



ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

LOCAL PLAN AND STRATEGY REVIEW

District priorities for nature and the wider environment from the local plan and other strategies

| | |
|-------------|--|
| Pages 2-3 | SECTION 1: Threats and pressures on the natural environment |
| Pages 4-17 | SECTION 2: Targets and priorities for nature recovery (Goal 1) <ul style="list-style-type: none">2.1 Protecting habitats2.2 Restoring or enhancing habitats2.3 Habitat creation2.4 Species specific |
| Pages 18-25 | SECTION 3: Wider environmental benefits <ul style="list-style-type: none">3.1 Goal 2: Air Quality3.2 Goal 3: Clean and plentiful water3.3 Goal 4: Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides3.4 Goal 5: Maximise our resources, minimise our waste3.5 Goal 6: Using resources from nature sustainably3.6 Goal 7: Mitigating and adapting to climate change3.7 Goal 8: Reduce risk of harm from environmental hazards3.8 Goal 9: Enhance biosecurity3.9 Goal 10: Enhance beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment |
| Pages 26-27 | SECTION 4: District projects to note |
| Page 28 | SECTION 5: Specific priorities within neighbourhood plans |
| Page 29 | SECTION 6: Documents reviewed and referenced |

To note: The Environmental Improvement Plan 2023, Environmental goals, have been used to categorize the district's environmental targets in this review.



SECTION 1: THREATS AND PRESSURES ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1 Development and recreational pressures

Intense pressures on green and blue infrastructure close to the urban area, The Green and Blue Grid Strategy will play a critical role in developing a sustainable multi-functional matrix of green and blue grid assets to match the scale of the new growth proposed. (Ashford Green and Blue Grid Strategy, 2008)

High pressure on development increases the pressure on and importance of residential gardens to provide important breaks or gaps in built up frontages and in overall built massing. They also play an important amenity role by providing private recreational space for residents and providing important wildlife habitats and green networks particularly where the gardens are well established. (Ashford local plan, 2019)

1.2 Flood Risk

Ashford is at particular risk from fluvial flooding, as five main rivers converge in the town – the Great Stour, East Stour, Aylesford Stream, Whitewater Dyke and Ruckinge Dyke. Two flood storage reservoirs upstream of Ashford, one at Aldington on the East Stour, the other at Hothfield on the Great Stour currently protect Ashford town from fluvial flooding.

It remains a critical issue for Ashford given the topography of the surrounding area and the geology which is predominantly Chalk, with outcrops of Gault Clay and Lower Greensands. The rivers are highly responsive to flows which increase rapidly after heavy rain and fall quickly in drier spells giving them ‘flashy’ characteristics.

Whilst the Ashford urban area has had significant investment in flood alleviation in recent years, there are some areas of the town still considered to be at risk of flooding by the Environment Agency, notably in South Ashford. It is therefore essential that development does not increase this risk. New development presents an important opportunity to ‘build-in’ additional local capacity in terms of flood mitigation. Adaptations to new development can contribute towards combating the effects of climate change over the next 100 years. (Ashford local plan, 2019)

Ashford Water Cycle Study (2016), states that there is limited potential for additional flood storage reservoirs.

1.3 Water Demand

Currently, household demand for water is a high proportion of the current effective rainfall which available to meet demand, and as such the whole of SEW’s supply area is currently classified as ‘an area of serious water stress’. (Ashford local plan, 2019)



Lower Greensand and Chalk aquifers are under pressure from existing groundwater abstractions with 'no water available for licensing' to protect river ecology. Abstraction is also playing a part in water quality failure/ Many elements of the Stour have improved since 2009 but there are some elements that have worsened to 'poor' (none of the rivers in the Ashford Borough currently meet WFD targets). (Ashford Water Cycle Study, 2016)



SECTION 2: TARGETS AND PRIORITIES FOR NATURE RECOVERY (GOAL 1)

Unless otherwise stated, the following information in section 2 came from the Ashford Local Plan, 2019.

2.1 PROTECTING HABITATS

2.1.1 Internationally Designated Sites

The Borough is home to two designated sites of international significance for biodiversity, the Wye and Crundale Downs Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Ramsar site – the latter extends into an area in the south-eastern corner of the Borough between Appledore and Hamstreet. A small part of the recently extended Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Special Protection Area (SPA) borders the borough boundary in the vicinity of Stone in Oxney. Under European legislation, the Council has a duty to ensure these sites are maintained in favourable conservation conditions and that they are afforded the greatest level of protection.

2.1.2 Nationally designated sites

Nationally designated sites in the Borough include two National Nature Reserves, at Hamstreet Woods and Wye and Crundale Downs, and 13 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), comprising 57 SSSI units, which are of national importance on account of their biological or geological interest. These sites are legally protected by the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These sites are therefore afforded a high level of protection in this Plan.

Ashford contains two AONB; the Kent Downs AONB in the north and east, and the High Weald AONB located in the south-west. The two AONBs are afforded the highest level of protection under the *Countryside Rights of Way Act* and *national planning policies PPS1 and PPS7*. Furthermore, the adopted Core Strategy identifies that the conservation of the landscape in the AONBs should be a priority. (Landscape Character Assessment, 2011)

Policy ENV3b – Landscape Character and Design in the AONBs

The Council shall have regard to the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the Kent Downs and High Weald AONBs. Major development proposals within the AONBs will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and where it is demonstrated they are in the public interest. All proposals within or affecting the setting of AONBs will also only be permitted under the following circumstances:



- *The location, form, scale, materials and design would conserve and where appropriate enhance or restore the character of the landscape.*
- *The development would enhance the special qualities, distinctive character and tranquillity of the AONB.*
- *The development has regard to the relevant AONB management plan and any associated guidance.*
- *The development demonstrates particular regard to those characteristics outlined in Policy ENV3a, proportionate to the high landscape significance of the AONB.*

2.1.3 Locally designated sites

The Borough is also home to 83 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), formerly known as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, identification of which is overseen by the Kent Nature Partnership. In addition, there are 3 Local Nature Reserves, the Ashford Green Corridor, Hothfield Common and Poulton Wood, Aldington. These sites are important elements of the borough's biodiversity assets and contribute to the promotion, conservation, restoration and re-creation of ecological networks. The Council therefore expects that they will be conserved and enhanced in new development that arises during the lifetime of this Plan.

2.1.4 Ashford's Green Corridor

The Green Corridor is a network of largely green open areas made up of recreation space and other green and blue spaces alongside the Great and East Stour rivers flowing through Ashford (Green Corridor Action Plan, 2017).

As much of the Green Corridor is located within the flood zone, it also acts as flood plain and water storage which prevents flooding, as well as being an important habitat for biodiversity. All along the green corridor highly valuable habitats for wildlife are found, providing an important network for the movement of wildlife through the urban areas, between designated nature sites and out towards the countryside.

The riverside areas have remained largely undeveloped, due to being within the flood plain and provide a unique opportunity for improving the quality of the urban environment and for establishing green links between the town and surrounding countryside.

In addition to the rivers and riversides, the green corridor includes woodlands, orchards, ponds, lakes, meadows and play and recreation spaces such as Victoria Park and Willesborough Dykes, and the whole area is an important part of the community green infrastructure. (Green Corridor Action Plan 2017)

The Green Corridor falls within the Mid Kent Greensand and Gault Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). Much of the Green Corridor is also designated as Local



Nature Reserve (LNR) and includes a number of Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). Protection and enhancement of the Green Corridor is a key objective of this Local Plan.

Policy ENV2 - The Ashford Green Corridor

The protection and enhancement of Ashford's Green Corridor is a key objective. Development proposals within the identified Corridor designation (and proposed extensions) will be permitted, providing that it is compatible with, or ancillary to, their principal open space use or other existing uses, and it can be demonstrated that the proposal would not cause significant harm to the overall environment, biodiversity, visual amenity, movement networks or functioning of the Green Corridor. Other forms of development proposals within the Green Corridor will not be permitted, unless it would be in accordance with a site specific policy in this Local Plan; or where it relates to a) the redevelopment of a suitable brownfield site or b) delivers overriding benefits, and in either scenario, that it can be demonstrated that there would be no significant harm to the overall environment, biodiversity, visual amenity, movement networks or functioning of the Green Corridor.

Development proposals on land adjoining the Green Corridor shall provide suitable access and links to the existing movement networks of the adjoining Green Corridor wherever possible. They must not cause significant harm to any of the key features and functions, and should make a positive contribution to the Green Corridor in respect of its environment, biodiversity, visual amenity, movement networks or functioning and its setting.

Development proposals must take into consideration the appraisals, projects and management recommendations set out for the specific areas in the Ashford Green Corridor Action Plan, including the identified proposed extension areas to the designation.

2.1.5 Rural Features

In addition to the many and varied elements that constitute landscape character, there are a number of specific features that are worthy of protection in their own right. Ancient and seminatural woodlands are often not just important landscape features but provide a range of habitat and biodiversity value not found in other forms of woodland. The NPPF (paragraph 118) advises against the loss or deterioration of ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees, unless the need for and benefits of the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss. The protection of such important features of the Borough's landscapes which have long contributed to the quality and variety of the countryside here is an important objective that requires specific policy coverage.



Policy ENV5 – Protecting Important Rural Features

All development in the rural areas of the Borough shall protect and, where possible, enhance the following features:

- a) Ancient woodland and semi-natural woodland;*
- b) River corridors and tributaries;*
- c) Rural lanes which have a landscape, nature conservation or historic importance;*
- d) Public rights of way; and,*
- e) Other local historic or landscape features that help to distinguish the character of the local area.*

The river corridors and tributaries that permeate the rural areas of the Borough also play an important role in defining the appearance and function of many parts of the Ashford countryside, including several villages. These corridors are important for floodwater storage and conveyance and safeguarded water quality can play a variety of roles from recreational routes to wildlife habitats and therefore are considered worthy of protection from inappropriate development.

2.1.6 Woodland

Ashford Council working with Kent Wildlife Trust for protection of notable woodlands in district:

- Kings Wood, Challock (1,500 acre - ancient)
- Hothfield Heathlands (Nature Reserve; heathland and river edge habitats)
- Ashford Warren and Hoad's Wood (38 acre close to town centre and infrastructure)
- Hamstreet Woods
- Orlestone Forest (apparently nationally regarded as one of the most important conservation area for invertebrates)
- Ashford Community Woodland (future plans to designate as an LNR)

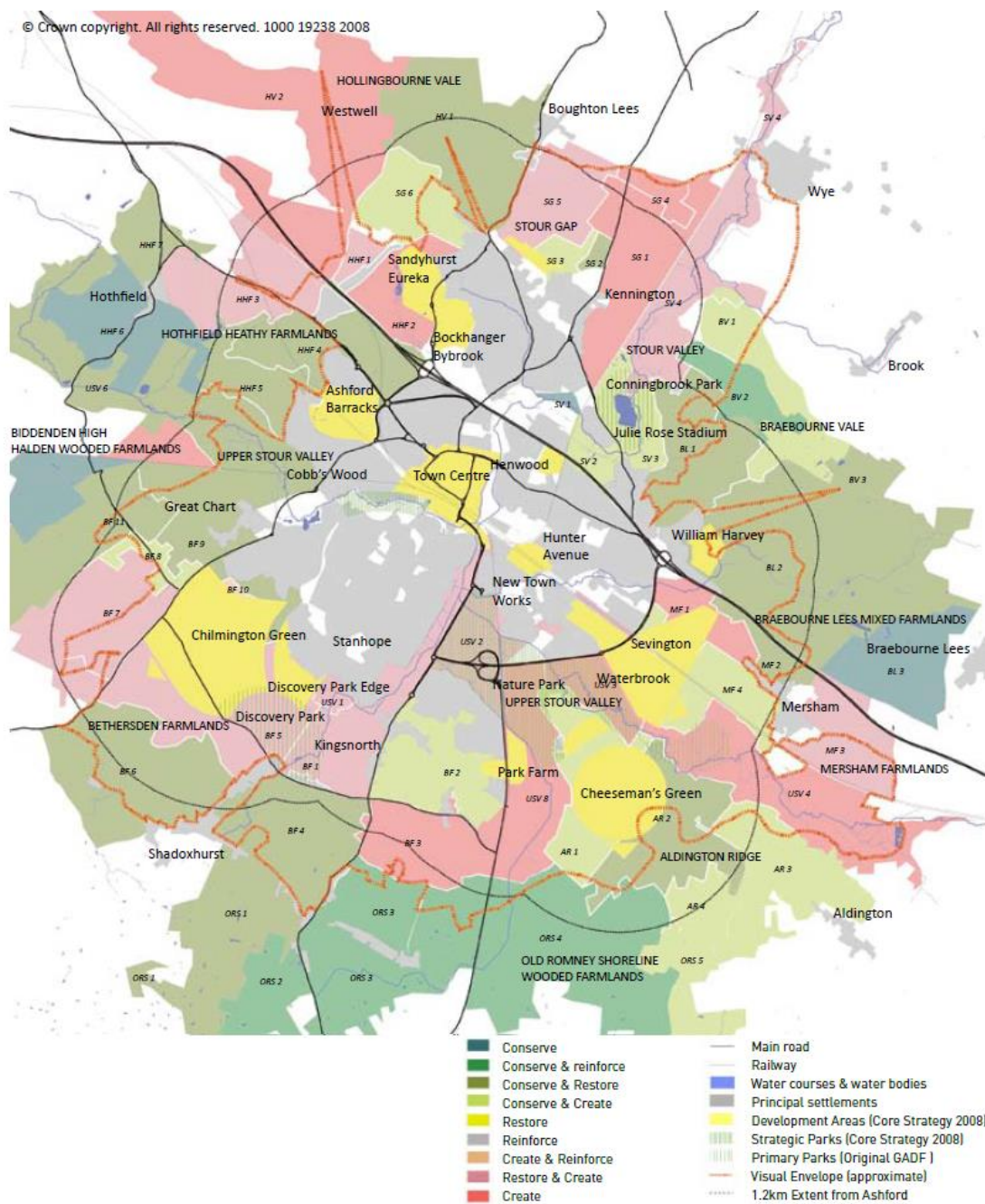
Rare species of Duke of Burgundy fritillary recorded in the Hamstreet Woods. 314 veteran trees, 69 ancient trees and another 332 of notable interest surveyed in Ashford. (Woodlands in the Borough)

The Ancient Woodland Inventory for Ashford Borough, Kent, (2009) re-examined the whole of the borough's ancient woodland resource . The area of ancient woodland since the original inventory was produced has risen from 5,801 ha to 6,155 ha, a gain of 354 ha as a result of this revision. This represents a modest increase from approximately 10% to 10.6% the borough's area designated as ancient woodland. The number of parcels of ancient woodland in the revised inventory, by contrast, is almost two and a half that of the original inventory with the gain mostly attributable to small parcels of woodland well distributed across the borough.

2.1.7 Habitat Conditions (Green & Blue Grid Strategy, 2008)

An analysis of the condition and relative sensitivity of the landscapes surrounding Ashford which was part of the Local Landscape Character Assessment. The judgement combines an assessment of condition and sensitivity, which indicates the area's ability to accommodate change. It is intended to assist in formulating policies and guiding decisions on future land management which are tailored to reinforce the character of specific landscape character areas.

Landscape condition of Ashford's landscape setting (Green & Blue Grid Strategy, 2008)





2.1.7 Protection from the negative impacts of development and infrastructure

A landscape strategy will be needed as a key part of the masterplan for the Land north of Steeds Lane and Magpie Hall Road. It will set out where public space and play areas will be provided; where landscape buffers are to be created, their scale and the planting proposals therein; the location of sustainable drainage features; areas of protected habitat; footpath links to the wider area and a viable, long term management plan for all these areas -this is a recurring theme throughout proposed residential development discussion, including ecological mitigation measures.

Alongside the conservation of existing habitats and species, the enhancement and integration of appropriate biodiversity into new developments can aid both the environmental sustainability of the scheme and deliver places which are more attractive in which to both live and work. Biodiversity measures may include the provision of open watercourse drainage systems, planting of native hedgerows, trees and woodland and the provision of bat and owl boxes and underpasses for mammals. These can provide important stepping stones for wildlife and ecosystems, as well as contributing to coherent ecological networks which can help to combat a decline in biodiversity.

In allocating new areas of development, the Local Plan has generally avoided areas with a high probability of flood risk and the functional floodplain. All future proposals should preferably be located in Flood Zone 1, as locating development in Flood Zone 1 means that future development is not reliant on costly fluvial flood defences that may become unsustainable in future due to climate change. It should be noted, that runoff from development within Flood Zone 1 has the potential to cause an increase in the probability of flooding if not mitigated. Therefore, any development which causes an additional flood risk by virtue of increasing runoff would need to be suitably mitigated or it will be considered unacceptable.

Policy ENV1 – Biodiversity

Proposals that conserve or enhance biodiversity will be supported. Proposals for new development should identify and seek opportunities to incorporate and enhance biodiversity. In particular, development should take opportunities to help connect and improve the wider ecological networks.

Proposals should safeguard features of nature conservation interest and should include measures to retain, conserve and enhance habitats, including BAP (Priority) habitats, and networks of ecological interest, including ancient woodland, water features, ditches, dykes and hedgerows, as corridors and stepping stones for wildlife.

Development that will have an adverse effect on the integrity of European protected Sites, including the Wye and Crundale Special Area of Conservation and the Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Ramsar and SPA sites, alone or in combination with other plans or projects, will not be permitted. Any



proposal capable of affecting designated interest features of European sites should be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment screening.

Development that will have an adverse effect on nationally designated sites, including the borough's Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves, will not be permitted unless the benefits, in terms of other objectives including overriding public interest, clearly outweigh the impacts on the special features of the site and broader nature conservation interests and there is no alternative acceptable solution.

Development should avoid significant harm to locally identified biodiversity assets, including Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves and the Ashford Green Corridor as well as priority and locally important habitats and protected species. The protection and enhancement of the Ashford Green Corridor is one of the key objectives of the Plan and therefore all proposals coming forward within or adjoining the Ashford Green Corridor should comply with Policy ENV2 in the first instance.

Where harm to biodiversity assets cannot be avoided, appropriate mitigation will be required in line with a timetable to be agreed with the Local Authority. Normally any mitigation measures will be required to be delivered on-site, unless special circumstances dictate that an off-site model is more appropriate. A financial contribution - in lieu of on-site mitigation - will only be considered in very exceptional circumstances and where it is demonstrated that the proposed mitigation is deliverable and effective.

Opportunities for the management, restoration and creation of habitats in line with the opportunities identified for the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) and targets set out in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy will be supported.

Policy SP1- Strategic Objectives

To deliver the 'Vision', a number of strategic objectives have been identified. They form the basis of this Local Plan's policy framework, as well as providing the core principles that planning applications are expected to adhere to.

- a. To focus development at accessible and sustainable locations which utilise existing infrastructure, facilities and services wherever possible and makes best use of suitable brownfield opportunities;*
- b. To conserve and enhance the Borough's natural environment including designated and undesignated landscapes and biodiversity and promote a connected green infrastructure network that plays a role in managing flood risk, delivers net gains in biodiversity and improves access to nature;*
- c. To conserve and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and the relationship between them and their settings in a way that promotes distinctive places, proportionate to their significance. Place-based heritage will be a key principle underpinning design and spatial form of development;*

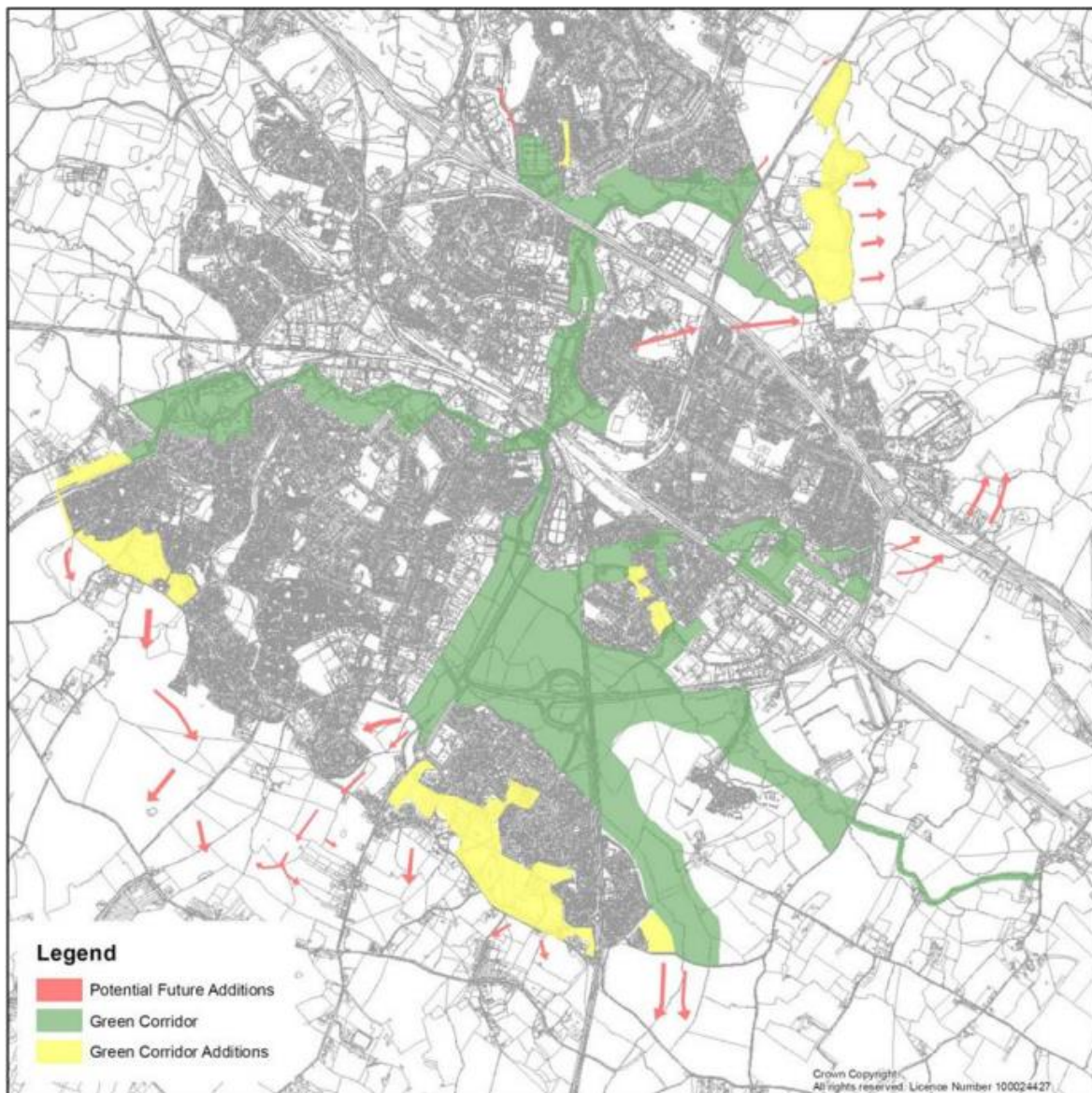
2.2 RESTORING AND ENHANCING HABITATS

2.2.1 Ashford Green Corridor

The Green Corridor designation has been central to Ashford's planning strategy and approach to green infrastructure since it was adopted in the 1994 Local Plan. It comprises a connected network of largely green open areas that are predominantly located alongside the Great and East Stour rivers, the Aylesford Stream, and other watercourses which flow through Ashford's urban area.

In 2017 they planned to extend the corridor into the yellow spaces on the following map. There are also future potential additional areas indicated by red arrows. In more detail in the Green Corridor Strategy.

Ashford Green Corridor

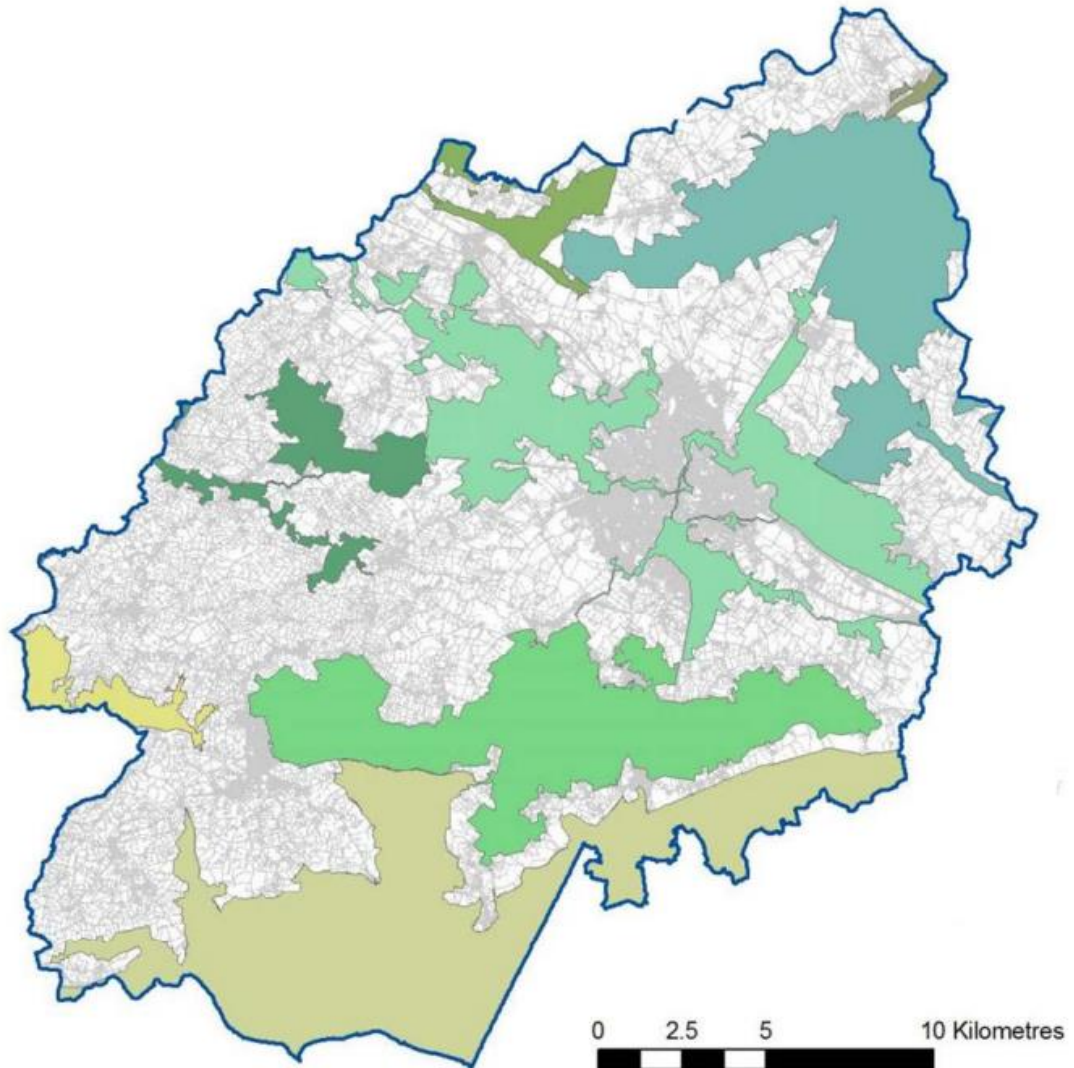


2.2.2 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

Policy ENV1

Opportunities for the management, restoration and creation of habitats in line with the opportunities identified for the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) and targets set out in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy will be supported.

Ashford Biodiversity Opportunity Areas 2015



This product includes mapping data from Ordnance Survey with the permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office
 © Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence Number 100024427

| | | |
|-------------|---|--|
| Key: |  Ashford Borough Boundary |  Medway & Low Weald Grassland & Wetland |
| |  East Kent Woodlands & Downs |  Mid Kent Downs Woods & Scarp |
| |  High Weald |  Mid Kent Greensand & Gault |
| |  Low Weald Woodland |  Romney Marshes |
| |  Lower Stour Wetlands |  The Blean |



This Local Plan supports the aims and objectives of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy as they relate specifically to the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) of this Borough, to ensure that the priority habitats and species of each BOA are conserved and enhanced in new development. Ashford Borough encompasses parts of 8 of Kent's BOAs, a reflection of its particularly diverse natural environment.

These BOAs, together with the international, national and locally designated sites, in addition to the Green Corridors and other natural spaces such as woodlands and open spaces, form the strategic Green Infrastructure Network of the Borough.

Parts of the following Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) fall within the Borough of Ashford:

- East Kent Woodlands & Downs
- High Weald
- Lower Stour Wetlands
- Low Weald Woodland
- Mid Kent Greensand & Gault
- Mid Kent Downs Woods & Scarp
- Medway & Low Weald Grassland & Wetland
- Romney Marshes
- The Blean

(Ashford Infrastructure Delivery Plan, 2017)

2.2.3 Green Space

Enhancements to informal/natural green space and water features within the countryside, such as woodlands (including ancient woodland), wetlands, river corridors and tributaries are sought by the Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD Policies TRS17 (Landscape Character and Design) and TRS18 (Important rural features). (Public Green Spaces and Water Environment SPD, 2012)

The Ashford Green Corridor is made up of open spaces and recreational areas alongside the rivers that flow through Ashford, much of which is within the functional floodplain. These areas will be protected and enhanced for flood storage and their amenity value.

2.2.4 Wetlands (Green Corridor Action Plan, 2017)

Targets for the Mid Kent Greensand and Gault BOA include the pursuing of opportunities to restore or recreate wetland habitats along the river Stour particularly where this may:

- provide opportunities for flood risk management and for recreation;
- contribute to the conservation of priority species;
- extend and buffer Local Wildlife Sites;



- contribute to the enhancement of species-rich neutral grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Meadow quality.

2.2.5 Within development and infrastructure

Developer contributions to flood risk improvements:

The following schemes have been identified from the Environment Agency's 2014/15 Flood and Coastal Risk Programmes of Work:

- Ashford conveyance improvements (reserved funding for 2014/15)
- Great and Little Stour flood alleviation scheme (reserved funding for 2014/15)
- Aylesford property level protection (indicative funding for 2015/16 onwards)
- Aylesford Stream flood alleviation scheme (indicative funding for 2015/16 onwards)
- Maytham tilting weir (indicative funding for 2015/16 onwards)
- South Ashford flood alleviation scheme (indicative funding for 2015/16 onwards)

As outlined above improvements tend to be small scale works, generally funded at the moment by FCRMGiA. Developers can be asked to make direct contributions to flood alleviation schemes affecting the communities close to developments. (Flood Risk Report, 2014)

Biodiversity In new developments:

Alongside the conservation of existing habitats and species, the enhancement and integration of appropriate biodiversity into new developments can aid both the environmental sustainability of the scheme and deliver places which are more attractive in which to both live and work. Biodiversity measures may include the provision of open watercourse drainage systems, planting of native hedgerows, trees and woodland and the provision of bat and owl boxes and underpasses for mammals. These can provide important stepping stones for wildlife and ecosystems, as well as contributing to coherent ecological networks which can help to combat a decline in biodiversity.

ABC Corporate Plan (2021):

- Conserve water through reduced usage.
- Reduce water use in corporate buildings / operations Lead (Corporate Property)
- Educate and change behaviours associated with water use and water consumption including growing plants and vegetables



Policy SP1- Strategic Objectives

To deliver the 'Vision', a number of strategic objectives have been identified. They form the basis of this Local Plan's policy framework, as well as providing the core principles that planning applications are expected to adhere to.

b. To conserve and enhance the Borough's natural environment including designated and undesignated landscapes and biodiversity and promote a connected green infrastructure network that plays a role in managing flood risk, delivers net gains in biodiversity and improves access to nature;

c. To conserve and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and the relationship between them and their settings in a way that promotes distinctive places, proportionate to their significance. Place-based heritage will be a key principle underpinning design and spatial form of development;

i. To ensure new development is resilient to, and mitigates against the effects of climate change by reducing vulnerability to flooding, promoting development that minimises natural resource and energy use, reduces pollution and incorporates sustainable construction practices, including water efficiency measures.

Sustainable Drainage Systems

Site policy steps on conserving and enhancing the Borough's nature is planned to be ingrained throughout planning and development projects, such as use of SUDs, but text does not mention any new plan for implementation.

The borough council already has in place an adopted Sustainable Drainage (SUDS) SPD which sets out how developers can meet the requirement of Policy CS20 of the Core Strategy. Guidance is provided on the provision of sustainable drainage systems for the disposal of surface water and rainwater, so that it is retained either onsite or within the immediate area.

Selection of SUDS types should consider habitat creation possibilities and green links – corridors and stepping stones – especially links to Ashford's Green and Blue Grid. Wherever possible and practicable SUDS should contribute to delivering Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats and the wider objectives of the Kent BAP. In the town centre, the provision of green roofs can provide habitats where it would be difficult to achieve at ground level. (Sustainable Drainage)



2.3 HABITAT CREATION

2.3.1 Ashford Green Corridor (Green Corridor Action Plan, 2017)

Potential Future Expansion Areas – Wing A

The areas around Conningbrook Lakes have potential to become GC designations in the future, particularly if future development is located to the north. Connections would be required to link the areas together, across the railway lines. Land to the east of the lakes also have high potential for ecology importance and may be considered for designation in future

Potential Future Expansion Areas – Wing B

The areas around Chilmington Green from Ashford Community Woodland through to the future Discovery Park have potential to become GC designations in the future, to create green links and green buffer zones between development. Connections would be required to link the areas together. Land to the south also has high potential for ecology importance and habitat creation.

Potential Future Expansion Areas – Wing C

Wilesborough Dykes There is potential that if development extends further in the future, that this area of Green Corridor designation should be extended further south, along the dykes. Willesborough & Sevington There is potential to extend the green corridor across the A2070, using the footbridge link and following the route of the Aylesford Stream towards Junction 10 of the M20. However, this should be explored further once the final plans for Junction 10a have been implemented. There is additional potential to extend further, over the M20 and A20 towards to Local Wildlife sites to the north of the William Harvey Hospital, particularly if these areas are developed.

2.3.2 Green and Blue Strategy Areas (Green & Blue Grid Strategy, 2008)

Create accessible greenspace and wildlife areas along an integrated network of safe, attractive pedestrian and cycle routes and more effective, functional links between urban areas and the surrounding countryside – for people and wildlife

Enhance biodiversity, by linking, extending and creating nationally important (BAP) habitats to reverse habitat fragmentation, and by promoting sustainable landscape management practises in all greenspace areas.

2.3.3 Woodland Creation

The Ashford Local Plan (2019) local plan mentions specific sites for potential woodland creation such as PolicyS3 –Court Lodge.



The extensive woodlands to the south west of Ashford are associated with active forestry and woodland management, including coppice and community orchards. Much of the area is low-lying, with meadows and ponds, and could function as a focus for secondary or tertiary water treatment. (Green & Blue Grid Strategy, 2008)

2.4 SPECIES SPECIFIC

2.4.1 Sandwich Bay SAC (Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA SAMMS, 2023)

The qualifying features of the SPA are listed as European Golden Plover (*Pluvialis apricaria*, non-breeding), Ruddy Turnstone (*Arenaria interpres*, non-breeding) and Little Tern (*Sterna albifrons*, breeding). However, Little Tern have not bred at Sandwich Bay since approximately the late 1990's and are therefore not included in this SAMM.



SECTION 3: WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

3.1 GOAL 2: AIR QUALITY

Ashford Borough generally has very good air quality. There are currently no areas within the Borough where the air quality fails to meet the required standards, and there are no designated Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). Ashford is a member of the Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership.

3.2 GOAL 3: CLEAN AND PLENTIFUL WATER

A range of new water resource infrastructure is being proposed to increase capacity within the WRMP some located within the Ashford Borough or adjoining local authority area. This includes a new groundwater source at Maytham Farm, Rolvenden with plans to replace non operational works with a new treatment works (in 2020), and a new reservoir at Broad Oak near Canterbury (in 2033).

There is a need for local authorities, developers and water companies to work closely together to deliver the efficiencies necessary to meet the identified water supply targets set out within the SEW WRMP (2015-2040).

Demand management measures such as water efficiency and the use of sustainable drainage to retain groundwater supplies are essential for the long-term resilience of water supplies in the Ashford Borough.

SuDS can make a real different to flood risk by managing the quantity of surface water runoff from development, they can also moderate flow rates and prevent sudden water level rises following heavy rain. SuDS can significantly reduce harm to valuable water resources by retaining water within the local hydrological system as well as protecting water resources from pollution by filtering run-off. SuDS can form an integral part of both soft or hard landscaping and can contribute to the quality of green space for the benefit of amenity, recreation and wildlife. SuDS may also allow new development in areas where existing drainage systems are close to capacity, thereby enabling development within existing urban areas.

3.3 GOAL 4: MANAGING EXPOSURE TO CHEMICALS AND PESTICIDES

3.4 GOAL 5: MAXIMISE OUR RESOURCES, MINIMISE OUR WASTE (Green & Blue Grid Strategy, 2008)

The Stour Valley to the north east is associated with open water and active recreation; the expansive, low-lying agricultural landscapes in this area could be associated with future biomass production



The Upper (East) Stour Valley and Willesborough Dykes area also has a wetland character, but here there is more of an association with nature; again there could be a future role for biomass

3.5 GOAL 6: USING RESOURCES FROM NATURE SUSTAINABLY

3.6 GOAL 7: MITIGATING AND ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

3.6.1 Climate Change Strategy (Climate Change Strategy, 2022)

Priority 7: Protect, enhance and increase green space for the benefit of people, wildlife and carbon sequestration.

Outcomes:

- Increased and enhanced biodiversity of open spaces in the borough increasing key species.
- Improvement in river water quality
- Improve access to open space, food growing and wildlife through land management, community gardening and habitat creation.

Objective 7.1 Improve biodiversity on council owned land

7.1.1 Develop and implement land management plans for council owned land which provide specific vision, aims and objectives for the ongoing maintenance and enhancement of parcels of land in a given locality

7.1.2 Proactively manage ABC tree stock, which will inform future tree management and maintenance programmes

Objective 7.3 Reduce environmental degradation through land management and habitat creation

7.3.1 Explore the creation of wildlife habitats in the borough, including roadside planting that seeks to mitigate air pollution

7.3.2 Work with land based industries and relevant agencies to implement sustainable land management practices

3.6.2 Green Pioneer (ABC Corporate Plan, 2021)

Objective GP2: Increase biodiversity and encourage sustainable lifestyles Outcome: Communities in urban and rural areas value, enjoy and respect the natural environment and the abundance of wildlife increases

GP2.1 Ensure the biodiversity net gain value through the planning process as set out in the Environment Bill is met or exceeded, where possible



- Work with land owners / developers to increase biodiversity Lead (Planning and Development)
- Develop and implement a mitigation plan to reduce nitrate concentrations in the Stour Valley catchment area Lead (Planning and Development) start date: Short, end date: Medium

GP2.2 Create and manage open and green spaces for the benefit of people and wildlife

- Work towards the Improvement and extension of the Kingsnorth Buffer Zone
- Progress the completion of Conningbrook Park (inc car park)
- Ensure open space management plans (e.g. QMP) include opportunities for increasing biodiversity
- Reduce loss of biodiversity at BCP through appropriate land management in land adjacent to the facility - Lobby (Ashford Port Health)
- Conclude the work of Ashford Environment and Land Mapping Commission to map the future land use of the borough

GP2.3 Work with communities to identify opportunities to enhance sustainability and support the circular economy.

- Ensure community grants are assessed and awarded in line with the KRF Principles for Green Recovery Lead (Culture) Medium
- Facilitate the Queen's Canopy tree planting initiative to plant 135,000 trees across the borough

3.7 GOAL 8: REDUCE RISK OF HARM FROM ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

3.8 GOAL 9: ENHANCE BIOSECURITY

3.9 GOAL 10: ENHANCE BEAUTY, HERITAGE AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

3.9.1 Enhance Beauty

The distinctive landscapes of the AONBs play an important role in defining the overall character of the Borough. All proposals within the AONBs must take account of the landscape character areas and policies of the appropriate AONB Management Plan and other relevant AONB Guidance.

Enhancing Existing Green Space and Water Environment priority:

landscaping schemes to help to hide eyesores and significantly improve the appearance of areas, whilst providing opportunities for nature conservation of Ashford urban area. (Public Green Spaces & Water)



3.9.2 Heritage

Ashford Heritage Strategy 2017, sets out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the Borough's rich historic environment, including the natural scapes of the area.

Policy SP1- Strategic Objectives

To conserve and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and the relationship between them and their settings in a way that promotes distinctive places, proportionate to their significance. Place-based heritage will be a key principle underpinning design and spatial form of development

3.9.3 Health and wellbeing

Green spaces and the water environment provide multi-functional spaces which have significant health, environmental, economic and social benefits for those who live, work and enjoy the recreational facilities within the borough.

These benefits include:

- Improved mental and physical health through exercise.
- Establishing community and social inclusion by providing areas for sport, recreation and play.
- Assisting with tackling community safety issues.
- Promoting lifelong education and learning.

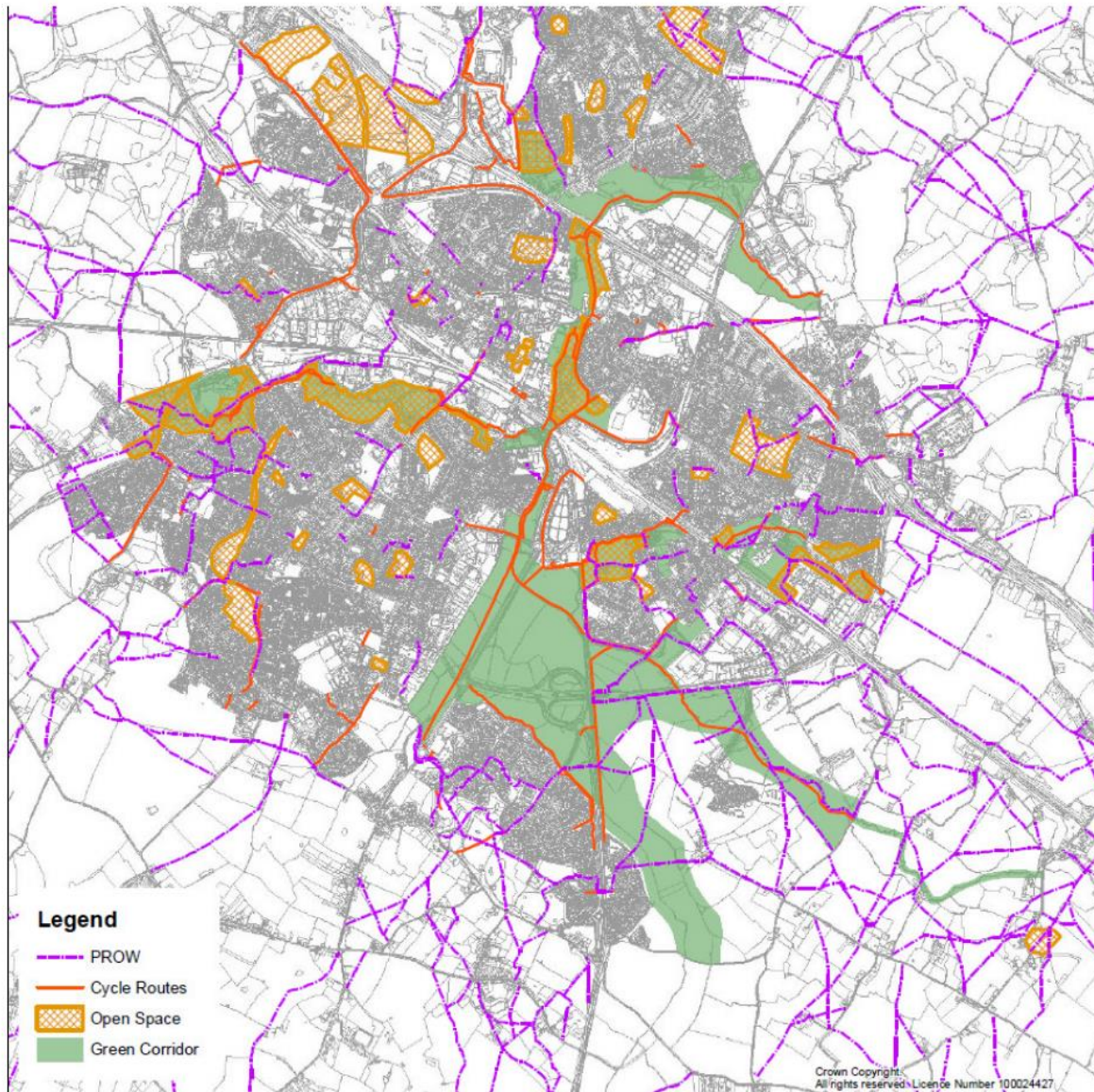
(Public Green Spaces & Water Environment SPD, 2012)

3.9.4 Access to nature

The public rights of way network (including bridleways) often reflects a legacy of the Borough's strong history of routeways and provides a mosaic of opportunities across the borough for walking, equestrianism and recreation in the countryside. It is important that this network is retained and, if possible, enhanced through working with the County Council to deliver its Right of Way Improvement Plan, (currently entitled the Countryside Access Improvement Plan) and the creation of clear, attractive connections to (or through) new developments.

Enhancing Existing Green Space and Water Environment priority: The completion of missing links in the footpath and cycleway network especially where these will serve a large residential population in the Ashford urban area. (Public Green Spaces & Water Environment SPD, 2012)

Existing Green Corridor with Public Rights of Way, Cycle Routes and Public Open Space to show connectivity between open spaces (Green Corridor Action Plan, 2017)



The deficiency of open space within Ashford town centre is likely to be exacerbated as more development is focused on the area. Enhancement of key green spaces and the water environment within and close to the centre will be the principal way of meeting green space needs. (Public Green Spaces & Water Environment SPD, 2012)

Within other towns and villages, there is the opportunity to enhance existing green space and the water environment. As less change and development is likely to be experienced in these areas, enhancement of existing green space is more likely to be appropriate in meeting future needs than new provision. Parish Councils will be well positioned to identify local priorities for improvement such as playing pitches, changing facilities, multi-use games areas, children's play areas; provision for



teenagers, footpaths, bridleways and wildlife areas. (Public Green Spaces & Water Environment SPD, 2012)

Promote sustainable transport, by providing a permeable and logical network of routes between key destinations and open spaces to encourage walking and cycling and by ensuring that public transport routes are incorporated into the wider network. (Green & Blue Grid Strategy, 2008)

3.9.5 Recreation

Where possible, the network of informal and natural green spaces within the borough should be extended to connect the natural habitats and enable greater protection of biodiversity in these areas. (Public Green Spaces & Water Environment SPD, 2012)

Enhance recreation and amenity, with more opportunities for high quality formal and informal recreation. (Green & Blue Grid Strategy, 2008)

The Local Plan seeks to deliver a community hub model, and the strategies emerging for recreation, sports, open space and play all recommend the same model. They are: Discovery Park, Conningbrook Park, Ashford Town Centre, Finberry/Park Farm, Kingsnorth Recreation Centre, Sandyhurst Lane, Spearpoint and Pitchside/courtside

Policy COM2 - Recreation, Sport, Play and Open Spaces

As a borough-wide target, the Council shall seek to deliver the overall quantum of new recreation, sport, play and open space provision, by 2030. To assist in achieving these targets, qualifying development proposals shall meet the need it generates, through the delivery of either new facilities or through the enhancement of existing facilities that improves their quality, availability and/or accessibility. New provision will be delivered via a combination of on-site measures and/or through off-site financial contributions, secured via Section 106 Agreements.

Open Space Strategy- Recommendations (Open Space Strategy, 2017)

Strategic recommendations for open space provision in the Urban Area:

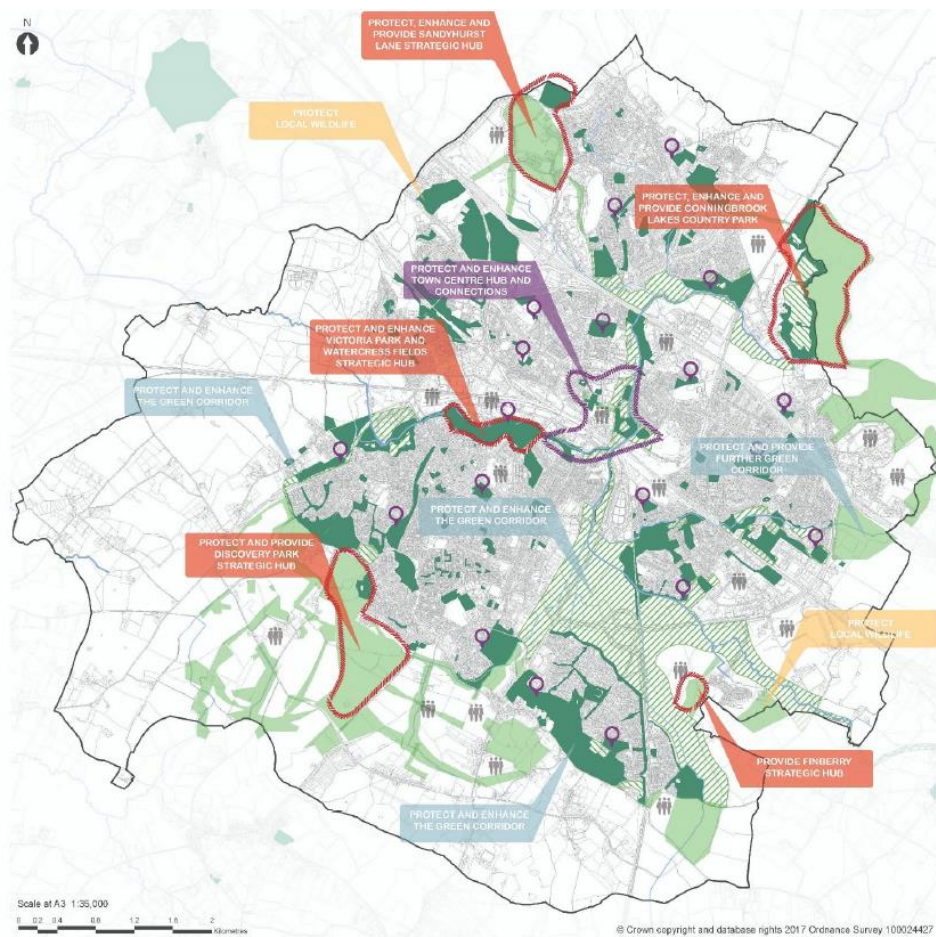
- SRU 1 – Redesign and implement enhancements to specific urban open spaces that provide high value to the community and open space network
- SRU 2 – Implementation of and adding to the current designation of Green Corridor
- SRU 3 – Redefining, redesigning and enhancing play in the urban area
- SRU 4 – Research the benefits of and achieve Green Flag Status on appropriate sites
- SRU 5 – Securing land ahead of development for future open space
- SRU 6 – Preparing and implementing Management and Maintenance Plans (MMP) for all Strategic / Prestige Parks, cemeteries and a general MMP suitable for amenity spaces in the Urban Area.
- SRU 7 – Review allotment provision
- SRU 8 – Secure land for cemeteries (subject to the new study recommendations)

- SRU 9 – Using Open Space to create safe off road routes across the urban area and connecting to the rural area.
- SRU 10 – Create a destination park for borough wide use, within the urban area.
- SRU 11 – Research possibilities for public open space within Ashford town centre

Emerging strategic recommendations for open space provision in the Rural Area:

- SRR 1 – Harness and grow existing partnerships between parish / towns, the Borough Council and other agencies.
- SRR 2 – Create Tenterden Strategic Hub
- SRR 3 – Using open space to help with Ecotourism
- SRR 4 – Improve access to, from and between open spaces
- SRR 5 – Investigate green buffer zones around villages
- SRR 6 – Planning of new open space through new development
- SRR 7 – Planning of improvements to existing open space provision

The Ashford Open Space Strategy (Open Space Strategy, 2017):



Open Space Strategy
Spatial Diagram
Ashford Urban Area





Key findings of Open Space Audit (Open Space Strategy, 2017):

- The Green Corridor and the river network play an important role in providing connections and 'natural' open space across the Urban Area and the transition between Urban and Rural.
- Neighbourhood and local General Amenity spaces are relatively small, are of poorer design, are in poorer condition and are fragmented across the urban area.
- There are a number of barriers in terms of accessibility that need to be explored in more detail. This includes existing road and rail network, rivers and land ownership. This would provide more quality information in terms of accessibility, and help steer the spatial planning process.
- The current supply of Strategic and Prestige Parks are in the centre of town (Victoria Park, Memorial Gardens and Old Burial Ground) and to the North East (Conningbrook Lakes County Park). However, the proposed Strategic Park (Discovery Park) located in the south west, part of Chilmington Green proposals should help with this provision, and increase the quantity per head of population.
- Quantity data indicates there is an under provision of allotments. However, there is a continual turnover of allotments sites, which over the long term balances with the waiting list; without the waiting list there would be vacant plots.



SECTION 4: DISTRICT PROJECTS TO NOTE

4.1 Tree Warden Scheme (Tree Warden Scheme)

Ashford Borough Council is committed to becoming Carbon Neutral by 2030. The strategy to achieve this consists of many strands, including carbon sequestration through tree planting initiatives. Tree planting and woodland developments however are not a quick win option, they are long term initiatives that require ongoing support, long term maintenance and champions to protect them for generations to come.

The types of activities that volunteers can get involved in with our support, include:

- Planting and care of trees (in new and existing woodlands that need management)
- Setting up tree nurseries using locally collected seeds – seed sharing schemes
- Surveying local trees and gathering information about them to help us monitor impact
- Providing ‘eyes and ears’ to inform Local Authority about disease, decay or vandalism and breaches of TPO’s
- Raising funds and identifying suitable land for local tree planting projects
- Going into schools to talk to young people about the value of trees.
- Giving leaded tree walks
- Acting as a tree ambassador, championing local trees and woodlands

4.2 Solar Together Kent (Solar Together Kent)

Solar Together Kent is a solar panel and battery storage group-purchase scheme. It enables homeowners and small businesses to install solar panels on their homes and businesses at a competitive price.

Ashford Borough Council is working in partnership with KCC and all 11 other district and borough councils and Medway Council. Means to reducing carbon emissions and enabling Ashford to Zero

4.3 Victoria Park and Watercress Fields Project (Victoria Park Project)

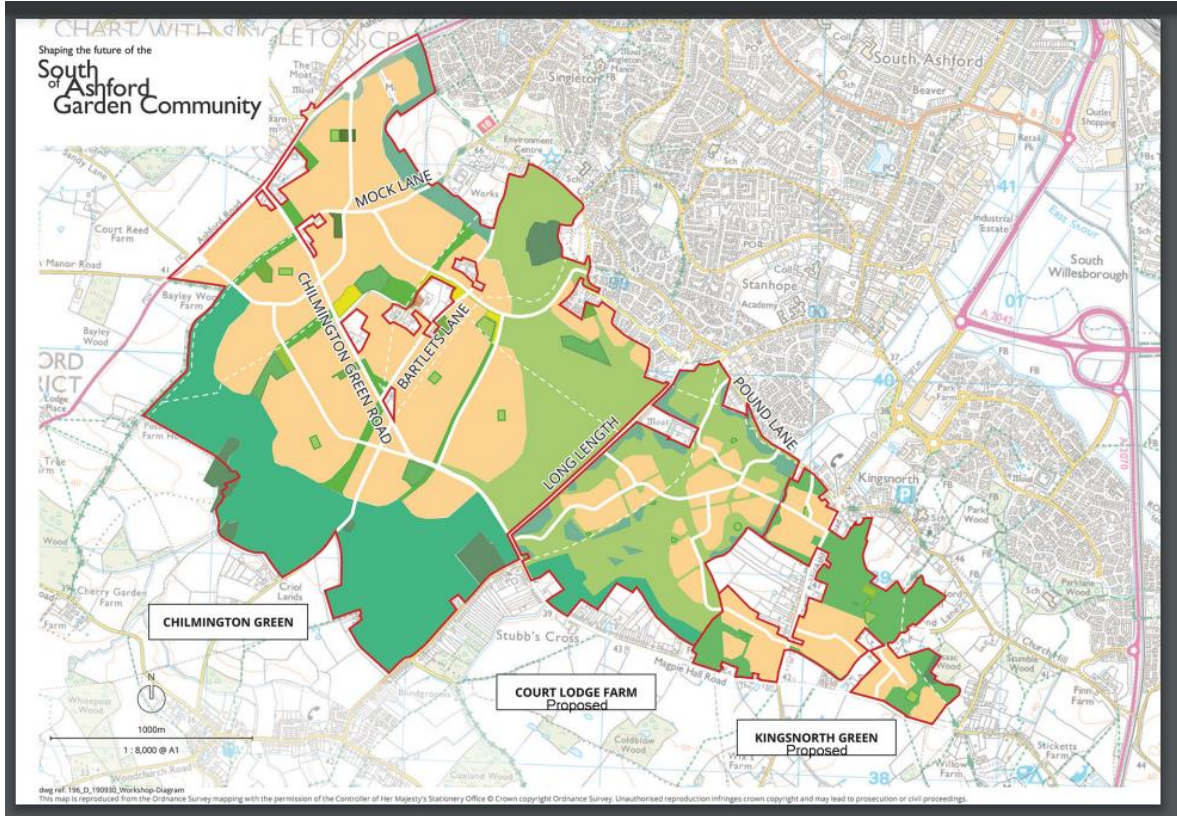
£4.5m project being delivered by Ashford Borough Council and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to improve and protect Victoria Park for the local community. The project focuses on the natural, built and social heritage of Ashford’s largest public park, and particularly aims to improve it for residents by updating the community facilities and play spaces.

4.4 South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) (South Ashford Community Garden)

South of Ashford Garden Community (SAGC) includes Chilmington Green, Court Lodge and Kingsnorth Green developments, and was named as one of 19 Garden Communities by the Government in 2019. 7,250 homes, 142 hectare public park, play spaces and ecological areas to be protected.

“a community with a clear identity and attractive environment attractive green space and public realm areas”

Chilmington Green Planning Code Chilmington Green Quality Agenda-32 commitments to making a quality place and vibrant community at Chilmington Green





SECTION 5: SPECIFIC PRIORITIES WITHIN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

5.1 Available Plans

Aldington and Bonnington, Bethersden, Boughton Aluph and Eastwell, Charing, Egerton, Hothfield, Pluckley, Pluckley Review, Smarden, Rolvenden, Tenterden, Wye. Bethersden, Hoathfield and Smarden don't have adopted plans, just as a designated area.

[Ashford neighbourhood plans](#)

5.2 Shared Characteristics across available plans

Preservation of Local Character:

- Emphasizes the importance of maintaining and improving the diversity and distinctiveness inherent in the local culture and history.
- Urges that development, especially in designated conservation areas, should be on a small scale to preserve the essential character of the community.

Natural Elements:

- Advocates for the retention of existing trees, hedges, and native species in new developments.
- Encourages additional planting of native species and discourages the use of non-indigenous or decorative plants.
- Open Spaces and Views:
- Highlights the importance of open spaces in reinforcing the rural character of the village.
- Stresses the need to avoid compromising important open views and landscapes, protecting them from development.

Conservation of Heritage:

- Calls for new buildings, extensions, and additions to be sympathetic in style and scale to existing structures.
- Recommends preserving and, if damaged, reinstating existing features such as ditches, hedges, and trees.

Sustainable Development:

- Encourages developers to discuss proposals with the community and align them with design statements that reflect ecological considerations.
- Promotes sustainable practices in design and construction, considering factors like roof pitches and building density.



SECTION 6: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AND REFERENCED

| Document reference | Link |
|--|---|
| Ashford local plan (2019) | adopted-ashford-local-plan-2030.pdf |
| Ashford Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2017) | ashford-borough-infrastructure-delivery-plan-2017.pdf |
| Woodlands in the Borough | https://www.ashford.gov.uk/outdoor-spaces/trees/woodlands-in-the-borough/ |
| Tree Warden Scheme | https://www.ashford.gov.uk/outdoor-spaces/trees/tree-warden-scheme/ |
| ABC Corporate Plan (2021) | Corporate Plan November 2021 (ashford.gov.uk) |
| Landscape Character Assessment (2011) | Landscape Character SPD- April 2011 |
| Green Corridor Action Plan (2017) | green-corridor-action-plan-2017.pdf |
| Public Green Spaces & Water Environment SPD (2012) | Contents (ashford.gov.uk) |
| Green & Blue Grid Strategy (2008) | Ashford Green Blue Grid Strategy - Final Report low res (1).pdf |
| Open Space Strategy (2017) | ashford-open-space-strategy final oct 2017.pdf |
| Sustainable Drainage | ashford_sustainable-drainage-suds-spd.pdf |
| Ashford Water Cycle Study (2016) | ashford-water-cycle-study.pdf |
| Flood Risk Report (2014) | flood risk report-july-2014.pdf |
| Ancient Woodland Inventory for Ashford Borough, Kent, (2009) | https://www.ashford.gov.uk/media/uq5cl4jq/a-revision-of-the-ancient-woodland-inventory-for-ashford-borough-kent.pdf |
| Solar Together Kent | Solar Together Ashford Borough Council Information on the solar panel group buying scheme called Solar Together Kent (ashford.gov.uk) |
| Victoria Park Project | Victoria Park Project (victoriaparkashford.co.uk) |
| South Ashford Community Garden | Find out about the South Ashford Garden Community. |
| Neighbourhood Plans | https://www.ashford.gov.uk/planning-and-development/planning-policy/neighbourhood-plans/ |