

South Norfolk Council

**South Norfolk
Local Landscape Designations Review**

Norwich Southern Bypass
Landscape Protection Zone



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Approved

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Watkins', enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

Dominic Watkins

Position

Director

Date

21st November 2012

Revision

Final

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 South Norfolk Council commissioned Chris Blandford Associates (CBA) to undertake a desk based review of potential local landscape designations (LDDs) proposed for the Site Specific Policies and Allocations Development Plan Document (DPD). Based on the recommendations of this study¹, the Council re-commissioned CBA to undertake further more detailed work to validate, and where necessary update, the boundaries of the LDDs.

1.1.2 This report examines the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ). The Strategic Gaps/Important Breaks and the Landscape Character Areas and River Valleys in the Norwich Policy Area LDDs are considered as separate reports.

1.2 Study Objectives

1.2.1 In line with the Brief, the objectives of this study are:

- To undertake additional work to identify key views and map their viewing cones/corridors.
- To take account of changes that have taken place (e.g. planning applications/appeal decisions) or will take place (e.g. preferred Local Plan sites).
- To be based on field assessments to ensure that the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone only includes land which can clearly be demonstrated to achieve the aims of the policy.
- To highlight any changes to the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone based on the findings.

¹ South Norfolk Local Landscape Designations Review (June 2012, Chris Blandford Associates for South Norfolk Council)

2.0 PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

2.1.1 The Government's current planning policies on different aspects of land use planning in England are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework² (NPPF). The NPPF came into effect on 27th March 2012, replacing previously published planning policy statements and guidance in England.

2.1.2 In contrast to the more prescriptive approach to LLDs set out in previous Government policy (PPS7), the NPPF does not rule out that locally valued landscapes may be identified and protected through designation by local planning authorities. The key requirements of the NPPF for local planning authorities to consider in relation to landscape protection policies are:

- The Government recognises that the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside should be protected for its own sake.
- The Government recognises that valued landscapes should be protected and enhanced commensurate with their status.
- Local planning authorities should set criteria-based landscape protection policies.
- Local planning authorities should set out a strategic approach to the protection of green infrastructure networks.
- Local planning authorities should give great weight to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- Local planning authorities should base landscape policies on adequate, up-to-date and relevant evidence.
- Landscape character assessments should be integrated with assessment of historic landscape character, and landscape sensitivity assessments should be prepared for major expansion areas.

² National Planning Policy Framework (DCLG, March 2012)

2.2 Joint Core Strategy

2.2.1 In March 2011, a Joint Core Strategy³ was adopted for the Councils of South Norfolk, Norwich City and Broadland. The key requirements of the adopted Joint Core Strategy in relation to landscape protection policies within South Norfolk's Development Plan Documents are:

- DPDs should seek to retain the locally distinctive character of rural areas in accordance with the JCS's spatial vision.
- DPDs should seek to protect 'key landscapes of acknowledged regional or local importance' in order to comply with a core planning objective of the JCS.
- The JCS requires that DPDs should safeguard and enhance environmental 'assets of local importance' (including landscape and historic landscape character, countryside and rural character and the setting of Norwich, towns and villages and the Broads).
- DPDs should recognise that assets of local importance are valuable in their own right, and in combination provide a significant resource for the JCS area.
- DPDs should maintain strategic gaps between Wymondham, Hethersett and Cringleford in relation to planning of major new/expanded communities.
- DPDs should protect the landscape setting of the Norwich urban area.
- DPDs should protect the landscape setting of the Broads.

2.3 Summary

2.3.1 Taking into account the NPPF's requirements and the absence of specific guidance or accepted practice, it is generally acknowledged that local planning authorities seeking to include LLD policies in their local plans should:

- Make a specific case for the LLDs based on factors unique to its area (relating to the particular characteristics of the landscape and its development pressures).

³ Joint Core Strategy for Broadland, Norwich and South Norfolk (Adopted March 2011)

- Show that the boundaries of areas to be designated as LLD can be defended using a clear methodology based on a robust Landscape Character Assessment undertaken in accordance with best practice.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 General

3.1.1 The extent of the potential Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBPZ) as proposed in the Consultation Draft Site Specific Policies and Allocations Development Plan Document⁴ is shown on **Figure 3.1**.

3.1.2 The Council's suggested policy wording for the NSBPZ is as follows:

'Development within the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ) as shown on the Map B, should have regard to preserving and, where possible, enhancing the landscape setting of the southern bypass and the urban area, in particular;

- *Long distance views and relatively undeveloped approaches to Norwich which contribute to the historic setting of the City; and*
- *Historic urban/rural 'gateways' on major routes to/from the City.*

Development which would significantly harm the NSBLPZ will not be permitted'.

3.1.3 Norwich has a very distinctive skyline with a clearly defined centre. The Cathedral is the focal point of the skyline. It is therefore important that new developments protect or enhance views of the Cathedral from the historic landscape setting of the City. Development should also ensure that long distance views from the City to the landscape setting are protected. The protection of views plays an important role in maintaining local distinctiveness and sense of place, which are essential in attracting and maintaining investment.

3.1.4 While CBA's initial review⁵ concluded that no changes to the suggested wording of the NSBLPZ policy or its extent were recommended in light of the existing evidence base, the review did identify that the *'Long distance views and relatively undeveloped approaches to Norwich which contribute to the historic setting of the City'* are not currently defined in the existing evidence base. The review recommended that a study be carried out to identify the key views and map viewing cones/corridors. The study's methodology is described below.

⁴ South Norfolk Local Development Framework – Site Specific Policies & Allocations Document and Long Stratton & Wymondham Area Action Plans: 2nd Public Consultation (Regulation 25), 29th August -18th November 2011 (South Norfolk Council)

⁵ South Norfolk Local Landscape Designations Review (June 2012, Chris Blandford Associates for South Norfolk Council)

3.2 Desk-Based Studies

3.2.1 A review of the following documents was undertaken to help identify evidence of *‘Long distance views and relatively undeveloped approaches to Norwich which contribute to the historic setting of the City’* as experienced from South Norfolk District:

- OS Mapping
- Aerial Photographs
- South Norfolk Landscape Assessment : Volumes 2⁶ and 3⁷.
- South Norfolk Local Landscape Designations Review : Landscape Character Areas and River Valleys in the Norwich Policy Area⁸.

3.2.2 Changes that have taken place (e.g. planning applications/appeal decisions) or will take place (e.g. preferred Local Plan sites) in or around the NSBLPZ were identified from a review of Table 4.1 and Figure 4.1 of the Landscape Character Areas and River Valleys in the Norwich Policy Area report.

3.3 Field Survey

3.3.1 Field survey work was undertaken in September 2012 to assess the *‘Long distance views and relatively undeveloped approaches to Norwich which contribute to the historic setting of the City’* as experienced from South Norfolk District. The field assessment also checked that the NSBLPZ only includes land which can clearly be demonstrated to achieve the aims of the policy, taking into account changes in landscape character where there has been significant new development or other forms of landscape change since 2001.

3.4 Review of Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone

3.4.1 The findings from the desk-based studies and field work have been used to inform an evaluation of the NSBLPZ as set out within **Section 4.0**.

3.5 Identification of Key Views, Undeveloped Approaches and Gateways

3.5.1 The findings from the desk based studies and fieldwork has been used to identify key views, undeveloped approaches and gateways into Norwich as set out within **Section 5.0**.

⁶ South Norfolk Landscape Assessment – Volume 2: Landscape Character Areas of the Norwich Policy Area (2001, Land Use Consultants for South Norfolk)

⁷ South Norfolk Landscape Assessment, Volume 3: Implications for Policy (June 2001, Land Use Consultants)

⁸ South Norfolk Local Landscape Designations Review: Landscape Character Areas and River Valleys in the Norwich Policy Area (September 2012, Chris Blandford Associates for South Norfolk Council)

4.0 REVIEW OF THE NORWICH SOUTHERN BYPASS LANDSCAPE PROTECTION ZONE

4.1 General

- 4.1.1 This chapter sets out the findings of the assessment undertaken to review the extent of the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ).
- 4.1.2 The proposed NSBLPZ, as shown on **Figure 3.1**, passes through a number of distinct Landscape Character Areas as defined by the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment⁹. CBA's recent review of these Landscape Character Areas¹⁰ confirmed that with the exception of Area G1 – Easton Fringe Farmland, the landscape either side of the bypass retains a rural identity. The rural character of the Easton Fringe Farmland has however been eroded by commercial and residential developments. It is likely that much of the remaining rural character will be further eroded if development takes place within the Strategic Site Allocations identified within the Local Plan. While the Royal Norfolk Showground has been identified within the Local Plan Site Specific Allocations and Policies Preferred Options, development would be strictly limited to be in keeping with the sites function. It is therefore anticipated that this would maintain a degree of 'openness' across the showground site, however the showground no longer exhibits rural characteristics.
- 4.1.3 The recent developments and preferred options for Strategic Site Allocations within the potential NSBLPZ, including those between Easton and Costessey, are shown on **Figure 4.1**.
- 4.1.4 With the exception of land now developed, the Royal Norfolk Showground and land allocated for future development, the fieldwork has confirmed that the boundaries of the NSBLPZ continue to be robust.
- 4.1.5 It is of course possible that not all development within identified Site Specific Policies and Allocations, will come forward. Should this be the case, it is considered that sites around Easton and Costessey within Character Area G1, should remain excluded from the NSBLPZ. However sites at the junction of the A140 and B1113 and at Trowse would continue to be predominantly rural and should therefore be considered part of the NSBLPZ.

⁹ South Norfolk Landscape Assessment – Volume 2: Landscape Character Areas of the Norwich Policy Area (2001, Land Use Consultants for South Norfolk)

¹⁰ South Norfolk Local Landscape Designations Review: Landscape Character Areas and River Valleys in the Norwich Policy Area (September 2012, Chris Blandford Associates for South Norfolk Council)

5.0 IDENTIFICATION OF KEY VIEWS, APPROACHES AND GATEWAYS

5.1 Key Views

- 5.1.1 The 2001 landscape assessment which was confirmed in 2012, identified views towards Norwich as being key characteristics of two of the landscape character areas in South Norfolk. These are D1: Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland to the south west of the city and D2: Poringland Settled Plateau Farmland to the south east of the city. In both cases, 'long views from the plateau edge, including Norwich from the northern plateau edge' are identified.
- 5.1.2 These northern plateau edges are situated to the south of the proposed NSBLPZ and are defined as being above the 40m AOD contour. Both landscapes share similar physical characteristics, namely a generally flat landform with open horizons, large scale arable fields and few roadside hedges. However there are woodland blocks in the landscape which serve to frame, block and foreshorten views. Moreover, the limited height difference between the northern edge of the plateaus and the landscape to the north limits the opportunity for views into the city.
- 5.1.3 The broad viewing cones/zones from the northern Plateau edge are shown on **Figure 5.1**.

5.2 Approaches

- 5.2.1 The southern approaches into Norwich are predominantly rural in character, providing a distinct transition between countryside and the City. Often the approaches occupy the 'gap' between settlements and the city boundary, but are also influenced by landform variations. The following sections describe the southern rural approaches into Norwich which are shown on **Figure 5.2**.

A146 Loddon Road

- 5.2.2 To the north of Furze Close Copse, in the vicinity of Framingham Pigot, Loddon Road descends a hillside and the generally low roadside hedges allows views north over the adjacent farmland.
- 5.2.3 To the north of the southern bypass, earthworks and roadside vegetation restrict wider views. Only when the road extends onto embankment and structure to cross the floodplain of the River Yare, does County Hall come into view and the urban area of Norwich becomes evident.

B1332 – Bungay Road

- 5.2.4 To the north of Arminghall, the road descends a hillside, but roadside vegetation encloses views on the approach to the A146. Despite this there is a strong sense of rural character on this approach into the city.

A140 – Ipswich Road

- 5.2.5 To the north of Dunston Hills copse, the roadside hedges are broken affording views over the adjacent countryside. Despite the presences of the park and ride site and a superstore north of the southern bypass, the rural character is maintained until the city boundary at Hartford Bridge.

Norwich – Ipswich Railway

- 5.2.6 To the north of Dunston Hills copse, the railway emerges from cutting and travels on embankment which affords views over the countryside. To the north of the southern bypass, the railway emerges onto embankment again to cross the floodplain of the River Yare before entering the city. As with the A140, the rural character is maintained up to the point that the railway crosses the city boundary.

B1113 – Main Road

- 5.2.7 In the north of Swardeston, the road has the character of a rural lane, with roadside hedgerows, trees allowing occasional views, but otherwise a good sense of enclosure. The rural character continues to the north of the southern bypass until the road meets the A140 at Harford Bridge where it enters the city.

A11/Norwich – Ely Railway

- 5.2.8 Both road and railway emerge from cutting in the vicinity of Ketteringham Lane and the Upper Tas Valley Walk to afford views across open farmland. To the north of the southern bypass, the rail corridor is initially heavily wooded, before becoming more open as it crosses the Yare Valley. Only after passing beneath the A140 and the city boundary does the landscape become urban. To the east of the Southern Bypass The A11 continues to pass through farmland for a short distance before entering Cringleford, where new residential development signals the start of the urban area.

B1172

- 5.2.9 To the north of Hethersett, the road becomes heavily treed, which prevent outward views, but provides a strong rural character. This character is largely continuous until the approach to the junction within the Southern Bypass, where the landscape becomes more open.

B1108 Walton Road

- 5.2.10 To the east of Bow Hill, the landscape on either side of Walton Road is rural, the road itself is well vegetated although in places, roadside hedges have been removed allowing limited views out. On the western approaches to the southern bypass, there are long views across farmland towards Bawburgh. East of the southern bypass, the road corridor is heavily wooded which gives a strong sense of enclosure before becoming more open and having a parkland character in places. The strong rural character is maintained until the road enters Colney.
- 5.2.11 It is noted, that sites for commercial use, along the section of the B1108 east of the southern bypass, have been identified as Preferred Options Strategic Allocations with the local plan. Should these developments take place, the present rural approach would be threatened.

A47 West of Easton

- 5.2.12 Between Church Plantation and Church Farm and the roundabout with Dereham Road, the western approach to Norwich has a strong rural character. The road corridor is bordered by hedgerows which gives a strong sense of enclosure, although breaks in the vegetation allow long views across the surrounding countryside.
- 5.2.13 To the east of the roundabout with Dereham Road, the southern bypass starts. For a short section it is in heavily treed cutting, which is effective in preventing views of adjacent quarries. The wood therefore maintains the rural character up to Stafford's Plantation where thereafter recent commercial development signals the entrance into the urban area.

5.3 Gateways

- 5.3.1 As discussed above in 5.2.1, a defining characteristic of the approach into Norwich is the often distinct and abrupt transition from countryside to city. In order to maintain this distinctiveness, consideration should be given to the adoption of a policy which would protect this defining characteristic from erosion by inappropriate development.

5.3.2 A similar approach, which seeks to protect the gateways into the city has been adopted by Norwich City Council. **Policy DM3** – Design Principles – of the Norwich Local Plan¹¹ has identified gateways into the city. The policy states:

‘Major development within 100 m of the main gateways to the city...will only be permitted where its design is appropriate to and respects the location and context of the gateways. New landmark buildings of exceptional quality will be accepted where they help to define or emphasise the significance of the gateway. In these locations, particular emphasis will be given to design considerations over other factors.’

5.3.3 The five gateways identified in the Norwich City Local Plan, which border South Norfolk District are shown on **Figure 5.3**.

5.3.4 Of the five gateways within the city boundary, the following two gateways have distinct rural approaches and define effectively the gateway into the city.

- A146 Loddon Road; and
- Junction of the A140 and B1113 at Harford Bridge

Two of the remaining three gateways, lie within existing urban areas and therefore do not mark the transition from the countryside into the built up area. These gateways are located on the:

- A11 at Eaton; and
- A1074 at Costessey.

The fifth gateway is located on the B1108 at Earlham, while its location presently marks the transition from the rural landscape to a more urban context, should the development at Colney take place as identified within the current and emerging South Norfolk Local Plans at Colney, the present rural approach is likely to change. As a result the arrival point at the built up area, will move westwards towards the southern bypass.

5.3.5 It is therefore recommended that three gateways are located at the following locations.

- A11 at Eaton;
- A1074 at Costessey; and
- B1108 at Earlham

Unlike the gateways within the Norwich Local Plan, these gateways would be situated on the edge of the built up area rather than the City boundary. In this way, they would mark more effectively the present distinctive transition between rural and urban – see **Figure 5.3**.

¹¹ Norwich Local Plan – Norwich City Council – August 2012

6.0 CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone

6.1.1 The review undertaken by CBA has concluded that for the most part the boundaries of the NSBLPZ continue to be robust and justifiable for inclusion within the Development Management Policies Document. The exception to this is where the existing character of land within the NSBLPZ can no longer be considered to be rural; namely the Royal Norfolk Showground and where future development sites within the NSBLPZ have been identified as preferred options for strategic allocations within the South Norfolk Local Plan. In addition, the land within the NSBLPZ, but outwith strategic allocations, between Easton and Costessey has a limited contribution to the protection of the landscape setting of the southern bypass and the urban area., The review has therefore concluded that the boundary of the proposed north western extent of the NSBLPZ be redrawn along Long Lane as shown on **Figure 6.1**.

6.1.2 Should development fail to come forward within the allocated sites at the junction of the A140 and B1113 and on land at Trowse, these land parcels should be retained within the NSBLPZ as they would continue to have a rural character and are an integral part of the wider rural landscape.

6.2 Key Views, Undeveloped Approaches and Gateways

6.2.1 In respect of key views, CBA's fieldwork has confirmed that opportunities to view Norwich from the landscape to the south of the city is limited due primarily to the lack of available elevated sites and the screening effect of vegetation. It is however recognised that opportunities do exist from the northern edge of the plateau to the south west and south east of the city. These are identified within the 2001 Landscape Assessment and confirmed by CBA in 2012, as the Wymondham Settled Plateau Farmland and Poringland Settled Plateau Farmland. In these areas, broad view cores/zones have been identified. CBA's recommendations for protected viewing cones/zones in the Development Management Policies document are shown on **Figure 6.2**.

6.2.2 In respect of undeveloped approaches into the city, there are several road and rail corridors, which have a very distinct rural character, affording views across the surrounding countryside. The review has concluded that those approaches can be defined as broad corridors along each of the main and secondary roads and railway corridors approaching the city. CBA's recommendations for protected approaches in the Development Management Policies document are shown on **Figure 6.2**.

- 6.2.3 The review has recommended the adoption of a policy which seeks to protect from erosion, the distinct transition between countryside and the built up areas on the outskirts of the City. Three locations are therefore recommended where 'gateways' should be located and where protection from development should be afforded. The recommended gateways are shown on **Figure 6.2**.

6.3 Policy Options

- 6.3.1 The Joint Core Strategy (JCS) is silent on the need for a designation to protect the landscape setting of the Norwich Southern Bypass, and therefore retention of a NSBLPZ policy in the South Norfolk Local Plan may not meet the test of soundness. However, the JCS does recognise the need to protect the 'landscape setting of the Norwich urban area' – i.e. long distance views, undeveloped approaches and gateways.
- 6.3.2 In light of the desk-study, fieldwork and evaluation undertaken by CBA to inform the review process described in this report, the following policy options are recommended for consideration with regards to the Site Specific Policies and Allocations Development Plan Document:

Option 1 – Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone Policy Only

Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone

Development within the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ), as shown on [Figure 6.1], should have regard to protecting the openness of the zone and, where possible, enhancing the landscape setting of the southern bypass. Development which would significantly harm the NSBLPZ will not be permitted.

Option 2 – Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone and Landscape Setting of Norwich Combined Policy

Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone & Landscape Setting of Norwich

Development within the Norwich Southern Bypass Landscape Protection Zone (NSBLPZ), as shown on [Figure 6.2], should have regard to protecting the openness of the zone and, where possible, enhancing the landscape setting of the southern bypass. In addition, development should also have regard to protecting and, where possible, enhancing the long distance views and relatively undeveloped approaches to Norwich which contribute to the historic landscape setting of the City, including the historic urban/rural 'gateways' on major routes to/from the City, as shown on [Figure 6.2].

Development which would significantly harm the NSBLPZ or the landscape setting of the Norwich urban area will not be permitted.

Option 3 – Landscape Setting of Norwich Policy Only

Landscape Setting of Norwich

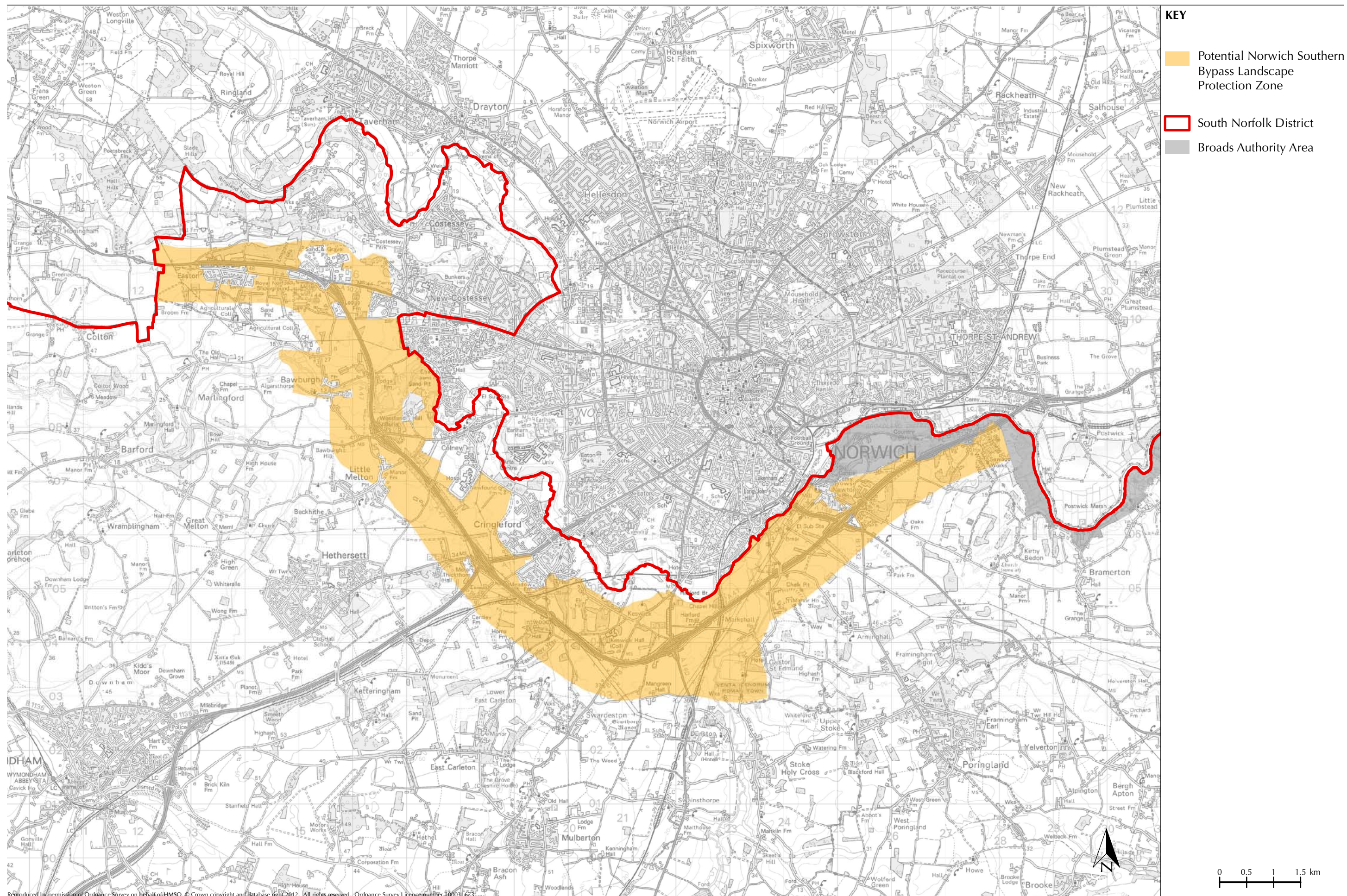
Development should have regard to protecting and, where possible, enhancing the long distance views and relatively undeveloped approaches to Norwich which contribute to the historic landscape setting of the City, including the historic urban/rural ‘gateways’ on major routes to/from the City, as shown on [Figure 6.3]. Development which would significantly harm the landscape setting of the Norwich urban area will not be permitted.

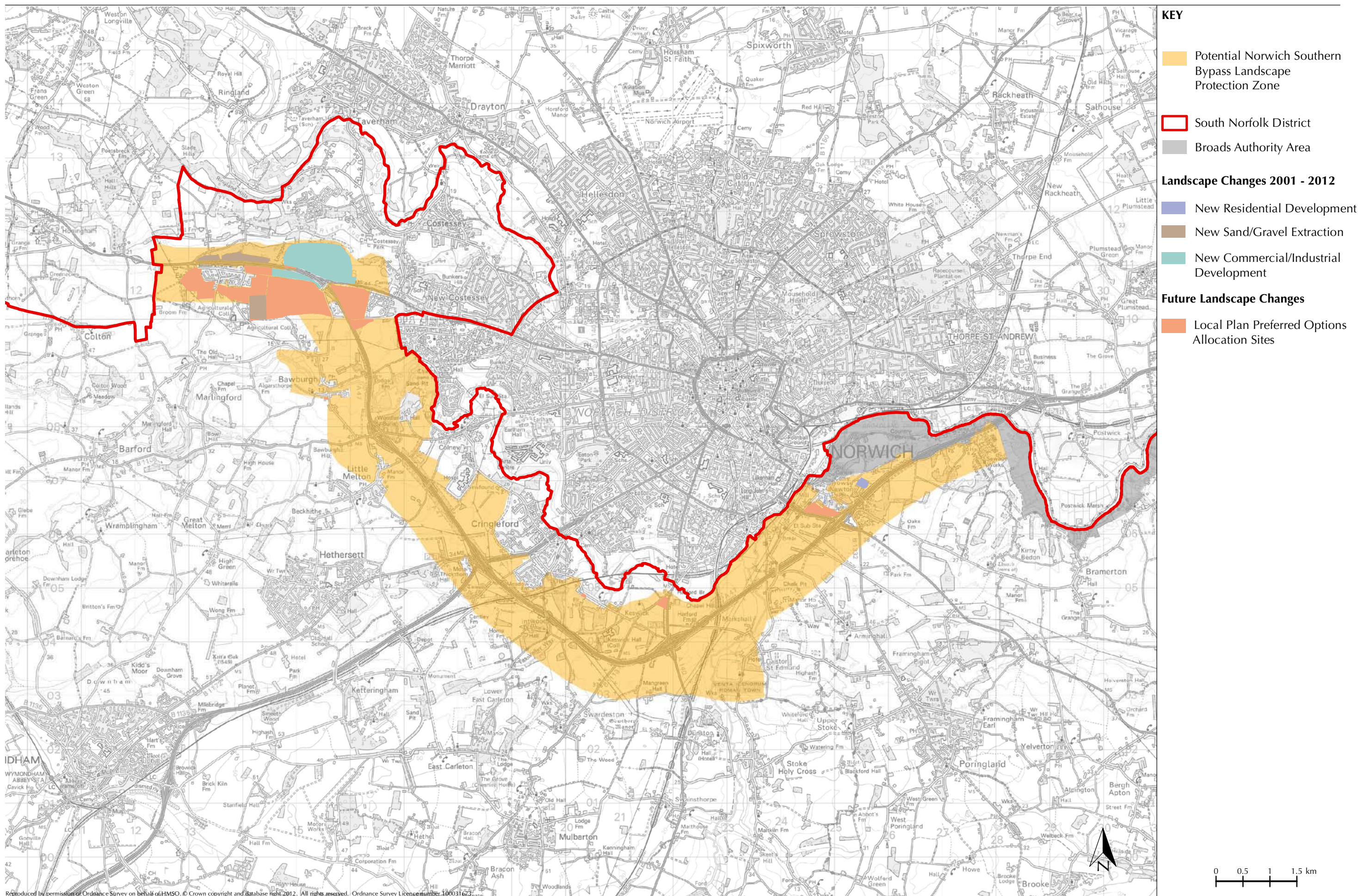
- 6.3.3 CBA considers that the evidence base provided by the South Norfolk Landscape Assessment Volumes 2¹² and 3¹³, together with the updated information set out in Sections 4.0 and 5.0 of this report, is sufficiently robust to justify the above policy options going forward.

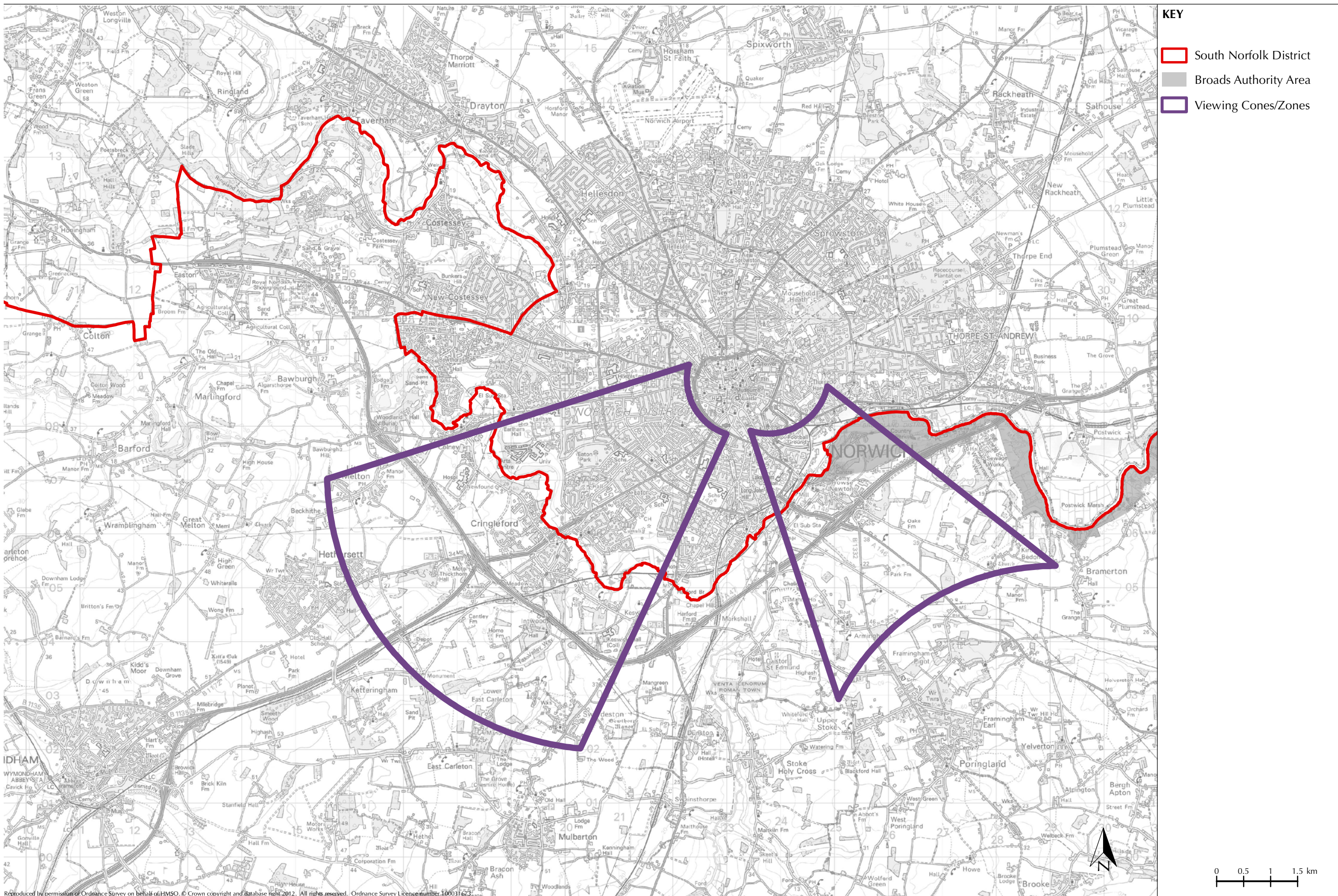
¹² South Norfolk Landscape Assessment - Volume 2: Landscape Character Areas of the Norwich Policy Area (2001, Land Use Consultants for South Norfolk Council)

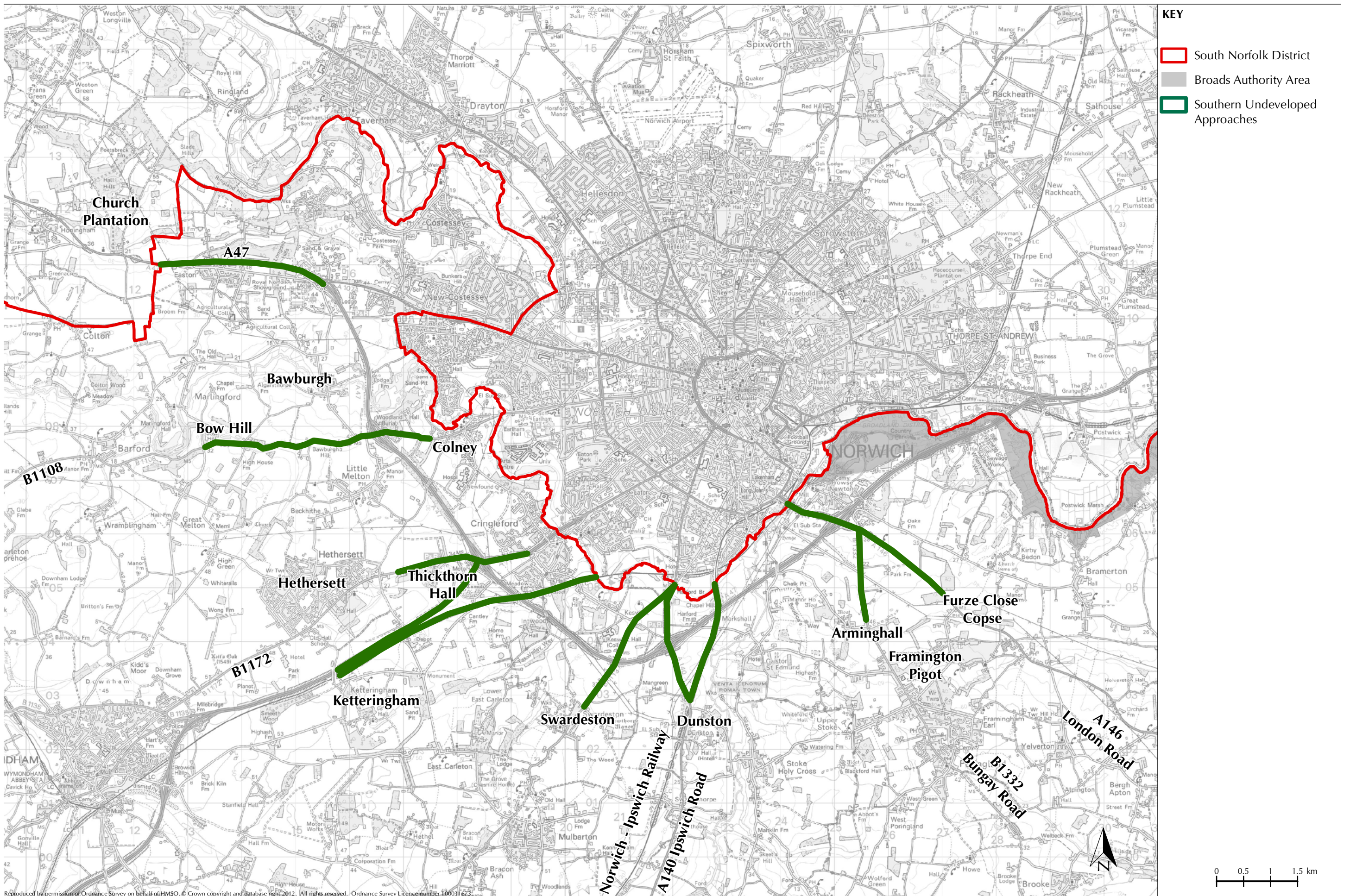
¹³ South Norfolk Landscape Assessment, Volume 3, Implications for Policy (June 2001, Land Use Consultants) – Paragraph B1.9

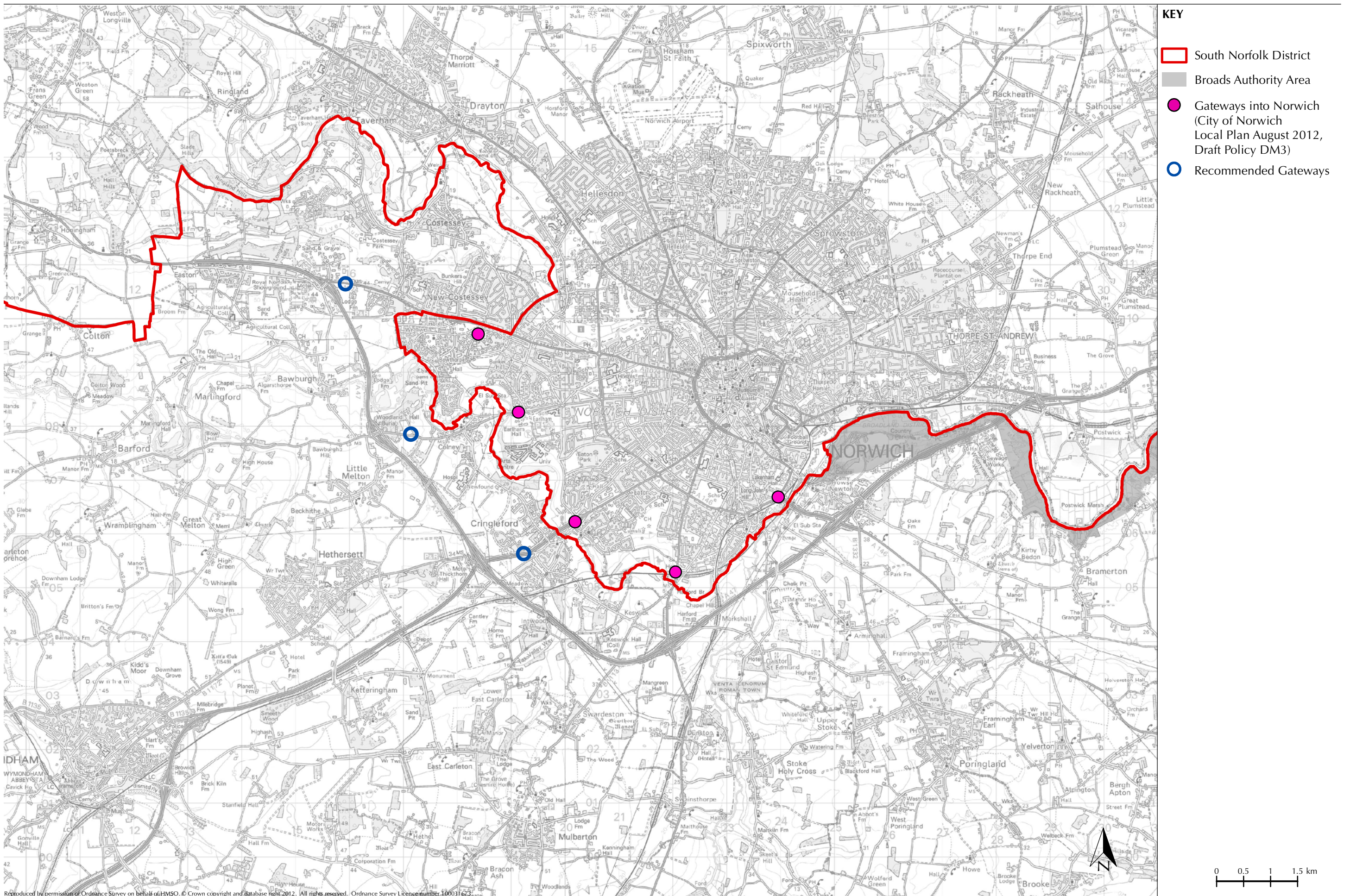
FIGURES

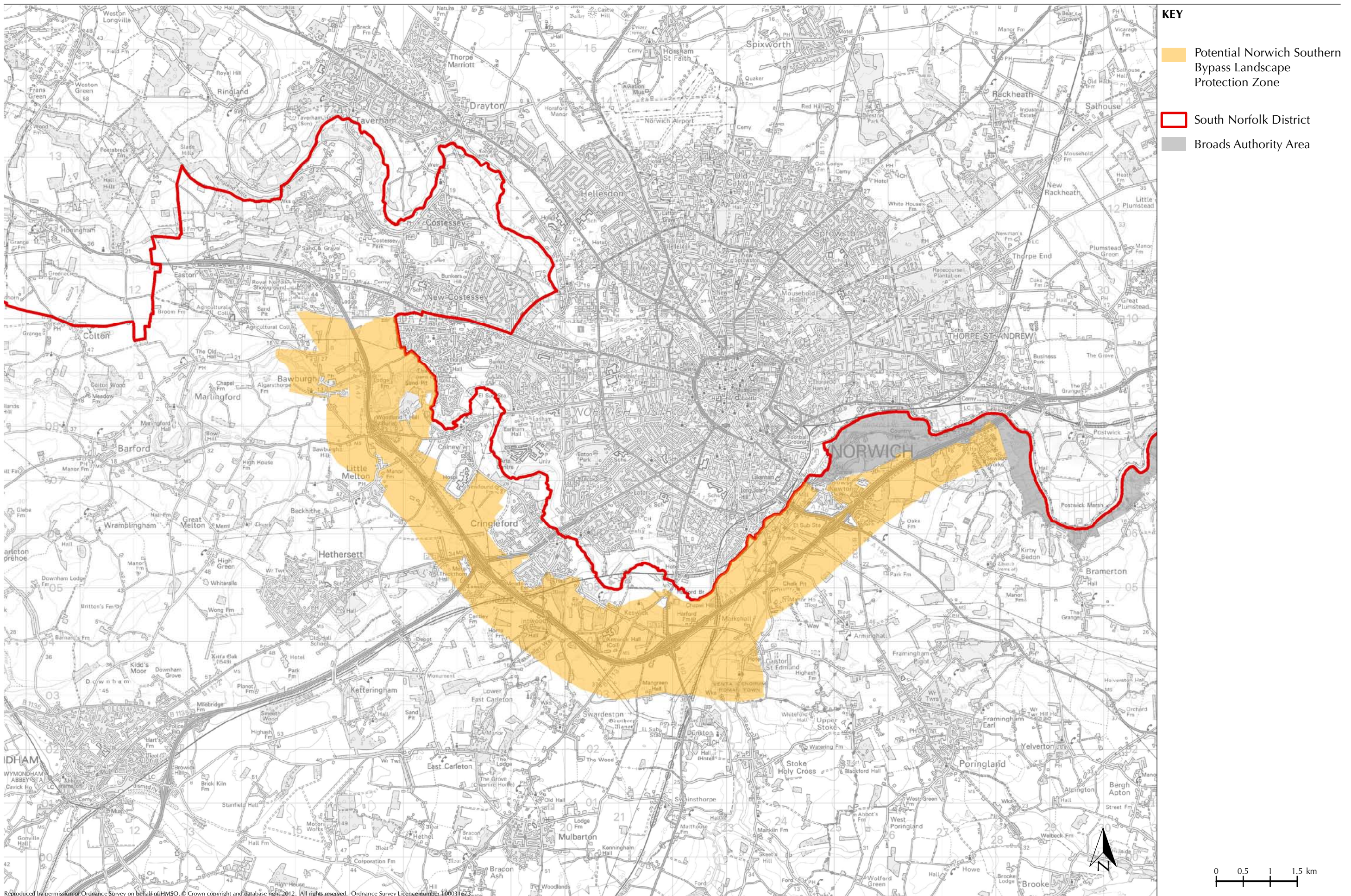


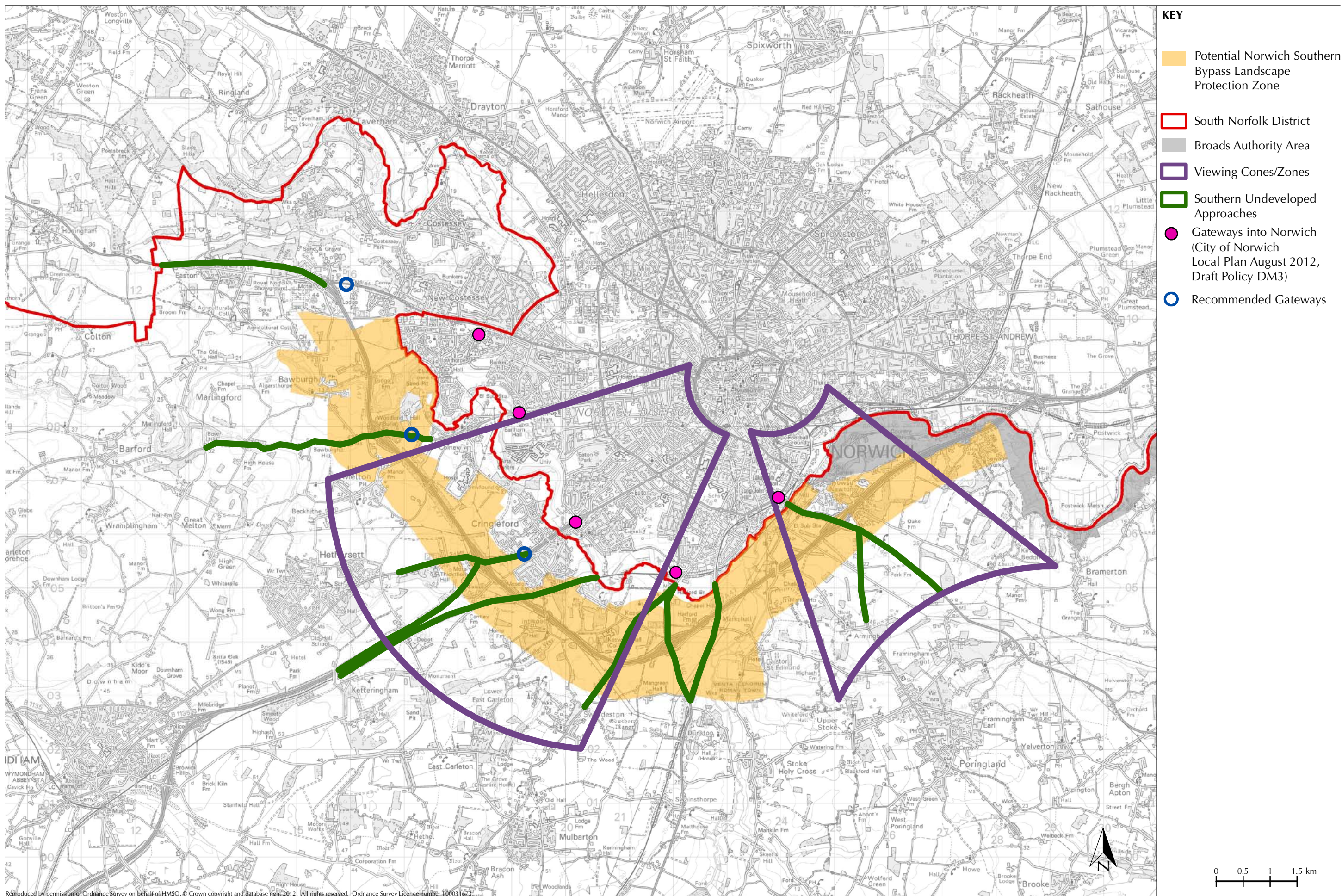




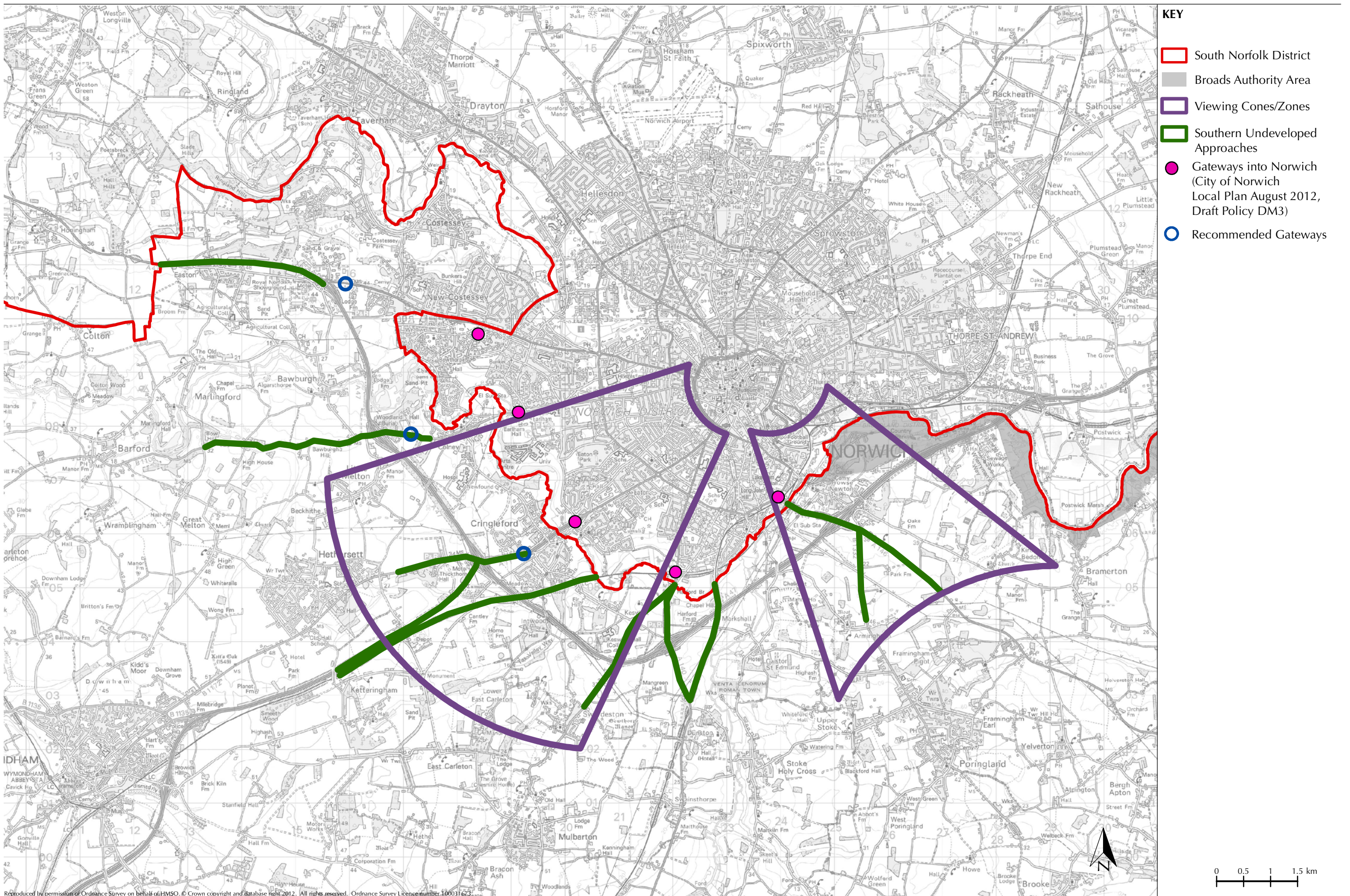








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South East Office The Old Crown High Street Blackboys Uckfield East Sussex TN22 5JR T 01825 891071 F 01825 891075 E mail@cba.uk.net W www.cba.uk.net

London Office 1 Swan Court 9 Tanner Street London SE1 3LE T 020 7089 6480 F 020 7089 9260

Directors C J Blandford BA DipLD MLA FLI • M E Antonia BSc EnvSci RSA DipPA • D Watkins BSc MSc AMIEnvSci

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