle area. Blackhorse Quarry is a tiny SSSI on the southern edge of Battle's development boundary on Hastings Road which is in favourable condition. Hemingfold Meadow SSSI is a small example of lowland calcareous grassland meadow, the only recorded example of the habitat in the District. It is located some distance to the east of Battle half way to Hastings and its condition is 100% favourable.
- 4.2.35 Battle Cemetery off Marley Lane is a protected SNCI. The grassland of this cemetery is particularly rich in areas, but is quite variable throughout. There is also a small copse and the cemetery is bordered by a small stream. Powdermill Woods and lakes is a much larger SNCI between Battle and Catsfield. This is an area of semi-natural woodland which is situated around two large lakes, separated by a rich area of Alder carr. Just east of the Great Wood is a third SNCI 'Burnt Chimney Farm Meadows which is an area of herb rich meadows flanked by hedges that is rich in wildlife.
- 4.2.36 The most extensive Biodiversity Action Plan habitat in the Battle vicinity is 'wet woodland', most notably the Great Wood. This has a dual recreational function as the largest area of accessible woodland in the District. It has potential for enhanced recreational cycle routes.
- 4.2.37 There are also a handful of lowland meadow examples (another BAP habitat), including a couple abutting the development boundary. The Weald Meadows Initiative has surveyed these in recent years and will be important to protect these BAP habitats from harm.
- 4.2.38 Opportunities for biodiversity improvements and urban fringe management exist around the Battle area. Battle is fringed by two Biodiversity opportunity areas, the Great Wood Area and the 'Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods' area.
- 4.2.39 The wider Great Wood Area is also a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (see Map 15). Great Wood is an ancient woodland site managed by the

Forestry Commission. The woodland itself contains classic ghyll streams, with the BOA extending south towards Telham Hill. Opportunities identified include woodland management and restoration, grassland management, restoration and creation, ecological networks and access improvements. The area includes areas that have been allocated or identified for potential housing development such as Blackfriars. Development layouts will need to be mindful of the potential to support and integrate these opportunities with the urban area.

- 4.2.40 The 'Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods' area is a huge BOA, including extensive areas west of Battle. Tributaries of the River Brede flow through the heavily wooded landscape of the High Weald. Much of this landscape is being looked at in great detail by the Rother Woods Project, where the important butterfly populations of the area are being conserved by a woodland management approach. The woodlands that have been selected in this BOA were considered priorities for biodiversity action by the Sussex Biodiversity Centre. Relevant opportunities in this area include woodland and meadow management and restoration, woodland butterfly interest, education and community engagement and access improvements.
- 4.2.41 Recreational footpath connectivity appears to be poor between Battle and both Netherfield and Hastings and improvements in this regard would help improve access to the wide countryside and associated green infrastructure.
- 4.2.42 It is worth noting that the proposed development of the Blackfriars site will include provision of some public open space alongside development.



## **Rural Rother (West)**

4.2.43 The previous 2007 study on Open Space, Sport and Recreation demonstrated a large shortfall of amenity greenspace in west Rother, but also a deficit in outdoor sports facilities and a small shortfall of allotments. It recommended qualitative and accessibility improvements to 'accessible natural greenspace' in all rural areas of west Rother. Villages specifically mentioned as needing allotments were Hurst Green, Burwash, Etchingham and Flimwell but further opportunities will be investigated in other large service villages within western Rother on an opportunity-led basis. In most cases there are likely to be residential developments that may offer opportunities to address needs.

4.2.44 One such recommendation was that the Council should consider new long term provision of amenity open space in west Robertsbridge, which is the largest settlement in west Rother and a 'Rural Service Centre'. Since publication of the Open Space Study in 2007, there has been further LDF evidence work conducted including the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) which identifies sites in central and eastern Robertsbridge as potentially suitable for new housing. Given the location of these sites, combined with the fact that the western end of Robertsbridge is less densely populated and more rural in character, it seems that if new amenity open space is required, then central or eastern Robertsbridge may be the more appropriate locations.

4.2.45 Regardless of deficiencies identified in earlier studies, amenity open space, green corridors and accessible natural greenspace may all be considered alongside new residential development as appropriate. Urban fringe developments may offer opportunities for establishment/restoration of hedgerows and or planting of native species to link existing habitats and offer a landscape buffer. Footpath links are poor in some areas and could also benefit from improvement, for example between Ticehurst and Flimwell. Villages in West Rother that have been identified as suitable for residential development include Ticehurst, Hurst Green, Etchingham, Netherfield, Sedlescombe, Catsfield and Crowhurst.

4.2.46 The Draft ESCC 'Strategic Open Space Study' also suggests the need for a possible new woodland country park east of Heathfield (in Wealden District) in order to meet an identified shortfall in this part of the county. If this were to be achieved in the future, it would also be within 5km of large parts of Rother, including Burwash. It would also be likely to serve other parts of western Rother with relatively poor accessibility to accessible woodland, such as Ticehurst, Etchingham and Hurst Green. However, since this falls outside Rother District it is not included in the recommendations and would be a matter for Wealden District Council and East Sussex County Council to take forward. In addition, there may be further opportunities to increase

public access to local woodland in the Ticehurst, Etchingham and Hurst Green areas – as outlined in Table 9.

- 4.2.47 Most of the area is AONB, barring the stretch south of Crowhurst and Catsfield. West Rother contains a number of SSSIs. Fore Wood near Crowhurst is also an RSPB reserve and in 100% favourable condition. Darvell Wood, north of Netherfield, is also 100% favourable. Dallington Forest, south of Burwash, is in unfavourable recovering condition. Willigford Meadows, south east of Burwash are mostly in unfavourable recovering condition. Continued monitoring of the SSSIs will be important to ensure improvement.
- 4.2.48 In addition, there are a number of SNCIs in west Rother. Darwell Reservoir Complex is one of the larger SNCIs, which in addition to the reservoir encompasses an adjacent pond, several meadows which border the reservoir, a small area of heathland, a number of small woodlands and large areas of Darwell Wood.
- 4.2.49 There are also several woodland SNCIs in West Rother including Rounden and Great Wood SNCI near Brightling, Burgh Wood Complex SNCI, Boarzell Wood SNCI and Ringden Wood SNCI.
- 4.2.50 Situated at the northern boundary of the district and bordering adjacent authorities Tunbridge Wells and Wealden, the Bewl Water reservoir is an important regional resource but is also a significant recreational amenity drawing upon a wide catchment area. It is the largest Wealden expanse of open water in Sussex, and also an SNCI and a Biodiversity Opportunity Area. 24 BAP species have been recorded in the last 10 years. The South East Plan has identified Bewl Reservoir as a strategic option for enlargement. Rother District Council would welcome working with the relevant agencies, water companies and stakeholders to ensure the enlargement of Bewl Reservoir is facilitated in a sustainable manner; with minimal visual and environmental impact on the landscape and ensure continued access for recreational users during any period of planned expansion. The reservoir has potential for improvements to wetland habitats and access, although this will require cross boundary work with other neighbouring authorities.
- 4.2.51 Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats in West Rother include extensive tracts of wet woodland, scattered patches of lowland meadows and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh along the flood plains of the River Rother and Waller's Haven. Special to Sussex habitats present in the area include ancient woodland and sandstone outcrops.
- 4.2.52 Opportunities for biodiversity improvements exist across west Rother. Huge tracts of both west and east Rother are within the 'Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods' BOA. The River Rother floodzone is an area that is rich in opportunity for wetland restoration; however its tributaries and those of the Brede and Tillingham flow through the heavily wooded

landscape of the High Weald. Much of this landscape is being looked at in great detail by the Rother Woods Project, where the important butterfly populations of the area are being conserved by a woodland management approach. The woodlands that are selected in this opportunity area are considered priorities for biodiversity action. Within this area there are also many lowland meadows, which have been surveyed by the Weald Meadows Initiative. Opportunities Identified in the BOA for this area include wetland and meadow habitat management, restoration and creation; woodland management and restoration, woodland butterfly interest, education and community engagement and access improvements.

4.2.53 The Combe Haven and Marline BOA extends up into west Rother, enveloping large parts of Crowhurst. Opportunities afforded by this BOA were discussed in the Bexhill section. The potential of the Pevensey Levels BOA was discussed in more detail in the Bexhill section.

4.2.54 The Environment Agency also see an opportunity to reduce flood risk and improve water quality by encouraging and promoting the use of SUDs in proposed developments, particularly around Robertsbridge.



Ancient woodland near Flimwell



## Rye

- 4.2.55 Rye is comparatively well off in terms of open space compared to other areas of Rother. The evidence suggests it has sufficient quantities of 'allotments' and 'outdoor sports facilities' but small shortfalls of 'amenity open space' and 'parks and gardens'. The previous 2007 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study recommended the council concentrate on qualitative improvements to 'amenity open space' and 'accessible natural greenspace' in the Rye area.
- 4.2.56 The ESCC Strategic Open Space Study has identified that works to improve access management at Rye Harbour Nature Reserve will also increase the proportion of residents who reach the 500ha ANGSt standard.
- 4.2.57 The Rye area is extensively covered by designations, including international designations and rich in a variety of habitats – many of them Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats. Much of the area is designated Special Protection Area (SPA) for wild birds under the EU Habitats Directive, and there are proposals by Natural England to extend this area further (as visible on Map 12). Smaller areas of Rye Harbour are Special Area of Conservation (SAC). There is also a current proposal by Natural England to designate large swathes of Rye Harbour and East Guldeford Levels as Ramsar (Wetland of International Importance).
- 4.2.58 Most of the areas are also designated SSSI. Rye Harbour SSSI is 100% unfavourable condition, whilst 'Dungeness Romney Marsh and Rye Harbour' SSSI is mostly favourable condition, but some 40% of the area is unfavourable – mostly recovering. The Environment Agency has commented in local catchment flood management plans that SSSIs in unfavourable condition can be improved by water level management for combined environmental and flood risk management benefits. Continued monitoring of the SSSIs will be important to ensure improvement.
- 4.2.59 Rother's largest SNCI extends west out of Rye along the valley of the River Brede and includes extensive areas of floodplain grazing marsh.
- 4.2.60 The south end of Rye town is encircled by the Rivers Brede and Rother which are also 'Mudflats' - a Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitat. Large areas of reedbed and 'coastal and floodplain grazing marsh' which nudge the town's south, east and west boundaries.
- 4.2.61 Opportunities for biodiversity improvements and urban fringe management exist around the Rye area. Rye is fringed by two Biodiversity opportunity areas, the 'Romney Marsh' Area and the 'Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods' area.

- 4.2.62 The Romney Marshes BOA envelopes Rye's southern boundary. It has opportunities for wetland habitat management, restoration and creation, wetland bird interest and cross-county working. The cross-county 'Romney Marshes Living Landscape project' should have a continuing role in this regard.
- 4.2.63 The banks of Rye Harbour have previously been identified as a green corridor, and there may be potential to extend this further into a wider network.
- 4.2.64 The 'Rye Harbour Farm Habitat Creation Programme' is an Environment Agency (EA) project that aims to restore many of the habitats that once existed in the area. It will re-create approximately 17 hectares of inter-tidal habitat near Lime Kiln Cottage, restore many of the shingle ridges and create new areas of fresh water wetlands at the Winchelsea Beach end of the site. Recreating these habitats will also help protect against flood risk.
- 4.2.65 The EA also see an opportunity to reduce flood risk and improve water quality by encouraging and promoting the use of SUDs in proposed urban developments around Rye.



Rye Town

## **Rural Rother (East)**

- 4.2.66 The RDC Sport, Recreation & Open Space Study 2007 showed fair deficits of 'amenity open space' and 'parks and gardens' in east Rother but a sufficient quantity of 'allotments' and 'outdoor sports facilities'. The study recommends a need for amenity open spaces (in Broad Oak) and allotments (in Fairlight Cove, Westfield and Broad Oak) and further opportunities for green infrastructure will be investigated in other large service villages within Eastern Rother on an opportunity-led basis. In all cases there are likely to be residential developments that may offer opportunities to address needs.
- 4.2.67 Regardless of deficiencies identified in earlier studies; amenity open space, green corridors and accessible natural greenspace should all be considered alongside new residential development as appropriate. Urban fringe developments may offer opportunities for establishment/restoration of hedgerows and or planting of native species to link existing habitats and offer a landscape buffer. Villages in East Rother that have been identified as suitable for residential development include Northiam, Peasmarch, Broad Oak, Westfield, Staplecross, Fairlight Cove, Beckley/Four Oaks, Iden and Camber.
- 4.2.68 The same study recommended qualitative and accessibility improvements to 'accessible natural greenspace' in all rural areas of east Rother, although in Winchelsea there was also a quantitative shortfall of accessible natural greenspace. However, an absence of proposed development in the Winchelsea area makes this recommendation difficult to achieve in the short-term.
- 4.2.69 In addition, by application of Woodland Trust standards, the potential need for more accessible woodland has been identified in Westfield, Icklesham and Fairlight Cove. Table 10 outlined some possible means of addressing these deficits.
- 4.2.70 A handful of green corridors have currently been identified in East Rother (in RDC Open Space Study and ESCC Strategic Open Space Study), as visible on Map 10, including two in Camber - Guldeford Creek and Broomhill Creek. However, there are other areas that appear to function as a green corridor. The Royal Military Canal, which extends as far as Pett level in the west, is an important environmental site. The Environment Agency is the navigation authority and uses the river to manage water levels on Romney Marsh and Walland Marsh. It is important for fish and other wildlife, and it passes through several Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). There is now a public footpath for the entire length of the canal so the canal has a valuable recreational function as well.
- 4.2.71 The Eastern corner of Sussex is heavily designated for its wildlife value, with extensive SSSIs, LNRs and Local Wildlife Sites as well as sites of international importance for wildlife. The condition of the SSSIs



is regularly monitored. Hastings Cliffs to Pett Beach SSSI is mostly favourable condition, but has some unfavourable recovering. Dungeness, Romney Marsh & Rye Bay SSSI is also mostly favourable, but some is in unfavourable recovering condition. Three very small scale SSSIs in east Rother include 'Northiam', 'Brede Pit and Cutting' and 'Leasam Heronry Wood' – are all favourable condition. Another tiny SSSI – Winchelsea Cutting is in unfavourable declining condition. The Environment Agency has commented in local catchment flood management plans that SSSIs in unfavourable condition can be improved by water level management for combined environmental and flood risk management benefits. Continued monitoring of the SSSIs will be important to ensure improvement.

4.2.72 Valuable BAP habitats in the east corner of Rother include 'coast and floodplain grazing marsh', 'maritime cliff', 'sand dunes' (at Camber), 'vegetated shingle' and 'saline lagoons'. These features have made the area extremely important for birds (wintering, breeding and non-breeding). Within their Catchment Flood Management Plans, the Environment Agency has identified potential to create new wetland habitat for conservation purposes and the EA note that some has already been created in the Brede and Tillingham Valleys.

4.2.73 In terms of geology, the Romney Marsh Area Biodiversity Opportunity Area lies mostly on Hastings sandstone, siltstone and mudstone, with extensive beach and tidal flat deposits of clay, silt, sand and gravel. It includes 14 BAP habitats and 169 species.

4.2.74 The cross-county Romney Marshes Living Landscape project is working to bring about improvements to this area where opportunities arise for wetland habitat management, restoration and creation, particularly related to wetland bird interest. The promotion of agri-environment schemes is seen as important in this area.

4.2.75 As the landscape gives way to the High Weald, further BAP habitats exist. There is extensive 'wet woodland', 'ancient woodland', 'lowland meadow' (particularly in the Brede Valley) and 'sandstone outcrops' (particularly along the Fairlight/Pett stretch of coast).

4.2.76 Huge tracts of both west and east Rother are within the 'Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods' BOA. The River Rother floodzone is an area that is rich in opportunity for wetland restoration; however its tributaries and those of the Brede and Tillingham flow through the heavily wooded landscape of the High Weald. Much of this landscape is being looked at in great detail by the Rother Woods Project, where the important butterfly populations of the area are being conserved by a woodland management approach. The woodlands that are selected in this opportunity area are considered priorities for biodiversity action. Within this area there are also many lowland meadows, which have been surveyed by the Weald Meadows Initiative. Opportunities Identified in the BOA for this area include wetland and meadow habitat

management, restoration and creation; woodland management and restoration, woodland butterfly interest, education and community engagement and access improvements.

4.2.77 Other designations in east Rother include SNCI along the Brede valley and a few smaller SNCIs such as Hastings Brickworks, whilst Flatropers Wood, south of Four oaks is a Sussex Wildlife Trust Reserve.

4.2.78 Within the Catchment Flood Management Plan, the Environment Agency (EA) see an opportunity to reduce flood risk and improve water quality by encouraging and promoting the use of SUDs, particularly in developments around Camber. The EA also see an opportunity that habitat improvements may increase water levels in the aquifer, particularly at Wallands Marsh.

4.2.79 The EA also consider there to be opportunities for 'flood storage' at River Tillingham between Cliff End and Winchelsea and also on the River Rother, that may involve setting back the embankments to make use of the natural floodplain storage and restore washlands.



Ternery Pool, a saline lagoon

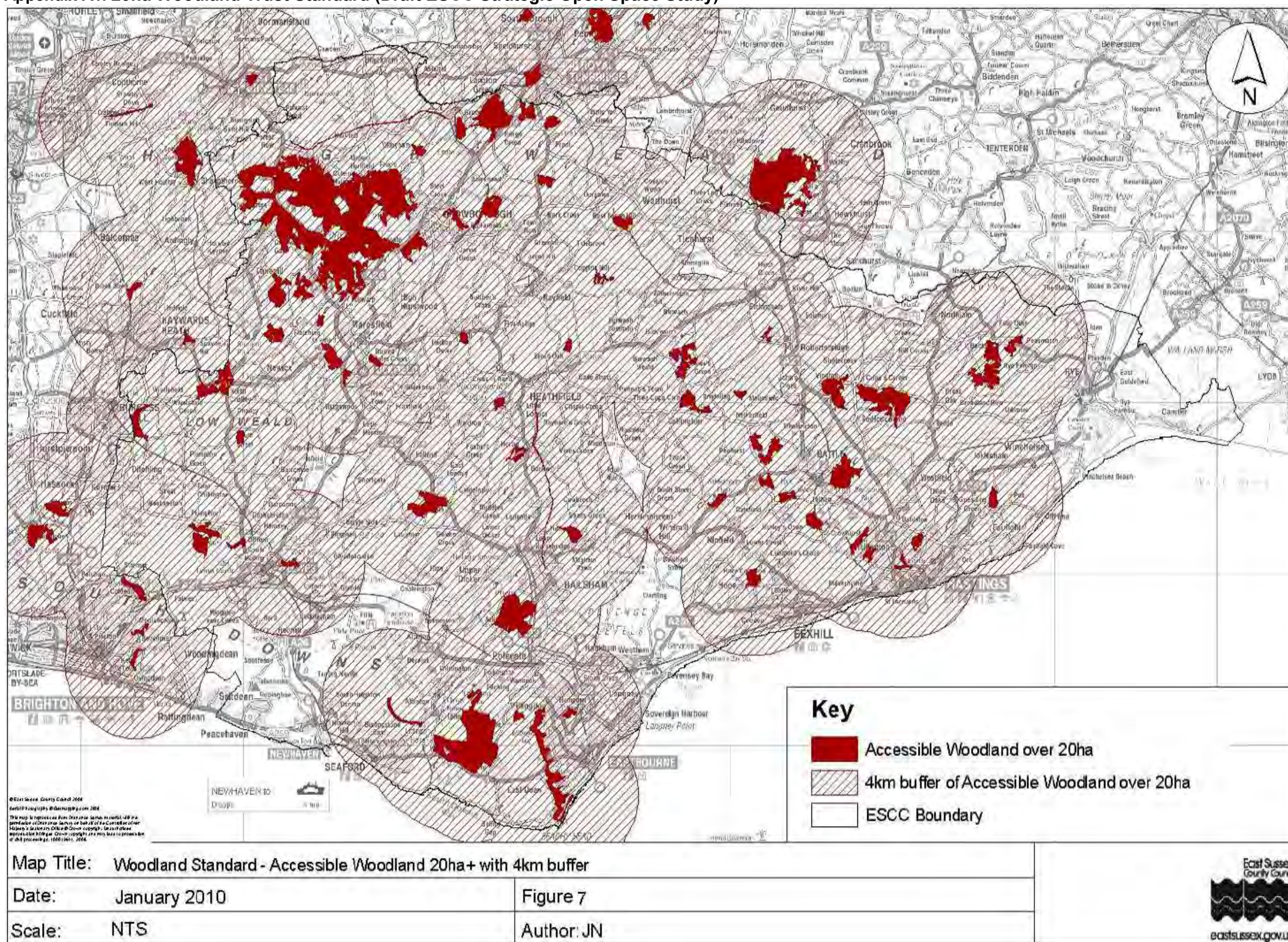
### **4.3 Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)**

- 4.3.1 In addition to the application of a new Core Strategy policy and bringing forward appropriate policies and proposals as part of the 'Development and Site Allocations' DPD, the Council may secure contributions towards GI where appropriate through planning obligations including contributions for off-site provision and improvements or public sector funding.
- 4.3.2 Local councils are now able to apply for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on new developments in their area to support infrastructure delivery. It is the intention of Rother District Council to develop a CIL shortly to support the Core Strategy. This will include provision of support for green infrastructure. Specific needs will be incorporated into its Infrastructure Delivery Plan, as this will form the basis of the CIL.



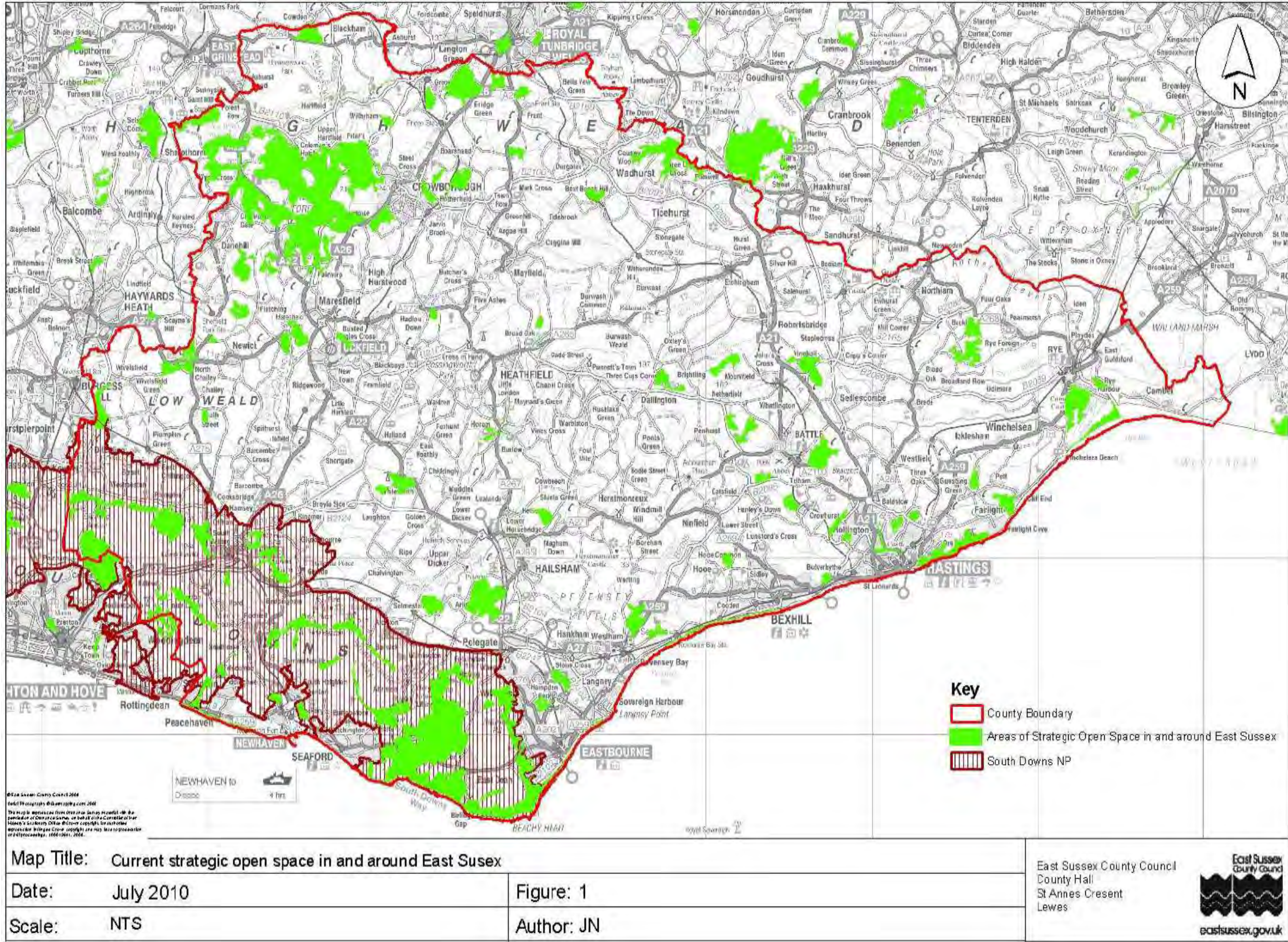


# Appendix A1. 20ha Woodland Trust Standard (Draft ESCC Strategic Open Space Study)



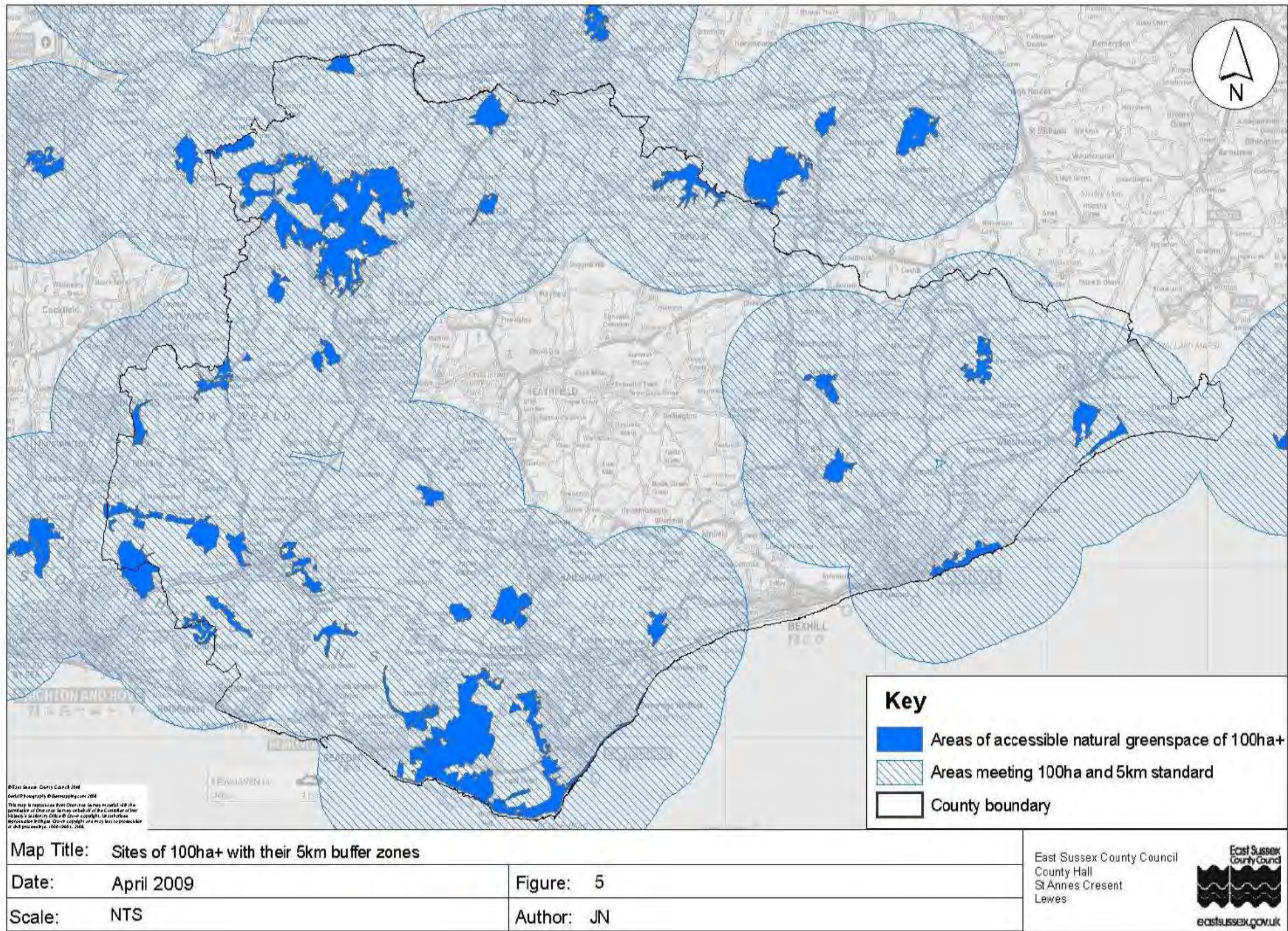


Appendix A2. Strategic Open Space in East Sussex (Draft ESCC Strategic Open Space Study)





Appendix A3. Areas of Accessible Natural Greenspace 100ha+ (Draft ESCC Strategic Open Space Study)







## **Appendix A4 Abbreviations**

ANG Accessible Natural Greenspace  
ANGSt Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard  
AONB Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty  
ASA Archaeologically Sensitive Area  
CC County Council  
CSS Countryside Stewardship Scheme  
DC District Council  
DEFRA Department of Environment Food and Rural Affairs  
ESCC East Sussex County Council  
ESA Environmentally Sensitive Area  
EA Environment Agency  
EN English Nature  
EH English Heritage  
ESS Environmental Stewardship Scheme  
GI Green Infrastructure  
LDF Local Development Framework  
LNR Local Nature Reserve  
NE Natural England  
NERC Act Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006  
NP National Park  
NT National Trust  
PPG Planning Policy Guidance  
PPS Planning Policy Statement  
RDC Rother District Council  
ROW Right of Way  
RSPB Royal Society for the Protection of Birds  
SAC Special Area for Conservation  
SAM Scheduled Ancient Monument  
SNCI Site of Nature Conservation Importance  
SOS Strategic Open Space  
SPA Special Protection Area  
SSSI Site of Special Scientific Interest  
SWT Sussex Wildlife Trust  
WT Woodland Trust