



SEVENOAKS DISTRICT 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 (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

Development options would all have an impact on both the Green Belt and the AONB (now referred to as National Landscape). All options include Green Belt release. Option one disperses growth across the AONB on medium-sized sites on the edge of three settlements (Sevenoaks, Westerham and West Kingsdown), whereas Option two concentrates growth in one location within the AONB (Pedham Place) and Option three is a combination of all the above elements.

This growing population and changing age structure presents a key challenge for the District. There is a requirement to provide 10,680 new homes, over the plan period up to 2040, in order to meet the needs of the growing population. The District has the lowest level of unemployment in Kent.

The new standard methodology housing figures have increased Sevenoaks housing need to 1149 pa. (Indicative Local Housing Need, 2024)

Sevenoaks District is a popular place to live, partly because of its proximity to London and accessibility to Europe. Strong road connections are provided by the strategic road network providing good links to the wider region. There are 14 train stations within the District, as well as others located just beyond the District border, many of which provide services into Central London in under an hour. The District is also well located for Gatwick and Heathrow airports, as well as the Channel Ports, Ashford and Ebbsfleet International stations.

1.2 Flood Risk (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

Historically, the main source of flooding in Sevenoaks District has been fluvial, with the most recent significant events occurring during Winter 2013/14, in Ightham in June 2016 and in Swanley in June 2019.

Identified in Policy W1, one source of flooding in Sevenoaks District is from surface water. The Level 1 SFRA identifies Edenbridge, Hever, Penshurst and Chipstead as the most notable locations at risk from surface water flooding

1.3 Water Stress (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

Water is a finite resource essential for human health and wellbeing, the economy and the wider environment and it needs to be managed carefully. Sevenoaks District lies in an area of serious water stress (as per the Environment Agency's classification) which is under growing pressure due to increased demand, pollution, poor land management, unsustainable abstraction and the impacts of climate change.



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

Unless otherwise stated, the following information in section 2 came from the Sevenoaks Regulation 18, Local Plan, 2023.

2.1 PROTECTING HABITATS

2.1.1 Site designations

Policy BW1- Safeguarding Places for Wildlife and Nature

Designated Sites

Designated sites of importance for biodiversity will be protected in line with the hierarchy set down in the NPPF. Locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity will be protected from development which would result in an adverse effect, directly or indirectly, to its nature or geological conservation interest. Locally designated sites include: • Local Wildlife Sites • Nature reserves including Local Nature Reserves, Roadside Nature Reserves and Kent Wildlife Trust Reserve • Regionally Important Geological Sites The enhancement of biodiversity through the creation, enhancement, extension and management of sites locally will be supported.

2.1.2 Nationally designated sites

Includes 42 Sites of Special Scientific Interest

National Landscapes (Formerly known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty-AONB)

The two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have their own Management Plans, which outline the key components, special characteristics and qualities which together make up their natural beauty.

More than 60% of the District lies within the Kent Downs or High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

Kent Downs National Landscape:

In the Kent Downs these comprise its dramatic landform and views, biodiversity-rich habitats, farmed landscape, woodland and trees, its historic and cultural heritage, heritage coasts, geology and natural resources and tranquillity and remoteness, including dark skies.



High Weald National Landscape:

Within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, its Management Plan identifies five defining components of character comprising a deeply incised, ridged and faulted landform, dispersed historic settlements, a dense network of historic routeways, an abundance of woodland and small, irregular fields bounded by hedgerows and woods and areas of lowland heath.

POLICY NE1- Landscape and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The landscape character of the District's countryside will be conserved and, where possible, enhanced. All proposals should have regard to the Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment 2017 and where applicable, any local landscape character assessment. The Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and their settings will be given the highest level of protection. Proposals within or affecting the setting of the AONBs should conserve and enhance their landscape and natural beauty, having regard to the relevant Management Plan, associated supporting guidance, documents and position statements. Development within the AONBs should be landscape-led and its scale, layout and design, including use of materials and colours, should be appropriate, both individually and cumulatively, having regard to the historic pattern and character of development. Proposals within the setting of the AONBs should avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated area, including in relation to views into or out from the designated area, individually or cumulatively.

Proposals within the AONB will be assessed against the following criteria:

- Proposals within or relating to a damaged landscape and/or feature should seek to improve the landscape and/or feature.*
- Proposals should have regard to and where appropriate and applicable, protect, conserve and/or restore locally distinctive patterns and species composition of natural features e.g. hedgerows.*
- Proposals should have regard to and where appropriate and applicable, protect, conserve, and/or restore the locally distinctive character of settlements, their settings and the relationship between built development and the natural landscape.*
- Proposals should protect visually sensitive skylines and geological and topographical features.*
- Proposals should have regard to and protect the landscape's cultural, historic and heritage value.*
- Proposals should protect important views and visual amenity.*
- Proposals should protect tranquillity and remoteness, by avoiding light and noise pollution.*

Enhancements may include but are not limited to:

- The removal or improvement of currently detrimental buildings or features;*
- Obscuring or distracting from negative features such as pylons, substations and major roads;*



- *Supporting climate mitigation and resilience;*
 - *Restoring historic features and replacing existing materials with more appropriate and local materials;*
 - *Supporting the local economy by using local materials, including features reliant on local materials such as wood for biomass boilers, supporting new rural business etc.;*
 - *Restoring historic settlement patterns, historic field patterns or historic routeways;*
 - *Allowing new appropriate public access;*
 - *Restoring native planting and natural features including trees, hedgerows, meadows and grassland;*
 - *Improving tranquillity by reducing the existing impact of noise and lighting*
- Major development proposals within the AONBs will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances and where it is demonstrated they are in the public interest. Proposals within the AONBs or their settings, should be informed by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment or Landscape and Visual Appraisal as appropriate.*

Metropolitan Green Belt:

Despite adjoining the outer edge of London, it is predominantly rural with 93% of the District designated as Green Belt. (Local Plan, 2011)

2.1.3 Locally designated sites

Includes:

63 Local Wildlife Sites

19 nature reserves, comprising Local Nature Reserves, Roadside Nature Reserves and Kent Wildlife Trust Reserves.

2.1.4 Green Infrastructure (ADMP, 2015)

The following key Core Strategy Objectives are relevant to Green Infrastructure and Open Spaces:

- To safeguard and maintain the openness of the Green Belt and the distinctive character and biodiversity of the district's landscapes, particularly in the Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, whilst facilitating the economic and social well-being of these areas including the diversification of the rural economy by adopting a positive approach to small scale economic development proposals which re-use existing buildings.



- To ensure that a new development is designed to a high quality and where possible makes a positive contribution to the distinctive character of the area in which it is situated.
- To safeguard existing open space, sport and recreational facilities that meet community needs and improve provision where necessary;
- To maintain and enhance the biodiversity of the District.

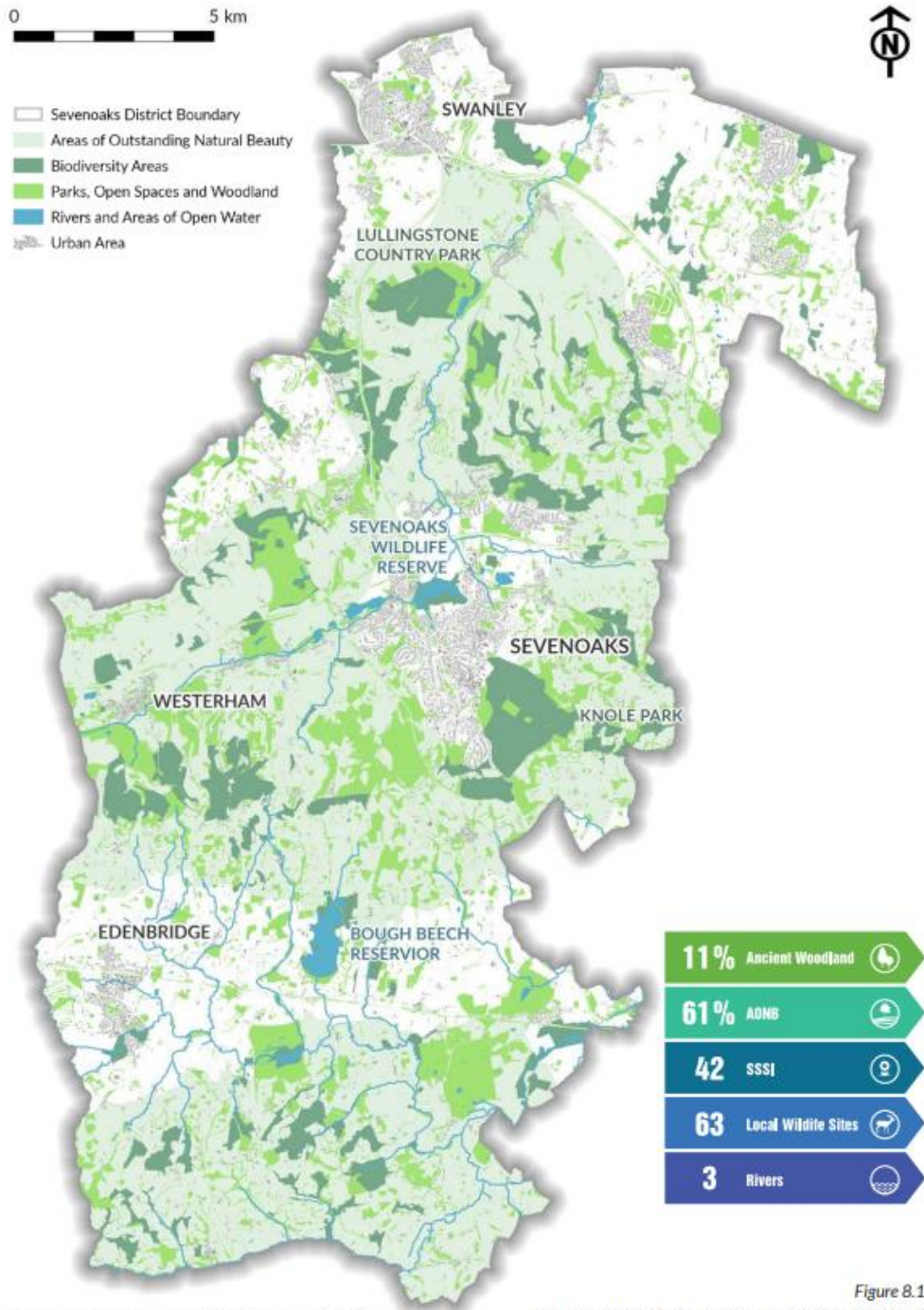
Sevenoaks District's Green Infrastructure Network:

In the District, the Green Infrastructure Network includes nationally designated areas such as:

- Land of biodiversity value, including Biodiversity Opportunity Areas
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest, (SSSIs)
- Registered Historic parks and gardens
- Land designated under The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) including Common Land and Public Rights of Way (PROW)
- Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and

Locally recognised sites such as:

- Local Wildlife Sites, identified by the Kent Wildlife Trust
- Kent Wildlife Trust Reserves
- Local Nature Reserves
- Roadside Nature Reserves
- Ancient woodlands
- Country Parks
- Tree Preservation Orders
- River corridors and open bodies of water
- Cycle routes
- Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens
- Amenity Greenspace
- Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space
- Provision for Children and Young People
- Outdoor Sports Facilities
- Allotments and Community Gardens
- Green Corridors
- Cemeteries and Churchyards



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Figure 8.1
 Key Natural Environment Features of Sevenoaks District



2.1.5 Ancient Woodland

There are many areas of woodland, much of which is designated as Ancient Woodland. Parts of the District afford impressive views over Kent and the South East, particularly from the North Downs and the Greensand Ridge.

11% of the District is covered in irreplaceable Ancient Woodland (compared with the UK average of 2%)

Ashdown Forest:

There are four internationally important sites within 10km of the boundary of the District, the most significant of which is Ashdown Forest which lies approximately 6km south of the District boundary. It is internationally important for nature conservation, reflected in its designation as a Special Protection Area (SPA), due to the presence of breeding Nightjars and Dartford Warblers and as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), primarily due to heathland habitats (its Northern Atlantic wet heaths and European dry heaths) and the presence of Great Crested Newts. These European designations cover around 3,000ha. Ashdown Forest is also designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The District's nearest settlement to Ashdown Forest is Edenbridge, which is approximately 12km from the site. However, whilst Ashdown Forest lies entirely within Wealden district, development in surrounding authority areas is still capable of having an impact as a result of:

- recreational pressure arising from population growth, which can affect the SPA;
- increases in vehicle emissions arising from vehicles using roads that run through and adjacent to the forest, which can affect the SAC

Mitigation measures developed to address recreational impacts upon Ashdown Forest comprise Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) and Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG). Visitor surveys undertaken in 2009 and 2016 have confirmed that the greatest impact arises from within a 7km zone of the forest, commonly referred to as the 'zone of influence'.

However, despite only a very small portion of our District falling within this zone and a small percentage of visitors coming from Sevenoaks, we are members of the Ashdown Forest Officer Working Group (SAMMS Partnership) and have signed a Recreational Pressure Statement of Common Ground with 5 other local authorities and Natural England to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to joint-working on this important issue. We will continue to work proactively with Natural England, neighbouring authorities and any other relevant bodies to understand and address the impact of the Local Plan on Ashdown Forest.

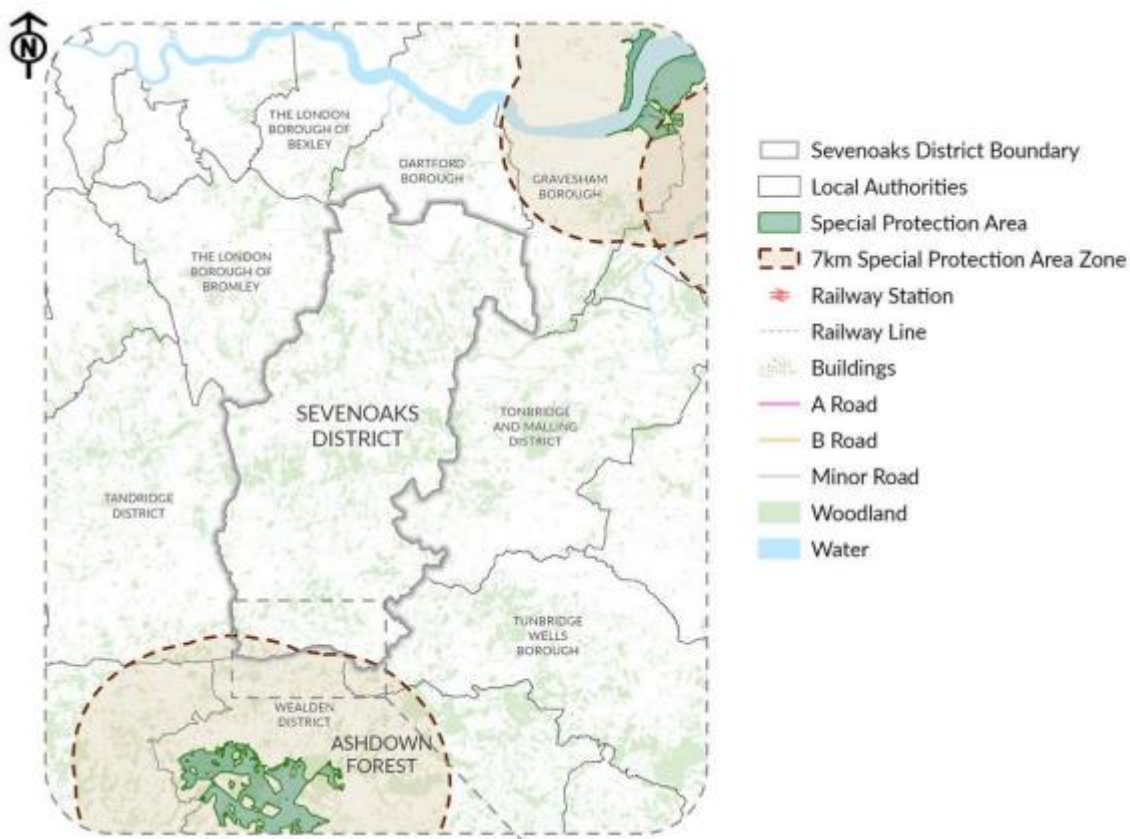
Mitigation of recreational pressure also includes Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace but as there are no proposed site allocations within the 7km zone in the

District, a strategic Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is unlikely to be feasible but we will explore options for alternative provision.

POLICY AF1: Ashdown Forest

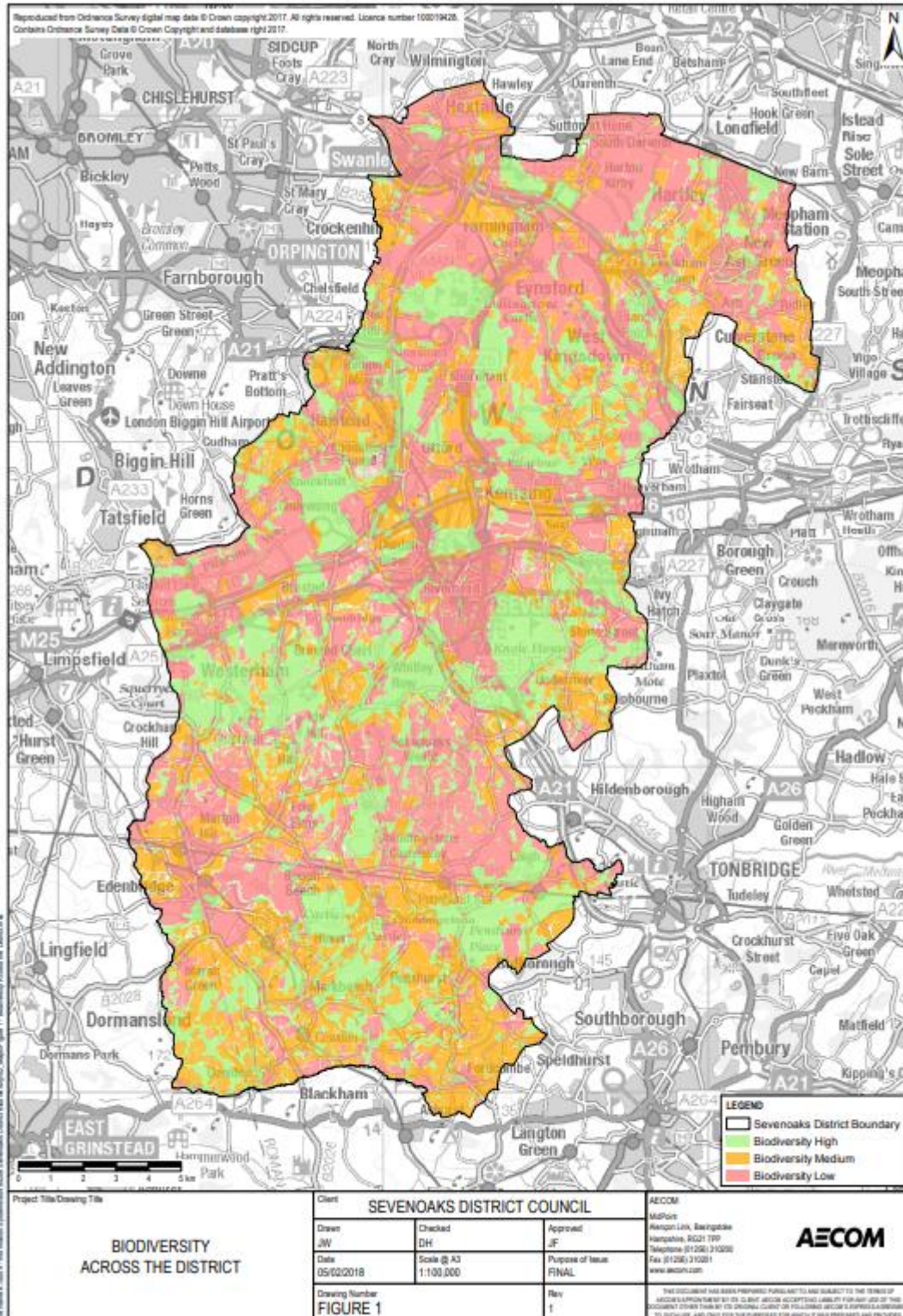
All residential development resulting in a net increase in dwellings within the 7km zone of influence (see map) will be required to address visitor impact on Ashdown Forest, in line with the SAMM strategy, by means of a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMMs) contribution. and through provision of or contributions towards Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace. If any major development is adjacent or close to the zone, applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis to determine any additional mitigation requirements.

Any proposals considered likely to have a significant adverse effect on the Ashdown Forest Special Protection Area (SPA) will not normally be permitted.





2.1.6 Biodiversity (Biodiversity Analysis, 2018)



2.1.7 Blue Infrastructure

Historically, the main source of flooding in Sevenoaks District has been fluvial, with the most recent significant events occurring during Winter 2013/14, in Ightham in June 2016 and in Swanley in June 2019. The principal watercourses running through the District are the River Darent and River Eden (which is a major tributary of the River Medway), but there are several connected streams and brooks too. There are a number of other potential sources of flooding in the District, including from surface water, groundwater, reservoirs and sewers. Climate change is likely to result in more frequent and intense periods of rainfall which increase these risks.

Figure 4.2 shows the areas of the District most at risk from fluvial flooding. It is essential that new development across the District avoids these, and areas at risk from other sources of flooding, in the initial instance. Where development is demonstrated as being necessary in such areas, in accordance with the tests set out in national policy, it must be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere. Policy W1 sets out how this must be demonstrated through the use of Flood Risk Assessments and how opportunities should be taken to reduce flood risk and make environmental improvements where possible.

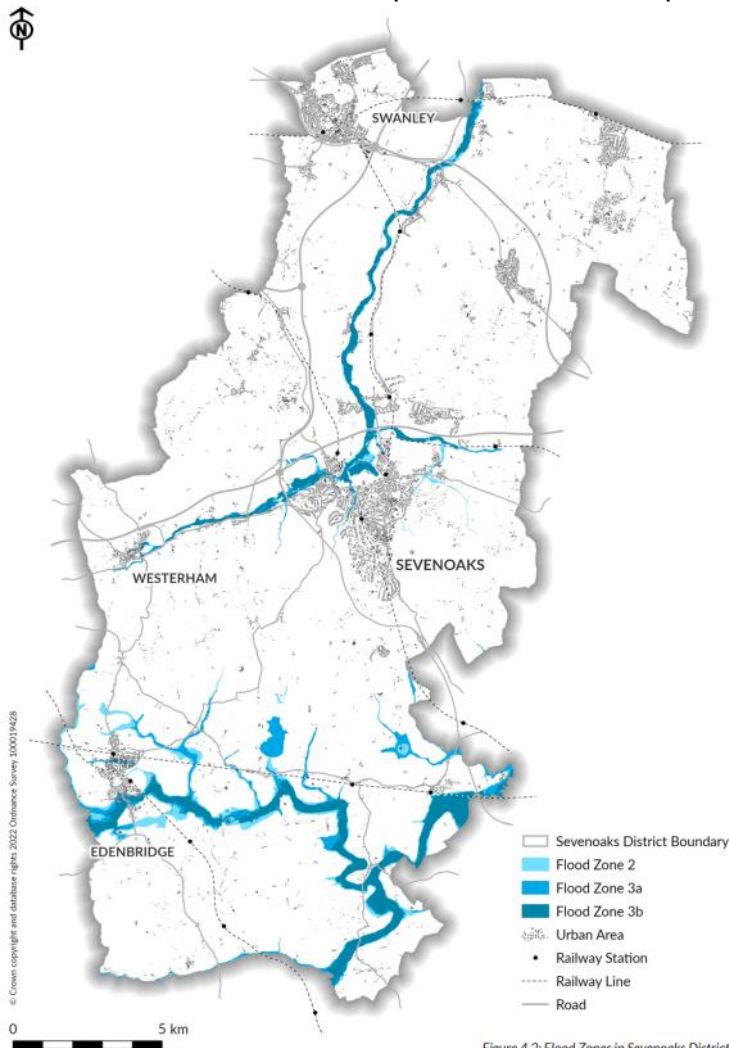


Figure 4.2: Flood Zones in Sevenoaks District



Policy W1- Flood Risk

This policy seeks to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk from flooding and ensure that where development is necessary in such areas, it is made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.

Development will only be permitted where:

- It can be demonstrated that the site is safe from all sources of flooding, now and for the lifetime of the development, taking into account the effects of climate change; and*

- It does not materially displace flood water or increase flood risk elsewhere.*

All proposals for major development will also require the submission of a suitable surface water drainage strategy. Flood protection and mitigation measures, including sustainable drainage systems, should be multi-functional where possible and maximise opportunities for landscape, biodiversity and green blue infrastructure improvements. Flood mitigation measures shall be installed and maintained in perpetuity at developers' own expense or put into a management company to ensure their long-term retention, maintenance and management. The provision of any other flood protection and resilience measures required will be informed by the Flood Risk Assessment.

2.1.7 Protection from the negative impacts of development and infrastructure

In order to conserve and enhance our blue green infrastructure, planning applications should identify existing blue green infrastructure, both on-site and in close proximity, and should protect and enhance it, maximising opportunities for new provision, where possible. This can be incorporated through the proposed landscaping scheme and other measures and can help deliver biodiversity net gain.

Continued protection of natural resources:

Our District's valuable natural and historic built environment makes an important contribution to the quality of life of our residents and all who visit.

WE WILL:

OB15: Ensure the District retains a high quality natural environment over the period of the Local Plan including delivering biodiversity net gain on new development.

OB16: Continue to support development that protects and enhances the District's historic environment and ensures that it can be enjoyed by future generations.

Policy W2: Sustainable Drainage

This policy seeks to ensure that all development includes adequate drainage provision for the disposal of surface water from all sources to prevent adverse impacts on water quality and reduce flood risk.

All development must include adequate drainage provision for the disposal of surface water from all sources, accounting for the latest climate change predictions. This should be an integral part of the design process and be in



the form of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) unless demonstrated to be inappropriate.

SuDS should be designed to have multifunctional benefits, using a mixture of built and nature-based solutions to support other relevant policies relating to design, water management, biodiversity, blue green infrastructure, leisure, amenity and the landscape.

Proposals must demonstrate that clear arrangements have been established for the operation and maintenance of the SuDS for the lifetime of the development.

All drainage schemes must deliver a net reduction in runoff rates, mimic natural drainage flows as closely as possible and manage surface water as close to the source as possible.

All drainage schemes must follow the drainage hierarchy in the following order:

- 1. Discharge into the ground, unless this would lead to the deterioration of groundwater quality in Source Protection Zones or vulnerability zones in accordance with Policy W3.*
- 2. Discharge into a surface water body.*
- 3. Discharge into a surface water sewer, highway drain or other drainage system. Surface water will not be permitted to enter the foul water system.*

Policy W3: Water Management, Stress and Efficiency

This policy seeks to ensure that all development recognises that Sevenoaks District is in an area of serious water stress and includes water management measures.

All development must minimise the use of mains water, make the most efficient use of water and incorporate water saving measures and technologies such as rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling.

All residential development must be built to ensure that wholesome water consumption is not greater than 110 litres per person per day.

Development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it would not result in the deterioration of the quantity or quality of ground and surface water resources. Where a site is within a groundwater Source Protection Zone, vulnerability zone, or where a significant adverse impact is likely, an appropriate site investigation and risk assessment will be required in consultation with the Environment Agency.

All development must, where appropriate, incorporate measures to protect and restore the physical state, biodiversity and natural function of watercourses, for example by using clear spanning bridges where crossing points are necessary to allow wildlife to continue to utilise the river corridor

Policy EN1 - Design Principles (ADMP, 2015)

Proposals which would create high quality design and meet the following criteria will be permitted:



- a) the form of the proposed development would respond to the scale, height, materials and site coverage of the area;*
- b) the layout of the proposed development would respect the topography and character of the site and the surrounding area and sensitively incorporate natural features such as trees, hedges and ponds within the site;*
- c) the proposal would not result in the loss of buildings, open spaces or green infrastructure that would have an unacceptable impact on the character of the area;*
- d) the proposal would ensure satisfactory means of access for vehicles and pedestrians and provide adequate parking and refuse facilities;*
- e) the proposal would incorporate, within the design opportunities for increasing biodiversity potential, where possible, and retaining and enhancing Green Infrastructure features including sustainable drainage systems. Proposals that affect a site's existing biodiversity and Green Infrastructure should be designed in a way that avoids or mitigates any potential harm;*
- f) the design of new buildings and the layout of spaces, including footways, car and cycle parking areas, would be permeable and provide connectivity with neighbouring areas;*
- g) new development would be inclusive and where appropriate make satisfactory provision for the safe and easy access of those with disabilities; and*
- h) the design of new developments would result in the creation of a safe and secure environment and incorporate adequate security measures and features to deter crime, fear of crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. Where appropriate, new developments should include infrastructure that meets modern communication and technology needs and restricts the need for future retrofitting. Such infrastructure should include Broadband, high speed internet cabling, digital TV cabling and provision of a power supply that would support green technology initiatives such as in home electric car charging points.*

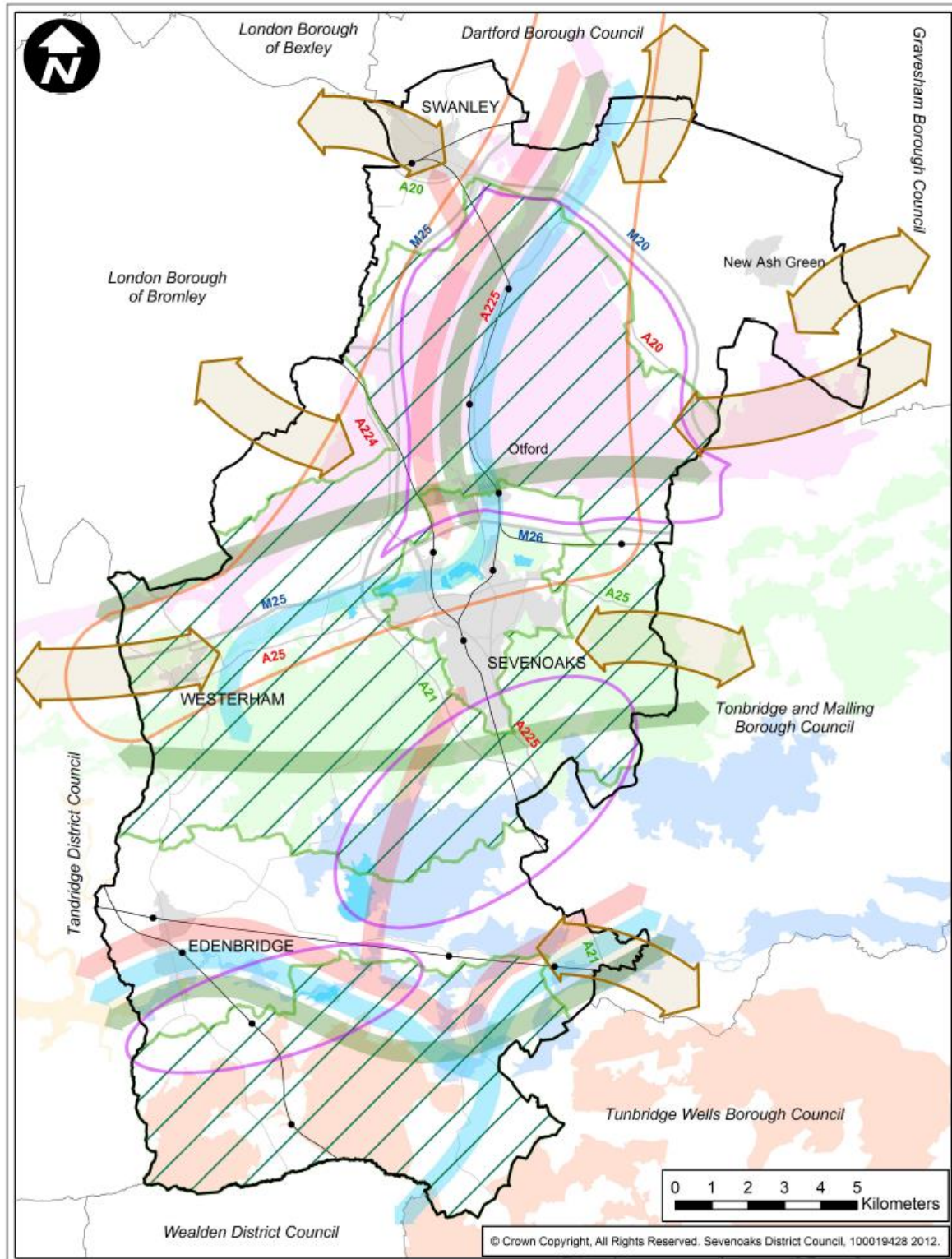
Subject to the above considerations development should make efficient use of the land on which it is proposed.

Where appropriate, proposals should include details and strategies for the effective management and maintenance of sites following their completion.

2.2 RESTORING AND ENHANCING HABITATS












2.2.1 Green Infrastructure

Green Infrastructure Opportunities Across Sevenoaks District (ADMP,2015)





Legend

-  Cycling Route Opportunities
 - improvements/extensions to existing routes
 - creation of new routes
 -  Walking Route Opportunities
 - improvements to existing routes
 - creation of new connections
 -  Rivers and Areas of Open Water
 - habitat and biodiversity improvements
 - removal of invasive species
 -  Opportunities for Cross Boundary Linkages
 -  Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
 - North Downs AONB (North)
 - High Weald AONB (South)
 -  Landscape Scale project areas
 -  Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme
- ### Biodiversity Opportunity Areas
-  Central North Downs
 -  Greensand Heaths & Commons
 -  High Weald
 -  Medway & Low Weald Greensand & Gault

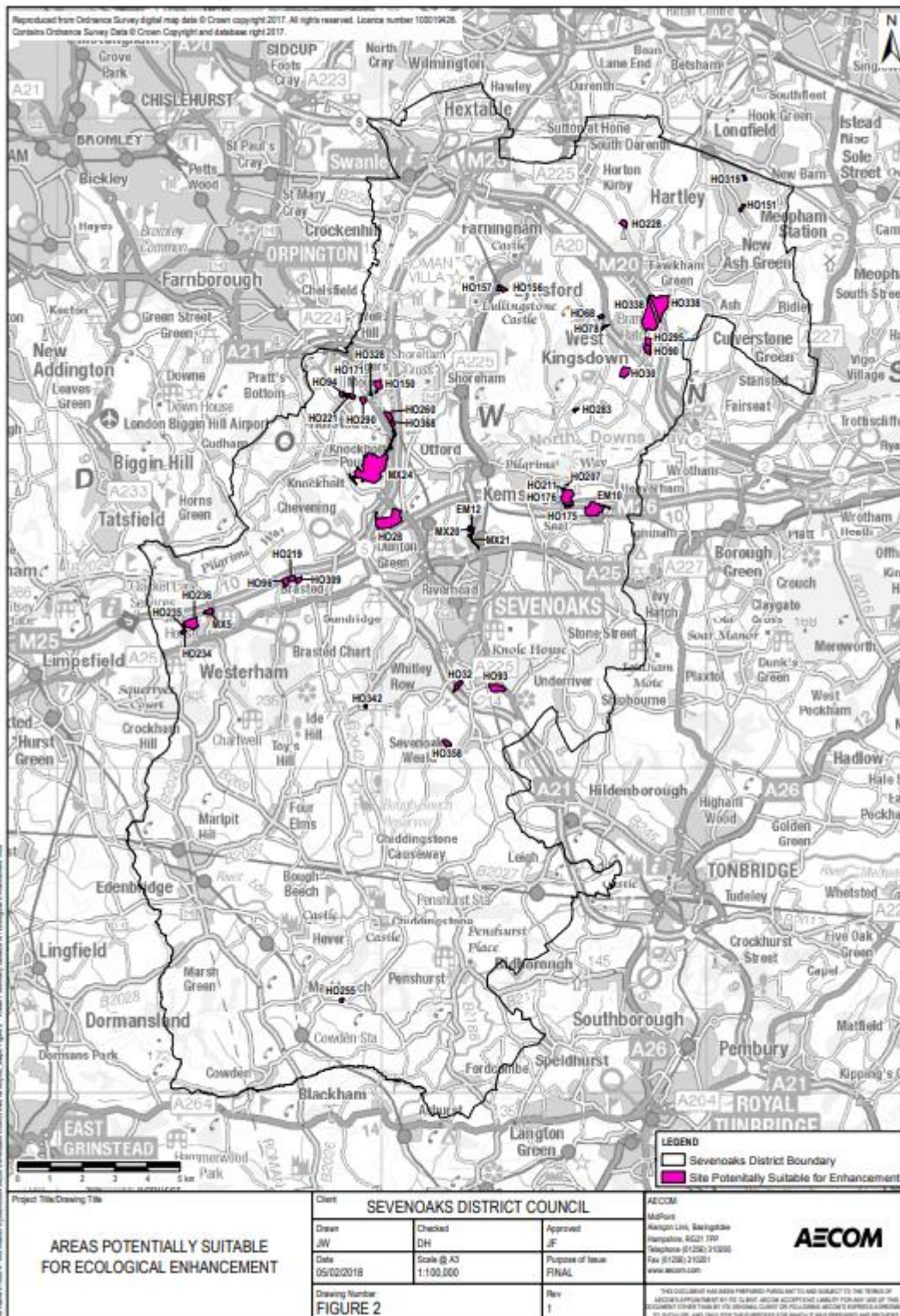
The definition of the Green Infrastructure Network has allowed opportunities to be identified which enhance and extend the network, including improving cross boundary linkages, which could be implemented during the plan period.

- Landscapes and Countryside – e.g. Kent Orchards Project
- Habitats and Biodiversity - e.g. NWKCP Living Churchyards Project
- Cross Boundary Linkages – e.g. Extension of the Tonbridge to Penshurst Cycle Route
- Linkages within Sevenoaks District – e.g. Enhancement along the Darent Valley
- River Corridors and Areas of Open Water – e.g. Removal of Invasive Plant Species

2.2.2 Biodiversity (Biodiversity Analysis, 2018)

Further Analysis for Areas Suitable for Ecological Enhancement It is recommended that, once further survey work has been completed, further analysis to identify areas for ecological enhancement should be undertaken. This analysis should follow the principles of “Making Space for Nature” (Lawton et al, 2010.), with the aims of creating a resilient ecological network within the District that is “bigger, better and joined”. Further in-depth analysis would focus on habitat types (i.e. woodland and grassland), within a potential site and its surrounding area, the distance of sites from known high biodiversity value habitats and potential cost of enhancement. Within GIS, it would be possible to model potential enhancement with respect to

- Increasing connectivity between areas of high-value habitat through habitat creation;
- Providing ecosystem services such as flood alleviation/mitigation; and
- Creating new areas of public open space with biodiversity value.



Ecological Enhancement Site Prioritisation Table found in Appendix A- pg 14-15 of the Biodiversity Analysis 2018 document.



2.2.3 Within development and infrastructure

The justification for a 20% BNG target in Kent is supported by a Kent wide viability study. A 20% target for Sevenoaks District is still under consideration and will be further tested through viability evidence.

Until the LNRS is published, where off-site BNG is required, it should be directed to areas of noted conservation value and/ or existing known areas where there are the greatest opportunities for habitat enhancement, restoration and recreation within the District e.g. Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and the Darent Valley Landscape Recovery Project (see case study). Interim Strategic Significance Guidance has been developed to provide guidance until the LNRS has been published, at which point the LNRS will supersede the interim guidance.

POLICY BW2- Biodiversity in New Development

All proposals for new development (qualifying development), which are not exempted through regulations, must provide 20% biodiversity net gain.

Proposals must:

- Demonstrate the pre-development biodiversity value of the site and the post-development biodiversity value of the proposal and it must be measured using the latest version of the statutory biodiversity metric.*
- Demonstrate that the mitigation hierarchy (avoid, mitigate, compensate) as set out in the NPPF has been strictly applied.*
- Provide net gain on or adjacent to the application site, wherever possible.*
- Where off-site provision is proposed, clearly demonstrate and justify why it is not possible to provide all or even some of the biodiversity net gain on or adjacent to the application site.*
- Provide off-site biodiversity net gain units locally within Sevenoaks District and they should be delivered within or provide connections between areas of noted conservation value such as designated sites, priority habitats, Local Wildlife Sites, Nature Reserves and irreplaceable habitats.*

Regard should be had to the:

1. Interim Strategic Significance guidance (until the LNRS for Kent is published)

2. Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent (once published)

- Use biodiversity credits from Natural England, or successors, as a last resort and it should be demonstrated why on-site and/or off-site biodiversity units cannot be secured.*

A management and monitoring plan must be submitted and it must be demonstrated that the proposed creation, enhancement or restoration of habitat can be secured for a minimum of 30 years. An appropriate funding mechanism will need to be secured to include funding for the Council to cover the costs of long-term monitoring, where applicable.



Proposals for new development which are exempt under the regulations should seek to minimise their impact on biodiversity. Opportunities for enhancement will be sought and achievement of a measurable net gain in biodiversity encouraged.

Natural England's Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide sets out the building blocks, a selection of which can be used, as appropriate, to provide BGI infrastructure. These include features such as sustainable drainage systems, green and blue roofs, green walls, rain gardens, swales, features for species and trees in hard landscapes.

Policy BW1 - Safeguarding Places for Wildlife and Nature

Blue Green Infrastructure

The District's Blue Green Infrastructure (BGI) network will be protected. Proposals which maintain, restore and enhance the Blue Green Infrastructure network will be supported. Proposals for major development will be expected to identify, as a baseline, existing Blue Green Infrastructure features and its condition, on-site, off-site and links with the BGI network. Blue green infrastructure features include, but are not limited to:

- *Open space*
- *Green roofs and walls*
- *Trees, hedges and hedgerows, including street trees*
- *Sustainable drainage systems*
- *Ponds, ditches and watercourses*
- *Features for species e.g. bird boxes or nests*

Development proposals on sites containing existing Blue Green Infrastructure will be expected to protect, retain and enhance existing blue and green infrastructure features.

All development proposals are expected to maximise opportunities for the provision of new or additional BGI.

Development proposals will be supported where the BGI has been fully considered, has taken account of the existing network, is suitable for the location, addressing local need, and includes new connections to the existing network, where possible and has had regard to and responded to appropriate and applicable strategies and evidence.

Any BGI should be multi-functional and supporting documentation should set out what functions it provides.

Proposals will be expected to include details demonstrating how it will be maintained and managed, including how it will be funded, for the life of the development.



Schemes and projects which would enhance the blue green infrastructure network will be supported.

2.3 HABITAT CREATION

2.3.1 Within development and infrastructure (ADMP, 2015)

GI also plays an important role in helping development adapt to climate change. Climate change is expected to cause increased winter rainfall and summer temperatures across the South East. GI can help reduce surface water runoff, provide natural shading, create important areas for species migration and help to regulate the temperature of buildings. Sustainable drainage systems should be included as part of on site green infrastructure to reduce the risk of surface water flooding. Any systems should have appropriate management arrangements.

GI can be incorporated into new development in a wide variety of ways. The nature and scale of the GI will depend on the type of development proposed and the existing character of the site and its surroundings. A range of GI should be explored in order to determine what is most appropriate for the site.

Examples include:

- Incorporating Living Roofs
- Use of sustainable drainage systems
- Connecting with existing PROW network
- Using plants and trees which extend existing habitats around site boundaries
- Using GI which reflects the special character of the landscape or Biodiversity Opportunity Area
- Formal and informal recreational GI (including the provision for children and young people where appropriate)

Occupiers of new development can increase the pressure on the GI Network particularly on open space and recreation facilities. The Council will require the provision of new or enhanced GI if development is proposed in areas where there is a deficiency in existing provision or in situations where the development itself would result in a deficiency in provision

Policy GI 1 – Green Infrastructure and New Development

Proposals will be permitted where opportunities for provision of additional Green Infrastructure have been fully considered and would be provided where justified by the character of the area or the need for open space.

Any open spaces provided as part of new development should, wherever practical and appropriate, be located where they can provide a safe link for the population and connectivity for biodiversity with the existing features of the Green Infrastructure Network.



Additional green infrastructure and habitat restoration and/or re-creation, should be provided in accordance with the appropriate guidance contained in the Kent Design Guide and the Sevenoaks Countryside Assessment SPD and should take account of the guidance within the AONB Management Plans and associated guidance where appropriate.

2.4 SPECIES SPECIFIC

2.4.1 Ashdown Forest SSSI

Presence of breeding Nightjars, Dartford Warblers and Great Crested Newts.

SECTION 3: WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

3.1 GOAL 2: AIR QUALITY (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

Vehicle emissions are the main contributor to poor air quality in the District and there is a high dependency on private vehicles to make journeys to key locations within, and outside of, the District (e.g. stations, shops and community facilities). This has led to a number of hot spots in Sevenoaks, Swanley and other smaller settlements along the A25, where air quality is particularly poor.

The District currently has 4 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), all of which have been declared in relation to traffic emissions.

Measures to improve air quality include reducing the need to travel, providing electric vehicle charging points and promoting alternative modes of transport, including cycling. Secondary effects of these measures can also improve general health and wellbeing.

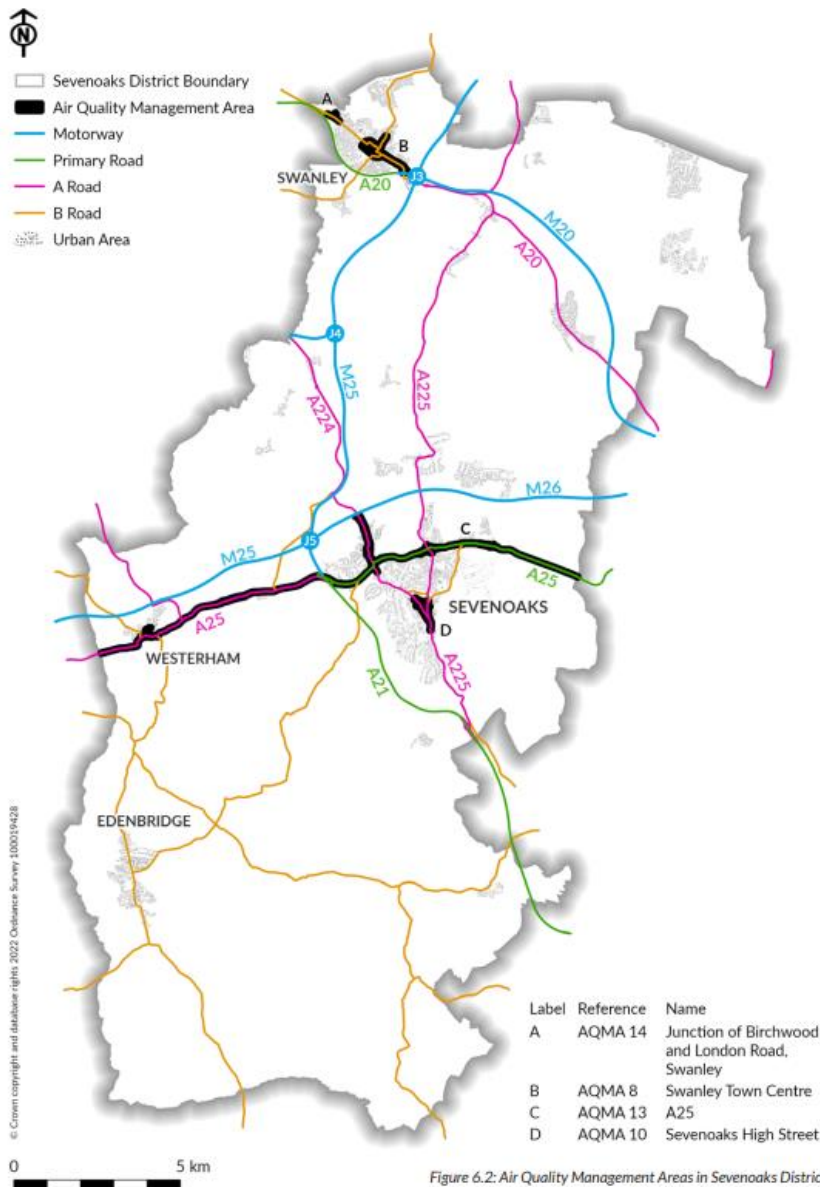


Figure 6.2: Air Quality Management Areas in Sevenoaks District



Policy AQ1: Air Quality

New development should result in a positive or neutral impact on air quality for new residents, the existing surrounding area and other areas connected to the development. It is expected that proposals should:

- Ensure that onsite and offsite air quality issues are included when assessing the environmental impact of proposals;*
- Ensure that development which may have an adverse impact on air quality will be required to incorporate measures to reduce the impact to an acceptable level;*
- Ensure that suitable onsite and offsite mitigation measures are incorporated into the scheme, including a financial contribution to strategic air quality improvement measures, if appropriate, such that future air quality is either improved or sustained at a level that would be achieved without the development; and*
- Require design and location of new development to take account of the need to improve air quality, in accordance with the District's Air Quality Action Plan*

An Air Quality Impact Assessment (AQIA) will be required for the following new developments:

- All major housing developments of 10 units or more;*
- All development proposed within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA); and/or*
- The development site is within 50 metres of a major road or heavily trafficked route. Schemes where unacceptable impacts cannot be overcome by mitigation will be refused*

3.2 GOAL 3: CLEAN AND PLENTIFUL WATER (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

Policy W3: Water Management, Stress and Efficiency

This policy seeks to ensure that all development recognises that Sevenoaks District is in an area of serious water stress and includes water management measures.

All development must minimise the use of mains water, make the most efficient use of water and incorporate water saving measures and technologies such as rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling.

All residential development must be built to ensure that wholesome water consumption is not greater than 110 litres per person per day.

Development will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that it would not result in the deterioration of the quantity or quality of ground and surface water resources. Where a site is within a groundwater Source Protection



Zone, vulnerability zone, or where a significant adverse impact is likely, an appropriate site investigation and risk assessment will be required in consultation with the Environment Agency.

All development must, where appropriate, incorporate measures to protect and restore the physical state, biodiversity and natural function of watercourses, for example by using clear spanning bridges where crossing points are necessary to allow wildlife to continue to utilise the river corridor

3.3 GOAL 4: MANAGING EXPOSURE TO CHEMICALS AND PESTICIDES

3.4 GOAL 5: MAXIMISE OUR RESOURCES, MINIMISE OUR WASTE

3.5 GOAL 6: USING RESOURCES FROM NATURE SUSTAINABLY

3.6 GOAL 7: MITIGATING AND ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Visions and Aspirations (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023):

V2. Achievement of the Council's Climate Change aspirations:

Significantly reducing carbon emissions and adapting to a changing climate.

WE WILL:

OB3: Ensure that tackling the challenges of climate change strongly influences all development taking place in the District.

OB4: Provide sufficient flexibility in policies to implement changing national standards, best practice and evidence base updates that will inevitably occur over the plan period.

OB5: Empower residents to make lifestyle choices that positively contribute to reducing carbon emissions.

Climate Change Strategy (2024):

Climate Change Priorities:

5. The Natural Environment

We want to preserve and strengthen the protection and climate benefits provided by the natural environment, and demonstrate that we are adapting in a timely and appropriate way to the changing climate



Our aims:

- Recover nature and strengthen natural resilience
- Improve biodiversity
- Increase natural carbon capture / storage

How are we going to get there?

- Work with partners including Kent Wildlife Trust and KCC to deliver enhanced biodiversity and carbon capture / storage
- Plant more trees to help offset carbon emissions

Key measure of success:

- Work with our partners to explore and implement a natural capital and biodiversity net gain project

Policy CC1 - Mitigating and Adapting to the Impacts of Climate Change (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

This policy seeks to ensure that all development in the District mitigates and adapts to impacts of climate change by:

- *Recognising and supporting the Council's commitment to reducing carbon emissions;*
- *Adhering to the spatial strategy and delivering development in sustainable locations, which is well supported by, or capable of delivering better local services and facilities resulting in more sustainable movement patterns and communities;*
- *Delivering more sustainable buildings which significantly reduce carbon emissions and are energy efficient, having regard to the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy;*
- *Delivering renewable and low carbon energy;*
- *Offsetting carbon emissions and maximising opportunities for carbon sequestration;*
- *Making the most efficient use of resources;*
- *Avoiding areas at risk of flooding and reducing that risk where possible; and*
- *Ensuring development is suitable for, and adaptable to a changing climate through innovative design.*



Policy CC3 - Low Carbon and Renewable Energy (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

This policy seeks to support and increase the use of low carbon and renewable energy generation, distribution and storage. All major development should incorporate renewable and low carbon energy production to meet at least 10% of predicted total energy requirements (after CO2 reductions from energy efficiency measures). Proposals for minor development are encouraged to demonstrate a commitment to low carbon and renewable energy generation and seek opportunities for innovation.

Proposals for low carbon, renewable and decentralised energy schemes outside of the Green Belt will be permitted provided that:

- The development, either individually or cumulatively, would not result in unacceptable adverse impacts that cannot be satisfactorily addressed on:*
- The landscape and visual amenity;*
- The amenity of surrounding uses (such as from noise, odour, shadow flicker and glare);*
- The local transport network;*
- Biodiversity; and*
- National designations and their settings such as the Greenbelt, AONBs, Conservation Areas and Listed Buildings.*
- Provision is made for the decommissioning of the infrastructure once operation has ceased, including the restoration of the site to its previous use.*
- Evidence is provided to demonstrate effective engagement with the Council and local community; and*
- Preference is given to existing commercial and industrial premises and previously developed land. Proposals for low carbon, renewable and decentralised energy schemes in the Green Belt will not be permitted except where very special circumstances have been demonstrated in accordance with national policy. In this case, and where on agricultural land, it will be necessary to demonstrate that poorer quality land has been considered before higher quality, and that continued agricultural use has been explored. A statement should be submitted alongside any planning application illustrating how the proposal complies with these criteria, any mitigation measures necessary and should be informed by a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment where appropriate.*

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 Heritage (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

There are many historic settlements in the District, as is reflected in the high number of Conservation Areas and listed buildings. The District boasts many nationally recognised heritage assets including the historic estates of:

Knole; Chartwell; Hever Castle; Penshurst Place; and Lullingstone Castle.

Other places of interest include the National Trust village at Chiddingstone, Eynsford Castle ruin, Lullingstone Roman Villa, Otford Palace and Toys Hill (the birthplace of the National Trust)

Historic Parks and Gardens are an important part of the historic and natural environment of the District. Some of these Historic Parks and Gardens are designated, and others are non-designated assets and are identified in the Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens and on the Sevenoaks Local List. There are likely to be others that are yet to be formally identified.

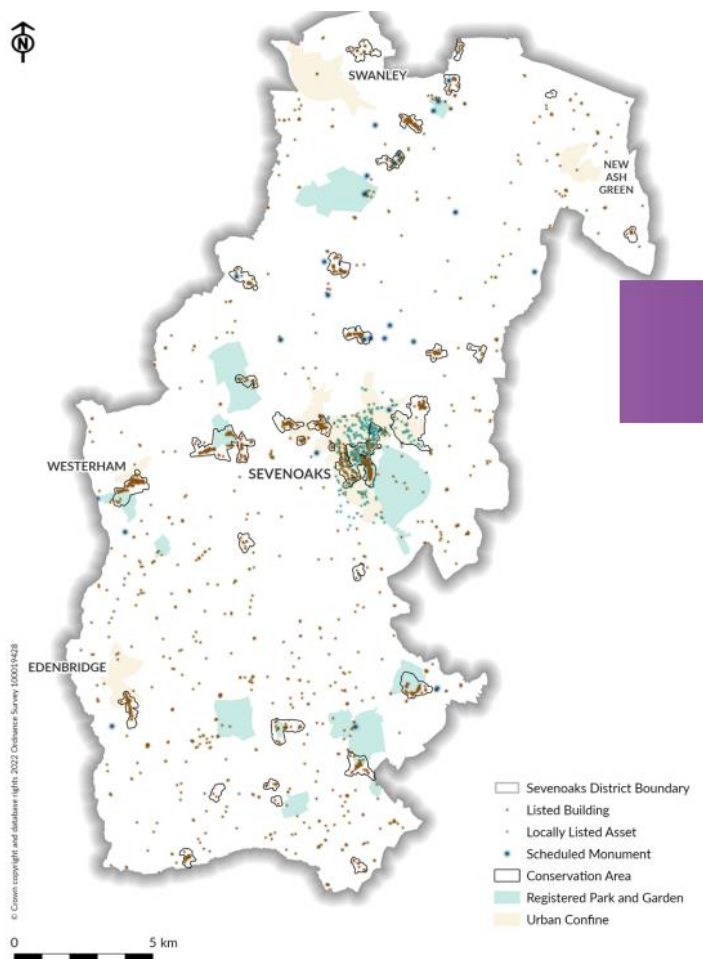


Figure 7.1: Heritage Assets and Conservation Areas



Policy HEN7- Historic Parks and Gardens

Proposals will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it:

a) Preserves, and where applicable enhances, the special interest, significance and settings of Historic Parks or Gardens, both registered or of local importance, and historic landscapes; including the restoration of lost features where possible;

b) Respects the distinctive characteristics of existing designed or natural landscapes and would not harm the enjoyment, layout, design, character and appearance; and c) Can be demonstrated that any harm can be outweighed by public benefits commensurate to the level of harm arising

3.9.2 Health and wellbeing (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

22% of the District's population are currently aged 65 or over, and this figure is expected to increase to 25.8% by 2043*. This growing population and changing age structure presents a key challenge for the District.

There are areas of affluence in the District, as well as pockets of deprivation. According to the IMD, Sevenoaks District is the second least deprived local authority in Kent, behind Tunbridge Wells Borough, although there are areas that are within the 30% most deprived in the country, namely Swanley St Mary's and Swanley White Oak.

Sevenoaks District has generally high house prices. This makes it very difficult for first time buyers and young families to remain in the District. There is a requirement to provide 10,680 new homes, over the plan period up to 2040, in order to meet the needs of the growing population. This includes a high proportion of affordable homes and specialist accommodation for older people.

The District has the lowest level of unemployment in Kent.

According to the IMD, Sevenoaks District is the second least deprived local authority in Kent, although it should be noted that there are areas within the District that fall within the 30% most deprived in the country, namely Swanley St Mary's and Swanley White Oak

This Sevenoaks District Council Health and Wellbeing Action plan aims to address the health focused priorities and actions outlined within the Sevenoaks District Community Plan (2022-25) and the SDC Local Plan. The Planning Policy team work alongside the Health and Communities team to ensure both documents work concurrently.

Strategic Objectives:

OB1: Recognise the link between the places and spaces that we live in and the quality of residents' mental and physical health.



OB2: Work closely with healthcare providers to develop policies that promote good physical and mental health as an outcome.

3.9.3 Access to nature (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

Policy T1- Sustainable Movement Network

Partnership working is integral to delivering sustainable movement across the District. We will continue to work in partnership with stakeholders including but not limited to Kent County Council, National Highways, transport providers and developers to ensure growth is supported by the necessary transport provisions and a range of movement is available. Through partnership working we will:

- Support the incorporation, enhancement and creation of walking, wheeling and cycling routes and provisions within a new development that is connected to the wider transport network;*
- Place accessible, secure and weatherproof cycling parking facilities at transport interchanges, employment and retail areas;*
 - Support the implementation of identified routes in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans;*
- Enhance the existing cycling and walking routes, including Public Rights of Way (PRoW) routes;*
- Integrate new pedestrian and cycle routes with the PRoW and wider travel network;*
- Create new routes to fill existing gaps thereby enhancing PRoW network connectivity;*

Policy T2- Sustainable Movement

New development proposals will be expected to:

- Consider the impact on the wider transport network and contribute to meeting the wider transport needs generated by the impact of development in the area. Development should consider the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Local Transport Plan, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans, and, where needed and viable, contribute to the delivery of proposals;*
- Wherever possible, prioritise transport in the following order in the development design: walking and wheeling, cycling, public transport, shared transport, private vehicle;*
- Wherever possible, provide maximum flexibility on travel mode choices, including walking, wheeling and cycling, shared transport, and with accessibility for all potential users;*



Walking, Wheeling and Cycling

- *Provide an adequate amount of cycle storage that is accessible, secure and weatherproof within new development;*
- *Link to and improve the existing cycle and walking network within the development's vicinity, particularly connecting services and facilities;*
- *Take account of the proposed routes in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure plans for the site's design.*
- *Comply with the latest government guidance for any walking, wheeling and cycling routes when new routes are constructed as a part of the development;*

A Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Sevenoaks Urban Area has been completed. The plan proposes new walking, wheeling and cycling routes to encourage people to move more sustainably. The Swanley LCWIP is progressing and will be completed for the next Local Plan consultation

3.9.4 Open spaces and recreation

The Study found that although the District has an adequate supply of most types of open space, the quality of the spaces could be improved. We will therefore work with partners to identify opportunities to redevelop areas that are currently not fit for purpose or where improvements can be made. (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

Policy OS1-Open Space and Recreation (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

- 1. The District's designated open spaces, as shown on the interactive map, will be retained for their current use and type of open space unless it can be demonstrated that the tests set out in national policy have been met.*
- 2. All other open spaces of value to the local community, either through use or contribution to local character, will also be retained. It is expected that Local Green Spaces, as defined in national policy, will be designated through the Neighbourhood Plan process.*
- 3. Development proposals will be required to incorporate good quality open space. Where an adequate quantity of open space exists in the local area, consideration may be given to improving the quality of the existing open space to benefit new and existing residents. All new or improved open space must include arrangements for long term maintenance and management.*



Open Space Study (2018):

Results of the quality audit for Amenity Greenspace relating to nature:

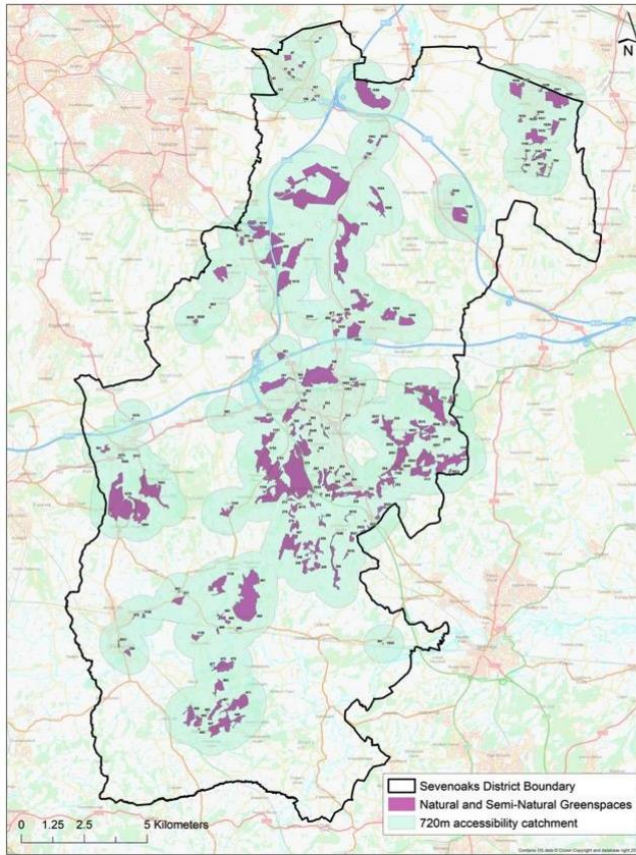
(This Open Space Category seemed to show the most ‘issues’ for nature)

- Most sites are in the “average” or “good” range, which accords with perceptions obtained in consultation
- A number are “poor,” and exhibit a lack of general maintenance such as poor grasscutting standards or relatively high levels of littering
- Some show signs resulting from a lack of parking facilities, with cars parked on green areas, or tyre damage
- Many are poorly landscaped, with just an area of lawn and no tree or other planting
- In most cases, little thought has been given to “softening” areas of lawn by using floral meadow or tree planting

Issues relating to quality across all open space types (Open Space Study, 2018):

Table 6.8: General quality Issues in the Sevenoaks across all open space types

OPEN SPACE TYPE	ISSUE
PARKS AND GARDENS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks are not welcoming enough • More information needed for visitors • Play facilities sometimes deficient
AMENITY GREENSPACE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards variable dependent upon care taken by local parish or town council • Absence of welcoming signage/information • Grass maintenance only average
FACILITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variable standards • Lack of signage • More exciting equipment needed in places
LAND ASSOCIATED WITH OUTDOOR SPORTS FACILITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited welcome at entrance • Lack of landscaping • Absence of seating
SEMI/NATURAL GREENSPACE AND GREEN CORRIDORS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low standards of maintenance in places • Lack of information • Poor accessibility
ALLOTMENTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very difficult to find in places, and unwelcoming • Modest facilities • Poor boundaries in places

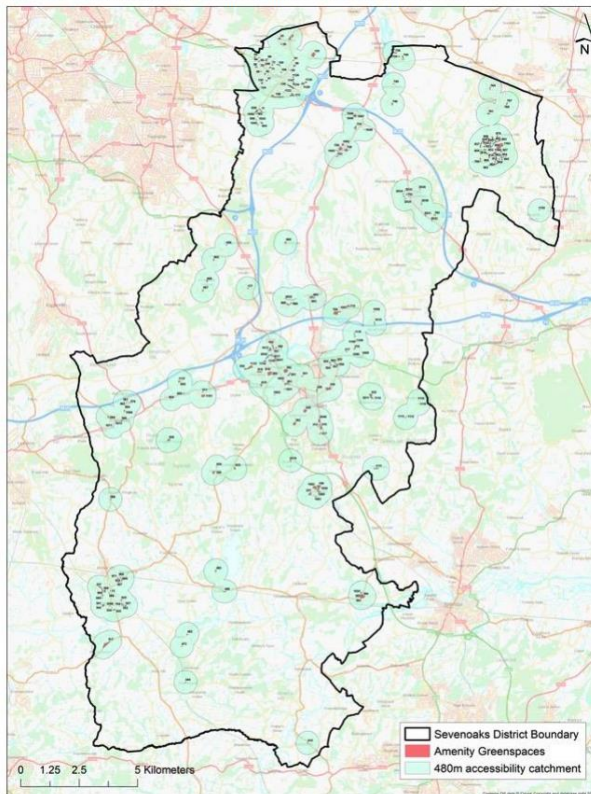


Natural and Semi-Natural Greenspaces
 accessibility catchment



(Open Space Study, 2018)

Figure 7.2: Accessibility of Amenity Greenspace using Fields in Trust walking standards



Amenity Greenspaces accessibility catchment



(Open Space Study, 2018)



SECTION 4: DISTRICT PROJECTS TO NOTE (Local Plan, Reg 18, 2023)

4.1 Partnership Working

Projects which provide improvements to the natural environment, strengthen the blue green infrastructure network, increase and improve public access, understanding and enjoyment, promote climate resilience and provide health benefits will be supported by the Council. This includes projects at both the landscape scale, such as the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme and the Sevenoaks Greensands Commons Project, and at the local scale, such as woodland management projects, community led habitat management, health walks and wildlife/nature experiences, especially those which encourage children and young people to engage with the natural environment.

We will continue to work with partners to develop projects. Partners such as:

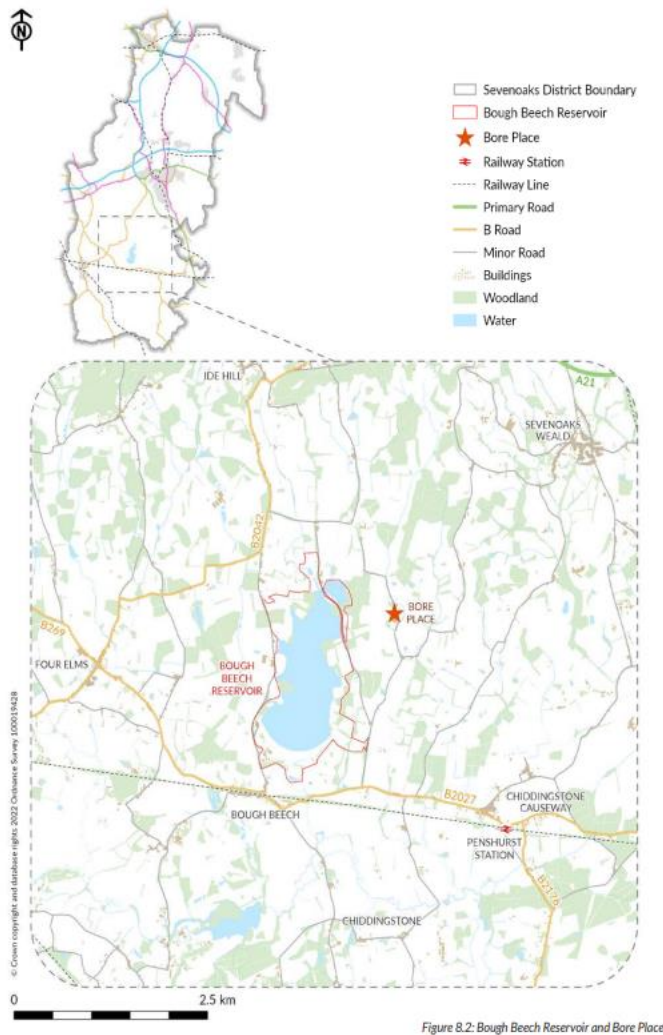
- The North West Kent Countryside Partnership;
- Kent Wildlife Trust;
- Kent Downs and High Weald AONB units.

4.2 Darent Valley Landscape Recovery

A partnership of landowners in the North Downs working with Kent Wildlife Trust, South East Rivers Trust and others to restore northwest Kent's landscape and wildlife within the river Darent catchment. It is seeking to create and enhance c1,500 ha of biodiverse habitats and restore the natural function of the river Darent, with the aim of creating a large network of high-quality habitats. It is expecting to generate a significant uplift in biodiversity, with potential to provide a large number of biodiversity units and to contribute towards carbon sequestration, from a mixture of woodland, grassland, heathland and freshwater habitats, including both enhancement of existing habitats and creation of high-quality semi-natural habitats from agricultural land. Its initial development phase is being funded by Landscape Recovery, one of the Government's Environment Land Management Schemes (ELMS), with habitat restoration works ready to begin in 2024.

4.3 Bore Place

There are emerging proposals around the Bough Beech reservoir and Bore Place sites (see figure 8.2), for potentially opening up Bough Beech reservoir to be more of a community resource. We will continue to work closely with both Bore Place and SES Water to enhance the linked sites for people and nature. 8.23 This exciting project will play a part in delivering health and wellbeing (both physical and mental) over the plan period which is a central theme in this Plan. Nature and biodiversity and resilient employment are also local priorities, and this is likely to align well with many of the economic and environmental policies of the Council.



4.4 Sevenoaks Greensand Commons Project (Greensand Commons)

Bat species such as Daubenton’s, Natterer’s, whiskered/Brandt’s and brown long-eared bats.

The project aims to restore the landscape, social and natural heritage of the Commons, creating opportunities for people to engage with and use the sites in ways they would like. Through connecting with local schools, charities, community groups and council services, the project will help under-represented groups to access the Commons.

The project seeks to improve engagement by opening public access through 26km improved footpaths and bridleways. Clear signage will be introduced where possible, to help visitors to navigate and learn about the sites.

Improving the knowledge that local people have of the land and its management is integral to the project. Sharing practical skills and knowledge through volunteering opportunities and informal learning will empower communities to take on a lead role in the ongoing management of the Commons.



Sevenoaks District Council, working with Kent Wildlife Trust and others, secured £483,600 from the National Lottery Grants Heritage Fund and £48,970 from the Enover Community Fund.

4.5 Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve (Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve)

Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve to Boast Better Biodiversity and a Refurbished Visitor Centre-£2 million revamp and greater conservation measures for biodiversity




SECTION 5: SPECIFIC PRIORITIES WITHIN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

5.1 Sevenoaks Town

Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan


THEME TWO: LANDSCAPE AND BLUE AND GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

Objective Four: To protect and enhance blue and green infrastructure, enhance biodiversity and respond to climate change


Policy L1: Proposals for new development should whenever possible deliver a 10% net gain in biodiversity retaining natural features that support wildlife, establishing ecological networks and including new habitats that respond to the local context and the character of the site. New planting and landscapes should respond to the wider landscape through use of native species that support greater biodiversity. Applicants will need to demonstrate the process that they have been through utilising Natural England’s Biodiversity Metric 3.1 (or subsequent version) and the options they have considered to deliver biodiversity net gain 


Policy L2: New development will be expected to manage surface water to minimise flood risk and flows to watercourses. Development proposals should normally incorporate sustainable urban drainage (SuDs) as an integral part of the landscape structure

Where practicable SuDs should be positively designed into schemes from the outset as public realm features. These features can include ponds, infiltration basins, swales/rain gardens and wetlands and can make a positive contribution to the biodiversity, character, appearance and sustainable performance of development


Development proposals will be expected to provide appropriate drainage infrastructure in order not to overbear the existing network and to avoid difficulties with local water supplies, sewerage and sewage treatment, and waste disposal 


Objective Five: To recognise the significant contribution that trees and hedgerows make to the town’s character and biodiversity


Aim L3: The Town Council will identify areas where trees and hedgerows make a significant contribution to local character and biodiversity* 


Policy L4: Wherever possible, existing trees and hedgerows must be retained and protected as part of development proposals. Proposals to remove trees and hedgerows must be justified and any trees or hedgerows lost through development should be replaced within, or in close proximity to the development site. New tree and hedgerow provision should be of a species that is both suitable for the location and responds to the character and biodiversity of the site within which it is located 

Objective Six: To protect, improve and enhance access to existing publicly accessible open spaces and create new publicly accessible open spaces and green infrastructure

Policy L5: The Neighbourhood Plan supports the development of new public open space and leisure opportunities in the town. This includes new public open space, community use and leisure opportunities at Sevenoaks Quarry (the Tarmac Site) in Greatness when sand extraction has been completed. The timetable for the delivery of this open space must be agreed by the local planning authority (as the decision-making authority) in conjunction with STC, prior to residential development commencing on this site, and subsequently conditioned in any Grant of Planning Permission. 

Aim L6: The Town Council will work with and support Kent Wildlife Trust to enhance access to the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve and improve ‘on-site’ facilities* 

Aim L7: The Town Council will support improvement and restoration proposals for Bradbourne Lakes developed in consultation with the local community* 

Policy L8: The Town Council will support the provision of additional allotments in the town at Bradbourne Vale Road and will protect those on the Quaker’s Hall Lane site 

Proposed landscape and infrastructure enhancements and new connections:

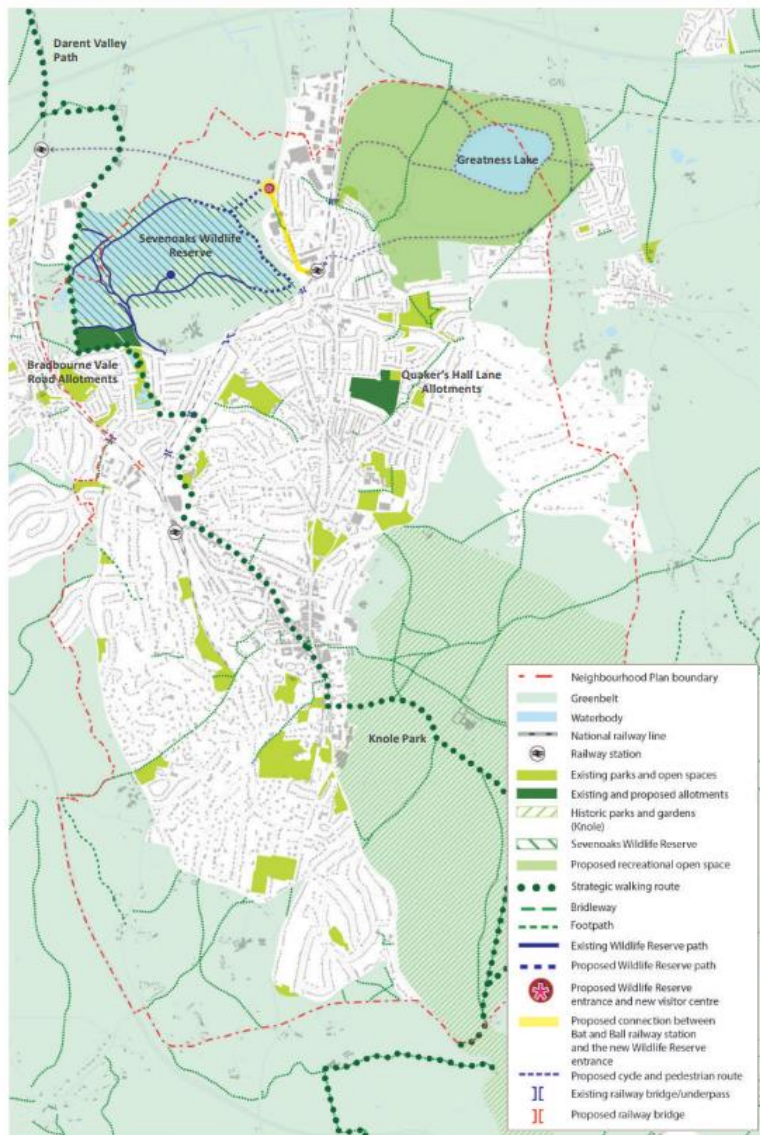


Figure 4.4: Proposed landscape and infrastructure enhancements and new connections (POLICY PLAN)

5.2 Swanley

[Swanley Neighbourhood Plan](#)

Objectives:

O8: Wherever appropriate, to protect the heritage, wildlife, and Green Belt of Swanley and their contribution to the health and well-being of its residents

5.3 Plans being prepared (Neighbourhood Plans)

Fawkham



SECTION 6: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AND REFERENCED

Document reference	Link
Local Plan, reg 18, 2023	Local Plan.pdf (sevenoaks.gov.uk)
ADMP, 2015	ADMP Main Document Adopted Version.pdf
Local Plan, 2011	Core Strategy Adopted Version February 2011 Sevenoaks District Council
Indicative Local Housing Need, 2024	https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675aaeca9f669f2e28ce2b91/lhn-outcome-of-the-new-method.ods
Climate Change Strategy, 2024	Climate Change Strategy Sevenoaks District Council
Open Space Study, 2018	Sevenoaks Open Space Study (June 2018) Sevenoaks District Council
Biodiversity Analysis, 2018	Biodiversity Analysis of Sevenoaks District (February 2018) Sevenoaks District Council
Neighbourhood Plans	cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s9526/
Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan	Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan Sevenoaks District Council
Swanley Neighbourhood Plan	Swanley Neighbourhood Plan Sevenoaks District Council
Greensand Commons	Sevenoaks District Planning Map
Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve	Sevenoaks Greensand Commons Kent Wildlife Trust