



Folkestone and Hythe District Local Plan

Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report

Folkestone and Hythe District Council

Final report

Prepared by LUC

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Folkestone and Hythe District Local Plan

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Folkestone and Hythe District Council commissioned LUC in June 2026 to produce a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report for the new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan.

1.2 SEA is an assessment process designed to consider and communicate the significant sustainability issues and effects of emerging plans and policies within them, including their alternatives. SEA iteratively informs the plan-making process by helping to refine the contents of plans, so that they maximise the benefits of sustainable development and avoid, or at least minimise, the potential for adverse effects.

1.3 The SEA process comprises a number of stages that need to be undertaken alongside Local Plan preparation:

- Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope of the environmental assessment.
- Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects.
- Stage C: Preparing the environmental report.
- Stage D: Consulting on the Local Plan and the environmental report.
- Stage E: Monitoring the significant environmental effects of implementing the Local Plan.

1.4 Scoping is the first stage in the SEA process. The purpose of this Scoping Report is to provide the context for, and determine the scope of, the SEA of the new Local Plan and to set out the framework for undertaking the later stages of the SEA.

This report is in an 'accessible format', which means that it has been formatted to meet the requirements of the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) Accessibility Regulations (2018), as set out in the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1). This means it must have larger fonts, larger spacing between lines and headings, less information presented in tables, 'alt text' provided for all figures and it is able to be read by screen-reading software.

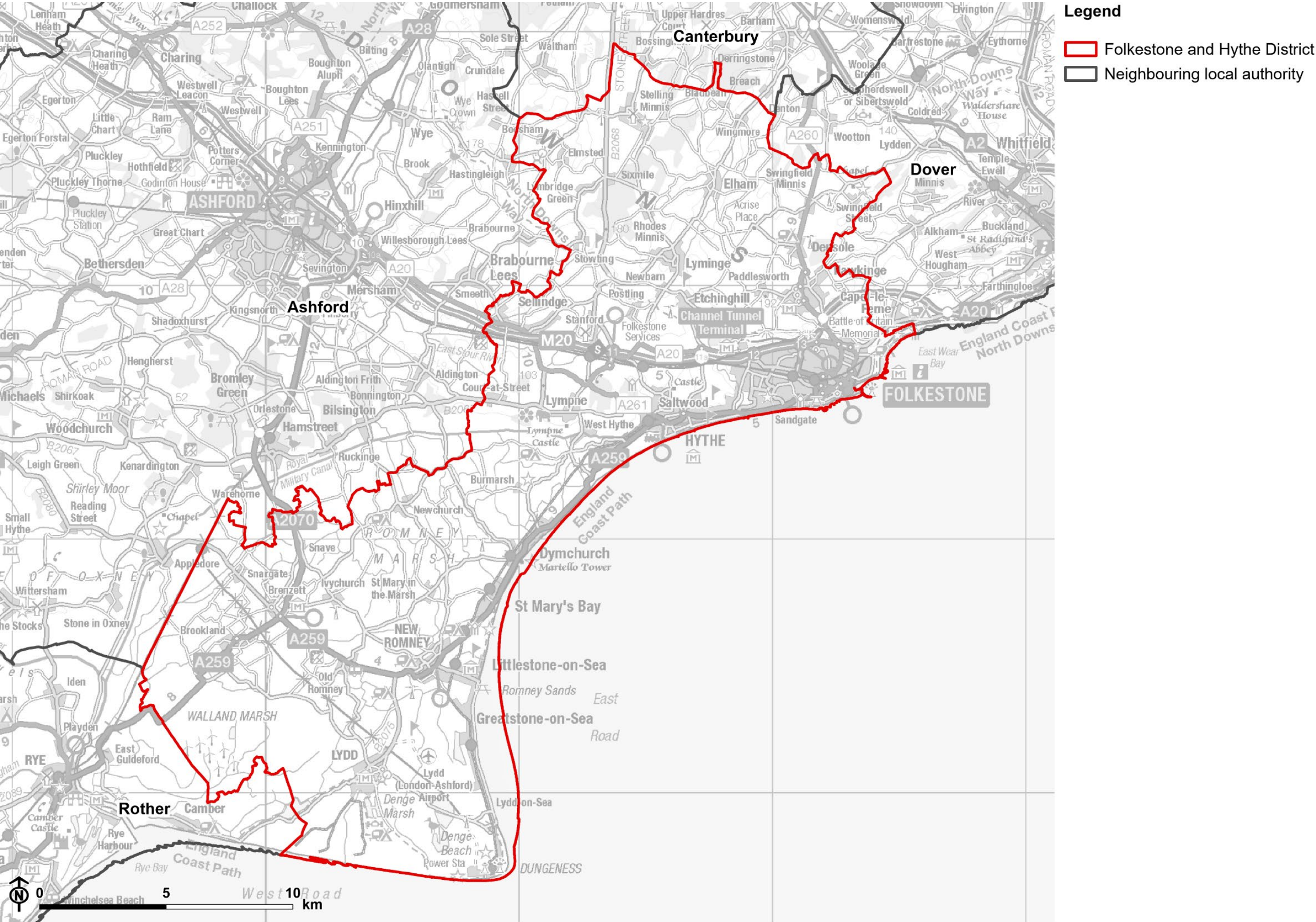
The plan area

1.5 Folkestone and Hythe district is located in the South East of England and is one of 12 local authority areas within the county of Kent. The district was created in 1974 and was formerly referred to as Shepway before changing its name in 2018 to reflect the names of its two largest towns. It covers an area of 356.6 square km and the largest towns are Folkestone and Hythe. The district is bordered by Dover district to the northeast, Canterbury district to the north, Ashford borough to the northwest, and Rother district, within East Sussex, to the southwest. As of 2024, the district had a population of 112,411 residents. Geographically, it is situated in a strategic position on the M20 and the Channel Tunnel rail link at Folkestone.

1.6 The district benefits from a range of habitats of significant biodiversity value and is partly within the Kent Downs National Landscape. To the south of the district there are internationally important coastal environments associated with Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay. The district is also home to a number of designated nature conservation sites, including Local Nature Reserves, Local Wildlife Sites and protected coastal habitats, which contribute significantly to the area's natural environment and green and blue infrastructure.

1.7 The location of Folkestone and Hythe District is shown in **Figure 1.1** overleaf.

Figure 1.1: Location of the district



Created by LUC - Location of the District 02/07/2026
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Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan

1.8 The adopted development plan for Folkestone and Hythe District comprises the following documents:

- Core Strategy Review 2022 (adopted 30 March 2022)
- Places and Policies Local Plan 2020 (adopted 16 September 2020);
- Policies Map; and
- The St. Mary in the Marsh Neighbourhood Plan 2017 to 2028 (made in March 2019)
- The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-2030 as amended by Early Partial Review (2020)
- Kent Mineral Sites Plan (2020)

1.9 The Council is now in the early stages of producing a new Local Plan. The Local Plan will be prepared under the new plan-making system and will cover the period up to at least 2045. It will replace the adopted Core Strategy Review 2022 and the Places and Policies Local Plan 2020. To date, the Council has undertaken two Call for Sites processes. The first was undertaken from the 7th of October to 18th November 2024. The second was held from the 13th of March to 24th April 2025. Sites have also been accepted since this date.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

1.10 It is necessary to conduct an environmental assessment of the new Local Plan in accordance with the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (European Directive 2001/42/EC), as transposed into law in England by the SEA Regulations [\[See reference 1\]](#). This remains in force despite the UK exiting the European Union in January 2020.

1.11 In October 2023, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill received royal assent. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act outlines a number of reforms to the planning system, including the replacement of the current SEA regime with a new requirement for an Environmental Outcomes Report (EOR). Consultation took place in 2023 on the proposals for EORs, and the Government published its response in March 2026 along with a roadmap for the introduction of the new system, which is expected to be in place by the end of 2027. The specific requirements will be set out in forthcoming regulations, along with information about transition arrangements; however, at present the requirement for SEA

remains as set out in existing legislation. Any changes to the legal framework for carrying out SEA will be addressed as appropriate as the Local Plan is prepared.

1.12 At the time of writing, Government guidance on the new plan-making system continues to refer to the requirement for SEA, noting that "your plan will need to carry out SEA if it meets criteria set out in regulation 5 of The Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. We expect that all local plans will need to carry out SEA."

1.13 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has confirmed that Local Plans being prepared under the new system are no longer required to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal, as was previously required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 for Local Plans prepared under the previous system.

Habitats Regulations Assessment

1.14 The requirement to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of development plans was confirmed by the amendments to the Habitats Regulations published for England and Wales in July 2007, updated in 2010 and again in 2012 and 2017 [\[See reference 2\]](#). The Regulations translate Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive) and 79/409/EEC (Birds Directive) into UK law and remain a legal requirement despite the UK exiting the European Union.

1.15 The purpose of HRA is to assess the impacts of a land-use plan against the conservation objectives of a European site and to ascertain whether it would adversely affect the integrity of that site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

1.16 The HRA of the new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan will be undertaken and reported on separately but the findings will be taken into account in the SEA where relevant (for example to inform judgements about the likely effects of potential development locations on biodiversity).

Meeting the requirements of the SEA Regulations

1.17 The relevant sections of the Scoping Report that meet the SEA Regulations requirements are signposted below (the remainder will be met during subsequent stages of the SEA of the new Folkestone and Hythe Local

Plan). This information will be included in the full SEA Report at each stage of plan making to show how the requirements of the SEA Regulations have been met.

1.18 The SEA Regulations [\[See reference 3\]](#) require the responsible authority to prepare, or secure the preparation of, an ‘environmental report’, which in this case will comprise the SEA report. The report shall identify, describe, and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of the following (requirements in green shaded text below, where each requirement is met is provided in the bullets below):

Implementing the plan or programme; and reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme. *Regulation 12(2)*

- The full SEA Report that will be produced to accompany consultation on the Local Plan will constitute the ‘environmental report’ and will be produced at a later stage in the SEA process but will include the relevant parts of the Scoping Report as noted below.

An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme, and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes. *Schedule 2(1)*

- Covered in **Chapter 1** and **Chapter 2**.

The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme. *Schedule 2(2)*

- Covered in **Chapter 3** and **Chapter 4**.

The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected. *Schedule 2(3)*

- Covered in **Chapter 3**.

Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as a European site (within the meaning of regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017). *Schedule 2(4)*

- Covered in **Chapter 3** and **Chapter 4**.

The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation. *Schedule 2(5)*

- Covered in **Chapter 2**.

The likely significant effects on the environment, including short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary effects, positive and negative effects, and secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects, on issues such as: (a) biodiversity; (b) population; (c) human health; (d) fauna; (e) flora; (f) soil; (g) water; (h) air; (i) climatic factors; (j) material assets; (k) cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage; (l) landscape; and (m) the interrelationship between the issues referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (l). *Schedule 2(6)*

- Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme. *Schedule 2(7)*

- Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with, and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information. *Schedule 2(8)*

- Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with regulation 17. *Schedule 2(9)*

- Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

A non-technical summary of the information provided under paragraphs 1 to 9. *Schedule 2(10)*

- Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

The report shall include such of the information referred to in Schedule 2 to these Regulations as may reasonably be required, taking account of:

- current knowledge and methods of assessment;
- the contents and level of detail in the plan or programme;
- the stage of the plan or programme in the decision-making process; and
- the extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process in order to avoid duplication of the assessment. *Regulation 12 (3)*

- This Scoping Report and the environmental report will adhere to this requirement.

1.19 In terms of consultation, the SEA Regulations require that:

When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the report, the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies. *Regulation 12(5)*

- This Scoping Report is being made available at the same time as the Local Plan Scoping (Regulation 20) consultation. As required by the SEA Regulations, it will be sent to the statutory bodies (the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England) for comment.

Every draft plan or programme for which an environmental report has been prepared in accordance with regulation 12 and its accompanying environmental report (“the relevant documents”) shall be made available for the purposes of consultation in accordance with the following provisions of this regulation.

As soon as reasonably practicable after the preparation of the relevant documents, the responsible authority shall:

- send a copy of those documents to each consultation body;
- take such steps as it considers appropriate to bring the preparation of the relevant documents to the attention of the persons who, in the authority’s opinion, are affected or likely to be affected by, or have an interest in the decisions involved in the assessment and adoption of the plan or programme concerned, required under the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Directive (“the public consultees”);
- Inform the public consultees of:
 - (a) the address of the website at which the relevant documents may be viewed and downloaded free of charge;
 - (b) the fact that a copy of the relevant documents may be obtained by email from the responsible authority;
 - (c) the fact that a copy of the relevant documents may be obtained by post from the responsible authority, provided that it is reasonably practicable for the authority to provide a copy by post;

- (d) the address, email address and telephone number for the purpose of requesting a copy of the relevant documents either by email or by post;
- (e) whether a charge will be made for copies of the relevant documents provided by post and the amount of any charge; and
- (f) the telephone number which can be used to contact the responsible authority for enquiries in relation to the relevant documents

The period referred to in paragraph (2)(d) must be of such length as will ensure that the consultation bodies and the public consultees are given an effective opportunity to express their opinion on the relevant documents.

Regulation 13(1)(2)

- Public consultation on the new Local Plan and accompanying SEA Reports will take place as the Plan develops. The intended programme and key stages for plan preparation are set out in the Local Plan Timetable, which was published in May 2026, and this timetable will be updated regularly throughout the preparation of the new Local Plan **[See reference 4]**.

Where a responsible authority, other than the Secretary of State, is of the opinion that a plan or programme for which it is the responsible authority is likely to have significant effects on the environment of a Member State, it shall, as soon as reasonably practicable after forming that opinion:

- notify the Secretary of State of its opinion and of the reasons for it; and
- supply the Secretary of State with a copy of the plan or programme concerned, and of the accompanying environmental report. *Regulation 14(1)*

- This is unlikely to be relevant to the new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan, as there will be no effects beyond the UK.

1.20 In terms of taking the environmental report and the results of the consultations into account in decision-making, the SEA Regulations require (relevant extracts of Regulation 16):

As soon as reasonably practicable after the adoption of a plan or programme for which an environmental assessment has been carried out under these Regulations, the responsible authority shall:

- publish the plan or programme, as adopted, its accompanying environmental report and a statement containing the particulars specified in paragraph (4) (“the relevant adoption documents”) on a public website at which the documents may be viewed and downloaded free of charge;
 - provide a copy of the relevant adoption documents by email to any person who requests a copy, as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of that person’s request;
 - provide one copy of the relevant adoption documents by post to any person who requests a copy, as soon as reasonably practicable after receipt of that person’s request, unless it is not reasonably practicable to provide a copy by post for reasons connected to the effects of coronavirus, including restrictions on movement;
 - make available a telephone number for the public to make enquiries in relation to the relevant adoption documents; *Regulation 15(4)*
- Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

As soon as reasonably practicable after the adoption of a plan or programme the responsible authority shall inform (i) the consultation bodies; (ii) the persons who, in relation to the plan or programme, were public consultees for the purposes of regulation 13; and (iii) where the responsible authority is not the Secretary of state, the Secretary of State, that the plan or programme has been adopted, and a statement containing the following particulars:

- how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme;
- how the environmental report has been taken into account;
- how opinions expressed in response to: (i) the invitation in regulation 13(2)(d); (ii) action taken by the responsible authority in accordance with regulation 13(4), have been taken into account;

- how the results of any consultations entered into under regulation 14(4) have been taken into account;
- the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
- the measures that are to be taken to monitor the significant environmental effects of the implementation of the plan or programme.
Regulation 16(2)(4)

- Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

1.21 The SEA Regulations also require that the responsible authority shall monitor the significant effects of the implementation of each plan or programme with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and being able to undertake appropriate remedial action (Regulation 17(1)). This requirement will be met after adoption of the new Local Plan.

Structure of the Scoping Report

1.22 This chapter describes the background to the preparation of the new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan and the requirement to undertake SEA. The remainder of this Scoping Report is structured into the following sections:

- **Chapter 2** describes the other plans, policies and programmes of relevance to the SEA of the Folkestone and Hythe new Local Plan.
- **Chapter 3** presents the baseline information which will inform the assessment of the policies and sites in the new Local Plan.
- **Chapter 4** identifies the key environmental issues in Folkestone and Hythe of relevance to the new Local Plan and considers the likely evolution of those issues without its implementation.
- **Chapter 5** presents the SEA framework that will be used to guide the appraisal of the Local Plan and the proposed method for carrying out the SEA.
- **Chapter 6** describes the next steps to be undertaken in the SEA of the new Local Plan.

Chapter 2

Relevant plans and programmes

2.1 Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations requires:

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.
- The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.

2.2 In order to establish a clear scope for the SEA it is necessary to review and develop an understanding of the environmental objectives contained within international and national plans and programmes that are of relevance to the new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan. Given the SEA Regulations requirements above, it is also necessary to consider the relationship between the new Local Plan and other relevant plans, policies and programmes.

2.3 This chapter summarises the relationship of the new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan to the relevant international and national plans, policies and programmes which should be taken into consideration during preparation of the document and its SEA, as well as those plans and programmes which are of relevance at a sub-national level. The objectives of these plans and programmes have been taken into account when drafting the SEA framework in **Chapter 5**. An outline of the content and main objectives of the new Local Plan will be described in subsequent SEA reports, as this emerges through the plan-making process.

The implications of Brexit

2.4 As of the end of January 2020, the UK is no longer a member of the EU. Principally, the UK's environmental law is derived from EU law or was directly effective EU law. As a result of Brexit, the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 converts existing EU law which applied directly in the UK's legal system (such as EU Regulations and EU Decisions) into UK law and preserves laws made in the UK to implement EU obligations (e.g. the laws which implement the EU Directive). This body of law is known as retained EU law and could be subject to future, post-Brexit amendments.

2.5 As set out in the Explanatory Memorandum accompanying the Brexit amendments **[See reference 5]**, the purpose of the Brexit amendments to the SEA Regulations is to ensure that the law functions correctly after the UK has left the EU. No substantive changes are made by this instrument to the way the SEA regime operates.

2.6 Relevant international plans and programmes (including those at the EU level) are transposed into national plans, policies and legislation and these have been considered in this chapter.

Relationship with other relevant plans or programmes

2.7 The new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan is not prepared in isolation and must be in conformity with a range of international and national plans and programmes. In addition, it will comprise any 'made' Neighbourhood Plans within the District. There is currently one made Neighbourhood Plan in Folkestone and Hythe District, which is the St Mary in the Marsh Neighbourhood Plan 2017 to 2028.

International

2.8 At the international level, there is a wide range of plans and programmes which act to inform and shape national level legislation. Planning policy in England at a national and local level (i.e. the NPPF and Local Plans) is in conformity with the relevant legislation.

2.9 Of relevance to the district is the proposed Cross-Channel Geopark, a cooperation between the Kent Downs National Landscape (England) and the Caps et Marais d'Opale Regional Nature Park (France) in celebration of the area's common geology and heritage **[See reference 6]**. A formal decision on the Geopark bid is expected later in 2026.

National

2.10 There is an extensive range of national plans, policies and programmes that are relevant to the Local Plan and the SEA process. A pragmatic and proportionate approach has been taken with regards to the identification of key national plans, policies and programmes, focusing on those that are of most relevance. A summary of the main objectives of national plans and

programmes, including the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance, of relevance to the new Local Plan and the SEA is provided below.

The National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

2.11 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) **[See reference 7]** is the overarching planning framework which provides national planning policy and principles for the planning system in England. The NPPF was originally published in March 2012 and has since been updated and revised several times, with the most recent version published in August 2026.

2.12 The three overarching objectives of the planning system are set out in the NPPF. These should be pursued in mutually supportive ways so that net gains are achieved across each of the different objectives:

- “an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible community facilities, public service infrastructure and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental objective – to support efforts to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy; and to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, and minimising waste and pollution.

2.13 The updated NPPF now includes a suite of procedural and thematic policies, which are separated into policies for plan-making and policies for decision-making. The policies for plan-making must be taken into account in preparing any part of a development plan submitted to the Secretary of State after December 2026. The national decision-making policies are effective immediately and development plan policies (or parts of those policies) which are

materially inconsistent with national decision-making policies will be given very limited weight.

2.14 The NPPF sets out that Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs) will form part of the development plan for each area, along with the Local Plan. The SDS for Kent and Medway will be prepared by Kent County Council and Medway Council.

2.15 NPPF Policy PM1: Spatial development strategies sets out the need for spatial development strategies to set a positive vision for future growth and change at a sub-regional scale and provide a clear spatial framework for investment and growth, including for new housing. Their content should be genuinely strategic in nature and allow for more detailed issues to be considered and addressed through other parts of the development plan. SDSs will apportion objectively assessed needs for housing (and other uses that are best considered at a strategic scale) to local planning authorities in the sub-region and identify broad locations for growth and regeneration but will not allocate sites.

2.16 The new Local Plan must be consistent with the requirements of the NPPF, which states in Policy PM2: Local Plans that: 'Local Plans should set out a positive vision and spatial strategy which supports the delivery of the spatial development strategy for their area, and should set out specific proposals for accommodating development needs and conserving and improving the environment at a local level'.

2.17 Policies PM6 – PM13 set out policies relating to how plans should be prepared and address matters including general principles for plan-making, evidence for plan-making, identifying and assessing land for development and maintaining and demonstrating co-operation between plan-making authorities.

2.18 Separate Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) [\[See reference 8\]](#) provides guidance for how the Government's planning policies for England are expected to be applied. Sitting alongside the NPPF, it provides an online resource that is updated on a regular basis for the benefit of planning practitioners.

2.19 The overarching nature of the NPPF means that its implications for the SEA relate to multiple topics which this report seeks to address. Considering the importance of the NPPF to the English planning system, the relevance of the framework and its implications for the plan-making process and the SEA is considered in more detail below. The SEA topics listed in the SEA Regulations are set out below (some of which have been combined), although consideration of issues often cuts across topics. The summary provided below is not

absolutely comprehensive and the NPPF is intended to be read and applied as a whole during plan making.

Biodiversity (including flora and fauna) and landscape

2.20 The NPPF sets out the approach that Local Plans should take in relation to biodiversity, and the landscape, particularly through plan-making policy N1: Improving the natural environment, which states that plans should “set out the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites and areas of importance for their landscape, geodiversity or biodiversity in the plan area, and identify other features which require particular consideration in managing development due to their environmental value such as chalk streams.” Plans should also identify opportunities for the “conservation, enhancement and recovery of landscapes, sensitive waterbodies, habitats and priority or threatened species, including through habitat restoration, the use of nature-based solutions, and the creation and strengthening of ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures (including opportunities which exist at a catchment or landscape scale across plan boundaries)”.

2.21 The new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan should seek to maximise any opportunities arising for biodiversity. This should include approaches which are supportive of enhancing the connectivity of green infrastructure and promoting the achievement of biodiversity net gain. The SEA process should support the identification and maximisation of potential benefits through the consideration of alternatives and assessment of both negative and positive significant effects.

2.22 The Local Plan should be supportive of an approach to development which would protect the landscape character of the district and its surrounds. The SEA should identify those alternatives which contribute positively to landscape.

Population and human health

2.23 In relation to population and human health, healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social integration, are safe and accessible, and enable and support healthy lifestyles are supported through the framework.

2.24 Plan-making policy HC1: Planning for healthy communities states that development plans should “promote the creation of healthy and inclusive places, and the provision, retention and enhancement of appropriate community facilities and public service infrastructure”. Development plans should “set out the facilities and contributions expected from development, including as part of allocations for major development involving the provision of housing”.

Additionally, they should “identify wider opportunities to promote good health, prevent ill-health, reduce health inequalities and support social interaction through their spatial strategy and land allocations, including through policies for strengthening town centres, locating development where it will support walking, wheeling and cycling and promoting mixed-use developments”. Through Policy HC2: Local Green Space, the NPPF supports the designation of land as Local Green Space “where this would safeguard green areas of particular value to the local community”.

2.25 The delivery of new housing is considered to support local communities and their wellbeing by meeting housing needs and addressing shortages. Policy HO2: Setting requirement figures for homes states that “Spatial development strategies should establish a housing requirement, and set pitch and plot requirements where a need has been identified, for each local planning authority within the strategy area”. It specifies that these figures should not be retested as part of Local Plan preparation unless there has been a significant change in circumstances which affects the overall requirement and its distribution to each local planning authority area. According to policy HO3: Providing land for homes, “Local plans should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites to meet or exceed the housing requirement figure and pitch and plot requirements for their areas over the plan period”.

2.26 The new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan can have a significant influence on addressing inequalities including those relating to health and will need to consider the appropriate siting of new development, particularly large development sites that are likely to include new service and facility provisions. The Local Plan can ensure that new development is located in areas which can improve accessibility for existing as well as new residents and ensure that future development does not exacerbate existing inequalities. The SEA process can support the identification and refinement of options that can contribute to reducing inequalities and support the development of policy approaches that cumulatively improve the wellbeing of local communities.

Soils, water and air

2.27 The NPPF states in Policy N1: Identifying environmental opportunities and safeguards that “development plans should safeguard and enhance the natural environment, and reflect the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services, by using Local Nature Recovery Strategies, Protected Landscape Management Plans, River Basin Management Plans, National Forest Strategies, Community Forest Plans and other relevant evidence”. Additionally, plan-making policy P1: Planning for clean and safe places stipulates that

development plans should “consider any wider opportunities to reduce air, water, soil, noise or other forms of pollution, and contribute to compliance with national and local environmental targets and objectives, through the spatial strategy and policies for specific parts of the plan area (such as by identifying opportunities for strategic nature-based solutions”. Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account implications for water supply.

2.28 The NPPF encourages the reuse of previously developed land, with Policy L1: Planning for an effective use of land stating that the development plan should “identify ways of accommodating as much as possible of the identified need for development in the area on previously developed land”.

2.29 Policy W1: Planning for energy and water states that the development plan should take into account factors including water supply, drainage and wastewater capacity when considering the location and phasing of growth. In relation to water efficiency, Policy PM13: Setting standards states that it may be appropriate to apply the tighter Building Regulations optional requirement where justified, or exceptionally a more stringent local standard in areas of serious water stress.

2.30 According to plan-making Policy P1: Planning for clean and safe places, development plans should consider opportunities to contribute to compliance with national and local environmental targets and objectives, through the spatial strategy and policies for specific parts of the plan area (such as by identifying opportunities for strategic nature-based solutions).

2.31 The new Local Plan can seek to ensure the appropriate protection of soil quality, including best and most versatile agricultural land. Further to this, the Plan should ensure that new development does not conflict with current mineral operations (there are no active quarries in Folkestone and Hythe) as well as long-term mineral resource plans. The SEA process should inform the development of the new Local Plan by helping to identify alternatives which would avoid areas of highest soil quality and best and most versatile agricultural land (as far as this is relevant to Folkestone and Hythe District), as well as those which would promote the use of brownfield land.

2.32 The Local Plan presents an opportunity to consider incorporating targets for water efficiency and the level of water consumption and grey water recycling in any new development. The Plan also can ensure that development is sited away from areas of high flood probability and that appropriate water drainage is in place in line with flood risk strategies. The SEA process should seek to

identify and address potential negative effects on the water environment, including implications relating to wastewater.

2.33 Growth will inevitably increase traffic on the roads which also has implications for air quality, and the new Local Plan and SEA process can seek to minimise effects of this nature through appropriately siting new development, identifying where mitigation may be needed and requiring the necessary transport provisions and contributions from new development. The Local Plan, as supported by the SEA, should seek to identify opportunities to maximise the potential for alternative modes of transport to the car and reduce the need to travel, therefore reducing emissions, through the consideration of alternatives and assessment of significant effects. This includes potential opportunities that may arise as a result of the delivery of new infrastructure.

Climate change mitigation and adaptation

2.34 Climate change mitigation and adaption, energy efficiency and waste minimisation measures for new development including through the promotion of renewable energy schemes are also supported through the NPPF. Plan-making policy CC1: Planning for climate change stipulates that development plans should take a “proactive approach to mitigating climate change and supporting the transition to net zero, in accordance with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008. They should also take a proactive approach to adapting to climate change, taking into account the implications of extreme weather and long-term climate trends including overheating, wildfires, drought, flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes”.

2.35 The policies W1-W4 in chapter 10 of the NPPF support the development and operation of energy and water infrastructure in ways which align with wider development, clean power and net zero objectives. Policy W2: Securing renewable and low carbon energy and electricity network infrastructure calls for the development plan to identify:

- areas which are suitable for renewable and low carbon energy development and electricity network infrastructure where this would help secure their development; and
- opportunities for development to draw its heat or energy supply from decentralised networks (such as district heat networks) or renewable or low carbon energy supply systems.

2.36 Policy PM13: Setting standards states that energy efficiency standards may go beyond the current or proposed Building Regulations provided that they

have a clear and robustly costed rationale which shows that there will not be an adverse impact on the viability and deliverability of development.

2.37 Policy F1: Assessing flood risk for plan-making requires development plans to “take a risk-based approach when identifying suitable locations for development, taking into account all sources of flood risk and the current and future impacts of climate change”.

2.38 The SEA can consider the contribution the alternatives make in terms of contribution to climate change mitigation as well as climate change adaptation.

Material assets

2.39 The NPPF sets out that in terms of economic growth, the objective of the planning system is to contribute towards building a “strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity”. There is also a requirement for the planning system to identify and coordinate the provision of infrastructure. Furthermore, planning policies should address the specific locational requirements of different sectors.

2.40 Plan-making policy E1: Providing the conditions for long-term economic growth stipulates that development plans should “set out a clear economic vision and strategy, which takes a positive, proactive and realistic approach to encouraging sustainable economic growth in both urban and rural areas, having regard to the Industrial Strategy and any relevant strategic and local strategies for economic development and regeneration”.

2.41 Plan-making Policy TC1: Planning for town centres, sets out how development plans should promote the long-term vitality and viability of town centres, including by setting out the hierarchy of centres and areas within them. Plans should allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of main town centre uses needed over the plan period.

2.42 Through plan-making Policy TR1: Vision-led approach to planning for transport, the NPPF states that ‘sustainable transport should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making, so that it is reflected in the vision for the plan area and its specific proposals, and forms an integral part of a plan’s strategy for creating well-designed, sustainable, inclusive and popular places’.

2.43 The new Local Plan should seek to maximise the potential benefits of nearby strategic growth, while at the same time ensuring the vitality and viability of smaller localised economies. Ensuring that services and facilities within

district's towns, service centres, rural centre and villages are maintained and enhanced is also important and will also provide support for local communities. The SEA process can support the development of the new Local Plan to ensure that its policies are considerate of impacts on the economy in the Folkestone and Hythe district. The process can also be used to demonstrate that impacts on the viability of town centres has been considered and that access to sustainable transport has been taken into account.

Cultural heritage

2.44 Plan-making policy HE1: Planning for the historic environment in the NPPF states that in relation to the historic environment, plans should “deliver a positive strategy for the conservation, enhancement and enjoyment of the historic environment”. This includes through identifying the “heritage assets within the plan area, including those heritage assets at most risk through neglect, decay or other threats, set out the key issues facing them and identify where these assets can be used to support sustainable development”, as well as taking opportunities, for example through “site allocations, design guides, design codes and masterplans, to draw on the contribution which the historic environment can make to the character and quality of development, and its context”.

2.45 The new Local Plan can offer enhanced protection for designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings, including any potential archaeological finds in line with heritage protection and enhancement plans. The SEA has a role to play by identifying which alternatives could offer opportunities to secure the protection and enhancement of assets as well as those which might have significant impacts in terms of their appropriate use and setting.

Other national policies, plans and programmes

2.46 Numerous other policies, plans and programmes (PPPs) at a national level are of relevance to the preparation of the new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan and the SEA. Unlike the NPPF, most of the documents are focussed on a specific topic area which the SEA will consider. There will be some overlap between SEA topics covered by these plans and programmes where those documents contain more overarching objectives. However, the plans and programmes considered of most relevance to the SEA have been grouped by the topics they most directly seek to address, and the sections below each topic

heading summarise the implications of the national PPPs for the Local Plan and the SEA.

Biodiversity (including flora and fauna)

2.47 The relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- Environmental Outcomes Reports: Roadmap to reform (2026)
- Environmental Improvement Plan (2025)
- The Environment Improvement Plan (2023)
- Working with Nature (2022)
- Establishing the Best Available Techniques for the UK (UK BAT) (2022)
- The Environment Act (2021)
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (2019)
- Environmental Damage (Prevention and Remediation) Regulations (2015)
- Biodiversity offsetting in England Green Paper (2013)
- Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (2011)
- England Biodiversity Strategy Climate Change Adaptation Principles (2008)
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981
- National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949)

Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

2.48 The new Local Plan should be prepared to limit the potential for adverse impacts on biodiversity. It should help to ensure that ecological features are managed, protected and enhanced and that opportunities for habitat restoration or creation are encouraged. It should also help to ensure that environmental pollution is minimised in order to protect the natural environment. The plan should also take into account non-designated habitats which form part of wider ecological networks. The new Local Plan also presents opportunities to promote the achievement of net gains in biodiversity. In terms of the location of

development, the allocation of new sites for development and updated planning policy can also be used to achieve better habitat connectivity through the provision of new green infrastructure and the requirement for biodiversity net gain.

2.49 The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, in addition to green infrastructure provision.

Population and human health

2.50 The relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- Health Bill (2026)
- The Future Homes and Buildings Standards: Building Circular 01/2026 (2026)
- Planning and Infrastructure Act (2025)
- Renters' Rights Act (2025)
- Healthy Homes – a foundation for healthier and resilient communities (2025)
- Homes England Strategic Plan 2023 to 2028 (2023)
- Green Infrastructure Framework (2023)
- White Paper Levelling Up the United Kingdom (2022)
- A fairer private rented sector White Paper (2022)
- National Design Guide (2021)
- The Environment Act (2021)
- The State of the Environment: Health, People and the Environment (2021)
- Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care (2021)
- COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Recovery Action Plan (2021)
- Using the planning system to promote healthy weight environments (2020) Addendum (2021)
- The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper (2020)
- Public Health England, PHE Strategy 2020 to 2025 (2019)

- The Housing White Paper 2017: Fixing our broken housing market (2017)
- Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard (2015)
- Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change Report Ready for Ageing? (2013)
- Laying the foundations: housing strategy for England (2011)
- Fair Society, Healthy Lives (2010)
- Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England (2010)
- Environmental Noise Regulations (2006)

Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

2.51 The new Local Plan needs to consider the requirements for infrastructure as this has the potential to have a significant impact on population and human health, and it should be prepared to ensure that the population has access to sustainable low carbon infrastructure and services and facilities and that there is sufficient capacity within them to serve the increased population. This should include healthcare, education and open space.

2.52 Local Plans should maximise the well-being benefits of well-designed local green spaces and ensure that the provision of open space and green infrastructure is of sufficient quantity and quality to meet the needs of the plan area, encourage healthy and active lifestyles, create fair, safe and inclusive communities, and improve the sustainable transport network including active travel networks within the plan area.

2.53 The provision of an appropriate level of housing over the plan period will help address issues of disparity in terms of access to decent housing in the plan area. The provision of new housing should be considerate of local needs with regards to housing size, tenure and type, including the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

2.54 The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to health and wellbeing, social inclusion, and sustainable and active travel.

Soils, water and air

2.55 The relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- The National Framework for Water Resources 2025: Water for Growth, Nature and a Resilient Future (2025)
- Plan for Water: Our Integrated Plan for Delivering Clean and Plentiful Water (2023)
- Air Quality Strategy for England (2023)
- Drainage and Wastewater Management Plans: guiding principles for the water industry (2022)
- Flood Risk Management Plans 2021-2027 (2022)
- National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England (2022)
- River Basin Management Plans (2022)
- Managing Water Abstraction (2021)
- Environment Act (2021)
- National Chalk Stream Strategy (2021)
- Meeting our future water needs: a national framework for water resources (2020)
- Clean Air Strategy (2019)
- Environmental Noise Regulations (2018)
- Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2018
- Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations 2017
- UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations (2017)
- Drought response: our framework for England (2017)
- Environmental Permitting Regulations (2016)
- Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations (2015)
- Water White Paper (2012)
- National Policy Statement for Waste Water (2012)
- Air Quality Standards Regulations (2010)

- Flood and Water Management Act (2010)
- Groundwater (England and Wales) Regulations (2009)
- Flood Risk Regulations (2009)
- Future Water: The Government's Water Strategy for England (2008)
- Air Quality Strategy for England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (2007)
- Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations (2003)
- Environmental Protection Act (1990)
- South Marine Plan (2018)

Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

2.56 The new Local Plan should help to ensure that environmental pollution is minimised in order to protect land and soils, ensure the efficient extraction of minerals, and to limit the potential for adverse impacts on higher value soils. Local planning authorities should consider setting out approaches in their Local Plans to promote the efficient use of water and limit all types of pollution including soil, water and air pollution. They should also seek to limit pressure on the wastewater treatment (WwT) infrastructure and water supply. The allocation of sites for development should take account of areas which are of highest sensitivity in relation to these issues, including Source Protection Zones (SPZs) and AQMAs. To limit the potential for air quality issues to be intensified as development is delivered over the plan period, local planning authorities should consider setting out approaches in their Local Plan to factor in the contribution that specific site options can make to achieving modal shift and limiting the need for residents to travel. The new Local Plan should also consider the handling of waste in line with the waste hierarchy.

2.57 The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to soil quality, water quality and resources and air quality.

Climate change adaption and mitigation

2.58 The relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- Clean Energy Industries Sector Plan (2025)
- Hydrogen Update to the Market (2025)

- Onshore Wind Strategy (2025)
- Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan (2025)
- Environmental Improvement Plan (2025)
- Clean Power 2030 Action Plan: A New Era of Clean Electricity (2024)
- Carbon Budget Delivery Plan (2023)
- Powering up Britain (2023)
- The Environment Improvement Plan (2023)
- Establishing the Best Available Techniques for the UK (UK BAT) (2022)
- British Energy Security Strategy (2022)
- The Environment Act (2021)
- The Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener (2021)
- The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy (2021)
- The Heat and Buildings Strategy (2021)
- The UK Hydrogen Strategy (2021)
- Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations (2021)
- National Infrastructure Strategy: Fairer, faster greener (2020)
- The Energy White Paper: Powering our net zero future (2020)
- Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge (2020)
- Sixth Carbon Budget (2020)
- Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management: Policy Statement (2020)
- The National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England (2020)
- The Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) Regulations 2020
- Net Zero – The UK’s contribution to stopping global warming (2019)
- The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and The Flood and Water Regulations 2019
- Climate Change Act 2008 and Climate Change Act 2009 (2050 Target Amendment) Order 2019

- The National Adaptation Programme and the Third Strategy for Climate Adaptation Reporting: Making the country resilient to a changing climate (2018)
- Our Waste, Our Resources: A strategy for England (2018)
- The Clean Growth Strategy (2017)
- National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW) (2014)
- Waste Management Plan for England (2013)
- The Energy Efficiency Strategy: The Energy Efficiency Opportunity in the UK (2012)
- The Promotion of the Use of Energy from Renewable Sources Regulations (2011)
- The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan: National Strategy for Climate and Energy (2009)
- The UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009)
- Planning and Energy Act (2008)

Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

2.59 The new Local Plan should set out policies to achieve climate change adaptation while also encouraging development which would help to minimise carbon emissions. It should help to ensure that new development is energy efficient and promotes the use of sustainable construction methods and materials, as well as reducing their carbon emissions. In addition, the Local Plan should seek to allocate development in areas where sustainable transport patterns can be best achieved and encourage development to make use of more sustainable sources of energy, potentially through the delivery of renewable energy development. The Plan should also ensure that risk from all sources of flooding as a result of climate change is managed effectively and should ensure that development is resilient to future flooding. This could include the Local Plan setting out approaches to encourage the appropriate use of sustainable drainage (SuDS) to minimise flood risk.

2.60 The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to the mitigation of climate change and adaptation to climate change, sustainable construction, flooding and sustainable transport.

Material assets

2.61 The relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- Better Connected: a strategy for integrated transport (2026)
- Infrastructure: A 10-Year Strategy (2025)
- The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy (2025)
- The Plan for Change (2024)
- Kickstarting Economic Growth: Milestone: Raising Living Standards in Every Part of the United Kingdom (2024) and Rebuilding Britain (2024)
- Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024 (2024)
- UK Invest 2035: The Modern Industrial Strategy (2024)
- Future of Transport: Supporting Rural Transport Innovation (2023)
- Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Report to Parliament (2022)
- The Growth Plan (2022)
- Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth (2021)
- Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain (2021)
- Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge (2020)
- Agricultural Transition Plan (2021 to 2024)
- Agriculture Act 2020
- Net Zero Strategy Delivering net zero aviation by 2050 (2020)
- The Road to Zero (2018)
- UK Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future (2018)
- Transport Investment Strategy (2017)
- Highways England Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan (2017)
- LEP Network response to the Industrial Strategy Green Paper Consultation (2017)
- National Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2016-2021 (2016)
- Door to Door: A strategy for improving sustainable transport integration (2013)

Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

2.62 The new Local Plan should allocate land to support the projected level of economic growth required over the plan period. Local planning authorities should consider setting out approaches in Local Plan policies to promote sustainable economic and employment growth to benefit all members of the community and to reduce disparity in the plan area. This should include support for the infrastructure required for the economy to function successfully. Employment sites should be located in areas that enable local people to be able to access new employment opportunities. Local planning authorities should consider setting out approaches in their Local Plan to promote the viability of town centres as well as local centres.

2.63 The potential for reducing the need to travel, limiting congestion and associated benefits for air quality and climate change as well as public health should inform the preparation of the policies for the Local Plan and its site allocations. The Local Plan should also encourage walking and cycling as alternative modes of transport by providing safe and attractive walking and cycling infrastructure, as well as recognise the multiple benefits they bring in terms of physical and mental health, reducing carbon emissions and reducing air pollution. Furthermore, the selection of site options for development should be informed by issues such as the potential for access to new and existing public transport nodes and active transport routes and specific highways capacity issues. The selection of individual site options should also be informed by their proximity to essential services and facilities which is likely to reduce the need for residents to regularly travel long distances.

2.64 The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to economic growth and employment and the provision of sustainable transport.

Cultural heritage

2.65 The relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- Historic England Corporate Plan 2023-26 (2023)
- Heritage Statement (2017)
- Sustainability Appraisal and Strategy Environmental Assessment: Historic England Advice Note 8 (2016)
- Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England (2010)

- Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act (1990)
- Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act (1979)
- Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act (1953)

Implications for the new Local Plan and SEA

2.66 The potential impact of new development on the historic environment, including local character as well as designated and non-designated heritage assets and their respective settings, should also inform the preparation of the Local Plan. The Plan should set out a positive strategy for conserving, enhancing and enjoying heritage assets and their settings, including wider historic townscapes and landscapes. It can help to realise the wider benefits of historic environment enhancements which include contributions to well-being and addressing the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Particular regard may be given to protecting heritage assets which have been identified as being ‘at risk’ (both at the national and local levels). Local planning authorities should consider setting out approaches in their Local Plans to address these issues and site options should be considered with regard to the potential for related issues. The new Local Plan should consider the contributions that the historic environment can make to the success of development and for the enhancement of the historic environment from sustainable development proposals.

2.67 The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to the historic environment.

Landscape

2.68 The relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- Protected Landscapes Targets and Outcomes Framework (2024)
- Levelling-up and Regeneration Act (2023)
- An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (2019)
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)
- Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)
- National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act (1949)

Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

2.69 The new Local Plan should be prepared to limit the potential for adverse impacts on important landscapes (including those that are designated). The Local Plan should also help to ensure that other non-designated and valued landscapes are protected and enhanced, and that development should be sympathetic to local character and history including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. Section 85 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, as amended by the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023, places a statutory duty on relevant authorities in exercising their functions that they must "seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty" of designated areas, such as the Kent Downs National Landscape.

2.70 The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to the character of landscapes and townscapes.

Sub national

2.71 Below the national level there are further plans and programmes which are relevant to the Local Plan and the SEA process. These plans and programmes sit at the county and sub-county levels and details are provided below.

County

- Kent Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2026-2031 (2026)
- Reforming Kent 2025-2028: Kent County Council's Strategic Statement (2025)
- The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024–2039 (2025)
- Commissioning Plan for Education Provision in Kent 2025-2029 (2025)
- Kent County Council Local Transport Plan 5: Striking the Balance 2024-2037 (2024)
- Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2024-2034 (2024)
- Kent Drug and Alcohol Strategy 2023-2028 (2022)
- Framing Kent's Future 2022-2026 (2022)
- Kent Adult Social Care Strategy 2022-2027 (2022)
- Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020-2045 (2020)

- Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan 2020-2023 (2020)
- Kent County Council Active Travel Strategy 2018/19 (2018)
- Kent County Council Growth and Infrastructure Framework (2018)
- Kent Environment Strategy (2016)
- Kent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2014-2021 (2014)
- Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (2025)

District

- Folkestone and Hythe District Council Heritage Strategy (2025)
- Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2023)
- Biodiversity Report (2026)
- East Kent Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Assessment (2014)
- Shepway Open Space Strategy (2017)
- Local Green Space Assessment (2018)
- Shepway Play Area Review (2017)
- Shepway Playing Pitch Strategy (2011)
- Shepway Transport Model Update (2017)
- Sustainable Access and Recreational Management Strategy (SARMS) (2017)

Other

- Kent Downs National Landscape Management Plan 2021-2026
- South East river basin district river basin management plan (updated 2022)
- Kent Downs AONB Renewable Energy Position Statement (2008, updated 2010 and 2011)

Implications for the Local Plan

2.72 The new Local Plan needs to consider the sub-national plans for Kent and Folkestone and Hythe district as listed above.

2.73 The new Local Plan should also support the aim to transition towards net zero and support adaptation to climate change. The Local Plan should meet the commitment that Folkestone and Hythe District Council has made to reduce its own emissions following the declaration of a climate emergency in 2019.

2.74 The Local Plan offers the opportunity to maximise the well-being benefits of well-designed open spaces and areas for recreation. It should help to ensure that the provision of open space and areas of recreation are of sufficient quantity and quality to meet the needs of the plan area, encouraging healthy and active lifestyles. It should also consider opportunities for biodiversity enhancement within open spaces and across the district.

2.75 The provision of an appropriate level of housing will help address issues of inequality in relation to housing in the plan area and support economic growth. The provision of new housing should be considerate of local needs, including the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The new Local Plan should support economic growth within Folkestone and Hythe District, including supporting the rural economy and infrastructure requirements. This economic growth should align with the aims in Kent.

2.76 The Local Plan should encourage the use sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling and public transport. The Local Plan should also support the infrastructure requirements to enhance and decarbonise transport within the district. Transport plans for Kent have been produced and should be taken into consideration.

Surrounding development plans

2.77 Development in Folkestone and Hythe District will not be delivered in isolation from those areas around it. Given the interconnection between the district and the surrounding areas there is potential for cross-boundary and in-combination effects where development is proposed through development plans in neighbouring authorities. Therefore, consideration should also be given to the plans for the following local authority areas which surround Folkestone and Hythe district:

- Dover District – The Dover District Local Plan to 2040 was adopted in October 2024. Due to its recent adoption, and in light of the fact that more

than 80% of the new Standard Methodology district housing need is being met by the Local Plan, the Dover District Council has no current plans to commence a Local Plan Review within the next three years.

- Canterbury District – The current Local Plan was adopted in 2017 and plans for growth to 2031. A new Local Plan to 2045 is in development under the legacy local plan-making scheme. The Regulation 19 consultation took place between March and May 2026 and submission is anticipated in September 2026.
- Ashford Borough – The Ashford Local Plan 2030 was adopted in February 2019. Ashford Borough Council had been preparing a new local plan, but has restarted the process following the new 30-month plan-making changes coming into place. The Council submitted a Notice of Intention to Commence Local Plan to the government in July 2026.
- Rother District Council – Rother lies to the southwest of Folkestone and Hythe District in neighbouring East Sussex. The adopted Local Plan comprises two parts: the Adopted Core Strategy (2014) and the Development and Site Allocations Local Plan (2019). The Rother Local Plan 2025-2042 is in development and is anticipated to be submitted for examination in December 2026 under the legacy local plan-making system.

2.78 As the SEA progresses, consideration will be given to the extent to which the content of these other plans could lead to in-combination effects with the new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan, for example as a result of any large-scale new development being proposed in close proximity to the district boundary.

Chapter 3

Baseline information

3.1 Baseline information provides the basis for predicting and monitoring the likely sustainability effects of a plan and helps to identify key sustainability issues and means of dealing with them.

3.2 Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations requires information to be provided on:

- The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme;
- The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected; and
- Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as a European site (within the meaning of regulation 8 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017).

3.3 This section presents the relevant baseline information for Folkestone and Hythe District. Data referred to have been chosen primarily for regularity and consistency of collection, to enable trends in the baseline situation to be established, and also to enable subsequent monitoring of potential sustainability effects. Where figures are referred to, these can be found at the end of the chapter from page 78 onwards.

Biodiversity

3.4 The biodiversity interest of Folkestone and Hythe is recognised in various site designations shown in **Table 3.1** below [\[See reference 9\]](#). A map showing the designated biodiversity assets is provided at **Figure 3.1**.

Table 3.1: Summary of designated sites within Folkestone and Hythe

Site designations	No. of sites	Area within FHDC (ha)
Site of Special Scientific Interest	12	6,030
Special Protection Areas/Ramsar site	1	5,745
Special Areas of Conservation	3	2,820
Local Nature Reserve	2	89

3.5 Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay is located in the district and is a significant ecological area with several overlapping designations. It is a designated Ramsar site, Special Protection Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). These are Habitats Sites (previously commonly referred to as European designations). The Council has published a Sustainable Access and Recreational Management Strategy in partnership with Rother District Council for the area [\[See reference 10\]](#). The strategy covers the Dungeness Complex of Natura 2000 sites which is an important visitor attraction in the area, contributing to the visitor economy of the district. The strategy identifies a need to minimise the recreational pressure on the designated areas and sensitive sites while still supporting tourism and the local economy.

3.6 The district contains two other SACs, the Folkestone to Etchinghill Escarpment SAC and Parkgate Down. In addition, along the district's coastline there are two Marine Conservation Zones (MCZ), which protect a range of nationally important, rare or threatened habitats and species [\[See reference 11\]](#), listed below [\[See reference 12\]](#):

- The Folkestone Pomerania MCZ – designated in 2013, the site protects six different habits of sediment and rock, and supports dense ross worm and honeycomb worm reefs.
- The Dover to Folkestone MCZ – designated in 2016, the inshore site is a highly diverse area and its features such as rocky outcrops, ledges, boulder and sediments support animals like sea slugs, long-clawed porcelain crabs, brittlestars and young lobsters.

3.7 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are of national importance for their wildlife, geology or landform and are designated by Natural England. They make up around 16% of Folkestone and Hythe's area, including inshore areas

[See reference 13]. Their conditions are detailed in **Table 3.2** [See reference 14]:

Table 3.2: SSSI within Folkestone and Hythe

SSSI name	Area in FHDC	Percentage of features meeting favourable or unfavourable recovering
Alkham, Lydden and Swingfield Woods	28ha	60%
Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay	5,358ha	39%
Folkestone to Etchinghill Escarpment	263ha	78%
Folkestone Warren	125ha	92%
Gibbin's Brook	17ha	67%
Great Shuttlesfield Down	22ha	33%
Lympne Escarpment	140ha	100%
Lynsore Bottom	31ha	0%
Otterpool Quarry	10ha	100%
Parkgate Down	7ha	100%
Seabrook Stream	24ha	100%
Yocketts Bank	5ha	100%

3.8 Kent County Council is responsible for developing the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (KMLNRS) and, in doing so, has worked closely with a range of other partners and stakeholders. The KMLNRS was published in November 2025 and sets out the county's priorities for nature recovery and the recommended actions to deliver them [See reference 15].

3.9 The district contains important habitats such as chalk grassland, ancient woodland, marshes and coastal cliffs and shingle. These habitats support many specialised and rare species, notable species include rare moths, short-haired bumblebees, turtle doves, medicinal leeches, and chalk grassland orchids [See reference 16].

3.10 Tree canopy cover across the district is around 8%, which is lower than the county average of 17%. There is a north-south divide across the district, with the Romney Marsh ward having the lowest level of canopy cover at 1.1%, and Hythe having 19% [See reference 17]. Kent County Council has in place a Tree Establishment Strategy which sets out a target for 19% average tree canopy cover across the county by 2050 through planting 1.5 million new trees [See reference 18].

3.11 Woodland is also not evenly spread across the district, with the majority of woodland concentrated in the northeast [See reference 19]. Ancient woodland accounts for 57% of woodland in Folkestone and Hythe, as shown in **Figure 3.2**. The KMLNRS states that opportunities to increase woodland and trees across the district should be sought.

3.12 The proposed Cross-Channel Geopark is a cooperation between the Kent Downs National Landscape (England) and the Caps et Marais d'Opale Regional Nature Park (France) in celebration of the area's common geology and heritage. The Management Plan [See reference 20] for the Cross-Channel Geopark outlines the strategies for preserving and enhancing the region's geological, cultural, and natural heritage. It includes detailed objectives for conservation, education, sustainable tourism, and community engagement, all while aligning with UNESCO's global initiatives. This plan aims to ensure that the proposed Geopark remains a living testament to the shared history between the UK and France, connecting both nations through their unique landscapes. A formal decision on the Cross-Channel Geopark application is expected later in 2026

Population

3.13 Folkestone and Hythe district covers an area of 356.6 square km. Most of the population live in the coastal towns of Hythe and Folkestone. The north of the district consists of villages nestled amongst farmland of the North Downs. The south features a coastal expanse of lower lying reclaimed land including Romney Marsh.

3.14 The 2021 Census records Folkestone and Hythe district's population as 109,800, a 1.7% increase since 2011. The district experienced a smaller growth

than both England and the South East of England, which saw an increase of 6.6% and 7.5% respectively over the same time period [\[See reference 21\]](#). By 2024, the mid-year population estimates indicate that the district’s population had slightly increased to 112,411 residents [\[See reference 22\]](#). In terms of population density, Folkestone and Hythe district is among the lowest 30% of local authority areas across England, with a density of around 2.2 people per football-pitch sized piece of land in 2021.

3.15 According to the 2021 Census, the population of the district had an average age of 47 years, which is higher than both the national average at 40 years of age and the South East of England average at 41 years of age. While there is a slightly lower proportion of younger people than nationally, there is a higher proportion of older people. The under-15 years age group accounts for 16.7% of the population of the district compared with 18.5% nationally, while the over 64 age group accounts for 25% of the population compared with 18.3% nationally [\[See reference 23\]](#).

3.16 According to the 2021 Census, the largest ethnic group in Folkestone and Hythe identified as "White", while 3.9% identified as "Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh". **Table 3.3** below shows the breakdown of Folkestone and Hythe district's population by ethnic group [\[See reference 24\]](#).

Table 3.3: Folkestone and Hythe population by ethnic group

Ethnic group	Percentage of population
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	3.9%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	0.6%
Mixed or Multiple ethnic groups	1.9%
White	92.6%
Other ethnic groups	1.0%

3.17 In the district, the percentage of households including a couple with dependent children decreased from 17.2% in 2011 to 15.9% in 2021. The percentage of households including a couple without children in Folkestone and Hythe also fell from 18.0% to 17.2%, however the percentage of households

including a couple with only non-dependent children increased from 5.2% to 6.0% [\[See reference 25\]](#).

3.18 The population in Folkestone and Hythe is spread across 13 wards. In 2024, Cheriton was estimated to be the ward with the highest population with almost 14,000 residents [\[See reference 26\]](#). **Table 3.4** below presents the population change between 2011 and 2021 by ward in Folkestone and Hythe. The table shows that most wards have experienced a population increase. Only five of the wards experienced a population decrease, but this was minimal. Cheriton was the ward which experienced the highest population increase with an additional 763 people moving into the ward between 2011 and 2021.

Table 3.4: Estimated population by ward in Folkestone and Hythe

Ward	Population in 2011	Population in 2021	Population change
Broadmead	3,849	4,201	352
Cheriton	12,756	13,519	763
East Folkestone	11,804	11,551	-253
Folkestone Central	10,427	10,313	-114
Folkestone Harbour	6,778	6,638	-140
Hythe	11,028	11,110	82
Hythe Rural	5,913	6,210	297
New Romney	6,996	7,252	256
North Downs East	11,278	11,653	375
North Downs West	6,201	6,272	71
Romney Marsh	7,189	7,108	-81
Sandgate & West Folkestone	5,723	6,062	339

Ward	Population in 2011	Population in 2021	Population change
Walland & Denge Marsh	8,027	7,869	-158

Housing

3.19 At the local level, housing affordability has improved in two-thirds of local authorities in England and Wales since 2024. Average house prices increased in 65% of local authority areas in England and Wales, while average earnings increased in 78% of local authorities in 2025.

3.20 The housing affordability ratio is defined as housing affordability estimates calculated by dividing house prices by annual earnings to create a ratio. It can be used to compare affordability over time and between areas. A larger number reflects a less affordable area. In 2025, it was estimated by the Office for National Statistics that full-time employees could typically expect to spend around 7.6 times their workplace-based annual earnings (£39,300) on purchasing a home in England. This is a slight decrease compared with 2024, when it was 7.7 times their workplace-based annual earnings [\[See reference 27\]](#). In Folkestone and Hythe district, the housing affordability ratio was 8.13 in 2025 which has decreased in recent years, down from 11.30 in 2021 [\[See reference 28\]](#). The average house price for a property in the district as of April 2026 was £306,000, which is lower than the regional average (£377,000), but higher than the national average (£270,000) [\[See reference 29\]](#).

3.21 The percentage of households in the social rented sector in the district fell from 11.2% in 2011 to 10.9% in 2021, while across England it fell from 17.7% to 17.1%. During the same period, the regional percentage fell from 13.7% to 13.6%. Private renting in Folkestone and Hythe increased from 22.2% to 22.5%, while the rate of households living rent free decreased from 1.3% to 0.1% [\[See reference 30\]](#).

3.22 Folkestone and Hythe District Council published a Housing Delivery Action Plan in 2025 which states that the Council scored 83% in the 2023 Housing Delivery Test, which was below the government's 85% threshold. The primary reasons identified by the Plan for this included national constraints such as flood risk, the reliance on strategic sites, and a lack of policy and allocations for small to medium sites [\[See reference 31\]](#).

Education

3.23 In 2023, there were 44 schools across Folkestone and Hythe district. These comprised of 36 primary schools, six secondary schools, one Foundation Special School, and one Pupil Referral Unit. [\[See reference 32\]](#). The district is forecast to have a surplus of approximately around 20% of Reception Year places throughout the Plan period, and for the whole primary cohort, 12.6% surplus capacity growing to 16.6% is forecast. However, within the secondary sector, a deficit of non-selective secondary places is forecast, which is partly due to the Folkestone Academy reducing their published admissions number from 210 to 180 from September 2025 [\[See reference 33\]](#).

3.24 Between January and December 2025, approximately 43.2% of the population of Folkestone and Hythe held a Level 4 qualification and above. This is lower than the regional figure for the South East of England at 49.5% and the national figure at 48.6%. During the same period, 13.9% of the population in the district also had no qualifications, significantly higher than both the regional and national figures at 4.8% and 6.3% respectively [\[See reference 34\]](#).

Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople

3.25 A Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment was completed in 2018, to inform the Places and Policies Local Plan, and this was followed by an addendum in 2019 [\[See reference 35\]](#) [\[See reference 36\]](#). The assessment identified a need for five additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches over the plan period to 2036/37. The report suggested that it was not possible to address future pitch need through the expansion and intensification of existing sites. This was established in the 2018 GTAA and confirmed through discussions with local residents. The need for five additional Gypsy and Traveller pitches was met by the granting of a planning permission for one pitch in Brenzett and the allocation of a site in the Places and Policies Local Plan (Land adjacent to 'The Retreat', Lydd Road, Old Romney) for four pitches, which was subsequently granted permission. The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment identified a need for two additional Travelling Showpeople plots, which could be met by the expansion of an existing yard in Sellindge.

Human health

Health

3.26 Health is a cross-cutting topic and as such many topic areas explored in this Scoping Report influence health either directly or indirectly. In the 2021 Census, 45.6% of the population of Folkestone and Hythe district identified themselves as being in very good health and 5.9% in bad health or very bad health [\[See reference 37\]](#). However, it should be noted that the Census 2021 was undertaken during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this may have influenced how people (at both the local and national levels) perceived their health status and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond to the Census.

3.27 Approximately 8.8% of people in Folkestone and Hythe were identified as disabled under the Equality Act where their day-to-day activities are limited a lot.

3.28 There are 15 GP surgeries in the district [\[See reference 38\]](#). The Royal Victoria Hospital is located in Folkestone, with other hospitals nearby including Buckland Hospital (Dover district), the William Harvey (Ashford borough), and the Kent and Canterbury (Canterbury district).

3.29 The 2025 Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment (PNA) for Kent [\[See reference 39\]](#) states that there are 20 community pharmacies in Folkestone and Hythe. The estimated average number of community pharmacies per 100,000 population is 18.0, which is higher than the Kent average of 15.6. There has been a reduction in provision of three community pharmacies since the previous PNA published in 2022. Access to pharmaceutical service provision is then supplemented in the more rural areas where residents live at least 1.6 kilometres away from a pharmacy with the addition of three dispensing doctor sites across Folkestone and Hythe. There are also a number of accessible providers open in the neighbouring districts of Dover, Canterbury and Ashford, as well as in Rother (East Sussex). Overall, no gaps in the provision of Necessary Services have been identified for Folkestone and Hythe district however Sunday access should be monitored in some parts of the district.

Life expectancy

3.30 The average life expectancy at birth for 2022 to 2024 for Folkestone and Hythe residents was 78.2 years for males and 83.0 years for females. This is

lower than the regional average of 80.7 years for males and 84.4 years for females and the England average of 79.5 years for males and 83.3 years for females [\[See reference 40\]](#).

Obesity and physical activity levels

3.31 Being overweight or obese carries numerous health risks, including increased likelihood of type 2 diabetes, cancer, heart and liver disease, stroke and related mental health conditions. It is estimated this health issue costs the UK £74 billion annually, of which £11 billion is attributed to NHS expenditure [\[See reference 41\]](#).

3.32 The PNA for Kent identifies that obesity levels are higher in the district compared to the Kent average, as is the number of patients diagnosed with cardiovascular disease [\[See reference 42\]](#). In Folkestone and Hythe, the percentage of adults living with obesity in 2024-2025 was 33.8%, which has significantly increased from 23.8% during the 2023-2024 period [\[See reference 43\]](#).

3.33 In 2024/25, Sport England conducted surveys that focussed on understanding levels of engagement of Folkestone and Hythe district’s population in sport. The survey required respondents to identify if they were ‘active’ (at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week), ‘fairly active’ (an average of 30-149 minutes of physical activity per week) or ‘inactive’ (30 minutes or less of physical activity per week) [\[See reference 44\]](#). In the district, 63.7% of adults were physically active which is slightly below the national average of 64.6%. The results of the survey are shown in **Table 3.5** below.

Table 3.5: Sport England physical activity levels survey

Area	Active	Fairly active	Inactive
Folkestone and Hythe	63.7%	9.9%	26.3%
South East England	67.4%	10.8%	21.7%
England	64.6%	10.7%	24.7%

Perceptions of well-being

3.34 Residents of Folkestone and Hythe district reported having higher levels of life satisfaction (8.08 out of 10.00) than the average for the United Kingdom (7.45) in the 2022/23 period. However, average figures recorded for 'feeling the things done in life are worthwhile' were lower than the UK (7.80 and 8.16, respectively), while the 'happiness' levels in the district was higher than the UK (7.79 and 7.39, respectively). Levels of high anxiety were recorded at 2.66 for the district in this period, a decrease of 0.73 from the previous period (2020/2021), and lower than the national average (3.24) [\[See reference 45\]](#).

Open space

3.35 Parks and open spaces are valuable community assets. They provide places for people to meet and socialise, support health and wellbeing, help cool urban areas, and improve the attractiveness and economic value of an area. Open spaces provide opportunities for outdoor exercise and offer the opportunity to help increase levels of health and reduce obesity. They also help to maintain good mental health and reduce stress by encouraging relaxation through interactions with the natural environment.

3.36 Across Kent, Folkestone and Hythe district has the greatest amount of accessible greenspace at 1.2 hectares per 1,000 people [\[See reference 46\]](#). The district contains numerous publicly accessible parks, semi-natural green spaces, amenity greenspace areas, play and sport areas [\[See reference 47\]](#). Natural and semi-natural greenspace is the largest typology of open spaces in Folkestone and Hythe district. These sites form approximately 61.98% of the total quantity of open space covering a publicly accessible area of 1754.18ha.

3.37 However, access is uneven across the district and there are several areas where prevailing poor health coincides with a low provision of greenspace. The Council's Open Space Strategy in 2017 [\[See reference 48\]](#) stated that despite being described as a "green district", a significant proportion of the Folkestone and Hythe's residents are deficient in access to one or two levels of the open space hierarchy.

3.38 There are currently six parks in the district that were awarded a 'Green Flag' for quality in 2026 [\[See reference 49\]](#). These are:

- Kingsnorth Gardens;
- the Lower Leas Coastal Park;

- Radnor Park;
- Royal Military Canal;
- Brockhill Country Park, Saltwood; and
- Hythe Green, Hythe (Green Flag Community Award).

3.39 The Council has also planned improvements for key play areas across the district at Cheriton Recreation Ground, East Cliff and Seabrook, including the provision of a new play area in Bouverie Square [\[See reference 50\]](#).

Deprivation

3.40 The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) uses Lower layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) to measure deprivation at local authority and county level. The seven distinct domains of deprivation (income; employment; health; education; crime; barriers to housing and services; and living environment) which when weighted and combined to form the IMD 2025 have been mapped for the district (see **Figure 3.3**).

3.41 The IMD is one way to monitor and assess the health and wellbeing of communities. New datasets, methodologies and geographies have been used to produce the IMD 2025, meaning that the latest outputs are less directly comparable to previous indices.

3.42 The IMD data published in October 2025 ranks Folkestone and Hythe district as currently 79 out of 296 authorities [\[See reference 51\]](#). The district displayed a slight increase in deprivation between 2015 and 2019, which has stabilised in the period to 2025. Alongside the other Kent coastal authorities of Dover, Swale and Thanet, plus Medway, the district is within the 30% most deprived local authorities in England (decile 1 to 3). At the very local level, 7.5% of Lower-layer Super Output Areas (LSOA) in the district fall within the 10% most deprived areas in England. 22.4% of the district population live in areas ranked among the most deprived fifth in England, and 4.5% in areas ranked among the least deprived fifth in England. The two most deprived wards in the district are:

- Folkestone Harbour (ranked 306 out of 33,755)
- Folkestone Central (ranked 1,198 out of 33,755)

Soils

3.43 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) [\[See reference 52\]](#) provides a framework for classifying land according to the extent to which its physical or chemical characteristics impose long-term limitations to agricultural use. The principal factors influencing agricultural production are soil wetness, drought and erosion. These factors, together with interactions between them, form the basis for classifying land use into one of five grades, where 1 describes land as excellent (land of high agricultural quality and potential) and 5 describes land as very poor (land of low agricultural quality and potential). Land falling outside these scores is deemed to be 'primarily in non-agricultural use', or 'predominantly in urban use'. Grade 3 can be further separated into grades 3a and 3b. Grades 1, 2 and 3a are considered to be the best and most versatile agricultural land.

3.44 There is a wide range of agricultural land across the district, with large swathes of Grade 1 agricultural land in the southern third of the district Grade 2 running in an east-west band either side of the M20 and Grade 3 (including 3a) in the north and mid-west. The area around Dungeness is largely Grade 5 (very poor) while the coastal towns are identified as Urban [\[See reference 53\]](#). This is shown in **Figure 3.4**.

Contaminated land

3.45 Under Part IIA of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Folkestone and Hythe District Council is responsible for regulating contaminated land. This requires the Council to survey the district, identify contaminated land, ensure a solution is found, and determine who should bear the costs of the solution.

3.46 In accordance with Section 78R of the Environmental Protection Act 1990, the Council is also required to maintain a public register of contaminated land, which serves as a permanent record of all regulatory action undertaken to ensure remediation of any site that has been classified as contaminated. There are currently no entries on the public register [\[See reference 54\]](#), however the Council has identified ten potential sites of contamination, four of which are either ongoing or require further information [\[See reference 55\]](#).

3.47 The definition of contaminated land from Part IIA Environmental Protection Act 1990 (as amended), Section 78A is: "any land which appears to the local authority in whose area it is situated to be in such a condition, by reason of substances in, on or under the land, that:

- significant harm is being caused or there is a significant possibility of such harm being caused; or
- significant pollution of controlled waters is being, or is likely to be, caused".

3.48 Local authorities are required to take a strategic approach in inspecting their area and are required to publish this as a part of a written strategy. The Council's Contaminated Land Strategy is updated every five years, with the current 2021-2026 Strategy nearing the end of its cycle [\[See reference 56\]](#)

Geology and minerals

3.49 The district's underlying geology comprises two distinct areas, the Romney Marsh and the North Downs. The North Downs are located in the northern part of the district, and are underlain by a sequence of Cretaceous-aged strata. In the south, the Romney Marsh and Walland Marsh are reclaimed landscapes formed of marine alluvial clays and sands from the Pleistocene Era [\[See reference 57\]](#).

Brownfield land

3.50 The Council has a duty to prepare, maintain and publish a Brownfield Land Register. Folkestone and Hythe District Council publishes the register in two parts. Part 1 lists all sites that have been assessed against the brownfield regulations criteria and Part 2 lists any sites covered in Part 1 that have been granted permission in principle [\[See reference 58\]](#). There are currently no entries on the Part 2 register, however the most recent publication of the Council's Part 1 register indicates that there is a total of 91 sites across the district [\[See reference 59\]](#).

Water

Water

3.51 Folkestone and Hythe district is located within the South East River Basin District, and lies in both the Rother Management and the Stour Management Catchment areas [\[See reference 60\]](#). The majority of surface water bodies across the district are classified as being of 'Moderate' ecological status [\[See reference 61\]](#).

3.52 Groundwater is a key source of the public water supply and there are three groundwater waterbodies under the district, the Kent Romney Marsh, Kent Greensand Eastern and the East Kent Chalk [\[See reference 62\]](#). All three fall under the South East Groundwater Management Catchment and are currently classified as having a 'Poor' overall status [\[See reference 63\]](#).

3.53 Source Protection Zones (SPZs) are defined around large and public potable groundwater abstraction sites. They provide additional protection to safeguard drinking water quality by constraining the proximity of an activity that can impact the quality of drinking water. In Kent, SPZs are commonly found over chalk aquifers in areas like Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone, Ashford and the Medway Valley. Because groundwater moves slowly, pollution is difficult to clean up once it occurs, so prevention is essential [\[See reference 64\]](#). There are several SPZs within the district and they are located to the northeastern area of the district near Folkestone and to the south around Dungeness [\[See reference 65\]](#). **Figure 3.5** shows the watercourses and SPZs in Folkestone and Hythe.

3.54 Bathing waters are monitored for quality at Folkestone, Sandgate, Hythe, Dymchurch, St Mary's Bay and Littlestone. The results for 2025 show that only Seabrook was classified as 'Excellent', the rest received 'Poor' or 'Sufficient' status, with the exception of Sandgate, where the results were unavailable [\[See reference 66\]](#). It has not yet been established where the pollution originates for the bathing water Dymchurch, Littlestone and St Mary's Bay [\[See reference 67\]](#).

3.55 Folkestone and Hythe district is one the driest districts in England and is within an area of serious water stress [\[See reference 68\]](#). In July 2026, a Temporary Use Ban (TUB) was put in place across much of Kent, including the district, by multiple water companies, including Affinity Water, with companies reporting a 20% increase in demand above normal in the heatwave [\[See reference 69\]](#).

3.56 Affinity Water and South East Water are the statutory water suppliers for the district and they have grouped together, along with four other water companies in the region, to create an alliance called Water Resources South East (WRSE). The alliance is planning various schemes to reduce the demand for water and develop new water sources. [\[See reference 70\]](#). Schemes relevant to the district include the Hythe water recycling scheme and the Hythe desalination scheme, led by Affinity Water, to be completed by 2053 and 2050 respectively.

3.57 Kent County Council is currently developing a 25-year Water Resources Strategy and following a series of significant water supply disruptions across the county, between November 2025 and January 2026, the County Council is establishing the Kent Water Resilience Partnership [\[See reference 71\]](#). The Partnership will oversee the strategic resilience of water across the county and aims to enable scrutiny and support public transparency.

Flood risk

3.58 Folkestone and Hythe district has historically been at risk of flooding, with approximately 55% of the area falling within the Environment Agency Zone 3a Flood Risk [\[See reference 72\]](#). The district is at risk of flooding from various sources including tidal, coastal, surface water, groundwater, rivers, streams and drainage ditches [\[See reference 73\]](#). The flood risk zones across the district are shown in **Figure 3.6**.

3.59 Large areas of the district are low-lying although the coastal areas are predominately protected by sea defences such as seawalls and shingle beaches [\[See reference 74\]](#). Much of Romney Marsh lies below the high tide level and requires a complex network of drainage structures to prevent the area from flooding [\[See reference 75\]](#). Groundwater flooding is closely linked to the managed ditch network and drainage system in Romney Marsh. The effects of climate change are expected to increase the frequency of wet winters and potentially heighten groundwater flood risk, particularly during the winter and spring months. [\[See reference 76\]](#).

3.60 Several flood defence projects have been completed as a result of the Folkestone to Cliff End Strategy (FoCES) which sets out plans to manage flood and erosion risks along the Romney Marsh coastline over the next 100 years [\[See reference 77\]](#). This includes the Hythe Ranges Sea Defences and the Lydd Ranges Sea Defences, completed in 2021 and 2024 respectively [\[See reference 78\]](#). In addition, Network Rail recently undertook sea defence upgrade works at Folkestone Warren including adding 18,000 tonnes of rock armour in front of the sea wall and 50 sheet piles behind the sea wall [\[See reference 79\]](#) [\[See reference 80\]](#). The works were completed in July 2026.

3.61 In addition, each year in spring and autumn, Folkestone and Hythe District Council redistribute 100,000 tonnes of shingle along 7km of coastline from east to west [\[See reference 81\]](#) [\[See reference 82\]](#). This aims to protect around 3,000 homes by building up a bank to prevent overtopping during storm events. Shingle Recycling is also undertaken at Littlestone by the Environment Agency, and at Dungeness Power Station by EDF Energy [\[See reference 83\]](#).

3.62 Southern Water is responsible for wastewater treatment for Folkestone and Hythe district and recorded 2,696 flooding events from their sewerage infrastructure between February 1988 and December 2021 across the area, of which the majority were external flooding events, with only 205 recorded as internal [\[See reference 84\]](#). Southern Water has announced a £42 million programme of works in Kent, which includes improving wastewater treatment works, pumping stations and sewer networks across Folkestone and Hythe district [\[See reference 85\]](#). Specific projects comprise a £10m upgrade at Dymchurch Wastewater Treatment Works and £8.6m targeted to improvements at Hythe. High level mapping undertaken for the district's draft Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment indicated that the highest risk areas for sewer flooding are located around the following areas [\[See reference 86\]](#):

- Park Farm and Downs Road;
- Folkestone Beach;
- North-east Elham;
- Seabrook;
- Near Barrack Hill and Cannongate Road;
- Near New Romney Station (Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway); and
- Central Lydd on the High Street

3.63 The final version of the Level 1 SFRA will be incorporated in the SEA once available.

3.64 Flood Risk Areas are considered to have a nationally significant level of flood risk from rivers, the sea or surface water, with some areas including both a Risk of Flooding from Rivers and Seas (RoFRS) and a Risk of Flooding from Surface Water (RoFSW) types. Folkestone and Hythe district currently has one RoFRS which is situated in Hythe [\[See reference 87\]](#). Six measures have been assigned for the area, listed below along with the time period they are expected to be completed by:

- Carry out a Flood Action Campaign in Hythe (2021 to 2027).
- Dredge the Royal Military Canal from West Hythe Dam to Seapoint Outfall in Hythe (2025 to 2027).
- Enlarge the culvert through the West Hythe Dam on the Royal Military Canal in West Hythe (2025 to 2027).

- Investigate and develop a scheme to manage the risk of fluvial flooding in Hythe (2025 to 2027).
- Undertake beach management in Hythe Ranges (2023 to 2027).
- Undertake beach management in Hythe, Sandgate and Folkestone (2021 to 2025).

Nutrient Neutrality

3.65 Across England, nutrient pollution is a major environmental issue for many important places for nature. In freshwater habitats and estuaries, increased levels of nutrients (especially nitrogen and phosphorus) can speed up the growth of certain plants, disrupting natural processes and impacting wildlife. This process (called ‘eutrophication’) damages these water dependent sites and harms the plants and wildlife that are meant to be there. In technical terms it can put sites in ‘unfavourable condition’. The sources of excess nutrients are very site specific but include sewage treatment works, septic tanks, livestock, arable farming and industrial processes.

3.66 In such areas, development proposals are often stalled unless mitigation can be put in place.

3.67 Natural England highlights the need to consider carefully the nutrient impacts of any new plans and projects on Habitats Sites, and whether mitigation is needed to protect sites from additional nutrient pollution. Development proposals can be considered ‘nutrient neutral’ where it can demonstrate that it will cause no overall increase in nutrient pollution affecting specified Habitats Sites **[See reference 88]**.

3.68 In Folkestone and Hythe District, nutrient neutrality is a critical issue due to high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus in the Stour catchment. The Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar falls within the Stour catchment, which supports a water environment that is one of the most important for water dependant wildlife in the United Kingdom. These European sites are currently subject to high levels of nitrogen and phosphorous input to its water environment, for which there is sound evidence to show that these nutrient levels are causing eutrophication of habitats in these designated sites. A key contributor to these high levels of nutrients is from wastewater from existing housing and agricultural sources. Therefore, any increase in demand for wastewater treatment from proposed development at wastewater treatment works (WwTW) that discharge into the Stour catchment is likely to result in a significant effect to the European sites.

3.69 The Stodmarsh SAC, SPA and Ramsar is currently failing the agreed nutrient standards as set out in Natural England's most recently published guidance on nutrient neutrality in relation to Stodmarsh [\[See reference 89\]](#). Any development proposed, which may contribute to increased nutrient levels cannot be ruled out from having a likely significant effect and therefore needs to be examined through the Appropriate Assessment.

3.70 The extent of the area impacted is shown in **Figure 3.7**.

3.71 In May 2026, approval was granted for a large-scale environmental project, which may help to tackle nutrient pollution at the Stodmarsh Nature Reserve, near Canterbury. At the national level, the introduction of Environmental Improvement Plans and associated levy [\[See reference 90\]](#), will also contribute to identifying solutions for nutrient pollution.

Air

Air quality

3.72 Air pollution is associated with a number of adverse health impacts. It is recognised as a contributing factor in the onset of heart disease and cancer. This sort of pollution particularly affects the most vulnerable in society, notably children, the elderly, and those with existing heart and lung conditions. There is also often a strong correlation with equalities issues because areas with poor air quality are also often those that are less affluent.

3.73 There is an obligation on all local authorities under Part IV of the Environment Act 1995 to review and assess regularly air quality in their areas and to determine whether or not national air quality objectives are likely to be achieved. Where exceedances are considered likely, the local authority must declare an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and prepare an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) setting out the measures it intends to put in place in pursuit of required air quality improvements.

3.74 The district has never declared an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) and is considered to have good air quality following consistent years of no reported exceedances of the annual mean NO₂ Air Quality Standard (AQS) [\[See reference 91\]](#).

3.75 Most of the air pollution within the Folkestone and Hythe district is caused by road traffic emissions from major roads, including the M20, A20, A259, A260

and A2034 that pass through the district [\[See reference 92\]](#). Commercial, industrial, and domestic pollution sources also contribute to pollutant concentration levels within the district. The Council is aiming to develop and publish an AQS in the coming year [\[See reference 93\]](#).

Climate change adaptation and mitigation

Climate change

3.76 Climate change presents a global risk, with a range of different social, economic and environmental impacts that are likely to be felt within Folkestone and Hythe district across numerous receptors. A key challenge in protecting the environment will be to tackle the causes and consequences of climate change. The consequences include predictions of warmer, drier summers and wetter winters with more severe weather events all year round, resulting in higher sea levels and increased river flooding. A strong reaction is required from planning authorities and planning policy generally to ensure appropriate action can be taken to help species and habitats adapt and to enable the agricultural sector to continue to deliver diverse, affordable and good quality produce.

3.77 There has been a general trend towards warmer average temperatures in recent years and 2025 became the UK's warmest year on record, with a mean temperature of 10.09°C. Four of the UK's last five years appear in the top five warmest years since 1884 and all of the top ten warmest years have occurred within the last two decades [\[See reference 94\]](#).

3.78 The UK climate station is located within the district at Fairway Avenue, Folkestone. It recorded the annual yearly average temperature in the period between 1991-2020 to be 14.40°C, which, whilst slightly below the regional average (14.70°C) over the same period of time, was higher than the UK average (12.79°C) [\[See reference 95\]](#).

3.79 Heavy rainfall and flooding events have been demonstrated to have increased potential to occur in the UK as the climate has generally become wetter. For example, for the most recent decade (2015-2024), UK winter half-years (October to March) were on average 6% wetter than for the period 1991-2020 and 16% wetter than for 1961-1990, compared to little change for summer half-years [\[See reference 96\]](#).

3.80 The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) AR6 Synthesis Report (2023) highlights that greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions are predicted to

continue into 2030. This makes it likely that global warming will exceed 1.5°C, which in turn means that GHG emissions will become harder to maintain below 2°C. As a result of this, increased global warming will occur and elicit climate hazards such as increased incidences of heatwaves, droughts, increased global monsoon precipitation, tropical storms, very wet and very dry weather. Our natural land and ocean carbon sinks will become less effective, sea levels will rise, become more acidic and experience deoxygenation amongst other climate events [\[See reference 97\]](#). The Paris Agreement, adopted in 2015, is a legally binding international treaty involving now 195 parties. The overarching goal of this agreement is to limit the increase in global warming to 1.5°C by the end of the century. Achieving this goal requires a lot of action globally but since 2016 when the agreement came into force, low-carbon solutions and new markets for climate resilience have been stimulated.

3.81 Folkestone and Hythe District Council declared a climate and ecological emergency in 2019 and resolved to start working towards becoming carbon neutral by 2030. In 2020, the Council released a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan setting out 33 actions to reduce carbon emissions across the six key areas of energy, behaviour change, transport, water, contracts and biodiversity/green spaces [\[See reference 98\]](#). The Council has implemented a range of initiatives to support its Net Zero commitment, including the launch of The Carbon Innovation Lab in 2022, a community-led forum to encourage and deliver local actions aimed at reducing carbon emission, and a new Green Grants Programme that funds green and sustainable projects over 2025 to 2027 [\[See reference 99\]](#).

3.82 In 2026, the Council published a District Wide Carbon Strategy [\[See reference 100\]](#) which aims to improve climate resilience and support the transition to a greener, low-carbon economy for all. The Strategy highlights that the Council is directly responsible for around just 0.4% of the district emissions and that wide scale collaboration is needed to make a more tangible difference.

Carbon dioxide emissions

3.83 The Government regularly publishes local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions statistics. For Folkestone and Hythe district, between 2005-2023 emissions have fallen from 7.9 tonnes per capita to 3.5 tonnes per capita [\[See reference 101\]](#). Per capita emissions in the plan area within the scope of influence of the local authority fell almost every year between 2006 and 2023, except from 2009-2010, 2011-2012 and 2020-2021 where the per capita emissions rose. This is shown in **Table 3.6** overleaf.

Table 3.6: Carbon dioxide emissions estimates in Folkestone and Hythe district

Year	Total emissions	Per capita emissions
2005	798.7kt	7.9tCO ₂ e
2006	810.2kt	7.9tCO ₂ e
2007	783.4kt	7.5tCO ₂ e
2008	703.3kt	6.7tCO ₂ e
2009	630.2kt	6.0tCO ₂ e
2010	653.8kt	6.1tCO ₂ e
2011	599.3kt	5.5tCO ₂ e
2012	621.0kt	5.7tCO ₂ e
2013	597.8kt	5.5tCO ₂ e
2014	542.7kt	5.0tCO ₂ e
2015	528.2kt	4.9tCO ₂ e
2016	503.9kt	4.6tCO ₂ e
2017	492.2kt	4.5tCO ₂ e
2018	478.3kt	4.4tCO ₂ e
2019	449.7kt	4.1tCO ₂ e
2020	406.2kt	3.7tCO ₂ e
2021	424.2kt	3.9tCO ₂ e
2022	402.5kt	3.6tCO ₂ e
2023	387.1kt	3.5tCO ₂ e

3.84 Figure 3.8 shows the per capita CO₂ emissions of Folkestone and Hythe compared to neighbouring authorities. In Folkestone and Hythe district, the main contributor of emissions was from domestic sources and transport. However, between 2005 and 2023, the levels of emissions from these two sources have dropped significantly by 52.34% and 18.63%, respectively. This is shown in **Table 3.7** below.

Table 3.7: Changes in carbon dioxide emissions by sector for Folkestone and Hythe district

Source of emissions	2005	2023
Industry	50.4kt	16.3kt
Commercial	161.4kt	35.6kt
Public Sector	86.6kt	18.0kt
Domestic	260.8kt	124.3kt
Transport	222.2kt	180.8kt
Land Use, Land-Use Change, and Forestry	-3.9kt	-5.8kt
Agriculture	21.2kt	17.8kt
Waste	0.1kt	0kt
Total	798.7kt	387.1kt

Overall energy consumption

3.85 The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy produced the following consumption figures for Folkestone and Hythe district in 2023. These figures are presented as kilotonnes of oil equivalent (Ktoe).

- All fuels: a total of 167.2 Ktoe across domestic, transport and industrial and commercial use.
- Coal: a total of 1.3 Ktoe predominantly through industrial and domestic use.

- Manufactured fuels: a total of 0.4 Ktoe through domestic and industrial and commercial use.
- Petroleum: a total of 74.3 Ktoe predominantly from road transport.
- Gas: a total of 50.7 Ktoe predominantly through domestic use.
- Electricity: a total of 32.6 Ktoe through domestic and industrial and commercial use.
- Bioenergy and wastes: a total of 7.9 Ktoe predominantly through road and transport.

3.86 Table 3.8 below highlights the energy consumption for Folkestone and Hythe district between 2005 to 2023 by type. Except for energy from bioenergy and wastes, the consumption of coal, manufactured fuels, petroleum, gas and electricity fell between 2005 and 2023 [\[See reference 102\]](#).

Table 3.8: Energy consumption in Folkestone and Hythe by type

Energy type	Energy consumption (2005)	Energy consumption (2023)
Coal	1.5Ktoe	1.3Ktoe
Manufactured Fuels	0.6Ktoe	0.4Ktoe
Petroleum	86.6Ktoe	74.3Ktoe
Gas	72.6Ktoe	50.7Ktoe
Electricity	60.0Ktoe	32.6Ktoe
Bioenergy and Wastes	1.8Ktoe	7.9Ktoe
Total	223.1Ktoe	167.2Ktoe

Renewable energy

3.87 Renewable energy is recognised as an important contributor to reducing reliance on fossil fuels and adapting to climate change. Within the South East of England, there was a total of 248,562 sites that were capable of generating

renewable energy across wind, solar, wave, hydro and biomass renewable sources in 2024. This represents 14.5% of all the sites within the UK that generate renewable energy [\[See reference 103\]](#).

3.88 In 2024, a total of 3,398 photovoltaic panels were installed in the district, along with 11 onshore wind and two individual installations for anaerobic digestion and plant biomass. This is an increase from 2014 levels, when 1,345 photovoltaic panels and no installations for anaerobic digestion and plant biomass were installed [\[See reference 104\]](#).

3.89 As of April 2026, there were 14 renewable electricity projects more than 150kW in Folkestone and Hythe district recorded on the Government's Renewable Energy Planning Database (REPD). These schemes were predominately for solar photovoltaics [\[See reference 105\]](#). The Council is also involved in the county-wide Switch Together Kent project, a solar panel and battery storage group-purchase scheme that allows residents and small businesses to install affordable solar panels, battery storage and heat pumps [\[See reference 106\]](#).

3.90 At the time of writing this report, there are also three proposals for large-scale solar energy schemes in the Romney Marsh area of the district. Their scale means that they are classed as Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) schemes under the 2008 Planning Act and will be decided by the Secretary of State for Energy Security and Net Zero should they proceed to submission and examination. The schemes are:

- South Kent Energy Park - on land either side of the A250 near Old Romney [\[See reference 107\]](#);
- Shepway Energy Park - on land north and east of Newchurch [\[See reference 108\]](#); and
- South Brooks Solar Farm - on land around Lydd [\[See reference 109\]](#).

Material assets

Economy

3.91 The percentage of people in Folkestone and Hythe district who were in employment between January 2025 and December 2025 was 68.8%, which is below the averages for the South East (78.9%) and Great Britain as a whole (75.5%). The number of people claiming unemployment related benefits in

Folkestone and Hythe district in May 2026 was 3.9%, which was higher than the South East figure of 3.1% but slightly lower than the national figure of 4.0% [\[See reference 110\]](#).

3.92 In 2023, the total output (Gross Value Added, GVA) in Folkestone and Hythe district reached £2,802 million. The trend in GVA has been steadily increasing over the years for the district, with decreases only recorded during the periods of 2008-2009, 2013-2014, 2017-2018 and 2019-2021 [\[See reference 111\]](#).

3.93 The average Gross Weekly Pay in 2025 in Folkestone and Hythe district for full time workers was £755.30 per week, which is lower than the regional average (£815.20) and the national average (£766.60). This equates to £39,275.60 a year in the district compared with £42,390.40 and £39,863.20 regionally and nationally, respectively [\[See reference 112\]](#).

3.94 In the period from January 2025 to December 2025, 74.2% of people in Folkestone and Hythe district were economically active. Across the South East region this figure was higher at 81.9% within the same period [\[See reference 113\]](#). Folkestone and Hythe district's workforce is distributed across a wide range of sectors, with only 47.5% of the working population employed as a manager, director, senior role, professional occupation or associate professional occupation compared to the regional (56.3%) and national (53.6%) averages [\[See reference 114\]](#).

3.95 Official Labour Market Statistics 2024 data, presented **Table 3.9** below, show that in Folkestone and Hythe district, 10.3% of people work in public administration and defence; compulsory social security which is higher than the regional average of 3.6% and the national average of 4.9%. Similarly, 11.8% of people work in accommodation and food service activities, which is higher than the regional average (7.8%) and national average (7.8%). 6.6% of residents work in transportation and storage compared to the regional average of 4.9% and national average of 5.0%. 3.7% of people work in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector, which is higher than the regional (2.6%) and national averages (2.5%) [\[See reference 115\]](#).

Table 3.9: Employee jobs in Folkestone and Hythe in relation to regional and national averages (2024)

Employee jobs by industry	Folkestone and Hythe	South East	Great Britain
Mining and Quarrying	0%	0%	0.2%
Manufacturing	5.1%	5.8%	7.3%
Electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply	1.8%	0.4%	0.4%
Water supply; sewerage, waste management and remediation activities	1%	0.9%	0.7%
Construction	5.9%	5.5%	5%
Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	14.7%	15.2%	13.7%
Transportation and storage	6.6%	4.9%	5%
Accommodation and food service activities	11.8%	7.8%	7.8%
Information and communication	1.5%	5.6%	4.5%
Financial and insurance activities	2.4%	2.5%	3.4%
Real estate activities	1.5%	1.8%	1.9%
Professional, scientific and technical activities	5.1%	9.3%	9.3%
Administrative and support service activities	6.6%	8.3%	8.6%

Employee jobs by industry	Folkestone and Hythe	South East	Great Britain
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	10.3%	3.6%	4.9%
Education	8.8%	9.8%	8.6%
Human health and social work activities	13.2%	13.7%	14.2%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	3.7%	2.6%	2.5%
Other service activities	2.1%	2.1%	1.9%

3.96 In 2025 there were 3,795 businesses in Folkestone and Hythe district. The majority of these (90.0% or 3,415) were micro businesses with fewer than ten members of staff. There were 320 (8.4%) small businesses, 50 (1.3%) medium and 10 (0.3%) large businesses in the district. In the year leading up to 2025, the number of businesses in the district increased by 60 [\[See reference 116\]](#).

Transport

3.97 The district is located at a key strategic position on the M20 and is a gateway to the Channel Tunnel. It is also home to Lydd Airport, which is primarily used for general aviation and minor commercial flights. As such, the district provides a strong transport and logistics sector, comparative to neighbouring Council jurisdictions [\[See reference 117\]](#). There are four railway stations within the district; Folkestone Central and Folkestone West are the most used railway stations, with smaller hubs at Sandling and Westenhanger [\[See reference 118\]](#). The transport networks within the district are shown in **Figure 3.9**. The Romney, Hythe and Dymchurch Railway connects Hythe to Dungeness. This railway is mainly a seasonal, tourist service rather than a practical option for everyday travel and its stations have therefore been excluded from Figure 3.9.

3.98 Folkestone and Hythe District Council are currently undertaking the Folkestone – A Brighter Future project. This is a £20 million regeneration programme focussed on Folkestone town centre, which includes improvements

to the road system around Folkestone Central railway station and alterations to the two-way traffic at Middelburg Square [\[See reference 119\]](#).

3.99 Over 7,000 heavy goods vehicles pass through the district each day on journeys to and from mainland Europe. To reduce diesel emissions the Council is campaigning to improve the rail network in order to enable a shift in freight from the road to rail [\[See reference 120\]](#). The Government announced a £15 million investment in February 2026 to enable an international logistics hub in east London to support the return of regular intermodal freight trains [\[See reference 121\]](#). Currently only a small proportion of rail freight passes through the Channel Tunnel and the new hub could potentially lead to the removal of 140,000 lorry journeys from the M20 every year [\[See reference 122\]](#).

3.100 At the more local level, the Council is encouraging taxi drivers to switch to electric or hybrid vehicles, and is increasing the number of electric vehicle charging points across the district [\[See reference 123\]](#). In April 2026, it was reported that there were 16,011 publicly available electric vehicle chargers in the South East [\[See reference 124\]](#), of which 228 are located in Folkestone and Hythe district [\[See reference 125\]](#). Across the UK, the South East has the highest number of Rapid or Ultra-rapid EV chargers, with currently 4,056 charging points, of which 16 are located in Folkestone and Hythe district [\[See reference 126\]](#)

3.101 Car use remains the most common mode of transport for those residents of the district who regularly commute. Travel to work data taken from the Census 2021 indicates that approximately half of the residents in Folkestone and Hythe district travel to work by driving a car or van, which is higher than the national average of 44.5% [\[See reference 127\]](#).

3.102 In 2021, there was a lower inflow of people commuting into Folkestone and Hythe (7,649 people) than commuting out (10,485 people). The vast majority of in and outflows of Folkestone and Hythe district involved journeys to/from Dover, Ashford and Canterbury as shown in **Table 3.10** [\[See reference 128\]](#).

Table 3.10: Inflows and outflows for Folkestone and Hythe

Area	Inflow	Outflow
Dover	3,246	1,937

Area	Inflow	Outflow
Ashford	1,966	3,588
Canterbury	748	1,613

3.103 Car ownership in Folkestone and Hythe district in 2021 was 79.5% [\[See reference 129\]](#), compared to 83.1% across the South East and 76.5% across England. This means that 20.5% of households in the district have no access to a vehicle and are reliant on public transport, including trains (described above) and buses. In East Kent, including Folkestone and Hythe district, most bus services are provided by group operator Stagecoach. In contrast to West Kent, there tends to be less commercial competition, particularly for off-peak services, with only a handful of independent operators running largely tendered or peak school routes.

3.104 In 2021, the government published the National Bus Strategy, which required all transport authorities and bus operators to make a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) [\[See reference 130\]](#). Kent County Council, as the relevant authority, submitted a BSIP to government in October 2021, which received £35.1 million of national funding compared to the £213 million requested. Since the initial BSIP was published, there have been various annual updates, most recently the BSIP 2025 to 2026 delivery plan. This was awarded an additional £22 million from government [\[See reference 131\]](#).

3.105 Part of the BSIP funding is allocated to carrying out minor highway improvements. Kent County Council works with bus operators to support bus punctuality and reliability by installing new restrictions or physical changes to our road and footway network. Several sites in Kent have been identified as requiring new and additional measures to prevent issues from interfering with scheduled services. In Folkestone and Hythe district, Marine Parade in Folkestone has been identified as a priority scheme [\[See reference 132\]](#).

3.106 From an active travel perspective, the district has published a Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP), which gathered audit data on the use of existing routes and identified where improvements might be made to the existing network over the next ten years [\[See reference 133\]](#). The key outputs are:

- A network plan for cycling and walking which identifies preferred routes and core zones for focusing the improvements.

- A prioritised programme of infrastructure improvements for future investment.
- A report which sets out the underlying analysis carried out and provides a narrative which supports the identified improvements and network.

Waste

3.107 Folkestone and Hythe District Council serves as the Waste Collection Authority and are responsible for collecting waste from their residents. Kent County Council acts as the Waste Disposal Authority and is therefore responsible for managing waste in Folkestone and Hythe district. The council implemented a 'Raise the rate' campaign to improve the district's recycling rate, including the provision of A-to-Z guidance by type of waste [\[See reference 134\]](#).

3.108 There are currently two Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) serving the district, which are located at New Romney and Folkestone [\[See reference 135\]](#).

3.109 Between 2024 to 2025, a total of 40,190 tonnes of waste was collected in the district, 40,157 tonnes of which was household waste. 45.9% of this household waste was sent to be recycled, composted or re-used resulting in 54.1% of waste not being recycled (21,728 tonnes out of 40,157 tonnes). This is similar to the average recycling rate of 45.7% for South East England but slightly higher than the national recycling rate of 42% for England [\[See reference 136\]](#).

Cultural heritage

3.110 Folkestone and Hythe district is home to a wealth of heritage assets, both designated and undesignated, including archaeological remains. These contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the area and include scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, conservation areas, and 913 listed buildings. The designated heritage assets are shown in **Figure 3.10** with listed buildings shown in **Figure 3.11**.

3.111 The district has a significant defence heritage, spanning from the Iron Age to the 20th Century [\[See reference 137\]](#). Distinctive heritage assets within this theme include the Grade II Martello Towers, Shorncliffe Army Camp in Folkestone, and the Royal Military Canal, one of the Napoleonic period defences. Additionally, the district is rich in Saxon heritage, with notable sites

including the Dover Hill Anglo-Saxon cemetery and the discovery of an Anglo-Saxon Hall on Tayne Field in Lyminge.

3.112 The very northern tip of the district coastline falls within the Heritage coast designation, which continues to Dover. Off-shore heritage includes a Protected Wreck Site, around 630 wrecks or reported sites recorded in the Kent Historic Environment Record, and a First World War German U-8 Boat.

3.113 There are 21 designated conservation areas across the district **[See reference 138]**:

- Hythe
- Elham
- New Romney Cannon Street
- New Romney High Street
- Lympne
- Dymchurch Church Area
- Dymchurch High Street
- Folkestone, Leas and Bayle
- Sandgate Esplanade
- Sandgate High Street
- Postling
- Etchinghill
- Lydd
- Newchurch
- Old Romney
- Brooklands
- Newington
- Saltwood
- Dungeness
- Littlestone
- Frogholt

3.114 The district also contains two sites that are nationally listed as Registered Parks and Gardens: Grade II listed Sandling Park and Grade II* listed Port Lympne [\[See reference 139\]](#) [\[See reference 140\]](#).

3.115 Folkestone and Hythe District Council updated its Heritage Strategy in 2024 [\[See reference 141\]](#). The Strategy sets out a thematic approach to understand and evaluate the district's heritage assets, the majority of which are non-designated, and has identified 13 broad themes which cover archaeology, built heritage, landscapes and townscapes, wrecks, customs, traditions and stories. The themes enable assets to be graded from 'Outstanding' to 'Intrusive' in terms of their significance, with the assessment based on the values set out in English Heritage's Conservation Principles [\[See reference 142\]](#). Many of the themes across the district were considered to be of Outstanding significance.

Heritage at Risk

3.116 Historic England maintains a Heritage at Risk Register [\[See reference 143\]](#) which includes historic buildings, Grade II* and Grade I listed buildings (Grade II listed buildings are only included for London) and Conservation Areas at risk of being lost through neglect, deterioration or decay. The register aims to highlight those places and buildings in greatest need of repair. Historic England classifies building conditions as 'very bad', 'poor', 'fair' or 'good'.

3.117 There are currently 13 entries registered on the Heritage at Risk Register within the district with three entries identified as 'very bad' or with extensive significant problems [\[See reference 144\]](#). The conditions of each entry are set out in table **Table 3.11**.

Table 3.11: Heritage at Risk Register Sites within Folkestone and Hythe district

List Entry/Name	Condition
Church of St Mary, Stowting	Poor
Church of St James, Elmsted	Poor
Roman villa, Folkestone	Generally satisfactory but with significant localised problems

List Entry/Name	Condition
Oval barrow in Shrub's Wood, Elmsted	Generally unsatisfactory with major localised problems
Motte and Bailey Castle 200m northwest of Stowting Church, Stowting	Generally unsatisfactory with major localised problems
Bowl barrow 150m northeast of Red House Farm, Swingfield	Extensive significant problems
Martello Tower No. 5, Sandgate	Fair
Martello Tower No. 4, The Leas, Folkestone	Very bad
Martello Tower No 6, Shorncliffe Camp, Sandgate	Poor
Martello Tower No. 9, Shorncliffe Camp, Hythe / Sandgate	Very bad
Dymchurch Redoubt, Hythe Ranges, Hythe	Poor
Martello Tower No. 7, Shorncliffe Camp, Sandgate	Poor
The Leas Lift, including Waiting Rooms, Brake Houses and Railings, the Leas, Folkestone	Poor

3.118 The district's Heritage Strategy prioritises the investigating the creation and maintenance of a Local Heritage at Risk Register with links to the National Register [\[See reference 145\]](#).

Historic Landscape Characterisation

3.119 Historic England published Historic Landscape Characterisation guidance that sets out the methodology for identification and interpretation of the varying historic character within an area beyond individual heritage assets into Historic

Landscape Characterisation types [\[See reference 146\]](#). The Historic Landscape Characterisation types present within Folkestone and Hythe include:

- Recreation;
- Settlement;
- Enclosed Agriculture (Typically Pre Modern Form);
- Military;
- Unimproved land; and
- Woodland and Forestry.

Landscape

3.120 National Character Area (NCA) profiles created by Natural England are used to define the specific combination of landscape, geodiversity, biodiversity, history, culture and economic activity in an area. NCAs follow natural lines in the landscape instead of administrative boundaries.

3.121 Folkestone and Hythe district falls within three NCAs listed below and shown in **Figure 3.12** providing a variety of landscape types: [\[See reference 147\]](#):

- Wealden Greensand [\[See reference 148\]](#): Situated in a narrow band west from Folkestone, it is a belt of Greensand typified by woodlands, scattered settlements and scarp / dip-slope topography. The East Kent section has a gentler, more open aspect and can be described as less intimate and less distinctive than other areas. It is also more marked by development, with the presence of major towns and communication corridors.
- North Downs [\[See reference 149\]](#): Situated in the northern quarter of the district, a distinctive chalk downland with a steep scarp, and broad dip slope incised by valleys or “coombes”. Unimproved, species rich grassland and ancient woodland are found on some less fertile soils, although much of the lower dip slope in Kent is fertile and is used for intensive arable agriculture. Rural with scattered and distinctive farmsteads and large houses.
- Romney Marshes [\[See reference 150\]](#): Situated in the southern half of the district, this is a flat, open and agricultural landscape, with distinctive drainage dykes, marshes and open skies. Dungeness is the largest shingle foreland in Europe, with a real sense of isolation and remoteness especially along the coast. 20th century development is evident in the

towns along the coastal strip. Part of this area is dominated by the imposing power station and associated transmission lines. Past gravel extraction pits, now flooded, military uses and expanding holiday resorts add to the distinctive character along the coast.

3.122 Folkestone and Hythe is a coastal district with 26 miles of coastline [See reference 151], a section of which in the north of the area is designated as Heritage Coast from Dover to Folkestone [See reference 152]. Over 33% of the district, in the north, falls within the Kent Downs National Landscape, designated by Natural England [See reference 153] and this is shown in **Figure 3.13**. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act) and the more recent Levelling-Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA) require every protected landscape to have a Management Plan, which must be reviewed every five years. All National Landscapes have Management Plans adopted by the Council. The current Management Plan runs from 2021 to 2026 and sets out the values of the landscape and key management principles [See reference 154]. The Management Plan is currently undergoing review for the 2026-2031 period and is expected to be adopted by the constituent authorities in late 2026 [See reference 155].

3.123 The Landscape Character Assessment for Kent (2004) [See reference 156] draws together existing landscape character assessments of the county and updates them to conform to the current guidance. Additional work on the condition and sensitivity of the Kent landscape has been used to formulate character-based strategies to ensure the continued distinctiveness of the Kent landscape. Landscape identified within the district are:

- East Kent Downs.
- Stowting: Postling Vale.
- Folkestone Outskirts: Postling Vale.
- Sellindge Plateau Farmlands.
- Hythe Escarpment: Lympne.
- Romney Marsh: Lympne.
- Romney Marsh Settlements.
- Romney Marsh: Mixed Farmlands.
- Highknock Channel and Downs.
- Brookland Farms.

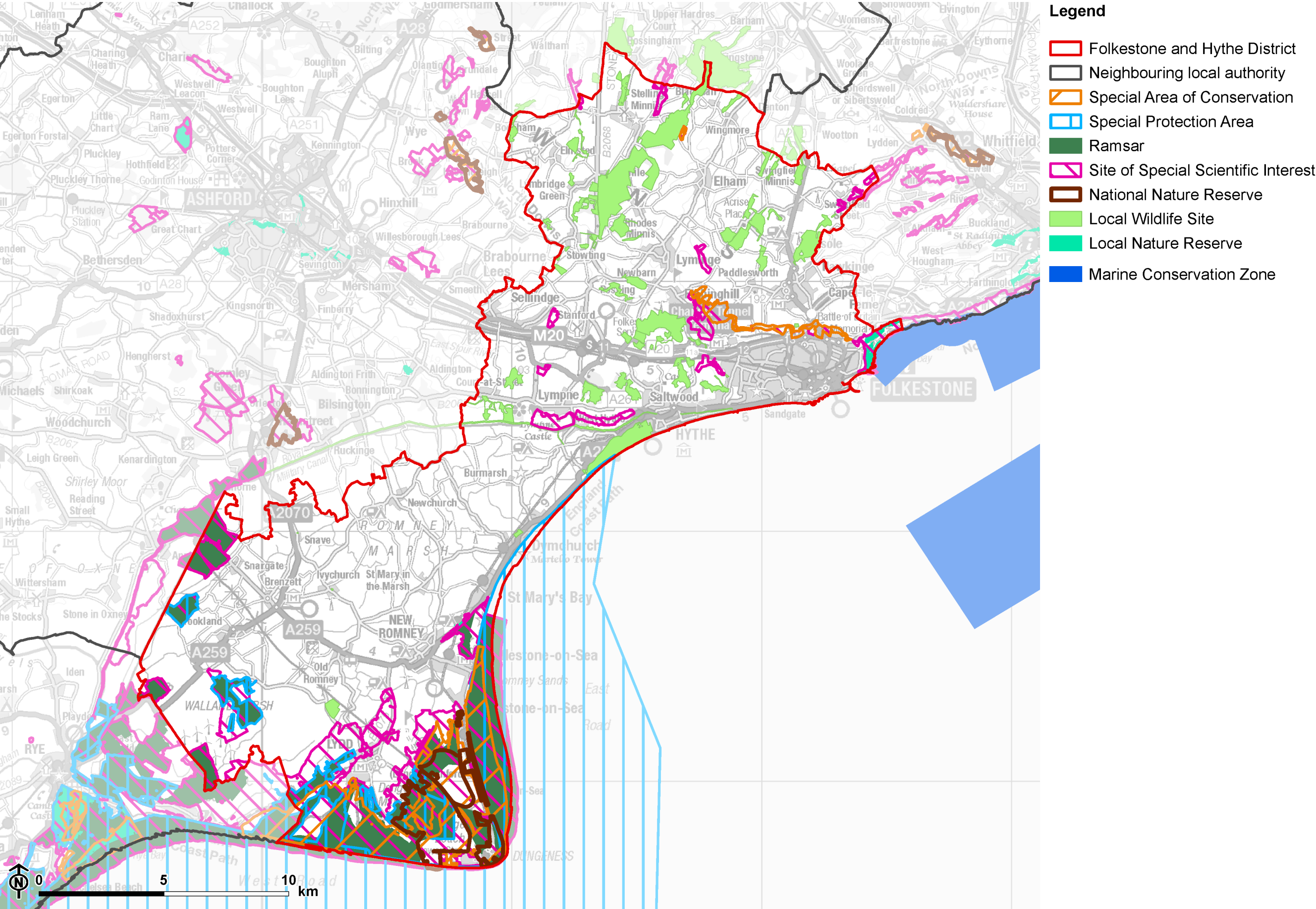
- The Romney Coast.
- Walland Marsh Farmlands.
- Dungeness Shingle.

3.124 Folkestone and Hythe district also has identified a number of locally designated 'Local Landscape Areas' which comprise of Romney Marsh; Sandgate Escarpment and Seabrook Valley; Eaton Lands; Coolinge Lane and Enbrook Valley; and Mill Lease Valley [\[See reference 157\]](#).

3.125 The council commissioned AECOM to undertake a High Level Landscape Appraisal of the district to inform the Core Strategy Review. The High Level Landscape Appraisal (February 2016) [\[See reference 158\]](#) uses established best practice and existing landscape appraisals to assess landscape sensitivity across the district, taking into account the landscape value and landscape susceptibility of different character areas.

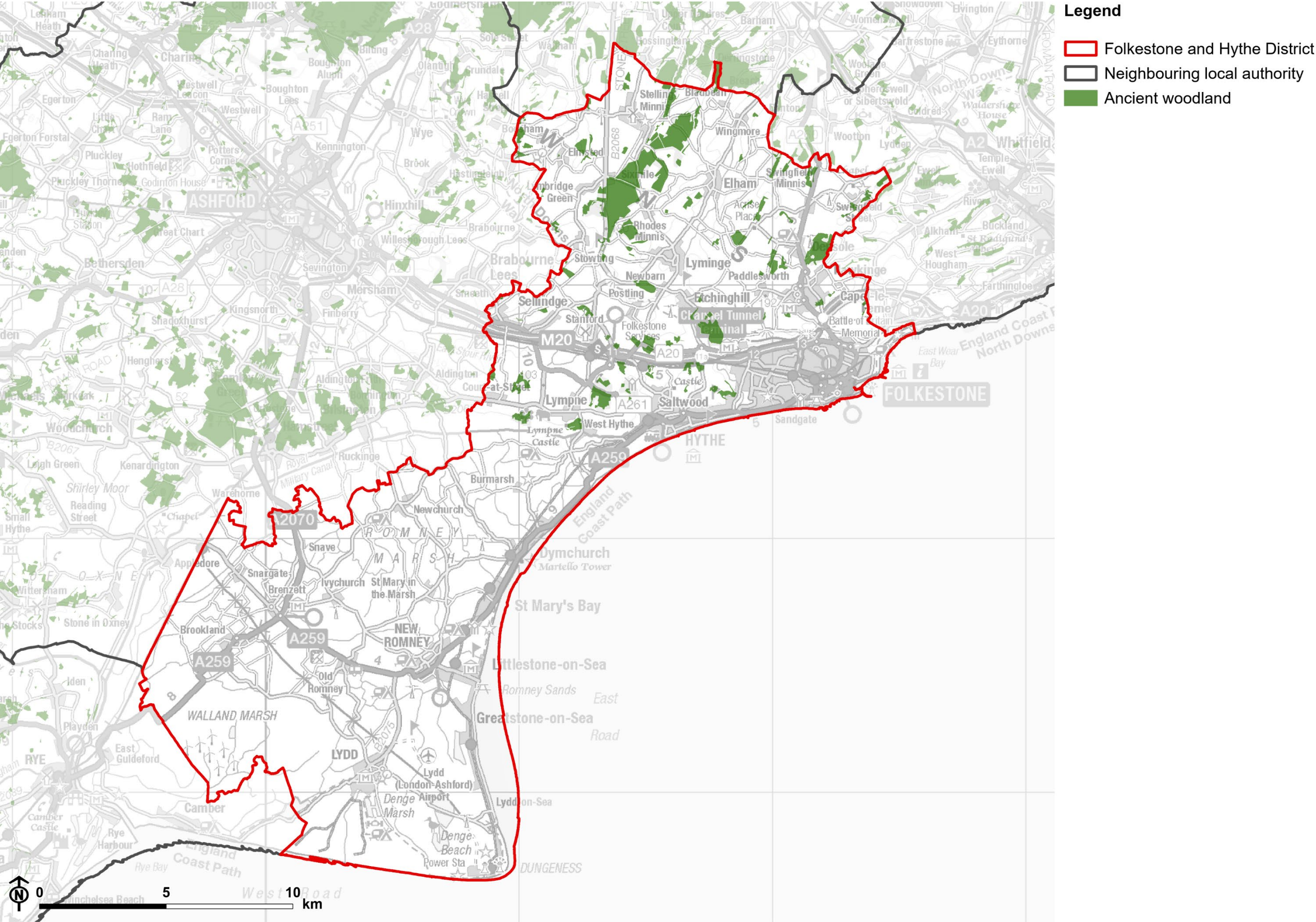
3.126 The Appraisal divides the district into 26 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) which are then scored for their sensitivity. 16 LCAs are assessed as being of high sensitivity, seven of medium sensitivity and three of low sensitivity. Each LCA is given a description, and key characteristics are highlighted, along with an analysis of landscape value, susceptibility and sensitivity.

Figure 3.1: Designated biodiversity assets



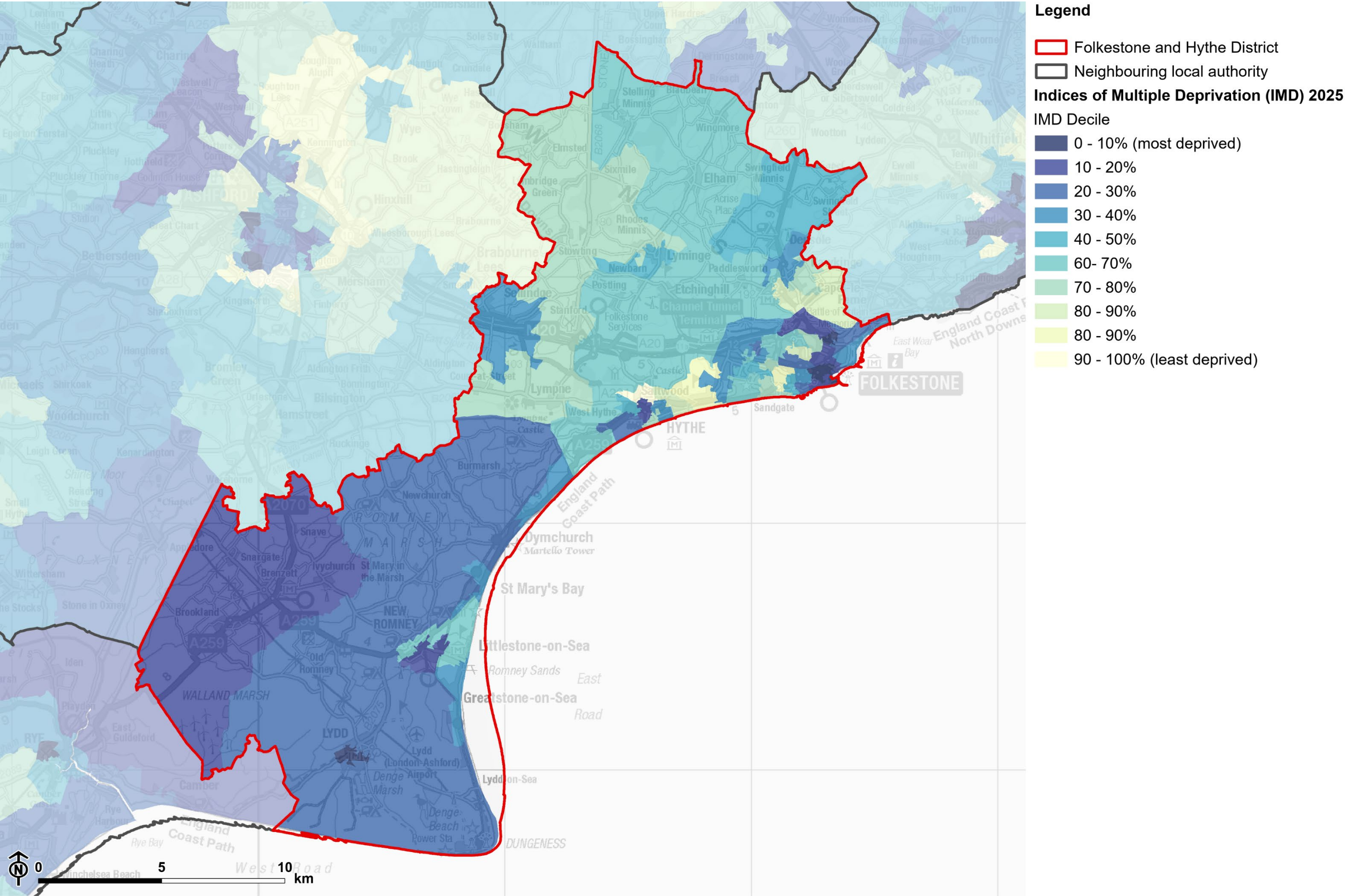
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Figure 3.2: Ancient woodland



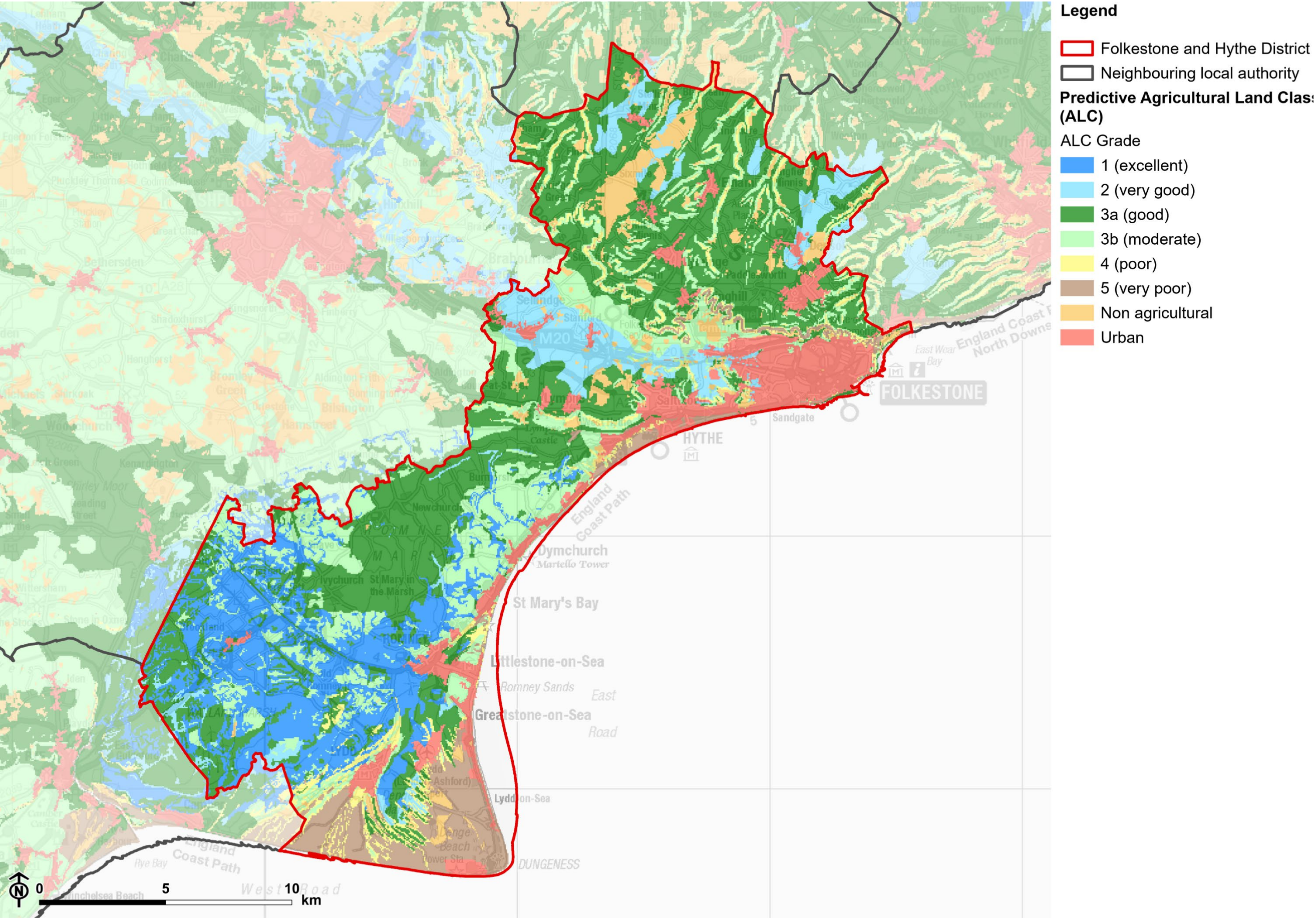
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Figure 3.3: Indices of Multiple Deprivation (Folkestone and Hythe and surrounds)



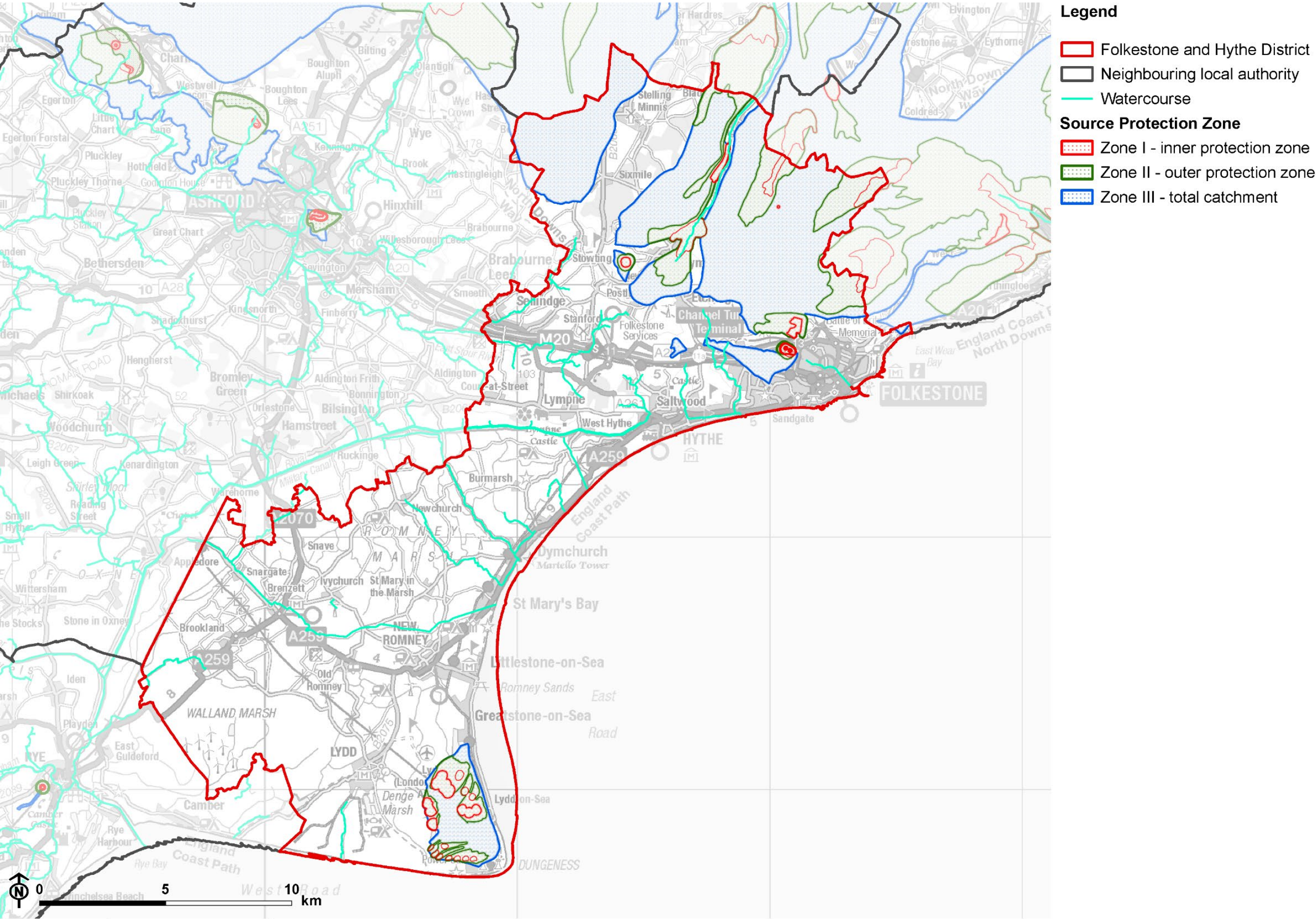
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Figure 3.4: Agricultural Land Classification (F&H and surrounds)



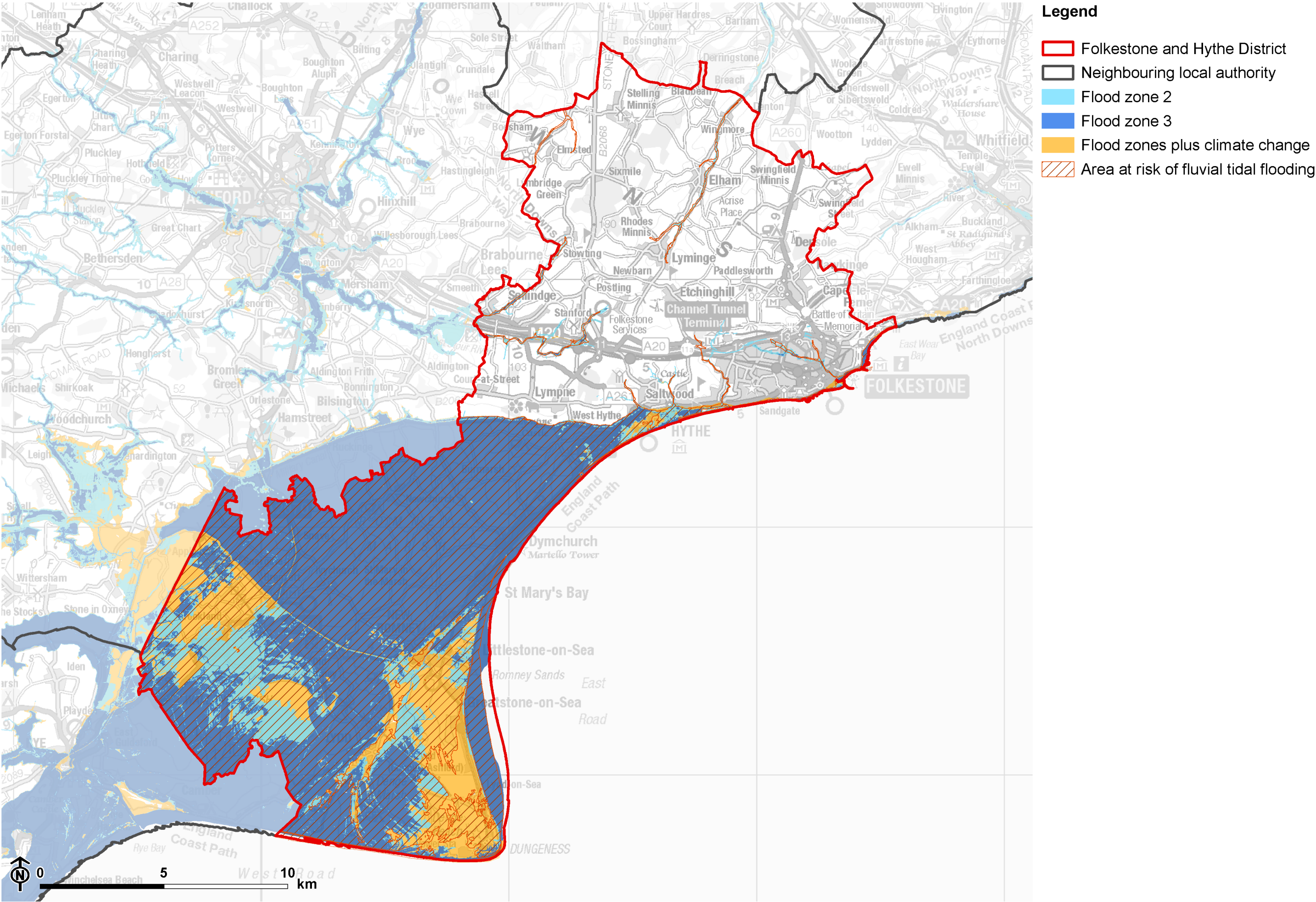
Created by LUC - Agricultural Land Classification (F&H and surroundings) 02/07/2026
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Figure 3.5: Watercourses and Source Protection Zones



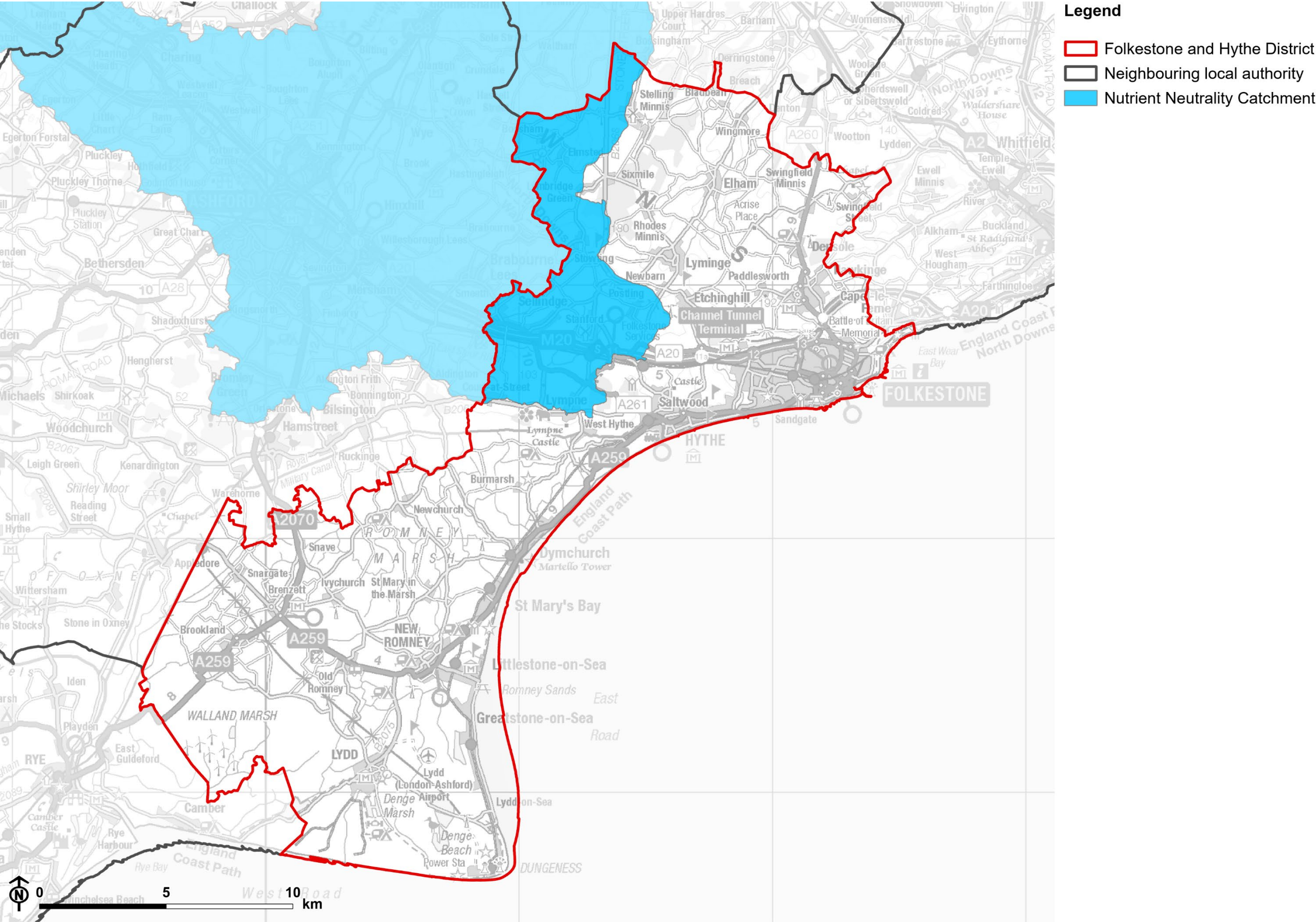
Created by LUC - Watercourses and Source Protection Zones 14/07/2026
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Figure 3.6: Flood Risk



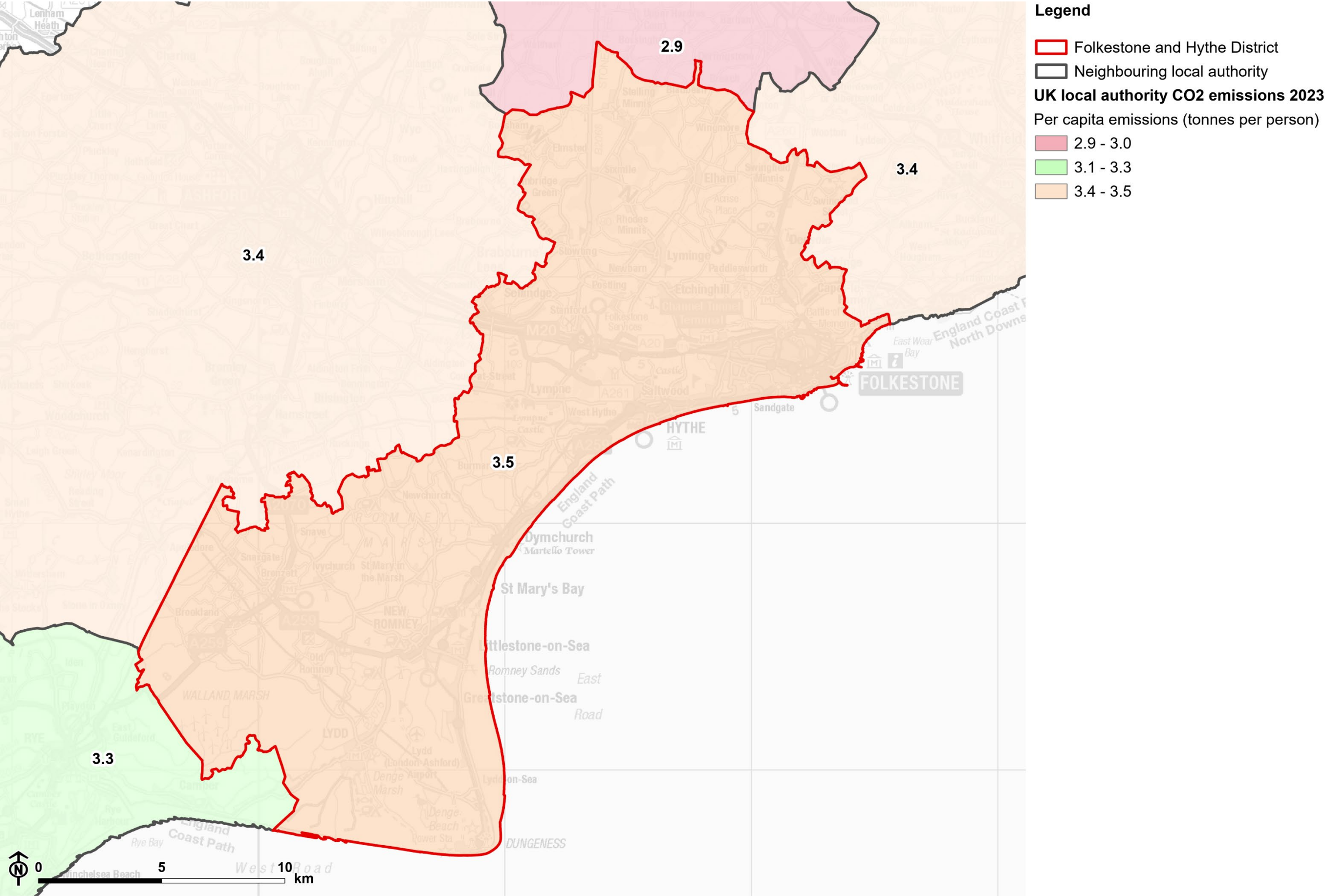
Created by LUC - Flood Risk 14/07/2026
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Figure 3.7: Nutrient Neutrality catchment area



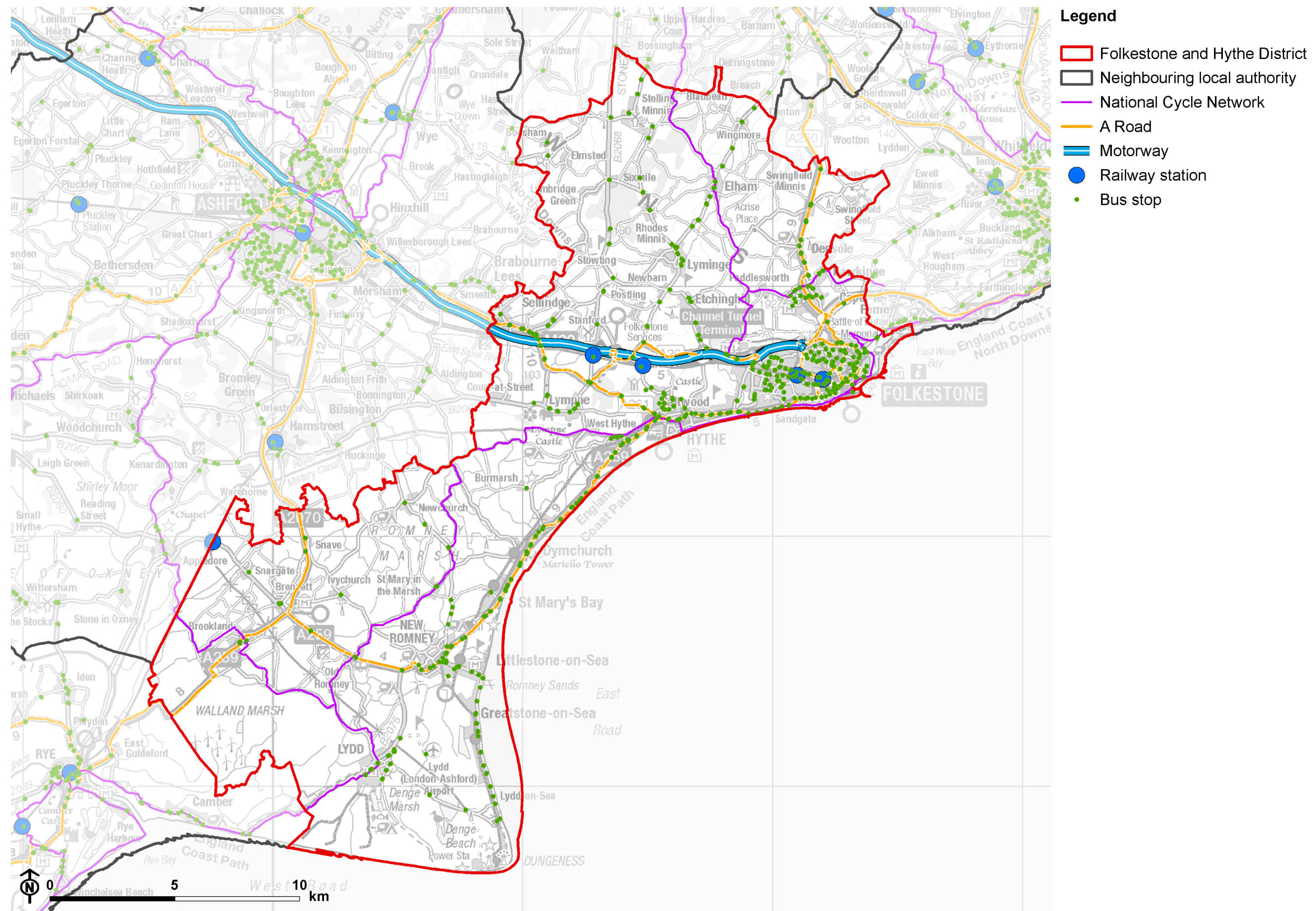
Created by LUC - Nutrient Neutrality catchment area 08/07/2026
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Figure 3.8: Per Capita CO2 Emissions compared to Neighbouring Authorities



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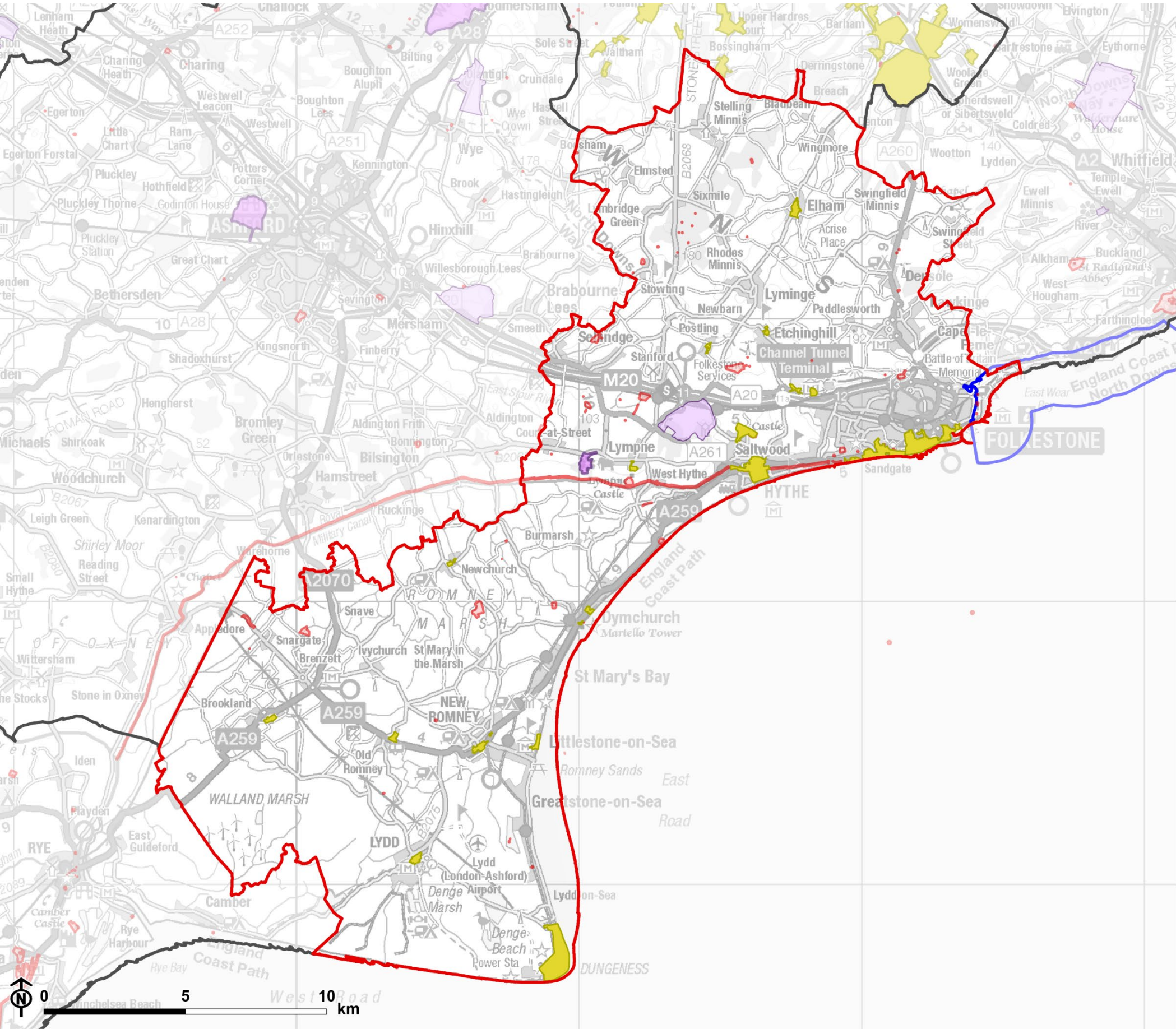
Figure 3.9: Transport links



Created by LUC - Transport links 25/08/2026

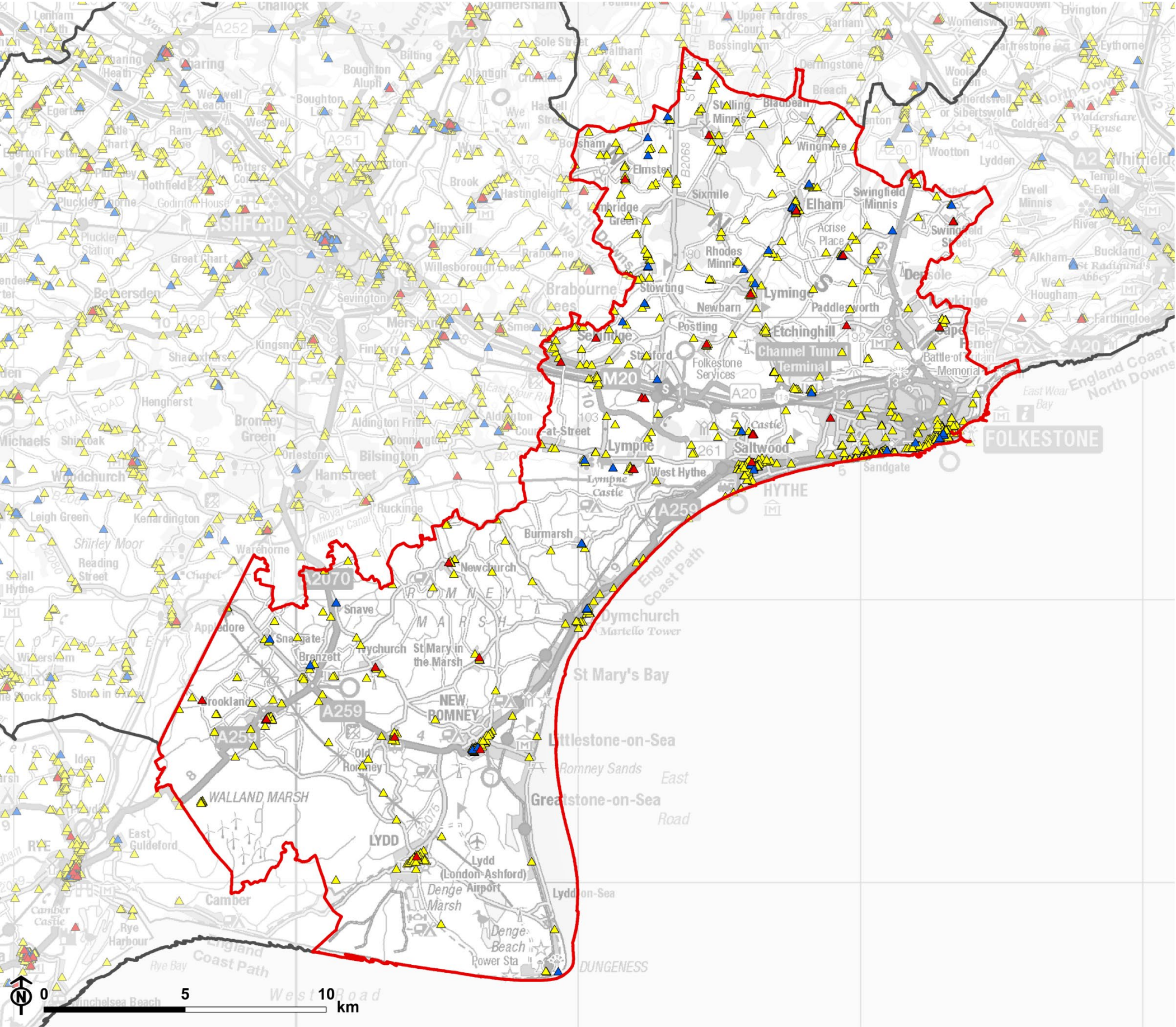
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Figure 3.10: Heritage assets



- Legend**
- Folkestone and Hythe District
 - Neighbouring local authority
 - Heritage Coast
 - Conservation area
 - Scheduled monument
- Registered Parks and Gardens**
- Grade II*
 - Grade II

Figure 3.11: Listed buildings



Legend

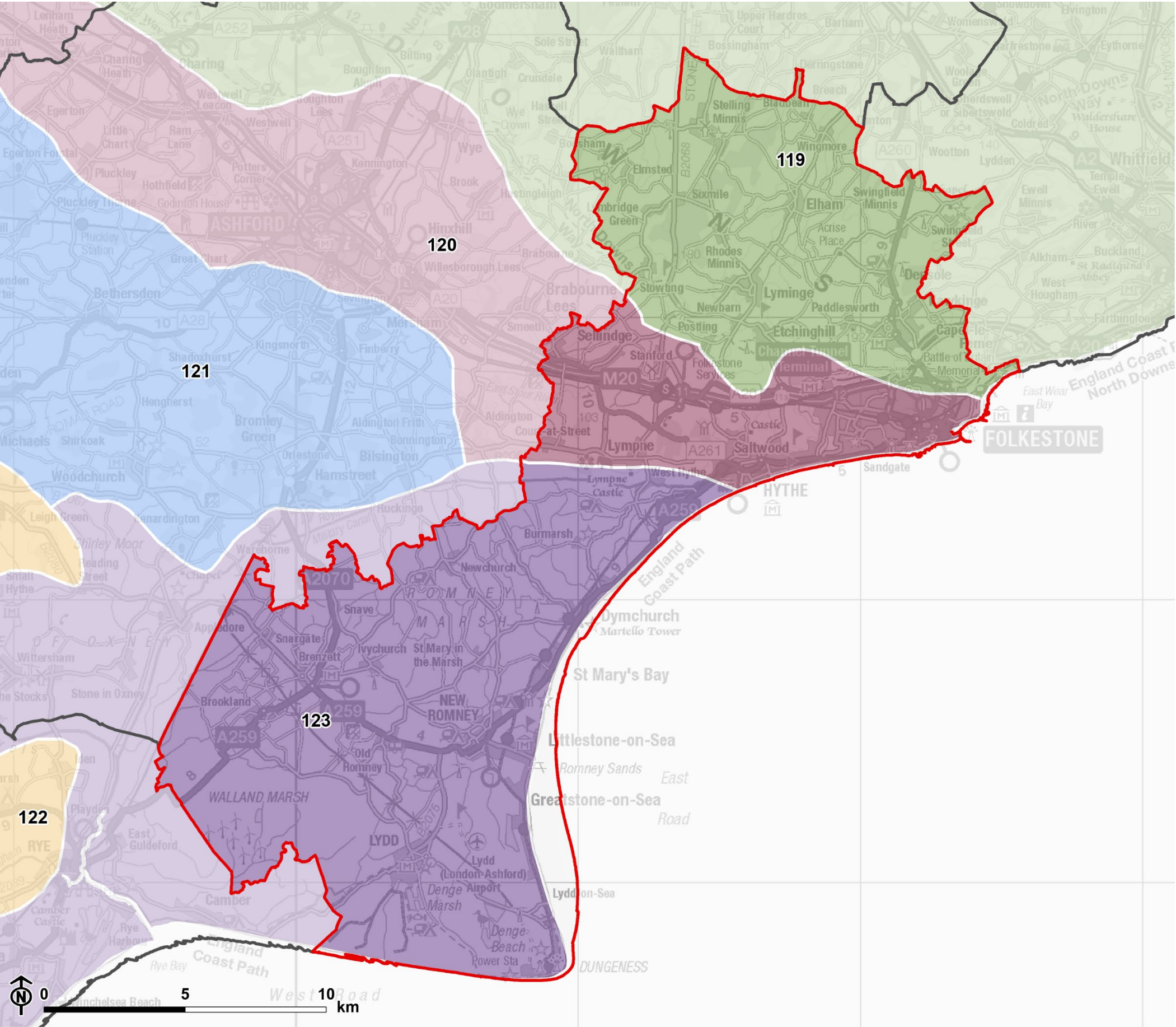
Folkestone and Hythe District

Neighbouring local authority

Listed building

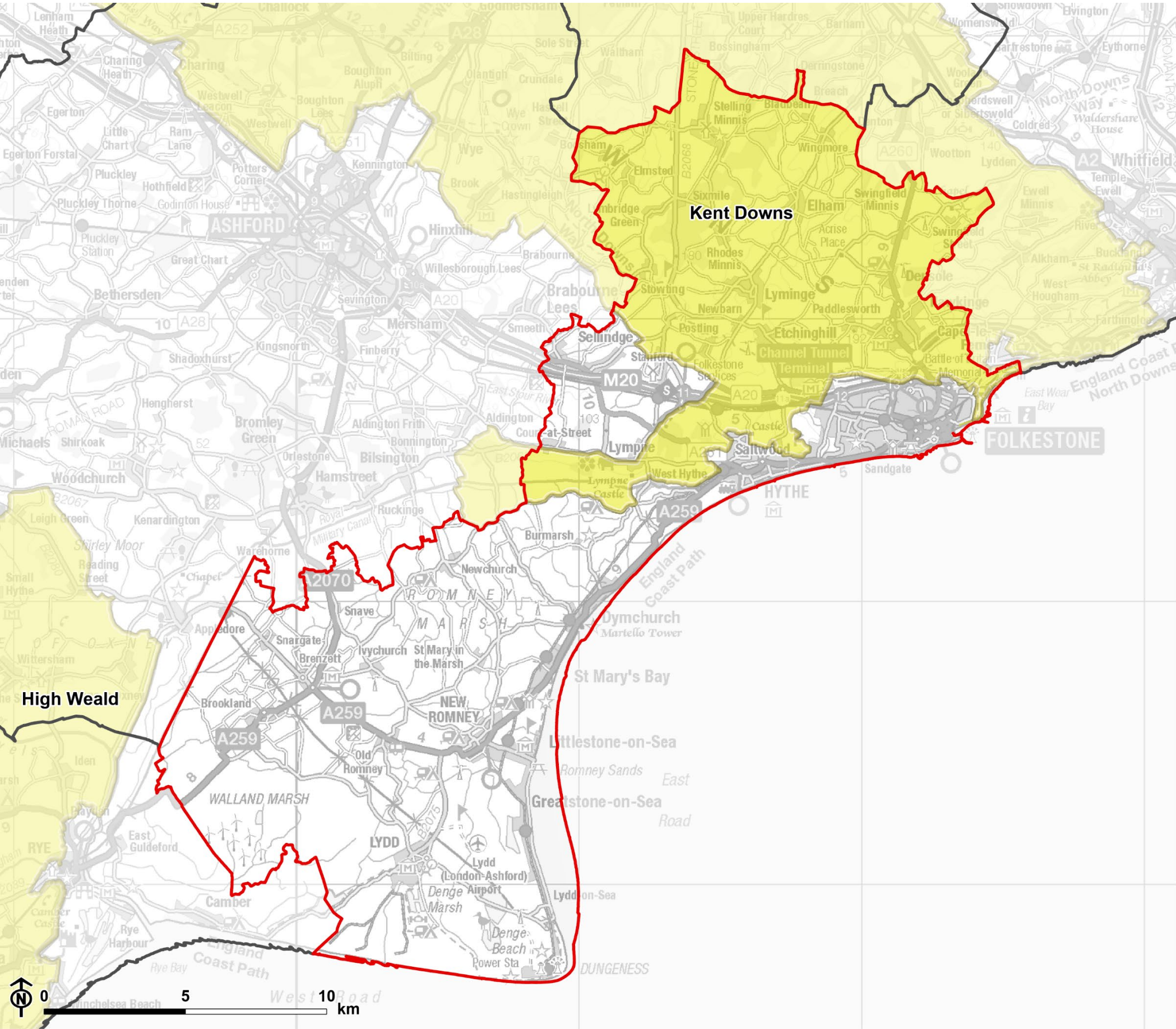
- ▲ Grade I
- ▲ Grade II*
- ▲ Grade II

Figure 3.12: Landscape Character



- Legend**
- Folkestone and Hythe District
 - Neighbouring local authority
 - National Character Area**
 - 119: North Downs
 - 120: Wealden Greensand
 - 121: Low Weald
 - 122: High Weald
 - 123: Romney Marshes

Figure 3.13: National Landscape



- Legend**
- Folkestone and Hythe District
 - Neighbouring local authority
 - National Landscape

Difficulties and data limitations

3.127 The SEA Regulations, Schedule 2(8) require the Environmental Report to include:

A description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.

3.128 At this stage, given the content and purpose of the SEA Scoping Report, it is considered appropriate to note the following data limitations which were identified as the report was prepared:

- Data was not available on existing services and facilities outside of/close to Folkestone and Hythe District.
- Data in relation to some topic areas is relatively dated, as the most recent evidence studies were prepared to support the adopted Core Strategy Review (2022) and Places and Policies Local Plan (2020). A range of updated evidence studies will be prepared to support the new Local Plan and will be taken into account in the SEA as they become available.

3.129 Where data limitations have been identified, if relevant updates sources become available at a later stage of the SEA process, they will be used to update the baseline information informing the appraisal work.

Chapter 4

Key sustainability issues and likely evolution without the Plan

4.1 Analysis of the baseline information has enabled a number of key sustainability issues facing Folkestone and Hythe district to be identified. Identification of the key sustainability issues (and consideration of how these issues might develop over time if the new Local Plan is not implemented) helps to meet the requirements of Annex 1 of the SEA Directive, which is to provide information on “the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan; and any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan”.

4.2 Key sustainability issues for Folkestone and Hythe district were previously identified through the SA/SEA Scoping process in 2018 for the adopted Core Strategy Review (2022). These issues have been considered as a starting point but have been fully reviewed, in light of the updated policy review and latest baseline information, during the preparation of this SEA Scoping Report for the new Local Plan. The current set of key sustainability issues for Folkestone and Hythe district is presented below.

4.3 It is also a requirement of the SEA Regulations that consideration be given to the likely evolution of the environment in the plan area if the new Local Plan were not to be implemented. This analysis is also presented below in relation to each of the key sustainability issues.

4.4 The information collated shows that, in general, the current trends in relation to the various social, economic and environmental issues affecting Folkestone and Hythe district would be more likely to continue without the implementation of the new Local Plan, although the policies in the adopted Development Plan would still go some way towards addressing many of the issues. In most cases, the new Local Plan offers opportunities to affect existing trends directly and strongly in a positive way, through an up-to-date plan which reflects the requirements of the NPPF.

4.5 Key sustainability issues in Folkestone and Hythe district (including environmental problems as required by the SEA Regulations) are set out below:

- **Folkestone and Hythe contains areas of high biodiversity value including the internationally important sites of the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay.** The new Local Plan provides an

opportunity to support the protection and enhancement of these biodiversity assets. Without the new Local Plan, there is a risk that development could come forward in a fragmented way, resulting in less coordinated protection, mitigation, and enhancement of biodiversity assets across the district.

- **Housing completions recently have been below the government's 85% threshold in the 2023 Housing Delivery Test.** To meet the needs of a growing population, an adequate supply of housing, including affordable homes is required. The new Local Plan provides an opportunity to facilitate and expedite the delivery of homes in the district, including affordable housing. Without the new Local Plan, house prices may be more likely to become increasingly unaffordable and there is greater potential for the housing stock to become mismatched to local needs.
- **Folkestone and Hythe district has a number of health and well-being issues including low life expectancy, high obesity rates, low physical activity levels and high inactive physical activity levels.** The new Local Plan could contribute to tackling issues of health and wellbeing and general health disparities through policies that strongly support uptake of active modes of transport, access to green space, community facilities, improved public realm and other recreation opportunities, in particular in more deprived areas. Without the new Local Plan, there is more likely to be an ongoing decline in the population's health and well-being.
- **Access to green space varies across Folkestone and Hythe, with a significant proportion of residents deficient in access to one or two levels of the open space hierarchy.** The new Local Plan presents an opportunity to help address existing deficiencies in accessible greenspace and to consider the multi-functionality of the green infrastructure network at a more strategic level to ensure there is connectivity between the walking and cycling network as well additional greenspace. Without the new Local Plan, access is more likely to remain uneven across the district.
- **There are relatively high levels of deprivation within the district which is within the 30% most deprived local authorities in England.** The new Local Plan offers an opportunity to reduce the level of deprivation in areas through appropriately planned growth and regeneration. Therefore, without the new Local Plan, deprivation is less likely to be effectively tackled, and inequalities are more likely to remain.
- **There are areas of high quality agricultural land across the district which requires protection from development.** The new Local Plan provides an opportunity to ensure that this resource is not lost or

compromised by future growth by prioritising the development of brownfield land and poorer agricultural land over the best and most versatile grades. Therefore, without the new Local Plan, agricultural land is less likely to be protected.

- **Folkestone and Hythe is located within the South East River Basin District, which is prone to drought and within a water stressed area.** The new Local Plan provides an opportunity to support measures to protect and improve water stress in the area. Without the new Local Plan, it is possible that development could be located in areas that will exacerbate water stress issues.
- **Over half of the district lies within Flood Zone 3a, placing these areas at risk of flooding from a number of sources.** The new Local Plan offers an opportunity to plan strategically to locate new development in areas at lower risk from flooding, therefore reducing the number of properties and economic assets at risk from flooding. Without the new Local Plan, flood risk will continue to affect the district through increased and higher intensity flooding.
- **All three of the groundwater waterbodies located within Folkestone and Hythe are classified as 'Poor' overall status.** The new Local Plan provides an opportunity to support measures that protect and enhance groundwater quality. Without the new Local Plan, existing pressures on groundwater bodies may continue or increase.
- **While emissions from all sectors have fallen in Folkestone and Hythe since 2005, carbon dioxide emissions from transport and domestic sources contribute greatly to overall emissions.** The new Local Plan provides an opportunity to incorporate uses and development layout and design that will help to limit carbon emissions associated with transport and energy use. It may also support the incorporation of infrastructure for energy generation from renewable sources. Without the new Local Plan, these issues are less likely to be well addressed.
- **Hotter, drier summers are expected as a result of ongoing and accelerating climate change, which have the potential for adverse effects on human health and the natural environment.** The new Local Plan offers another opportunity to update the district's approach to managing the effects of the changing climate and associated weather events, particularly in the design of new buildings, whole developments and green infrastructure. Therefore, without the new Local Plan, this issue is likely to be less well addressed.

- **Folkestone and Hythe district's economic performance has been weaker than the national average in recent years,** and the employment rate is low, with lower gross weekly pay and lower levels of qualifications in the district in the year leading up to 2025. The new Local Plan offers the opportunity to plan a co-ordinated approach to employment which will lead to increased employment opportunities across the district. Without the new Local Plan trends of poor economic performance are likely to continue.
- **Folkestone and Hythe district has extensive heritage interest including 13 assets recorded on Historic England's Heritage at Risk Register.** The new Local Plan provides an opportunity to draw on the most up to date evidence to ensure that new development is sited and designed so as to conserve, enhance and encourage enjoyment of the historic environment as well as improve accessibility and interpretation of it. Therefore, without the new Local Plan, the historic environment is less likely to be protected and enhanced and the condition of assets may worsen.
- **There are areas of landscape sensitivity across Folkestone and Hythe district, including the Kent Downs National Landscape which falls partly within the district.** The new Local Plan offers an opportunity to consider the most recent landscape-related evidence and to ensure that sensitive landscapes and townscapes are protected and enhanced, with development being located and designed to take account of the variation in character and sensitivity across the district. The new Local Plan also offers the opportunity to take into account the new requirement for local planning authorities to seek to further the purposes of National Landscapes. Without the new Local Plan, this issue is less likely to be addressed as it is more likely that piecemeal and ad-hoc developments would come forward.

Chapter 5

SEA framework

5.1 The development of a set of SEA objectives (known as the SEA framework) is a recognised way in which the likely environmental effects of a plan can be described, analysed and compared.

5.2 The SEA framework comprises a set of SEA objectives against which the Local Plan will be assessed. The assessment of the Local Plan options, policies and site allocations against these SEA objectives will be guided in part by the assessment questions accompanying each objective. These questions are not exhaustive, and some may be more relevant to certain elements of the Local Plan than others.

5.3 The proposed SEA framework for the Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan is presented below. The previous SA/SEA framework for the adopted Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan Review was considered as a starting point to inform the preparation of this SEA framework, although it has been amended to take into account the analysis of international, national and local policy objectives, the baseline information, and the key sustainability issues currently facing Folkestone and Hythe. Only SEA is now required (as opposed to an integrated SA/SEA under the previous plan-making system) and so the objectives have been structured by SEA topic with a particular focus on environmental effects, although it still extends to some social and economic issues.

5.4 All of the topics specifically required by the SEA Regulations (set out in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations) are clearly addressed by the headline SEA objectives.

SEA objective 1: To conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity

Assessment questions

- Will the option or policy conserve and enhance both designated and undesignated ecological assets, including Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay?
- Will the option or policy protect sites, features and areas of geological value?

- Will the option or policy maintain and enhance woodland/hedgerow cover and management?
- Will the option or policy encourage the development of new biodiversity assets and linkages to existing habitats within and alongside development?
- Will the option or policy support delivery of the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy?
- Will the option or policy provide and manage opportunities for people to come into contact with nature while encouraging respect for and raising awareness of the sensitivity of the natural environment?
- Will the option or policy support the protection, enhancement and provision of green and blue infrastructure?
- Will the option or policy ensure green infrastructure assets and networks (including green open space and river/canal corridors) are linked into new and existing developments, to improve the connectivity of green spaces and green networks?

Relevant SEA topic

- Biodiversity

SEA objective 2: To meet the housing requirements of the whole community

Assessment questions

- Will the option or policy meet local housing need, including specialist housing needs and housing for older people?
- Will the option or policy improve access to affordable housing?
- Will the option or policy improve the quality of housing stock?
- Will the option or policy provide a mix of housing types and tenures?

Relevant SEA topic

- Population

SEA objective 3: To improve the health of the population overall and reduce health inequalities

Assessment questions

- Will the option or policy improve people's physical and mental health and well-being?
- Will the option or policy help address the main causes of ill health (obesity and low physical activity levels) by encouraging healthier lifestyles?
- Will the option or policy enhance existing open spaces and provide new ones?
- Will the option or policy support access to primary healthcare facilities?
- Will the option or policy protect residential amenity?
- Will the option or policy provide good access to services and facilities?

Relevant SEA topic

- Human health

SEA objective 4: To conserve and enhance soil and mineral resources

Assessment questions

- Will the option or policy promote the re-use of previously developed land?
- Will the option or policy avoid development of best and most versatile agricultural land?
- Will the option or policy ensure contaminated land is remediated where appropriate?

Relevant SEA topic

- Soils

SEA objective 5: To manage and reduce flood risk from all sources and to conserve and enhance water quality and resources.

Assessment questions

- Will the option or policy limit the amount of development in areas of high flood risk (including areas at risk from coastal change) and areas which may increase flood risk elsewhere, taking into account the impacts of climate change?
- Will the option or policy reduce the flood risk facing existing and new development?
- Will the option or policy promote the use of sustainable drainage systems and other flood resilient design?
- Will the option or policy help to support efficient use of water, including greywater recycling in new developments?
- Will the option or policy ensure that there are sufficient water resources available to support new development?
- Will the option or policy protect and improve the water quality?

Relevant SEA topic

- Water

SEA objective 6: To maintain and improve the quality of groundwater, surface waters and coastal waters, and ensure that development does not contribute to nutrient pollution.

Assessment questions

- Will the option or policy minimise inappropriate development in Source Protection Zones?

- Will the option or policy lead to the deterioration of the quality of groundwater, surface waters or coastal waters and the physical quality of rivers and coastal waters?
- Will the option or policy improve or protect the quality of rivers, lakes, groundwater or estuaries?
- Will the option or policy promote development away from waterbodies so as to minimise contaminated runoff from development?
- Will the option or policy ensure there is sufficient wastewater treatment capacity to accommodate new development?
- Will the option or policy increase nutrient inputs (nitrogen or phosphorus) to sensitive water bodies?

Relevant SEA topic

- Water

SEA objective 7: To maintain and where possible improve air quality

Assessment questions

- Will the option or policy minimise exposure to poor air quality?
- Will the option or policy improve air quality?
- Will the option or policy promote more sustainable transport and reduce the need to travel?
- Will the option or policy contain measures which will help to reduce congestion?
- Will the option or policy facilitate the take up of low/zero emission vehicles?
- Will the option or policy help mitigate noise and other forms of pollution?

Relevant SEA topic

- Air

SEA objective 8: To adapt to the effects of climate change while minimising greenhouse gas emissions

Assessment questions

- Will the option or policy reduce greenhouse gas emissions from domestic, commercial and industrial sources?
- Will the option or policy plan and implement adaptation measures for the likely effects of climate change?
- Will the option or policy include energy efficiency measures?
- Will the option or policy reduce energy consumption?
- Will the option or policy encourage the development of renewable energy resources?
- Will the option or policy limit the amount of development in areas of high flood risk and areas which may increase flood risk elsewhere, taking into account the impacts of climate change?
- Will the option or policy promote the use of sustainable drainage systems and other flood resilient design?
- Will the option or policy promote the use of nature-based solutions (e.g. wetlands, ponds, rain gardens, green walls/roofs) to contribute towards climate change adaptation?
- Will the option or policy support the delivery of climate adaptation measures, including incorporation of green and blue infrastructure, and take account of those experiencing social and economic inequalities who are most affected by climate impacts?
- Will the option or policy support the delivery of development that is resilient to the changing climate and can withstand extreme weather events (e.g. heatwaves, wildfires, drought, intense storms)?
- Will the option or policy reduce reliance on private vehicles and promote the use of active and sustainable modes of transport?

Relevant SEA topic

- Climate change adaptation and mitigation

SEA objective 9: To achieve sustainable levels of prosperity and growth throughout the plan area while supporting the vitality and viability of the district's towns and villages

Assessment questions

- Will the option or policy support the provision of infrastructure necessary for economic growth in the plan area?
- Will the option or policy support job creation in sustainable, long term growth areas that match local skill sets?
- Will the option or policy support higher levels of educational attainment?
- Will the option or policy provide facilities and services to support the vitality and viability of towns and villages and reduce the need to travel?

Relevant SEA topic

- Material assets

SEA objective 10: To conserve and where appropriate enhance areas and assets of historic and archaeological importance

Assessment questions

- Will the option or policy conserve and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets, including their setting and the wider historic environment?
- Will the option or policy provide opportunities for improvements to the conservation, management and enhancement of Folkestone and Hythe District's heritage assets, particularly heritage assets at risk?
- Will the option or policy promote access to, as well as enjoyment and understanding of, the local historic environment for residents and visitors?

Relevant SEA topic

- Cultural heritage

SEA objective 11: To conserve and enhance the quality and local distinctiveness of landscapes and townscape

Assessment questions

- Will the option or policy safeguard and enhance the character of sensitive landscapes and local distinctiveness and identity?
- Will the option or policy help to safeguard the character of the National and Local Character Areas?
- Will the option or policy further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Kent Downs National Landscape?

Relevant SEA topic

- Landscape

Use of the SEA framework

5.5 The SEA will be undertaken in close collaboration with the Folkestone and Hythe District Council officers responsible for drafting the new Local Plan in order to fully integrate the SEA process with the production of the plan.

5.6 Policies and site allocations, including the reasonable alternative options, will be assessed against the SEA objectives in the SEA framework, with symbols being attributed to each policy or site option to indicate their likely effects on each SEA objective. Where a potential positive or negative effect is uncertain, a question mark will be added to the relevant symbol (e.g. +? or -?) and the symbol will be colour coded in line with the potential positive, negligible or negative effect (e.g. green, blue, orange, etc.).

5.7 The likely effects of options need to be determined and their significance assessed, which inevitably requires a series of judgments to be made. The assessment will attempt to differentiate between the most significant effects and other more minor effects through the use of the symbols. The dividing line in

making a decision about the significance of an effect is often quite small. Where either (++) or (--) will be used to distinguish significant effects from more minor effects (+ or -) this will be because the effect of an option or policy on the SEA objective in question is considered to be of such magnitude that it will have a noticeable and measurable effect taking into account other factors that may influence the achievement of that objective.

5.8 The findings of the SEA will be presented using colour coded symbols showing the likely effect of each option against each of the SEA objectives along with a concise justification for the effect identified. The key to the SEA symbols is shown in **Table 5.1** below.

Table 5.1: SEA framework symbols and colour coding

Symbol and colour code	Description
++	Significant positive effect likely
++/-	Mixed significant positive and minor negative effects likely
+	Minor positive effect likely
++/--	Mixed significant positive and negative effects likely
+/-	Mixed minor positive and negative effects likely
-	Minor negative effect likely
--/+	Mixed significant negative and minor positive effects likely
--	Significant negative effect likely
0	Negligible effect likely
?	Uncertain effect

5.9 In relation to the assessment of the site options, detailed sets of site assessment criteria will be developed and applied during the next stage of the SEA. The criteria will relate specifically to each type of site option (residential, employment, mixed use etc.). The site assessment criteria will set out clear

parameters within which certain SEA effects would be identified, based on factors such as the distance of site options from features such as biodiversity designations, public transport links and areas of high landscape sensitivity. The criteria, where required, may be updated at future stages of the SEA to draw on the most recent evidence sources. The site assessment criteria will be applied through the use of a Geographical Information System (GIS).

5.10 In determining the significance of the effects of the options for potential inclusion in the new Local Plan, it will be important to bear in mind the relationship of the Local Plan with the other documents in the planning system such as the NPPF and other national policy approaches, and regulatory requirements, as these may provide additional safeguards or mitigation of potentially significant adverse effects.

Reasonable alternatives

5.11 The SEA must assess not only the preferred options for inclusion in the Local Plan but also 'reasonable alternatives' to these options. This implies that alternatives that are not reasonable do not need to be subject to assessment. Part (b) of Regulation 12(2) notes that reasonable alternatives will take into account the objectives of the plan, as well as its geographical scope. Therefore, alternatives that do not meet the objectives of national policy, local objectives or are outside the plan area are unlikely to be reasonable.

5.12 Developing options for a plan is an iterative process, usually involving a number of consultations with the public and stakeholders. Consultation responses and the SEA can help to identify where there may be other 'reasonable alternatives' to the options being considered for a plan.

5.13 The SEA findings are not the only factors taken into account when determining a preferred option to take forward in a plan. Indeed, there will often be an equal number of positive or negative effects identified by the SEA for each option, such that it is not possible to rank them based on sustainability performance in order to select a preferred option. Factors such as public opinion, deliverability and conformity with national policy will also be taken into account. Future iterations of the SEA will describe how the assessment of options has been taken into consideration when developing the Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan.

Chapter 6

Next steps

6.1 In order to meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations, the views of the three statutory consultees (the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) are being sought in relation to the scope and level of detail to be included in this SEA Scoping Report.

6.2 Consultees are in particular requested to consider the following:

- Whether the scope of the SEA is appropriate as set out considering the role of the new Folkestone and Hythe Local Plan to help meet and manage Folkestone and Hythe district's needs.
- Whether there are any additional plans, policies or programmes that are relevant to the SEA that should be included.
- Whether the baseline information provided is robust and comprehensive and provides a suitable baseline for the SEA of the new Local Plan.
- Whether there are any additional key sustainability issues relevant to the new Local Plan that should be included.
- Whether the SEA framework is appropriate and includes a suitable set of SEA objectives for assessing the effects of the options included within the new Local Plan as well as reasonable alternatives.

6.3 Responses from consultees will be reviewed and appropriate amendments made to the information contained in the Scoping Report, including the baseline information, policy context and SEA framework where necessary.

6.4 As the Local Plan is drafted, it will be subject to SEA using the SEA framework presented in **Chapter 5**. A full SEA Report (incorporating the next stages of the SEA process) will then be produced and made available to other stakeholders and the general public for wider consultation alongside the emerging Local Plan. This will include any amendments to the scoping work arising from the consultation with statutory bodies on this report.

LUC

August 2026

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Bristol

12th Floor, Colston Tower, Colston Street, Bristol BS1 4XE
0117 929 1997
bristol@landuse.co.uk

Cardiff

Room 1.12, 1st Floor, Brunel House, 2 Fitzalan Rd, Cardiff CF24 0EB
0292 032 9006
cardiff@landuse.co.uk

Edinburgh

Atholl Exchange, 6 Canning Street, Edinburgh EH3 8EG
0131 202 1616
edinburgh@landuse.co.uk

Glasgow

5th Floor, The Garment Factory, 10 Montrose Street, Glasgow G1 1RE
0141 334 9595
glasgow@landuse.co.uk

London

250 Waterloo Road, London SE1 8RD
020 7383 5784
london@landuse.co.uk

Manchester

4th Floor, 57 Hilton Street, Manchester M1 2EJ
0161 537 5960
manchester@landuse.co.uk

landuse.co.uk

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