SWALE BOROUGH 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 population pressures

Population growth due to in-migration. Population growth in Swale has, and continues to be, largely fuelled by those who move here, but its indigenous population is ageing and the death rate is higher than both the Kent and the South East average. The expanding urban populations are largely a result of migration into the area by younger people and families. (Local Plan, 2017)

The Borough's Local Housing Need for 2022 to 2038 (the timeframe for the emerging plan) has been informed by a local housing needs assessment, conducted using the standard method in national guidance. The need of 1,038 dwellings per annum represents an increase of 33.8% compared with the current adopted local plan, that has an objectively assessed need of 776 dwellings per annum for 2014 – 2031. (Reg 19, Local Plan, 2021)

1.2 Recreational Pressures (Local Plan, 2017)

Potential adverse impacts on European designated wildlife sites:

A particular issue where the strategy and Policy CP 7 will play a key part is where potential adverse impacts on European designated wildlife sites are identified, for example, as a result of increased recreational pressures on bird habitats on the North Kent Marshes. These are matters affecting both the preparation of the Local Plan and for relevant development projects, both of which are required to comply with the Habitats Regulations Assessment process. Land raising is also being utilised as an option to protect sites from flooding.

1.3 Infrastructure Pressures (GBI Strategy, 2020)

The A2 which crosses the borough east to west severs many habitats in the north and southern sections of Swale. At a more local scale, hard engineering works along the banks of some of Swale's rivers and creeks over the years disconnects watercourses from their floodplains, inhibiting the movement of species.

1.4 Water Stress (Local Plan, 2017)

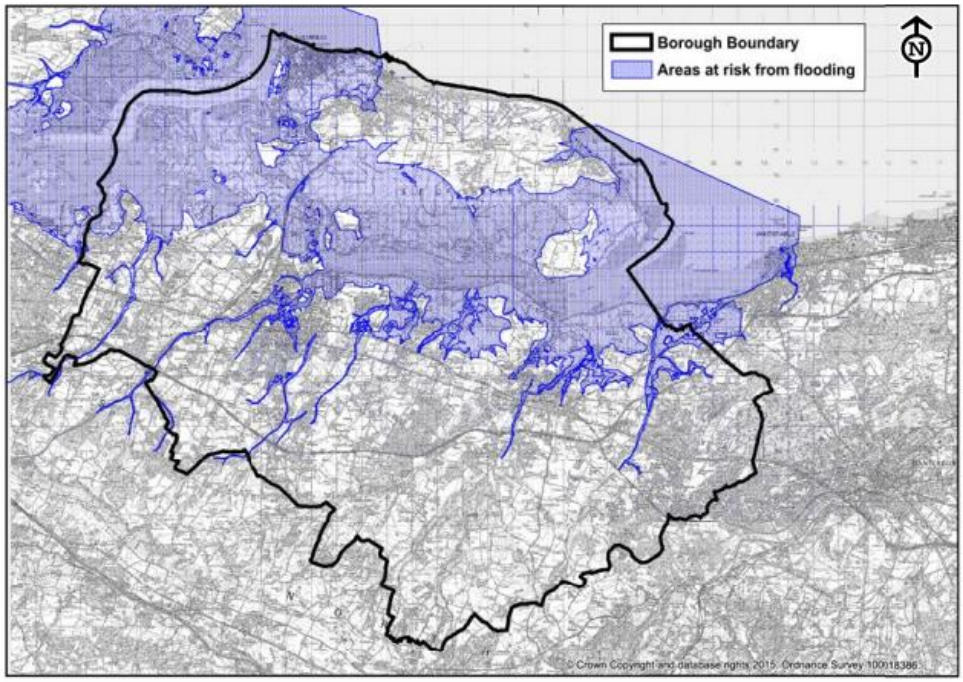
Swale lies within an area of serious water stress as classified by the Environment Agency . Water resources are likely to become more stretched within Swale as the population continues to grow. Both water companies which serve Swale are committed to putting in place the necessary mechanism to support the development proposed by the Local Plan, following their twin-track approach of reducing demand and developing new resources. This strategic approach is supported at the local level by Policy DM 21.

1.3 Flood Risk

Many areas around the Medway Estuary and Swale are low-lying and at significant risk of flooding. Due to ageing flood defences, rising sea levels and climate change, this risk will increase over the next 100 years. It will put approximately 18,000 properties, more than 10,000 hectares of agricultural land and key infrastructure at an increased risk of tidal flooding. Much of the area is nationally and internationally designated habitat, which will be lost as sea levels rise and 'squeeze' it against the existing defences. The Strategy sets out a plan for how these designated habitats can be retained by realigning defences or creating compensatory areas in other locations. Furthermore, over the next 100 years there is also an increased risk of erosion along the cliffs in the north of the Isle of Sheppey. (FCERM)

The Council's own Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) looked at the current risk of flooding as well as flood risk in 70 and 100 years time – taking into account the effects of climate change. The SFRA examined the entire Borough with a broad assessment (Level 1) and looked at nine potential development areas in more detail (Level 2). It identified tidal over-topping and potential breaches as the main risk of flooding likely to be exacerbated in the future as sea levels rise. The SFRA was updated in 2019/20 and is due to be reviewed again in 2024. (Local Plan, 2017)

Swale Borough Council Level 1 SFRA



Map 7.6.2 Areas at risk from flooding in Swale (Environment Agency Flood Zone 3)

1.4 Climate Change

Communities, landscapes and biodiversity are vulnerable to climate change through changes to water resources, flood risk, erosion and habitat fragmentation as well as damage to habitats and property from increased storminess. (Local Plan, 2017)

Sea Level: We expect sea level to continue to rise at increasing rates with climate change. Our best estimate currently is that the sea will rise by approximately 0.8m over the next 100 years in the MEASS area. This increase can have a significant effect on overtopping of sea defences and coastal flood risk within an area. (MEASS)

Erosion risk: occurs from the ongoing erosion of the land by wave action, combined by the impact of the loss of land. There are some areas in MEASS where defences are present to protect against erosion, but there are others where the coastline should remain undefended, due to the environmental designations being based on the geology of the cliffs. As the sea level rises, the wave energies which impact the land will increase and the rate of erosion of the land will also increase. This can have a significant impact on the area of land at risk from erosion. (MEASS)

Protected Areas: There are a number of national and international environmental designations in the MEASS area. These designations have to be adhered to when developing the options to ensure that the negative impacts on the designations are mitigated. (MEASS)

Coastal Squeeze: Intertidal areas such as saltmarsh and mudflats, which can be seen at low tide, will be underwater for longer in the future due to rising sea levels. Built defences, such as sea walls and beaches, can cause a reduction in the area of mudflats and saltmarsh as the sea level rises. This is because the habitats are prevented from moving further up the shore by the presence of the defence. Coastal Squeeze will affect the wildlife that depend on these habitats, including the birds, which are of international importance. (MEASS)

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

Unless otherwise stated, the following information in section 2 came from the Swale Local Plan, 2017.

2.1 PROTECTING HABITATS

2.1.1 Site designations

A number of areas within Swale have been formally designated because they are landscapes of great value and/or scenic beauty and because they have a particular value for the conservation of selected species, habitats, historic and cultural assets. Within these designations priority will be given to the long term conservation and enhancement of these landscapes relative to their status, whilst having regard to the economic and social wellbeing of their communities.

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

Policy DM 24

> *The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally designated site and as such permission for major developments should be refused unless exceptional circumstances prevail as defined by national planning policy. Planning permission for any proposal within the AONB will only be granted subject to it:*
>
> *1. conserving and enhancing the special qualities and distinctive character of the AONB in accordance with national planning policy;*
>
> *2. furthering the delivery of the AONB's Management Plan, having regard to its supporting guidance documents;*
>
> *3. minimising the impact of individual proposals and their cumulative effect on the AONB and its setting, mitigating any detrimental effects, including, where appropriate, improving any damaged landscapes relating to the proposal; and*
>
> *4. being appropriate to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area or being desirable for the understanding and enjoyment of the area*

2.1.3 Areas of High Landscape Value

Policy DM 24

Areas of High Landscape Value (Kent and Swale Level) are designated as being of significance to Kent or Swale respectively, where planning permission will be granted subject to the:

1. conservation and enhancement of the landscape being demonstrated;

2. avoidance, minimisation and mitigation of adverse landscape impacts as appropriate and, when significant adverse impacts remain, that the social and or economic benefits of the proposal significantly and demonstrably outweigh harm to the Kent or Swale level landscape value of the designation concerned.

Areas of High Landscape Value - Kent Level. Three are present in Swale reflecting the broad landscape types in the Borough - the North Downs, Blean Woods and North Kent Marshes. These landscapes are considered to be scenically important in a county-wide context and their boundaries were reviewed in 2008.

Areas of High Landscape Value - Swale Level. Following a 2008 landscape assessment a number of areas were considered worthy of designation due to their significance within Swale and were included for the 2008 Local Plan and comprising of land between: Tonge and Luddenham; Iwade, Newington and Lower Halstow;Boughton Street, Hernhill, Dargate and Staplestreet; and Sheppey Court and Diggs Marshes.

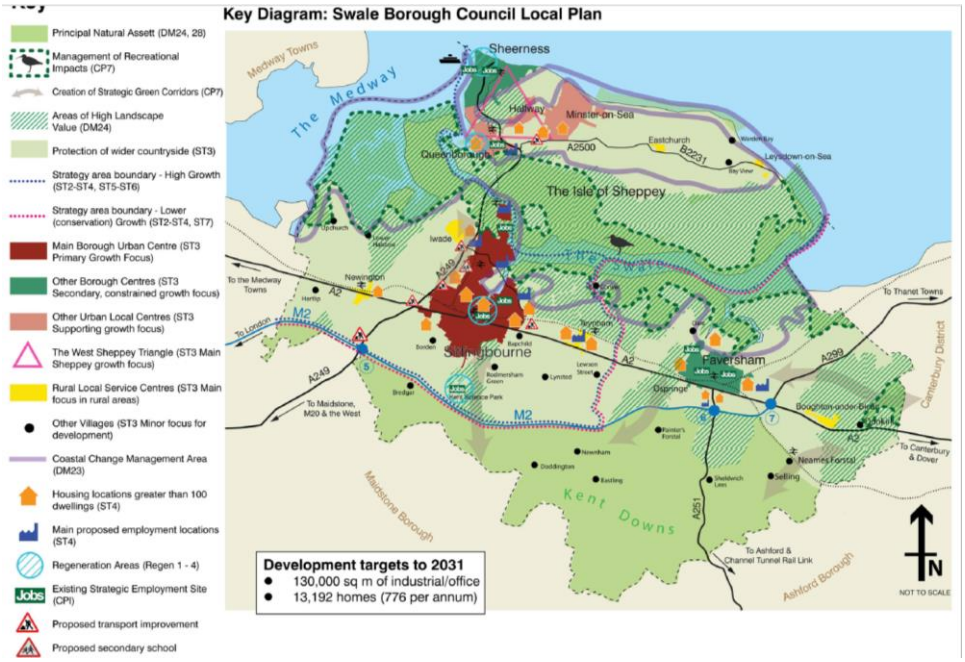
DM 24 Conserving and enhancing valued landscapes - indicators

1. Monitoring of indicators intended to conserve or enhance landscape condition with reference to:

a. changes in landscape condition as indicated by a review of the Council's landscape character assessment;

b. a formal review of landscape designations undertaken; and

c. a review of planning approvals where contrary to Policy.



Local Green Space:

Policy DM 18 Local green spaces

> *Sites are designated as Local Green Spaces, as shown on the Proposals Map. Within designated Local Green Spaces planning permission will not be granted other than for:*
>
> *1. The construction of a new building for one of the following purposes: essential facilities for outdoor sport or recreation, cemeteries, allotment use, or other uses of land where preserving the openness of the Local Green Space and not conflicting with its purpose;*
>
> *2. The re-use or replacement of an existing building, provided the re-use does not include any associated uses of land around the building which might conflict with the openness of the Local Green Space or the purposes of including land within it; and*
>
> *3. The carrying out of an engineering or other operation or the making of any material change of use of land, provided that it maintains the openness and character of the Local Green Space.*

2.1.4 Local Countryside Gaps

The purpose:

- to maintain the separate identities and character of settlements by preventing their merging;

- safeguard the open and undeveloped character of the areas; prevent encroachment and piecemeal erosion by built development or changes to the rural open character; and influence decisions on the longer-term development of settlements through the preparation and review of Local Plans.

Policy DM 25 - The separation of settlements - Important Local Countryside Gaps

To retain the individual character and setting of settlements, the following Important Local Countryside Gaps are defined on the Proposals Map as gaps between:

1. Sittingbourne and the satellite villages of Bapchild, Rodmersham Green, Tunstall, Borden, Chestnut Street, Bobbing and Iwade;

2. Upchurch and the administrative boundary with Medway Council; and

3. Queenborough, Sheerness, Minster and Halfway.

Within these gaps, unless allocated for development by the Local Plan, planning permission will not be granted for development that would undermine one or more of their purposes.

2.1.5 Rural Lanes

Swale possesses a rich heritage of rural lanes that contribute to rural amenity, nature conservation and the character of the landscape. A study undertaken in 1997 by Kent County Council identified the top 20% of these lanes against environmental criteria, and these are shown on the Proposals Map. Many are experiencing pressures from the rapid rise in rural traffic, urbanisation and changes in the management of verges.

Policy DM 26 - Rural lanes

Planning permission will not be granted for development that would either physically, or as a result of traffic levels, significantly harm the character of rural lanes. For those rural lanes shown on the Proposals Map, development proposals should have particular regard to their landscape, amenity, biodiversity, and historic or archaeological importance.

2.1.6 Agricultural Land

Our core objectives: Support our farming and food sectors so that they are at the forefront of increasing food security,reducing food miles and increasing local food consumption.

Swale has a wide area of some of the highest quality of agricultural land in the UK (called best and most versatile). It is found within a broad belt running east-west

around the A2. The area is one of the most productive agricultural areas in Kent due to the fine loam soils and favourable climatic conditions. Around 80% of Swale's land is classified as being suitable for agriculture (grades 1-5), with the Borough containing about 17% of Kent's grades 1 and 2 resource.

Policy DM 31- Agricultural land

> *Development on agricultural land will only be permitted when there is an overriding need that cannotbe met on land within the built-up area boundaries. Development on best and most versatile agriculturalland (specifically Grades 1, 2 and 3a) will not be permitted unless:*
>
> *1. The site is allocated for development by the Local Plan; or*
>
> *2. There is no alternative site on land of a lower grade than 3a or that use of land of a lower gradewould significantly and demonstrably work against the achievement of sustainable development;*
>
> *3. The development will not result in the remainder of the agricultural holding becoming*

2.1.7 Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows

Swale's average tree canopy was estimated at 9.5%. Although comparatively low relative to some districts in Kent, canopy cover in Swale is above the national (8.2%) average as reported in Trees in Towns 2 (2008). Nonetheless, the district level of tree canopy cover falls below the 17% Kent and Medway average and the 19% coverage target outlined within KCC's Tree Establishment Strategy 2022- 2032. Further, there is variation across Swale's wards with 18 out of 24 having lower than the national average of canopy cover, see Figures 2 & 3. (Draft Tree Strategy, 2024)

Woodland Habitat	Area (HA)	% Land Area coverage in Swale
Broadleaved, mixed, yew & undetermined young woodland	2743.2	6.6%
Coniferous woodland	123.2	0.30%
Orchard	333	0.80%
Total	**3199.4**	**7.7%**

Figure 5 - Woodland Cover in Swale (KCC 2012)

(Draft Tree Strategy, 2024)

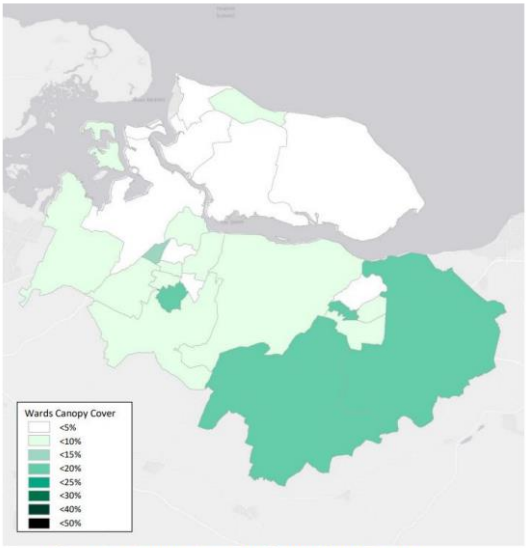


Figure 2 - Canopy Cover Swale Wards (KCC 2020)

Ancient and replanted woodland in Swale stretches from the Blean and across the North Downs. Traditional orchards are found in the fruit belt of the Borough - which runs along the A2 corridor and stretches into the North Downs - as well as in isolated locations on the Isle of Sheppey. Scrub is often undervalued but is important as a habitat as well as a nursery for future woodland stocks. Many woodlands and old orchards in Kent are no longer used for timber/fruit products in a way that would otherwise ensure their positive long-term management for flora and fauna. The Council is keen to support the innovative and sustainable use and management of woodlands for such activities as renewable energy, but also as a resource for education (e.g. forest/wild schools). Carefully planned appropriate development, the intended purpose of which is to further the sustainable management of woodland/old orchards, may be supported by the Council where in accordance with the Local Plan.

As well as the potential removal of woodland, development can threaten the sustainable management of woodland. This might be as a result of increased recreational pressures from new residents, the sub-division or lotting of woodland (or development associated with it), or the incorporation of woodland into residential curtilages. Such impacts will need to be assessed as part of a planning application and where the landscape and/or biodiversity interest of woodlands would be threatened, planning permission will be refused unless the benefits of development in that location clearly outweigh these concerns.

Policy DM 29 - Woodlands, trees and hedges

> *The Borough Council will seek to ensure the protection, enhancement and sustainable management of woodlands, orchards trees and hedges. It will:*
>
> *1. Support carefully planned appropriate development, the intended purpose of which is to further the sustainable management of woodland/old orchards;*
>
> *2. Ensure that development proposals take all reasonable opportunities to provide for new woodland, orchard, tree and hedge planting at a sufficient scale (with provision made for appropriate long term management) to maintain and enhance the character of the locality and provide for an attractive living and working environment;*
>
> *3. Use Tree Preservation and Hedgerow Protection Orders to safeguard species which have a significant impact on the local environment and its enjoyment by the public. Where removal of trees and hedgerows is unavoidable, the Borough Council will require appropriate replacements as a condition of a planning permission; and*
>
> *4. Unless the need for, and benefits of development in a location clearly outweigh the adverse impacts, planning permission will be refused where there:*

1. is a loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees; or

2. would be an inability to secure the beneficial management of woodland, old orchards or hedges for their landscape, historic or biodiversity interest (including as a result of their sub-division/lotting or incorporation into a residential curtilage);

or 3. would be a loss of trees (including individual trees, old orchards, fruit trees, hedgerows and woodland scrub) that make an important contribution either to the amenity, historic, landscape, townscape or biodiversity value of the site and/or the surrounding area.

Hedgerow Protection (Draft Tree Strategy, 2024):

• Hedgerows which qualify as Habitats of Principal Importance for conserving biodiversity, are covered by national policy in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

• Hedgerows with nesting birds, and bats and dormice, have indirect protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act

• Hedgerows which qualify as important hedgerows, have protection under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997

2.1.6 Green Infrastructure Network

Table 2: Approximate Quantity of GBI Typology across Swale

Green Infrastructure Type	Approximate Percentage (%) of Swale Borough
Agricultural land	49.1
Allotments	0.07
Amenity greenspace	0.1
Cemetery and burial grounds	0.08
Provision for Children and Young People	0.005
Grassland or scrubland	7.5

Green Corridor	0.1
Natural and semi-natural greenspace	0.5
Orchard	7.2
Outdoor sports facilities	1.1
Parks and gardens	0.3
Private gardens	4.1
Woodland	8.0
Street Tree	0.2
Beach	0.1
Foreshore	5.2
Blue Infrastructure Type	**Approximate Percentage (%) of Swale Borough**
Tidal Water	6.2
Waterbody	0.6
Watercourse	0.8
Wetland	2.3

(GBI Strategy, 2020)

We will look to protect and enhance the nation's (and our own), most important environmental assets – coastal habitats, downland, dry valleys, ancient woodlands, agricultural land and historic resources. As well as providing custodianship, we will take all opportunities to expand the range of biodiversity and habitats and take responsibility for ensuring that wider growth does not place unsustainable pressures on our resources of European protected wildlife habitats around the coast. In so far as it is compatible with our settlement strategy and other sustainability objectives, we will also allocate sites for development on land of the lowest environmental value, in so doing encouraging the effective use of previously developed (brownfield) land and minimising the significant loss of high quality agricultural land.

Conserving and enhancing the Borough's outstanding natural environment is at the heart of a Local Plan strategy which seeks to create more robust ecological and landscape structures and reverse the decline in the quality and diversity of our landscapes and biodiversity. In assessing the impacts of development upon the natural environment, the Council will recognise and value our ecosystems for the wider services they provide to society, such as for food, water, flood mitigation, disease control, recreation and, importantly, health and well-being. Whilst it will safeguard the network of national and natural asset designations in the Borough, across all areas, designated or not, we will expect the use of landscape character and biodiversity assessments to drive natural asset focused developments. Where possible, all development proposals should seek to achieve a net-gain in biodiversity.

Policy CP 7 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment - providing for green infrastructure

> *The Council will work with partners and developers to ensure the protection, enhancement and delivery, as appropriate, of the Swale natural assets and*

green infrastructure network and its associated strategy. Development proposals will, as appropriate:

1. Recognise and value ecosystems for the wider services they provide, such as for food, water, flood mitigation, disease control, recreation, health and well-being;

2. Protect the integrity of the existing green infrastructure network as illustrated by the Natural Assets and Green Infrastructure Strategy Map, having regard to the status of those designated for their importance as set out by Policy DM24 and Policy DM28;

3. Where assessment indicates that it is necessary to enhance and extend the network (including when management, mitigation and/or compensatory actions are required to address adverse harm), be guided by the Green Infrastructure Network and Strategy Map, prioritising actions toward identified Biodiversity Opportunity Areas;

4. Ensure that there is no adverse effect on the integrity of a SAC, SPA or Ramsar site, alone or in combination with other plan and projects, as it would not be in accordance with the aims and objectives of this Local Plan;

5. Require the completion of project specific Habitats Regulations Assessment, in accordance with Policy DM28, to ensure there are no likely significant effects upon any European designated site. For residential sites within 6km of an access point to any of the North Kent Marshes, development must contribute to its Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy;

6. Contribute to the objectives of the Nature Partnerships and Nature Improvement Areas in Kent;

7. Make the enhancement of biodiversity and landscape as their primary purpose;

8. Promote the expansion of Swale's natural assets and green infrastructure, including within new and existing developments, by:

a. delivering a high standard of design quality to maximise the social, economic, health and environmental benefits of green infrastructure;

b. providing a focus for social inclusion, community development and lifelong learning;

c. taking into account the guidelines and recommendations of relevant management plans and guidance, Biodiversity Action Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents;

d. contributing to the protection, conservation and management of historic landscapes, archaeological and built heritage assets;

e. achieving, where possible, a net gain of biodiversity;

f. providing new recreational facilities in accordance with Policy DM17, exploiting opportunities to link urban and countryside areas and to create new footpath and cycle links;

g. taking account of and integrating with natural processes, such as flood risk and utilising sustainable urban drainage; and

h. including proposals to 'green' existing and proposed developed areas by increasing opportunities for nature in domestic gardens, streets and buildings, including street trees and in and around formal open spaces and sports provision

CP 7 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment - providing for green infrastructure - indicators

1. Monitoring of indicators intended to demonstrate that the quality of the natural environment is maintained or enhanced with reference to:

a. percentage of completions on previously developed land;

b. average densities on permitted housing sites;

c. amount of best and most versatile agricultural land lost to significant scales of development;

d. planning permissions implemented involving planning condition(s) for remediation;

e. frequency of air pollution standards violations;

f. per capita emissions of 'conventional' air pollutants, including CO2, together with fuel consumption;

g. new designations of Air Quality Management Areas;

h. changes in landscape character area condition;

i. change to overall condition of SSSIs;

j. levels of new open space provided, especially natural/semi-natural greenspace. Review of open space assessment when required to determine access to local greenspace; and

k. the monitoring framework for the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy established by the North Kent Environmental Planning Framework.

2.1.7 **Protection from Flooding** (Faversham Creek)

In 2010 a Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Supplementary Statement for Faversham Creek, was developed and agreed by the Environment Agency. It provides guidance on the change of use or redevelopment of previously developed land within the 1:20 year flood risk area along the town's creek. Given the relatively confined nature of the floodplain in this area, which should enable safe access and escape in most instances, as well as the need for regeneration of the creek, a special designation was given to this area – Flood Zone 3a(i). This means that whilst there is an acknowledgement of the high flood risk in these areas, the strict national policy restrictions associated with functional floodplain (Flood Zone 3b) do not automatically apply. All development proposals will need to meet the requirements of the SFRA Supplementary Statement and be agreed by the Environment Agency as well as by Swale Borough Council. This work is being review in an updated SFRA, due in 2024.

Sustainable drainage systems provide a more natural approach to managing water close to its source. They can reduce the impact of development by slowing runoff to greenfield rates, encouraging infiltration, trapping pollutants, providing habitats for biodiversity, increasing amenity for residents through the provision of open space and increasing the potential for grey water recycling. These benefits also make an important contribution to local authority responsibilities under the Water Framework Directive. Drainage must be considered at the earliest stages of the development process to ensure that the most sustainable option can be delivered in all cases.

Policy DM 21 Water, flooding and drainage

> *When considering the water-related, flooding and drainage implications of development, development proposals will:*
>
> *1. Accord with national planning policy and planning practice guidance;*
>
> *2. Avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding and where development would increase flood risk elsewhere;*
>
> *3. Provide site specific flood risk assessments, as required, carried out to the satisfaction of the Environment Agency and, if relevant, the Internal Drainage Board. These will, where necessary, include details of new flood alleviation and flood defence measures to be installed and maintained by the developer;*
>
> *4. Include, where possible, sustainable drainage systems to restrict runoff to an appropriate discharge rate, maintain or improve the quality of the receiving watercourse, to enhance biodiversity and amenity and increase the potential for grey water recycling. Drainage strategies (including surface water management schemes) for major developments should be carried out to the satisfaction of the Lead Local Flood Authority;*

5. Integrate drainage measures within the planning and design of the project to ensure that the most sustainable option can be delivered, especially where, exceptionally, development is to be permitted in an area of flood risk;

6. Within areas at risk of flooding, submit a suitable flood warning and emergency plan that has been approved by the relevant emergency planning regime and, where appropriate, the emergency services; 254 Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan 2017 7 Development management policies

7. Where necessary, demonstrate that adequate water supply and wastewater connection and treatment infrastructure is in place before construction commences and that these details have been approved by the appropriate water company and funded by the development where appropriate;

8. Ensure future unconstrained access to the existing and future sewerage and water supply infrastructure for maintenance and up-sizing purposes;

9. Make efficient use of water resources and protect the yield of local public water supplies. For new residential development, all homes to be designed to achieve a minimum water efficiency of 110 litres per person per day, in line with the Government's Housing Optional Technical Standard for water efficiency; and

10. Protect water quality, including safeguarding ground water source protection zones from pollution, to the satisfaction of the Environment Agency.

DM 21 Water, flooding and drainage -Indicator

1. Monitoring of indicators intended to ensure that the risk to communities from flood risk/contamination is not increased with reference to:

a. the number of planning permissions granted for residential development in flood risk areas contrary to the advice of the Environment Agency;

b. the number of developments which use sustainable drainage systems;

c. the number of applications which do not receive approval for water supply and wastewater connection from the appropriate water company;

d. levels of water quality;

e. water consumption per capita (in so far as data collection is possible at Borough level); and

f. waste water treatment capacity.

Development has the potential to change surface water and ground water flows, depending on how the surface water is managed within the development proposal. Site specific Drainage Strategies should be submitted to the local planning authority

along with planning applications for major development (as defined within the Development Management Procedure Order 2015).

Some incidents of flooding along minor watercourses have occurred in the Borough as a result of unauthorised works and blockages. To ensure that development does not increase the risk of flooding or cause harm to the water environment, Land Drainage Consent, Flood Defence Consent or Flood Risk Activity Environmental Permits and other consents may be required for works, for example, within 16 metres of watercourses.

The Water Framework Directive requires a management plan for each river basin to be developed every six years, in England by the Environment Agency. Swale is within the Thames River Basin District (North Kent catchment) and its River Basin Management Plan, Water for Life and Livelihoods, defines the particular issues for this catchment as water quality, physical modifications to rivers and invasive non-native species. The plan looks to local authorities to help meet its objectives, for instance through the use of sustainable drainage, the promotion of water efficiency, through spatial planning decisions, the incorporation of green infrastructure and by working with the Catchment Partnership.

2.1.8 Coastal Protection

Swale's coastal assets: The Borough's 111km of coastline is the longest of any Kent district and combines a wide range of coastal assets: Sheerness Docks - a natural deep water harbour and historic former naval dockyard. Fishing port at Queenborough. Docks at Ridham. Leisure oriented marina and repair facilities at Otterham Quay. Harty and Oare landing stages. The seaside resorts of Sheerness, Minster, Warden and Leysdown. Water sports along the north Sheppey coast and in the borough's creeks. Swathes of wetlands and marshes, designated internationally and nationally for their biodiversity interest. Creeks, including Queenborough, Milton, Conyer, Oare, Lower Halstow and Faversham Geologically important cliffs on Sheppey. Local coastal paths and the regional Saxon Shore Way.

Policy DM 22 - The coast

> *Planning permission will be granted for development proposals at or near the coast subject to:*
>
> *1. Maintaining or enhancing access to the coast where it can be appropriately managed;*
>
> *2. The protection, enhancement or management as appropriate of biodiversity, landscape, seascape and coastal processes;*
>
> *3. Enabling wildlife to adapt to the effects of climate change, contributing towards the Local Plan's Natural Assets and Green Infrastructure Plan provided by Policy CP 7;*

4. No overriding conflict with the policies and proposals of the Shoreline Management Plans;

5. Proposals within the built up area boundaries as defined on the Proposals Maps , contributing to the rejuvenation of the developed coast, particularly where enhancing either existing industrial and maritime infrastructure, coastal heritage, tourism or environmental management;

6. Proposals at the undeveloped coast and its hinterland, supporting conservation and enhancement; and

7. Compliance with Policy DM 23 for the Coastal Change Management Area.

The Isle of Grain to South Foreland and the Medway Estuary and Swale Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) have been prepared by the South East Coastal Group and identify sustainable long-term management policies for Swale's coast in the face of climate change and sea-level rise.

The North Kent Recreational Disturbance Study (Footprint Ecology, 2013) has examined the combined effects of development across districts for their effects on the Special Protection Areas (SPA). The North Kent Environmental Planning Group have recently completed a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy and are currently looking at mechanisms to enable a process by which development contributions can provide funding for implementation on the North Kent Marshes.

The Coastal Change Management Area has been defined as the areas of coastline likely to be affected by physical changes to the coast, such as erosion, coastal landslip, permanent inundation (i.e. land lost permanently to the sea) and accretion (land increasing due to addition of sediment). It has been defined within Swale and shown on the Proposals Map with the agreement of the Environment Agency, using the experience gathered from the relevant Shoreline Management Plans, the North Sheppey Erosion Study, Swale's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment and the National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping project.

The CCMA includes an area along Sheppey's north coast where erosion occurs. This erosion area is separated into: Erosion Zone 1 (defined as land between the low water mark and the 50 year indicative erosion line on the Proposals Map); and Erosion Zone 2 (defined as land between the 50 year indicative erosion line and the 100 year indicative erosion line on the Proposals Map).

DM 23 Coastal change management area - indicators

1. Monitoring of indicators intended to ensure that the risk to communities from coastal change is minimised and managed with reference to: a. the

number of developments permitted within the CCMA and the number relocated away from it.

2.1.9 Protection from the negative impacts of development and infrastructure

Our core objectives: Provide the right housing to support demographic change and housing needs to regenerate and build stronger, greener communities

Part of avoiding impacts and achieving net gains for biodiversity is mitigation and, as a last resort, compensation. Development proposals must safeguard what is important, introduce new features and mitigate the remaining impacts, including use of compensation where unacceptable harm remains or where a net gain in biodiversity can be achieved. In such cases the Council will use existing, and develop new mechanisms to ensure adequate compensation.

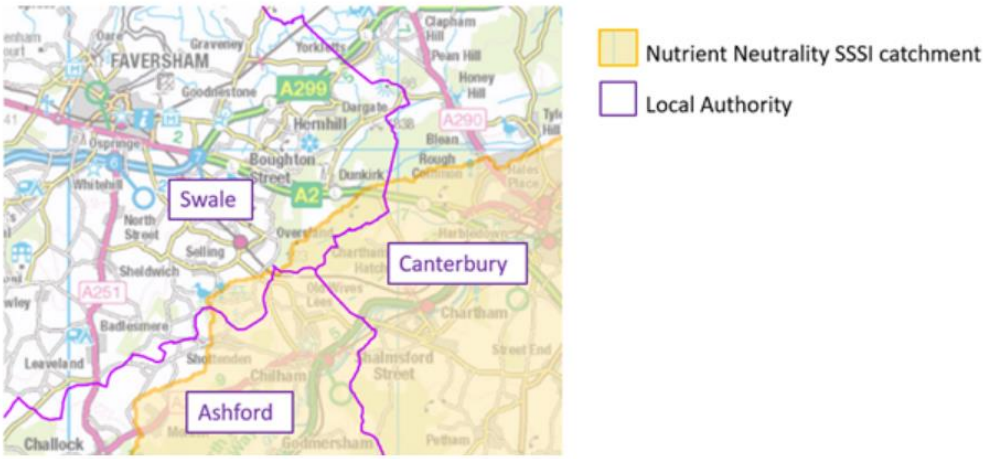
The Council also considers that Swale has the potential to become a centre for habitat creation as part of co-operation with other Councils. We will encourage the use of land here to potentially act as a receptor for mitigation and compensation of development schemes elsewhere in Kent and further afield when such actions cannot be taken closer to the point of impact and where such measures are not detrimental to the integrity of the Borough's own natural assets.

Partners are putting in place a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) that shall include the measures needed to mitigate growth. This shall also include a mechanism to ensure that residential development financially contributes toward mitigation measures, such as wardening, management or habitat creation that shall, in turn, be informed by the Green Infrastructure Strategy Map. The SAMMS will be used to support the determination of planning applications and inform any Local Plan review and the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy.

2.1.10 Nutrient Polluted Sites (Nutrient Neutrality)

Nutrient neutrality advice impacts a small part of Swale east and south of Dunkirk and east of Oversland.

The Stodmarsh Nature Reserve is in the Stour valley near Canterbury. It is protected as a National Nature Reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a Ramsar site as well as a Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation under the Habitats Directive. It is managed by Natural England. A review during 2017/18 identified that some of the lakes there had raised nitrogen and phosphorus levels. As a consequence, in July 2020, Natural England issued nutrient neutrality advice for the catchment that feeds the Stodmarsh Nature Reserve. This means that Local Planning Authorities can only approve development if they are certain it will not have an adverse effect on the Stodmarsh Nature Reserve habitat site.



2.2 RESTORING AND ENHANCING HABITATS

2.2.1 Green Infrastructure

Draft potential action plan framework (Draft Tree Strategy, 2024)

Goals:

- To safeguard existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows, employing the necessary mechanisms to conserve our outstanding resource - SBC will take a lead role in the stewardship of its trees and woodland on our own estate and wWork in partnership to achieve our goals.
- To capitalise on the benefits of green infrastructure by increasing tree planting and canopy cover and attracting investment to ensure delivery - Increase tree planting to deliver the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan's targets of 148,100 trees or 60 acres of woodland on Council land and work towards increasing tree coverage to 19% as outlined within KCC's Tree Establishment Strategy 2022- 2032. Maximise funding and incentives to deliver tree and woodland establishment.
- To actively promote and engage with people about trees and positively communicate our strategy to new and existing audiences - To celebrate our green environment and engage our communities with the natural environment

Swale Green Grid (GBI Strategy, 2020):

Swale's Green Grid Strategy was published in June 2016, and describes the Green Grid as a 'strategic, joined up approach to land management' to create multi-functional green spaces. The Green Grid involves a wide range of stakeholder interests across Swale, focussing on connecting green spaces and communities for a range of benefits. Six green infrastructure components comprise the opportunities which form the spatial structure of the Green Grid:

- Greenspaces
- Corridors
- Hubs
- Gateways
- Major development sites
- Wider area initiatives

Swale's Green Grid forms part of more strategic Green Grid approach operating at Kent (county) level. The aim is for a greenspace network of footpaths, cycleways and wildlife corridors to connect North Kent's countryside and estuary landscapes.

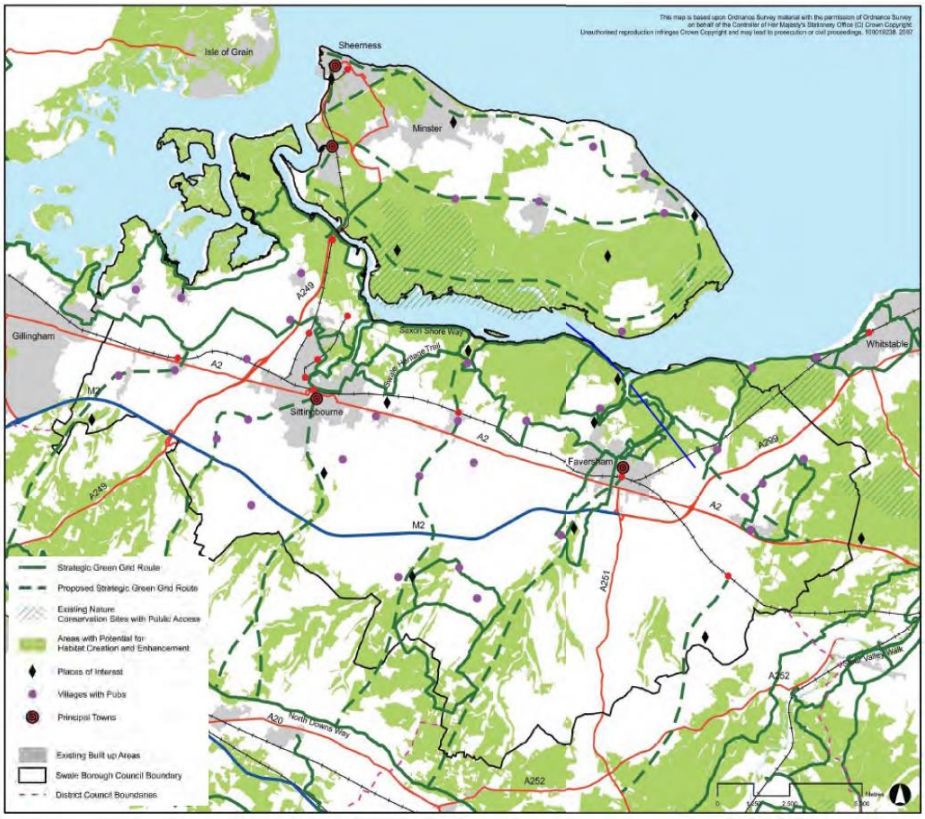


Figure 7: Swale Green Grid – Strategic Green Grid Framework (Source: Swale Green Grid Strategy, 2016)[23]

(GBI Strategy, 2020)

2.2.2 Nature Recovery Priority Areas (Biodiversity Baseline Study, 2020)

Using criteria set out above (pg 9-11 of report) the following three areas have been identified that could form the basis of a Swale LNRS, provide opportunities for delivering onsite and offsite BNG and guide planning policy in Swale where it relates to biodiversity. Separate consideration has also been given to Traditional Orchard priority habitat, which is found widely dispersed throughout the Borough and therefore does not easily fit within the ecological network approach applied to other habitats.

Swale Nature Recovery Priority Area:

This Nature Recovery Priority Area focuses around the internationally important wetlands and intertidal habitats of the Swale SPA/Ramsar/SSSI. The presence of high distinctiveness habitats and designated areas within the buffer zone. The coastal and intertidal habitats of the North Sheppey Coast from Minster to Leysdown have not been included for the purposes of this report given that they are under limited development pressure and contain limited opportunities for habitat restoration under BNG, however it may be appropriate to include this area within any future LNRS. It should be noted that much of this area is covered by statutory designations and therefore falls outside the scope of BNG, including all intertidal habitats. The specific habitat restoration priorities for this Nature Recovery Priority Area can be summarised as follows:

Floodplain Wetland Mosaic (FWM): FWM is a composite habitat in the UK Habitat Classification system, which is included because of its importance for providing habitat to aquatic birds and other animal species. It is also referred to as Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh in other classification systems and in the PHI. FWM incorporates a range of wetland habitat types including neutral grassland, reedbed, ditches and standing open water (these individual habitats are also presented separately in Figure 1 where they do not fall within an area classified as FWM). Priority should be given to enhancing, restoring and creating FWM habitat along the SPA/Ramsar/SSSI boundary in South Sheppey and between Sittingbourne and Faversham. FWM (referred to in the document as Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh) is identified as a priority in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy.

Neutral Grassland: Many areas adjoining the Swale SSSI are not suitable for restoration to FWM owing to the lack of suitable hydrology to create and enhance wetland features. Nevertheless these areas should not be excluded from consideration for BNG. Restoring these areas to Species-Rich Neutral Grassland would not create priority habitat, but would provide a valuable transitional buffer for wetland areas closer to the coast and provide additional habitat, particularly for bird species that are characteristic of the North Kent Marshes.

Former Industrial Land: The area surrounding the Swale has a long industrial history and contains a large number of sites with habitats associated with previous industrial use. This includes the priority habitat type Open Mosaic Habitat on Previously Developed Land, which is particularly important for rare invertebrates. This also includes open water in former quarries, and associate wet woodlands found in sites such as the Oare Gunpowder Works. Priority should be given to safeguarding, restoring and enhancing these sites. There are often opportunities to do this as part of onsite habitat compensation and GBI. Brownfield habitats are identified as a priority in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy.

Multifunctional Green Space as part of Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI): This Nature Recovery Priority Area borders the three main settlements in the

Borough: Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness. Therefore priority should be given to creating GBI that incorporates a variety of habitats, including those mentioned above but also including lowland deciduous and wet woodland habitat where appropriate, and also combines habitat creation with recreational facilities. In this way BNG has potential to contribute to the objectives of SBC's GBI strategy

North Downs Nature Recovery Priority Area

This Nature Recovery Priority Area is centred on the dry valleys of the dip slope of the North Downs. T presence of high distinctiveness habitats and designated areas within the buffer zone. The area consists of four linear concentrations of woodland and grassland high distinctiveness habitats that run from the southern boundary of the Borough towards Borden, Ospringe, Painter's Forstal and Selling respectively and also includes a small disconnected area around Queendown Warren in the far south west corner of the Borough. In the absence of statutory protected sites (other than a small section of Queendown Warren SSSI/SAC), a network of Local Wildlife Sites forms the spine of this Nature Recovery Priority Area. The priorities for this area are:

Woodlands : This Nature Recovery Priority Area contains large concentrations of Lowland Deciduous Woodland priority habitat and smaller sections of Lowland Beech and Yew Woodland priority habitat. Opportunities exist to enhance this woodland through improved management, and expanding the extent and improving connectivity through creation of new woodland. There is also potential to buffer existing areas of woodland with complementary areas of species-rich grassland, wood pasture and parkland and scrub. Any woodland restoration plan should be considered in the context of the wider mosaic of woodland and grassland that exists in this area, and woodland creation should be avoided in areas where creation or restoration of Lowland Calcareous Grassland priority habitat would be more appropriate. Both these types of woodland are identified as priorities in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy, and woodland creation has potential to contribute towards SBCs climate change strategy.

Grasslands: This Nature Recovery Priority Area contains smaller fragments of speciesrich calcareous and neutral grassland, particularly on the steep sides of dry valleys. Opportunities exist to enhance existing areas medium distinctiveness neutral and calcareous grassland to priority habitat condition, and create new medium and high distinctiveness grassland habitat on existing arable and modified grassland fields, particularly focusing on creation of Lowland Calcareous Grassland Priority Habitat. Lowland Calcareous Grassland is identified as a priority in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy

The Blean Nature Recovery Priority Area

The majority of the Blean woodland complex is located within the boundaries of Canterbury, with significant sections also found on the eastern edge of Swale. The section within Swale includes the eastern extremity of the Blean SSSI and SAC (this site is excluded for the purposes of BNG). The presence of high distinctiveness habitats and designated areas within the buffer zone. This Nature Recovery Priority Area is focused around a cluster of SSSI or LWS designated woodlands, composed mainly of lowland deciduous ancient woodland and conifer plantation habitat types. The Blean is distinguished from the woods of the North Downs owing to the prevalence of acid rather than calcareous soils, and as a result fragments of Lowland Heathland and Lowland Acid Grassland are also found in small pockets. The priorities for this area are:

Woodlands: The majority of this Nature Recovery Priority Area is composed of woodland. There are opportunities to improve management of existing Lowland Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat, restore existing areas of low distinctiveness conifer plantation to high distinctiveness Lowland Deciduous Woodland, and create new woodland on existing agricultural land adjoining woodland areas. As stated above, Lowland Deciduous Woodland is identified as a priority in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy.

Grasslands and heaths: The Blean is suitable for creating mosaics of woodland combined with (depending on soil conditions) Lowland Heathland priority habitat, Lowland Acid Grassland priority habitat and Neutral Grassland (either as priority Lowland Meadow or medium distinctiveness Neutral Grassland habitats). This could be combined with restoration of existing conifer plantations. Both Lowland Heathland and Lowland Acid Grassland are identified as priorities in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy.

Borough Wide Priority – Traditional Orchards

Swale, and particularly the area between Sittingbourne and Faversham, is noted for its long-standing tradition of fruit growing. The remaining relict traditional orchards can be found scattered throughout the Borough and form an important part of the both it's natural and historic heritage. The distribution of traditional orchards shows that this priority habitat type does not easily fit within any of the other priority habitat networks found in the Borough. As a result, a separate Borough-wide strategy is required to safeguard and enhance existing traditional orchards and create new traditional orchard habitat. The Kent Biodiversity Strategy identifies Traditional Orchards as a priority, highlighting how development can be an appropriate mechanism for restoring or creating this habitat as an integral part of GBI within development footprints.

Priorities in this respect should be to avoid any loss of Traditional Orchard as a result of development, and where appropriate incorporating new or existing traditional orchards into development master plans. As a caveat, "community orchards" are often incorporated into development in circumstances when other habitats would be

more suitable for a particular location. Therefore, any plans to create new traditional orchard habitat should be reviewed to ensure that this habitat type would be in keeping with the character and ecological features appropriate to the particular location.

Appendix M. Figure 13 SHLAA

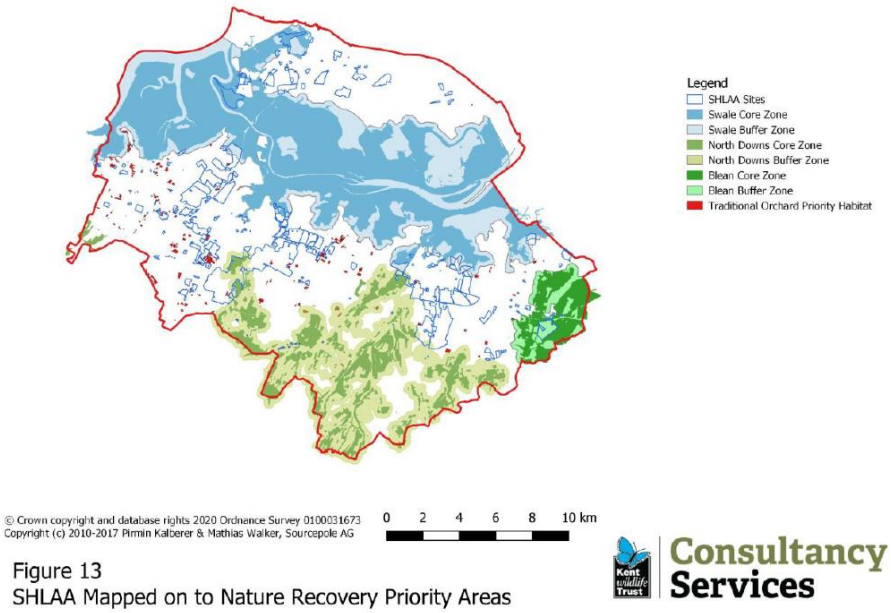


Figure 13
SHLAA Mapped on to Nature Recovery Priority Areas

Kent Wildlife Trust | Consultancy Services

2.2.3 Local Wildlife Sites

The Local Wildlife Site (LWS) network – there are 32 non-statutory designated LWSs in the Borough, concentrated primarily in the North Downs, on the edge of the Swale SSSI and in the Blean. The extent of identified Nature Recovery Priority Areas should prioritise restoring LWSs where there is scope for improving condition and enhancing habitat networks between them (subject to securing consent from private landowners where appropriate). (Biodiversity Baseline Study, 2020)

2.2.4 Biodiversity Action Plan

UK Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats:

Chalk grassland, acid grassland, neutral grassland, wood-pasture and parkland, vegetated shingle, maritime cliffs, reedbeds, arable field margins, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, intertidal mudflats (littoral sediment), saltmarsh, ponds, traditional orchards and hedgerows.

Kent Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats:

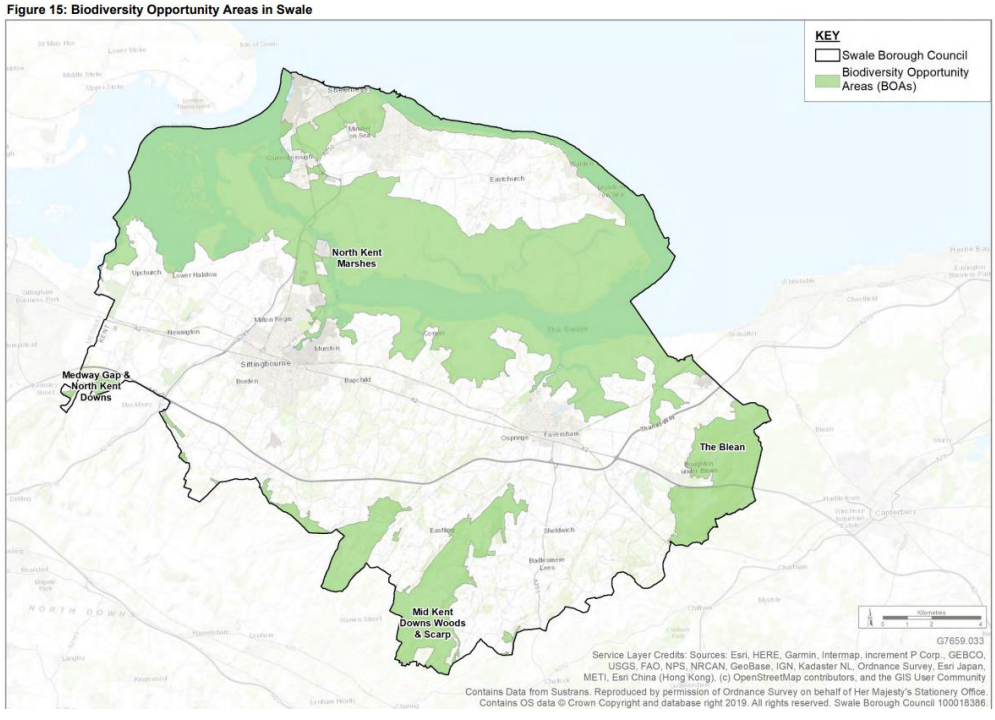
Ancient and/or species rich hedgerows, built-up areas and gardens, cereal field margins, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, coastal saltmarsh, coastal vegetated shingle, standing open water, wet woodland, lowland calcareous grassland, maritime cliff and slope, mixed broadleaved woodland and plantations, lowland wood-pasture and parkland, mudflats, old orchards, reedbeds, and lowland meadow.

Swale Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats: Orchards, estuary habitats, woodlands, wildflower grassland, farmland, built-up areas and gardens.

2.2.5 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

Kent Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) – BOAs identify parts of the Kent where the greatest opportunities exist to enhance ecological networks through habitat enhancement, restoration and creation at a county scale. Four BOAs are located partially within Swale and are illustrated in Figure 4: the North Kent Marshes, the Blean, the Mid Kent Downs Woods and Scarp and a small section of the Medway Gap and North Kent Downs. (Biodiversity Baseline Study, 2020)

Figure 15: Biodiversity Opportunity Areas in Swale



(GBI Strategy, 2020)

North Kent Marshes (GBI Strategy, 2020)

The North Kent Marshes is an open and remote landscape characterised by grazing marsh associated with wetlands, and the marshes are almost in their entirety designated for their national and international importance for their breeding and wintering bird populations.

Targets include:

- Protect and enhance existing important marine and terrestrial habitats
- Deliver more, bigger, better and connected habitats
- Restore grazing marsh on improved grassland
- Create new intertidal mudflat and saltmarsh
- Maintain total extent of coastal vegetated shingle habitat
- Maintain and enhance important ecological features within new development and create ecological networks within the built environment
- Implement a sustainable access strategy, including the creation of alternative natural greenspace

Mid Kent Downs Wood and Scarp (GBI Strategy, 2020)

The area is within the Kent Downs AONB and contains a high number of Local Wildlife Sites. The area is characterised by important dense woodlands, steep-sided valleys and productive agricultural land.

Targets include:

- Protect, manage and enhance existing habitats
- Restore and recreate chalk grassland to create large, continuous blocks on the scarp and on suitable soils in dip slope valleys
- Enhance species-rich neutral grassland
- Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland and extend and reconnect fragmented, dip-slope woodlands
- Complement dip-slope woodlands by buffering with seminatural habitats.

Blean Woodland (GBI Strategy, 2020)

The Blean is in the east of Swale and is one of the biggest complexes of ancient semi-natural woodland in England, with much of it designated as NNR, SSSI and LWS. It is of particular importance for birds and several threatened butterfly species.

Targets include:

- No loss of ancient semi-natural woodland and its mosaic of associated habitats
- Enhance and reconnect woodland to create a very extensive block of habitat

• Restore conifer plantations on ancient woodland sites to suitable, wooded habitat
• At least 50ha of heath and acid grassland (including grazed wooded heath) should be restored or enhanced as part of the woodland matrix
• Creation of acid grassland and heathland
• Enhance species-rich neutral grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Meadow quality.

Blean Woodlands in the east of Swale extends across the border into Canterbury district, and covers a total of eleven square miles.

The areas of woodland comprising the Blean which fall within Swale's borough boundary include:

• South Blean Woods
• South Bishops Den Woods
• Blean Woods NNR
• Blean Wood
• Ellenden Wood
• Victory Wood

The cross-border nature of the Blean woodlands represents an opportunity for continued cross-border management of the Blean with Canterbury. The Big Blean Walk, a 25 mile circular walk through all of the Blean woodlands invites people to explore the history and nature of the area through interactive panels.

Medway Gap and North Kent Downs (GBI Strategy, 2020)

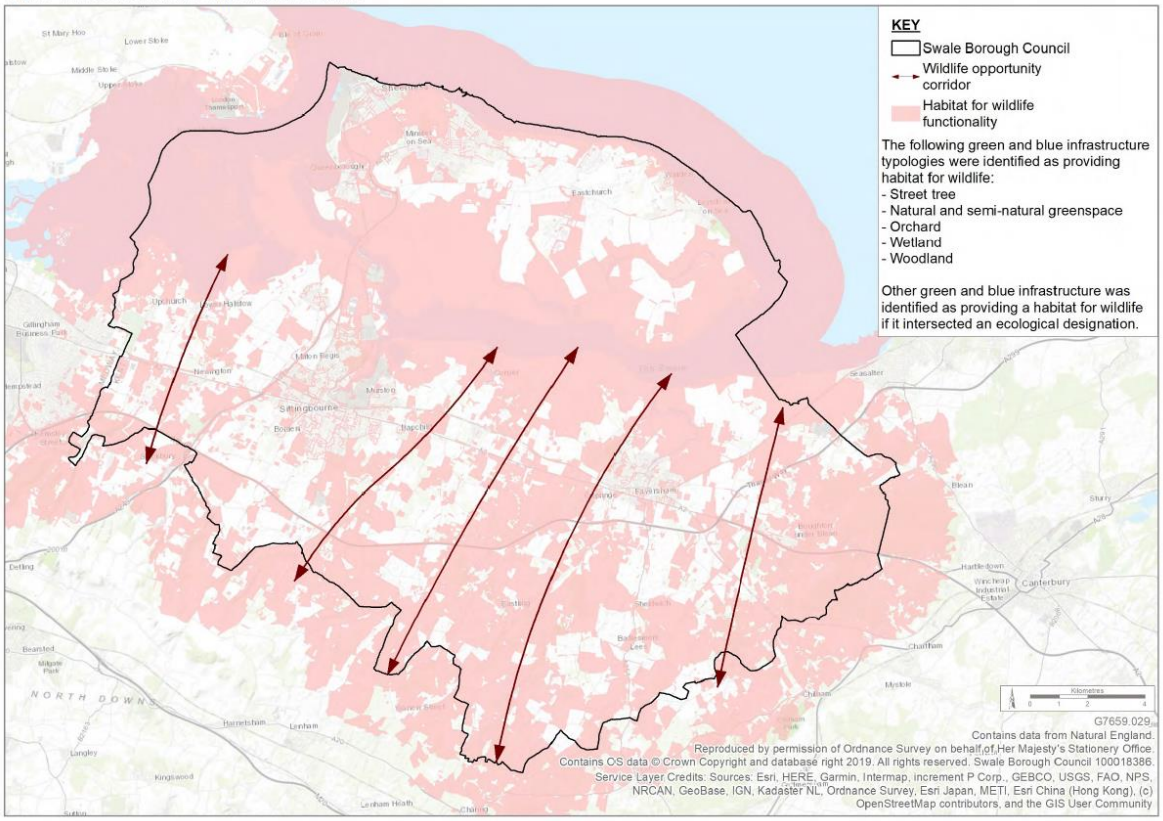
As shown on Figure 15, a very small section of the Medway Gap and North Kent Downs BOA falls within Swale. This small section comprises patches of woodland, a characteristic feature of the BOA as a whole.

2.3 HABITAT CREATION

2.3.1 Wildlife Opportunity Corridors

The existing wildlife corridors primarily run east-west, meaning there is scope for improving north-south habitat connectivity across Swale. Figure 17 uses data on existing habitats across Swale, and provides some indicative opportunities for wildlife connectivity from north to south. Where possible, the opportunity corridors follow the line of various landscape features such as watercourses and creeks such as the White Drain in the east. As well as connecting the habitats shown on Figure 17 through habitat creation, habitats may also need enhancement for securing well connected and thriving corridors for the movement of species. (GBI Strategy, 2020)

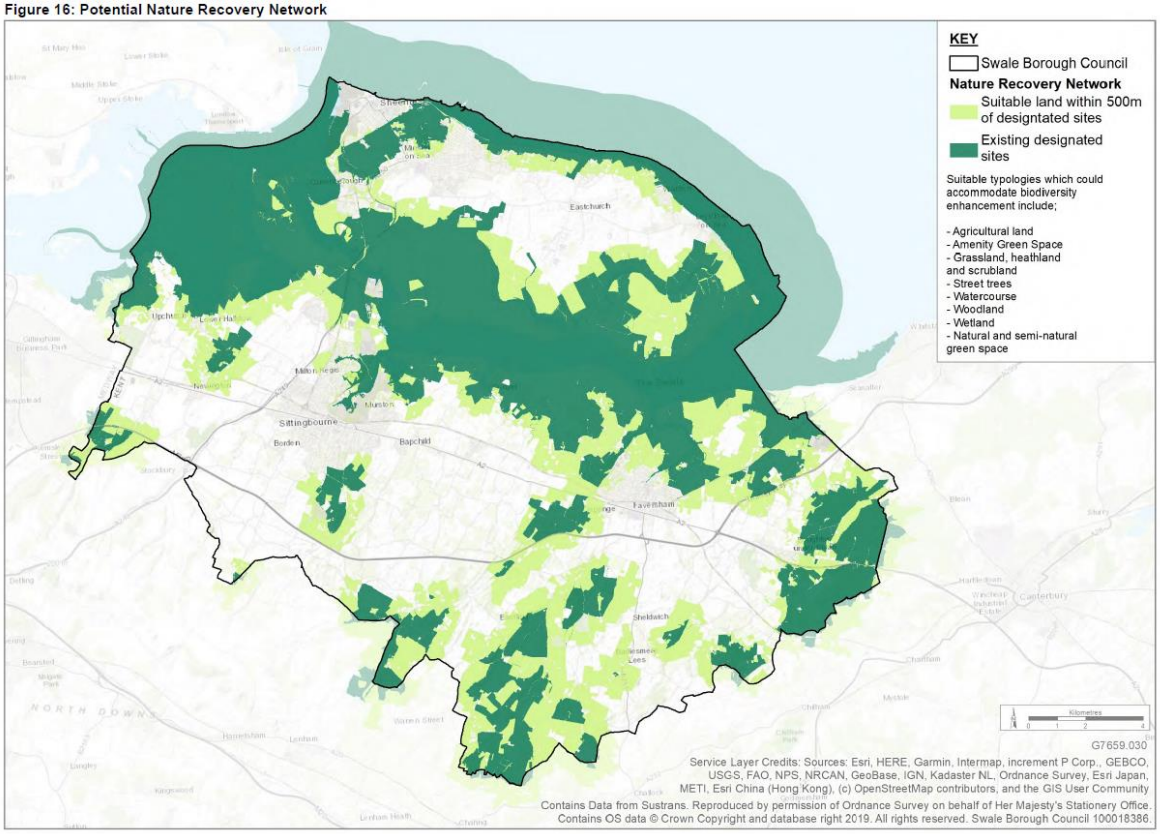
Figure 17: Potential Wildlife Opportunity Corridors



(GBI Strategy, 2020)

2.3.2 Potential Nature Recovery Network

Figure 16: Potential Nature Recovery Network



(GBI Strategy, 2020)

2.3.3 Green and Blue Infrastructure Network

A Green and Biodiverse Borough (GBI Strategy, 2020):

1. Identify opportunities for town centre greening (using native species where feasible)
2. Increase urban tree planting for corridor greening
3. Optimise existing parks and green spaces to create multifunctional, useable spaces
4. Promote provision of multifunctional GBI in new development including both residential and employment uses

A Healthy Blue Environment (GBI Strategy, 2020):

1. Consider opportunities for Sustainable Drainage Systems – recognise work of the BEGIN project in creating flagship projects, note link to community engagement and stewardship
2. Develop opportunities to improve water quality
3. Protect, enhance and enable sustainable access to the wide range of waterways and water based habitat

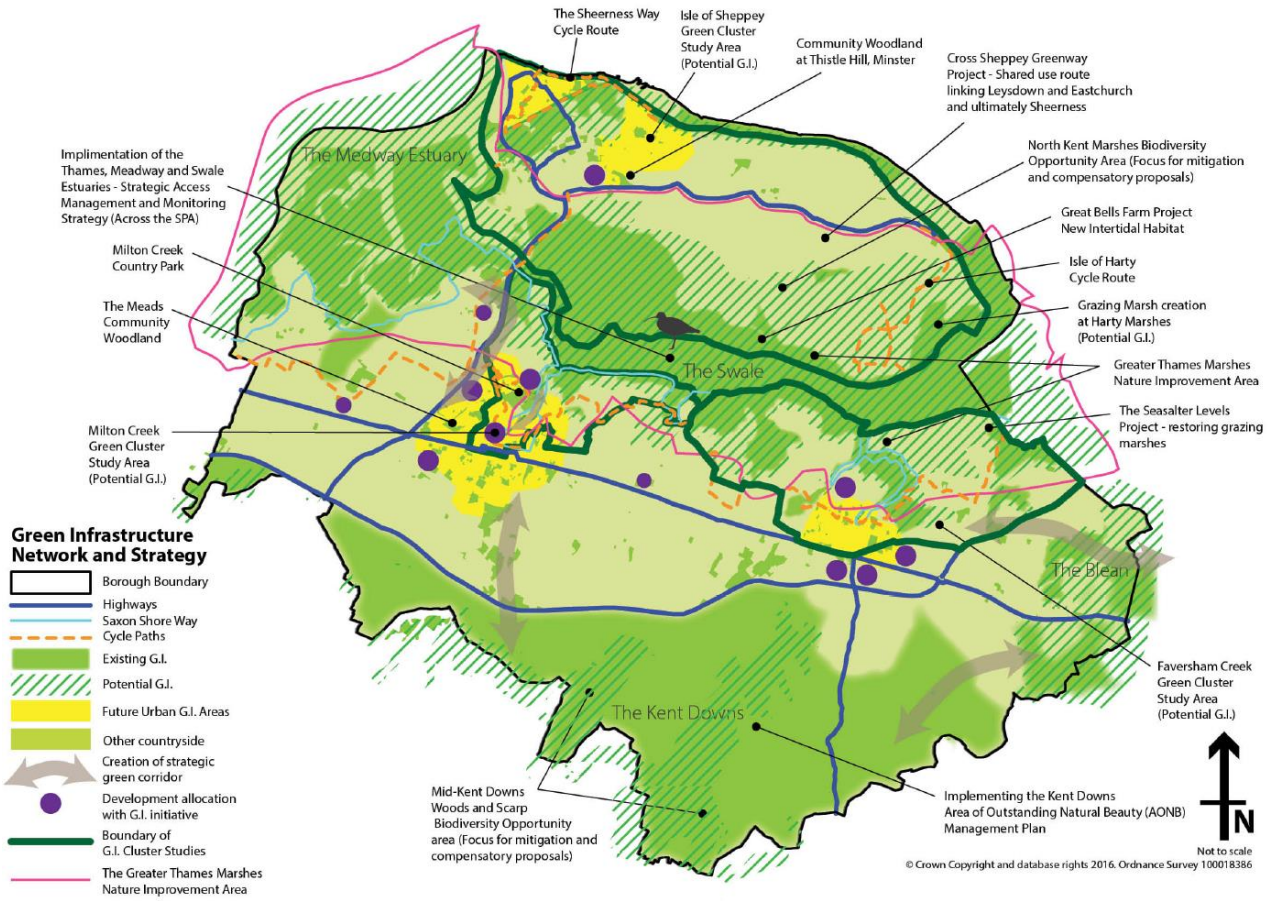
The Swale natural assets and green infrastructure network and strategy

Creating a natural assets and green infrastructure network and strategy draws upon a considerable number of sources of evidence. These are outlined in Appendix 1. As well as informing the strategy, use of these documents in the preparation of development proposals and in partnership working is strongly encouraged.

A natural assets and green infrastructure network for Swale has been defined and mapped from this evidence base, comprising two main broad elements. These are:

1. The existing network: comprising open space, the principal public footpath network and landscape and biodiversity designations. This forms the basis of maintaining and enhancing the existing level of assets in the face of future change; and

2. The future network shows where the network might be extended on a strategic scale, for example: as a result of an assessment of sports or open space needs; where biodiversity may need to change and or migrate as a result of future climate change; where habitats and landscapes are lost as a result of development that may need to be mitigated or compensated for in locations such as Biodiversity Opportunity Areas; and where there are obvious gaps that can be filled to make for a more comprehensive and cohesive network.



(GBI Strategy, 2020)

2.3.4 **Tree Planting** (Draft Tree Strategy, 2024)

In addition to existing trees, Swale Borough Council has an ambitious tree planting in response to the Climate and Ecological Emergency declared by the Council on 26 June 2019. Within its Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan the Council is aiming to:

- Plant 148,100 trees or 60 acres of woodland on Council land to offset 20% of council emissions by 2025.
- Establish a baseline of trees and woodland on council land and develop a funded action plan to increase tree cover in Swale and promote the benefits of sequestration.
- Ensure the installation and maintenance of landscaping in new developments to contribute to biodiversity net gain via suitable conditions or Section 106 agreements.
- Encourage coppicing of council woodland to promote biodiversity and use of local woodland products in Swale's country parks.
- Engage business and community groups to support tree planting and conservation work.

2.3.5 **Habitat Compensation- Build Flood Defences** (MEASS)

We cannot stop sea level rise but we can try and compensate for the loss of habitat caused by our built flood defences, by creating new areas of suitable habitat. Future management of the coastline will need to protect the natural environment and be cost-effective. This may mean that in certain areas formal defences may need to be withdrawn in the future to let more natural evolution of the habitats. An assessment of the potential coastal squeeze of intertidal mudflat and saltmarsh habitat, as well as impacts to freshwater habitat from not defending the coastline or not raising defences in line with sea level rise. We have worked very closely with Natural England, RSPB and Kent Wildlife Trust to ensure that the least damaging schemes are proposed. Within MEASS, a study has been done which estimates a total loss of saltmarsh over the next 100 years of 113ha (0-20 years), 140ha (21-50 years), and 308ha (51-100 years). The Strategy looks to address this by creating Managed Realignment Sites which will aim to provide areas to create additional intertidal habitat

2.3.6 Within development and infrastructure

Policy DM 19 Sustainable design and construction

> *Demonstration of a contribution to the network of green infrastructure and biodiversity, including through tree planting, green roofs and walls, soft landscaping and sustainable drainage systems as appropriate in accordance with Policy CP 7;*

Policy DM 28 Biodiversity and geological conservation

Development proposals will conserve, enhance and extend biodiversity, provide for net gains in biodiversity where possible, minimise any adverse impacts and compensate where impacts cannot be mitigated.

Part B: All Sites Development proposals will:

1. Apply national planning policy in respect of the preservation, restoration and re-creation of:

- *The habitats, species and targets in UK and local Biodiversity Action Plans and Biodiversity Strategies;*
- *Linear and continuous landscape features or those acting as stepping-stones for biodiversity;*
- *Aged or veteran trees and irreplaceable habitat, including ancient woodland and traditional orchards;*

2. Be informed by and further the guidelines and biodiversity network potential of the Council's Landscape Character and Biodiversity Assessment SPD;
3. Support, where appropriate, the vision and objectives of relevant environmental and biodiversity management and action plans;
4. Be accompanied by appropriate surveys undertaken to clarify constraints or requirements that may apply to development, especially where it is known or likely that development sites are used by species, and/or contain habitats, that are subject to UK or European law;
5. When significant harm cannot be avoided through consideration of alternative sites or adequate mitigation provided on-site or within the immediate locality, compensatory measures will be achieved within the relevant Biodiversity Opportunity Area, or other location as agreed by the Local Planning Authority;
6. Provide, where possible, a net gain of biodiversity overall; and
7. Actively promote the expansion of biodiversity within the design of new development and with reference to the wider natural assets and green infrastructure strategy in Policy CP7.

2.3.7 Monitoring

DM 28 Biodiversity and geological conservation - indicators

1. Monitoring of indicators intended to conserve or enhance biodiversity within the overall context of achieving a net gain in biodiversity with reference to:
a. a review of planning approvals where contrary to Policy;
b. the amount of new habitat created by new development, especially natural/semi-natural greenspace;
c. the number of SSSIs in favourable condition and other monitoring of biodiversity designations; and
d. any monitoring undertaken of Kent Biodiversity Action Plan/Kent Biodiversity Strategy, including habitats created.

2.4 SPECIES SPECIFIC

SECTION 3: WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

3.1 GOAL 2: AIR QUALITY

Swale currently has five Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), four of which are in Sittingbourne and one in Faversham, suggesting that implementing GBI for maximum air quality benefits should be targeted within these spaces. Section 6.0 addresses proposed interventions in Swale's towns which can contribute to improved air quality. (GBI Strategy, 2020)

5 AQMAs are provided below (Air Quality Action Plan, 2023)

AQMA 1: Newington, (A2 /High St) - declared in 2009;
AQMA 2: Ospringe Street, Faversham (A2/Ospringe) - declared in June 2011 and revised (as AQMA 6) to the Mount in May 2016;
AQMA 3: East Street, Sittingbourne (A2/Canterbury Road) - declared January 2013;
AQMA 4: St Paul's Street, Milton, Sittingbourne (B2006) - declared January 2013;
AQMA 5: Teynham (A2 /London Rd) - declared December 2015.
AQMA 7: Keycol Hill (A2) – DECLARED October 2020

Teynham (AQMA 5) and East Street (AQMA 3) are soon to be undeclared as AQMAs

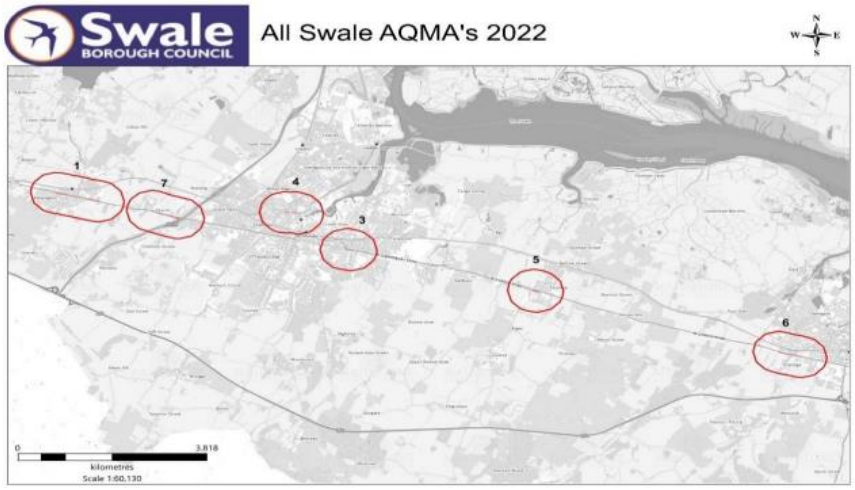


Figure 1. All Swale AQMA's 2022

NB. The small red outlines are the AQMAs. This includes buffer areas to aid viewing and have no reflection on the size or spatial context of the AQMAs.

3.2 GOAL 3: CLEAN AND PLENTIFUL WATER (Local Plan, 2017)

All new development has a responsibility to seek to manage demand for water and make efficient use of this resource. In this way the reliance on new water resources is reduced and less demand is placed on the environment and water bill payers.

Their Water Resources Management Plan assumes new development will be built to at least 105 litres/person/day and ask that the planning authority ensure that this design and construction standard is enforced.

Policy DM 21 promotes water efficiency in new development, requiring new homes to be designed to achieve a minimum water efficiency of 110 litres per person per day, the most efficient level enforceable under the government's Housing: Optional Technical Standards and a standard that has been endorsed by the two water companies within Swale, the Environment Agency and the relevant Catchment Partnership, the North Kent Catchment Improvement Group (hosted by the Medway Swale Estuary Partnership and the South East Rivers Trust).

This policy also addresses the issue of water resources in new development by requiring applicants to secure the agreement of water companies with regards to water supply before development commences.

Source Protection Zones (SPZs) are used to control activities close to drinking water supplies. Developments proposed in sensitive groundwater areas, such as SPZs, or close to any controlled water features, need to be assessed for the risk the development may have on the immediate and surrounding water quality. This will involve assessing current water quality and the effect the physical development may have on water quality (e.g. reducing infiltration to groundwater or introducing a pollutant linkage).

The principles and guidelines contained in the Environment Agency's Groundwater Protection: Principles and Practice GP3 (November 2012) should be followed. The Environment Agency will need to be satisfied that development will not harm groundwater.

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

Our core objectives (Local Plan, 2017):

1. Adapt to climate change with innovation, reduced use of resources, managed risk to our communities and opportunities for biodiversity to thrive.

Carbon Emissions (Local Plan, 2017):

Homes, transport and, unusually for Kent, industry, are the biggest carbon emitters. There are major opportunities for the low carbon sectors of the economy, especially at the Port of Sheerness and the Isle of Sheppey prisons

Swale Climate Action Plan (Swale Climate Action):

In 2020 we published our Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan. This sets out the actions we need to take to achieve net-zero across our estate by 2025 and net-zero across the borough by 2030.

Top 10 Priorities:

For 2023, our top 10 key priority actions are:
1. retro-fit Swale House to cut carbon emissions
2. develop, adopt and implement an EV strategy
3. tree planting on council land (target; 148,100 trees or 60 acres of woodland) to offset 20% of council emissions
4. improve facilities and incentives for walking and cycling
5. increase engagement with our staff, including a review of business travel
6. support businesses to reduce carbon emissions and improve ecology and biodiversity
7. set up an offset fund
8. establish and promote a car club in Faversham.
9. ensure LED lighting is fitted across the our estate, including parks and open spacesimprove air quality, focusing on AQMAs along the A2 and the establishment of a Clean Air Zone

Ecology and Biodiversity Action Plan (Climate Change and Ecological Emergency):

	Dept.	Action	Timescale	Annual Carbon Reduction (tCO_2e)	Progress
Actions Swale Borough Council can take:					
1	**CEL**	**Tree planting on council land (target; 148,100 trees or 60 acres of woodland) to offset 20% of council emissions.**	**2025**	**1,481t offset (25t to date)**	**2,500 trees planted in country parks 2019/20**
2	Planning	To use planning policy (local plan and a supplementary planning document) to improve development outcomes which support access and recreation, green spaces, biodiversity and climate change adaptation and mitigation.	Short	Medium	Ongoing
3	CEL	Establish a baseline of trees and woodland on council land and develop a funded action plan to increase tree cover in Swale and promote the benefits of sequestration.	Short	Medium	
4	Planning	Ensure the installation and maintenance of landscaping in new developments to contribute to biodiversity net gain via suitable conditions or Section 106 agreements.	Short	Medium	Ongoing
5	CEL	Minimise use of fertilizers, pesticides and weed killers.	Short	Small	
6	CEL	Promote use of locally produced compost derived from garden and food waste collections	Short	Small	
Actions we can take in partnership with others					
7	CEL	Encourage coppicing of council woodland to promote biodiversity and use of local woodland products in Swale's country parks.	Short	Small	

Mitigation in Development (Local Plan, 2017):

Policy DM 19 Sustainable design and construction

1. Development proposals will include measures to address and adapt to climate change in accordance with national planning policy and guidance and, where appropriate, will incorporate the following:

2. Development proposals should, where appropriate, be located, oriented and designed to take advantage of opportunities for decentralised, low and zero carbon energy, including passive solar design, and, connect to existing or planned decentralised heat and/or power schemes.

3. All new non-residential developments will aim to achieve BREEAM 'Good' standard or equivalent as a minimum. All new non-residential developments over 1,000 sq m gross floor area should aim to achieve the BREEAM "Very Good" standard or equivalent as a minimum.

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 (Local Plan, 2017)

The NPPF states that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs and that they have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty

Policy ST 1 Delivering sustainable development in Swale

> *Using landscape character assessments to protect, and where possible, enhance, the intrinsic character, beauty and tranquillity of the countryside, with emphasis on the estuarine, woodland, dry valley, down-land and horticultural landscapes that define the landscape character of Swale;*

The NPPF explains that planning policies should aim to identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.It also emphasises the role good design can have on protecting dark landscapes.Tranquillity is a valuable resource that once lost is difficult to regain, it having benefits to health and well being as well as to green infrastructure. It is associated with quiet places, surrounded by elements of nature and is most commonly found in an uncluttered and peaceful countryside, but also within urban areas – for instance in a leafy urban square or park where birdsong is audible. Tranquillity is also often associated with dark skies and the absence of light pollution from roads and built up areas.
The Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal 2011 highlighted tranquillity as a feature of several areas of the Borough, whilst the Campaign to Protect Rural England have also drawn up a Tranquillity Map for Kent and using this data a Swale section of this map has been developed as a pictorial guide to areas of higher or lower tranquillity, indicative and relative tranquility in Swale (CPRE Map localised by SBC)

3.9.2 Heritage (Local Plan, 2017)

Our core objectives: Conserve and enhance our historic and natural assets as the means to drive regeneration, tourism, and environmental quality and to reverse declines in their condition.

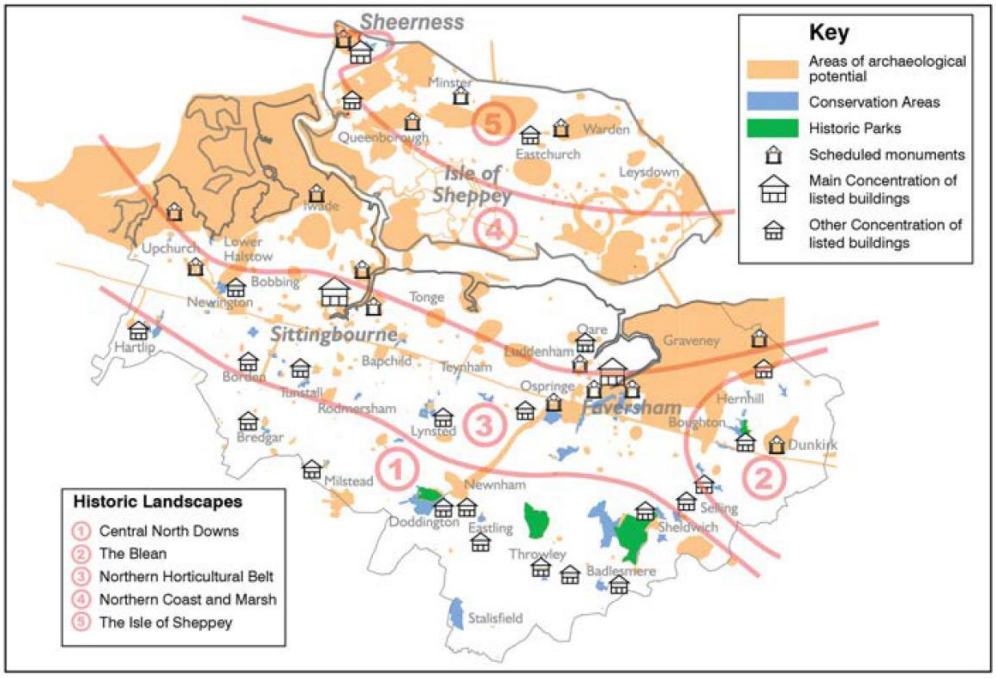
Within historic landscapes, historic patterns of land use define the ‘grain’ of existing patterns of settlement and landscape. As with urban development, new development is more likely to be successfully integrated into the Borough if it complements what has gone before. Its layout should take account of the historic landscape of the area. Existing patterns of roads, lanes, paths, hedgerow networks and field boundaries should help to shape new development, allowing the older landscape to show through the modern development. Historic landscape analysis will enable

judgements to be made about the relative importance of different components of the landscape so that priorities can be set for preservation and enhancement.

Policy CP 8 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

To support the Borough's heritage assets, the Council will prepare a Heritage Strategy. Development will sustain and enhance the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets to sustain the historic environment whilst creating for all areas a sense of place and special identity. Development proposals will, as appropriate:

1. Accord with national planning policy in respect of heritage matters, together with any heritage strategy adopted by the Council;
2. Sustain and enhance the significance of Swale's designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings in a manner appropriate to their significance and, where appropriate, in accordance with Policies DM 32-DM 36;
3. Respond to the integrity, form and character of settlements and historic landscapes;
4. Bring heritage assets into sensitive and sustainable use within allocations, neighbourhood plans, regeneration areas and town centres, especially for assets identified as being at risk on national or local registers;
5. Respond positively to the conservation area appraisals and management strategies prepared by the Council;
6. Respect the integrity of heritage assets, whilst meeting the challenges of a low carbon future;and
7. Promote the enjoyment of heritage assets through education, accessibility, interpretation andimproved access.

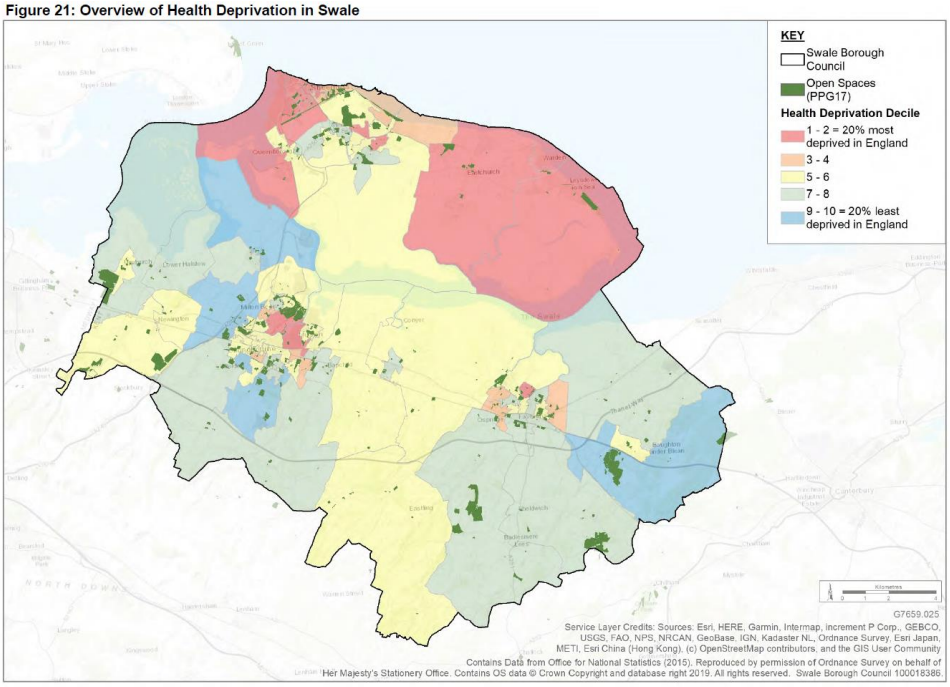


Map 5.7.1 Indicative location of main heritage assets in Swale

3.9.3 Health and wellbeing

Within Swale significant health inequalities exist, with an 11.7 year difference in life expectancy between the two ends of the deprivation scale (Figure 21) and the 2014 obesity rate was 20.9% in comparison to 24% for Canterbury and Coastal Kent. On the Isle of Sheppey, obesity levels in year six children were the highest for Swale in 2017. (GBI Strategy, 2020)

Figure 21: Overview of Health Deprivation in Swale



(GBI Strategy, 2020)

Key Findings (GBI Strategy, 2020):

- Large areas of the Isle of Sheppey, particularly the east of the Island comprising Eastchurch, Leysdown-on-Sea are within the 20% most deprived areas in England in terms of health
- The least deprived areas in terms of health are in the south and north west of Sittingbourne and around the Blean Woodland
- The least deprived area in the north west of the borough comprises mainly marshland and is a largely unsettled landscape.

Research undertaken as part of Swale's Active Lives Framework (2017) found that 24% of Swale's population are 'Inactive' doing less than 30 minutes of activity per week. Providing all Swale's residents with good access to GBI can raise levels of physical activity such as walking and cycling, having secondary health benefits such as reducing obesity and improving overall levels of health. GBI methods are a cost effective method of improving public health outcomes. (GBI Strategy, 2020)

GBI does not only provide physical benefits for health, but also there is substantial evidence that GBI can have positive mental health benefits. 17.5% of Swale's population suffers from mental illness, so providing GBI alongside social prescribing which encourages interaction with nature and space for passive relaxation are essential in creating sustainable communities in our borough. (GBI Strategy, 2020)

Key health facts for Swale (Local Plan, 2017):

1. The health of people in Swale is mixed when compared with the average for England. The Public Health England publication Swale Health Profile 2014 reveals levels of health/deprivation significantly worse than the England average in the following areas: children in poverty; violent crime; long term unemployment; smoking status at time of delivery; breastfeeding initiation; under 18 conceptions; obese adults; excess weight in adults; recorded diabetes; and smoking related deaths.

2. There are significant health inequalities depending on where people live within the Borough. The life expectancy for those living in the 20% most deprived areas of Swale (west and east Sheppey, Murston, Milton Regis, Kemsley and Davington Priory) is about eight years lower for men, and approximately five years lower for women, than for those living in the least deprived areas.

3. The highest crime levels in the Borough are in Sheerness, Leysdown, Kemsley, Milton Regis, Murston, the rural area around Teynham, part of the St Ann's ward and part of the Abbey ward in Faversham.

Policy CP 5 Health and wellbeing (Local Plan, 2017)

> *The Council, working in conjunction with relevant organisations, communities and developers, will promote, protect and work to improve the health of Swale's population, and reduce health inequalities. Development proposals will, as appropriate:*
>
> *3. Safeguard or provide as appropriate, open space, sport and recreation in accordance with Policy DM 17, additionally enabling access to nature in accordance with the Local Plan Natural Assets and Green Infrastructure Strategy in Policy CP 7;*
>
> *4. Promote healthier options for transport, including cycling and walking;*
>
> *5. Improve or increase access to a healthy food supply such as allotments, markets and farm shops;*
>
> *7. Create a healthy environment that regulates local climate by providing open space and greenery to achieve shading and cooling, particularly within existing urban environments; and*
>
> *8. Undertake and implement a Health Impact Assessment for relevant proposals that are: a. required to undertake Environmental Impact*

Assessments; or b. within Swale's most deprived wards; or c. identified as required by the Local Plan.

As well as providing the attractive environments within which people will want to live, work and invest, green infrastructure has the following multiple benefits to the health and wellbeing of both people and nature (Local Plan, 2017):

- new open space and facilities to increase participation in sport and recreation;
- connections with our natural environment;
- new and enhanced habitats for biodiversity, including when the mitigation of adverse development
- impacts arising from development becomes necessary;
- resilience and adaptation of species and habitats to climate change;
- the opportunity to manage the risks to those in vulnerable areas such as from flooding;
- the conservation and enhancement of valued landscapes, spaces and heritage;
- counters to the effects of noise and pollution; and a safe network of car free routes linking home, work, school and areas of recreation.

CP 5 Health and wellbeing – indicators (Local Plan, 2017)

1. Monitoring of indicators associated with healthy communities to show improved quality of life with reference to:

g. levels of new open space and sports facilities provided;

3.9.4 Access to nature (GBI Strategy, 2020)

The borough has a good existing network of footpaths with links to the Saxon Shore Way and a range of long distance paths. However, in some places, the routes are fragmented and safety can be an issue due to poor route management creating overgrown footpaths.

Fragmented sustainable links including footpaths and cycle ways can also mean fragmented habitats. The way in which places are connected by networks of footpaths and cycleways influences how people travel around, impacting on how much physical exercise people undertake on a daily basis. Swale has an ageing population so GBI which is accessible for all ages is becoming increasingly important.

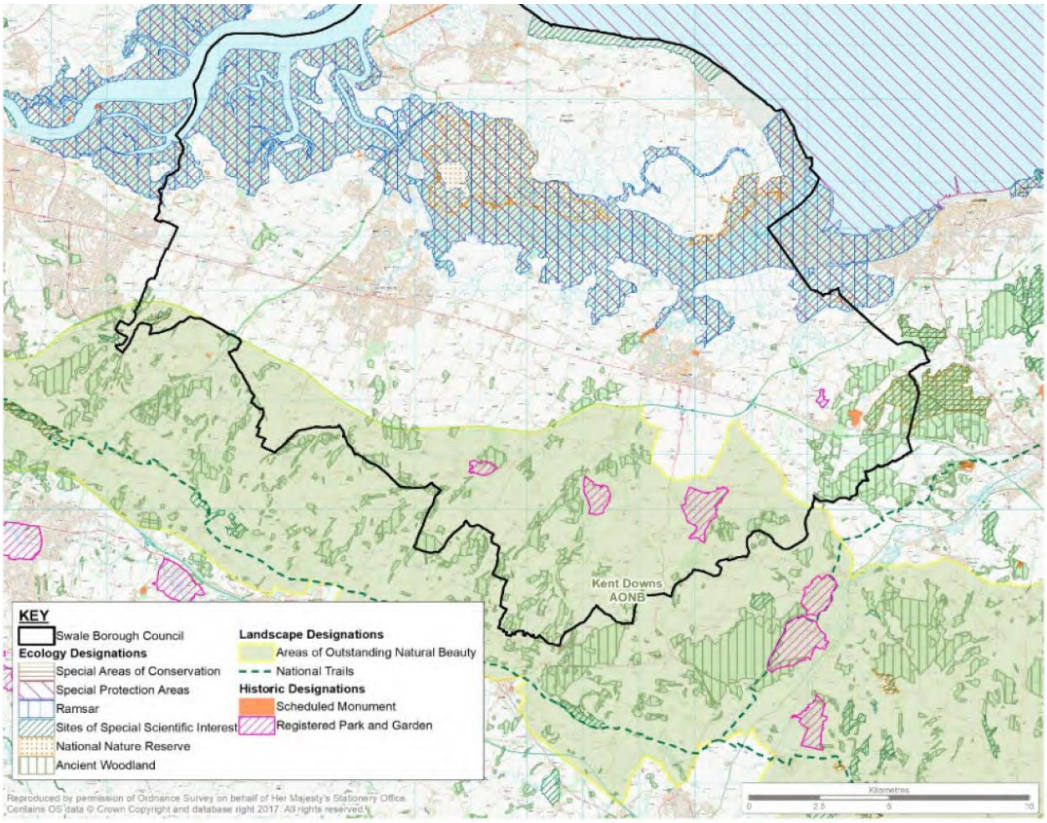


Figure 6: Landscape and Ecological Designations in Swale

3.9.5 Open spaces and recreation

As mentioned earlier, 24% of Swale's population are currently inactive meaning they do less than 30 minutes of physical activity per week which is above the national average of 22%. When asking for views on how to get more people active across the borough, low cost, family-friendly activities are the most popularly cited in Swale, according to previous research as part of the Active Lives Framework (2017). Active travel initiatives are both low cost and family-friendly. (GBI Strategy, 2020)

A Healthy, Connected and Active Swale (GBI Strategy, 2020):

1. Recommend active travel routes linking residential areas to schools, work and public transport hubs for both physical and mental health benefits and social interaction

2. Encourage community participation and engagement through GBI initiatives
3. Promote healthy play and leisure
4. Enable access to affordable healthy food and food growing

DM 17 Open space, sports pitches and facilities – indicators (Local Plan, 2017)

> *1. Monitoring of indicators intended to demonstrate provision in accordance with stated policy standards with reference to: a. the amount of open space/facility established by type relative to the standard.*

SECTION 4: DISTRICT PROJECTS TO NOTE

4.1 Milton Creek Country Park (GBI Strategy, 2020)

Milton Creek Country Park, a restored landfill site, lies in the north of Sittingbourne. Milton Creek, a shallow tidal inlet adjoins the east of the park, and there is an extensive pathway network linking areas of meadow and scrub. Restoration works began in 2003

4.2 Bird Wise (GBI Strategy, 2020)

Bird Wise, otherwise known as the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Scheme (SAMMS) is a partnership between local authorities, developers and environmental organisations to raise awareness of how to enjoy the coast responsibly to protect the internationally important wildlife of the Swale Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar Sites. 2.46 Bird Wise's project area, extending from Gravesend to Whitstable, surpasses Swale's borders. SAMMS involves the collection of tariffs from developments, which is then invested in rangers at Swale SPA, the delivery of educational programmes and encouraging responsible use of the SPA through signposting. The tariff scheme is based on the premise that an increased population will likely increase recreational pressure on the SPA, and therefore impact the 250,000 waders and waterfowl which spend the winter months on the marshes of the north Kent Coast. Bird Wise enables people to interact with green and blue infrastructure in a sustainable way, protecting the wildlife for years to come

4.3 BEGIN (GBI Strategy, 2020)

Blue Green Infrastructure through Social Innovation (BEGIN) was set to run until 2020 and is a European Funded Project at the Kent County Council level. The project aims to deliver GBI, predominantly in urban areas to deliver climate change adaptation and increase climate resilience of the County as a whole. Innovation is a key aspect of BEGIN, promoting new and improved climate adaptation solutions, as well as facilitating the training of local people to maintain green and blue infrastructure beyond the project lifespan. In practice, the BEGIN project in Kent involves locally focused project to respond to need for example the long standing surface water drainage issues along Bell Road in Sittingbourne. The Bell Road project in Sittingbourne has involved the implementation of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to slow the flow and intercept water including a wildflower garden and management of mature trees. The project has involved the local community, and it is hoped that the community will remain involved through the continued management of the project. At the time of writing this Strategy, a new SuDS project is in its early stages at Snipeshill in Sittingbourne, using lessons learned from Bell Road. It is hoped that beyond the lifespan of the BEGIN project, we can learn from

the schemes implemented and continue to adopt community level sustainable drainage projects to make us a more climate resilient borough

4.4 South and South East In Bloom (GBI Strategy, 2020)

The South and South East 'In Bloom' project forms part of the wider Britain in Bloom Initiative. The aim is to bring communities together to plant a range of species around towns and villages for greener communities. Though the initiative was only launched in Swale in 2019, the project has seen many social and environmental benefits including positive interaction between community members and thriving, interconnected habitat creation.

4.5 Elmley Nature Reserve (GBI Strategy, 2020)

Elmley National Nature Reserve (NNR) is the only privately owned nature reserve in the UK, located on the south west of the Isle of Sheppey. The reserve is an internationally important fresh water marsh wetland, significant for its varied biodiversity including water voles, rare invertebrates and flora as well as wintering and breeding birds. In line with the objectives of the Adopted Swale Local Plan, Elmley NNR has undergone investment to progress Eco-tourism objectives. By providing limited accommodation on site, the NNR are managing and limiting damage to the NNR, whilst still attracting people to experience wildlife

4.6 Forest Schools (GBI Strategy, 2020)

Public Health Projects-Forest Schools run at a range of locations throughout the borough including Milton Creek Country Park. The programme allows young people to explore the natural environment in an educational setting, whilst encouraging active and healthy lifestyles. Swale Borough Council's website provides six walks within urban areas, to get local populations moving.

4.7 Making a Buzz for the Coastline (GBI Strategy, 2020)

Kent is home to of the seven rarest bumblebee species in the UK, making their protection and important focus across the county. The Bumblebee Consultation Trust, in partnership with Kent Wildlife Trust, is leading a project along 135 miles of Kent's coastline to create better quality and longer lasting foraging habitat for bees. The project is set to run until the beginning of 2020, and includes various aspects of habitat creation and management. Kent Wildlife Trust's 'Bee Roads' work forms part of the wider Making a Buzz for the Coast Project. This involves the establishment of new Roadside Nature Reserves to add to the existing network managed by the trust. The aim is to provide corridors of roadside bee habitat, to connect populations of priority bumblebees.

4.8 Nature's Sure Connected (GBI Strategy, 2020)

The 'Nature's Sure Connected' biodiversity monitoring project began in October 2018 and is led by Kent Wildlife Trust. The project aims for landscape-scale conservation, providing a platform and research based evidence for a network of stakeholders to work together to protect and restore the natural environment. The project, though set to end in 2020, will guide future landscape scale management across Kent through implementing practices and principles.

4.9 Breeding Waders in North Kent (GBI Strategy, 2020)

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds and Natural England are leading a long term project to deliver advice to land managers in order to halt the decline of breeding waders within the Swale SPA area. To date, more than 10 farms are involved in the project, designed to enhance the grazing marsh pasture habitat type, for biodiversity benefits.

4.10 England Coast Path (GBI Strategy, 2020)

Natural England is progressing plans to improve access to the coast in Swale. The project comprises the creation of a national trail, the England Coast Path. The routes proposed by Natural England usually follow existing walked lines on the ground, including a mixture of sections with an existing public right of way interspersed with sections without. The England Coast Path proposals will create new public rights of way along the parts of the trail that are not currently. The coast of the Isle of Sheppey for example is currently largely devoid of public rights of way. The proposals for the new 51km stretch of footpath to improve access to the coastline around the Isle of Sheppey are due to be finalised in winter 2020. In June 2017, Natural England produced a report setting out proposals for improved coastal access along the 58km coastal stretch between Whitstable and Iwade, comprising new stretches of footpath and improved access to existing footpaths.

4.11 Tree Fund (Draft Tree Strategy, 2024)

Recently, it was announced that Swale Borough Council was successful in winning funding from the Forestry Commissions' Local Authority Tree Fund to plant over 15,000 whips and 350 standard trees over the next 2 years.

4.12 Erosion Risk Mapping (Local Plan, 2017)

The Environment Agency's National Coastal Erosion Risk Mapping Project aims to improve public access to the latest knowledge on coastal erosion via an online information tool.

4.13 The Coastal Communities 2150 Project (Local Plan, 2017)

The Coastal Communities 2150 project aims to develop community resilience to the risks and opportunities presented by potential changes to the climate along the Kent coast through improving knowledge and disseminating climate change projections, developing adaptation strategies and engaging communities.

4.14 The Greater Thames Marshes Nature Improvement Area Project (Local Plan, 2017)

The Greater Thames Marshes Nature Improvement Area was a partnership to improve the wildlife, resilience, public understanding and enjoyment of the Greater Thames Marshes. The Greater Thames Marshes NIA project has now ended, however, actions from the project are embedded within the objectives of the Thames Gateway Local Nature Partnership

4.15 The Medway Swale Estuary Partnership (Local Plan, 2017)

The Medway Swale Estuary Partnership is a not-for-profit organisation whose work is centred around the understanding, conservation and promotion of the estuary's natural and historical environments. It hosts the North Kent Catchment Improvement Group, which is developing catchment improvement plans for North Kent (estuarine and freshwater).

SECTION 5: SPECIFIC PRIORITIES WITHIN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

5.1 Boughton & Dunkirk (Boughton & Dunkirk Neighbourhood Plan)

The proposal for 2,500 houses and industrial development by the Duchy of Cornwall on a site beside the A2 at Faversham; 35% of the land in this proposed development lies outside the Faversham boundaries (26% in Boughton parish; 9% in Selling parish). In particular, this intrusion into Boughton parish, if adopted in the Swale Local Plan, may well distort any housing figures and traffic flow forecasts in this Neighbourhood Plan. In addition, it would threaten the 'green' rural gap between the town of Faversham and the villages of Boughton, Selling, Sheldwich, Hernhill, Dunkirk and potentially Graveney. The NP team will work with Swale Borough Council to agree a locally important countryside gap through the local plan process

E4 Any development that conflicts with the protection of the natural landscape and sensitive sites and wildlife in ‘The Blean’ and the surrounding fruit belt will not be supported.

AS1 To support landscaping around the A2 to reduce the impact of the road and associated development. All landscaping and boundary planting should be of native species.

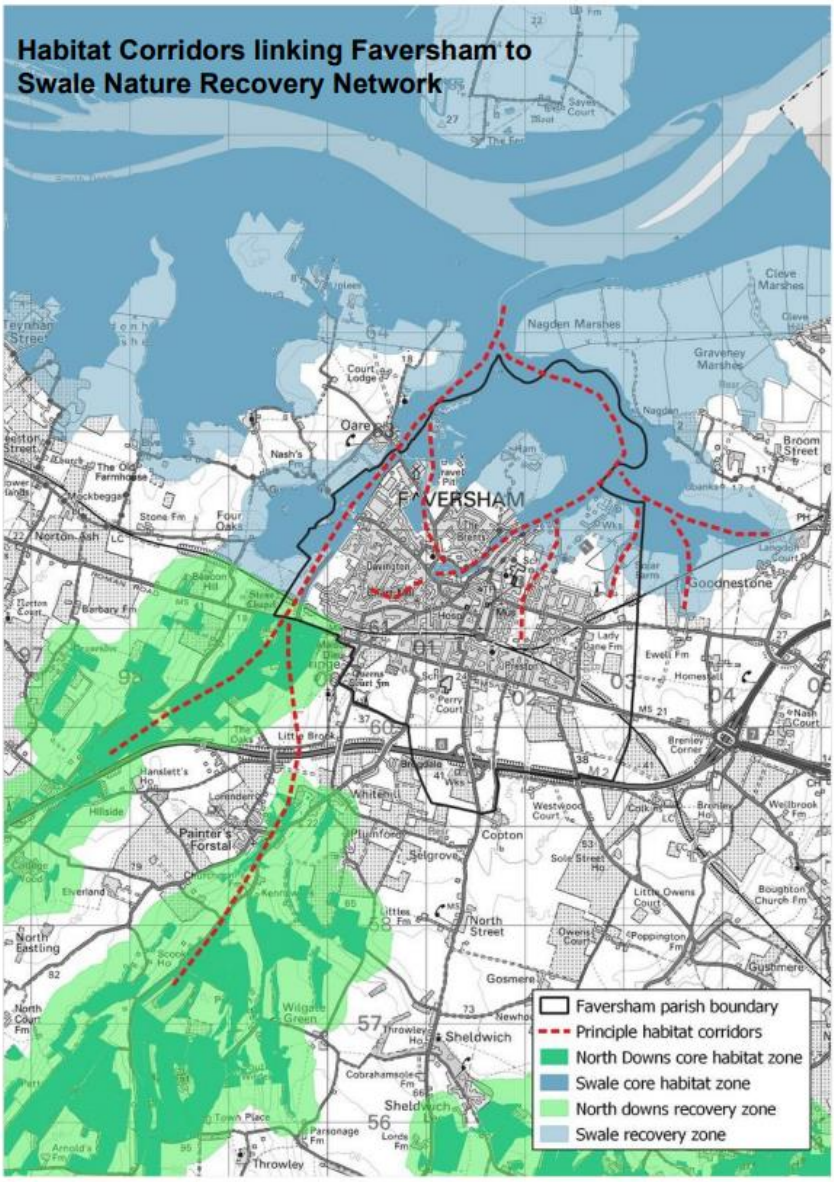
AS5 Development proposals must conserve and enhance Area 6 (Blean Woods West), including ditches, streams and ponds, scrub, dry and wet heath, together with its setting of wood pasture, open slopes (including views) and the rural character of the area’s network of narrow winding lanes, enclosed by mature hedgerows.

5.2 Faversham (Faversham Neighbourhood Plan)

One of the key issues is the water quality of Faversham Creek, as a result of discharges from the Faversham Wastewater Treatment Works (WTW) and other pollutant sources. Under heavy rainfall conditions, storm tanks at the Faversham WTW are designed to store the increased influx of rainwater and wastewater until it can be treated when normal conditions return. Once the storm tanks are full, the resulting overflow including untreated sewage is discharged directly into chalk streams. It is therefore critical to protecting and safeguarding the blue infrastructure that there is sufficient capacity within the network to accommodate the residential expansion of the town, without compromising the water quality of Faversham and its environs.

The priority habitats in Faversham and its surrounding landscape are selected on the basis of their distinctiveness in the broader context of the Swale and south-eastern UK. High priority habitats include the marine and coastal ecosystems also highlighted in the Natural Habitats map, and remaining blocks of intact woodland at Bysing Wood, The Knole and elsewhere.The cemetery at Love Lane is designated as medium priority habitat; and arable land around the parish is flagged as low priority habitat.

Figure 10: Habitat Corridors



5.3 Faversham Creek (Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan)

- Enhance navigation and the sluicing/flushing functions of the Creek so as to provide full access and mooring opportunities for larger craft, including within the basin via an opening bridge.
- Manage the threat of flood by safeguarding functional floodplain and ensuring that such measures necessary to protect the area are undertaken.
- Encourage greater use of the Creek, especially by communities at Davington/ North Preston, by creating multi-function green space on the Front Brents and in the Stonebridge allotments for wildlife, water management, cultural, recreational and tourism activities.
- Avoid significant harm to areas designated for their ecological importance, whilst ensuring that a network of habitats is provided.

- Create a diversity and vibrancy of land uses by providing focal areas of activity at the Basin/Town Quay, Belvedere Road and Standard Quay.
- Enable development potential to be realised by addressing capacity issues on the local sewerage and surface water network.
- Maintain and enhance the surrounding townscape setting of the Creek, its roofscape and higher ground, allotments, waterways, landmark buildings and urban marshland edges.
- Open up pedestrian/cycle/visual connections to adjacent marshland landscapes by creating a creek-edge route.

SECTION 6: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AND REFERENCED

Document reference	Link
Local Plan, 2017	adoptedlocalplanfinalwebversion.pdf
Reg 19, Local Plan, 2021	The Swale Borough Local Plan Review February 2021
Biodiversity Baseline Study, 2020	Biodiversity Baseline Study.pdf
GBI Strategy, 2020	green and blue infrastructure strategy 2020.pdf
Air Quality Action Plan, 2023	Executive summary
DRAFT Tree Strategy, 2024	DRAFT Tree Strategy Scoping Report Stakeholder Circulation Draft .pdf
MEASS	MEASS Consultation Document Introduction.pdf (environment-agency.gov.uk)
FCERM	Medway Estuary and Swale flood and coastal risk management strategy - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Nutrient Neutrality	Planning and Planning Policy - Nutrient Neutrality in Swale
Swale Climate Action	Swale Climate Action
Boughton & Dunkirk Neighbourhood Plan	Boughton Dunkirk Neighbourhood Plan - submission version.pdf (swale.gov.uk)
Faversham Neighbourhood Plan	Faversham Neighbourhood Plan Submission Version V9 June 2023.pdf (swale.gov.uk)
Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan	119Q170320Referendum-PlanWEB.pdf (swale.gov.uk)