



MEDWAY COUNCIL

LOCAL PLAN AND STRATEGY REVIEW

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

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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 infrastructure pressures (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

There are huge pressures on housing. Decent homes are unaffordable for many people. Unfortunately, some of the accommodation locally is sub-standard and there are challenges in securing decent standards with some conversions, particularly where they are undertaken under permitted development. The supply of new housing is central to the new Local Plan, but it is about more than housing numbers. The Plan will seek to improve the choice and mix of homes, drive up quality, and meet the needs of different sectors of the community. Housing-led growth can support wider investment in services and businesses and contribute to shaping the character of new and existing communities.

In addition to assessing how to meet Medway's needs for 28,500 new homes over the Plan period, the Council must consider if there is capacity to provide up to an additional 2,000 homes to help meet Gravesham's housing needs, following a request from the neighbouring borough.

The River Medway is a key asset, providing a strong sense of place and identity. However, the river bisects the area and movement is constrained by four crossings. The severance caused by the river, established commuting flow patterns and travel behaviour, the legacy of post-war development designed for the car, generous car parking provision in dense employment areas and the existing public transport offer make for a challenging environment in which to accommodate Medway's development needs. The new Plan will need to set out a strategy for how we can reduce car dependency. This will involve thinking differently about how people can move round the central urban areas on foot or bicycle and improving sustainable transport connections from the suburban and rural areas, including consideration of better use of the river for transport. Medway's location in north Kent gives rise to additional opportunities and challenges associated with wider growth, such as the proposed Lower Thames Crossing (LTC).

It is widely recognised that the existing transport networks are under pressure across Medway and upgrades are needed to cope with increased journeys that will come as Medway's communities and businesses expand

This consultation document has been drawn up following the withdrawal of Government funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) for strategic transport and environmental schemes. The withdrawal of the HIF funding means that the Council will look at alternatives for securing investment in transport and green infrastructure across Medway, as these remain strategic matters central to the new Plan.



1.2 Flood Risk

The Medway Towns are at risk of flooding from a number of sources, including tidal and surface water flooding, as well as flooding from groundwater, streams and ditches. A national assessment of surface water flood risk indicates that Medway is one of 116 communities throughout England which is considered to be at significant risk of surface water flooding. Currently, tidal flood risk infrastructure provides a varying level of protection to the areas of ecological importance across the low-lying land in the north of Medway, and the strategically important towns situated along the tidal River Medway. Current UK projections for future climate change indicate that there will be more frequent short duration high intensity rainfall and more frequent periods of long duration rainfall. Climate change is also expected to bring hotter, drier summers alongside wetter winters but not necessarily in tandem. Summer droughts are also likely to be more frequent alongside an increased risk of flooding. This combined with increased demand from development requires a proactive approach to the management of these risks via the planning system.

National Planning Policy expects Local Plans to account for water management via the consideration of flood risk, coastal change, climate change, water quality, water supply and wastewater.

1.3 Climate Change

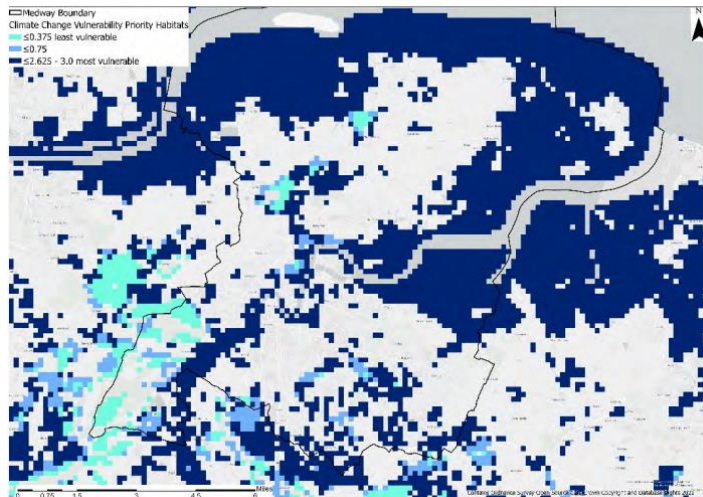
Climate change is a global emergency but needs to be addressed at all levels. Medway as a coastal area is particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels, and changes in temperature and precipitation have impacts for landscape, food production, nature and people. The new Local Plan will help to secure a more resilient future for Medway. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

Climate Change Vulnerability (GBI Framework, 2021):

Habitats which have been assessed as being highly sensitive with low adaptive capacity score more highly (3 is the maximum) and those habitats which have low sensitivity and high adaptive capacity are less vulnerable and score lower. The mapping shows that the estuary habitats, although extensive and not fragmented, are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. This is due to both sea level rise and the potential of drier summers. The highly fragmented areas of priority habitat, especially grassland sites, in urban Medway are also vulnerable. Whilst the large blocks of woodland around Cuxton and Halling are less vulnerable, the smaller, isolated woodlands across Medway, including the Hoo Peninsula, are more vulnerable.



Plan 7: Climate Change Vulnerability - Priority Habitats



1.4 Pressures on Designated Sites

Habitat Regulations Assessment, 2023:

The following Habitats sites and impact pathways will form the focus of the HRA for the MLP going forward:

- Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar (air pollution, water quality and quantity, habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, recreational effects, urbanisation effects and coastal squeeze);
- Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar (air pollution, water quality and quantity, habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation, recreational effects, urbanisation effects and coastal squeeze);
- The Swale SPA and Ramsar (air pollution, water quality and quantity and habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation); and
- North Downs Woodlands SAC (air quality, recreational effects and urbanisation effects and habitat loss, degradation and fragmentation)



Table 5.7: Summary of impact pathways at each Habitats site from the MLP

Habitats site	Air Pollution	Water Quality / Water Resources	Recreational Effects	Urbanisation	Habitat Loss, degradation and Fragmentation	Coastal Squeeze
Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in
Medway Estuary and Marshes Ramsar	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in
Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in
Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in
The Swale SPA	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped out
The Swale Ramsar	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped out
North Downs Woodlands SAC	Scoped in	Scoped out	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped in	Scoped out
Peter's Pit SAC	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out
Queensdown Warren SAC	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out	Scoped out

(Habitat Regulations Assessment, 2023)

1.5 Threats to biodiversity

GBI Framework (2023):

- Lack of resources to manage some nature conservation sites sustainably and in the long term;
- Small, fragmented and disconnected sites in some areas particularly in urban Medway;
- Development has been identified as the greatest pressure on Kent habitats, through loss of land and increased population. This pressure can be mitigated through obligations on developers to deliver biodiversity net gain;
- Recreational pressure on urban and rural sites can cause disturbance to wildlife (although partly mitigated by the 'Birdwise' Strategic Access Management and Mitigation programme);
- Recreational pressure and anti-social behaviour can hinder the implementation of conservation management, e.g. grazing on urban sites, as well as cause direct damage;
- Farming has a significant impact on biodiversity and there is uncertainty around the future of this and future farming and environment payments. 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' within the Kent Downs AONB may bring significant benefits to this part of Medway;
- Woodland which is small, fragmented and not managed;
- Increase in invasive non-native species, pests and diseases including ash dieback;



- Some Sites of Special Scientific Interest are in unfavourable condition;
- A wide range of pollutants, from many sources with the most widespread current harm from excess nutrients (phosphate and compounds of nitrogen) in air and water. There has also been a rise in concern over plastics pollution, particularly in the water environment;
- Lack of information on some species and habitats (although this is being addressed in some areas by the Medway Urban Greenspaces Forum);
- Some Kent Biodiversity Action Plan species under threat and declining



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

Unless otherwise stated, the following information in section 2 came from the Medway Council Adopted Local Plan, 2003.

2.1 PROTECTING HABITATS

2.1.1 Natural Assets

Strategic Objectives (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023):

(viii) Firm protection for the Green Belt, the best and most versatile agricultural land, sites of international, national and other strategic importance for nature conservation and landscape.

Core Values (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023):

There is also a continuing need to protect and, where possible, improve the area's natural assets, for example, areas of nature conservation value, semi-natural areas and urban open spaces.

32% of the Medway area is of national importance for biodiversity

28% of the Medway area is of international importance for biodiversity

These figures are significantly greater than the country's average which is at about 7%. (Natural Environment and greenspaces)

2.1.2 Site designations (GBI Framework, 2023)

Table 1: Nature Conservation Designations in Medway

Designated Sites	Area (sq km)	% of Medway Area
International Special Protection Areas (for birds), Special Areas of Conservation (for habitats) and Ramsar wetlands	69.64	26%
National Sites of Special Scientific Interest Marine Conservation Zone	78.36 71.6	29%
Local and Kent Local Nature Reserves ⁴ Local Wildlife Sites	0.79 4.41	0.3% 1.7%



2.1.2 Internationally Designated Sites

Special Protection Area & RAMSAR Site

Downstream towards the Thames Estuary, the river has a major role in nature conservation, as undeveloped coast and wetland of international importance offering a habitat to birdlife. This is reflected in the designation of most of the lower river as a Special Protection Area under the European Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds and as a Ramsar site under the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance.

POLICY BNE35: INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL NATURE CONSERVATION SITES

International and National Nature Conservation Sites, as defined on the proposals map, will be given long term protection:

- (i) classified and potential Special Protection Areas (SPAS);*
- (ii) listed and proposed Ramsar sites;*
- (iii) National Nature Reserves;*
- (iv) Sites of Special Scientific Interest.*

Any new areas subsequently proposed or confirmed for these designations will also be subject to this policy provision, as would any subsequent proposed or designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

Development that would materially harm, directly or indirectly, the scientific or wildlife interest of these sites will not be permitted unless the development is connected with, or necessary to, the management of the site's wildlife interest.

Development for which there is an overriding need will exceptionally be permitted if no reasonable alternative site is (or is likely to be) available. The overriding need will be judged against the national and/or international ecological importance of the affected nature conservation designation.

When a Special Protection Area or Special Area of Conservation is affected this need must comprise imperative reasons of overriding public interest. If the affected Special Protection Area or Special Area of Conservation hosts a priority habitat or species, then the 102 need must relate to human health, public safety or beneficial consequences of primary importance to the environment, or to other imperative reasons of public interest established by the European Commission. In such exceptional circumstances, the detrimental impact upon the scientific or wildlife interest should be minimised and appropriate compensatory measures will be required.



2.1.3 Nationally Designated Sites

Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI)

There are eight SSSIs in Medway: (i) Medway Estuary and Marshes; (ii) South Thames Estuary and Marshes; (iii) Northward Hill; (iv) Dalham Farm; (v) Tower Hill to Cockham Wood; (vi) Chattenden Wood; 99 (vii) Cobham Wood; (viii) Halling to Trottscliffe Escarpment.

The SSSIs mentioned at (i), (ii), (vii) and (viii) extend beyond Medway. Northward Hill is also a National Nature Reserve. The national importance of SSSIs means that development proposals in, or likely to affect them, will be subject to Environmental Assessment.

Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs)

(i) Grain Pit (ii) South Hill and Houlder Quarry; (iii) River Medway and Marshes, Wouldham; (iv) Cuxton Wood (Mill Wood)*; (v) Cuxton Pit; (vi) River Medway between Cuxton and Temple Marsh (*part); (vii) Bridge Woods, Burham; (viii) Luton Banks*; (ix) Hook Wood, Walderslade*; (x) Great Lines*; (xi) Darland Banks*; (xii) Ambley and East Hoath Woods (*part); (xiii) Grove Wood; 100 (xiv) South Wood*; (xv) Berengrave Pit*; (xvi) Yaugher Woods (xvii) Princes Avenue

Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

The waterfront is an important area for nature and much of the river in central Medway is a designated Marine Conservation Zone. This means that the impacts of development, such as light, noise and other disturbance on the river may need to be considered. As a coastal authority, Medway is also subject to the impacts of rising sea levels with climate change. This is a particular consideration in planning for the redevelopment of waterfront sites, and the need to futureproof buildings.

Kent Downs National Landscape (Formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)

The AONB designation and its setting is also afforded significant weight in national planning policy to protect land from major development. The potential cross-border proposal in the Medway Valley would have significant impacts on the AONB. The Council would be expected to evidence a case for development in such a location and how landscape impacts could be mitigated.



POLICY BNE32: AREAS OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Development within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as defined on the proposals map, will only be permitted when it conserves the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area. Major development will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and will be considered against the following criteria:-

- (i) The national need;*
- (ii) Impact on the local economy,*
- (iii) The cost and availability of alternative sites or other means of meeting the need,*
- (iv) Any detrimental impact on the environment or landscape,*
- (v) The environmental standard of the proposed construction or restoration.*

Metropolitan Green Belt

In Kent, the Metropolitan Green Belt has helped to preserve the open countryside between the edge of Greater London and the urban areas of Medway, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks and Tonbridge. At a more local level, it has helped maintain the open area between Medway and Gravesend.

The Metropolitan Green Belt has its origins in regional planning policy and is designed to resist urban sprawl into the rural area around London. PPG2 gives five purposes for including land in the Green Belt, namely:

- (i) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- (ii) to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;*
- (iii) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- (iv) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and (v) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.*

POLICY BNE30: METROPOLITAN GREEN BELT

Within the Metropolitan Green Belt, as defined on the proposals map, there is a general presumption against inappropriate development. Development will not be permitted unless the following objectives are fulfilled:

- (i) it is designed and sited so that the open character of the area is maintained; and*
- (ii) it accords with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.*
- (iii) new buildings will only be permitted for the following purposes: (a) agriculture or forestry; or (b) essential small scale facilities for outdoor sport or*



recreation, for cemeteries or other land uses that fulfil the above objectives; or 88 (c) a limited extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building; or (d) limited infilling within the village boundary of Upper Halling.

(iv) the reuse of buildings will only be permitted if: (a) the development fulfils the above objectives, taking into account any proposed extension to the buildings and any associated uses of land surrounding the buildings; and (b) the buildings are of permanent and substantial construction, and are capable of conversion without major or complete reconstruction; and (c) the form, mass and general design of the buildings are in keeping with their surroundings.

Just under 5% of land in Medway is designated as Green Belt. These areas adjoin Green Belt land in Gravesham and Tonbridge and Malling. Both of these boroughs have significantly higher proportions of land covered by the Green Belt designation. As well as preventing the outward expansion of London, at a more local level, the Green Belt prevents coalescence of towns and villages. It provides a strategic gap between Strood and Higham, and between Snodland and Halling. The Council has carried out a review of land in Medway in the Green Belt, which shows that the purposes of the policy are being met. There is a strong presumption in national planning policy that Councils should seek to protect the Green Belt from development, and where needing to allocate land for growth, sites outside of the Green Belt should be considered in preference to Green Belt release. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

2.1.4 Locally Designated Sites

Areas of Local Importance

There are several areas of landscape that enhance local amenity and environmental quality, providing an attractive setting to the urban area and surrounding villages. These locally significant landscapes are shown on the proposals map as Areas of Local Landscape Importance (ALLIs). Some of these areas form part of the green hillsides and backdrops of the urban area, which are recognised in the Thames Gateway Planning Framework as a particularly important environmental resource.

These ALLIs are significant not only for their landscape importance, but also for other important functions:

- (i) As green lungs and buffers, helping to maintain the individual identity of urban neighbourhoods and rural communities;
- (ii) As green corridors (or links) for the community to reach the wider countryside;
- (iii) As edge or “fringe” land, needing protection from the pressures of urban sprawl; and



(iv) As habitats for wildlife and corridors, along which wildlife from the wider countryside can reach the urban environment.

- (i) HOGMARSH VALLAY
- (ii) CHATTENDEN RIDGE
- (iii) DEANGATE RIDGE
- (iv) COCKHAM FARM RIDGE
- (v) DILLYWOOD LANE
- (vi) HALLING COMMON
- (vii) CUXTON BRICKFIELDS
- (viii) NASHENDEN VALLEY
- (ix) TADDINGTON WOOD and BEECHEN BANK
- (x) HORSTED VALLEY
- (xi) CAPSTONE, DARLAND and ELM COURT
- (xii) MEIRSCOURT/MERESBOROUGH
- (xiii) GILLINGHAM RIVERSIDE
- (xiv) GREAT AND LOWER LINES
- (xv) CLIFFE POOLS AND PITS
- (xvi) BROOMS WOOD

POLICY BNE34: AREAS OF LOCAL LANDSCAPE IMPORTANCE

Within the Areas of Local Landscape Importance defined on the Proposals Map, development will only be permitted if:

(i) it does not materially harm the landscape character and function of the area; or

(ii) the economic and social benefits are so important that they outweigh the local priority to conserve the area's landscape.

Development within an Area of Local Landscape importance should be sited, designed and landscaped to minimise harm to the area's landscape character and function.

Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) (Sustainability Appraisal, 2023)

The MLP area contains an important network of local designations running through the urban area, including eight LNRs covering approximately 454.18ha: Rede Common; Baty's Marsh; Darland Banks; Ambley Wood; South Wood; Levan Strice; Foxburrow Wood, and Berengrave Chalk Pit. These also form important wildlife corridors, allowing species to move between habitats.

POLICY BNE36: STRATEGIC AND LOCAL NATURE CONSERVATION SITES



Strategic and Local Nature Conservation Sites, as defined on the proposals map, will be given long term protection:

(i) Sites of Nature Conservation Interest;

(ii) Designated and proposed Local Nature Reserves.

Development that would materially harm, directly or indirectly, the scientific or wildlife interest of these sites will not be permitted unless the development is connected with, or necessary to, the management of the site's wildlife interest. Development for which there is an overriding need will exceptionally be permitted if no reasonable alternative site is (or is likely to be) available. The overriding need will be judged against the strategic and/or local importance of the affected nature conservation designation. In such exceptional circumstances, the detrimental impact upon the scientific or wildlife interest should be minimised and appropriate compensatory measures will be required.

Special Landscape Areas (SLAs)

In Medway there are two SLAs, the North Downs and the North Kent Marshes, with the former being contiguous with the Kent Downs AONB. The council will aim to protect the natural beauty of these areas. Development which undermines this aim will only be considered if significant social or economic benefits would result. These social or economic benefits would be expected to have a countywide significance.

POLICY BNE33: SPECIAL LANDSCAPE AREAS

Development within the North Downs and the North Kent Marshes special landscape areas, as defined on the proposals map, will only be permitted if: (i) it conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the area's landscape; or (ii) the economic or social benefits are so important that they outweigh the county priority to conserve the natural beauty of the area's landscape.

2.1.5 Undesignated Habitats

Protection of undesignated habitats is important to maintain the constant natural capital of the area. Undesignated habitats are significant for maintaining biodiversity (that is, they can represent green corridors or stepping stones for migration, dispersal and exchange of genetic material). Examples of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna are:

- (i) hedgerows, streams and ditches between fields;
- (ii) uncultivated field margins, linear tree belts, shelter belts and plantations;
- (iii) ancient woodlands and semi-natural woodlands;
- (iv) the Estuary and River Medway, including associated inter-tidal areas and banks;
- (v) ponds and lakes;



(vi) buildings inhabited by protected species

The Kent Wildlife Habitat Survey is a valuable source of information on types of habitats, many of which are undesignated. Three types of undesignated habitat are particularly important: the remaining areas of ancient semi-natural woodland; the inter-tidal habitats of the River Medway and Medway's last remaining areas of calcareous (chalk) grassland. The nature of these habitats are such that they are virtually irreplaceable. In addition, on a national level, these three habitats have become important because of their increasing rarity.

2.1.6 The Strategic Gap

Policy MK5 of the structure plan seeks to maintain the separation of Medway from Maidstone and the Medway Gap urban area (including the settlements on the east and west sides of the River Medway).

The policy is intended to apply both to the expansion of existing settlements and free standing developments which would erode the open character of the countryside and undermine its function of maintaining the separation of the existing settlements.

POLICY BNE31: STRATEGIC GAP

Within the strategic gap, as defined on the proposals map, development will only be permitted when it does not: (i) result in a significant expansion of the built confines of existing settlements; or (ii) significantly degrade the open character or separating function of the strategic gap.



2.1.7 Hoo

Hoo Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity (2019):

Ref	Character Area	Sensitivity	Value	Capacity
1	Hogmarsh Valley	High	Medium	Medium/High
2	Bald Top Hill	High	Medium	Medium/High
3	Chattenden Ridge	Medium	High	Medium/High
4	Deangate Ridge	Medium	Medium	Medium
5	Hoo Farmland	Medium	Medium	Medium
6	Cockham Farm Ridge	High	Medium	Medium/High
7	Hoo Flats	High	High	High
8	Land to east of Hoo St Werburgh	Medium	Low	Low/Medium
9	Land to south of High Halstow	Medium	Medium	Medium
10	Land to east of High Halstow	Medium	Medium	Medium

Level	Definition
Low	The parcel can accommodate the proposed type of development / an extension of the proposed type of development without significant character change
Low/Medium	The parcel can accommodate the proposed type of development / an extension of the proposed type of development in many situations without significant character change
Medium	The parcel can accommodate the proposed type of development / an extension of the proposed type of development in some situations without significant character change
Medium/High	The parcel can accommodate the proposed type of development / an extension of the proposed type of development only in defined limited situations without significant character change
High	The parcel is unable to accommodate the proposed type of development / an extension of the proposed type of development without significant character change

2.1.8 Green Infrastructure

Trees and Woodlands:

There is a recognised need to retain both individual and small groups of trees that contribute to the character of the urban townscape. Similarly, it is necessary to protect copses and woodland areas; many of these are included in the Areas of Local Landscape Importance protected by policy BNE34. Areas of ancient woodland in particular will have significant nature conservation interest and are protected by either policies BNE35 and BNE36, if they are recognised nature conservation sites, or by policy BNE37 elsewhere.

Medway has in the past, suffered substantial losses of trees and woodlands in order to accommodate development. The council intends to prevent any significant further loss and will seek to increase tree cover wherever possible. This will be achieved by the protection of existing trees and woodlands, by requiring additional tree planting in connection with development proposals and by supporting initiatives for community forests or woodlands.



Overall, Medway's tree canopy is 16.5% of its area, slightly less than the Kent average of 17%. It is higher in the urban area, at 21%, which is higher than the average canopy of 16% of towns and cities across England. (GBI Framework, 2023)

The wide range of woodlands in Medway all have value for wildlife. All of these types of woodland identified in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2020 to 2045 as priority habitats are present in Medway. Half of Medway's woodland is within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Around 693 hectares, or 47% of Medway's woodland is ancient. (GBI Framework, 2023)

POLICY BNE41: TREE PRESERVATION ORDERS

Tree Preservation Orders will be used to protect trees, groups of trees and woodlands of important public amenity value. In considering applications for works to protected trees, regard will be had to:

(i) The future health and appearance of the trees and woodlands;

(ii) Where appropriate, requiring replacement planting of felled trees, the planting of an increased number of trees and, ensuring that the planting is incorporated in, and/or adjacent to, the site where the trees are to be felled; and

(iii) Resisting applications for clear felling of woodland and requiring recoppicing or other woodland management to be carried out in accordance with good arboricultural practice.

Hedgerows:

The Regulations presume in favour of protecting and retaining important hedgerows, stating that the council should issue a Hedgerow Retention Notice unless it is satisfied that there are particular circumstances to justify the hedgerow's removal. Criteria for determining whether a hedgerow is important are laid out in the Regulations.

POLICY BNE42: HEDGEROW RETENTION

Important hedgerows will be retained and protected.

2.1.9 Countryside

The local plan recognises the role of the countryside and the natural environment in urban and rural areas. The countryside and natural environment are significant resources which make a profound contribution towards the quality of life of the local population. The countryside hosts farming, forestry and other working activities, but at the same time it accommodates walking, cycling, horse-riding and other



recreational pursuits. The landscape provides visual amenity for visitors and residents alike. The countryside and the natural environment are also a haven for a great diversity of wildlife, flora and fauna which, if destroyed, is often irreplaceable.

POLICY BNE25: DEVELOPMENT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

Development in the countryside will only be permitted if:

(i) it maintains, and wherever possible enhances, the character, amenity and functioning of the countryside, including the river environment of the Medway and Thames, it offers a realistic chance of access by a range of transport modes; and is either;

(ii) on a site allocated for that use; or 81

(iii) development essentially demanding a countryside location (such as agriculture, forestry, outdoor or informal recreation); or

(iv) a re-use or adaptation of an existing building that is, and would continue to be, in keeping with its surroundings in accordance with Policy BNE27; or

(v) a re-use or redevelopment of the existing built-up area of a redundant institutional complex or other developed land in lawful use; or

(vi) a rebuilding of, or modest extension or annex to, a dwelling; or

(vii) a public or institutional use for which the countryside location is justified and which does not result in volumes of traffic that would damage rural amenity.

The countryside is defined as that land outside the urban and rural settlement boundaries defined on the proposals map.

2.1.10 Farmland and Rural landscape (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

Much of the land around the north and east of Rainham is the best and most versatile farmland, although many fields are not in active agriculture use. The area to the south is within the setting of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and undeveloped land forms an important component of our green infrastructure networks. The area to the north lies close to the Medway Estuary, which is designated a Special Protection Area, Ramsar site and Site of Special Scientific Interest, recognising its international and national importance for wildlife.

The peninsula includes areas of the best and most versatile land for agriculture, and there is a strong farming presence. However, the area is also characterised by wider industries, particularly the legacy of the energy sector at Grain and Kingsnorth. These two large brownfield sites form an important part of Medway's employment land supply and offer unique opportunities for further jobs growth such as realising opportunities for green technology as the country moves to zero-carbon.



The area's special and distinctive environment is a primary consideration. The Local Plan will set out a strategy, not just for development, but also for strengthening our green infrastructure networks and sites. Biodiversity, landscape, and water management are just some of the key matters in environmental planning. The Council will assess the potential impacts of possible development sites on different aspects of the natural environment, with specific attention to the designated areas, such as SSSIs and the SPAs.

POLICY BNE48: AGRICULTURAL LAND

Development that would cause a loss of the best and most versatile agricultural land (MAFF grades 1, 2 and 3a) will not be permitted.

Exceptionally, development will be permitted when:

(i) there exists an overriding need for the development that is of more significance than the considerable weight to be afforded to protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land; and

(ii) there exists a lack of suitable development opportunities on previously developed sites and land within the boundaries of existing developed areas; or

(iii) either sufficient land in lower grades is unavailable, or available lower grade land has statutory landscape, wildlife, historic or archaeological designation which outweigh agricultural considerations; and

(iv) where grade 1, 2 or 3a land needs to be developed and there is a choice between sites in different grades the development is proposed on land of the lowest grade.

POLICY BNE47: RURAL LANES

Development served by, and/or affecting, the important rural lanes defined on the proposals map will only be permitted where there is no adverse effect upon the value of the lane in terms of its landscape, amenity, nature conservation, historic or archaeological importance. Where alterations to the carriageway definition or boundaries of rural lanes is necessary, the use of natural, locally distinctive materials such as grass banks, stone setts and hedging will be required. The use of urbanising features such as raised concrete kerbstones, fencing and walls should be avoided unless these are absolutely essential for structural or safety reasons.



2.2.11 Open Space

POLICY L3: PROTECTION OF OPEN SPACE

Development which would involve the loss of existing formal open space, informal open space, allotments or amenity land will not be permitted unless:

- (i) sports and recreation facilities can best be implemented, or retained and enhanced through redevelopment of a small part of the site; or*
- (ii) alternative open space provision can be made within the same catchment area and is acceptable in terms of amenity value; or*
- (iii) in the case of outdoor sports and children's play space provision, there is an excess of such provision in the area (measured against the n.p.f.a. standard of 2.4 hectares per 1,000 population) and such open space neither contributes to, nor has the potential to contribute to, informal leisure, open space or local environmental amenity provision; or*
- (iv) in the case of educational establishments, the development is required for educational purposes and adequate areas for outdoor sports can be retained or provided elsewhere within the vicinity; or*
- (v) the site is allocated for other development in the local plan.*

Policy L6 : OPEN SPACE ALLOCATIONS (2003)

The following sites, as defined on the proposals map, will be safeguarded for the provision of informal public open space:

- (i) Lower Lines, Gillingham;*
- (ii) Inner Lines, Brompton;*
- (iii) Hillyfields, Gillingham;*
- (iv) land between former junior school, Avery Way and Kingsmead Park, Allhallows;*
- (v) Cherry Tree Orchard, Rainham ;*
- (vi) land South of Pier Road, Gillingham.*

2.1.12 Blue Infrastructure

The Coast (GBI Framework, 2023):

In some areas natural areas of beaches, saltmarshes and mudflats remain. Maintaining the current defence lines within the estuary will result in increased instances of 'coastal squeeze' – the reduction in area of these important habitats as sea levels rise. With high rates of sea level rise and low rates of sediment supply



intertidal saltmarsh and mudflat habitats may suffer erosion where defences or high land constrain the landward movement of the shoreline.

The management of Medway's coastline is covered in two Shoreline Management Plans – for the Medway Estuary and for the Isle of Grain alongside the Medway and Swale Strategy Study. In some areas the policy is to maintain flood defences to protect important structures and infrastructure. In other places the policy is to allow managed retreat.

[Medway Estuary and Swale SMP](#)

[Isle of Grain to South Foreland SMP](#)

[Medway Estuary and Swale Strategy Study](#)

POLICY BNE45: UNDEVELOPED COAST

Development will be permitted in and alongside the undeveloped coast, as defined on the proposals map, only if:

- (i) a coastal location is essential and no suitable alternative site exists along the developed coast; and*
- (ii) the scenic, heritage or scientific value of the undeveloped coast is maintained and, where consistent with this and where practicable, public access to the coast is improved; and*
- (iii) the development is not likely to be at risk from flooding or coastal erosion to the extent that it would require defence works for its safety and protection.*

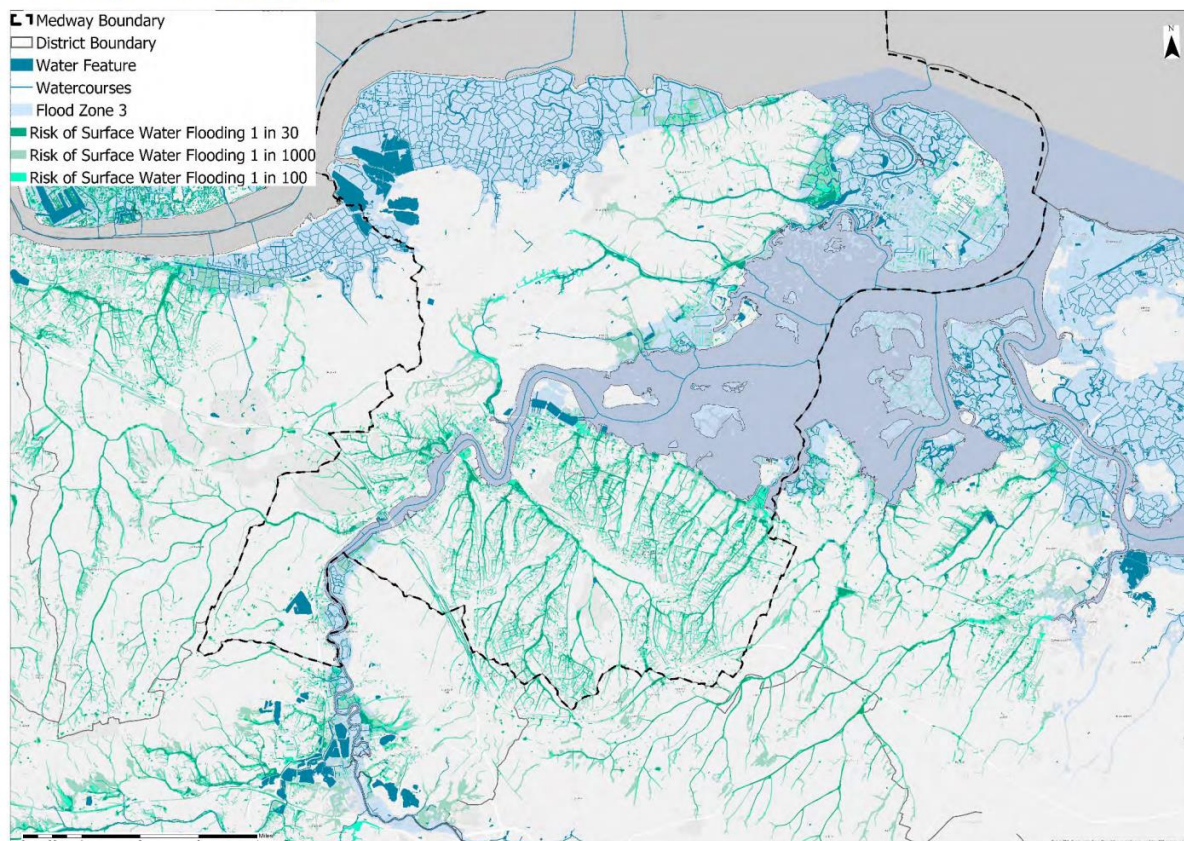
POLICY BNE46: DEVELOPED COAST

Development will be permitted in and alongside the developed coast, as defined on the proposals map, when: (i) the appearance and environment of the coast is improved; and

- (ii) coastal erosion will not threaten any new building proposed as part of the development; and*
- (iii) public access to the coast is improved, where practicable and whenever appropriate; and*
- (iv) the need for the coastal location is justified when the development is outside existing settlement boundaries and Economic Development Areas.*



Plan 12: Water Resources and Flooding



(GBI Framework, 2023)

The River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) (Sustainability Appraisal, 2023)

The MLP area lies within the Thames River Basin District. The River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) for the Thames provides an update on the ecological status of the water environment.

The RBMPs present the following objectives of the Water Framework Directive:

- To prevent deterioration of the status of surface waters and groundwater;
- To achieve objectives and standards for protected areas;
- To aim to achieve good status for all water bodies or, for heavily modified water bodies and artificial water bodies, good ecological potential and good surface water chemical status;
- To reverse any significant and sustained upward trends in pollutant concentrations in groundwater;
- The cessation of discharges, emissions and losses of priority hazardous substances into surface waters; and
- Progressively reduce the pollution of groundwater and prevent or limit the entry of pollutants



POLICY S3: RIVER MEDWAY

Proposals which are consistent with nature conservation, landscape and hydrological policies and which have no adverse impact upon coastal archaeology will be permitted that develop the River Medway for:

- (i) public access along the riverbank through the construction of riverside walks and cycle-ways;*
- (ii) use as a transportation corridor, both for freight and passengers;*
- (iii) appropriate commercial, tourism and leisure development along the river's edge of a high quality design;*
- (iv) recreational and tourism purposes.*

The inter-tidal habitats of the Medway are an important natural resource. Where any proposed development would affect the inter-tidal habitats, an assessment of its impact will be required. Where development is proposed that will result in any loss of inter-tidal habitats, proposals must include compensatory inter-tidal habitats sufficient to mitigate any loss.

Thames, Medway & Swale Estuaries- Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS)

A strategy to resolve disturbance issues to wintering birds on the North Kent Marshes. The report focuses on the European Protected Sites (Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Site, Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA/Ramsar Site, and The Swale SPA/Ramsar Site) and their internationally important bird interest features.

Previous studies show marked declines of key bird species, particularly on the Medway Estuary. There is currently insufficient evidence to adequately assess the cause of these declines. Disturbance is one potential factor, and studies have shown recreational activities to cause disturbance impacts to birds. The declines in birds have been detected at the SPA level. Within the Medway, the areas that have seen the most marked declines are the area north of Gillingham, including the area around Riverside Country Park. This is one of the busiest areas in terms of recreational pressure.

New development will further exacerbate the pressures. New brings more people to the local area and access levels have been predicted to increase on the coastal sites by around 15%. Such an increase will be gradual and long-term, across a wide stretch of coast; robust solutions are required to ensure that this level of development, considered in-combination, does not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the European sites.

This strategy addresses disturbance impacts and provides a strategic, cross-boundary solution to issues relating to disturbance, there are two aims.



- To support sustainable growth whilst protecting the integrity of European wildlife sites from impacts relating to recreational disturbance
- To reduce the existing recorded recreation impact on birds on the European wildlife sites in order to meet duties relating to the maintenance and restoration of European sites, as required by Article 4(4) of the Birds Directive.

2.1.13 Protection from the negative impacts of development and infrastructure

Strategic Objectives:

The environmental quality and image of the area should be upgraded through the highest urban design and landscape standards being pursued in new development and regeneration.

Core Values:

The environment in much of the urban area needs to be enhanced through improved design and, in some cases, sensitive renewal or comprehensive rehabilitation.

Enhance the environment:

Protection of the environment does not simply mean that all development is prevented. Development when sensitively sited, designed and landscaped can enhance the environment. Development should therefore seek to respect environmental objectives and assets, including the need to improve current conditions. Policies in the local plan are therefore intended to control development, so that when it does occur, a positive benefit can be achieved.

POLICY S6: PLANNING OBLIGATIONS

The council will set conditions on planning permissions or seek to enter into a legal agreement with developers to provide for new physical infrastructure, social, recreational and community facilities (including education facilities) and environmental mitigation or compensation measures where mitigation is impossible or inadequate on its own, where the need for these arises directly from the development concerned.

Provision will be sought in proportion to the size and nature of the individual development, and will take account of the existing pattern of provision and capacity in the locality.

Provision will be made on the site where this can be reasonably achieved. When this is not the case, contributions will be sought for the provision of facilities and ecological features elsewhere, provided their location can adequately serve the development site or are appropriately related to it.



RESTRICT OVER-DEVELOPMENT

Extensions and residential infill development should not appear as afterthoughts nor dominate the original and adjacent buildings. They should not result in the over development of plots nor unduly reduce available garden or amenity areas. It is, therefore, necessary to control their design in terms of height, depth, mass, scale and materials to respect the appearance of the street scene and the character of the area.

POLICY BNE1: GENERAL PRINCIPLES FOR BUILT DEVELOPMENT

The design of development (including extensions, alterations and conversions) should be appropriate in relation to the character, appearance and functioning of the built and natural environment by:

- (i) being satisfactory in terms of use, scale, mass, proportion, details, materials, layout and siting; and*
- (ii) respecting the scale, appearance and location of buildings, spaces and the visual amenity of the surrounding area; and*
- (iii) where appropriate, providing well structured, practical and attractive areas of open space.*

Amenities:

The council will, therefore, resist development which would result in damage to the amenity of those people occupying property close to new development. Overlooking from public rights of way, play areas and neighbouring properties should be taken into account.

POLICY L10 : PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Development which would prejudice the amenity, or result in the diversion or closure, of existing public rights of way will not be permitted, unless an acceptable alternative route with comparable or improved amenity can be provided

POLICY BNE43: TREES ON DEVELOPMENT SITES

Development should seek to retain trees, woodlands, hedgerows and other landscape features that provide a valuable contribution to local character.

POLICY BNE37: WILDLIFE HABITATS

Development that would cause a loss, directly or indirectly, of important wildlife habitats or features not protected by policies BNE35 and BNE36 will not be permitted, unless: (i) there is an overriding need for the development



that outweighs the importance of these wildlife resources; and 104 (ii) no reasonable alternative site is (or is likely to be) available if ancient woodland, inter-tidal habitats and calcareous (chalk) grassland would be lost; and (iii) the development is designed to minimise the loss involved; and (iv) appropriate compensatory measures are provided.

Water management:

POLICY CF12: WATER SUPPLY

Development will not be permitted where:

- (i) it would have a detrimental effect on the quality or yield of water supply; or*
- (ii) it would prevent or reduce replenishment of groundwater aquifers; or,*
- (iii) it would have an adverse impact on the flora, fauna (including fisheries interests) and amenity of water courses and other habitats whose nature conservation value is dependent on maintaining water levels;*
- (iv) it would represent an unacceptable risk to the quality of groundwater resource, unless appropriate measures are taken to adequately protect those resources.*

POLICY CF13: TIDAL FLOOD RISK AREAS

Development will not be permitted within a tidal flood risk area if:-

- (i) it harms the integrity of the flood defences; or*
- (ii) it fails to provide for a means of escape for people in the event of a flood;*
or
- (iii) it introduces residential living and sleeping accommodation below the estimated flood level; or (iv) it introduces mobile homes or caravans; or*
- (v) it introduces new holiday accommodation between October and May.*

Riverbanks

Development along the banks of the upper parts of the river may have an impact upon sediment processes and other aspects of the tidal flow of the lower river and intertidal habitats. This may, in turn, have impacts upon the Ramsar and SPA sites.

Consequently, development on the riparian edge needs to be carefully considered. The importance of coastal archaeology should also be borne in mind. There is a need for further survey work to access coastal archaeology. In addition to planning permission, various other consents may also be required before development on, over or adjacent to the River Medway may proceed. The Environment Agency will, under their own powers, seek to ensure that there is no net environmental loss resulting from any scheme which requires any Agency authorisations/consents.



Monitoring Measures:

The performance of the plan in meeting its aims with regard to the environment will be judged against the following criteria:

- (i) the number of developments permitted that do not conform to the council's noise standards;
- (ii) the number of developments using energy efficiency measures;
- (iii) the number of major developments that incorporate structural landscaping schemes;
- (iv) the number of developments adversely affecting the historic features and special character of Listed Buildings, Ancient Monuments and Conservation Areas;
- (v) the number of permissions given for existing rural buildings to be re-used;
- (vi) the amount of development that degrades the open character or settlement separation functions of the Metropolitan Green Belt, and the Strategic Gap;
- (vii) the amount of development that degrades the natural beauty of the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and of the North Downs and North Kent Marshes Special Landscape Areas;
- (viii) the amount of development that has a prejudicial effect upon the open character or landscape function of the Areas of Local Landscape Importance;
- (ix) the amount of wildlife habitat lost to development and new wildlife habitat resulting from development proposals; and
- (x) the amount of best and most versatile agricultural land lost to development.

2.2 RESTORING AND ENHANCING HABITATS

2.2.1 Priority Habitats (Sustainability Appraisal, 2023)

The Plan area also supports a plethora of priority habitats protected under the NERC Act, including:

- Good quality semi-improved grassland
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Coastal saltmarsh
- Mudflats
- Deciduous Woodland
- Saline Lagoon
- Traditional orchard.

2.2.2 Core Biodiversity Areas (GBI Framework, 2023)

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas form a good basis, but do not include important urban corridors. Natural England habitat network mapping highlights restoration and



creation opportunities in the vicinity of priority habitats, but does not include other sites with potential for improvement, especially in urban areas, for example parks, or sites which are only mapped on local datasets.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

1. Protect, enhance and improve the core biodiversity sites and take action for priority species

1.1. Protect and enhance the sites which form the core of the biodiversity network – those sites designated for nature conservation and those with known biodiversity value.

1.2. Ensure that Medway-owned sites with nature conservation value are protected and their value enhanced, bringing declining sites into good condition and reducing sources of harm.

1.3. Protect, enhance and seek to expand areas of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority habitats which are notable within Medway - chalk grassland, traditional orchards, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.

1.4. Protect and seek to increase populations of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority species which are notable within Medway – water vole, common blue butterfly, turtle doves, nightingale, shrill carder bee, lapwing and Sandwich tern

2.2.3 Green and Blue Infrastructure

The Vision for Medway 2040 (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023):

The plan's vision is to establish Medway as a leading regional city, connected to its surrounding coast and countryside; with a thriving economy, where residents enjoy a good quality of life and there is a clear strategy for addressing climate change and strengthening natural assets.

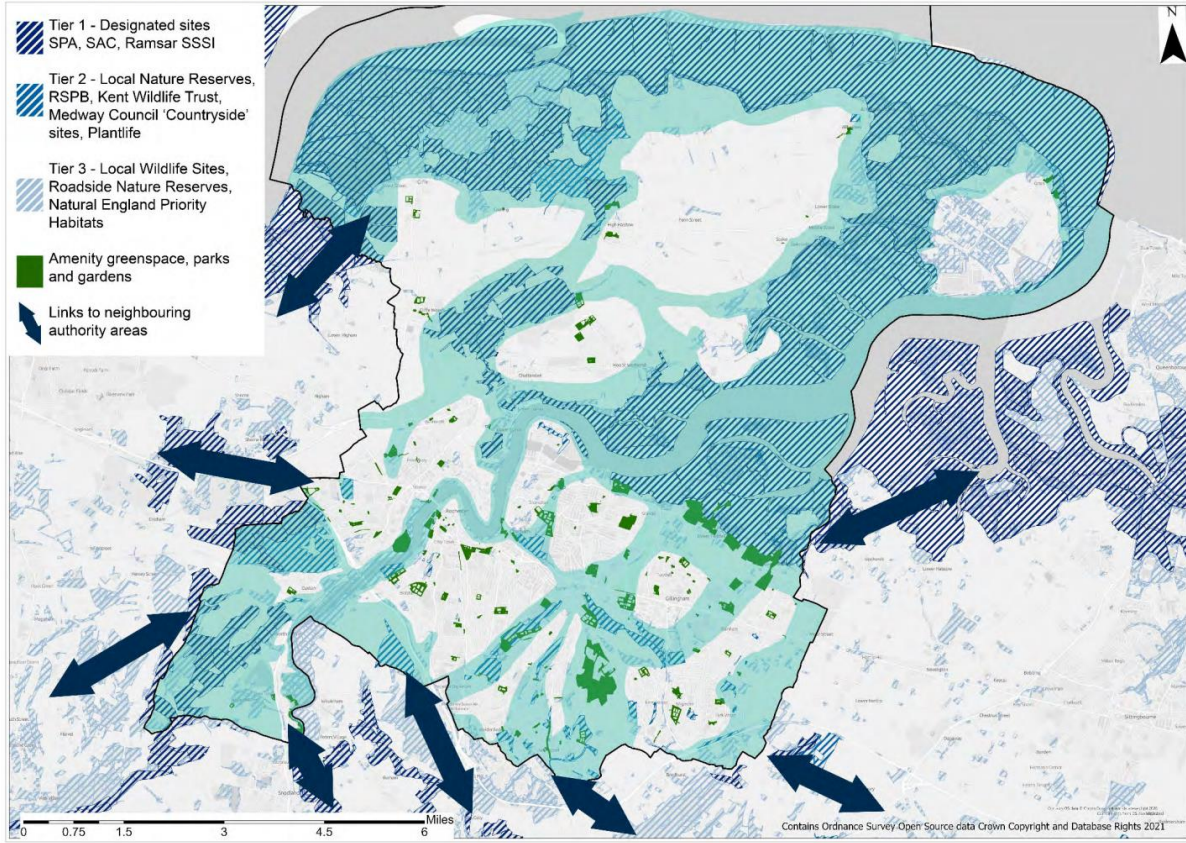
The countryside, coast and the urban open spaces are valued and benefit as joined up environmental assets in a resilient green infrastructure network. Important wildlife and heritage assets are protected and enhanced.

Proposed Objectives (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023):

To secure a robust green and blue infrastructure network across land and water that protects and enhances the assets of the natural and historic environments in urban and rural Medway; providing resilience for nature through better connectivity and conditions; informing the design and sustainability of new development; and supporting healthier lifestyles.

GBI Framework, 2023:

Plan 6: Green and Blue Corridors 2021



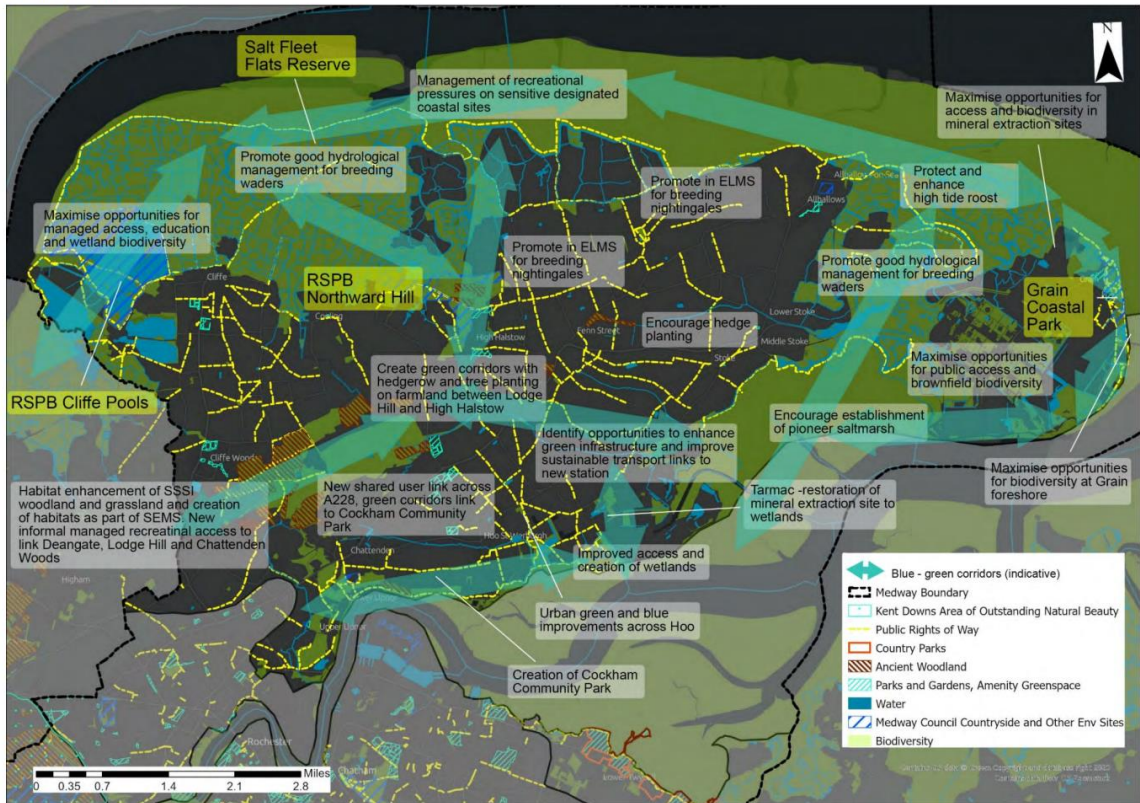
Within these areas priorities should be to:

- Improve the biodiversity value of existing semi-natural sites as the core assets of the corridors, conserving and enhancing the nature within the sites and ensuring they are under appropriate management;
- Buffering and expanding these sites by creating hospitable areas for nature around them;
- Create new sites for nature;
- Creating stepping stone sites within the corridors by making sites better for nature. This could include parks, urban greenspace and gardens.

Green and Blue Infrastructure Area Priorities:

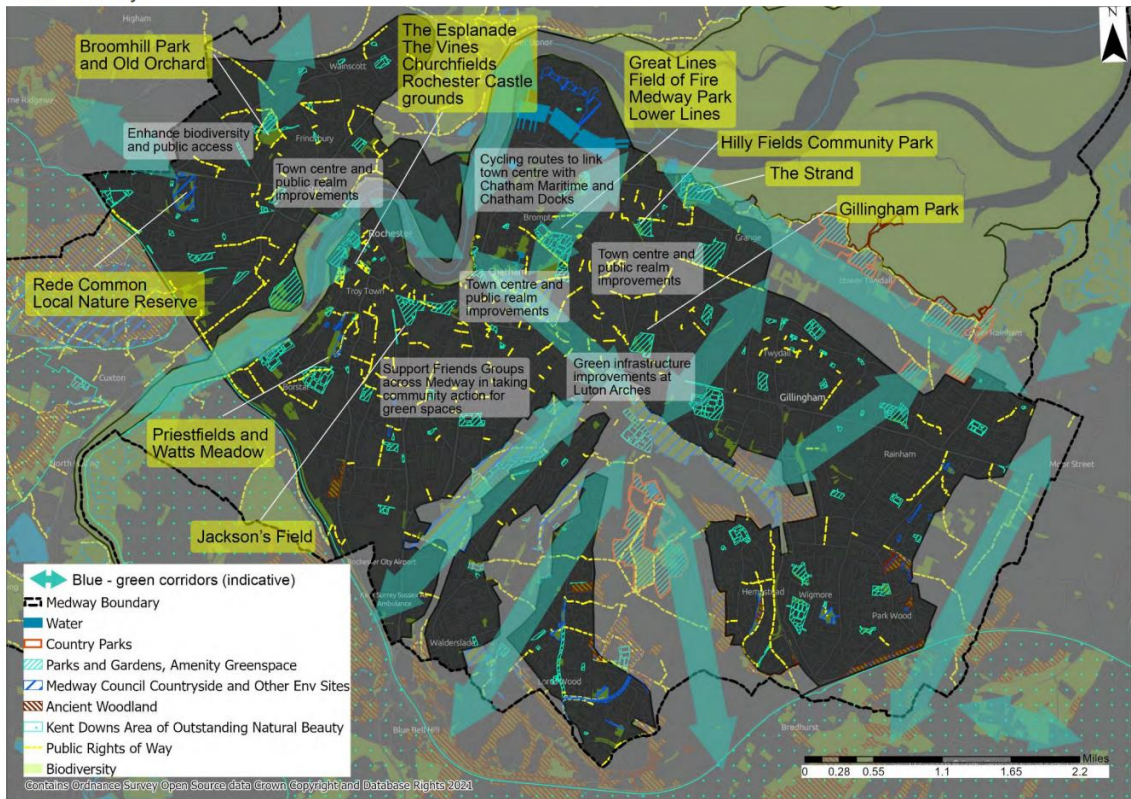
Hoo Peninsula:

Plan 19: Hoo Peninsula



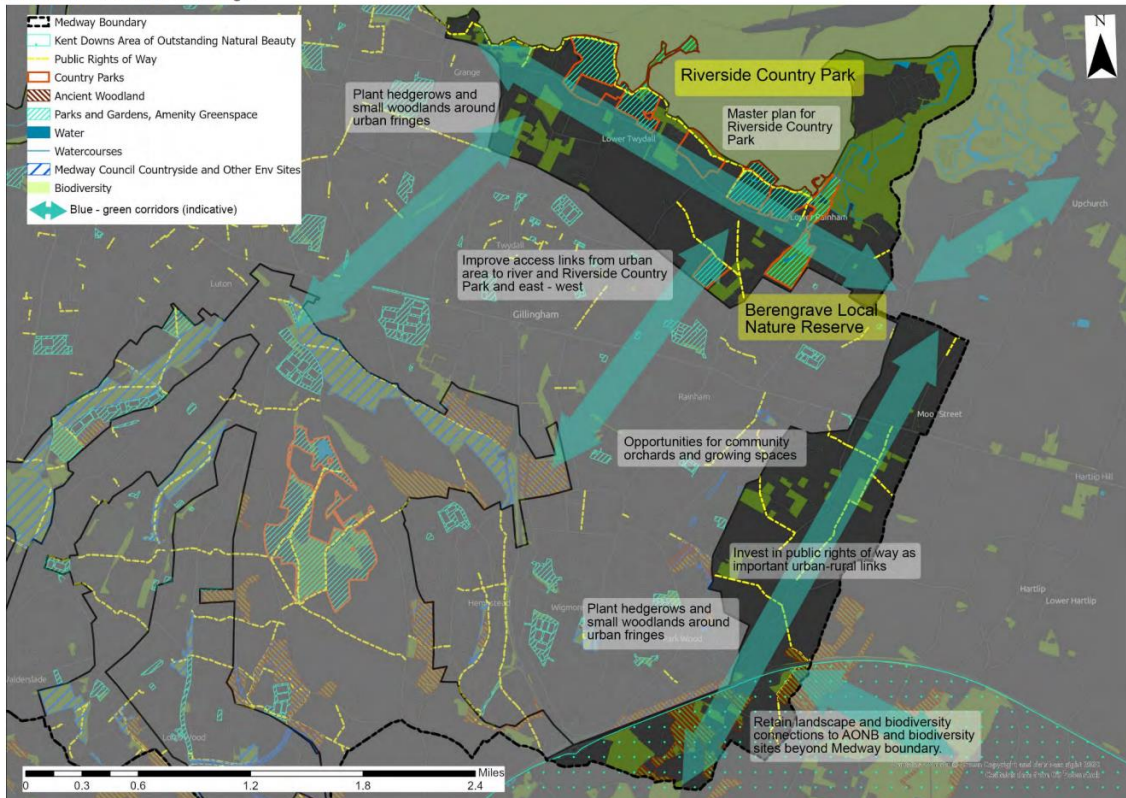
Urban Medway:

Plan 21: Urban Medway



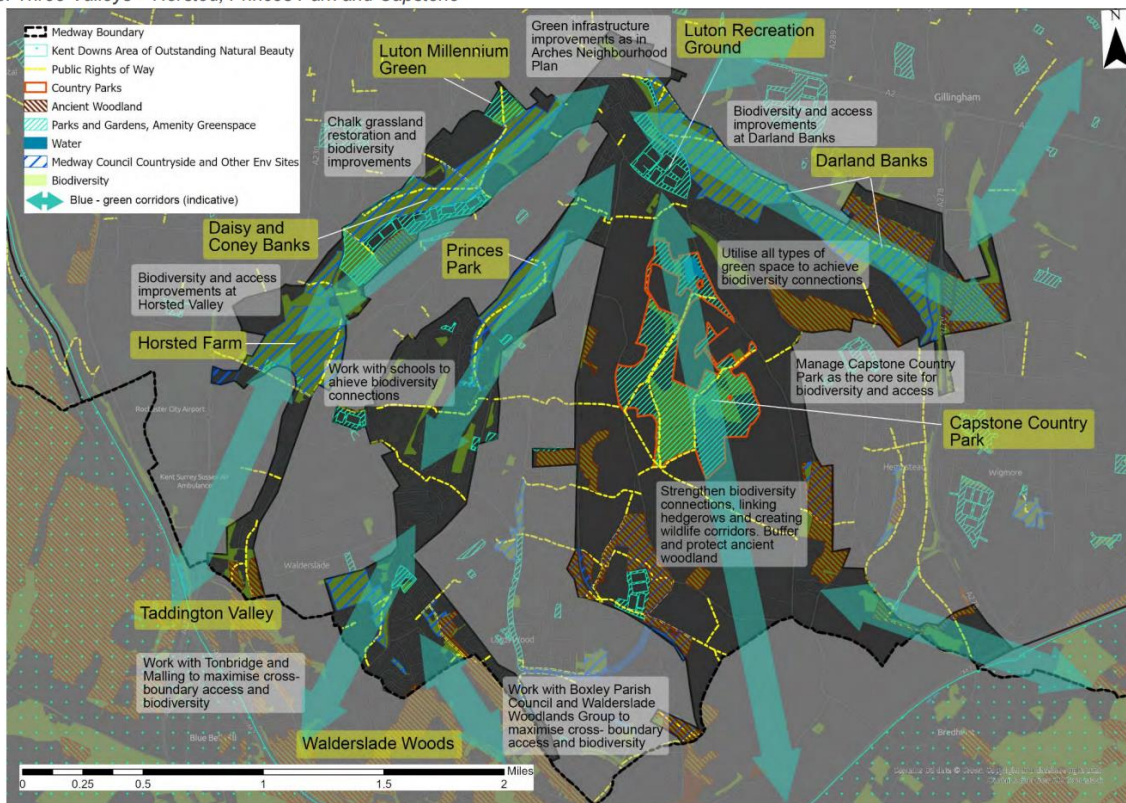
Rainham and Meresborough:

Plan 22: Rainham and Meresborough



Three Valleys – Horsted, Princes Park and Capstone:

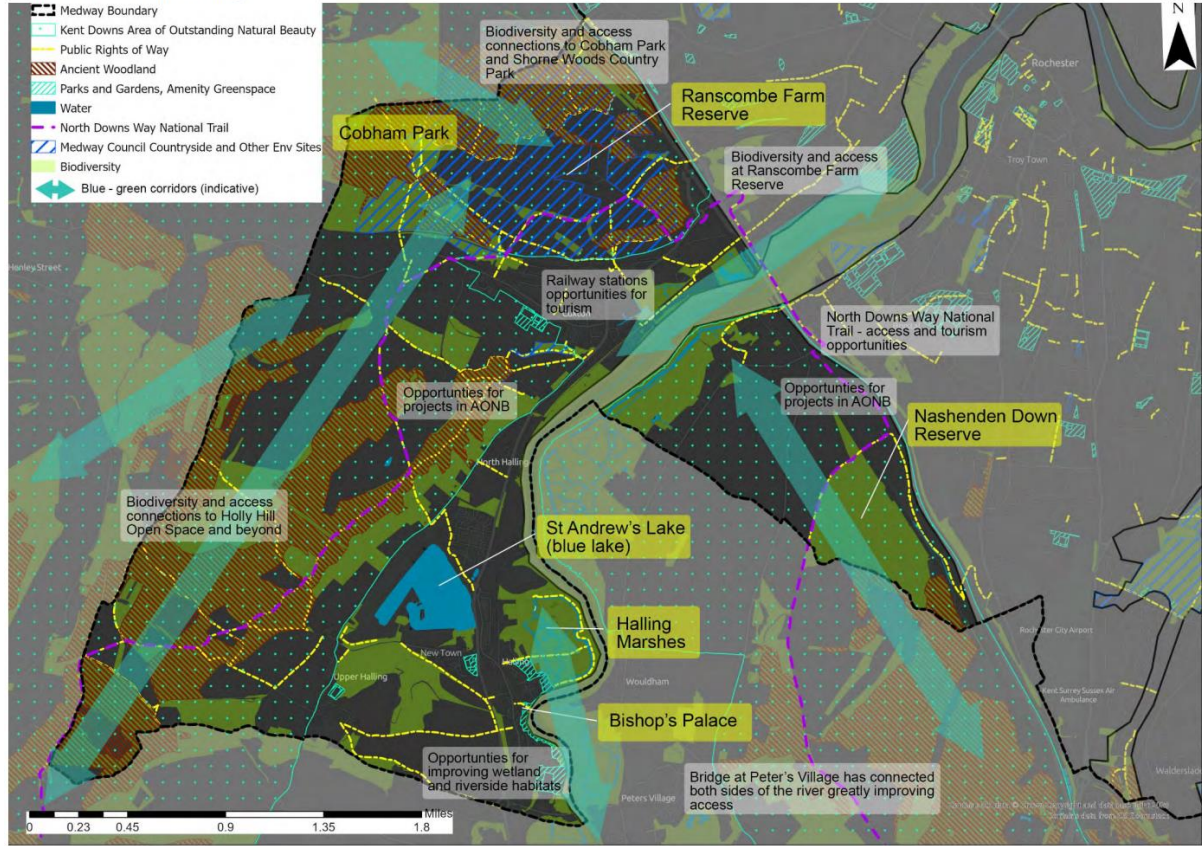
Plan 23: Three Valleys – Horsted, Princes Park and Capstone





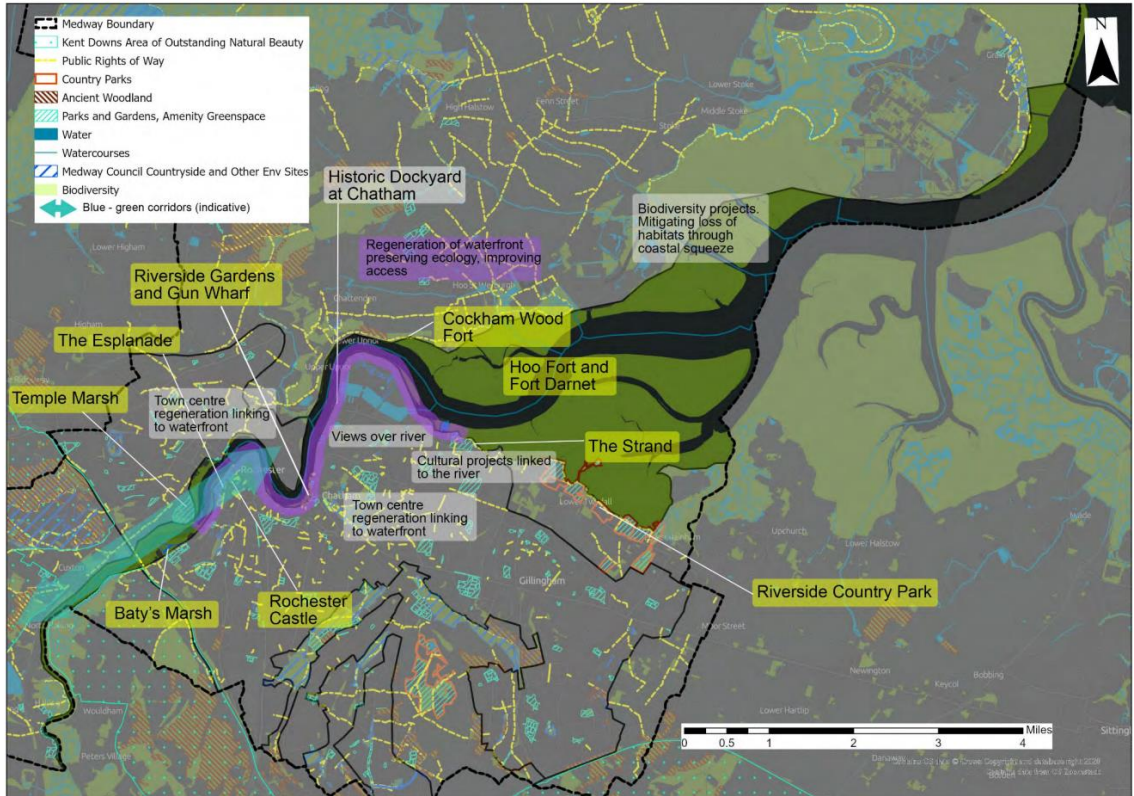
Cuxton and Halling:

Plan 24: Cuxton and Halling



River Medway:

Plan 25: River Medway





2.2.4 Within development and infrastructure

The vision for Medway 2040 (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023):

The quality of new development has enhanced Medway's profile, and driven up environmental standards in construction, and older properties have been retro-fitted to improve sustainability.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities (GBI Framework, 2023) - 5. Ensure development is sustainable

5.1. Seek 20% Biodiversity Net Gain through development, subject to viability and soundness testing.

5.2. Deliver ambitious biodiversity improvements through the Hoo Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and its associated Strategic Environmental Management Scheme (SEMS).

5.3. Incorporate biodiversity into housing developments, including hedgehog highways, swift boxes and biodiversity-friendly planting in streets and gardens

Proposed Objectives (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023):

- To deliver sustainable development, meeting the needs of Medway's communities, respecting the natural and historic environment, and directing growth to the most suitable locations that can enhance Medway's economic, social and environmental characteristics.
- To secure the ongoing benefits of Medway's regeneration, making the best use of brownfield land, and bringing forward the transformation of the waterfront and town centre sites for high quality mixed use development, and a focus for cultural activities.

To lift the standards of sustainability and quality in all new development; respond positively to the character and variation of local places across Medway; seeking opportunities for greener construction, to provide for more energy efficient buildings which drives down their carbon impact; demonstrate distinctiveness; and improve the accessibility and design of the public realm that will help people to live healthier lives and open up travel choices, reducing car dependency.

Further consideration will be given to potential impacts on the environment *of development*, especially the designated habitats and landscapes which form a large part of Medway's area, and strategic infrastructure needs. The Council will need to assess how negative impacts can be avoided, or mitigated, such as through delivery of new services. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)



POLICY BNE6: LANDSCAPE DESIGN

Major developments should include a structural landscaping scheme to enhance the character of the locality. Detailed landscaping schemes should be submitted before development commences and should have regard to the following factors:

- (i) provide a structured, robust, attractive, long term, easily maintainable environment including quality open spaces, vistas and views; and*
- (ii) include planting of a size, scale and form appropriate to the location and landform, taking account of underground and overground services; and*
- (iii) include details of the design, materials and quality detailing of hard works elements such as gates, fences, walls, paving, signage and street furniture; and*
- (iv) retain important existing landscape features, including trees and hedgerows, and be well related to open space features in the locality; and*
- (v) support wildlife by the creation or enhancement of semi-natural habitats and the use of indigenous plant material where appropriate; and*
- (vi) include an existing site survey, maintenance and management regimes and a timetable for implementation.*

POLICY BNE22 ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT

Development leading to the protection and improvement of the appearance and environment of existing and proposed areas of development, transport corridors, open spaces and areas adjacent to the River Medway will be permitted.

POLICY BNE38: WILDLIFE CORRIDORS AND STEPPING STONES

Development should, wherever practical, make provision for wildlife habitats, as part of a network of wildlife corridors or stepping stones.

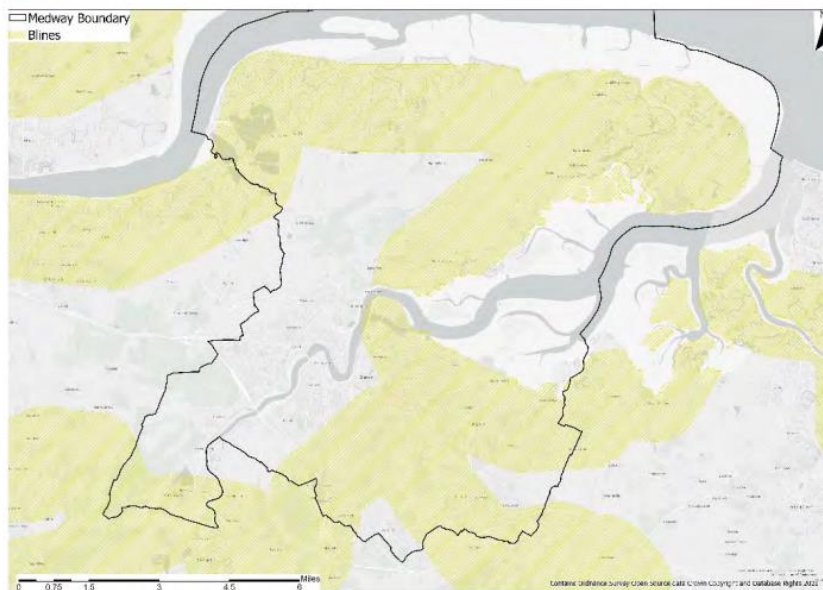
2.3 HABITAT CREATION

2.3.1 Conservation Parks

The Thames Gateway Planning Framework (RPG9a) stresses that the estuarine marshes of the Thames downstream of Gravesend and those of the Medway are a key environmental asset, and points to the potential of “conservation parks”. Such conservation parks could improve public access to, and knowledge of, the nature conservation resources of the marshes, fostering conservation and enhancement jointly with recreation and “green tourism”. People could be attracted to these areas because of their wildlife interest, but appropriate management would need to ensure that the number of visitors did not cause damage. Ideally, visitors should be encouraged to travel to the area by means other than the private car.

2.3.2 Pollinator Corridors (GBI Framework, 2023)

Plan 5: Buglife 'B-Lines' show opportunities to create corridors for pollinators



2.3.3 Green Infrastructure (GBI Framework, 2023)

Strategic Priorities:

- Protect, enhance and improve the core biodiversity sites and take action for priority species.
- Create an ecologically resilient network to join habitats, allow species to move and to help nature adapt to climate change.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities:



1. Protect, enhance and improve the core biodiversity sites and take action for priority species

1.3. Protect, enhance and seek to expand areas of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority habitats which are notable within Medway - chalk grassland, traditional orchards, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.

2. Create an ecologically resilient network to join habitats, allow species to move and to help nature adapt to climate change

2.1. Reduce sources of harm to existing biodiversity sites.

2.2. Develop ecologically resilient and varied landscapes through conserving and enhancing local variation within sites and habitats and making space for the natural development of rivers and coasts.

2.3. Establish ecological networks through habitat protection, restoration and creation.

2.4. Integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures into conservation management, planning and practice.

2.5. Work with partners to deliver a resilient network and with neighbouring authorities to develop connections over local authority boundaries.

2.6. Seek to create mosaics and overall abundance of wildlife alongside the protection of specific habitats and species.

2.7. Work with the Kent Nature Partnership to develop and deliver a Local Nature Recovery Strategy as part of the National Nature Recovery Network.

2.8. Sustain a healthy tree stock and ensure no net loss of trees, manage existing woodland estates and create and restore hedgerows.

2.9. Continue to increase the number of wildflower verges on council owned land

2.3.4 Within development and infrastructure (GBI Framework, 2023)

Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDs)

Sustainable Drainage Schemes are a way of managing surface water flood risk. The surface water can be managed by using green spaces to capture water in natural features like swales, ponds, tree pits and rain gardens to allow it to soak into the ground or be evaporated. This reduces the need for traditional piped drainage networks to be used to manage surface water within the built environment. SuDs can also provide amenity value, reduce the impacts of climate change, and create spaces for nature. Green infrastructure is recognised as one of the key assets used for implementing or retrofitting SuDs. An increased frequency of intense rainfall events, combined with a



drainage network that quickly reaches capacity, will lead to more frequent flooding, but by allowing surface water, which would normally enter this network, to discharge into green space will help to reduce the risk of flooding.

Strategic Priorities:

- New development should try and incorporate SuDs schemes that are integral to the green infrastructure provided.
- Retrofitting SuDS could potentially help solve some of the flooding that may be faced in Medway in the future.

New development:

New development could incorporate SuDs schemes that are integral to the GI provided, including providing a management and maintenance plan that will improve the water quality by removing pollutants and putting clean water back into the environment. Plants and vegetation will help provide essential food and habitat for local wildlife, and benefit biodiversity overall.

Existing Development:

However, new development forms only a small part of the current urban areas. If retrofit SuDs can be incorporated into existing developed areas, then the opportunities for delivering sustainable solutions that offer multiple benefits will be much greater

Future Proofing:

Retrofitting SuDS can potentially help solve some of the flooding and water quality problems that may be faced in Medway in the future. Such measures provide a more joined up approach to managing surface water across wider areas, supporting the water cycle as a whole, helping to green urban areas and generating multiple benefits in-line with an ecosystem's services approach. Planning SuDs that are an integral part of future green infrastructure is key to the success of future development, including arrangements for maintenance – which needs to be understood and planned in the early design stages.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities:

1. New development should try and incorporate SuDs schemes that are integral to the green infrastructure provided.

1.1. New green infrastructure should integrate SuDs into the design of the space rather than a separate feature, including the maintenance of the space as a whole.



1.2. The arrangements for the future maintenance of the system should be considered during the early stages of SuDS design as this will influence the design

1.3. SuDs should be designed to support biodiversity and amenity uses.

2. Retrofitting SuDS could potentially help solve some of the flooding that may be faced in Medway in the future.

2.1. Look at ways in which existing open space can be retrofitted to alleviate surface water flooding in areas where it is a problem.

2.2. Community consultation should be undertaken when retrofitting SuDs.

2.3. There are a range of SuDS components which can be designed into tight urban settings.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

Minimum 10% gain required calculated using Biodiversity Metric and approval of net gain plan (Medway Council is working towards 20% net gain).



2.4 SPECIES SPECIFIC

2.4.1 Protected Species

POLICY BNE39: PROTECTED SPECIES

Development will not be permitted if statutorily protected species and/or their habitat will be harmed. Conditions will be attached, and/or obligations sought, to ensure that protected species and/or their habitats are safeguarded and maintained.

Certain plant and animal species are protected under statutes and Government regulations (e.g. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and the Habitats Regulations 1994). The presence of such protected species is a material consideration in the assessment of development proposals. Protected species are not restricted to designated nature conservation sites. Their occurrence can be unpredictable as their population and breeding, roosting or feeding locations often change. Thus, the characteristics of protected species mean that it is also necessary to take account of their protection in undesignated sites. It will therefore be important to carry out survey work where appropriate to establish the presence of protected species, including the effect of seasonal factors on their presence. Advice on protected species is available through local offices of English Nature.

Protection in situ of protected species will be the primary aim, with impacts mitigated through design and/or mitigation. Translocation of species to another site, where practicable, will only be considered as a last resort.

2.4.2 Priority Species

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities (GBI Framework, 2023):

1. Protect, enhance and improve the core biodiversity sites and take action for priority species

1.4. Protect and seek to increase populations of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority species which are notable within Medway – water vole, common blue butterfly, turtle doves, nightingale, shrill carder bee, lapwing and Sandwich tern

Priority Species (Sustainability Appraisal, 2023):

The Plan area also supports a plethora of priority habitats protected under the NERC Act, including:

- Good quality semi-improved grassland
- Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh
- Coastal saltmarsh



- Mudflats
- Deciduous Woodland
- Saline Lagoon
- Traditional orchard.

These priority habitats support a diverse range of priority species, including but not limited to:

- Water vole (*Arvicola amphibous*)
- Otters (*Lutra lutra*)
- Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*)
- White-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)
- Brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*)
- Bats, including Serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*) and Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)
- Birds, including breeding waders, such as snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*) and curlew (*Numenius arquata*). Wintering wildfowl, including Bewick swans (*Cygnus bewickii*) and whooper swans (*Cygnus cygnus*)
- Insects, including pearl-bordered fritillary (*Boloria euphrosyne*), Heath fritillary (*Melitaea athalia*) and bright wave (*Idaea ochrata*)
- Plants, including small cordgrass (*Spartina maritima*) and Three-lobed water crowfoot (*Ranunculus trichophyllus*)

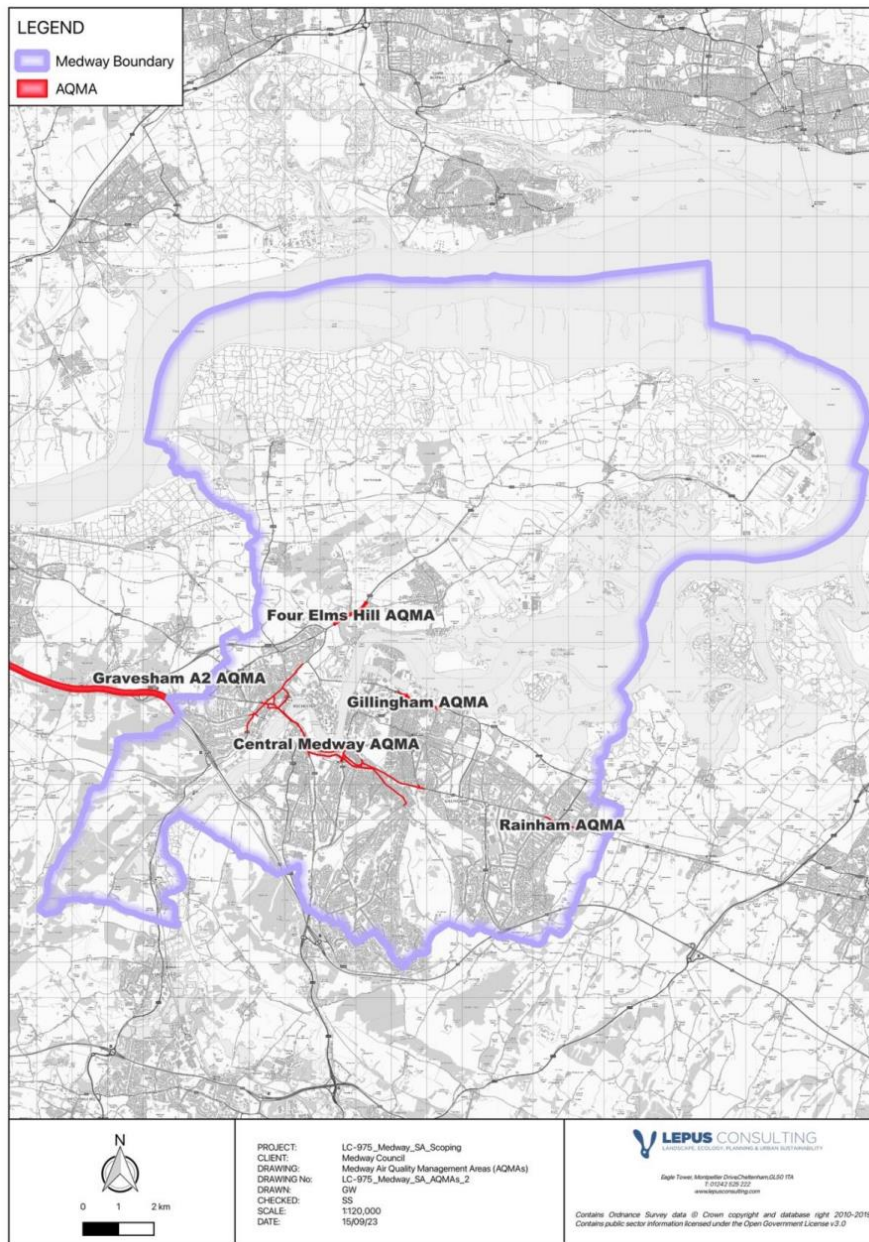
2.4.3 Migratory Birds (Natural environment and greenspaces)

Every year, thousands of ducks, geese, and wading birds travel thousands of miles, from as far afield as the Arctic, to spend the winter months feeding and resting along our coastline. In spring, they fly north back to the arctic to breed and other birds, such as gulls, terns and nightingales arrive to mate, nest, and raise their young in Medway and the surrounding north Kent marshes. Many of these birds are considered vulnerable and are on the red and amber lists for conservation concern, so they depend on our coastline for their survival. Because of this, the coastline is protected as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under international designations.

SECTION 3: WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

3.1 GOAL 2: AIR QUALITY

There are currently four AQMAs within Medway which are above the annual objective for NO₂: Central Medway; Rainham, Gillingham, and Four Elms Hill (see Figure 3.1). Gravesham A2 AQMA which lies in the adjoining Gravesham Borough Council, also borders Medway LPA in the west. The air quality objective for NO₂ is an annual average of 40ug/m³. This level has been exceeded within these areas. (Sustainability Appraisal, 2023)



(Sustainability Appraisal, 2023)



The A2 is an important transport corridor, but experiences congestion and has been designated an Air Quality Management Area. There is a risk that major development in these suburban locations could generate further dependencies on car-based travel, adding to congestion and pollution, and undermining Medway's ambitions for sustainable development. Much of the potential development south of the M2 is anticipated to travel towards the M2 via junction 4 which may need to be improved to accommodate additional traffic. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

In 2010, 125 annual deaths were attributed to man-made air pollution in Medway – Public Health England (2014). (GBI Framework, 2023)

Core Values: Reducing congestion and pollution by decreasing the need to use private transport and increasing the use of public transport. (Local Plan, 2003)

Proposed Objectives: To ensure effective management to improve air quality. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

Medway Council's Air Quality Action Plan 2015 (GBI Framework, 2023):

Medway Council's Air Quality Action Plan 2015, describes the air quality assessment process in Medway, identifies the role of traffic in the current problem and sets out a range of transport-focussed measures to improve air quality.

The Action Plan and updates recommend improving air quality at the Central Medway, Pier Road, Gillingham and High Street, Rainham and Four Elms Air Quality Management Areas to work towards meeting the national air quality objective for the protection of human health.

Carefully positioned green infrastructure that incorporates the right type of vegetation, separates people from pollution by introducing barriers and extends the distance between the pollution source and individuals. Where possible road and pavement layouts, should incorporate urban greening schemes, and providing active travel routes through greenspace all help reduce exposure to air pollution and improve health

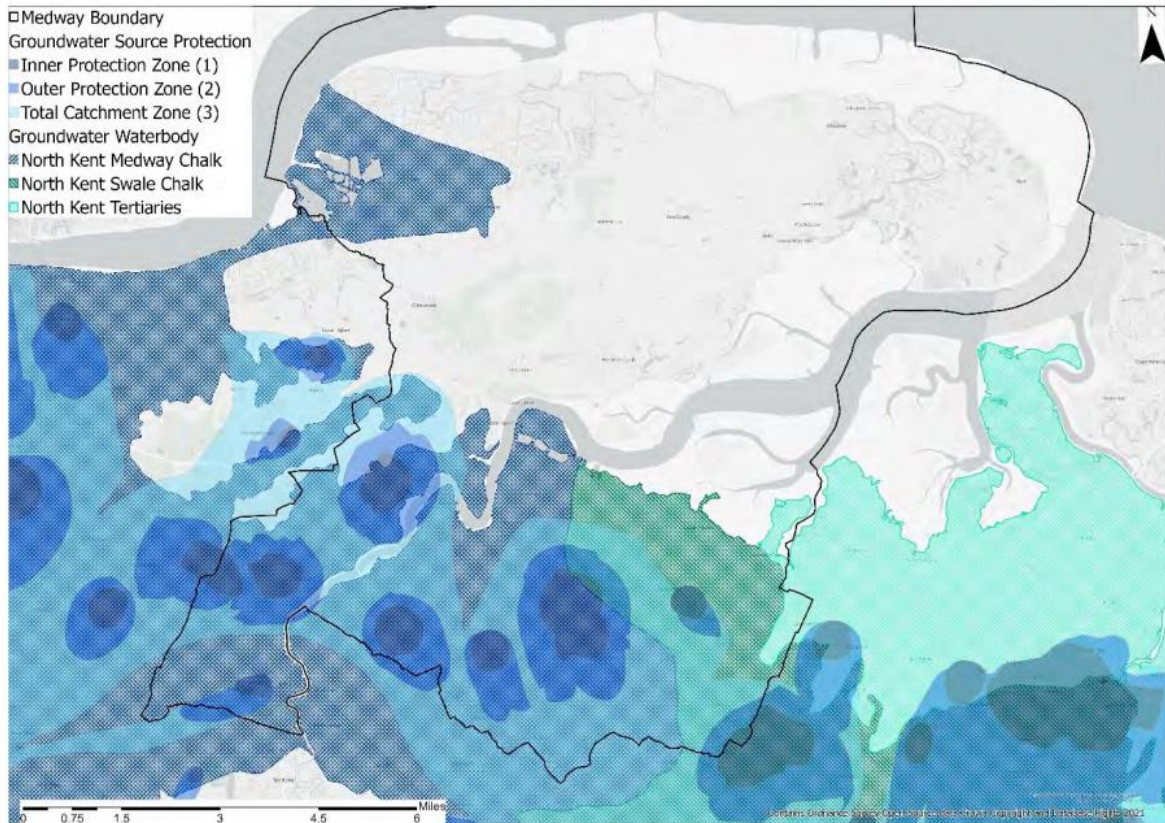
POLICY BNE24: AIR QUALITY (Local Plan, 2003)

Development likely to result in airborne emissions should provide a full and detailed assessment of the likely impact of these emissions. Development will not be permitted when it is considered that unacceptable effects will be imposed on the health, amenity or natural environment of the surrounding area, taking into account the cumulative effects of other proposed or existing sources of air pollution in the vicinity.

3.2 GOAL 3: CLEAN AND PLENTIFUL WATER

Proposed Objectives: To ensure the effective management of natural resources, including water and soil. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

Plan 14: Groundwater Waterbodies and Groundwater Source Protection Zones



(GBI Framework, 2023)

Lying under Medway is the principal chalk aquifer of the North Downs. Groundwater source protection extend across the aquifer to protect sources of water. These zones help to protect the precious aquifer from pollution, such as petrol or soakaways from septic tanks. Drinking water is supplied by a mixture of groundwater and rivers. Use of water has an impact on aquatic ecosystems. There is a need to protect water source and limit water use. (GBI Framework, 2023)

Local authorities and developers can play a significant role in improving the local water environment, for example through Local Plan policies, urban regeneration or catchment restoration and GI projects. Typical improvements might include:

- Restoring rivers and floodplains or corridors to a more natural state
- Removing barriers to fish movement
- Promoting efficient and sustainable use of water resources in developments
- Promoting the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)



- De-culverting watercourses
- Managing pollution from wastewater
(Sustainability Appraisal, 2023)

3.3 GOAL 4: MANAGING EXPOSURE TO CHEMICALS AND PESTICIDES

3.4 GOAL 5: MAXIMISE OUR RESOURCES, MINIMISE OUR WASTE

Vision for Medway 2040: Waste is managed as far up the Waste Hierarchy as possible to achieve a more circular economy. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

Proposed Objectives: To ensure the effective management of minimising the production of waste, enabling it to be managed as far up the Waste Hierarchy as possible. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

POLICY BNE23: CONTAMINATED LAND (Local Plan, 2003)

Development on land known or likely to be contaminated or affected by adjacent or related contamination must be accompanied by the findings of a detailed site examination to identify contaminants and the risks that these might present to human health and the wider environment. Appropriate measures to reduce, or eliminate, risk to building structures, services and occupiers of the site and of adjoining sites must be agreed. Such remedial measures must be satisfactorily implemented before the development is occupied.

3.5 GOAL 6: USING RESOURCES FROM NATURE SUSTAINABLY

Vision for Medway 2040: Medway is known for its innovation and creativity, with businesses adapted to changes in the economy and the environment, and leading in green growth and technology, benefitting from excellent digital connectivity. High streets are sought after locations for a range of businesses, providing space for start-ups and co-working facilities that reduce people's need to commute. Medway's farmland produces quality food and drink and is contributing to the management of natural resources. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

Proposed Objectives: To ensure the effective management of natural resources, including water and soil, and improving air quality, providing for the sustainable supply of minerals and minimising the production of waste, enabling it to be managed as far up the Waste Hierarchy as possible. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

Renewable Energy (Local Plan, 2003):

There are often considerable environmental constraints on renewable energy schemes that will need to be taken into account. There may be a detrimental visual amenity impact from apparatus and grid connections in areas of landscape importance. Many types of renewable energy schemes may mean significant



problems of traffic generation that would need to be adequately addressed. There may be a detrimental impact on amenity in terms of nature conservation, particularly in the RAMSAR sites.

Locational constraints can arise since, in many cases, the resource can only be harnessed where it occurs. For example, there is scope to generate heat and electricity from the bacterial digestion of sewage sludge at Motney Hill wastewater treatment works, which could make the site self sufficient in energy.

POLICY CF11: RENEWABLE ENERGY (Local Plan, 2003)

Renewable energy schemes for the generation and consumption of electricity will be permitted when the location, scale and design of the apparatus and associated infrastructure are not detrimental to nature conservation or landscape concerns and present no significant loss of residential or countryside amenity.

3.6 GOAL 7: MITIGATING AND ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Vision for Medway 2040: Medway has achieved 'green growth', development that has responded positively to tackling climate change, providing for healthier and more sustainable choices of homes, transport and workplaces, and reducing the risk of flooding. Medway has transitioned to a low carbon economy, with a clear path mapped out to reaching 'net zero'. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

Proposed Objectives: To deliver on the Council's commitment to addressing the Climate Emergency, providing resilience to temperature and climate change through seeking adaptations and mitigation measures, including opportunities to promote carbon reduction and support the transition to 'zero carbon', and reduce the risk of flooding; promoting the use of nature-based solutions to climate change; seeking to protect the most vulnerable groups from the impacts of climate change; and supporting major shifts in modes of transport used to reduce carbon impacts. (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023)

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities (GBI Framework, 2023):

4. Adapt and mitigate for climate change impacts

4.1. Bring forward nature-based solutions as cost-effective, climate adapted and biodiversity-supporting alternatives to 'grey' engineering solutions.

4.2. Increase tree and woodland cover, ensuring that this follows the principles of 'right tree, right place'. Trees should be planted where this fits with the landscape character and should not be planted on sites with other biodiversity interest which would be lost through tree planting. Urban trees should be fitting for the size and location of space.



4.3. Identity habitat areas within Medway for protection as carbon sinks and wildlife habitats. This should include both terrestrial and marine habitats.

POLICY BNE4: ENERGY EFFICIENCY (Local Plan, 2003)

Energy efficiency measures will be sought within development proposals, providing there is no detrimental impact on amenity. In particular, proposals should have regard to:

- (i) appropriate siting, form, orientation and layout of the buildings and the appropriate size and location of windows to maximise passive solar heating, natural lighting and natural ventilation; and*
- (ii) the appropriate use and siting of soft landscaping to act as shading or shelterbelts; and*
- (iii) energy efficient technology including solar panels, combined heat and power/district heating schemes and district wind power schemes; and*
- (iv) high standards of insulation and other heat retaining features; and*
- (v) the use of building materials of the lowest possible embodied energy, except where there is an overriding need to avoid damage to the architectural or historic interest of Listed Buildings and buildings in Conservation Areas.*

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

Core Values: Ways need to be found to protect attractive countryside for its own sake and maintain a viable rural economy. (Local Plan, 2003)

Strategic Priorities: Strengthen landscape character and ensure green and blue infrastructure enhances and fits with local landscape character. (GBI Framework, 2023)

3.9.2 Heritage

Strategic Priorities:

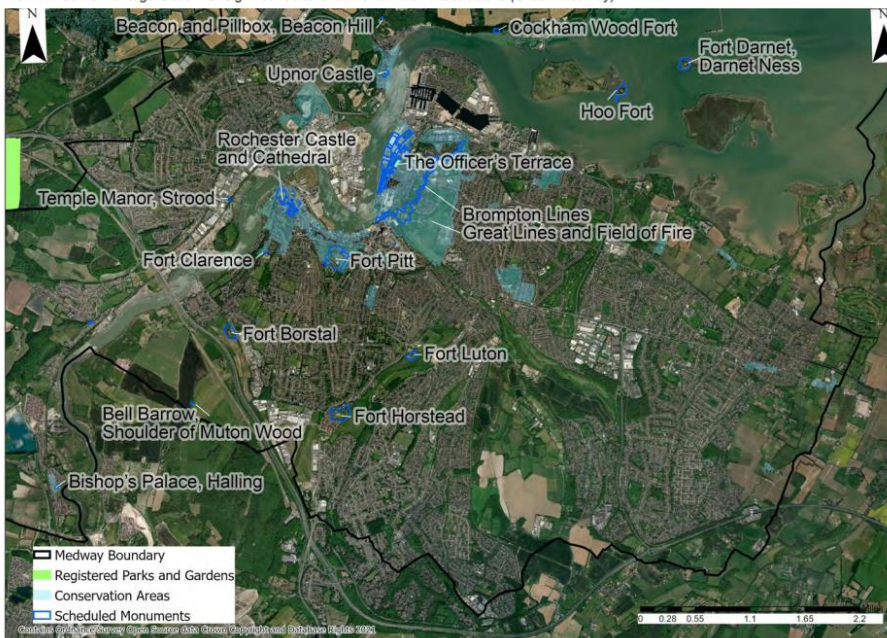
Ensure heritage is recognised in green infrastructure planning and interpretation. (GBI Framework, 2023)

POLICY BNE12: CONSERVATION AREAS (Local Plan, 2003)

Special attention will be paid to the preservation and enhancement of the character and appearance of Conservation Areas, as defined on the proposals map

Medway contains 25 Conservation Areas which range in size from Rochester city centre and Brompton Lines to Cliffe village and Railway Street, Gillingham. These are shown on the proposals map and are listed below: (a) Rochester City Centre (b) Victoria Street, Rochester (c) Church Fields, Rochester (d) Upper Upnor (e) Cliffe (f) New Road, Chatham (g) Star Hill, Rochester (h) Watts Ave/Roebuck Road (i) St. Mary Hoo (j) Upper Bush (k) Halling (l) Star Hill to Sun Pier (m) New Road, Rochester (n) Frindsbury and Manor Farm (o) Brompton Lines (p) Rainham (q) Lower Twydall (r) Gillingham Park 68 (s) Moor Street (t) Meresborough (u) Pembroke (Chatham Maritime) (v) Lower Rainham (w) Railway Street, Gillingham (x) Gillingham Green (y) Chatham Historic Dockyard (Local Plan, 2003)

Plan 17: Some Heritage Sites with significance to Green and Blue Infrastructure (Urban Medway)



(Local Plan, 2003)



3.9.2 Health and wellbeing

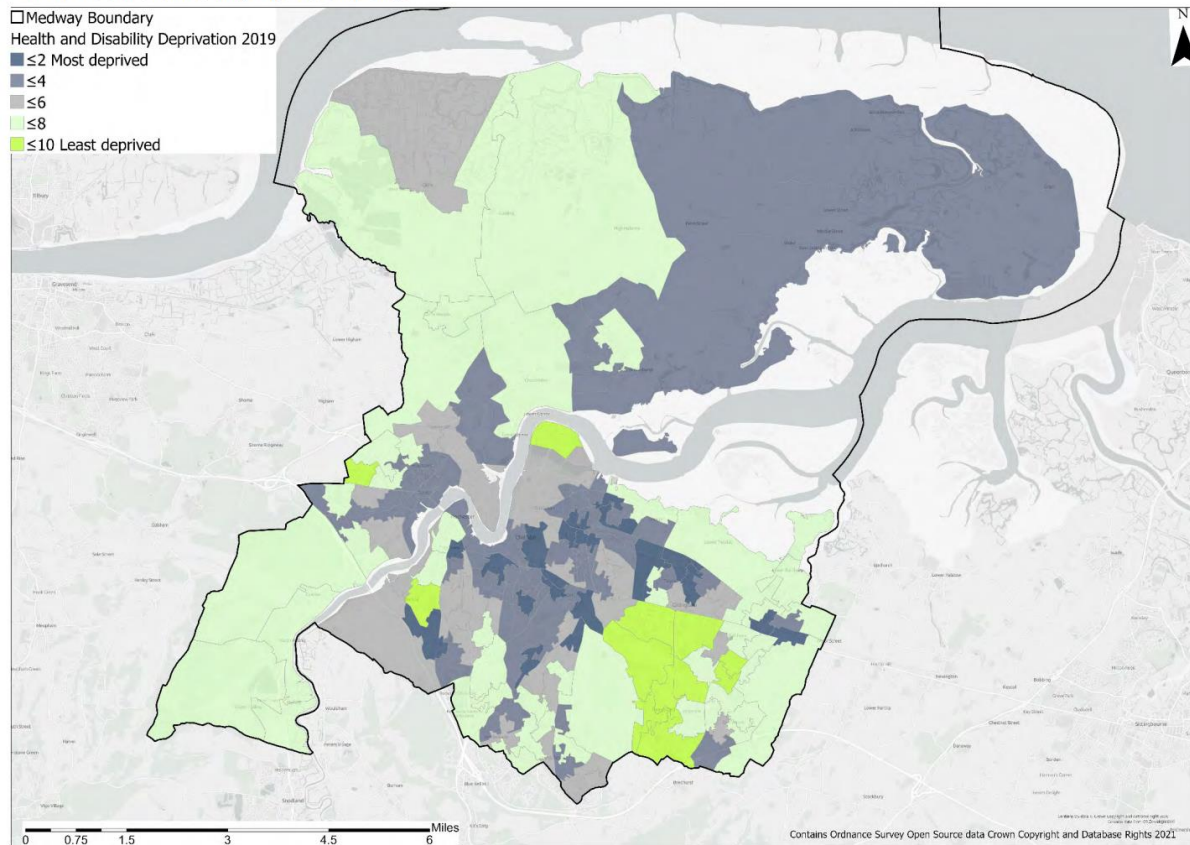
Health and Wellbeing in Medway (GBI Framework, 2023):

- About 19% of children live in low income families;
- Life expectancy for both men and women is lower than the England average;
- Life expectancy at birth for men and women and under 75 mortality rate for cancer and circulatory diseases is significantly worse in Medway than the England average;
- Life expectancy is 8.9 years lower for men and 6.8 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Medway than in the least deprived areas;
- In Year 6, 21.0% of children are classified as obese;
- Medway is in the lowest quartile in England for healthy eating with 23.9% of adults eating five or more portions of fruits or vegetables per day, significantly worse than the England average of 28.7%;
- Medway has significantly higher rates of obesity than the England average, 30% of adults in Medway are obese compared with the England average of 24.2%;
- Average life expectancy in rural areas is significantly greater than in urban wards. Life expectancy is highest in Cuxton and Halling at 82.6 years, and lowest in Chatham Central at 77.5 years.

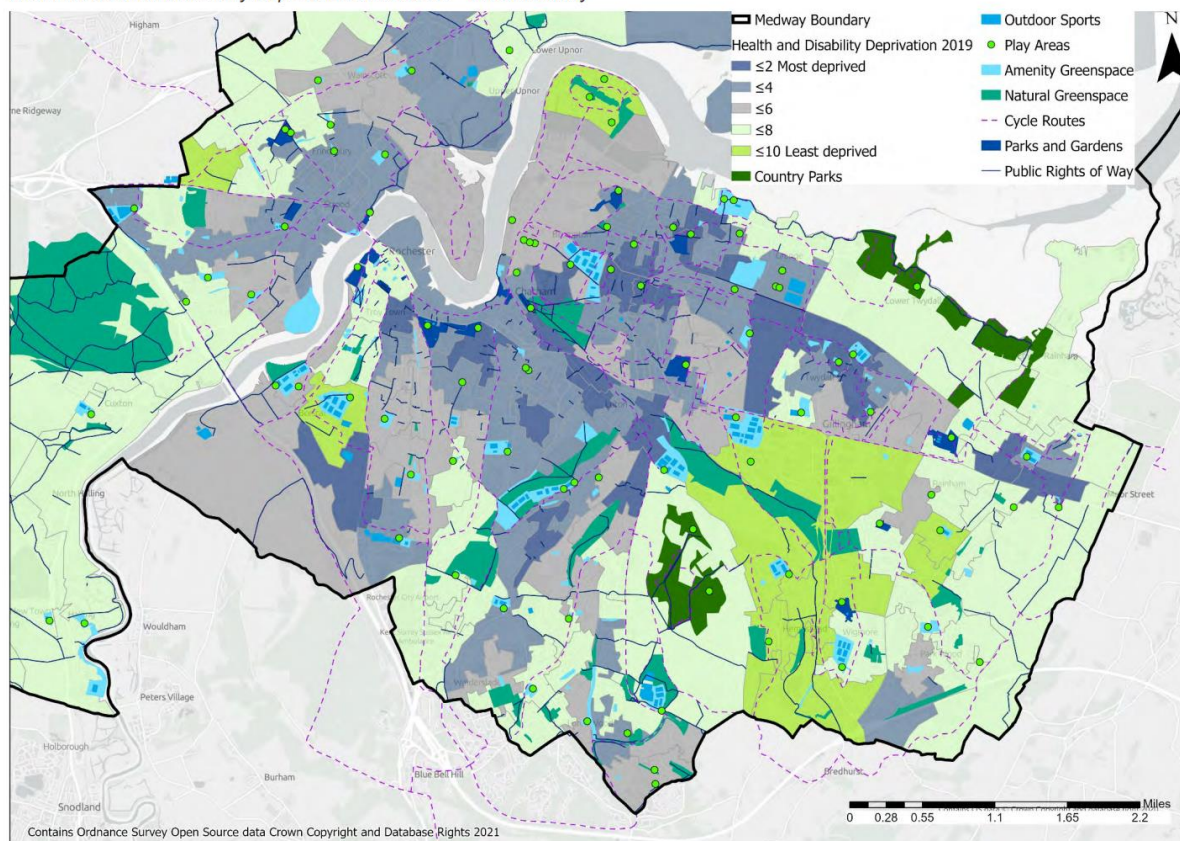
The Council wants Medway to be a healthy place to live, with clean air, high quality, well designed housing, greenspaces for people to enjoy, places for people to mix, and job opportunities to support a good quality of life. Currently there are marked differences in health and wellbeing across communities in Medway. The Plan needs to look at how we plan for the use of land to help people to live healthier and longer lives, and provide safe, connected and sustainable places.



Plan 10: Health and Disability Deprivation (2019)



Plan 11: Health and Disability Deprivation and Access - Urban Medway





The vision for Medway 2040:

- Medway is a healthy place in which to live and work. People can move around more easily, with good walking and cycling links and clean air. All sectors of the community can enjoy the outdoors, with spaces designed for play, leisure, access and rest. People have a choice of affordable and healthy food and can grow their own. Public spaces are inclusive, designed with care and imagination for all to share. People can meet most of their daily needs in their local area, such as schools, grocery shopping and places to socialise and exercise.
- Investment in new services and infrastructure, such as transport, schools, healthcare and open spaces

To reduce inequalities in health and deliver better outcomes for residents, by promoting opportunities for increasing physical activity and mental wellbeing, through green infrastructure and public realm design for walking, cycling, parks and other recreation facilities, and improving access to healthy food choices; and to reduce social isolation by supporting retention and development of local services close to where people live, and inclusive environments that are accessible by all groups in society.

Key priorities (GBI Framework, 2023):

- Children: Reduce childhood obesity and increase walking and cycling e.g. through the active schools travel strategy;
- Older population: Integration - connecting people to leisure and recreation and support those who are socially -isolated;
- Improving health and wellbeing: Shape Medway's environment to make healthy choices the easy choices and reduce physical inactivity

Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats (GBI Framework, 2023):

- Medway, in line with the rest of England, has an ageing population. This will mean more people have health needs, mobility issues and will be living with disability;
- Medway has significantly higher rates of obesity than the England average, 30% of adults in Medway are obese compared with the England average of 24.2%.
- Evidence shows that spending time in nature is also good for mental wellbeing. Medway has a range of good quality green spaces. Examples include Capstone Country Park, Great Lines Heritage Park and Riverside Country Park, these should be invested in for the future.
- Investing in Green and Blue Infrastructure will ensure that the health and wellbeing challenges faced in Medway can be better supported, especially if they are informed by local health data, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.



3.9.3 Access to nature

Core Values (Local Plan, 2003):

The widening of transport choices and accessibility, and a reduction in the reliance on the private car by improvements to facilities for cycling, walking and public transport.

The vision for Medway 2040 (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023):

Medway is defined by its river and estuaries. The urban waterfront is animated and accessible. Continuous riverside paths provide attractive and healthy connections, a draw for visitors and residents. The rural character of the Medway Valley and the Medway and Thames estuaries are valued landscapes and habitats are in good condition. There are new opportunities for river transport.

Proposed Objectives (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023):

To strengthen and develop transport networks providing safe and effective choices for sustainable travel, including improved opportunities for walking and cycling and enhanced public transport services, and management of the highways network, with associated improvements in air quality.

Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats (GBI Framework, 2023):

- There is a good supply of greenspace across Medway but not all of this space is accessible. Access to some spaces is limited due to terrain, perceptions of safety and lack of infrastructure.
- Medway, in line with the rest of England, has an ageing population. This will mean more people have health needs, mobility issues and will be living with disability;
- Medway has significantly higher rates of obesity than the England average, 30% of adults in Medway are obese compared with the England average of 24.2%.
- Evidence shows that spending time in nature is also good for mental wellbeing. Medway has a range of good quality green spaces. Examples include Capstone Country Park, Great Lines Heritage Park and Riverside Country Park, these should be invested in for the future.
- Investing in Green and Blue Infrastructure will ensure that the health and wellbeing challenges faced in Medway can be better supported, especially if they are informed by local health data, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.



Needs, Opportunities and Priorities (GBI Framework, 2023):

1. Providing access to green infrastructure close to home and which is inclusive for all.

- 1.1. Plan strategically for a reduced car Medway – planning strategically to link public rights of way, cycle routes and greenspaces.
- 1.2. Ensure that greenspace is provided by new development so that everyone has access to greenspace close to home.
- 1.3. Maximise access to the riverside, with improved access to and along this route, as this has the potential to provide a level and attractive linear route for all abilities.
- 1.5. Make routes and spaces as accessible as possible.
- 1.6. Link town with countryside through improved routes and public rights of way.
- 1.8. Embed green and blue infrastructure into regeneration plans and cultural programmes and strategies.

2. Support people in taking healthy exercise.

- 2.1. Update and revise promoted routes using public rights of way in both urban and rural areas, providing more information on accessibility.
- 2.2. Improve routes which are used by Walking for Health.
- 2.3. Continue to support Walking for Health and the Medway Cycle Group.
- 2.5. Create more spaces to support community growing – allotment facilities, gardens, edible trails and green walls and educate and support residents in utilising these.

3. Initiate local evidence-informed research to understand the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups.

- 3.3. Establish interventions, such as green social prescribing initiatives, that will support people who do not use greenspace to begin using it.

Strategic Priorities (GBI Framework, 2023):

- Support increased active travel, to relieve congestion and air pollution and encourage healthy living through a strategic cycle network and walking routes.
- Support people in taking healthy exercise.
- Initiate local evidence informed research to understand the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups.
- Link people and nature.
- Ensure that greenspace provision keeps pace with population growth and provides for Medway's future residents.



- Prioritise improving access to greenspace and creating greener communities in areas of deprivation or where there is poor or unequal access.
- Providing access to green infrastructure close to home and which is inclusive for all.

Medway’s Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) (GBI Framework, 2023):

ROWIP recognises the importance of public rights of way for many people, including those with mobility impairments and health needs. The ROWIP sets out the priorities for improving rights of way to meet the needs of the public, now and in the future.

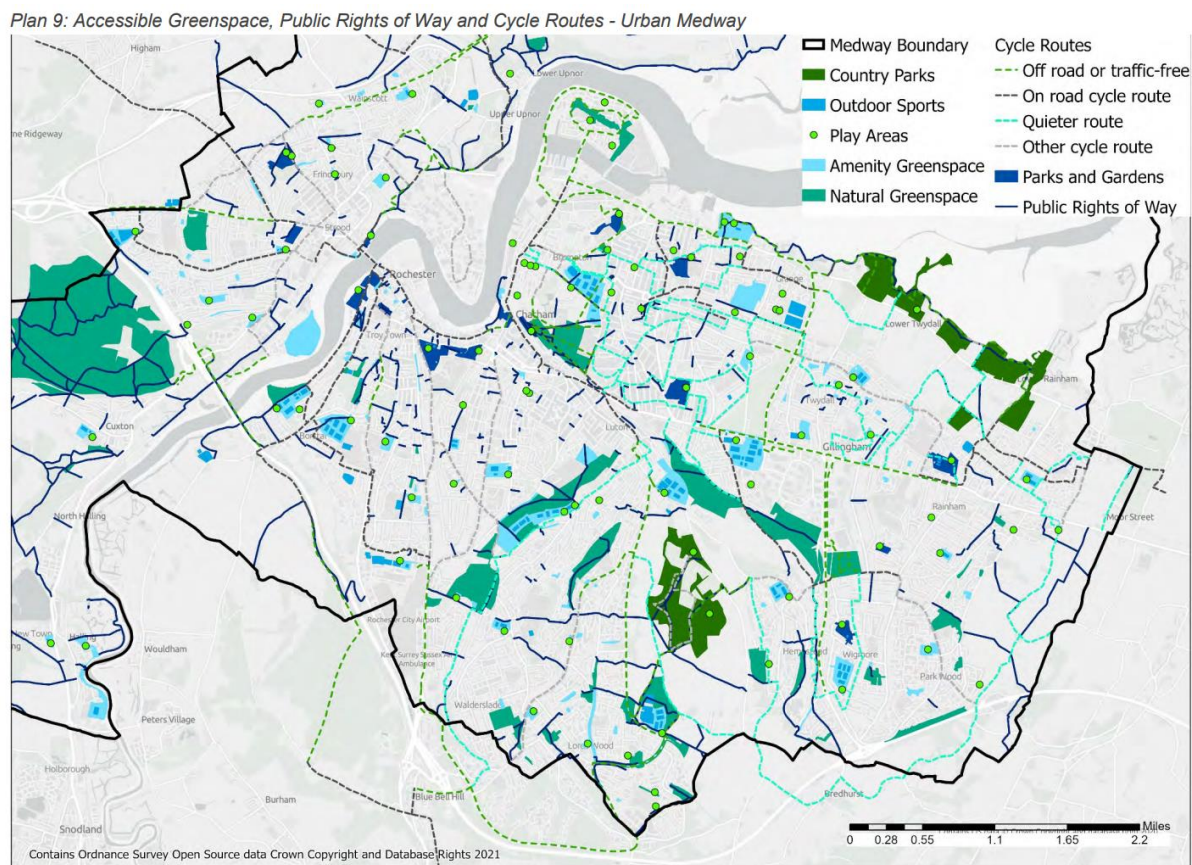
The main priorities of the ROWIP are to support health and wellbeing, improve accessibility, increase active travel and improve information:

- Protect the network and maintain it in the best condition possible, prioritising safety and areas of greatest need. This includes maintaining the network, clearing vegetation and keeping structures in good condition. Priority paths are those in and near urban areas, well-used paths and those linking town and countryside;
- Ensure that the network evolves to meet current and future needs and that connectivity for all users is improved;
- Ensure that access improvements are strategically planned to meet Medway’s needs including larger-scale strategic projects where necessary;
- Ensure that housing growth is positive and has no detrimental effect on public rights of way, and that improvements to public rights of way are secured through new development, including new multiuser, high quality routes and that urban and countryside areas are linked;
- Create and improve the connections of ‘higher status’ routes for equestrians and cyclists;
- Support improved health and wellbeing through improving accessibility and working with health walks and public health partners

Table 2: Provision of Accessible Greenspace - Hectares per 1,000 population²⁵

Sub Areas	Parks and Gardens ²⁶	Amenity	Play	Natural greenspace
Chatham	1.16	0.74	0.03	1.82
Gillingham	0.26	0.73	0.06	1.02
Rainham	2.16	0.21	0.04	0.78
Rochester	0.21	0.68	0.01	1.14
Strood and rural	0.13	1.23	0.05	9.6
Medway Total	0.71	0.78	0.04	3.25
Quantity Standard	0.4	0.74	0.08	1.35

(GBI Framework, 2023)



(GBI Framework, 2023)

3.9.4 Connection with Nature

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities (GBI Framework, 2023):

3. Link people and nature

- 3.1. Celebrate and raise awareness of Medway iconic species and habitats and the need to conserve them.
- 3.2. Deliver education and engagement events through Medway’s country parks and wider events and cultural programmes.
- 3.3. Get people involved in conservation activities and tree planting.
- 3.4. Support Friends groups and the Medway Urban Greenspaces Forum to further community engagement and action for nature and greenspace.
- 3.5. Promote the action of residents to improve wildlife through gardening for wildlife, create hedgehog highways and install swift boxes.
- 3.6. Incorporate nature into Medway-owned parks and amenity spaces so that people can experience nature close to where they live and create stepping stones for wildlife, for example through permanent wildlife areas such as wildflower meadows, or through initiatives such as ‘No Mow May’.
- 3.7. Designate more Local Nature Reserves to increase the hectare provision per 1,000 people.



3.8. Improve school grounds, including tree planting, growing spaces and wildflower gardens.

3.9.5 Open spaces and recreation (GBI Framework, 2023)

Levels of access to open space vary considerably across Medway. There are several areas of poor health where there is also low greenspace. Whilst many are clustered in urban areas, there are significant areas of poor health in rural areas where there is low access to multifunctional greenspace. Here, public rights of way perform an additional important function

Some areas in Medway are deficient in green space and linkages to greenspace (Gillingham South, Rochester East, Strood North, Rainham Central, Chatham Central, Rainham South, Walderslade and Princes Park).

Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats:

- There is a supply of accessible greenspace across urban Medway, although some areas lacking particular types of space;
- There is less greenspace in the densely populated areas of Gillingham South, Rochester East, Strood North, Rainham Central, Chatham Central, Rainham South, Walderslade and Princes Park;
- Due to the large urban population, many sites have high use. Some sites attract visitors from further afield than would be expected for a site of their size, indicating a high demand. This research was carried out before the Covid-19 pandemic, during which demand and use of greenspaces increased greatly;
- Pressures on greenspace will increase due to the increase in population. It is important that adequate greenspace, active travel links and upgrades to public rights of way area provided and that these are maintained to a high standard;
- There remains pressure on resources for greenspace and public rights of way maintenance due to ongoing strain on local government resources. Lack of maintenance, alongside obvious vandalism and neglect have been shown to deter people from using open spaces;
- The two country parks, Capstone and Riverside, attract high numbers of visitors from Medway and beyond. However, most people need to drive to these sites and they do not fulfil the need for local greenspace for most people;



Needs, Opportunities and Priorities:

1. Ensure that greenspace provision keeps pace with population growth and provides for Medway's future residents

- 1.1. Ensure that greenspace provision meets the standards set out in Medway's Local Plan and that development delivers greenspace provision to meet the needs of new residents (no net loss).
- 1.2. Manage greenspaces to ensure that they can accommodate high levels of visits, providing infrastructure and maintenance to meet high demand.
- 1.3. Seek new greenspace in areas where there is a deficit.
- 1.4. Where development is taking place, ensure that public rights of way are improved and, where possible, provide multi-user routes and new connections.
- 1.5. Invest in public rights of way, particularly those linking town and countryside, to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of people.
- 1.6. Plan strategically to ensure accessible greenspace, cycle routes, walkable spaces and public rights of way are connected, especially in areas of development, so that opportunities are not lost and gains are delivered.

2. Support increased active travel, to relieve congestion and air pollution and encourage healthy living through a strategic cycle network and walking routes.

- 2.1. Make civic spaces more accessible and welcoming using green infrastructure to encourage people to walk and cycle.
- 2.2. Integrate green infrastructure into new masterplanning in ways that promote active travel, recreation and leisure, and support community and social engagement.
- 2.3. Ensure urban public rights of way are more fully utilised, keeping them clear from flytipping, signing them and upgrading for cycling use where possible.
- 2.4. Implement more cycling routes.
- 2.5. Develop urban promoted walking trails.
- 2.6. Seek greenways and traffic-free routes where possible.

3. Prioritise improving access to greenspace and creating greener communities in areas of deprivation or where there is poor or unequal access.

- 3.1. Ensure improvements are carefully planned with local consultation to provide equitable and sustainable benefits and to understand the actual and potential local benefits of greenspace.
- 3.2. Ensure greenspace includes thoughtful and inclusive physical design, to deliver multiple outcomes to attract different population groups.



SECTION 4: DISTRICT PROJECTS TO NOTE

4.1 Medway Tree and Woodland Strategy (Natural Environment and Greenspaces)

A Medway Tree and Woodland Strategy has been drafted and is going through an approval process.

We're planting a new generation of trees. We planted over approximately 11,000 trees across Medway in 2020 to 2021 thanks to funding from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund. We continue to plant trees every winter, supported by volunteers from the local community including the council's friends groups who help to look after greenspaces across Medway.

We are undertaking a feasibility study to transform the old Cozenton Nursery site back into a tree nursery and environmental volunteering hub.

Medway Tree Fund has been set up

4.2 Medway Urban Greenspace Forum (Natural Environment and Greenspaces)

We have been working to create more wildlife habitats around Medway by reducing mowing frequency on a number of grass verges and in areas of our parks and greenspaces. This has been creating naturalised verges in Medway.

We support the work of friends of groups and volunteers and the Medway Urban Greenspace Forum working to protect and enhance our greenspaces.

4.3 Investment into Cycling (GBI Framework, 2023)

In the last five years Medway has invested £2.5 million in cycling. It has created on-road cycle paths that make it easier to cycle safely get to places like Gillingham Business Park, Strood Retail Park, Rainham High Street and St Mary's Island. There are also schemes prepared to improve existing shared cycle and pedestrian footways in the district.

4.4 Sustrans Cycle Network (GBI Framework, 2023)

Medway Council works closely with Sustrans to identify and develop improvements to Medway's cycle network and also works with Sustrans' volunteer rangers to act on reported issues. Medway also promotes Living Street's International Walk to School Month (October) and Sustrans Bike to School week.



4.5 National Trails (GBI Framework, 2023)

There is a section of the North Downs Way National Trail within Medway. The King Charles III England Coastal Path is also being developed through Medway. It is due to open by 2021 (Medway section opened 2023) and will also have the status of a national trail when complete. The 160 mile Saxon Shore Way trail, which follows the former Roman coastline through Kent to East Sussex, enters Medway near Cliffe, then passes across the Hoo Peninsula, before following the Medway estuary to Rochester and through Riverside Country Park. Medway Council has also produced shorter promoted routes.

4.6 Whose Hoo (Whose Hoo)

Whose Hoo is a heritage funded, landscape scale project focussing on the remarkable Hoo Peninsula. Situated in the southeast of England, the Hoo Peninsula is a hidden gem brimming with rich heritage and diverse habitats that many people throughout Medway are unaware of. The project is currently in the development phase, meaning we are still running pilot events and carrying out community consultation events, with the final bid for delivery phase funding being submitted in 2024. If the bid is successful, Whose Hoo will run from late 2024 until 2027.

Through engaging activities, educational programs, and community involvement, the Whose Hoo project aims to highlight the hidden treasures of the Hoo Peninsula, creating a stronger bond between people and their local environment. This is an exciting 3-year project that promises to reveal the wonders of this often-overlooked landscape while safeguarding its heritage and natural beauty for future generations to cherish and enjoy.

4.7 Medway Swale Estuary Partnership (MSEP) and the Living River Foundation (Natural Environment and Greenspaces)

Medway Council currently host the Medway Swale Estuary Partnership (MSEP), a not-for-profit organisation whose work is centred around the understanding, conservation, and promotion of the estuary's natural and cultural heritage. We have been working to support beach cleans along the river. Beach cleans are also run by MSEP and the Living River Foundation. We have analysed the River Medway to better understand which sections of the riverbanks are accessible as footpaths and cycleways.

4.8 Medway Food Partnership (Natural Environment and Greenspaces)

The Medway Food Partnership (launched in November 2021) is working with local businesses and the not-for-profit sector to: make sure everyone has access to



sustainable and healthy food, build the public's education and skills around healthy food and create healthier communities and better futures for our residents.

Our aim is to support healthy and happy communities whilst ensuring that we create an eco-friendly and sustainable economy.

By working in partnership with local organisation and businesses, we will create a food culture in Medway that is fair for all. We want to educate our young people about food, providing knowledge through childcare settings and schools. We want to help support a vibrant and sustainable local food economy.

To help us achieve our vision, we have created 5 subgroups:

- 1) Poverty, food security and emergency food support
- 2) Healthy food for all and education and skills
- 3) Climate change and the environment
- 4) Business and procurement
- 5) Oral health.

Each of these subgroups hold regular meetings, focusing on a particular area of the partnership to help drive forward action.

4.9 Partnerships (Natural Environment and Greenspaces)

Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT): Darland Banks and Nashenden Down

Darland Banks is the KWT's most diverse reserve. It is home to the largest population of man orchids in the country. Nashenden Down has been transformed from an arable field into a nature reserve hosting an impressive species list.

Plantlife: Ranscombe Farm Reserve

We are working closely with Plantlife to protect and manage Ranscombe Farm Reserve.

4.10 Greenspace regeneration projects (Natural Environment and Greenspaces)

Development of our greenspaces: Our aim is to work in partnership to protect and sustain the existing open spaces in Medway. We want to create new and improved open spaces to support Medway's growth and provide for guests and residents.

We aim to:

- make the best use of our valued open and green spaces
- identify how we can improve our existing parks and open spaces



- develop new partnerships and secure funding to make improvements in the future
- encourage more community involvement
- celebrate our open and green spaces.

We're currently working on a number of improvement projects.

- Town Hall Gardens
- Luton Millennium Green
- Jacksons Recreation Ground Improvements
- Esplanade Gardens improvements
- Horsted Valley access
- England Coastal Path Project (completed)
- Berengrave Local Nature Reserve
- Medway Open Space Study - required as supporting evidence for Medway's emerging Local Plan.

4.11 Nightingale Habitat (Nightingale)

Biodiversity Offsetting to compensate for nightingale habitat loss at Lodge Hill, Kent (2012)

4.12 Helping schools blossom with biodiversity (Schools)

Veolia and Medway are asking schools to help them deliver ecological transformation by applying for a Veolia Orchard. A Veolia Orchard is made up of five young fruit trees or, for those schools with more limited space, ten strawberry plants which can thrive in pots and bring nature and biodiversity to playgrounds, big or small.

In 2022, Veolia and their charity partners Groundwork, delivered 500 free fruit trees to 100 schools across the country. In 2023, we want to grow this network of orchards and support more schools on their environmental journeys. This initiative was launched in 2022 to foster a deeper connection with nature whilst empowering students with the skills to take care of their local environments.

Across the country, 100 schools are already benefiting from these powerful tools to educate pupils on the importance of planting trees and the biodiversity they support.

4.13 Bird Wise North Kent (Bird Wise)

The coastline of north Kent, between Gravesend and Whitstable, plays host to thousands of waders and wildfowl every winter. This beautiful landscape is enjoyed



by many people for a variety recreational purposes throughout the year. Bird Wise is a project that will raise awareness of the international significance of this landscape, and its importance to birds and other wildlife. Through education and engagement we aim to ensure that existing and new visitors to north Kent are able to enjoy the coast responsibly, and that these beautiful birds continue to winter here for generations to come



SECTION 5: SPECIFIC PRIORITIES WITHIN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

5.1 Available Plans

[Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Neighbourhood Plan \(May 2023\)](#)

5.2 Plans Under Development

High Halstow, Arches (Chatham), Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden, Frindsbury
Extra



SECTION 6: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AND REFERENCED

Document reference	Link
Local Plan, 2003	Medway Local Plan 2003.pdf
Reg 18, Local Plan, 2023	Document downloads - Medway Local Plan 2041 Medway Council
GBI Framework, 2021	Medway green and blue infrastructure framework Medway Council
Hoo Landscape and Sensitivity Study, 2019	Hoo Landscape Capacity and Sensitivity Study Medway Council
Natural Environment and Greenspaces	The natural environment and greenspaces Medway Council
Nightingale	Biodiversity Offsetting to compensate for nightingale habitat loss at Lodge Hill, Kent Medway Council
Schools	Helping schools blossom with biodiversity Medway Council
Habitat Regulations Assessment, 2023	Habitats Regulations Assessment of the Medway Local Plan 2023 Medway Council
Bird Wise	Bird Wise North Kent Wising Up to Bird Disturbance
SAMMS	Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy Medway Council
Sustainability Appraisal, 2023	Sustainability Appraisal of the Medway Local Plan - Scoping report 2023 Medway Council
Whose Hoo	Home - Whose Hoo