

**STRATEGIC PLANNING,  
SUSTAINABILITY &  
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE**

**5 December 2017**

**Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Action Plan**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service/Lead Director</b>	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Mark Egerton, Strategic Planning Manager & Tay Arnold, Planning Projects and Delivery Manager
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

Following examination and subsequent inclusion of Main Modifications, the Council adopted its Local Plan on 25th October 2017. This includes various references and commitments regarding green and blue infrastructure. In the updated Strategic Plan, in association with the theme 'Respecting the Character and Heritage of our Borough' the Council committed to delivering the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (GBIS). To facilitate the delivery of the Local Plan commitments along with the GBIS an accompanying action plan is being brought to this committee for adoption.

**This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:**

1. That the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy action plan be adopted.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee	5 December 2017

# Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Action Plan

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 On 12<sup>th</sup> July 2016 Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee adopted the Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. The Strategy contributes to fulfilling the Council's duty to preserve biodiversity under Section 40 of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 and is an essential component of the Local Plan evidence base. Adoption of this strategy followed two reports to SPST Committee in 2013 and 2014. The drafting of the strategy and draft action plan followed engagement with key stakeholders and local communities; and a series of workshops with stakeholders and partners in 2015 covering both items. The adopted strategy included a framework for delivery and this action plan builds on this.
- 1.2 The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (GBIS) emphasises the importance of green and blue infrastructure for people and the natural environment. The action plan, once adopted will guide and co-ordinate investment in Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure, contributing to the protection and enhancement of the Borough's natural environment.
- 1.3 Following examination and subsequent inclusion of Main Modifications, the Council adopted its Local Plan on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2017. This includes various references and commitments regarding green and blue infrastructure. Indeed, the Local Plan provides a spatial objective to "retain and enhance the character of the existing green and blue infrastructure and to promote linkages between areas of environmental value". To facilitate this, the Local Plan makes various references to the Council's Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. For example, in the reasoned justification to Policy SP4 (Maidstone Town Centre), paragraph 4.72 states "...the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy will help to identify the principles that should be followed and the subsequent action plan will include specific initiatives for implementation."
- 1.4 Policy DM3 (Natural Environment) refers directly to the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy. Furthermore, the reasoned justification to Policy DM3 (Natural Environment) notes at paragraph 6.16 "The green and blue infrastructure is considered to be of such importance that a Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (GBIS) has been produced. The strategy looks to encourage the creation of links and stepping stones to help in the movement of people and wildlife across the built up urban area. In the rural areas, the focus will be more on land management and creating and enhancing landscape and habitat networks. The Strategy will also seek to identify those areas of the borough where deficiencies exist and look to provide guidance on how these can be overcome. The council will promote a partnership approach with developers, landowners and neighbouring local authorities, including Kent County Council, to help achieve the objectives of the Strategy."

- 1.5 The GBI action plan therefore forms a key component to ensure that the desired outcomes of the GBI are achieved. The action plan recognises that as the planning, design and management of the green and blue infrastructure resource is the responsibility of many different organisations, the strategy and action plan can only be delivered successfully in partnership. Key stakeholders to the GBIS and the draft action plan were MBC councillors, KCC (Maidstone Borough) councillors, parish councillors, resident associations, resident groups, MBC officers (cross-departmental), Kent Downs AoNB Unit, Environment Agency, Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, Mid Kent Downs partnership, Kent Wildlife Trust, Kent High Weald Partnership, River Catchment Improvement Groups, Neighbouring Authorities and Friends of Parks and Allotment Association representatives.
- 1.6 The key stakeholders agreed the draft action plan in 2015 following a series of themed workshops. The action plan is grouped into a number of themes to help deliver the strategy's vision and objectives. Each action also identifies which green and blue strategy objectives it would help to meet and identifies a timescale and lead partner.
- 1.7 The themes covered in the action plan are:
  - Mitigating and adapting to climate change
  - Integrating sustainable movement and access for all
  - Promoting a distinctive townscape and landscape
  - Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, water and air quality
  - Providing opportunities for sport, recreation, quiet enjoyment and health
  - Retaining and enhancing a quality environment for investment and through development
  - Providing community involvement and opportunities for education

Within each of these themes there are a range of different actions, assigned to the most relevant delivery lead. There is a diverse range of specific actions and MBC planning (both as sole lead and in partnership) has specific actions to deliver against several of the themes such as:

- Encourage tree planting as part of new development to enhance air quality.
- Support delivery of green and blue infrastructure improvements relating to the actions in the Walking and Cycling Strategy 2016.
- Coordinate green and blue infrastructure proposals for Maidstone with KCC Active Travel Strategy developed during 2016.
- Maintain stellar shape of urban area, prevent coalescence of neighbourhoods and provide network of multifunctional green infrastructure including the creation of green links from the town centre into the countryside.
- Identify sites to address quantified shortage of public open spaces.
- Avoid the loss of ancient woodland and veteran trees and encourage landowners to manage and restore these areas.
- Protect the spring line along the southern edge of the Kent Downs AONB from pollution particularly from highway and agricultural run-off.
- Review and update the Maidstone Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

- Develop a playing pitch strategy to understand quantity, quality and accessibility of sports pitches and identify surpluses and deficits linking with Kent Football Association Strategy, working with National Governing Bodies of Sport to understand recreational space/pitch needs as part of new development using Kent FA pitch calculator.
  - Provide new or improved sports pitch facilities as set out in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.
  - Explore provision of new allotment sites as set out in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.
  - Investigate opportunities to designate more sites as local nature reserves to help meet the Natural England standard of 1ha local nature reserve per 1,000 population.
  - Create substantial new areas of publicly accessible natural and semi-natural area in association with new housing development including within the north west and south east strategic development locations in Maidstone town and rural service centres in accordance with the Maidstone Borough Local Plan.
- 1.8 The projects identified in the action plan will take time to deliver; some may be underway already, but others may be dependent on external factors and may be more long-term in their delivery. The key role for Maidstone Borough Council will be one of facilitation. It should be noted that specific projects directly related to Maidstone Borough Council owned parks and open spaces are not included in this action plan as they are already part of the MBC 10-year Parks and Open Spaces Strategy.
- 1.9 The council will actively keep this action plan under review alongside its other strategies and plans, and will update it where appropriate.
- 

## **2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 Adopt the Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Action Plan, to accompany the already adopted Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.
- 2.2 Adopt the Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Action Plan with modifications, to accompany the already adopted Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.
- 2.3 Not to adopt the Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Action Plan and continue to deliver the already adopted Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy through existing measures.
- 

## **3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Option set out in paragraph 2.1 is the preferred option as the Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Action Plan sets out how the already adopted Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy will be implemented. Within the updated Strategic Plan MBC has made a commitment to delivering this strategy
- 

## **4. RISK**

- 4.1 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks associated are within the Council's risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

## 5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 The drafting of the strategy and draft action plan followed engagement with key stakeholders and local communities; and a series of workshops with stakeholders and partners in 2015.

## 6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 Following adoption the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy action plan will be published on MBC website. The council will actively keep this action plan under review alongside its other strategies and plans, and will update it where appropriate.

## 7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	Accepting the recommendations will materially improve the Council's ability to achieve the updated Strategic Plan specifically the theme 'Respecting the Character and Heritage of our Borough' where delivering the GBI is included.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	See 4.1 of the report	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Financial</b>	The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
<b>Staffing</b>	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development

<b>Legal</b>	There are no implications arising from this report	Cheryl Parks, Lawyer (Planning), Mid-Kent Legal Services
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	There are no implications arising from this report	Cheryl Parks, Lawyer (Planning), Mid-Kent Legal Services
<b>Equalities</b>	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Policy & Information Manager
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	None	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Procurement</b>	None	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development

## 8. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: GBIStrategyActionPlan2017

---

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

**Green and Blue Infrastructure report:**

<https://meetings.maidstone.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CIId=579&MIId=2607>