


Rural Policies



Objective No. 1 — Conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.

Objective No. 2 — Provide good movement round the parish by cycle and footpaths.

4.1 The aim of the Ticehurst Neighbourhood Plan is to maintain and enhance the rural character of the parish within the special landscape of the High Weald.

4.2 Ticehurst Parish is in the centre of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Its landscape is man-made, crafted over time to become one of the best examples of a medieval landscape in Northern Europe. It is characterised by small dispersed settlements of farmsteads and hamlets, ancient woodland, and steep-sided gills.

4.3 The soil is generally poor, which has led to small mixed farms, with incomes often supplemented by other rural industries. Woodland covers about a third of the area: it provided the timbers for England's navy in the 16th century and the fuel for the iron industry in the 17th century when the Weald was the industrial heartland of England. Today, coppicing is still a local industry.

4.4 Until the 19th century, the parish was relatively isolated, with no easy transport by river and notoriously terrible roads. As a result, the people are self-sufficient and independently-minded (Sussex motto: "we wun't be druv").

4.5 The High Weald AONB has the aim of conserving and enhancing this beautiful landscape, whilst recognising the need for social and economic development. Their Management Plan (2014-2019) identifies five key components of the High Weald:

- *Geology, Landform, Water Systems & Climate* — Deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform of clays and sandstone from which spring numerous gill streams.
- *Settlement* — Dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets and late medieval villages.
- *Routeways* — Ancient routeways often narrow, deeply sunken, and edged with trees, hedges, wildflower-rich verges, and boundary banks
- *Woodland* — A great extent of ancient woods, gills and shaws in small holdings.
- *Field & Heath* — Small, irregularly-shaped, and productive fields often bounded by, and forming a mosaic with, hedgerows and small woodlands.

4.6 Ticehurst is at the eastern end of Forest Ridge (Map 4). To the north, the land slopes down to Bewl Water. To the south, Stonegate also sits on another section of Forest Ridge; Burwash and Brightling are on Battle Ridge. Ancient routeways have translated into modern roads, tracks, and paths. These can be maintained and enhanced to provide a network of communication across the parish. The natural habitat of woodland, gills and shaws and the pattern of small fields with hedgerows as boundaries provide the High Weald with abundant wildlife and biodiversity.

4.7 The Ticehurst Neighbourhood Plan fully supports the objectives of the High Weald AONB Management Plan. It also recognises the need for new development to be progressed in conjunction with the AONB's "special qualities" and Statement of Significance.

4.8 The following policies and community actions are designed to meet the first two plan objectives:

- 1) Conserve and enhance the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB.
- 2) Provide good movement round the parish by cycle and footpaths.



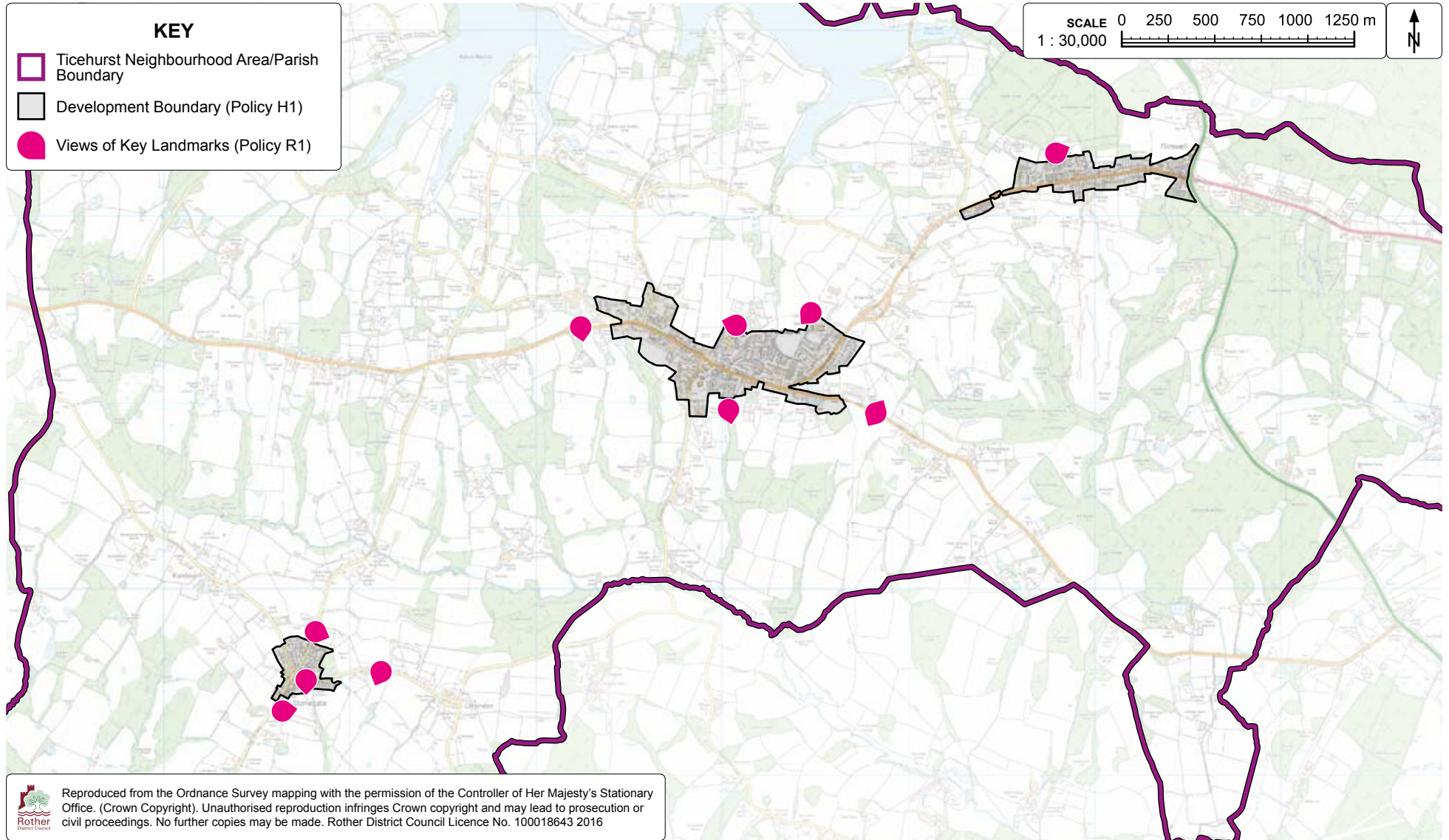
Map 4 — Topographical data showing the landform of the neighbourhood area and the distinctive ridge patterns, shown by the red colours.

Policy R1

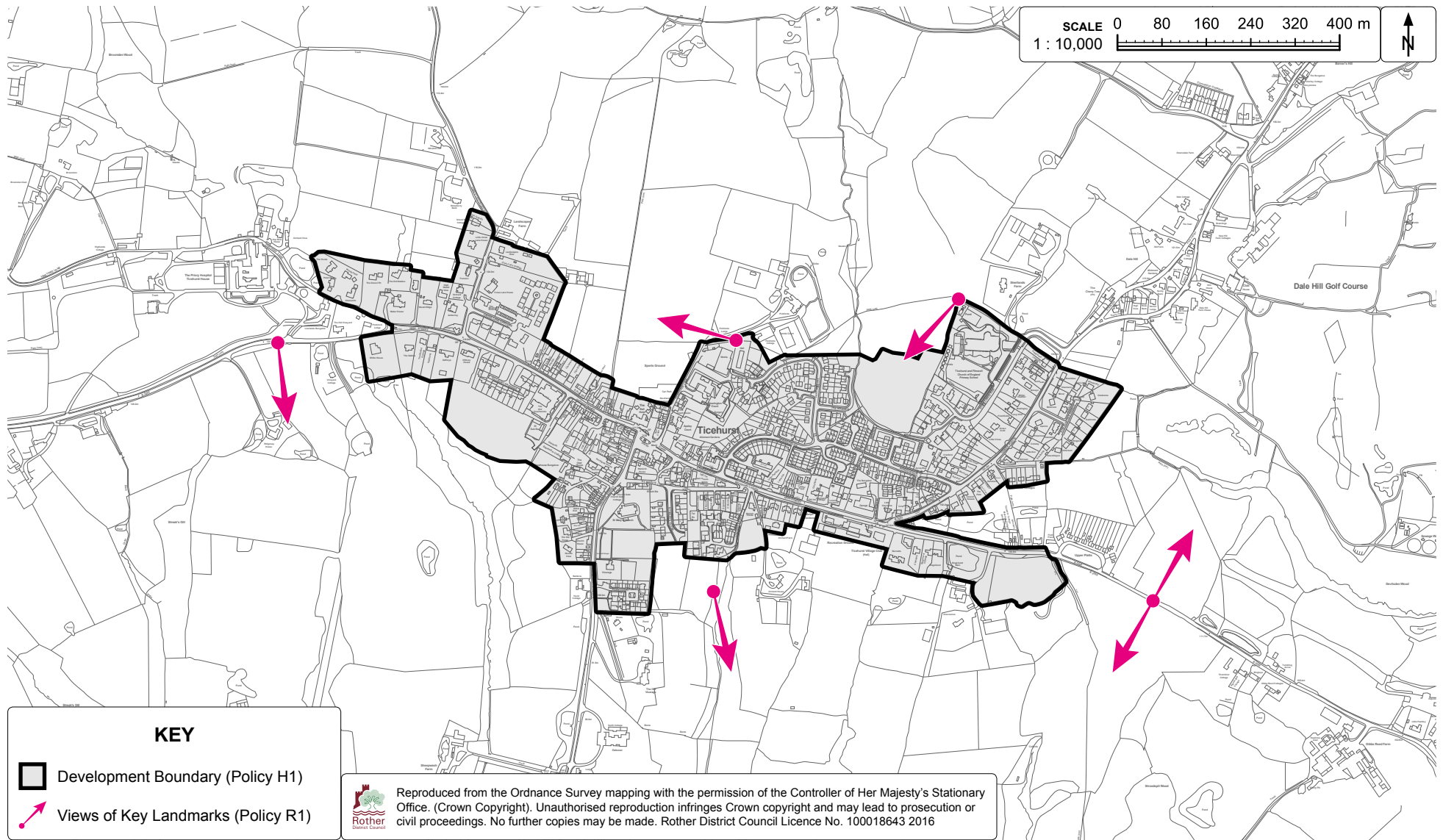
Conserve the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

1) Development within the High Weald AONB will be expected to conserve and enhance its natural beauty. Any developments should have regard to the Rother District Core Strategy Policy EN1 (Landscape Stewardship) and the High Weald AONB Management Plan (2014-2019) or its replacement.

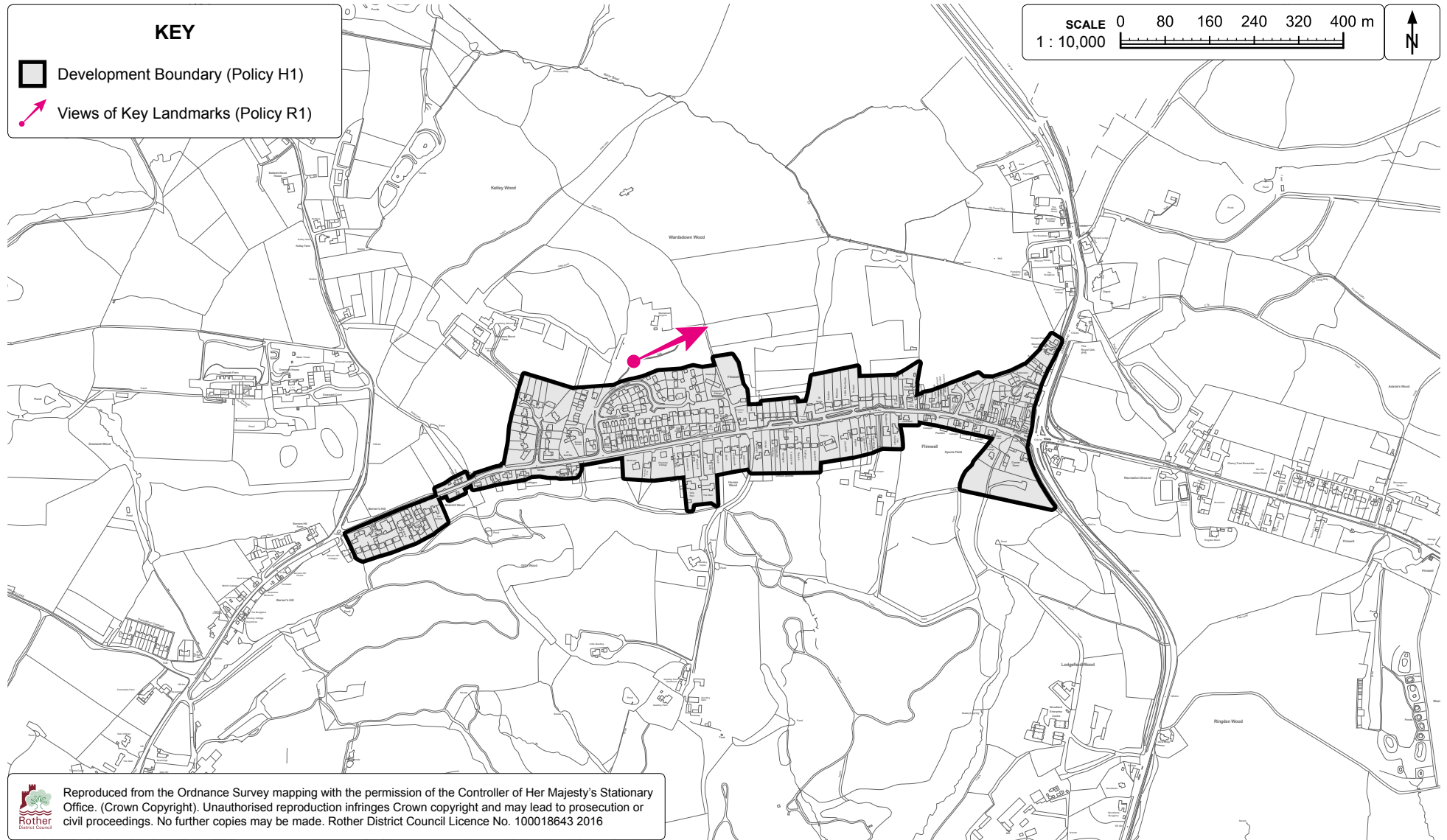
2) Development should demonstrate that it will not have an unacceptable adverse visual impact on the landscape setting of the villages or views of key landmarks, shown in maps 6, 7 and 8.



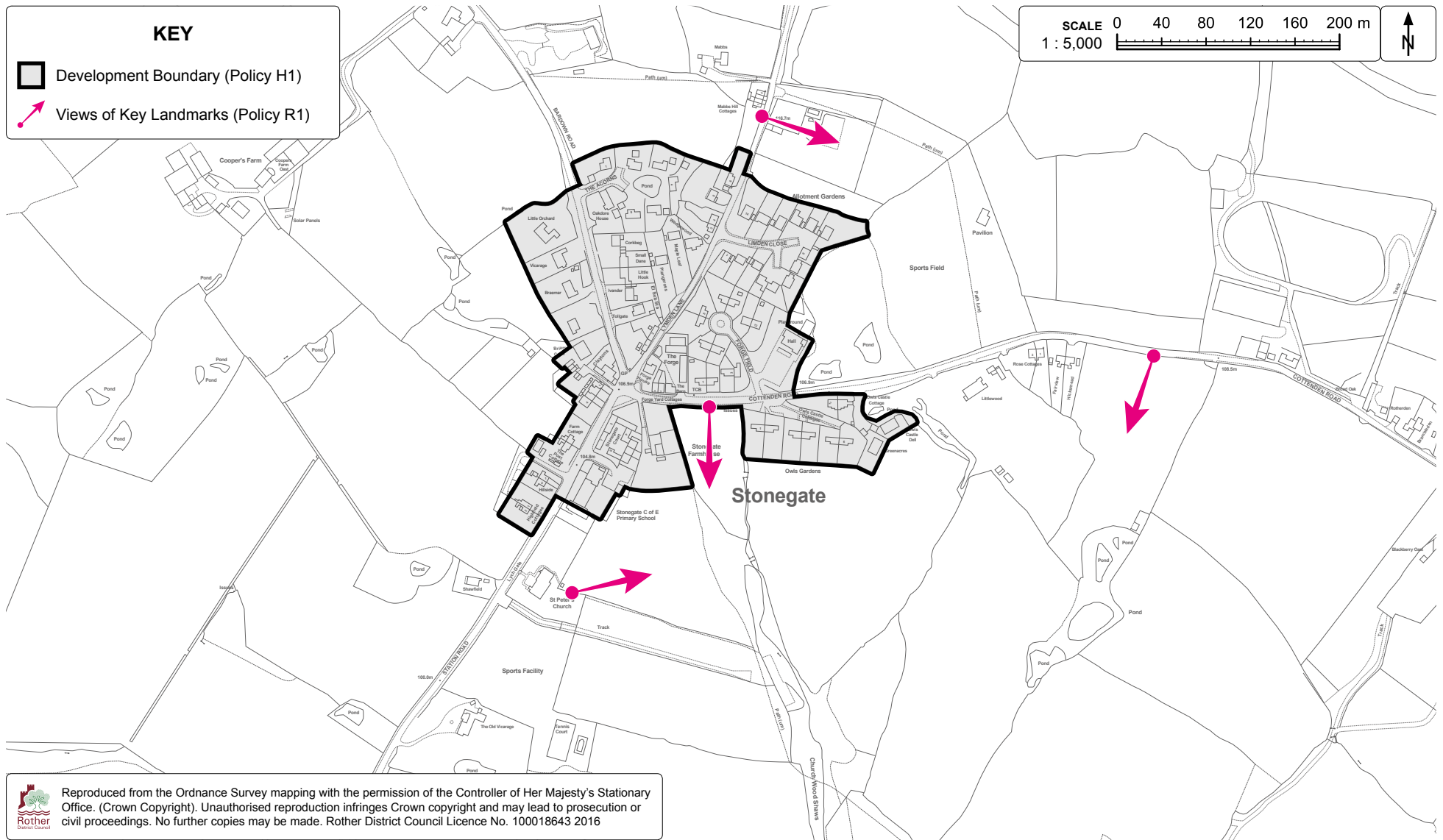
Map 5 — Views defined in the Rother Landscape Assessment.



Map 6 — Views defined in the Rother Landscape Assessment (Ticehurst).



Map 7 — Views defined in the Rother Landscape Assessment (Flimwell).



Map 8 — Views defined in the Rother Landscape Assessment (Stonegate).

4.9 The High Weald AONB covers 15 district local authorities who contribute to and support its Management Plan. The High Weald AONB management unit is located in Flimwell within the Woodland Enterprise Centre, demonstrating how central Ticehurst Parish is within the AONB.

4.10 Whilst the primary purpose of AONB designation is to conserve and enhance natural beauty, the Management Plan also recognises that it must be an economically viable area – indeed it was created by being worked. Change is inevitable, but any change must take account of the need to protect the landscape. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 115 states that “Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty”. This beautiful setting defines the character of Ticehurst Parish and is seen by residents as a prime reason for living here.

4.11 The villages of Ticehurst and Flimwell are on Forest Ridge. To the north, the land slopes down to Bewl Water. To the south, there are three ridges: Stonegate, Burwash and Brightling. Views to and from these ridges are admired by both locals and visitors, and should be protected as typical aspects of the impressive High Weald landscape. In addition, views defined in the Rother Landscape Assessment dated August 2009 should be protected. These protected views are shown in Map 5, and by village in Maps 6 (Ticehurst), 7 (Flimwell) and 8 (Stonegate).

Whilst most consideration is given to the three villages of Ticehurst, Flimwell and Stonegate, it should be remembered that the High Weald is a landscape of “dispersed historic settlements of farmsteads and hamlets” as well as villages. The hamlets of Wallcrouch and Three Leg Cross, and the smaller farm settlements, such as Downash, Cottenden and Bardown, also need protection.



The landscape gap between Stonegate and Ticehurst is a beautiful part of the wider landscape.

Policy R2

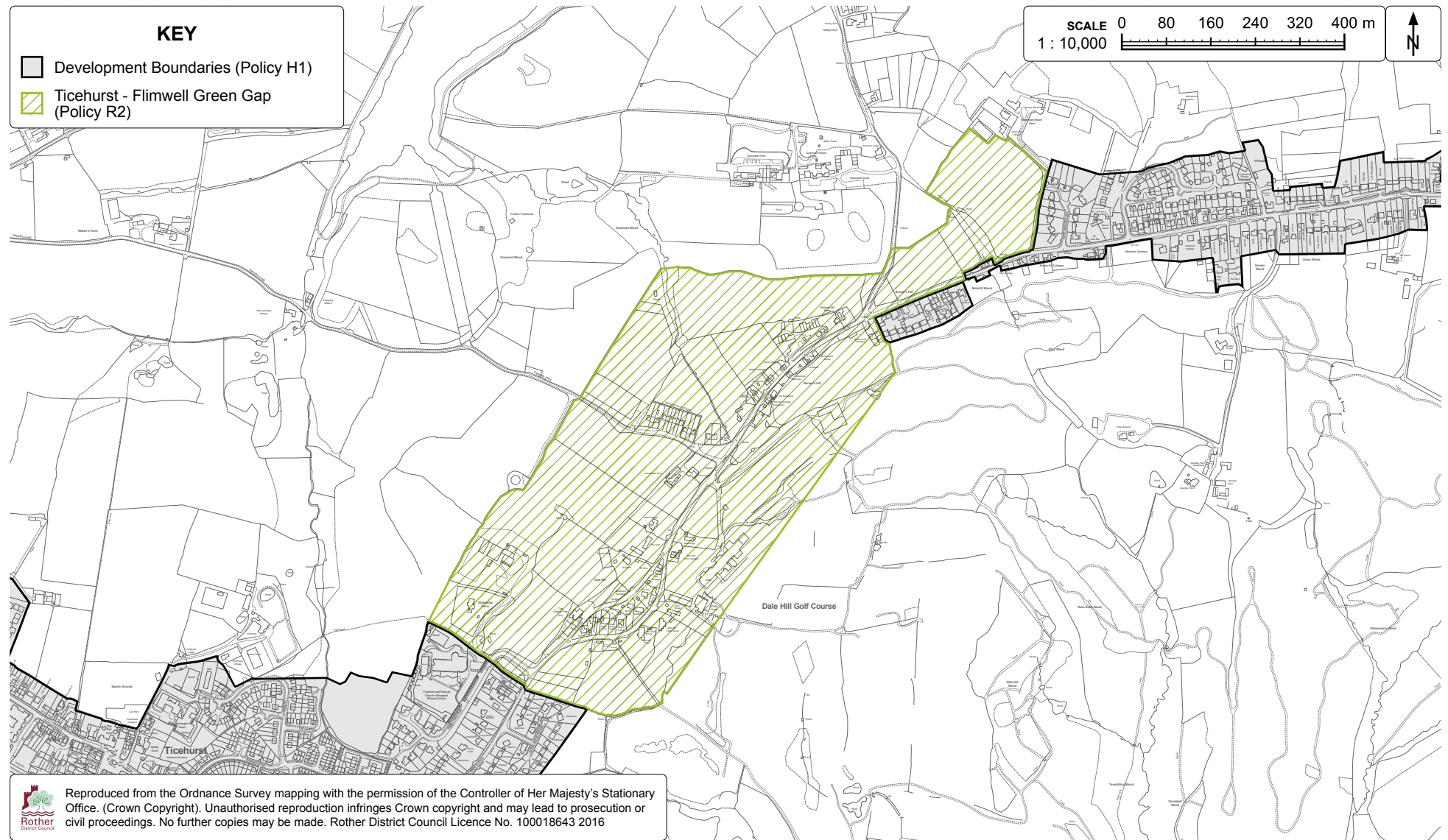
Maintain Green Gaps Between Settlements

Development within the area shown as the Ticehurst — Flimwell Green Gap in Map 9 will be carefully controlled and only be allowed where the development is unobtrusive and does not detract from the openness of the area.

4.12 It has long been the policy of Ticehurst Parish Council to avoid ribbon development, especially between Flimwell and Ticehurst, despite the almost continuous development between them on the south side of the road. Rother District relies on Core Strategy (CS) policy OSS2 (Use of Development Boundaries) to maintain village integrity. These boundaries are now revised and extended in this plan (see Policy H1).

4.13 The TNP will resist development between Ticehurst and Flimwell which would tend to encourage their coalescence.

4.14 As the largest green space in the parish, Bewl Water and its surrounding land are of major importance. It has protection under Rother District Council CS policy RA2 (General Strategy for the Countryside). Nevertheless, the TNP emphasizes that the shore line of Bewl Water should be protected from permanent development, in particular the area adjacent to but outside the Bewl Water boundary fence.



Map 9 — Green gap between Ticehurst and Flimwell.

Policy R3

Protect & Enhance Green Spaces

The following areas, which are shown on Maps 10, 11 and 12, are designated as Local Green Space:

- Land to the rear of Hillbury Field
- Sports Ground off Pickforde Lane
- Allotments off Springfields
- Playground, open space and allotments of Farthing Hill
- Land off Farthing Hill and south of Banky Field
- Ticehurst CEP School Playing Field
- Pond area and meadow area off Pashley Road and Meadowside Cottages

- Recreation Ground, High Street
- St Mary's Church Ground and cemetery
- Land rear of Old Wardsdown, Flimwell
- Sports Ground, High Street, Flimwell
- Stonegate CEP School Playing Field, Stonegate
- Sports Field, Cottenden Road, Stonegate
- Pond and Woodland, Cottenden Road, Stonegate

Proposals for development of these areas will only be permitted where it has been demonstrated that there are very special circumstances (such as essential utility infrastructure) that justify the need for the development, and that there are no suitable alternative sites.

4.15 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. There is a need to support and utilise green spaces for the benefit of the residents and the environment, in accordance with NPPF (2012) paragraphs 76 and 77 and Rother District CS Policy EN5 (Biodiversity and Green Space). The neighbourhood plan delivers a green infrastructure approach aligned to the work that is being carried out by Rother District Council, East Sussex County Council and Natural England.

4.16 The green spaces designated include the recreation grounds and the village and primary-school playing fields. These spaces are essential to the social life and well-being of the community, providing recreation and at the same time supporting biodiversity (one example being the pond and woodland in Cottenden Road, Stonegate). There are also green spaces defined as part of new developments (such as Banky Field and Hillbury Field) to encourage a rural rather than urban feel to the new housing. Other green spaces designated provide local play areas, protect views and maintain each village’s connection with the open rural landscape.

4.17 Designation of a green space does not imply public access to it. Some spaces, such as the recreation areas and playing fields, clearly do have public access; others are designated to ensure that the villages do not become an urban sprawl, and that there is sufficient green space around the village to allow them to remain connected to the countryside. Local Green Space designation should not, however, be an attempt to impose Green Belt protection around the built development of the villages.

4.18 Although Bewl Water is not a green space within the parish, overall it meets most of the criteria, together with the green areas surrounding the reservoir including the footpaths and cyclepaths. As such, it should have maximum protection from development.

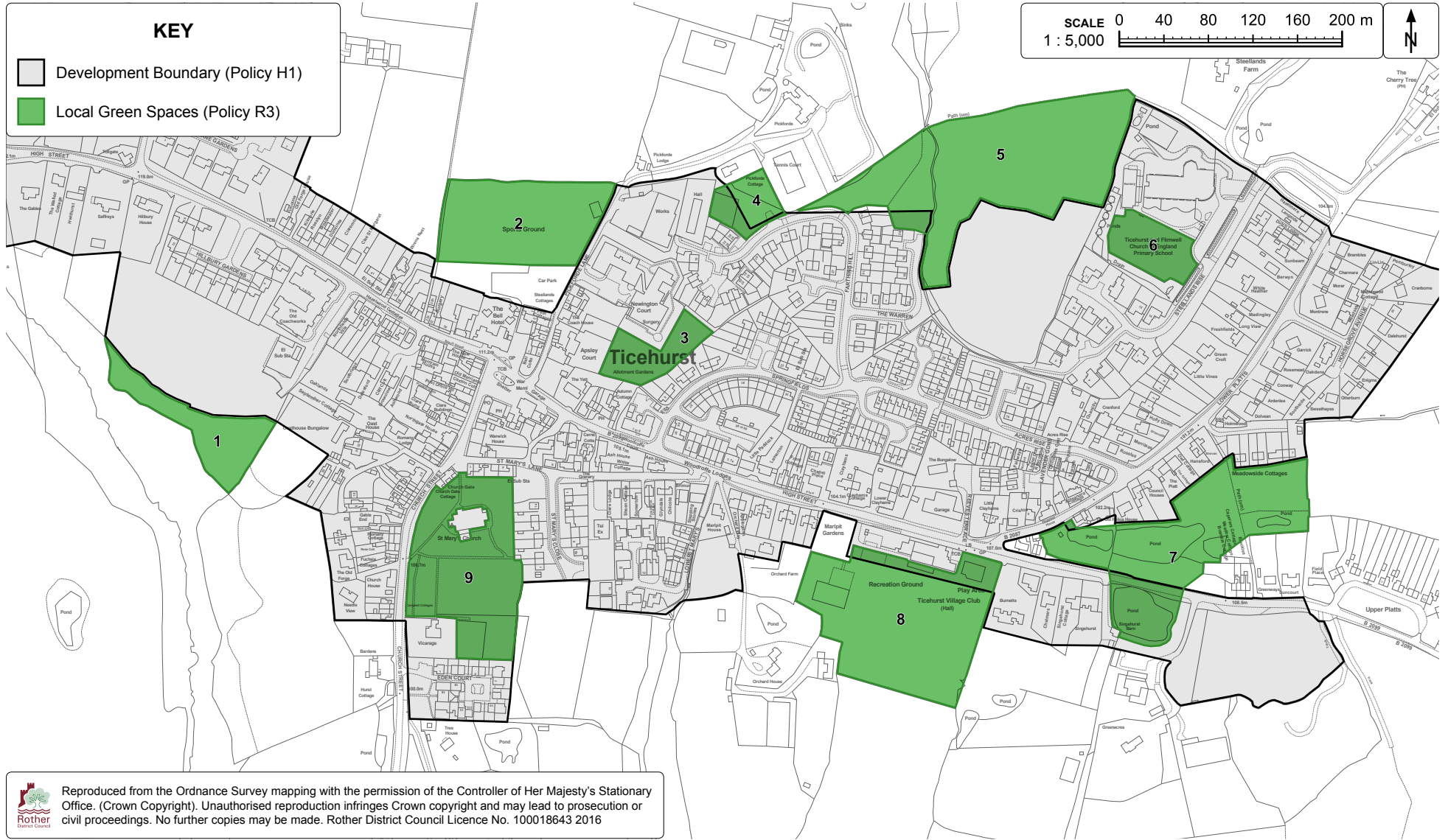
Background to the Local Green Spaces

4.19 Local green space designation, defined within the NPPF paragraph 100, should only be used as follows:

1. When the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves.
2. Where the green space is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular significance, using the following criteria:
 - a. Beauty
 - b. Historic significance
 - c. Recreational value (including playing field)
 - d. Tranquillity
 - e. Richness of wildlife and biodiversity
3. Where the green space is local in character
4. Where the green space is not an extensive tract of land.

4.20 As stated in paragraph 99 of the NPPF: “The designation of land as Local Green Space through local and neighbourhood plans allows communities to identify and protect green areas of particular importance to them. Designating land as Local Green Space should be consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. Local Green Spaces should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period.”

4.21 Information supplied by the High Weald AONB Unit on medieval field boundaries supports paragraph 100 of the NPPF. The numbered areas shown on the three maps (Maps 10-12) and scheduled below have been selected to meet the criteria above.



Map 10 — Locally designated green spaces, Ticehurst.

CODE	SITE ADDRESS	CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
TICEHURST			
T1	Land to the rear of Hillbury Field, High Street	1, 2b, 2d, 2e	Area is part of the medieval cohesive assart system. Ticehurst Woods to the south is ancient woodland. Raptors (barn owls, nightjars and kestrels) hunt over the field and glow-worms, grass snakes and slow worms are frequently found (prior to the planned development). Gill with a stream on the southern boundary.
T2	Sports ground and football pitch off Pickforde Lane	1, 2b, 2c, 3, 4	A well-used and maintained sports ground. Home to the football club. Was part of a modern field amalgamation (post 1846). The public footpath to the western boundary has been in existence since the mid-1800s.
T3	Allotments off Springfields	1, 2c, 3, 4	A well-maintained and fully used concealed facility for the benefit of the community. Limited access. No historic value but important community area.
T4	Playground, open space, allotments off Farthing Hill	1, 2c, 3, 4	Fully-equipped play area, an area of open space with well-maintained and occupied allotments.
T5	Land off Farthing Hill and south of Banky Field	1, 2a, 2d	Part maintained. Other area is new open space forming part of Section 106 agreement for the Banky Field residential area (outline permission granted).
T6	Ticehurst CEP School playing field off Steellands Rise	1, 2c, 3, 4	Level school sports field plus educational sporting facilities, well maintained.
T7	Pond area and meadow off Pashley Road and Meadowside Cottages	1, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 3, 4	A recently cleared and stocked pond and woodland, well-maintained and used by the community, together with the meadow and historic footpath adjoining. Wide variety of birdlife including the endangered yellowhammer. Pond is used by a small group of ducks. It is a green oasis between built-up areas.
T8	Recreation ground to the side and rear of the Village Hall, High Street	1, 2b, 2c, 2d, 3, 4	Well-maintained sports and recreational facilities with associated play areas. Actively used by youth teams and for local events (e.g village fête).
T9	St Mary's Church grounds and cemetery, Church Street	1, 2a, 2b, 2d, 3d, 3, 4	The grounds and cemetery are well maintained and very tranquil. They have historic significance to the village.



T1 Land to the rear of Hillbury Field.



T2 Sports ground off Pickforde Lane.



T3 Allotments off Springfields.



T4 Playground, allotments Farthing Hill.



T5 Land off Farthing Hill.



T6 Ticehurst CEP School Playing Field.



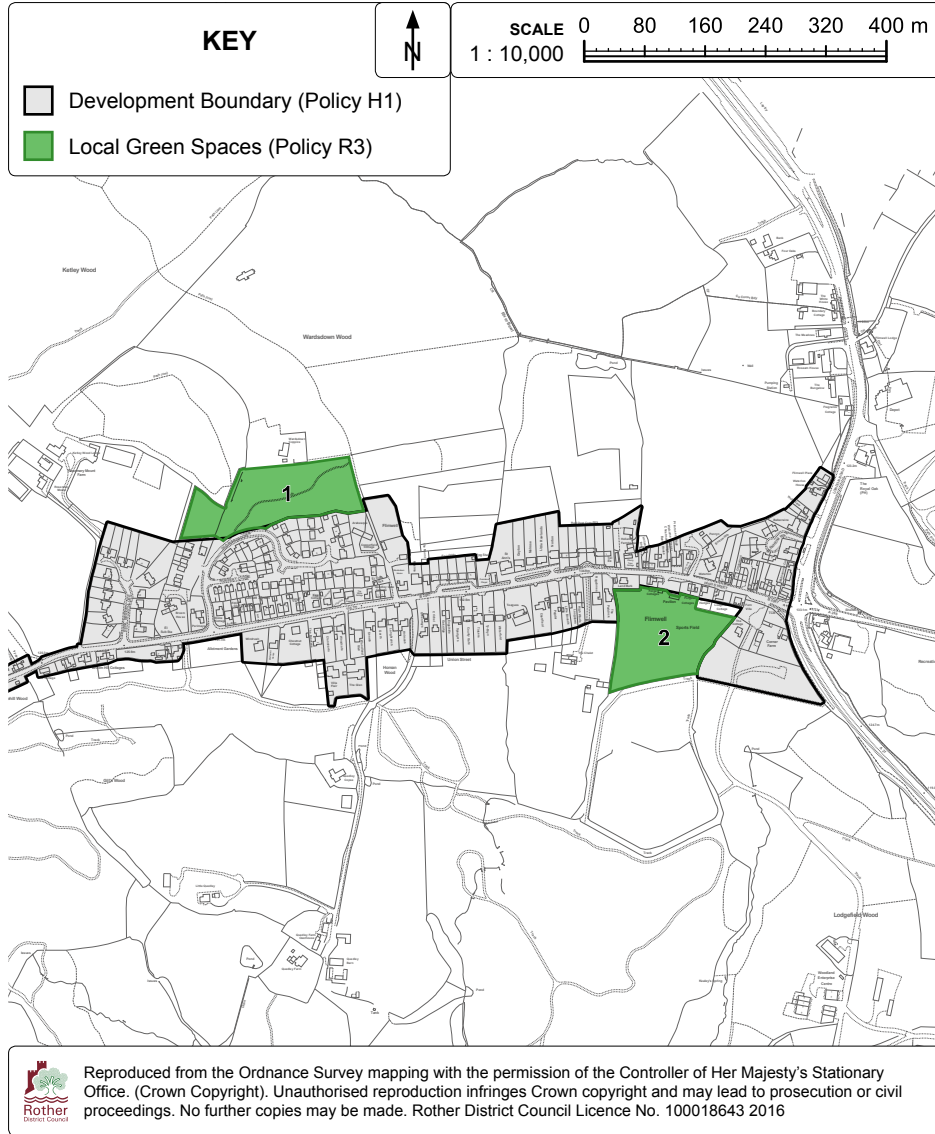
T7 Pond area off Pashley Road.



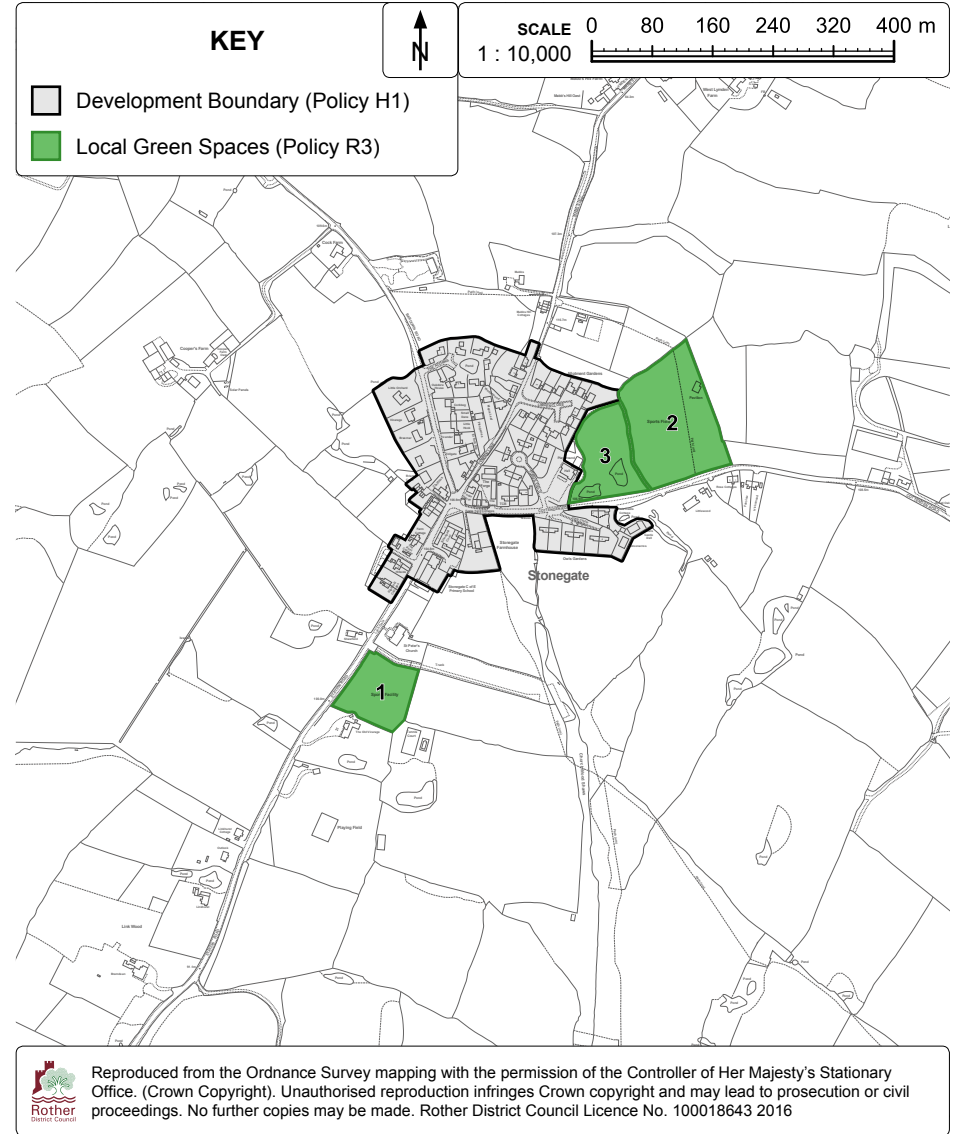
T8 Recreation Ground High Street



T9 St Mary's grounds and cemetery.



Map 11 — Locally designated green spaces, Flimwell.



Map 12 — Locally designated green spaces, Stonegate.

CODE	SITE ADDRESS	CRITERIA	DESCRIPTION
FLIMWELL			
F1	Land to the rear of Old Wardsdown	1, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2e	Maintained as part of a Section 106 Agreement. Part of an early modern aggregate assart field system by Wardsdown Wood and Union Street. Part of ancient woodland.
F2	Sports ground, High Street	1, 2b, 2c, 3, 4	A well-used and maintained sports field for the village cricket and football clubs. Part of a post-medieval (AD 1500-1599) regular piecemeal enclosure.
STONEGATE			
S1	Stonegate CEP School playing field	1, 2b, 2c, 3, 4	Part of a medieval cohesive assart of fields. Well maintained level ground.
S2	Sports field, Cottenden Road	1, 2b, 2c, 3, 4	Part of a medieval cohesive assart of fields between Stonegate and Lynden. The public footpath running through the site has been in existence since the mid-1800s. The ground is maintained and used.
S3	Pond and Woodland, Cottenden Road	1, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2e, 3	A well-maintained area of woodland and stocked pond, used by local people for recreational purposes. The pond and woodland maintain abundant and varied wildlife.



F1 Land to rear of Old Wardsdown.



F2 Sports Ground High Street.



S1 Stonegate School Playing Field.



S2 Sports Field, Cottenden Road.



S3 Pond & Woodland, Cottenden Road.

Policy R4

Develop Footpath & Cycle Networks

1) The development of footpath and cycle routes which link Flimwell, Ticehurst and Stonegate will be supported.

2) Improvements to the network footpaths and cycle routes across the neighbourhood area must ensure they are safe, convenient and comfortable.

4.22 At present, there is no footpath link between Flimwell and Ticehurst. The busy B2087 road means that primary school children cannot walk or cycle to school safely. The connection between Bewl Close and the entry to the school at Steellands Rise is a particular problem and even a short walk here is dangerous for both adults and children.

4.23 The Parish Council will investigate a pedestrian link between Flimwell and Ticehurst. Its cost will be a major hurdle. However, Rother District CS policy CO4(v) (Supporting Young People) prioritises investment to support key services, such as education. Ticehurst Parish also has the possibility of using money raised by the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) from new developments to invest in improved footpaths.

4.24 Ticehurst Neighbourhood Plan will particularly support links between schools and residential areas which are traffic-segregated. New developments on the edge of the village should seek to enhance this access, in line with Rother District CS policy TR3 (i) and (ii) (Access and New Development). Increased opportunities to walk or cycle to work and school or to access village centre and other facilities can lead to decreased car use, reduced congestion, reduction of pollution, and improved public and individual health.

Policy R5

Support Biodiversity

1) Development proposals should maintain and enhance existing on-site biodiversity assets and provide for wildlife needs on site where possible. There should be no detrimental impacts on biodiversity, with the development seeking to deliver a net gain in natural capital.

2) Development proposals should adopt best practice in Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) wherever appropriate.

3) Development proposals will be expected to retain well-established features of the landscape, including mature trees, species-rich hedgerows, watercourses and other ecological networks together with ponds and the habitats alongside them. If there is any loss of significant trees and hedgerows as part of the development, then new provision must be made elsewhere on the site.

4) Proposals for new residential development should, where appropriate, provide wildlife corridors that allow wildlife to move from one area of habitat to another.

5) Development proposals with on-site green infrastructure should, where appropriate, provide management plans, including funding for the long-term management of the assets secured by an s106 obligation.

4.25 Policy R5 aims to:

- protect existing assets, particularly trees, hedges and associated margins;
- influence the location and type of green space secured through development (see the Design Guide);
- encourage developers to build biodiversity enhancements into their developments, providing wildlife corridors and suitable planting for birds and insects;
- manage green infrastructure associated with a new development, in conjunction with developers, to provide funding and a long-term management plan.

4.26 Ticehurst is a rural parish and the presence of wildlife is a notable feature, enjoyed within and around the villages. Deer and foxes are present with in the many areas of woodland, pheasants parade in the local gardens, and raptors such as barn owls, buzzards and kestrels can be seen hunting in the fields adjacent to villages. Other summer visitors, such as swallows and martins appear, sometimes in large numbers over Bewl Water.

4.27 Some of the roadside verges are now being managed for their wildflowers, attracting butterflies, bees and many other invertebrates. There are several small ponds with associated woodland and margins and the village ponds in Ticehurst and Stonegate are actively cared for by local residents through a Parish Council management programme.

4.28 The parish has no SSSIs or European sites designated for wildlife interest, but there are four Local Wildlife sites: Bewl Water, Ringden Wood, Boarzell Wood and The Haven Meadow.

4.29 Of these, the most important is Bewl Water, designated by Rother DC as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) and a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). It is the largest expanse of open water in the south-east and is a haven for wetland birds, with a significant population of great crested grebes. It provides an important stop for migrating waterfowl and warblers, with several unusual species of wintering duck such as goldeneye and the occasional osprey.

4.30 There are Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) sites, primarily ancient and semi-natural woodlands, throughout the parish. Some of these contain gill woodland, a type of landscape which is particularly abundant in the High Weald. The Ticehurst Parish Biodiversity report (from the Sussex Biodiversity Centre) lists four BAP habitats, primarily woodland, and over 500 protected and designated species in the parish. Landowners in the parish are already participating in Environmental Stewardship schemes.

4.31 Ticehurst Neighbourhood Plan seeks to protect and increase the parish's biodiversity. The green spaces defined in Policy R2 provide a buffer around the three villages. Any new developments should be permeable to wildlife, connecting up green spaces where possible, creating space for nature and enabling the wildlife to move around.

RURAL COMMUNITY ACTIONS

Protect and enhance roadsides

4.32 Roadside verges and hedgerows should be preserved and enhanced throughout the parish to help maintain local character and beauty, in accordance with East Sussex Green Infrastructure policy and its plant life recommendations for verge management. The aim is to maximise flowering plant diversity and other wildlife whilst keeping roads safe for motorists and all other road users.

3.33 Verges and hedgerows are crucial to the aesthetic character of the area; they form a network of passage-ways for wildlife and contribute to biodiversity. ESCC designate verges as wild flower havens and these will be for the value they add to life in the parish (as has already been done, for example, on Hillbury Bank).

4.34 Residents should be encouraged to use hedges rather than fences along their boundaries. The use of hedgerows instead of fences is encouraged by the “Rother DC Planning Handbook – Guide to Householder Development”, and by the Development and Site Allocations (DaSA) draft policy DHG7 (Boundary Treatment). Landowners should be encouraged to maintain hedges as specified in the “High Weald land management guidance – hedgerows”. Hedgerows should be maintained at a height which does not hide significant views.

4.35 The Parish should publicise how to manage verges together with a plan to discourage abuse, for example by fly-tipping or by parking cars or other vehicles on them.

Enhance footpath and cycle networks

4.36 A cohesive system of pedestrian and cycle way connections throughout the parish will deliver social and environmental benefits, encouraging exercise and healthy living and improving access to the surrounding countryside and local attractions such as Bewl Reservoir and Bedgebury Pinetum.

4.37 Infrastructure improvements would enhance village life, for example:

- an off-road path from Cross Lane Gardens to the Primary School
- an off-road route from Flimwell to Ticehurst.

4.38 Plans for a pedestrian route linking Flimwell and Ticehurst will be investigated by Ticehurst Parish Council and relevant landowners.

4.39 The Ticehurst website (www.ticehurstonline.org) should be enhanced to include maps of local walking and cycling routes.

4.40 Parking on the pavement by vehicles will be actively discouraged as pavements should be exclusively for use by pedestrians, wheelchair and mobility scooter users, push-chairs, and dog walkers. Residents have highlighted this issue as a major concern.

4.41 Directional signs and finger-posts are owned by the local county authority (East Sussex County Council — ESCC). The iconic finger-posts are valued by the community and should be retained and maintained jointly by ESCC and Ticehurst Parish Council.

4.42 A number of paths become waterlogged, extremely slippery and potentially dangerous during winter and spring (examples are Springfields to Ticehurst Primary School and Upper Platts to Lower Platts). There should be a plan of action to create durable, year-round safe footpaths. Footpath widening and resurfacing, where necessary, will be encouraged.