TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

LOCAL PLAN AND STRATEGY REVIEW

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

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 pressures (Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council)

There is pressure on Tonbridge and Malling to identify land for housing.

1.2 Flood Risk (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2022)

The risks of flooding from rivers (fluvial flooding) are pertinent to Tonbridge and Malling owing to the Rivers Medway, Bourne and Hawden Stream and their tributaries which flow through the borough. In response to past incidents there has been substantial investment in major infrastructure projects such as the Leigh Barrier and East Peckham flood mitigation scheme to reduce the risk of flooding.

1.3 Climate Change (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2022)

If the Local Plan does not include positive, effective mitigation policies to facilitate sustainable living, there is the risk of increased CO2 emissions in the atmosphere which could result in negative consequences for climate change, including extreme weather events.

Worsening climate change would increase the likelihood in the future of more and greater flooding events, including flash flooding. The risks of not properly planning for flooding would be an increased threat to people's lives, their homes and businesses. The emergency services would be placed under greater pressure and there would be a significant economic cost in terms of the impact on the local economy and increased insurance premiums.

The loss of habitats as a result of extreme weather events, including droughts as well as flooding, would inevitably impact on biodiversity as certain species are unable to sufficiently adapt to survive. This biodiversity loss, which is likely to include both flora and fauna, would impact on the quality of our lives and the local environments

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

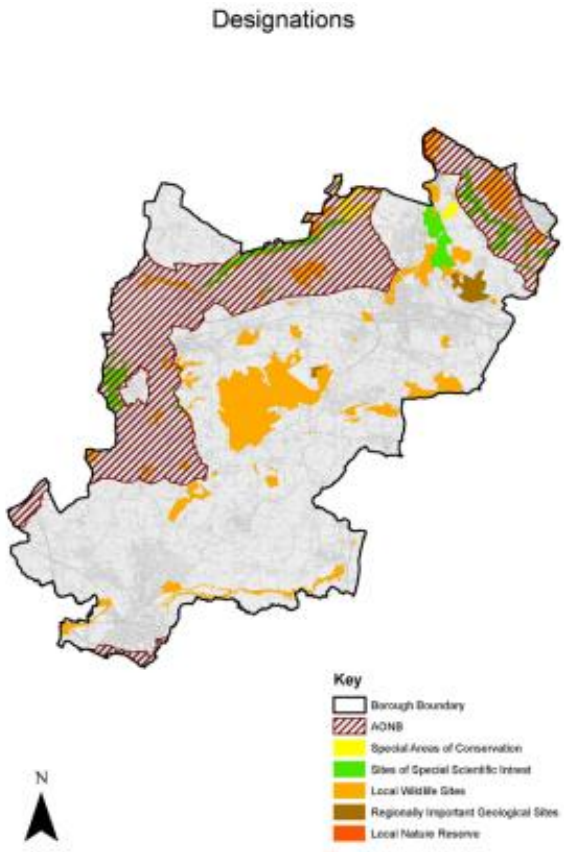
Unless otherwise stated, the following information in section 2 came from the Tonbridge & Malling Regulation 18, Local Plan, 2022.

2.1 PROTECTING HABITATS

2.1.1 Site designations

The council is required to plan positively to ensure that natural environment is conserved and enhanced. Within the borough there are a range of important designated areas, including international, national and local designations. The development strategy of the borough, and individual allocations, need to ensure conservation and enhancement of these sites, both from individual developments and cumulative impacts.

Hierarchy	Designation	Site
International	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	North Downs Woodland Peters Pit
National	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	Wouldham to Detling Escarpment (part) Peters Pit, Wouldham Holborough to Burham Marshes Houlder to Monarch Hill Pits, Upper Halling Halling to Trottiscliffe Escarpment (part) Trottiscliffe Meadows Oldbury and Seal Chart (part) Bourne Alder Carr One Tree Hill and Bitchet Common (part) Ayelsford Pit Wateringbury
Local	Local Wildlife Sites Local Nature Reserve	42 sites 2 sites (Ditton Court Quarry Nature Reserve and Haysden Nature Reserve)



(Green Infrastructure, 2018)

2.1.2 Internationally Designated Sites (Development Plan Document, 2010)

The most important sites for biodiversity (those identified through international conventions and European Directives such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)) enjoy statutory protection. In Tonbridge and Malling Borough, there are two SACs; the North Downs Woodland (split in two locations) and Peters Pit both of which are situated in the north of the Borough. Presently there are no SPAs within Tonbridge and Malling. The two SACs are identified on the Proposals Map and enjoy statutory protection under European legislation and the draft Conservation (Natural Habitats) (Amendment) (England and Wales) Regulations 2006.

2.1.3 Nationally Designated Sites and Protected Landscapes

Sites designated for their biological or geological value, support a diverse range of habitats and species. These sites, along with valued landscapes such as National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the wider countryside, contribute to a network of green infrastructure which can help provide for biodiversity and support the health and well-being of communities, as well as delivering wider benefits to the environment and economy.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which are of national importance for nature conservation but are not part of the internationally important features are subject to Core Policy CP8. Developments likely to affect these SSSI sites will be considered in the context of PPS9, the legislative provisions of Section 281 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as inserted by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000), and Part 2 of ODPM Circular 06/2005 relating to the statutory requirements, as well as the Good Practice Guide to PPS9 published by the ODPM in March 2006. (Development Plan Document, 2010)

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

There are parts of two AONBs in the borough; the Kent Downs AONB in the north and west and High Weald AONB south of Tonbridge. These are illustrated on the Key Diagram (see Appendix A). Combined, the two AONBs cover 29.84% of the borough. The adopted Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2021-2026, and the High Weald AONB Management Plan 2019-2024, form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan as they identify the key issues, opportunities and threats facing these landscapes and set out aims and principles for their positive conservation and enhancement. The topography of the North Downs and Bidborough Ridge means that there are views both into and out of the AONBs from the borough. The sensitive location and design of development is paramount to avoid or mitigate any impacts on the AONBs and their settings. The council is considering commissioning evidence to better understand the potential landscape impact of possible future strategic scale allocations, and to inform site specific policies.

Locating development on land outside of the AONBs will help to conserve and enhance these protected landscapes. However there is potential both, individually and cumulatively, to negatively impact on the setting of these areas and this in turn could impact on the designated areas themselves. The sensitive location, scale and design of development is essential to avoid or mitigate any impacts.

We will continue to fund and work in partnership with the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Unit and High Weald AONB Unit in the review of the AONB management plans. Once adopted, these form council policy for the management of the AONBs and for the carrying out of functions relating to it. We will continue to explore external funding opportunities through these partnerships to deliver projects within the AONBs that support the aims of the management plans. (Climate Change Strategy, 2020)

Metropolitan Green Belt

Over 70% of Tonbridge & Malling is covered by the Metropolitan Green Belt surrounding London.

2.1.4 Locally designated sites

Local Green Space can be designated in a Local Plan or Neighbourhood Plan where the objectives of the NPPF are met, where such a designation has been promoted by the local community and will be consistent with planning for sustainable development in the area. The Local Green Space Designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of plan making. The Local Plan process provides an opportunity to consider potential designations of Local Green Space in the borough.

Policy NE1 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

> *1. Development that adversely affects either directly, indirectly or cumulatively a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) or Local Nature Reserve (LNR), as identified and on the Proposals Map and listed in Policy Annex NE1, will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development override the need to safeguard the nature conservation value of the site and that adverse impacts can be adequately compensated.*
>
> *2. Where development may exceptionally be justified, it must minimise harm to the nature conservation interest of the site, and re-establish and enhance the habitat, or nature conservation features lost.*
>
> *3. Development that would adversely affect a Regionally Important Geological Site (RIGS) as identified on the Proposals Map and listed in Policy Annex NE1, will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated:*
>
> *(a) that the benefits of development override the need to safeguard the particular geological or geomorphological interest of the site, and*
>
> *(b) that any adverse impacts can adequately be mitigated.*
>
> *4. Planning conditions or obligations will be used to protect the site's nature conservation, geological or geomorphological interest, and to provide appropriate mitigation or compensatory measures and site management.*

2.1.5 Hedgerows, Trees & Woodland

The Ancient Woodland Inventory identifies that approximately 11% of the borough is ancient woodland. Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland and ancient and veteran trees, should be avoided. Therefore, the location and distribution of this irreplaceable habitat is an important consideration for the development strategy and individual allocations.

Policy NE4 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

> *1. The extent of tree cover and the hedgerow network should be maintained and enhanced. Provision should be made for the creation of new woodland*

and hedgerows, especially indigenous broad-leaved species, at appropriate locations to support and enhance the Green Infrastructure Network as illustrated on the Diagram. This includes provision of new habitats as part of development proposals.

3. Ancient woodland will be protected, and where possible, enhanced through improved management. Development that would adversely affect ancient woodland will not be permitted unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location can be demonstrated to override the harm that would be caused to the ecological and historical importance of the ancient woodland.

Policy NE4 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

Woodland

2. Development that would result in the net loss or deterioration of woodland will only be permitted if all of the following tests are met: (a) development cannot reasonably be located on an alternative site; (b) the need for development clearly outweighs any harm which may be caused to the ecological, archaeological and landscape value of the woodland; and (c) harm can be reduced to acceptable limits through the implementation of positive environmental mitigation measures within the site or by replacement planting elsewhere or enhanced management.

2.1.6 Agricultural Land

Tonbridge and Malling borough is predominantly rural in character and has large areas of land outside of the settlements in agricultural use. The Agricultural Land Classification Grades, published by Natural England and most recently updated in 2020, identifies that most of the agricultural land in the borough is classified as Grade 3: 'Good to Moderate'. However, there are also some areas of Grade 2: 'Very Good' with areas of Grade 1: 'Excellent' agricultural land predominantly around West Malling and Wateringbury (as illustrated on the Key Diagram in Appendix A). The Local Plan should seek to avoid allocating sites or development on land, that would result in significant development of high-quality agricultural land.

2.1.7 Rural Lanes

Policy DC6 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

In the consideration of development proposals which are in the vicinity of, or are served by, rural lanes, permission will only be granted where: (a) the development conserves and, where appropriate, enhances the value of the lane in terms of its landscape, am (b) any proposed alterations to the lane are minimum necessary to serve the proposal in terms of highway safety.

2.1.8 Biodiversity

Habitats and Biodiversity: In addition to key outdoor leisure sites, we have two country parks (Haysden and Leybourne Lakes Country Park) both of which have been awarded Green Flag awards. We produce management plans for all key outdoor sites and will review them regularly, taking into account nature, biodiversity and conservation. (Climate Change Strategy, 2020)

Corporate Priorities (Corporate Strategy, 2023):

Sustaining a borough which cares for the environment.

We're committed to creating a borough which protects the environment and provides beautiful spaces for our residents and visitors to enjoy. Between now and 2027 we will:

- Deliver climate change plans which focus on cutting emissions and increasing biodiversity.
- Build on our track record of recycling more than anywhere else in Kent with measures to further improve rates while reducing overall levels of waste and fly-tipping.
- Improve environmental quality in the borough by tackling sources of pollution such as car idling and taxi emissions, backed up by design-led approaches in new developments and encouraging sustainable travel.
- Continue our successful management of parks, open spaces and leisure centres so the best recreational facilities are available to everyone.
- Recognise and support our local built heritage to give people pride in the place they live.

Policy NE2 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

> *1. The biodiversity of the Borough and in particular priority habitats, species and features, will be protected, conserved and enhanced.*

Policy NE3 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

> *1. Development that would adversely affect biodiversity or the value of wildlife habitats across the Borough will only be permitted if appropriate mitigation and/or compensation measures are provided which would result in overall enhancement.*
>
> *2. Proposals for development must make provision for the retention of the habitat and protection of its wildlife links. Opportunities to maximise the creation of new corridors and improve permeability and ecological conservation value will be sought.*

3. Where development is permitted the Council will impose conditions, where necessary and appropriate, and/or planning obligations will be sought, subject to all of the following criteria;

(c) minimising disturbance;

(d) protecting and enhancing the site's ecological conservation value and extent;

(e) contributing towards the objectives of the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan;

(f) ensuring appropriate management and monitoring; and

(g) if damage to or loss of the site is unavoidable, creating new or replacement habitats of enhanced ecological value and extent in order to reinforce the Green Infrastructure Network as illustrated on the Diagram.

2.1.9 Blue Infrastructure

The River Medway runs through the North Downs in the north of the Borough and through the centre of Tonbridge in the south. In addition, a number of its tributaries also run through Tonbridge and Malling.

As well as the rivers, there is also a series of lakes, predominantly found around Leybourne in the north and to the west of Tonbridge in the south, and a network of smaller ponds distributed throughout the Borough.

This network of waterways provides a range of valuable habitats, as well as offering recreation and leisure uses. Figure 6 illustrates the distribution of rivers and water bodies. (Green Infrastructure, 2018)

(Green Infrastructure, 2018)

Strategic Flood Risk Assessment has been commissioned, but the outputs are not yet able to be shared.

The risks of flooding from rivers (fluvial flooding) are pertinent to Tonbridge and Malling owing to the Rivers Medway, Bourne and Hawden Stream and their tributaries which flow through the borough. In response to past incidents there has been substantial investment in major infrastructure projects such as the Leigh Barrier and East Peckham flood mitigation scheme to reduce the risk of flooding.

The council has commissioned a new Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) to inform plan-making. This will inform decisions on the location of future development and the preparation of policies for the long-term management of flood risk within the borough so development is safe over the intended lifetime. The council, through the SFRA, will work with statutory consultees such as the Environment Agency and Kent County Council as the Local Lead Flood Authority to ensure all sources of flooding are taken into account as well as the appropriate future climate change allowances.

2.1.10 Protection from the negative impacts of development and infrastructure

Policy SQ1 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

> *Local distinctiveness*
>
> *1. Proposals for development will be required to reflect the local distinctiveness, condition and sensitivity to change of the local character areas as defined in the Character Area Appraisals SPD.*
>
> *2. All new development should protect, conserve and, where possible, enhance:*
>
> *(a) the character and local distinctiveness of the area including its historical and architectural interest and the prevailing level of tranquillity;*
>
> *(b) the distinctive setting of, and relationship between, the pattern of settlement, roads and the landscape, urban form and important views; and*
>
> *(c) the biodiversity value of the area, including patterns of vegetation, property boundaries and water bodies*.

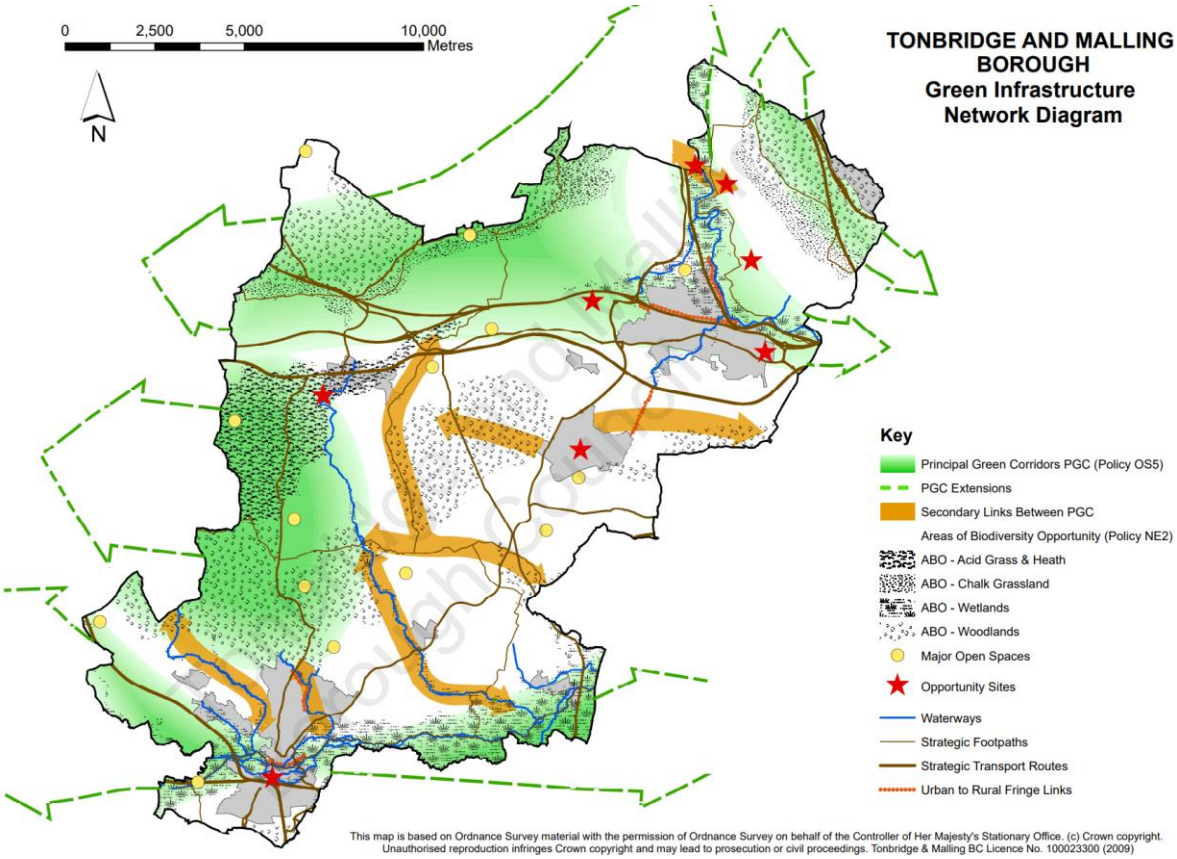
2.2 RESTORING AND ENHANCING HABITATS

2.2.1 Green Infrastructure

Development Plan Document, 2010:

The impacts of climate change will present threats and opportunities to natural habitats and species. In order for species to survive, opportunities will need to exist for them and their habitats to migrate. The ability of species to move and respond to the impacts of climate change will be limited if habitats are further fragmented. The Green Infrastructure Network Diagram (see Policies NE2, NE3 and OS5) seeks to address the issue of the connectivity of wildlife habitats in the interests of protecting, and where possible, enhancing local biodiversity and allowing them to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Due to pressures from development, land management and changes in agricultural practices, habitats often now occur as fragments within the landscape. The fragmentation of habitats (both terrestrial and aquatic) can obstruct routes for migration and the genetic exchange of species in the wider environment. The BRANCH Project has demonstrated how the distribution of species can alter in response to climate change. It is important, therefore, that the potential impact of warmer drier summers and wetter winters on the natural environment is recognised and accommodated within the LDF, and this can be done by the creation of functional ecological networks.



GI Strategy in production- Outputs are not able to be shared yet (Biodiversity Duty, 2024)

The Green Infrastructure Study will undertake a baseline study of current Green Infrastructure assets to help identify areas of highest environmental value', identify areas of the borough that have access to green space or water within a 15-minute walk from their home in line with the Environmental Improvement Plan, and identify areas of strategic significance where off-site BNG could be targeted to support existing habitats and species. It will also identify opportunities to inform policies in the Local Plan and Climate Change Strategy, as well as the Kent and Medway Nature Recovery Strategy. Work Area Relevant policies/strategies already in place Detail/key policies Future plans/comments create new or enhanced green infrastructure, provide policy recommendations for inclusion in the Local Plan and Climate Change Strategy, as well as make recommendations for how council owned land can help to enhance the green infrastructure network, with the identification of potential sites for off-site BNG delivery.

2.2.2 Tree Charter (Climate Change Strategy, 2020)

Working with partners, we will produce a tree charter for the borough, with the aim of retaining a planting budget to replant trees where appropriate and ensure that trees in the borough are well cared for. We will work with local landowners and developers to encourage tree planting and explore suitable opportunities for planting within boundaries and hedgerows. We will also seek to maximise tree planting through the development process where possible and appropriate.

2.2.3 Open Spaces (Climate Change Strategy, 2020)

Where possible we will create and maintain buffer zones of mixed vegetation on edges of open spaces and against water areas to create habitats and habitat corridors. We will commit to reducing chemical use as much as reasonably practicable and ensure that our main contractor working at the sites, hold ISO140001 environmental accreditation or have other appropriate environmental safeguarding strategies in place.

2.2.4 Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

Policy NE2 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

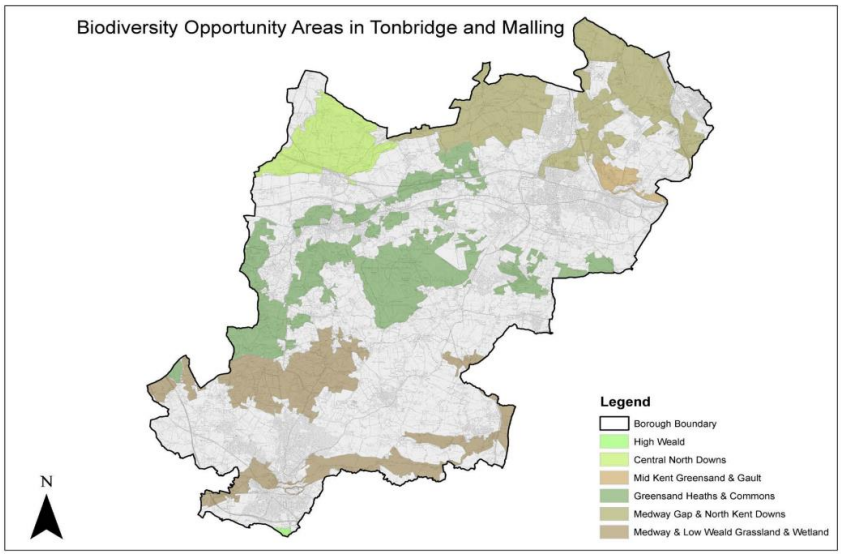
> *1. The biodiversity of the Borough and in particular priority habitats, species and features, will be protected, conserved and enhanced.*
>
> *2. The restoration and creation of new habitats will be pursued where these promote permeability and contribute to the UK and Kent Biodiversity Action Plan targets having regard to the areas of biodiversity opportunity identified on the Green Infrastructure Network Diagram.*

The South East Plan identifies biodiversity targets for several habitats, including calcareous grassland in the North Downs and broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland, and coniferous woodlands in both the North Downs and Weald.

Kent Biodiversity Action Plan areas of biodiversity opportunity broadly reflect the Kent BAP habitats and form part of the green infrastructure of the Borough as illustrated on the Green Infrastructure Network Diagram. (Development Plan Document, 2010)

Green Infrastructure, 2018:

Appendix 2: Biodiversity Opportunity Area map



Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

The Kent Local Nature Partnership has identified six BOAs within Tonbridge and Malling.

These include:
• Medway Gap & North Kent Downs;
• Central North Downs;
• Greensand Heaths & Commons;
• Medway & Low Weald Wetlands and Grasslands;
• High Weald; and
• Mid Kent Greensand and Gault.

The geographical extent of these is set out in Figure 5. These areas identify key locations for habitat restoration and/or creation work and provide a framework for partner organisations projects to help deliver net gains in biodiversity. Further information can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2

Medway Gap and North Kent Downs Targets:

1. Maintain and enhance existing and recently created chalk grassland. Enhance at least 40ha of chalk grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat quality. Pursue opportunities for:

• Additional chalk grassland creation where this would contribute to the county-wide target of 232ha by 2020; and

• Additional chalk grassland restoration to meet the county-wide target of 464ha by 2020.

2. Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement

3. Pursue opportunities for the restoration and enhancement of grazing marsh, fen and reedbed habitats within the floodplain of the River Medway, including restoration of at least 50ha of grazing marsh in the Medway Valley between Rochester and New Hythe, to contribute to county-wide targets of 500ha.

4. Secure and maintain appropriate management of key brownfield sites, particularly where these support UK BAP priority species .

5. Continue to conserve and enhance key populations of arable weeds, and maintain, enhance and extend the area of cereal field margins being positively managed for arable weeds.

6. Pursue opportunities for creation of species-rich neutral grassland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating 37ha on new lowland meadow in blocks of at least 2ha by 2020. Enhance at least 15ha of species-rich neutral grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Meadow quality.

7. Where appropriate, encourage and enhance public access, particularly from the Medway Towns.

8. Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary.

Central North Downs Targets:

1. Restore, extend and reconnect chalk grassland. By 2020, restore at least 30ha of chalk grassland in the Darent Valley area to help meet the county-wide target of 464ha, and pursue opportunities for chalk grassland creation, aiming to create at least 15 ha to contribute to the county-wide target of 232ha. Enhance at least 35ha of chalk grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat quality.

2. Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.

3. Restore natural floodplain habitats, and restore/create flower-rich neutral grassland on suitable soils. Pursue opportunities for creation of species-rich neutral grassland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating 37ha on new lowland meadow in blocks of at least 2ha by 2020. Enhance at least 20ha of species-rich neutral grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat quality.

4. Achieve a quantifiable improvement in ecological status of the River Darent, as judged by Water Framework Directive indicators.

5. Implement conservation grazing management on grassland and wood pasture habitats.

6. Encourage appropriate physical and intellectual access to the landscape and wildlife of the area.

7. Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary.

Greensand Heaths and Commons Targets:

1. Pursue opportunities for creation of acid grassland and heathland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating, by 2020, up to 28ha in blocks of at least 1ha and no more than 500m from other existing or new semi-natural habitat. Enhance at least 45ha of speciesrich acid grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Acid Grassland quality.

2. Enhance or reinstate woodland management – including wood pasture management where appropriate – and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.

3. Enhance at least 12ha of species-rich neutral grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Meadow quality. 4. Pursue opportunities for quarries to be restored to maximize their biodiversity potential. Where appropriate, seek restoration to heathland and/or acid grassland as a condition of permissions for aggregates extraction.

5. Engage communities within target areas by raising awareness of biodiversity and encouraging them to get involved in biodiversity action. 6 Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary

Medway and Low Weald Wetlands and Grasslands Targets:

1. Achieve a quantifiable improvement in ecological status of all water bodies, as judged by Water Framework Directive indicators.

2. Pursue opportunities for creation of wider river floodplains with riparian corridors around natural drainage channels.

3. Pursue opportunities for the delivery of catchment improvement work, including enhancing, restoring and creating fen, wet woodland, reedbed and wet grassland and action for key species such as otter.

4. Secure the appropriate conservation management of all existing Lowland Meadows. Enhance at least 50ha of species-rich neutral grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Meadow quality.

5. Pursue opportunities to create new species-rich neutral grassland, particularly close the Marden Meadows SSSI and south of Sevenoaks, in blocks of 2ha or more, where this will contribute to meeting the county target of creating 37ha by 2020.

6. Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.

7. Continue to encourage the positive management, restoration and re-creation of hedgerows, particularly where this would reconnect other habitats or enhance the landscape, in particular where these have been removed due to agricultural intensification.
8. Improve the management of invasive species in and alongside water courses.
9. Maintain, restore, recreate and buffer ponds, particularly to establish networks of sites to support great crested newt.
10. Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary.

High Weald Targets:

1. Restore, recreate and enhance woodland through active conservation management, particularly locally unique gill woodlands, heathy woodlands and wood pasture. Restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland.

2. Secure the appropriate conservation management of all existing Lowland Meadows. Enhance at least 100ha of species-rich neutral grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Meadow quality. Pursue opportunities to create new species-rich neutral grassland where this will contribute to meeting the county-wide target of 37ha, in blocks of 2ha or more, by 2020.

3. Reinforce the intricate matrix of habitats by restoring and recreating heathland, acid grassland, and neutral grassland, and reconnecting fragmented woodlands.

Opportunities should be taken for heathland or acid grassland restoration and enhancement as part of woodland management, for example at Bedgebury Forest and Hemsted Forest and in the Pembury area. Additional opportunities for creation of acid grassland and heathland should be pursued where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating up to 28ha by 2020.

4. Pursue other opportunities to create new acid grassland and heathland, of up to 20ha in blocks of at least 1ha and no more than 500m from other existing or new semi-natural habitat. Enhance at least 10ha of species-rich acid grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Acid Grassland quality.

5. Maintain and restore water courses, achieving a quantifiable improvement in ecological status as judged by Water Framework Directive indicators and maintain, restore and create ponds.

6. Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary.

Mid Kent Greensand and Gault Targets:

1. Major opportunities exist to recreate and restore acid grassland and heath. This should include restoration, by 2020, of at least 4ha at Ashford Warren; and creation of at least 10ha of acid grassland and heath in the heathland corridor from Lenham to Brabourne Lees, plus at least 10ha of acid grassland around the northern edge of Maidstone. Habitat blocks should be no smaller than 1 ha if no more than 500m from other existing or new acid grassland, and no smaller than 6ha if more isolated. Additional opportunities should be pursued for creation of acid grassland and heathland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating 28ha by 2020.

2. Enhance at least 10 ha of species rich grassland on acid soils, including newly created habitats, to bring them to UK BAP priority habitat quality.

3. Enhance or reinstate woodland management – including wood pasture management where appropriate – and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.

4. Achieve a quantifiable improvement in ecological status of all water bodies, as judged by Water Framework Directive indicators.

5. Pursue opportunities to restore or recreate wetland habitats along the Rivers Medway, Stour and Len and their tributaries, particularly where this may
• Provide opportunities for flood risk management and for recreation; • Contribute to the conservation of priority species; or
• Extend and buffer Local Wildlife Sites.

• Enhance at least 20ha of species-rich neutral grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Meadow quality.

6. Secure and maintain appropriate management of key brownfield sites, particularly where these support UK BAP priority species.

7. Infrastructure and other development should avoid further fragmentation, particularly of wetland habitats and woodlands.

8. Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary.

2.3 HABITAT CREATION

2.3.1 Within development and infrastructure

Planning policies and development allocations are being updated in the new Local Plan, to ensure that developments respond to sustainability considerations, these include (Climate Change Strategy, 2020):

- developments which maximise opportunities to reduce energy demands through the orientation of habitable rooms to harness natural light and through landscaping to prevent over heating (draft policy LP14)
- developments which maximise opportunities where practicable for sustainable travel, including contributions towards off site infrastructure as well as walking and cycling routes and infrastructure, reflecting the amount of movement generated and the nature and location of each site (draft policy LP23)
- major developments will, where practicable and proportionate, provide opportunities for habitat creation (draft policy LP19), and where possible maximise opportunities for net biodiversity gains on site (draft policies LP27-31)
- new dwellings will be required to make provision for an electric vehicle charging point with each property. This is also required where practicable and proportionate for non-residential developments
- new dwellings will be required to meet the Building regulations optional requirement for tighter water efficiency of 110 litres/person/day (draft policy LP44)

Policy CC3 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

1. Development will not be permitted if it has an unacceptable effect on the water environment, including surface water and groundwater quality and

quantity, river corridors and associated wetlands. LDF: Managing Development and the Environment DPD – April 2010 29

2. Development proposals will not be permitted unless they incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SUDS) appropriate to the local ground water and soil conditions, local drainage regimes and in accordance with the Groundwater Regulations. Where soil permeability is low, rainwater harvesting and/or green roofs should, where practicable, be integrated into the design of the development.

3. Where SUDS are used, they will be required, where appropriate and practicable, to deliver recreation and wildlife benefits.

4. Development proposals incorporating SUDS must include an agreement to ensure future management, maintenance and replacement, when necessary, of the SUDS structures.

5. Where it is not practicable to use SUDS, the development proposal will need to demonstrate that an appropriate alternative means of surface water drainage to ground watercourses or surface water sewers is incorporated.

Seeking a higher target for Biodiversity Net Gain will need to be viability tested to ensure the delivery of a higher target does not put at risk the delivery of other local standards in the Local Plan e.g. affordable housing, open space etc.

2.4 SPECIES SPECIFIC (Green Infrastructure, 2018)

2.4.1 Medway Gap and North Kent Downs

- This target area includes the county's most important site for arable weeds.
- Key species include a number of important arable weed species, including corncockle, rough mallow and broad-leaved cudweed; chalk downland species including groundpine, man orchid, Kentish milkwort, meadow clary, and adonis blue butterfly; and wetland species, including otters.

Targets:

- Secure and maintain appropriate management of key brownfield sites, particularly where these support UK BAP priority species .
- Continue to conserve and enhance key populations of arable weeds, and maintain, enhance and extend the area of cereal field margins being positively managed for arable weeds.
- Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary

2.4.2 Central North Downs

Key species include otter, crayfish, adder, dark green fritillary, chalk hill blue, early gentian, Deptford pink and juniper

Target: Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary.

2.4.3 Greensand Heaths and Commons

Important for species of acid woodland and heathland which are otherwise scarce in Kent. Woodlands and woodpasture are noted for their veteran trees, fungus flora and invertebrate assemblages. The area is important for bats, adder and RDB bird species, and could be important in the future for woodlark.

Target: Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary

2.4.4 Medway and Low Weald Wetlands and Grasslands

Key species include otter, depressed river mussel, white clawed crayfish and river lamprey.

Targets:

- Pursue opportunities for the delivery of catchment improvement work, including enhancing, restoring and creating fen, wet woodland, reedbed and wet grassland and action for key species such as otter.
- Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary.

2.4.5 High Weald

The area is important for many species which are at the edge of their range in Kent, including golden-ringed and brilliant emerald damselflies, and a number of western bryophyte species associated with rock outcrops and gills. The area is important for bats, particularly woodland species. Bechstein's bat is recorded breeding here. Birds otherwise very scarce in Kent, including willow tit, lesser spotted woodpecker and woodlark occur here.

Target: Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary.

2.4.6 Mid Kent Greensand and Gault

Key species include water vole, white-clawed crayfish and Desmoulin's whorl snail Vertigo moulinsiana, associated with river corridors, as well as wintering bittern along the Medway. The shrill carder bee Bombus sylvarum has been recorded at Leybourne Lakes Country Park, together with other important invertebrate species. Few nationally important species are associated with acid grassland and heath habitats, though many species of these habitats are scarce or unknown elsewhere in Kent, such as the keeled skimmer dragonfly at Hothfield or the assemblages of scarce invertebrates recorded from around Maidstone.

Targets:

- Pursue opportunities to restore or recreate wetland habitats along the Rivers Medway, Stour and Len and their tributaries, particularly where this may
    - Provide opportunities for flood risk management and for recreation;
    - Contribute to the conservation of priority species; or
    - Extend and buffer Local Wildlife Sites.
    - Enhance at least 20ha of species-rich neutral grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Meadow quality.
- Secure and maintain appropriate management of key brownfield sites, particularly where these support UK BAP priority species.
- Action for naturally widely dispersed habitats (ponds, traditional orchards), wildlife associated with arable farmland, and widely dispersed species such as great crested newt will need to focus across the whole of the area and not just within the Biodiversity Opportunity Area boundary.

SECTION 3: WIDER ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS

3.1 GOAL 2: AIR QUALITY

Corporate Priorities (Corporate Strategy, 2023):

We're committed to creating a borough which protects the environment and provides beautiful spaces for our residents and visitors to enjoy. Between now and 2027 we will Improve environmental quality in the borough by tackling sources of pollution such as car idling and taxi emissions, backed up by design-led approaches in new developments and encouraging sustainable travel.

Climate Change Strategy, 2020:

Ongoing assessments of air quality within the borough of Tonbridge and Malling have identified six areas where levels of nitrogen dioxide have at some point exceeded the annual objective limit of 40µg/m-3 and have been declared Air Quality Management Areas. These are:

- M20, between New Hythe Lane and Hall Road,
- Tonbridge High Street between Vale Road and The Botany, A26, Wateringbury Crossroads
- A20 Aylesford A20 Larkfield
- A25 SevenoaksRd/Western Rd Borough Green

We will continually monitor and update its Air Quality Action Plan for these areas, and as part of this work will review the change in levels over the years.

All monitoring sites within Tonbridge and Malling have shown a slow trend in the improvement in nitrogen dioxide levels. In 2018, (the last full year results available at the time of writing), Tonbridge High Street, Borough Green and M20 monitoring sites within those AQMA's all achieved levels below the 40µg/m-3 annual objective for nitrogen dioxide. However, our AQMA in Wateringbury still recorded the second highest level of nitrogen dioxide in Kent.

Policy SQ4 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

> *Development will only be permitted where all of the following criteria are met:*
>
> *(a) the proposed use does not result in a significant deterioration of the air quality of the area, either individually or cumulatively with other proposals or existing uses in the vicinity;*
>
> *(b) proposals would not result in the circumstances that would lead to the creation of a new Air Quality Management Area;*
>
> *(c) proximity to existing potentially air polluting uses will not have a harmful effect on the proposed use; and*

(d) there is no impact on the air quality of internationally, nationally and locally designated sites of nature conservation interest or appropriate mitigation is proposed to alleviate any such impact.

The Local Plan should seek to avoid wherever possible locating development in areas of poor air quality and should explore opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts, such as through traffic and travel management, and green infrastructure provision and enhancement. The potential impact of air pollution on international wildlife sites (Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites) will be considered through a Habitats Regulations Assessment to be carried out during the preparation of the Local Plan. (Reg18, Local Plan, 2022)

3.2 GOAL 3: CLEAN AND PLENTIFUL WATER

Policy SQ5 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

1. All development will be expected to ensure that adequate water and sewerage infrastructure is present or can be provided in order to meet future needs without compromising the quality and supply of services for existing users.

2. Planning permission will only be granted for developments which increase the demand for offsite water and sewerage infrastructure where: sufficient capacity already exists, or (b) extra capacity can be provided in time to serve the development.

3. When there is a water or sewerage capacity problem and there are no programmed off-site infrastructure improvements, planning permission will only be granted if the developer funds, under the relevant water supply legislation, appropriate infrastructure improvements which should be completed prior to occupation.

3.3 GOAL 4: MANAGING EXPOSURE TO CHEMICALS AND PESTICIDES

3.4 GOAL 5: MAXIMISE OUR RESOURCES, MINIMISE OUR WASTE

Corporate Priorities (Corporate Strategy, 2023):

We’re committed to creating a borough which protects the environment and provides beautiful spaces for our residents and visitors to enjoy. Between now and 2027 we will build on our track record of recycling more than anywhere else in Kent with measures to further improve rates while reducing overall levels of waste and fly-tipping.

Climate Change Strategy, 2020:

Managing the way we deal with waste, helps to tackle climate change and reduce carbon emissions. We will encourage more people to reduce their waste and make it easier for residents to compost or recycle.

3.5 GOAL 6: USING RESOURCES FROM NATURE SUSTAINABLY

3.6 GOAL 7: MITIGATING AND ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

Corporate Priorities (Corporate Strategy, 2023):

We're committed to creating a borough which protects the environment and provides beautiful spaces for our residents and visitors to enjoy. Between now and 2027 we will deliver climate change plans which focus on cutting emissions and increasing biodiversity.

3.7 GOAL 8: REDUCE RISK OF HARM FROM ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

3.8 GOAL 9: ENHANCE BIOSECURITY

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

3.9.1 Heritage

The borough has a rich history which extends back thousands of years with evidence of life in the stone age, bronze age and iron age. The borough, formed in 1974 has a wide range and considerable number of heritage assets including (Reg 18, Local Plan, 2022):

- 61 Conservation Areas
- 1318 Listed Buildings
- 25 Scheduled Monuments
- 23 Historic Parks and Gardens (5 of which are registered)
- 12547 ha of archaeological potential areas

Corporate Priorities (Corporate Strategy, 2023):

We're committed to creating a borough which protects the environment and provides beautiful spaces for our residents and visitors to enjoy. Between now and 2027 we will recognise and support our local built heritage to give people pride in the place they live.

Policy SQ2 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

> *Buildings included within the Local List of Buildings of Architectural or Historic Interest adopted by the Council will be retained wherever possible and protected from development that would harm their setting or local historic or architectural interest.*

3.9.2 Health and wellbeing (Development Plan Document, 2010)

In June 2008, the Kent Public Health Observatory published a Local Authority Inequalities Profile for Tonbridge & Malling3 . The report provides a snapshot of the health issues in the Borough. Although the health of the people in Tonbridge and Malling is better than the England average overall, there are inequalities between wards within the Borough for life expectancy at birth, smoking prevalence, teenage conceptions and infant mortality, and also for early deaths (cancer, heart disease and stroke). There are over 2,800 children living in poverty in the Borough and smoking still accounts for over 150 deaths per year. Creating opportunities for people to lead healthy lives would be aimed at reducing these statistics in the future. The following policy seeks to ensure the health of people working and living in a new development is fully considered as an integral part of the design process. In order to address these issues, applicants should also have regard to Policy OS5, and in the countryside, to Policies DC5 and DC7.

Policy SQ7

> *Before proposals for development are permitted, they will need to demonstrate that the following issues have been addressed:*
>
> *(a) the design and layout of the proposal maximise opportunities for healthy living and healthy active lifestyles choices by the residents, workforce or visitors.*
>
> *(b) access to open spaces;*
>
> *(c) For development proposals of 10 or more dwellings developers must demonstrate that the healthcare needs (primary and acute) likely to be generated by the development have been considered in consultation with the relevant Health Care Trusts and Kent Adult Social Services as appropriate and that, provided it can be demonstrated that there is a deficiency in*

provision that cannot be addressed through normal NHS funding procedures, a developer contribution is secured, before the development is occupied, to ensure the most appropriate (on or off-site) provision is available, or will be made available, to serve the development.

3.9.3 Access to nature (Green Infrastructure, 2018)

A significant network of Public Rights of Way exists within the Borough linking urban areas with the surrounding countryside, and neighbourhoods with local destinations such as parks and other managed green spaces.

There are several strategic long-distance footpaths such as the North Downs Way, the Greensand Way and the Weald Way, as well as cycle routes including Regional Route 12 and proposed National Route 17 which run through the Borough.

3.9.4 Connection with Nature (Climate Change Strategy, 2020)

Raising awareness locally will be a key objective and we will provide educational events for the public on sites across the borough that relate to nature, wildlife, biodiversity and its importance. In addition we will continue to core fund Medway Valley Countryside Partnership to assist in delivering various works and education across the borough regarding all environmental issues.

3.9.5 Open spaces and recreation

Corporate Priorities (Corporate Strategy, 2023):

We're committed to creating a borough which protects the environment and provides beautiful spaces for our residents and visitors to enjoy. Between now and 2027 we will continue our successful management of parks, open spaces and leisure centres so the best recreational facilities are available to everyone.

Policy OS1 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

1. Development which would result in the loss of, or reduce the recreational, nature conservation, biodiversity, carbon sink, landscape, amenity and/or historic value of, existing open spaces listed in Policy Annexes OS1A & OS1B and identified on the Proposals Map, and any other open spaces that are provided during the lifetime of the LDF, will not be permitted unless a replacement site is provided which is equivalent or better in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility.
2. The recreational, biodiversity, amenity and/or historic value of existing open spaces of lower quality as listed in Policy Annex OS1B and identified on the Proposals Map, will be enhanced primarily through developer contributions

secured from developments in lieu of on-site open space provision (see Policy OS3).

Policy OS3 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

1. On all residential developments of 5 units or above (net), there will be a requirement for open space provision in accordance with the quantitative standards set out in Policy Annex OS3.
2. The form and level of provision of open space will be determined in accordance with the sequential approach and methodology set out in Annex D.
3. Where it is impractical or inappropriate to provide open space on-site, off-site provision (or a financial contribution towards it) will be sought commensurate with the quantitative and accessibility standards set out in Policy Annex OS3. Where this is not achievable, developer contributions for the enhancement of existing open spaces off-site within the relevant accessibility threshold1 will be sought. Priority will be given to enhancing those sites identified in Policy Annex OS1B and any open space projects in the Council's Capital Plan that fall within, or close to, the relevant accessibility threshold of the development site.
4. Any new on-site or off-site provision will be required to be located, where feasible, where it can provide a connection to the network of existing open spaces and wildlife corridors.
5. Where physical provision of open space is made by the developer (either on-site or off-site), an agreement will be sought with the developer to lay out the land to the standards required and to make adequate provision for its subsequent maintenance. Maintenance of the site will be required to support the multifunctional role of the open space, including, where practicable, management regimes that facilitate natural habitat creation and species migration

Policy OS5 (Development Plan Document, 2010)

1. Any open spaces provided as part of new development, either on-site or off-site, must, wherever practicable, be located where they can provide a safe connection, either directly or in the form of a stepping stone, with the existing network of open spaces and wildlife corridors as identified on the Green Infrastructure Network Diagram.
2. Any such connection will be required, where practicable, to provide opportunities for walking, cycling and, where appropriate, horse riding between and through open spaces, as well as opportunities for natural habitat creation and species migration.
3. New open spaces provided in association with new development must be managed to facilitate natural habitat creation and to allow, wherever practicable, for species migration across the Green Infrastructure Network.

SECTION 4: DISTRICT PROJECTS TO NOTE

4.1 Old Chalk New Downs project (Climate Change Strategy, 2020)

We will also continue to support the Old Chalk New Downs project which aims to restore and connect remaining fragments of chalk grassland in the North Downs to facilitate the spread and survival or rare species and raise awareness of the habitat through engagement schemes.

SECTION 5: SPECIFIC PRIORITIES WITHIN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

5.1 Available Plans (Local Development Scheme, 2022)

No Neighbourhood Plans have yet been progressed in the borough. However, applications have been made to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council for the designation of the following neighbourhood areas:

- Ditton Neighbourhood Area Application (Approved June 2015)
- West Malling Neighbourhood Area Application (Approved September 2016)
- Hildenborough Neighbourhood Area Application (Approved January 2021)

SECTION 6: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED AND REFERENCED

Document reference	Link
Reg 18, Local Plan, 2022	Regulation 18 Local Plan 2022 – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (tmbc.gov.uk)
Biodiversity Duty, 2024	Annex 1 - Biodiversity Duty First Consideration Report.pdf
Corporate Strategy, 2023	Corporate strategy 2023 to 2027 – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (tmbc.gov.uk)
Climate Change Strategy, 2020	Climate change strategy 2020 to 2030 – Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council (tmbc.gov.uk)
Development Plan Document, 2010	The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 has introduced new types of plan for shaping and guiding development and new procedures for preparing them (sharepoint.com)
Green Infrastructure, 2018	CONTENTS (tmbc.gov.uk)
Local Development Scheme, 2022	Annex 2 Draft LDS.pdf (tmbc.gov.uk)
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council	Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council officers