

Babergh Development Framework August 2012 Evidence Base for the West of the Babergh District



Green Infrastructure

Evidence base for the West of the Babergh District

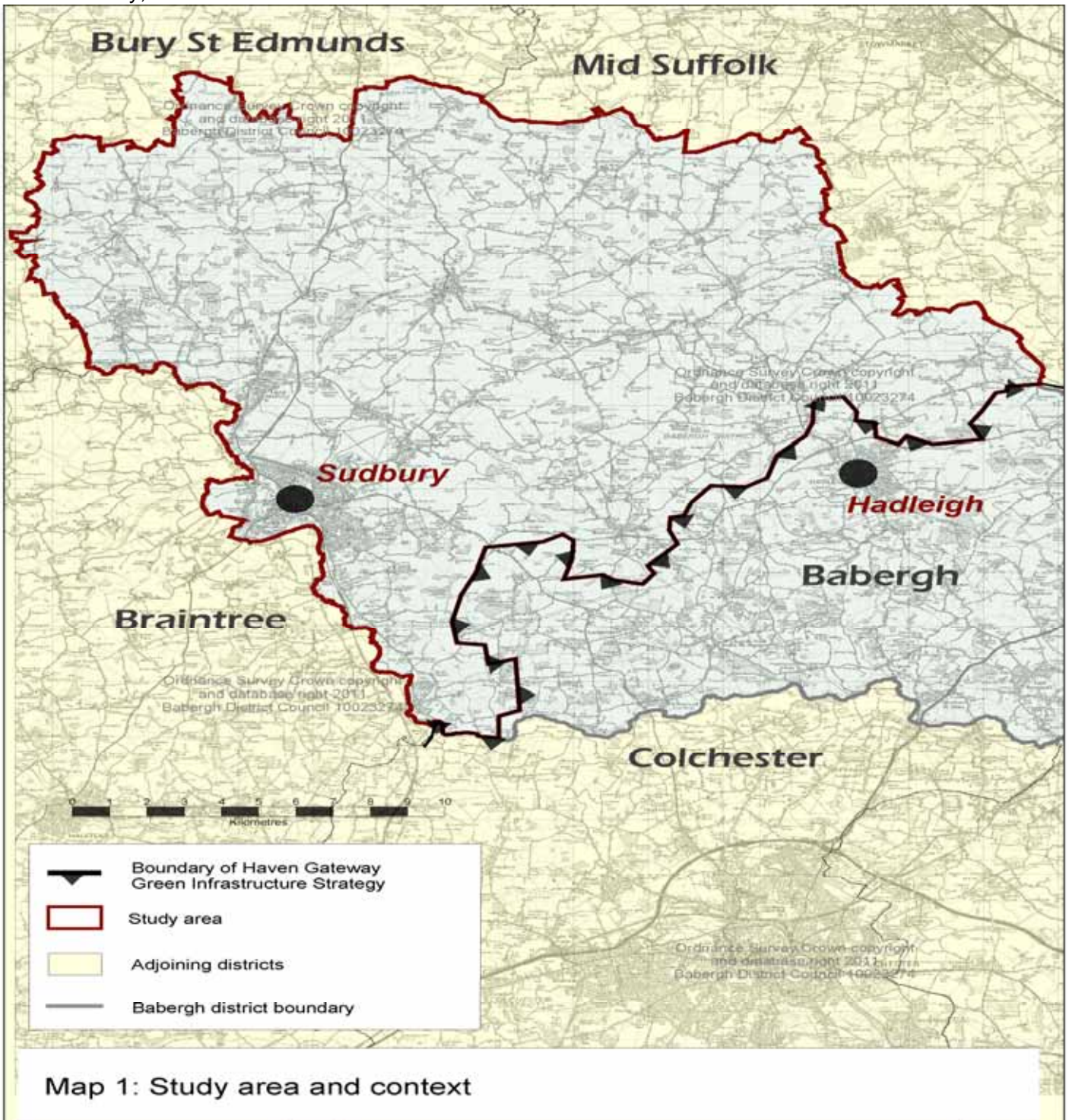
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1. Introduction

This document provides part of the evidence base for Babergh's Green Infrastructure. It is necessary to support the policy context for Babergh's Development Framework and long term planning objectives for green infrastructure.

The Haven Gateway Partnership (HGP) produced a comprehensive Green Infrastructure Strategy (HaGGIS) in April 2008. The location of Babergh has meant that the eastern part of the district is within the boundary of the HaGGIS, but excludes the area of the district in the west. Map 1 illustrates the extent of the HaGGIS coverage and the part of the district which is covered by this evidence base, referred to as the study area. Neighbouring local authority areas are also indicated as administrative boundaries are not relevant to the accessibility to green infrastructure sites. Those adjoining the study area include; Mid Suffolk, St Edmundsbury, Braintree and Colchester.



2. What is Green Infrastructure?

This document provides part of the evidence base for Babergh's Green Infrastructure. It is necessary to support the policy context for Babergh's Development Framework and long term planning.

Green Infrastructure is the areas of the environment which provide multiple benefits and vital functions for wildlife, people, communities and the economy alike. The concept of Green Infrastructure provides a joined up approach to environmental management. The aim is to focus on the relationships and connections between green spaces, habitats, and wildlife and other communities they serve, rather than, focusing on the needs of individual species, sites and neighbourhoods.

A great many elements of our environment contribute to the green infrastructure network. This document identifies the existing resource within the study area, including all of the environmental assets which contribute to green infrastructure provision. The green infrastructure assets covered are comparable to those included in the HaGISS.

The Green Infrastructure Resource in the west of Babergh:

- River valleys and topography including flood risk areas
- Landscape character
- Designated sites- wildlife and landscape bio-diversity
- Agricultural land classification
- Historic landscape and designated historic features
- Promoted access routes
- Accessible natural green spaces

3. Context

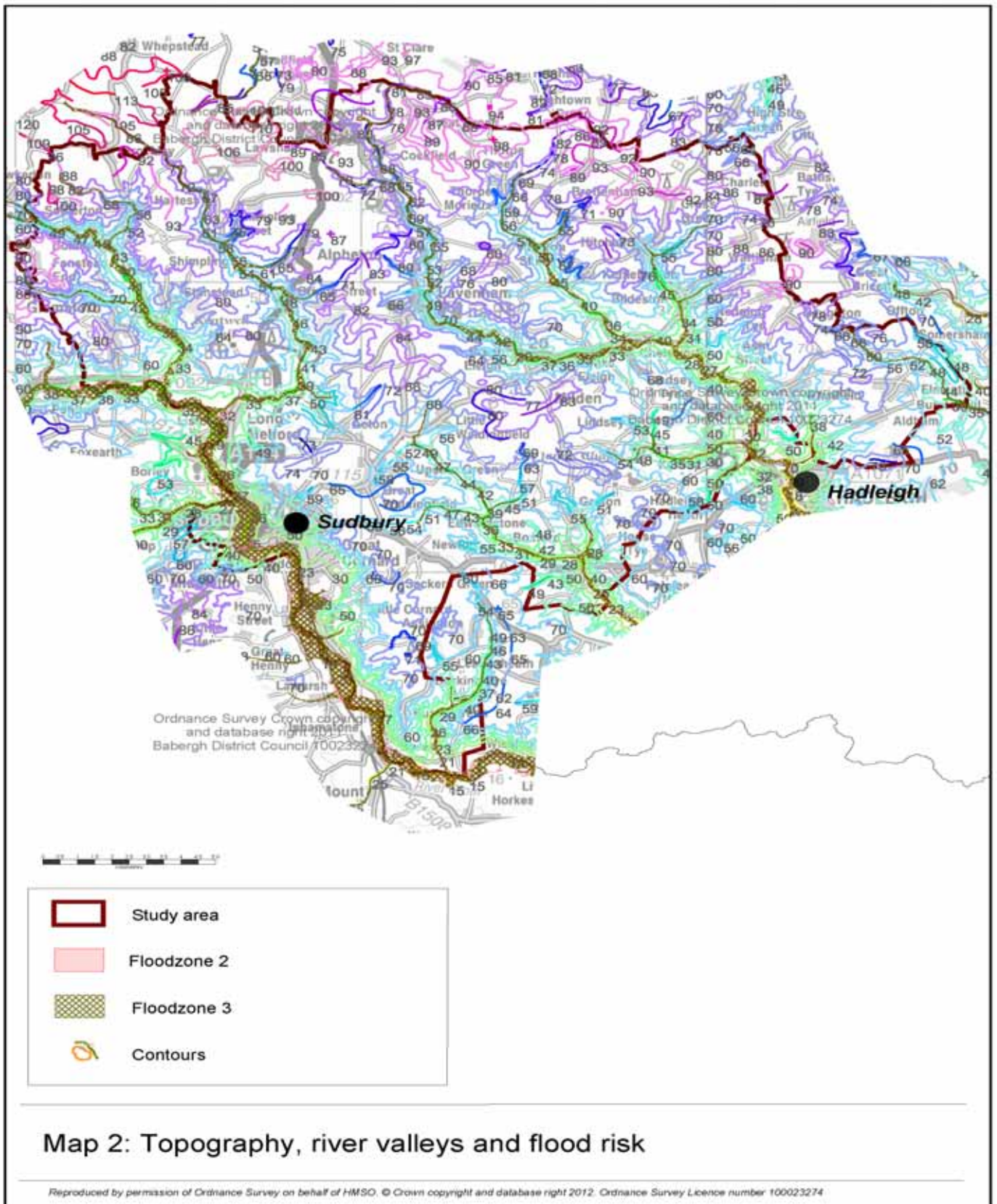
This document provides a comprehensive evidence base for the green infrastructure resource as it currently exists in the western part of Babergh. Unlike the HaGGIS, it does not go on to provide a strategy for the future and identify opportunities and recommendations. However, this is supported by a District wide Green Infrastructure Framework which draws together the relevant elements from the HaGGIS and it considers opportunities and potential actions for enhancing the green infrastructure network throughout the district, with this fundamentally linked to realistic delivery opportunities associated with the growth and policy context of the Core Strategy.

4. Existing Provision- The Green Infrastructure Resource

The existing provision for each of the themes listed is illustrated below on GIS maps accompanied by a brief description.

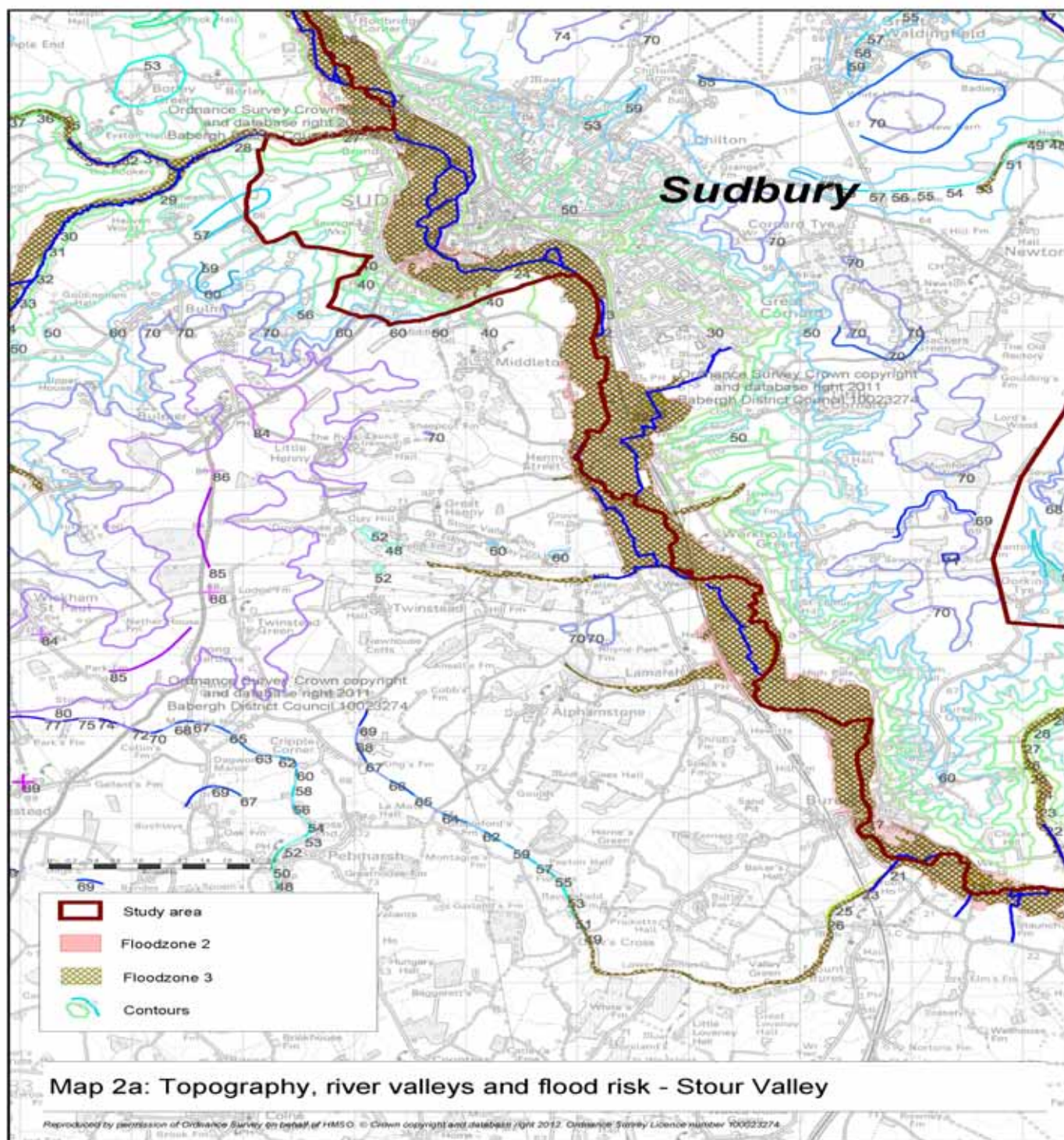
River Valleys, topography and flood risk

The topography of this part of the district reflects the dominance of the river valleys; Map 2 (below) illustrates how the landscape rises and falls towards and beyond the river valleys and their tributaries. The flood plain and the landscape beyond the banks of the rivers all make up a part of the green infrastructure network.

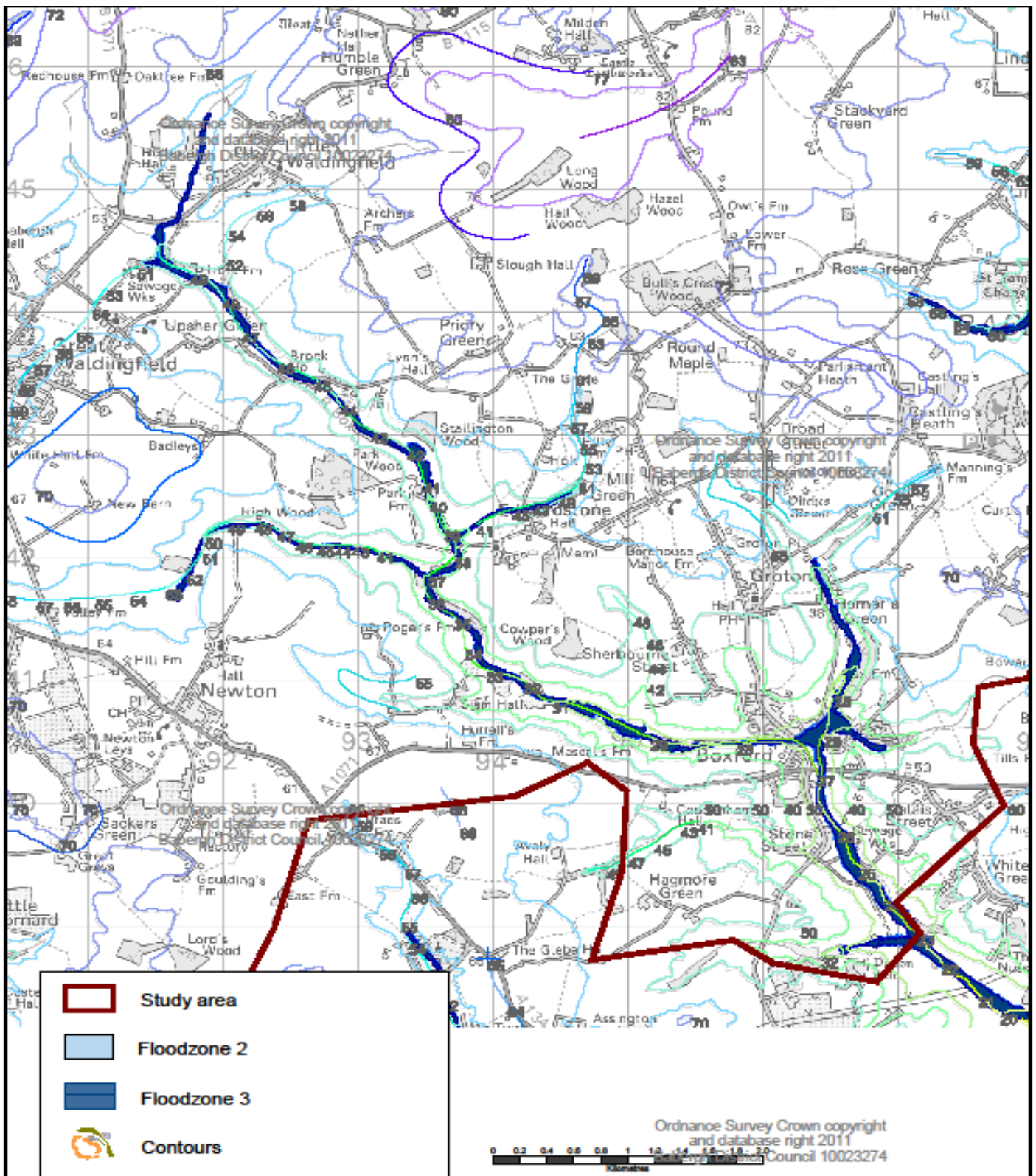


The western part of the district is characterised by the river valleys, prominent in the landscape - principally the Rivers Stour and Brett with their tributaries including the Rivers Glem and Box. The River Stour forms much of the western boundary of the district, intermittently flowing beyond the boundary into the administrative areas of Braintree and Colchester. The Stour is joined by the River Glem and Chad Brook as left bank tributaries. From the western boundary, the Stour flows through Long Melford, then south towards the urban settlement of Sudbury. Continuing south it reaches Bures, forming the boundary between Suffolk and Essex, splitting the village settlement between the two counties. The flow of the Stour continues to Nayland which is included within the HaGGIS boundary.

Map 2a below, illustrates Flood Zones 2 and 3 in relation to the River Stour. The functional flood plain, not only protects properties and significant numbers of people from flooding, particularly in Sudbury, also contributes to the green infrastructure network through the meadows and river valley corridors, serving functions for wildlife, landscape and recreation enjoyment.



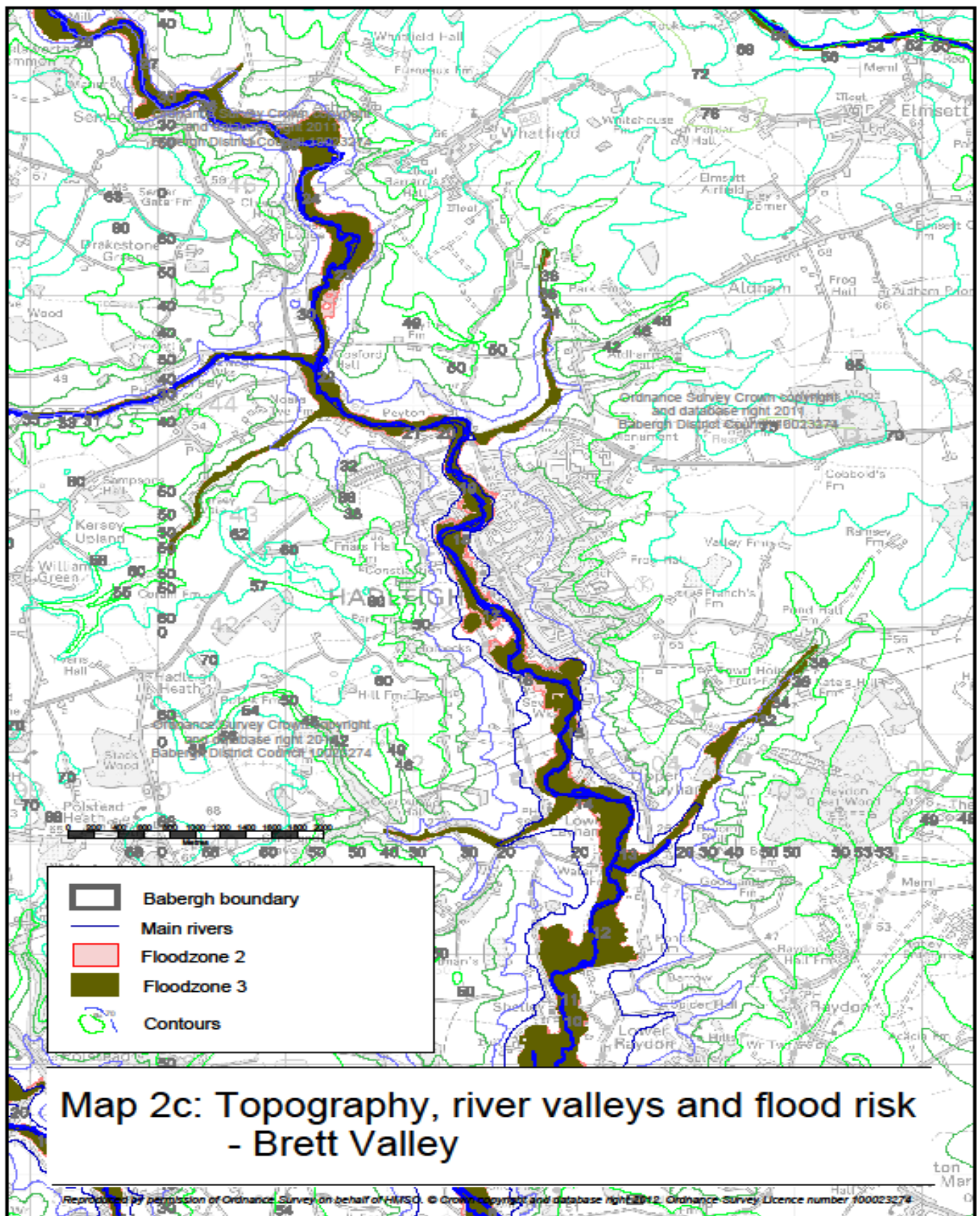
Near to Little Waldingfield the River Box rises, as shown on Map 2b below. Although it has a narrow floodplain, it is predominantly in a rural area, with the exception being the large village of Boxford, where areas of the settlement are situated within flood zones 2 and a small number of properties in flood zone 3.



**Map 2b: Topography, river valleys and flood risk
- Boxford**

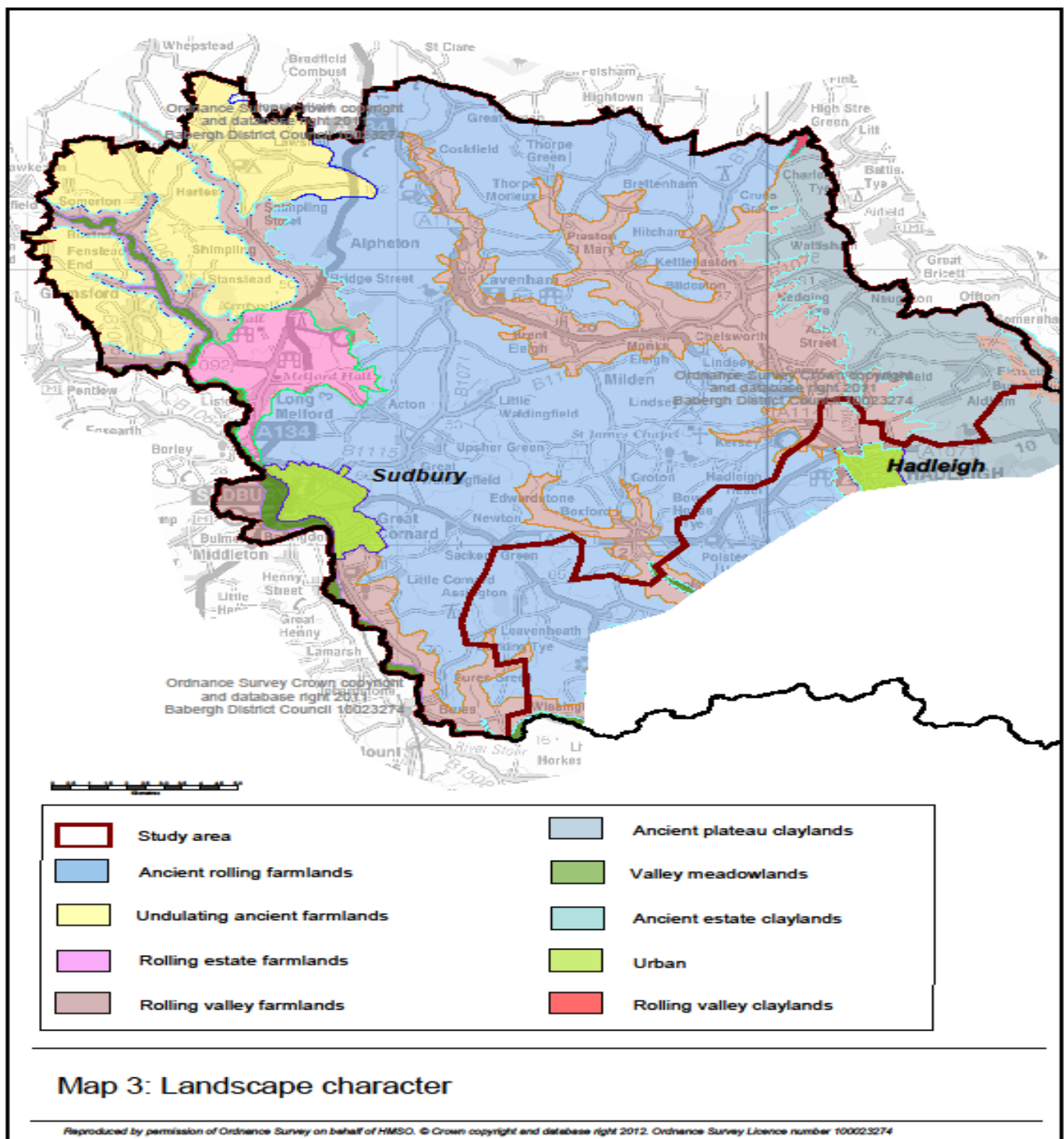
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The largest tributary of the Stour is the River Brett. This flows in a predominantly southerly direction, starting north of Cockfield, through Lavenham. It continues south through Monks Eleigh and Brent Eleigh to Hadleigh. Flood Zones 2 and 3 shown below on Map 2c are largely undeveloped, although a small number of properties exist before the flood plain becomes well defined towards Hadleigh.



Landscape Character

Landscape is defined by the Countryside Agency, English Nature and English Heritage on a “Character Map for England”. The character area which covers the study area is defined on this map as “South Suffolk and North Essex Claylands”. This area is broadly flat, chalky boulder clay plateau dissected by undulating river valley topography. It is predominantly arable with irregular field patterns and wooded appearance and there is some pasture on the valley floors. There is a cultural association with Constable and the Dedham Vale. Within this regional context a Landscape character assessment has been carried out for the whole of Suffolk which provides a further breakdown and more detail on landscape character types. Suffolk County Council, together with the district councils has prepared a comprehensive Landscape Character Assessment, which offers extensive information and guidance through a web based tool available on www.suffolklandscape.org.uk. The character types situated within the study area are shown on Map 3 below.



Around Sudbury to the east, the landscape is predominantly Ancient Rolling Farmland, with the river valley in Sudbury, and continuing south to Nayland, is characterised as Valley Meadow Lands, coinciding largely with the functional flood plains. North of the Stour banks, the landscape is predominantly Rolling Valley Farmland. Whereas, towards Long Melford and Glemsford as the land rises, it is Undulating Ancient Farmland, changing to Undulating Estate Farmlands further north towards Bury St Edmunds. More information and guidance can be found on the web site indicated above.

Designated Sites

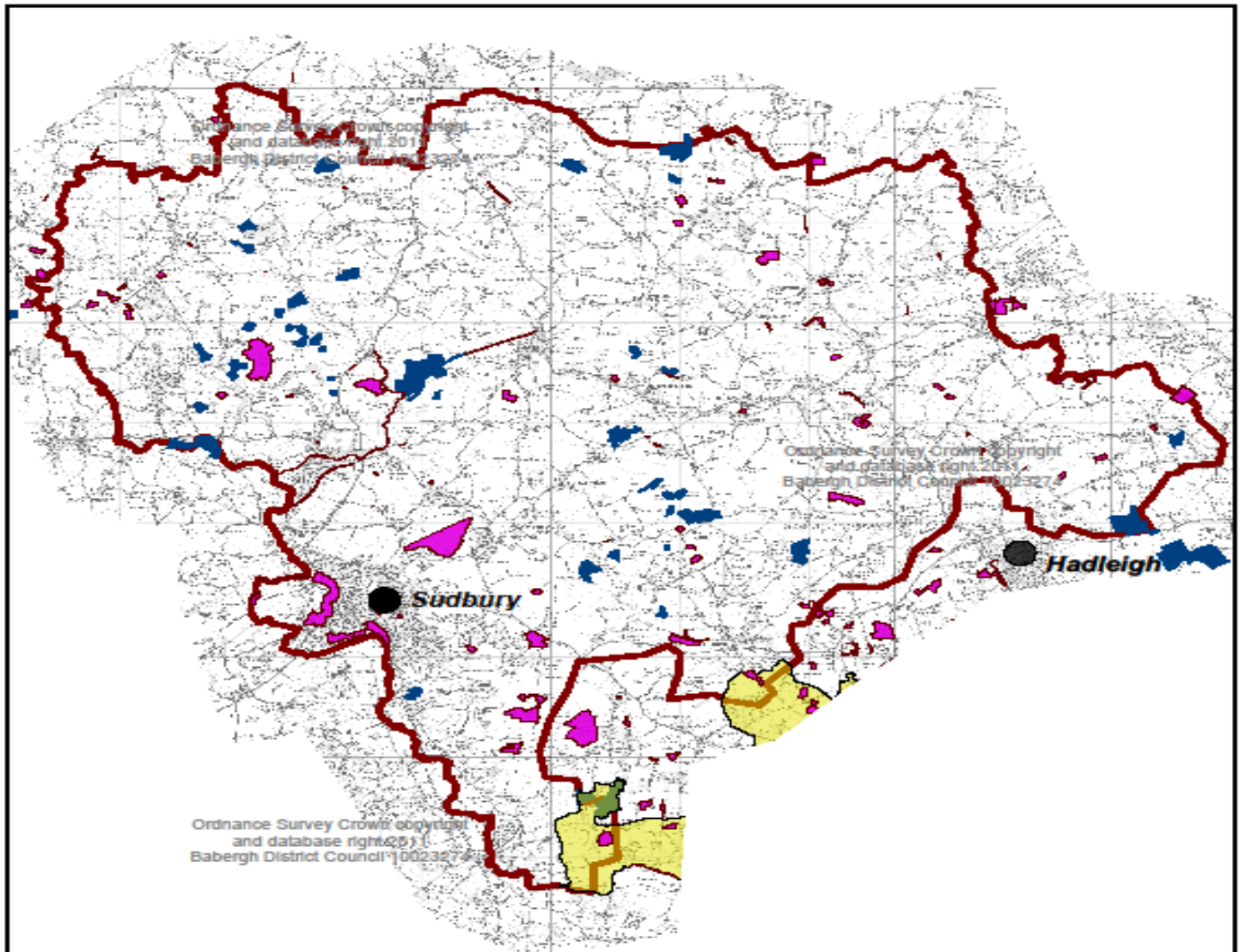
As in many rural areas, the attractive landscape and the nature conservation value of the countryside for many habitats and wildlife species lend themselves to protection under a wealth of international, national and local designations. Many designated areas contribute to the green infrastructure network, those that are located within the study area are shown on Map 4 below and described briefly.





Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

The study area includes a part of the Dedham Vale AONB, protected for its distinctive exceptional lowland river valley characteristics. The boundary of the AONB largely coincides with the Stour Valley associated with the paintings of John Constable. Areas with AONB status are protected by national legislation which seeks to ensure the attractive distinctive character is protected and enhanced. Covering 90km in all the AONB, due to its very nature is attractive for recreational enjoyment and many areas offer good access to a range of areas, all of which contribute to the green infrastructure network in this part of the district and beyond. The Dedham Vale and Stour Valley Management Plan 2010-2015 sets the following vision for the area “ By 2025 the Dedham Vale AONB and Stour Valley is recognised as a distinctive working landscape (one that maintains a viable agriculture production as its core function) and retains its special character. This character should be understood and appreciated by those that choose to live, work and visit the area. The Management plan, includes objectives and policies for achieving this vision which are based on the following 5 themes;

1. Landscape Farming and Biodiversity
2. Settlements and People
3. Enjoying the area
4. The river and its tributaries
5. Traffic and transport

- **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** The SSSIs within the study boundary are shown on Map 4.. These designated sites comprise some of the finest wildlife and geological sites in the UK which support our most characteristic, rare and endangered species, habitats and geological features.
- National Nature Reserve (NNR) The NNRs in the study area are shown on Map 4. These areas are designated as they represent an area of national importance, usually for a particular wildlife habitat. They are often open to the public and managed access allows enjoyment and education of such areas.
- County Wildlife Sites (CWS) The CWS in the study area are shown on Map 4. These are also designated sites important for their wildlife value, being of local importance. Again most of these are accessible to the public via managed access. Many are managed by the Suffolk Wildlife Trust, or



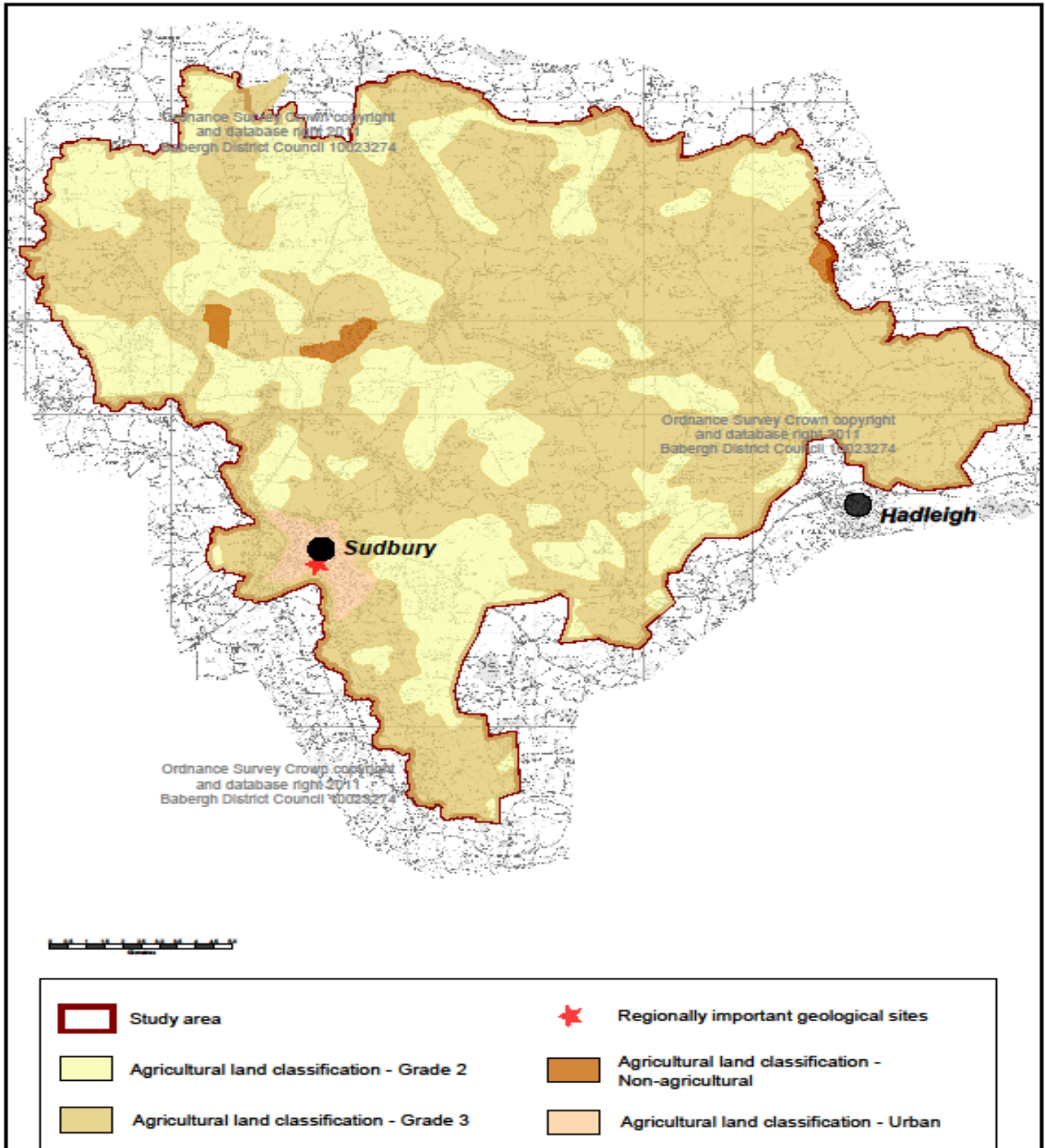
	Study area
	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
	Site of Special Scientific Interest
	County Wildlife Sites

Map 4: Designated sites

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County Wildlife Sites reproduced by permission of Suffolk Biological Records Office 2011

Agriculture and geology

The geology of Suffolk is relatively simple with extensive areas of till or boulder clay deposited over much of the county. This underlying geology influences the local soils and the quality of agricultural land. In the study area, most of the agricultural land is of a good quality classified as grade 2 or 3. The pattern of the distribution is illustrated on Map 5, which also shows areas of key importance for their geological value. (RIGs). The agricultural / geological pattern is important in shaping the make of the landscape in the rural areas and contributing to the locally distinctive character associated with the area.

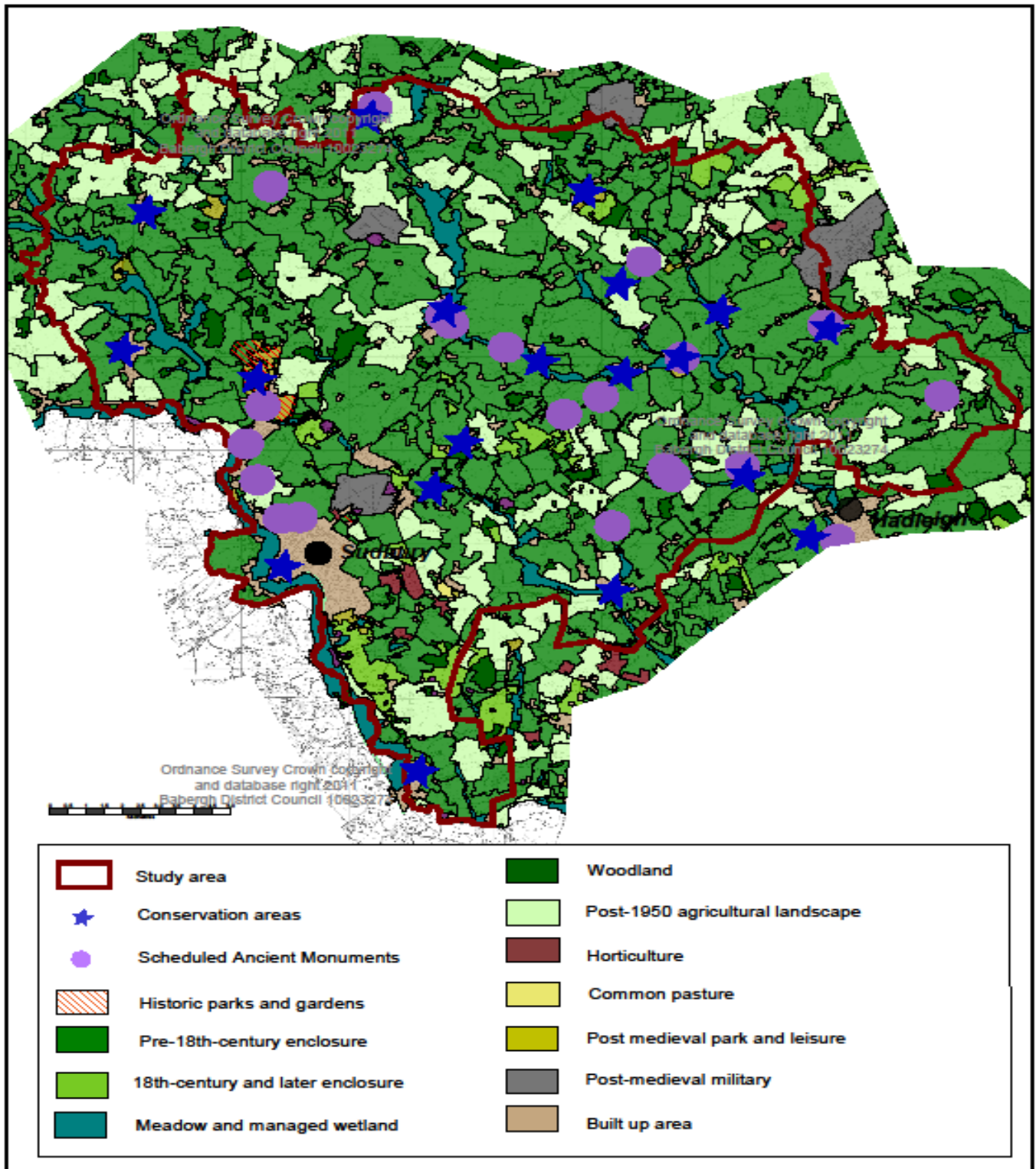


Map 5: Soil, geology and agriculture

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Historic landscape and features

An historic landscape characterization project for the East of England was carried out in 1998/9. This provided an indication of the historic landscape types through the region. In Suffolk, an updated version of this for the county is available on the www.suffolk.gov.uk web site under environment/archaeology. Map 6 below illustrates the historic characterisation within the study area.



Map 6: Historic landscape characterisation

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Historic Landscape Characterisation reproduced by permission of Suffolk County Council Licence (HLC) copyright of Suffolk County Council Licence No SHLC12/02

Also shown on map 6 are the Conservation Areas, Scheduled Ancient Monuments and Historic Parks and Gardens, within the study area. As illustrated there are a number of historic features and notable areas of historic landscapes which shape the locally distinctive characteristics of this part of the district. Many historic features are within a wider setting which either directly or indirectly make an important contribution to the green infrastructure network. The Conservation Areas, centered on the historic built core of a settlement, often include important connecting open spaces which form part of the setting of buildings. The western part of the district has a wealth of notable historic elements including those in Long Melford, the National Trust owned Melford Hall and its surrounding formal and informal gardens, and the privately owned Kentwell Hall and its extensive grounds (open to the public at times). The area also includes Lavenham, renowned for its historic character and prominence of well preserved fine timber framed buildings.

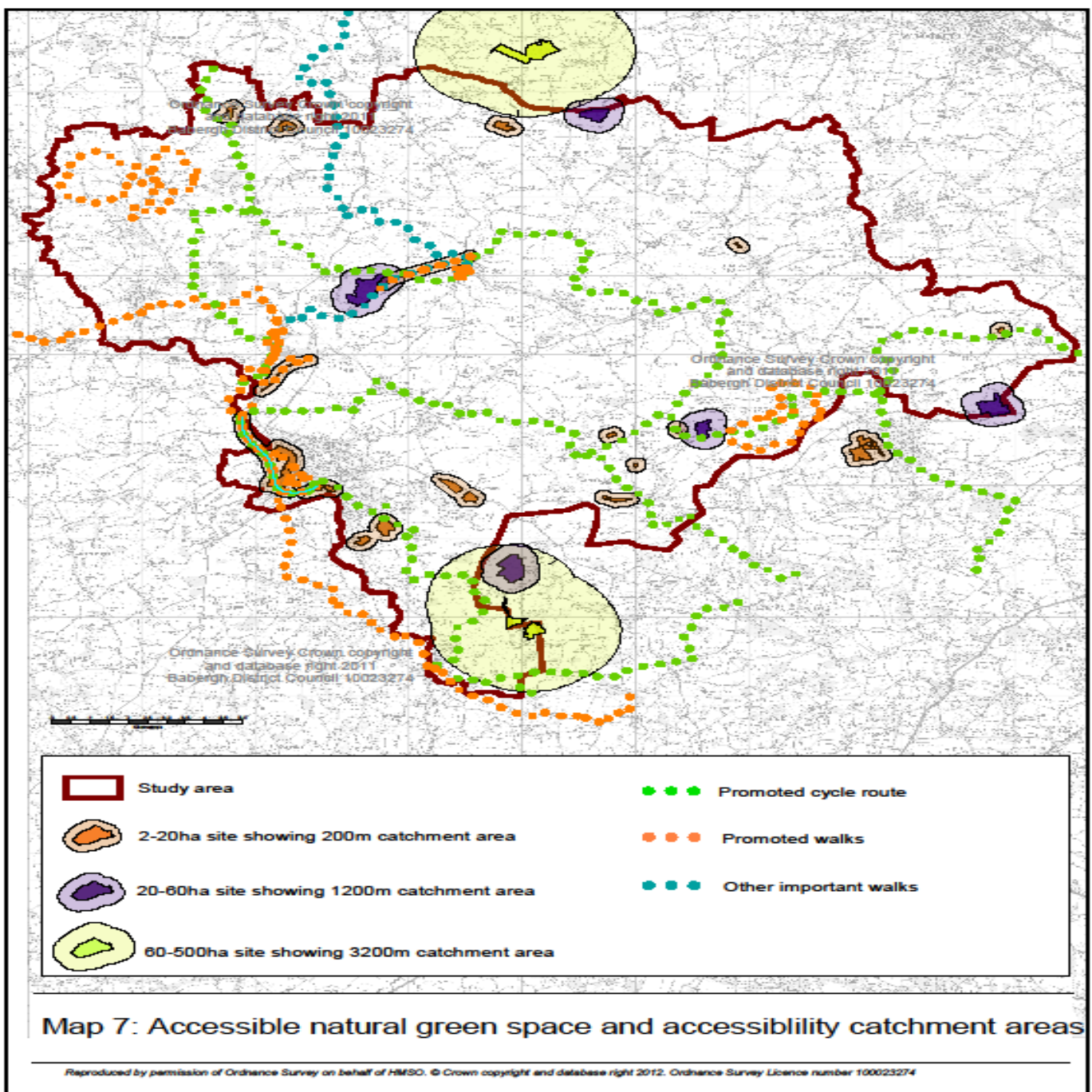
Promoted Access Routes

There are a number of access routes in the form of public rights of way which are actively promoted in the study area. These include promoted cycle routes including those which are part of the Sustrans network, and walks which may be part of a long distance or promoted circular or shorter walks. It is acknowledged that the public rights of way network is more extensive than this and all rights of way make a contribution to the green infrastructure network. However, it is recognised that the promoted routes are likely to be more heavily used and already key areas where there is some existing connectivity within the green infrastructure (GI) network.

The promoted access routes include long distance routes such as the Stour Valley Footpath and St Edmund Way, as well as national cycle routes and associated cycle links / loops. These are shown on Map 7, together with existing accessible natural green space. The relationship of the promoted routes with the Accessible Natural Green space sites is an important consideration, particularly when considering the level of accessibility of various centres of population to recreational open space and opportunities for enhancement in the future. Often improvements to the opportunities for access are key to enhancing future provision, rather than necessarily focusing on the provision itself.

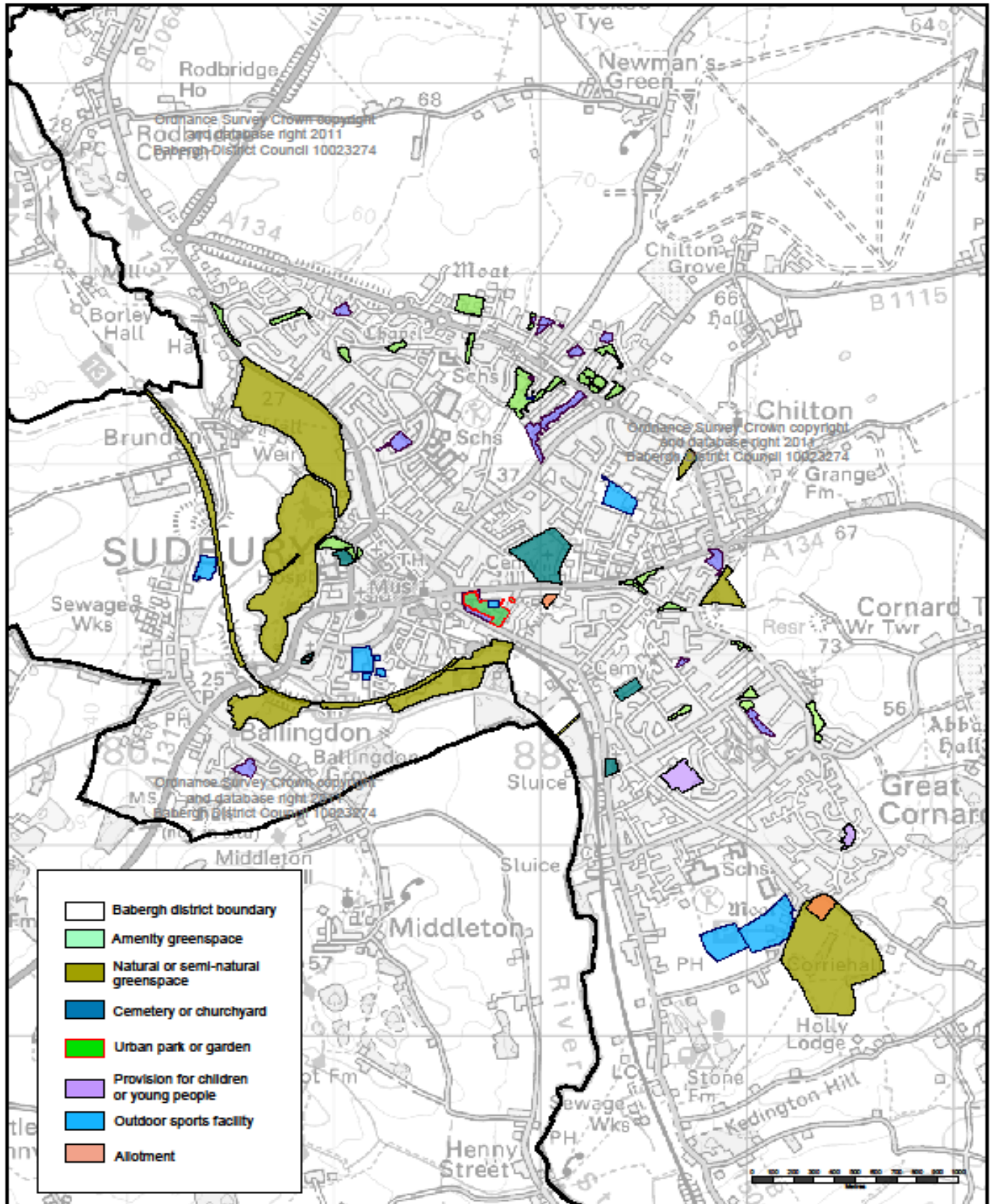
Accessible Natural Green space

There are many assets in the study area which are defined as Accessible Natural Green space (ANGSt) as defined by English Nature. These include sites such as Arger Fen, Great Cornard Country Park and Great Waldingfield Airfield. A recognised approach to assessing the level of provision of ANGSt in many areas is to apply established standards linked to population catchment areas, in order to identify areas where people have limited or no access to areas defined as ANGSt. The HaGGIS, follows this approach, this issue is considered in more detail in the Babergh Green Infrastructure Framework, however, in order to present comparable information in this evidence base, the ANGSt sites are shown on Map 7 together with the identified catchment area, based on the nationally recommended minimum standards for the accessibility of the population to particular, size and types of accessible green space. The promoted routes for pedestrians and cyclists also shown, illustrate that the links between and to/from these sites is limited, particularly promoted footpaths, although it is recognized that the public right of way network is more extensive and may illustrate better opportunities than are represented here.



Sudbury / Great Cornard and Chilton

The main urban area within the Study area is Sudbury, including Great Cornard and Chilton. It is helpful to see the existing green infrastructure distribution at a large scale for the built up area. The map below illustrates the GI in Sudbury, including the open space, sport and recreation sites. The interpretation of this, the deficiencies and gaps and opportunities for the future are addressed in detail in the Green Infrastructure Framework for Babergh.



Further Information

This evidence base provides a snapshot of the green infrastructure provision in the western area of Babergh almost as an “inventory of existing provision”, illustrating comparable data to that provided in the Haven Gateway Green Infrastructure Strategy for the eastern area of Babergh and adjoining areas beyond. There are a great many sources where more information may be available and the list below will sign post you to some helpful sources for additional details:

Haven Gateway Partnership http://www.haven-gateway.org/themes/green_infrastructure/gi_in_haven_gateway/what_is_the_haven_gateway_partnership_doing/the_haggis_strategy/download_the_strategy

Natural England http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/regions/east_of_england/ourwork/qi/accessible_natural_green_space_standard_angst.aspx

Babergh District Council - Babergh Development Framework

<http://www.babergh.gov.uk/Babergh/Home/Planning+and+Building+Control/LocalDevelopment+Framework/>

Suffolk County Council

<http://www.suffolklandscape.org.uk/>
<http://publicrightsofway.onesuffolk.net/>
<http://www.discoversuffolk.org.uk/>

Suffolk Wildlife Trust

<http://www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org/>

St Edmundsbury Borough Council

<http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/green-infrastructure.cfm>

Dedham Vale and Stour Valley AONB

<http://www.dedhamvalestourvalley.org/>

The Babergh Green Infrastructure Framework identifies opportunities and priorities for the future in respect of provision, enhancement and management of green infrastructure throughout the district. The District wide framework supports this evidence base.

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