

# The Parish of SANDHURST

## HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION

### REVISION OF KENT HLC (2000)



March 2017

**THE REVISION OF THE KENT HLC**

**FOR**

**THE BOROUGH**  
**OF**  
**ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS**

**Summary Report**  
**Parish of Sandhurst**

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**The parish summary should be read in conjunction with the Tunbridge Wells Borough Historic Landscape characterisation Report (Section I User Guide and Interpretation; Section II The Gazetteer of HLC Types and Section III the Maps). June 2017**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The revised Historic Landscape Characterisation for the Borough of Tunbridge Wells could not have been undertaken without the dedicated support of David Scully, Landscape and Biodiversity Officer at Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and also Lis Dyson County Archaeologists at Kent County Council. The Tunbridge Wells Borough Historic Landscape Characterisation builds on the project begun by the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty [AONB] Partnership. This work could not have been undertaken without the help of Paul Cuming Kent Historic Environment Records Manager and Richard Dadd GIS Technician at Kent County Council. A ‘Thank you’ is extended to all. Appreciation and thanks also goes to the team at the High Weald AONB Partnership especially Sally Marsh, Co-Director, Charles Winchester Landscape Researcher and Matt Pitts Land Manager Adviser.

My colleague Phil Sansum kindly undertook the processing of the missing Tithe maps for the Borough for which I am very grateful.

The views expressed in this report are entirely the author’s own and do not reflect the policies of neither Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, Kent County Council nor the High Weald AONB.

## PERIOD TABLE

Description	Archaeological Period	From	To
Hunting societies	Upper Palaeolithic	30,000	10,000 BC
Hunter-gather societies	Mesolithic	10,000-8,000	4,000-3,500 BC
The first agriculturalists	Neolithic	3,500	2,100 BC
Beginning of metal working in bronze	Bronze Age	2,100	600 BC
Beginning of metal working in iron	Iron Age	600 BC	AD 43
	Romano-British	AD 43	AD 410
	Anglo-Saxons [or Early Medieval]	AD 410	1066
	Medieval	1066	1540
	Post-medieval	1540	Present

*The Archaeological and Historical Periods used in the Sussex HLC & Revised Kent HLC*

Key to HLC-Prev	Description	Date	Combined
P1	Late 20th century	AD1945 – present	Post 1900
P2	Early 20th century	AD 1914 – AD 1945	
P3	Early Modern	AD 1800 – AD 1913	19th century
P4	Late Post-medieval	AD 1600 – AD 1799	Post-medieval
P5	Early Post-medieval	AD 1500 – AD 1599	
P6	Medieval	AD 1066 – AD 1499	Medieval
P7	Early-medieval	AD 410 – AD 1065	
P8	Roman	AD 43 – AD 409	
P9	Prehistoric	500,000 BC – AD42	

**Summary Assessment of the Historic Landscape Characterisation  
for the parish of Sandhurst  
Borough of Royal Tunbridge Wells**

**1. Introduction**

**Historic Landscape Characterisation [HLC]** is a process by which the landscape of an area is interpreted and mapped by selected historic attributes which contribute to the local historic character. The dominant historic attributes are that of enclosure and settlement. The pattern of fields, the nature of the boundaries, the form and distribution of historic settlement shape the local character and distinctiveness of a given area. The term ‘historic landscapes’ means in this context all landscapes which have been shaped by human interaction. HLC maps character not land use though with finer grained HLCs for some of the historic types reflect the use of the land. It can be likened to a fine water-colour painting which despite using OSMM as its base does result in some ‘blurred’ boundaries between character types at the very detailed field by field level. HLC is a starting point when investigating the historic landscape for any given area, however it is not a substitute for detailed desk-based assessments and field observations.

The Historic Landscape Characterisation for Sandhurst forms part of a district wide revision of the Kent HLC (2000). Four parishes in the east of the district have been completed on behalf of the High Weald AONB (Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, Cranbrook & Benenden) and the remaining parishes are being undertaken as part of a rolling programme of phased characterisation for Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. As each parish is completed a short analysis is presented. The parishes will then be grouped up to form the district-wide HLC. The sequence of characterisation has been prioritised to provide firstly information on those parishes close to the town of Royal Tunbridge Wells, and secondly to complete the wider countryside of the borough. The centre of the built-up area of the town has been omitted as the priority is to characterise the historic landscape of the rural parts of the borough.

This report sets out a summary of the some of the results for the civil parish of Sandhurst. A Methods Report [Draft] together with a Gazetteer of Typologies and attributes has been prepared for the end of the first phase of this revision (end of September 2016). Phase 2 (Frittenden, Capel, Horsmonden and Brenchley) was completed at the end of December 2016. The third phase for the remaining parishes (Bidborough, Lamberhurst, Paddock Wood and Sandhurst) commenced in January 2017 for completion at the end of March 2017. At the end a summary report for the Tunbridge Wells Borough HLC will be prepared.

## 2. Historic context of parish of Sandhurst

The parish lies at the eastern end of the Borough of Tunbridge Wells overlooking to the south, the valley of the upper reaches of the River Rother. A central ridge of high ground runs east to west forms a spine through the parish. To the north is a valley, a tributary of the Rother called the Hexden Channel. Smaller streams flow either north or south into these valleys creating smaller valleys between which are knolls of higher ground.

It is a particularly wooded parish especially in the west, with smaller gills and coppices in the stream valleys. Along the spine of high ground runs the A268 which probably follows the course of much older, possibly prehistoric routes from the coast inland. The course of a Roman Road runs north east from Kitchenham Farm in the valley of the Rother to Wandle Mill and thence through to Benenden and into north Kent. The southern parish boundary follows the River Rother and to the south west a stream known as the Kent Ditch

The underlying geology comprises River Alluvium in the valleys. The southern facing slopes of the ridge comprise Wadhurst Clay with outcrops of Ashdown sandstone at Marsh Quarter and Conghurst Farms. Numerous ponds pocket this area, where marl and ironstone have been dug from the clay (as noted by Hasted) The eastern end of the northern side of the ridge comprises Tunbridge Wells Sandstone running down to the alluvium but at the western end Wadhurst Clay occurs. The ridge here is dominated by Tunbridge Wells sandstone.

Hasted describes the soil in the north-east and southern parts as *a stiff and heavy tillage land, which has underneath plenty of marle, in which parts there is much iron ore; the western parts being more hilly, is a light and gravelly soil.* [Hasted 1797 vol VII p158].

The ridge top route was likely to have been a drove-way as aligned along it are three greens; Field Green, Cow Beech Green (now in the main part of the village) and Ringle crouch Green. According to Hasted there was a large forstal or play stool close to the church, where a fair was kept. The lords of the manor had by the time of Hasted's writing taken the land and enclosed to their own use.

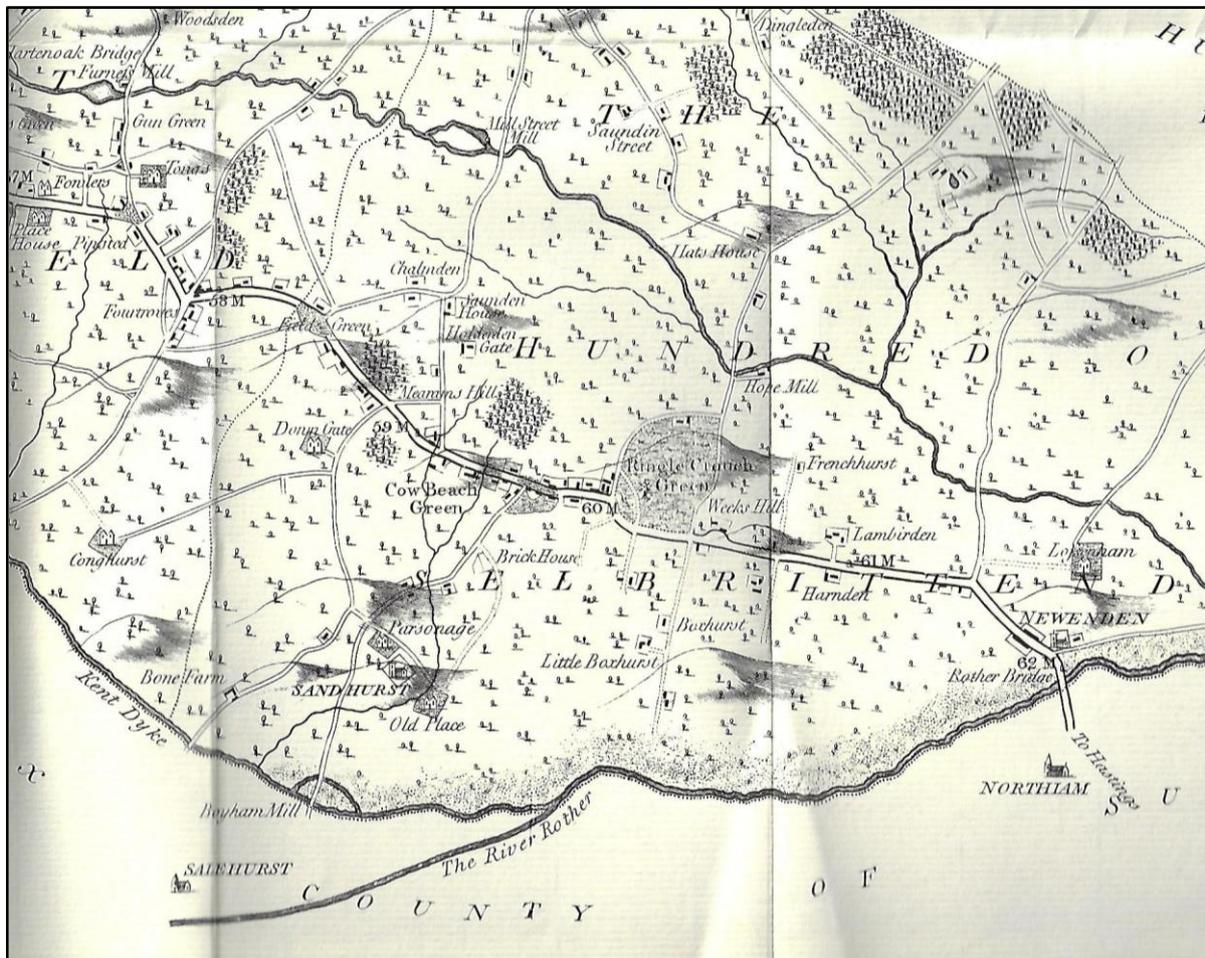
After AD 450 with the coming and settling in Kent of the Saxons the Weald was divided into large 'commons' attached to large agricultural estates in north and east Kent. Kent was carved up to utilise large swathes of the landscape. These estates became the lathes the territories of which spread into the Weald to lay claim to the woodland and grazing pastures. These commons were used for seasonal grazing but were gradually broken up into dens or swine pastures attached to the evolving manors located in the north and east on the demesne and farmed land. Eventually temporary settlements in the dens became permanent farmsteads taking their names from the 'dens' and the settlers enclosed land and laid out fields from the swine pastures in order to cultivate crops and keep stock.

Much of the territory of the borough of Tunbridge Wells lies at the end of the Saxon commons or lathes which extended westwards from the parent manors in the north and east of the county. The main line of expansion initially followed the old ironways but as new grazing pastures were developed so the network of droves evolved creating the road, lane and footpath network seen today. The drive to claim territory for grazing pastures was

**BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
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slowing down as it extended west possible due to the long distance from these parent manors. Sandhurst lies at the termination of the large common belonging to the Lathe of Lyminge (limen-wera-weald). By the time the dens were being formed much the area had already been under pasturage for several centuries, thus some dens had two names such as the den of Sandhurst (a topographic name describing its physical location within the forest) and Betherinden (a patronymic folk name describing the people). These folk names are much older and Sandhurst has five dens so called namely Alderden, Betherinden, Challenden, Frenchurst and Silverden (See Wallenberg 1930 p346).

Around the C10 the boundary between Kent and Sussex was gradually fixed along water courses such as the Kent Ditch. The River Rother formed a clearly defined topographic feature along which to align and key boundary.



*Extract from Edward Hasted's Map of the Hundred of Selbrittenen 1797*

The importance of the river in medieval and earlier times is shown by the location of Sandhurst church on a knoll of high ground overlooking the Rother valley and into Sussex beyond. The Historic Environment Record records evidence of Iron Age occupation in this locality and the course of the Roman Road from Bodiam passes just to the west. Old Place Farm (Betherinden) also faces the valley and a track runs from the farm down to a crossing point and continues towards Bodiam. Many of the farms in Sandhurst overlooking the valleys have tracks (or had tracks – now grubbed out) running down to the former valley marshes.

As the rivers became silted up and traffic increased – the ridge top tracks were utilised resulting in the expansion of settlement along them of which Sandhurst is a good example. The church is left isolated with the main farmstead and in this case the parsonage. Its isolation may have been exacerbated by the enclosure of the forstal or play stool by the lords of the manor and Cow Beech Green became the focus of the village.

### **3. Results of the revised HLC for the parish of Sandhurst**

Some examples of the digitising of Sandhurst parish as part of the wider revised HLC for the borough of Tunbridge Wells are presented in the map extracts on the following pages. The first phase and second phases of this project have been completed (December 2016). Sandhurst is the fourth and final parish of the Phase 3 parishes (Bidborough, Paddock Wood and Lamberhurst completed) leaving only the final HLC layer to be built and checked. A brief analysis of the HLC attributes is presented here. The HLC has been split into its main period and type component attributes, but by applying the different style sheets it is possible to show the various attributes for the present day HLC, as well as a conjectured image of what the historic character of the late medieval and early-post-medieval landscape might have looked like. The blank areas around the edge of the parish have been digitised as part of the adjacent parishes. Once all the parishes have been joined together these areas will be covered.

#### **3.1 The Phase 1 Kent HLC**

Map 1 shows the broad HLC type for the Kent Phase 1 for the civil parish of Sandhurst (which coincides with the ecclesiastical parish). The Kent HLC was one of the earliest HLCs to be undertaken in England and was produced using a very broad-brush approach to characterisation. The broad character areas of Sandhurst can clearly be seen. The wooded character of the western part of the parish contrasts with the more open eastern part. The ridge top settlement follows the main routeway with the smaller hamlets of Sandhurst Cross also indicated. The valley floor enclosures mark the Rother.

#### **3.2 The Revised Kent HLC for Tunbridge Wells Borough – Sandhurst**

Map 2 shows the broad HLC type for the revised Kent HLC for Tunbridge Wells Borough. The finer-grained approach to the data capture can clearly be seen for example with the scattered settlements across the area. The fragmented woodland character of the east and southern parts of the parish is shown together with the smaller areas of former common. The revised HLC highlights the lack of survival of orchards across the parish. The Rother valley does not appear as the revision does not separate valley floor from other forms of enclosure at this level of the HLC. The scattered nature of the farms and the higher incidence of woodland to the east is however shown.

### **3.3. The HLC Types for present day landscape of Sandhurst**

Map 3 shows the HLC types for Sandhurst. The ancient woodland character dominates the western part of the parish, with an absence of settlement in the form of farmsteads. Areas of assart fields occur close to gills, whilst the cohesive assarts occur in the centre of the parish either side of the ridge top. The more regular informal fields tend to occur around areas of oldest settlement, suggesting periods of field reorganisation perhaps. There are large areas of modern field reorganisation especially on the lower, less steeply sloping ground. The river valleys are shown by the formal innings from the marshes. Designed landscapes are dominated by modern landscaped gardens. Few orchards remain since the 2000 HLC map.

### **3.4 The Time-depth and antiquity of the present landscape of Sandhurst**

Map 4 shows the projected period of origin for each historic character type in the present landscape of Sandhurst. A large part of the present day historic landscape character of Sandhurst dates from the medieval period, dominated by the assarts, ancient woodland and historic farmsteads. This is a landscape of great antiquity where much has remained unaltered. To the east and north of the parish where modern field amalgamation has taken place, or orchards removed the landscape has undergone layers of change showing considerable time-depth.

### **3.5 Analysis of different character types**

Map 5 shows only the HLC broad type for Enclosures or Field patterns by HLC type for Sandhurst. This is an example of how the HLC can be queried in order to assess the different historic character types. The parish retains a variety of the field patterns, with a high incidence of assart fields; aggregate assart fields are strongly associated with the woods and gills, whereas the cohesive assarts occur either side of the ridge top. As already stated the regular informal fields occur around some the areas of oldest settlement. The paddocks are associated with modern sub-division of fields close to farmsteads.

Map 6 gives an indication of this polygons have been illustrated by the Boundary type attribute associated with them. Ditched boundaries as are expected occur in the valley of the Rother and its tributaries. Wooded hedges and shows dominate the parish. Hedges occur bounding the regular informal fields and the modern field amalgamation. Overall the wooded hedges together with the large tracts of woodland give Sandhurst a dominant woodland landscape character which is relatively unchanged since the medieval period.

### **3.6. The conjectured medieval and early post-medieval landscape of Sandhurst**

Map 7 is a composite map of the present HLC overlain with those polygons where the previous historic character can be identified from the historic mapping. Each time there is a character change as shown by the historic maps (up to 4 changes recorded in the GIS attribute table as Prev1 to Prev 4) this has been captured in the data base. The result is that this map gives an indication of what the landscape may have appeared like c.1500-1600, when much the medieval features would still have been intact.

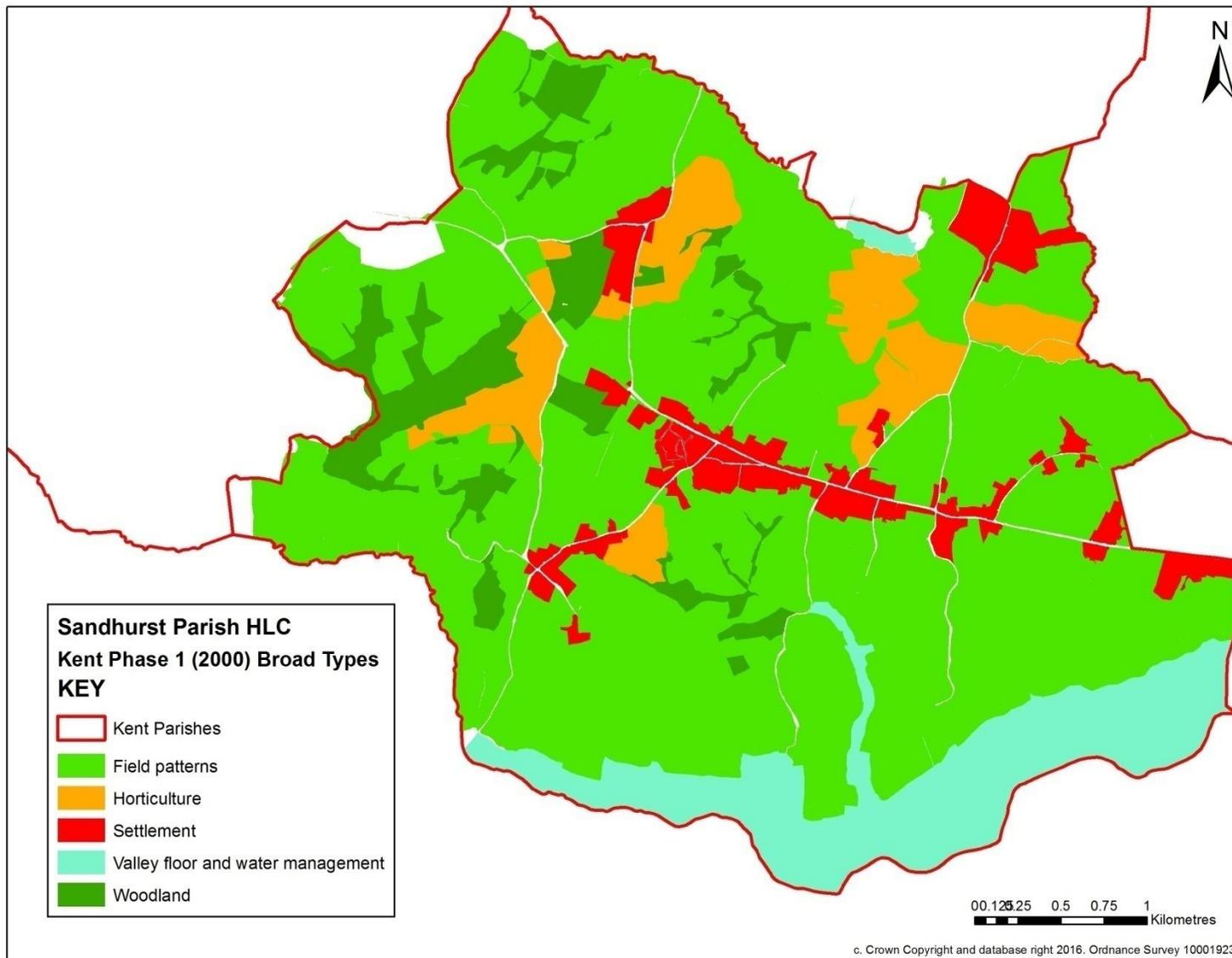
Interestingly Hasted does not describe the landscape of Sandhurst in his 'History of Kent' but his map of the Hundreds of the County does reveal the extent of the greens along the ridge top. Cohesive (or regular) assarts dominate intermixed in the west of aggregate assarts and

**BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
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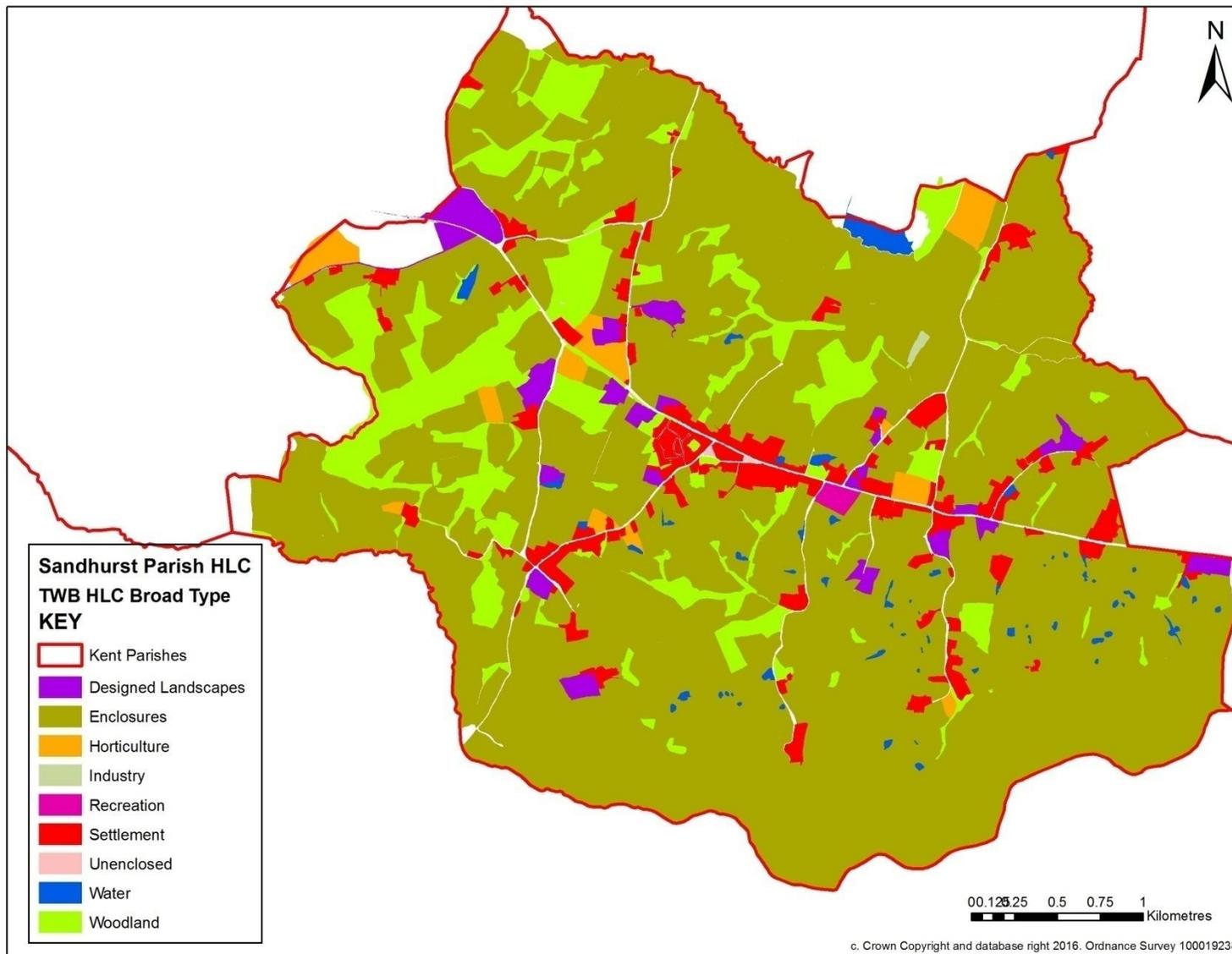
woodland. The land to the east has less woodlands suggesting it was cleared and settled much earlier in Saxon times due to its proximity to the water courses and the demand for woodland (and then land) by the coastal settlements. Scattered farmsteads dominate the settlement pattern with hamlets around the greens. The village was probably becoming well established by the beginning of the post-medieval period.

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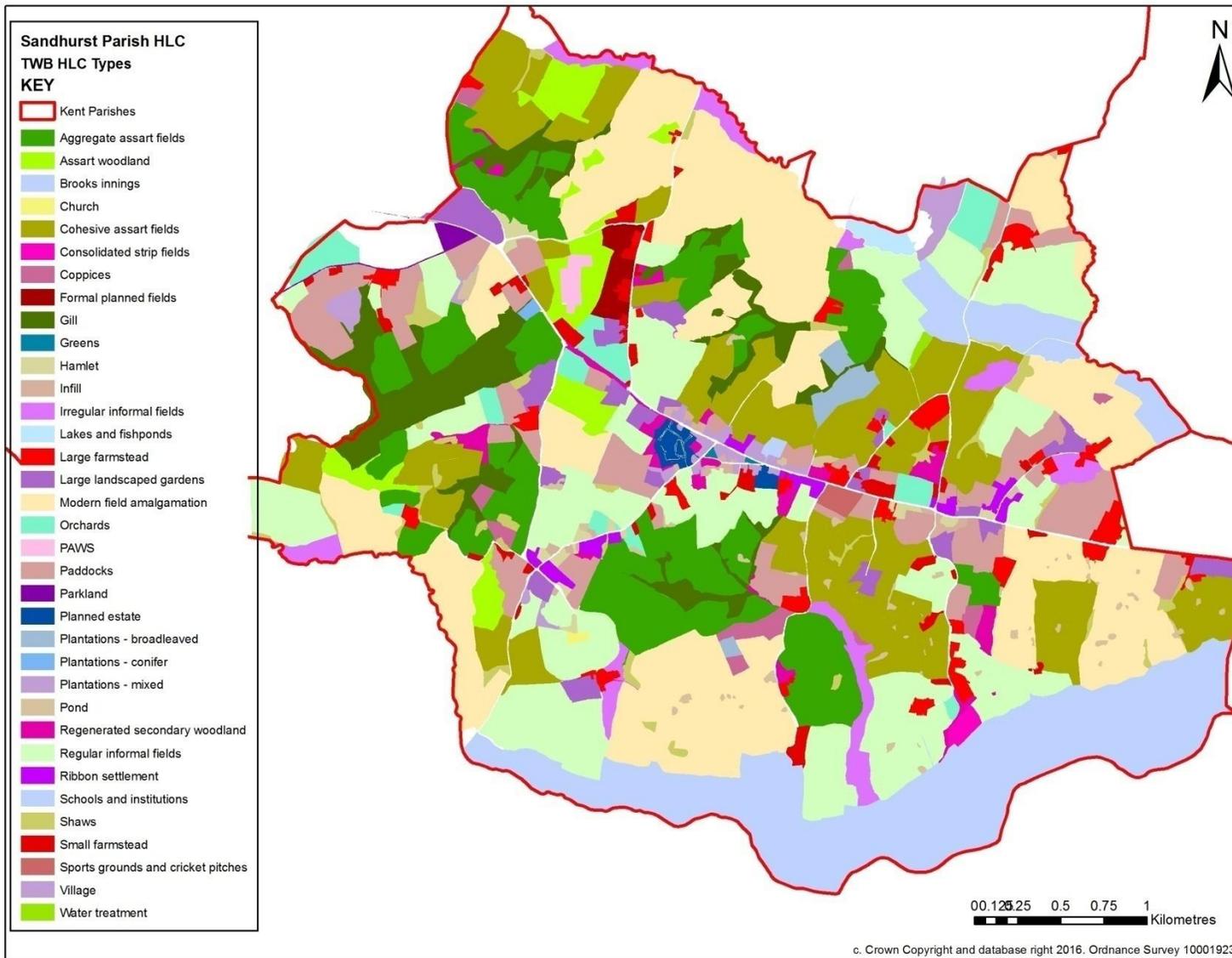
MAP 1

BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
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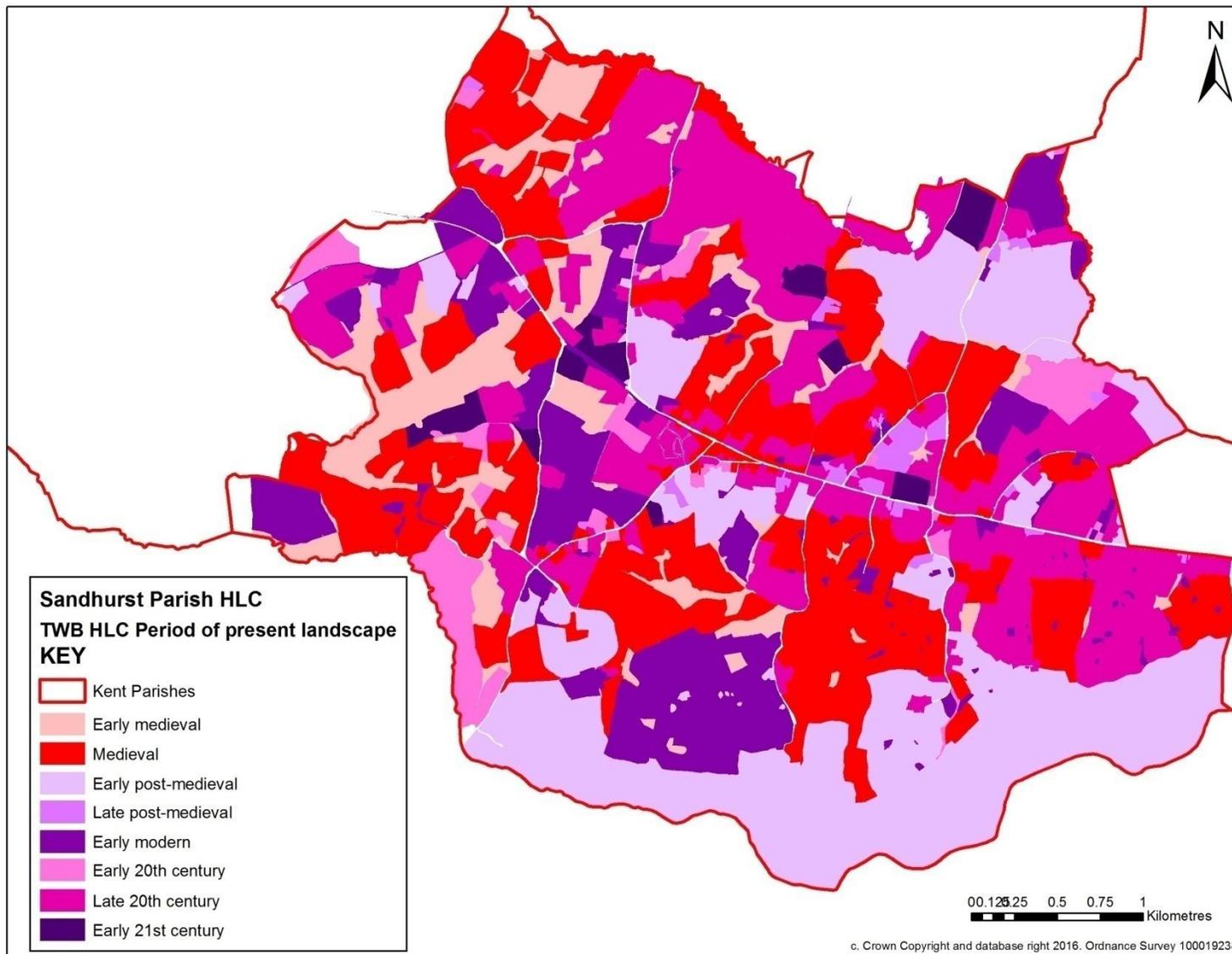
MAP 2

**BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
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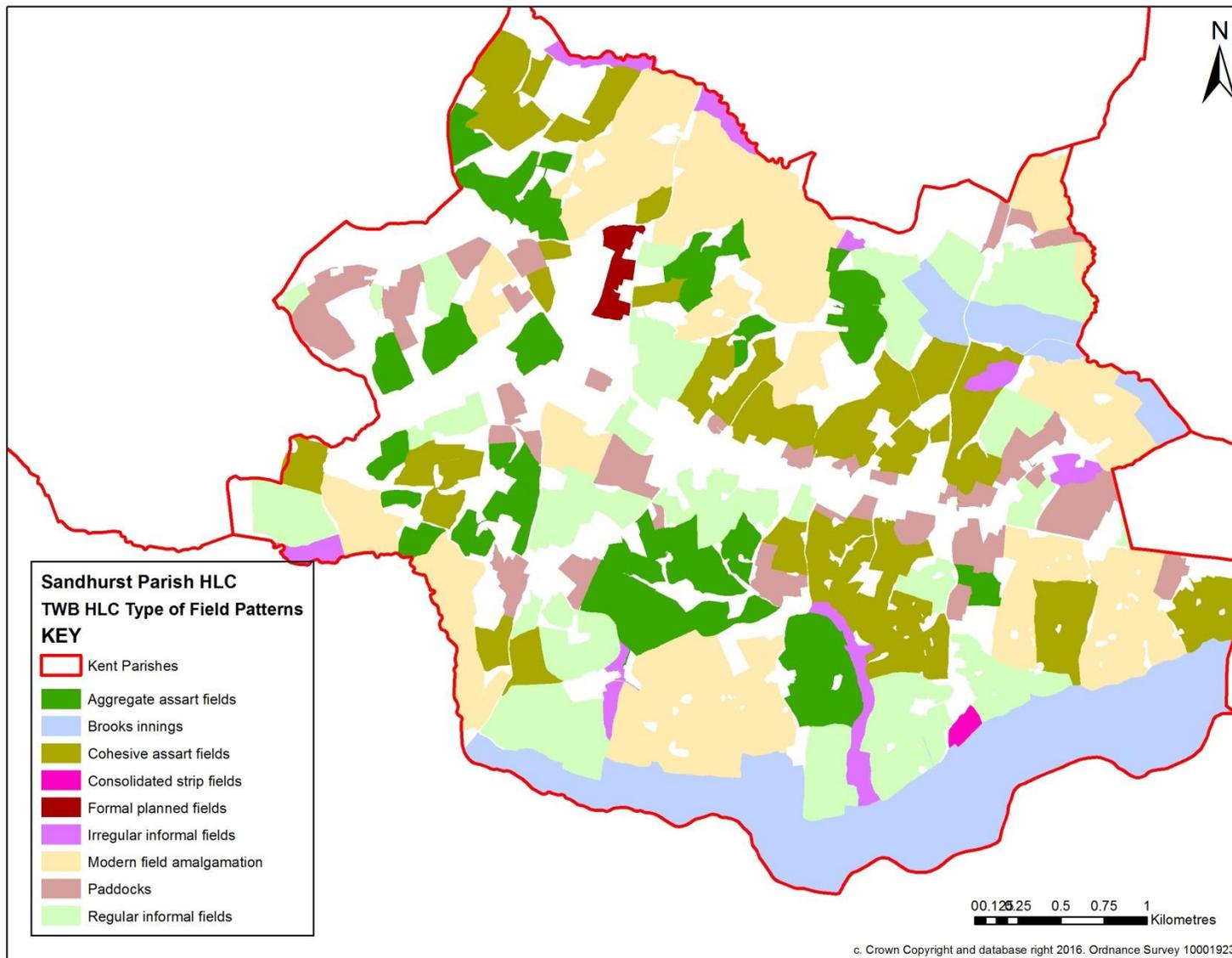
Map 3

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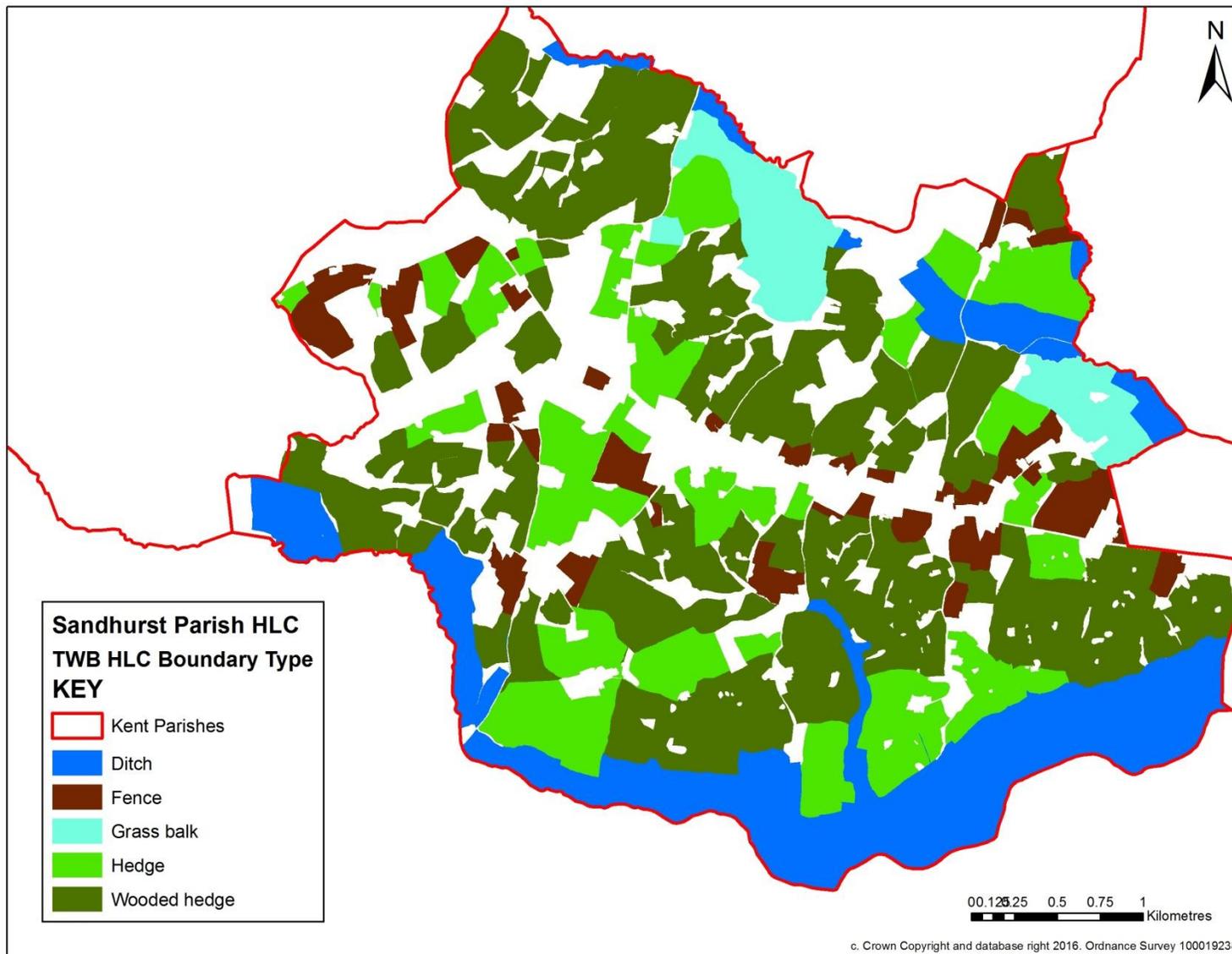
MAP 4

BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
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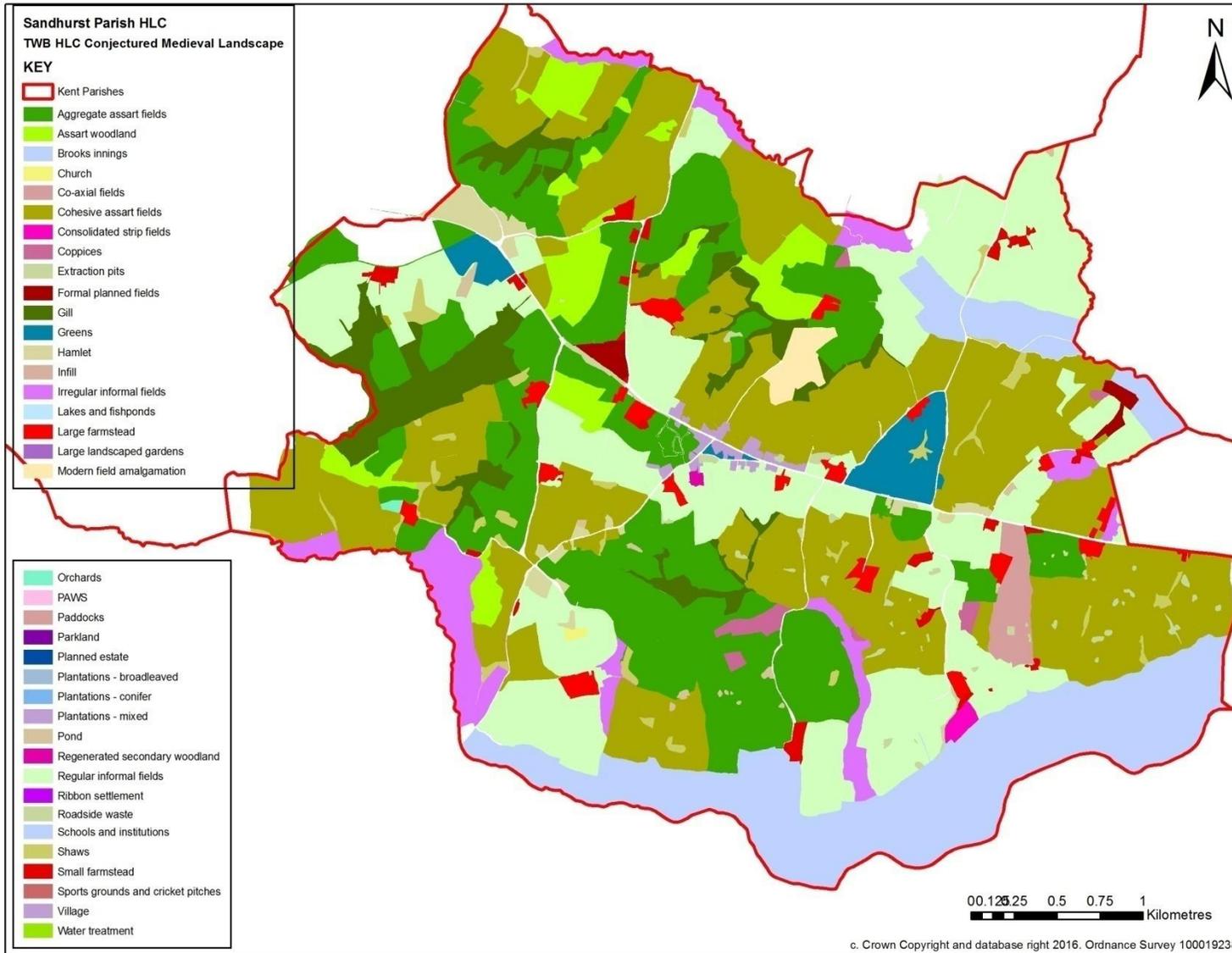
MAP 5

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MAP 6

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**MAP 7**

#### **4. Initial Conclusions**

This analysis only touches on the potential of HLC to understand the historic character of the landscape and provides the starting point for research for any given area. The HLC reveals that the landscape of Sandhurst is essentially one with a medieval character which is under-pinned by the Saxon origins in its layout. The historic character of Sandhurst reflects both the ancient landscapes (antiquity) and the modern landscapes (time-depth). The changes in the 19th century and 20th century with the development and then gradual decline in orchards growing are shown around the village but the underlying structure of remaining field boundaries, old routeways (lanes and paths) and the dispersed nature of the historic settlement is still present and can be identified here. Sandhurst as a parish on the edge of the Kentish swine pasture territory retains much of this early medieval history, which in turn can still be identified on the ground through the survival of historic landscape features, also including place-names and historic routeways. The importance of the rivers in the distribution of settlement and routeways should not be underestimated.

Far more research is needed to understand the different process of enclosure in the Weald of Kent, especially in the understanding the medieval settlement and expansion. Further research is needed on the division of land with their farmsteads into yokes, yardlands, sulungs, virgates etc. and interpreting medieval manorial surveys with the actual territories in the landscape. Research into the assarting process and the development of the Saxon dens is also needed.

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