

small valleys



Integrated landscape character



MAP 22a - Landscape Character Types - Small Valley Key Plan

Each of the Small River Valleys has a distinctive character, but all are undulating and relatively enclosed, in contrast to the more open landscapes they traverse. The underlying geology of the Small Valleys is dominated by drift deposits of alluvium-fen peat and bog-fen peat. They generally have gentle valley side slopes so there is a gradual transition, with the characteristic sense of enclosure increasing towards the valley floor and views becoming more open towards the upper valley slopes. Where they occur, small woodlands, belts of trees, tall species-rich hedgerows and hedgerow trees are dominant landscape features which tend to restrict views and enhance the sense of enclosure. The valley landform also serves to enclose views within the valleys.

The valleys were the focus for early Saxon settlement, particularly at fording points and on patches of light, gravelly soils. The ‘-ham’ place names at Binham, Langham and Gimingham suggest their Saxon origin. Both Binham and Langham were the focus for medieval markets, most likely instigated by the local manorial lords, but in both cases the markets were out of use by the 17th century. There is ample archaeological evidence of medieval earthwork banks and ditches marking the edges of the floodplain along the valleys, as well as sites of moated medieval buildings, watermills and mill ponds. St Mary’s Priory, Binham, a Benedictine Priory founded in the late 11th century, is one of the best preserved monastic ruins in Norfolk. Its dissolution in 1539 led to the decline of the small market centre of Binham.

Pasture and rough grazing predominate on the valley floor, with a gradual transition to arable fields on the valley side slopes. However the smaller valleys may have no valley floor and no pasture. Most fields are bounded by high, species-rich hedgerows, particularly alongside roads and some of the valley floor pastures are separated by wet ditches as well as hedgerows. Where present, the inter-connected chain of valley floor pastures and wet woodland is an important part of Norfolk’s ecological network, providing a conduit for species movement across relatively intensively farmed areas and often linking woodland and grassland habitats to the coast. Where wet woodland and or pasture has become degraded or absent, the value of the ecological corridor is diminished.

Roads tend to be narrow, winding and with a rural character. There are localised areas with straight stretches of road. Settlement either spreads in a linear pattern along the roads or is concentrated in a more nucleated pattern close to the valley floor. In some areas the road follows the course of the river and buildings may be very close to the carriageway.

Landscape sensitivity and change

The enclosed, pastoral characteristics of the Small Valleys contrast with the more open surrounding landscapes. Key environmental assets which are sensitive to change are:

- The remaining valley pastures and associated wetland and wet woodland habitats along the valley floor.
- Mature hedgerows and hedgerow trees, which define the landscape structure of the valleys and enhance biodiversity of the wider river corridor.
- Woodlands, belts and lines of trees, which provide shelter, a sense of enclosure and valuable ecological habitats, particularly when they connect to hedgerows.
- Remnant heathy areas associated with woodlands, which are highly valuable habitats.



Variations in character

Variations in character and inherent landscape sensitivities are highlighted in the following distinctive landscape character areas within the Small Valleys (AONB area):

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
Babingley Valley - SV1	Relatively flat valley floor surrounded by wooded hills, which are separated into large irregular fields bound by wire fences and crossed by ditches. The Babingley River is lined by trees. Views are channelled east-west along the valley bottom between areas of large dense woodlands on the valley slopes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mature landscape structure including belts and copses, woodland, mature trees and intact hedgerows • River floodplain - wetland habitats (wet grassland, lowland meadows, wet woodland and reedbeds) • Distinctive lines of trees alongside the Babingley River • Views to plantation woodland surrounding the valley • Predominantly rural character
Heacham Valley - SV2	Narrow, relatively steep-sided valley incised into the western chalk escarpment before reaching the coastal plain at Heacham. Sharp contrast in general with surrounding large scale arable landscape. Well wooded, especially at the eastern end associated with Sedgeford Hall. The village of Sedgeford sits above the valley on its northern side.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parkland landscapes associated with Sedgeford Hall • Valley bottom pasture south of B1454 • Valley bottom wetland habitats (e.g. sedge beds near Sedgeford)

Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
Burn Valley - SV3	Stark contrast with surrounding large scale arable fields in general. The river can occasionally disappear from the surface higher in its course in periods of dry weather but is a permanent feature within the AONB. The valley more or less contains the settlements of Burnham Thorpe and Burnham Overy, with large gardens and small orchards and paddocks a feature as well as valley bottom wetland habitats. Beyond Burnham Overy the valley enters the adjoining Drained Coastal Marshes landscape type.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historic associations - Nelson's birthplace is close by at the southern end. • Remaining wetland habitats, including the river (chalk river BAP habitat) • Sense of tranquillity and isolation • Intimacy of valley bottom landscapes in contrast to surroundings
Binham & Langham - SV4	Clearly defined valley which is frequently very open, with lower than average woodland content, especially on the valley floor. Binham Priory is an important historical complex, situated prominently on the valley side. The road and public rights of way tend to follow the course of the river	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remaining valley floor pastures, hedgerow trees and hedgerows – many of which have been removed • Historic, species-rich hedgerows are particularly important and those which define the edge of the valley floor make a particularly important contribution to the visual character of the valley • Setting, views and buildings associated with Binham Priory

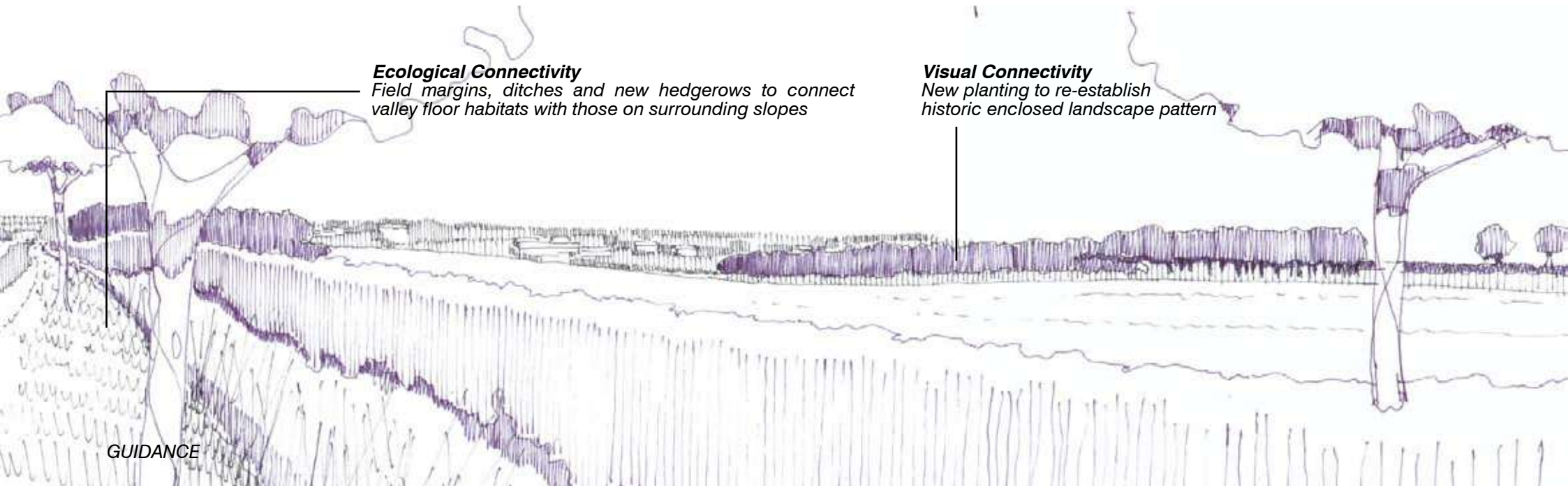
Landscape character area	Distinctive character	Inherent sensitivity
Mun Valley - SV5	<p>Unusual small river valley which accesses the coast but does not enlarge to Large River Valley status – the Mun Valley tends to ‘pinch’ at its mouth, ending as a narrow gully within the town of Mundesley. The river is heavily canalised.</p> <p>The upper reaches are well wooded, but the rest of the valley has very little woodland or trees. There is some valley pasture, but much of this has been lost in the last 50 years. There are remnants of the ‘ring garth’ field boundary between the valley floor and sides. Settlement is sparse and tends to be tranverse across the valley (rather than along the river) – the road follows the same pattern</p> <p>The fishing lakes at Gimingham are prominent, as is the golf course and driving range at Mundesley and the former TB hospital on the valley side at Mundesley.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodlands, remnant woodland-heathy areas, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, all of which provide the overall visual and ecological structure of the Small Valley landscape, but which are in decline • Valley pastures and areas with a natural river course • Remaining areas with a small-scale landscape pattern and a more intimate landscape character

AN ERODED LANDSCAPE PATTERN - LACK OF CONTRAST AND ENCLOSURE



Key forces for change

- Changes to the agricultural economy and particularly the introduction of agri-environmental grants, have led to positive changes in landscape character – reinstatement or conservation of hedgerows and woodlands, arable reversion to pasture and wetland management.
- Development pressures around settlements – new built development can be visually prominent within a relatively small scale valley with contained views. It can also reduce opportunities for pro-active restoration and restoration of habitats.



Key forces for change (continued)

- Extensions to existing properties, subdivision of landholdings within settlements, external lighting and inappropriate boundary fencing which result from increasing affluence and which cumulatively contribute to the suburbanisation of the area and the erosion of its inherent enclosed and rural character of the valley.
- Introduction of new agricultural buildings, which are increasingly replacing older barns.
- Conversion of older barns to residential use, with the associated erosion of rural character this brings, due to driveways, pylons, car parking areas, external lighting, gardens, fencing etc.

20 year vision

conserve and enhance

Enclosed, deeply rural valleys with an intimate scale. Wet woodland and floodplain meadows provide a corridor of wetland habitats along the valley floor linked to woodlands, hedgerows and hedgerow trees on the valley sides. Overall the proportion of woodlands and hedgerows is higher within the valley than in the surrounding farmland. Hedgerows and hedgerow trees line valley roads and are clustered close to farmsteads so that they are well integrated in the valley landscape.



Integrated landscape guidance

1 Conserve and enhance the valley pastures and associated wetland habitats along the valley floor

- Conserve and enhance all existing valley pastures and wet woodlands as a priority within the Small Valleys landscape type.
- Extend areas of valley pastures – with reversion from arable fields – to increase the amount of wet pasture habitat and connectivity of these important habitats along the valley floor.
- Create buffer zones of semi-natural habitat along the margins of valley floor pastures and encourage low input agricultural systems to reduce the possible impacts of eutrophication.
- Conserve, enhance and where possible extend drainage ditches as landscape features and wildlife corridors.

2 Conserve and enhance the characteristic small-scale, enclosure and rural qualities of the Small Valleys

- Conserve and manage all existing hedgerows and hedgerow trees, aiming to extend and improve their visual/ecological structure by new hedgerow and tree planting which is designed to enhance the connectivity of the ecological network and the overall sense of enclosure.
- New hedgerow and tree planting should take account of the historic pattern of the landscape; the 'ring garth' hedgerows, which demarcate the valley floor (from the valley side slopes) are of particular importance in defining the visual structure of the Small Valleys and the number and density of hedgerow trees traditionally increases towards the valley floor.
- Conserve all existing woodlands, copses and tree belts, extending them wherever possible to create or enhance connections with the existing matrix of woodlands and hedgerows.
- Aim to increase the diversity of landscape elements and habitats within the landscape – take opportunities to introduce new woodlands, hedgerows and hedgerow trees as a means to integrate new development.
- Give priority to the conservation of the hedgerows and hedgerow trees which line many rural roads, ensuring that these are replaced if there are minor changes to road alignments, for instance as a result of improvements to sightlines or the introduction of passing places.

Integrated landscape guidance (continued)

3 Conserve the rural character of settlements and outlying farms, which can be prominent within contained valley views

- Wherever possible conserve mature trees within and on the outskirts of settlements; new built development should be designed to incorporate new tree and hedgerow planting so that settlements are integrated into the characteristic enclosed valley character.
- Avoid the introduction of suburban features, including gardens, fencing, lighting and entrance driveways, which can cumulatively alter the rural character of the landscape.
- New farm buildings or conversions require exceptionally high standards of siting and design – woodland, hedgerow and hedgerow tree planting may be required to integrate new structures into the surrounding landscape.
- When planning and designing new built development, take account of views towards settlements from roads and rights of way on the valley side slopes, which can be just as significant as views from the valley floor roads on the approaches to settlements.
- Avoid new built development or farm structures in prominent locations on the more open valley side slopes, and especially towards the crest of the valley landform, where there is a risk that built structure might break the skyline in views from within the valley.

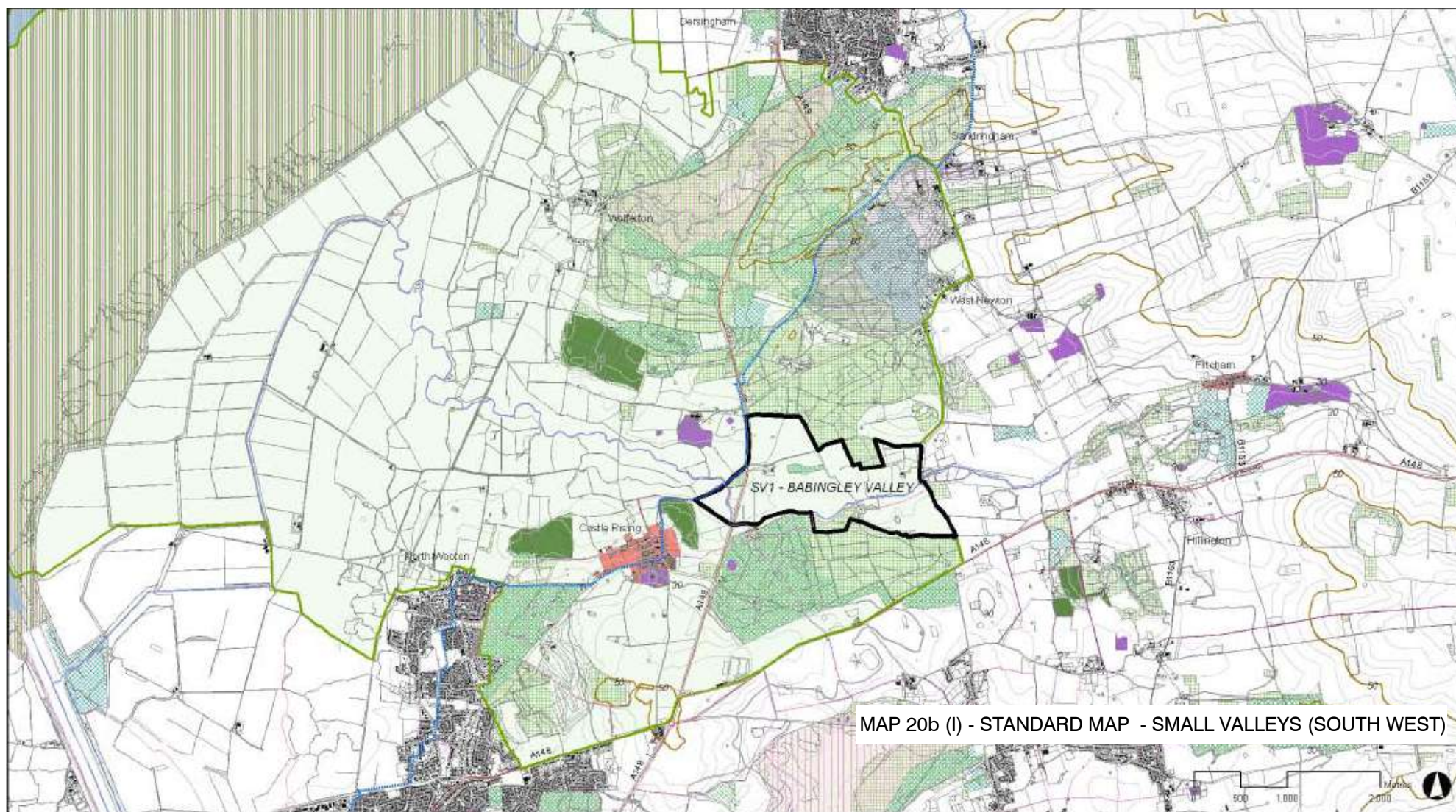
Detailed maps




























- **Standard** - landform, drainage, rights of way and statutory designations
- **Biodiversity** - ecological networks ¹
- **Historic landscapes** - broad historic landscape character types ² and data from the Historic Environment Record ³

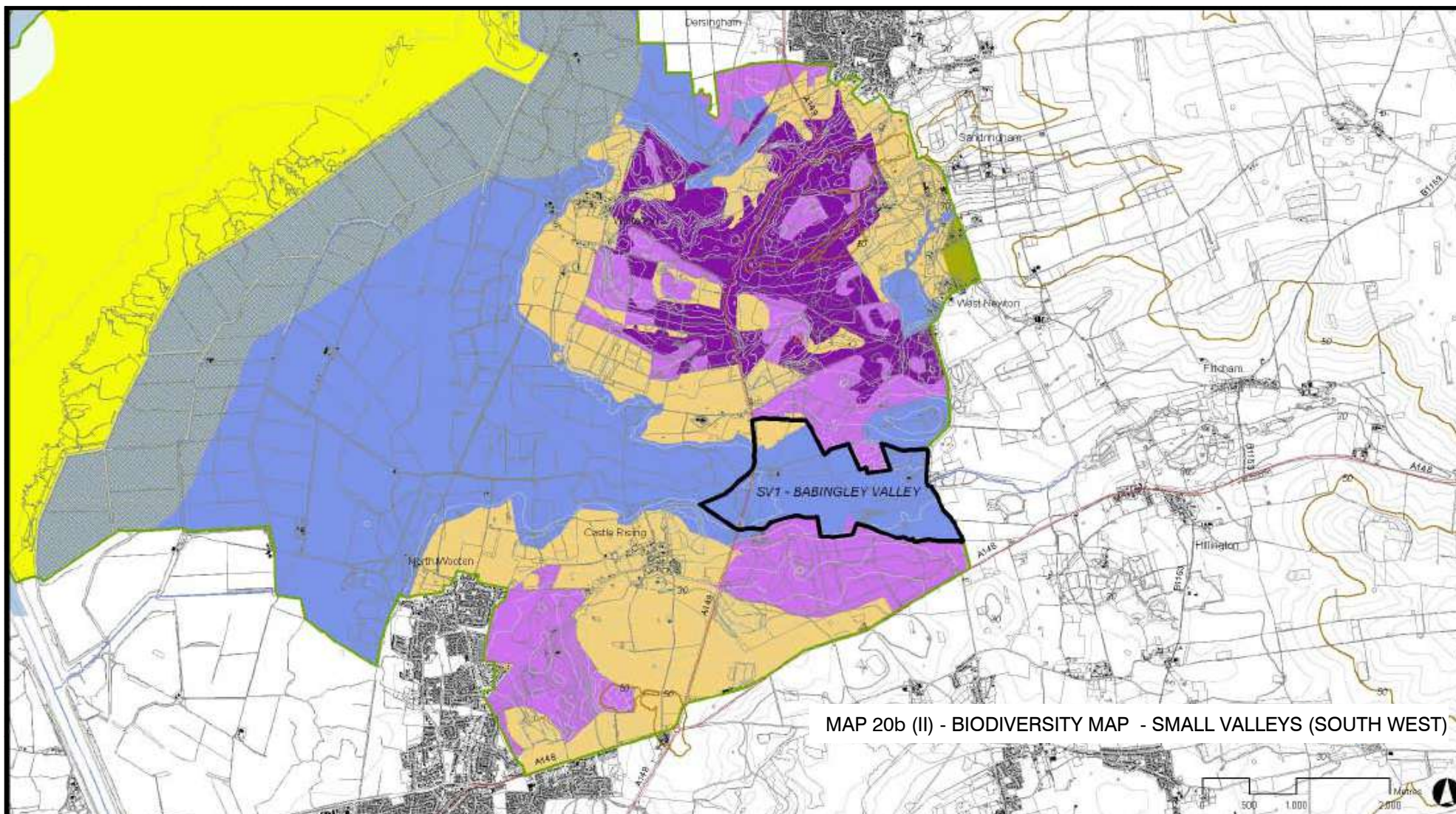
¹ Norfolk Wildlife Trust on behalf of the Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership, July 2006, *Ecological Network Mapping Project for Norfolk*

² Norfolk Landscape Archaeology, January 2009, *Norfolk Historic Landscape Character - a report on the Norfolk Landscape Characterisation (HLC) Project*

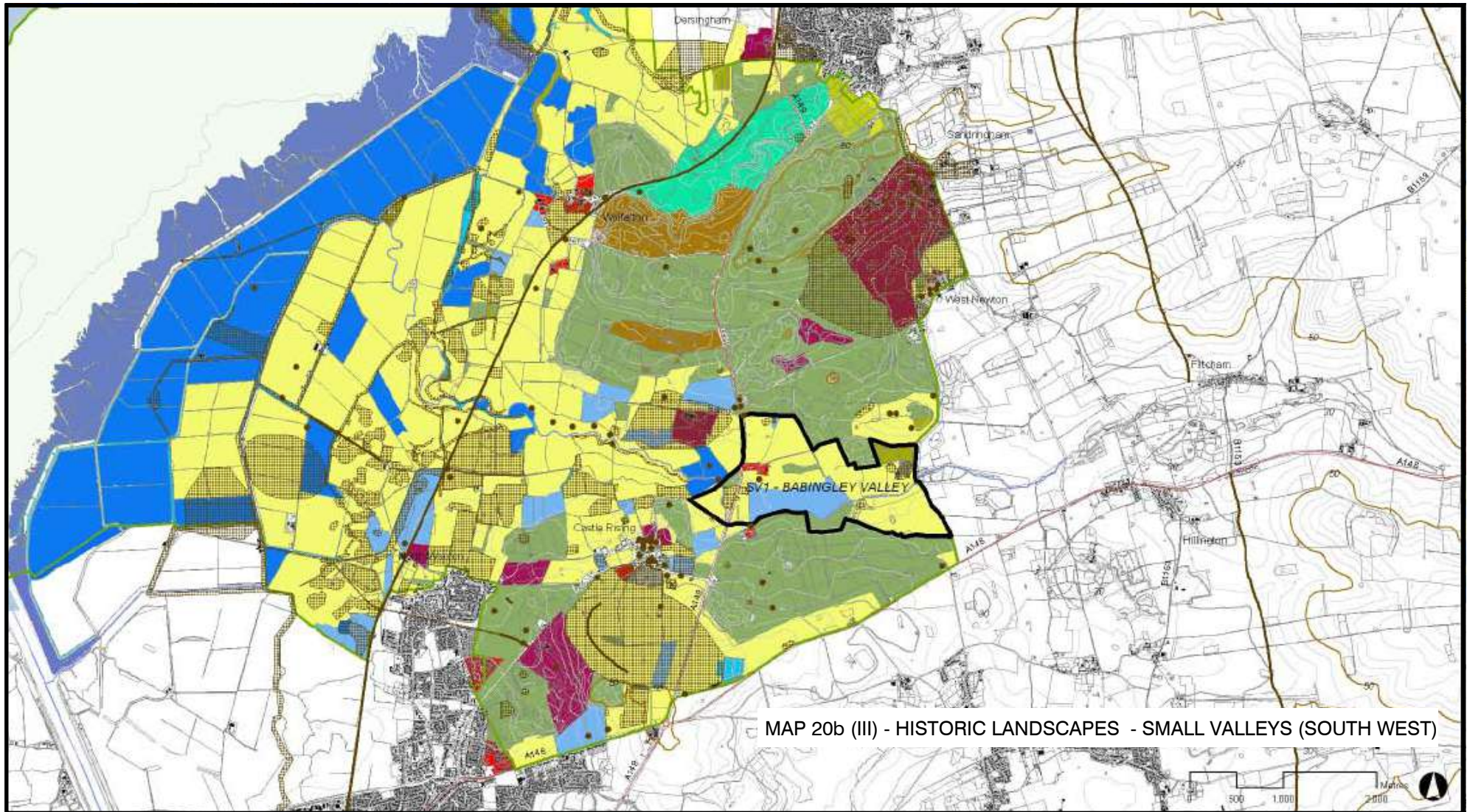
³ www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk - provides a computerised, searchable database (with integrated digital mapping) of all areas of known archaeological activity, sites, finds, cropmarks, earthworks, industrial remains, structures and historic buildings in the county

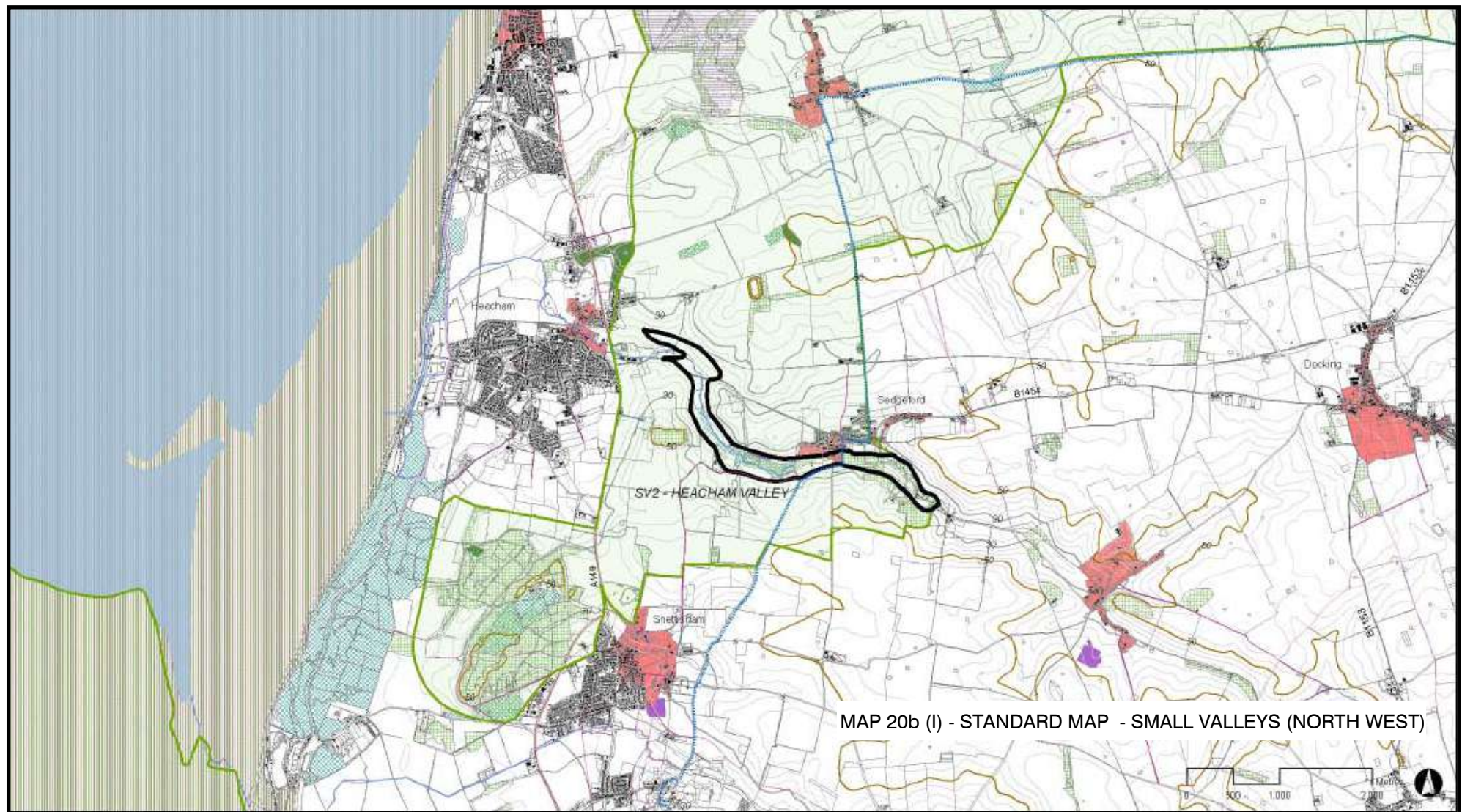




























Statutory Designations				Heritage		Connections		Topography			
	Ramsar Site		Local Nature Reserve		Scheduled Ancient Monuments		National Cycle Route		Contour Line (Interval 5 m)		'A' Road
	Special Protection Area		Forestry Commission Woodland		Conservation Areas		Cycleways		30 m Contour Line		'B' Road
	Ancient Woodland		Special Area of Conservation		Historic Parks and Gardens		Long Distance Path		50 m Contour Line		Main River
	Site of Special Scientific Interest				Historic Parks and Gardens		Footpath				Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
	County Wildlife Sites						Bridleway				Settlement
							Restricted Byway				District Council Boundaries

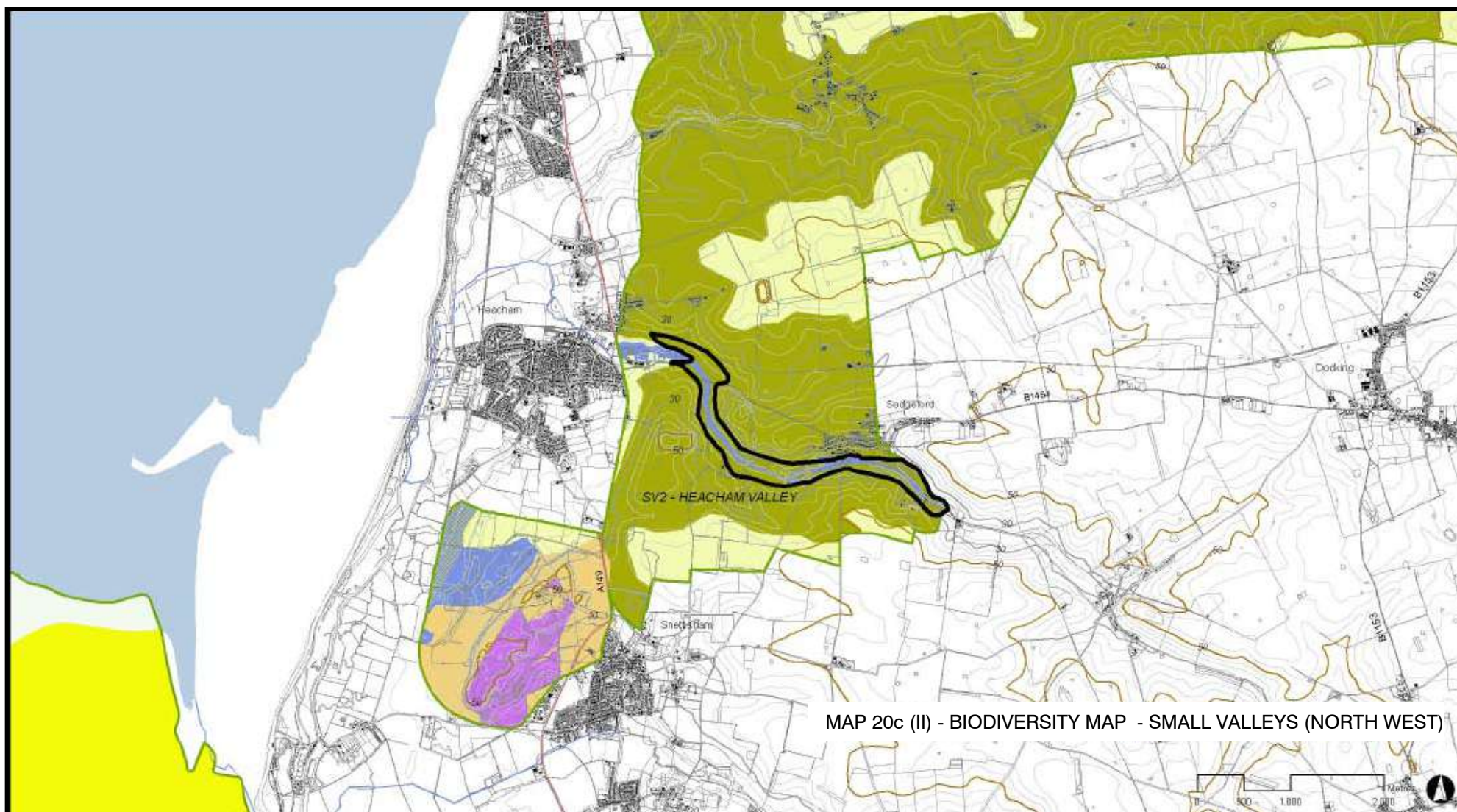


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|--|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Core Woodland Area | Coastal Habitat Enhancement Zone | Coastal Buffer Zone | Priority 1 Heathland Creation Areas (Scores 33 or Above) | 'A' Road |
| Zone of General Habitat Enhancement | Calcareous Grassland Core Area | Broads & River Buffer Zone | Priority 2 Heathland Creation Areas (Scores 21-32) | 'B' Road |
| Zone of Grassland-Heathland-Woodland Enhancement | Core Habitat Corridors | Paston Bam Bat Site Management Area | | Main River |
| Wetland Habitat Enhancement Zone | | | | Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty |
| | | | | Settlement |
| | | | | District Council Boundaries |

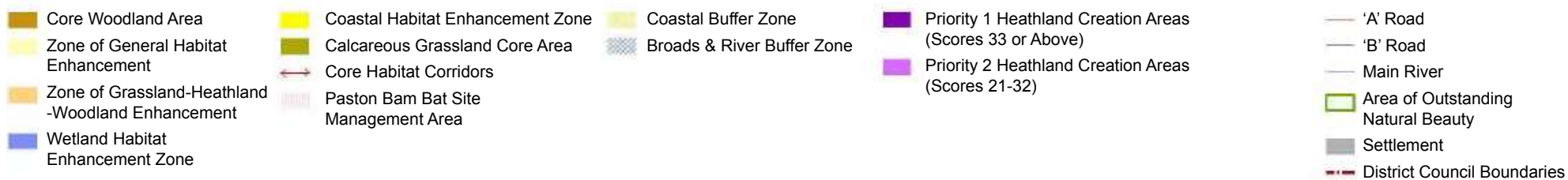


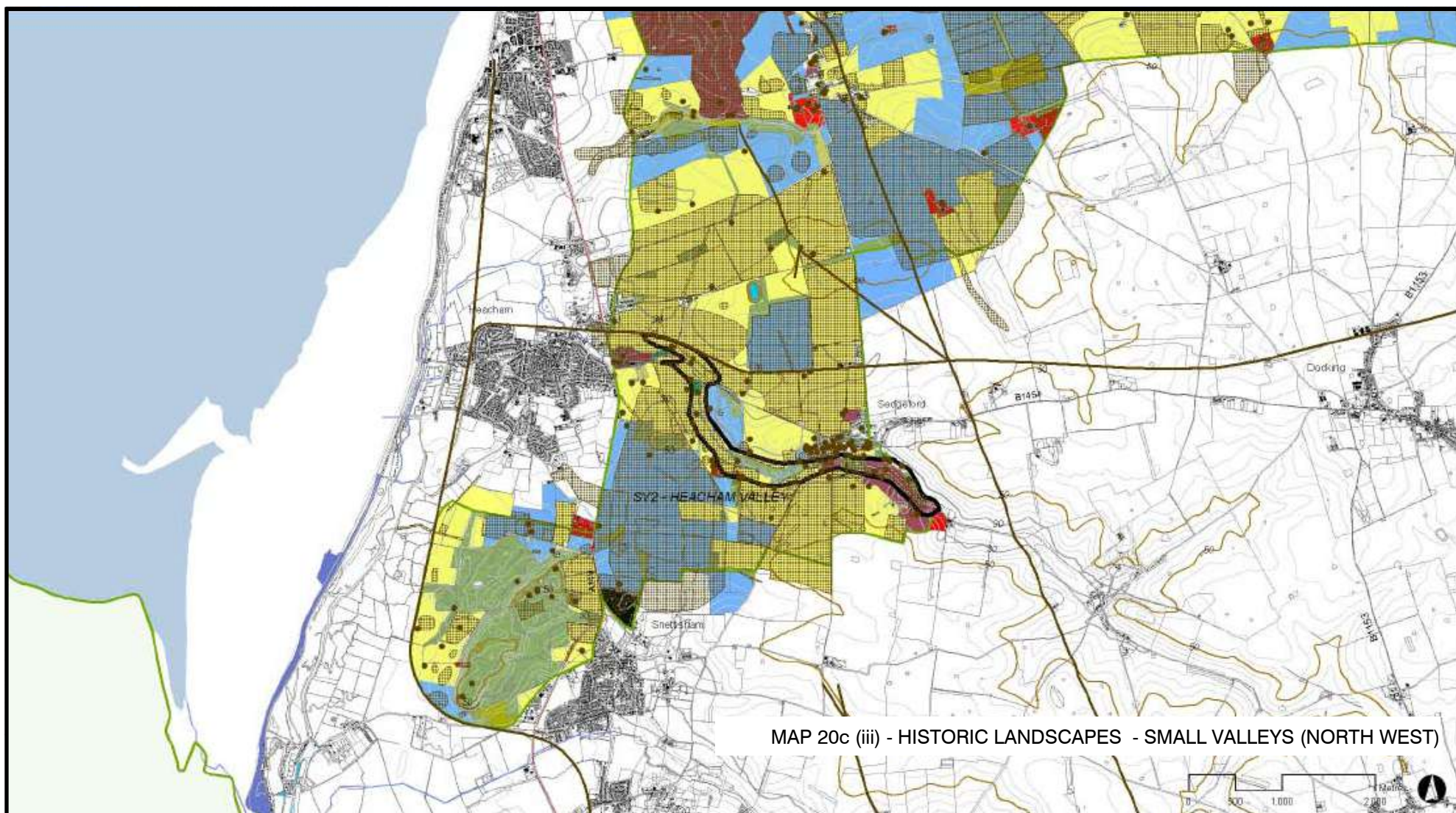


Statutory Designations			Heritage		Connections		Topography				
	Ramsar Site		Local Nature Reserve		Scheduled Ancient Monuments		National Cycle Route		Contour Line (Interval 5 m)		'A' Road
	Special Protection Area		Forestry Commission Woodland		Conservation Areas		Cycleways		30 m Contour Line		'B' Road
	Ancient Woodland		Special Area of Conservation		Historic Parks and Gardens		Long Distance Path		50 m Contour Line		Main River
	Site of Special Scientific Interest						Footpath				Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
	County Wildlife Sites						Bridleway				Settlement
							Restricted Byway				District Council Boundaries



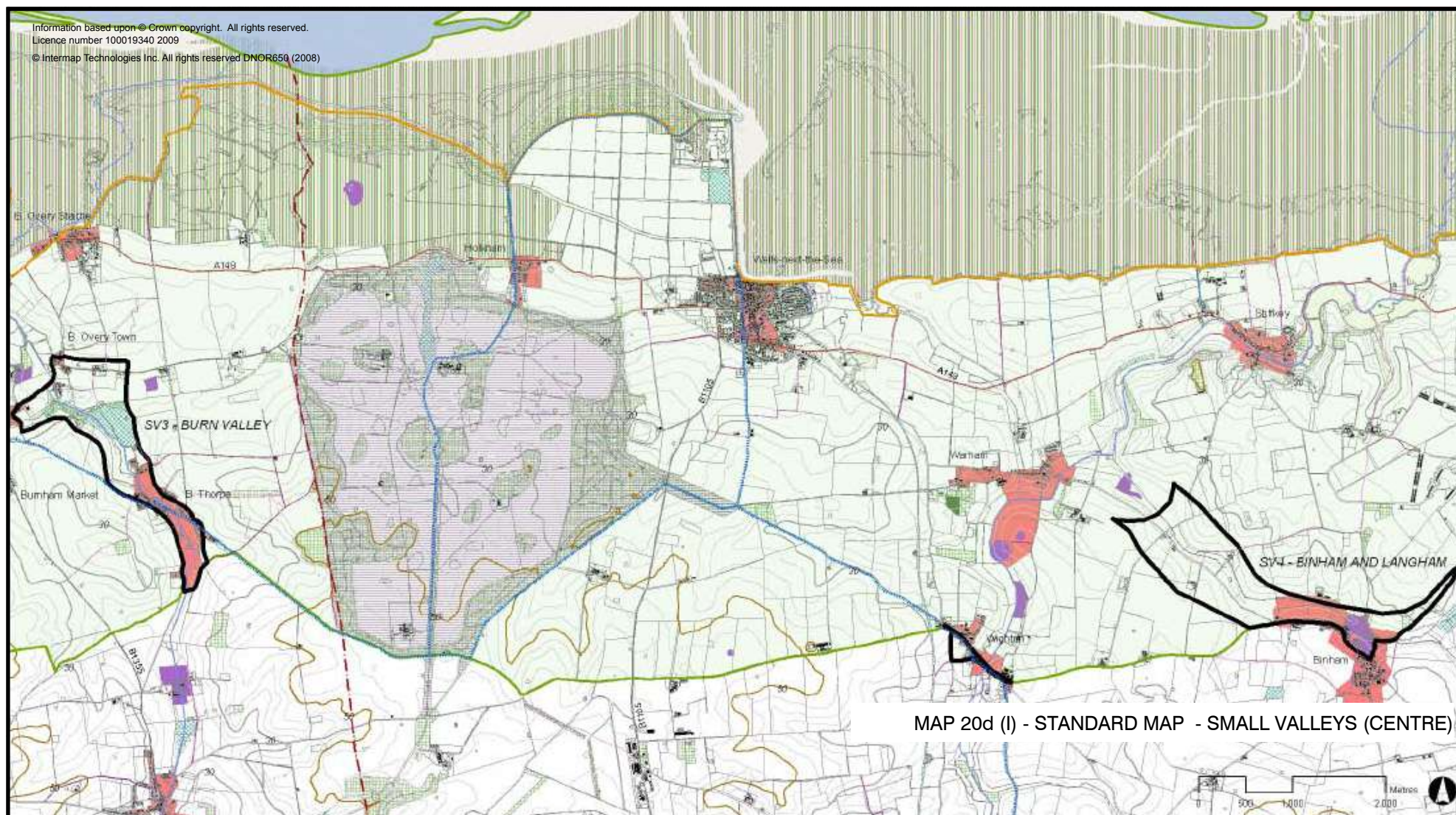
MAP 20c (II) - BIODIVERSITY MAP - SMALL VALLEYS (NORTH WEST)





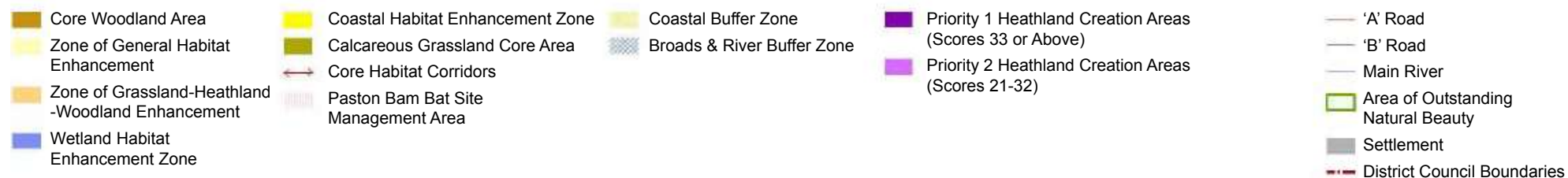
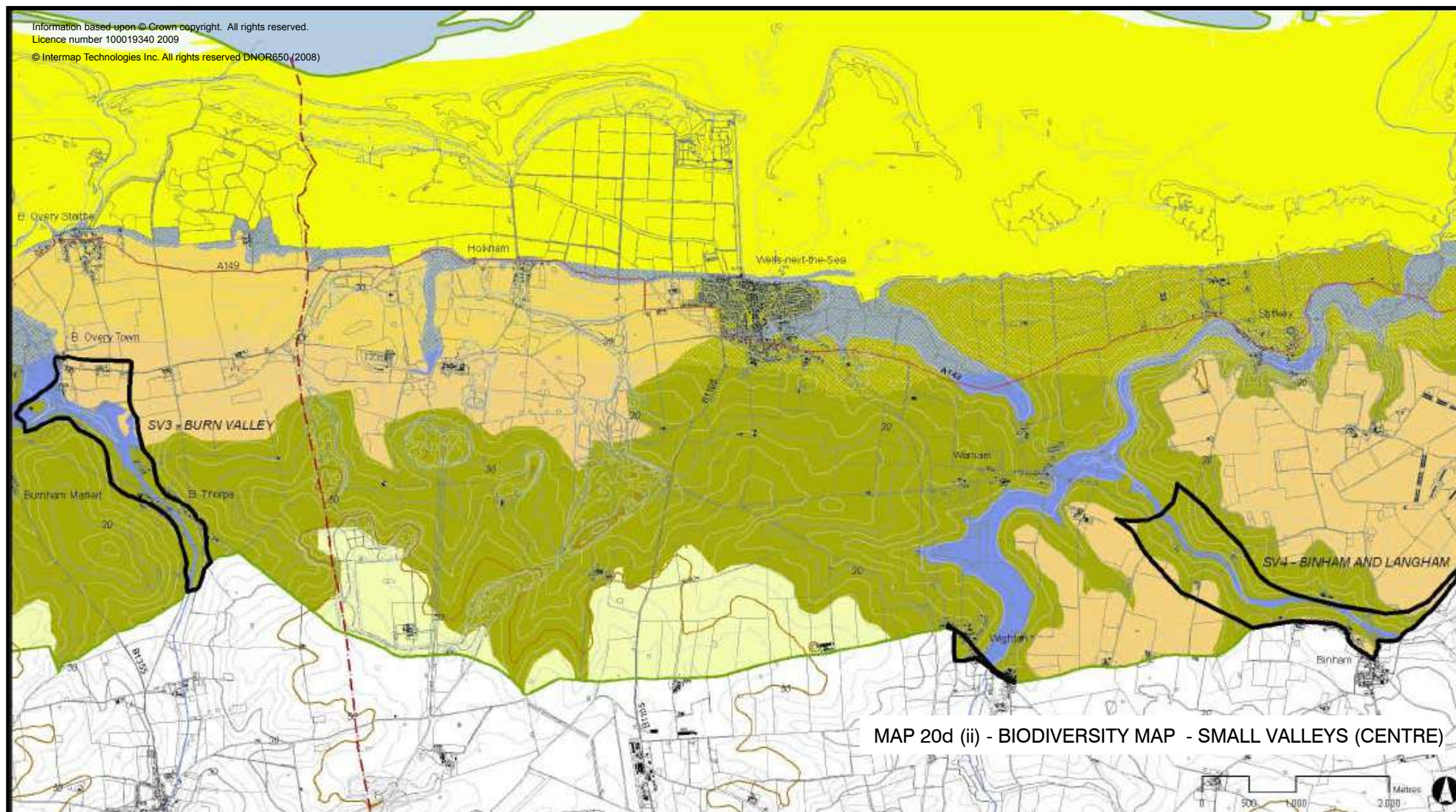
MAP 20c (iii) - HISTORIC LANDSCAPES - SMALL VALLEYS (NORTH WEST)

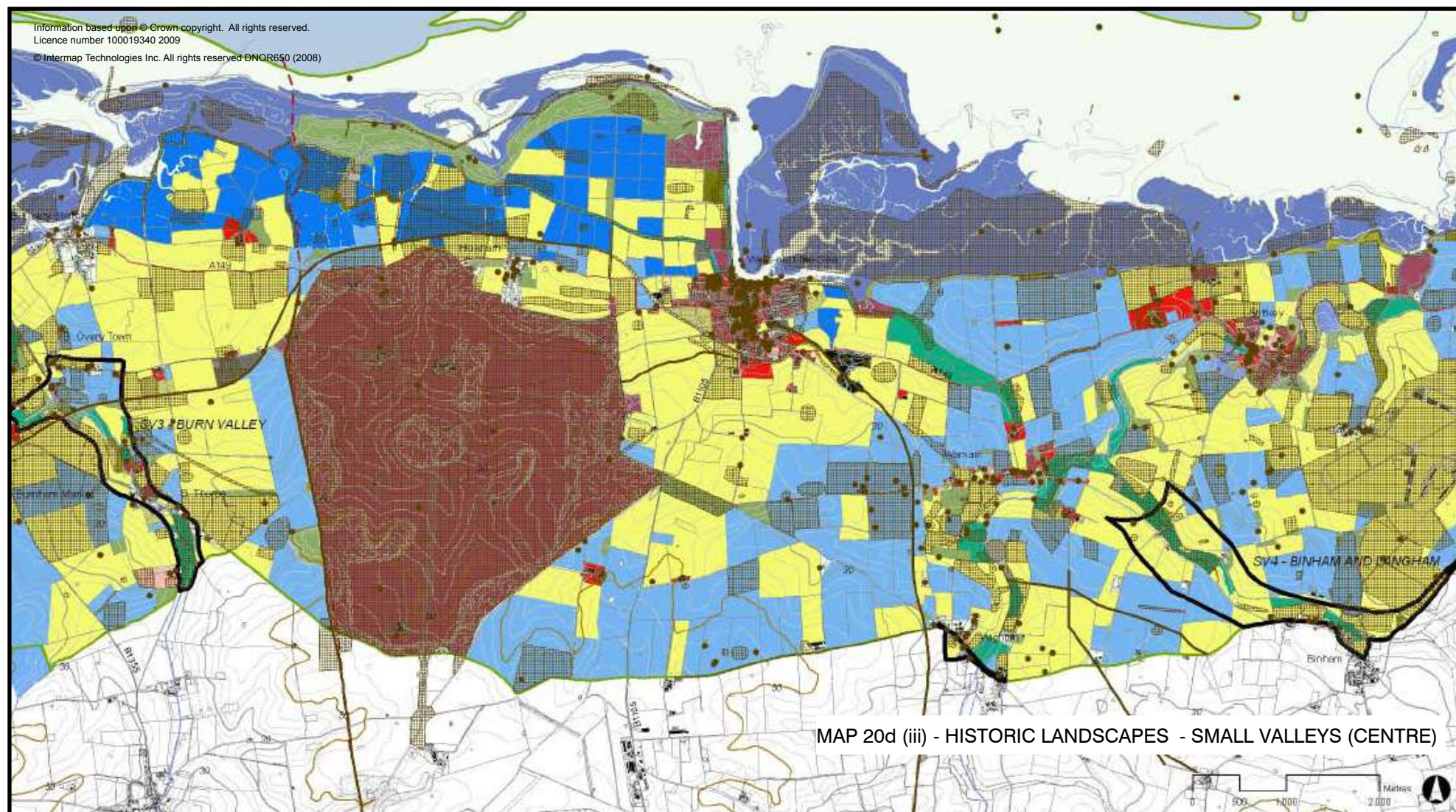




MAP 20d (I) - STANDARD MAP - SMALL VALLEYS (CENTRE)

Statutory Designations		Heritage		Connections		Topography	
	Ramsar Site		Local Nature Reserve		National Cycle Route		Contour Line (Interval 5 m)
	Special Protection Area		Forestry Commission Woodland		Cycleways		30 m Contour Line
	Ancient Woodland		Conservation Areas		Long Distance Path		50 m Contour Line
	Site of Special Scientific Interest		Historic Parks and Gardens		Footpath		'A' Road
	County Wildlife Sites				Bridleway		'B' Road
					Restricted Byway		Main River
							Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
							Settlement
							District Council Boundaries

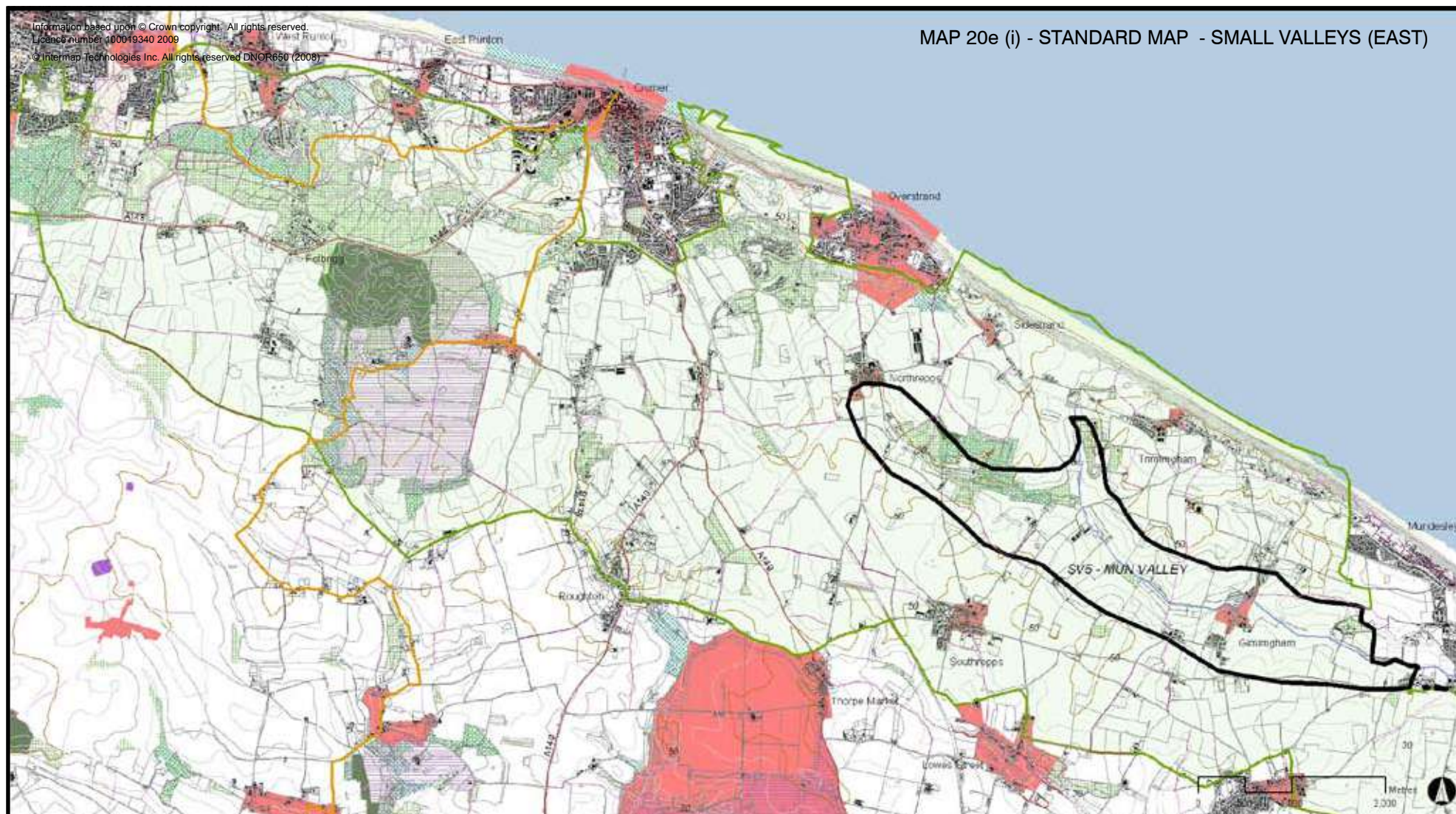




MAP 20d (iii) - HISTORIC LANDSCAPES - SMALL VALLEYS (CENTRE)



MAP 20e (i) - STANDARD MAP - SMALL VALLEYS (EAST)



Statutory Designations		Heritage	Connections	Topography	
	Ramsar Site				
	Special Protection Area				
	Ancient Woodland				
	Site of Special Scientific Interest				
	County Wildlife Sites				
	Local Nature Reserve				
	Forestry Commission Woodland				
	Special Area of Conservation				

