

Robertsbridge

Historic Character Assessment Report

July 2009



Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS)

Roland B Harris

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in association with Rother District Council



Sussex EUS – Robertsbridge

The Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (Sussex EUS) is a study of 41 towns undertaken between 2004 and 2009 by an independent consultant (Dr Roland B Harris, BA DPhil FSA MIFA), supported from January 2008 by a Research Assistant (Elizabeth Ruffell BSc MSc), for East Sussex County Council (ESCC), West Sussex County Council (WSCC), and Brighton and Hove City Council; and was funded by English Heritage.

Guidance and web-sites derived from the historic town studies will be, or have been, developed by the local authorities.

All photographs and illustrations are by the author.

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Cover photo: The Seven Stars, High Street.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the project

This report is an archaeological, historical, and historic urban character assessment of Robertsbridge. It is part of the Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (henceforth Sussex EUS) that examines 41 towns across the ancient county.¹

The Sussex EUS forms part of a national programme of such surveys initiated by English Heritage in 1992. The national programme is already well underway, with roughly half the English counties having been completed or currently undergoing study.

As the surveys have progressed, the approach has developed. In line with recent surveys, the Sussex EUS includes more modern towns, the main significance of which stems from the 19th and 20th centuries. Another recent innovation is the introduction of the characterization concept, comparable with the map-based techniques adopted by historic landscape characterization. This approach was developed in Lancashire (2000-4), and is further refined in Sussex.

The Sussex EUS has been funded by English Heritage, and supported in kind by the commissioning authorities: East Sussex County Council, West Sussex County Council, and Brighton and Hove City Council. A wide range of stakeholders (including district and borough councils, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) has supported the project.

In West Sussex the Sussex EUS forms part of the *Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme*,² aiming to provide guidance and advice on the protection and enhancement of all aspects of character in the county. Other historic environment projects come under this umbrella:

- Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of Sussex
- Intensive Urban Survey of Chichester and Fishbourne
- Local Distinctiveness Study of West Sussex.

1.2 Aims and objectives

1.2.1 Aims

The aim of the Sussex EUS is to deliver a unique and flexible tool to aid the understanding, exploration and management of the historic qualities of 41 of the most significant towns in Sussex with a view to:

- archaeological and historic environment research and management.
- informing strategic and local policy.
- underpinning urban historic land and buildings management and interpretation.
- encouraging the integration of urban historic characterization into the wider process of protecting and enhancing urban character.

1.2.2 Objectives

Key objectives of the project include the:

- synthesis of previous archaeological and historical work.
- creation of a Geographic Information System (GIS) that maps and allows the analysis of archaeological events, monuments and urban plan components using information obtained from a variety of sources.
- analysis of the origins and development of each town by establishing and examining its principal plan components and existing standing structures.
- identification of county-wide Historic Character Types and attribution of the types to different areas within each town.
- preparation of a Statement of Historic Urban Character for each town, to include assessment of archaeological potential and Historic Environment Value.
- identification of gaps in the understanding of the past occupation and historical development of character of each town through the development of a Research Framework.
- advice to local authorities on the development of guidance derived from the town studies.

1.3 Outputs

The principal outputs of the project comprise:

- Historic character assessment reports. Documents (of which this is one) that, separately for each town, summarize the setting and pre-urban activity; synthesize current archaeological and historical research; describe the development from origins to the present day; assess the surviving historic character and historic environment value; and set out a framework for future research on the historic environment of the towns.
- Geographical Information System (GIS) for the historic environment of each town. The GIS underpins the analysis and mapping of the town

reports, and is available to local authorities as a unique tool to support their decision making. The EUS-generated GIS data includes historic buildings and archaeological data, and mapping of areas for which Historic Character Type, historic land use, and Historic Urban Character Areas have been defined. The GIS data will be maintained and updated by the West Sussex County Council *Sites & Monuments Record* (SMR) and the East Sussex County Council *Historic Environment Record* (HER).

- Informing historic environment management guidance specific to each local planning authority, for the 41 EUS towns and Winchelsea, produced under the new Local Development Frameworks, and subject to formal consultation procedures.
- Background papers for the Sussex EUS project. Documents that include the project design, a summary of the methodology and an overall bibliography.

1.4 The structure of this report

1.4.1 The Setting

This introductory section describes the topography, geology, communications, and pre-urban archaeology of the town.

1.4.2 History

The history of Robertsbridge in this report can be a brief summary only. It aims to synthesize published research, and to provide a chronological overview of the development of the town as seen from documentary sources. The focus is placed on those matters – such as origins, economy, trade and institutions – that are most closely related to the urban historic environment today.

1.4.3 Archaeology

The archaeology section of this report draws on published and unpublished reports of excavations, archaeological assessments, and records of finds. This section also includes analysis of historic buildings (listed and non-listed) and the topography, the latter drawing on large-scale maps of Robertsbridge from 1733 onwards. Again, this section follows a chronological structure, and focuses on aspects of the material evidence of the town's past that relate most closely to the historic environment today.

1.4.4 Statement of Historic Urban Character

Whereas sections on history and archaeology (above) explore the development of Robertsbridge over time, this part of the report considers and defines the physical evidence of the past in today's townscape. It does this by means of a character-based approach, operating at three different scales: areas of common Historic Character Type; larger and topographically familiar Historic Urban Character Areas; and the whole town. Assessment is made of the Historic Environment Value of each of the Historic Urban Character Areas, taking account of the archaeological potential.

1.5 Principal sources

Robertsbridge has been the subject of significant historical and architectural interest, but only limited below-ground archaeological investigation. The principal sources drawn on during the writing of this report are listed below. Many other sources have been used too, and full references have been given by use of endnotes.

1.5.1 History

There is no authoritative historical study of Robertsbridge from its medieval origins onwards, although the history of Salehurst parish in the **Victoria County History**, published in 1937, explores aspects of the general history.³ The most significant historical secondary source, however, is the detailed survey of the manor of Robertsbridge of 1567, edited by **Raymond D'Elboux**.⁴

1.5.2 Archaeology

There have been no substantial excavations within the historic core of Robertsbridge. There have been several minor investigations and watching briefs, however, in or adjacent to the town. The one published excavation comprises:

Robertsbridge bypass – 1985⁵

Four unpublished investigations comprise:

Flood alleviation scheme – 2001-3⁶

1 The Retreat, High Street – 2004⁷

18 Fair Lane – 2006⁸

George Inn – 2006⁹

The **East Sussex Historic Environment Record** (HER) database has been invaluable for identifying unpublished sites, and for providing the pre-urban archaeological context.

1.5.3 Historic buildings

Robertsbridge has seen systematic analysis of its timber-framed historic buildings as part of the Rape of Hastings Architectural Survey, by **David Martin** and **Barbara Martin** (née Mastin). This has taken the form of numerous individual reports (from 1967 onwards) and an architectural history of the town, published in 1974.¹⁰

English Heritage's statutory list of historic buildings is also of use, though many of the descriptions date from the late 1940s and mid-1970s and were necessarily produced without internal inspection. Very limited fieldwork only was possible during this assessment and focused on correcting dating derived from such sources, identifying hitherto ignored buildings of historic interest, and re-evaluating the dating and function of key buildings and monuments.

1.5.4 Geology and topography

The contextual discussion of the solid and drift geology has principally derived from 1:50,000 British Geological Survey digital data. Ordnance Survey Historic 25" maps for Epochs 1-4 (1873

onwards) have proved invaluable, especially as these have been used in digital form, allowing overlaying with each other and with other data. A map of c.1733 (*East Sussex Record Office ACC 4728*) and, more completely and accurately, the tithe map of 1841-3 capture the pre-railway town at a large scale. This has been digitized and rectified to fit the National Grid to allow comparison with other maps and data. Vertical air photo coverage of 2006 provides a useful snapshot in time. All analysis and maps utilize the most recent large-scale Ordnance Survey mapping (digital MasterMap data).

1.6 Area covered by the report

The Sussex EUS assessment of Robertsbridge covers the historic core of the town as defined c.1875.

Robertsbridge is one of four towns in Rother District that have assessments such as this. The others are Battle, Bexhill and Rye (Winchelsea having been the subject of a more intensive study).

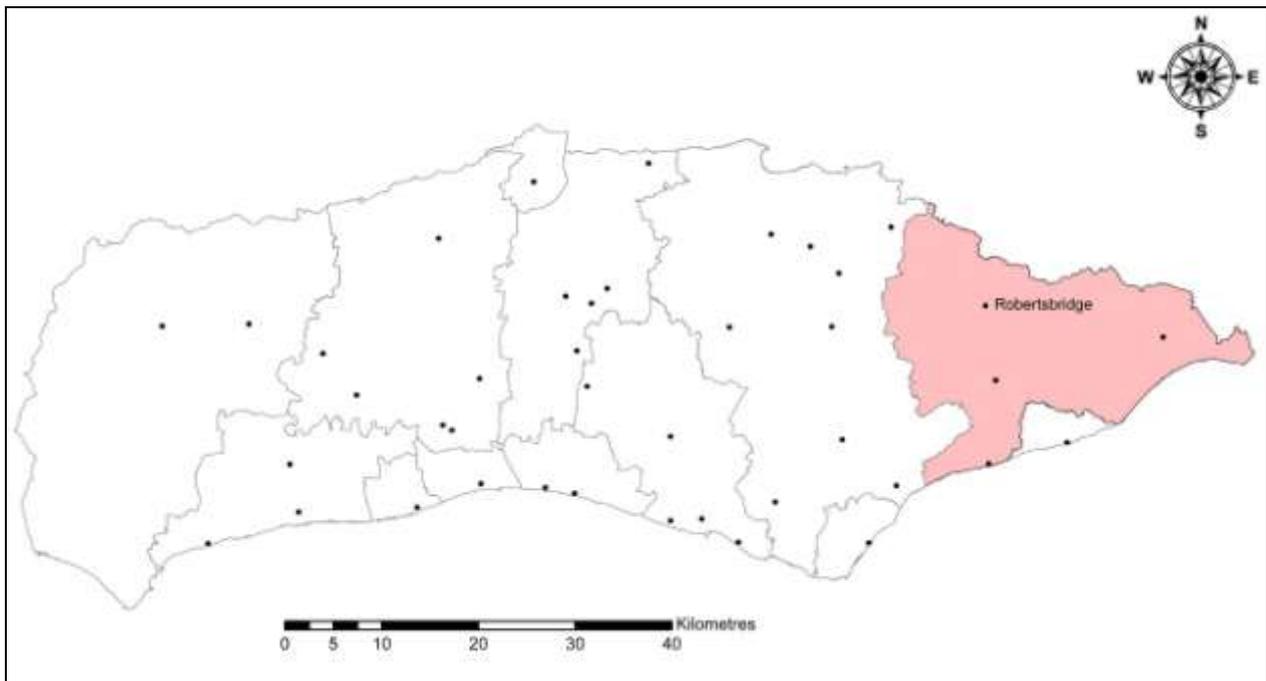


Fig. 1. Location of Robertsbridge within Sussex. Rother District is highlighted and points locate the 41 Sussex EUS towns.

2 THE SETTING



Fig. 2. River Rother at Robertsbridge.

2.1 Topography (Map 2)

Robertsbridge is situated within the High Weald, in the east-west valley of the River Rother, between the Forest Ridge and the Battle Ridge. The town is on the western side of a slight spur projecting into the flood plain of the River Rother, which flows to the sea near Rye, 22km to the east-south-east.

The northern end of the High Street is the lowest part of the town at c.10.5m OD. The main street rises steadily southwards to c.20.0m OD at the George Inn, and 35.8m OD at the southern edge of the present town (i.e. opposite Heathfield Gardens). The east-west slope across the town is illustrated by the fact that Fair Lane rises eastwards from its junction with the High Street at 14.3m OD to 24.5m at its eastern end; while Station Road descends westwards from its junction with High Street at 16.6m OD to 11.5m OD near 15 Station Road, before rising up the other side of the Darwell Stream valley to the railway crossing at c.17.0m OD.

The principal street of the town is the generally north-south High Street. The historic town has

minimal attached suburbs, principally located on the higher land off Fair Lane (i.e. the north-east) and on the south-west side of the historic core. A more extensive detached suburb has formed west of the railway station, stretching c.1.5km along Brightling Road. The separate historic settlement of Northbridge Street, c.350m north of Robertsbridge on the north side of the River Rother has also gained 20th-century suburbs to its north-east.

The town lies towards the south of the historic parish of Salehurst (now mostly forming Salehurst Civil Parish, together with a substantial part of Hurst Green Civil Parish and a very small part of Etchingham Civil Parish). In addition to the town of Robertsbridge, the extensive parish contains the historic villages of Salehurst (which retains the parish church) and Northbridge Street, together with the remains of a Cistercian abbey.

2.2 Geology (Map 2)

2.2.1 Solid geology

Along with the whole of Sussex, the rocks of the Robertsbridge area are sedimentary. Descending the higher land of the High Weald towards the Low Weald, the rocks get more recent.

All of Robertsbridge lies on a succession of sandstones, siltstones and mudstones (commonly clays) of the Hastings Beds (Lower Cretaceous). The EUS study area lies on the sandstones and siltstones of the Ashdown Sandstone Formation. Most of the modern suburbs have similar solid geology, although the western extremity (i.e. from the western end of Langham Road) lies on the mudstones of the Wadhurst Clay Formation.

Clay ironstone, or siderite mudstone, provided ore for the Wealden iron industry, and post-medieval forges and blast furnaces lie near the EUS study area. Typically these are located on fault lines marking the edge of the Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation and the Ashdown Sandstone Formation.

2.2.2 Drift Geology

The drift geology of the Robertsbridge area comprises alluvium and river terrace deposits that mark the valley and flood plain of the River Rother and its tributaries (such as the Darwell Stream on the west side of the town). These deposits show that the current channel that is the river today was formerly considerably more

extensive, and is reflected in a long history of flooding at Robertsbridge.¹¹

2.3 Communications

2.3.1 Water

Robertsbridge is located directly on the River Rother. Although a minor channel today, apparently the river was navigable as far as Robertsbridge.¹² This had ceased to be the case by the 16th century when the river was navigable as far as Udiam, c.3.2km east of Robertsbridge.¹³ Even at this date, however, Bodiam appears to have been the more usual limit. For example, in 1542-74 iron from Robertsbridge Abbey forge was carted to Bodiam bridge (i.e. past Udiam) before being loaded on to barges, with trans-shipping occurring at Rye.¹⁴ Bodiam bridge remained the limit of navigation in 1723 and 1840.¹⁵

2.3.2 Road

Robertsbridge lies on the former Hastings to London road, but this route – in the form of the A21 – has bypassed the town itself since 1989. The Hastings-London road (which ran along the High Street) was turnpiked in 1753, and the road from Robertsbridge to Woods Corner (Dallington) was turnpiked in 1813.¹⁶

2.3.3 Railway

The South Eastern Railway (SER) was authorized to build a double-tracked main line connecting Tunbridge Wells (thence London) and Hastings. This opened as far south as Robertsbridge in 1851, with the section from Robertsbridge to St Leonards opening in 1852.¹⁷ The line was selectively reduced to a single track in the tunnels (to allow use of standard rolling stock: the tunnels are narrower than designed due to faulty construction and necessary re-lining) and electrified in 1985-6: it remains in frequent use.¹⁸ In 1900 the Rother Valley Railway (later the Kent and East Sussex Railway) was opened between Robertsbridge and Rolvenden. This light railway was extended to Tenterden in 1903 and Headcorn in 1905, and survived as an independent company until nationalized in 1948. It closed in 1961, but the section from Tenterden to Bodiam was reopened in stages from 1974 by enthusiasts: a separate group was formed in 1991, based at Robertsbridge station, which has begun to rebuild the section from Robertsbridge to Bodiam.¹⁹

2.4 Evidence for pre-urban activity

2.4.1 Prehistoric

There is only limited evidence for prehistoric activity within or adjacent to the EUS study area:

- Robertsbridge bypass – excavation in 1985 in advance of construction of the bypass recovered a small assemblage of 12 prehistoric worked flints, six of which were Mesolithic (10000-4001 BC) blades/bladelets.²⁰

There has been a further prehistoric find possibly in or near the EUS study area:

- Robertsbridge (unspecific location) – a polished Neolithic (4000 BC to 2351 BC) axe-head [HER reference: MES2302].

2.4.2 Romano-British

Although no Romano-British finds or features have been found through controlled excavation in the town, there have been discoveries of Roman ironworkings in the area. There are two known bloomery sites of this period within 5km.²¹

Outside the EUS study area there has been one local Roman-British discovery:

- Bugsell – Romano-British settlement site discovered in 1969, upstream from Robertsbridge. Finds include Samian dating from the 2nd century AD.²²

2.4.3 Anglo-Saxon

There have been no Anglo-Saxon finds in or near the EUS study area.

2.4.4 Implications of pre-urban archaeology

The implications from all the pre-urban finds are clear: although the EUS study area and its immediate vicinity lacks substantial controlled excavations, evidence for prehistoric and Romano-British occupation in the area has been found and, together with evidence for later pre-urban activity, should be anticipated in any archaeological excavations in Robertsbridge

3 HISTORY

3.1 Origins: 12th-15th centuries

3.1.1 Place-name

The name *Robertsbridge* simply means the 'bridge of Robert', apparently taking its name from Robert de St Martin, founder of the abbey, although Alured de St Martin (sheriff of the Rape of Hastings, steward to Richard I, and husband of Alice, or Adeliza, widow of John Count of Eu) is more commonly identified as the founder. The name – in the Latinized form *Ponte Roberti* – is recorded from c.1176.²³ David and Barbara Martin have suggested on topographic grounds that the bridge was over a minor stream,²⁴ although Mark Gardiner has argued since, on the basis of a charter from the late 12th or early 13th century relating to a pond at Redland mill, that there was by then a long bridge or causeway over the River Rother on the present line (i.e. The Clappers).²⁵

3.1.2 Abbey, chapel and church

The remains of Robertsbridge Abbey – the only Cistercian foundation in Sussex – lie 1.4km to the east of the town. It has long been accepted that the location of the abbey when founded c.1176 was in the centre of what became Robertsbridge, and that it moved to its present site in the early 13th century.²⁶ A temporary site in the first phase of foundation of a Cistercian abbey is normal and, despite a recent suggestion that the present site is the original one,²⁷ there are good grounds for this tradition at Robertsbridge. First, the abbey is located at *Elham*, which prior to 1219 was clearly a different site from the abbey.²⁸ Second, and more compellingly, a charter of 1314 describes a chapel (dedicated to the Trinity, Holy Cross, St Mary and St John the Evangelist²⁹) in the vill of Salehurst as being 'on the spot where the Abbey was originally founded'.³⁰ A charter of 1356 refers to what is evidently the same chapel as that 'formerly built in the vill of Robertsbridge'.³¹ Wills from 1501, 1502 and 1543-4 give the dedication as being of Our Lady,³² and, together with the survey of 1567, show that the chapel was located in the street, in the area now known as the Green.³³ The reason for relocation of the abbey is unclear. Increased wealth from benefactions in the early years has been suggested,³⁴ and, even less plausibly given that the site moved from c.20m OSBM to c.10m OSBM, due to flooding.³⁵ The adoption of a small riverside prominence is more consistent

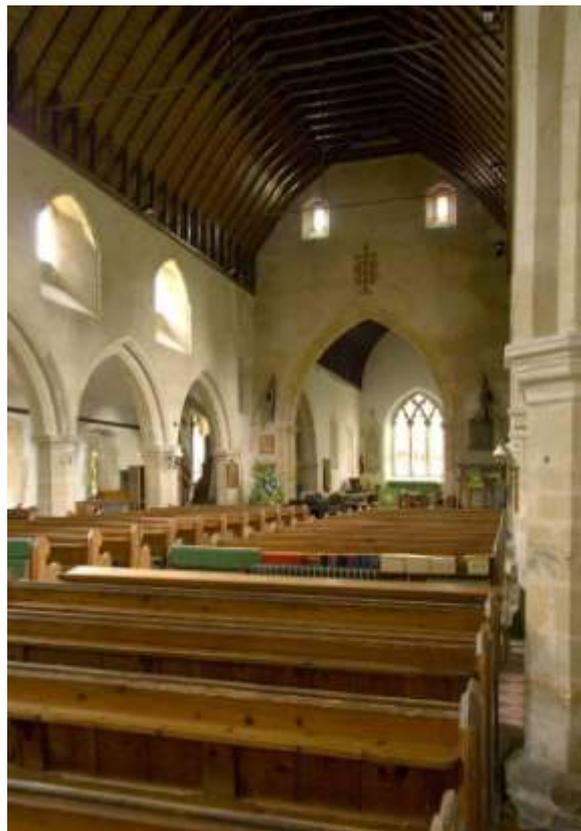


Fig. 3. St Mary's church, Salehurst.

with typical Cistercian re-siting to achieve better water supply.

Despite the emergence of Robertsbridge as a significant settlement in the 13th century (see below, section 3.1.3), it did not become its own parish, so that the parish church remained St Mary, Salehurst, recorded in Domesday Book (1086).

3.1.3 Medieval town

Cistercians – influenced by 11th-century hermit movements and applying nostalgia for the Desert Fathers to their rigorous application of the Rule of St Benedict – normally avoided, or even cleared, settlement from the vicinity of their foundations. Therefore, it is improbable that Robertsbridge saw secular settlement before the abbey had relocated to *Elham*. The earliest indication of secular activity at Robertsbridge comes from the granting to the abbot of Robertsbridge in January 1225 of a weekly Friday market and an annual three-day fair (on the vigil, day and morrow of the feast of the Assumption of Mary: August 15th). Within three weeks the grant was cancelled, apparently due to the threat to existing markets in the area. In 1253 the abbot was again granted a weekly market at Robertsbridge, this time to be held on a Monday, and an annual fair (on the vigil, day



Fig. 4. 48 High Street: the former medieval courthouse.

and morrow of Holy Cross day: September 14th, which was consistent with the dedication of the chapel). This followed the granting, to William of Etchingam, of a Wednesday market at Salehurst five months earlier.³⁶ Four other markets were granted in Sussex in the early 1250s (at Burwash, Cuckfield, Hailsham, and Wadhurst) that, with Robertsbridge and Salehurst, represent a largely successful spurt of growth in the formal economy of the Weald.³⁷ The three-day fair is recorded as being held in 1465.³⁸

Robertsbridge was developed after c.1220 (with the short-lived grant of 1225 perhaps reflecting the nascent settlement) by the abbot, who around 1250-60 developed his own hundred of Robertsbridge, and created the posts of constable, ale-conner and street-driver.³⁹ An undated rental, probably of the late 13th or early 14th century, includes several tenants with occupational names: a weaver, a fuller, a dyer, a trader, a smith and a turner. Evidently, Robertsbridge was a significant centre for trading and manufacturing by c.1300, and its success may already have been at the expense of the rival market of Salehurst (which had certainly declined by 1349).⁴⁰ A substantial phase of expansion c.1314 has been suggested, on the grounds that tenants at nearby Todhurst

may have been relocated to the town at this date.⁴¹

3.1.4 Urban institutions

The abbot had a private prison at Redland, c.600m east of the town, in 1279.⁴² This was moved into the town in the late 14th or 15th century when the courthouse was constructed (48 High Street).⁴³

3.2 The town c.1500-1840

3.2.1 Economic history

Robertsbridge between the 16th and early 19th centuries was largely indistinguishable from a village. The weekly market is undocumented for most of this period, but can be assumed to have continued as it was still going in the later 19th and 20th centuries (see below, section 3.3.1). The fair continued to be held, and was recorded in 1567, c.1580 (when the profits were assessed at 7s 8d per annum) and 1672.⁴⁴ The date moved from September 14th to 25th in 1752, with the adoption of the New Style calendar.⁴⁵

In the survey of inns and alehouses of 1686, Robertsbridge had modest provision of stabling and accommodation, consistent with its location on a trans-Weald route (which only became more significant with the later development of Hastings as a resort). With c.10 stablings and guest beds, the town had less provision than other nearby Wealden towns, such as Battle and Wadhurst, and was similar to nearby villages such as Ticehurst.⁴⁶ Although six alehouses are recorded in the survey of 1567, few of these appear to have been substantial inns. In 1659-60 the Pied Bull, the Lion and the George were of sufficient scale to accommodate meetings of the tithe commission and courts, and the Checker was substantially extended in the 17th century.⁴⁷

Wealden roads had long been notoriously bad so were ripe for improvement by turnpike trusts. The road from Hastings to Flimwell, via Battle and Robertsbridge, was turnpiked in 1753, and the road from Robertsbridge to Woods Corner (Dallington) was turnpiked in 1813.⁴⁸

Wealden iron production had a significant impact on the economy of the town, with the beginning of the period coinciding with the development of the blast furnace, expanding markets, and rapid growth in the industry. The first English blast furnace had been established 29km from Robertsbridge, at Newbridge on Ashdown Forest, in 1496. The industry expanded rapidly in the 16th century, thereafter declining to the point of extinction by the end of the 18th century. There



Fig. 5. 46 High Street, formerly The Checker.

were 27 ironworks of this period within 10km of Robertsbridge.⁴⁹ The nearest to the town was established on the site of the suppressed abbey, by Sir William Sidney, in 1541-2. Robertsbridge Abbey forge operated until the 1790s, also making steel from 1566 to at least 1609. The furnace, also built in 1541-2, was abandoned in 1546, re-opened in 1574 and finally closed c. 1790. The forge and furnace were subsequently leased to members of local families (Michael Weston in 1574; Henry English in 1628; William and Robert Hawes in 1651; and Thomas Snep in 1707).⁵⁰ French ironworkers are recorded at Robertsbridge Abbey forge and furnace, holding demesne land rent free in return,⁵¹ and earlier ironworks in the area presumably account for the four aliens, three of whom were French, recorded in the 1524-5 subsidy rolls for the Hundred of Robertsbridge.⁵² The impact on local employment is less well documented, but was doubtless considerable.

A still active cloth industry is suggested by reference to fulling mill fields in the 1567 survey, located on the east side of the town.⁵³

From a parish total of around 330 in 1524, and around 400 in 1539, the population rose to around 675 by 1676 and around 710 in 1724. Thereafter population continued to grow, reaching 1,611 in 1801 and 2,204 in 1831.⁵⁴ The

predominance of parish, rather than town, statistics and the diverse source of these figures, mean that they should be taken as indicative of general trends only.

One stimulus for growth in the late 18th and early 19th centuries may have been the barracks built in the north of the parish, c.2km from Robertsbridge, at Silverhill: there had been a beacon here from at least 1595.⁵⁵ The advent of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815) saw a new need for barracks in the county, and that built in 1798 for c.4,000 men at Silverhill was the largest in the county. The barracks was closed after 1815.⁵⁶

3.2.2 Church and religion

This period began with the drama of Henry VIII's Dissolution of the Monasteries. The surrender of the abbey in 1538 saw the site granted to Sir William Sidney, with the south, west and north-west ranges of the conventual buildings retained and converted to a mansion. These were further reduced in the 17th century.⁵⁷

Within Robertsbridge itself, the chapel of Our Lady survived into the 16th century (see above section 3.1.2), and is last referred to in 1567.⁵⁸ It appears to have been demolished soon after.⁵⁹ The church of St Mary at nearby Salehurst was institutionally more robust and continued to serve the parish, which included the nearby town of Robertsbridge.

Bishop Compton's census of 1676 recorded no Roman Catholic recusants, but there were 28 adult protestant nonconformists in Salehurst parish.⁶⁰ The Chichester diocesan survey of 1724 records three Presbyterian families, out of a total of 157.⁶¹ A Wesleyan Methodist chapel was established in Fair Lane in 1812,⁶² although John Wesley visited the town five times to preach, between 1771 and 1784,⁶³ and there appears to have been an earlier Methodist congregation at Robertsbridge, recorded in 1774, 1780 and 1791.⁶⁴

3.2.3 Urban institutions

There is little evidence of urban institutions in this period, consistent with Robertsbridge's village like status. The courthouse in the High Street probably became redundant during the 16th century (see section 4.1.1), and it appears that courts were subsequently held in alehouses or inns: certainly the Earl of Leicester's Justice Courts for the Liberty of Robertsbridge were held at the Lion in 1659 and at the George in 1660.⁶⁵

The burial of Ann Audrey, wife of a schoolmaster, in 1652 suggests that there may

have been schooling in the town in the 17th century.⁶⁶ John Cowper's will of 1691, however, suggests that any schooling had ceased by then, as it made provision – subject to his children dying without lawful issue and following his wife's death – for a charity school for Salehurst and the surrounding parishes. No school was established as a result of Cowper's will,⁶⁷ although the Methodist, George Pike, had a school at Robertsbridge in the 1770s and 1780s.⁶⁸ A charity school was founded in Robertsbridge in 1796, and this became a National School in 1834.⁶⁹

Salehurst parish acquired a workhouse, or poorhouse, by 1730, which survives as School Terrace, Northbridge Street: this late 16th-century building was modified to create six cottages for its new purpose.⁷⁰ In the parliamentary survey of 1776-7 it is recorded as having 100 places.⁷¹ Following the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act, Salehurst parish became part of Ticehurst Poor Law Union,⁷² with a new Union workhouse opening in Flimwell in 1836.⁷³

3.3 Expansion: c.1840-2005

3.3.1 Economic history

The railway came to Robertsbridge in 1851, with a station 250m west of the town. The South Eastern Railway (SER) built the new double-tracked main line to connect Tunbridge Wells (itself connected to London since 1845) and Hastings (the section from Robertsbridge to St Leonards not opening until 1852). This provided a more direct Hastings-London line than that of the London Brighton and South Coast Railway (LBSCR): in 1846 the latter had opened a line between Brighton and St Leonards (where, in 1851, it joined the new SER Ashford-Rye-St Leonards line). In 1900 the Kent and East Sussex line was opened between Robertsbridge and Rolvenden (extended to Tenterden in 1903 and Headcorn in 1905).⁷⁴

The impact of the railway was not apparent in population expansion. Growth earlier in the century had peaked at 2,204 in 1831, and the parish total had dropped to 2,099 in 1841. This was followed by a recovery to 2,191 in 1851 followed by a dip to 2,014 in 1861, rising slightly to 2,133 in 1881, before a further dip to 1,803 in 1901, and was only 1,932 in 1911. Railway labourers inflated the 1851 census figure, so the rural depopulation (which was part of a wider trend) probably at least in part predates the railway. The effect of the railway on population in the later 19th and early 20th centuries, therefore, was probably limited to helping Robertsbridge



Fig. 6. 63 High Street, the home and workshop of L. J. Nicolls, famous maker of cricket bats, from 1876 to 1942.

escape some of the rural depopulation that marked most of the Sussex parishes to the south and east (which amongst other factors, typically had poorer access to the railway).⁷⁵ With such little change in the population, Robertsbridge saw very little suburban expansion before 1914, with new development largely limited to a few houses scattered along the turnpike road of 1813 (Station Road and its continuation Brightling Road).

The market became a fortnightly sale in or by the 19th century, relocating to an auction market site on the south side of the George Inn, after c.1875.⁷⁶ The market ceased in the 1950s.⁷⁷ A fatstock show was held annually on 12th December in the early 20th century.⁷⁸ Fairs continued to be held until the mid-20th century.⁷⁹

The economy of Robertsbridge remained largely agricultural, with pasture dominating, and hops a significant crop until the mid-20th century. Although the 19th-century Wealden industry of artificial fattening of poultry by force feeding, or cramming, was concentrated in the Heathfield area, revival after the First World War saw a more evenly distributed Wealden poultry industry with the centre shifting slightly eastwards.⁸⁰ At Robertsbridge, R. Burgess and Co. Ltd. had a mill and warehouse in Station Road, which

supplied the industry.⁸¹ In 1878, a more substantial flour mill was built to replace Ockham mill on the north side of the River Rother, at Northbridge Street.⁸²

L. J. Nicolls began making his famous cricket bats in Robertsbridge in 1876, with his workshop at 63 High Street. In 1940 Nicolls merged with H. J. Gray and Sons (founded as racket makers in Cambridge in 1855) to form Gray-Nicolls, which continues to produce hand-made bats from its factory, which in 1942 moved to the Covelyn site at Coldharbour (a former pig and chicken farm), to the west of the town. With the sale of this site for residential development (Oakland Drive), in 1982 Gray-Nicolls moved to its present premises (the former Nicoltoys factory) in Station Road.⁸³

After 1911 the population of Salehurst parish saw little change until after 1931 (1,991), thereafter totals rising to 2,302 in 1951, and (despite losing 440 in 1952 to the creation of Hurst Green parish and, to less effect, the enlargement of Etchingham parish⁸⁴) 2,624 in 2001. The modest inter-war expansion of Robertsbridge followed the pattern of earlier development in that it comprised further building along Station Road/Brightling Road, together with limited development on the new roads leading off this (i.e. Langham Road, Knelle Road and Bellhurst Road). Post-1945 development has seen further expansion of this suburb on the west side of the railway, most notably with housing built on the site of the saw mill and timber yard (Mill Rise). This period has also seen housing developments in or adjacent to the historic core (e.g. to the south-west of the George Hotel and at Fayre Meadow).

3.3.2 Church and religion

St Mary's, Salehurst, has remained the parish church for Robertsbridge, although around 1900 a mission church was established from St Mary's within the town itself, in Fair Lane (i.e. the present church rooms).⁸⁵ A new ecclesiastical parish of Hurst Green was created in 1907 from the parishes of Salehurst and Etchingham.⁸⁶

Nonconformism continued to flourish after 1840. The High Street Bethel Strict Baptist chapel was registered in 1842 (closed)⁸⁷ and a Congregational Methodist church was built in the High Street in 1881 (now styled a United Reformed church). The Wesleyan Methodist chapel in Fair Lane saw a Sunday school added in 1874, but was converted to flats in 1960.⁸⁸

3.3.3 Urban institutions

During the 19th and 20th centuries Robertsbridge has seen the development of a range of social functions that did not exist previously. The detail of these is beyond the scope of this brief account, but the salient institutions are included. Despite modest population expansion, Robertsbridge did not acquire new urban attributes, such as administrative and legal functions, and remains functionally indistinguishable from a large village.

In 1841 The National School acquired the former workhouse site for a purpose-built school at Northbridge.⁸⁹ The school was expanded later in the 19th century, gaining a separate infants' department by 1880.⁹⁰ The school became a primary school only in 1955, with the opening of the co-educational Robertsbridge County Secondary School on the west side of the town. This became a comprehensive in 1975-6, and since 1993 has been styled Robertsbridge Community College. Following compulsory purchase of land within Robertsbridge itself (which included part of the former Upper Fairfield) in 1984, the primary school moved to its present site in 1988.⁹¹

Increasing sporting and social activities in the late 19th century led to a need for dedicated recreational facilities. The Working Men's Club and Institute was founded in 1892, initially meeting at the Langham Hotel, until a purpose-built clubhouse opened in Station Road in 1909.⁹² Robertsbridge Cricket Club was founded in 1887.⁹³ Since 1993 Robertsbridge Community College has made its increasing facilities available to non-pupils.

4 ARCHAEOLOGY

4.1 The medieval town

4.1.1 Buildings

Although the parish church of St Mary and the remains of the Cistercian abbey lie outside Robertsbridge, and there are no visible remains of the medieval chapel of Our Lady, the town preserves numerous examples of medieval houses.

Ostensibly a late 17th-century house, 61 High Street (Robertsbridge House) preserves a sandstone undercroft from its medieval predecessor, possibly dating from as early as the 14th century. This had a timber ceiling from the outset, and has four simple arched recesses, or cupboards, in the north wall. There is no evidence of the original entrance (which would be expected to be from the street), but later 14th or 15th-century doorways have been added at the northern end of the rear wall: one opens on to a spiral stair to the ground floor and the other to the rear yard or, perhaps less likely, a rear range. Re-used timbers in the rebuilt house could derive from the medieval building above the undercroft. The presence of the undercroft is consistent with use as a tavern or inn in the late medieval period (the Tonne, by 1567 The George, The Star by 1807, and the White Horse by 1864). In the late 15th or early 16th centuries a detached stable block was built to the rear, which was partly demolished during construction of a rear wing to the inn in the mid-17th century: the surviving part of the late medieval stable forms the northern bay of White Horse Cottage.⁹⁴

There are surviving examples of 14th-century timber framing at 1-4 Fair Lane (a four-bay house with two-bay open hall dating from c.1380, originally with an end jetty to the parlour⁹⁵) and 12-14 High Street (Rosebank). The latter is a late 14th-century four-bay Wealden house, with the external recess for the open hall still visible, despite insertion of a floor in the late 16th century.⁹⁶ There are six other Wealden houses in Robertsbridge. The Seven Stars, High Street, is a four-bay example from c.1400 having a two-bay open hall with an overshot cross-passage (see cover). A floor was inserted c.1600.⁹⁷ 43-7 High Street: early 15th-century Wealden house of four bays, with the open hall floored and a continuous jetty inserted in 17th century.⁹⁸ 52 High Street comprises a single (probably the parlour) bay of an early 15th-



Fig. 7. 71-5 High Street.

century Wealden house, now incorporated within an early 19th-century terrace (50-6 High Street).⁹⁹ 46 High Street is a substantial five-bay Wealden house of 15th-century date, with a long three-bay hall (of which one bay was overshot by a hall chamber), consistent with construction as an ale-house (The Checker: see Fig. 5). The open hall was floored in the mid-16th century and the building converted to a continuous jettied type. The mock timber framing of the façade dates from 1973.¹⁰⁰ 71-5 High Street is a 15th-century Wealden house, with the open hall floored and a continuous jetty inserted in the mid-16th century.¹⁰¹ 23 Fair Lane is probably the most recent example, dating from the later 15th-century, and has both close-studding and larger daub panels. The open hall was floored over c.1600.¹⁰² The survival of a 14th-century Wealden house at 35 High Street, Winchester has demonstrated that such wide 'parallel hall' houses were compatible with even the most intensely commercial of locations,¹⁰³ and all except Rosebank (which was built as a farmhouse: see below, section 4.1.3) are located directly on the street frontage, compatible with an urban, commercial function.

There are examples of specialized buildings. 48 High Street is a three-bay house, with a two-bay



Fig. 8. 13-15 High Street.

open hall, and a service bay to the south, of late 14th or 15th-century date. This building was recorded as the courthouse in 1567, but probably went out of use around this time since the open hall was much reduced in the mid to late 16th century by insertion of a first floor and the loss of one of the two bays by the building of a chimney.¹⁰⁴ 13-15 High Street is a late 15th-century house with single-bay open hall and service bay. The position of the doorways to the two rooms of the service bay, at the extremities of the wall, is unusual for services and could suggest that the room facing the street was a shop.¹⁰⁵

Other medieval open-hall buildings comprise 55-9 High Street (a late medieval timber-framed house of which the heavily modified southern two bays only survive and appear to have been the service rooms to a former open hall¹⁰⁶) and 11 High Street (a much disguised late 15th-century two-bay house with a one-bay open hall)¹⁰⁷

4.1.2 Excavations

A series of excavated trenches (at roughly 50m intervals) along the line of **Robertsbridge bypass** in 1985 produced limited evidence of medieval activity. This included a medieval ditch containing 14th-century pottery, in Trench G; and a thick layer of burnt clay with late 13th-century

and 14th-century pottery, in Trench I. These suggest 14th-century occupation along St John's Cross Road (i.e. the southern continuation of the High Street) around the junction with the A21 bypass, although the fact that the trench between these two (Trench H) produced only two sherds of medieval pottery suggests that this was scattered.¹⁰⁸

The cutting of a new stream channel in Area D (i.e. west of the historic course of the stream to the rear of 41-51 High Street) during the **flood alleviation scheme** works in 2001-3 revealed evidence of a ditch system that appears to relate to medieval and post-medieval field boundaries.¹⁰⁹

4.1.3 Topographic analysis (Maps 5-6)

David and Barbara Martin have suggested that the earliest phase of urban development comprised long and narrow plots of probable 13th-century date on the west side of the High Street, between Piper's Lane and 36-7 High Street.¹¹⁰ The earliest buildings are of 14th-century date and are scattered on both sides of the High Street and Fair Lane so, in the absence of detailed medieval tenement by tenement documentary history, such analysis is necessarily based on cartographic evidence,



Fig. 9. 23 Fair Lane: late 15th-century close-studding visible in west wall.



Fig. 10. 12-14 High Street (Rosebank): late 14th-century Wealden farmhouse.

combined with the 1567 survey. Certainly the 1567 survey shows that the western edge of the town was formed by the course of the Darvell Stream (as it survived until the recent flood alleviation scheme), thus giving plots on this side of the High Street a much greater length than those on the east side. However, it is equally clear that few full-length plot boundaries survived into the period of detailed cartography. Indeed, the only entire plot that reaches the stream on the tithe map of 1841-3 (Fig. 17) is north of the area of primary plots identified by the Martins, to the rear of 23 High Street. To the south of this the tithe map shows a single full-length boundary to the rear of the centre of 39 High Street, and the double boundaries of a former lane within the grounds of Provident Cottage (i.e. between plots 613 and 1588 on the tithe map). Otherwise the boundaries recorded on the tithe and early Ordnance Survey maps stop, or show major discontinuity, at a second, more easterly, course of the stream that has been infilled or covered over since 1945. The two courses separated at Piper's Lane, with the eastern channel marking the edge of the alluvium deposits and, thus, the area of regular flooding. Although the eastern

channel shows some signs of artificial straightening (e.g. behind 41-51 High Street), it appears natural in origins and is highly unlikely to represent a later introduction across pre-existing plots. If, as seems at least possible, this eastern channel represents the rear of the earliest plots on the west side of the High Street, this removes much of the difference between the plots on the east and west sides of the main street, with both sides generally tapering towards the river crossing at the north (in a manner similar to earlier Bramber). Moreover, the mirrored deviations of the High Street frontages (i.e. the splaying out near the war memorial, reflecting the mid-road location of the medieval chapel, and the widening of the centre part of the High Street, albeit with what appears to be subsequent encroachment immediately north of Fair Lane) suggest that the town developed both sides of the street broadly contemporarily. Indeed, in the absence of a good reason (such as the different lordship either side of the road at Sedlescombe Street¹¹¹) this would be expected.

The straightness of the urban part of Fair Lane contrasts with the lane to the east, which suggests that it is a secondary development.¹¹²

Moreover, the plots are smaller and more irregular than those of the High Street. The earliest surviving building here is 1-4 Fair Lane, dating from c.1380, and the street is likely to have been established in or by the early 14th century. Although the lane runs through the middle of the two fair fields,¹¹³ the form of these two fields as known from the earliest surveys does not suggest a single field later cut by the street: the earliest reference to the 'Fairefield' is in 1337,¹¹⁴ but presumably originated in the 13th century.

The northern part of the High Street also appears to be a secondary expansion of the town. On the east side, the late 14th-century four-bay Wealden house at 12-14 High Street (Rosebank) is set back from the frontage, and formed part of a farmstead called Corsleys until subdivided into tenements in the late 15th century.¹¹⁵ In 1567 the lands to which the name Corsleys remained attached included a small parcel opposite Rosebank, suggesting that the west side of the High Street also initially formed part of the farmstead.¹¹⁶ Certainly, the earliest buildings here (11 and 13-15 High Street) date from the late 15th century (see above, section 4.1.1).

The medieval town was more extensive than later mapping or surviving buildings suggest. In 1973 four house platforms were observed on the south side of Robertsbridge, on the east side of George Hill (i.e. in the field opposite modern Blenheim Court). These buildings were recorded in the 1567 survey, and, thus, are likely to have been medieval.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the excavation in 1985 of evidence for 14th-century occupation around the junction of St John's Cross Road and the A21 bypass suggests still more southerly expansion of the town at an early date, although possibly only intermittently built-up in this area (see above section 4.1.2).

4.2 The village c.1500-1845

4.2.1 Buildings

Robertsbridge has 34 surviving buildings that date from between 1500 and 1800: eight from the 16th century, nine from the 17th century, 12 from the 18th century, and five from the early 19th century.

All of the 16th and 17th-century buildings are timber framed. The 16th-century examples reflect the demise of the open hall. At 3-9 High Street the early 16th-century two-bay hall was floored over *ab initio*, apart from a narrow smoke bay.¹¹⁸ More typical of the period, however, was the complete flooring at first-floor level, with a



Fig. 11. 25-7 High Street.

continuous jetty along the street frontage. At 39 High Street a 19th-century façade hides two bays of what was probably a three-bay house of early 16th-century date, with close studding and a continuous jetty to the first floor,¹¹⁹ and there is a contemporary close-studded example at 25-7 High Street. 16-18 High Street is a continuous jettied house of mid-16th-century date, although the jetty has been underbuilt in brick.¹²⁰ 67 High Street is a small two-bay house of early 17th-century date, with a continuous jetty, also since underbuilt in brick.¹²¹

Examples of commercial buildings also survive from the 16th century. At 43-7 High Street (see above, section 4.1.1) a northern extension of early 16th-century date had a pair of top-hinged shutters on the street frontage, which almost certainly relate to a shop.¹²² 35-7 High Street has two bays of two stories surviving from the early 16th century, with matching bays added c.1600. The lack of evidence for heating could suggest non-domestic use such as shops or workshops, with chambers above.¹²³ 23 High Street is a timber-framed extension of c.1600 added to the northern end of early 16th-century 25-7 High Street, comprising a wagon bay (blocked in the early 18th century) and a shop or workshop.¹²⁴

41 High Street reflects the increasingly built-up street frontage, being oriented at right-angles to the street. It is a four-bay early 17th-century



Fig. 12. 58 High Street (The Grove).

timber-framed building, with the side (i.e. northern) elevation facing a passage, and including a gable at the High Street end.¹²⁵

The surviving buildings reflect the increase in coach travel from the 17th century. 23 High Street is a timber-framed extension of c.1600 added to the northern end of early 16th-century 25-7 High Street, and includes a carriage or wagon way (blocked in the early 18th century).¹²⁶

61 High Street (Robertsbridge House) was rebuilt in the late 17th century, at which point it was an inn called The George or The Star (formerly the Tonne and latterly the White Horse). The rebuilding gave the inn a substantial and symmetrical seven-bay brick façade, with a central doorway above which was another doorway opening on to a balcony: the balcony has been removed and the upper doorway since converted to a window. To the rear the rebuilt inn of this period is timber framed.¹²⁷ Although much altered, Langham Cottage is the surviving 17th-century brewhouse of The George (i.e. 61 High Street).¹²⁸ 1 and 2 The Retreat is a timber-framed building of the late 17th or early 18th century, and appears to have been built as the stable block of the Seven Stars (it was certainly functioning as such by the late 18th century).¹²⁹ 46a High Street is a three-bay timber-framed house of c.1720. There is a contemporary three-bay service block attached to the rear, which

probably functioned as the stables to the Checker Inn (46 High Street).¹³⁰

Despite widespread use of brick for chimney stacks (which include the fine mid to late 17th-century example at 36-40 High Street¹³¹) and for the façade at 61 High Street (see above), timber framing remained the predominant building type in the 17th and 18th centuries. The Grove, 58 High Street, has a timber frame of the late 17th or earlier 18th century, built with a massive brick chimney stack with flues for back to back fireplaces on each of the two storeys.¹³² A substantial example of timber framing survives at The George Inn, which was built as a private house in 1713 (only becoming an inn between 1734 and 1774), with an impressive façade of seven bays (clad from the outset, presumably tile-hung as it is today), rear wings (later extended), and cellar.¹³³ Mid-18th examples are found at 11 and 12 Fair Lane (dated to 1742 on the chimney, originally forming a single house of three bays, and almost certainly tile-hung from the outset¹³⁴) and at the Tudor House, High Street (where an early 19th-century brick and tile-hung exterior of the three-stories hides an earlier lightly built timber frame¹³⁵). Mid-18th-century George Hill House combines brick and timber framing, having a brick ground floor that carries a coeval timber-framed upper storey, which is



Fig. 13. The George Inn.



Fig. 14. 51 High Street (Langham House).

tile hung.¹³⁶

In the absence of internal survey, it is unclear whether other 18th-century examples of brick ground floors and tile-hung first floors (e.g. 42 High Street and 1-3 Piper's Cottages, Piper's Lane) have similar construction. It must be suspected, however, that early 19th-century examples (such as 21 Fair Lane and 1 High Street) are entirely of brick. Although stuccoed, early 19th-century 51 High Street (Langham House) is evidently brick built, and has a three-storied elevation with two full-height bow windows, which reflects the influence of urban Regency buildings (most probably those in Hastings). The Bethel Baptist chapel (dated 1842), is of red brick with simple Gothic windows (now a house).

Robertsbridge preserves two non-urban buildings from this period. A two-bay barn, store, or workshop was added to the rear of 55-9 High Street in the mid to late 16th century.¹³⁷ More certainly agricultural is the barn at Grove Farm, which is a four-bay timber-framed and weatherboarded building of c.1700, with a wagon-door opening on to the northern side of the threshing bay.¹³⁸ An 18th-century cart shed is attached to the rear.

4.2.2 Excavations

A watching brief to the rear of **18 Fair Lane** in 2006 revealed a brick-lined well, possibly of 17th-century date.¹³⁹

Archaeological investigations during the **flood alleviation scheme** works in 2001-3 revealed several discrete concentrations of post-medieval artefacts (including pottery and blast-furnace slag) in Area C (i.e. west of the historic course of the stream to the rear of 1-27 High Street), but they did not relate to occupation and appear to be the result of levelling or rubbish disposal.¹⁴⁰

A watching brief at **1 The Retreat, High Street**, in 2004 during excavation of foundations for an extension revealed 19th-century features only, comprising rubbish pits and a brick-lined drain, with the earliest dated find being a single residual sherd of 17th-century pottery.¹⁴¹

A watching brief during redevelopment of the car park and gardens to the rear of **George Inn** in 2006 found features (including pits, postholes, brick foundations, drains and paving) of 18th to 20th-century date, with residual pottery from the 16th and 17th centuries: there was no medieval material.¹⁴²



Fig. 15. United Reformed church, 1881.

4.2.3 Topography (Maps 7-9)

There was little large-scale re-organization of Robertsbridge between 1500 and 1845 to upset the medieval topography. The most significant change in this period resulted from the turnpiking of the road from Robertsbridge to Woods Corner (Dallington) in 1813.¹⁴³ This saw construction of a new c.800m-long section of road on the west side of the town (now Station Road/Brightling Road), which bypassed Bishop's Lane and cut through the plots of 51-69 High Street.

At the southern end of the High Street five houses were demolished in the early to mid-17th century to form a farmstead (The Grove).¹⁴⁴ Further south several plots occupied in 1567 became vacant by the late 17th century, although the overall number of houses remained approximately the same as the core of the town became slightly more densely occupied,¹⁴⁵ then increasingly so as the population increased, within largely the same footprint, during the 18th century.

4.3 Expansion: c.1845-2008 (Maps 3, 10 and 11)

4.3.1 Buildings and topography

The majority of the buildings in Robertsbridge date from this period, partly as a result of loss of earlier buildings, but mainly through expansion of the town in the 20th century, especially since 1945.

There are few mid to late 19th-century buildings in the historic core of the town, reflecting the good survival of earlier buildings. Noteworthy examples include the Congregational Methodist (now United Reformed) church of 1881 (by Thomas Elworthy), of red brick with terracotta dressings in a free Italianate Renaissance style¹⁴⁶). 2-8 High Street is a mid-19th-century terrace built of brick laid in rat trap bond. Although outside the EUS study area, the brick-built SER railway station of 1851 (by William Tress) survives, extended on the south c.1910.¹⁴⁷ 15-23 Station Road is a near contemporary terrace, but the lack of expansion in the late Victorian and Edwardian periods (the arrival of the railway notwithstanding) means that there was little in the way of larger villa construction: rare examples survive near the station in Brightling Road, such as Glenferness, Fair View and Hill Grove.

The inter-war years saw the development of a more substantial western suburb along and off the Brightling Road, combining semi-detached

and modest detached houses, with examples from the 1930s in Langham Road echoing the local vernacular style in their combination of brick and first-floor tile-hanging. The development of the western suburb continued after 1945, with bungalows added to the mixture of housing, and the Robertsbridge County Secondary School built on the northern fringe (1955). Within or adjacent to the historic core of the town, larger housing developments have included Fayre Meadow (built on the northern fair field, comprising a close of small detached houses) and the Willow Bank estate (to the south-west of the George Inn, comprising small detached, semi-detached and terraced houses). The most substantial building has been the new Salehurst C of E Primary School, George Hill, a one storey structure of 1988. More significant to the development of the town, however, has been the building of the Robertsbridge bypass, which opened the following year.

This period has seen some losses of earlier buildings, with a comparatively recent example being the demolition in 1979 of an early 18th-century timber-framed service building (for long a slaughter house) at the rear of 67 High Street.¹⁴⁸



Fig. 16. 2-8 High Street.



Fig. 17. Detail of Salehurst tithe map, 1841-3, showing Robertsbridge (*East Sussex Record Office*).

5 STATEMENT OF HISTORIC URBAN CHARACTER

5.1 Town summary

5.1.1 Historic environment overview

Although very much founded as a place of trade, or mini-town, with its market charter, on the Hastings to London Road and the River Rother, Robertsbridge missed out on much later medieval and post-medieval development. The arrival of the railway in 1851 appears to have stemmed the flow of rural depopulation typical in rural eastern Sussex, but did not result in growth. Even in the 20th century expansion has been modest, although significant when compared to the very small scale of the ‘town’ in the 19th century. Redevelopment of the centre of Robertsbridge during the 20th century was minimal. The lack of expansion and redevelopment has had the effect of preserving a high proportion of the pre-c.1840 buildings and topography of the town. Although survival has been reasonable, Robertsbridge’s modest scale means that the numbers and range of buildings are smaller than, say, those found at East Grinstead, Lewes or Rye. The High Street and the northern side of Fair Lane are particularly notable for their mixture of medieval and post-medieval buildings (although the timber framing of these is often hidden by tile-hanging, weatherboarding and brick). Less visible is the archaeological evidence of the medieval town, the origins of which lie in the establishment of a planned settlement in the early 13th. Although there have been several minor archaeological investigations in and near the town, the potential of this archaeology has yet to be realized through archaeological excavation.

5.1.2 Historic environment designations (Map 4)

There are 51 listed buildings in the EUS study area itself (two Grade II* and 49 Grade II). Of these, 14 predate 1500; eight are 16th century; nine are 17th century; 11 are 18th century; five are early 19th century; three are from 1841-80; and one is from 1881-1913.¹⁴⁹ There is an additional 18th-century historic building recognized in this assessment that has not been listed.

Robertsbridge has a Conservation Area. There are no Scheduled Monuments in the town.

5.1.3 Historic building materials

With minor exceptions such as the cellar of 61 High Street, and sill walls (some of which are substantial, given the sloping topography), the pre-1700 buildings of the town are all timber-framed. Timber-framing remains the dominant building material of the first half of the 18th century (although many buildings of this period were clad *ab initio*). Brick is increasingly popular thereafter and is the dominant building material from c.1800 onwards. Clay tiles are used for roofs and tile-hanging (23 examples on pre-1840 buildings). Weatherboarding is used extensively (11 examples on pre-1840 buildings).

5.2 Historic Character Types

5.2.1 Historic Character Types and chronology (Maps 5-11)

Historic Character Types (HCTs) for Sussex EUS
Lane/road [includes all historic routes]
Major road scheme [modern ring roads, motorways etc.]
Bridge/causeway
Regular burgage plots
Irregular historic plots [i.e. pre-1800]
Proto-urban
Vacant [reverted from built-up to fields etc.]
Market place
Church/churchyard [i.e. parish]
Cemetery
Religious house [abbey, priory, convent etc.]
Great house
Castle
Town defences
Other fortification
Barracks
School/college
Public
Farmstead/barn
Mill
Suburb [estates and individual houses]
Retail and commercial [i.e. post-1800]
Extractive industry [e.g. sand pit, brickfield]
Heavy industry [e.g. steel or automotive industry]
Light industry [e.g. industrial estates]
Utility
Quay/wharf [inc. boatyards]
Harbour/marina/dock
Station, sidings and track
Inland water
Orchard
Market garden [inc. nursery]
Allotments
Race course

Sports field [inc. stadia, courts, centres etc.]
Park
Informal parkland [e.g. small civic areas, large grounds]
Seafront [piers, promenades etc.]
Beach/cliffs

Table 1. Sussex EUS Historic Character Types.

Historic Character Types have been developed in the Sussex EUS to describe areas of common character by reference to generic types found across all 41 towns. Historic function is often the key determinant of character type, hence the term ‘Historic Character Types’ and the time-depth implicit in many of the types in Table 1 (e.g. *regular burgage plots*). The types also reflect the character of these towns, and, thus, they are different from those that would be applied nationally or to another county.

The Historic Character Types have been mapped to areas within the towns (polygons in the Geographical Information System that underpins the Sussex EUS). Whilst character type can prove consistent throughout a large area (for example, across a late 20th-century housing estate), different historic use of part of that area has been used as a basis for subdivision. This is to allow the application of the types in Table 1 to the mapped polygons throughout the 15 periods of the **EUS chronology** (Table 2). This means that for any area within the town, or mapped polygon on the Geographical Information System, both the present Historic Character Type and the past land use(s) are defined.

This approach gives time-depth to the map-based character component of the Sussex EUS, and is structured to take account of both upstanding and buried physical evidence of the past. It enables the generation of maps (e.g. Maps 5-9) showing the changing land use of the urban area throughout the history of each town, and, through use of the Geographical Information System developed as part of this assessment, for simple interrogation of any area in the town to show all its known past land uses.

Period	Date
Period 1	500,000BC-AD42
Period 2	43-409
Period 3	410-949
Period 4	950-1065
Period 5	1066-1149
Period 6	1150-1349
Period 7	1350-1499
Period 8	1500-1599
Period 9	1600-1699

Period 10	1700-1799
Period 11	1800-1840
Period 12	1841-1880
Period 13	1881-1913
Period 14	1914-1945
Period 15	1946-present

Table 2. Sussex EUS chronology.

5.2.2 Historic Character Types in Robertsbridge (Maps 10 and 11)

Although Historic Character Types represent county-wide types, modern Robertsbridge is characterized by its particular concentration of some types and the comparative rarity, or absence, of others. For example, the historic core of the modern town, or village, includes large areas of *regular burgage plots*, reflecting the early importance and planned nature of the town and its ensuing economic decline.

5.3 Historic Urban Character Areas (Map 12)

5.3.1 Defining Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs)

Whereas Historic Character Types have been applied to areas of the Sussex towns with consistent visible character and historical development – and are mapped across the whole history for each town – **Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs)** represent meaningful areas of the modern town. Although similar areas are found in many towns, HUCAs are unique, can include components of different history and antiquity, and usually represent amalgamation of several Historic Character Types.

Thus, HUCA 1 in Robertsbridge combines five Historic Character Types that represent the *regular burgage plots* that date from Period 6 (1150-1349); *irregular historic plots* that date from Period 7 (1350-1499); a *market place* that dates from Period 6 (1150-1349) and Period 9 (1600-99); and *suburb(s)* from Period 15 (1946-present). Combining this complexity into a single HUCA called *The Green* reflects the largely coherent character of the area today. This coherence renders HUCAs suitable spatial units for describing the historic environment of the EUS towns, for assessing their **archaeological potential**, **Historic Environment Value** and for linking to **research questions**.

Some components of the towns are not included as HUCAs: roads (other than those that were built as part of a particular development) and

waterways are kept separate as they frequently antedate surviving buildings or the known urban activity.

5.3.2 Archaeological potential

Whilst the nature and extent of areas to which Historic Character Types have been applied is closely related to the survival of buried archaeology, this assessment considers the archaeological potential at the larger scale of the HUCAs. The reasons are twofold: first, the typically smaller scale of areas of common Historic Character Type could misleadingly imply that high, or even low, archaeological potential is precisely confined, or that archaeological value is exactly coterminous with the edge of specific features (standing or buried); and, second, most Sussex towns have had insufficient archaeological investigation to support this precision. For this reason, too, there is no grading or ranking of archaeological potential. Rather, the summary of archaeological potential is used to inform the overall (graded) assessment of **Historic Environment Value** of each HUCA (see below).

When considering the archaeological potential of the towns, it is important to recognize that archaeology often survives 19th and 20th-century development and that it is misleading to assume complete destruction. Also, whilst pre-urban archaeology tells us little about the towns themselves, it contributes to wider archaeological research.

In assessing the likelihood of buried archaeology within areas in the towns there has been consideration of the potential for archaeology 'buried', or hidden, within later buildings and structures, as well as that for below-ground features.

5.3.3 Historic Environment Value (Map 13)

The **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of each HUCA is assessed here, and expressed as a value from 1 (low) to 5 (high). Such values are iniquitous to some and always subjective, but here provide a necessary means of consistently and intelligently differentiating (for the purposes of conservation) the upstanding fabric, boundaries and archaeology that form the historic urban environment. The Historic Environment Value (HEV) of each HUCA is based on assessment of:

- Townscape rarity
- Time-depth or antiquity

- Completeness.

Lesser additional considerations in the assessment comprise:

- Visibility
- Historic association.

The full methodology for assessing Historic Environment Value forms part of the annexe to the historic environment management guidance for Rother District.

5.3.4 Vulnerability

The vulnerability of each HUCA is also considered, although many future threats cannot be anticipated. These brief analyses mean that this Statement of Historic Urban Character can be used to focus conservation guidance.

5.3.5 Research questions

Where relevant, reference is made to questions in the **Research Framework** for Robertsbridge (below, section 6). This referencing links these key questions to specific HUCAs, helping ensure that any investigation of the historic environment (such as that as a condition of development, under PPG15 or PPG16) is properly focused.

5.3.6 Robertsbridge's Historic Urban Character Areas (Map 12)

The following assessments of the Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) of Robertsbridge commence with those that make up the historic core. Inevitably, these assessments are more extensive than those that relate to recent expansion of the town.

HUCA 1 The Green (HEV 4)

HUCA 1 lies near the centre of the medieval and modern town. It is focused on the triangular green that appears to have been the medieval market place, which it remained until this was relocated to the south of the George Inn after c.1875. The market place contained the medieval chapel of Our Lady, just south of where the war memorial now stands, and this was identified in 1314 as being the spot where the temporary Cistercian abbey of c.1176 was located, prior to being relocated to the east of Robertsbridge in the early 13th century.

Today the area lies just south of the commercial centre of the town and has a largely residential function, although the George Inn remains one of the main public houses of Robertsbridge. Houses form almost continuously built up frontages to the east and west sides of the

southern end of the High Street, with the George Inn occupying a more spacious plot (although it has seen recent infill development at the rear). The former market place now comprises roads (High Street and Piper's Lane) flanking an area of grass and trees (with a pronounced east-west slope), the war memorial, and, to the south, a hard-surfaced area that acts as a forecourt to the George Inn.

There are eight listed buildings, or groups of buildings, (all Grade II), of which three are Period 7 (1350-1499), two are Period 9 (17th century), and three are Period 10 (18th century). The listed buildings include several noteworthy examples. 48 High Street is a three-bay house, with two-bay open hall, and service bay to the south, of late 14th or 15th-century date. This building was recorded as the courthouse in 1567, but probably went out of use around this time since the open hall was much reduced in the mid to late 16th century by insertion of a first floor and the loss of one of the two bays by the building of a chimney. There are two Wealden houses: 52 High Street comprises a single (probably the parlour) bay of an early 15th-century Wealden house, now incorporated within an early 19th-century terrace (50-6 High Street); and 71-5 High Street is a 15th-century example, with the open hall floored and a continuous jetty inserted in the mid-16th century. The Grove, 58 High Street, has a timber frame of the late 17th or earlier 18th century, built with a massive brick chimney stack with flues for back to back fireplaces on each of the two storeys.¹⁵⁰ The George Inn is another later example of late timber framing: it was built as a substantial private house in 1713, with an impressive façade of seven bays (clad from the outset, presumably tile-hung as it is today), rear wings (later extended), and cellar.

Historic boundaries are well preserved, most notably on the west side of the High Street, where long burgage plots extend to the rear of nos. 69-75.

Infill residential development to the rear of the George Inn has had the greatest impact on the historic environment, but otherwise the good survival of medieval plots (and the buildings thereon) and the potential for 12th-century and later archaeology means that, notwithstanding the lack of early archaeology during a watching brief at the rear of the George Inn in 2006, the **archaeological potential** of nearly all this HUCA is high.

The survival and condition of plots and, especially, the medieval and post-medieval buildings (which include some particularly

noteworthy examples); the completeness of historic street-front; the visibility of the historic fabric; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA a high **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 4.

HUCA 1 has seen significant change in the 20th and 21st centuries, most obviously through residential development to the rear of the George Inn. Given the considerable Historic Environment Value of the area this means that **vulnerability** is high. Given that shops in the HUCA have been converted to residences and other pubs in the town have closed, the George Inn in particular is vulnerable to change of use and associated external/internal refitting.

Research questions especially relevant to this HUCA relate to the initial location of the abbey (RQ2), the chapel (RQ3), and the market place (RQ4).

HUCA 2 Upper High Street (HEV 5)

HUCA 2 lies at the heart of the medieval town, established along the London-Hastings road (here the High Street) from the early 13th century. Today the area forms the commercial centre of the town, although many of the shops and business premises have changed to purely residential use in the last 50 years.

There are 26 listed buildings (one Grade II*, and 25 Grade II), of which one is either Period 6 (1150-1349) or Period 7 (1350-1499), five are Period 7 (1350-1499), six are Period 8 (16th century), four are Period 9 (17th century), six are Period 10 (18th century), one is Period 11 (1800-40), two are Period 12 (1841-80), and one is Period 13 (1881-1913). The listed buildings include several noteworthy examples. The Seven Stars (Grade II*) is a four-bay Wealden house from c.1400 having a two-bay open hall with an overshot cross-passage. A floor was inserted c.1600, but, despite later brickwork and tile-hanging, the recessed hall and jettied first-floor rooms to either side remain clearly discernible. Other, less externally obvious, examples of Wealden houses survive at 43-7 High Street (here dating from the early 15th-century, with the open hall floored and a continuous jetty inserted in 17th century), and 46 High Street (a substantial five-bay example of 15th-century date, with a long three-bay hall, of which one bay was overshot by a hall chamber, which is consistent with construction as an ale-house – The Checker). 61 High Street (Robertsbridge House) is remarkable both for preserving a timber-ceiled sandstone undercroft possibly dating from as early as the 14th century (consistent with use as a tavern or inn in the late

medieval period – the building was the Tonne, becoming The George by 1567, The Star by 1807, and the White Horse by 1864), and for its rebuilding in the late 17th century, in which it gained a substantial and symmetrical seven-bay brick façade, with central balcony. The mid to late 17th-century chimney at 36-40 High Street is particularly fine. Later noteworthy buildings include early 19th-century 51 High Street (Langham House), which has a Regency-styled three-storied elevation with two full-height bow windows; the Bethel Baptist chapel of 1842 (red brick with simple Gothic windows); and the Congregational Methodist (now United Reformed) church of 1881 (red brick with terracotta dressings).

There is one unlisted locally important historic building, comprising 1 and 2 The Retreat, which is a timber-framed building of the late 17th or early 18th century, and appears to have been built as the stable block of the Seven Stars (now in residential use).

Historic boundaries are moderately well preserved on both sides of the High Street, with narrow burgage plots still partly in evidence.

Internal reorganization and new shopfronts have had the greatest impact on the historic environment in the late 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, but otherwise the good survival of medieval plots (and the medieval and early post-medieval buildings thereon) and the potential for 13th-century and later archaeology in particular means that, notwithstanding the lack of early archaeology during a watching brief at 1 The Retreat in 2004, the **archaeological potential** of nearly all this HUCA is high.

The survival of plots and, especially, the medieval and post-medieval buildings (which include some particularly noteworthy examples); the completeness of historic street-front; the visibility of much of the historic fabric; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA the very highest **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 5.

HUCA 2 has seen some change in the 20th century (e.g. through structural and cosmetic changes to buildings mainly in commercial use). Given the considerable Historic Environment Value of the area this means that **vulnerability** is high. The shops, pubs and other business premises are vulnerable to change of use (including further change from commercial to residential function), and external/internal refitting.

Research questions especially relevant to this HUCA relate to the development of plots (RQ7).

HUCA 3 Lower High Street (HEV 4)

HUCA 3 lies at the northern edge of the late medieval and modern town, with subsequent expansion northwards limited by the location of the river and its floodplain. Initially it appears to have developed as a farmstead, before being engulfed by expanding tenements in the 15th century. Today, the area is largely residential, with some High Street businesses (such as a restaurant at 13-15 High Street).

There are six listed buildings (one Grade II*, and five Grade II), of which three are Period 7 (1350-1499), one is Period 8 (16th century), one is Period 11 (1800-40), and one is Period 12 (1841-80). Particularly noteworthy is 12-14 High Street (Rosebank: Grade II*): built as a farmhouse in the late 14th century and set back from the street frontage, it is a four-bay Wealden house, with the recess for the open hall still visible externally, despite insertion of a floor in the late 16th century. Opposite 11 and 13-15 High Street are in origins two late 15th-century timber-framed buildings, each of which had single-bay open halls (13-15 High Street has doorways to the two rooms of the service bay at the extremities of the wall suggesting that the room facing the street was a shop). 2-8 High Street is a mid-19th-century terrace built of brick laid in rat trap bond.

Historic boundaries are moderately well preserved on both sides of the High Street, although this area lacks the more clearly defined burgage plots in evidence to the south.

Infill residential development to the rear the east side of the High Street has had the greatest impact on the historic environment (recent development to the rear of the west side of the street falls outside this HUCA and the EUS study area), but otherwise the survival of medieval plots (and the buildings thereon) and the potential for 12th-century and later archaeology means that the **archaeological potential** of the HUCA that have not been redeveloped is moderate.

The survival of some plots and, especially, the medieval and post-medieval buildings (which include one particularly noteworthy example); the completeness of historic street-front; the visibility of much of the historic fabric; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA a high **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 4.

HUCA 3 has seen considerable change in the 20th and 21st centuries through infill development. Given that scope for further infill is limited, the **vulnerability** is low to medium. Perhaps the greatest threat is to internal refitting

of listed 13-15 High Street relating to commercial use or, potentially, change of use to a residential property.

Research questions especially relevant to this HUCA relate to the development of plots (RQ7).

HUCA 4 Fair Lane (HEV 3)

HUCA 4 lies on the eastern side of the medieval and modern town. The straightness of the urban part of Fair Lane contrasts with the lane to the east, which suggests that it is a secondary development probably of the early 14th century or the late 13th century. To the east of the HUCA the lane runs between the two fair fields (the northern one was covered by the Fayre Meadow housing development in the 20th century). Today, the area is largely residential.

There are eight listed buildings (all Grade II), of which two are Period 7 (1350-1499), one is Period 8 (16th century), one is Period 9 (17th century), one is Period 10 (18th century), and three are Period 11 (1800-40). There are several notable buildings. 1-4 Fair Lane is a four-bay house with two-bay open hall dating from c.1380, originally with an end jetty to the parlour. 23 Fair Lane is a Wealden house, dating from the later 15th-century, and has both close-studding and larger daub panels. The open hall was floored over c.1600. 5-7 Fair Lane was built c.1570 as a small three-bay house of two storeys, with a lath and daub chimney (replaced by a brick stack in the 17th century).¹⁵¹ 11 and 12 Fair Lane is a mid-18th-century example of timber framing (dated to 1742 on the chimney), originally forming a single house of three bays, and almost certainly tile-hung from the outset.

Historic boundaries are moderately well preserved on the built-up northern side of the street.

There has been relatively little development within this HUCA since c.1900, which, as in part countered by the lack of known early occupation on the south side of the street and a largely unproductive watching brief at 18 Fair Lane in 2006, suggests that the **archaeological potential** of the HUCA is moderate.

The survival of some plots and, especially, the medieval and post-medieval buildings; the completeness of historic street-front on the north side of the street; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA a **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 3.

HUCA 4 has seen little significant change in the 20th and 21st centuries, and with most of the buildings in residential use, and many listed, the

vulnerability is low. Perhaps the greatest threat is to the potential archaeology through garden landscaping and extensions.

Broad, or Robertsbridge-wide, **research questions** only apply to this area.

HUCA 5 George Hill (HEV 2)

HUCA 5 lies on the south side of the medieval and modern town. Although not densely occupied in the later post-medieval period, the HUCA was evidently occupied in the medieval period, with more tenements recorded in the survey of 1567 and house platforms noted in the field opposite Blenheim Court. Moreover, Grove Farm was created in the early to mid-17th century, which involved demolition of five houses. Finally, south of the known extent of the town, archaeological excavation of trenches in 1985 in advance of the bypass construction revealed evidence for 14th-century occupation around the junction of John's Cross Road and the bypass. Today the farm survives, but otherwise the HUCA is a residential area.

There are three listed buildings (all Grade II), of which two are Period 9 (17th century), and one is Period 10 (18th century). Yew Lodge, George Hill, is a five-bay house with a central chimney stack and a primary lean-to along the full length of the rear wall, dating from c.1660.¹⁵² Mid-18th-century George Hill House combines brick and timber framing, having a brick ground floor that carries a coeval timber-framed upper storey, which has tile-hanging. The barn at Grove Farm is a rare survival of an agricultural building within the EUS study area, and is a four-bay timber-framed and weatherboarded building of c.1700, with a wagon-door opening on to the northern side of the threshing bay. An 18th-century cart shed is attached to the rear. Historic boundaries are moderately well preserved.

There has been considerable development within this HUCA since 1945, which suggests that the **archaeological potential** of the HUCA is limited, although, as the 1985 excavation demonstrated, locally higher in the areas that remain open land, or fields.

The survival of some plots and, especially, the post-medieval buildings; and the archaeological potential give this HUCA a **Historic Environment Value (HEV)** of 2.

HUCA 5 has seen significant change in the 20th and 21st centuries, for example with the building of a telephone exchange and, more significantly, housing development on the west side of George Hill at Blenheim Court. The scope for further infill and urban fringe development (e.g.

opposite Blenheim Court and at Grove Farm) suggests that the **vulnerability** is high.

Broad, or Robertsbridge-wide, **research questions** only apply to this area.

5.3.7 Summary table of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) for Robertsbridge

Table 3 summarizes the assessments made in the individual Historic Urban Character Area descriptions (above). It provides a simplified comparison of the assessments across different

parts of the town, and helps to draw out key points. As such it supports the preparation of guidance for the town (see section 1.3).

The table shows how Historic Character Types combine into more recognizable Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs). It summarizes the archaeological potential that, along with historic buildings and boundaries, contributes to the assessment of the Historic Environment Value of each HUCA. The assessment of vulnerability of each HUCA is important for developing guidance.

Summary of assessment of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) for Robertsbridge				
<i>Historic Character Types (HCTs)</i>	<i>Historic Urban Character Area (HUCA)</i>	<i>Archaeological potential</i>	<i>Historic Environment Value (HEV)</i>	<i>Vulnerability</i>
Market place Irregular historic plots Regular burgage plots Farmstead/barn Suburb	1. The Green	High	4	High
Irregular historic plots Regular burgage plots Suburb	2. Upper High Street	High	5	High
Irregular historic plots Suburb	3. Lower High Street	Moderate	4	Low to medium
Regular burgage plots Suburb	4. Fair Lane	Moderate	3	Low
Farmstead/barn Irregular historic plots Suburb Utility Vacant	5. George Hill	Limited, but locally moderate to high	2	High

Table 3. Summary of assessment of Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs) for Robertsbridge.

6 HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

6.1 Pre-urban activity

Development pressure and opportunities for developer funding mean that archaeological excavations in the town, or prior to expansion of the town, are more likely to occur than in the surrounding area. Thus, archaeological excavations and standing building investigations in Robertsbridge should address:

RQ1: What was the nature of the palaeo-environment (ancient environment), and the prehistoric, Roman, and Anglo-Saxon human activity in the area? (NB for the Anglo-Saxon period, the focal or market place and the adjacent churchyard is a particular area for study).

6.2 Origins

RQ2: What were the location, form and construction detail of the late 12th-century Robertsbridge abbey (i.e. within the area later occupied by the town) prior to its relocation?

RQ3: What were the location, form and construction detail of the chapel of Our Lady?

RQ4: What was the extent and development of the medieval market place and did this have a defined boundary or not?

RQ5: What evidence is there for the development of the urban centre in the 13th century?

RQ6: What evidence is there for the extent, population, and economic basis of the 13th and 14th-century town?

RQ7: What was the topography of the early town? NB this needs to be considered with particular reference to the development of plots.

6.3 Later medieval town

RQ8: How have tenements developed in the later medieval period?

RQ9: What evidence is there for encroachment on to the High Street being a late medieval development?

RQ10: What different zones (e.g. social differentiation, or types of activity: especially

consider industry), were there during this period, and how did they change?

RQ11: Are any of the supposedly post-medieval houses actually earlier than suspected, and what evidence can the standing buildings provide for their function and date (i.e. through dendrochronology), especially those on the main commercial street?

6.4 Post-medieval town

RQ12: What different zones (e.g. social differentiation, or types of activity), were there during this period, and how did they change?

RQ13: How were the medieval and early post-medieval buildings adapted for new functions and changing status?

RQ14: What is the evidence for fluctuating fortunes in the post-medieval period (e.g. prosperity during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars against France resulting from the proximity of barracks)?

7 Notes

¹ The 41 towns of the Sussex EUS are: Alfriston, Arundel, Battle, Bexhill, Bognor Regis, Bramber, Brighton, Burgess Hill, Crawley, Crowborough, Cuckfield, Ditchling, Eastbourne, East Grinstead, Hailsham, Hastings, Haywards Heath, Heathfield, Henfield, Horsham, Hove, Lewes, Lindfield, Littlehampton, Mayfield, Midhurst, Newhaven, Peacehaven, Petworth, Pevensey, Pulborough, Robertsbridge, Rotherfield, Rye, Seaford, Shoreham, Steyning, Storrington, Uckfield, Wadhurst and Worthing. Chichester and Winchelsea are omitted as they are the subjects of more intensive studies.

² The *Character of West Sussex Partnership Programme* is led by West Sussex County Council in conjunction with the borough and district councils, AONB agencies and stakeholders. The main aims of the partnership are to produce a range of interlocking characterization studies; to produce planning and land management guidance; and to raise public and community awareness of character as a vital and attractive ingredient of the environment of the county. The full range of characterization studies comprise:

Landscape Character Assessments and Landscape Strategy for West Sussex (2005).

Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) of Sussex (2003-8).

Sussex Extensive Urban Survey (EUS) (2004-8).

Intensive Urban Survey of Chichester/Fishbourne (2005-6) (Chichester District Council).

Local Distinctiveness Study of West Sussex (2004-6).

³ Salzman, L. F., (ed.), *Victoria County History* 9 (1937), 217-25.

⁴ D'Elboux, R. H., 'Surveys of the Manors of Robertsbridge, Sussex, and Michelmarsh, Hampshire, and of the Demesne Lands of Halden in Rolvenden, Kent: 1567-1570', *SRS* 47 (1944).

⁵ Gardiner, M., 'Fieldwork and excavation on the Robertsbridge bypass, 1985', *SAC* 135 (1997), 301-8.

⁶ Stevens, S., *An Archaeological Watching Brief at the Robertsbridge Flood Alleviation Scheme, Robertsbridge, East Sussex* (unpublished Archaeology South-East report, project no. 1594, 2003).

⁷ Chuter, G., *An archaeological recording brief at 1 The Retreat, High Street, Robertsbridge, East Sussex* (unpublished East Sussex County Council report, project no. 2004/4, 2004).

⁸ Butler, C., *An Archaeological Watching Brief at 18 Fair Lane, Robertsbridge, East Sussex* (unpublished report by Chris Butler Archaeological Services, 2006).

⁹ Hart, D., and Whittaker, D., *An Archaeological Watching Brief at the George Inn, Robertsbridge, East Sussex* (unpublished Archaeology South-East report, project no. 2331, 2006).

¹⁰ Martin, D., and Mastin, B., *An Architectural History of Robertsbridge* (1974). NB the individual reports on buildings are referenced in endnotes where relevant in the text. In addition to those expressly cited, the following reports have been used: Martin, D., *5-7 East Street, Robertsbridge* (unpublished Rape of Hastings Architectural Survey report 0145, 1974); Martin, D., *Yew Lodge, Robertsbridge* (unpublished Rape of Hastings Architectural Survey report 0109, 1972); Martin, D., *20, 22 High Street, Robertsbridge* (unpublished Rape of Hastings Architectural Survey report

0062, 1971); Martin, D., *8-10 East Street, Robertsbridge* (unpublished Rape of Hastings Architectural Survey report 0073, 1972).

¹¹ For a study of the alluvial fill deposits of the River Rother, which includes 12 boreholes in the Robertsbridge area, see: Scaife, R. G., and Burren, P. J., 'Further Evidence for the Environmental Impact of Prehistoric Cultures in Sussex from Alluvial Fill Deposits in the Eastern Rother Valley', *SAC* 125 (1987), 1-9.

¹² Salzman, L. F., (ed.), *Victoria County History* 9 (1937), 217.

¹³ Brent, C. E., 'Urban Employment and Population in Sussex Between 1550 and 1660', *SAC* 113 (1975), 35-50, at 36.

¹⁴ Cleere, H., and Crossley, D., *The Iron Industry of the Weald* (2nd edtn., 1995), 159.

¹⁵ Farrant, J., 'Growth of Communications 1720-1840', in Leslie, K. and Short, B. (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Sussex* (1999), 78-9.

¹⁶ Johnston, G. D., *Abstract of Turnpike Acts relating to Sussex* (transcript at SAS, c.1948), 4, 18.

¹⁷ Farrant, J., 'Growth of Communications 1840-1914', in Leslie, K. and Short, B. (eds.), *An Historical Atlas of Sussex* (1999), 40-1.

¹⁸ Savidge, A., and Mason, O., *Wadhurst: Town of the High Weald* (1988), 132; *Sussex: Environment, Landscape and Society* (1983), 95-7.

¹⁹ Farrant, J., 'Growth of Communications 1840-1914', in Leslie, K. and Short, B. (eds.) *An Historical Atlas of Sussex* (1999), 80-1; Griffiths, I. L., 'Road and rail in Sussex', in Geography Editorial Committee (eds.), *Sussex: Environment, Landscape and Society* (1983), 239; websites of the Rother Valley Railway (<http://www.rvr.org.uk/index.html>, accessed 12.6.2009) and the Kent and East Sussex Railway (<http://www.kesr.org.uk/>, accessed 12.6.2009).

²⁰ Gardiner, M., 'Fieldwork and excavation on the Robertsbridge bypass, 1985', *SAC* 135 (1997), 301-8.

²¹ Cleere, H., and Crossley, D., *The Iron Industry of the Weald* (2nd edtn., 1995), 288; and additional recorded in the HER, references MES79 and MES7308.

²² Martin, D., 'Bugsell Romano-British Settlement, Salehurst', *SAC* 111 (1973), 111.

²³ Mawer, A., & Stenton, F.M., *The Place-names of Sussex* (1929-30; reprinted 2001), 459; Page, W. (ed.), *Victoria County History* 2 (1973), 71; Salzman, L. F., (ed.), *Victoria County History* 9 (1937), 221.

²⁴ Martin, D., and Mastin, B., *An Architectural History of Robertsbridge* (1974), 4-6; Martin, D., and Mastin, B., 'An Architectural History of Northbridge and Salehurst Villages', *Historic Buildings in Eastern Sussex* 2 (i) (1980).

²⁵ Gardiner, M. F., *Medieval Settlement and Society in the Eastern Sussex Weald* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1995), 155-7.

²⁶ E.g. D'Elboux, R. H., 'Surveys of the Manors of Robertsbridge, Sussex, and Michelmarsh, Hampshire, and of the Demesne Lands of Halden in Rolvenden, Kent: 1567-1570', *SRS* 47 (1944), xx; Page, W. (ed.), *Victoria County History* 2 (1973), 71-2; Gardiner, M. F., *Medieval Settlement and Society in the Eastern Sussex Weald* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of London, 1995), 155-7.

²⁷ Vidler, D., *St Mary's Abbey, Robertsbridge, Sussex* (undated manuscript, Sussex Archaeological Society library, stamped as received May 2003), 14.

- ²⁸ D'Elboux, R. H., 'Surveys of the Manors of Robertsbridge, Sussex, and Michelmarsh, Hampshire, and of the Demesne Lands of Halden in Rolvenden, Kent: 1567-1570', *SRS* 47 (1944), no. 277.
- ²⁹ *Ibid.*, no. 18.
- ³⁰ *Calendar of Charters and Documents Relating to the Abbey of Robertsbridge, Co. Sussex, Preserved at Penshurst Among the Muniments of Lord de Lisle and Dudley*, (1873), 300.
- ³¹ *Ibid.*, 362.
- ³² Godfrey, W. H., (ed.), 'Transcript of Sussex Wills: Vol. IV' *SRS* 45 (1940), 90-1.
- ³³ *Ibid.*; D'Elboux, R. H., 'Surveys of the Manors of Robertsbridge, Sussex, and Michelmarsh, Hampshire, and of the Demesne Lands of Halden in Rolvenden, Kent: 1567-1570', *SRS* 47 (1944), nos. 18, 30, 41, 64, 65.
- ³⁴ Page, W. (ed.), *Victoria County History* 2 (1973), 71.
- ³⁵ Taylor, M., 'Ecclesiastical sites in Sussex', in Rudling, D., (ed.), *The Archaeology of Sussex to AD 2000* (2003), 161-170, at 163.
- ³⁶ Letters, S., *Gazetteer of Markets and Fairs in England and Wales to 1516* (Centre for Metropolitan History, 1998-2007: on-line at <http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/gaz/gazweb2.html>).
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¹⁴⁶ This has almost identical detailing to Elworthy's slightly simpler chapel of 1881 at Battle.

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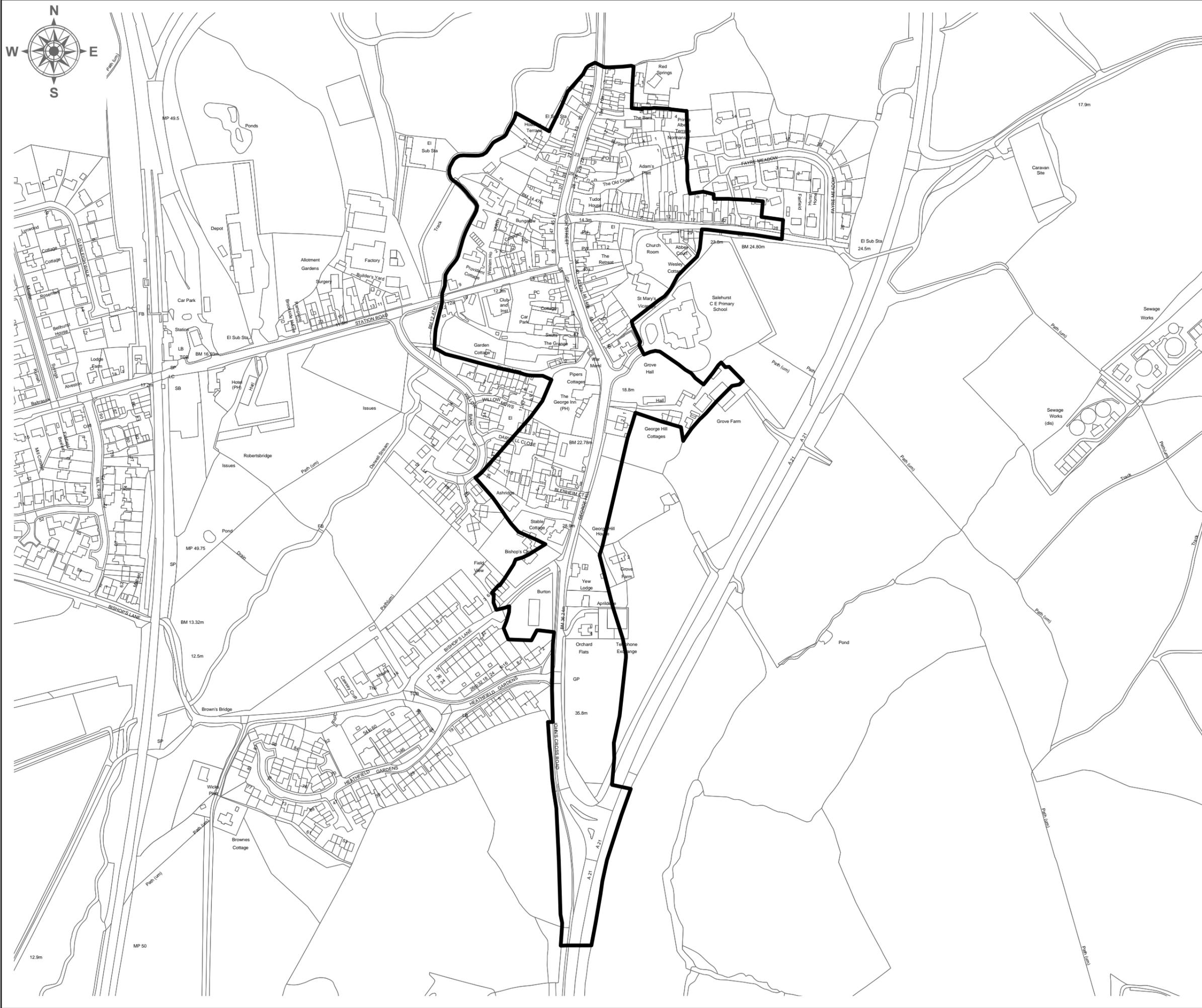
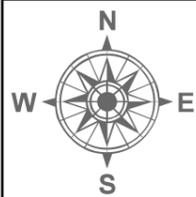
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¹⁴⁹ Listed building data is drawn from the statutory lists produced by English Heritage, but has been amended – especially in regard to the dating – during the Sussex EUS. The GIS data prepared during the Sussex EUS contains the full references to the sources for revised dates: in many cases these come from fieldwork undertaken by the author.

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Sussex EUS



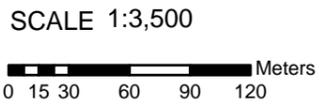
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ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 1 Extent of Robertsbridge EUS study area

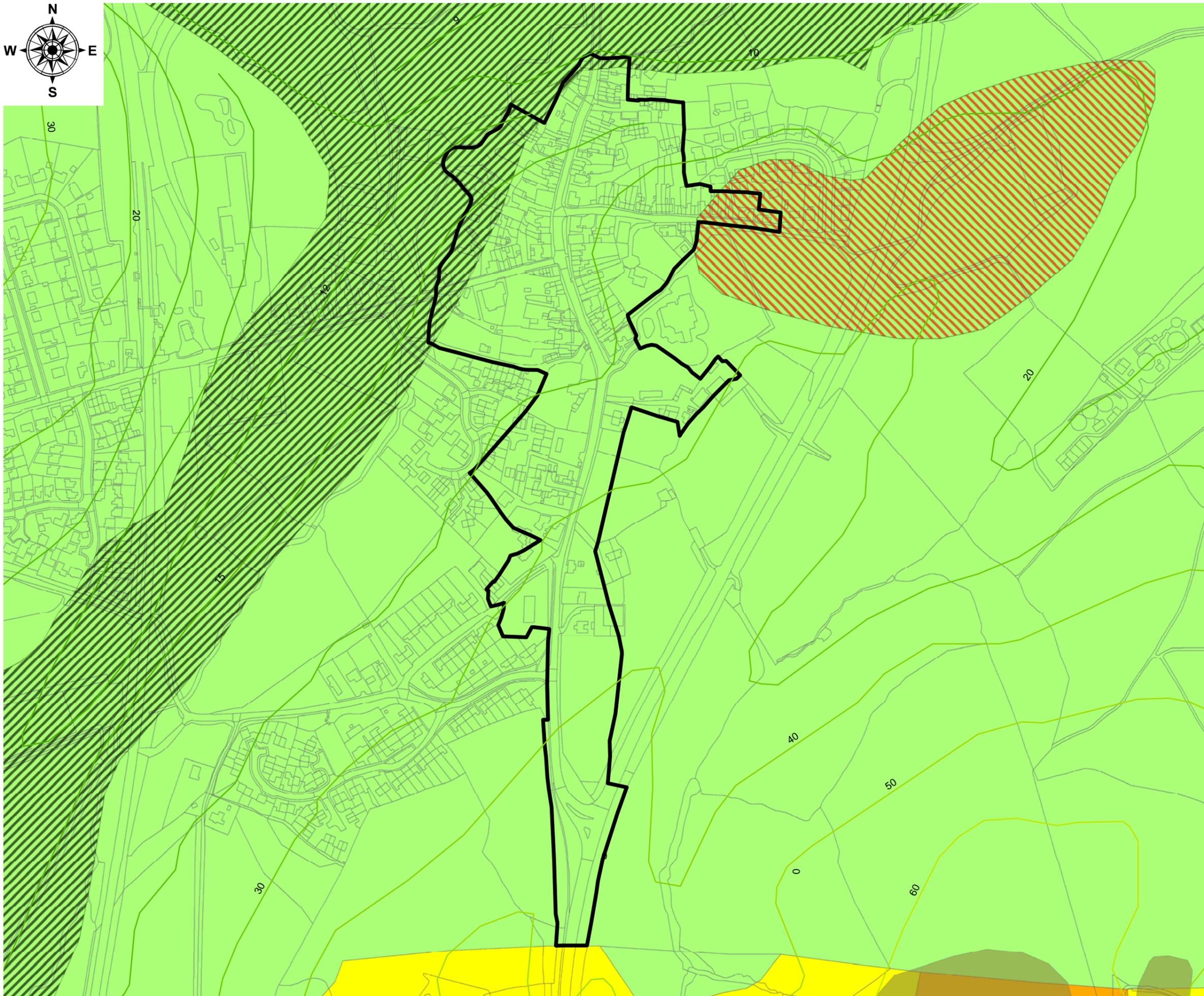
KEY

 EUS boundary

EUS research and mapping:
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July 2009



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Sussex EUS



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ENGLISH HERITAGE

ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 2

Solid and drift geology with 10m contours

KEY	
SOLID GEOLOGY	
	ASHDOWN FORMATION
	TUNBRIDGE WELLS SAND FORMATION
	WADHURST CLAY FORMATION
DRIFT GEOLOGY	
	ALLUVIUM
	HEAD (UNDIFFERENTIATED)
	RIVER TERRACE DEPOSITS, 1

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SCALE 1:3,500
0 15 30 60 90 120 Meters

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ENGLISH HERITAGE

**ROBERTSBRIDGE
MAP 3**
Ordnance Survey
1st Series 25" (1873)

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SCALE 1:3,500
0 15 30 60 90 120 Meters

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ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 4

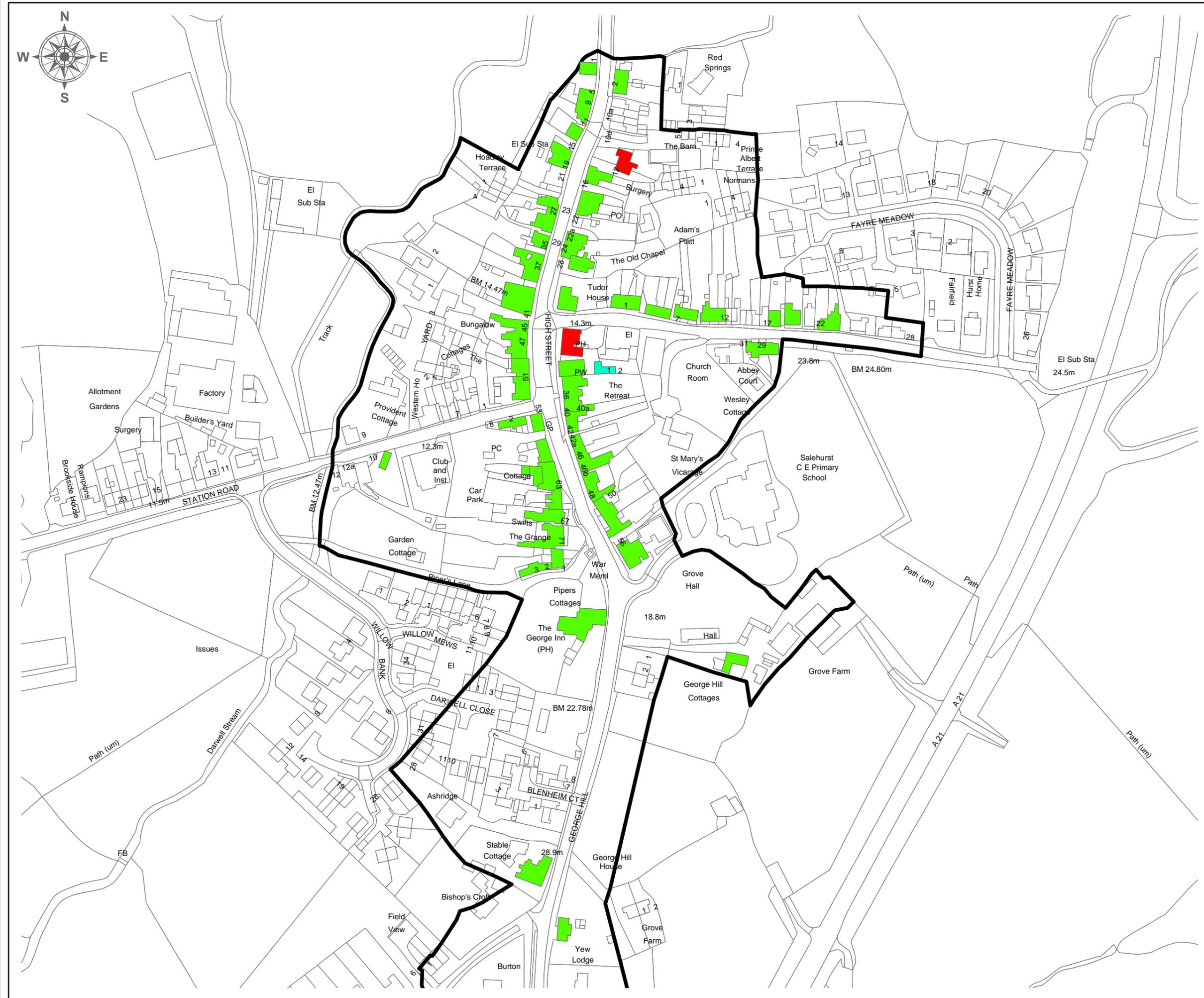
Historic buildings

KEY

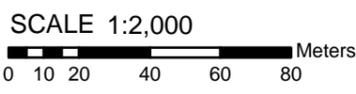
Robertsbridge buildings

Listing grade

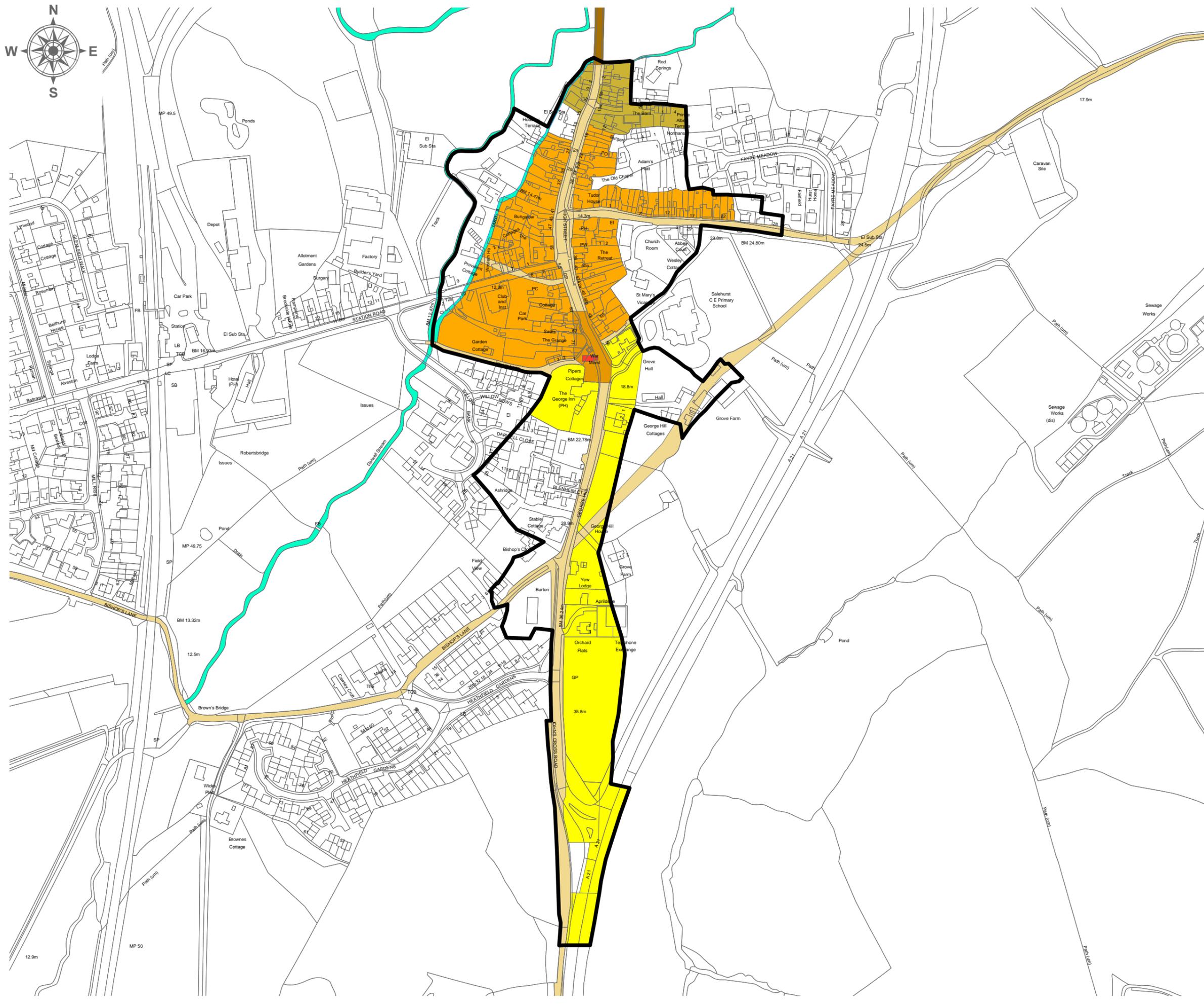
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- 2
- 2*



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ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 5 Period 6 (1150-1349)

KEY

Robertsbridge EUS

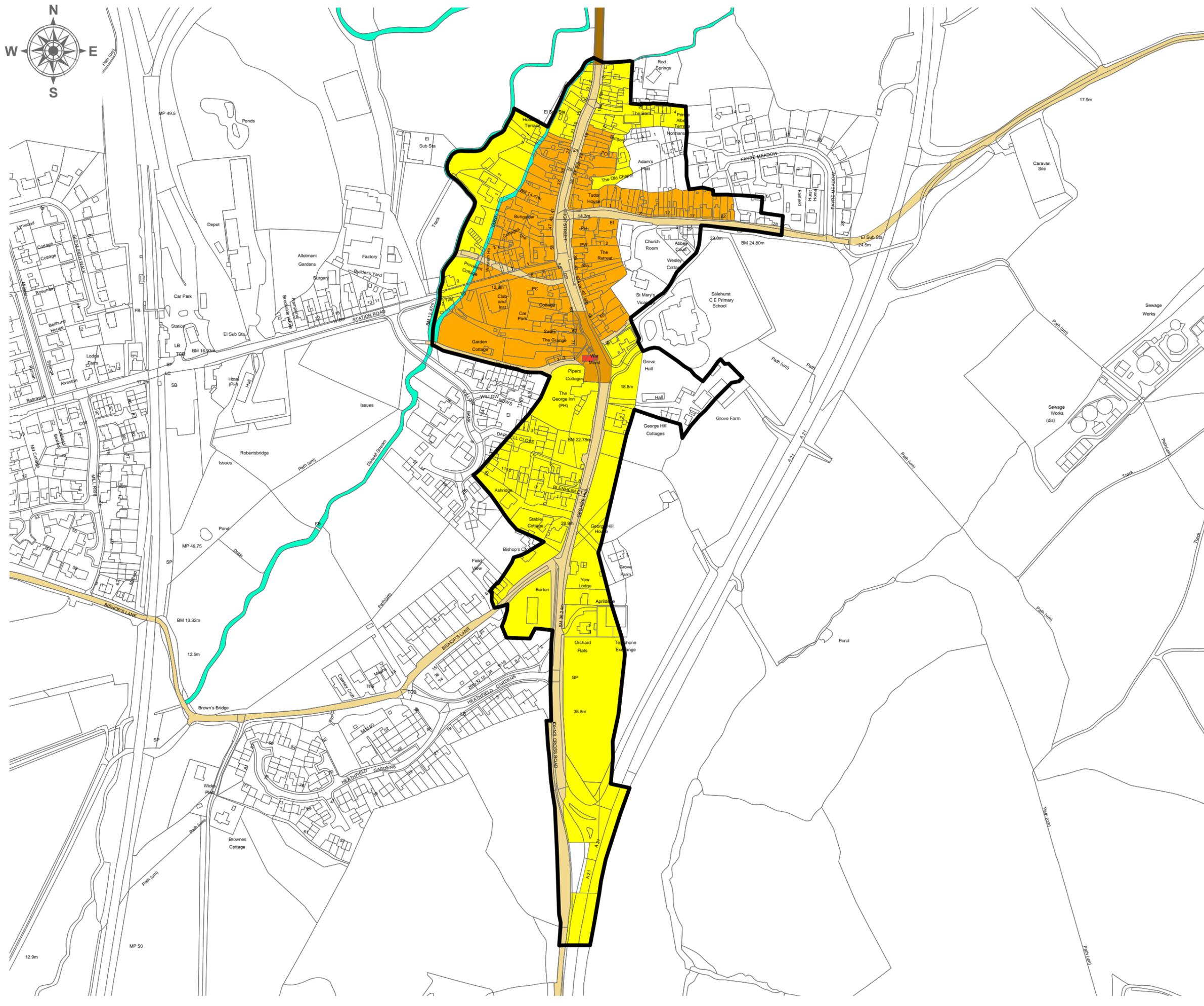
HCT

- Bridge/causeway
- Church/churchyard
- Farmstead/barn
- Inland water
- Irregular historic plots
- Lane/road
- Market place
- Regular burgage plots

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ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 6 Period 7 (1350-1499)

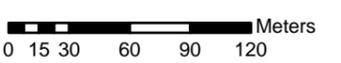
KEY

Robertsbridge EUS HCT

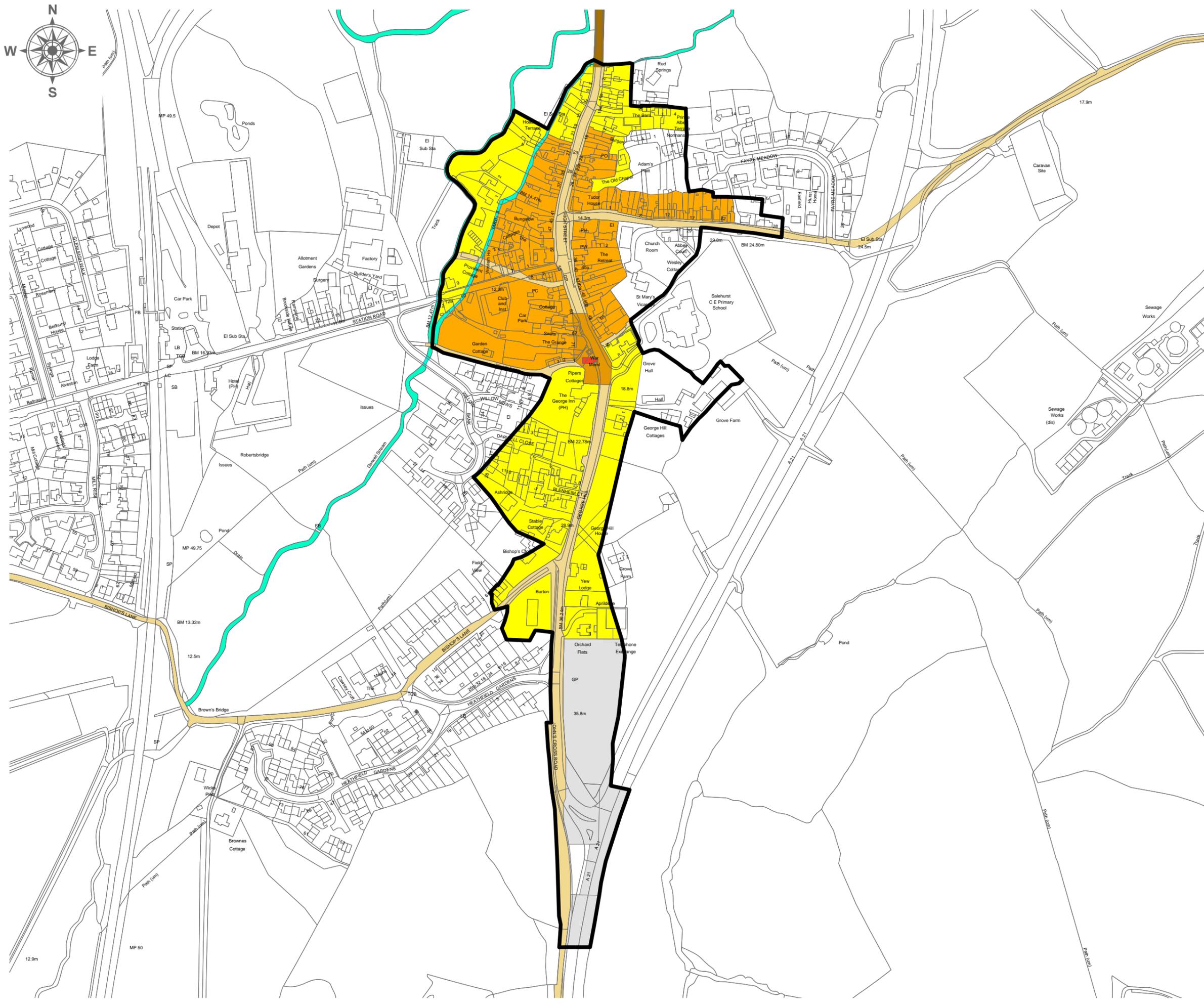
- Bridge/causeway
- Church/churchyard
- Inland water
- Irregular historic plots
- Lane/road
- Market place
- Regular burgage plots

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ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 7

Period 8 (1500-1599)

KEY

Robertsbridge EUS

HCT

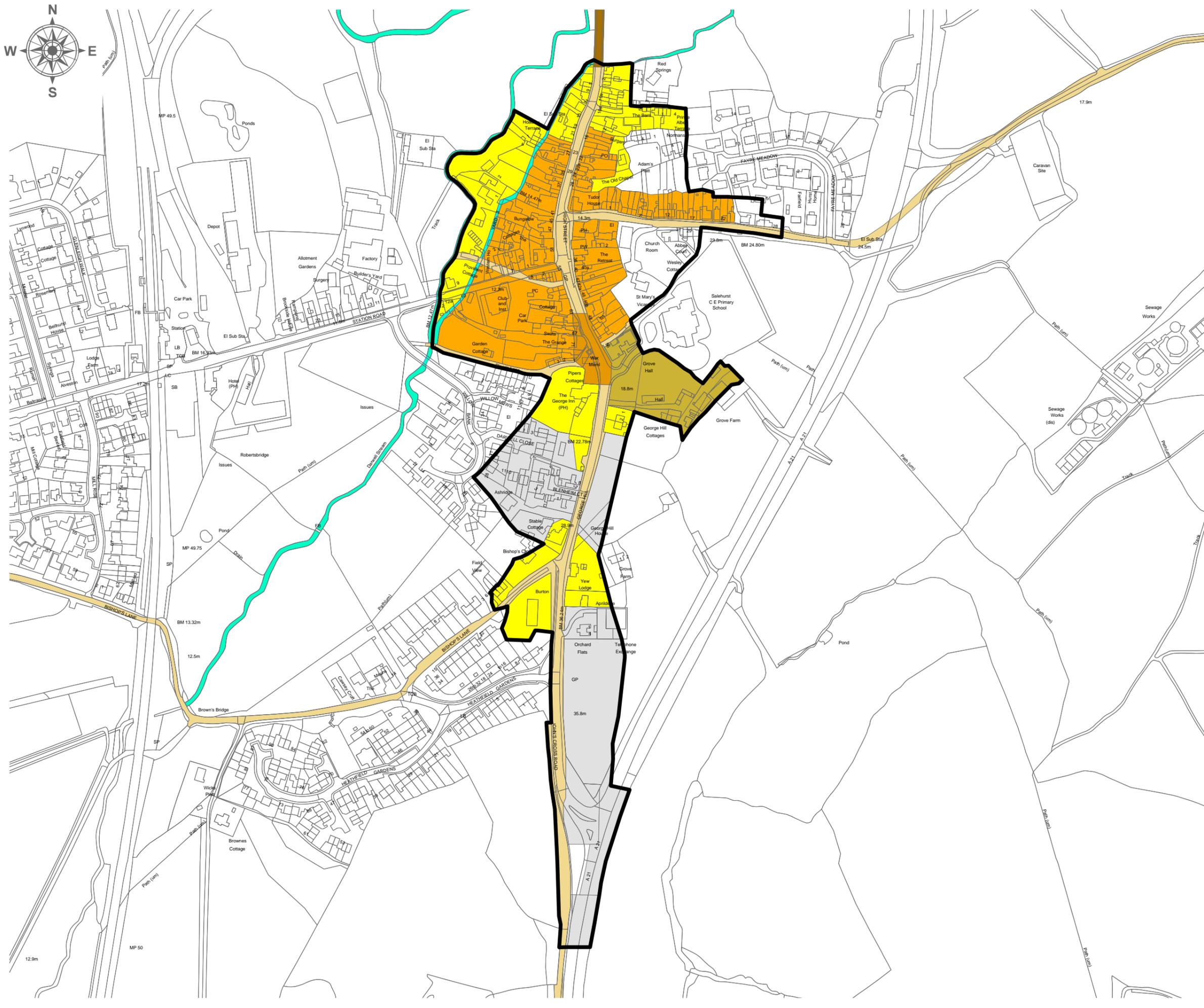
- Bridge/causeway
- Church/churchyard
- Inland water
- Irregular historic plots
- Lane/road
- Market place
- Regular burgage plots
- Vacant

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Sussex EUS



ENGLISH HERITAGE

ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 8

Period 9 (1600-1699)

KEY

Robertsbridge EUS

HCT

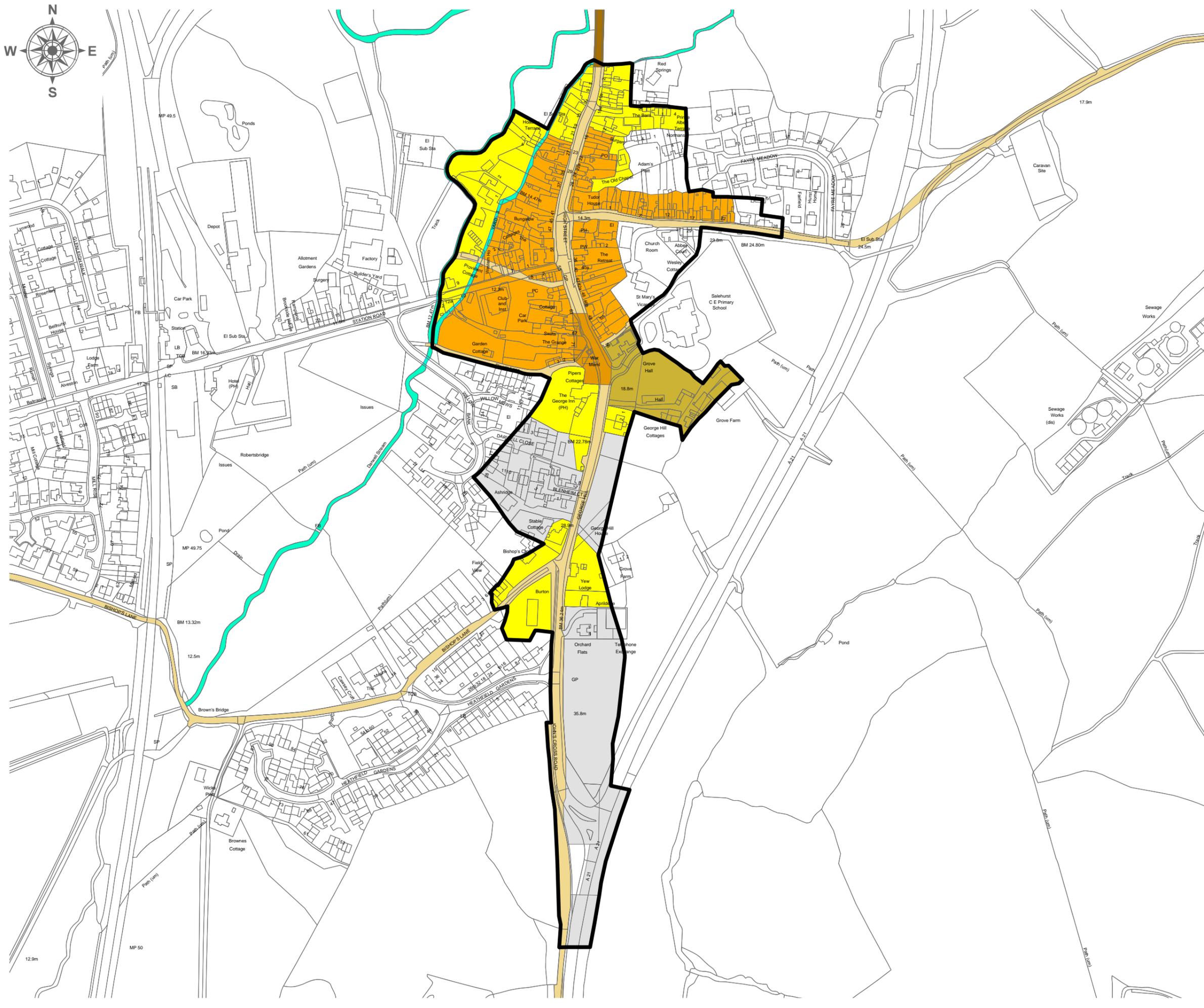
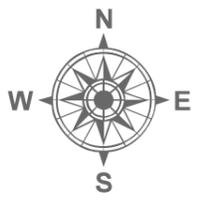
- Bridge/causeway
- Farmstead/barn
- Inland water
- Irregular historic plots
- Lane/road
- Market place
- Regular burgage plots
- Vacant

EUS research and mapping:
Dr Roland B Harris FSA MIFA
July 2009

SCALE 1:3,500



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ENGLISH HERITAGE

ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 9

Period 10 (1700-1799)

KEY

Robertsbridge EUS

HCT

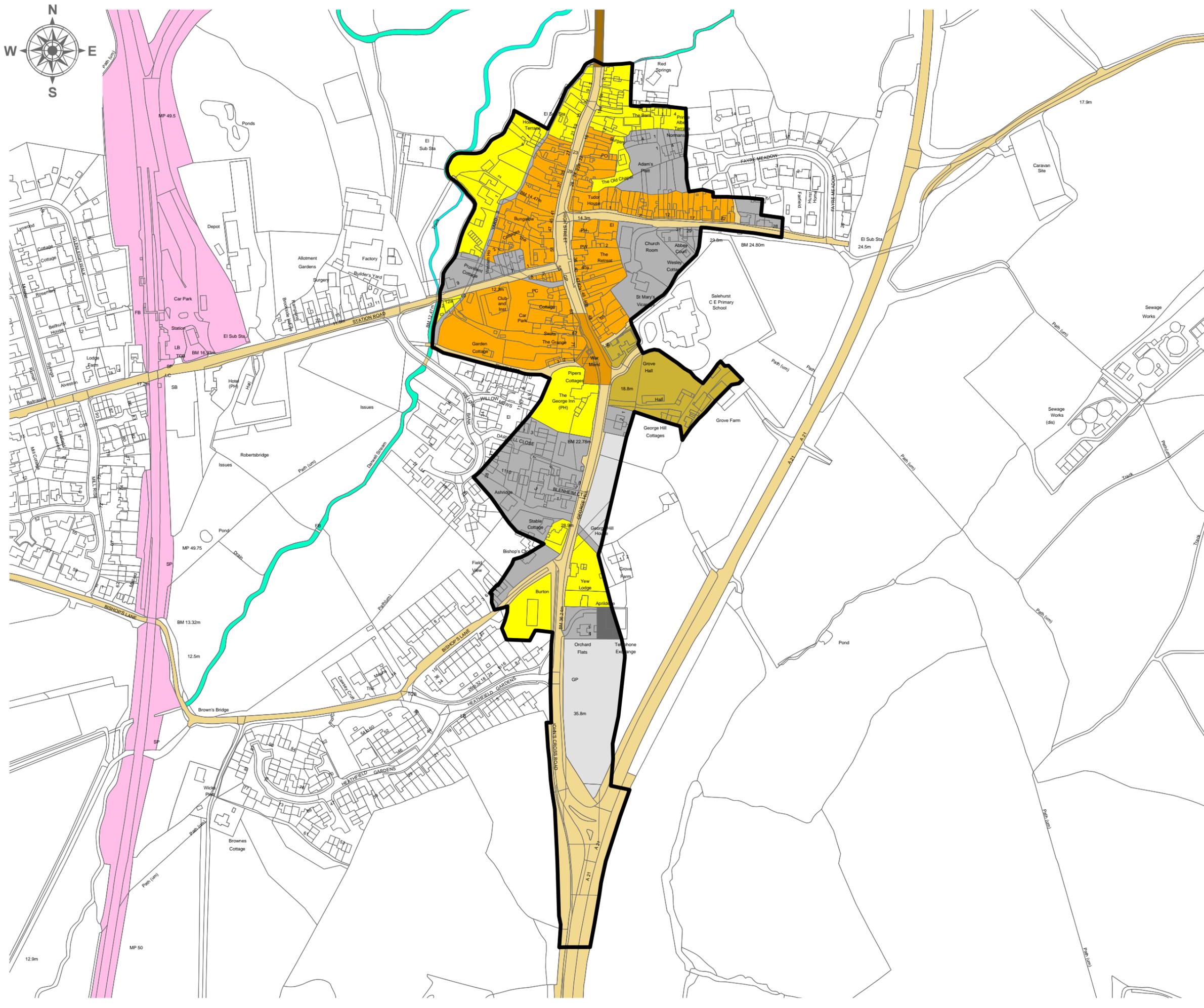
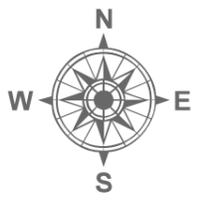
- Bridge/causeway
- Farmstead/barn
- Inland water
- Irregular historic plots
- Lane/road
- Market place
- Regular burgage plots
- Vacant

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ENGLISH HERITAGE

ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 10 Historic Character Types (2009)

KEY

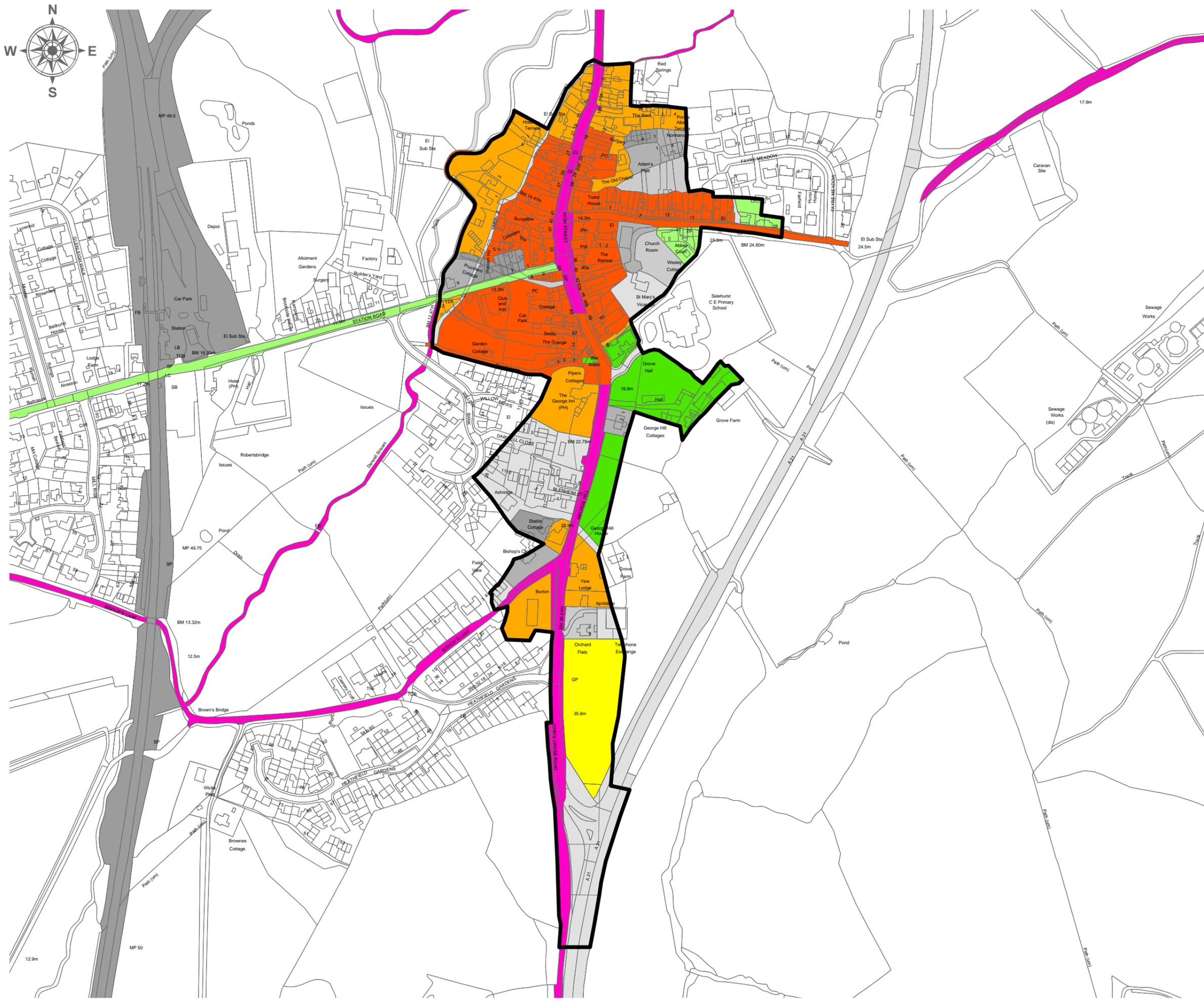
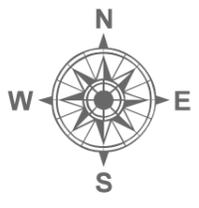
**Robertsbridge EUS
HCT**

- Bridge/causeway
- Farmstead/barn
- Inland water
- Irregular historic plots
- Lane/road
- Market place
- Regular burgage plots
- Station, sidings and track
- Suburb
- Utility
- Vacant

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ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 11

Historic Character Type areas showing principal period from which character is derived

KEY

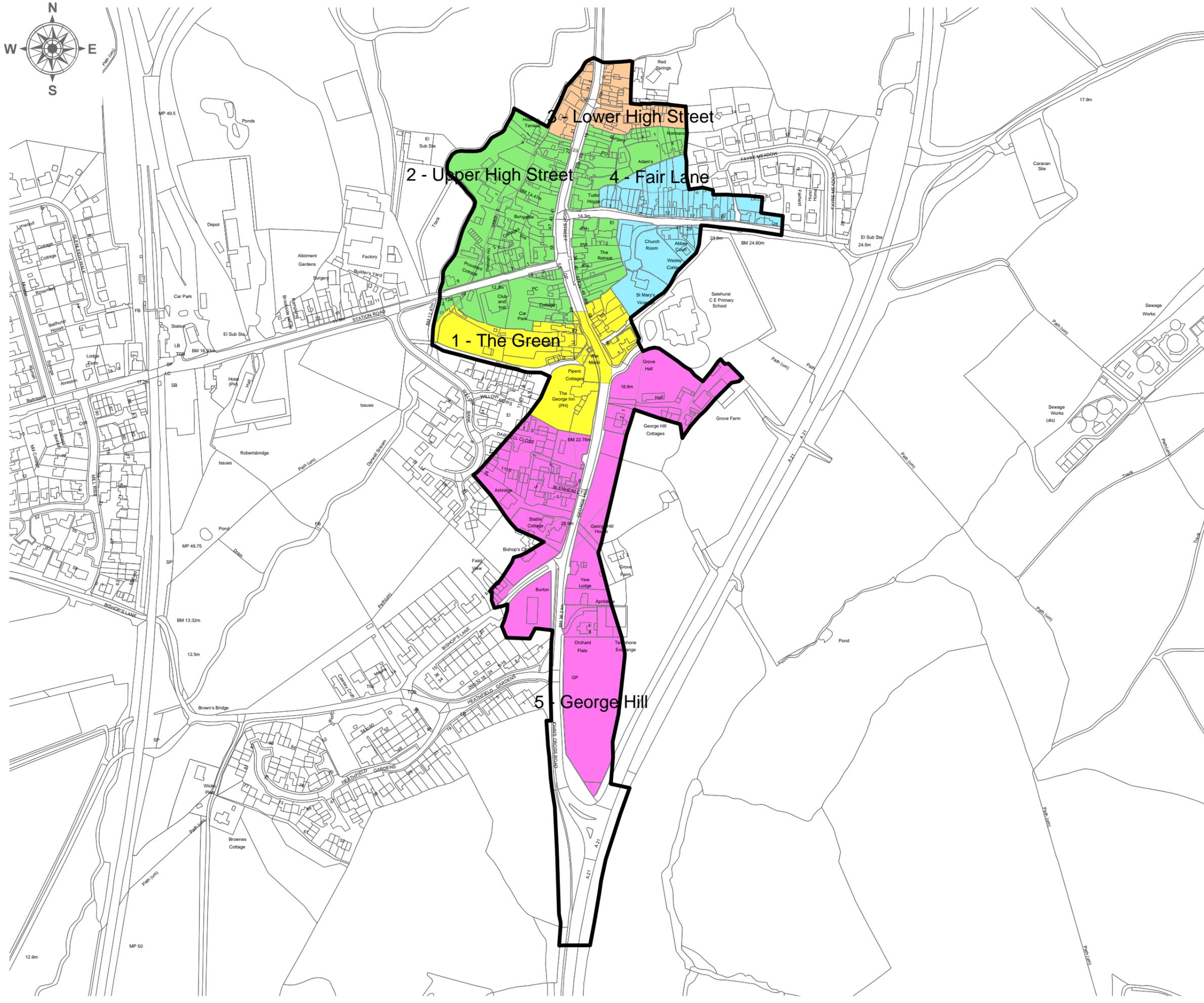
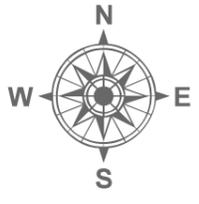
Robertsbridge EUS PERIOD

3
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15

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SCALE 1:3,503

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ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 12

Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs)

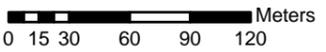
KEY

Robertsbridge EUS HUCA

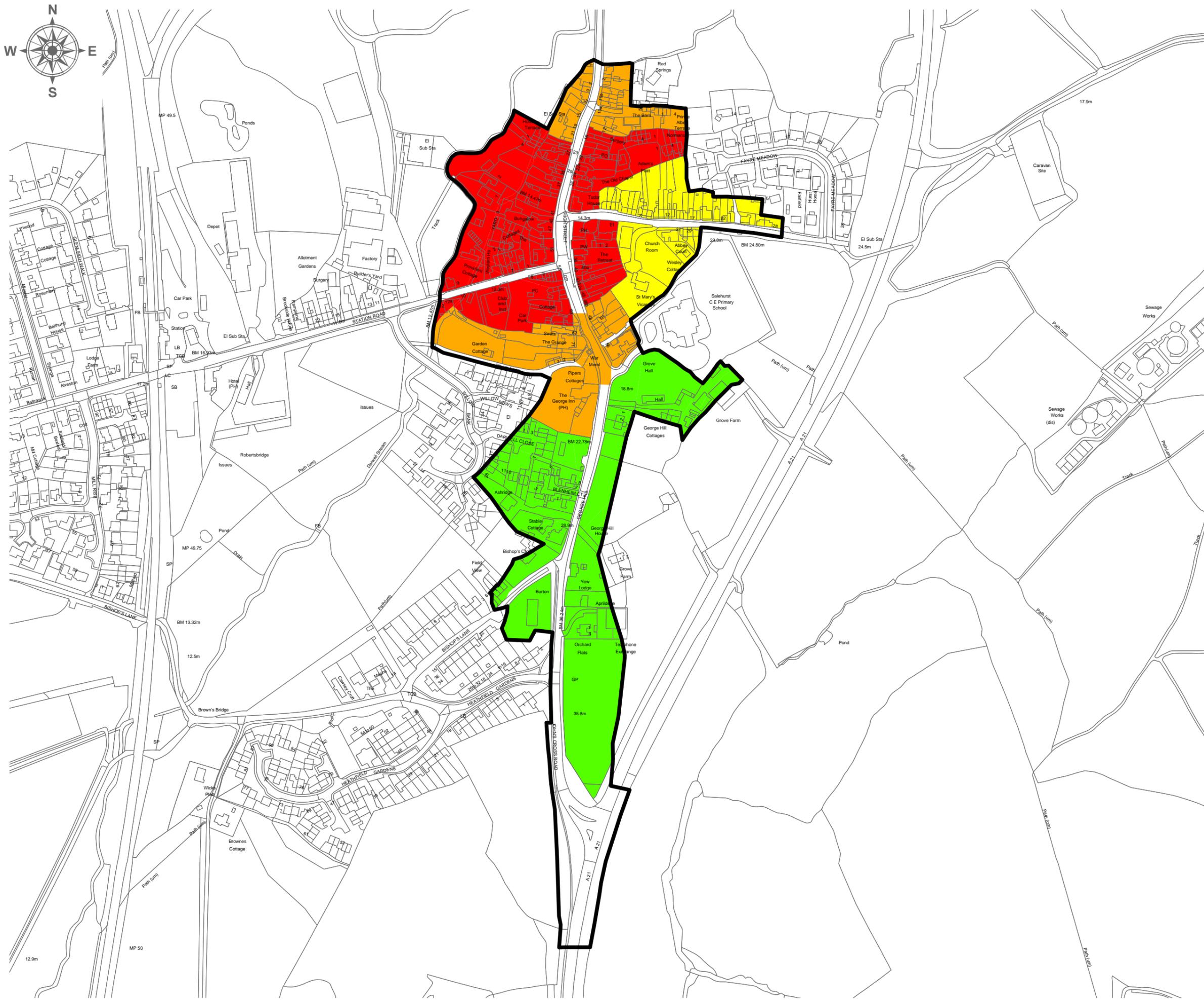
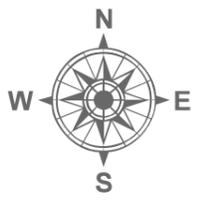
- 1 - The Green
- 2 - Upper High Street
- 3 - Lower High Street
- 4 - Fair Lane
- 5 - George Hill

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ROBERTSBRIDGE MAP 13

Historic Urban Character Areas (HUCAs)

KEY

Robertsbridge EUS

HEV

- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

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