

# The Parish of HORSMONDEN

## HISTORIC LANDSCAPE CHARACTERISATION

### REVISION OF KENT HLC (2000)



December 2016

**THE REVISION OF THE KENT HLC**

**FOR**

**THE BOROUGH  
OF  
ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS**

**Summary Report**  
**Parish of Horsmonden**

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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).**

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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 Horsmonden  
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 Horsmonden forms part of a district wide revision of the Kent HLC (2000). Four parishes in the east of the district have been completed (Goudhurst, Hawkhurst, Cranbrook & Benenden) and the remaining parishes are being undertaken as part of a rolling programme of phased characterisation. 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 Horsmonden. 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). The parish of Horsmonden together with the following three parishes (Capel, Brenchley and Frittenden) form the second phase of the Kent HLC (2001) Revision for the Borough of Tunbridge Wells.

**2. Historic context of parish of Horsmonden**

The civil parish of Horsmonden approximately coincides with the historic ecclesiastical parish boundary; the exception being the in the north-west where Horsmonden now incorporates part of Yew Tree Green which formerly lay in Brenchley parish. To the south west the area of Hayle Farm formerly lay within the parish of Lamberhurst. The eastern boundary of the historic parish is formed by the River Teise. At its northern end the parish extends in to the valley of the River Medway. The civil parish lies within the Hundred of Brenchley and Horsmonden, a hundred which post-dates 1086 and which was called Brenchley only according to Hasted *ibid* p280). The parish is long and thin four miles by one to two miles in width.

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Horsmonden parish is located on the northern edge of the High Weald and comprises gently undulating land with small streams flowing in a general north easterly direction towards the River Teise and the River Medway. The western boundary (abutting that of Brenchley) follows small streams and tributaries flowing northwards to the Medway. The southern boundary abuts the wooded landscape of Lamberhurst deeper into the High Weald.



Extract from *Hasted Hundred of Brenchley and Horsmonden* (1797)

The underlying geology is dominated by Tunbridge Wells Sand formation which occurs through much of the middle part of the parish. To the north from Baybrooks to August Pitts Farm Weald Clay occurs with Brick earth and river alluvium in the Medway vale. The eastern boundary of the valley of the River Teise and its tributaries also comprise stoneless alluvium. At the southern end Wadhurst Clay outcrops around the area of Rectory Park and

Spelmonden. Whilst in the valley by Elphicks Farm and the church of St Margarets, Ashdown Beds occur. Exploitation of the ironstone in the Wadhurst Clay and the bedded sandstone in the Ashdown Beds is in evidence by the numerous quarries and small ponds (flooded extraction pits) surviving in the woodland.

Horsmonden like Brenchley is located on the edge of Wealden swine pasture area, where it joins with the meadow lands of the valley of the Medway. The historic settlement pattern together with place-name evidence preserves the wood pasture and wooded landscape origin. Running from north to south is a prehistoric route and old iron and drove way from Maidstone into the heart of the Weald (B2162) along which Saxon dens (now historic farmsteads) were aligned. Witney identifies this old route through the place-names of pits and street such as August Pitts Farm and Hazel Street where there was re-use of a Romano-British route by Saxon farmers (Witney 1976, 27). The use of the River Medway and the River Teise as transport corridors is also not to be underestimated in the influence in the location of historic settlement in Horsmonden.

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. The area of Horsmonden lay in the large and powerful lathe of Aylesford. The dens of the Manors of Gillingham and Maidstone alternated along the droveway from the Medway into the higher ground at Horsmonden. Both these manors belonged to the Archbishop of Canterbury. As colonisation spread into the Weald those dens around the edge where probably settled much earlier than those deeper into the Weald. Place-name evidence can be an indication age of settlements, as shown in the neighbouring parish of Brenchley. Those names which preserve the root word 'inga' indicating a folk name are an indication of earlier Saxon settlement. The '*den*' of the people '*inga*' of [personal name]. There are three such names in Horsmonden – Badmonden, Baiden and Radmonden (now Hazel Street) all of which lie on or near to the main north-south drove. The Wealden manor of Horsmonden itself comprised other dens belonging to the Manor of Maidstone, which included Spelmonden, Radmonden (now Hazel Street) and the Manor of Grovehurst. The church and its small hamlet lie about a quarter of a mile south of the village on a spur of rising ground overlooking a confluence of River Teise with several of its tributaries, where the main drove way fords the river. The river may have provided an important communication route along which transport wood timber and other products from the Weald down to Maidstone (to avoid the routes during winter times). Villages tended to develop around routeway junctions to take advantage of trade and as centres where fairs and markets could be held, hence the probable separation of the village from its church.

In addition to the ancient grazing pastures, Witney identifies a large area of Saxon royal forest land in Horsmonden centred at Shirrenden on the parish boundary but which also included Horsmonden Heath (now the site of the village) and the ancient manor of Lewis

Heath (Witney 1976, 65). This area of heath or early medieval 'forest' hunting ground can still be traced on the maps by the heath place-names and by the surviving field pattern [See Section 3.6 p11 below]. Hasted also marks the heath on the maps of the Kent hundreds. The heath became part of the Archbishops land holding which in turn he granted to the Clares of Tonbridge in 1171 (Witney 1976, p231).

Edward Hasted in 1797 describes the landscape of the parish of Horsmonden *as being a surface of continued hill and dale [from Lamberhurst] with the village built around a small green called 'Horsmonden heath', with the rest of the houses being dispersed singly over different parts of it. ... It is much interspersed with coppice woods of oak, especially on the west and north sides of it, where the soil abounds with iron ore; the whole is much covered with fine spreading oak trees....* [Hasted 1797. Vol. V p311-312].

Hasted is describing a medieval landscape which had remained relatively unaltered for centuries. Apart from the green in the village, three other greens are recorded, on the west side at Yew tree Green on the border with Brenchley. Busheys Green lies near Churn Lane in the north of the parish and Wrangling Green which lies on the parish boundary with Brenchley west of Yew Tree Green. Greens are often remnants of small commons or unenclosed former wood pasture of the Early medieval dens.

However by the beginning of the 19th century top fruit, orchards and hop grounds were being laid out across the parish, sometimes removing hedges and shaws in the process. The coming of the railway provided a transport system whereby fresh fruit could be delivered to markets in London and further afield. Many groups of medieval and early post-medieval field systems were swept away as regular-shaped orchards were established. The station was located close to the village and encouraged the development of domestic development close by.

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

Some examples of the digitising of Horsmonden 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 of this project has been completed and is presented in a GIS project for the parishes of Speldhurst, Southborough, Royal Tunbridge Wells and Pembury. Capel and Brenchley (with Matfield) have been completed for Phase 2 with Frittenden to be undertaken. Only 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.

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

Map 1 shows the broad HLC type for the Kent Phase 1 for the civil parish of Horsmonden. The HLC for Kent was one of the earliest HLCs to be undertaken in England and was produced using a very broad-brush approach to the characterisation. The broad character areas of Horsmonden can clearly be seen. Horticulture dominates the historic character with settlement centred on the east-west route across the parish and around the small hamlet of Baiden. Woodland is confined for the most part to the south of the parish.



The north of the parish in the Medway valley is characterised by the valley floor enclosures. The parkland of The Rectory is also shown.

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

Map 2 shows the broad HLC type for the revised Kent HLC for the Borough of Tunbridge Well. The finer-grained approach to the data capture can clearly be seen. The scattered settlement pattern described by Hasted is shown by the historic farmsteads many of which have designed landscapes associated with them indicating a higher level of modern gentrification of settlement. Larger areas of woodland in the southern part of the parish but there is a higher incidence of scattered pockets of woodland in the centre of the parish highlighting the wooded character of the landscape.

### **3.3 The HLC Types for present day landscape of Horsmonden**

Map 3 shows the HLC types for Horsmonden. The overall historic character is one of farming, in particular dominated by orchards, which blanket the areas to the north and south of the village, in the areas which were once former medieval heath. Intermixed with the orchards are fragments of the older field systems. To the north and south east of the parish are larger areas of modern field amalgamation which in a number of cases clearly area associated with a farmstead such as Church and Park Farms in the south, August Pitts Farm in the north west and the area of Bassets and Bennets Farm to the north. The loss of so many boundaries is the result of modern farming techniques dating from the mid-C19. Field enlargement coincided with both the development and installation of clay land drains and the laying out of the railway. The main land use change however was the development of orchards, which are such a strong landscape character today. The installation of land drains was easier in larger fields and these new layouts were suitable for the planting up of extensive orchards. The laying out of modern orchards in the early C20 and their subsequent grubbing in the late C20 has resulted in large areas of the parish undergoing significant landscape change since the Late post-medieval period. This can be seen in Map 7. However Many of the older orchards are laid out within the existing field patterns, thus preserving the pattern and field boundaries, such as the area south of the present village. Looking at the OS 25" 1<sup>st</sup> Edition or the Tithe map clearly shows the 'grain' of the field patterns running north to south aligned with the ancient droveways.

Historic field systems pre-dating the orchard growing are rare in this parish. Remnants of the assart field systems lie close to gill woods, for example at Pullens and Ruck Farms in the south west of the parish. Along the valley of the River Teise are irregular fields which may be medieval enclosures for hay meadows. The large moated site at Share Farm appears to be associated with these field systems.

Modern paddocks are a feature around settlement, together with the larger designed (or laid out) gardens associated with converted farmsteads or larger detached country properties, such as the hamlet north of Grovehurst.

Hop growing was an extensive land use and dominated the early 19th century character. Hop gardens were difficult to identify on the 1940 RAF AP and the limit on time meant that a systematic search of the Tithe map schedules was not undertaken. Thus some of the areas identified as orchards are likely to have been hop gardens.

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

Map 4 shows the projected period of origin for each historic character type in the present landscape of Horsmonden based on the historic map evidence and understanding of the Kent landscape. As with Brenchley and Capel, Horsmonden is a landscape dominated by Early modern and 20th century historic character under-pinned by the medieval structure of routeways, field patterns, historic settlement and woodlands. Sixteen years on from the Kent Phase 1 HLC in 2000 has revealed a landscape where extensive areas of orchards have been converted to arable lands, for example in the north of the parish around Paddock Wood or around the core of the parish. Early medieval and medieval character is confined to the areas of woodland and associated assart fields with scattered medieval farmsteads. The meadows and enclosures within the river valley are also likely to be of medieval origin as well, given that hay was essential for the over-wintering of stock.

Elements of that past historic landscape character still may survive within the present landscape, for example some of the field boundaries for the older field systems in the areas of modern field amalgamation or within present layout of orchards. These boundaries can also be the remnants of the older parishes, manors, and farmsteads.

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

Map 5 shows only the HLC broad type for Enclosures by HLC type for Horsmonden. This is an example of how the HLC can be queried in order to assess the different historic character types. The rural landscape is dominated by the patterns of enclosures (but not including the orchards) and it can be seen that Horsmonden is dominated by modern field amalgamation and smaller paddocks, the result of the railway, agricultural improvements and changes in cropping regimes in the modern era. The areas of modern field amalgamation occur on the lower ground close to the valley of the Medway where the soils and topography enabled changes and improvements in cultivation techniques to take place. The modern fields are also closely associated with areas of abandoned fruit growing. The assart fields occur as fragmented groups in the southern and western parts of the parish, following the edge of the High Weald. The fragments of formal planned fields can also be seen and they are closely associated with areas of 'green' or common.

Map 6 gives an indication of this where the same polygons have been illustrated by the Boundary type attribute (which does include some areas of orchards). The vale of the Medway and Teise can be identified by the fields bounded by ditches. The boundaries formed of hedges tend to occur in the northern part of the parish with wooded hedges tending to occur more to the southern part, accentuating the wooded nature of this part of the parish. The Grass balks are associated with modern field amalgamation at Park and Church Farms. In parts these wooded hedges are all that remain of the former woodland that did occur across parts of this area. Wooded hedges are either outgrown hedges (due to lack of management) or wider wooded shaws. The fences are evidence of paddocks, laid out in

an older field system and due to the frequency of such enclosures around settlement, fences appear to dominate these areas.

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

Map 7 is a composite map of the present HLC overlain with those polygons where the previous historic landscape character can be identified from the historic mapping. Each time there is a change in the historic character 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.

This is the landscape that Hasted describes being wooded, with the fine spreading oaks. These oaks would have occupied the wooded shaws and hedges of the medieval field pattern which is indicated by the dominance of cohesive (or semi-planned) assart fields.

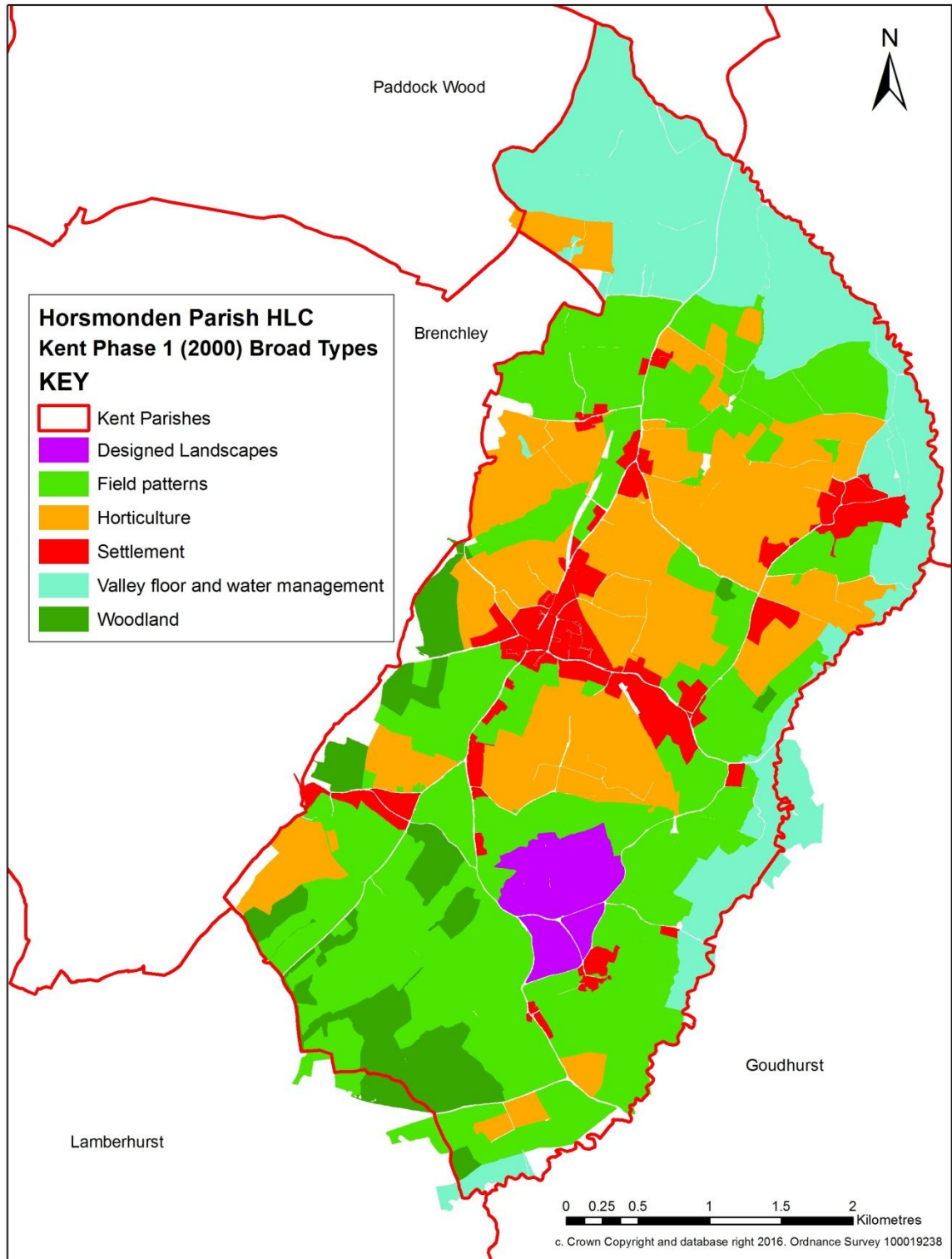
Horsmonden is an interesting parish in that despite the extensive Early modern and 20<sup>th</sup> century farming practices, the medieval character still survives. The routeways provide the prehistoric and Romano-British framework to which many field patterns are aligned. At the northern end of the parish are remains of co-axial fields (or ladder type) fields close to August Pitts Farm. Possible strip fields lay within the lower reaches of the Teise, where small regular fields are aligned to the water-courses. The area of Horsmonden Heath can be traced by the regular co-axial field pattern to the south of the village between the stream at the north and the edge of Rectory Park to the south (and together with the 'heath' place-names, and other names such as 'Warreners', and 'Sandy Pitt') indicate the potential extent of the heath. This field pattern is similar to one identified over the county boundary in the parish of Frant (East Sussex) where enclosure of part of the Royal forest of Waterdown took place. To the east of the 'heath' is a small group of irregular fields or assarts indicating the clearance of a former enclosed woodland (just north of Nevergood Farm). Enclosed woods were often closely associated with Saxon wood pastures as a source of coppice underwood for fencing etc. for example the surviving wood pasture system of Ashtead Common in Surrey.

Another group of co-axial fields occurred close to the early medieval manor of Grovehurst, where they are aligned between a north-south lane and the River Teise.

The origins and antiquity of the regular informal fields is difficult to assess, but these fields could date from the early post-medieval due to field re-organisation or may even be medieval in date. A large group are associated with Church Farm and Park Farms along the valley of the Teise. The modern aerial photographs show crop marks in the modern fields which suggest that there was a field system different to the regular informal fields shown on the historic mapping.

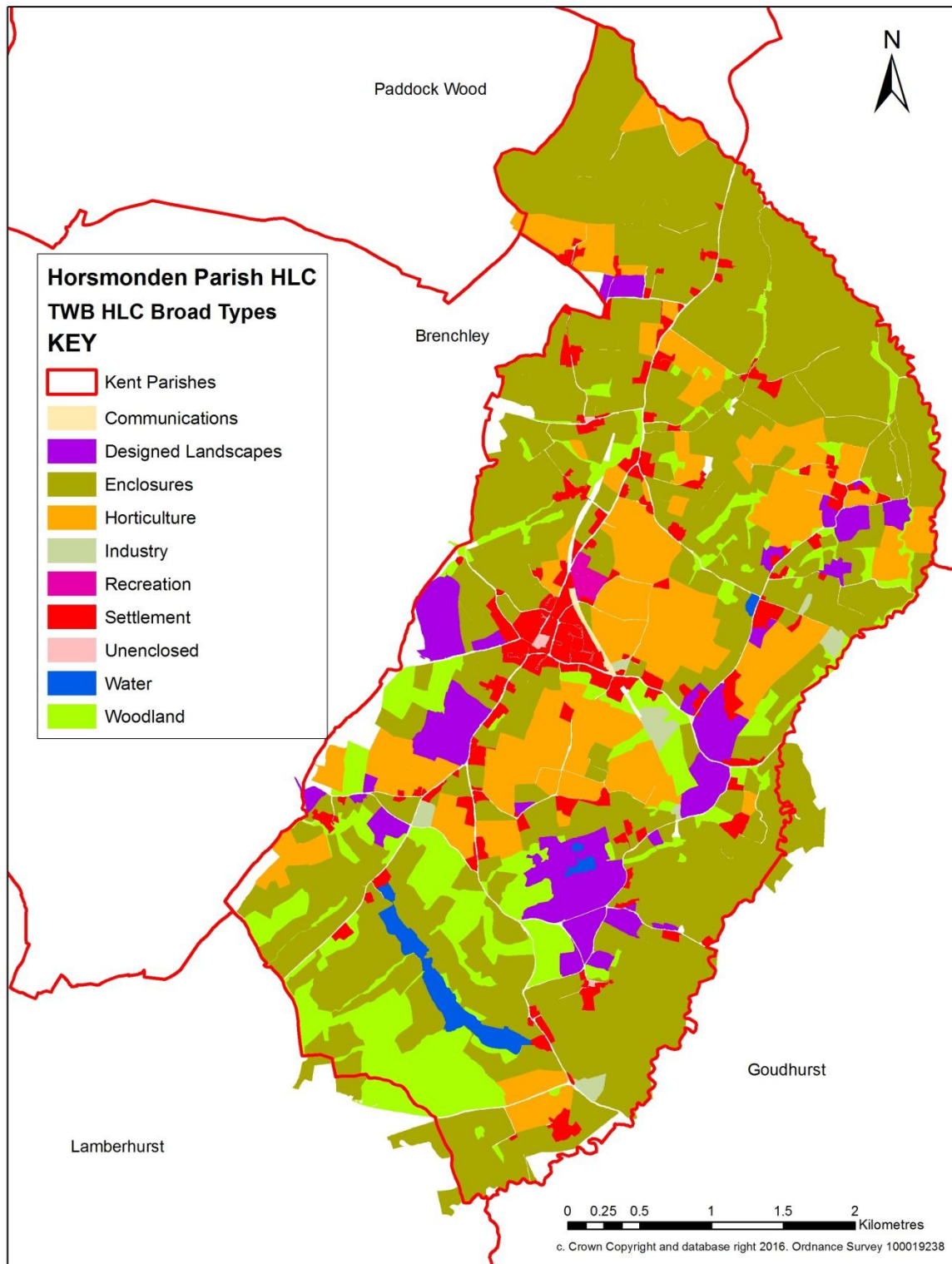
BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
REVISED KENT HLC (2000)  
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MAPS



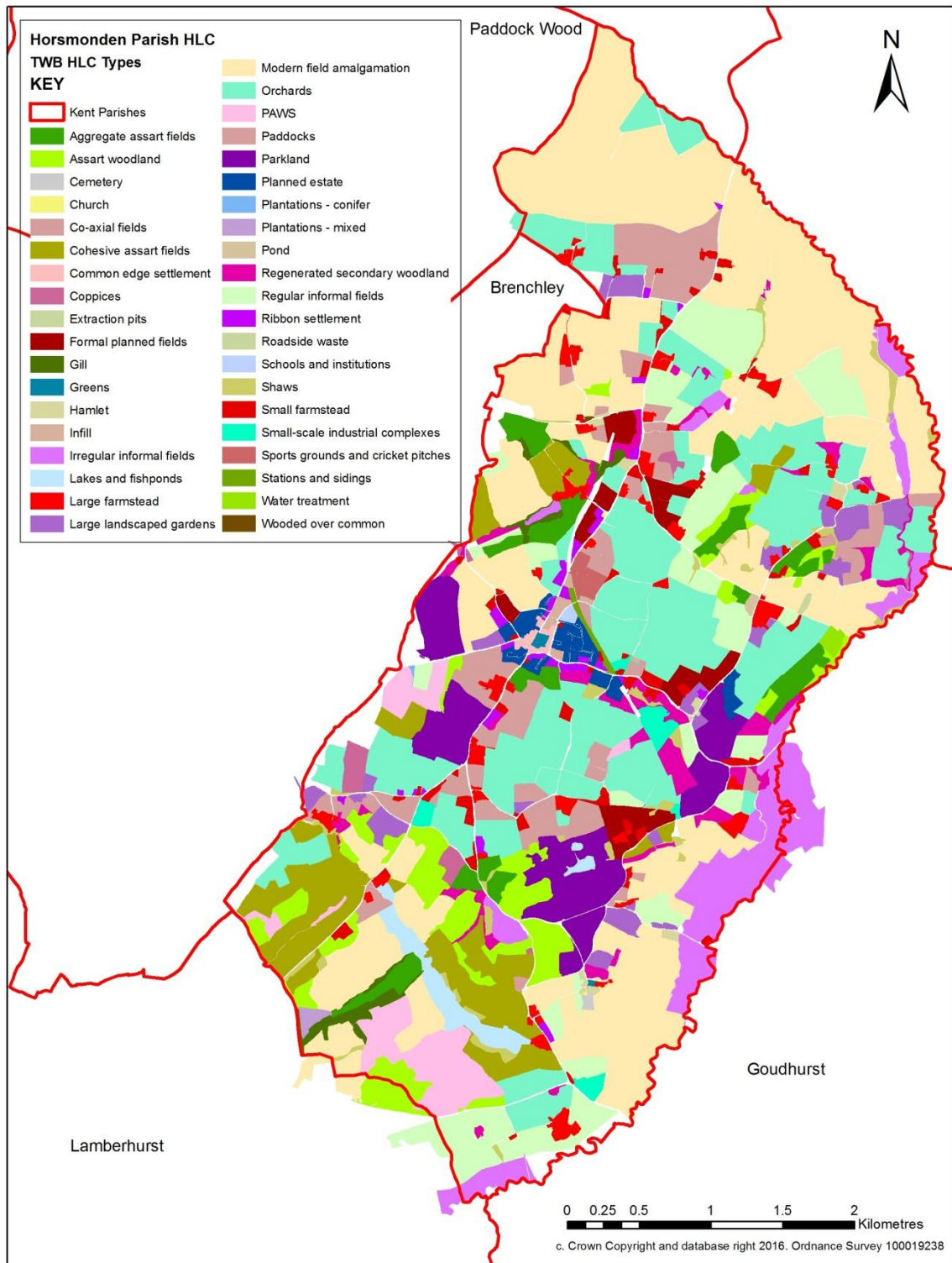
Map 1

BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
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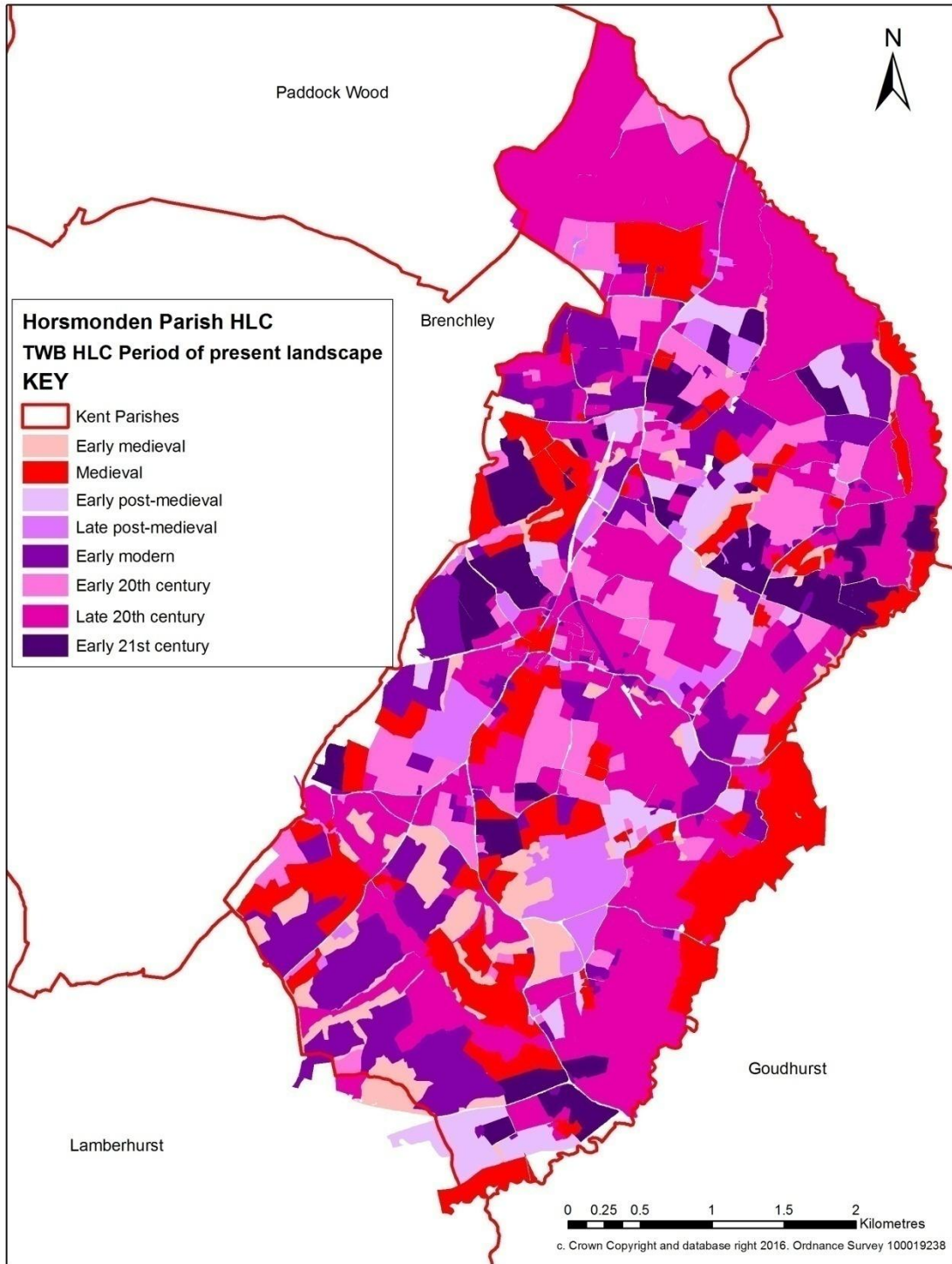
Map 2

**BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
REVISED KENT HLC (2000)  
PARISH OF HORSMONDEN**



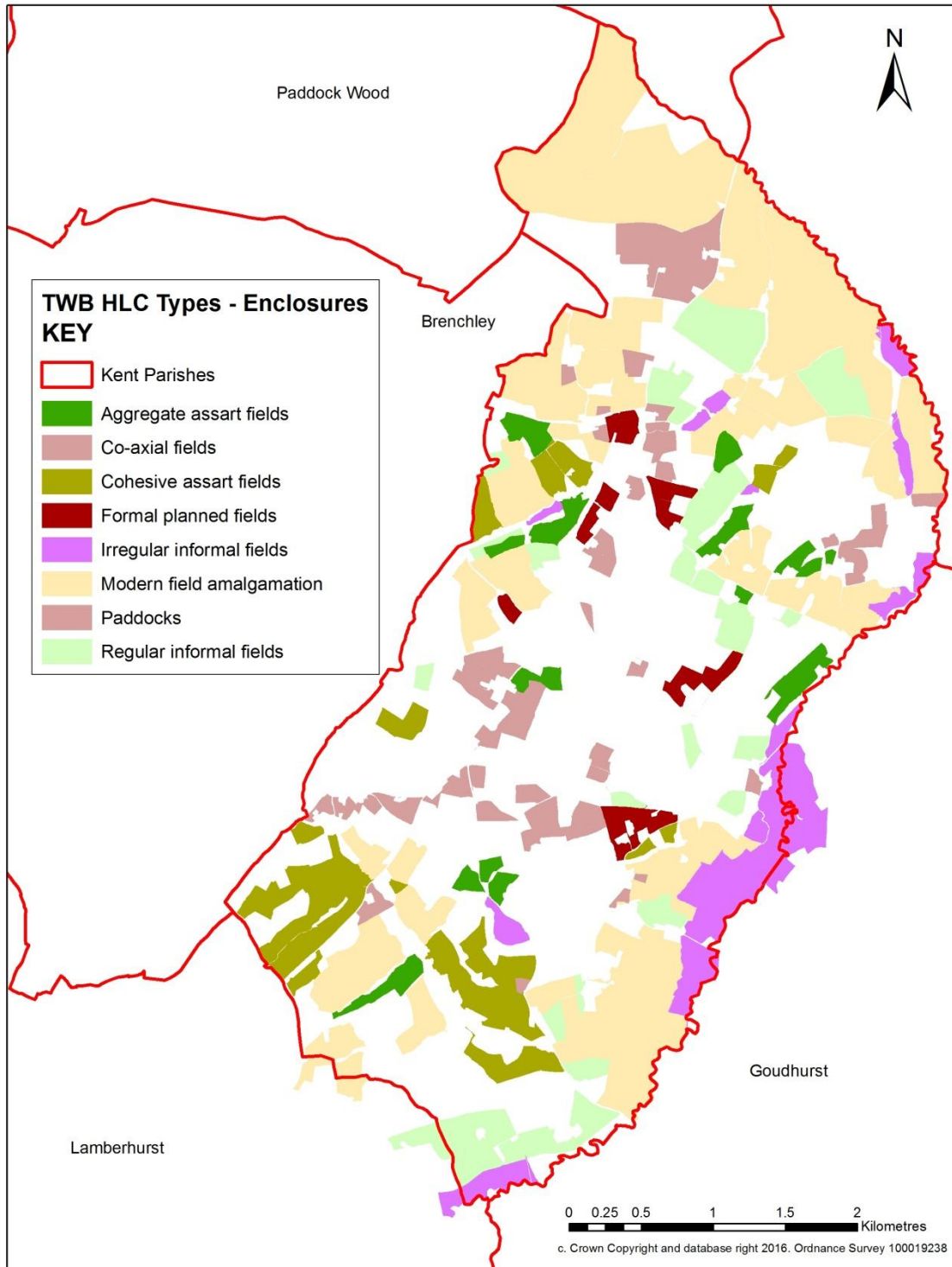
Map 3

BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
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Map 4

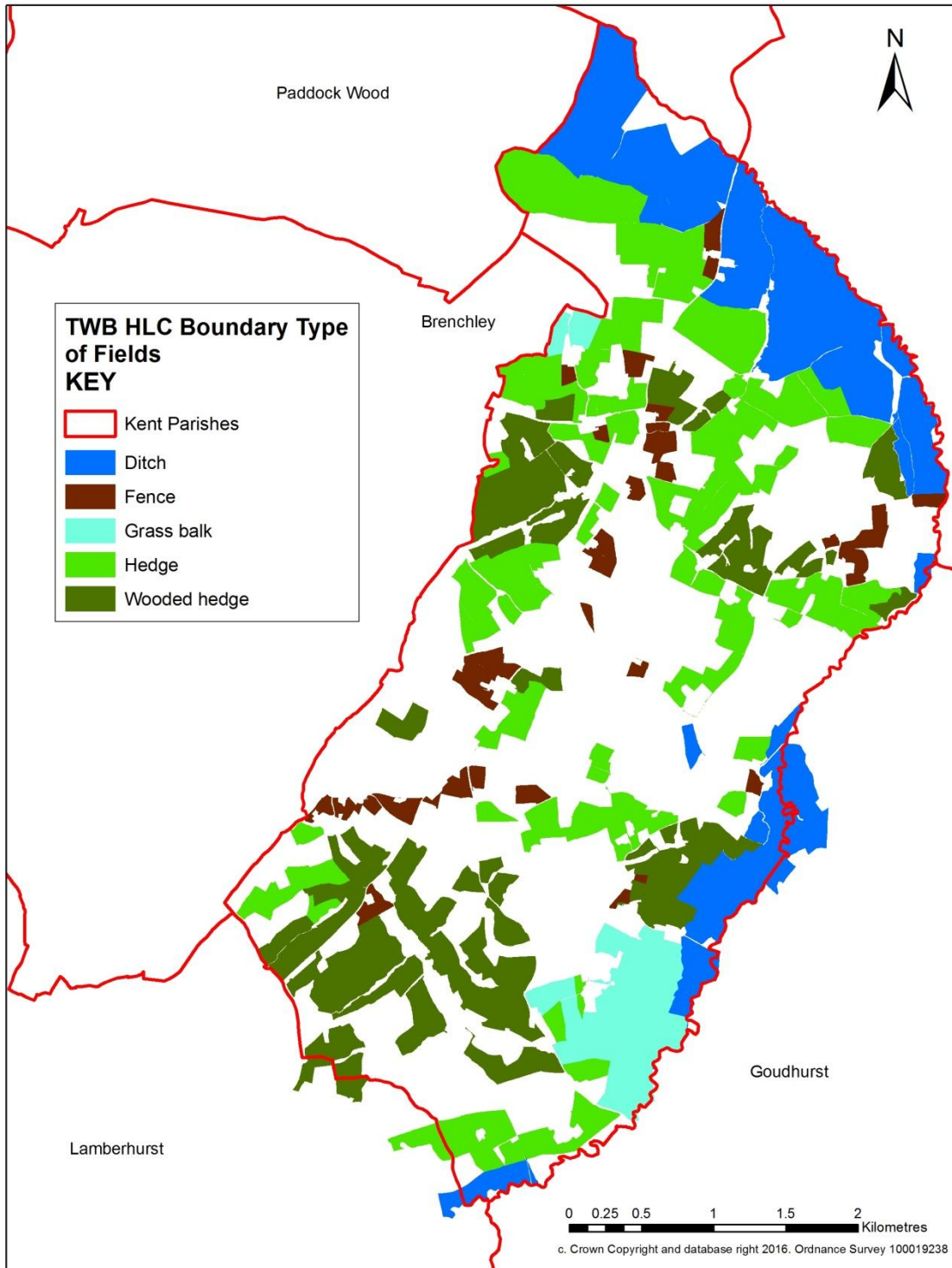
BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
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Map 5

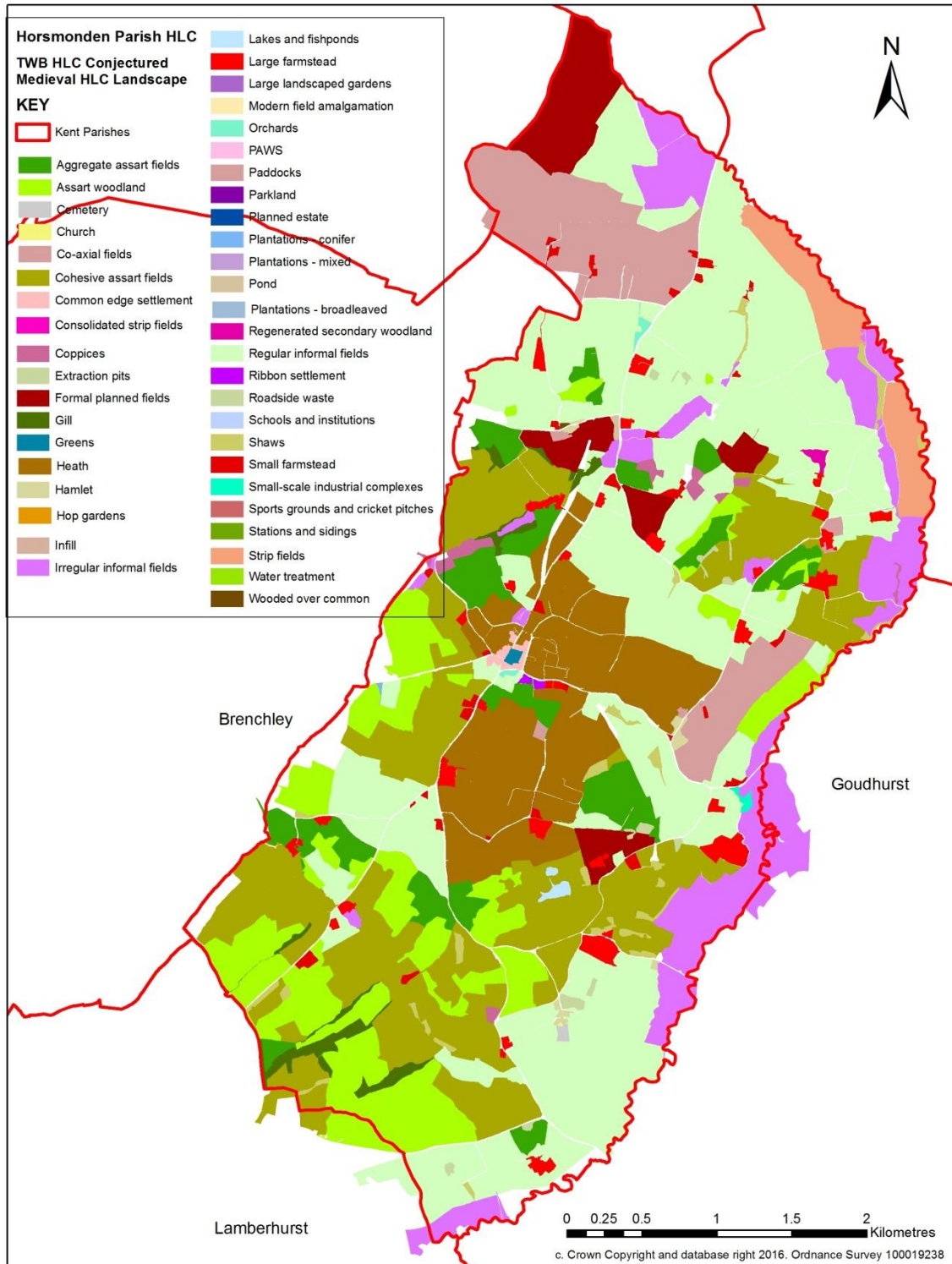


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Map 6

**BOROUGH OF ROYAL TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
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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 Horsmonden is essentially of a post-medieval character which is under-pinned by the medieval and early medieval origins in its layout. The historic character of Horsmonden reflects both the ancient landscapes (antiquity) and the modern landscapes (time-depth). The changes in the C19 and C20 with the development and then gradual decline in orchards growing are shown across the whole of the parish 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. Horsmonden is a parish with considerable recorded medieval history, which in turn can still be identified on the ground through the survival of historic landscape features. The fragmented field patterns which still survive are evidence of how the landscape was farmed in the medieval and early post-medieval periods. The grain of the historic character of Horsmonden is still evident today including the extent of the 'lost' heath or Saxon royal forest.

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