Tunbridge Wells Borough Council

Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Development Framework

Green Infrastructure Plan

Supplementary Planning Document

Adopted August 2014

Chapter 1: Introduction

What is Green Infrastructure?

1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012) defines green infrastructure as *"a network of multi-functional green space, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities*". The positive contribution that green infrastructure makes to creating sustainable communities and tackling climate change is becoming increasingly important in the context of balancing housing growth with environmental preservation, and is gaining widespread recognition in spatial planning policy.

1.2 The aim of green infrastructure planning is not just the creation of new green spaces, but also the enhancement of existing green infrastructure assets. These assets can take many forms, but the main types are shown in the box below.

Green Infrastructure Typology

- Natural and semi-natural urban green spaces
- Parks and gardens, including urban parks, country parks and formal gardens
- Green corridors, including river and canal banks and extensive areas of natural habitat
- Cycleways and rights of way
- Outdoor sports facilities and provision for children and teenagers
- Amenity green space and accessible countryside in urban fringe areas
- Allotments and community gardens, cemeteries and churchyards
- Green roofs and walls

1.3 Some elements of green infrastructure may not be 'green' in a traditional sense. Natural areas, parks and recreational systems and open spaces can be considered to be 'green infrastructure', whereas built infrastructure and systems, roads and bridges, water and electrical lines and other community systems can be described as 'grey infrastructure'. Some elements, such as service areas of industrial parks, could be classed as ‘grey’ but still contribute to the wider functioning of a green infrastructure network. Therefore, the potential contribution of roadside verges and amenity areas, for example, will also play a key role in the Borough's green infrastructure network.

Functions of Green Infrastructure

1.4 The NPPF emphasises that green infrastructure assets have the potential to fulfil several functions simultaneously. The South East Green Infrastructure Framework(2009)[1] identifies key functions of green infrastructure and these are summarised in the box below.

1 This was originally published by a partnership of governmental and non-governmental bodies in the South East, to guide the implementation of the green infrastructure policy in the now revoked South East Plan.

Green Infrastructure Functions[2]

Conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, including the need to mitigate the potential impacts of new development
Well managed and better connected networks through the urban and rural environment help to contribute to targets set in county-wide and local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAP), as well as enabling species to migrate and adapt to climate change.

Creating a sense of place and opportunities for greater appreciation of valuable landscapes and cultural heritage
Green infrastructure can conserve and enhance landscape and cultural heritage and help to preserve the intrinsic cultural and environmental value of places.

Increasing recreational opportunities, including access to, and enjoyment of, the countryside and supporting healthy living
Recreation spaces, allotments and community gardens provide opportunities for healthy eating and exercise and help to foster community cohesion.

Improved water resource and flood management and sustainable design
Green infrastructure can help to reduce flood risk by reducing the volume and speed of rainfall flowing into rivers, while also helping to reduce water pollution and contributing to the objectives of the Water Framework Directive.

Making a positive contribution to combating climate change through adaptation and mitigation of impacts
Green infrastructure can improve micro-climates through shading and cooling, and allows species migration.

Sustainable transport, education and crime reduction
Green corridors on routes of pedestrian or cycling demand can promote a modal shift to walking and cycling and thus bring benefits of social cohesion and crime reduction.

Production of food, fibre and fuel
Allotments and community gardens can provide opportunities for local food production, which can be particularly valuable in areas where few people have access to a garden.

1.5 A Research Report[3] by Natural England suggests that green infrastructure can also deliver wider economic and social benefits, including improved physical and mental health outcomes, economic competitiveness and greater attraction to tourists, greater community cohesion and economic security deriving from adequate supplies of fresh water and food.

1.6 In terms of spatial planning, when the Borough's green infrastructure assets and links are incorporated and planned together, then an interconnected and joined-up multi-functional green infrastructure network can be achieved. This will not only deliver multiple functions, but also has the potential to support wider economic, environmental and social benefits.

1.7 Some green infrastructure areas/options, and the sites and features within those areas/options, extend beyond the Borough boundary, over which this authority has no jurisdiction and cannot implement any spatial plan or policy. In many cases, however, these areas/options are also identified by the adjoining authority indicating mutual support and possible partnership working. Where an adjoining authority has not identified a proposed cross-boundary area/option that is proposed by this

2 Adapted from South East Green Infrastructure Framework
3 Microeconomic Evidence for the Benefits of Investment in the Environment - review (NERR033) (2012)

document, features and sites within the adjoining authority may be identified in this document as a record of fact to indicate to others the possibility of mutual support and joint working. The identification of features and sites in this way is in no way intended to preempt the decisions of adjoining authorities or to place any obligation upon them.

What is a Green Infrastructure Plan?

1.8 A Green Infrastructure Plan (GI Plan) considers the 'big picture' beyond site-specific issues, including private, as well as public, assets. The GI Plan sets out a clear vision and framework for existing and future green infrastructure: setting out the current provision of green infrastructure assets; identifying areas where there are gaps in provision or linkages; and identifying potential opportunities for enhancing and filling these gaps.

1.9 The preparation of this GI Plan has been informed by the approach recommended in the South East Green Infrastructure Framework (2009), a document produced to guide the delivery of green infrastructure in the South East. The Framework notes that it is unlikely to be appropriate to address green infrastructure solely in a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and policies to enhance green infrastructure within the Borough are also included within relevant policies in the Site Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD), which is subject to independent examination.

1.10 This GI Plan has formed a key part of the evidence base for supporting allocated sites and other policies within the Site Allocations DPD and has been developed alongside that document with significant stakeholder and community involvement. On 16 May 2014, the Borough Council formally resolved to adopt the Green Infrastructure Plan as a Supplementary Planning Document to guide the application of these policies. The Borough Council may review this document to provide advice on implementation, delivery and design if deemed necessary. All future DPDs will also have regard to the GI Plan.

Key Tasks in Green Infrastructure Planning

1.11 The South East Green Infrastructure Framework recommends a staged and continuous approach to green infrastructure planning and delivery, ideally commencing with the production of the Local Development Scheme (LDS) and leading through to the Core Strategy submission. The Borough Council's Core Strategy, adopted in June 2010, includes a Core Policy commitment to the development of green infrastructure networks. The remaining stages in the process have been aligned to the Borough Council's LDS timescale, as set out in Table 1.

Table 1 Indicative Green Infrastructure Planning stages

Stage	Detailed task	Indicative timescale	Reports
1	**Set out commitment to develop GI Plan**	Completed June 2010	LDS and Core Strategy
2	**Refine Evidence Base**	Completed June 2010	Green Infrastructure Plan - Initial stages document
	Existing green infrastructure assets		
	Deficiencies in green infrastructure		
	Local needs		
	Opportunities		
3	**Develop initial options**	Completed 9th August to 30th September 2011	Green Infrastructure Plan - Options document
	Develop policy options		

Stage	Detailed task	Indicative timescale	Reports
	Consult stakeholders and public		Draft Green Infrastructure Plan
	Scoping of delivery mechanisms		
	Set of principles to inform the planning, design and delivery of green infrastructure		
4	**Refine options**	Completed December 2012 to May 2013	Final Green Infrastructure Plan Policies and allocations within DPD
	Develop spatial plan for green infrastructure network		
	Policy framework and delivery mechanisms		
	Proposals should be supported by implementation plan including funding issues		
5	**Formal public consultation**	January 2014	Green Infrastructure Plan SPD and consultation statement
6	**Adoption of GI Plan as SPD**	By summer 2014	Green Infrastructure Plan SPD
7	**Delivery**	Post-adoption (2014 onwards)	
8	**Monitoring of targets and projects**	Post-adoption (2014 onwards)	Authority Monitoring Report

Structure of this document

1.12 The SPD comprises a series of chapters. This chapter sets out an introduction to the document. Chapter 2 sets out aims, objectives and the vision for green infrastructure across the Borough. Chapter 3 sets out the policy context. Chapter 4 reviews the Borough's existing green infrastructure assets and Chapter 5 identifies deficiencies and opportunities. Chapter 6 sets out options and Chapter 7 sets out funding approaches. Consultation methods, together with comments made during the consultations and the Borough Council's responses, are summarised in a separate Consultation Statement (2014).

Chapter 2: Vision and Objectives

Borough Council Vision 2026

Vision 2026[4]

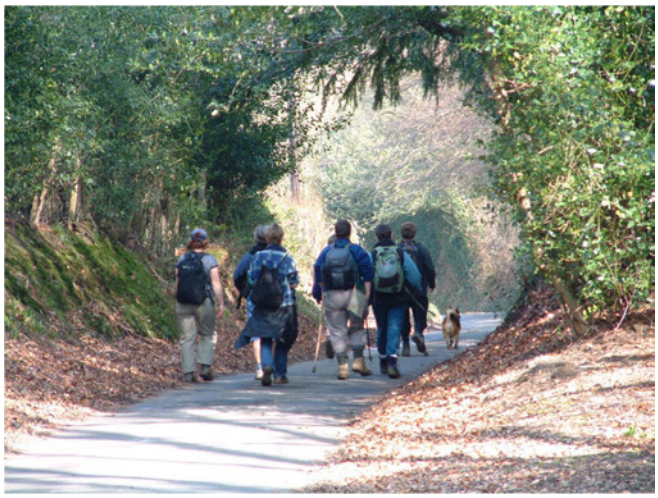
By 2026, the Borough of Tunbridge Wells will be characterised by stronger communities, who feel safer, well served, well housed and with access to excellent health services. Our residents will benefit from better education and skills development, leading to a thriving and diverse local economy. Tunbridge Wells will be a regional hub, attracting visitors and new business to the Borough – both from elsewhere and from within the Borough. Everyone will benefit from a range of cultural and leisure offers, in an attractive environment. Underpinning our ambitions is a key desire to ensure the Borough remains sustainable, in terms of our current and future prosperity and ensuring the benefits enhance the quality of life for all.

2.1 The Borough Council has adopted a new Vision 2014-2019. The new Vision sets out a more detailed set of objectives which the Council wishes to deliver over the five-year period to ensure that the Borough remains a prosperous, green and confident place to live, work and visit.

Borough Sustainable Community Strategy

2.2 As stipulated in the South East Green Infrastructure Framework, the GI Plan can provide evidence to support the Borough's Sustainable Community Strategy (2011) (SCS) and inform Local Area Agreement targets. Green infrastructure falls within the 'Cleaner and Greener' objective of the Sustainable Community Strategy, which is *"To make the transition to a low carbon economy to minimise our impact on the environment and to adapt to our changing climate".*

2.3 The GI Plan is identified within the SCS as one of the "*Strategies and Plans that will help deliver this ambition"* (paragraph 3.38).



2.4 The provision of open space also creates opportunities for people to lead healthier lifestyles. Consequently, green infrastructure can contribute to another of the Strategy's objectives: *"Health - To support residents across the borough to make healthier choices with a focus on those communities with the worst health outcomes, thereby reducing health inequalities".*

How green infrastructure can help achieve the vision and objectives

2.5 Green infrastructure policies aim to contribute to these objectives by:

- conserving, enhancing or creating local and regional networks of green infrastructure in order to link assets within and between boroughs and connect urban areas with the surrounding countryside
- enhancing the multi-functionality of existing green infrastructure assets and seeking the creation of new multi-functional spaces and/or linkages where a need or deficiency has been identified

4 The Council's long term vision for the borough, available at http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/12338/Vision2026.pdf

- enhancing local distinctiveness and sense of place by preserving and enhancing the Borough's rich network of local heritage and landscape features, biodiversity sites and habitats
- conserving and enhancing the network of existing access routes to allow sustainable commuting, providing safe, attractive and well-signed walking and cycling options for all, including those with disabilities
- preserving and enhancing all opportunities for recreation, including green spaces, play spaces, sports fields, commons, public rights of way and allotments to promote healthy living and enhance wellbeing, and to increase opportunities for food and fuel production
- reducing flood risk and enhancing water quality by progressing opportunities to integrate Sustainable Drainage Systems into development sites and reduce impermeable surfaces

2.6 Many of these benefits of green infrastructure are also cross-cutting; for example, biodiversity benefits can arise from enhancing access routes.

2.7 The SCS is to be refreshed in 2014 and updated to reflect our latest partnership working although the objectives will largely remain as they are.

Chapter 3: Policy Context

3.1 This chapter provides a summary of the national and local planning policy context for green infrastructure, and of recent policy guidance.

National Policy

3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 supersedes and consolidates the suite of Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Planning Policy Statements. "*Conserving and enhancing the natural environment*" is one of the core planning principles set out in the NPPF. It recognises the importance of planning for green infrastructure in mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change. It states that planning departments should plan positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management of networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure and should work with Local Nature Partnerships where appropriate. It also sets out a number of other matters, including planning for biodiversity, landscape enhancements and mitigating adverse environmental impacts.

3.3 The NPPF also introduces a new designation, Local Green Space. These are areas of great local importance, identified by local and neighbourhood plans as requiring special protection, and their designation would place some restraint on development. They can only be designated under certain circumstances.

3.4 Under the Localism Act 2011, public bodies have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries, particularly those identified as strategic priorities, such as the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. This requirement is reinforced in the NPPF and has implications for the implementation of green infrastructure proposals identified within this Plan, in terms of ensuring collaboration takes place with external partners to deliver the options identified. The Act also established a voluntary neighbourhood planning process, giving local communities powers to produce Neighbourhood Development Plans.

3.5 A more recent amendment to the Act[(5)] introduced a duty to cooperate with Local Nature Partnerships. These organisations are designated by the Secretary of State and established for the purpose of protecting and improving the natural environment in an area and the benefits derived from it. Kent Local Nature Partnership was one of 41 such organisations designated in 2012.

Regional Policy

3.6 The South East Plan (the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South East) (2009) was revoked on 25 March 2013[(6)]. However, the Plan's policy on green infrastructure and accompanying guidance (the South East Green Infrastructure Framework) (2009) have influenced approaches to green infrastructure planning across the region since their introduction.

3.7 The Borough Council will continue to work in partnership with neighbouring authorities and the Kent Local Nature Partnership on green infrastructure planning.

Adopted Core Strategy

3.8 The Tunbridge Wells Borough Core Strategy (2010) contains policies guiding future development and conservation within the Borough to 2026. Core Policy 1(4) requires developments to provide, or contribute to the provision of, infrastructure for which they create a need. Core Policy 4(4): Environment and Core Policy 14(8): Development in the Villages and Rural Areas directly relate to green infrastructure and make commitments to the conservation, creation and enhancement of green infrastructure across the Borough. These policies are reproduced in the box below. Other policies relevant to the multi-functional nature of green infrastructure are Core Policy 3(3): Transport

5 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2012 (SI 2613)
6 By order of The Regional Strategy for the South East (Partial Revocation) Order (SI 427).

Infrastructure (which seeks to encourage sustainable modes of transport, including walking and cycling), Core Policy 5: Sustainable Design and Construction (which seeks to recognise and respond to the potential impacts of climate change) and Core Policy 8: Retail, Leisure and Community Facilities Provision (which seeks to provide and maintain open spaces, recreational and cultural facilities and to improve links between them as part of a green infrastructure network).

Core Policy 1: Delivery of Development

(4) Developments on all allocated and unallocated sites will be required either to provide, or to contribute towards the provision of, the services, facilities and infrastructure for which they create a need.

Core Policy 4: Environment

(4) Opportunities and locations for biodiversity enhancements will be identified and pursued by the creation, protection, enhancement, extension and management of green corridors and through the development of green infrastructure networks in urban and rural areas to improve connectivity between habitats.

Core Policy 14: Development in the Villages and Rural Areas

(8) Non-motorised modes of transport between the rural settlements and within the rural areas will be encouraged by ensuring that the existing network of public footpaths and bridleways are protected, maintained and improved. Opportunities for new green routeways within, and between, settlements, and between settlements and areas of recreation, will be identified and planned for to encourage non-motorised modes of transport and to enhance biodiversity.

3.9 Paragraph 5.102 of the Core Strategy also states that *"the Borough Council will conduct future studies as part of a Green Infrastructure Framework and will use the results to identify opportunities and broad locations for the enhancement of biodiversity and green corridors. This will be addressed in detail within the Allocations DPD and the Development Control Policies DPD."*

3.10 This GI Plan forms a significant proportion of the evidence base referred to above and identifies broad locations and opportunities for enhancement.

3.11 The Council is currently working on producing a Site Allocations DPD(due to be adopted in 2015) to support the proposals within the Core Strategy. The Council has decided not to proceed with a specific Development Management Policies DPD in light of the changes set out in the NPPF and will consider amendments to policies in a future review of the Core Strategy.

Neighbouring Authorities

3.12 A key component of green infrastructure planning is establishing and linking cross-boundary green infrastructure assets. Consequently, networking and partnership working with neighbouring authorities is a key element of delivering the GI Plan. The Borough Council has taken note of adjoining authorities' GI Plans where they exist and has consulted all adjoining authorities on the development of this Plan to ensure they are, where possible, complementary. This work has been reinforced by the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities introduced in the Localism Act 2011.

3.13 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council has produced a Green Infrastructure Report (2009) to support its Managing Development and the Environment DPD. This documents the process of drawing together data and stakeholders to develop a green infrastructure diagram for the Borough. The

Network Diagram within the report identifies Principal Green Corridors within the borough and Principal Green Corridor extensions, which go beyond the Borough boundary. One such extension runs south of the boundary, into Tunbridge Wells Borough.

3.14 The other adjoining authorities in Kent (Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council and Ashford Borough Council) and East Sussex (Wealden District Council and Rother District Council) have also prepared some form of strategy for green infrastructure or in the final stages of producing one.

3.15 Wealden District Council has produced two green infrastructure Background Papers to date. This includes Background Paper 6: Green Infrastructure (Core Strategy Submission Document, August 2011) and Green Infrastructure Background Paper (Strategic Sites Submission Document, March 2014). Sevenoaks District Council has produced a GI topic paper (November 2013) to support its Core Strategy and Allocations and Development Management Plan and Rother District Council has produced a GI background study (August 2011) to inform its new Local Plan. Ashford Borough Council has a 'Green and Blue Grid Strategy' (2008) which sets out principles of green infrastructure within the Borough. Maidstone Borough Council is currently consulting on the published Draft Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (October 2013).

3.16 Some proposals within this Plan could extend beyond the Borough boundary into adjoining authorities; any such work will be subject to appropriate consultation and agreement with those authorities.

Policy Guidance

3.17 Planning for a healthy environment: good practice guidance for green infrastructure and biodiversity (Town & Country Planning Association and The Wildlife Trusts, 2012) provides more detailed guidance on how the benefits of a green infrastructure network can be delivered through the planning system. It suggests approaches to be taken at strategic, local, neighbourhood and masterplan level, and in determining planning applications, and also offers advice on long-term management and funding issues.

3.18 The guidance sets out 10 guiding principles for green infrastructure planning, as shown in the box below.

Principles of Green Infrastructure Planning

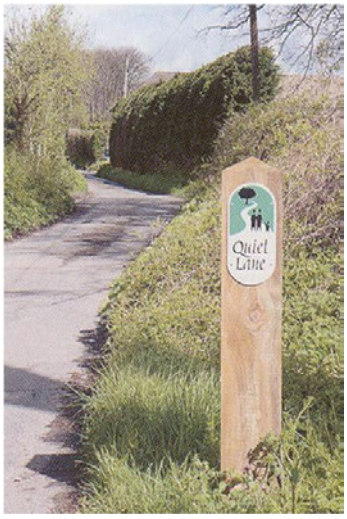
- GI needs to be strategically planned to provide a comprehensive and integrated network
- GI requires wide partnership buy-in
- GI needs to be planned using sound evidence
- GI needs to demonstrate 'multi-functionality'
- GI creation and maintenance need to be properly resourced
- GI needs to be central to the development's design and must reflect and enhance the area's locally distinctive character
- GI should contribute to biodiversity by safeguarding, enhancing, restoring, and creating wildlife habitat and by integrating biodiversity into the built environment
- GI should achieve physical and functional connectivity between sites at strategic and local levels
- GI needs to include accessible spaces and facilitate physically active travel
- GI needs to be integrated with other policy initiatives

3.19 These principles have been reflected in the preparation of this GI Plan and the emerging Borough Council's Site Allocations DPD.

3.20 Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance (2009) predates the NPPF and is currently being updated. However, it contains a wealth of useful information, and case studies illustrating how green infrastructure can be successfully planned as an integral part of new developments.

3.21 GI proposals, like other public realm projects, will need to conform with policy and guidance in respect of accessibility standards, but should, in any case, aim to create a safe and accessible environment for all, including those with disabilities.

Chapter 4: Existing Green Infrastructure Assets



4.1 The Borough has an extensive network of urban and rural green infrastructure, including sites designated for their biodiversity, nature conservation and landscape value, in addition to important habitats, footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways. It is anticipated that these areas and features will form a significant part of the Borough's Green Infrastructure Network. Although this section is set out by feature or function, it should be recognised that many green infrastructure assets are multi-functional.

Biodiversity, geodiversity and nature conservation

Designated sites

4.2 There are no internationally designated sites, such as Ramsar[(7)] sites, Special Protection Areas (SPA) or Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) within the Borough. The Borough Council has, however, conducted an Appropriate Assessment to assess the implications of its Core Strategy on the Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA which lies to the south west of the Borough boundary. The assessment concluded that although Core Strategy policies would not have significant adverse effects on Ashdown Forest, in order to avoid any potential future recreational impacts, semi-natural green space should be provided as part of future developments in the Borough if a deficiency in recreational space is identified. This provision would be intended to reduce the desire of residents to travel to Ashdown Forest for recreational activities by providing similar facilities closer to home. Further detail is provided in the Core Strategy. This is also reflected in the emerging Site Allocations DPD.

Table 2 Biodiversity and Geodiversity Sites

Level	Site	Number	Locations
International	Special Protection Area/Special Areas of Conservation	0	None in the Borough, but Ashdown Forest SAC/SPA is 8km to the west
National	Sites of Special Scientific Interest	10	Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Cranbrook, the villages and rural areas
Regional	Regionally Important Geological Site	1	Scotney Castle
Local	Local Nature Reserves and Community Woodland	5	Royal Tunbridge Wells, Paddock Wood and Cranbrook
Local	Local Wildlife Sites	59	Throughout the Borough
Local	Sites of Local Nature Conservation Value	17	Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Paddock Wood, Cranbrook, Hawkhurst, villages and rural areas
Local	Roadside Nature Reserves	12	Throughout the Borough

7 The Ramsar Convention is an international agreement signed in Ramsar, Iran, in 1971, which provides for the conservation and good use of wetlands. The UK Government ratified the Convention and designated the first Ramsar sites in 1976.

4.3 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are areas recognised by Natural England as having national importance for their flora and fauna, geological or physiographical (landform) features. These sites are protected by statute, the highest level of protection. Many of the SSSIs in the Borough are wooded areas recognised for their rich assemblage of ferns, mosses and liverworts; others are recognised for their geomorphological features, or for the range of habitats sustaining rare species.

4.4 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are designated to support biodiversity and local distinctiveness. They are of county-wide importance for their wildlife interest and can include both public and private land. Local authorities can also, in consultation with Natural England, designate and manage Local Nature Reserves. These are habitats of local or regional significance that make a useful contribution both to nature conservation and to opportunities for the community to see, learn about and enjoy wildlife. The Kent High Weald Partnership has carried out extensive ecological surveys and prepared management plans, which have been agreed with the Borough Council for each site.

4.5 Sites of Local Nature Conservation Value (SLNCV) are designated by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, based on information from conservation bodies, environmental consultants and Council officers. As their name indicates, they are sites of local importance and have a lower level of protection than sites of county-wide or national importance, such as LWSs or SSSIs. The evaluation of these sites includes an assessment of their importance to local communities as they provide opportunities for direct contact with nature, which can be particularly valuable in urban areas. SLNCVs will be considered for designation as Local Nature Reserves where they are of sufficient size and have local support, and where the land is owned or controlled by the Borough Council. Tunbridge Wells Borough Council will seek to encourage appropriate public access to all SLNCVs and to promote, where possible, management that will protect and enhance the conservation value of the SLNCV.

4.6 The Kent Wildlife Trust has identified a number of Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs) within the Borough. By their nature, RNRs are long and thin, providing not only havens for wildlife, but also important wildlife corridors or 'stepping stones' between larger sites. The Roadside Verge Project is funded by Kent Highways and Kent County Council, but is managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust. Sites are managed for wildlife and for public access and owned by organisations, including the Kent Wildlife Trust, the Woodland Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, utility companies, the Forestry Commission and Parish Councils across the Borough.

Habitats

4.7 Important habitats and protected or notable species are not confined to designated sites, but can be found on almost any site. A number of habitats and species within the Borough are therefore identified in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and the Council's own Local Biodiversity Action Plan. All green spaces (urban or rural) are also important for pollinators, which are vital for biodiversity.

4.8 Wildlife habitat surveys have influenced and informed the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan. The priority habitats identified accord with those in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and those that the UK Government wish to see enhanced as "*habitats of principal importance*", for which all public authorities have a duty of regard. The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan was fully reviewed in 2005. It describes species and habitats in Kent that are significant on a regional, national or international scale and in need of protection. It gives protection targets and outlines projects to increase species' populations, as well as the quality and quantity of habitats.

4.9 The Local Biodiversity Action Plan has been produced in response to the need to promote and carry out positive action for the conservation and enhancement of local biodiversity, as stipulated in the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Local Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats

- Lowland meadows
- Lowland dry acid grassland
- Lowland heath
- Built up areas and gardens
- Hedgerows
- Lowland woodland pasture and historic parkland
- Rocky outcrops
- Gill woodlands

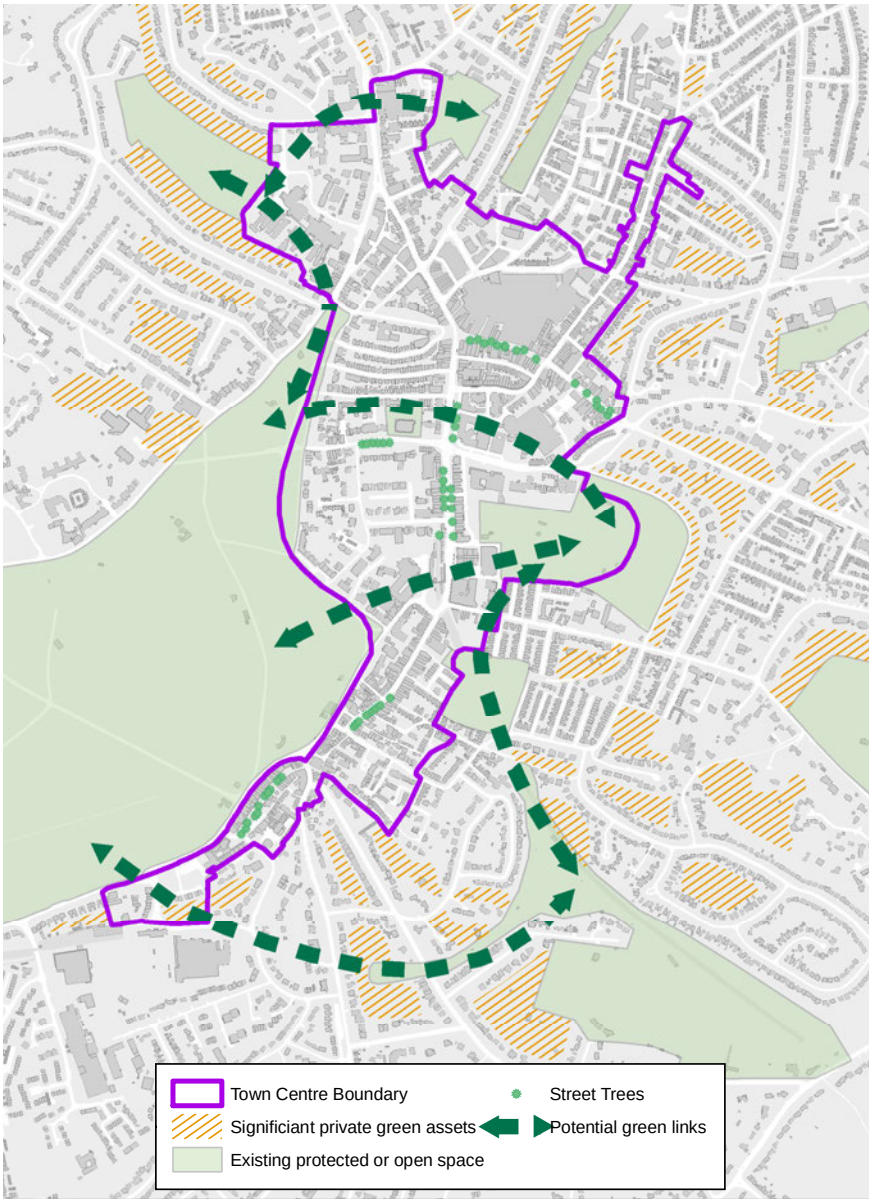
4.10 In the Local Biodiversity Action Plan, six Priority Habitats from the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and two Habitats of Local Significance were chosen for specific action. Over the next five years, efforts will be focused on conserving and enhancing these selected priority habitats. It is important to note that many of these habitats also have multiple functions. For example, as well as having biodiversity benefits, protecting hedgerows can strengthen the character of the AONB and protect the historical dimension of the landscape.

4.11 As part of the work on the Borough's Town Centres Area Action Plan DPD[8], some additional 'green' assets have been identified, such as street trees and 'significant private green assets' (usually large back gardens)[9], which contribute in a biodiversity and landscape sense.

4.12 Figure 1 illustrates the location of green infrastructure assets within Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre, and similar maps for other areas of the Borough are available at Appendix 2.

8 This document will now be incorporated into the Site Allocations DPD
9 It should be noted that the Borough Council has no jurisdiction over private land

Figure 1 Green Infrastructure Assets in Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Centre



Heritage and Landscape

4.13 There are 25 Conservation Areas within the Borough, approximately 3,000 listed buildings, 10 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, 41 Historic Parks and Gardens, and many other sites featuring on the Kent Historic Environment Record and within Heritage Counts. The Borough also contains many archaeological features, such as Urban Archaeological Zones and Sites of Archaeological Interest. The Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation (2001) identified that much of the structure of the Kent landscape predates the 18th century, as it was not included within the Enclosure Acts and, that as a result, numerous ancient character elements remain within the landscape of the Borough. Lidar (Light Detection and Ranging)[10] data can also be used to determine historic environment patterns and information.

4.14 The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a medieval landscape of rolling hills and small, irregular fields, woods and hedges and covers areas of Kent, East Sussex and West Sussex. The AONB covers approximately 70% of the Borough, concentrated in the most southern

10 An optical remote sensing technology that measures properties of scattered light to find range and/or other information about a distant target

areas, washing over towns such as Cranbrook and Hawkhurst, and surrounding the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells. Due to the close proximity of the AONB to the major settlements, it is a popular destination for recreation, supporting a network of footpaths, cycle routes and bridleways.

4.15 The Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment (2002, updated 2011) identifies 19 separate character areas, each with key characteristics and landscape objectives, as well as opportunities to enhance the landscape and current constraints upon development. Additionally, the Borough's Landscape Character Assessment and Capacity Study (2009) assesses capacity for change in the landscape around the main settlements, as well as identifying appropriate mitigation measures.

4.16 The High Weald AONB Management Plan (2009 - 2014) also provides a wealth of information relevant to green infrastructure. The character of the High Weald AONB is the essence of its natural beauty, and consists of five key components, being geology, landform, water systems and climate; settlements; routeways; woodland; and field and heath, all of which are aspects of green infrastructure. The Management Plan sets out specific management objectives for each of these character components and can thus contribute towards enhancing the aims of green infrastructure policies and plans. As all local authorities within the High Weald AONB have adopted this plan, it can provide a useful basis for cross-border working, and should ensure that the policies and plans of neighbouring authorities complement one another.

4.17 It should be noted that the 2009-2014 AONB Management Plan is currently being reviewed with the proposed new document to go out to consultation in April 2014. Any changes will be incorporated within the final SPD.

4.18 The character components of the High Weald AONB also form the foundations of many other green infrastructure assets, such as historic routeways, Ancient Woodland and BAP habitats.

4.19 Approximately 16% of the Borough is recognised as Ancient Woodland, meaning that it has been wooded for hundreds of years and so has unique ecological and historical features. These sites also have high biodiversity value and therefore provide a valuable contribution towards the green infrastructure network. In addition, locally recognised assets include largely unspoilt areas of countryside and rural lanes. Hedgerows contribute greatly to biodiversity, as they not only form important habitats in their own right, but can also provide refuge and corridors for transient species.

Open Space and Access

4.20 The Borough Council's PPG17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study (2007) has found that the Borough contains a large amount of open space, including 1.32ha of parks, 37.40ha of natural and semi-natural green space and 0.21ha of informal open space per 1,000 people, as well as numerous outdoor playing pitches and courts. Calverley Grounds, Dunorlan Park, The Grove, Rusthall Common, Tunbridge Wells Common, Woodlands Park and Marshley Harbour Wood are some of the open spaces managed or funded by Kent County Council and the Borough Council. While PPG17 has now been revoked, this remains an important source of evidence for the Green Infrastructure Plan.

4.21 There are a number of walking and cycling routes within the Borough, including the National Cycle Route 18 and long distance walking routes (High Weald Landscape Trail and Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk). There are a limited number of bridleways and some limited riding areas, for example at Bedgebury Forest. Reflecting the location of the Borough, and in particular the position of Royal Tunbridge Wells at its south west corner, many footpaths and bridleways cross the county boundary

with East Sussex. A Historic Routeways Survey Pack is available from the High Weald AONB Management Unit and can be used to provide additional information on routes to supplement the information in the Borough Council's Rural Lanes Supplementary Planning Guidance (1998). This SPG, while somewhat dated, still provides a valuable source of useful information, particularly on historic routeways.

4.22 In addition to areas such as Tunbridge Wells, Rusthall and Southborough commons, which already carried public rights of access, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced a right of access on foot to designated areas mapped as Open Country and Registered Common land. Areas within the Borough over which the public have rights of access include village greens, the commons, Bedgebury Forest and Hemsted Forest.

4.23 Access to existing and proposed GI spaces needs to be inclusive, providing the widest possible access opportunities for all sections of the community. Community and access groups can be helpful in achieving the best outcomes for accessibility and should be involved in the very early stages of project planning.

Water Environment

4.24 The Borough's rivers and streams are key components of the green infrastructure network, as they provide unique habitats and settings, acting as linear linkages across the Borough that can, in a natural or semi-natural form, facilitate habitat migration. Rivers and watercourses can be enhanced to maximise these functions by, for example, establishing wide, semi-natural margins along at least one bank. The Borough's main river is the River Teise, which runs through Lamberhurst and then northwards past Horsmonden towards the Medway; other watercourses and streams include the Crane Brook, which runs into Cranbrook; and Tudeley Brook, which runs into Paddock Wood. River corridors are important rural assets, but are also particularly important in urban areas, where corridors can be constrained by development.

4.25 The water environment can also provide an important resource for sport and recreation. This can contribute to the enhanced health of residents and adds to the multi-functionality of the water environment as a green infrastructure asset.

4.26 Streams and watercourses can, however, also be a cause of flooding, which is already an issue in some parts of the Borough. The Borough-wide Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) (2007) identifies areas within Flood Risk Zone 3, most notably at Paddock Wood, Goudhurst and Lamberhurst. The Level 2 SFRA (2009) provides a more detailed assessment of Paddock Wood and surrounding areas and identifies areas to the north of the town that are situated in Flood Risk Zones 3a (high probability) and 3b (functional floodplain). Flooding can also arise as a result of surface water management problems. Green infrastructure has the potential to alleviate some of these forms of flooding through providing flood storage at times of flood, and the increased presence of permeable surfaces within green spaces can play a substantial role in minimising surface water run-off.

Other Assets

4.27 Approximately 22% of the Borough is Metropolitan Green Belt. While this is not a landscape designation, the NPPF encourages local authorities to plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt; for example, by providing access and opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation, or by retaining and enhancing landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity. The Green Belt consequently represents a valuable green infrastructure asset.

4.28 Urban features such as street trees, grass verges and green roofs can also fulfil green infrastructure functions, such as flood attenuation, reducing the 'heat island' effect[(11)] and acting as biodiversity 'stepping stones'.

Conclusion

4.29 A number of maps have been produced illustrating existing green infrastructure assets across the Borough. These are available at Appendix 2.

4.30 Green Infrastructure can take a variety of forms and fulfil a variety of functions, including:

- Biodiversity: ranging from large designated sites to habitats identified within Biodiversity Action Plans
- Landscape: designated features and other valuable landscape components
- Open space: amenity green space in urban and rural areas
- Rivers, streams and watercourses
- Public Rights of Way

4.31 The mapping of assets will allow for a greater understanding of what additional GI provision may be required. This will assist in identifying gaps in networks, fragmented habitats, or locations where ANGSt landscape and habitat networks and access routes should be protected, enhanced or sought.

11 temperatures in urban areas are often significantly higher than in surrounding rural areas, as urban areas tend to generate and retain heat

Chapter 5: Deficiencies and Opportunities

5.1 Green infrastructure planning not only aims to enhance the connectivity of open space across the Borough, but also to provide opportunities to alleviate current deficiencies. While the previous chapter summarised the Borough's existing green infrastructure assets, this chapter discusses some deficiencies in provision identified in previous studies and some broad indications of opportunities for improvement.

Biodiversity

5.2 The Biodiversity Action Plan habitats referred to in the previous chapter were selected because they are under immense pressure from development and land use changes. Although they are not current 'deficiencies', their identification provides an opportunity for enhancing biodiversity.

5.3 The South East Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) are the regional priority areas for restoration and creation of Biodiversity Action Plan habitats. There are two BOAs within the Borough that provide opportunities for creation or restoration of Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, and targets for these have been established by the Kent Biodiversity Action Partnership. A large part of the Borough falls within the High Weald Opportunity Area, and very small areas are within the Medway and Low Weald Grassland and Wetland Opportunity Area. The targets for the Medway and Low Weald areas are supported and considered within plans for green infrastructure, particularly within cross-boundary working, while the targets for the High Weald area are a key consideration and target of work.

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Targets

High Weald

- Restore, recreate and enhance woodland through active conservation management, particularly locally-unique gill woodlands, heathy woodlands and wood pasture. Restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland
- Secure the appropriate conservation management of all existing Lowland Meadows
- Pursue opportunities to create new species-rich neutral grassland where this will contribute to meeting the target (100ha should be in the Low Weald and High Weald, in blocks of 2ha or more), by 2015
- Reinforce the intricate matrix of habitats by restoring and recreating heathland, acid grassland and neutral grassland and reconnecting fragmented woodlands. In the Pembury area, at least 5ha of heathland should be restored and at least 15ha of heathland and acid grassland created by 2015. Opportunities should be taken for heathland or acid grassland restoration as part of woodland management, for example at Bedgebury Forest and Hemsted Forest. Additional opportunities for creation of acid grassland and heathland should be pursued where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating up to 145ha by 2015
- Pursue other opportunities to create new acid grassland and heathland where this will contribute to the county-wide target of, by 2015, up to 50ha in blocks of at least 1ha and no more than 500m from other existing or new semi-natural habitat
- Maintain and restore watercourses and maintain, restore and create ponds

Biodiversity Opportunity Area Targets

Medway & Low Weald Wetlands & Grasslands

- Pursue opportunities for creation of wider river floodplains with riparian corridors around natural drainage channels
- Pursue opportunities for the establishment, by 2020, of a new, landscape-scale, freshwater wetland complex, including fen, wet woodland, reedbed and wet grassland, in which successional processes are allowed to proceed. In this context, a 'landscape-scale' complex should be considered as extending over at least 1,000 hectares
- Secure the appropriate conservation management of all existing Lowland Meadows
- Pursue opportunities to create new species-rich neutral grassland, particularly the Marden Meadows SSSI and south of Sevenoaks, where this will contribute to meeting the target of creating, by 2015, 100ha in the Low Weald and High Weald, in blocks of 2ha or more
- Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement
- Continue to encourage the positive management, restoration and re-creation of hedgerows, particularly where this would reconnect other habitats or enhance the landscape, in particular where these have been removed due to agricultural intensification
- Improve the management of invasive species in and alongside watercourses
- Maintain, restore and recreate buffer ponds, particularly to establish networks of sites to support Great Crested Newts

5.4 It is also recognised that the additional development proposed in the Core Strategy could have indirect impacts on biodiversity and the use of open space for recreation. This could be particularly acute in Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough, where 75% of development will occur. In preparing its Site Allocations DPD, the Borough Council has considered the potential impact of each site allocation on Local Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodland and Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, with a view to determining whether site-specific contributions may be required as part of the development of allocated sites, and has identified and promoted opportunities to enhance or provide green infrastructure links within specific developments. Where new development occurs, the Borough Council will seek mitigation of off-site impacts resulting from recreational pressure on existing green infrastructure sites, where practical.

5.5 The Borough Council is committed to working with Wealden District Council on any cross-boundary Management Plan for Ashdown Forest, which is situated within Wealden District. It is also anticipated that some areas of accessible natural or semi-natural green space could be created in and around Royal Tunbridge Wells to alleviate pressure on Ashdown Forest. It is anticipated that the provision of green infrastructure within new developments, new areas of natural or semi-natural greenspace, and enhanced linkages across the Borough in general, can provide opportunities for biodiversity enhancement.

5.6 Environmental projects undertaken by outside agencies will also contribute to the aims of green infrastructure planning. For example, Natural England's Environmental Stewardship scheme is an agri-environment scheme that provides funding to farmers and land managers to deliver effective environmental land management. Nationally, over 50% of agricultural land is now covered by this scheme. The different levels of stewardship provide opportunities for conserving, enhancing and promoting the countryside by: conserving biodiversity; ensuring land retains its traditional character; protecting historic features and natural resources; and providing opportunities for people to visit and learn about the countryside. This will contribute a great deal towards the aims of green infrastructure planning. The Kent High Weald Partnership has also been working on the creation of orchards, known

as Community Orchards. Kent Wildlife Trust is pursuing a wider project on living landscapes in and around the Borough. The Borough Council is also investigating the potential for a partnership to conserve and enhance the woodland areas around Pembury.

Landscape

5.7 The Landscape Character Assessment and Capacity Study (2009) identified some areas of poor landscape quality within the Borough, such as parts of Barnett's Wood and Knight's Park in Royal Tunbridge Wells, which have become degraded. It also identified other opportunities for strengthening landscape characteristics. Green infrastructure provision could offer an opportunity to make these improvements.

Open Space and Access

5.8 Natural England's Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) recommends that everyone should live within 300 metres of a 'neighbourhood' natural or semi-natural greenspace of at least 2ha, within 2km of a 'district' greenspace of at least 20ha, within 5km of a 'county' greenspace of at least 100ha, and within 10km of a 'sub-regional' greenspace of at least 500ha. It also recommends that at least 1ha of Local Nature Reserve should be provided per 1,000 population, while the National Playing Fields Association (now Fields in Trust) recommends 2.4ha of play and recreation space per 1,000 population. These standards are widely recognised and used.

5.9 A study by the High Weald AONB Unit, An Analysis of Accessible Natural Greenspace (ANGST) provision in the South East(2007), assesses the level of open space available to households in comparison to the ANGSt standards[(12)]. This found that, within Tunbridge Wells Borough, 24% of households were within 300m of a space of 2ha, 84% were within 2km of a space of 20ha, 93% were within 5km of a space of 100ha, 37% were within 10km of a space of 500ha, and 9% met all of the ANGSt requirements. 3% of households in the Borough met none of the ANGSt standards.

5.10 The Borough Council's PPG17 Sport, Recreation and Open Space Study (2006) identifies both quantitative and qualitative deficiencies in open space provision across the Borough. For example, the first of the ANGSt requirements is not met in some parts of Brenchley, Hawkhurst, Horsmonden and Royal Tunbridge Wells, where households lack access to neighbourhood-scale natural or semi-natural greenspace within 300m, and the quality of natural and semi-natural greenspaces across the Borough, assessed against a number of criteria, is generally regarded as being only average. It also finds the quantity of informal open space to be inadequate (0.21ha per 1,000 population, compared to a recommended standard of 0.5ha) and that quality ratings for open space and recreation facilities are generally lower for open spaces outside Royal Tunbridge Wells.

5.11 While these deficiencies present opportunities to enhance provision in these areas, the Borough also contains many rural areas with attractive accessible greenspaces, such as Bedgebury Pinetum, Tunbridge Wells Common and a good network of public footpaths (although it is recognised that there is a limited network of bridleways). The PPG17 Study also found that the amount of accessible natural and semi-natural greenspace across the Borough as a whole represents an average of 37.40ha per 1,000 population, significantly higher than the minimum of 2ha recommended by Natural England. According to the Borough Council's Appropriate Assessment (2009), if levels of provision remain above the recommended standard following the provision of an additional 6,000 homes in the 2006-2026 period, as set out in the Borough Council's Core Strategy, then the designation of additional recreational green space within the Borough would not be necessary.

12 The study used Ordnance Survey Address Point data to calculate distances from individual households to greenspaces of each scale

5.12 As part of the work for the Site Allocations DPD, the Borough Council appointed consultants to undertake additional work (Habitat Regulations Assessment March 2013) to consider impact of the growth proposals envisaged in the Core Strategy and specific sites. This did not raise any additional issues other than the need for continued assessment on the impact of proposals within the DPD on the Ashdown Forest.

5.13 The PPG17 Study also acknowledges that there are comparatively few bridleways in the Borough and connections between bridleways and/or riding areas are poor. Potential routes for all users could be introduced between Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough and Pembury, along the River Teise, and by connecting residential areas with tourism and recreation areas (for example, Royal Tunbridge Wells to Scotney Castle). Within the main urban area, linkages could be improved between Cumberland Way and the Pantiles, between the Commons and green areas in Royal Tunbridge Wells, and between the Victorian residential parks (Calverley, Camden, Nevill and Broadwater Down).

5.14 The Kent Countryside Access Improvement Plan evaluates the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public. It acknowledges some opportunities within the Borough for enhancing commuter links; new access routes, and use of redundant sections of the A21 associated with future widening; and links from Royal Tunbridge Wells to tourist attractions. Although the A21 scheme has been delayed as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review in 2010, it progressed through the Public Inquiry stage in May 2013 and is considered to be achievable during the lifetime of this GI Plan, which covers the period up to 2026. The proportion of public rights of way accessible to equestrians, whether riders or carriage drivers, is low when compared to the rest of Kent or the national picture and routes such as these are often disjointed. Improving the number of routes, their accessibility and connectivity for equestrians can support many GI objectives and will also increase accessibility for cyclists.

Analysis of access to open space

5.15 During the preparation of this Plan, additional analysis of access to open space and other accessible natural green space (based on the ANGSt standards) has been carried out. The full results of this analysis are available at Appendix 3. However, the main points are:

- access to open space is good across the Borough as a whole. The north and the north east parts of the Borough have particularly good coverage; however, there are a few pockets of the Borough with limited access to Areas of Important Open Space. Goudhurst has particularly poor access to these areas, as does Benenden parish and the north of Lamberhurst parish
- access to parks is particularly good in the north western and northern parts of the Borough. Access to parks in the northern part of Goudhurst parish and Benenden parish is more limited
- access to natural and semi-natural open space is good across the whole of the Borough
- access to allotments is good in the north west and the east of the Borough. The south west and the east of the Borough have poor access to allotments, particularly as there are none in Frittenden, Benenden or Sandhurst

Water Environment

5.16 Tunbridge Wells Borough sits within both the South East and Thames River Basin Management Plan (2009) areas and consequently both Management Plans are relevant. They provide assessments of the current ecological and biological status of the river basins and set out a series of actions for improvement, with the aim of meeting the objectives of the Water Framework Directive to restore all waters to good status by 2015.

5.17 In the Thames River Basin District, 23% of surface waters are classified as being of good or better ecological status or potential, and 35% of groundwater bodies are of good quantitative status. In the South East River Basin District, 19% of surface waters are classified as being of good ecological status or potential and 33% of groundwater bodies are of good overall status. Both River Basin Management Plans set targets for improvements to water sources across the river basin areas:

- Within the South East area, in combination, 23% of all water bodies will be at good status by 2015 and at least 47% of assessed surface waters will be at good or better biological status by 2015
- In the Thames area, 25% of all water bodies will be at good or better status by 2015 and at least 30% of assessed surface waters will be at good or better biological status by 2015

5.18 The aims of the River Basin Management Plans and of green infrastructure planning are mutually reinforcing. Improving the quality of rivers and other water bodies contributes to the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, one of the key functions of green infrastructure, and river corridors can also act as green infrastructure corridors and provide pedestrian, cycling and equestrian links and opportunities for recreation. Developing green infrastructure networks can in turn help to reduce water pollution, thus contributing towards meeting targets for water quality.

5.19 Where opportunities arise, enhancement of river corridors will be undertaken, which could include re-naturalisation of river corridors through establishing wide, semi-natural margins along at least one bank and 'daylighting' (i.e. removing defunct culverts) or the removal of redundant structures. Re-naturalisation can also have flood risk and biodiversity benefits.

5.20 The River Medway Catchment Flood Management Plan (2009) also notes that the provision of flood storage space in the Upper Medway catchment provides the opportunity for biodiversity and habitat creation and enhancement. Information is not, however, currently readily available by local authority area.

Other

5.21 As identified in the Borough Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Levels 1 and 2 (2007 and 2009), there are some problem areas within the Borough in terms of flood zones, in particular in Paddock Wood and Lamberhurst. Green infrastructure can provide opportunities to reduce flooding by providing spaces to collect flood water, known as flood attenuation zones, or by allowing rainwater to soak away gradually rather than gather on impermeable surfaces, thus moderating the volume of water arriving in drainage systems.

5.22 Paddock Wood was identified within the SFRA Level 2 as an 'area of critical drainage' and consequently a Surface Water Management Plan (SWMP) for the area has been produced. The aim of the SWMP, with regard to contributing towards green infrastructure, is to identify suitable areas within Paddock Wood in which appropriate sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) can be implemented to help mitigate the risk of surface water flooding.

5.23 A number of plans have been produced that illustrate green infrastructure deficiencies and opportunities across the Borough. These are available at Appendix 3.

Chapter 6: Proposals

Green Infrastructure in new developments

6.1 Providing green infrastructure as an integral part of new development is considered to be beneficial in many ways. Policies in Development Plan Documents can encourage the provision of green infrastructure assets in developments of certain types and scales, and also ensure the protection of existing assets. Carefully designed green infrastructure in new developments can also provide links to existing green infrastructure assets.

6.2 Incorporating green infrastructure into the design at the earliest stage of a development allows the consideration of how it can complement and relate to existing green infrastructure and enhance multi-functionality. Using green infrastructure principles in design can not only maximise the provision of open space forms of green infrastructure, but can also influence the massing, heights and orientation of buildings and maximise the use of green roofs. Green infrastructure provision should be in proportion to the size and scale of the development. For small developments, green infrastructure could include the provision of bird boxes and sustainable design standards. For larger sites, green infrastructure networks should be considered as a key element of the vision, design and layout and should include as many functions as possible. Opportunities to provide green infrastructure links within larger allocated sites have been identified in the Site Allocations DPD, and adopted policies set out a general requirement for the provision of green infrastructure in new developments. To be successful it is important that the long term management of GI provision and improvements that arise from developments must be secured and properly financed through appropriate conditions and legal agreements. Landscape character should be used to inform appropriate GI; for example, location and pattern, species and management regime.

6.3 The provision of green infrastructure within developments can also enhance areas that currently have limited access to open space; therefore particular emphasis could be placed upon green infrastructure provision as part of development in areas with open space deficiencies (as identified in the previous chapter), such as parts of Royal Tunbridge Wells, Brenchley, Hawkhurst and Horsmonden.

6.4 Green infrastructure assets exist on many different scales, ranging from Bedgebury Forest to much smaller parcels of land such as roadside green spaces, all of which contribute to the biodiversity and heritage value of the Borough. Providing or enhancing smaller assets such as trees and hedgerows also helps to deliver the aims of green infrastructure planning and provides important biodiversity links. However, roadside verge management and tree and hedge planting should take account of the need to avoid displacing vulnerable road users into the path of motor traffic. The Tree Strategy will look at the range of tree cover in both private and public ownership, setting a standard of how it can best be managed in a sustainable and holistic way to contribute to meeting the aims of green infrastructure planning.

Specific Spatial Proposals

6.5 This section sets out the specific spatial proposals that will form the focus of the Council's efforts in terms of creating green infrastructure opportunities and linkages across the Borough. Some are current projects and others can be delivered alongside new development during the Core Strategy period. Other proposals are more aspirational and will need a greater commitment from the Council and other stakeholders to be brought to fruition. Those adjacent to and/or indicated to extend beyond the Borough boundary will require the support, cooperation and partnership working with the adjacent authority.

6.6 These proposals have been developed to meet the deficiencies identified within this document and also to provide a wide range of green infrastructure functions. The proposals have been consulted upon and, with some amendments, it has been decided to pursue all of them, although through different project groups. Proposal 8 has been added following consultation in August 2011 to meet issues identified in the Surface Water Management Plan (2011) for Paddock Wood.

6.7 The green infrastructure functions to which each proposal could potentially contribute are summarised at the end of this chapter in Table 3.

Proposal 1: Extension of the Forest Ridge Project around Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough and Pembury

Extension of the Forest Ridge Project at Broadwater Warren, Hargate Forest, Cinderhill and Tudeley Woods.

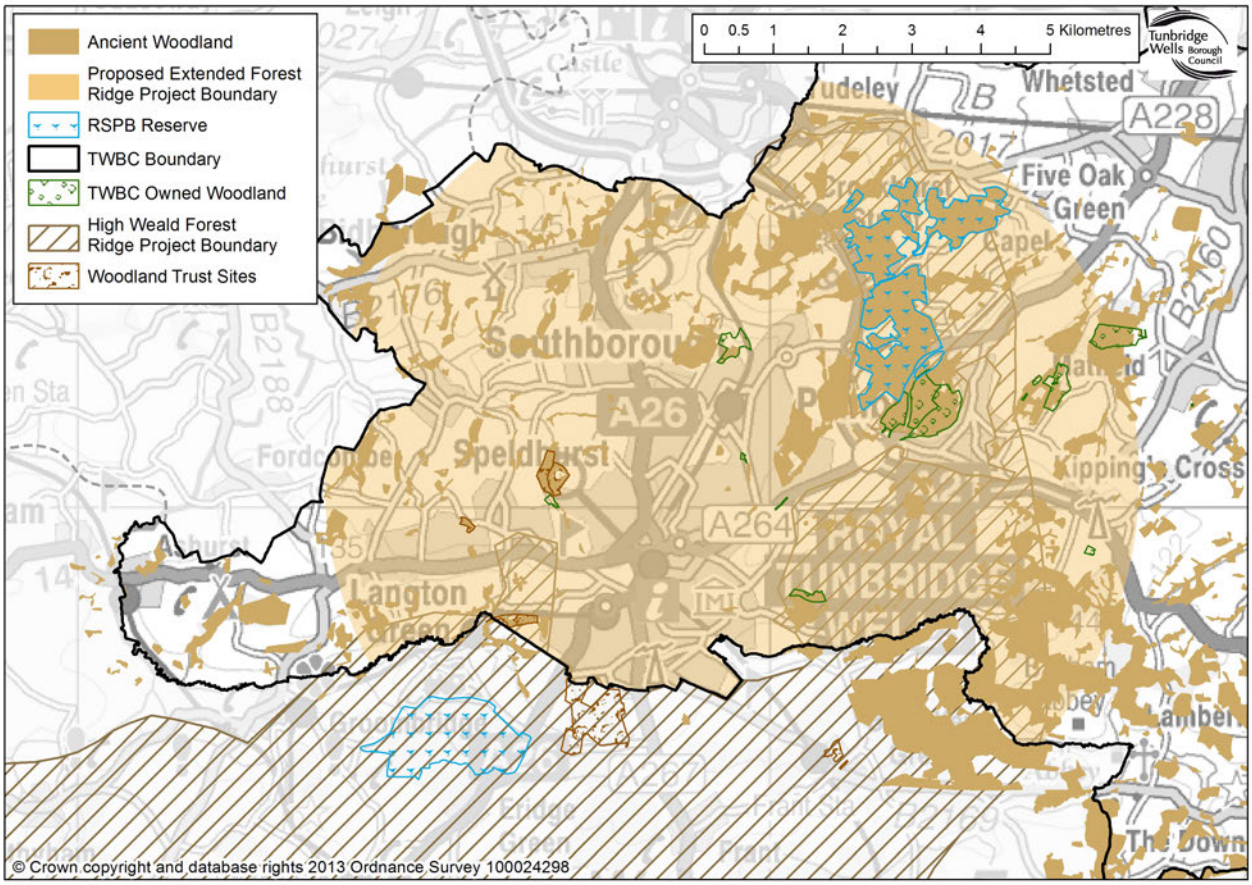
Justification

6.8 This proposal has the potential to fulfil a number of green infrastructure functions, as shown in Table 3. The proposal has been developed because it brings together a number of the aims of green infrastructure, continues a current successful project and meets a number of the key deficiencies identified within this document. There may also be a number of opportunities associated with some development sites on the periphery of Royal Tunbridge Wells. These may have the opportunity to provide enhanced green infrastructure assets and to provide links between existing assets.

6.9 The proposal meets the deficiencies set out in this document by enhancing the High Weald Biodiversity Opportunity Area objectives and providing some alternative accessible natural and semi-natural open space, especially for the eastern parts of Royal Tunbridge Wells, which have been identified as areas of particular deficiency. This may also help to alleviate some of the recreational pressure on Ashdown Forest and to enhance some areas of poor landscape quality at Barnett's Wood and Knight's Park, which were identified within the Landscape Character Assessment and Capacity Study (2009).

6.10 The proposal also has the potential to meet the two objectives set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan for the maintenance of routeways. The first objective aims to maintain routeway boundaries that form a part of the habitat mosaic of the High Weald, and the second aims to improve the condition and connectivity of habitats along routeways for wildlife.

Map 1 Extent of Forest Ridge Project



Project details

6.11 The Weald Forest Ridge Project secured a £2 million grant to implement a landscape-scale project to widen access to, and conservation of, the Weald Forest Ridge's special landscape, cultural and historic features by involving local people and organisations. The project was focused on the highest ridge within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a 328sq km area stretching from Horsham to Royal Tunbridge Wells.

6.12 Map 1 shows the extent of the project, which wraps around the southern and eastern edges of Royal Tunbridge Wells, extending northward towards Tonbridge and including Pembury. The project, which started in January 2009, came to an end in December 2011. The aim of enabling people to learn about, enjoy and help to preserve the unique heritage of the area fits well with the objectives of green infrastructure and leaves a legacy of sites, skills and interested people on which we can build.

6.13 The landscape around Royal Tunbridge Wells is generally described as Wooded Farmland and Forested Plateau, with a high proportion of Ancient Woodland, rich in cultural and wildlife interest. Much of the land falls within the High Weald Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) and is consequently recognised as an area in which Kent Biodiversity Action Plan targets should be focused.

6.14 There is already considerable activity in and around Royal Tunbridge Wells, on sites within the Borough and in the adjoining Wealden District, all of which is contributing towards the targets of the BOA, but also provides improved access and opportunities for recreation and involvement for local residents, including those of Royal Tunbridge Wells. Some sites are undergoing radical programmes of enhancement and restoration, while others are already under long-term management plans. These include RSPB sites (Broadwater Warren and Tudeley Woods), Tunbridge Wells Borough Council sites (Marshley Harbour Wood, Snipe Wood, High Wood, Barnett's Wood and Reynolds

Lane), Woodland Trust sites (Hargate Forest, Friezeland Wood and Nellington Wood) and other sites (Common Land at Royal Tunbridge Wells, Rusthall and Southborough) managed by the Commons Conservators and Southborough Town Council.

6.15 There is also the prospect of significant change in the area arising from development on Rural Fringe or other greenfield sites and the A21 improvement works, which offer prospects for wider landscape and access improvements, as well as the possibility of new sites being brought into conservation management, such as Sherwood Lake and Woodlands. The Site Allocations DPD provides more detail on the proposed allocation of Rural Fringe sites for development. The improvements to the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury were approved by the Secretary of State in May 2014 and a contractor was appointed in July 2014. At that time completion was anticipated during 2017.

6.16 Building on the success of the High Weald Forest Ridge Project and the current activities and opportunities in the area, the main objectives of this option are primarily to improve habitat management and connectivity, to improve access to the landscape around Royal Tunbridge Wells for exercise and recreation, and to increase opportunities for people to learn about their local environment and to participate in conservation activities. This will strengthen the landscape character and improve the resilience of the landscape and biodiversity against future development pressures and climate change. It will also maximise the health and recreational benefits for residents and may reduce the need for travel to other more accessible, or currently more attractive, locations.

6.17 The woodlands are also a valuable economic resource, providing wood fuel, with local sites already providing the wood chips to fuel the boilers of the new Tunbridge Wells Hospital at Pembury. The project should also consider the linkages between accessible sites.

6.18 There are already active partnerships in operation, but bringing them together under a more focused project could have many benefits, including shared resources and coordinated actions. Existing and potential partners include the Kent High Weald Partnership, the High Weald AONB Unit, the RSPB, Kent Wildlife Trust, Sussex Wildlife Trust, Kent County Council, the Woodland Trust, South East Water, Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust, Southborough Town Council and the Manor of Rusthall. Implementation will therefore be greatly enhanced by establishing a project partnership. This could be hosted by the Council or one of the project partners, but a degree of independence may make the partnership more successful in securing wider grant opportunities and community participation.

6.19 The relationship of the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells with the Borough and County boundaries limits the possibilities of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to extend this project around the southern edge of the town, which falls within Wealden District. Wealden District Council may wish to consider through their own studies whether this proposal is a priority for them and if and how they may wish to support it and any partnership(s) that may arise to implement it.

Proposal 2: High Weald/Low Weald Links

Links between the High Weald and the Low Weald character areas.

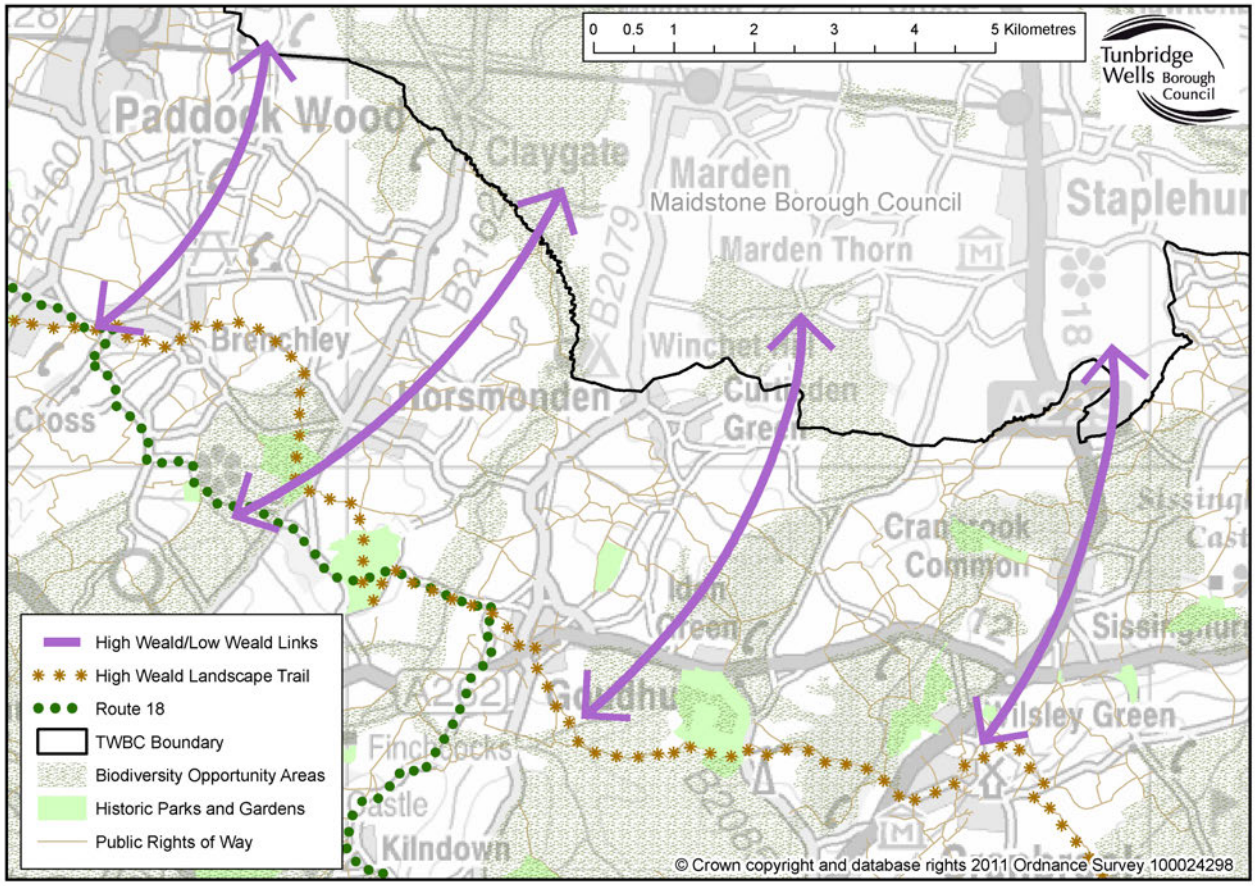
Justification

6.20 This proposal has the potential to fulfil a number of functions of green infrastructure, as shown in Table 3. It will involve improving links and signage across existing droveways to enhance sustainable transport routes, which in turn creates access opportunities and appreciation of the landscape and environment.

6.21 The proposal can also help achieve the objectives for maintaining routeways, such as droveways, as set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan. It has the potential to increase protection for, and awareness of, the networks of historic routeways, particularly within the Low Weald.

6.22 This proposal has been developed because there is a lack of suitable, available routes for recreation or access across the Low Weald. This has been widely recognised by the Council for a number of years, and has also been identified in both the Borough's PPG17 Study (2006) and Kent County Council's Countryside Access Improvement Plan (2007). Although the parts of the Low Weald within the Borough are not designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the landscape is still of high value and should be protected. This proposal has the potential to enhance enjoyment of this area and to protect it from harm. The old droveways can be protected from inappropriate development, which could harm their rural character, and can also be enhanced through the signage and promotion of opportunities.

Map 2 High Weald/Low Weald Links



Project details

6.23 The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, being a nationally important landscape with a strong sense of identity, has many attractions and is a natural focus for countryside activities for residents and tourists alike. The Low Weald landscape is often perceived as being of lesser quality or value than the High Weald and consequently less interesting and of less importance. However, the Low Weald landscape also has much to offer and is rich in historic features and wildlife, with a good network of Public Rights of Way. The European Landscape Convention recognises the importance of all landscapes and the need to protect and enhance their unique character.

6.24 The High Weald and Low Weald landscapes do merge into one another and have a pleasing contrasting character. There is a strong historical relationship between the two, based on the exploitation of the natural resources of the High Weald for pannage, timber, iron and charcoal that

has resulted in a north-south pattern of historical routeways, including Roman roads, ironways and drove roads. Some of these historical routeways have become busy roads, but many are narrow rural lanes, footpaths and bridleways that are also important for their visual amenity and wildlife.

6.25 Protecting and enhancing these routeways so that their heritage, amenity and wildlife value are secured can be done in tandem with improving access, to encourage people to explore these landscapes. These should lead to a greater appreciation of the Low Weald landscape and greater recognition of its value as a resource for the community and visitors. Improving links between the High and Low Weald may encourage people to explore new areas, taking visitor pressure off some High Weald landscapes, and may also reduce the need to travel to more accessible places. This proposal would also complement Proposal 6: The High Weald Transition Zone.

6.26 It is understood that Maidstone Borough Council is considering a similar green infrastructure proposal, and it is a natural partner for such a project in any event. Other potential partners include Kent High Weald Partnership, High Weald AONB Unit, KCC Highways, Kent Wildlife Trust, Kent County Council, Parish Councils, Maidstone Borough Council, Sevenoaks District Council and Ashford Borough Council.

Proposal 3: Teise to Medway River Corridors

Enhancing the quality of the waterway and increasing opportunities for access.

Justification

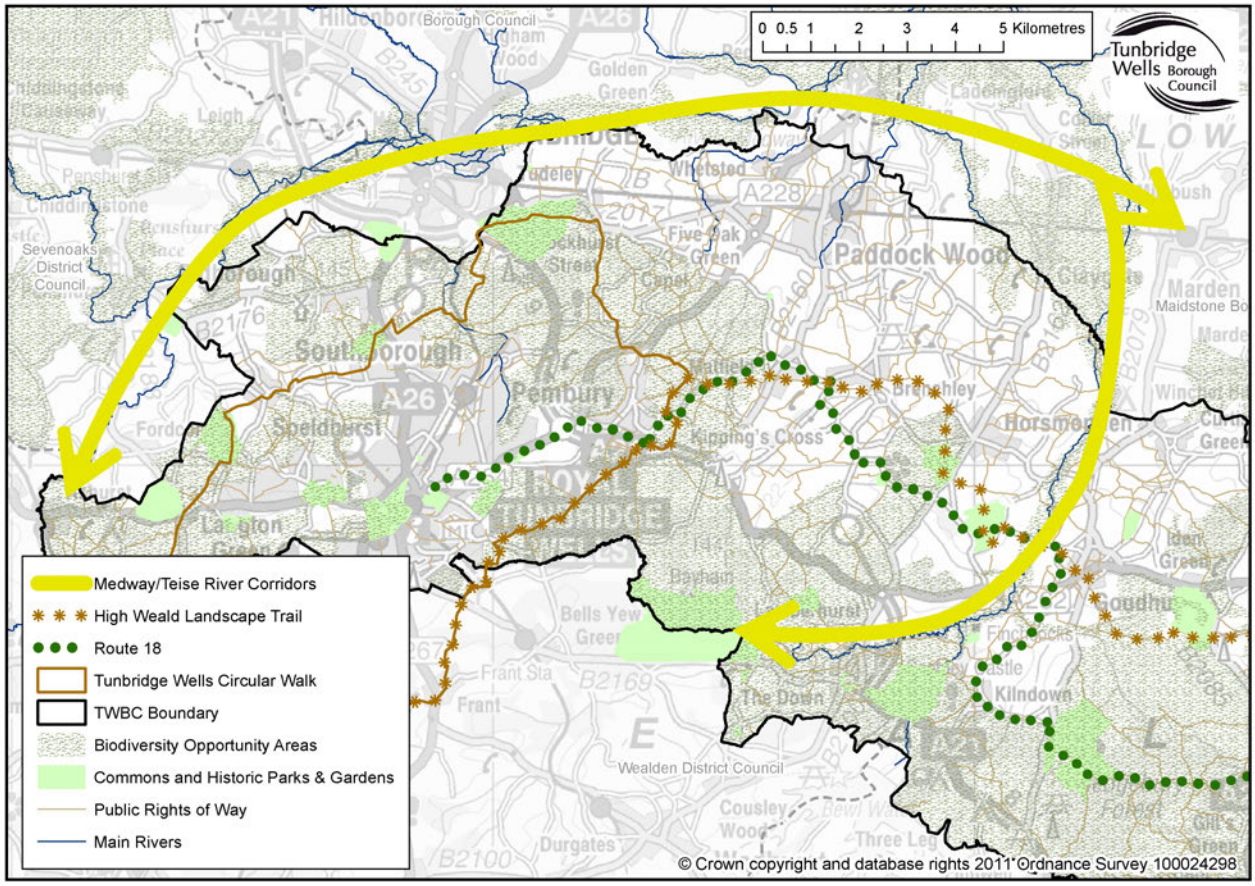
6.27 This proposal has been developed not only to enhance the water environment, but also to continue the approach of adjoining boroughs such as Tonbridge & Malling and Maidstone. This will provide a strategic approach to green infrastructure. It meets the deficiencies set out within this document by meeting some of the objectives of the River Basin Management Plan, such as improvement of water quality. It will also enhance access, meeting aims of the Kent Countryside Access Improvement Plan. It can also meet some of the BOA targets set out in Chapter 5 of this document, including improving the management of invasive species in, and alongside, watercourses.

6.28 It is anticipated that this proposal can help meet the objectives set out in the High Weald AONB Management Plan for routeways and to reinforce the vision for the character component of geology, landform, water systems and climate. For example, it has the potential to improve the condition and connectivity of habitats along routeways for wildlife and to improve pedestrian access to the river corridors. Further still, appropriate land management adjacent to the river corridors can improve water quality.

6.29 This proposal has the potential to fulfil a number of the functions of green infrastructure identified earlier in this document. It will enhance access to open spaces, the landscape and the countryside, through providing access to the watercourse. This will also enhance biodiversity within, and alongside, the watercourse, and enhance water quality which, in turn, has positive impacts on the environment.

6.30 All such proposals must, of course, take account of flood risk and indeed many improvements of river corridors for green infrastructure objectives will also have positive benefits for flood risk.

Map 3 Teise to Medway River Corridors



Project details

6.31 River corridors are a natural routeway for people and wildlife, providing significant landscape interest and recreation opportunities. The Rivers Teise and Medway run to the north of the Borough and flow southwards into the Borough to the east and west. This proposal would enhance the River Corridors, contributing to the Water Framework Directive objectives, as well as creating important routes and linkages.

6.32 In terms of rights of way and access to waterways, many of the Borough's footpaths and bridle paths run adjacent to, or near to, the rivers, providing access to the rivers for recreation. However, in a few areas around Ashurst, Goudhurst and Lamberhurst there are no rights of way near to the rivers. These gaps in provision can be addressed to create additional access to the river corridor.[13]

6.33 Another aim of this proposal will be to improve the land management adjacent to the river corridors. Potential types of habitats to be created include ghyll streams and woodland, lowland meadows and other riparian habitats. This should have a positive effect on water quality and help to meet the aims and objectives of the River Basin Management Plans[14]. The Water Framework Directive requires that there should be no deterioration of the quality of water bodies and that they are classified as having ‘good ecological status’ or ‘good ecological potential’ by 2015. The River Basin Management Plans identify that all the watercourses within the Borough are currently classed as having 'moderate ecological status'. While they do not have significant problems in terms of water quality, there is still the potential for enhancement alongside the requirement for no deterioration.

13 N.B. Undisturbed areas of the river corridors are also important for wildlife and angling, so will also be considered.

14 The Borough falls within both the Thames and the South East River Basin Management Plan areas

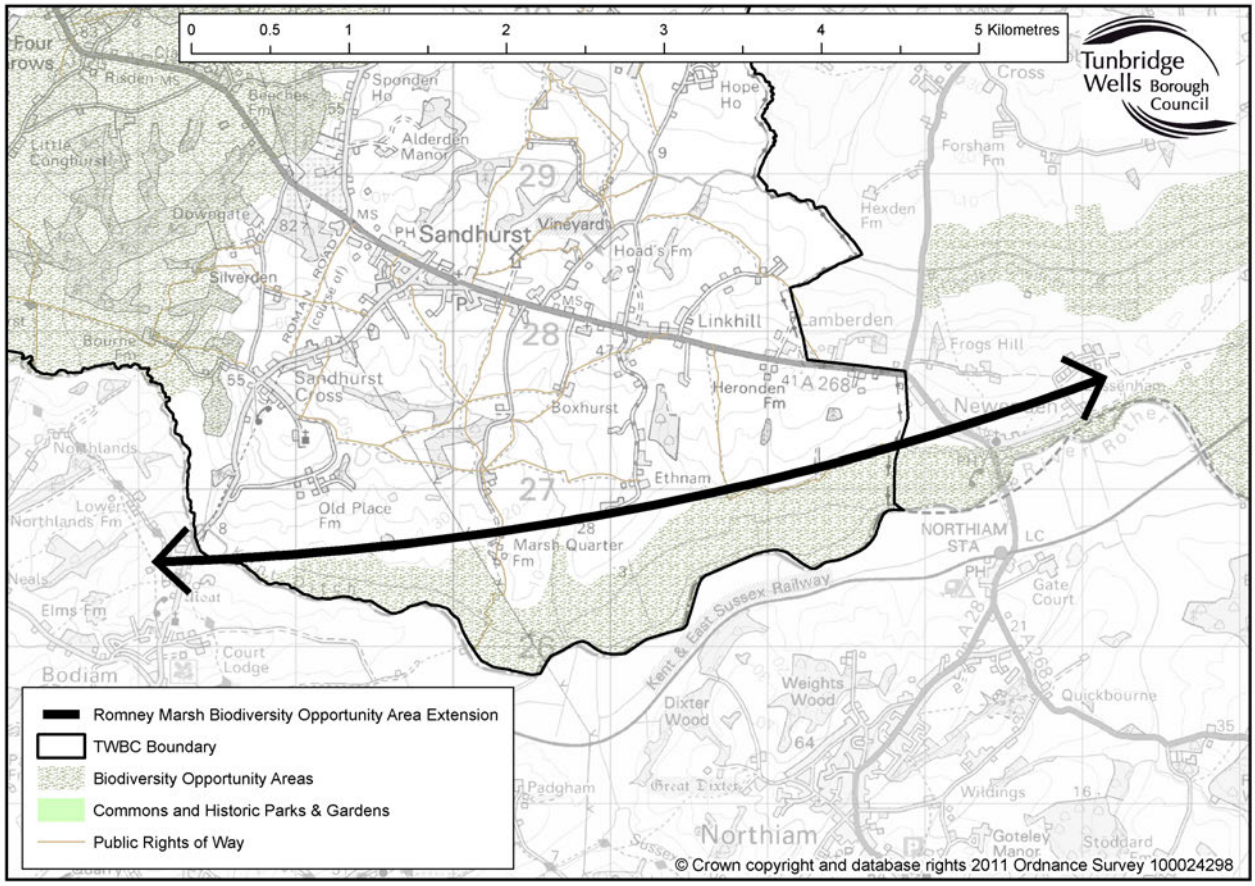
6.34 The enhancement of routeways and improvements to the environmental quality will result in biodiversity and access improvements linking into adjacent boroughs. Good quality routes can also contribute to the recreational and tourism offer of the Borough and provide vital links between areas.

6.35 This proposal complements the work of adjoining boroughs, in particular Tonbridge & Malling and Maidstone Borough Councils. The Environment Agency will also be working towards achieving Water Framework objectives. The Borough Council will work with these authorities to enhance access through the delivery of additional routes alongside the waterways and improve their water quality.

Proposal 4: Extension of Romney Marsh Biodiversity Opportunity Area

To support the Romney Marsh Biodiversity Opportunity Area for habitat enhancement, restoration and recreation.

Map 4 Extension of Romney Marsh Biodiversity Opportunity Area



Justification

6.36 In the very south east corner of the Borough, to the south east of Sandhurst, a short section of the Borough boundary is formed by the River Rother, which marks the boundary with Rother District Council. The River Rother is part of the large Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) and is recognised as an area in which Kent Biodiversity Action Plan targets should be focused.

6.37 The aim of this proposal is to work with, and support, Rother District Council and other organisations in extending and implementing the Romney Marsh BOA. Partnership work should be carried out between Rother District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and the Kent Wildlife

Trust. The proposal has been developed to enhance biodiversity in this corner of the Borough and to provide a strategic green infrastructure planning option. It will help to meet the BOA targets for the Romney Marsh BOA, including:

1. Protect, manage and enhance existing habitats and designated sites

2. Identify opportunities to restore, recreate and enhance grazing marsh and to restore or recreate fen, swamp and other natural wetland habitats

3. Pursue opportunities to enhance or recreate acid grassland on suitable soils where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating up to 145ha by 2015

4. Pursue opportunities for creation of species-rich neutral grassland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating 250ha of new lowland meadow in blocks of at least 2ha by 2015

5. Provide guidelines on best practice for managing ditches to maximise biodiversity, while retaining their effective water management function

6.38 This proposal has the potential to fulfil a number of the functions of green infrastructure. It will have a multitude of biodiversity benefits, but also the ability to combat climate change.

Proposal 5: Enhancement of links between key tourist attractions and settlements

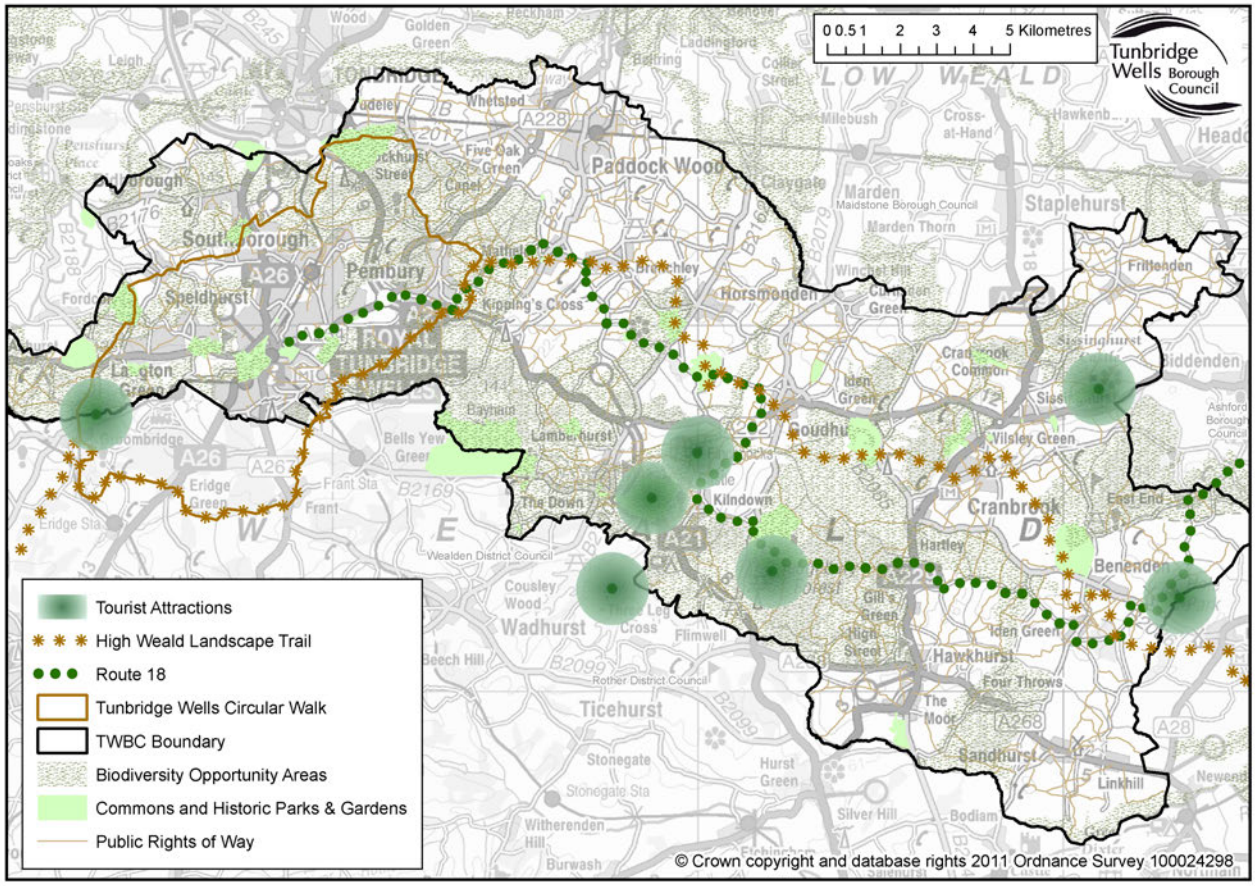
Improvement of links from the Borough's key centres, including Royal Tunbridge Wells, Cranbrook and Hawkhurst to key tourist attractions, for example Bedgebury Pinetum and Bewl Water.

Justification

6.39 The Borough Council's PPG17 Study and the Kent Countryside Access Improvement Plan identified a need for pedestrian, cycle and equestrian route enhancement in the Borough. The PPG17 Study specifically identifies the need for links between the main settlements and tourist attractions, such as Bedgebury Pinetum and Bewl Water. The project can also address locally identified deficiencies in connectivity between urban areas and green spaces such as links between the town and Tunbridge Wells and Rusthall Common.

6.40 While the Borough benefits from the Sustrans Route 18 cycle route and a good network of footpaths, connectivity is not always ideal and some of these routes are not attractive for all user groups. The aim of this proposal will be to increase connectivity and increase provision of more accessible and safer off-road routes for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians between settlements and tourist attractions.

Map 5 Key Tourist Attractions



Project details

6.41 The Borough Council will work with Kent County Council, major tourist attractions, Tourism South East, Visit Kent, landowners and other stakeholders to identify and increase the opportunities for such linkages across the Borough. This will involve assessing potential routes. This proposal also complements the aims of Proposals 3 and 7. These three proposals work together to integrate existing and proposed accessible green infrastructure.

6.42 This proposal has been developed to address the deficiencies in footpath and bridlepath links identified in the Kent Countryside Access Improvement Plan and the PPG17 Study. The proposal aims to meet these deficiencies by providing links between the important settlements and key tourist attractions. It also has the potential to fulfil a number of the functions of green infrastructure. It will aid appreciation of the landscape and cultural heritage, enhance recreational opportunities and improve access.

Proposal 6: High Weald Transition Zone - strengthening National Character Area

Protect, enhance and restore the landscape character of the High Weald National Character Area outside of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Justification

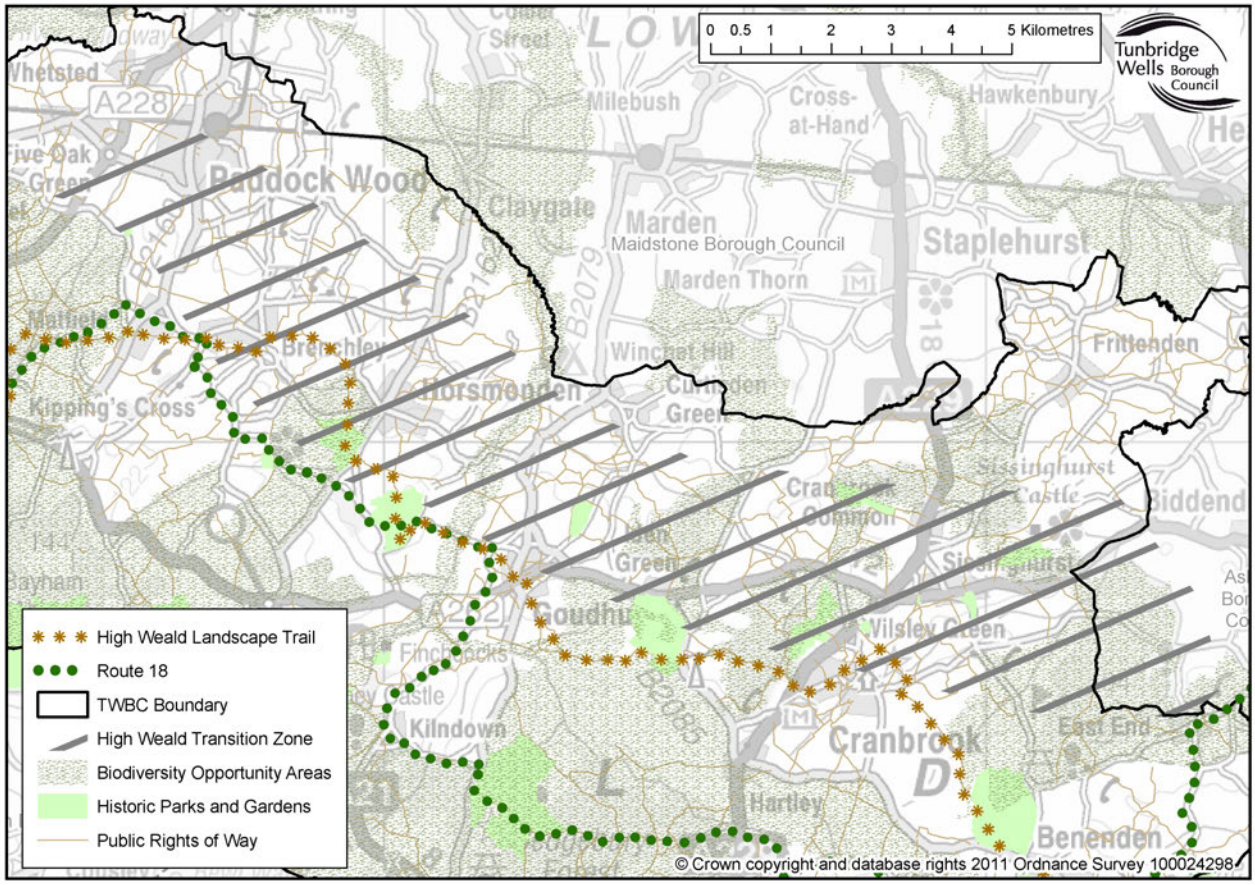
6.43 The boundary of the designated High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) runs across the northern part of the Borough, wrapping around Royal Tunbridge Wells, and covers around 70% of the total area of the Borough. The boundary to the High Weald AONB was set when

the area was designated in 1980 and no changes to this boundary are proposed or likely to be enacted for the foreseeable future. The High Weald Joint Advisory Committee produces a Management Plan for the area.

6.44 The High Weald is also one of 159 National Character Areas, areas defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity and cultural and economic activity, within England. The Natural England National Character Area Profile 122: High Weald (2013) identifies the High Weald National Character area as covering most of Tunbridge Wells Borough, extending further north than the High Weald AONB boundary, close to the line of the former High Weald Special Landscape Area.

6.45 The aim of this proposal is to protect, enhance and restore the landscape character of the part of the High Weald National Character Area that lies outside the High Weald AONB. Strengthening the landscape in this area will help protect the character and natural beauty of the High Weald AONB. This will complement Proposal 2 above.

Map 6 High Weald Transition Zone



Project details

6.46 The aims of this proposal can be supported by the following partners: Kent High Weald Partnership; High Weald AONB Unit; Natural England; Parish Councils; private landowners; Ashford Borough Council; Maidstone Borough Council; Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council; and Sevenoaks District Council.

6.47 This proposal is likely to be a long-term, low impact project working with existing partners, landowners and adjoining authorities as and when opportunities arise. Much can be achieved through the application of the principles of the High Weald AONB Management Plan and the Council's Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment, through landowner advice or planning decisions, but a

project of awareness raising with Parish Councils and landowners would be a first step. There may be opportunities to take this proposal forward as part of a future review of the Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment and to work with Natural England on a larger scale landscape project.

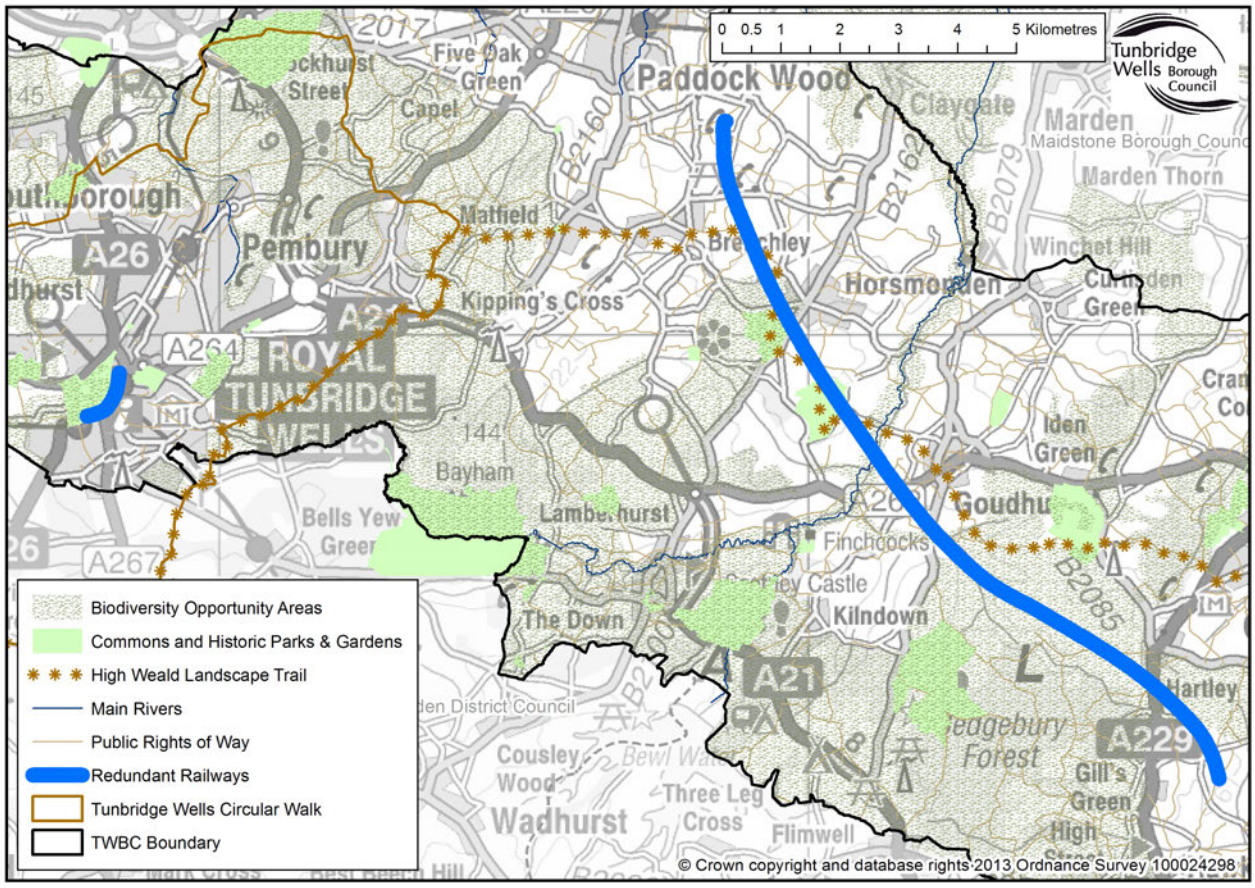
6.48 This proposal seeks to enhance the area that leads into, and complements, the designated High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It therefore places additional value on this landscape, which is often overlooked. It meets the deficiencies set out within this document by improving biodiversity and enhancing landscape value in this often neglected landscape.

6.49 This proposal has the potential to fulfil a number of the functions of green infrastructure. It meets landscape objectives and creates opportunities for enjoyment of the landscape.

Proposal 7: Redundant railways

Within the eastern part of the Borough, along the former Paddock Wood to Hawkhurst Railway, which connected Hawkhurst, Cranbrook, Goudhurst, Horsmonden and Paddock Wood. Within the western part of the Borough, along the former Tunbridge Wells to Eridge line.

Map 7 Redundant Railways



6.50 This option would involve identifying and protecting former railway routes through LDF policies and exploring ways of establishing and continuing them as accessible routes. Similar projects have been successfully completed in various locations across the country, including local projects such as The Forest Way, a disused railway path from East Grinstead to Groombridge, and the Cuckoo Trail, a former railway between Heathfield and Polegate. These are shared-use paths for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, and are part of the National Cycle Network. They are popular with locals and tourists alike and the Cuckoo Trail has approximately 250,000 visitors annually.

Former Hawkhurst to Paddock Wood line

6.51 This project will also help contribute to the aims of route enhancements between areas of the Borough, linking towns such as Paddock Wood in the north to smaller rural settlements further south. The Tunbridge Wells to Eridge line could be considered in the context of increasing linkages to the rural areas in this part of the Borough. Other potential benefits include being a rural attractor, bringing people into the Borough for tourism and recreation purposes, with associated health benefits.

6.52 Work has already begun by Kent County Council, alongside representatives of Hawkhurst and Goudhurst Parish Councils and Paddock Wood Town Council, to consider the possibility of converting all or part of the former Hawkhurst to Paddock Wood line into a trail to be used by cyclists, walkers and horse riders. The Borough Council supports this ideal and will work with landowners, Kent County Council, the Parish and Town Councils, as referred to above, and other stakeholders including Sustrans (a sustainable transport charity that supports such projects), to identify areas where access to the former railway lines can be improved, with associated promotion, upgrade of paths and routeways, and signage. Although it is recognised that parts of the line may no longer be available, some parts have already been cleared with the help of the landowners, and members of the community are working together on extending the project.

6.53 The proposal has been developed because there are deficiencies in footpath, cycle and bridleway links across the Borough, particularly between tourist attractions. It was identified because old railways are increasingly recognised as having the potential for such activities, which was felt should be extended within the Borough. The proposal meets these deficiencies by providing additional recreational and biodiversity links across the Borough, as well as bringing a historical perspective.

6.54 This proposal has the potential to fulfil a number of the functions of green infrastructure. It will enable habitat migration across the rural areas into more urbanised settlements, providing an opportunity for the enjoyment of the countryside, which also has recreational and health benefits. It will also provide key transport and access routes across the Borough and between settlements.

Proposal 8: Surface Water Management Plan outcomes

Improve surface water management within Paddock Wood and reduce surface water flood risk.

6.55 The purpose of this proposal is to aid the implementation of the Paddock Wood Surface Water Management Plan (2011). The purposes of the SWMP are to enable different organisations and local communities to gain a better understanding of the flood risks within the defined area and to inform a surface water management strategy for Paddock Wood. The area has been identified as an area of critical drainage by the Borough Council's Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and hence a management strategy is crucial in order to understand and be able to pro-actively reduce the flood risk to the area.

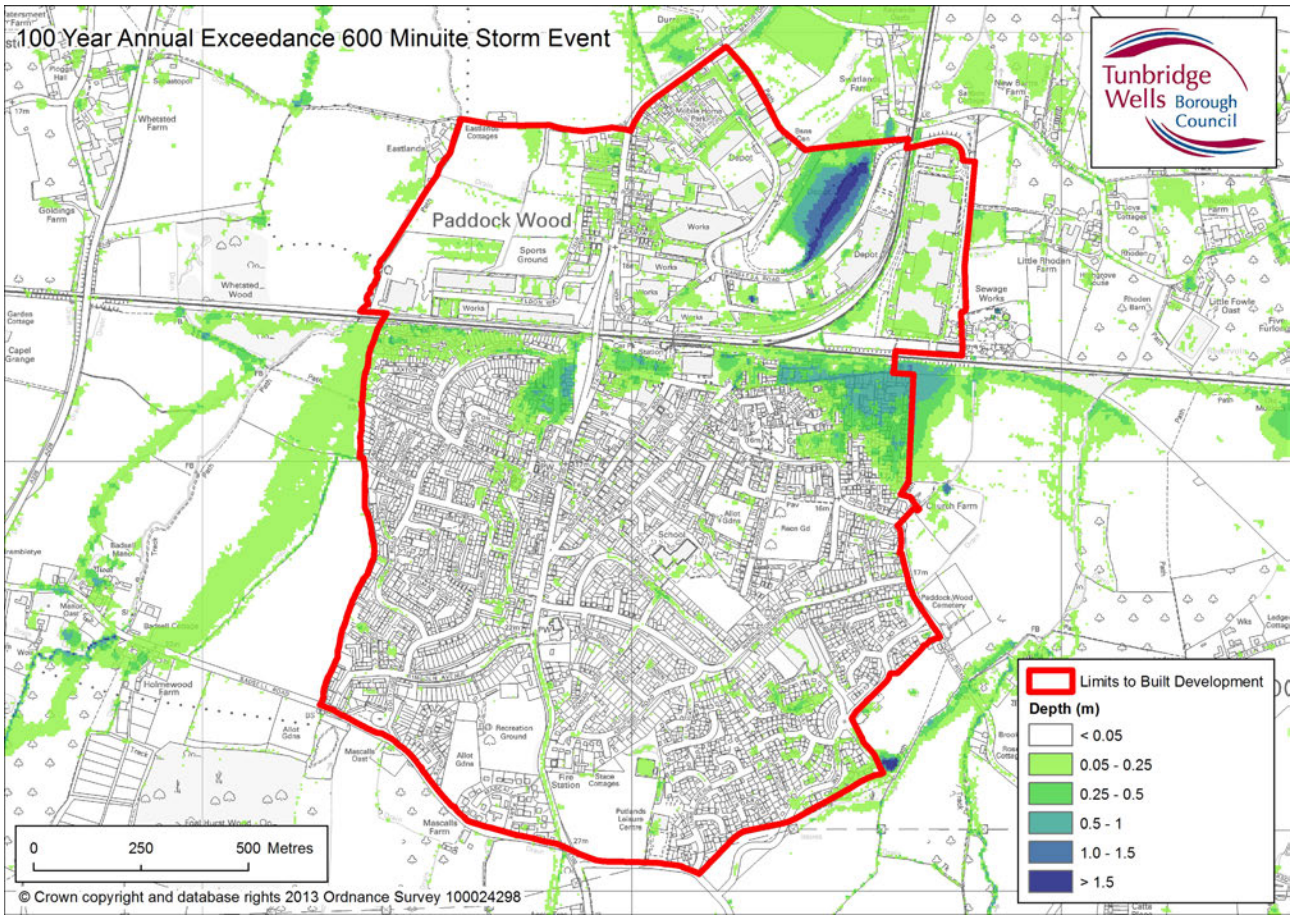
6.56 The SWMP recommends ways to mitigate against flood risk within the area, including Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS). These involve utilising the natural environment to store water for gradual release, mimicking natural drainage processes, and can hence be incorporated into the overall green infrastructure for the town and immediate surrounding rural area.

6.57 An Action Plan has been produced as an output of the SWMP, and establishes a long term plan for the continued management of surface water. The Action Plan identifies specific objectives, ranging from conducting additional surveys to improving understanding of the capacity of watercourses, to developing and implementing a policy to manage and reduce the impact of urban creep. The latter could potentially be achieved through incorporating elements of green infrastructure into the sustainable design of new developments, or the retrofitting of existing development, in order to intersect rainfall before entering and overflowing the drainage system.

6.58 Therefore, this proposal has the potential to fulfil several of the functions of green infrastructure, particularly in terms of improving flood management and achieving sustainable design.

6.59 The SWMP has been produced in partnership with Kent County Council, Medway Internal Drainage Board, Southern Water, the Environment Agency and Paddock Wood Town Council. A public engagement event was also held in Paddock Wood, with the intention of enhancing community understanding of the risks of surface water flooding and informing the community about the various mitigation techniques that could be adopted. This project aims to continue working in partnership in order to achieve the identified actions and to encourage community involvement in this process by raising awareness of the implications of certain actions, such as fly-tipping and the creation of additional hardstanding on individual properties.

Map 8 Potential flood depths in Paddock Wood (1 in 100 annual exceedance probability, 600 minute storm duration)



Functions

6.60 Table 3 below shows how the proposals fulfil the functions identified within this document. It shows that, in combination, the proposals have the potential to fulfil all green infrastructure functions.

Table 3 Appraisal of options against green infrastructure functions

Proposal	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Enhancing biodiversity	Creating sense of place	Access and healthy living	Water and flooding	Climate change	Transport, education, crime reduction	Food and fuel
Infrastructure within new developments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
1. Extension of Forest Ridge Project	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
2. High Weald/Low Weald Links	✓	✓	✓			✓	
3. Teise to Medway River Corridors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
4. Extension of Romney Marsh Biodiversity Opportunity Area	✓			✓	✓		
5. Enhancement of links between key tourist attractions and settlements		✓	✓			✓	
6. High Weald Transition Zone - strengthening National Character Area	✓	✓					
7. Redundant railways	✓	✓	✓			✓	
8. Surface Water Management Plan outcomes	✓			✓	✓		

6.61 The proposals have been categorised in this Plan as being of high, medium and low priority, as follows:

- **High priority**

  - Green infrastructure within new developments
  - Proposal 1: Extension of Forest Ridge Project
  - Proposal 8: Surface Water Management Plan Outcomes

- **Medium priority**

  - Proposal 3: Teise to Medway River Corridors
  - Proposal 5: Enhancement of links between key tourist attractions and settlements

- **Low priority**

  - Proposal 2: High Weald/Low Weald Links
  - Proposal 4: Extension of Romney Marsh Biodiversity Opportunity Area
  - Proposal 6: High Weald Transition Zone - strengthening National Character Area
  - Proposal 7: Redundant railways

Implementation

6.62 An analysis and understanding of existing networks and barriers will assist with the implementation of this Plan. Some further work is required to help understand the nature and extent of any barriers and how such barriers can be overcome. This will hopefully lead to the identification of those areas of greatest potential and possible solutions. To a certain extent, the approach to implementation will depend upon the issues identified but it will also be important to take advantage of existing programmes and activities, to build on existing measures and most importantly to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves. Significant improvements will only come about through a proactive approach, bringing together interested parties, 'Friends of' and other community groups, and other stakeholders who can then explore funding opportunities.

Chapter 7: Delivery

Funding and delivery in general

7.1 It is unlikely that significant new funding will be made available from either central or local government to specifically fund green infrastructure projects. However, the proposals fall within or overlap with a number of current and emerging funded initiatives for environmental protection and enhancement, as well as other initiatives to support rural and land-based tourism, and so there is every prospect that these initiatives can and will help deliver the identified green infrastructure objectives.

7.2 Much of the work needed to implement green infrastructure initiatives is also consistent with existing ongoing work by the Council and its partners, to protect and enhance our local environment and improve the quality, quantity and access to our public open spaces and countryside. Green infrastructure projects can therefore help provide a focus for this existing work and, through working with new and existing partnerships, utilise existing resources to achieve significant progress and enable bids for new external funding.

7.3 New development, whether on greenfield or previously developed sites, brings opportunities to support green infrastructure work and to provide new green infrastructure. Policies for achieving this are set out in the Core Strategy and the Site Allocations DPD. Funding or works to provide green infrastructure may come about through planning conditions, S106 planning obligations or Community Infrastructure Levy payments. The benefits of green infrastructure can be maximised by taking a strategic approach to new development through Development Plan Documents and by adopting a collaborative approach with developers at an early stage in order to identify the opportunities that a site(s) may offer.

7.4 The sections below attempt to identify existing initiatives, partnerships and ongoing work that already contribute to green infrastructure work and can be harnessed further through partnership working or new funding bids. They also identify where new development might offer opportunities to make a significant contribution to green infrastructure proposals. At the end of each section the main Action(s) required to commence the proposal are identified, and the proposal is graded as being of high, medium or low priority, based on deliverability, impact and likelihood of success.

7.5 It is also necessary to have a flexible approach to projects, timetables and priorities to be able to take advantage of as yet unknown projects and initiatives or other opportunities as and when they arise. To be successfully taken forward, projects will need to identify key personnel for delivery and the plan overall, and the individual projects will require regular monitoring.

Proposal 1: Forest Ridge

Major projects and initiatives

- Legacy of Forest Ridge Project – Landowner advice, trained woodland archaeological surveyors, greater awareness, developing projects at Hargate Forest and Broadwater Down
- Falls within High Weald Biodiversity Opportunity Area
- Suitable for Woodland Grant Scheme, Stewardship schemes and new tree planting grants.
- Falls within new (2012) HLF bid by RSPB under ‘Your Heritage’ fund, aimed at learning conservation and participation and is primarily aimed at habitat restoration and enhancement.

Existing projects and partnerships that already work in this area

- High Weald AONB Unit (HW AONB)
- Kent High Weald Partnership (KHWP)
- Forestry Commission (FC)

- Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT)
- Woodland Trust (WT)
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
- Kent Reptile and Amphibian Group (KRAG) – Adders surveys at Snipe wood.
- Sherwood Lake And Woodlands Steering Group (SLWSG)

Development opportunities

- Allocation of rural fringe and other greenfield sites around Royal Tunbridge Wells for housing development during the 2012-2026 period
- A21 Dualling Tonbridge to Pembury (scheduled for commencement 2014)

7.6 This proposal covers a significant area that includes a number of benign landowners such as the RSPB, KWT, WT, and TWBC, as well as containing a large site with significant land including Pembury Hospital and at least nine schools in edge-of-town or rural locations.

7.7 With the extent of positive landownership and likely development pressures, it seems that a landscape-scale project involving a wide partnership would be the best way of taking this proposal forward. The area also includes the most deprived neighbourhoods in the borough, which are a Council priority and a focus for many funding partners.

7.8 A model for this type of project, known as Living Landscapes, has already been developed and successfully implemented elsewhere by the KWT. This or a similar model should be investigated through a new partnership to take forward this important work, and initial discussions with interested groups indicate significant interest in this project. Policy will also be developed through Development Plan Documents to ensure that new greenfield developments around Royal Tunbridge Wells make full and proper contributions to this work.

Actions

- TWBC to convene partnership meeting and discuss options for taking landscape-scale project forward.

Priority

7.9 This project is highly deliverable and can have a significant impact, and aspects are already being delivered. This suggests that this should be a **high** priority.

Proposal 2: High Weald/Low Weald Links

Major project and initiatives

7.10 The Council is not aware of any major projects or initiatives in this area at present but this proposal may be more relevant at a local scale such as that of Parish and Town Councils. The objectives and geographical area of the proposal are similar to those of Green Infrastructure Proposal 6 (High Weald Transition Zone) and these two proposals could be amalgamated into a single project to maximise resources. Green Infrastructure Proposal 3 (the Teise River Corridor) could also contribute to this project but is more focused.

Existing projects and partnerships that already work in this area

- High Weald AONB Unit (HW AONB)
- Kent High Weald Partnership (KHWP)

- Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT)
- Kent County Council – Rights of Way (KCC)

Development opportunities

7.11 Within or close to this area only Paddock Wood is likely to see significant development and such development could make some significant contributions to access improvements locally. Individual applications, especially those associated with larger scale rural development such as farm buildings, could make localised improvements and assist with improving connections. A number of Toll Rides or TROT schemes (equestrian riding routes on woodland and farmland) are in operation across this area, and these routes could with landowner co-operation be extended or linked up.

Actions

- Establish contact with equestrian community to explore options, and map deficiencies and opportunities.
- Discuss project with KCC Public Rights of Way staff and influence plans and programmes for improvements.
- Discuss with Parish and Town Councils local walking and riding routes.

Priority

7.12 This project is deliverable but is likely only to have small scale and localised impacts, and larger scale funding might be difficult to obtain. This suggests that this proposal should be a **low** priority.

Proposal 3: Teise to Medway River Corridors

Major projects and initiatives

7.13 Both Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Maidstone Borough Council have similar initiatives to protect and improve river corridors in their Green Infrastructure plans. The Environment Agency is working with Countryside Management Partnerships across the Medway catchment area as part of a Water Framework Directive initiative to engage with stakeholders and riparian landowners in particular. For Tunbridge Wells Borough this is the Kent High Weald Partnership, which has recently launched, in partnership with the Environment Agency, the Teise River project. Primarily aimed at water quality, this project should be of benefit to wider objectives.

Existing projects and partnerships that already work in this area

- High Weald AONB Unit (HW AONB)
- Kent High Weald Partnership (KHWP)
- Environment Agency
- Kent County Council – Rights of Way (KCC)

Development opportunities

7.14 No areas of significant development are planned in or close to the Teise, but individual planning applications or farm diversification schemes may be able to bring about access or management improvements.

Actions

- Support the Teise River project with EA and KHWP, and look to develop other projects and initiatives from this project.
- Meet with Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council and Maidstone Borough Council to discuss their approach and plans for river corridors in their areas.

Priority

7.15 This project is deliverable and already there is an active project that will help deliver this proposal. Improvements are only likely to be small scale and localised, but as the project falls within the scope of the Water Framework Directive funding might be easier to obtain than for some other projects. This suggests that this proposal should be a **medium** priority.

Proposal 4: Extension of Romney Marsh BOA

Major projects and initiatives

7.16 The Council is not aware of any significant initiatives at present in this area but it is proposed that the Council respond positively to requests from Rother District Council, Kent Wildlife Trust or other organisations involved in projects for this proposal to assist with improvements in the borough.

Existing projects and partnerships that already work in this area

- High Weald AONB Unit (HW AONB)
- Kent High Weald Partnership (KHWP)
- Environment Agency
- Kent County Council – Rights of Way (KCC)

Development opportunities

7.17 The Council is not aware of any particular development opportunities.

Actions

- Ensure KHWP are aware of project and are willing to support the relevant organisations
- Support initiatives for improved footpath, cycleway and bridleway links in this area

Priorities

7.18 As the Borough only touches the edge of a larger project area and the Council's role is merely to support others, this is a **low** priority.

Proposal 5: Enhancement of links between tourist attractions

Major projects and initiatives

7.19 Led by the High Weald Unit, 'Our Land' is an innovative, collaborative project that is developing and promoting sustainable rural tourism in the National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Protected Landscapes) of the South East. The project is co-ordinated by the South East

Protected Landscapes (SEPL) Forum in partnership with responsibletravel.com, a Brighton-based online travel agency. A number of partnership organisations such as Tourism South East and Seven Wonders of the Weald are very active in the area, with the High Weald seen as a particular attraction.

7.20 The A21 can already be crossed by a Land Bridge at Lamberhurst but planned improvements to the A21 at Castle Hill near Royal Tunbridge Wells will provide three further safe crossing points for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

Existing projects and partnerships that already work in this area

- High Weald AONB Unit (HW AONB)
- Kent High Weald Partnership (KHWP)
- Seven Wonders of the Weald
- Tourism South East
- Kent County Council – Rights of Way (KCC)
- National Trust
- Forestry Commission

Development opportunities

7.21 As mentioned above, planned improvements to the A21 will improve local routes for pedestrians and cyclists, opening up more opportunities for connections. Significant attractions such as Scotney Castle and Bedgebury Forest are continually looking to maximise their estate, and developments here and at other attractions may bring forward further opportunities to improve connectivity.

Actions

- Identify possible project lead and/or partnership – likely to be focused on a particular route.
- Map available and possible routes to understand opportunities, gaps and barriers, to identify what needs to be done.
- Look to obtain localised improvements through small scale developments

Priorities

7.22 The project has the potential to bring about very significant and positive change but there are significant practical and financial obstacles to overcome. Suggest priority is **medium** until further work is done.

Proposal 6: High Weald Transition Zone

7.23 This will be picked up in future landscape assessments.

Major projects and initiatives

7.24 The Council is not aware of any major projects or initiatives in this area at present but this proposal may be more relevant at a local scale such as that of Parish and Town Councils. The objectives and geographical area of the proposal are similar to those of Green Infrastructure Proposal 2 (High Weald/Low Weald Links) and these two proposals could be amalgamated into a single project to maximise resources. Green Infrastructure Proposal 3 (the Teise River Corridor) could also contribute to this project but is more focused.

7.25 The Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment was first published in 2002 and updated in 2011 but is due for a complete refresh in about 2015. The work required for a Landscape Assessment involves public engagement and consultation, and may point towards works that would assist this proposal and could be identified as a theme for the relevant character areas.

Existing projects and partnerships that already work in this area

- High Weald AONB Unit (HW AONB)
- Kent High Weald Partnership (KHWP)
- Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT)
- Kent County Council – Rights of Way (KCC)

Development opportunities

7.26 Within or close to this area only Paddock Wood is likely to see significant development and locally such development could make some significant contributions to reinforcing landscape character. Robust application of the existing Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment to all planning applications can help reinforce High Weald Landscape character in this area.

Actions

- Make this proposal a theme of the Borough Landscape Character Area Assessment review in 2015
- Ensure Development Management Officers are fully aware of the Green Infrastructure Proposal by mapping area in Local Plan constraints map

Priority

7.27 This project is deliverable but is likely to be a long term project, with protection and improvements that are difficult to quantify. Specific funding may be difficult to secure, but much could be achieved within existing resources. This suggests that this proposal should be a **low** priority.

Proposal 7: Redundant railway lines

Major projects and initiatives

7.28 There has already been some work on a possible pedestrian, horse riding and cycling route based on the Paddock Wood to Hawkhurst line. KCC, working with a local group under the Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group, has been considering a Heritage Lottery Fund bid but as far as the Borough Council is aware this has not yet been fully developed. Although there are significant barriers to implementation, similar projects have been carried out elsewhere and may provide inspiration on a way forward.

7.29 The other redundant railway line within the Borough runs from Tunbridge Wells West through to Eridge and remains a safeguarded transport route in the Local Plan and emerging Site Allocations DPD.

Existing projects and partnerships that already work in this area

- High Weald AONB Unit (HW AONB)
- Kent High Weald Partnership (KHWP)
- Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group
- Kent County Council – Rights of Way (KCC)

Development opportunities

7.30 Safeguarding the Paddock Wood to Hawkhurst route from development would prevent further encroachment to the route. Land ownership is a significant barrier but small scale development may help to secure improvements.

Actions

- Make contact with KCC and Hop Pickers Line Heritage Group to get an update on project progress
- Review other similar projects to get a better understanding of the opportunities, problems and costs involved
- Ensure Paddock Wood to Hawkhurst former railway route is safeguarded

Priority

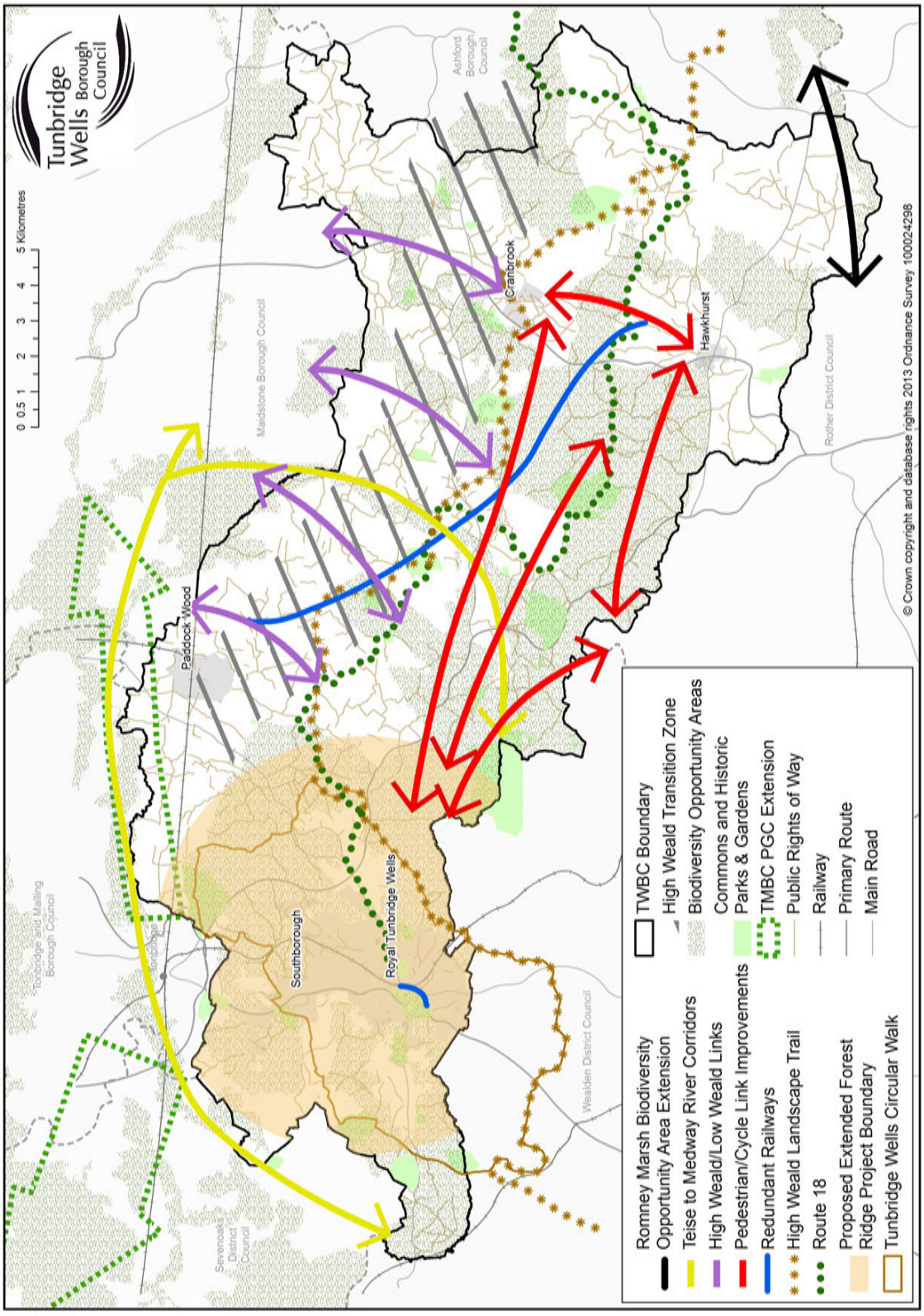
7.31 There are significant barriers to this proposal, which will need strong political will and a significant financial commitment to achieve any significant degree of success. This is likely to be a long term project, which suggests that this proposal should be a **low** priority.

Proposal 8: Surface Water Management, Paddock Wood

7.32 A Surface Water Management Plan (2011) has been produced to address flooding issues in Paddock Wood. A partnership of stakeholders has developed an action plan to implement further studies, to inform development and to take practical work forward. These proposals can affect and contribute towards Green Infrastructure in general and to the specific Green Infrastructure proposals above, in significant ways.

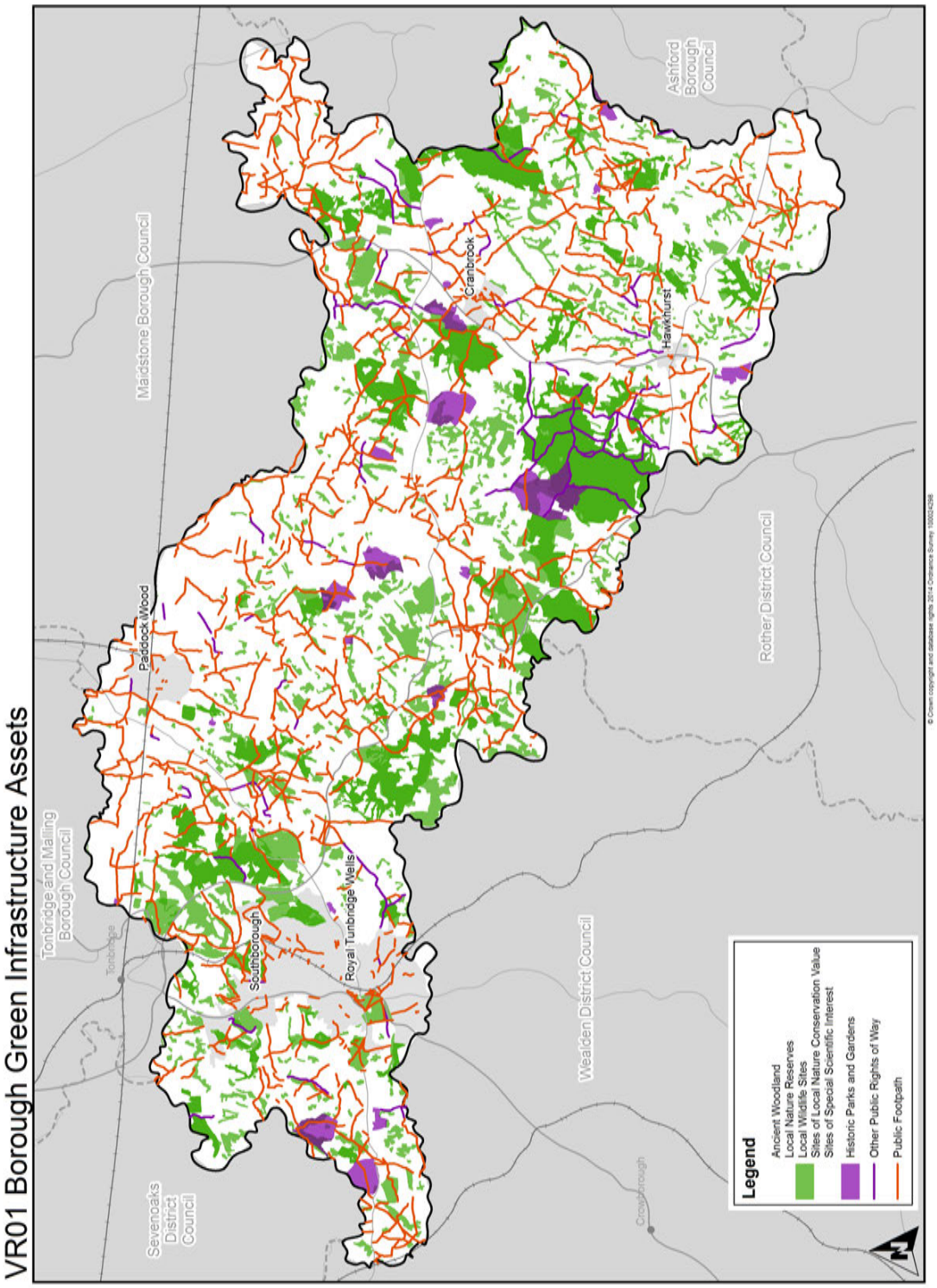
7.33 As implementation will be through the Plan Partnership and the action plan, no further proposals are contained here.

Appendix 1: Key Diagram

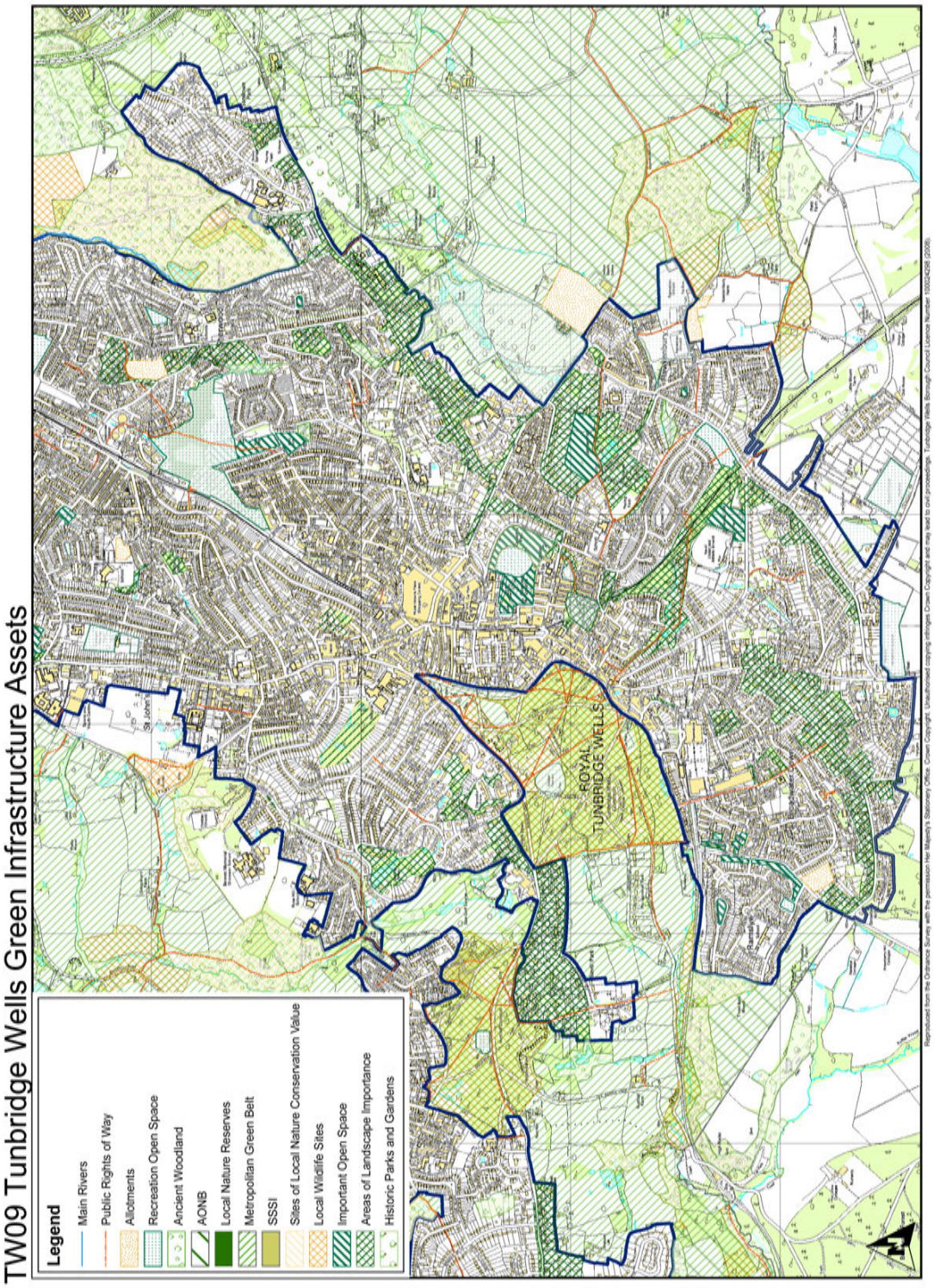


Appendix 2: Green Infrastructure Assets

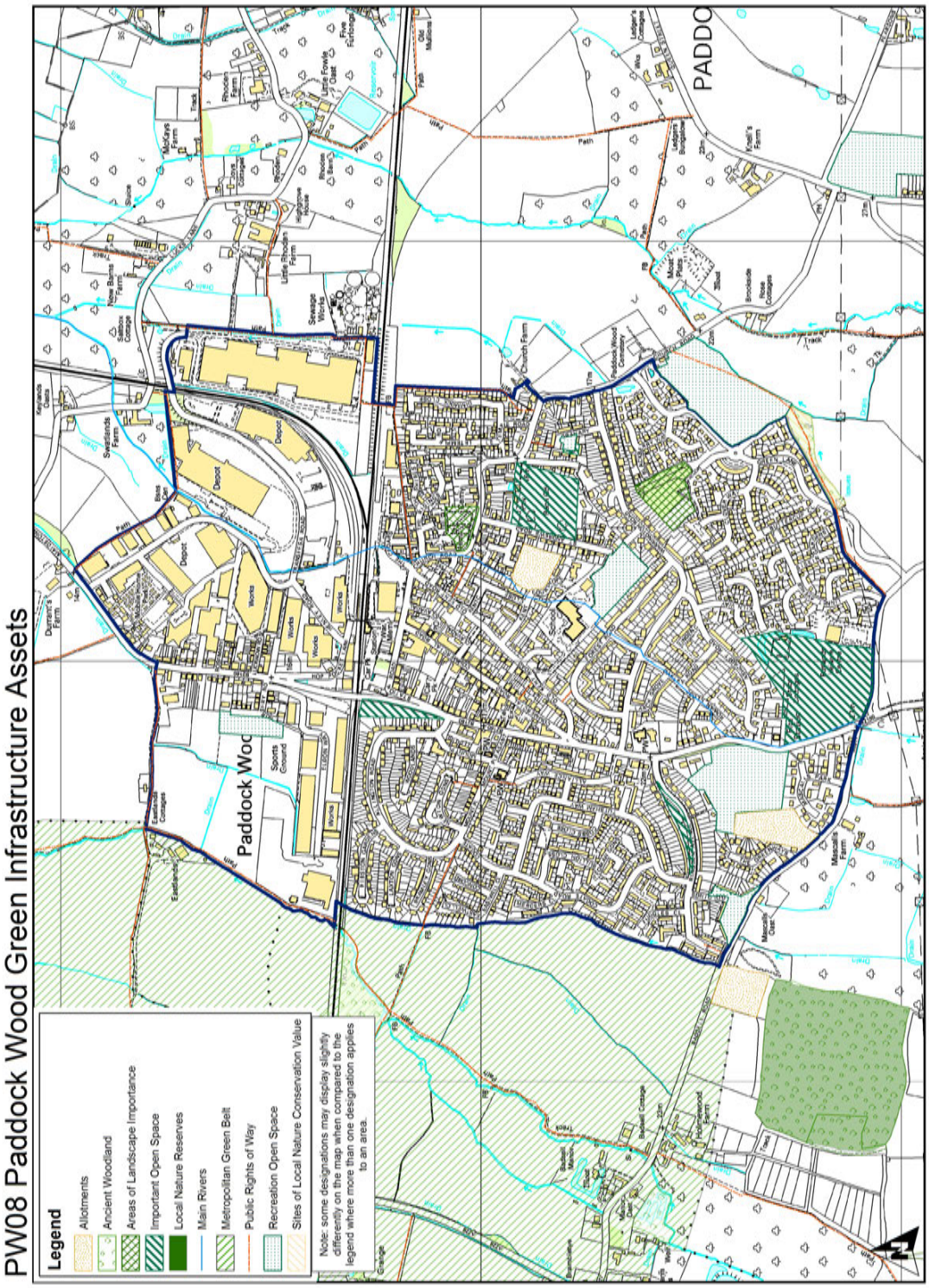
Borough-wide green infrastructure assets



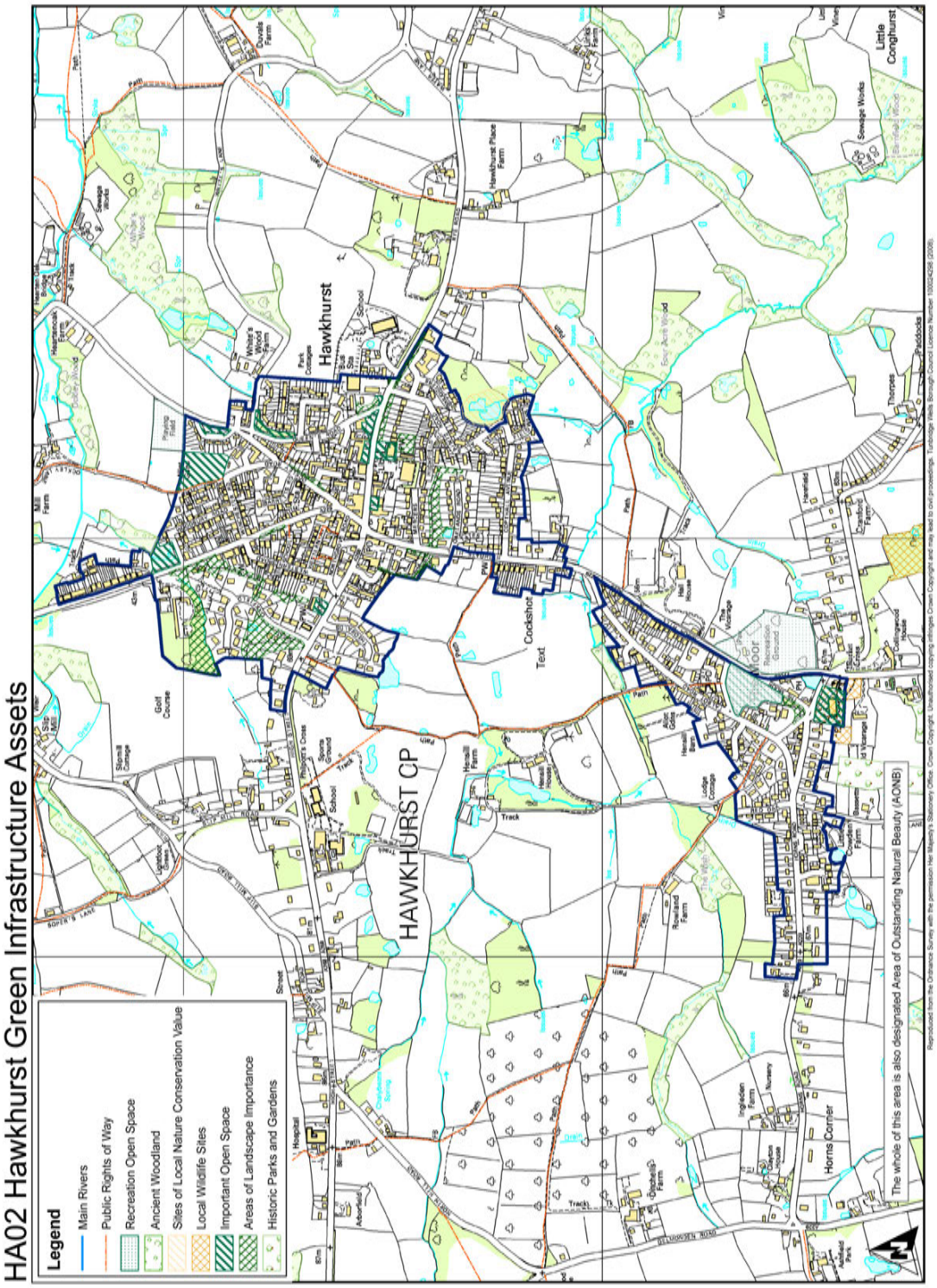
Map 9 Green infrastructure assets in Royal Tunbridge Wells



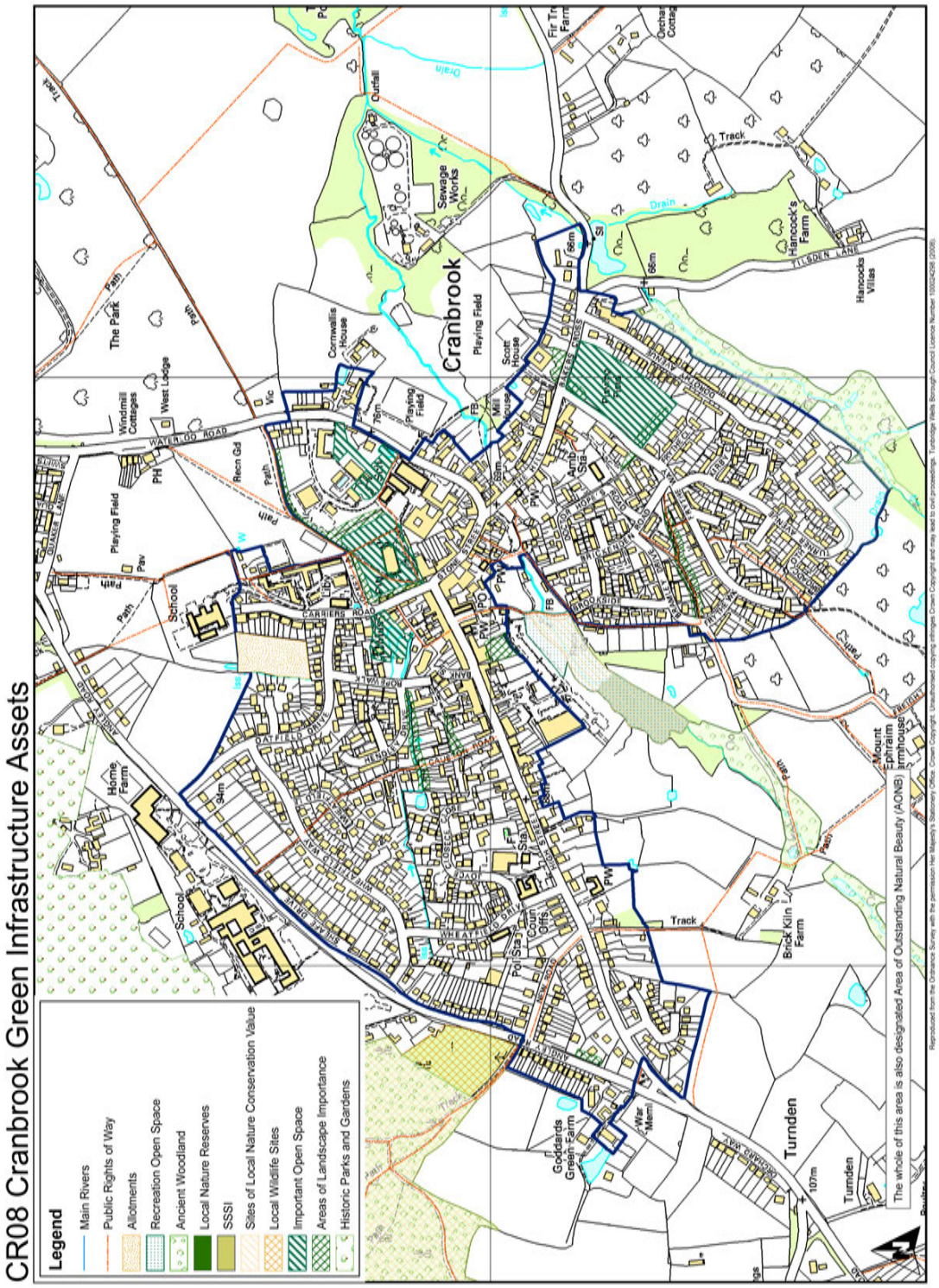
Green infrastructure assets in Paddock Wood



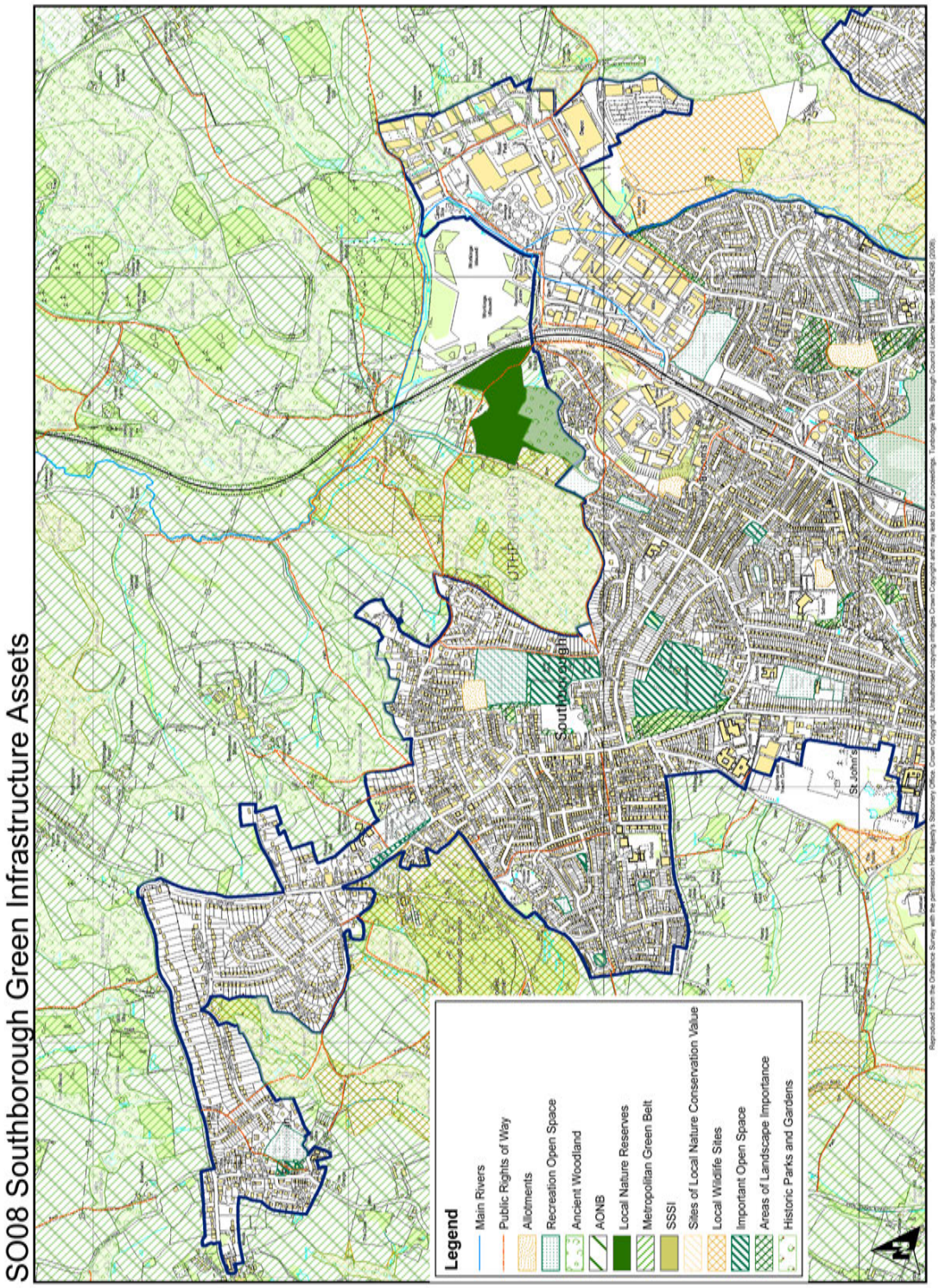
Map 10 Green infrastructure assets in Hawkhurst



Map 11 Green infrastructure assets in Cranbrook



Map 12 Green infrastructure assets in Southborough



Appendix 3: ANGSt Mapping Data

Analysis of mapping

Important Open Space

3.1 Areas to the north east and north of the Borough have good access to important open space by both walking and cycling distance. Parishes such as Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Speldhurst, Bidborough, Paddock Wood, Pembury, Brenchley and Horsmonden have very good access. The number of important open spaces is highest in this part of the Borough. Parishes such as Sandhurst, Hawkhurst, Frittenden and Cranbrook also have good access.

3.2 A few pockets of the Borough do not have good cycle and walking access to areas of open space. These tend to exist in the centre of the Borough, where the parishes have the largest land mass. In Goudhurst, important open spaces exist only in the centre of the parish; therefore producing poor walking and cycling access. In Lamberhurst, important open space exists in the south of the parish, leaving poor coverage in the north. Benenden has no important open spaces within its parish; therefore it does not have good access.

Parks

3.3 Areas in the north west and north, as well as south west and north east of the Borough, have good walking and cycling access to parks. These areas contain the largest and highest number of parks.

3.4 Goudhurst has only one park, in the south of the parish; therefore limited access in other parts of the parish. Benenden has no parks and therefore access by walking and cycling to parks is very limited.

Natural and Semi-Natural Open Space

3.5 The whole Borough has good walking access to natural and semi-natural open spaces, although there is limited provision for cycling and riding. Smaller areas of natural and semi-natural open spaces exist in the north of the Borough, while the largest areas exist in the centre and west of the Borough.

Allotments

3.6 Good walking access to allotments exists in the north west and east of the Borough. Larger, and a higher number of, allotments tend to be available in these parts of the Borough compared to the south west.

3.7 The south west and north east of the Borough have poor cycling and walking access to allotments. There are no allotments in Frittenden, Benenden or Sandhurst. The south of Goudhurst also has poor coverage.

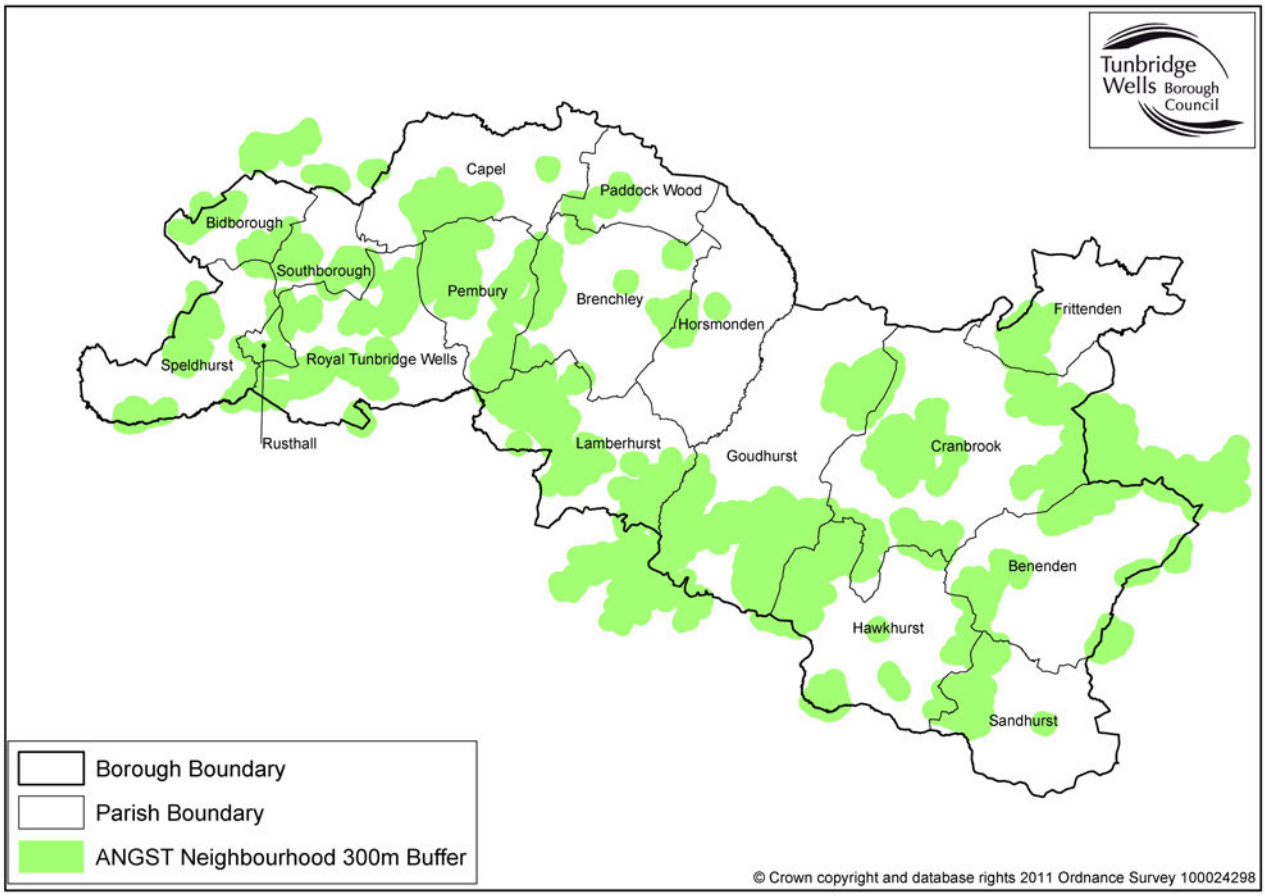
ANGSt Standards

3.8 ANGSt standards set out appropriate distances to different forms of open space and recreational areas. The standards set out that households should have access to small neighbourhood areas of accessible natural green space within 300m of their home, district-sized areas within 2km of their home, county areas within 5km and sub-regional areas within 10km. The following maps show these distances from areas of the Borough by buffer and the results are summarised in Table 4 below.

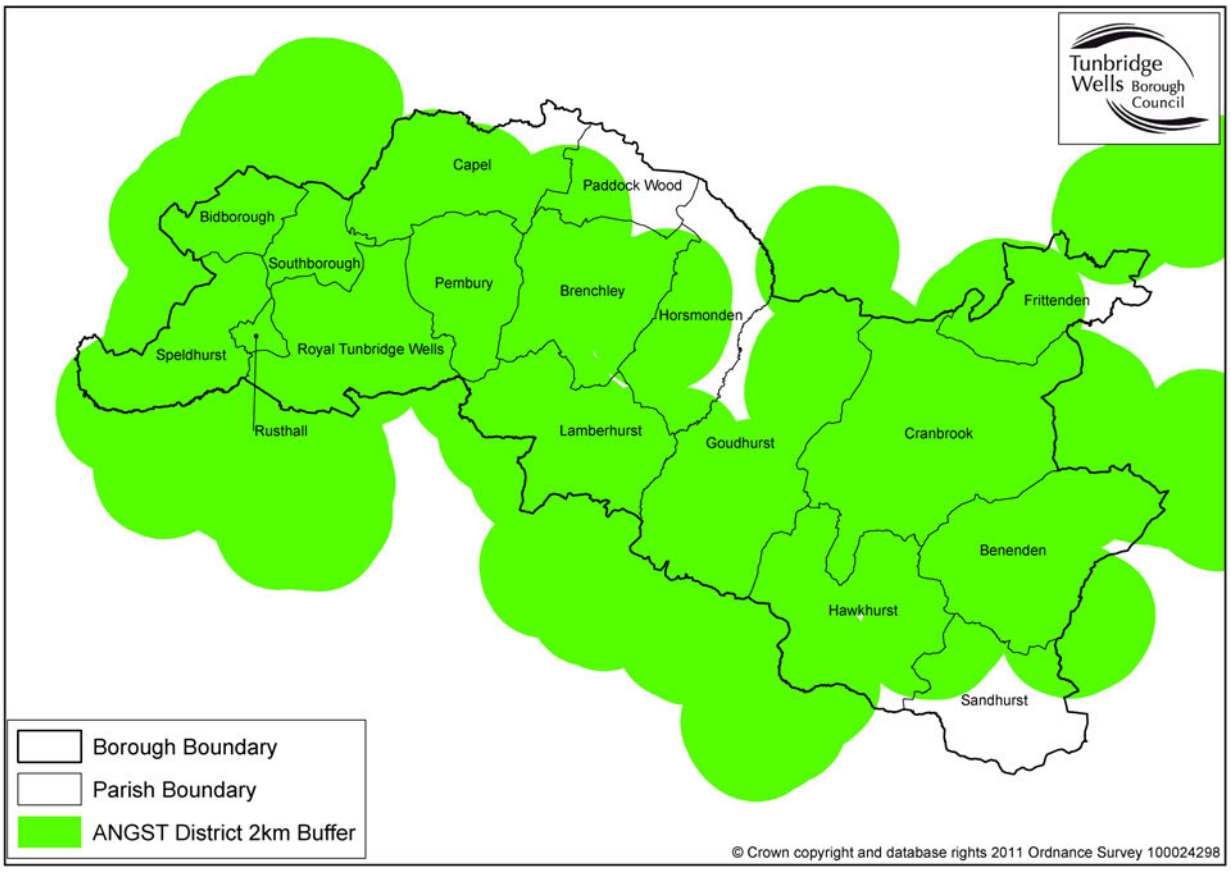
Table 4 Summary of ANGSt buffer mapping

Buffer	Summary of map
Neighbourhood 300m Buffer	Some areas of the Borough to the north west and the south have limited access to these areas. A large part of the centre and south east of the Borough, including Goudhurst, Horsmonden, Benenden and Sandhurst, is lacking provision.
District 2km Buffer	The 2km Buffer covers most of the Borough. The north of Paddock Wood and Horsmonden, and the south of Sandhurst, are not covered, although these areas only account for a small part of each district. In some areas, the buffer overlaps into other districts and boroughs.
County 5km Buffer	Most households in the Borough have access to this type of green space within 5km of their home. The only exceptions are in small parts of Paddock Wood, Horsmonden and Bidborough.
Sub-Regional 10km Buffer	The central, south eastern and north eastern parts of the Borough have good access to these areas. However, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Southborough, Capel and Bidborough in the west of the Borough are not within 10km of these areas.

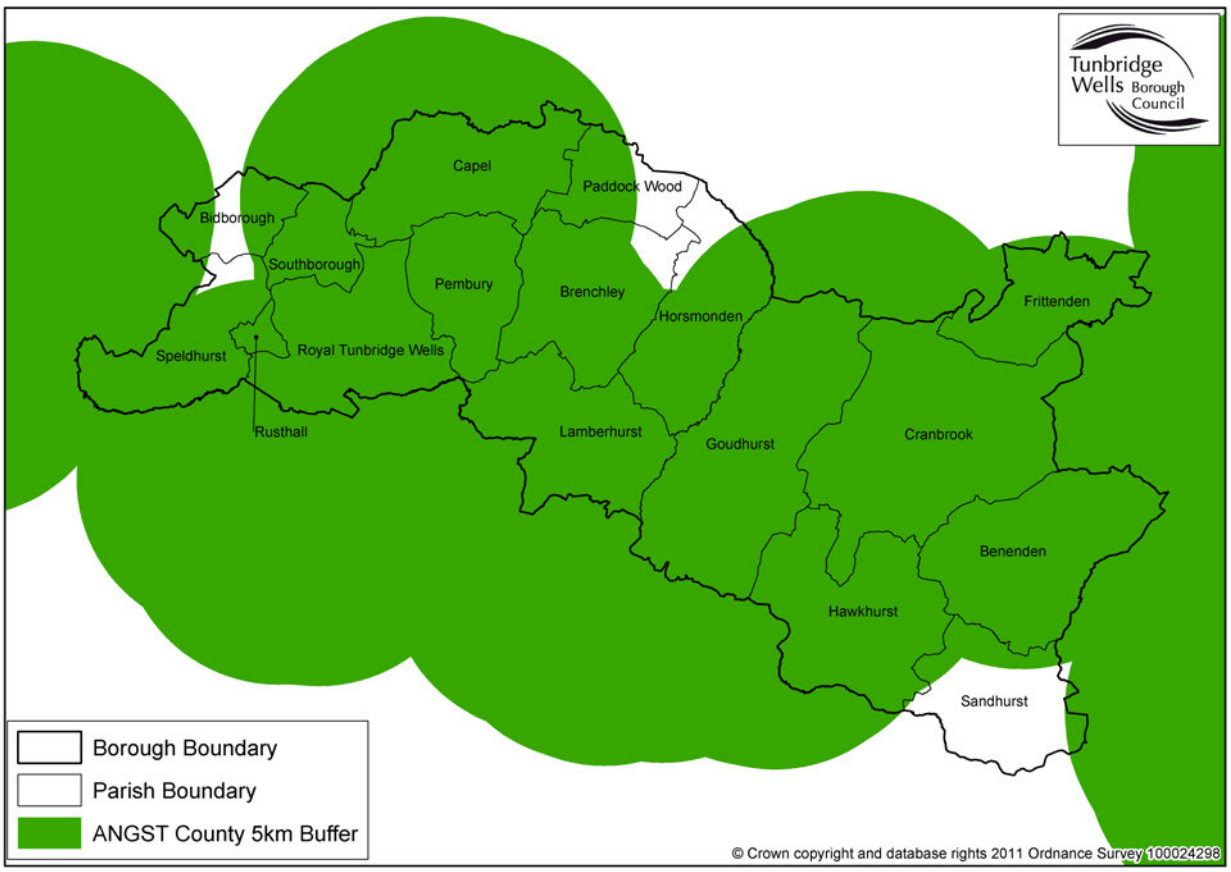
Map 13 ANGSt Neighbourhood 300m Buffer



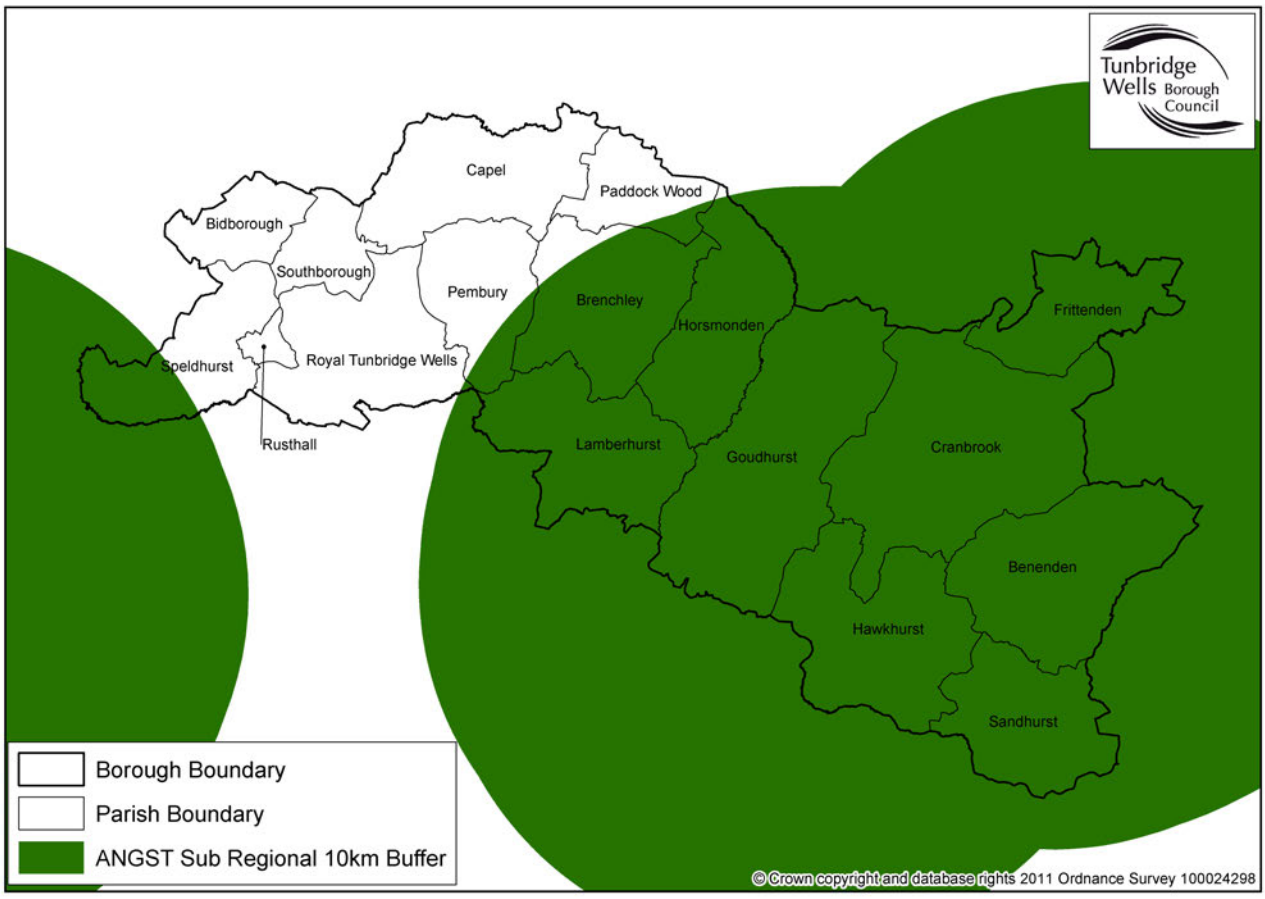
Map 14 ANGSt District 2km Buffer



Map 15 ANGSt County 5km Buffer



Map 16 ANGSt Sub-Regional 10km Buffer



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