

3 - The Landscape of Eastleigh Borough

Description

- 3.1 The borough of Eastleigh extends from its boundary with Winchester District in the north southwards to the coast at Southampton Water. It is bounded to the east by Fareham borough and to the west by Test Valley borough and Southampton. The River Hamble flows along the eastern boundary and the River Itchen cuts through the north-west part of the borough. The Hampshire chalk land has its southern boundary a few kilometres to the north of Eastleigh borough. The character of Southampton Water and the River Hamble have also informed the study.
- 3.2 The area was sparsely populated until well into the nineteenth century. Now, however, much of it is built-up. The settlements of Eastleigh, Chandler's Ford, Bishopstoke and Fair Oak dominate the northern section. West End, Hedge End and Botley dominate the centre; and Bursledon, Netley and Hamble are substantial settlements located in the south. Some of the landscape in the southern and northeastern parts of the borough is more rural.
- 3.3 The area is crossed by several major roads, of which the M27 and M3 are the most conspicuous. The main South Western railway line through the borough runs north-south. The Eastleigh to Fareham railway runs south-east through Eastleigh. Southampton Airport lies on the edge of the town of Eastleigh.

Landscape History

- 3.4 In 1810, before the coming of the railway, much of the borough was quite poor economically and not heavily populated. Eastleigh was a collection of farm buildings; Bishopstoke was a slightly larger settlement; Allington was a hamlet serving a manor; and Hamble and Bursledon were villages based on the ship building industry. The largest settlement, although still only a village, was Botley on the banks of the River Hamble. It served a manor and had a small harbour and substantial mill.
- 3.5 The floodplain of the River Itchen, was largely as today, free of development with the meadows being used as grazing for sheep and cattle. This was the time when 'watering' the meadows was practiced to bring on a good growth of spring grass. The practice allowed river water to slowly flow over the meadows by means of ditches, banks and artificial structures such as sluices, which can still be seen today and are characteristic of the landscape of Hampshire's river valleys. This practice was, however, very labour intensive and fell out of general use in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as labour prices rose and artificial fertilisers and herbicides became more generally available.
- 3.6 At the western edge of the borough lies the largely intact North Stoneham Park, influenced by the legendary landscape designer, Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Along the slightly higher ground at the northern edge of the borough, there was a considerable amount of woodland, probably surviving since at least 1600. Much of

this woodland remains today, with deciduous and coniferous woodland grown for commercial timber production, as can be seen at Stoke Park Woods.

- 3.7 In the north-east corner of the borough, land at Stroud Wood was open common land, as was the site of the more recent settlement of Horton Heath to the south. Common land provided grazing for the livestock of local people and consisted of unfenced areas of acid grassland and heathland.
- 3.8 Further south, where Hedge End is now, were extensive areas of woodland. Woodland and farmland continued south to Bursledon. To the west, beyond more woodland, lay the large open commons of Weston, Netley and Bursledon, fragments of which still survive today. Woodland extended up shallow valleys from the coast and surrounded the land around Hound and Netley. To the south and west of Hamble was common land, some of which remains. Near the southern coast lies the ruins of Netley Abbey, surrounded by fertile farmland.
- 3.9 The borough's population expanded rapidly with the coming of the railway in 1840 and the relocation of engine carriage and locomotive works at the beginning of the 20th. Eastleigh in particular flourished and spread out into farmland and common land. The once small settlements of Bishopstoke and Hedge End grew rapidly, particularly with the development of new housing after World War II (WWII).
- 3.10 Before WWII, land within the borough that was not built up still remained as farmland or woodland, with larger remnants of common land still surviving. Farmland was managed non-intensively with hay meadows full of wild flowers and arable fields that had a rich flora and fauna due to the lack of herbicides or pesticides. Hedgerows, copses and farm ponds were an integral part of the farm system, managed for game, livestock and the various goods they produced. The growing of strawberries was an important trade for Botley and Bursledon, with 'strawberry trains' moving produce out of the area.
- 3.11 The years after WWII saw intensification of agriculture as Britain aimed to be self-sufficient in food and this, combined with the increasing demand for housing, took its toll on the borough's landscape and biodiversity.
- 3.12 Artificial fertilisers, herbicides and pesticides were introduced to farmland and once rich meadows and fields lost many species. Woodlands that were once managed for their wood products fell into neglect and many hedgerows, ponds and commons were destroyed. The River Hamble saw a rapid increase in the building of boatyards and marinas with some loss of natural coastal habitats as it became a popular tourist destination. Even the River Itchen, although largely still undeveloped, was affected as farming along its banks intensified and water levels dropped due to abstraction to supply an ever-increasing population.
- 3.13 In more recent times, specific areas of land within the countryside have been identified as strategic and local gaps. These have served to protect the individual identity of major and smaller settlements, preventing their coalescence. As such, this land has remained fairly undeveloped, due to greater control over proposed uses and development of these areas.

Topography

(see “Map 3. Topography” on page 22)

- 3.14 The Hocombe-Fair Oak Ridge, rising to over 60 m above Ordnance Datum (AOD), dominates the northern part of the borough. Between Eastleigh and Fair Oak it is cut through by the River Itchen, which has a wide and distinctive flood plain and gravel terraces. To the south the land rises again, to over 80 m AOD around West End and Netley Hill, with a very broad, low ridge extending northwards through Horton Heath. This landform encloses the wide, irregular catchment of the unnamed stream that joins the Itchen near West Horton Farm.
- 3.15 From the eastern edge of Hedge End, the land forms a very gently-sloping plateau. This extends almost to the River Hamble before falling more abruptly immediately adjacent to the river. To the south, as far as the steep, narrow valley on which Badnam Copse lies, the landform is more irregular, but a gently-domed plateau extends through Hound before the land falls irregularly to the coast. The plateau is cut by a small valley extending southwards from Old Netley and another on the western boundary of the borough, (Map 2).

Geology and Soils

(see “Map 4. Geology” on page 24 & “Map 5. Soil Types” on page 26)

- 3.16 The borough’s soils are mainly of poor to moderate agricultural quality with small pockets of high grade land. In the north poorly drained clays predominate, with acid soils and gravels in the south.
- 3.17 Much of the Borough, and almost all of the centre, is covered by the Bracklesham Beds (Map 3). These are a mixture of sands and clays which give rise to three principal types of soil:
- The often poorly-drained, largely clayey soils of much of the area;
 - The bands of sandy soil that extend northwards from West End;
- and,
- The Podsol soils which lie around the motorway, west of Hedge End.
- 3.18 Podsol soils are also found on small areas of the Plateau Gravels which overlie the beds, but the Gravels generally rise to more fertile brown earth soils. Small areas of Valley Gravels in the north have largely been built over.
- 3.19 On the Hocombe-Fair Oak Ridge, the Bagshot Sands are exposed, while the oldest geological formation, the London Clay, is found at the extreme northern end of the borough, where it has formed heavy and often poorly-drained clay soils. The two most recent formations, Brickearth and Alluvium, also lie in the north. Much of the Brickearth has been built over at Eastleigh and the airport, but the Alluvium covers most of the floodplain of the Itchen and forms peaty soils (Map 4).

Agricultural Land Classification

(see “Map 6. Agricultural Land Classification” on page 28)

- 3.20 Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) is a method for assessing the quality of farmland to allow informed decisions to be made about its future use. The ALC system divides land into five classes, 1-5, with grade 3 being further subdivided into 3a and 3b.
- 3.21 The most versatile and best quality land is identified as grade 1, 2 or 3a. Natural England considers this land to be “flexible, productive and efficient in response to inputs and which can best deliver future crops for food and non food uses such as biomass, fibres and pharmaceuticals”, (Natural England, 2009).
- 3.22 The classification is based on long-term limitations of the land for agricultural use. Factors that affect the grade are climate, site and soil characteristics, and the interactions between them.
- 3.23 The proportion of agricultural land grades across Hampshire are:
- Grade 1 – 0.4% (1,548 hectares);
 - Grade 2 – 4.9% (17,854 hectares);
 - Grade 3 – 56.9% (209,336 hectares);
 - Grade 4 – 15.2% (55,772 hectares);
 - Grade 5 – 5.3% (19,476 hectares);
 - Non agricultural – 11.2% (41,282 hectares); and
 - Urban – 6.1% (22,449 hectares).
- 3.24 The ALC system was introduced in 1966 when the whole of England was mapped using reconnaissance field surveys and graded. Revisions took place in 1988, which introduced subgrades 3a and 3b, however full resurveying of England has not been undertaken. Only selected areas have been resurveyed and their classifications revised, therefore this information is not available for Eastleigh borough.
- 3.25 Agricultural land quality in the southern half of Eastleigh Borough is generally high, and quite large areas particularly within the Hamble Peninsula were used formerly for horticulture, in particular strawberry growing. Much of the land in this area and in the central and eastern parts of the borough is classified as Grades 1 and 2, (see Map 5 page 26, which gives a general indication of agricultural quality where information is available).

Ecological Character

(see “Map 7. Ecological Character and Cultural Heritage” on page 30)

- 3.26 A surprising range of important habitats and species can be found in Eastleigh borough. There are many surviving areas of woodland, species-rich grassland and

fragments of heathland and undeveloped coast. Hedgerows, narrow tree belts and small copses provide further tree cover.

- 3.27 The River Itchen still contains wetland habitats, which provide food, shelter and suitable breeding conditions for a variety of species including the otter, water vole, Atlantic salmon, and invertebrates such as dragonflies and damsel flies.
- 3.28 Tidal saltmarsh and mudflats, significant areas of woodland, reedbeds and species-rich grassland bound the River Hamble. The Upper Hamble Country Park (also known as Manor Farm Country Park) contains woodlands that are some of the most ecologically diverse in central southern Britain.
- 3.29 The southern coast of the borough includes extensive areas of shingle and mudflats that are of international importance to large numbers of birds providing conditions suitable for feeding, roosting and breeding.
- 3.30 Within built-up areas of the borough, woodlands and grasslands of a more natural character can be found. Gardens also provide suitable areas where species flourish.

International Designations

- 3.31 The following sites are designated of European importance for nature conservation, strictly protected from damaging activities under the provisions of the *Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994*:
- River Itchen Special Area of Conservation (SAC);
 - Solent Maritime SAC;
 - Solent and Southampton Water Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar.

National Designations

- 3.32 There are currently six sites of special scientific interest (SSSI's) in Eastleigh Borough:
- Moorgreen Meadows (West End);
 - The River Itchen (Itchen Valley corridor);
 - Lincegrove to Hacketts Marsh (River Hamble);
 - Upper Hamble Estuary and Woods (River Hamble); and
 - Netley Common;
 - Lee-on-The-Solent to Itchen Estuary (Solent Coast).
- 3.33 These sites are considered to be of national importance for nature conservation and are protected from damaging activities under the provisions of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

3.34 The Borough does not have any national nature reserves.

Local Designations

3.35 In addition to statutory designations, there are a number of other sites whose nature conservation importance has been identified. These sites are of importance for nature conservation at a county and local level.

3.36 Sites of importance for nature conservation (SINCs) are locally designated following established criteria and in the borough generally fall into one of the following categories:

- Ancient semi-natural woodland;
- Old unimproved grasslands;
- Remnant heathland;
- Wetland; or
- Coasts and estuaries.

3.37 The borough currently has 134 SINCs and is awaiting approval for three additional sites.

3.38 In May 2002, the Borough Council published a biodiversity action plan, *Wild about Eastleigh*, (<http://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/leisure-and-culture/countryside/biodiversity/biodiversity-action-plan.aspx>), which assessed the biodiversity of the borough, identified priority habitats and species, and established seven priority areas where action was to be targeted.

- Flexford;
- Itchen Valley;
- Moorgreen;
- Netley and Bursledon Common;
- Solent Coast and Hamble Estuary;
- Stoke Park; and
- Wyvern.

3.39 Local Nature Reserves have also been established which serve nature conservation purposes and provide quality environments for local people to experience. These sites include:

- Hocombe Mead,
- Mercury Marshes,
- Hackett's Marshes,
- Netley Common,
- West Wood,
- Manor Farm.

Cultural Heritage

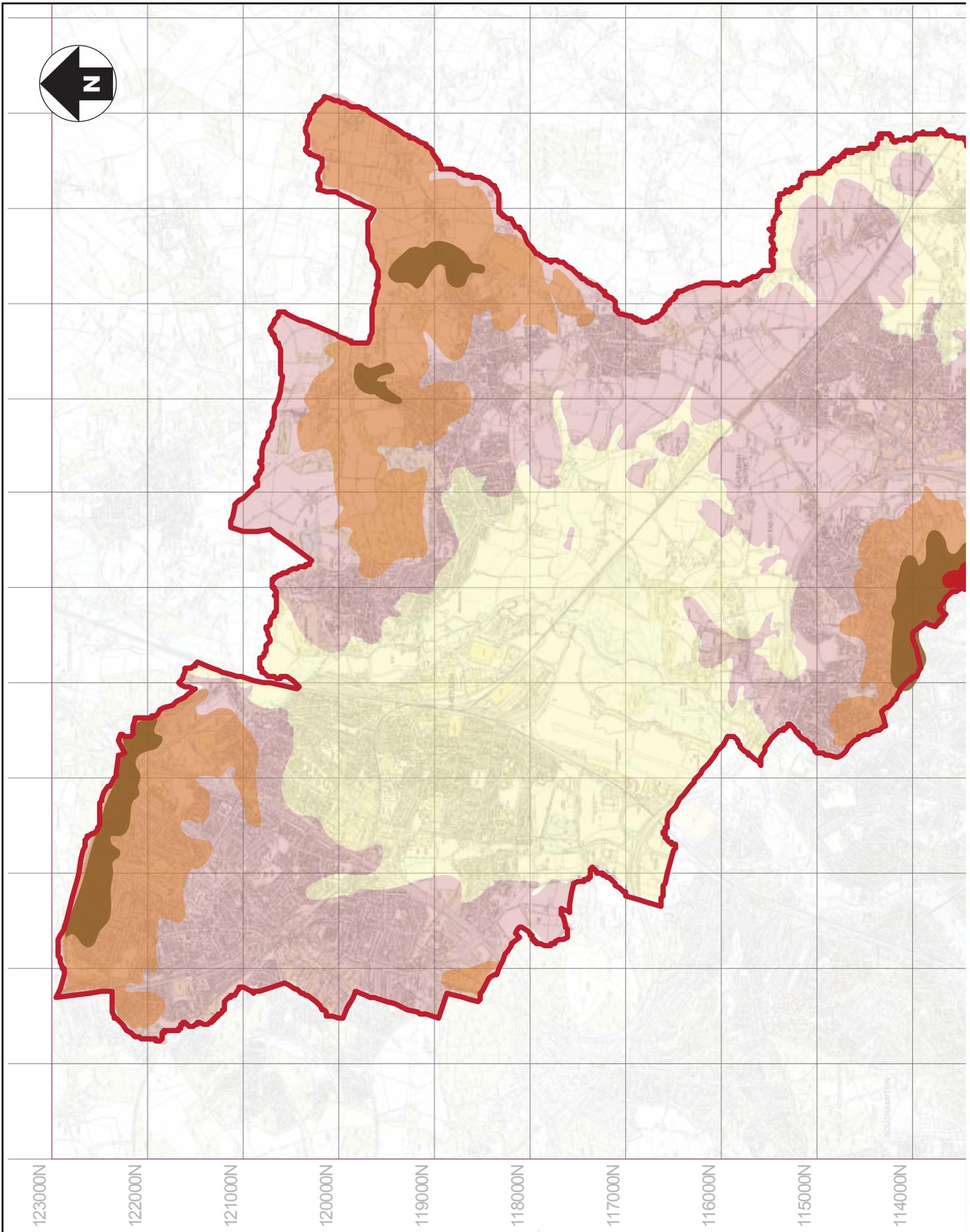
National Designations

Register of Historic Parks and Gardens

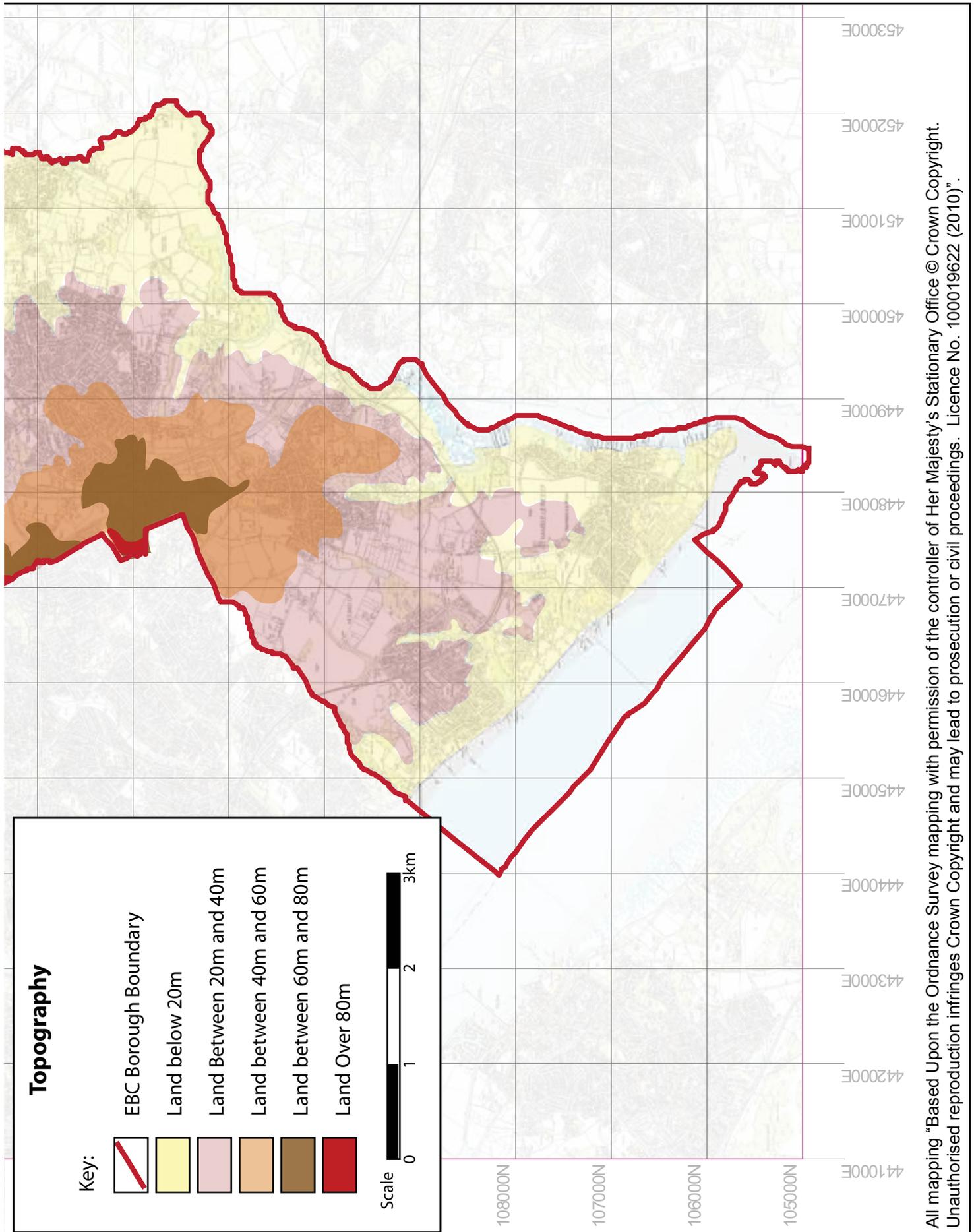
- 3.40 Since the 1980s there has been a national record of the historic parks and gardens which make a contribution to the English landscape. Established and maintained by English Heritage, the *Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest in England*, contains nearly 1450 sites. Its main purpose is to help ensure that the features and qualities which make the listed landscapes of national importance are safeguarded during management or if changes are proposed that could affect them. The Draft Heritage Background Paper provides further information on heritage assets
<http://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/PDF/QP2heritagedraftapril2011.pdf>
- 3.41 Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for the historic environment (PPS5) sets out the current Government stance relating to the historic environment and heritage assets. Policy HE9.1 states that “there should be a presumption in favour of the conservation of designated heritage assets”, for it recognises that “once lost, heritage assets cannot be replaced and their loss has a cultural, environmental, economic and social impact.”
- 3.42 A designated heritage asset includes registered parks and gardens.
- 3.43 Although inclusion of a historic park or garden on the register does not bring additional statutory controls, local authorities have been required to make provision for the protection of the historic environment in their policies and their allocation of resources. Registration is a material consideration in planning terms so, following an application for development which would affect a registered park or garden, local planning authorities must, when determining whether or not to grant permission, take into account the historic interest of the site.
- 3.44 Royal Victoria Country Park, Hound is currently the only site in the borough that has been included on the English Heritage register.

Conservation Areas

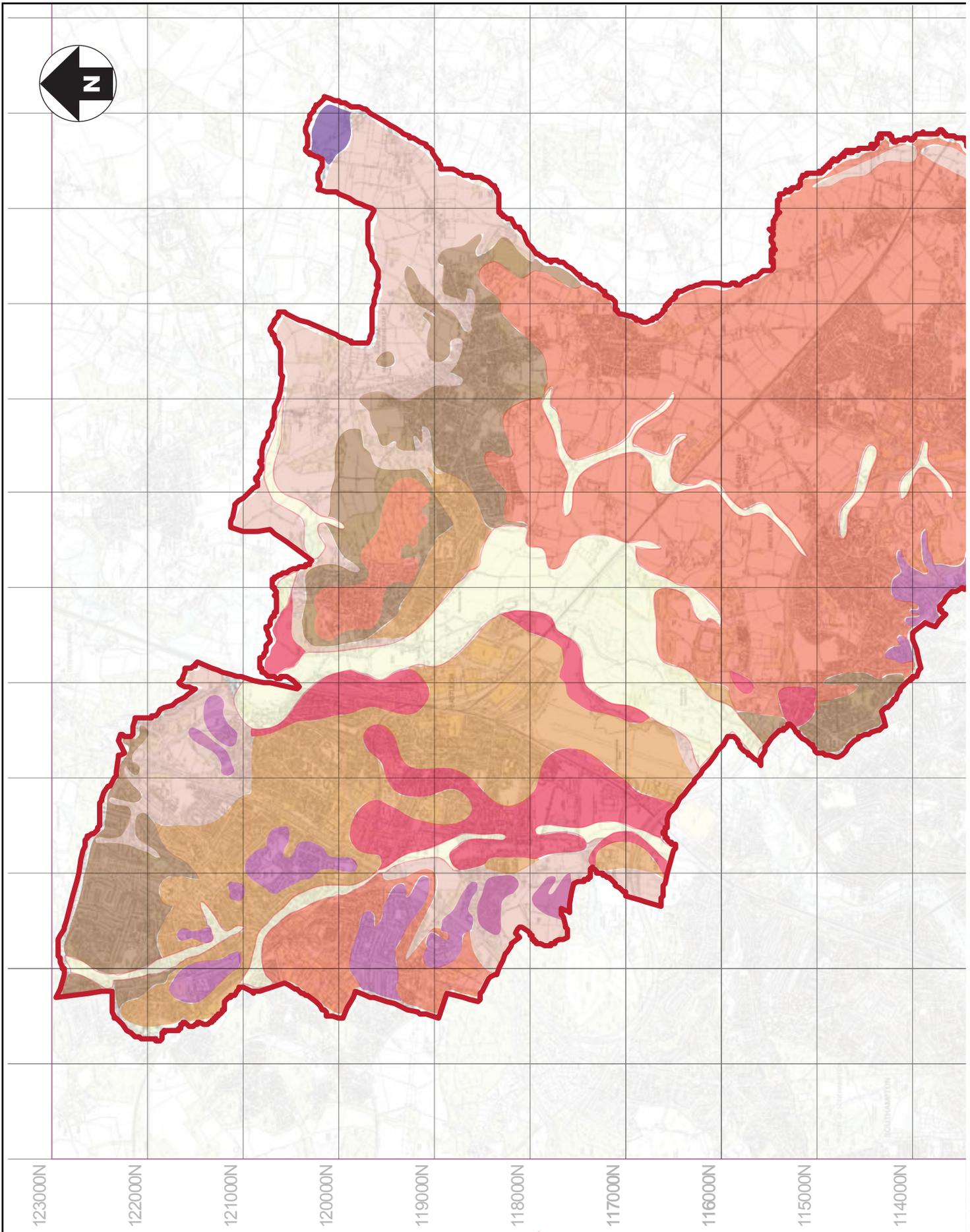
- 3.45 Conservation Areas are areas of special architectural or historic interest, the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance, as defined by the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, (The Act). Local authorities have the power to designate conservation areas, following an appraisal of the qualities of the built-environment considered against local and regional criteria.
- 3.46 An appraisal of an area considered for conservation area status must consider:
- Evidential value: the potential of a place to yield evidence about past human activity;



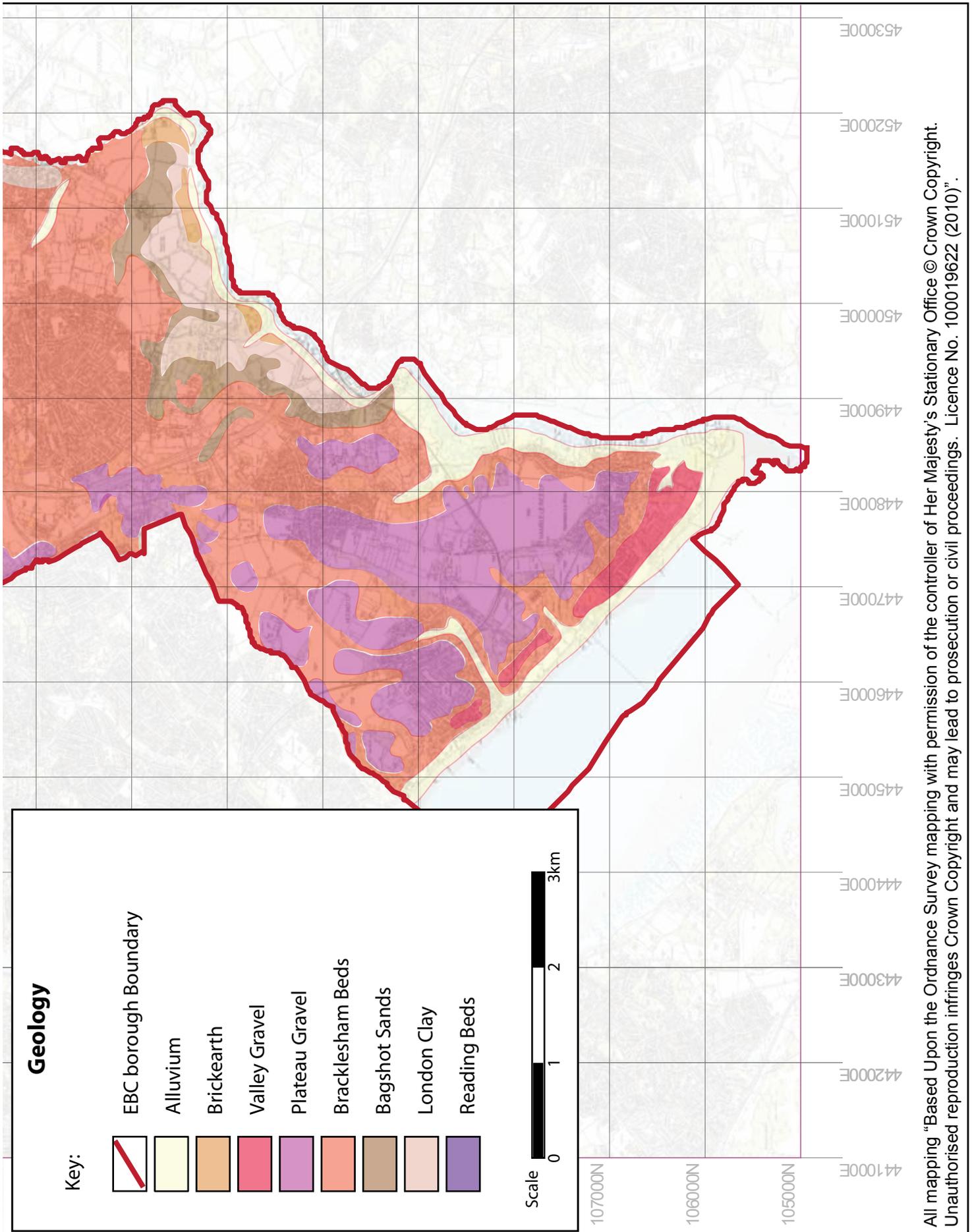
Map 3. Topography

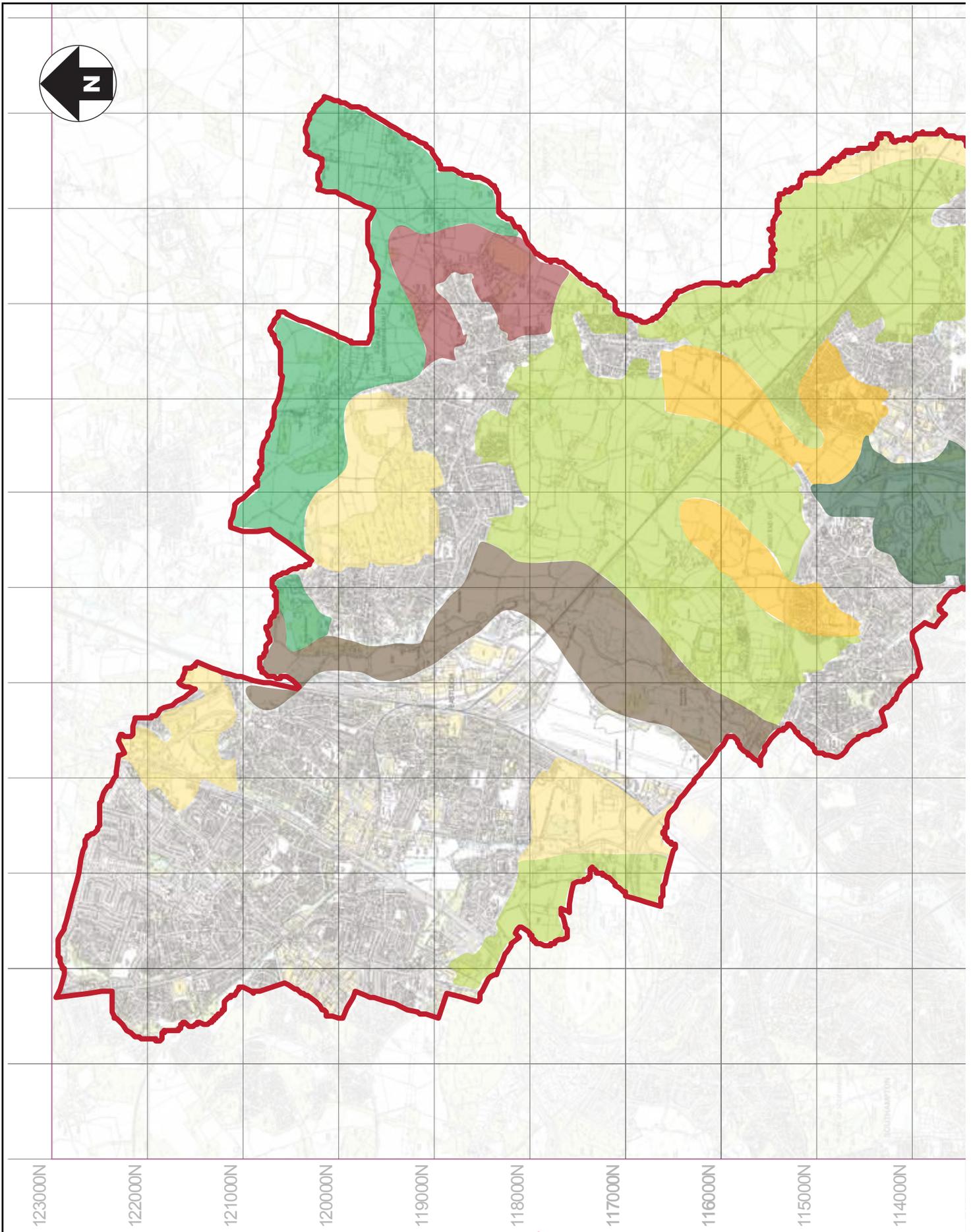


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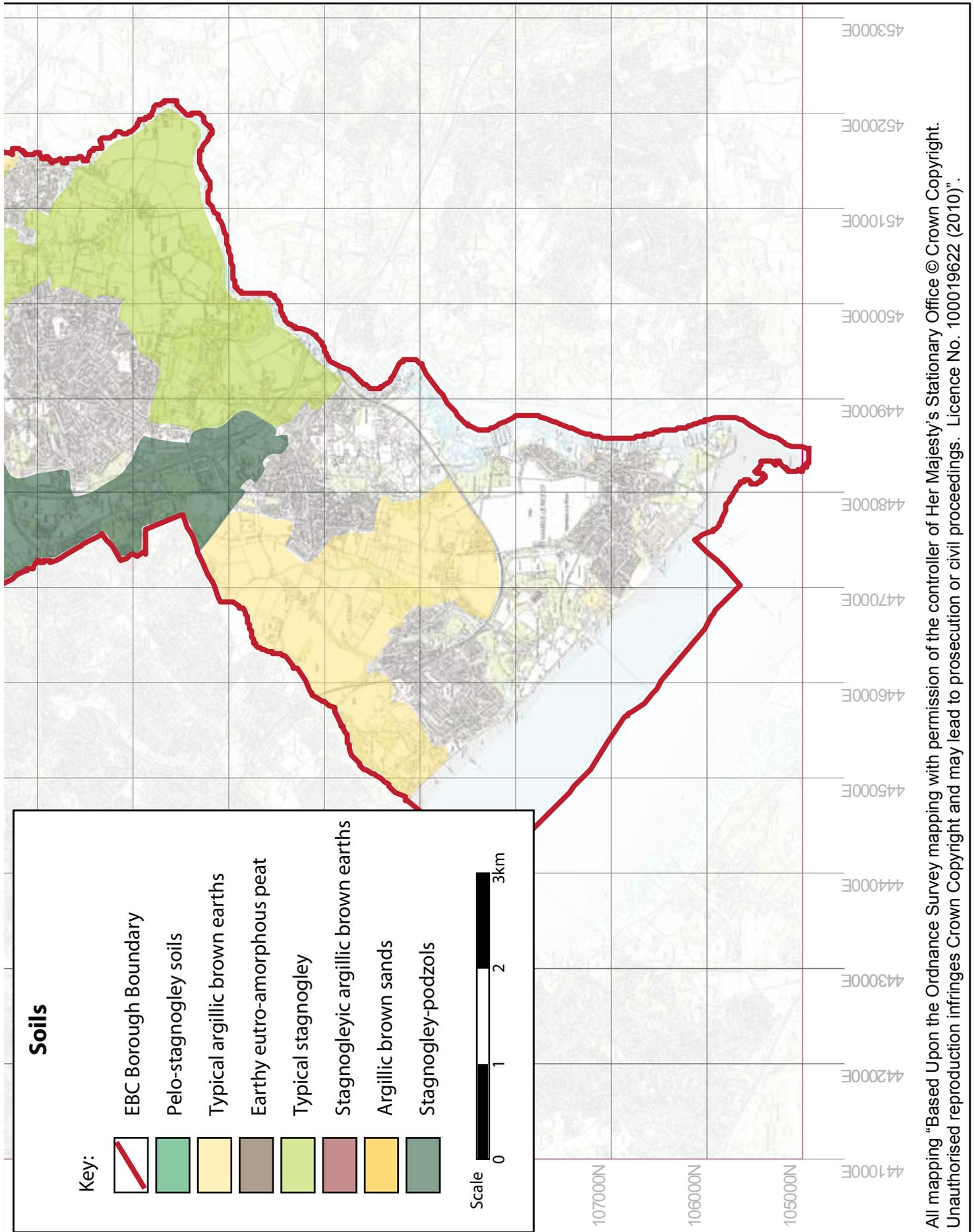


Map 4. Geology

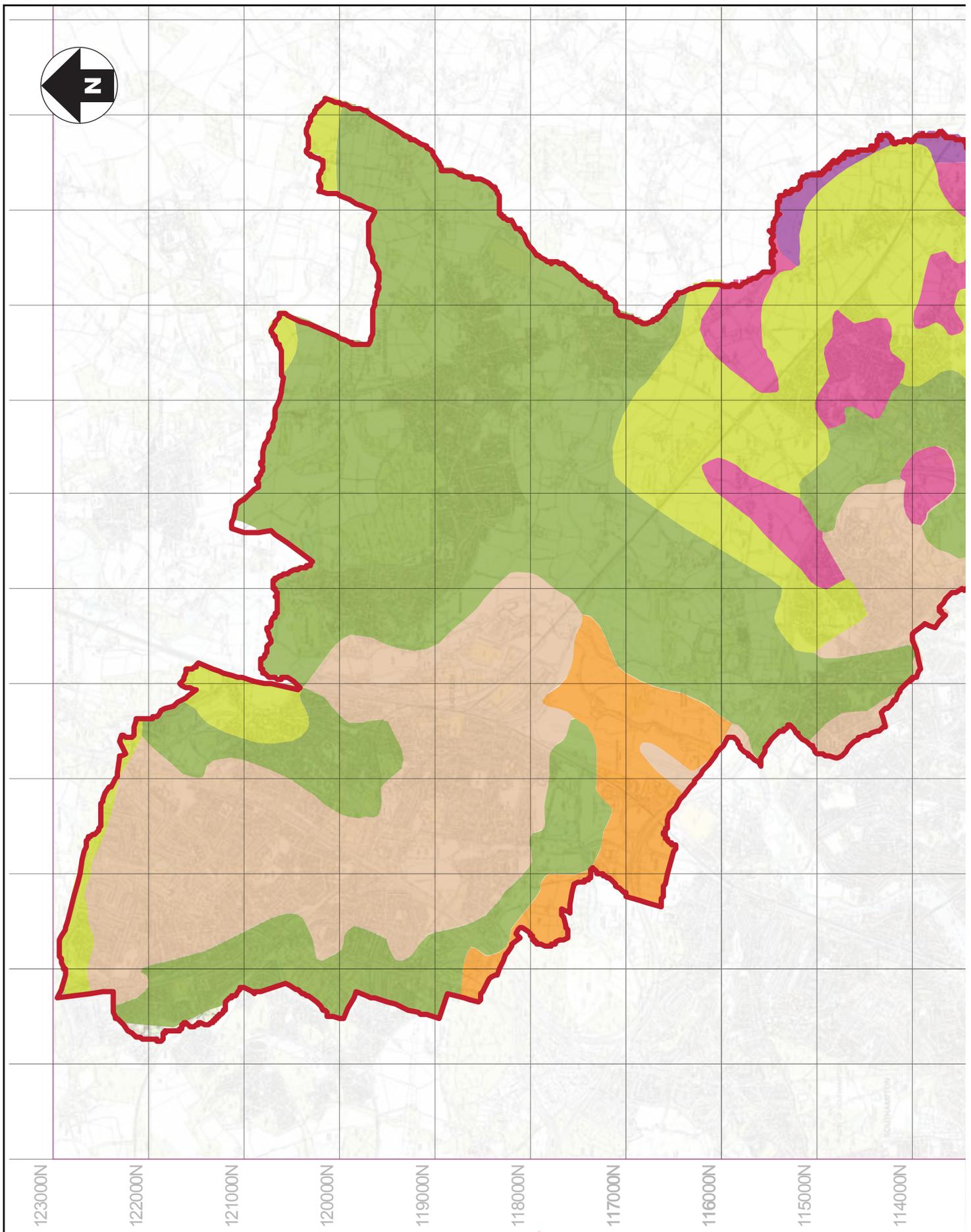




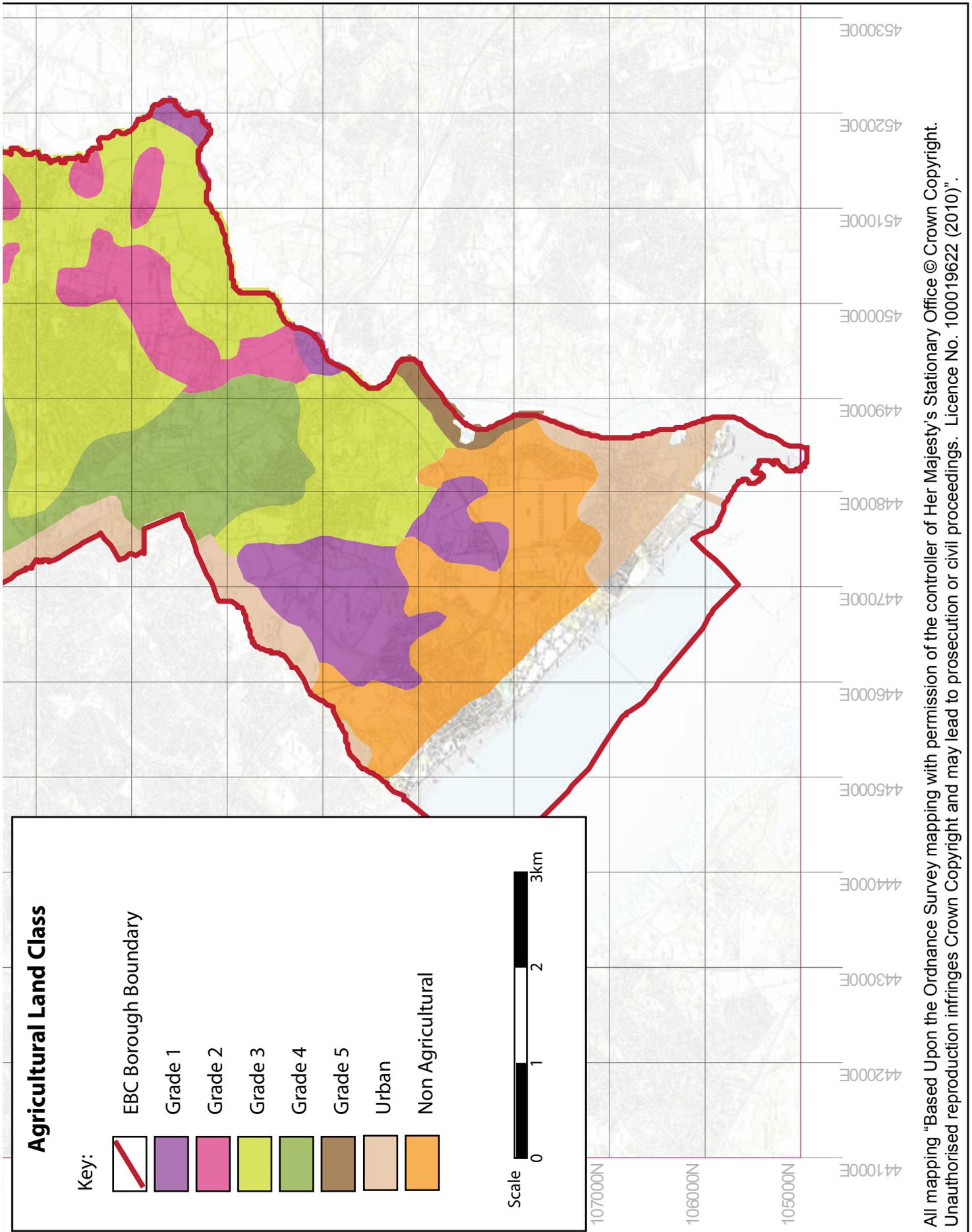
Map 5. Soil Types



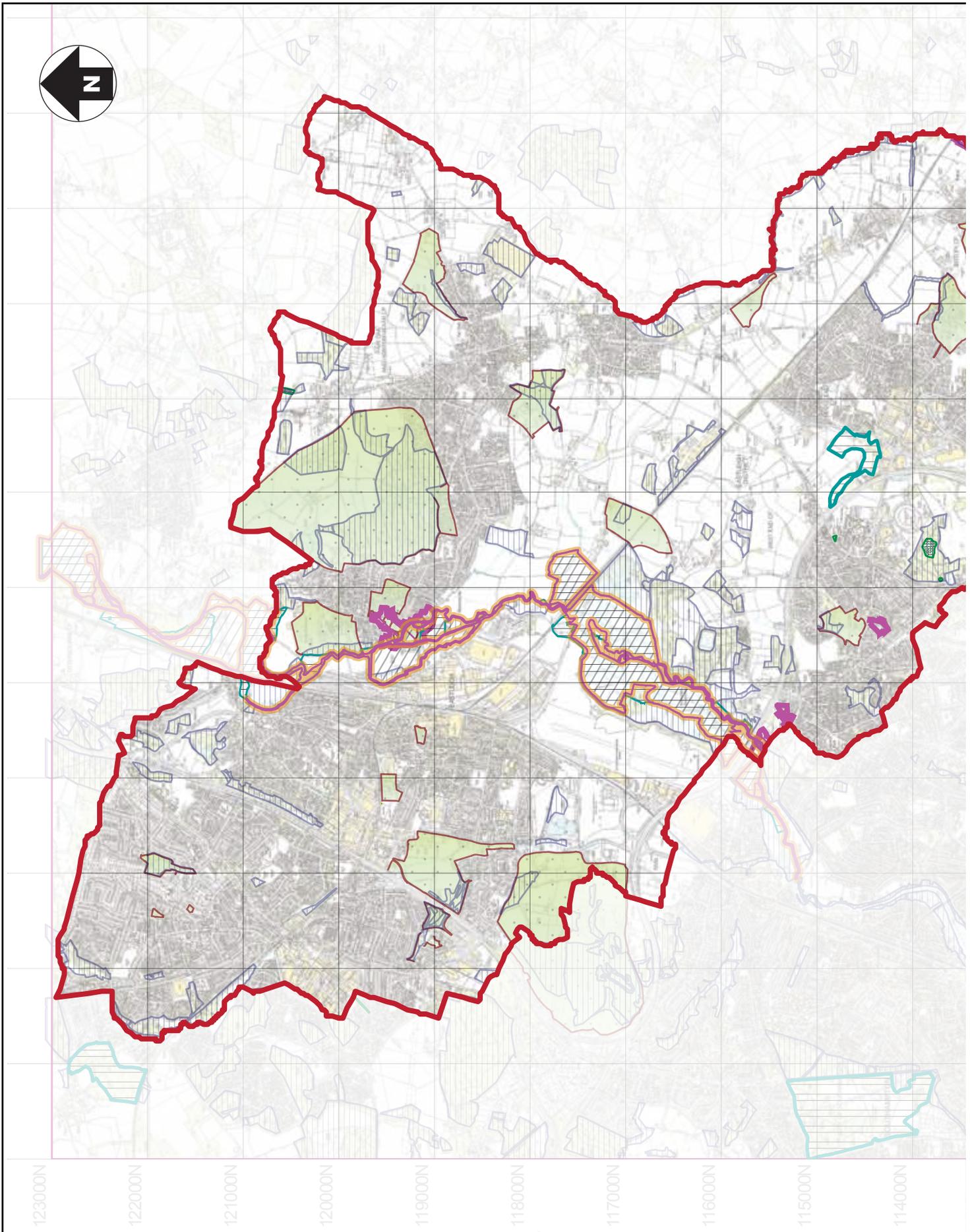
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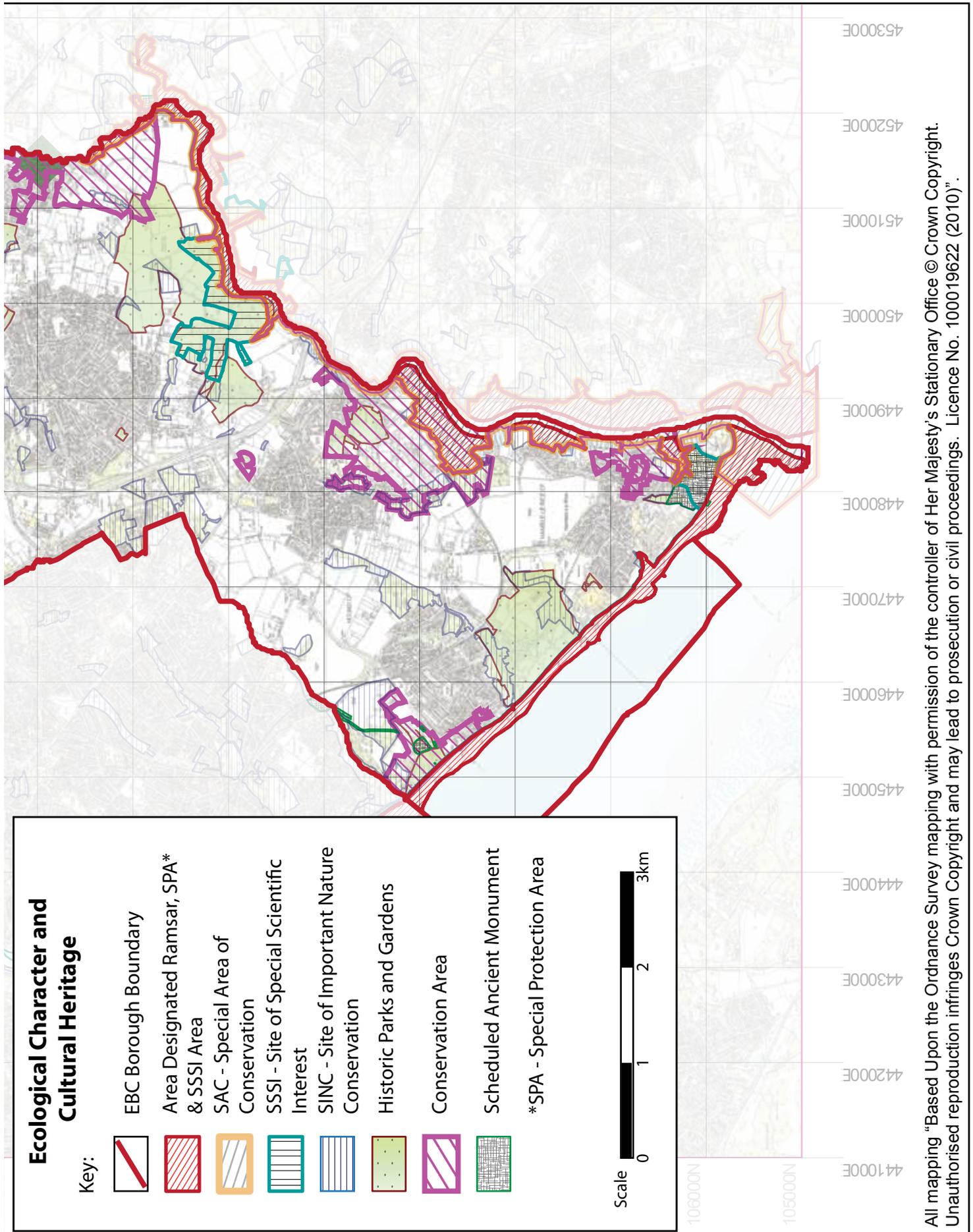
Map 6. Agricultural Land Classification



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Map 7. Ecological Character and Cultural Heritage



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- Historical value: the ways in which people, events and aspects of life can be connected through a place to the present;
- Aesthetic value: the ways in which people draw sensory and intellectual stimulation from a place;
- Communal value: the meanings of a place for the people who relate to it, or for whom it figures in their collective experience or memory, (English Heritage, 2008).

3.47 The Borough of Eastleigh has eight conservation areas. They are:

- Bishopstoke;
- Botley;
- Old Bursledon;
- Bursledon Windmill;
- Gaters Mill and Romill Close at West End;
- Hamble le Rice;
- Orchards Way at West End; and
- Netley Abbey.

3.48 These are predominantly built-up areas but do include areas of land which define their landscape context or setting.

Listed Buildings

3.49 Listed Buildings are buildings and structures that have been included on the English Heritage statutory list of buildings of architectural and historic interest. These buildings have been identified as structures where changes should be carefully considered, due to their special interest. The local planning authority considers proposals for changes through the planning process, balancing the site's historic significant against other issues such as function, condition or viability.

3.50 The majority of the buildings were put on the list after a countrywide survey. In Eastleigh this survey was carried out and buildings added to the list from 1955 to 1983. Further buildings can be added at any time.

3.51 As well as the building itself, the listing includes objects and structures which have been part of the grounds or curtilage since 1 July 1948. These structures have the same protection as the main listed building.

3.52 There are about 180 listed buildings in the Borough, all of which are Grade II except for 8 Grade II* buildings:

- Old Church of St Bartholomew, Botley;
- Church of St Leonard, Bursledon;
- Bursledon Windmill;
- Church of St Nicolas, North Stoneham;
- Sydney Lodge, Hamble le Rice;

- Netley Castle;
 - Chapel, Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley; and
 - Church of St Mary, Hound.
- 3.53 Grade II buildings are nationally important and of special interest – 92% of all listed buildings fall into this class.
- 3.54 Grade II* buildings are particularly important buildings of more than special interest – 5.5% of listed buildings fall into this class, (www.english-heritage.org.uk).

Ancient Monuments

- 3.55 The Borough of Eastleigh has eight scheduled monuments. These are:
- Park pale at Marwell, south of Fisher's Pond, Fair Oak;
 - Hamble Common earthworks, remains of St Andrew's Castle, Hamble le Rice;
 - Netley Abbey, Hound;
 - Netley Abbey aqueduct, Hound;
 - Netley Abbey precinct, wall and moat, Hound;
 - Netley Castle, Hound;
 - Hickley Wood hillfort, West End; and
 - Bowl barrow 200m west of Moorgreen House, West End.
- 3.56 These sites have been placed on the schedule of ancient monuments, which has been kept since 1882. Structures listed on this schedule are given preservation priority over other land uses. Scheduling is the only legal protection specifically for archaeological sites.

Local Designations

Locally Listed Buildings

- 3.57 If a building within the Borough does not meet the criteria for inclusion of statutory listing, it can still be considered for local listing by the Council.
- 3.58 Buildings placed on the local list are considered to have local importance. Owners are encouraged to retain these buildings, as their loss would be detrimental to the appearance, character and townscape quality of the borough. There are a number of locally listed buildings throughout the borough, (<http://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/planning--building-control/planning-policy-and-design/conservation-and-heritage/listed-buildings/locally-listed-buildings.aspx>).

Hampshire Register of Historic Parks and Gardens

- 3.59 Hampshire County Council has compiled a non-statutory register of historic parks and gardens that includes over 900 sites across Hampshire, more than 25 of which fall within Eastleigh Borough, (<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/landscape-and-heritage/historic-environment/parks-gardens/hampshire-register.htm>). The location of historic

gardens is recorded where available in this document for information. In many cases some or most of the features originally recorded as being of interest will no longer be present. See also the Eastleigh Borough Council Heritage background paper at <http://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/PDF/QP2heritagedraftapril2011.pdf>

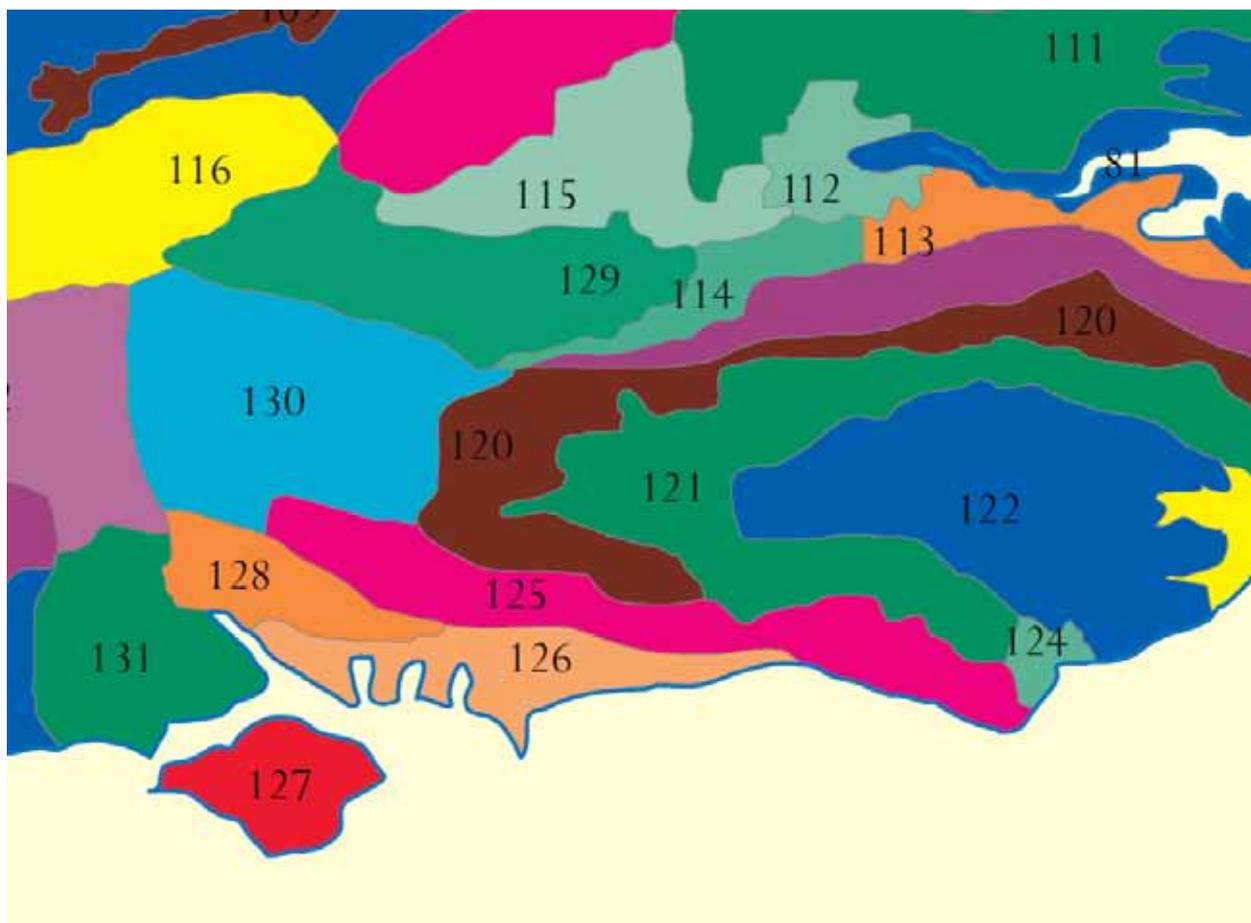
Landscape Character Areas

National

3.60 The England-wide landscape character mapping carried out by Natural England (2005) defines the Borough of Eastleigh within two broad categories:

- Character Area 126 (South Coast Plain); and
- Character Area 128 (South Hampshire Lowlands).

3.61 The key characteristics of these character areas are outlined in “Appendix E - Selection Criteria” on page 193.



Map 8. Extract from Countryside Character Vol 7 South East & London

Local

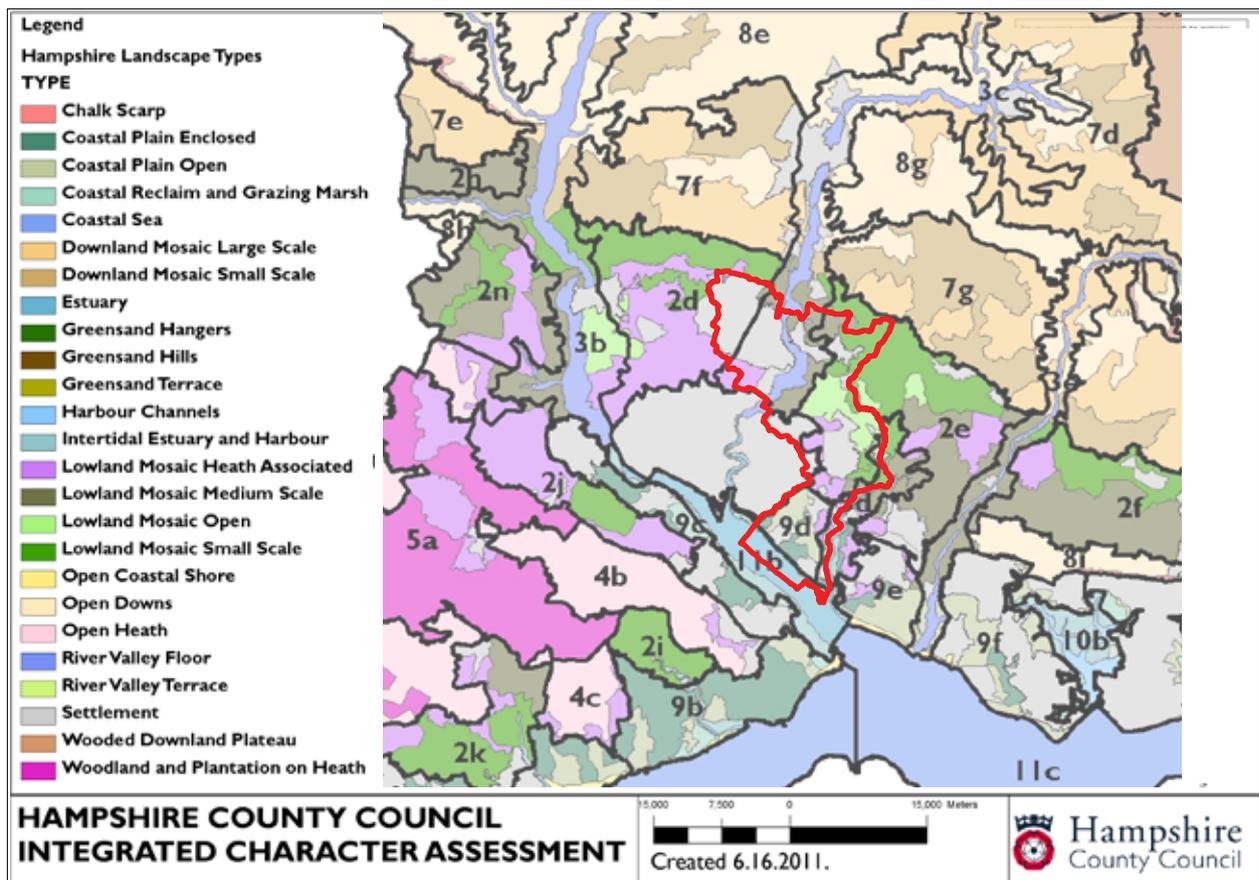
The Hampshire County Council Integrated Character Assessment

3.62 This report was more detailed than the Natural England character mapping and divided Hampshire into 11 Landscape Character Areas in line with the national guidance. The strategy adjusted boundaries to reflect the local context and subdivided areas where a finer grain was needed.

3.63 As a result of looking at the county landscape on a smaller scale than the national work, the two nationally described areas in Eastleigh borough became six at the County scale:

- Southampton Water
- Romsey to Eastleigh Wooded Lowland Mosaic
- Netley, Bursledon and Hamble Coastal Plain;
- Hamble Valley
- Forest of Bere West
- Itchen Valley.

3.64 The main characteristics of these areas are outlined in “Appendix D - Key Characteristics on page 182



Map 9. HCC Integrated Character Assessment map June 2011 focusing on Eastleigh Borough area

Landscape Character Types

- 3.65 The landscape character types listed in this assessment are described in the Hampshire Integrated Landscape Character Assessment 2011 (<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/landscape-and-heritage/planning-the-landscape/landscape-character/hampshire-integrated-character-assessment.htm>), giving a finer grain definition of the landscape types into which the county has been divided. These are the relatively generic types of land characterised by similar geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation and historical land use and settlement pattern that are found across Hampshire.

Historic Landscape Types

- 3.66 The historic landscape types listed in this assessment have been recorded by Hampshire County Council in their study of the historic landscape (<http://www.hants.gov.uk/landscape/landscapecharacter.html>).
- 3.67 Historic Landscape Assessment (HLA) aims to identify and as far as possible understand the historic development of today's landscape. It looks at the contribution that past historic processes make to the character of the landscape as a whole, not just selected 'special sites'. The currently available data from HCC was based on a rapid countywide exercise to produce broad patterns of historic landscape characters derived from maps and aerial photographs. It offers a countrywide view, rather than a detailed field by field definition of historic character.