

London Colney Parish Environmental Action Plan



Produced by London Colney Parish Council
in association with the
Countryside Management Service



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Foreword	iii
Section 1 Introduction to a Parish Environmental Action Plan	1
Section 2 Background to London Colney	3
Section 3 Wildlife and Heritage	7
Section 4 Access and Rights of Way	9
Section 5 Demography	11
Graph 1 Ages of London Colney Population	11
Graph 2 Occupations in London Colney	11
Section 6 Possible threats and Developments	13
Section 7 Environmental Health	15
Table 1 Noise level db(A) Description	15
Table 2 Health based Ambient Air Quality Assessment	16
Section 8 Climate Change	19
Section 9 Action Plan	21
 Appendices	
Appendix 1 Short Description of Action Plan Objectives	23
Appendix 2 List of Preliminary Projects	25
Appendix 3 Reference Maps	27
1 Parish Location	
2 Parish Boundary	
3 Aerial View	
4 Land Ownership	
5 Wildlife	
6 Access	
7 Areas Under Threat of Development	

Appendix 3 Reference Maps (continued)

- 8 Conservation Areas
- 9 Watercourses
- 10 Green Belt
- 11 Noise map - produced by DEFRA
- 12 Flood Map - produced by the Environment Agency

Appendix 4 PEAP Steering Group Membership 53

Appendix 5 Bibliography / Information Sources 55

Foreword

The Parish Council is well aware that its actions can have a significant impact on the local environment, and a local Parish Environmental Action Plan (PEAP) certainly allows us to make a positive contribution in a planned and sustainable way.

Following discussion with the Countryside Management Services (CMS) in early 2008, our Council established a steering group consisting of Parish Councillors, local residents and the CMS. Since then, their commitment and diligence has led to this report under the excellent chairmanship of Councillor Ken Bowes.

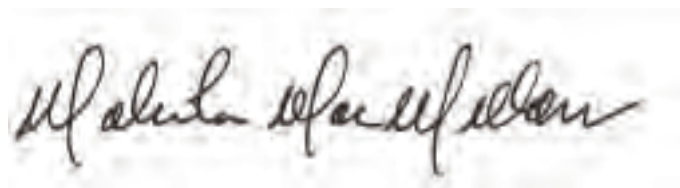
So often such reports can be full of good intentions, but this Report, with its excellent maps, identifies projects accompanied by an Action Plan and Objectives which will impact directly on our community.

These pages also provide comment on our local demography, threats to our environment and climate change impact. It is the forerunner of a detailed five-year plan which will be published as an annex to this report.

Commitment to financial backing for projects has already been given by the Parish Council and we will seek joint funding from the District Council for some activities. In fact, one project at the Colney Fox pond has progressed substantially.

All members of the Parish Council and the Steering Group have an enthusiastic commitment to a PEAP, not only to its principles but also to its projects being achieved. Sincerest thanks to all Steering group members, in particular Mr Peak, and to contributions from Messrs John Dent and Wally Vernon. We are most grateful for the on-going guidance from the Countryside Management Service

By identifying areas under threat of development, this Plan will help us develop strategies for protecting and enhancing vulnerable areas within our village - but we need others to recognise and sign up to these commitments, including local residents and the councils at St Albans and Hertfordshire.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Malcolm MacMillan', is centered on the page. The signature is written in a cursive style with some loops and flourishes.

Malcolm MacMillan

Chair of the Parish Council

1 Introduction to a Parish Environmental Action Plan

- 1.1 This Parish Portrait and Environmental Action Plan (PEAP) has been produced by a steering group of the London Colney Parish Council which included councillors and residents in association with the Countryside Management Service (CMS).
- 1.2 A Parish Environmental Action Plan (PEAP) is an approach whereby a community group can identify, programme and implement a whole range of environmental improvements. The main aim will be to identify what makes a place special, and most importantly, support the local action needed in order to make such features relevant and accessible. The first step, an audit of access, open space, habitats, heritage, landscape and other features will be followed by the preparation of an action plan. The aim is to provide a detailed framework for an effective and co-ordinated approach to local environment improvements.
- 1.3 What is a PEAP?
- An opportunity for a community to identify its most important natural places.
 - A place to capture a community's aspirations for improving its environment.
 - A way of integrating all environmental activity in a single coherent long term plan.
 - A tool for raising awareness and gathering the support necessary to make things happen.
- 1.4 A successful PEAP is based on local commitment backed up with support from the Countryside Management Service (CMS). Local support can be in a variety of forms including:
- Commitment from a community group or Parish Council
 - A local steering group that regularly meets
 - A mechanism for involving local people in prioritising action and making things happen.

1.5 The support the Countryside Management Service (CMS) provides will include:

- Guiding the community through the PEAP process.
- Assisting in gathering environmental information.
- Helping to pull together and co-ordinate the steering group.
- Assisting local land owners with grant aid applications.
- Providing on-going support and guidance.

2 Background to London Colney

- 2.1 London Colney was formally made an ecclesiastical Parish in 1909; however there are much earlier land divisions which suggest that parts of the parish boundary have considerable antiquity.
- 2.2 Much of the landscape seen today is a result of past human activity. Relatively modern development and mineral extraction has changed much of the landscape with which people would have been familiar even a few decades ago. Only areas west of Shenley Lane and east of the by-pass would be in some part recognisable.
- 2.3 The local soils consist of boulder clay overlain with semi-permeable stony clay known locally as 'Hoggin' with pockets of sand and gravel. The Upper Colne Valley contains mineral deposits which have been widely exploited altering the local river environs. The hydrology consists of the River Colne which is fed by the Colney Stream and the Salisbury Brook. These features were more prolific in the past and were supplemented by ponds, one of which still makes its presence felt on White Lion Lane, now St Anne's Road (Appendix 3, Map 9).
- 2.4 The Domesday Survey of 1098 suggests that London Colney including the Napsbury area was made up of woodland and mixed agriculture such as arable and pasture.
- 2.5 The earliest signs of human activity are prehistoric, the remains of which have been found to the west of the parish. Mesolithic tools of hunter gatherers have been found by the river. Crop marks indicate various earthworks including, ditches, barrows and round houses. It is in the later part of this period when large scale setting out is thought to have occurred. This may be why the overall pattern of the landscape is rectilinear in common with much of southwest Hertfordshire. It is possible to analyse the arrangement of fields and roads and demonstrate that the landscape may have been set out as early as the Bronze Age. The grain of fields and tracks runs approximately north west, away from the higher ground of the clay southern uplands of Ridge and Shenley Parishes. This pattern is more clearly seen on 19th century maps with roads and tracks that remain today.



- 2.6 From the late Iron Age and the Romano-British period the parish was at the periphery of the territory controlled from first, Verulamio and then Verulamium, no doubt it was farmed although direct evidence of Roman influence is yet to be found. In the age that followed the land was divided into large estates delineated by boundaries which were often natural features. About three quarters of the parish was part of the vast holdings of St Albans Abbey, the remaining land was divided between the Tyttenhanger and Park Estates, the latter comprised most of south west Hertfordshire. The parish today is formed from three earlier parishes namely St Peters and Shenley. The third, a detached part of St Stephens, probably created in the 14th century at the same time as Ridge parish.
- 2.7 London Colney first appeared on a Hertfordshire map of 1645. The village grew when the coaching route from London to Holyhead was in its heyday. At which time there were 26 Inns and Pubs to accommodate the travellers, coachmen and their teams of horses. At the beginning of the 20th century the population figure was 3568 (including Colney Heath), today it is approximately 8000.
- 2.8 St. Peter's was the first church built in 1825. Over the years churches and chapels of other denominations have followed. Up until the Second World War London Colney remained a trunk route for heavy freight lorries, having numerous transport cafes. Industry, hospitals and farming provided many jobs for young school leavers and the village shops were thriving businesses. Since World War II, large housing estates have taken over land which once yielded crops and included meadows where cattle grazed.
- 2.9 Interesting buildings that have stood the test of time include: Tyttenhanger House which has been occupied by the Earl of Caledon, the Earl of Hardwicke and Sir Henry Blount, Salisbury Hall formerly Shenley Manor, Colney Park House and Tyttenhanger Lodge, which are now the Pastoral Centre and the Colney Fox respectively.



2.10 The Pastoral Centre was built in the ancient monastic style with a cloister surrounding an inner garden. The building itself was started in 1899 following the demolition of the old Colney Park Mansion House. The Neo-Tudor building is classed as one of the architect Leonard Stokes's greatest works. The chapel designed by Ninian Comper is greatly admired.



2.11 The Chantry Chapel in the grounds of the Pastoral Centre is of special interest. Legend has it to be the site of the home of St Alban before his arrest and execution in the city of Verulamium now named in his honour. The whole site is recorded in the Domesday Book.

2.12 Some of the most attractive properties in the village are located in the Waterside area. Waterside House formerly Rose Cottage, is an impressive house on a farmstead site which is referred to as existing at the time of the Domesday Census. The many smaller cottages in this area are also worthy of note, some being over 150 years old.

2.13 Notable individuals that have resided in London Colney include; Nell Gwynn, Lady Randolph Churchill, Sir Nigel Gresley and Walter Goldsmith. The celebrated artist Gordon Beningfield grew up in the village and the actor Phillip Madoc has lived in the village for a number of years.

3 Wildlife and Heritage

- 3.1 London Colney is described as being part of the 'Vale of St Albans' landscape character area which is characterised as;

'A broad and shallow basin of the Upper Colne, with some extensive panoramas over arable fields, both along the vale and up towards Shenley Ridge to the south. Mixed land uses include arable, extensive areas of active and restored mineral extraction and urban fringe development. Areas of wooded farmland estate characterise the north eastern part of the area'.

- 3.2 There are six County Wildlife Sites designated within the Parish of varying habitats including arable fields, the River Colne which contains the nationally declining water vole, acid grassland, wild flower meadows and open water habitats formed through gravel extraction. The latter is Broad Colney Lakes which is owned and managed by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. This nature reserve has a range of wetland habitats including the nationally rare wet woodland.



- 3.3 Pockets of woodland exist within the parish and on the boundary including Coppice Wood which has been identified as ancient woodland which means the area has been continuously wooded since 1640.
- 3.4 London Colney Parish lies within the boundaries of Watling Chase Community Forest. Watling Chase is one of 12 community forests within the UK. It covers 72 square miles of south Hertfordshire and north London. Watling Chase is both an area and a vision for the future. The development of the forest is based on a number of objectives including the promotion of nature conservation, the creation of wildlife sites, providing access and recreational use of the area and encouraging education.

- 3.5 Watling Chase is also a grant aid body. Environmental projects identified within the PEAP can be funded (not exclusively) through the Watling Chase Community Forest Small Projects Grant Fund.
- 3.6 The parish enjoys a number of publicly accessible open green spaces including large sports fields at Napsbury Lane to the north, on the Napsbury Estate and Morris Way Recreation Ground to the east. There is also open green space around the Napsbury and Pastoral Centre complexes and the area between the M25 and the River Colne.
- 3.7 There is some archeological interest to the south of the parish with Colney Chapel moated site designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Appendix 3, Map 8).

4 Access and Rights of Way

4.1 London Colney has the Timberland Trail and the Alban Trail which are promoted access routes running through the parish as well as a promoted cycle route (Appendix 3, Map 6).



4.2 There is a reasonable Public Rights of Way network within the parish mainly concentrated to the south and east, with only one bridleway to note. Access improvements will have to be focused upon new dedications or permissive routes if this resource is to be enhanced. There are existing initiatives that can be utilised to achieve this aim.

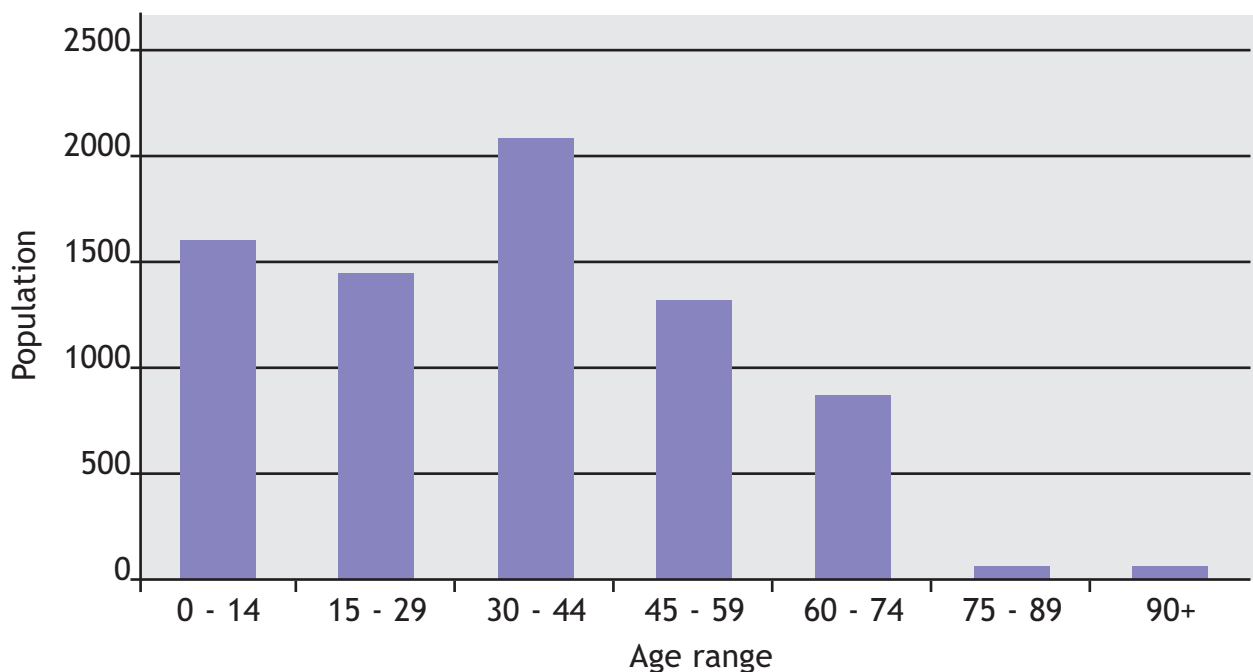
4.3 The Parish Paths Partnership is a national scheme, a partnership between Hertfordshire County Council through the Rights of Way Department, the CMS, local Authorities and community groups. It aims to give local people, mainly through the parish council, the resources and skills to enable them to improve the condition of the Rights of Way network.

5 Demography

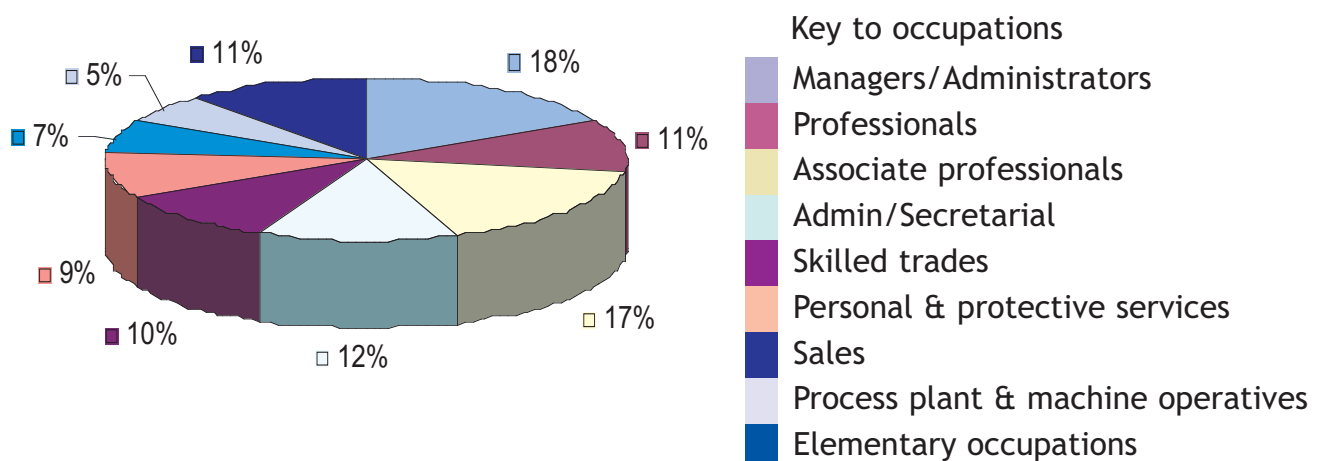
5.1 London Colney Parish has a population of approximately 7742. Around 19.2% are employed in the Wholesale and Retail trade, 15.9% employed in Real Estate/Business, 14.4% employed in Health and Social Care with only 0.6% employed through agriculture.

5.2 The largest age group is 30 - 44 with a percentage of the population around 26%. Children under the age of 14 make up 20% of the total population. Residents aged 60+ are the smallest group with 16.6% of the overall population.

Graph 1 Ages of London Colney Population



Graph 2 Occupations in London Colney



6 Possible Threats and Developments

- 6.1 The M25 will be widened to four lanes in each direction by 2012. The expansion will be within Secretary of State land. Evidently there will be an increase in traffic in the next 20 years with a perceived increase in noise, air



and light pollution. It is estimated that by 2027 the noise level at the Eskdale flats will be 74.4 dB(A) based on an 18 hour average. This is only 6 dB(A) below the level at which the health and safety regulations require an employer to carry out an assessment for the protection of their workers.

- 6.2 A new 100 bed hotel is to be built close to the petrol station on the Colney Fields site with parking for around 100 cars. This will generate additional traffic from clients and deliveries on the Bell and Colney Fields roundabouts. There will also be additional demands on water resources and increased light and noise pollution.
- 6.3 Areas have been identified as possibilities for the building of additional housing to meet Government housing targets to the south of the Napsbury Estate (possibly 1200 houses) as well as possible new housing to the north of the Napsbury Estate up to the A414 bounded by Napsbury Lane (Appendix 3, Maps 7 and 8).
- 6.4 There is also the possibility that a development will take place close to the Pastoral Centre although the size of this has yet to be determined. In-filling within the village is also proposed both in terms of small green spaces not yet built on, the re-development of two public houses and the Ridgeview Site.
- 6.5 All of this potential development would completely change the size of the village, adding practically 50%. Impact on the environment and resources would be considerable and probably unsustainable. Considerable infrastructure improvements would be required to mitigate against the effects of such proposals.



- 6.6 Gravel extraction is taking place close to the village off Coursers Road to the south and bounded by the M25. It is intended to extract 30 million tons of sand and gravel up to 2032 and fill the resulting excavations with 'inert waste'. This will cause an increase in large lorry movements on the Bell Roundabout.
- 6.7 There is a proposal to build a rail freight terminal to the west of the parish on the former Handley Page Airfield Site. The number of traffic movements associated with the site (approximately 3000 per day) would have an enormous impact on the surrounding area in terms of traffic congestion, air and noise pollution together with increased light levels from the site itself. There is no planned direct access to the site from the M25 which will result in increased localised congestion.

7 Environmental Health

7.1 Due to the proximity of the Parish to the M25 motorway, the A1081 and the A414 dual carriageways and the Thameslink railway line there is a high level of ambient noise in the Parish particularly on the south side. A map of the ambient noise coverage along with a legend of noise levels related to the colour contours is shown in Appendix 3, Map 11. An indication of the equivalent noise level of everyday occurrences is in Table 1 for comparison. The highest noise level at the southern end of the village is 74.4 dB(A). There is no legal limit to exposure to noise which emanates from traffic on motorways. However there are a number of ways of mitigating the effects of the noise. These can include fencing, low-noise surfaces, earth banks and concrete central reservations. At the present time it is understood that only low-noise surfacing and a concrete central reservation are proposed around Junction 22 for M25 widening.

Table 1 Noise level db(A) Description

Activity	Db(A)
Threshold of pain	120
Pneumatic drill un-silenced at a distance of 7m	95
Fast train 180km/h measured from behind yellow line on the platform	94
Heavy diesel lorry 40 km per hour at a distance of 7m	83
Modern twin engine plane at take off at a distance of 152m	81
Passenger car at a distance of 7m	70
Office environment	60
Conversation	50
Library	40
Quiet bedroom	35
Threshold of hearing	0

7.2 In terms of air pollution, air quality in the UK is assessed against the standards and objectives of the Air Quality (England) Regulations 2000 (amended 2002 and updated in the latest UK Air Quality Strategy (AQS) (Defra, 2007)). The AQS sets a number of health-based ambient air quality objectives, which are summarised in the Table 2. The EU Limit Values and their corresponding compliance dates are also shown. The year 2005 saw the status of PM10 and CO raised to EU Limit Values. NO₂ becomes an EU Limit Value in 2010.

Table 2 Health based Ambient Air Quality Assessment

Pollutant	UK Air Quality Strategy Objectives			EU Limit Values	
	Concentration	Measured as	Date	Concentration	Date
Benzene	16.25µg/m ³	Running annual average	31 Dec 2003	n/a	n/a
	5µg/m ³	Annual average	31 Dec 2010	5µg/m ³	1 Jan 2010
1,3-butadiene	2.25µg/m ³	Running annual average	31 Dec 2003	n/a	n/a
Carbon monoxide (CO)	10mg/m ³	Maximum daily running eight hour average	31 Dec 2003	10mg/m ³	2005
Nitrogen dioxide (NO ₂)	200µg/m ³	1 hour average (18 exceedances)	31 Dec 2005	200µg/m ³	1 Jan 2010
	40µg/m ³	Annual average	31 Dec 2005	40µg/m ³	1 Jan 2010
Particles (PM10) gravimetric	50µg/m ³	24 hour average (35 exceedances)	31 Dec 2004	50µg/m ³	1 Jan 2005
	40µg/m ³	Annual average	31 Dec 2004	40µg/m ³	1 Jan 2005
Particles (PM2.5) gravimetric	25µg/m ³	Annual average	2020	n/a	n/a

- 7.3 There are some measuring devices for NO₂ in the London Colney area. These are located in Bell Lane, at the Ridgeview hostel, and at Five Acres. The 2004 level of NO₂ in Bell lane exceeded the EU limit and at Ridgeview it was below the limit. For 2008 up to May the figures for the above sites are an average of 37, 38 and 35 microgrammes/cubic metre respectively.
- 7.4 All of the M25 will have lighting once it is widened. The proposed form of lighting for the widened motorway will be of the new cut-off type that should minimise the scatter of lighting beyond the motorway fence-line. The lighting is proposed to be located in the verges on both sides of the motorway and the nearest lights will be directed away from neighbouring properties. The spill from these lights will be controlled although some faint illumination will extend up to 50m away (0.1 lux at that distance). To put that figure in context, full moonlight is 0.25 lux and a typical residential street would be lit to around 5 lux.
- 7.5 There was local concern expressed at the M25 public exhibition at London Colney about pollution of the watercourse, around the Sainsbury supermarket, which outfalls to the River Colne. This outfall, and all other drainage outfalls from the motorway, are to be protected by mechanisms that enable spillages of chemicals or oil on the motorway to be contained in the event of an incident.
- 7.6 Areas possibly susceptible to flood risk around the river Colne are shown in Appendix 3, Map 12. The flood risk probability is between 0.5% and 1% in any one year for the dark blue area and 0.1% for the light blue area.

8 Climate Change

- 8.1 It is widely accepted that there will be an impact from climate change in the time period up to the end of the century on the south of England. In the main, the effects will be a lack of water (increasing drought conditions), less rain in summer and more rain in winter and an increase in the severity of precipitation and weather events when they occur. It is anticipated that the average temperature will increase by a few degrees Celsius in this period.
- 8.2 As a result of these changes to the climate there will be changes to the flora and fauna supported by the green spaces of the Parish. It is possible that different species of insect and birds will be able to cope with the changed conditions and equally likely that there will be a loss of some species unable to adapt to the changing environment. Any increase in drought conditions will inevitably lead to increased stress on trees and there will be a need to consider the planting of drought resistant types. Higher costs may be incurred for the watering of playing fields, allotments and children's amenities.
- 8.3 If precipitation events are more intense then there may be an increased risk of flash flooding events in the vicinity of the river Colne and additional flood prevention measures may be needed.
- 8.4 Action will be needed to combat the factors believed to impact on climate change and there will be a need to reduce to the maximum extent possible the carbon footprint of the Parish.



9 Action Plan

- 9.1 An initial set of projects has been incorporated into a five-year rolling programme. An outline description of the objectives and details of the preliminary projects to be undertaken are contained in Appendices 1 and 2.
- 9.2 It must be emphasised that this proposed programme is still under discussion and that it will be subject to refinement and can be added to as the work progresses. However, it is essential that a start is made on improving the environment of London Colney now and to this end a number of small projects will be implemented as a priority whilst the overall programme continues to develop. Each of the projects will have a detailed plan with costs and agreement will be sought from the Parish Council before work commences.

Short Description of Action Plan Objectives

- 1 Interface with existing and proposed Parish Council projects (see Appendix 2).
- 2 Survey all footpaths in the Parish and develop a plan for their improvement in junction with CMS. Ensure that the footpaths' leaflets are amended and re-published if necessary. Determine if new paths can be created and if so implement. Survey the cycle paths in the Parish and plan to increase their number, improve their quality and publicise their existence.
- 3 Set up a project to monitor the noise and air pollution levels within the Parish and draw up a plan to ameliorate the impact of traffic pollution on residents. Increase the tree planting in the Parish; either individual trees, those associated with play areas or new planting to tackle air pollution or provide increased screening for traffic noise (A1081/M25). Plan to open up all the wooded areas for public access in the Parish or adjacent to it (e.g. Coppice wood) in conjunction with the Forestry Commission and CMS. This will include the introduction of paths, information boards and walks leaflets for the woods.
- 4 Co-ordinate the PEAP with Napsbury Trust environment plans (e.g. the orchard, cycle track). Co-ordinate with the Herts. and Middx. Wildlife Trust regarding the Nature Reserve and determine if there are projects with which the PEAP can assist. Initiate a survey of the flora and fauna of the Parish from established sources and determine what conservation measures might be implemented in conjunction with other nature organisations. Encourage the local schools to be aware of these aspects of the local environment and to assist with the survey.
- 5 Using the list of all play areas and allotments in the Parish, determine what improvements/enhancements could be made and implement them. Determine if additional green spaces can be created within the Parish and draw up a plan to bring them into being and provide for their continued maintenance.
- 6 Determine the feasibility of dredging the rivers in the Parish to improve water flow, reduce the possibility of flooding and encourage wildlife to flourish along the river courses. Plan for its implementation and ensure that all interested parties are consulted.

- 7 Determine the carbon footprint of the Parish and plan to reduce the footprint by Council action (e.g. use of green electricity by the Council). Publicise the means available to the public to reduce their impact on the environment. Determine how recycling can be improved within the Parish and plan to provide additional facilities to make it easier for the residents to recycle.
- 8 Draw up a plan to maintain/enhance the London Colney conservation areas. Plan to improve the roundabouts in and close to the Parish (e.g. top and bottom of the village, Colney Fields, Napsbury Lane).

List of Preliminary Projects

- 1 Repair of gates at both ends of the village one of which has been damaged by traffic.
- 2 Clean up of road by Ridgeview and along Barnet Road – litter and overgrown verges.
- 3 Prune trees in High Street and clean up car park in Haseldine Road.
- 4 Provide larger signs to free parking in Haseldine Road Car Park on the High Street.
- 5 The wall in Haseldine Road needs repair.
- 6 Replace bus shelters near to Halsey Park and elsewhere in the village.
- 7 Need barrier on the by-pass central reservation to stop lorries exiting from the depot crossing the central reservation and turning south .
- 8 Ensure all traffic and direction signs are de-cluttered where foliage is obscuring them.
- 9 Complete railing replacement on the bridge – press Herts. Highways for action.
- 10 Change all PC sites to a green electricity tariff.
- 11 Complete footpath survey to ensure improvement plan is ready for implementation as of next April.
- 12 Renovation of pond at Colne Gardens
13. Replanting of green troughs close to the Surgery on High Street.

Reference Maps

The following maps have been produced by the Countryside Management Service* for inclusion in this PEAP:

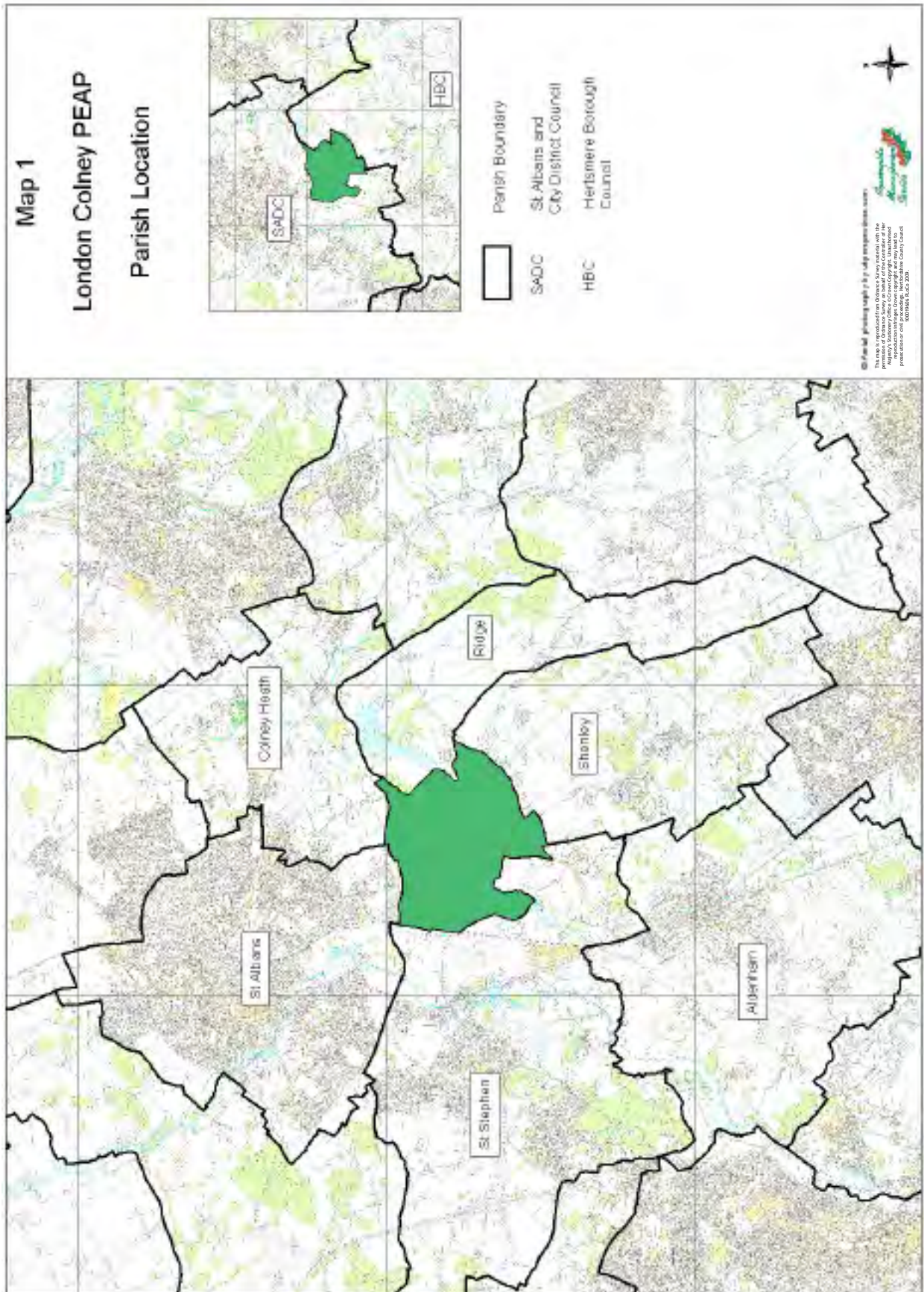
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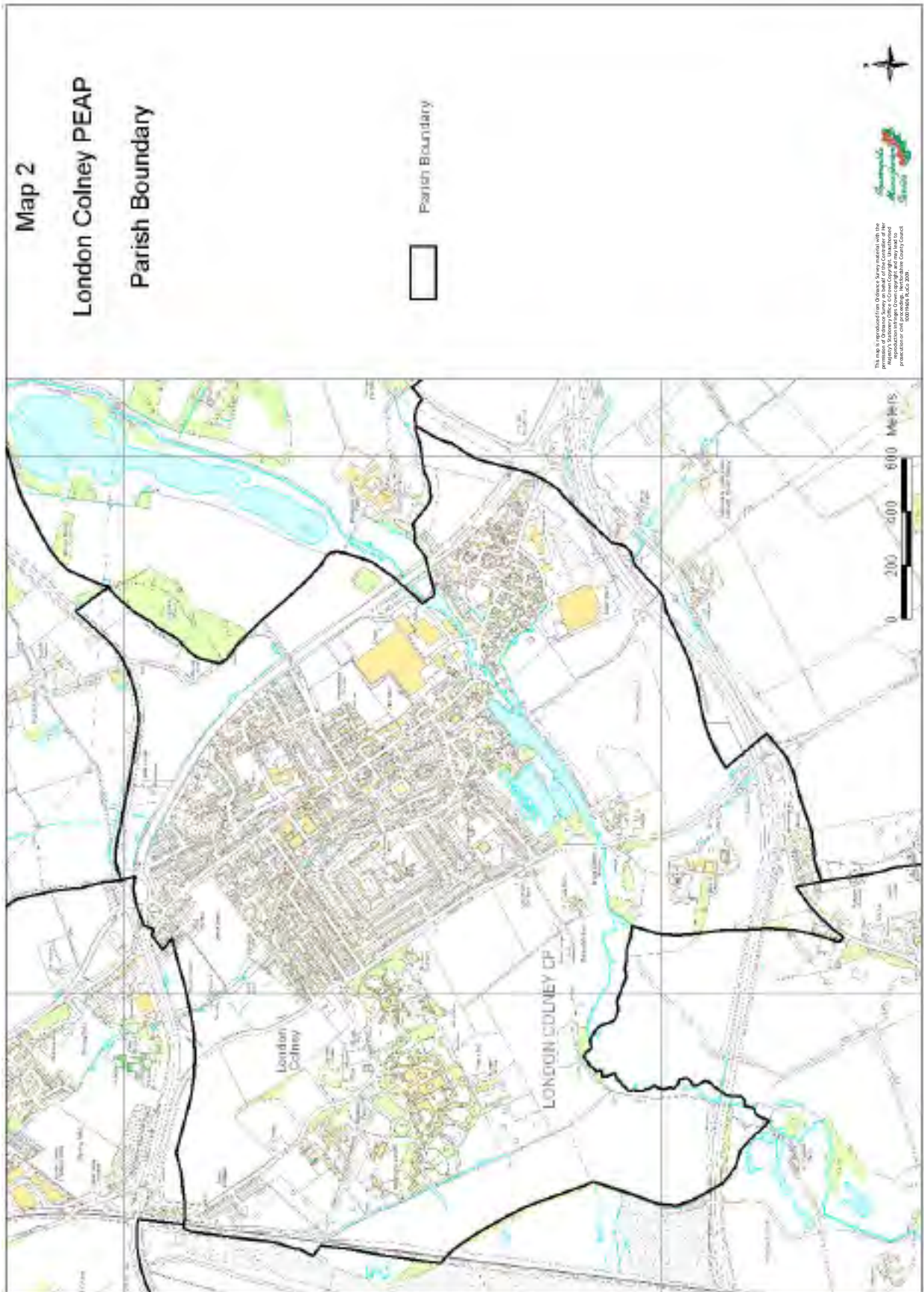
Also included are:

- 11 Noise map - produced by DEFRA
- 12 Flood Map - produced by the Environment Agency

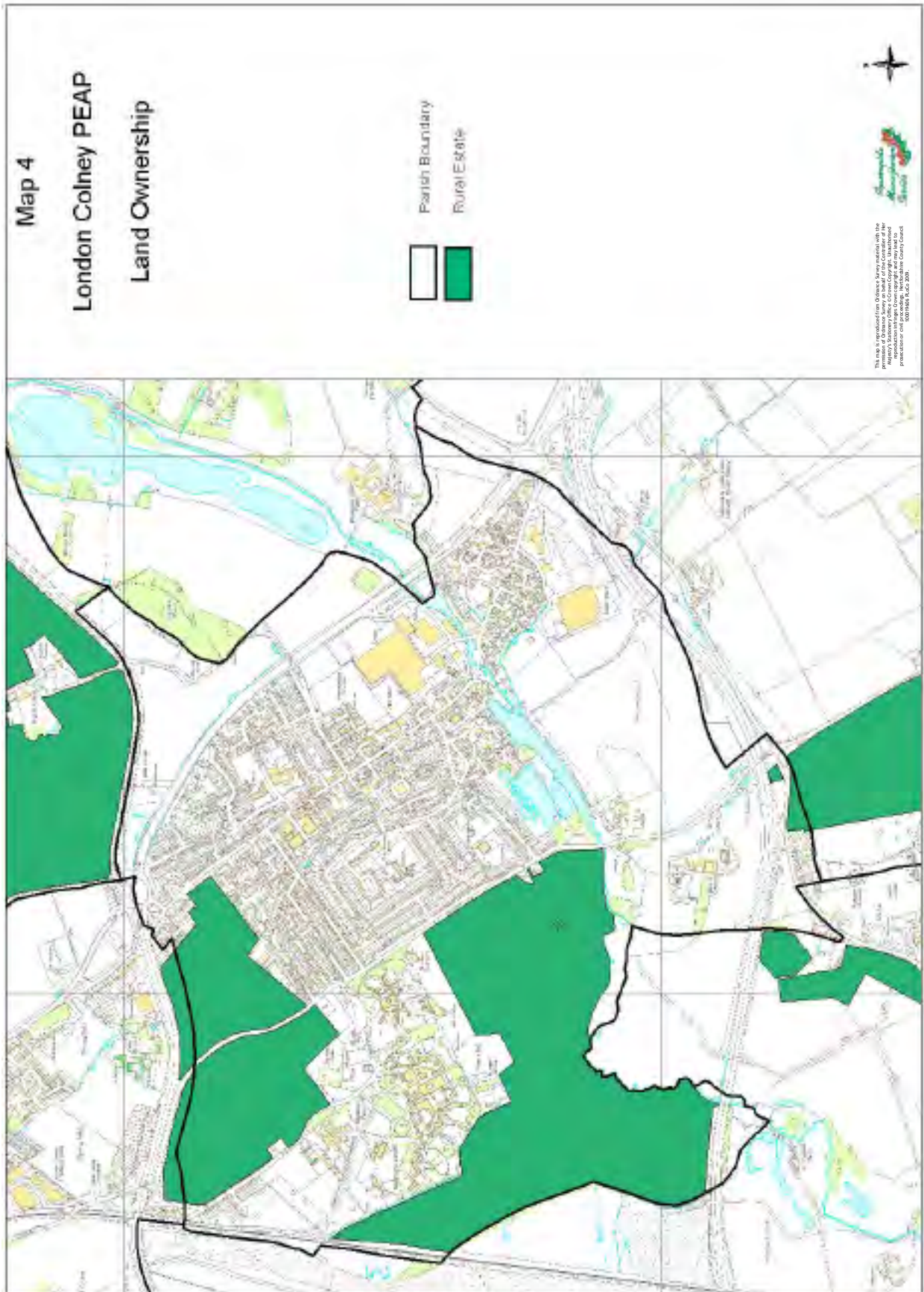
* Maps 1 - 10

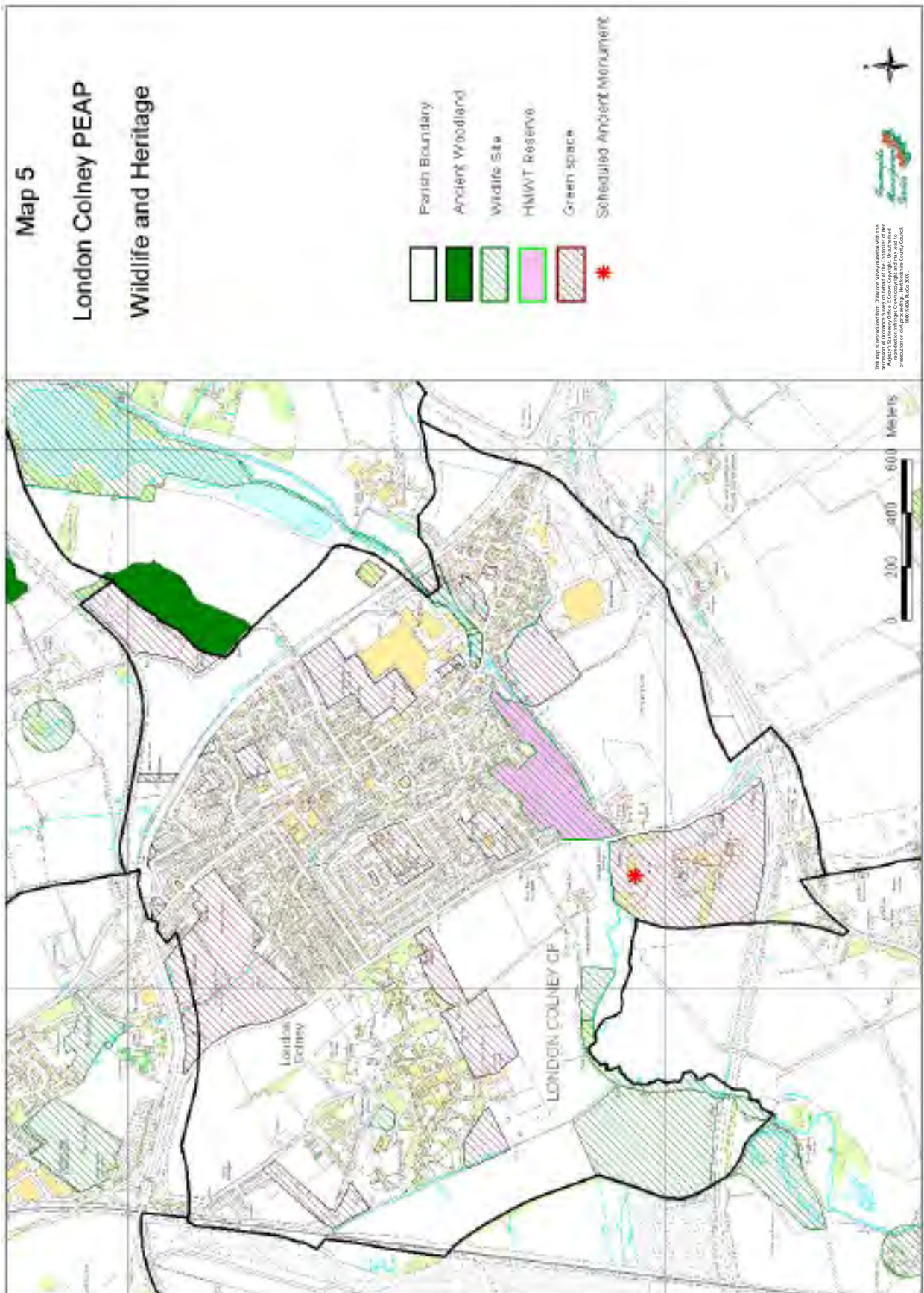
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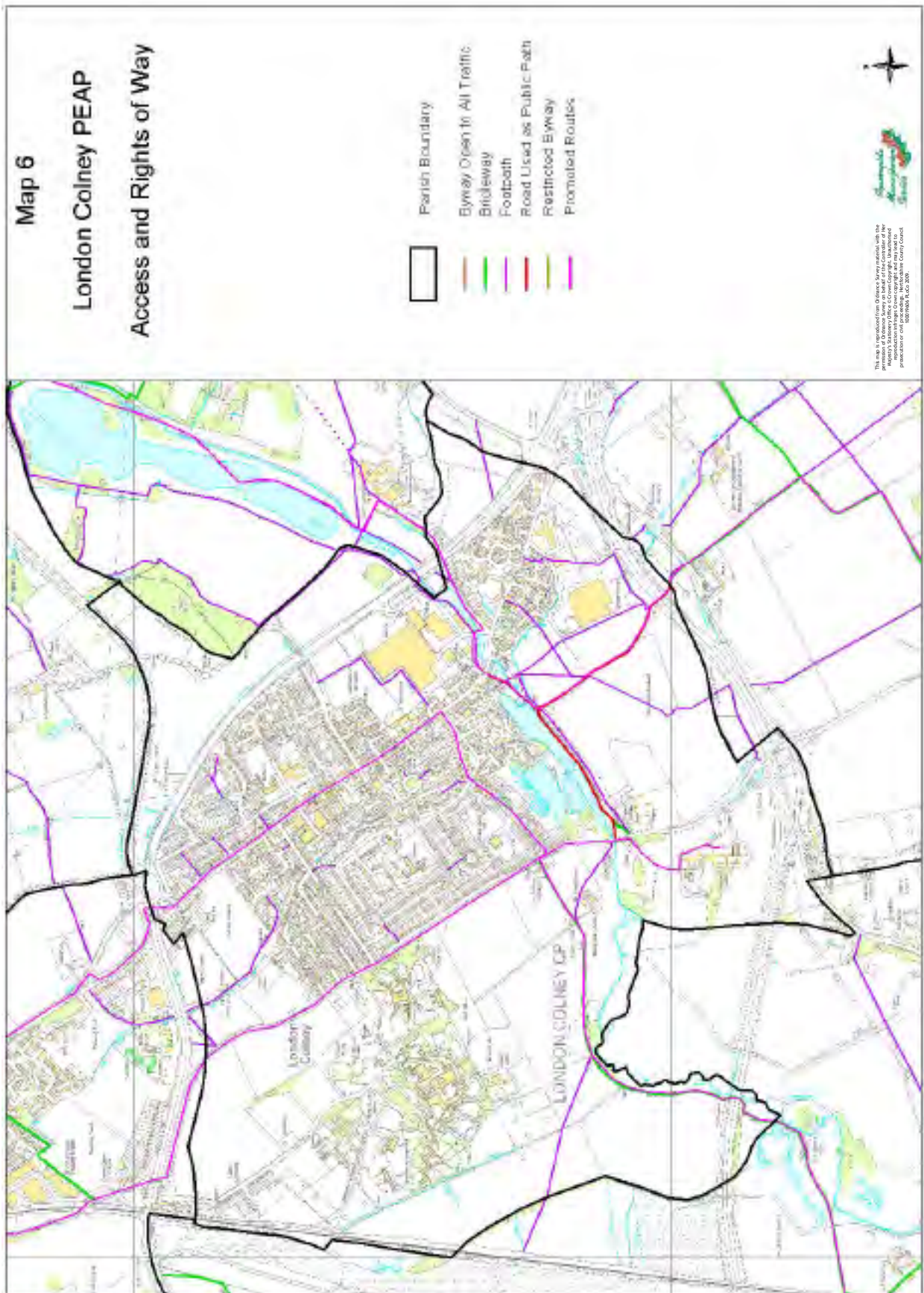


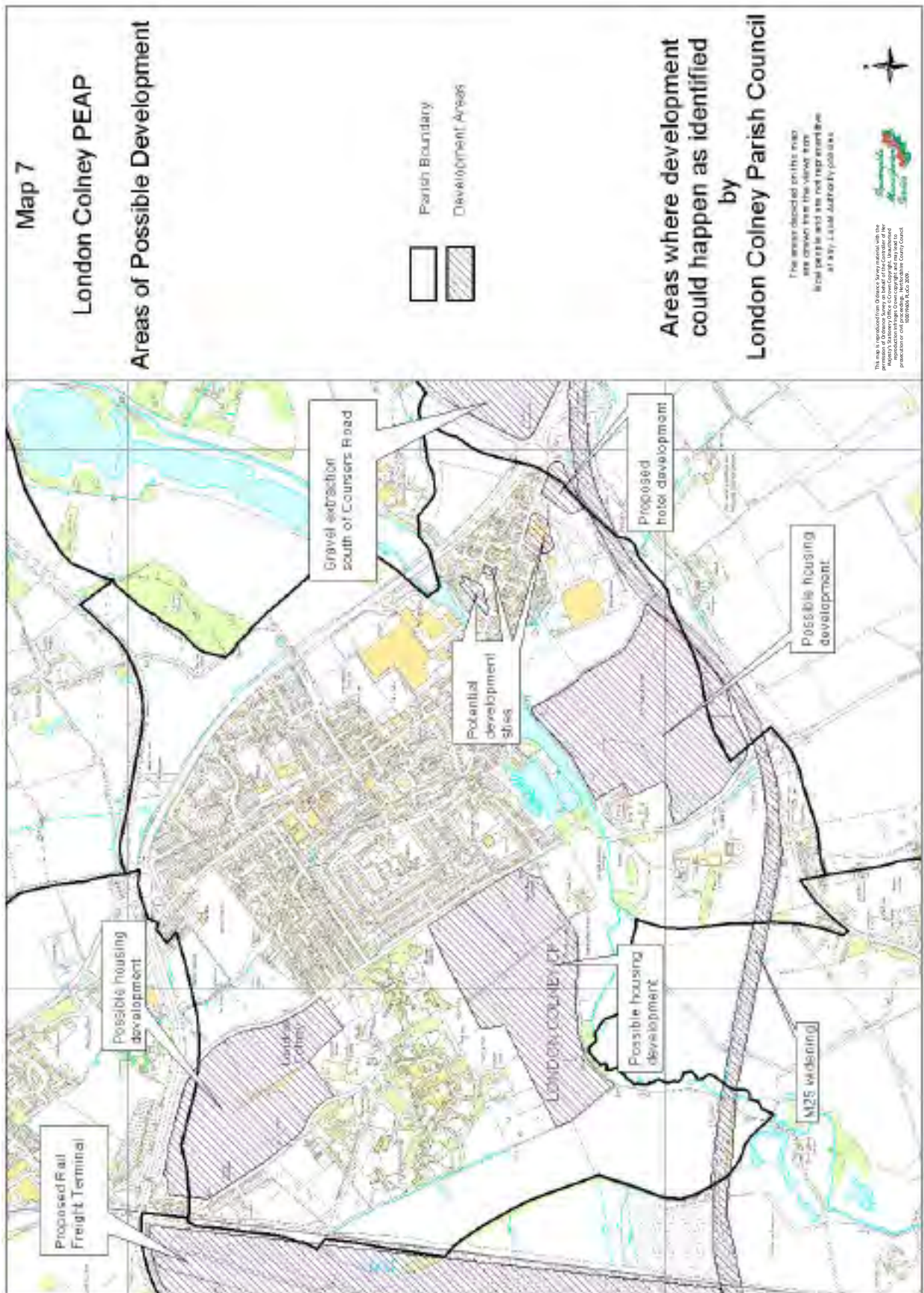


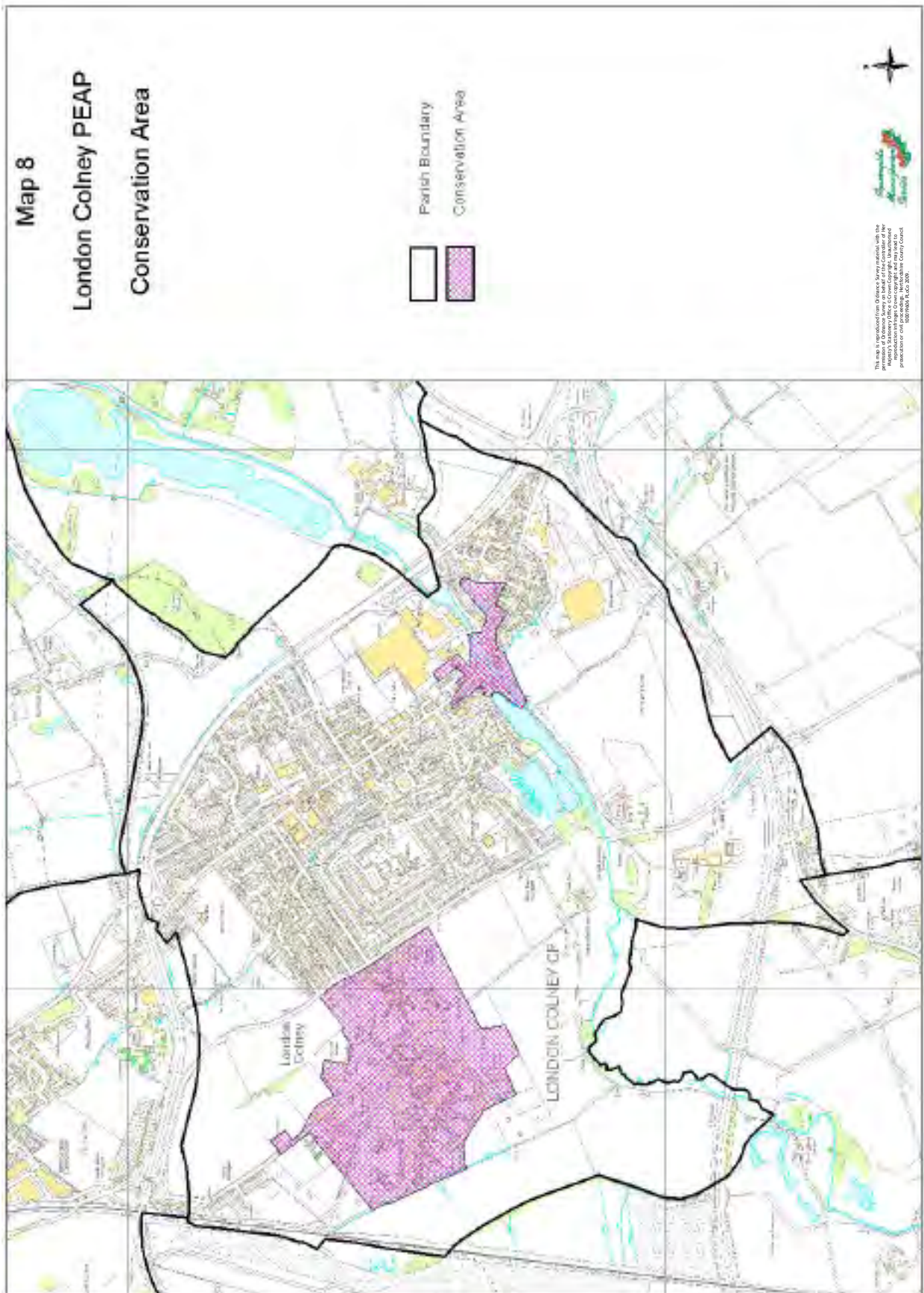


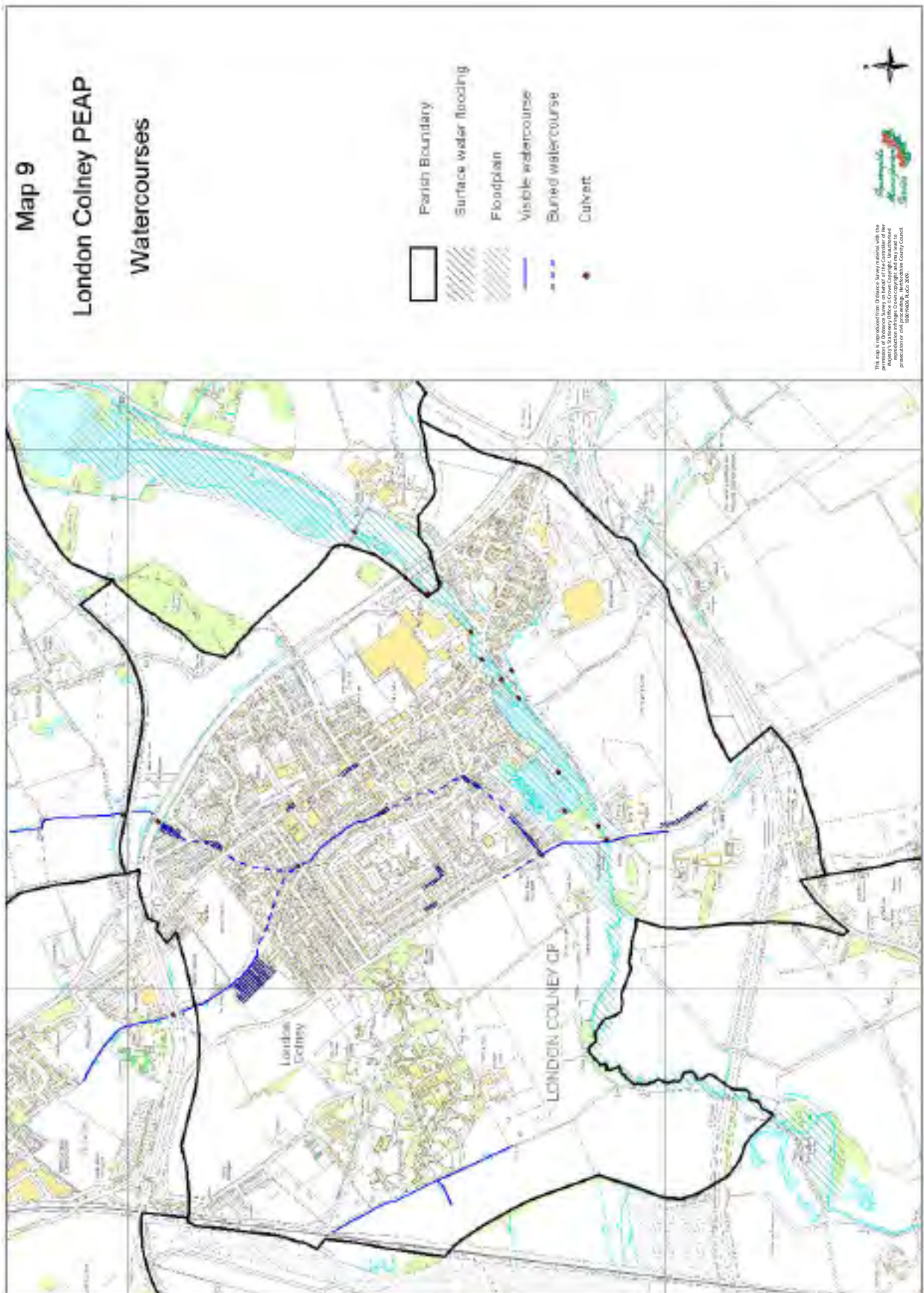


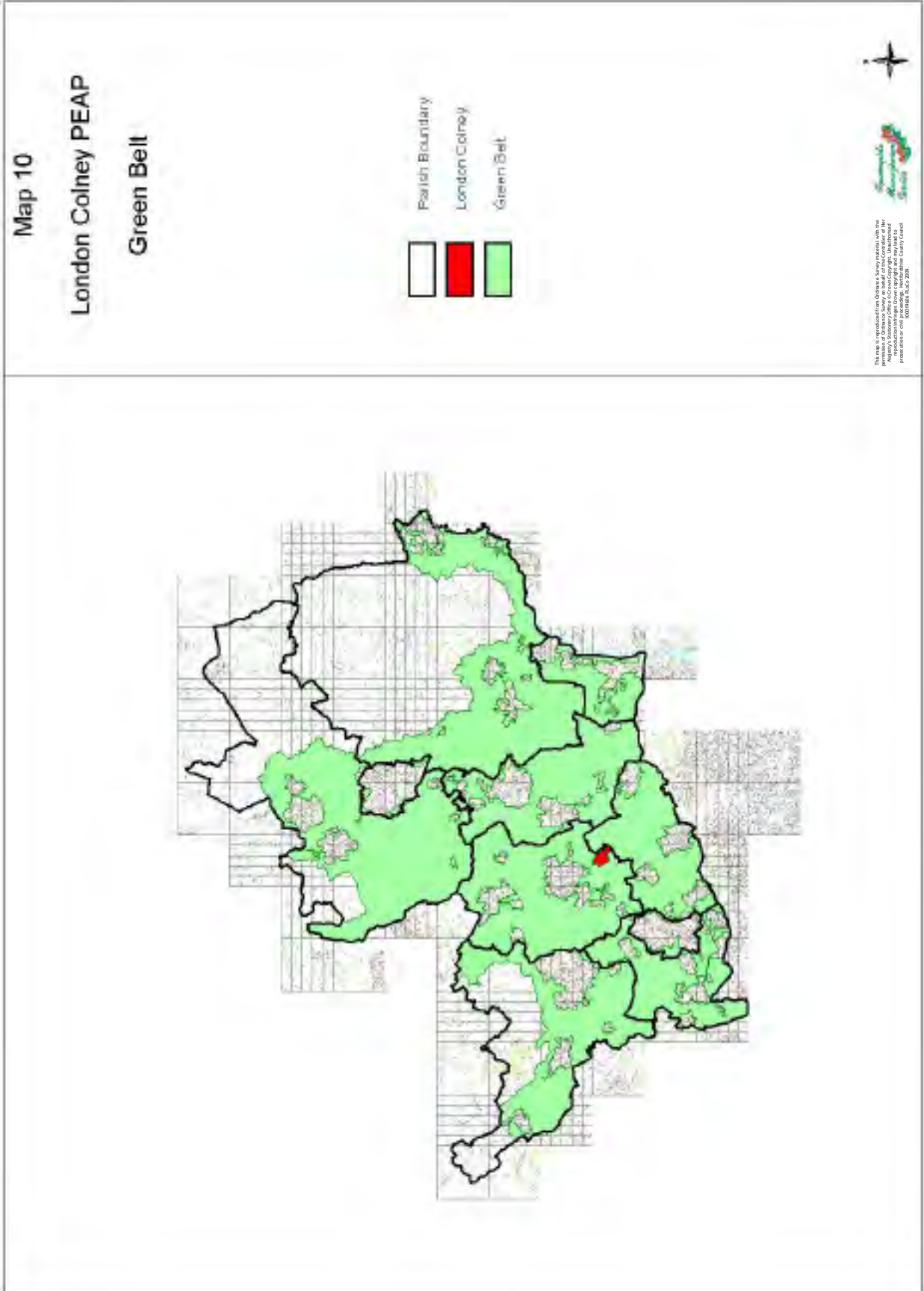


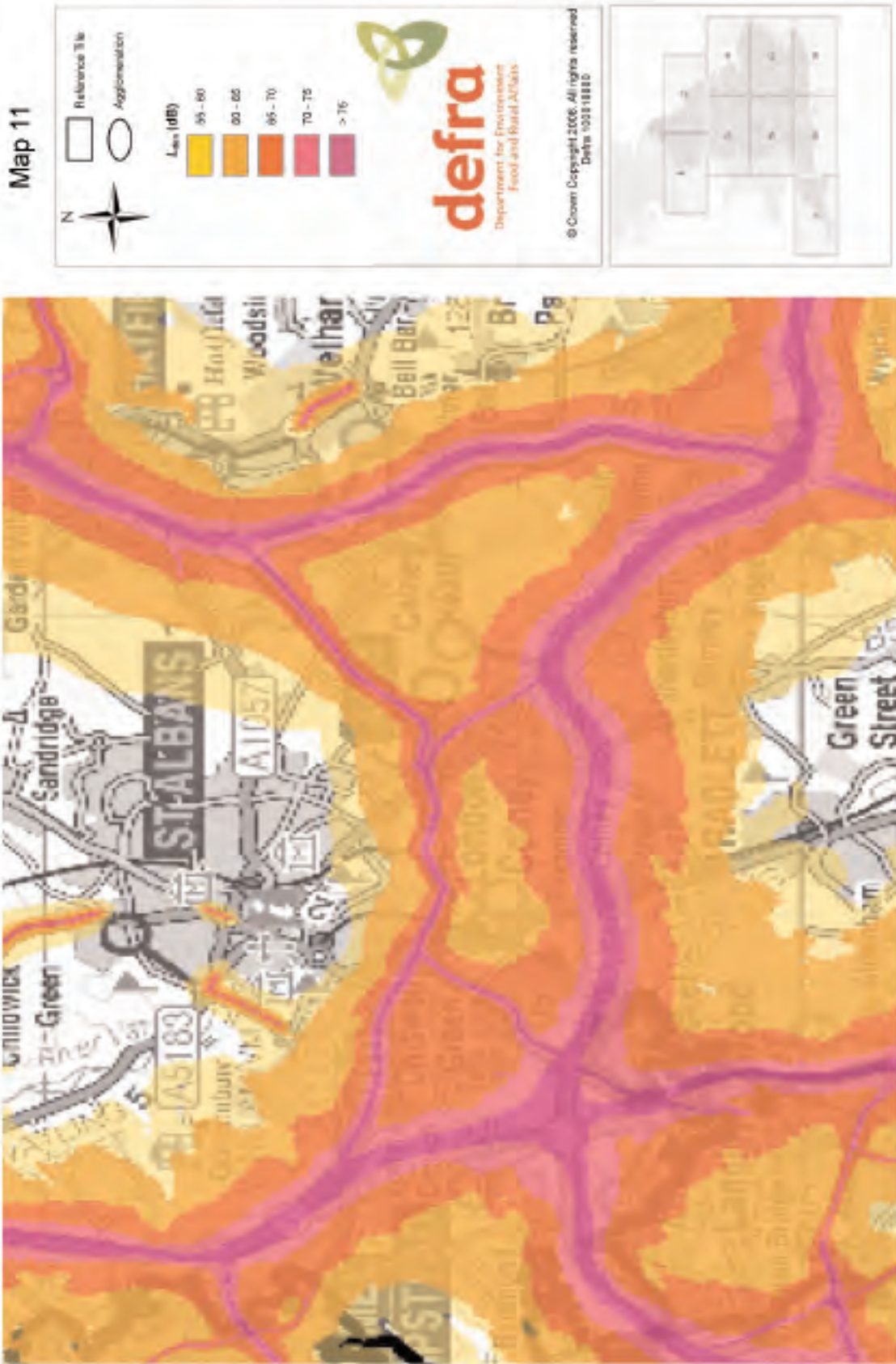














PEAP Steering Group Membership

Councillor K Bowes, Chairman

Councillor M Crouch

Councillor N Mahony

Mr J Perkins, Countryside Management Services (CMS)

Mrs J Barker

Mr K Peak

Ms K Shaw

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- 4 Hertfordshire Geological Survey
- 5 2001 Census
- 6 Extracts from 'The M25 Widening Scheme', Highways Agency
- 7 Hertfordshire Historical Archive

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