

# SOUTHBOROUGH AND HIGH BROOMS

## Design Guidelines and Codes

Final report  
April 2024



## Quality information

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## Revision History

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# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4. Design guidelines and codes</b>	<b>41</b>
	1.1 Purpose and process	5		4.1 Introduction	41
	1.2 Policy context	6		4.2 Part 1: General design considerations	42
	1.3 Area of study	8		4.3 Part 2: Key design guidance	44
	1.4 Stakeholder engagement	10			
<b>2</b>	<b>2. Place Analysis</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5. Checklist</b>	<b>72</b>
	2.1 History and heritage	13			
	2.2 Landscape and spatial setting	20			
	2.3 Connectivity and movement	24			
<b>3</b>	<b>3. Character Study</b>	<b>27</b>			
	3.1 Defining the character areas	27			
	3.2 SWOT analysis	38			





Introduction

01



# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose and process

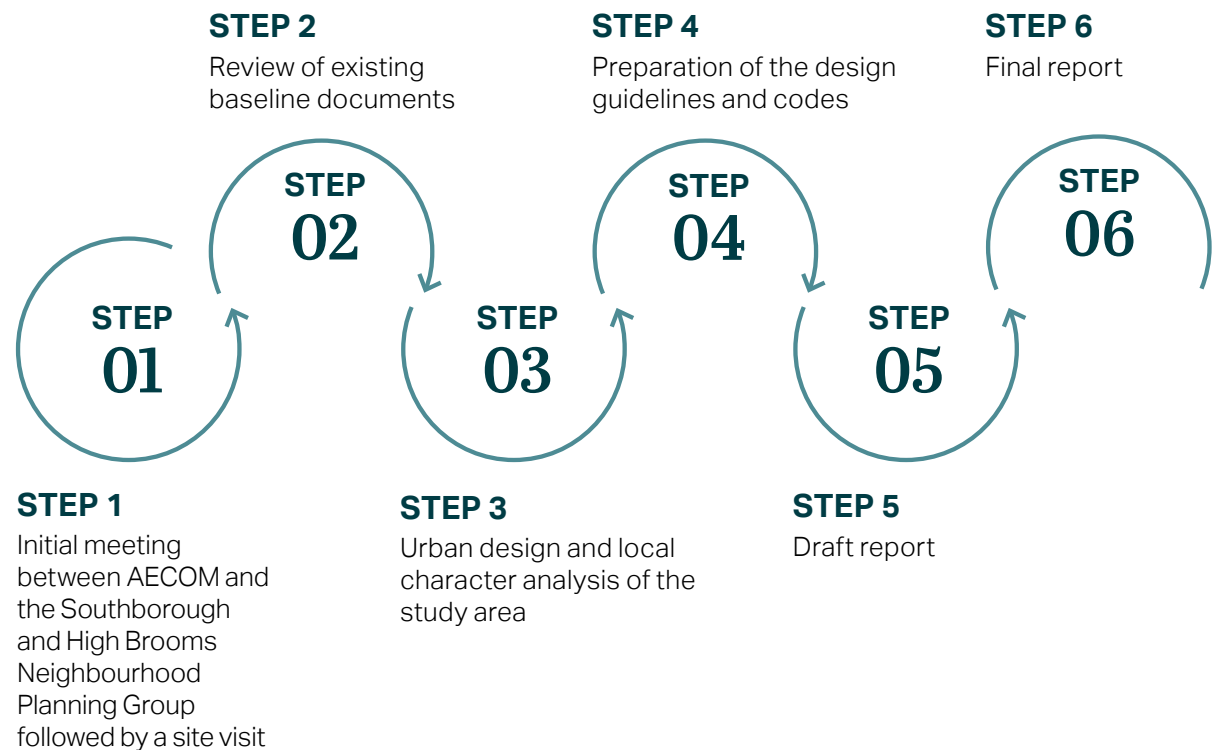
The general design guidelines and specific codes set out in this report will provide a detailed framework that should be followed by any future design proposals that come forward within the neighbourhood area to ensure it meets a consistent, high quality standard of design and positively contributes to the unique character of Southborough.

It is intended that this report becomes an integral part of the Southborough Neighbourhood Development Plan by informing policies that will influence the design of new development and have weight in the planning process.

To help guide the reader, content and section references are colour coded for ease of navigation. The report is distinguished in two parts:

- **Introduction, Place Analysis, Character Study**
- **Design guidelines and codes, Checklist** as the 'reference' section.

The following steps were agreed with the Neighbourhood Plan Review Group to produce this report, which draws upon policy development and engagement work undertaken by the Group:



## 1.2 Policy context

This section outlines the national and local planning policy and guidance documents which should be read in conjunction with this design guide.

### 1.2.1 NATIONAL POLICY AND GUIDANCE

#### **National Planning Policy Framework** Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities | 2023

The NPPF sets out the nationwide planning policies and government's expectations on how these should be applied. The document was updated in September 2023 to meet the current challenges of climate change, flooding and coastal resilience. As a result, the update can be a useful tool in decision-making processes to make the most of and improve existing renewable energy capacities.

The NPPF requires all local planning authorities to prepare design guides or codes consistent with the national guidance documents. The previous NPPF update in 2021, introduced references to the National Design Guide and National Model Design Code and the use of area, neighbourhood, and site-specific design guides, in order to ensure good quality and context sensitive design.

#### **Building for a Healthy Life** Homes England | 2020

Building for a Healthy Life (BHL) is the Government endorsed industry standard for well designed homes and neighbourhoods. The BHL toolkit sets out principles to help guide discussions on planning applications and to help local planning authorities to assess the quality of proposed (and completed) developments, but can also provide useful prompts and questions for planning applicants to consider during the different stages of the design process.

#### **National Design Guide**

Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities | 2019

The National Design Guide 2019 illustrates how well designed places that are beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice.

#### **National Model Design Code**

Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities | 2021

The National Model Design Code 2021 provides detailed guidance on the production of design codes, guides and policies to promote successful design. It expands on 10 characteristics of good design set out in the National Design Guide. This guide should be used as reference for new development.

#### **Manual for Streets**

Department of Transport | 2007

Development is expected to respond positively to the Manual for Streets 2007, the Government's guidance on how to design, construct, adopt and maintain new and existing residential streets. It promotes streets and wider development that avoid car dominated layouts but that do place the needs of pedestrians and cyclists first.



## 1.2.2 LOCAL DESIGN GUIDANCE

### **Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council | 2010

The core strategy directs development on a particular course during the period up to 2026 by providing the overarching principles of the local development framework by which the essential development needs of the Borough will be delivered. This includes a spatial vision, strategic objectives, a delivery strategy and an implementation and monitoring framework. Core Policy 10: Development in Southborough states that Southborough will remain a town centre of distinctive character and development or redevelopment will serve to strengthen the sense of place, independent of Royal Tunbridge Wells, with approximately 300 net additional dwellings to be delivered across various sites.

### **Tunbridge Wells Submission Local Plan**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council | 2021

The emerging local plan, which covers the period 2020-2038 and is envisaged to be adopted by the end of 2024, sets out the spatial vision, strategic objectives, and the overarching development strategy for the borough and establishes the planning policy framework necessary to deliver them. Policy EN1: Sustainable Design states that all proposals for development will be required to satisfy criteria relating to design, character and site context; highway safety and access; water/flooding issues; landscape, trees and amenity; bio/geodiversity; residential amenity; crime reduction; design and construction guidance; and community engagement. Policy STR/SO 1: The Strategy for Southborough allocates approximately 42 new dwellings on two sites. Both have had planning permission and 16 are now built.

### **The Kent Design Guide**

Kent Design Initiative | 2005

This Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) seeks to provide a starting point for good design while retaining scope for creative, individual

approaches to different buildings and different areas. It aims to assist designers and others achieve high standards of design and construction by promoting a common approach to the main principles which underlie Local Planning Authorities' criteria for assessing planning applications. An updated guide is currently being prepared.

### **High Weald Housing Design Guide**

High Weald AONB Joint Advisory Committee (JAC) | 2019

As of November 2023 all designated *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty* (AONBs) in England and Wales become *National Landscapes*. The design guide helps achieve well-designed places and the conservation and enhancement of the National Landscape. The document is divided in three sections, 'Response to Setting', 'Making a Place', and 'The Right Details', providing guidance relating to the most common design issues, with a particular emphasis on tailoring design approaches and decisions to support the overall character and identity of the High Weald.

### **Site Allocations Local Plan**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council | 2016

This document outlines an area that spans across Royal Tunbridge Wells and Southborough that is designated as an Area of Change, where a wide range of sites have been allocated.

### **Southborough Conservation Area Appraisal**

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council | 2003

The appraisal outlines the boundary of the Conservation Area, describes its location and setting, archaeology and historical development, and sets out spatial and character analysis on the streetscape, gateways, listed buildings that contribute to the area's special character.

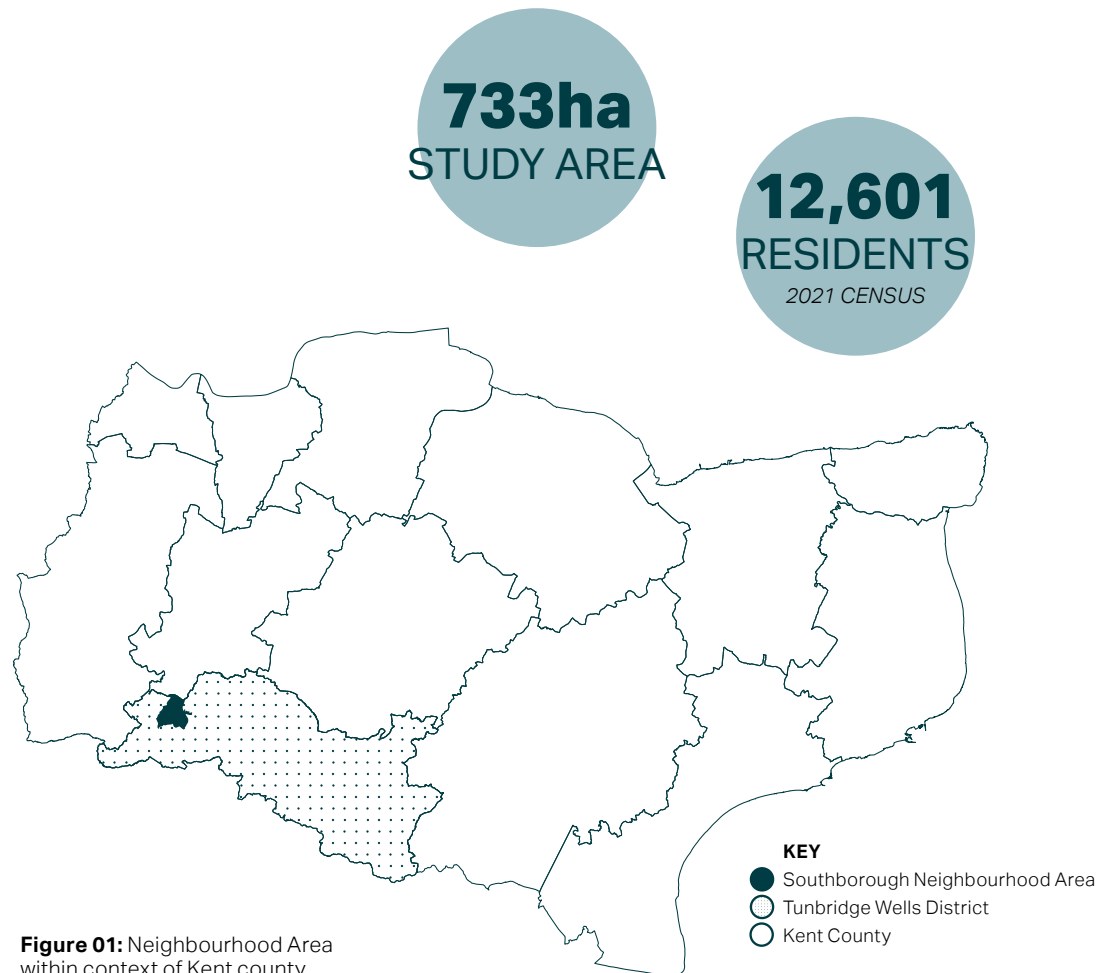
Other SPDs of relevance include the Tunbridge Wells Borough Landscape Character Assessment (2017), Southborough Conservation Area Appraisal (2003), Alterations and Extensions SPD (2006) and the Recreation Open Space SPD (2006).

## 1.3 Area of study

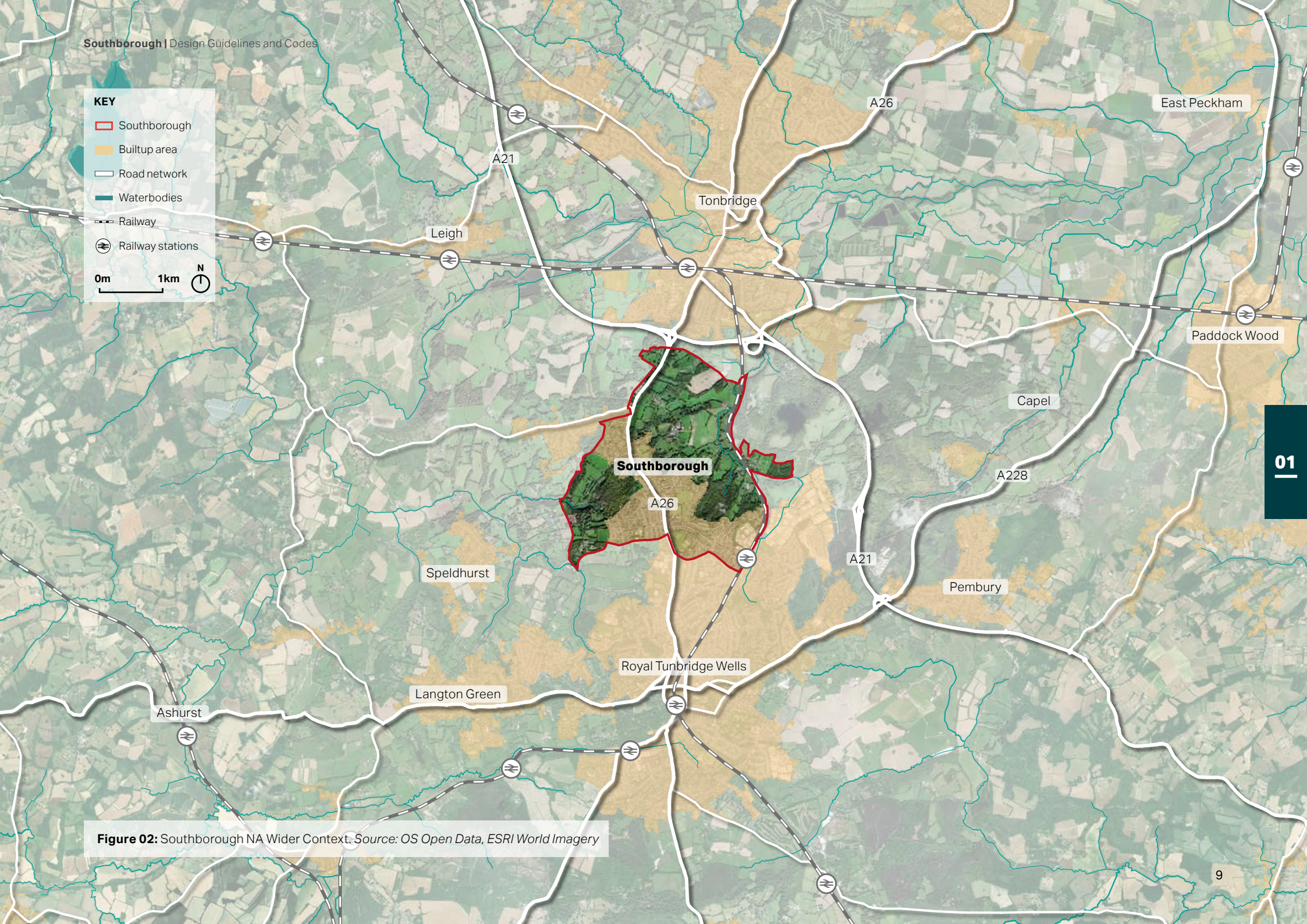
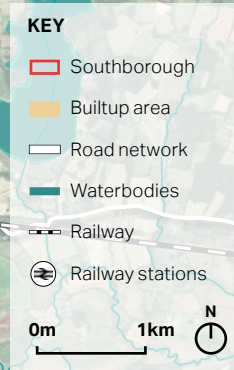
The Neighbourhood Area (NA) of Southborough is a civil parish within Kent, located in South East England and covers an area of approximately 733 hectares. The NA of Southborough includes Southborough town and also the historic settlement at High Brooms.

The A26 (London Road) is the principal route running north-south through the town, linking to Tonbridge in the north and Royal Tunbridge Wells in the south, approximately 2.5 miles from each. The Southeastern train line runs along the eastern boundary of the town, with the nearest stations at High Brooms, Tonbridge, and Tunbridge Wells.

Southborough boasts some outstanding natural beauty, best captivated by the areas which fall within the High Weald National Landscape. There are also a number of amenities in Southborough, including the civic centre, primary schools, cricket club, football club, multiple shops and supermarkets on the High Street (London Road). Surrounding villages such as Bidborough rely on Southborough services.







**Figure 02:** Southborough NA Wider Context. Source: OS Open Data, ESRI World Imagery



## 1.4 Stakeholder engagement

A community engagement session was held during the Southborough Winter Fayre 2023 at the Civic Centre to seek views and opinions of the local residents concerning the design of housing in Southborough.

People were shown a set of posters including the photographs of local housing types and designs and were asked to answer the following questions:

- *Does this photo set a good example for the type of housing design we should be striving for in Southborough?*
- *What do you like about the design?*
- *What do you not like about this design?*

Some of the key points that were raised during the engagement session are illustrated overleaf.

The answers to the above questions were concentrated around themes and design elements related to:

- *Building appearance*
- *Materials and their relevance to the local area*
- *How buildings relate to one another and to the street or other public areas*
- *Building height and size*
- *Gardens*
- *Public space*
- *Boundary treatment (walls, hedges, paving etc.)*
- *Car parking*
- *General feel of the place*
- *How friendly it is for pedestrians and cyclists*
- *Sustainability (energy saving, efficient use of land, wildlife etc.)*



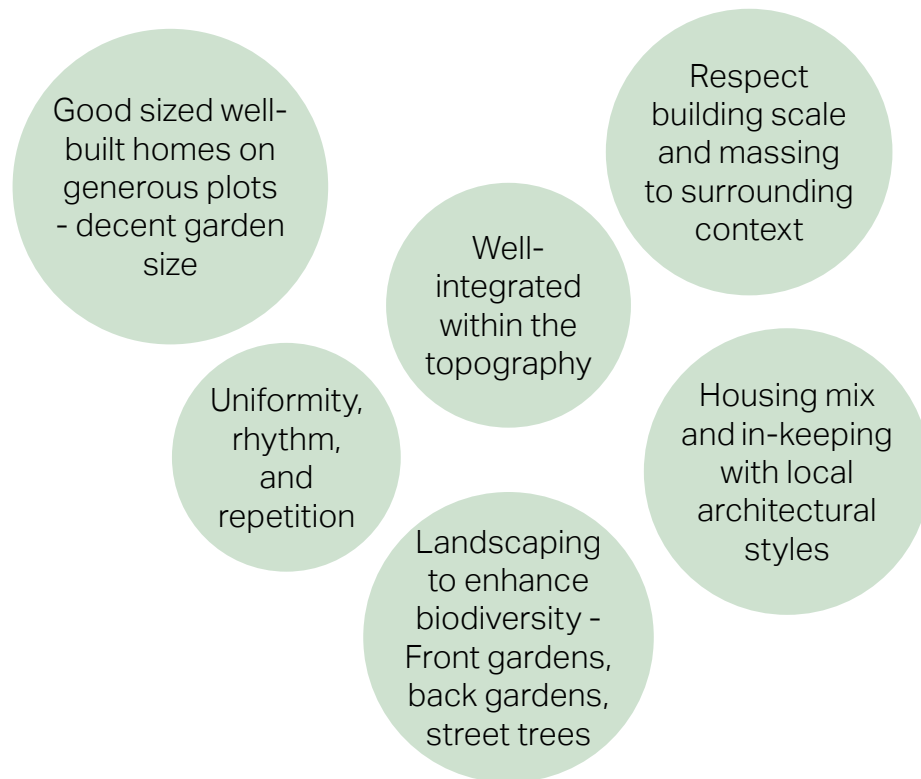
**Figure 03:** Southborough Winter Fayre 2023.  
Image Credit: <https://shillingsnaps.co.uk/southborough-street-winter-fayre-2023>



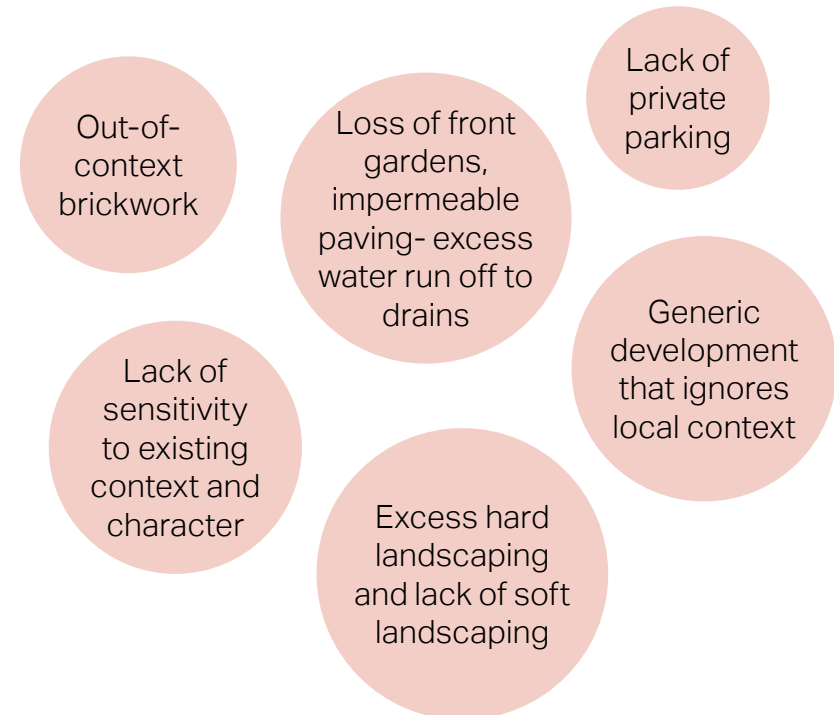
**Figure 04:** Examples of engagement posters produced by AECOM for the Southborough Winter Fayre 2023.



What people would like to see in new developments in Southborough:



What people would not like to see in new developments in Southborough:





**Place Analysis**

**02**



## 2. Place Analysis

**This section presents a snapshot of the Neighbourhood Area today to inform the design objectives of the Design Guidance and Codes. It provides an overview of Southborough and High Brooms' movement network, heritage, and landscape setting.**

### 2.1 History and heritage

#### Historic Origins

Southborough is an historic settlement with records dating back to pre-conquest period, archaeological remains of flint arrowheads and stone axeheads indicate early traces from the perhistoric period.

In the 11th century, William the Conqueror granted Richard Fitz Gilbert lands and bestowed the title Lowey of Tonbridge. The Manor of Southborough was one part of the Lowey.

Until the 16th century, most areas south of the Medway formed part of the Royal Forest of Southfrith, which was reserved by royalty for hunting. Settlements were established as isolated hamlets outside the royal preserve, including Nonsuch Green, Holden

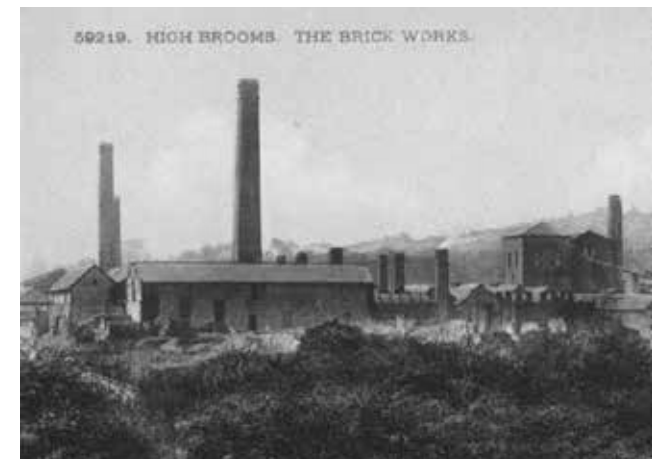
Corner, Modest Corner and a few houses near the Common. By 1639, Southborough is referred to as a hamlet of timber cottages.

#### Industrial Heritage

The Southborough NA has an extensive industrial heritage - stretching from the ironworks from the prehistoric period, to more recent history of gunpowder, cricket ball, and brick manufacturing. Between 1885 and 1968, the High Brooms Brick & Tile Company (HBBC) excavated clay in the area to manufacture local red bricks. The influence of the HBBC can still be seen within the architecture of both Southborough and High Brooms. High Brooms bricks were also used nationally. Some examples are Blackwall and Rotherhithe Tunnel.



**Figure 05:** Historic photograph of the High Street, London Road.  
Image Credit: <https://southboroughsociety.org.uk/southborough>



**Figure 06:** The High Brooms Brick Works.  
Image Credit: [Highbrooms Society on WordPress.com](https://highbroomsociety.wordpress.com)



## Conservation Area

The Southborough Conservation Area was originally designated in 1972. Buildings in the conservation area, principally date from the 16th and 20th centuries. The Conservation Area Appraisal outlines six different character areas, each with unique geographical, historic and physical relationships: The Bounds, The Common, Modest Corner, Holden Corner, Commonsides/The Broadway, The Parade/Park Road. Please refer to the Conservation Area Appraisal for more information on each.

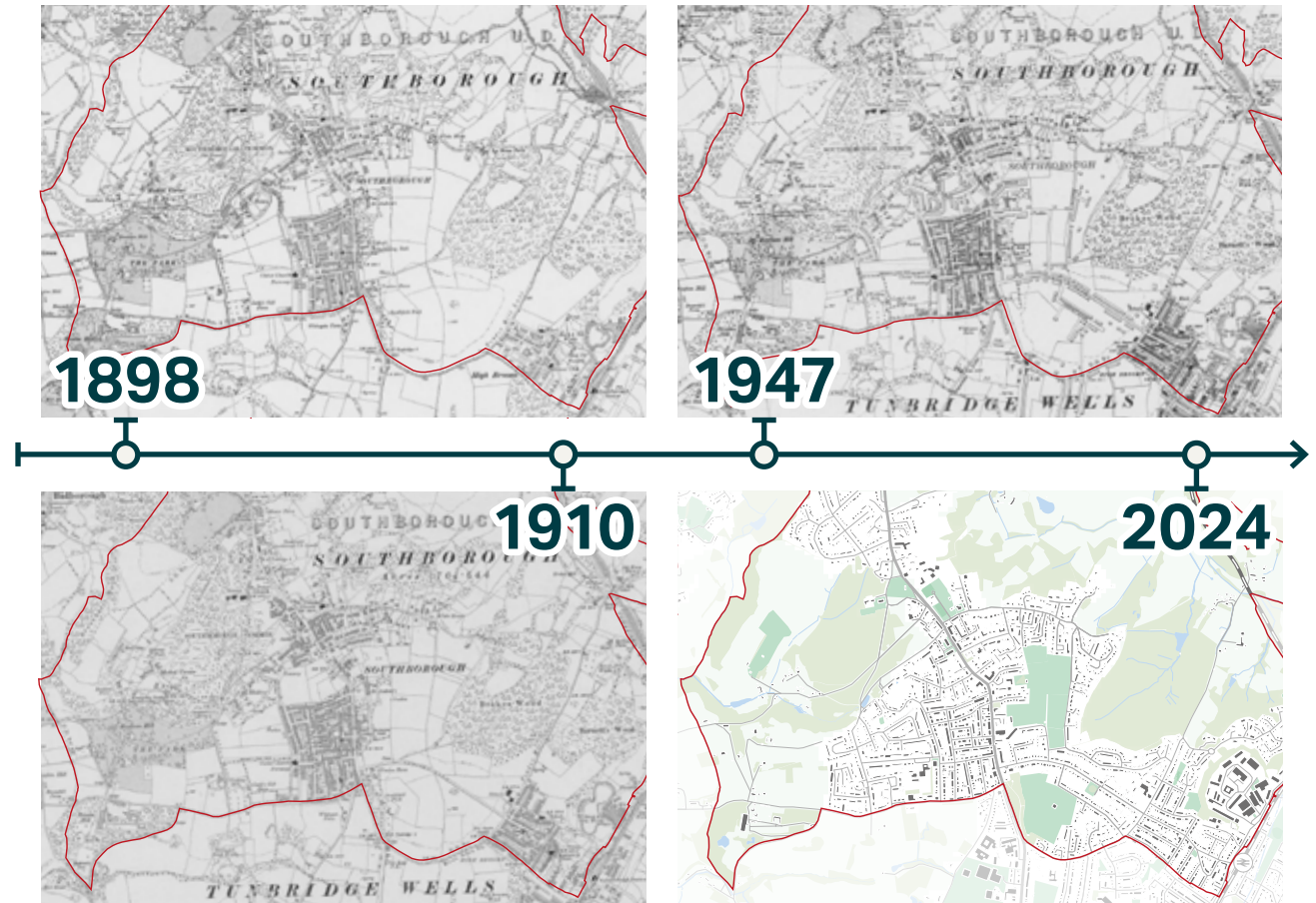
## Historic Parks and Gardens

Salomons and Bentham Hill House are notably listed within Kent Compendium's List of Historic Parks and Gardens as parks and gardens of local importance.<sup>1</sup>

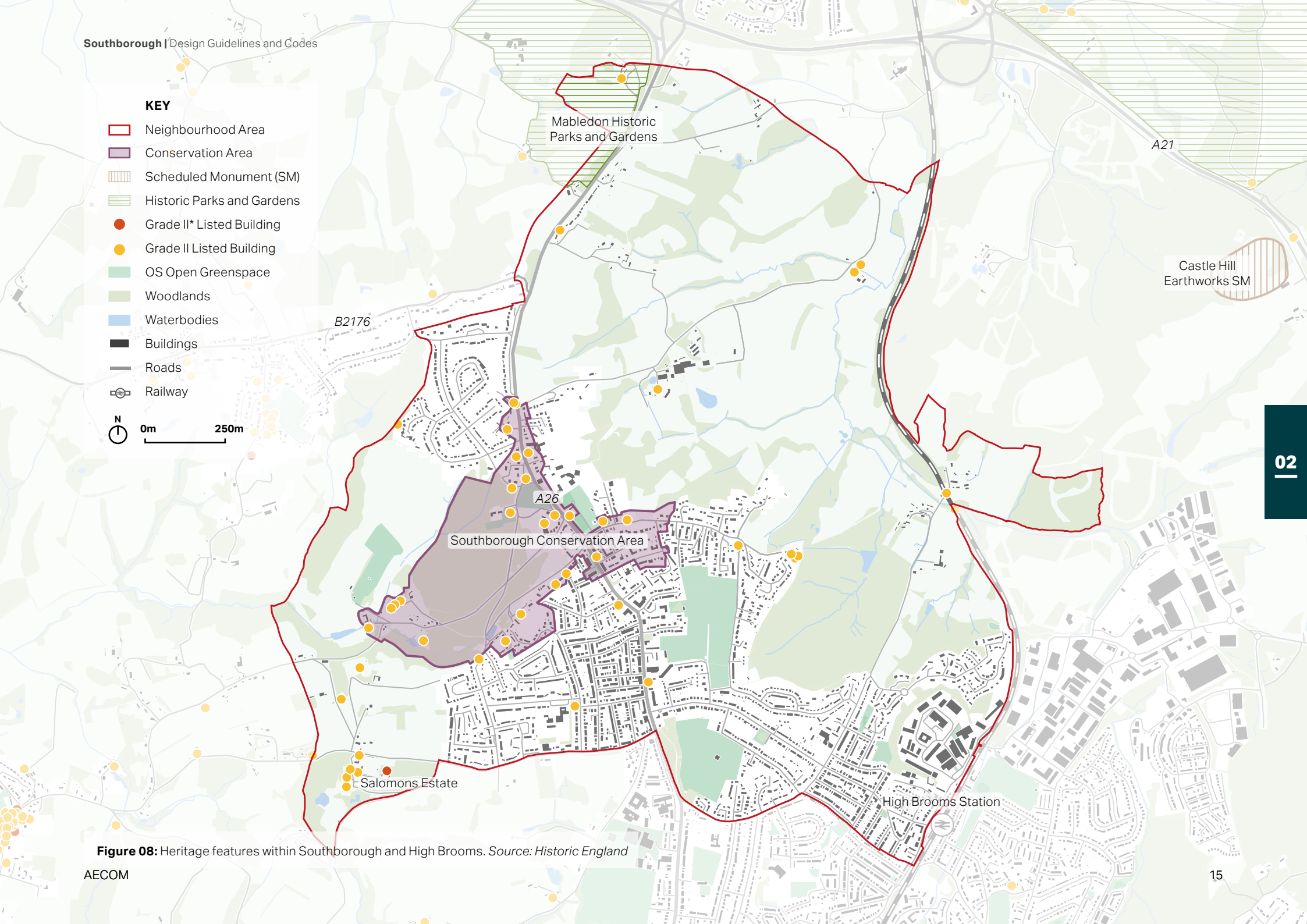
In addition to the above, some areas of the Mabledon estate falls within the boundary of Southborough. The gardens and parkland surrounding Mabledon are protected under Historic England's 'Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England'.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://thegardenstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Final-Historic-Pks-Gardens-Review\\_Sep10-1.pdf](https://thegardenstrust.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Final-Historic-Pks-Gardens-Review_Sep10-1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1001296>



**Figure 07:** Historic map timeline of Southborough from 1898 to 2024.  
Source: © 2024 National Library of Scotland



**Figure 08:** Heritage features within Southborough and High Brooms. Source: Historic England



## Listed Buildings

Southborough's rich architectural heritage is evident in the number of listed buildings. There are 50 Listed Buildings, one Grade II\* listed and 49 Grade II. The majority of these sit within the Conservation Area. Some notable Listings are below:

- Broomhill / Salomons Estate, features multiple listings, including the Grade II\* listed stables to east of salomons' house and other Grade II features;
- Church of St Peter, Grade II listed. Originally built in 1830 by Decimus Burton. Yellow- brick and sandstone;
- Former Weaver's Restaurant, Grade II listed. C16 L-shaped timber-framed hall house. Ground floor rebuilt in red brick; timber frame exposed above with plaster infilling;
- Ivy House Farm, Grade II listed. C.1460 L-shaped timber-framed house with plaster infilling and curved braces on 1st floor, except tile-hung west wing;
- Colebrook (or Southborough) Viaduct. Grade II listed. Built with red brick in 1845, with stringcourse and parapet above the arches.



Figure 10: David Salomons House & Estate.



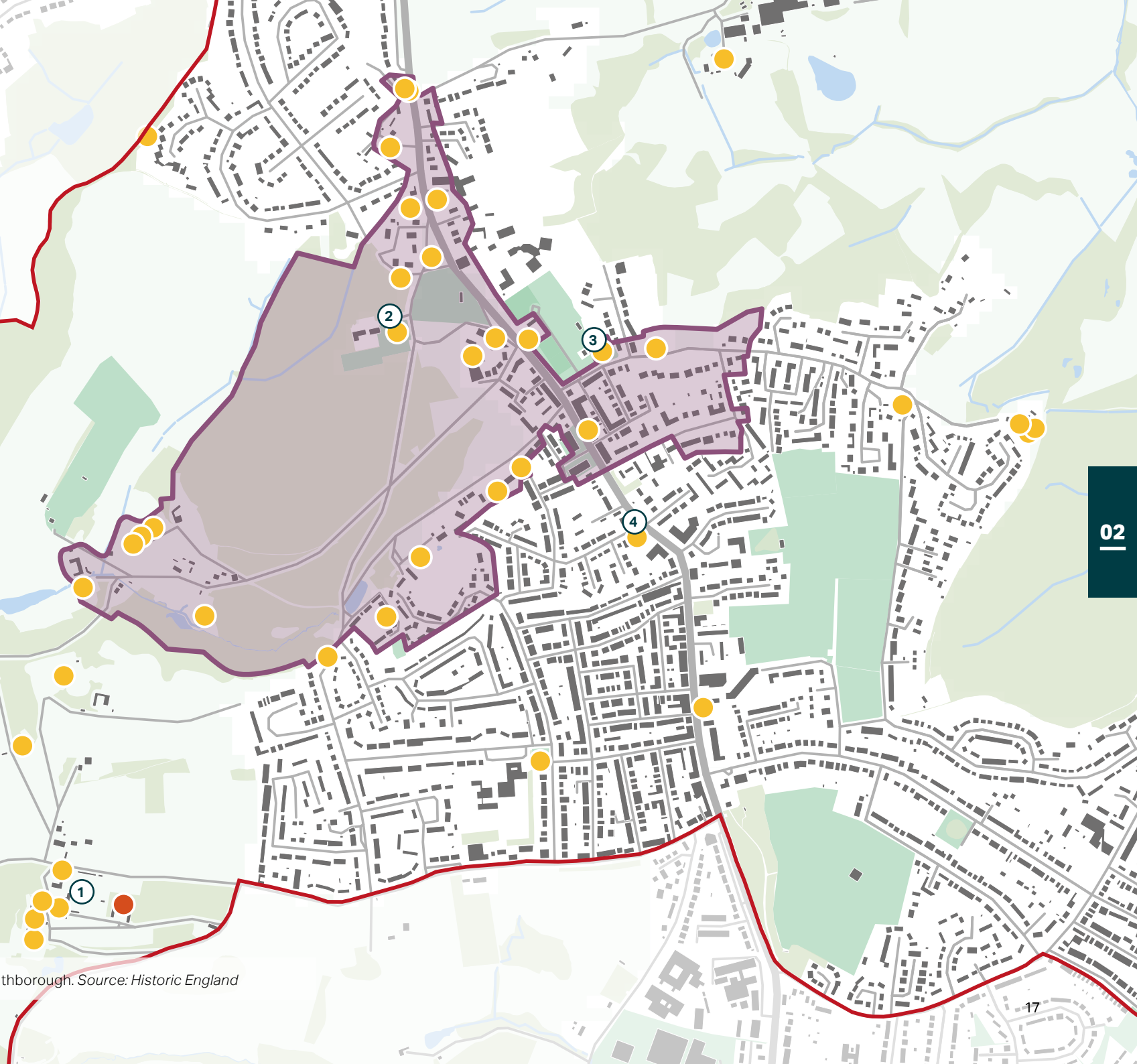
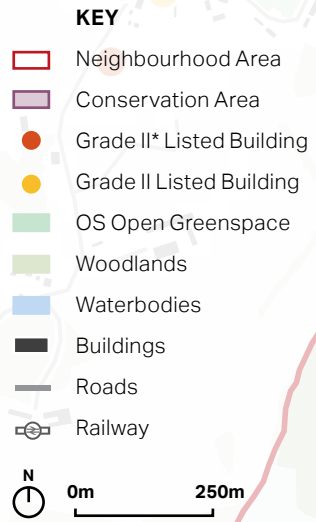
Figure 12: Church of St Thomas, Grade II listed.



Figure 11: Church of St Peter, Grade II listed.



Figure 13: Former Weaver's Restaurant, Grade II listed.



**Figure 14:** Heritage features within Southborough. Source: Historic England  
AECOM



Settlement Pattern

The Southborough Neighbourhood Area includes two settlement areas: Southborough and High Brooms. The image adjacent shows the location of each of the settlements and how they relate to each other spatially, with connecting road networks and public rights of way (PRoW).

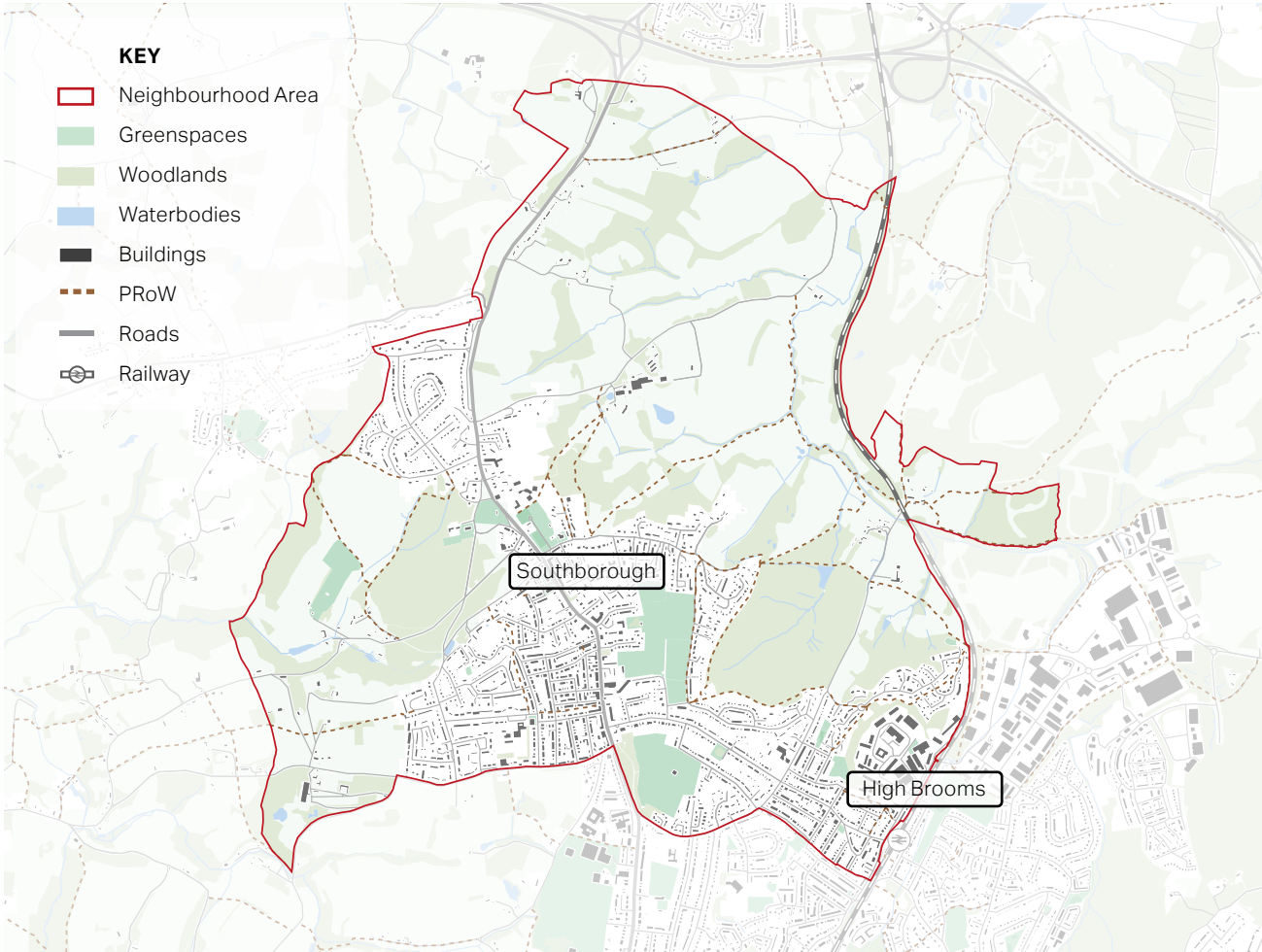


Figure 15: Spatial context of Southborough and High Broom.



**Figure 16:** Salomans Estate - historically important landmark to Southborough for its architectural design and setting .



**Figure 17:** Example of terraced houses within Southborough. Typically a mixture of local red brick, and white render.



**Figure 18:** Distinctive High Brooms Plaques.



**Figure 19:** Example of semi-detached houses within High Brooms. Typically local red brick, with decorative brickwork and plaques.



## 2.2 Landscape and spatial setting

### High Weald National Landscape

Southborough is situated within the scenic setting of the Kentish High Weald National Landscape. Excluding the built-up areas of the town, the surrounding countryside is all within the High Weald National Landscape, which is characterised by its attractive landscape with a mosaic of small farms and woodlands, historic parks, sunken lanes and ridge-top villages.

### Site of Special Scientific Interest

The 'Southborough Pit' is a 1.06 hectare site, and officially designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The site demonstrates an example of Wadhurst Clay and Lower Tunbridge Wells landscape character transition, and is critical for sedimentological modelling.<sup>1</sup>

### Local Nature Reserve

Barnett's Wood is a designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR), and spans around 12 hectares.

<sup>1</sup> <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1005484.pdf>

The site features ancient woodlands, wildflower meadows, ponds and an outdoor classroom, along with multiple walking routes. Some well known walking trails are the sculpture trail and woodland.

### Green Belt

The Green Belt was first set out in the 1980 Kent Structure Plan, and has since proved an effective tool in maintaining urban growth, and protecting the countryside. Please refer to the Tunbridge Wells Green Belt Study for more information.<sup>2</sup>

### Woodlands

There are several areas of ancient and semi-natural woodland, such as Brokes Wood. Ancient woods are areas of woodland that have persisted since 1600 in England. They are a valuable natural asset for wildlife, soils, carbon sequestration, and various other ecological benefits. There are also areas of deciduous woodland throughout the Neighbourhood Area.

<sup>2</sup> <https://tunbridgewells.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/local-plan/previous-stages/draft-local-plan/environment-and-landscape/tunbridge-wells-green-belt-study>



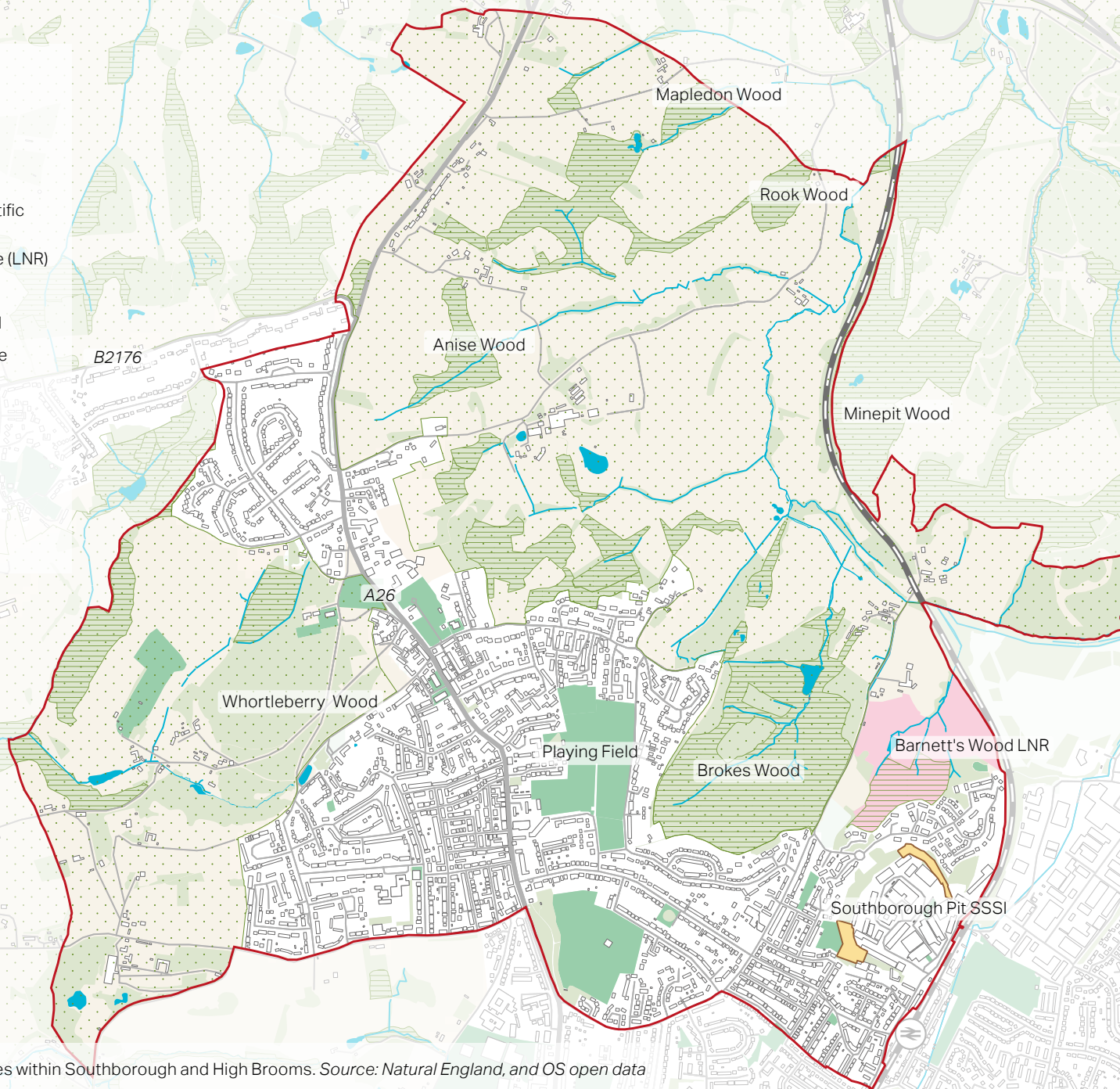
**Figure 20:** High Weald Rolling Hills. Source: [highweald.org](http://highweald.org)



**Figure 21:** Footpath at Brokes Wood (Ancient Woodland). Source: [www.geograph.org.uk](http://www.geograph.org.uk); Copyright N Chadwick and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.

- KEY**
- Neighbourhood Area
  - High Weald
  - Ancient woodland
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
  - Green Belt
  - Deciduous woodland
  - OS Open Greenspace
  - Waterbodies
  - Buildings
  - Roads
  - Railway

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**Figure 22:** Landscape features within Southborough and High Brooms. Source: Natural England, and OS open data



## Topography

The landscape and topography of Southborough makes a significant contribution to its character and setting. Situated within the idyllic setting of the Kentish High Weald National Landscape, the undulating ridges and gentle valleys creates sweeping views over the landscape.

## Flood Zones

The main settlements of Southborough and High Brooms sit on a ridgeline and thus have minimal impact from flooding. Some areas towards north-east of the NA fall within Flood Risk Zones 2 & 3, defined as below.<sup>1</sup>

- Flood zone 2: “annual probability of river flooding between 1.0% and 0.1% and annual probability of sea flooding between 0.5% and 0.1%.”
- Flood zone 3: “1% or greater annual probability of river flooding or a 0.5% or greater annual probability of sea flooding.”

<sup>1</sup> <https://geosmartinfo.co.uk/2016/03/flood-zones-explained/>



**Figure 23:** North of Pennington Road. Source: [www.geograph.org.uk](http://www.geograph.org.uk); Copyright N Chadwick and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.



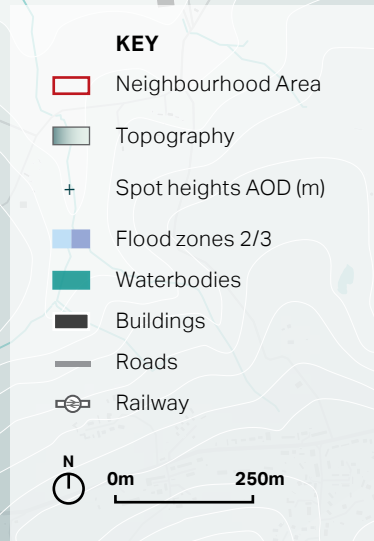
**Figure 24:** View towards Nightingale Farm from Vauxhall Lane. Source: [www.geograph.org.uk](http://www.geograph.org.uk); Copyright N Chadwick and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.



**Figure 25:** Southborough Bourne. Source: [www.geograph.org.uk](http://www.geograph.org.uk); Copyright N Chadwick and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.



**Figure 26:** Duck Pond at Holden Corner. Source: [www.geograph.org.uk](http://www.geograph.org.uk); Copyright N Chadwick and licensed for reuse under this Creative Commons Licence.



**Figure 27:** Landscape features within Southborough and High Brooms. Source: Natural England, and OS open data



## 2.3 Connectivity and movement

### Roads

Southborough is well-connected, the London Road (A26) runs centrally through the settlement giving easy access to the M25, M26 and M20.

Traffic congestion on the High Street (A26) and the movement of heavy goods vehicles through the town are concerns for residents. The remaining road network in the neighbourhood area is formed of residential and country roads.

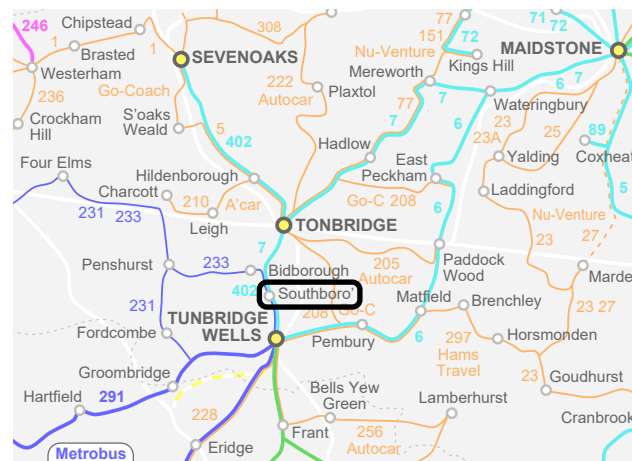
### Walking and active travel

The Neighbourhood Area benefits from a number of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) that connects the main settlement areas to the surrounding countryside, and the High Weald National Landscape. There is also a good network of footpaths within the built-up area which provides permeability through the residential quarters.

There are no National Cycle Network Routes through the Neighbourhood Area. However there are local cycles routes within the borough as picked up in the codes.

### Public transport

The Southeastern train line runs along the eastern boundary of the neighbourhood area, with the nearest stations at High Brooms, Tonbridge, and Tunbridge Wells, providing links into London. There are direct train connections from High Brooms to London Bridge within 40 minutes. Southborough is also well-connected via a public bus network to surrounding towns and villages, such as Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge, Maidstone, among others.



**Figure 30:** Bus routes around Southborough.  
Source: <http://www.busatlas.uk/>



**Figure 28:** London Road (A26) towards Tonbridge to the north of the Neighbourhood Area.



**Figure 29:** Public footpaths at High Brooms Village Green, with views towards Tunbridge Wells.





**KEY**

 Neighbourhood Area


 A Roads


 B Roads


 Secondary Roads


 Tertiary Roads

 Public footpath (PRoW)

 OS Open Greenspace

 Woodlands

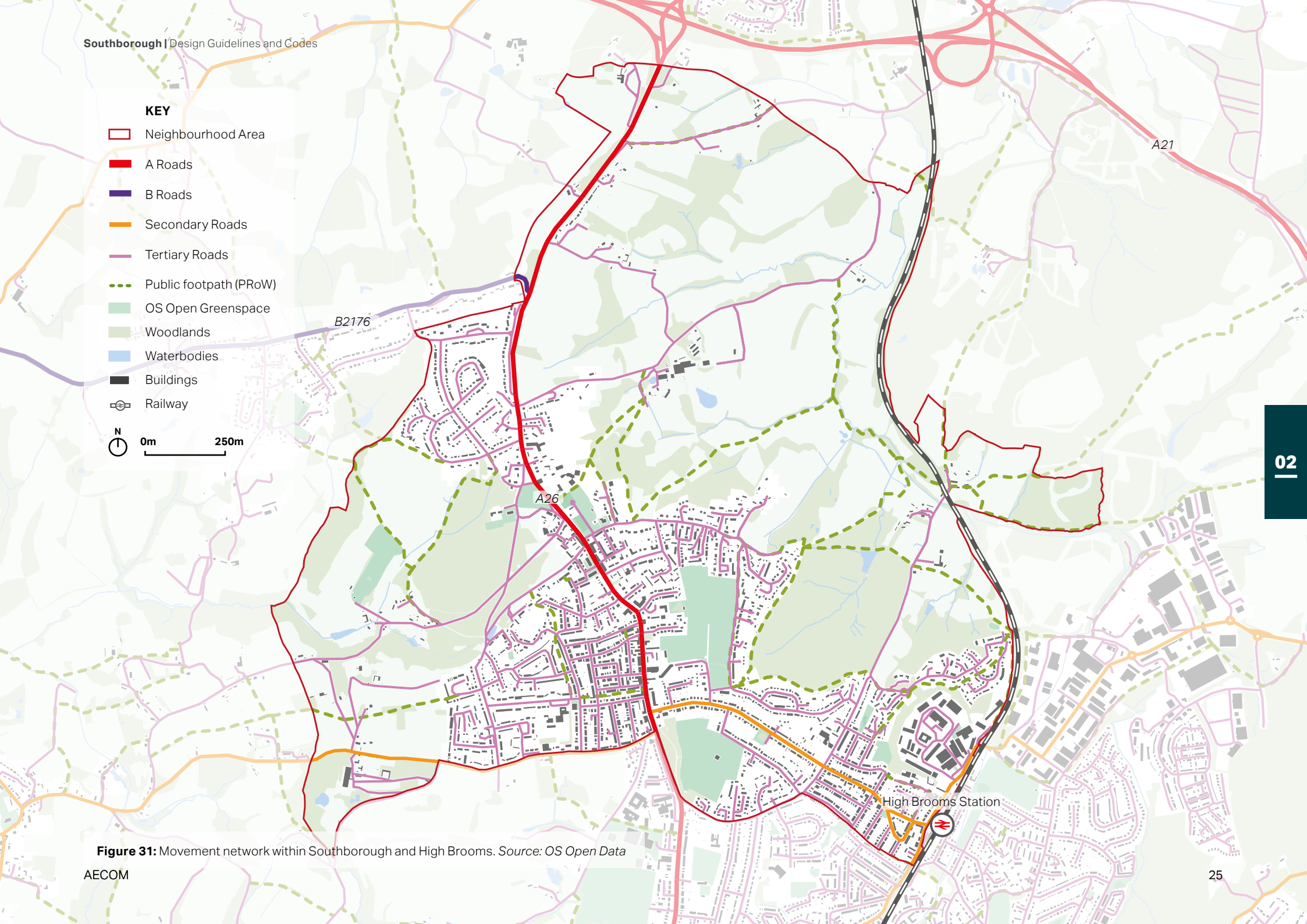
 Waterbodies

 Buildings

 Railway



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**Figure 31:** Movement network within Southborough and High Brooms. Source: OS Open Data