7.0 Hellingly and Lower Horsebridge

7.1 Context

Location

7.1.1 Two sub-areas are considered within this chapter: Hellingly and Lower Horsebridge. The Hellingly sub-area is situated approximately 0.5km due north of the urban edge of Upper Horsebridge/Hailsham. Park Road connects Hellingly to Upper Horsebridge and forms the main north-south route through the area. To the east, Hellingly extends to the junction of New Road, the A271 and Featherbed Lane and the western edge is defined by the B2104. The historic village centre of Hellingly (a Conservation Area) is located on the west side of the River Cuckmere. Eight sites were assessed within this sub-area (Refer to Figure 7.1 for location of sites).

7.1.2 The Lower Horsebridge sub-area is focussed along the A271, between the Boship roundabout to the west and Horsebridge and Upper Horsebridge to the east. It extends to the A267 in the north and west, to the Cuckmere River in the south and to the B2104 in the east. Four sites were assessed within this sub-area. (Refer to Figure 7.1 for location of sites).

Landscape Character Context

7.1.3 At the County level of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA), the Hellingly sites (009/3000, 534/3000, 107/3000, 784/3000, 574/3000, 262/3000, 263/3000 and 264/3000) are incorporated within the southern part of the South Slopes of the High Weald LCA and the Lower Horsebridge sites (780/3100, 067/3100, 428/3400 and 080/3100) are incorporated within the north-east edge of the Eastern Low Weald LCA. (Refer to Figure 2.1 for County Landscape Character Context). The two sub-areas are contiguous and are positioned at the boundary of the two character types. These LCA's are briefly summarised below with the characteristics of particular relevance to these sub-areas underlined for emphasis. The summary is taken from the East Sussex County Landscape Assessment[1]:

7.1.4 The South Slopes of the High Weald is summarised as:

This is an intricate, small scale landscape with a strong pattern of hedgerows, falling southward from the Heathfield to Battle ridge towards the Low Weald and Pevensey Levels. This landscape of gentle valleys and slopes affords good views of the South Downs.

- The key characteristics are described as: *High Weald landscape at its most intricate; a very detailed landscape.*
- *Deeply dissected into innumerable north-south ridges, valleys and ghylls.*
- *Streams drain mainly into River Cuckmere or Pevensey Levels waterway systems.*
- *Close network of ghyll woodland, small woods, shaws and hedges; 15% woodland. An abundance of hornbeam ('horebeech').*
- *Close network of winding lanes with scattered farms, cottages and linear settlements, often on ridges.*
- *Varied villages, most with remote rural character and on ridges.*
- *Secluded, often shady valleys with remote feel.*

[1] East Sussex County Council (2010). The East Sussex County Landscape Assessment. http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/environment/landscape/download.htm

- *Substantial remote areas in the east.*
- *Parkland and designed landscapes.*
- *Numerous hammer ponds and other iron industry relics.*
- *Chestnut post and rail fencing is characteristic of this area.*

7.1.5 Most of these characteristics, including '*Secluded often shady valleys'*, *innumerable north-south ridges, valleys and ghylls'* are less relevant to Hellingly, which is situated to the south of the area and is on the border of two other County Landscape Character areas.

7.1.6 The Eastern Low Weald County LCA is summarised as:

This area is more open and exposed than the western low weald, with many more flat, treeless areas. It contains the large woodland areas of Abbot's and Vert Woods, which are mainly conifer plantations. Running from Ringmer in the west (outside Wealden District) to Polegate in the east the area contains the upper River Cuckmere and Arlington Reservoir.

The key characteristics are described as:

- *Significant areas of flat, nearly treeless country with remote windswept feel.*
- *A greater area (15%) is under woodland than in the Western Low Weald but, by contrast, nearly all of this is in large blocks over 2 Ha.*
- *About half the woodland is coniferous.*
- *Hedges and hedgerow trees are slightly less abundant, and trees are often small and wind-bent.*
- *Ancient pathways cross the area, including ancient Drove roads running North and South across the Low Weald.*
- *Fine, open views of the Downs.*
- *Small, remote and largely unspoiled rural villages.*
- *Historic designed landscapes and parkland.*
- *Small, winding, partly tree-lined streams, notably the River Cuckmere, but also many artificial, straightened drains and channels*

7.1.7 A number of these characteristics e.g. '*coniferous woodland'* and '*fine, open views of the Downs*' are more typical of the landscape to the south and west of the Eastern Low Weald than of the area around Lower Horsebridge, which sits at the junction of four County Landscape Character Areas.

7.1.8 At the local level of landscape character assessment, all of the sites in both sub-areas fall completely or partially under the one Local Landscape Character Type (LLCT): Open Clay Vales LLCT and are part of the Local Landscape Character Area (LLCA) E6: Hellingly. Three of the sites (262/3000, 263/3000 and 264/3000) straddle the boundary with the Ridges and Slopes LLCT and fall partly within LLCA B1: Cowbeech Hill (refer to Figure 7.2).

7.1.9 The key characteristics of the Open Clay Vales LLCT are:

Flat to gently sloping, predominantly low-lying landform associated with several stream and river corridors. Small hills of higher land provide landscape interest. A small-scale pattern of rural hamlets, villages and farmsteads/houses which tend to be located along the network of minor roads that cross this predominantly rural landscape. This LLCT abuts the main town of Polegate in the east. Open views across predominantly flat fields are characterised by wide skies.

Views southwards (from most areas) to the dominant ridges of the South Downs contribute to a strongly recognisable sense of place and provide orientation. Views northwards to the Wooded Clay Vales (LLCT D) comprise wooded skylines.

The landscape is crossed by a network of rural road corridors, which are often lined with mature trees and hedgerows. The mainline Lewes-Eastbourne railway runs west-east across this LLCT and the A27 main road corridor forms the southern boundary.

There is a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout most of the landscape, at a distance from the A27 main road corridor and railway line.

Overall, the Open Clay Vales LLCT is assessed in the Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2014) as having **High Landscape Sensitivity** and **High Landscape Value.**

7.1.10 The key characteristics of the Ridges and Slopes LLCT are:

A small-scale landscape of predominantly pastoral fields, which forms the southern slopes of the High Weald (which is situated immediately to the north of the area). The topography slopes from north to south, with the landscape falling away towards the lower Open Levels LLCT (F) to the south.

A series of linear villages which are situated on an east-west orientated ridge at the northern edge of the LLCT. In addition, there are a number of small hamlets and farmsteads dotted throughout the landscape.

Panoramic, open views southwards across the Levels are characteristic of the southern part of this LLCT, contributing to recognisable sense of place. Views northwards from the landscape and settlements along the ridge, comprise a foreground of small scale fields and woodlands which form part of the High Weald AONB. Patches of small to medium-sized woodlands provide an intermittent sense of enclosure within this predominantly rural landscape.

The landscape is crossed by a network of rural, sometimes sunken lanes, which are lined with mature trees and hedgerows.

There is a strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout most of the landscape.

Overall, the Ridges and Slopes LLCT is assessed in the Wealden Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2014) as having **High Landscape Sensitivity** and **Very High Landscape Value.**

7.1.11 LLCA E6: Hellingly is a relatively small area that wraps around the northern edge of the urban dominated landscape of Hailsham. The key characteristics are described below with those characteristics which are particularly evident underlined for emphasis:

- *To the east, open views across the Levels are a key feature looking eastwards, whilst views westwards are dominated by residential properties at the urban edge*
- *A patchwork of small scale, predominantly pastoral fields dominate the landscape character.*
- *To the north of Hailsham, settlement pattern includes the two small villages of Hellingly and Lower Horsebridge.*
- *From this part of the LLCA, views southwards are dominated by the urban edges of Hailsham (although these are often screened by mature vegetation).*
- *Urban fringe land uses are apparent, including several nurseries.*
- *The upper reaches of the River Cuckmere also flows north-south.*
- *Despite proximity to Hailsham, there is a strong landscape structure of hedgerows lining field boundaries and trees lining some of the road corridors.*

Photo 7.1 – Viewpoints on higher land to the east of Hellingly have long distance views towards the Pevensey Levels

Photo location: View south-east from site 263

Photo 7.2 – Pastoral fields and the River Cuckmere are key features of LLCA E6: Hellingly

Photo location: View south across site 780/ towards the northern edge of Upper Horsebridge

7.1.12 The two sub-areas are generally fairly representative of the LLCA and share many of the key characteristics. In addition to these, it is worth noting that the River Cuckmere forms a strong landscape corridor which extends north-south through the area and also contains two key recreational routes: the Cuckoo Trail and the Wealdway together with the historic village core (with many Listed Buildings which form a Conservation Area) and, to the south, Horselunges Manor (grade I Listed Building). All the sites are situated in this LLCA but three of the sites at the eastern edge of Hellingly 262/3000 263/3000 and 264/3000 also fall partly into LLCA B1: Cowbeech Hill.

7.1.13 LLCA B1: Cowbeech Hill extends northwards and westwards from the edge of Hellingly. The key characteristics are described below with those characteristics which are particularly evident in the sub-area underlined for emphasis:

- *Dominated by large areas of woodland, including Park Wood and Nobody's Wood, which provide a strong sense of enclosure.*
- *strongly rural landscape, with few human influences, other than a couple of farmsteads and one east-west running minor road.*
- *Several small ponds are dotted within the landscape and views westwards across the upper reaches of the Cuckmere Valley contribute to recognisable sense of place.*
- *strong sense of remoteness and tranquillity throughout.*

Photo 7.3 – Park Wood provides enclosure to LLCA B1: Cowbeech Hill and the area has a strong sense of tranquillity and remoteness

Photo location: View north across site 264/3000 towards Park Wood

7.1.14 LLCA B1 covers the majority of site 264/3000 and part of sites 262/3000 and 263/3000. Park Wood bounds the northern edge of 264/3000 and provides important context and enclosure for the site. Sites 263/3000 and 264/3000 at the eastern edge of Hellingly occupy an elevated position at the Hellingly/ Amberstone boundary before the landscape falls away to create the distinctive expanse of the Pevensey Levels. These sites therefore have a greater visual connection and have a greater association with the area to the east rather than the rest of Hellingly to the west.

Existing Settlement Pattern

7.1.15 The existing settlement pattern of Hellingly is quite dispersed and lacks coherence. The historic village core is arranged in a loop formed by Church Lane, Mill Lane and Station Road with the Grade I listed church of St. Peter and St. Paul at its centre. This small rural village surrounded by countryside contains a number of listed buildings, is designated a Conservation Area and has a strong sense of place. This is one of several distinct clusters of settlement dispersed along the main east – west route which starts as Station Road before transitioning to New Road at the intersection with Park Road.

7.1.16 To the east, and separated by the River Cuckmere, is a linear pattern of development occupying the single side of Station Road and Park Road. This development is characterised by late twentieth century, detached residences, set back from the road, the majority of which are bungalows. A small business park also features with a cluster of small warehouses.

7.1.17 Further east, again on New Road, is another short linear stretch of development, this time straddling both sides of the road and comprising mid twentieth century semi- detached properties with a suburban character. A farmstead and a Nursing Home are also attached to this cluster.

7.1.18 To the west, adjacent to the B2104, is another small cluster of settlement forming the western edge of Hellingly. This comprises a school, churchyard and four cottages.

7.1.19 In the northern part of Hellingly, there is a departure from the disjointed linear pattern along the east – west road. Instead, a large, contemporary residential development comprising a range of family homes laid out on a series of winding estate roads is tucked into the Park wood, on the site of a former hospital. This setting and location means the development is insular and not well related with the rest of the village.

7.1.20 Lower Horsebridge, by contrast is clearly defined and comprises a small village focussed along a bend in the A271 and continuing briefly along the southern end of the B2104. The village contains a number of listed buildings and is surrounded by open countryside. To the east, although there is very little separation between Lower Horsebridge and Horsebridge (c.250m), the geometry of the road neatly contains Lower Horsebridge, and this together with a playing field in the centre of the village and the arrangement and architectural detailing to some of the buildings, gives a strong sense of place to the village.

Visual Context

7.1.21 The Hellingly sub-area (excluding site 009/3000) is enclosed to the north-east by rising topography and Park Wood - an extensive block of mature woodland. Together these screen most views of the sub-area from the north-east. To the south east the sub-area is more open and there are long distance views across the Pevensey Levels. Views to the south generally extend as far as the urban edge of Hailsham/Upper Horsebridge although from higher parts of the sub-area (e.g. on site 263/3000 and 264/3000) there are glimpsed long distance views towards the South Downs. The west side of the sub-area is generally lower lying and is relatively enclosed by vegetation and buildings within the area including a mature belt of vegetation long the Cuckoo Trail. Views of the individual sites from within the sub-area are often screened by vegetation and existing buildings within the area.

Photo 7.4 – The urban edge of Hailsham/Lower Horsebridge are a characteristic feature of views south from Hellingly

Photo location: View south from site 534/3000

7.1.22 The Lower Horsebridge sub-area and site 009/3000 fall within the Cuckmere Valley and are generally more open to views than the Hellingly sub-area. There are fewer substantial blocks of vegetation to provide enclosure and as a result much of the sub-area is open to views from the surrounding roads and PRoW. Sites 067/3100, 428/3100 and 780/3100 are all clearly visible from the adjacent roads and PRoW. From within all the sites within the Lower Horsebridge sub-area there are local views along and across the Cuckmere Valley. There are also occasional glimpsed views from site 780/3100 of the South Downs on the distant horizon.

Photo 7.5: Views across the Cuckmere Valley (sometimes with the South Downs glimpsed in the distance beyond) contribute to the sense of place of Hellingly and Lower Horsebridge

Photo location: View south across site 780/3100

Green Infrastructure Context

Accessible Natural Greenspace

7.1.23 Accessible natural greenspace has been considered and evaluated in a separate report produced by Chris Blandford Associates (CBA 2016 Wealden Green Infrastructure Study). The CBA study identifies the key Green Infrastructure links in terms of movement of people through the landscape and also identifies a number of areas of GI deficit, these mainly being associated with the existing urban areas of Polegate and Hailsham. The CBA report also identifies a number of Green Infrastructure opportunities and these are considered further in the context of the Hellingly and Lower Horsebridge sub-areas below.

PRoW

7.1.24 The Cuckoo Trail (Sustrans route 21) and the Wealdway long distance Recreational Route (Hellingly/10) pass along the Cuckmere Valley between Hellingly and Lower Horsebridge. A network of footpaths provide further routes in the area providing pedestrian routes between Hellingly and Upper Horsebridge/Hailsham (e.g. footpaths Hellingly/2/6b/7a), and between Lower Horsebridge and the open countryside to the north west (e.g. bridleway Hellingly/3a and footpaths Hellingly1/8). Together these routes provide important recreational routes for residents of Hellingly, Horsebridge and Hailsham. Figure 7.6 illustrates the location and reference name for all the PRoW within the sub-area.

Strategic infrastructure context

7.1.25 There are no Strategic Green Corridors in the Hellingly and Lower Horsebridge sub-areas.

7.1.26 The High and Low Weald Strategic Green Access Link (C) and Cuckoo Trail Strategic Green Access Link (D) pass through the sub-area. Strategic Green Access Links connect communities and businesses within Hailsham & Polegate, and in the surrounding villages to local leisure opportunities/destinations, greenspaces and public transport services.

7.1.27 At a more local scale, a network of Local Green Links connects the Hailsham & Polegate Urban Green Grid to the Strategic Green Access Links, Green Infrastructure and Blue Infrastructure within the countryside in and around the towns. This network includes local GI linkages connecting the town centres with open spaces throughout the built-up areas and in the surrounding countryside. The Hellingly and Lower Horseridge sub-area has Local Green Links which run south and east towards Hailsham and Herstmonceaux respectively.

7.1.28 Protection of corridors of undeveloped land/countryside as green wedges between the built-up area of Hailsham & Polegate and the surrounding villages, to safeguard the towns' character and landscape setting, provides the opportunity to locate accessible natural greenspace in these areas. One of these Proposed Areas of Search for New Accessible Natural Greenspace lies within the sub-area. Further information is provided in the 2016 Wealden Green Infrastructure Study.

Green Infrastructure

7.1.29 Figure 7.3a shows the Green Infrastructure of these sub-areas, which are dominated in the case of Hellingly by the large extent of Park Wood to the north and northeast. Conversely, Lower Horsebridge is very much dominated by its Blue Infrastructure system as set out below.

7.1.30 The Lower Horsebridge sub-area sites lies close to the floodplain of the Cuckmere River, and the key Green Infrastructure features in the landscape comprise the scatter of trees and shrubs along the line of the main watercourse and its tributaries, these being a

dominant feature in the local landscape by comparison with hedgerows and woodland. Otherwise, the main green corridor is formed by roadside planting along the A22 and A267 which provides linkage to the Wilmington Wood complex.

7.1.31 A further feature of the Lower Horsebridge sub-area, and particularly a number of the larger allocation sites, is the presence of crop marks which suggest the alignments of former hedgerows (these can also be seen on old Ordnance Survey mapping). Future development of allocation sites in the sub-area should seek to reinstate these hedgerows.

7.1.32 The Hellingly sub-area sites, conversely, lie in a landscape dominated by the Green Infrastructure provision afforded by Park Wood and woodland habitats along the Cuckoo Trail, some of which provide connectivity between the Cuckoo Trail and the Cuckmere River. Sites 264/3000 and 262/3000 directly abut Park Wood and 534/3000 lies adjacent to the Cuckoo Trail.

7.1.33 These sites are thus important in linking the habitats of the Cuckmere River, Cuckoo Trail and Park Wood, and any development of the sites within the sub-area should seek to protect and enhance existing green linkages between these features. Opportunities to ensure good connectivity with hedgerows along New Road, which in turn connects to the A271 and the Magham Down sites should also be sought. Planting of new woodlands, hedgerows or tree lines which reinforce or link into the wooded corridor of the Cuckoo Trail should be encouraged.

Blue Infrastructure

7.1.34 Blue Infrastructure, which comprises undeveloped areas of floodplain which typically have a pastoral character and often feature semi-improved grassland, wet woodland and marsh grassland, forms a very important component part of the local 'Green Infrastructure'. Blue Infrastructure provides both a corridor of movement, particularly for species such as bats, which navigate through the landscape using features such as watercourses and hedgerows and aquatic mammals (otter and water vole). It also provides a valuable foraging resource for a wide range on animal species, including amphibians, certain species of reptile, and most species of bat. Floodplain and riparian habitats may also support notable plant species and wetland invertebrates.

7.1.35 Figure 7.3b shows the Blue Infrastructure of the sub-area and the relationship between areas of floodplain (as defined by Environment Agency mapping of Zones 2 and 3), watercourses, and waterbodies such as ponds and lakes as taken from Ordnance Survey 1:25,000[2].

7.1.36 The Lower Horsebridge sub-area sites lie close to the floodplain of the Cuckmere River, with two sites, 080/3100, 780/3100 situated largely within the indicative floodplain. There is a likelihood that these sites will support riparian and wetland species. Potential development of these sites may create a pollution risk to the wetland habitats of the Cuckmere River unless this is adequately mitigated against. The other two sites, 067/3100 and 428/3100 have minimal connectivity with the Blue Infrastructure network and hence there is little likelihood that the rare and scarce plants and animals which use the Cuckmere River would be present.

7.1.37 The Hellingly sub-area sites, with the exception of 263/3000 and 264/3000 lie at some distance from the upper sections of the streams and drains which feed the Pevensey

[2] However, it should be noted that not all ponds are recorded on the 1:25,000 map series and that the actual number of ponds is present is likely to be higher than that shown.

Levels and Cuckmere River, and as such there is poor habitat connectivity with the designated habitats of the Levels and little likelihood that the rare and scarce plants and animals which use the Pevensey Levels and Cuckmere River would be present on the sites in the sub-area. Potential development of sites 263/3000 and 264/3000, which have a high degree of Blue Infrastructure connectivity may create a pollution risk to the wetland habitats of the Pevensey Levels unless this is adequately mitigated against.

Key Green Infrastructure Opportunities

7.1.38 Where appropriate, new developments in the sub-area should, in addition to retaining wildlife habitats, also seek to promote opportunities for enhancing existing wildlife habitats, and/or creating new habitats, related to residential development sites around Hailsham & Polegate. In the context of the Hellingly and Lower Horsebridge sub-areas, the following opportunities, taken from the CBA report and the individual site assessment reports for the sub-area, would apply:

- Opportunities exist to improve the existing urban edges of Hailsham through the provision of new development and GI associated with further growth of the town to enhance the surrounding landscape.
- Where appropriate, promote opportunities for landscape enhancements related to residential development sites around Hailsham.
- Where appropriate to do so, promote and encourage the use of best practice innovative architectural and planning solutions that take inspiration from local distinctiveness and character.
- Opportunities exist within Hailsham to create improved links between development and GI provision, to restore and improve degraded landscapes by increasing woodland areas, protecting landscape features and creating multifunctional green networks focussed on existing tree belts and hedgerows connected to the Cuckoo Trail green corridor.
- Where appropriate, seek to improve water quality and manage local flood risk through promoting the use of SuDS, green roofs and rain gardens for example, particularly within new housing developments. Opportunities exist in areas of most need, to consider how SuDS could also help to provide additional accessible greenspace.
- Explore opportunities to promote gardening for wildlife and growing food within existing and new residential areas.
- Where appropriate, seek opportunities to safeguard and enhance existing wildlife sites in or adjacent to the sub-area, for example Jarvis's, Nobody's Wood & Park Wood Complex LWS, and through sensitive management improve their overall condition.
- Contribution to 'B-Lines' project through seeding with native wildflower seed mix and use of native flowering trees and shrubs in planting schemes.
- The internal and external boundary vegetation should be allowed to develop to a broader, taller form and strengthened by further planting, including berry bearing species to provide for bird foraging, and native species to attract insects. A structurally diverse range of plants should be used, including shrubs large enough to support nesting birds.
- Creation of permanent wildflower grassland and native scrub habitat on development site boundaries and within areas of public open space.
- Creation of new wildlife habitat including grassland, woodland and scrub on land outside the development site boundary.
- Retention and enhancement of ditches and watercourses through selective removal of overhanging woody vegetation and sensitive re-profiling.
- Enhancements to retained on-site woodland habitat, including thinning out non-native deciduous tree species, and replacement planting with native species.
- Reinforce the green linkages formed by vegetated section of the Cuckmere River and the Cuckoo Trail to form a strong and cohesive north-south woodland corridor.

Minor site-specific measures are set out in the individual site reports.

Ecological and Biodiversity Context

7.1.39 The Lower Horsebridge and Hellingly sites range in size from small to medium-large and are situated in an arc about the northern part of Hailsham between Lower Horsebridge in the west and Amberstone in the east. The floodplain of the Cuckmere River separates the Lower Horsebridge sites from the Hellingly sites and the floodplain edge influences the ecology of the Horsebridge sites whilst the eastern Hellingly sites are influenced more by proximity to tracts of Ancient Woodland. The western Hellingly sites are clustered in the vicinity of an area featuring nurseries and light industrial uses.

7.1.40 Refer to Figure 7.4 for a map showing designated sites and biodiversity habitats in the vicinity of Lower Horsebridge and Hellingly.

7.1.41 Both the sub-areas are characterised by a relatively low density of ponds, and relatively low number of hedgerows, as field size in the local area tends to be larger than is typical elsewhere in the district. Great crested newt has however been recorded on multiple occasions in the local area, as has dormouse, although neither species occurs as frequently as in the well wooded areas to the south and west of Hailsham, which also feature a high density of ponds. All common reptile species are present (adder, common lizard, slow worm and grass snake).

7.1.42 The numbers and range of other protected species recorded from the sub-area (refer to Figure 7.5) reflects the nature of the landscape; uncommon bird species occur in the vicinity of the Cuckmere River floodplain and bat species have been recorded around the edge of the developed area, where older houses offer roosting opportunity, and also from the nearby woodland areas

7.1.43 Non-native species are infrequent in the sub-area.

7.2 Overview of assessments

7.2.1 The Hellingly and Lower Horsebridge sub-area contains twelve sites which were assessed. The Hellingly sites are dispersed between North Street (site 009/3000) in the west and Amberstone (sites 264/3000 and 263/3000) in the east, with the majority of the sites clustered around the junction of Park Road, Station Road and New Road.

7.2.2 The Lower Horsebridge sites are clustered around the village centre of Lower Horsebridge.

7.2.3 Most of the sites are located outside Flood zones 2 and 3. Within Lower Horsebridge however, the majority of sites 780/3100 and 080/3100 are within flood zone 2 and 3. One further site at the eastern edge of Hellingly, 263/3000 has a band through the centre which is situated in flood zone 2 and 3.

Landscape assessments

7.2.4 The landscape assessments for Hellingly fall into three broad groups which are discussed below.

7.2.5 Sites 107/3000, 784/3000 and 574/3000 are a group of small sites in close proximity to each other and situated in between and behind a row of existing residential properties on Park Road and Station Road. They all have a low visibility to and from the surrounding area and their small scale and context amongst existing development, creates a high, or in the case of 574/3000, a very high capacity for development. This last site is a small

industrial park and redevelopment could integrate it with the neighbouring residential properties and could improve the quality and coherence of the site and this small existing residential area.

Photo 7.6 – Some sites in the centre of Hellingly are fully enclosed by buildings and vegetation.

Photo location: View across site 107/3000

Photo 7.7 – Redevelopment of site 574/3000 provides the opportunity to replace large scale industrial buildings with smaller scale development more appropriate to the village character of Hellingly

Photo location – view across site 574/3000

7.2.6 Site 009/3000, is c. 1km from the group noted above, but has a number of similarities. It is a small site, situated behind existing properties and has low visibility from the surrounding area. However, the location is more sensitive, due to its proximity to the Hellingly village Conservation Area, the Cuckmere Valley and Horselunges Manor (Listed Building). The site has a Moderate-High landscape capacity and has the potential to

strengthen the settlement pattern and identity of the existing small cluster of development by the school.

7.2.7 Site 534/3000 and Site 262/3000 are larger scale sites that are considered to have a high or very high landscape capacity respectively. This is based on their minimal visibility, the broadly flat topography, and their location, in the centre of the Hellingly area close to a junction with Park Road, Station Road and New Road. Both of these sites are close to larger new developments, one within Park wood to the north of 534/3000 and one to the south of 262/3000. A key potential impact of developing these sites would be to substantially increase the developed area of Hellingly which could erode the gap between Upper Horsebridge and Hellingly and create a continuous stretch of development from Hailsham, through Upper Horsebridge to the north of Hellingly. This could weaken the separate identity of Hellingly as a settlement. However, it also presents opportunities to create a new village centre and improve connections and integration of the Park Wood development with the rest of the village. Strategic masterplanning could be undertaken in relation to these sites to ensure that genuine placemaking principles are embedded.

Photo 7.8 – Site 262/3000 is a large flat site in the centre of Hellingly. Development of the site provides an opportunity to create a new village centre

Photo location: View north across site 262/3000 towards the recent re-development of the Hellingly Hospital site

7.2.8 Site 534/3000 passes adjacent to the Cuckoo Trail, a walking and cycling route, which extends from Hampden Park in Eastbourne to Heathfield. This creates a sensitive edge to the site, and, if the site were developed, a landscape buffer zone should be created to minimise impacts on the character of the route. However, it also provides an opportunity to promote sustainable travel for commuting and an attractive recreational facility that would benefit new development in the area.

7.2.9 Sites 264/3000 and 263/3000 form a contiguous piece of land at the eastern most edge of Hellingly. These sites are much more sensitive due to their elevated position, which means they are highly visible in the wider landscape including long distance views across to the Pevensey Levels. Both sites also contain sensitive site features, this is particularly significant to site 263/3000 which contains listed buildings (Park Farmhouse and Park Farm Barn), and a stream which puts part of the site into flood zone 2 and 3. Both sites are

considered to have a moderate to low landscape capacity. Within the Hellingly area these sites have the lowest potential for development.

Photo 7.9 – The central part of site 263/3000 is within flood zone 2 and 3

Photo location: View north-east across site 263/3000

7.2.10 The Lower Horsebridge sub-area contains four sites, which were assessed. All of which fall within the Open Clay Vales LLCT and within E6:Hellingly LLCA.

7.2.11 The two sites, 067/3100 and 428/3100 to the north of the A271 can be considered together. Introducing development to these two sites would significantly alter the character of the village of Lower Horsebridge, increasing its size substantially and changing the character and setting of the existing village centre. Sites 067/3100 and 428/3100 would require careful integration as the fields, particularly 067/310, are open and exposed to the north, lacking a natural field boundary for containment. The A267 to the north would potentially provide containment for an expanded village of Lower Horsebridge however; it would not create any visual containment. Overall these two sites are considered to have high landscape capacity, they have weak historic continuity and are contiguous with the existing village and development. Development of an appropriate scale and character on the sites would be likely to have limited visual impact on the wider area and could have minimal impact on the wider landscape character if developed sensitively.

7.2.12 Site 428/3100 has a better sense of enclosure than 067/3100 and is therefore slightly less sensitive. It wraps around an existing new residential development, which currently sits uncomfortably in the landscape, creating an abrupt transition from the adjacent field. The potential development of this site could help create a more successful integration.

7.2.13 Site 780/3100 is the largest site within the Lower Horsebridge sub-area. Most of the site falls within floodzones 2 and 3 and is therefore restricted in terms of its potential for development. It also borders the River Cuckmere which is a landscape feature of High sensitivity and forms an important green/blue corridor which provides a valuable sense of separation between Lower Horsebridge and the large urban area of Upper Horsebridge and Hailsham to the south. Overall the site has Moderate-Low landscape capacity although the western corner is outside the flood zone and more distant from the River Cuckmere and therefore has higher potential to accommodate development.

Photo 7.10 – The Cuckmere Valley forms an important green corridor and creates a valuable sense of separation between the settlements of Lower and Upper Horsebridge

Photo location: View from the edge of Upper Horsebridge across the Cuckmere Valley towards site 780/3000 and Lower Horsebridge

7.2.14 Site 080/3100 is located close to 780/3100 at the eastern edge of Lower Horsebridge. It is not widely visible from the surrounding area which reduces its sensitivity. However, most of the site is within flood zone 2 and 3 which restricts its suitability for development.

7.2.15 Overall, the landscape around Hellingly and Lower Horsebridge has some capacity to accommodate development without resulting in significant landscape and visual impacts if appropriately designed and with landscape mitigation measures in place. The introduction of development on some of these sites has the potential to provide a greater sense of cohesion and have a positive impact on the local area. In addition the two larger sites in the centre of Hellingly also potentially have capacity to help restructure the area and provide a focal point for the village.

7.2.16 A number of mitigation measures will be required to minimise potential landscape and visual effects as much as possible and to maximise the opportunities that these areas present. Potential measures include:

- Retain and protect the rural countryside character of the Cuckoo Trail, setting any development back from it with a buffer zone
- The riverine landscape quality of the Cuckmere River and its tributaries is important and needs to be retained/protected/enhanced
- Retain the sense of separation between Hellingly and Lower Horsebridge and between Upper Horsebridge and Lower Horsebridge to enable the clear identities of the settlements to be maintained
- Retain and enhance the existing network of PRoW and use them to help create routes through and around new development areas to connect to the wider countryside and between settlements

- Any potential development will need to respect the inherent character of the Open Clay Vales character area, as a broadly open, flat landscape. New tree planting and vegetation should be provided within development areas to provide structure and to integrate buildings into their surroundings. However, mass planting is less appropriate.
- Native hedges will be important to provide edges to development sites to help integrate development and create positive edge conditions.
- Views from the Pevensey Levels will need to be considered and protected.

Ecology assessments

7.2.17 It was considered that a minority of the sites assessed in the sub-area were of ecological value at up to a District-level scale (see table below); the majority being of ecological value at the Parish level or below. This is in part because few sites occur in close proximity to sites of known ecological value, although several sites do feature biodiverse grassland, woodland or species rich hedgerow habitats.

7.2.18 Most of the sites, with the exception of 780/3100 and 263/3000 are either of small size, or feature a limited range of habitats of low ecological value and thus would be likely to be used by only small numbers of the more commonly occurring protected species, for example: reptiles, great crested newts, foraging or commuting bats and badger. All sites will require at least some protected species survey; but it is unlikely that protected species presence would present a significant constraint to development assuming avoidance of key habitats and that suitable mitigation measures are put in place where appropriate.

7.2.19 Sites 780/3100 and 263/3000 are assessed as having a high likelihood of ecological interest (see table below) because of the nature of the habitats they support. Refer to individual site reports for a summary of the potential for protected species interest and the surveys recommended.

7.2.20 Where bio-diverse on-site habitats abut off-site habitats of known wildlife value for example sites 264/3000 and 262/3000, the wildlife interest of the site itself is likely to be significantly greater than might otherwise be the case and the potential for protected species interest is likely to be considerably higher than might otherwise be the case.

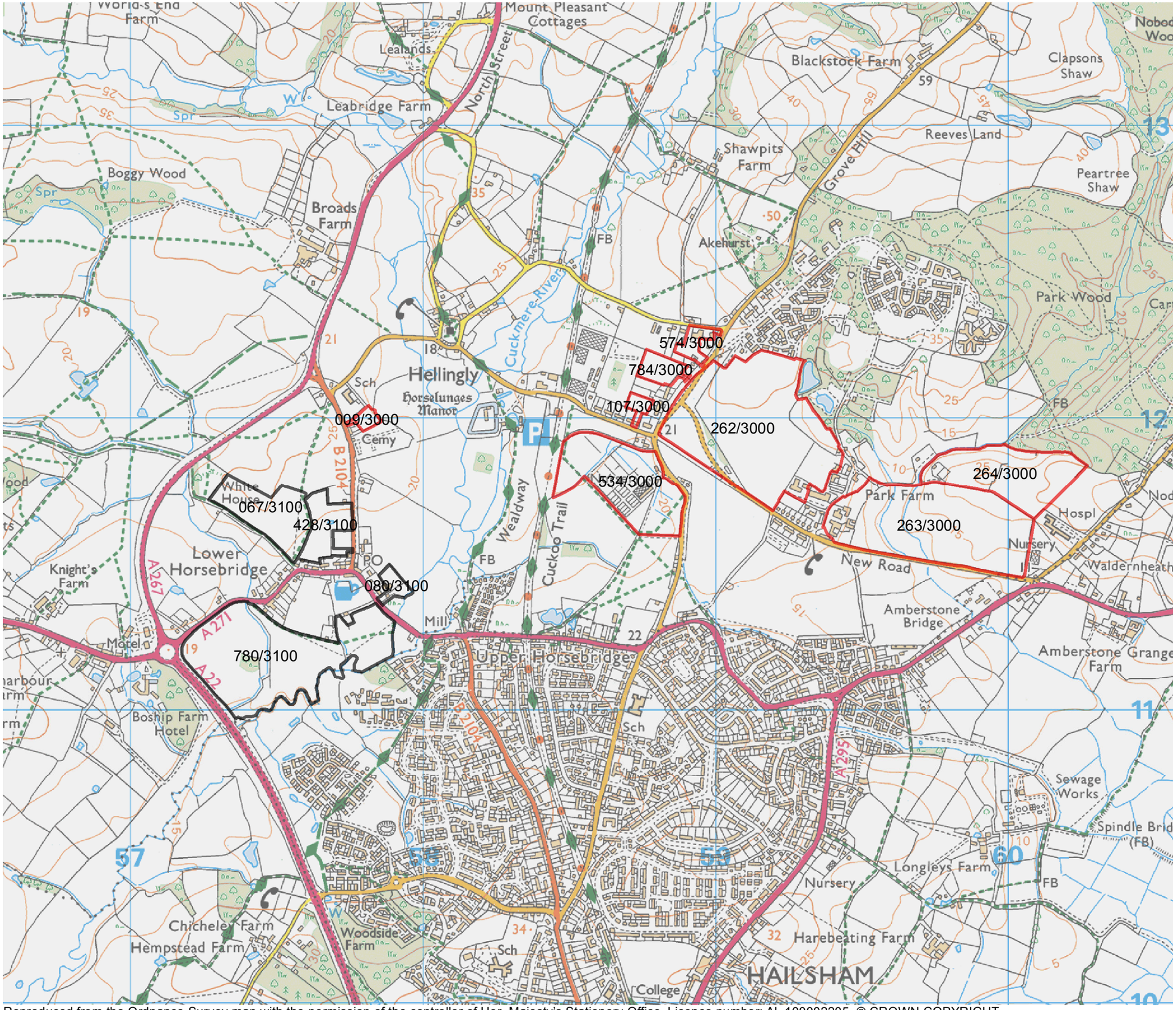
7.2.21 Development of the larger sites in the sub-area: 262/3000, 263/3000, or development of a large number of the smaller sites in combination would result in a significantly elevated number of residents close to the Pevensey Levels, who may choose to use the Levels for recreation. The disturbance impacts arising from this would need to be evaluated through Habitats Regulations Assessment of both individual developments above a certain scale, and also cumulative impact assessment, and appropriate mitigation measures employed if necessary.

7.2.22 The likelihood of ecological interest for each site is summarised in the table below:

	Site name	**Level of value/scale**	**Likelihood of ecological interest**
Lower Horsebridge			
067/3100	Land to the East of A267	Lower/Parish	Low

080/3100	Rothwebis Nursery, London Road	Lower/District	Medium
428/3100	Land at North Street	Lower/Parish	Medium
780/3100	Land east of A22 and south of A271, Lower Horsebridge	Lower/District	High
Hellingly			
009/3000	Field at North Street, Horsebridge	Lower/Parish	Low
107/3000	Land adjoining 13 Station Road	Lower/Parish	Low
262/3000	Park Farm (west), New Road	Lower/Parish	Medium
263/3000	Park Farm (east), New Road	Lower/District	High
264/3000	Park Farm, New Road	Lower/Parish	Medium
534/3000	Sussex Plants Ltd and adjoining land, Park Road Nurseries, Park Road	Lower/Parish	Medium
574/3000	Horselunges Business Park & Gros Fayt	Lower/Parish	Low
784/3000	Land at Park Road	Lower/Parish	Low

7.2.23 If proposals for development come forward on these sites, or if the sites are allocated for development within the Wealden Local Plan, appropriate measures will need to be incorporated to ensure the potential effects on biodiversity are avoided/minimised and/or mitigated, and that enhancements can be delivered in accordance with local and national planning policy. This should be done on a site by site basis, taking into account green and Blue Infrastructure local to the site, and ensuring that valuable habitats on site are retained and enhanced, and that additional measures such as new ponds, new areas of woodland or grassland, or features such as bird and bat boxes and habitat piles can be delivered wherever feasible. The individual site reports provide outline/indicative avoidance, mitigation and enhancement proposals, however these should be refined and developed by the Ecologists working in support of any future planning application, along with other more species- or habitat-specific measures as may be indicated by the outcome of the recommended species and habitat surveys.



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Key

- Site Boundary (Hellingly)
- Site Boundary (Lower Horsebridge)

L16418 Hailsham Area Action Plan
Hellingly & Lower Horsebridge

Site Locations

Figure 7.1
1:12 500@A3

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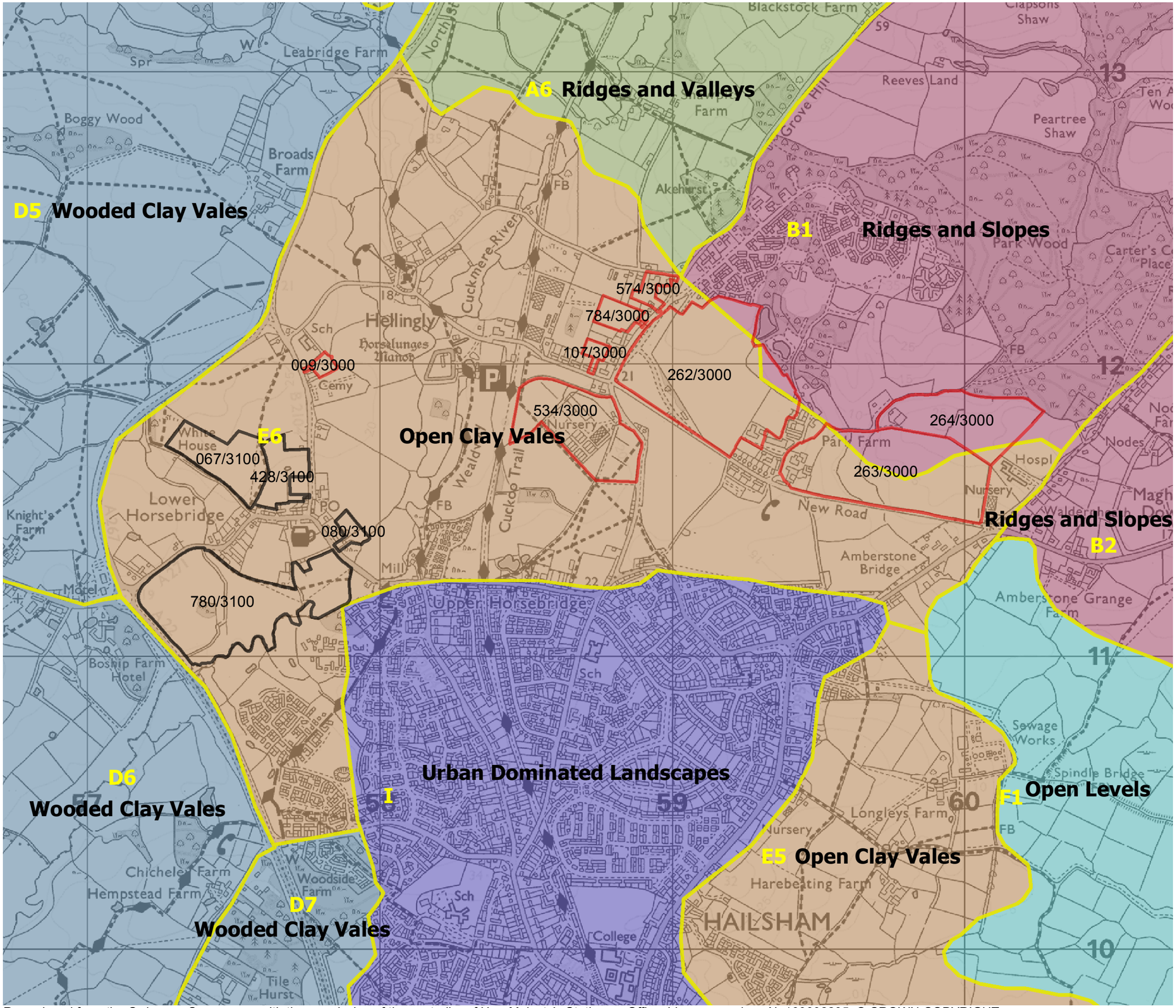

Key

- Site Boundary (Hellingly)
- Site Boundary (Lower Horsebridge)
- Local Landscape Character Areas

Local Landscape Character Types

- Coastal Levels
- Gently Undulating Wooded Valleys
- Open Clay Vales
- Open Levels
- Ridges and Slopes
- Ridges and Valleys
- Settled Levels
- Urban Dominated Landscapes
- Wooded Clay Vales

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Hellingly & Lower Horsebridge

Landscape Character Context

Figure 7.2
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Key

Site Boundary (Hellingly)

Woodland

Tree Belt

Hedgerow

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Green Infrastructure

Figure 7.3A
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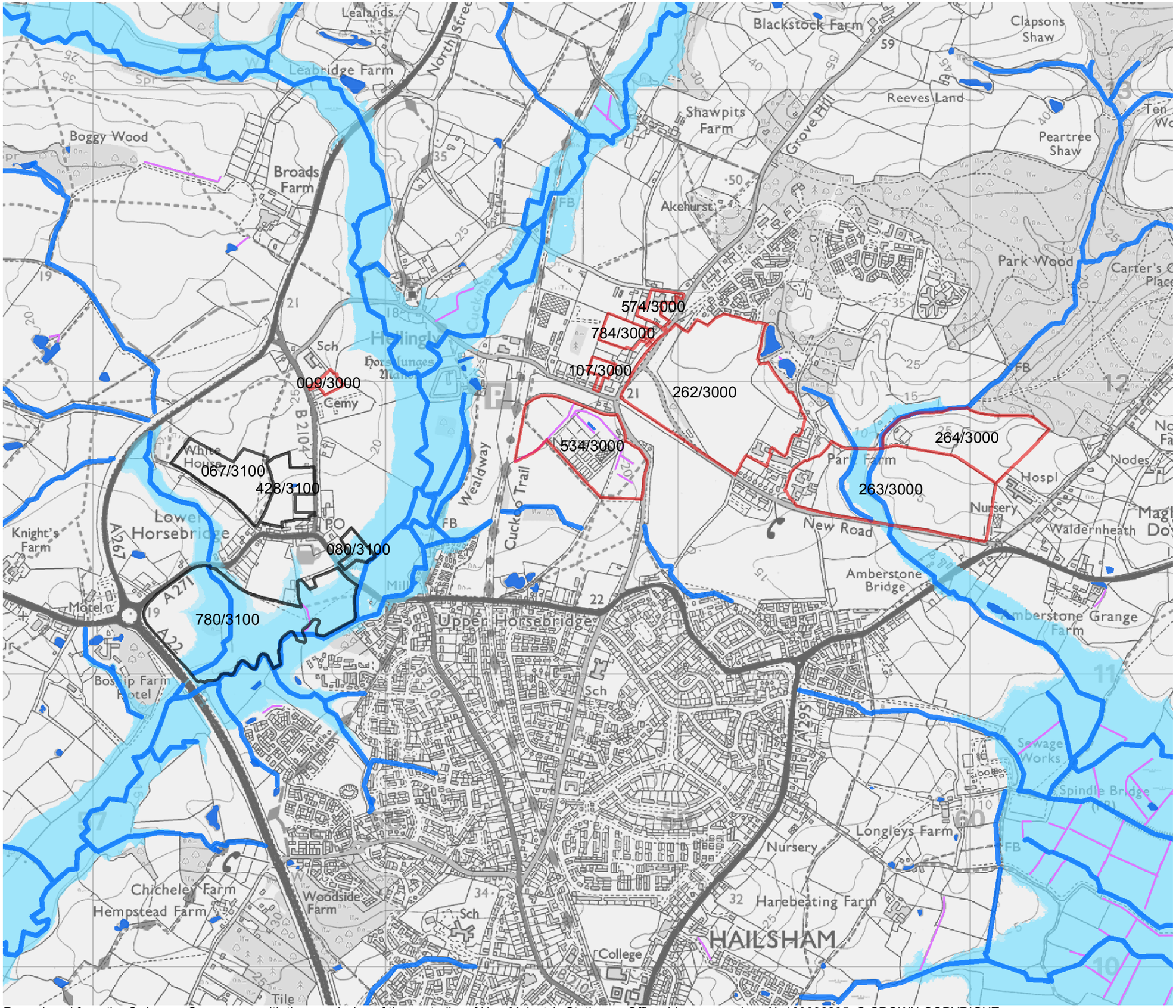

Key

- Site Boundary (Hellingly)
- Site Boundary (Lower Horsebridge)
- Flood Zone
- Standing Water/Pond
- Watercourse
- Ditch

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Hellingly & Lower Horsebridge

Blue Infrastructure

Figure 7.3B
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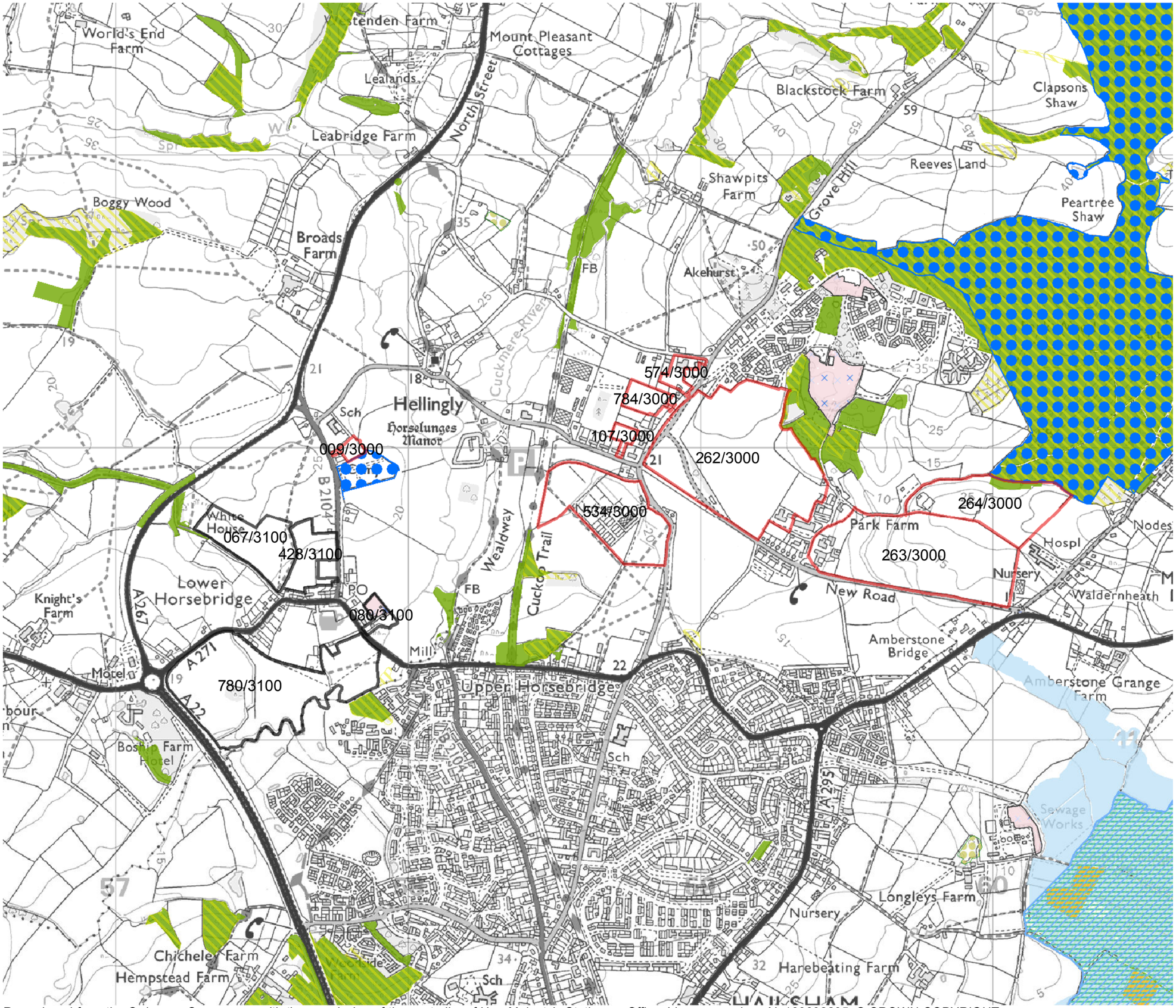

Key

- Site Boundary (Hellingly)
- Site Boundary (Lower Horsebridge)

Local Sites

Priority Habitat Inventory - Main Habitat

- Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh
- Deciduous Woodland
- Traditional Orchard
- Good Quality Semi-Improved Grassland
- No Main Habitat but Additional Habitats Present
- Woodpasture and Parkland (BAP Priority Habitat)
- Notable Road Verge
- Ancient and Replanted Semi-Natural Woodland
- Local Wildlife Site

National Sites

- National Nature Reserves
- Site of Special Scientific Interest

International/European Sites

- Ramsar
- Special Areas of Conservation
- Special Protection Area

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Hellingly & Lower Horsebridge

Designated Sites

Figure 7.4
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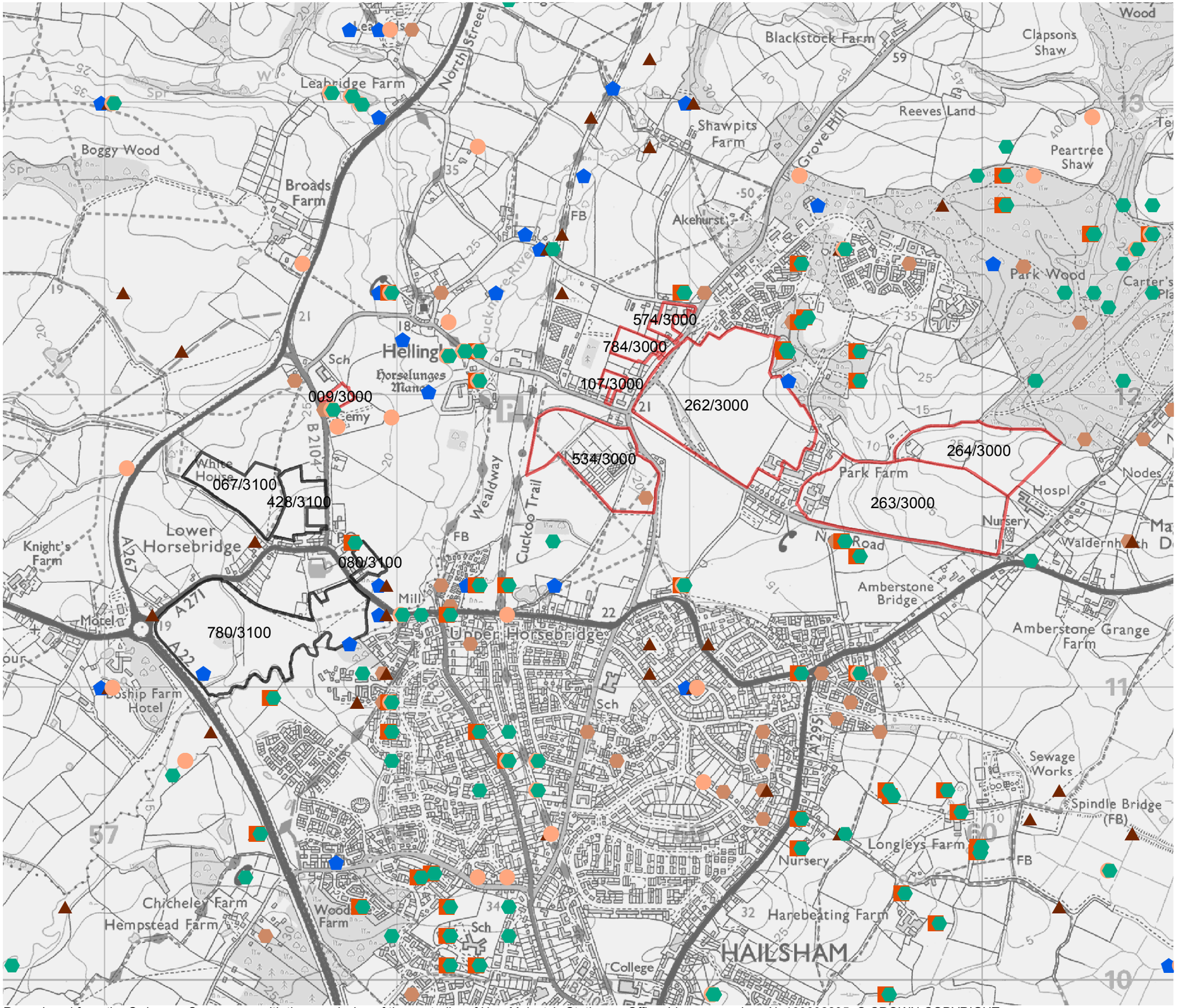

L16418 Hailsham Area Action Plan
Hellingly & Lower Horsebridge

Protected & Non-native Species

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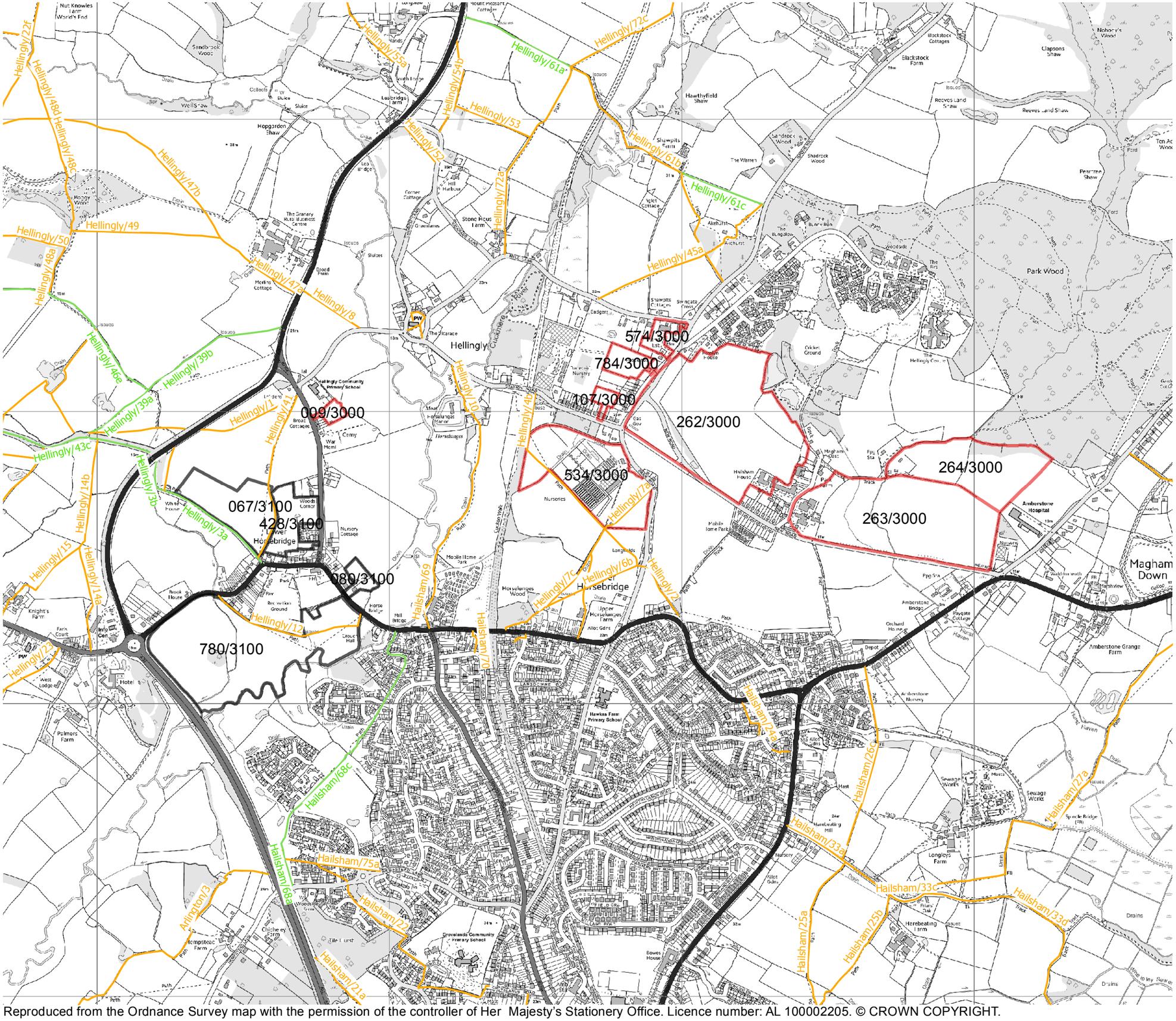

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Hellingly & Lower Horsebridge

Public Rights of Way

Figure 7.6
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