

# AGENDA

## STRATEGIC PLANNING, SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING



Date: Tuesday 12 July 2016  
Time: 6.30 pm  
Venue: Town Hall, High Street,  
Maidstone

Membership:

Councillors Burton (Chairman), English,  
Mrs Grigg, D Mortimer, Munford,  
Prendergast, Springett,  
de Wiggondene and Wilby

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Page No.

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Notification of Substitute Members
3. Urgent Items

**Continued Over/:**

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**Issued on Monday 4 July 2016**

The reports included in Part I of this agenda can be made available in **alternative formats**. For further information about this service, or to arrange for special facilities to be provided at the meeting, **please contact Tessa Ware on 01622 602621**. To find out more about the work of the Committee, please visit [www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk)

**Alison Broom, Chief Executive, Maidstone Borough Council,  
Maidstone House, King Street, Maidstone Kent ME15 6JQ**

4.	Notification of Visiting Members	
5.	Disclosures by Members and Officers	
6.	Disclosures of Lobbying	
7.	To consider whether any items should be taken in private because of the possible disclosure of exempt information	
8.	Minutes of the meeting held on 14 June 2016	1 - 10
9.	Presentation of Petitions (if any)	
10.	Questions and answer session for members of the public	
11.	Committee Work Programme for noting	11 - 13
12.	Report of the Head of Planning and Development - Staplehurst and Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan Examinations Update	14 - 19
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14.	Report of the Head of Planning and Development - Community Infrastructure Levy: Draft Charging Schedule	151 - 193

## **MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee**

#### **MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 14 JUNE 2016**

**Present:** Councillor D Burton (Chairman), and Councillors English, Mrs Grigg, D Mortimer, Munford, Prendergast, Springett, de Wiggondene and Wilby

**Also Present:** Councillors Adkinson, Burton, Clark, Garten and Harper

7. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

8. **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS**

There were no substitute members.

9. **URGENT ITEMS**

The Chairman stated that, in his opinion, an Urgent Update on the Committee's Work Programme should be taken as an urgent item as it contained information relating to the Committee's commitments for the coming months.

He also stated that it had been requested by Councillor Springett that the Committee receive a report on Planning Enforcement and another report on Retrospective Planning Applications. Scoping work with Officers will take place and dates for receiving these reports will be arranged and notified to the Committee.

There is also an update report on the Brunswick Street Car Park to come to the Committee at a date in the future to be arranged.

This was noted by the Committee.

10. **NOTIFICATION OF VISITING MEMBERS**

It was noted the following Visiting Members were in attendance:

Councillor Adkinson to speak on Item 12  
Councillor M Burton – observing  
Councillor Clark to speak on Item 12  
Councillor Garten to speak on Item 15  
Councillor Harper to speak on Item 12.

11. DISCLOSURES BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS

Councillor Garten declared he used to be a Parish Councillor of Broomfield and Kingswood and that he was also a resident in this parish.

Councillor Prendergast declared she had in the past been a member of the Maidstone Campaign for the Protection of Rural England but had not taken part in its discussions on the Integrated Transport Strategy.

Councillor English declared he was the Secretary of Hayle Place Nature Reserve and had made comments on the Integrated Transport Strategy but had not take part in any discussions.

Councillor Harper declared he was Chairman of the Maidstone Cycling Campaign Forum.

Councillor Clark declared he lived in Boughton Lane.

All Councillors declaring an interest considered their interests were not Other Significant Interests and would remain in the meeting and take part in the discussions or address the Committee, whichever was relevant.

12. DISCLOSURES OF LOBBYING

It was noted that all Councillors declared they had been lobbied on the Land South of Cripple Street, Maidstone as an issue in the Integrated Transport Strategy.

Councillor English declared he had been lobbied on issues regarding the Walking and Cycling Strategy and the responses to Kent County Council's Active Travel Strategy.

Councillor Prendergast declared she had been lobbied on the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan.

13. EXEMPT ITEMS

**RESOLVED:**

That items on the agenda be taken in public as proposed.

14. MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS HELD ON 18 APRIL 2016

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

15. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 MAY 2016

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 24 May 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

16. PRESENTATION OF PETITIONS (IF ANY)

There were no petitions.

17. QUESTIONS AND ANSWER SESSION FOR MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Mr Sean Carter Chairman of the North Loose Residents Association, Planning Committee addressed the Committee to ask his question:

*"Following the article in the Kent Messenger of 10 June showing traffic in Boughton Lane has increased by 53% in the last five years and 11% in the last year, which confirms Kent Highways view that the junction with the Loose Road is over capacity. Does Maidstone Borough Council now accept that allocating housing on the New Line Learning school site and playing fields in Boughton Lane is a mistake and should be withdrawn?"*

The Chairman responded as follows:

*"I can't comment specifically upon the statistics that you quote, I've not seen those. But what I would say to you is that any individual planning application that may come forward for that site would be considered on its own merits and it would also be considered upon what transport congestion mitigation measures are offered against that individual application, and if a suitable scheme of mitigation was brought forward it may well be considered favourably or it may well not and that will be a matter for the Planning Committee or future inspector to decide."*

Mr Carter asked the following supplementary question:

*"It should be noted that this junction was never included in the original Integrated Transport Strategy. At the request of Maidstone Borough Council, Mott MacDonald have now produced a report to try to find a solution for this junction. Maidstone Borough Council instructed Mott MacDonald to allow for new developments, mainly in the Sutton Road area, but made no mention of two allocated sites in Boughton Lane or development in Coxheath, Marden, Staplehurst or Boughton Monchelsea, all of which impact on this junction. This report was based on traffic figures provided by developers for the New Line Learning site. Can we be assured, that in the future, all instructions from Maidstone Borough Council planners to contractors, will take account of all factors concerning new developments, including neighbourhood planning groups, in the process?"*

The Chairman responded as follows:

*"I think there's two aspects to this. There's the inclusion of neighbourhood plan groups and I believe it would be our policy to furnish any consultants with a full suite of information, which would include neighbourhood planning documents as they are emerging. All of those documents and similar are published on our website and available, and I believe that consultants would have access to all of our information."*

18. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT -  
CONSIDERATION OF RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT  
INTEGRATED TRANSPORT STRATEGY

The Principal Planning Officer presented the report. The Committee was informed, that as a result of consultation carried out on the Integrated Transport Strategy (ITS), in conjunction with the Local Plan Regulation 19 Consultation, between 5 February and 18 March 2016, a total of 84 representations were made from various interested parties. A schedule of representations was included in the report.

The main recommended change, agreed with Kent County Council (KCC), was that the Walking and Cycling Strategy be published and adopted as a standalone strategy separate from the ITS. It was reported that, if agreed, the amendments would be made to both documents and the revised documents presented to the Maidstone Joint Transport Board (JTB) at their next meeting in July. If agreed by JTB, the documents would then come back to this committee for final approval for adoption and published later in 2016.

It was confirmed that the ITS and the Walking and Cycling Strategy were in support of the allocations in the Maidstone Local Plan.

Councillors Harper, Adkinson and Clark addressed the Committee as Visiting Members.

The Committee was informed that the separation of the two documents related to reaching an agreement with Kent County Council (KCC) and to produce a joint ITS, which was an important document providing evidence for the Local Plan. The Committee was advised that it was common practice throughout the country for the two documents to be separate.

The Committee heard that references to the Walking and Cycling Strategy would remain in the ITS, with more detail included in the Walking and Cycling Strategy. The Committee was assured that the two documents would remain synergised.

The Committee was informed KCC undertook strategic VISUM modelling. In order to assess the likely impact of development and suggest mitigation it was necessary to carry out micro simulation modelling. KCC did not do this, leaving a gap in the data that Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) filled as it was faced with planning applications to consider which needed detailed highways mitigation. These studies were available to all Councillors on the MBC website.

It was confirmed that there was ongoing dialogue with the Maidstone Cycling Campaign Forum with officers from both KCC and MBC attending meetings of the forum.

In response to questions the Committee heard that:

- In the Local Plan, set out on pages 245-246, there was a detailed list of junction improvements. The gap in transport improvements at a detailed local level, as opposed to the VISUM modelling, which was a strategic level model, was dealt with through detailed junction capacity assessment work carried out for the Council by Mott MacDonald and Transport Assessments submitted by developers with planning applications. These addressed the cumulative impact of development on the local highway network. Where appropriate mitigation was justified and required, this was secured through Section 106 agreements with developers. MBC's strategy was focussed on junction improvements, which also helped public transport operators.
- The VISUM modelling carried out picked up transport movements between the RSCs and Maidstone town centre but did not pick up on journeys to other destinations outside the borough. At planning application stage developers were asked for s106 contributions for transport improvements such as increasing the frequency and ease of use of bus services serving the RSCs and improvements to train stations, for example, where this was proven necessary as mitigation.
- KCC's objections to the Local Plan and planning applications on transport reasons have been based on their VISUM modelling. MBC's research had involved more detailed research on the impact of developments on junctions. In response to KCC MBC had assembled micro modelling and established potential mitigation to congestion.
- MBC and KCC have secured £8.9m of Local Growth Fund 1 money for the improvement of 5 priority junctions which was approved by JTB in November 2015.
- Each transport assessment carried out by developers should take into account all development in the area when suggesting transport mitigation.

The Committee were reminded that the Inspector would decide if the Local Plan provided sufficient transport mitigation.

The Committee agreed to note the schedule of issues and responses to the ITS consultation and agreed the revised ITS and Walking and Cycling Strategy should come back to the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee before going to JTB.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Committee note the schedule of issues and responses to the consultation on the Integrated Transport Strategy as set out in Appendix One.
2. That the Committee agree that revised versions of the Integrated Transport Strategy and separate Walking and Cycling Strategy be prepared and reported to a future meeting of the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee, and then, if approved by this Committee, presented to the Maidstone Joint Transport Board recommending that the relevant Kent County Council Cabinet Member approve the Integrated Transport Strategy and separate Walking and Cycling Strategy.
3. That following the meeting of the Maidstone Joint Transport Board the 'final' versions of the documents will then be reported to this Committee for approval for publication.

Voting: For – 8 Against – 0 Abstentions – 1

19. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - RESPONSE TO KCC'S ACTIVE TRAVEL STRATEGY CONSULTATION DRAFT

The Principal Planning Officer presented the report.

Members raised concerns regarding the translation of the aspirations into actions and delivery.

Concern was also raised regarding the promotion of active travel to the benefit of all sections of the community equally. The Committee agreed that solutions for accessibility to active travel should be provided.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee agree to the proposed response to the consultation set out in paragraphs 4.2.1 to 4.2.6 of the report and that it be forwarded to Kent County Council prior to the close of the consultation period on 13 July 2016, provided the following comments are included:

*"Maidstone Borough Council consider Kent County Council's Active Travel Strategy to generally be a good document in terms of its aspirations. However, the Council would like to see more commitment to the actual delivery of Active Travel.*

*Furthermore, Maidstone Borough Council are pleased Kent County Council have, through its Equality Impact Assessment, identified shortfalls in its Active Travel Strategy. The Council strongly recommends that implementation measures in this strategy should actively seek to address the issues of inequality that have been identified."*

Voting: For – 9 Against – 0 Abstentions – 0



20. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION BY KENT COUNTY COUNCIL ON FINAL REVIEW OF FUNDED BUS SERVICES

The Principal Planning Officer presented the report and pointed out the report was for the Committee to note as the consultation period had closed. MBC's response was attached to the report.

The Committee heard that a report had been printed in the Kent Messenger giving the wrong impression that all the proposals in the KCC document came from MBC. The Kent Messenger had been contacted and would be printing a correction in their next edition.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Maidstone Borough Council response to Kent County Council's Review of Funded Bus Services be noted.

21. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - BROOMFIELD AND KINGSWOOD NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Project Manager, Local Plan presented the report explaining the reason for the delay.

The Committee heard the examiner stated the plan did not meet the basic requirements and was contrary to adopted local plan policies ENV28 and H27, and there was a lack of evidence for the development proposals.

Councillor Garten addressed the Committee as a Visiting Member.

The Committee heard that the Broomfield and Kingswood neighbourhood plan did not accord with the adopted local plan. The Broomfield and Kingswood parish council were advised to make representations during the draft Local Plan consultation process for a change to the parish boundary. The parish council did not do this. The Committee were informed that the Inspector for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan may allow the parish council to make representations during the inspection hearings, but this was not definite.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the Committee note the report of the Examiner of the Broomfield and Kingswood Neighbourhood Development Plan.

Voting: For – 9      Against – 0      Abstentions - 0

2. That the Committee agree not to move the Broomfield and Kingswood Neighbourhood Development Plan to referendum.

Voting: For – 8      Against – 0      Abstentions – 1

22. REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - EXAMINATION OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS FOR STAPLEHURST AND HEADCORN

The Project Manager, Local Plan, presented the report and explained the issues experienced with the Staplehurst and Headcorn neighbourhood plans.

Subsequent to the publication of the report Staplehurst parish council had appointed an alternative examiner for their neighbourhood plan, Mr D Stebbing. Mr Stebbing would commence the examination of the Staplehurst neighbourhood plan on 15 June 2016.

The Committee heard that Headcorn parish council were still to confirm their preferred examiner. Indications were that the parish council would prefer Mr Lockhart-Mummery, who had been advising KCC on transport issues in respect of the Local Plan. The parish council had been informed that MBC would object to Mr Lockhart-Mummery's appointment as examiner as it was considered by officers to be a conflict of interest on Mr Lockhart-Mummery's part. Planning Practice Guidance was clear that the appointment of an examiner should be made by the local authority, but with the parish council's agreement.

The Committee requested a further update on the situation regarding the Headcorn neighbourhood plan at their next meeting.

**RESOLVED:**

1. That the update on the Staplehurst and Headcorn neighbourhood plan be noted.
2. That a further update on the Headcorn neighbourhood plan be provided at the next meeting of the Committee.

23. ORAL REPORT OF THE HEAD OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT - UPDATE ON THE MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN

The Head of Planning and Development provided the Committee with an oral update of the position of the local plan.

The Maidstone Borough Local Plan and accompanying documents were submitted on 20 May 2016. All documents were available to view on the MBC website under Planning.

An inspector had been appointed, Mr Robert Mellor. Mr Mellor was currently reading through all the documents and officers were awaiting his views on the topics to be examined. Mr Mellor may hold a pre-examination meeting to discuss the start and finish dates of the examination. Officers hoped to hear from him on this in the near future.

The two main outstanding documents were the Integrated Transport Strategy and the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, both of which were due to be reported to this Committee at their meeting in July 2016.

The Committee were informed that the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan was due to be adopted in July 2016. The repercussions of this on the local plan would be the requirement for mineral assessments to be carried out for development sites lying in identified mineral safeguarding areas and the mineral safeguarding areas detailed in the local plan.

The inspector had been informed and a joint position statement with KCC would be produced for the examination in public.

It was noted that once the local plan had been adopted policy documents on evolving landscape issues around the borough would be developed and presented to this Committee.

**RESOLVED:**

That the Committee note the update on the local plan.

24. OUTSIDE BODIES UPDATES - VERBAL REPORTS

Councillor Burton provided an update on the Quality Bus Partnership and informed the Committee there were concerns raised by bus operators regarding the work on the Maidstone bridges gyratory system. However, since the work began they felt the issues were not as severe as they had envisaged.

Councillor Burton also reported that regular meetings had been arranged with Highways England however the meetings had focussed on operational and strategic issues and the purpose of these meetings needed to be clarified. He went on to report that the Bridges Gyratory and Tow Path Schemes had nothing to report.

Councillor English provided the Committee with an update on the Community Rail Partnership and the Medway Valley Line Liaison Group. He informed the Committee the two groups had focussed on the representations on the South Eastern Rail Franchise consultation. Councillor English confirmed that their representations were fully in accordance with the views of MBC.

Councillor English went on to inform the Committee that the Medway Valley Line Liaison Group had been working to secure the adoption of stations along the line. It was confirmed that Councillor Pickett, with the community in the Bridge Ward, had been investigating the adoption of the Maidstone Barracks station.

25. DURATION OF MEETING

6:30pm to 8:43pm





# ⇒ **Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee Work Programme**

Democratic Services Team  
E: [democraticservices@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@maidstone.gov.uk)

Publication Date:

## **INTRODUCTION**

This document sets out the decisions to be taken by the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transport Committee of Maidstone Borough Council on a rolling basis. This document will be published as updated with new decisions required to be made.

## **DECISIONS WHICH COMMITTEES INTEND TO MAKE IN PRIVATE**

The Committee hereby gives notice that it intends to meet in private after its public meeting to consider reports and/or appendices which contain exempt information under Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended). The private meeting of any Committee is open only to Committee Members, other Councillors and Council officers.

Reports and/or appendices to decisions which Committee will take at their private meetings are indicated in the list below, with the reasons for the decision being made in private. Any person is able to make representations to the Committee if he/she believes the decision should instead be made in the public part of that Committee meeting. If you want to make such representations, please email [committeeservices@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:committeeservices@maidstone.gov.uk). You will then be sent a response in reply to your representations. Both your representations and the Committee's response will be published on the Council's website at least 5 working days before the Committee meeting.

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## **ACCESS TO COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Reports to be considered at any of the Committee's public meetings will be available on the Council's website ([www.maidstone.gov.uk](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk)) a minimum of 5 working days before the meeting.

## **HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE TO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS?**

The Council actively encourages people to express their views on decisions it plans to make. This can be done by writing directly to the appropriate Officer or to the relevant Chairman of a Committee.

Alternatively, you can submit a question or make a statement to the Committee by emailing [tessaware@maidstone.gov.uk](mailto:tessaware@maidstone.gov.uk), provided it is relevant to their terms of reference. All questions or requests to make a statement at a Committee meeting must be received by 5pm one clear working day prior to the meeting.

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Title of Report and Brief Summary:</b>	<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>Public or Private (if Private the reason why)</b>	<b>Content</b>
<b>6 July</b>	<b>Integrated Transport Strategy – before it goes to JTP</b>	TBC	Public	Approval of the two strategies
<b>12 July</b>	<b>Green and blue Infrastructure Strategy and Delivery Framework</b>	Chris Smith	Public	Adoption of GBIS and approval of Delivery Framework
<b>12 July</b>	<b>CIL Draft Charging Schedule and Reg 123 List</b>	Andrew Thompson	Public	Approval for consultation
<b>12 July</b>	<b>Oral update on Staplehurst and Headcorn Neighbourhood Plans</b>	Cheryl Parks	Public	
<b>13 September</b>	<b>Integrated Transport Strategy and Walking and Cycling Strategy</b>	TBC	Public	Adoption of the two strategies
<b>13 September</b>	<b>Changes to National policy relating to Plan Making</b>	TBC	Public	Summary update of Policy and Legislative changes and the impact on plan making
<b>11 October</b>	<b>CIL Draft Charging Schedule and Reg 123 List</b>	Andrew Thompson	Public	Responses to consultation; proposed changes ; recommendation to Council re submission of CIL for examination
<b>11 October</b>	<b>Finance and Resources</b>	Tay Arnold	Public	Summary update report on the wider Planning Department finance and resource position (deferred from 15/16)
<b>8 November</b>	<b>CIL Governance structure</b>	Andrew Thompson	Public	Approval of a governance structure and management arrangements
<b>8 November</b>	<b>Local Plan examination update</b>	TBA	Public	Verbal update on the examination
<b>TBC</b>	<b>Update on Housing and Planning Act</b>			
<b>TBC</b>	<b>Planning Service Review</b>			
<b>TBC</b>	<b>Planning Support Service options</b>			
<b>Ad hoc</b>	<b>Neighbourhood Plans</b>	Cheryl Parks	Public	Consultation responses; examiner reports; referendum approvals; all as required.

# Agenda Item 12

## Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

**12 July 2016**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

**Yes**

## Staplehurst and Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan Examinations Update

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Cheryl Parks, Project Manager, Local Plan
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	Staplehurst, Headcorn

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

1. That the Committee notes the progress made in relation to the re-examination of the Neighbourhood Development Plans of both Staplehurst and Headcorn

### **This report relates to the following corporate priorities:**

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all -
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough -

### **Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	12 July 2016



# Staplehurst and Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan Examinations Update

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report updates the current position in relation to the re-examination of the Neighbourhood Development Plans of both Staplehurst and Headcorn, as requested by this Committee at its meeting of 14 June 2016.

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## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting of 14 June 2016 this Committee considered a report relating to issues experienced with the examinations of both the aforementioned Neighbourhood Development Plans.
- 2.2 Having noted the officer's report and discussed the position as reported, the Committee resolved to request a further update from officers at the next meeting of the Committee.
- 2.3 Since the last meeting considerable progress has been made in relation to both plans and this is set out in this report.

### Staplehurst:

- 2.4 Because delays had been experienced in seeking candidate examiners from the Council's preferred provider, NPIERS, an alternate provider, Intelligent Plans, had been approached. Having discussed the Council's requirements, Intelligent Plans were able to provide a candidate examiner for consideration.
- 2.5 NPIERS also provided a further candidate following the Council's concern about the previously supplied examiner, Mr Lockhart-Mummery, as set out in the June Committee report.
- 2.6 Staplehurst Parish Council was therefore presented with a choice of two candidate examiners, the first from Intelligent Plans (Mr Derek Stebbing) and the second from NPIERS (Mr Jeremy Edge). Following consideration of the merits of each examiner, the Parish Council requested that Mr Derek Stebbing be appointed.
- 2.7 Officers' view was that both the candidate examiners would be suitable and so Mr Stebbing was formally appointed to carry out a new examination of the Staplehurst Neighbourhood Development Plan, and commenced the examination starting 15 June.
- 2.8 It is understood that as part of the examination process Mr Stebbing carried out an unaccompanied site visit to Staplehurst in the week commencing 20

June 2016. At the time of writing, officers have heard nothing further from the examiner, and await his findings in due course.

Headcorn:

- 2.9 Both Mr Derek Stebbing and Mr Jeremy Edge were also suggested to carry out the re-examination of the Headcorn Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 2.10 Headcorn Parish Council had been keen for Mr Lockhart-Mummery to undertake the examination, but accepted the Council's decision in regard to his perceived conflict of interest. Having considered both suggested examiners the Parish Council expressed a preference for Mr Jeremy Edge to carry out the new examination.
- 2.11 Mr Edge was keen to explain that he had no direct conflicts of interest, but that he had represented Gladmans on Community Infrastructure Levy matters in a different part of the country several years ago. (Gladmans had made representations to the Headcorn Neighbourhood Plan consultation at Regulation 16). It was felt that this would not impede a transparent examination of the Neighbourhood Plan, and so Mr Edge has been appointed to examine the Headcorn plan with the agreement of the Parish Council.
- 2.12 Because of existing commitments relating to other plan examinations, Mr Edge has indicated that he will be unable to start immediately, but will commence the examination towards the end of July 2016. Whilst frustrating for the Parish Council, it will be unlikely that another examiner could be found that could start any sooner than Mr Edge.
- 2.13 Both appointed examiners are aware of the position in regard to the previous incomplete examinations and are also aware of the examiner's interim reports published on the Council's website. Both will undertake initial examination of the plans and supporting documentation on their own merits and as consulted on at Regulation 16, before any consideration of the previous examiner's interim conclusions.
- 2.14 Consultees who made representations to the consultations on both plans have been notified in writing of the current situation and of the appointment of new examiners.
- 2.15 In due course, the outcomes of the new examinations will be notified to consultees, and reported to this Committee. In the interim, continued support will be provided to both Parish Councils including updating them on progress with the examination process.

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### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to note the content of this report.
- 3.2 A further written update could be requested by the Committee. However, it is felt that the matter is now in hand and can next be reported according to the agreed protocols and once the examiners findings are available for each Neighbourhood Development Plan.

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#### 4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The Committee is recommended to note this report and await the examiners' findings on each of the Neighbourhood Development Plans in due course.
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#### 5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 5.1 Following receipt of the examiners' findings, a report will be produced for each Neighbourhood Development Plan setting out the recommended next steps.
- 

#### 6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	A Neighbourhood Development Plan, once made, will be part of the Development Plan for the borough, directly impacting on the Corporate Priorities through the determination of planning applications in the plan area.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	There is reputational risk to the Borough Council relating to this report. Whilst officers have endeavoured to work proactively with both Parish Councils, there is still a view that some fault lies with the Borough Council, which is not the case. The view externally, in both Parishes but more strongly evident in Headcorn is that the Borough Council is actively delaying Neighbourhood Plans in order to give greater priority to the Local Plan and to push through higher housing numbers for rural settlements. This is refuted in the strongest terms.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Financial</b>	There were costs related to the original failed examinations. The proposed new examinations described here will involve	Director of Finance & Business Improvement

	further costs.	
<b>Staffing</b>	There are no staffing implications relating to this report and its recommendations.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Legal</b>	Statute sets out the procedures to be followed with regard to Neighbourhood Planning. The Borough Council is obliged to follow statutory requirements, which it has done.	Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning), Mid Kent Legal Services
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>	The needs of different groups are considered throughout the development of the plans.	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager
<b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b>	Plans must have regard to sustainability and the natural environment including heritage assets as part of their policies. An assessment for the need for Strategic Environmental Assessment is carried out at an early stage and repeated at key stages of the plans development.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Community Safety</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Human Rights Act</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Procurement</b>	There are no particular procurement requirements or considerations that are not already in place at this stage.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development & Paul Riley, Section 151 Officer
<b>Asset Management</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development

## 7. REPORT APPENDICES

There are none

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## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

There are none

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# Agenda Item 13

## Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee

**12 July 2016**

Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?

**Yes**

### Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	<b>Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee</b>
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning & Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Chris Smith, Planning Policy Manager (interim)
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

#### **This report makes the following recommendation to this Committee:**

That the Committee adopts the Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, an essential component of the Local Plan evidence base.

#### **This report relates to the following corporate priorities:**

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all.
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough.

#### **Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee	12 July 2016

# Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (Appendix A) is being brought back to this Committee for adoption following:
  - two reports to Committees in 2013 and 2014;
  - engagement with key stakeholders and local communities; and
  - a series of workshops with stakeholders and partners in 2015.
- 1.2 The Strategy will contribute 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.
- 1.3 The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (GBIS) emphasises the importance of green and blue infrastructure for people and the natural environment. The GBIS will promote, guide and co-ordinate investment in Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure over the next 20 years contributing to the protection and enhancement of the borough's natural environment.
- 1.4 The strategy aims to be closely integrated with the following local strategies: Vision for Kent 2012-22, Growing the Garden of England: A strategy for environment and economy in Kent 2011, Kent Nature and Biodiversity Partnerships including the Maidstone Biodiversity Strategy, the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2013-2017, Maidstone Integrated Transport and walking and Cycling Strategies 2016 and the Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone; and others that have been adopted as the GBIS as progressed: A strategic framework for sport and physical activity 2012-2022 and the Draft Active Travel Strategy for Kent.
- 1.5 It points out that the borough's landscape, habitats, rivers and public rights of way do not stop at the administrative boundary and it is vital that the strategy responds to and influences the approach to green and blue infrastructure in the surrounding area.
- 1.6 Existing green and blue infrastructure resources are set out and described (including maps): landscape character, habitats, heritage assets, publically accessible green space, amenity green space, provision for children and young people, natural and semi-natural green space, allotments and community gardens, outdoor sports facilities, green and blue corridors and private green space.

### Open Spaces

- 1.7 An outline assessment of current deficiencies in accessible open space provision is provided using the Open Spaces Quality Audit, the Accessibility Maps and the Quantitative Assessment of Open Space Provision using the new (submitted Local Plan) standards to produce indicative open space deficiencies by place/ward:

- **Amenity Green Space**  
Current deficiency within Maidstone - North, Fant, High Street, Bearsted, Allington and North Wards
- **Children's Play Space**  
Considered as, at best, fair in most of the borough but deficient in the urban area of Maidstone and, possibly, Marden, Staplehurst, Headcorn and Sutton Valence.
- **Natural/Semi-natural Greenspace**  
Whilst considered as good in general, deficient in the urban area of Maidstone and Staplehurst, Headcorn and Marden and, possibly, Lenham, Coxheath and Sutton Valence.
- **Allotments**  
Deficient in most of the Maidstone urban area and Staplehurst.
- **Outdoor Sports Facilities**  
Considered as very poor with indications of deficiencies in most of the borough but will be informed by the commissioned Playing Pitches Strategy (2016/17).

1.8 Key issues identified to be addressed by the strategy are: impacts of climate change, gaps in the connectivity of blue and green resources, inequalities in accessibility to public open space, landscape and townscape quality, water and air quality, health inequalities and the need to accommodate development to meet the projected needs of the community.

- 1.9 Detailed objectives are set out to achieve the vision and guide the strategy's proposals for each of the strategy's seven key themes:
- 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; and
  - providing community involvement and opportunities for education.

#### 1.10 Key Principals and Opportunities

The main purpose of the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is to maximise the functionality and therefore the benefits of the resource in Maidstone Borough and to help deliver the council's wider community and planning objectives. For each of the seven key themes identified, the following principles and opportunities for conserving, improving and creating green and blue infrastructure are considered:

- Key issues
- How can green and blue infrastructure help
- Examples of Good Practice
- Key principles and opportunities for Maidstone's green and blue infrastructure including conserving, improving and creating new opportunities.



- 1.11 The key opportunities and principles for conserving, improving and creating green and blue infrastructure are brought together in a strategic framework plan (Map 14). This identifies and prioritises four broad areas where green and blue infrastructure interventions will have the most impact on achieving the strategy objectives: the Capstone-Bredhurst area, the M20 corridor, River Beult corridor and Laddingford/Low Weald area. In addition it highlights designated Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, river catchment improvement areas and the eight poorest quality publicly accessible green space sites, which should be a priority for improvement.
- 1.12 Maidstone urban area is also a priority for improvements due to the high population levels, level of multiple deprivation and need to mitigate effects of air pollution through tree planting and encouraging active, sustainable travel. The framework plan indicates green and blue corridors in the urban area to conserve and improve to help achieve these objectives. Developing more detailed green and blue infrastructure plans for the Maidstone urban area will be an important next step and is included in the delivery framework.
- 1.13 The framework plan also identifies where spatially-specific proposals for Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure will interact and link with green infrastructure proposals of adjoining districts, including Tunbridge Wells Council's High Weald/Low Weald links project, Tonbridge & Malling Council's 'Principal Green Corridors' and Swale Council's 'Strategic Green Grid Routes'.
- 1.14 **Delivering the Strategy**  
The vision, objectives and proposals of the strategy will be translated into action through its Delivery Framework (Appendix 1 of the GBIS). It describes:
- Evidence for the Local Plan
  - Sets strategic direction and vision for green and blue infrastructure for the borough and identifies delivery opportunities through partnership working and the seeking of external funding and investment.
  - Sets a framework that will underpin the 10 year Open Spaces Plan that will be drawn up by MBC Parks and Open Spaces Team.
  - Will provide a framework for partner agencies to agree and deliver actions to benefit green and blue infrastructure in the borough that are outside the direct control of MBC.
- 1.15 The Strategy recognises that as the planning, design and management of the green and blue infrastructure resource is the responsibility of many different organisations, the strategy can only be delivered successfully in partnership. Key stakeholders are: MBC councillors, KCC (Maidstone Borough) councillors, parish councillors, resident associations, resident groups, MBC (cross-departmental), KCC (Highways and Transportation and Public Rights of Way teams), 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.

- 1.16 Key stakeholders have discussed an action plan (Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy: Action Plan April 2016), should opportunities arise to deliver the strategy. The action plan is grouped into a number of themes to help deliver the strategy's vision and objectives. Each action identifies which green and blue strategy objectives could be progressed to a timescale and with a lead partner.
- 1.17 The Maidstone Local Plan (2016) and planning decisions will play an important role in securing the protection and enhancement of the Borough's green and blue infrastructure. For this reason the strategy identifies specific planning actions detailed in the GBIS.

## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee approved the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (GBIS) for targeted engagement in November 2013. Key stakeholders as well as local communities, Parish Councils and the wider public were invited to comment. An amended draft Strategy was considered at Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2014.
- 2.2 In 2015 a series of workshops were held with key stakeholders and partners involved in delivering improvements to the borough's green spaces and water environments. The result was a multi-agency delivery framework accompanying the GBIS.
- 2.3 The Strategy encourages 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 strategy is focused on land management and creating and enhancing the landscape and habitat networks.
- 2.4 The GBIS seeks to identify those areas of the Borough where deficiencies exist and provides guidance on how these can be overcome. It promotes a partnership approach with developers, land owners and neighbouring local authorities to help achieve the Strategy's objectives
- 2.5 The submitted Maidstone Borough Local Plan is cited by the GBIS as playing an important role in protecting existing open space and ensuring new green and blue infrastructure is provided to serve new development.
- 2.6 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) defines green infrastructure (GI) as a network of multifunctional green space, urban and rural which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. PPG states that GI is not simply an alternative description for conventional open space. As a network it includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, but also street trees, allotments and private gardens.

### **3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 3.1 The Committee could resolve to adopt the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy as evidence for the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and approve the framework for delivery.
  - 3.2 Alternatively the Committee could resolve not to adopt the GBIS.
- 

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

- 4.1 The Committee is recommended to agree to the option as set out above at 3.1.
  - 4.2 The Strategy is identified as part of the Evidence Base for the submitted Local Plan that will be subject to Examination.
  - 4.3 The submitted Local Plan notes the importance of green and blue infrastructure and the production of the GBIS.
  - 4.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), paragraph 117 sets out what planning policies should do to minimise impacts on biodiversity (and geodiversity). This will include planning for: biodiversity at a landscape-scale, local ecological networks, priority habitats and priority species. This will be provided through the GBIS which sets out the evidence and the framework.
- 

### **5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION**

- 5.1 Subject to the agreement of the Committee to the recommendations of this report, no immediate action will be required in relation to the GBIS.
  - 5.2 However, should opportunities arise to deliver the GBIS; implementation would be through its delivery framework, in partnership with the key stakeholders.
- 

### **6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Implications</b>	<b>Sign-off</b>
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy will be part of the Evidence Base for the submitted Local Plan.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	There is limited risk relating to this report.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and

		Development
<b>Financial</b>	There are no additional related costs to adopting the Strategy	Paul Riley, Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	There are no staffing implications relating to this report and its recommendations.	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Legal</b>	N/A	Kate Jardine, Team Leader (Planning), Mid Kent Legal Services
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>	N/A	Anna Collier, Policy & Information Manager
<b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Community Safety</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Human Rights Act</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development
<b>Procurement</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development & Paul Riley, Section 151 Officer
<b>Asset Management</b>	N/A	Rob Jarman, Head of Planning and Development

## 7. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2016)

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## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

***None***

# Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy



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## Executive Summary

### 1. Introduction

- Outlines what green and blue infrastructure is.
- Why Maidstone Borough needs a green and blue infrastructure strategy.
- The purpose of the green and blue infrastructure strategy.
- How the Strategy was produced.

### 2. Policy Context

The legislative frameworks for elements of green and blue infrastructure are reviewed:

- European Context: EU green infrastructure strategy 2013, European Landscape Convention, Habitats Directive and Water Framework Directive.
- National Context: Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Countryside and Rights of way Act (2000), Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), Flood and Water Act (2010), National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012, Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) (2016 update) and Sport England's planning objectives.

The contribution that green spaces and the water environment can make to other strategies is also examined including how Planning can support the green and blue infrastructure strategy. An important role is identified for the Local Plan (2016) to secure new green and blue infrastructure to serve new development. It sets out how planning policy and decisions should ensure that development is well located and designed to protect and enhance the natural features of a site and the local landscape character.

The strategy aims to be closely integrated with the following local strategies: Visions for Kent 2012-22, Growing the Garden of England: A strategy for environment and economy in Kent 2011, Kent Nature and Biodiversity Partnerships including the Maidstone Biodiversity Strategy, the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2013-2017, Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy 2016 and the Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone.

It points out that the borough's landscape, habitats and public rights of way do not stop at the administrative boundary and it is vital that this strategy responds to and influence the approach to the green and blue infrastructure in the surrounding area.

### **3. Vision and Objectives**

The Strategy sets out a vision for the borough's green and blue infrastructure for the next 20 years after reviewing the policy context and understanding the rich assets of the borough's green space and water environment and the challenges it faces.

The vision is for greener, healthier, attractive towns and villages sustainably connected to the rich tapestry of distinctive landscapes, wildlife habitats and waterways – valued, enjoyed and cared for by local people.

Detailed objectives are set out to achieve the vision and guide the strategy's proposals set out for each of the strategy's seven key themes:

- 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; and
- providing community involvement and opportunities for education.

### **4. Understanding Maidstone Borough's existing green and blue infrastructure resources**

Maidstone is an exceptionally green borough with a number of open spaces, the largest of which is Mote Park. There are numerous smaller parks, greens and amenity spaces within the town and villages with playgrounds and sports facilities. Maidstone Borough however is largely rural and the countryside offers areas of high quality landscape and biodiversity and a wide range of informal recreation opportunities. There is also an extensive network of waterways with five main rivers that provide rich biodiverse corridors for wildlife and for recreation.

The following existing green and blue infrastructure resources are set out and described (including maps): landscape character, habitats, heritage assets, publically accessible green space, amenity green space, provision for children and young people, natural and semi-natural green space, allotments and community gardens, outdoor sports facilities, green and blue corridors and private green space.

An outline assessment of current deficiencies in accessible open space provision is provided utilising the Open Spaces Quality Audit, the Accessibility Maps and the Quantitative Assessment of Open Space Provision using the new (Local Plan 2016) standards to produce the following indicative open space deficiencies by place/ward:

- **Amenity Green Space**

Current deficiency within Maidstone - North, Fant, High Street, Bearsted, Allington and North Wards

- **Children's Play Space**

Considered as, at best, fair in most of the borough but deficient in the urban area of Maidstone and, possibly, Marden, Staplehurst, Headcorn and Sutton Valence.

- **Natural/Semi-natural Greenspace**

Whilst considered as good in general, deficient in the urban area of Maidstone and Staplehurst, Headcorn and Marden and, possibly, Lenham, Coxheath and Sutton Valence.

- **Allotments**

Deficient in most of the Maidstone urban area and Staplehurst.

- **Outdoor Sports Facilities**

Considered as very poor with indications of deficiencies in most of the borough but will be informed by the Playing Pitches Strategy (2016/17).

Key Issues identified to be addressed by the Strategy are: impacts of climate change, gaps in the connectivity of blue and green resources, inequalities in accessibility to public open space, landscape and townscape quality, water and air quality, health inequalities and the need to accommodate development to meet the projected needs of the community.

## 5. Key Principles and Opportunities

The main purpose of the green and blue infrastructure strategy is to maximise the functionality and therefore the benefits of the resource in Maidstone Borough and to help deliver the council's wider community and planning objectives. For each of the seven key themes identified, the following principles and opportunities for conserving, improving and creating green and blue infrastructure are considered:

- Key issues
- How can the green and blue infrastructure help
- Examples of Good Practice

- Key principles and opportunities for Maidstone’s green and blue infrastructure including conserving and improving and creating new opportunities.

The key opportunities and principles for conserving, improving and creating green and blue infrastructure are brought together in a strategic framework plan (Map 14).

The framework plan identifies and prioritises four broad areas where green and blue infrastructure interventions will have the most impact on achieving the strategy objectives: the Capstone-Bredhurst area, the M20 corridor, River Beult corridor and Laddingford/Low Weald area. In addition it highlights designated Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, river catchment improvement areas and the eight poorest quality publicly accessible green space sites, which should be a priority for improvement.

Maidstone urban area is also a priority for improvements due to the high population levels, level of multiple deprivation and need to mitigate effects of air pollution through tree planting and encouraging active, sustainable travel. The framework plan indicates green and blue corridors in the urban area to conserve and improve to help achieve these objectives.

Developing more detailed green and blue infrastructure plans for the Maidstone urban area will be an important next step and is included in the strategy action plan.

The framework plan also identifies where spatially-specific proposals for Maidstone Borough’s green and blue infrastructure will interact and link with green infrastructure proposals of adjoining districts, including Tunbridge Wells Council’s High Weald/Low Weald links project, Tonbridge & Malling Council’s ‘Principal Green Corridors’ and Swale Council’s ‘Strategic Green Grid Routes’.

## **6. Delivering the Strategy**

The vision, objectives and proposals of this strategy will be translated into action through the Delivery Framework set out in Appendix 1.

The Strategy recognises that as the planning, design and management of the green and blue infrastructure resource is the responsibility of many different organisations, the strategy can only be delivered successfully in partnership. Key stakeholders are: MBC councillors, KCC (Maidstone Borough) councillors, parish councillors, resident associations, resident groups, MBC (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.

Key stakeholders have agreed an accompanying action plan (Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy: Action Plan April 2016). 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.

The Maidstone Local Plan (2016) and planning decisions can play an important role in securing the protection and enhancement of the Borough's green and blue infrastructure. For this reason the strategy identifies specific planning actions detailed in paragraph 2.27 of the Strategy.

The Strategy recommends that a green and blue infrastructure forum comprising key stakeholders be set up to implement and monitor the strategy. The forum would also help raise the profile of the borough's green and blue infrastructure within partnership organisations and help to attract resources.

It recommends that the Borough Council co-ordinates the forum and the forum be structured around the action plan themes. Each theme has a principal agency responsible for delivering the majority of actions within the theme and it is recommended that they are represented on the forum. In addition, the central role of planning means that a representative of the Local Planning Authority should attend the forum.

## 1. Introduction

### What is green and blue infrastructure?

- 1.1. Green and blue infrastructure is the green space and water environment essential to the quality of our lives and ecosystem. It is referred to as 'infrastructure' as it is as important as other types of infrastructure such as roads, schools and hospitals. It is taken to mean all green space and water of public and natural value.

For the purposes of this strategy, green and blue infrastructure includes:

- natural and semi-natural greenspaces - including woodlands, scrub, grasslands (egs downland, acid grasslands, commons and meadows) wetlands, open and running water and rock areas (eg quarries);
- green corridors - including river corridors, river and canal banks, cycleways/bridleways and rights of way;
- outdoor sports space (with natural or artificial surfaces and either publicly or privately owned) - including pitches for football, cricket, rugby, tennis courts, bowling greens, golf courses, school and other institutional playing fields;
- parks and gardens - including urban parks, country parks and formal gardens;
- amenity greenspace (most commonly, but not exclusively in housing areas) – including informal recreation spaces, greenspaces in and around housing, domestic gardens and village greens;
- provision for children and teenagers - including play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops, and other more informal areas (eg 'hanging out' areas, teenage shelters);
- allotments and community gardens;
- cemeteries and churchyards; and
- the wider countryside.

### Why does Maidstone Borough need a green and blue infrastructure strategy?

- 1.2. Research and best practice have established a number of benefits which green and blue infrastructure can bring:

- 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 through development (in Policy section); and
- providing community involvement and opportunities for education.

### **What is the purpose of the green and blue infrastructure strategy?**

- 1.3. The role of the strategy is to promote, guide and co-ordinate investment in Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure over the next 20 years.
- 1.4. The strategy aims to:
- bring increased certainty about the importance of this key part of the borough's environment;
  - maximise the number of overlapping benefits of green and blue infrastructure by looking holistically at each area to ensure it is delivering as many benefits as possible;
  - co-ordinate a wide range of stakeholder interests and focus limited resources on a number of interlinked proposals to maximise the benefits for green and blue infrastructure;
  - act as a basis for attracting resources including grant funding, Section 106 development funding and, when approved, the Community Infrastructure Levy;
  - guide the Local Plan in relation to Green and Blue Infrastructure.
  - Input to the Integrated Transport Strategy; and
  - provide background to a Green and Blue Infrastructure Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which would provide detailed guidance to developers, partners and decision makers on future provision of green and blue infrastructure.

### **How was the Strategy produced?**

- 1.5. The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy is based on up to date evidence (see Appendix 2).
- 1.6. In 2013 a consultation draft strategy was produced and key stakeholders as well as local communities, Parish Councils and the wider public were invited to comment. The draft Strategy was amended as a result of comments received.
- 1.7. In 2015 a series of workshops were held with key stakeholders and partners involved in delivering improvements to the borough's green spaces and water environments in order to generate a multi-agency Action Plan to accompany the Strategy.

## 2. Policy context

This section briefly reviews the legislative framework for elements of green and blue infrastructure. It also examines the contribution green spaces and the water environment can make to delivering a number of other strategies.

### European context

- 2.1. **Enhancing Europe's Natural Capital: EU Green Infrastructure Strategy 2013**<sup>1</sup> is a European Commission strategy 'to promote the deployment of green infrastructure in the EU in urban and rural areas'. The strategy focus is on promoting green infrastructure in the main policy areas such as agriculture, forestry, nature, water, marine and fisheries, regional and cohesion policy, climate change mitigation and adaptation, transport, energy, disaster prevention and land use policies.
- 2.2. The **European Landscape Convention** (ELC) is the first international convention to focus specifically on landscape. It is dedicated exclusively to the protection, management and planning of all landscapes in Europe. The Convention was signed by the UK government on 24th February 2006, ratified on the 21st November 2006, and became binding in this country on 1st March 2007. Every landscape forms the setting for the lives of a local population, and the quality of those landscapes affects everyone's lives. The ELC seeks to reconcile environmental management with the socio-economic challenges of the 21st century and to help people and communities to re-connect with place. The Convention aims to promote landscape protection, management and planning across Europe, and to organise European-wide co-operation on landscape issues. The Convention covers land and water (inland and seas), and natural, rural and urban areas.
- 2.3. Adopted in **1992, the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, (commonly known as the Habitats Directive)**, requires each member state to make legislative and administration provision to enable them to maintain or restore natural habitats and wild species at favourable conservation status, through site and species protection objectives. Of particular interest in Maidstone Borough is the Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) designation under the Habitats Directive. SACs are designated for their importance as natural habitat types and as the habitats supporting international species of importance

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<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2013) Environment, Green Infrastructure [Online] available from: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/>



listed within the Directive. Along with Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which are designated under the Birds Directive, these sites form a European network of designated sites called 'Natura 2000'. In Maidstone part of the North Downs is designated a SAC which is therefore of international conservation status.

- 2.4. The Habitats Directive is applied via the **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010<sup>2</sup> (as amended)**, commonly shortened to the "Habitats Regulations".
- 2.5. **Water Framework Directive (WFD)**. The purpose of the Water Framework Directive is to establish a framework for the protection of inland surface waters, estuaries and groundwater. The framework for delivering the Directive is through River Basin Management Planning. The UK has been split into several River Basin Districts (RBDs). Each River Basin District has been characterised into smaller management units known as Water Bodies. The surface Water Bodies may be rivers or lakes. Ecological Status is classified in all Water Bodies, expressed in terms of five classes (high, good, moderate, poor or bad). The 'Catchment Based Approach' has recently been adopted by DEFRA as the key approach to implementing the water quality enhancement required under the WFD and a River Catchments theme is included in the Action Plan.

### National context

- 2.6. **The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981**, as amended, is the statutory basis for species and habitat protection within the UK. The Act sets out the protection afforded to wild plants (Schedule 8) and animals (Schedule 5) in the UK, and reviews the species to which it applies every 5 years. The protection can be connected to the actual species, or its habitat (resting or breeding). Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are also notified under the Act. These sites are nationally important and are intended to reflect the best examples of particular features of interest (biodiversity, geodiversity and/or physiographical) across the country. Maidstone Borough has 9 sites of Species Scientific Interest.
- 2.7. **The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000<sup>3</sup>** provides access on foot to certain land types (mountain, moorland, heath or down), changed the public rights of way (PRoW) legislation, increased the requirements for the management and protection of Sites of Special

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<sup>2</sup> [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010](#)

<sup>3</sup> UK Legislation (2013) The Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents>

Scientific Interest (SSSIs), strengthened wildlife enforcement law and provided clarification on the management and designation of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

- 2.8. Section 40 of **The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006**<sup>4</sup> places a duty on Local Authorities and other public bodies to preserve biodiversity. At a strategic level the Act ensures that biodiversity principles are:
- Adopted into approaches regarding the delivery of services and functions and involve all partner landholding;
  - Promoted in urban design and regeneration/development plans and projects;
  - Incorporated into land management practices in rural regeneration/development schemes; and
  - Encourage to help engender local pride and environmental stewardship.
- 2.9. Section 41 of NERC commits the Secretary of State, in consultation with Natural England, to publish a list of the habitats and species which are of principal importance in the preservation of biodiversity. The list is to be kept under review and revised where appropriate. It is therefore used by the local authority and public bodies to identify species that require consideration within planning for the purposes of the protection of biodiversity.
- 2.10. The **Flood and Water Management Act, 2010**, provides for comprehensive management of flood risk for people, homes and businesses, helps safeguard communities from rises in surface water drainage charges, and protects water supplies to the consumer. Climate projections suggest that extreme weather will happen more frequently in the future and this act aims to reduce the flood risk associated with extreme weather.
- 2.11. **The Water Framework Directive (WFD) (The Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) December 2000)** seeks to improve the local water environment for people and wildlife, and promote the sustainable use of water. The Directive applies to all surface water bodies, including lakes, streams and rivers as well as groundwater. The overall aim of the WDF is for all water bodies to reach good status by 2027, and in Maidstone this would mean improving their physical state and preventing deterioration in water quality and ecology. The WDF introduced the concept of integrated river basin management and such plans should influence development plans. Maidstone lies within the Thames River

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<sup>4</sup> [Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006](#)

Basin District and the South East RBD and in December 2009 the Environment Agency published the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) for both Thames and the South East. The Medway Catchment Plan which will form part of the Thames River Basin Management Plan 2 will fulfil the WFD requirements and become a legally binding document ratified by UK and EU parliaments. Through the formation of Catchment Improvement Groups (CIGs), the local community as well as private and public bodies inform and shape this work.

- 2.12. **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012<sup>5</sup>**, paragraphs 73-77, 99-103 and 109-118, outline the national approach to the natural environment and open spaces. It encourages the creation and enhancement of a network of open spaces and natural habitats and the protection of existing areas of open space and landscapes.
- 2.13. The NPPF requires Local Authorities to protect and plan for biodiversity, by identifying areas for potential enhancement and corridors.
- 2.14. When new development is brought forward in areas which are vulnerable to flooding care should be taken to ensure that risks can be managed through suitable adaptation measures, including through the planning of green infrastructure.
- 2.15. Local Plans should take account of climate change over the longer term, including factors such as flood risk, coastal change, water supply and changes to biodiversity and landscape. New development should be planned to avoid increased vulnerability to the range of impacts arising from climate change.
- 2.16. It also states that policies should protect and enhance public rights of way and access.
- 2.17. **Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) - Natural Environment (2016 update)<sup>6</sup>**, explains key issues in implementing policy to protect biodiversity, including local requirements including guidance on landscape, biodiversity and ecosystems, green infrastructure and brownfield land, soils and agricultural land.
- 2.18. **Sport England<sup>7</sup>** has set out its planning objectives:
  - **Protect existing facilities:** Sport England seeks to help protect sports and recreational buildings and land including playing fields.

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<sup>5</sup> [National Planning Policy Framework](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Planning Policy Guidance - Natural Environment](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Sport England Delivering Sport and Recreation](#)

They expect these to be retained or enhanced as part of any redevelopment unless an assessment has demonstrated that there is an excess of provision and they are surplus to requirements, or clear evidence supports their relocation. Sport England is a statutory consultee on all planning applications affecting playing field land and will object to such an application unless one of five exceptions applies.

- **Enhance the quality, accessibility and management of existing facilities:** They wish to see the best use made of existing sports facilities through improving their quality, access and management. Sport England have developed a wide range of supporting advice on understanding and planning for facility provision, including efficient facility management such as community access to school sites.
- **Provide new facilities to meet demand:** They seek to ensure that communities have access to sufficient high quality sports facilities that are fit for purpose. Using evidence and advocacy, Sport England helps to guide investment into new facilities and the expansion of existing ones to meet new demands that cannot be met by existing provision.

## How can Planning support the green and blue infrastructure strategy?

2.19. The emerging Local Plan<sup>8</sup> can play an important role in protecting existing open space and ensuring new green and blue infrastructure is provided to serve new development. Similarly, planning decisions should ensure that development is well located and designed to protect and enhance the natural features of a site and the local landscape character.

2.20. Specifically, planning policy and decisions should:

- protect green space in the flood plain from development
- require developers to create new habitats focusing on the 12 priority BAP habitats as part of green infrastructure planning and design in new developments;
- ensure that existing habitats and protected species are accommodated and any loss appropriately mitigated in all new development and that development within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas do not significantly increase the fragmentation of wildlife habitats or neutralise significant opportunities for habitat restoration or recreation;
- conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting; the setting of

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<sup>8</sup> [Submission version Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2016](#)

the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Greensand Ridge, Medway Valley, Len Valley, Loose Valley and Low Weald as landscapes of local value;

- encourage developers of large sites in locations with a history of orchards to provide appropriately managed community orchards as part of their proposal;
- require developers to conserve and enhance existing publicly accessible green space within development sites;
- ensure developers of new housing sites provide for all types of publicly accessible open space to a specified standard where there is insufficient accessible open space already provided; and
- ensure developers provide details of how green and blue infrastructure will be managed and maintained to a high quality over the long term.

## How can green and blue infrastructure support local strategies?

As well as seeking to support the objectives of national legislation, the strategy aims to be closely integrated with the following local strategies.

- 2.21. **Vision for Kent 2012-2022 (Kent County Council)** concludes that tackling climate change is everyone's responsibility. It also emphasises making the most of Kent's natural environment for people to enjoy and contribute to their wellbeing and improving overall health while tackling the health inequalities gap. Green infrastructure can help manage the impacts of climate change and contribute to healthy lifestyles.
- 2.22. One of the key themes of **Growing the Garden of England: A strategy for environment and economy in Kent – 2011** is rising to the climate change challenge – working towards a low carbon Kent prepared for and resilient to the impacts of climate change.
- *Climate Change Priority 5 is to reduce future carbon emissions.*
  - *Climate Change Priority 6 is to manage the impacts of climate change, in particular extreme weather events.*
  - *Valuing Environment Priority 9 is to conserve and enhance the quality of Kent's natural and heritage capital.*
  - *Valuing Environment Priority 10: Ensure that Kent residents have access to the benefits of Kent's coast, countryside, green space and cultural heritage.*
- 2.23. The strategy identifies a number of actions all of which Green and Blue Infrastructure can help deliver:

- *Action CC 5.2: Proactively support the development of high-quality, non-traffic, shared walking and cycling routes.*
- *Action VE 9.1: Establish functional habitat areas and wildlife networks in Biodiversity Opportunity Areas that support local landscape character.*
- *Action VE 9.2: Update the Landscape Character Condition Assessment identifying areas of declining condition and taking action to improve them.*
- *Action VE 10.1 Deliver the Countryside Access Improvement Plan, with an on-going commitment to customer led improvements to Kent's green infrastructure.*
- *Action VE 10.2 Deliver initiatives in the Kent area that enable people to more readily access green space and the historic environment such as Explore Kent, outdoor learning, and volunteering.*

2.24. **The Kent Biodiversity Partnership**<sup>9</sup> is a broad network of organisations, each with a common focus for biodiversity conservation in Kent. The Partnership aims to make Kent a place where plants, animals and habitats are protected and enhanced, both for their own sake and as an integral part of the quality of life in the county.

The Partnership's Steering Group has a role in:

- Overseeing the development, implementation, monitoring and review of the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan (Kent BAP);
- Leading the way in developing partnership projects and initiatives for the protection and conservation of biodiversity in Kent; and
- Ensuring biodiversity is at the heart of our aim for a more sustainable future for Kent.

2.25. **Kent Nature Partnership**<sup>10</sup> is a Local Nature Partnership (LNP) that are are partnerships of a broad range of influential organisations, businesses and people, and from a range of sectors, charged by government with the task of bring about improvements in their local natural environment in England. To achieve this they are expected to ensure that consideration for the environment is put right at the heart of local decision-making.

2.26. Local Nature Partnerships originated in a vision set out in the UK government's 2011 'Natural Environment White Paper', which identified the need to take greater account of the value of the environment when strategic decisions are made that affect people and the local economy. The overall purpose of an LNP is to:

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<sup>9</sup> [Kent Biodiversity Partnership](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Kent Nature Partnership](#)

- Drive positive change in the local natural environment, taking a strategic view of the challenges and opportunities involved and identifying ways to manage it as a system for the benefit of nature, people and the economy.
- Contribute to achieving the Government's national environmental objectives locally, including the identification of local ecological networks, alongside addressing local priorities.
- Become local champions influencing decision-making relating to the natural environment and its value to social and economic outcomes, in particular, through working closely with local authorities, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Health and Wellbeing Boards.

2.27. **The Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2013** - **2017** sets a number of objectives especially for sustainable transport:

Priority walking objectives include:

- *Make promoted routes as accessible as possible and promote them to a wide audience.*
- *Ensure new developments encourage and provide for walking and cycling, including links to the wider countryside.*
- *Widen the audience for walking, including under-represented groups.*
- *Officers will proactively seek opportunities to improve the accessibility of the network, following consultation with local landowners and parishes.*

Priority cycling objectives include:

- *Support increasing cycling for everyday journeys, including seeking improvements to routes serving transport hubs, large employers and schools, and connecting cycling networks.*
- *Deliver a continued increase of traffic-free routes and a better connected network to support the development of tourism, family and recreational cycling.*

Priority equestrian objectives include:

- *Continue to improve equestrian infrastructure and develop new routes in target areas identified by riders.*

2.33. Sustainable transport routes can form an important part of the Green and Blue Infrastructure network and provide corridors for people and wildlife.

2.34. **The Maidstone Integrated Transport Strategy 2016** sets out a number of objectives which Green and Blue Infrastructure can help fulfil by incorporating inclusive modes of transport that are affordable and easily available to everyone (such as walking, cycling and public transport) and providing existing or new routes including the River Medway Towpath.

2.35. The **Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone 2009–2020** overarching priorities are Troubled Families (Community Budgets); Tackling worklessness and poverty and Local environmental improvements. Underpinning the three priorities, there are seven long-term outcomes that the Borough Council aspires to achieve through a partnership approach in Maidstone, including:

*Improved health and wellbeing of people which enables them to live active and independent lives*

By 2020 we will have facilitated the creation of active, healthy and independent communities where the gap in health inequalities within the borough have been reduced...

*Mixed and sustainable communities with an increased supply of new homes, improved existing dwellings and a high quality physical environment*

...the quality of our environment will be improved with cleaner streets and high quality green spaces. Further, the Borough Council and its partners will play an active role in neighbourhood action planning helping to address local issues and improve the quality of life for residents by developing a common understanding of issues within areas of high need, including environmental improvements, but other crossing cutting issues such as health inequalities, low levels of educational attainment, skills and qualifications, high unemployment and low economic activity.

2.36. In accordance with the UK BAP, the **Maidstone Biodiversity Strategy A Local Biodiversity Action Plan Phase 1 2009 – 2014**<sup>11</sup> primary aims for biodiversity conservation are:

- *Maintain and enhance the populations and natural ranges of species and the quality and extent of wildlife habitats and ecosystems.*
- *Conserve internationally, nationally and regionally important species, habitats and ecosystems and to enhance their conservation status where possible.*
- *Conserve species, habitats, and natural and managed ecosystems that are locally characteristic and to enhance their conservation status where possible.*
- *Maintain the genetic variation within species and hence habitats and ecosystems.*
- *Contribute to the conservation of biodiversity on a local, regional, national, European and global scale.*
- *Ensure that current policies and practices which affect the environment do not damage global biodiversity, but instead contribute towards conserving and enhancing it.*

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<sup>11</sup> [Maidstone's Biodiversity Strategy](#)



- *Increase public awareness of, and involvement in, conserving biodiversity.*

2.37. Green and Blue Infrastructure is crucial to successfully delivering the BAP objectives.

Strategies which help support Green and Blue Infrastructure are set out in Appendix 2.

### **Supporting adjoining green and blue infrastructure strategies**

2.38. Clearly the borough's landscape, habitats and public rights of way do not stop at the administrative boundary and it is vital that this strategy responds to, and influences, the approach to the green and blue infrastructure in the surrounding area.

2.39. Each has a strategy which sets out the existing assets and approach to green space and the water environment:

- Medway Wildlife, Countryside and Open Space Strategy 2008–2016.
- Swale Green Grid Strategy 2007.
- Tonbridge and Malling Green Infrastructure Report 2009.
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Green Infrastructure Plan Supplementary Planning Document Consultation Draft, 2014.
- Ashford Green & Blue Grid Strategy 2008 (though this focuses on the urban area and its immediate setting).

2.42. A number of strategies propose strategic green routes to better connect the green and blue assets across administrative boundaries (e.g. Faversham and Sittingbourne to the North Downs Way; the Medway Gap and Kings Hill to Maidstone town via the green wedges and improved links between the High Weald and Low Weald through Tunbridge Wells Borough).

2.43. Areas for habitat creation or enhancement are proposed along the boundaries with Swale Borough and Medway.

2.44. A High Weald Transition Zone is identified to the south of the Maidstone Borough to enhance and restore the landscape character of the part of the High Weald National Character Area that lies outside the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and this could have a beneficial impact on the Borough.

## Conclusion

- 2.45. It is clear from an analysis of local strategies that green and blue infrastructure can play a major role in delivering a wide range of benefits within the borough, particularly:
- 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, and
  - Providing community involvement and opportunities for education
- 2.46. In many instances there is reference to tackling inequalities such as health or access to green space and affordable modes of transport. Green spaces and the water environment can provide an inclusive resource for healthy exercise and for neighbourhood enhancement. This strategy will also seek to implement opportunities that tie in with affordable and sustainable transport.

### 3. Vision and objectives

- 3.1. Reviewing the policy context and understanding the rich assets of the borough's green space and water environment, and the challenges it faces, the strategy has set out a vision for the borough's green and blue infrastructure for the next 20 years.

#### Vision

Greener, healthier, attractive towns and villages sustainably connected to the rich tapestry of distinctive landscapes, wildlife habitats and waterways – valued, enjoyed and cared for by local people.

- 3.2. A number of more detailed objectives are needed to help achieve this vision and to guide the strategy's proposals. These are set out for each of the strategy's key themes.

#### Objectives

##### **Theme 1: Mitigating and adapting to climate change**

In the towns and villages:

*To avoid increasing flood risk, provide increased shade and enhance the sustainable connections to key destinations and the countryside.*

In the countryside:

*To create a robust and resilient landscape with improved links between wildlife habitats.*

##### **Theme 2: Integrating sustainable movement and access for all**

In the towns and villages:

*To enhance the sustainable connections to key destinations and the countryside.*

In the countryside:

*To improve sustainable access by footpaths, riverside walks, cycleways and bridleways.*

### **Theme 3: Promoting a distinctive townscape and landscape**

In the towns and villages:

*To maintain and improve valued open spaces, heritage and tree cover and create new high quality, well linked green spaces to serve new development.*

In the countryside:

*To conserve and enhance the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting, maintain landscapes of local value and restore and improve sensitive landscape in the poorest condition.*

*To take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land.*

### **Theme 4: Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, water and air quality**

In the towns and villages:

*To retain existing, and encourage new, wildlife habitats and landscape features and improve river and air quality.*

In the countryside:

*To maintain, enhance and extend the rich tapestry of distinctive wildlife habitats and improve water quality.*

### **Theme 5: Providing opportunities for sport, recreation, quiet enjoyment and health**

In the towns and villages:

*To improve accessibility to green spaces including the countryside, make green spaces more attractive and welcoming and achieve new standards to improve green space provision and address existing deficiencies.*

In the countryside:

*To improve sustainable access within the countryside and waterways and retain tranquil areas for quiet enjoyment.*

### **Theme 6: Providing community involvement and opportunities for education**

*To achieve greater community involvement in the planning and management of green spaces and encourage the use of green and blue infrastructure as an educational resource.*

### **Theme 7: Retaining and enhancing a quality environment for investment and through development**

*To provide a high quality environment and development standards which form the benchmark for new, high quality, well planned developments with sufficient well integrated, high quality green spaces.*

## 4. Understanding Maidstone Borough's existing green and blue infrastructure resources

### Existing green and blue infrastructure resources

#### Overview

Maidstone is an exceptionally green borough with a number of open spaces, the largest of which is Mote Park, which is Grade II on the Historic England Register of Historic Parks. There are numerous smaller parks, greens and amenity spaces within the town and villages with playgrounds and sports facilities. Maidstone Borough however is largely rural and the countryside offers areas of high quality landscape and biodiversity and a wide range of informal recreation opportunities. There is also an extensive network of waterways with five main rivers that provide rich biodiverse corridors for wildlife and for recreation.

#### Landscape character

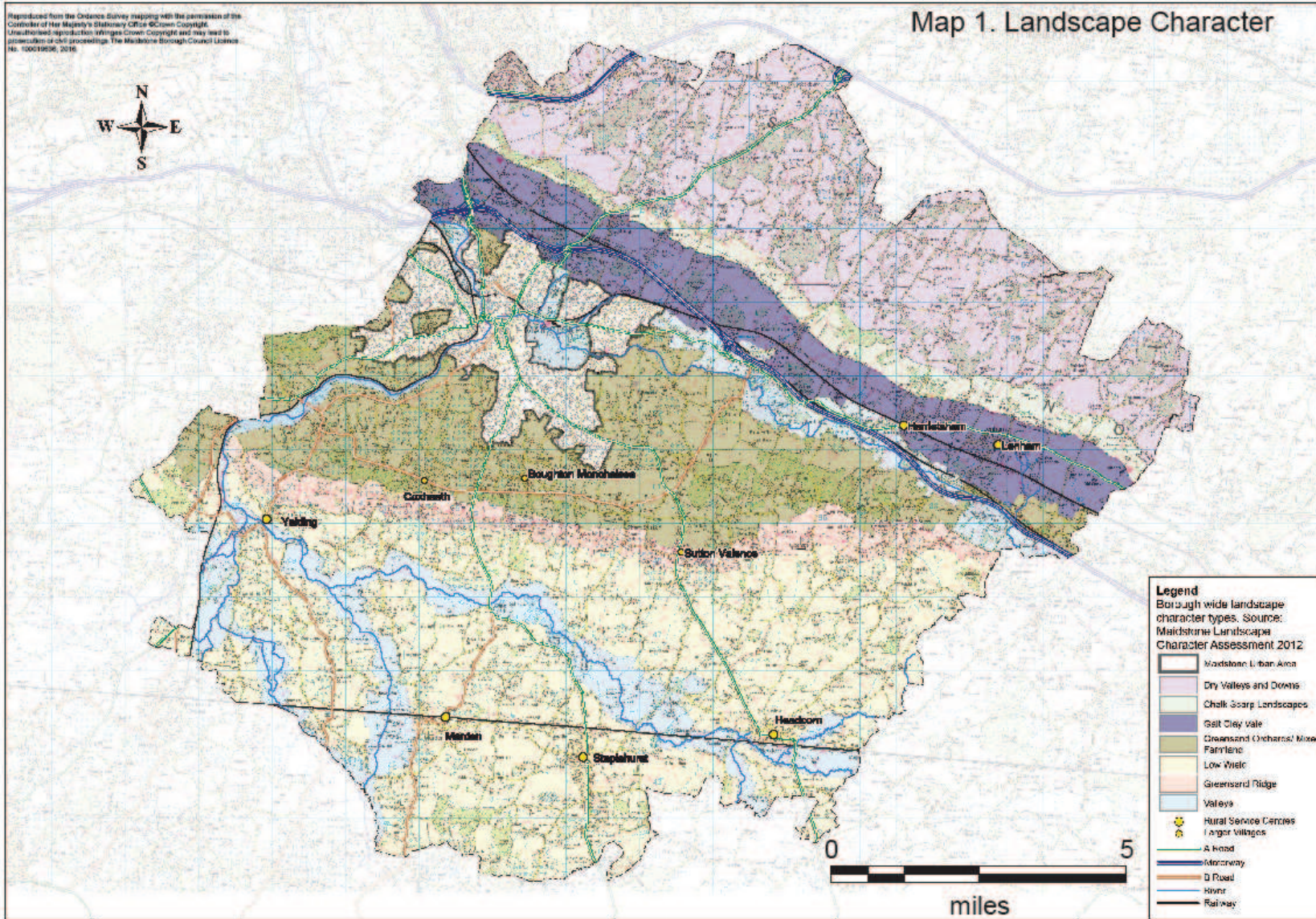


- 4.1. Landscape character is strongly defined by geodiversity with four distinct rock types that define the landform and character of the borough – Chalk, Gault Clay, Lower Greensand and Wealden Clay which run in bands of varying widths in a north westerly to south easterly direction across the borough. Due to this distinctive geomorphology, a clear landform division occurs between the North Downs and the Low Weald. In general, the harder Greensand and Chalk stand out in the landscape as ridges, and the Gault Clay forms low ground in between with the Low Weald forming much of the southern part of the borough.
- 4.2. Maidstone's diverse rural landscape is dominated by three national landscape character types: the North Downs, Wealden Greensand and Low Weald, which can be further broken down into seven landscape character areas which themselves have broadly similar patterns of key

physical elements such as geology, landform, soils, vegetation, land use, settlement and field pattern<sup>12</sup>, as shown on Map 1.

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<sup>12</sup> Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment, 2009



- 4.3. The North Downs to the north of Maidstone town is a distinctive chalk downland with a continuous and steep scarp along its southern edge giving extensive views across Maidstone Borough and the rest of Kent. Chalk soils support areas of high quality unimproved chalk grassland. Clay-with-flints soils on the upper parts of the dip-slope supports oak/ash woodland and scrub with beech/ash/maple is common on the valley sides. Land is largely dominated by arable fields with a few pockets of traditional downland grazing. A series of springs emerge at the foot of the North Downs scarp where the porous chalk meets the Gault Clay and this spring line is marked by early settlements and farmsteads, notably at Boxley, Thurnham and Hollingbourne, Harrietsham and Lenham. These small watercourses eventually feed into the River Len via a series of small streams and ditches.
- 4.4. Along the foot of the scarp and wrapping itself around the southern, eastern and western parts of Maidstone town the Wealden Greensand area is characterised by old orchards and woodland. The undulating Greensand Ridge provides a distinctive landscape characterised by sunken lanes and hidden valleys with panoramic views southwards to the Low Weald. The landscape is generally a varied and pleasant mix of winding lanes and mixed farmlands with a high percentage of fruit, scattered small woodlands and grasslands interspersed with larger arable fields. Orchards and hops used to be more frequent but now the landholdings are fragmented and much of the land use converted to arable. Two rivers, the Loose and Len, dissect this fruit belt. The Loose valley runs into Maidstone town to the south and the Len valley runs to and through Mote Park from the east.
- 4.5. The Low Weald is bisected by the Beult (below), Teise and Medway rivers and includes an abundance of ponds and small stream valleys often with wet woodlands of alder and willow and scattered orchards. The field patterns, many of medieval character, hedgerows, stands and buildings of character add to the distinctive character of the area. Traditionally, orchards and hops were widespread. But during the 20th century many were converted to horticultural and arable crops.





- 4.6. Within these landscapes are many attractive villages with historic vernacular style buildings, and there is a particularly strong use of ragstone throughout the landscape, which reflects the underlying geology.



- 4.7. Maidstone town forms the primary urban area and a striking characteristic in the town's overall urban form is its stellate development pattern. In the past ribbons of development extended out along radial routes leaving fairly substantial undeveloped areas in between. Over the years some of these undeveloped areas became infilled, and the overall urban form became more nebulous in shape, but only parts of its green corridors have been developed, leaving the remainder as a significant defining feature of the town. There are nine broad green corridors located across the urban area linking urban Maidstone with the surrounding countryside. Parts of the corridors are continuous, such as those closely connected with the river valleys of the Medway and Len whilst others have become separated or isolated islands of green space.



The green corridors often penetrate within or close to the town centre. The amenity value of the green corridors to urban dwellers is particularly important, and they also provide opportunities for many green and blue infrastructure functions including non-motorised transport routes; recreation and sport; and biodiversity. The River Medway is also a defining feature of the town with the river entering the town from Watlingbury to the south west through a green corridor, through the centre of the town as a wide river, and out to the north west towards Allington.

## Habitats



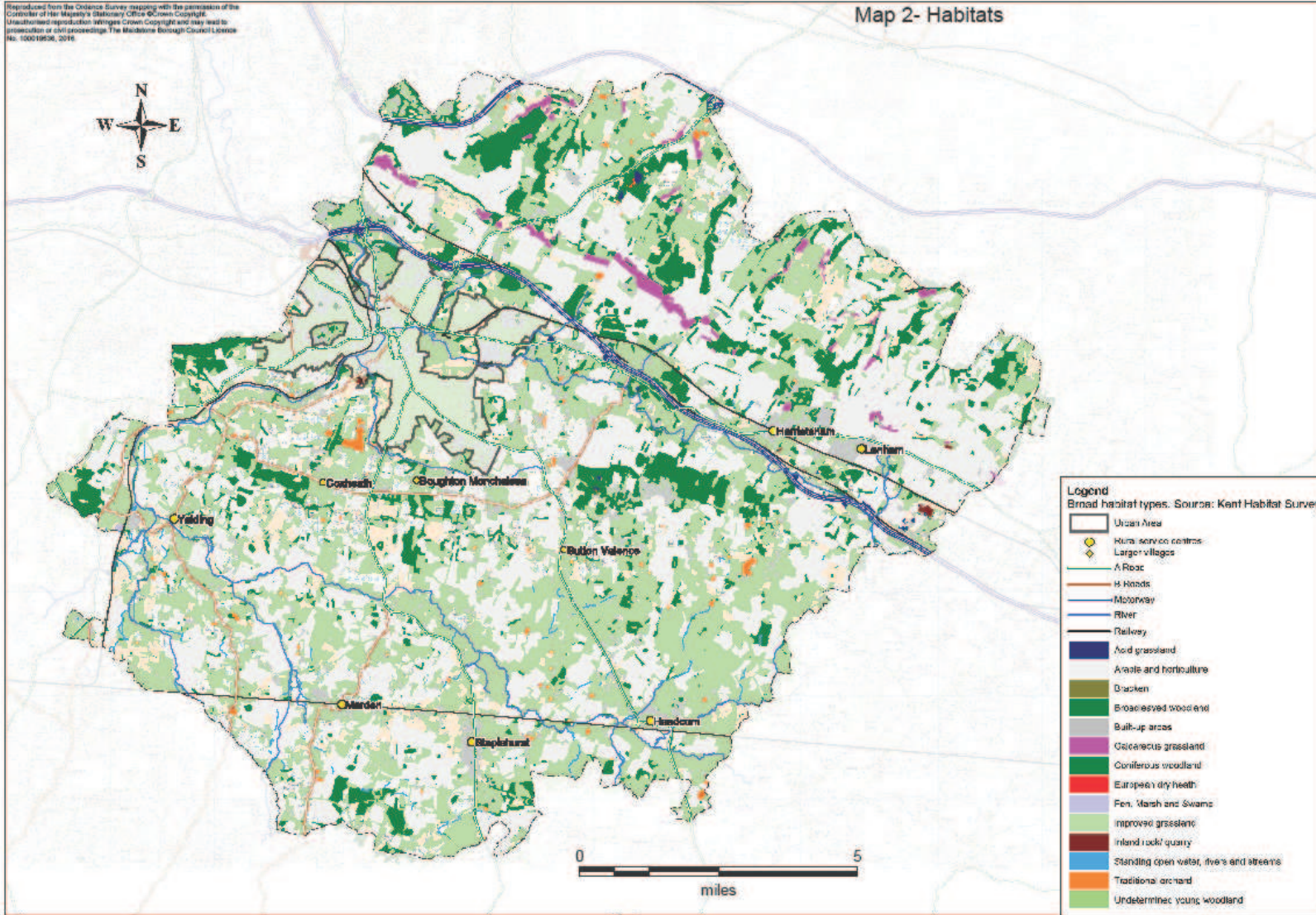
- 4.8. A UK BAP habitat is described in broad terms and can often include a number of UK BAP priority habitats. In Maidstone there are 17 UK BAP broad habitat types. Arable and horticulture and improved grassland are the largest broad habitat types, occupying almost three-quarters of the Borough area. Important woodland habitats are also found here, with over 11% of the Borough being broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland.
- 4.9. Map 2 shows the locations of each broad habitat within the borough. It is based on the Kent Habitat Survey 2012<sup>13</sup> which provides a county-wide survey of all habitats in Kent and is available to view online at <http://www.archnature.eu>. Figure 1 shows the amount of each habitat.

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<sup>13</sup> Kent Habitat Survey 2012 <http://www.archnature.eu>.

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Map 2- Habitats



**Figure 1: UK broad habitat types in Maidstone Borough**

<b>Broad habitat type</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
Arable and horticulture	14923.1
Improved grassland	13476.8
Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland	4344.6
Neutral grassland	2208.7
Built up areas	1434.2
Boundary and linear features	1246.7
Orchard	386.9
Calcareous grassland	273.9
Standing open water and canals	258.3
Coniferous woodland	120.7
Rivers and streams	115.5
Acid grassland	29.4
Inland rock	18.4
Fen, marsh and swamp	12.7
Bracken	2.5
Dwarf shrub heath	2.3
Undetermined young woodland	1.2

(Source: Kent Habitat Survey 2012)

- 4.10. Within the broad habitat classes are a number of UK BAP priority habitats, which have been recognised as of importance for nature conservation because they support rich or scarce communities, they are particularly fragile or they are very rare within the UK. This includes more than one fifth of the county's UK BAP priority habitat traditional orchard and a significant proportion of calcareous grassland, lowland beech and yew woodland, wet woodland and lowland mixed deciduous woodland<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Kent Habitat Survey 2012

**Figure 2: UK priority habitats in Maidstone Borough**

<b>UK priority habitat</b>	<b>Area (ha)</b>
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	2259
Lowland wood pasture and parkland	1250
Calcareous grassland	143
Traditional orchards	107
Lowland yew and beech	84
Lowland meadow	45
Wet woodland	39
Lowland dry acid grassland	9
Lowland heathland	4

(Source: Kent Habitat Survey 2003)

#### **4.11. Designated sites**

Many sites have been recognised for their landscape or biodiversity value and have formal designations offering varying degrees of protection (see Map 3).



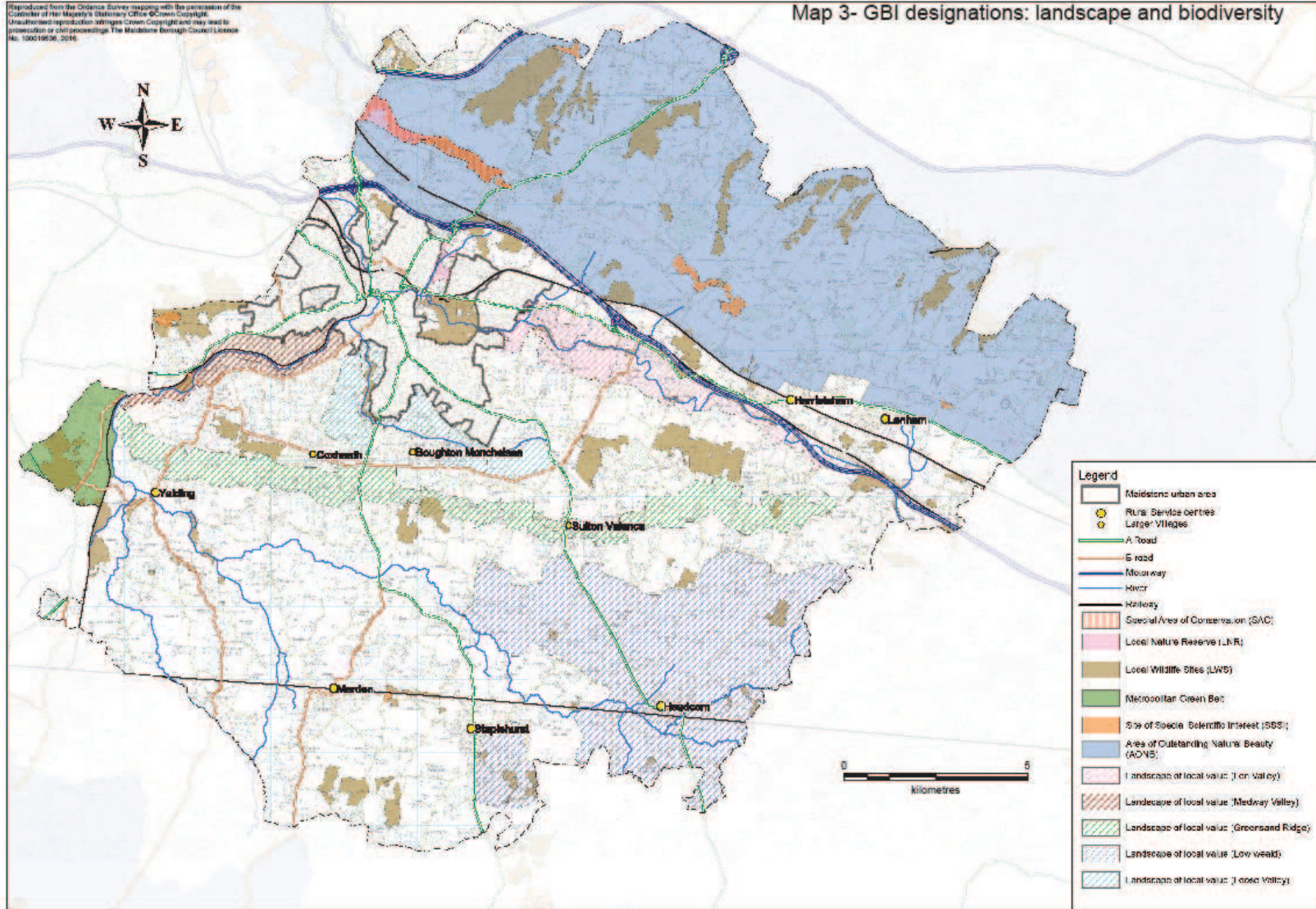
- 4.12. Just over a quarter of the borough is within the **Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)**. The AONB is a visually prominent landscape that contributes significantly to the borough's high quality of life. It is an important amenity and recreation resource for both Maidstone residents and visitors and forms an attractive backdrop to settlements along the base of the Kent Downs scarp. It also contains a wide range of natural habitats and biodiversity. Designation as an AONB confers the highest level of landscape protection and one which the council has a statutory duty to conserve and enhance.

- 4.13. The council has also designated five **Landscapes of Local Value**; the Greensand Ridge, Medway Valley, Len Valley, Loose Valley and Low Weald. These have been identified according to criteria relating to character and sensitivity.
- 4.14. A small area to the west of the borough lies within the **Metropolitan Green Belt**, incorporating the villages of Nettlestead and Nettlestead Green. The key purposes of the Metropolitan Green Belt include preventing urban sprawl and to assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 4.15. Within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the North Downs Woodlands is designated as **Special Area of Conservation** due to its existing and regenerating chalk grassland and mature beech and yew woodland - features that are threatened or rare in a European context.
- 4.16. **Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)** represent Britain's finest sites for fauna, flora, geology and physiographical features and are protected by legislation. There are nine SSSI sites within the borough including chalk grassland and woodland sites on the Kent Downs, the clay River Beult environment and geological SSSI's at quarries such as at Allington and Lenham.
- 4.17. Maidstone borough also has four **Local Nature Reserves (LNR)**, four Wildlife Trust Reserves (WTR) and two community nature areas (CNA) which are publicly accessible reserves of local/regional wildlife value where enjoyment by the public is actively promoted. Non-statutory nature conservation sites, known in Maidstone as **Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)**, are regionally and locally important nature conservation sites. Maidstone borough has approximately 59 sites that occur within its boundary, which cover approximately 2629 hectares. The majority of habitat found in LWS within the borough is lowland mixed deciduous woodland.
- 4.18. The Borough includes four **Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA's)** identified by the Kent Nature Partnership, comprising Greensand Heath and Commons, Mid Kent Greensand and Gault, Mid Kent Downs, Woods and Scarp and Medway and Low Weald Wetlands and Grasslands. The 2015 BOA maps indicate where the delivery of Kent Biodiversity Strategy targets should be focused in order to secure the maximum biodiversity benefits. The BOA maps also show where the greatest gains can be made from habitat enhancement, restoration and recreation, as these areas offer the best opportunities for establishing large habitat areas and networks of wildlife habitats. Many areas outside the designated areas

and identified BOAs also have substantial biodiversity interest, and include a number of ancient woodlands and other areas of habitats. It will still be necessary to maintain, enhance, buffer and extend areas of wildlife habitat outside the mapped areas in order to maintain the wildlife interest and richness of the wider countryside.



- 4.19. Parts of the borough fall within the **Wealden Great Crested Newt Important Area for Ponds (IAP)** identified by the Environment Agency (Important Areas for Ponds in the Environment Agency Southern Region, 2009). Great Crested Newt populations thrive where there is high pond density and a well-connected landscape. This helps ensure the survival of populations even if sub-populations are affected by, for example, pond desiccation or fish introductions. The IAP covers the whole of the Weald but within this large area there are 'hotspots' with clusters of Great Crested Newt populations including in Marden and Staplehurst which have a high density of pond.





## Heritage Assets

4.20. Maidstone Borough has been shaped and influenced by a long history, the legacy of which is a strong and rich cultural heritage. From the characteristic ragstone villages and hop and fruit-growing infrastructure of oast houses and orchards to grand historic parks and gardens such as at Leeds Castle estate and Mote Park, these heritage assets contribute to the strong sense of place, which exists across the borough. Many are designated for their national historic significance but Maidstone also contains numerous heritage assets of local significance in the form of historic buildings, local parks and gardens, archaeological sites and monuments most of which are included in the Kent Historic Environment Record. . The most significant heritage assets have been mapped to inform the development of the Green and blue infrastructure strategy (see Map 4).

4.21. There are several **Scheduled Monuments** within the Borough defined under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 such as remains of historic buildings, moated sites, earthworks and historic bridges. These are designated for their historic significance of national importance and it is an offence to carry out, without consent, any works resulting in the

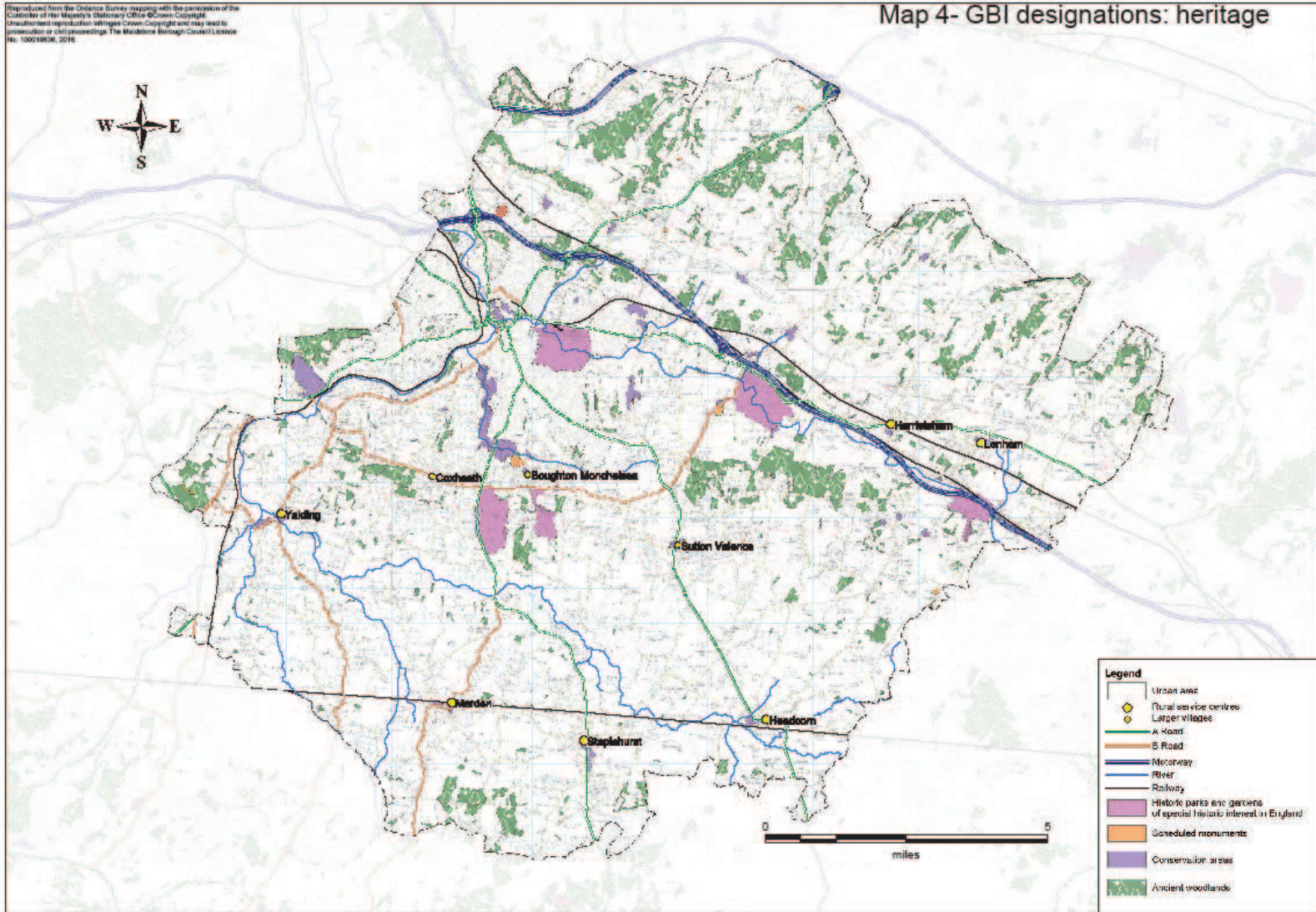
demolition, destruction, damage, alterations or repair to any Scheduled Monument. A **Conservation Area** is a local designation, which aims to protect special architectural or historic interest, made by Local Planning Authorities



under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. There are 41 Conservation Areas throughout Maidstone Borough, mainly focused around traditional settlement centres. As trees make a significant contribution to the character of an area, all trees with a trunk diameter exceeding 75mm at 1.5m above ground level are legally protected within Conservation Areas – adding protection to this important part of the green infrastructure.

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Map 4- GBI designations: heritage



- 4.22. A **Register of Landscapes, Parks and Gardens** of Special Historic Interest has been maintained by Historic England since the 1980s and the designation of such sites forms a material consideration within the planning process. Within Maidstone Borough there are several registered sites, comprising Mote Park (below), Leeds Castle Estate, Linton Park, Chilston Park and Boughton Monchelsea Place.



- 4.23. **Ancient woodland** in England is defined as an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. Fragments and swathes of ancient woodland are strewn across Maidstone Borough, with particularly large ancient woodland blocks at Oaken Wood to the west and at Kings Wood to the east.

## Publicly accessible green space

4.24. An updated audit of the quantity of publicly accessible green space across the Borough was carried out in 2014. Publicly accessible green space was defined as all open access land which is owned by Maidstone Borough Council, Kent County Council, Forestry Commission, Woodland Trust, parish councils, housing associations or 'open access' land (land which has been voluntarily dedicated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000), or land which has been voluntarily deemed as publicly accessible by the landowner through other legal means. In calculating the quantity of publicly accessible green space, land crossed by a Public Rights of Way (footpaths, bridleways, etc) such as farmland was not deemed to be publicly accessible as a whole. Green spaces were categorised and quantified as the following types:

- Amenity green space – informal recreation spaces, recreation grounds, village greens, urban parks, formal gardens, and playing fields.
- Equipped play areas – playgrounds, ball courts, outdoor basketball hoop areas, skateboard parks, teenage shelters and 'hangouts'.
- Outdoor sports facilities – outdoor sports pitches, tennis, bowls, athletics and other sports.
- Allotments – land used for growing of own produce including urban farms, (not private gardens).
- Natural/semi-natural – including woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, wetlands, open and running water, banks to rivers, lakes and ponds, wastelands, closed cemeteries and graveyards.

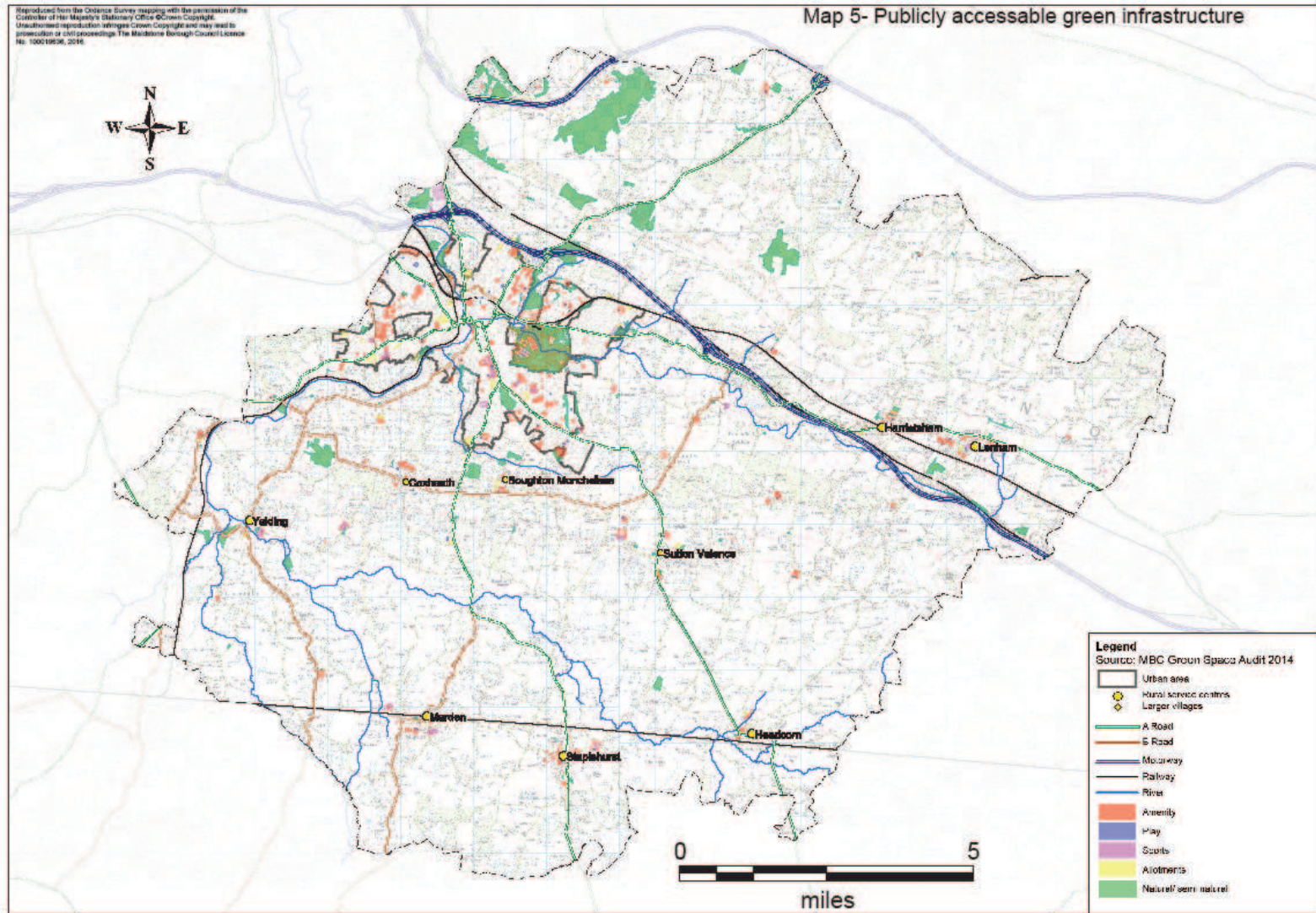
Multi-functional green spaces such as parks were quantified by their component parts (such as natural and semi natural open space, sports pitches and children's play areas) to provide an accurate assessment of the quantity of different functional areas

The quantities and locations of green spaces are shown in Figure 3 and Map 5

**Figure 3: Quantity (m<sup>2</sup>) of publicly accessible green space<sup>15</sup>**

URBAN WARDS	Allotments	Amenity	Natural	Play	Sports	Ward Totals
ALLINGTON	0	47,812	72,634	12,916	78,470	211,832
BARMING	18,507	18,170	57,373	1,276	0	95,326
BEARSTED	8,474	25,730	109,029	809	23,790	167,832
BOXLEY	8,196	93,343	4,567,731	6,799	599,791	5,275,860
BRIDGE	32,596	50,479	40,536	3,497	0	127,108
DOWNSWOOD AND OTHAM	8,217	37,665	70,450	3,981	8,001	128,314
EAST	1,154	94,067	38,808	7,774	9,882	151,685
FANT	45,165	26,012	39,269	6,130	17,094	133,670
HEATH	2,035	54,365	24,382	26,183	6,679	113,644
HIGH STREET	6,660	33,521	20,669	2,469	10,652	73,971
LOOSE	22,547	23,769	2,077	813	0	49,206
NORTH	43,840	14,169	99,536	5,071	0	162,616
PARK WOOD	0	52,486	33,361	4,322	16,072	106,241
SHEPWAY NORTH	3,299	67,473	1,727,765	5,920	144,987	1,949,444
SHEPWAY SOUTH	0	49,063	77,220	4,615	0	130,898
SOUTH	24,338	96,428	78,883	5,804	36,515	241,968
<b>Urban Ward Totals:</b>	<b>225,028</b>	<b>784,552</b>	<b>7,059,723</b>	<b>98,379</b>	<b>951,933</b>	<b>9,119,615</b>
<b>RURAL WARDS</b>						
BOUGHTON MONCHELSEA						
CHART SUTTON	15,297	77,556	223,629	1,077	15,230	332,789
COXHEATH AND HUNTON	18,912	75,828	423,867	5,327	17,197	541,131
DETLING AND THURNHAM	6,500	14,446	731,201	1,354	0	753,501
HARRIETSHAM AND LENHAM	9,405	125,954	356,673	4,377	18,168	514,577
HEADCORN	7,758	56,788	22,682	2,898	10,928	101,054
LEEDS	0	14,893	14,353	1,213	20,703	51,162
MARDEN AND YALDING	12,034	112,541	226,466	4,269	52,661	407,971
NORTH DOWNS	0	36,890	782,057	3,175	5,814	827,936
STAPLEHURST	0	33,812	15,825	3,041	40,537	93,215
SUTTON VALENCE AND LANGLEY	21,965	62,629	99,720	2,243	1,560	188,117
<b>Rural Ward Totals:</b>	<b>91,871</b>	<b>611,337</b>	<b>2,896,473</b>	<b>28,974</b>	<b>182,798</b>	<b>3,811,453</b>
<b>Green Space Type Totals</b>	<b>541,927</b>	<b>2,180,441</b>	<b>17,015,919</b>	<b>225,732</b>	<b>2,086,664</b>	<b>12,931,068</b>

<sup>15</sup> Green Space Audit data from Green and Blue Spaces Provision in Maidstone Borough Quantitative Assessment (May 2014)



- 4.25. The quality of publicly accessible green spaces is key to their effective functioning and use. An assessment of quality was carried out in 2014/15 on 140 sites across the Borough including amenity green spaces, natural and semi-natural green spaces and allotments. The assessment was based on the quality and accessibility aspects of the Green Flag Award programme resulting in an assessment of either 'Very Poor', 'Poor', 'Fair', 'Good' or 'Very Good'. Of the 140 sites assessed 8 were scored to be in Poor condition, 62 as Fair, 57 as Good and 1 as Very Good, (Teston Picnic Site).
- 4.26.** Play areas were assessed using the Play Area Scoring Matrix (PASM), which assesses the quality, accessibility and use of each area grading them as either Excellent ( $\geq 70\%$ ), Satisfactory (56%-69%) or Requires Improvement ( $\leq 55\%$ ). The PASM assessment is carried out by Maidstone Council bi-annually providing an overall picture of quality of play areas across the Borough and recent assessments show a reduction in quality across all sites since 2009 as the level of available capital funding has reduced and more sites are graded as requiring improvement.

### **Amenity green space**

- 4.27. The formal parks and gardens in the borough, found mostly in and around Maidstone town, and managed by Maidstone Borough Council comprise; Mote Park, Whatman Park, Clare Park, Millennium River Park, Brenchley Gardens, South Park, Cobtree Manor Park and Penenden Heath. There are two country parks which are owned and managed by Kent County Council – Teston Bridge Country Park on the River Medway and White Horse Wood Country Park on Detling Hill.
- 4.28. Four of the parks gained a national Green Flag Award in 2015 in recognition of their exceptionally high standards, excellent facilities and strong community involvement, namely Mote Park, Cobtree Manor Park, Whatman Park, and Clare Park. Millennium River Park is a linear route which runs along 10km of the River Medway that opens up to riverside spaces along the way from Teston Bridge Country Park to Allington. The river park was opened in 2001 as one of the 'lasting legacy' projects funded in part by the National Lottery to celebrate the new millennium. The path passes through Whatman Park, a key open space in Maidstone town which combines a natural riverside landscape with activity areas including a skate park, adventure play area, toddlers play area and the Riverstage Arena (a roofed amphitheatre used for a variety of events).

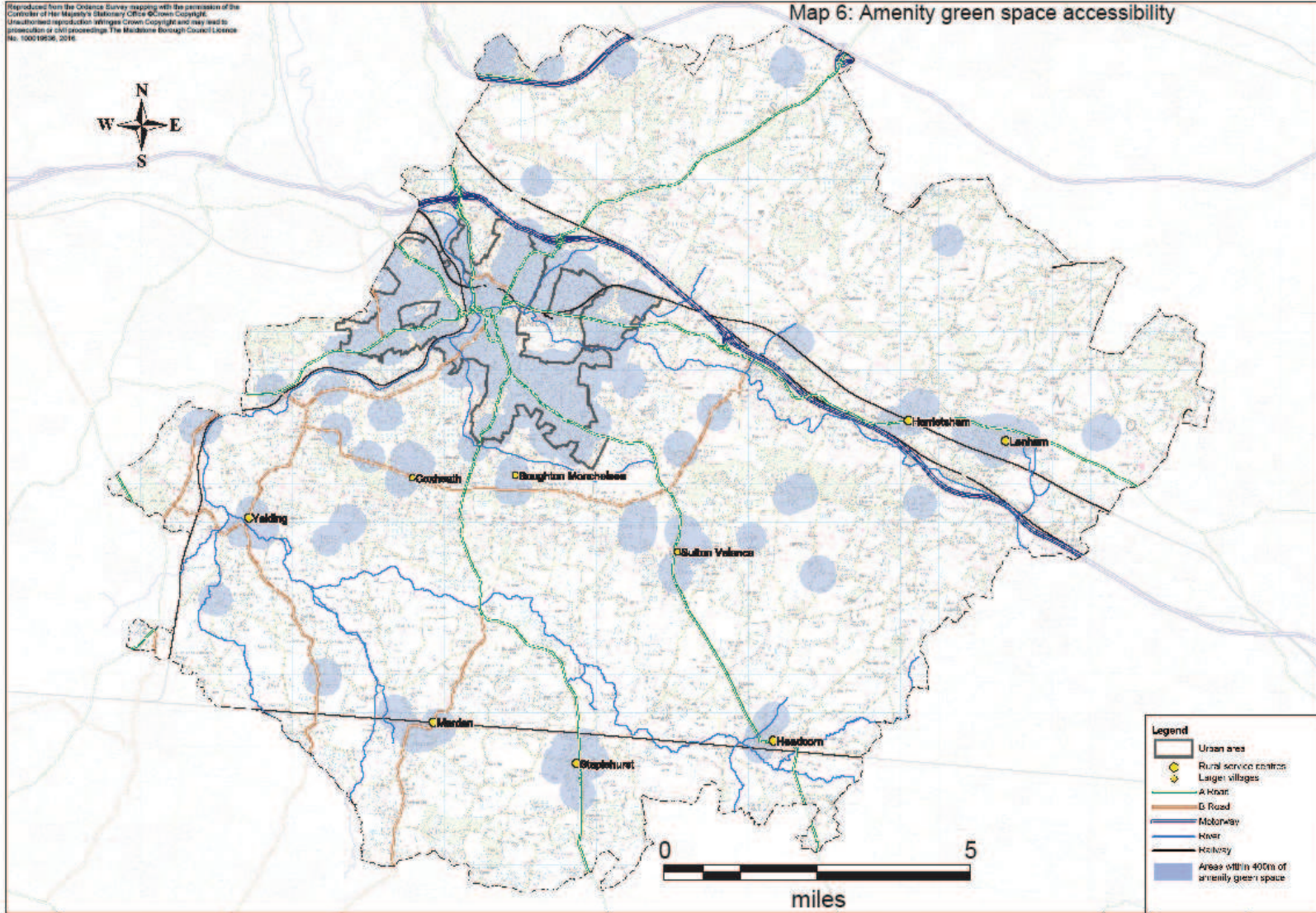


- 4.29. In addition to formal parks and gardens, smaller scale amenity green spaces are most commonly but not exclusively found in housing areas and include informal recreation spaces, green spaces in and around housing and village greens. These provide space for informal activities close to home or work, and they can enhance the appearance of residential or other areas. Many of the smaller settlements in the borough rely on these informal spaces for their recreational needs.
- 4.30. Current provision of amenity green space equates to 0.7 hectares per 1000 population in the urban area and 1.47 hectares per 1000 population in the rural areas. A 2015 telephone survey of residents found that most people believe the quantity of amenity space to be 'good' or 'very good'. However, there are specific areas deficient in amenity space, for example, parts of Allington and North Wards within Maidstone urban area fall below 0.7 hectares per 1000 population and have areas which are not within 400m of amenity open space as shown on Map 6.



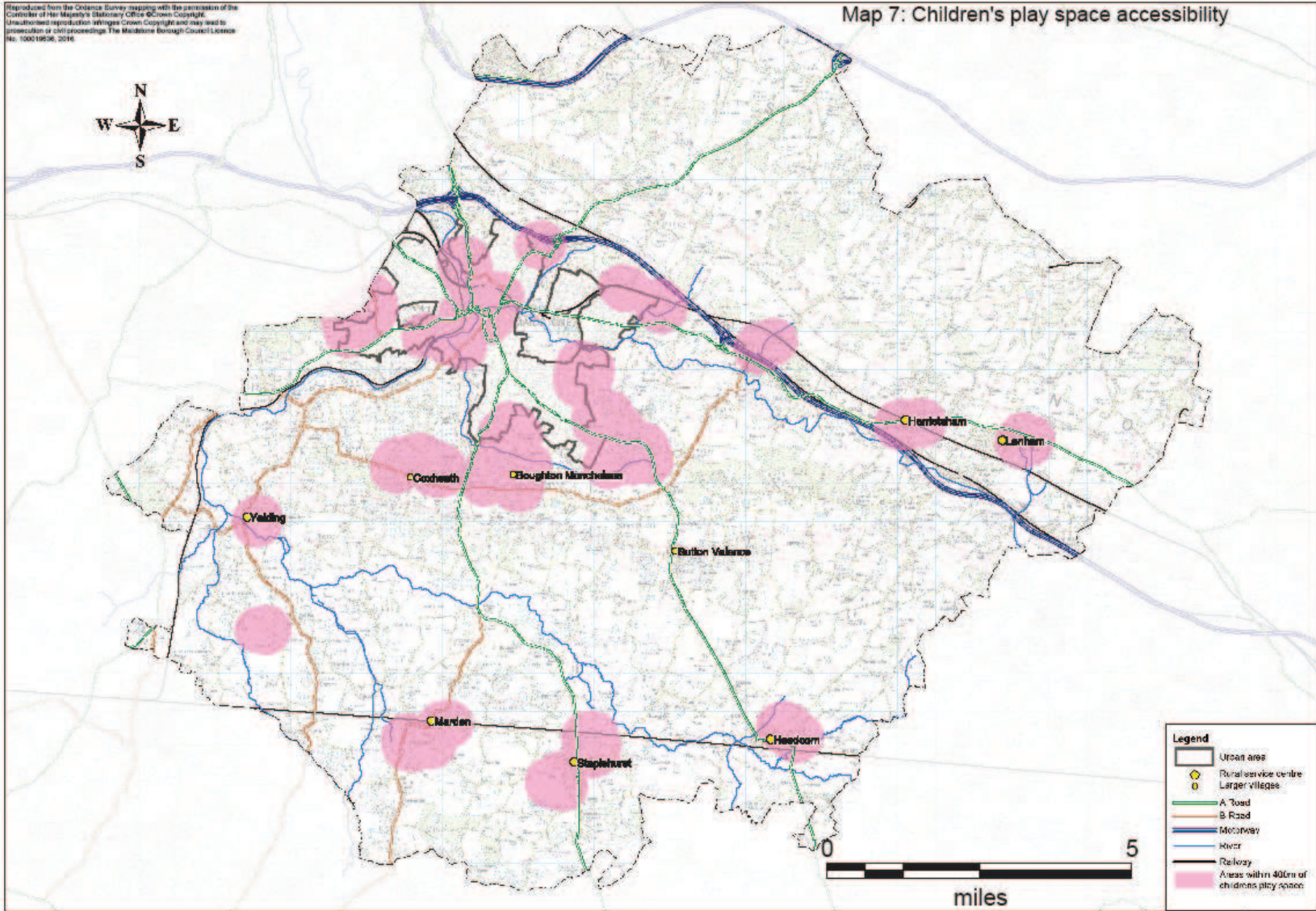
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Map 6: Amenity green space accessibility



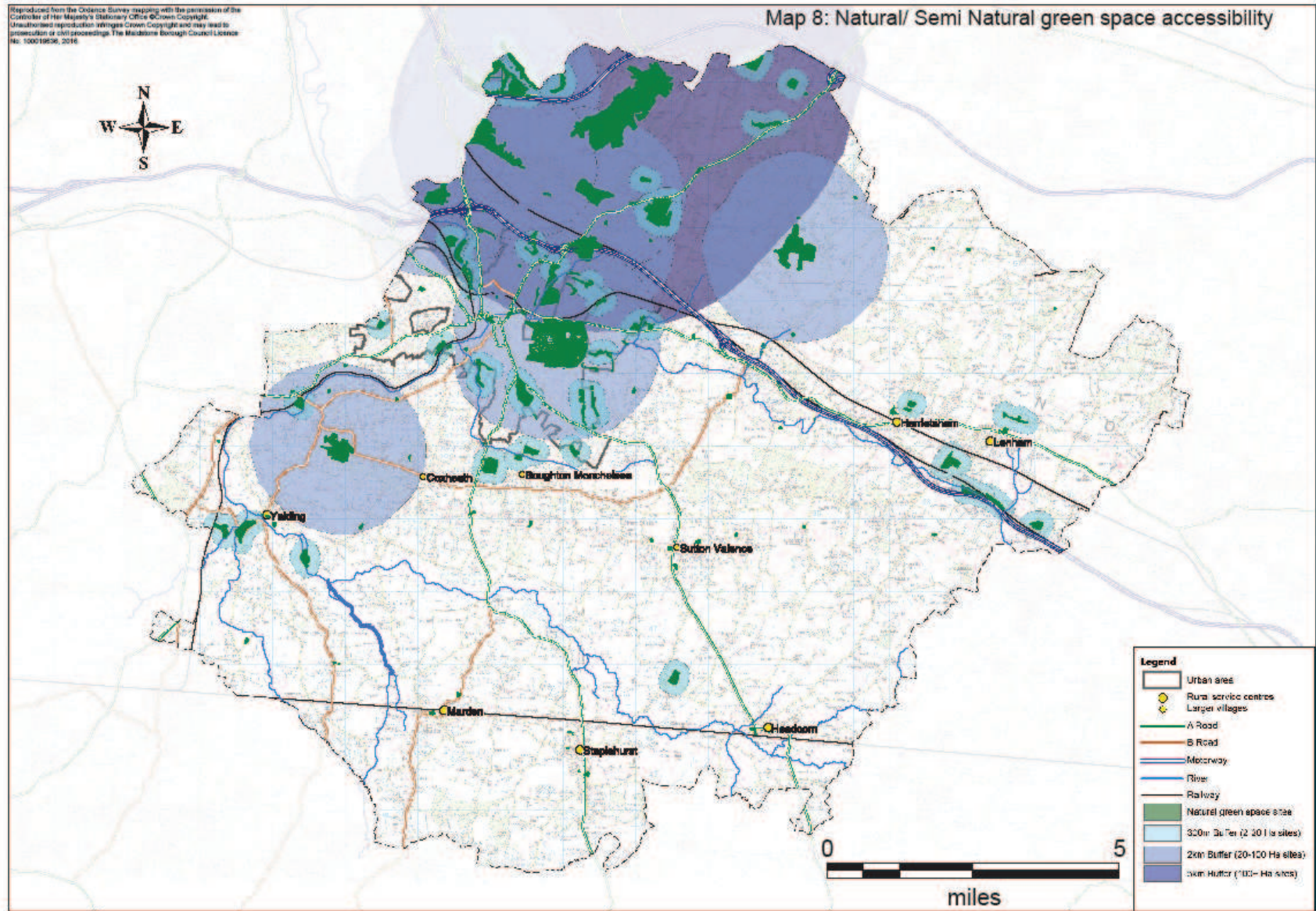
## Provision for children and young people

- 4.31. The 2014 publicly accessible green space audit identifies 119 separate play areas within the borough, including equipped playgrounds, ball courts, skateboard areas, teenage shelters and 'hangouts'. Mostly owned and managed by Maidstone Borough Council or the parishes, many are located within parks and green spaces and are hard surfaced elements within the green infrastructure, and are of variable quality.
- 4.32. The Draft Maidstone Play Strategy 2014 – 2024 categorises play areas into three types; 'Destination Play Areas' with a wide range of facilities visited by park users from outside the borough as well as the local community, such as at Mote Park and Cobtree Manor Park; 'District Play Areas' also with a wide range of facilities but mainly used by local communities and some passing visitors to the borough such as at South Park, Penenden Heath and Whatman Park and 'Local Neighbourhood Play Areas' which have a more limited range of play equipment but provide important informal leisure areas for families in the immediate local community. These areas are further subdivided into Larger and Smaller Local Neighbourhood Play Areas. Larger examples include Shepway Green, Barming Heath and Nettlestead Village Hall. Smaller examples include Albert Reed Gardens, Camden Street and Lime Trees at Staplehurst.
- 4.33. Current provision of equipped play areas equates to 0.09 hectares per 1000 population in the urban areas and 0.07 per 1000 population in the rural areas. There is concern about the lack of play facilities from many local residents with 40% believing the provision to be 'very poor', 'poor' or 'fair' in a 2015 telephone survey. The 2014 audit of publicly accessible green spaces identifies Bearsted (north and south of the A20), south Loose (east and west of the A229) and Maidstone town centre as areas deficient in play space as shown on Map 7. The Draft Maidstone Play Strategy 2014 – 2024 also identifies a lack of youth facilities in Headcorn, Detling, Lordswood, Harrietsham, Teston and Yalding and a lack of children's play facilities in Detling



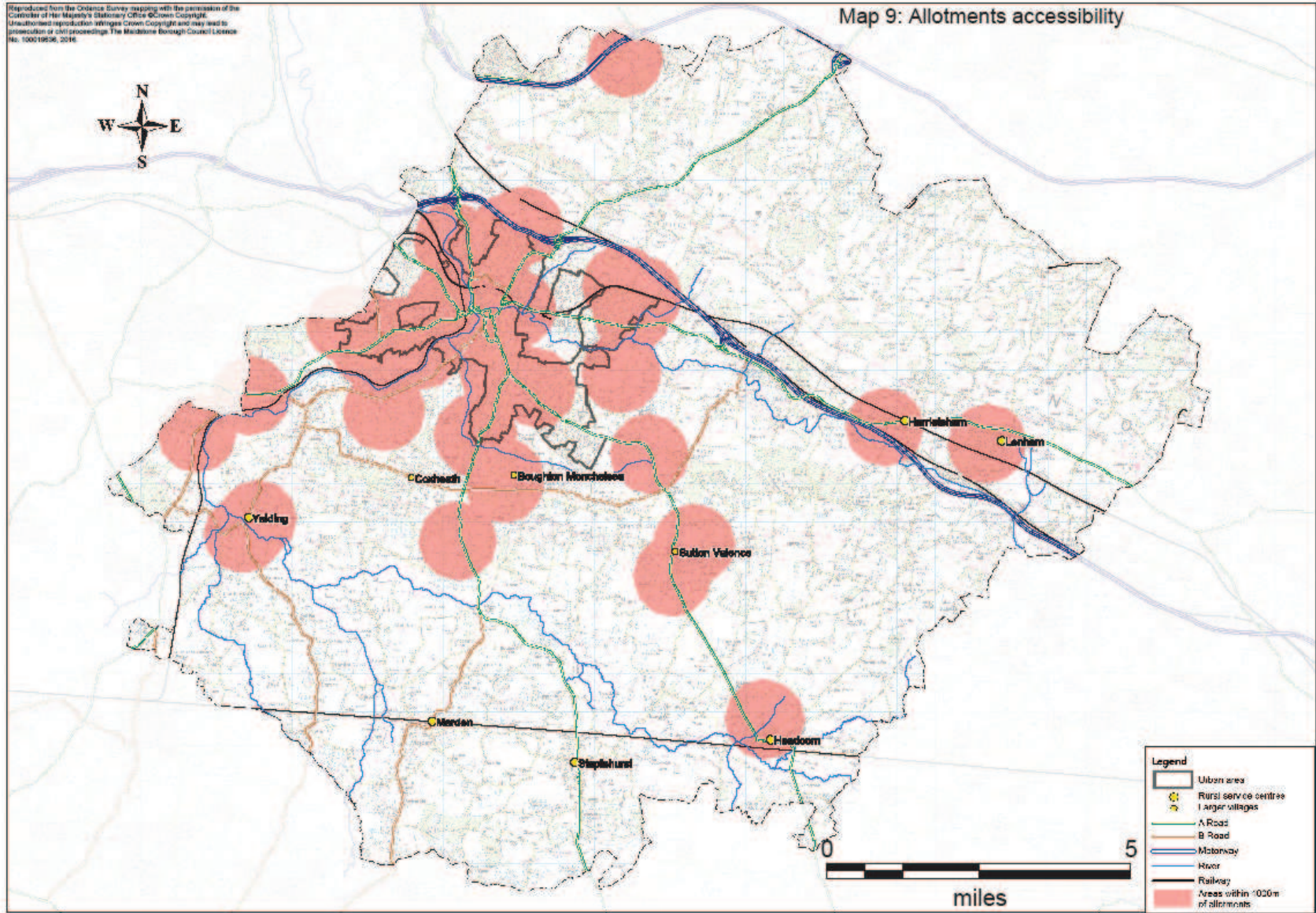
## Natural and semi-natural green space

- 4.34. Natural and semi-natural publicly accessible spaces including woodlands, scrub, grasslands, wetlands, open and running water and wastelands are scattered across the borough and fall within many different ownerships, both public and private. The Kent Wildlife Trust manage a number of nature reserves, comprising the Larches, Marden Meadows, Quarry Wood, and Kiln Wood as well as the grounds of their headquarters, Tyland Barn Visitors Centre which includes a demonstration nature park. The extensive Hucking Estate Woodland on the North Downs Way is owned and managed by the Woodland Trust. Vinters Valley Nature Reserve is managed by an independent Trust.
- 4.35. Cemeteries and churchyards and other burial grounds are included within the category of natural and semi-natural green space. They are important for quiet contemplation, burial of the dead as well as wildlife conservation and promotion of biodiversity. There are two cemeteries in the borough, Maidstone Cemetery and Vinters Park Crematorium and numerous churchyards within the smaller settlements.
- 4.36. Current provision of natural and semi-natural green space is higher than for other green space types and equates to 6.31 hectares per 1000 population in the urban areas and 6.95 hectares per 1000 population in the rural areas. 72% of residents rated the amount of natural and semi natural space as very good / good in a 2015 telephone survey. However there are areas deficient in accessible natural and semi-natural green space, particularly in some of the rural areas of the Borough as shown on Map 8 which is highlighted in draft Neighbourhood Plans in Lenham, Headcorn and Coxheath.



## Allotments and community gardens

- 4.38. Allotments and community gardens provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce contributing to sustainability, health and social inclusion. There are 12 allotment sites in Maidstone town which are run by the Maidstone Allotments Management Committee, a group of volunteers who look after them on behalf of the council. 17 parish councils also run their own local allotments. Demand for allotments is currently higher than supply as there is a waiting list for allotments. Currently, allotments are not advertised or promoted but if they were, in order to encourage healthy lifestyles for example, the demand may well rise significantly.
- 4.39. Current provision of allotments equates to 0.2 hectares in the urban areas and 0.22 hectares in the rural areas. There was a high degree of uncertainty about the provision of allotments in the 2015 telephone survey of residents with 47% stating they don't know or have no experience of allotments. Only 22% felt the provision of allotments was good or very good. The 2014 audit of publicly accessible green spaces identified deficiencies in allotments in Park Wood, Bearstead and Allington wards within Maidstone and Staplehurst and Marden as shown on Map 9. Harrietsham and Coxheath's draft Neighbourhood Plans also identify a shortage of allotment space.

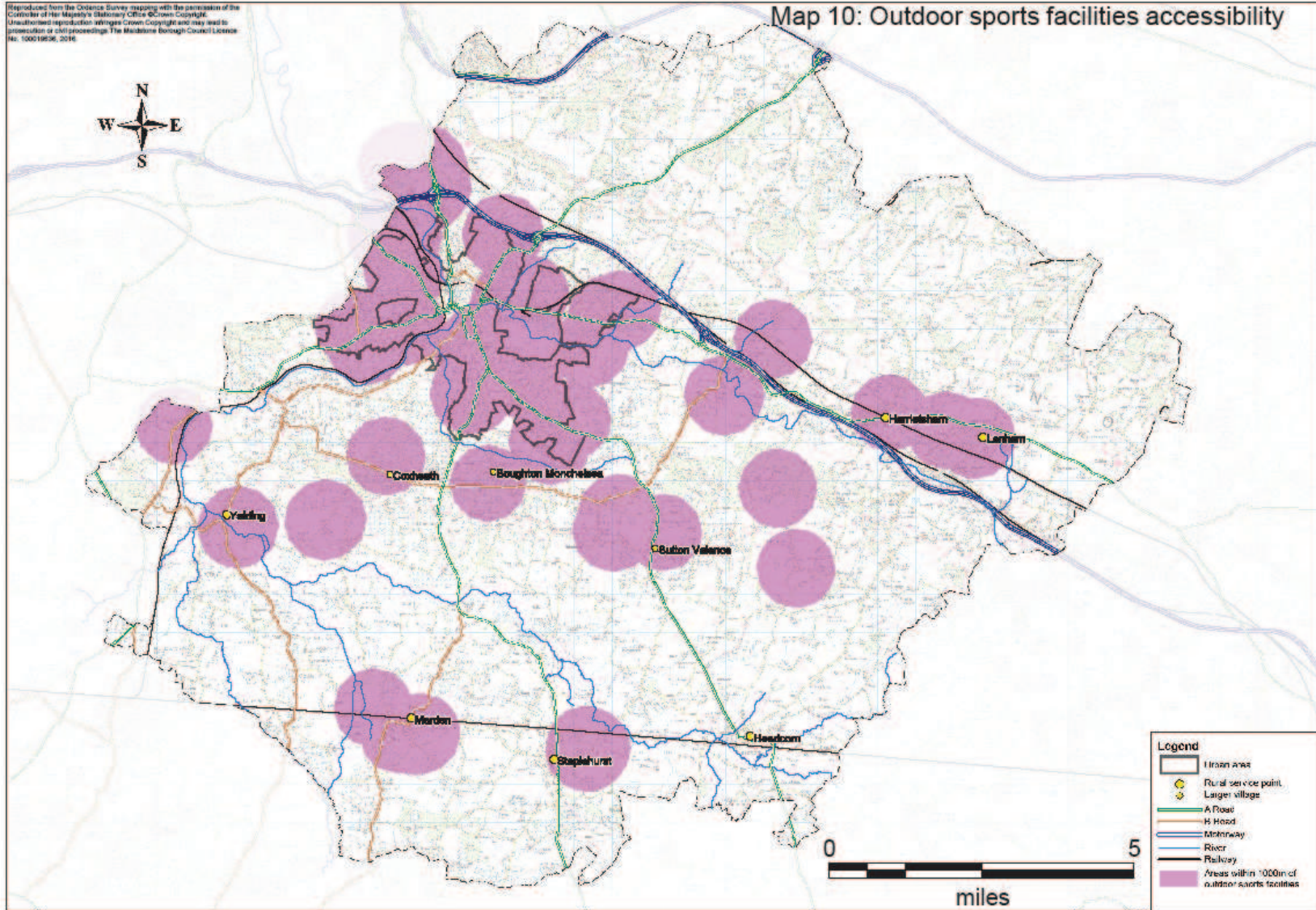


4.40.

## Outdoor sports facilities

- 4.41. Football pitches are available for hire at ten sites in and around Maidstone town and there is a rugby pitch and cricket club at Mote Park. There are also pay and play tennis courts at four sites. Informal and formal playing fields and other sports facilities are dispersed throughout the borough in the smaller settlements. The 2014 audit did not include outdoor sport facilities that are privately owned or those which have limited public access such as school sports pitches being used at weekends by community clubs. These are likely to grow in importance with greater emphasis on schools and colleges generating community use from fields and Sport England's strategy to develop multi-use community assets.
- 4.42. Current provision of publicly accessible outdoor sports facilities equates to 0.85 per 1000 population in urban areas and 0.44 hectares per 1000 population in rural areas. The 2015 telephone survey of residents shows concerns with regard to the amount of outdoor sports facilities with 43% rating them as fair, poor and very poor. The County Football and Hockey Associations also identify that provision for these sports in the borough is inadequate. The 2014 audit of publicly accessible green spaces identified deficiencies in outdoor sports facilities in Langley, Headcorn and Staplehurst as shown on Map 10 however, a comprehensive Playing Pitch Needs Assessment in line with Sport England's methodology is required to fully ascertain the borough's sports facility requirements





## **Green and blue corridors**

- 4.43. Many of the publicly accessible green spaces outlined above form important green corridors. These include paths along riverbanks, cycleways, and footpaths. Maidstone borough's five main rivers provide important movement corridors for people and wildlife although some are more accessible to people than others. The Medway for example has a continuous path, which alternates from bank to bank, along its length through the borough, whilst its tributaries are only accessible in a few places. A combination of parks and green corridors in Maidstone town create a distinctive pattern of green corridors and wedges, some continuous and some broken, radiating out from the town centre. Railways and road corridors also provide important green corridors, often undisturbed by foot traffic. Some of these are managed actively for nature conservation. Many of the green and blue corridors are historic routes and contain nationally and locally important heritage assets. For example, during the Second World War the River Medway was the GHQ Stop-Line and still contains dozens of pillboxes and defence sites. Further detail on movement links is included in the 'Sustainable green links' section.

## **Private green spaces**

- 4.44. Private gardens, school grounds and the grounds of other institutions such as hospitals also provide valuable green infrastructure, some of great value to wildlife. However, there is little information held about the borough's private green spaces and they have not been included in any mapping exercise to date. School grounds in particular are often under-utilised but can provide experiential outdoor learning facilities which reconnect children with nature. In areas of green space deficiency, school grounds can be managed for community use outside school hours.

## **Open Spaces Quality Audit**

- 4.45. The Borough's open spaces sites assessment of accessibility and quality was conducted between October 2014 and April 2015. The assessment included visits to 140 open space sites across the Borough including parks and open spaces, natural and semi-natural greenspaces and allotments. The open spaces were not all in the Borough Council's ownership, but they were all freely accessible and open to the public.
- 4.46. Playing Pitches (and Indoor Sports Facilities) were not included in the Quality Audit. MBC have commissioned the production of a Playing Pitch

Strategy and an Indoor Sports Facilities Study that will report in early 2017.

- 4.47. The results of the assessments provide the Borough with a comprehensive overview of the condition and quality of the open space provision and provided a new level of management information.
- 4.48. The most popular reasons for Maidstone residents visiting open spaces are to walk, to take exercise, for fresh air, to use children's play equipment and to walk the dog. Amenity green space and natural and semi natural open space are most popular in terms of claimed usage.
- 4.49. Amenity green space is typically accessed by foot and by car whereas there is a slight preference for access on foot for both natural and semi natural space and play areas provision. The majority travel to outdoor sports facilities by car.
- 4.50. Amenity green space, pay area provision and allotments appear to be in close proximity with residents, whereas natural and semi natural greenspace and outdoor sports facilities take longer for residents to reach.
- 4.51. Users often reference a place, eg Mote Park, rather than type when asked about open space provision. Residents and users often do not distinguish between amenity green space and natural and semi natural spaces which they see as the same types of space.
- 4.52. Most residents believe that the amount of open space available in the borough is either very good or good in relation to amenity green space and natural and semi natural space. But they are some concerns about the amount of play area provision for children and young people and outdoor sports facilities where they are rated as fair/poor and very poor respectively.

#### **Assessment of current deficiencies in accessible open space provision**

- 4.53. An outline assessment of current deficiencies in accessible open space provision within the borough can be undertaken using:

- The Open Spaces Quality Audit (2015) that set out new standards for public open space provision in new development.<sup>16</sup>
- Accessibility Maps: 6: Amenity green space, 7: Children’s play space, 8: natural & semi natural green space, 9: Allotments, and 10: Outdoor sports facilities.
- The table below “Analysis of publically accessible green space against open space standards by ward” takes the information in Figure 3: Quantity of publicly accessible green space to provide a quantitative assessment of the current provision of publicly accessible green space against the open space standards based on the 2014 population figures.

This quantitative data combined with the qualitative information in the Open Spaces Quality Audit and the Accessibility Maps can be analysed together to produce an outline assessment of current deficiencies in accessible open space provision by Wards

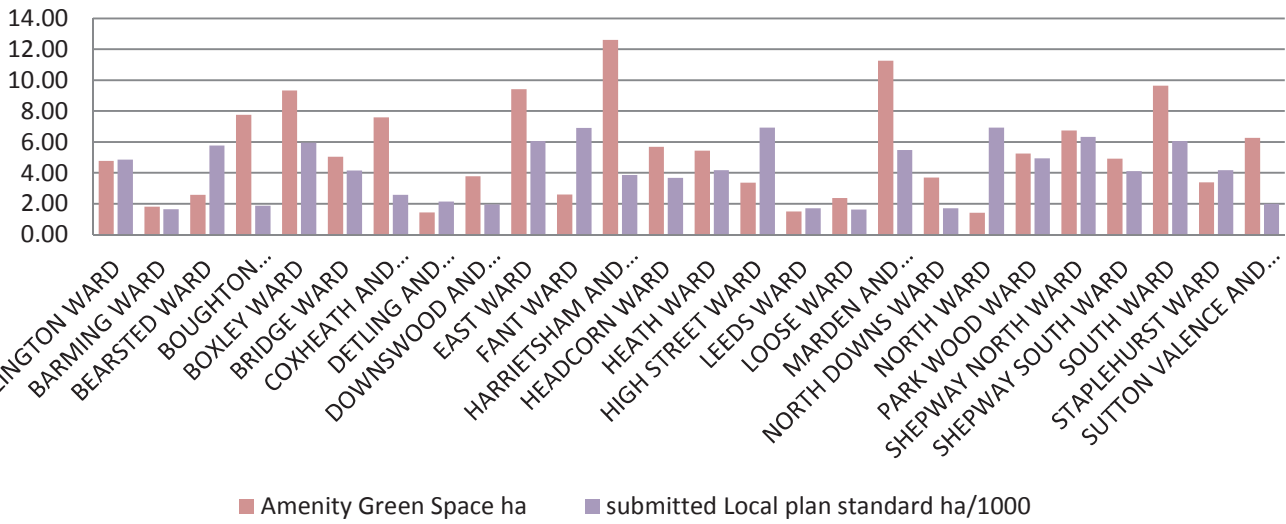
Current Deficiencies in Open Space provision @ 2014 population figures					
Ward	Allotments ha	Amenity ha	Natural ha	Play ha	Sports ha
ALLINGTON WARD	-1.39	-0.07	-37.78	-0.44	-3.24
BARMING WARD	1.38	0.17	-9.60	-0.46	-3.78
BEARSTED WARD	-0.80	-3.20	-42.72	-1.98	-10.82
BOUGHTON MONCHELSE	0.99	5.88	4.94	-0.56	-2.77
BOXLEY WARD	-0.88	3.38	401.52	-1.45	46.38
BRIDGE WARD	2.08	0.90	-34.43	-1.13	-9.47
COXHEATH AND HUNTON	1.16	5.01	18.47	-0.39	-4.17
DETLING AND THURNHAI	0.04	-0.70	53.23	-0.63	-4.90
DOWNSWOOD AND OTH	0.26	1.81	-11.16	-0.30	-3.68
EAST WARD	-1.61	3.35	-52.34	-1.39	-12.85
FANT WARD	2.54	-4.30	-60.16	-1.85	-14.07
HARRIETSHAM AND LENH	-0.16	8.73	-0.21	-0.94	-7.02
HEADCORN WARD	-0.28	2.00	-31.92	-1.03	-7.32
HEATH WARD	-0.99	1.26	-36.37	1.13	-8.88
HIGH STREET WARD	-1.31	-3.56	-62.15	-2.22	-14.74
LEEDS WARD	-0.49	-0.21	-14.36	-0.49	-1.82
LOOSE WARD	1.79	0.75	-14.87	-0.50	-3.71
MARDEN AND YALDING V	-0.36	5.79	-28.12	-1.53	-7.23
NORTH DOWNS WARD	-0.49	1.98	62.35	-0.29	-3.32
NORTH WARD	2.40	-5.51	-54.40	-1.97	-15.84
PARK WOOD WARD	-1.41	0.32	-42.42	-1.33	-9.66
SHEPWAY NORTH WARD	-1.48	0.43	114.08	-1.67	0.05
SHEPWAY SOUTH WARD	-1.17	0.80	-30.37	-1.00	-9.38
SOUTH WARD	0.70	3.59	-48.34	-1.58	-10.19
STAPLEHURST WARD	-1.19	-0.79	-37.16	-1.19	-5.48
SUTTON VALENCE AND LA	1.62	4.26	-8.62	-0.49	-4.42

<sup>16</sup> [Local Plan Evidence, Natural & Historic Environment ENV007 \(I\) Our proposed standard for open spaces](#)

### Analysis of publically accessible green space against open space standards by ward

Ward	Population @ 2014	Allotments m2	Allotments ha	Provision (m2)/1000 population	Apply draft standard ha/1000	Deficiency / ha	Amenity m2	Amenity ha	Provision (m2)/1000 population	Apply draft standard ha/1000	Deficiency / ha	Natural m2	Natural ha	Provision (m2)/1000 population	Apply draft standard ha/1000	Deficiency / ha	Play m2	Play ha	Provision (m2)/1000 population	Apply draft standard ha/1000	Deficiency / ha	Sports m2	Sports ha	Provision (m2)/1000 population	Apply draft standard ha/1000	Deficiency / ha
ALLINGTON WARD	6930	0	0	0	1.39	-1.39	47,812	4.78	6,899	4.85	-0.07	72,634	7.26	10,481	45.05	-37.78	12,916	1.29	1,864	1.73	-0.44	78,470	7.85	11323	11.09	-3.24
BARMING WARD	2360	18,507	1.85	7,842	0.47	1.38	18,170	1.82	7,699	1.65	0.17	57,373	5.74	24,311	15.34	-9.60	1,276	0.13	541	0.59	-0.46	0	0.00	0	3.78	-3.78
BEARSTED WARD	8250	8,474	0.85	1,027	1.65	-0.80	25,730	2.57	3,119	5.78	-3.20	109,029	10.90	13,216	53.63	-42.72	809	0.08	98	2.06	-1.98	23,790	2.38	2884	13.20	-10.82
BOUGHTON MONCHESE	2680	15,297	1.53	5,708	0.54	0.99	77,556	7.76	28,939	1.88	5.88	223,629	22.36	83,444	17.42	4.94	1,077	0.11	402	0.67	-0.56	15,230	1.52	5683	4.29	-2.77
BOXLEY WARD	8500	8,196	0.82	964	1.70	-0.88	93,343	9.33	10,982	5.95	3.38	4,567,731	456.77	537,380	55.25	401.52	6,799	0.68	800	2.13	-1.45	599,791	59.98	70564	13.60	46.38
BRIDGE WARD	5920	32,596	3.26	5,506	1.18	2.08	50,479	5.05	8,527	4.14	0.90	40,536	4.05	6,847	38.48	-34.43	3,497	0.35	591	1.48	-1.13	0	0.00	0	9.47	-9.47
COXHEATH AND HUNTON	3680	18,912	1.89	5,139	0.74	1.16	75,828	7.58	20,605	2.58	5.01	423,867	42.39	115,181	23.92	18.47	5,327	0.53	1,448	0.92	-0.39	17,197	1.72	4673	5.89	-4.17
DETLING AND THURNHA	3060	6,500	0.65	2,124	0.61	0.04	14,446	1.44	4,721	2.14	-0.70	731,201	73.12	238,955	19.89	53.23	1,354	0.14	442	0.77	-0.63	0	0.00	0	4.90	-4.90
DOWNSWOOD AND OTH	2800	8,217	0.82	2,935	0.56	0.26	37,665	3.77	13,452	1.96	1.81	70,450	7.05	25,161	18.20	-11.16	3,981	0.40	1,422	0.70	-0.30	8,001	0.80	2858	4.48	-3.68
EAST WARD	8650	1,154	0.12	133	1.73	-1.61	94,067	9.41	10,875	6.06	3.35	38,808	3.88	4,486	56.23	-52.34	7,774	0.78	899	2.16	-1.39	9,882	0.99	1142	13.84	-12.85
FANT WARD	9860	45,165	4.52	4,581	1.97	2.54	26,012	2.60	2,638	6.90	-4.30	39,269	3.93	3,983	64.09	-60.16	6,130	0.61	622	2.47	-1.85	17,094	1.71	1734	15.78	-14.07
HARRIETSHAM AND LENH	5520	9,405	0.94	1,704	1.10	-0.16	125,954	12.60	22,818	3.86	8.73	356,673	35.67	64,615	35.88	-0.21	4,377	0.44	793	1.38	-0.94	18,168	1.82	3291	8.83	-7.02
HEADCORN WARD	5260	7,758	0.78	1,475	1.05	-0.28	56,788	5.68	10,796	3.68	2.00	22,682	2.27	4,312	34.19	-31.92	2,898	0.29	551	1.32	-1.03	10,928	1.09	2078	8.42	-7.32
HEATH WARD	5970	2,035	0.20	341	1.19	-0.99	54,365	5.44	9,106	4.18	1.26	24,382	2.44	4,084	38.81	-36.37	26,183	2.62	4,386	1.49	1.13	6,679	0.67	1119	9.55	-8.88
HIGH STREET WARD	9880	6,660	0.67	674	1.98	-1.31	33,521	3.35	3,393	6.92	-3.56	20,669	2.07	2,092	64.22	-62.15	2,469	0.25	250	2.47	-2.22	10,652	1.07	1078	15.81	-14.74
LEEDS WARD	2430	0	0.00	0	0.49	-0.49	14,893	1.49	6,129	1.70	-0.21	14,353	1.44	5,907	15.80	-14.36	1,213	0.12	499	0.61	-0.49	20,703	2.07	8520	3.89	-1.82
LOOSE WARD	2320	22,547	2.25	9,719	0.46	1.79	23,769	2.38	10,245	1.62	0.75	2,077	0.21	895	15.08	-14.87	813	0.08	350	0.58	-0.50	0	0.00	0	3.71	-3.71
MARDEN AND YALDING V	7810	12,034	1.20	1,541	1.56	-0.36	112,541	11.25	14,410	5.47	5.79	226,466	22.65	28,997	50.77	-28.12	4,269	0.43	547	1.95	-1.53	52,661	5.27	6743	12.50	-7.23
NORTH DOWNS WARD	2440	0	0.00	0	0.49	-0.49	36,890	3.69	15,119	1.71	1.98	782,057	78.21	320,515	15.86	62.35	3,175	0.32	1,301	0.61	-0.29	5,814	0.58	2383	3.90	-3.32
NORTH WARD	9900	43,840	4.38	4,428	1.98	2.40	14,169	1.42	1,431	6.93	-5.51	99,536	9.95	10,054	64.35	-54.40	5,071	0.51	512	2.48	-1.97	0	0.00	0	15.84	-15.84
PARK WOOD WARD	7040	0	0.00	0	1.41	-1.41	52,486	5.25	7,455	4.93	0.32	33,361	3.34	4,739	45.76	-42.42	4,322	0.43	614	1.76	-1.33	16,072	1.61	2283	11.26	-9.66
SHEPWAY NORTH WARD	9030	3,299	0.33	365	1.81	-1.48	67,473	6.75	7,472	6.32	0.43	1,727,765	172.78	191,336	58.70	114.08	5,920	0.59	656	2.26	-1.67	144,987	14.50	16056	14.45	0.05
SHEPWAY SOUTH WARD	5860	0	0.00	0	1.17	-1.17	49,063	4.91	8,373	4.10	0.80	77,220	7.72	13,177	38.09	-30.37	4,615	0.46	788	1.47	-1.00	0	0.00	0	9.38	-9.38
SOUTH WARD	8650	24,338	2.43	2,814	1.73	0.70	96,428	9.64	11,148	6.06	3.59	78,883	7.89	9,119	56.23	-48.34	5,804	0.58	671	2.16	-1.58	36,515	3.65	4221	13.84	-10.19
STAPLEHURST WARD	5960	0	0.00	0	1.19	-1.19	33,812	3.38	5,673	4.17	-0.79	15,825	1.58	2,655	38.74	-37.16	3,041	0.30	510	1.49	-1.19	40,537	4.05	6802	9.54	-5.48
SUTTON VALENCE AND LA	2860	21,965	2.20	7,680	0.57	1.62	62,629	6.26	21,898	2.00	4.26	99,720	9.97	34,867	18.59	-8.62	2,243	0.22	784	0.72	-0.49	1,560	0.16	545	4.58	-4.42
	153620	316,899					1,395,889					9,956,196				127,353			1,134,731					12,931,068		
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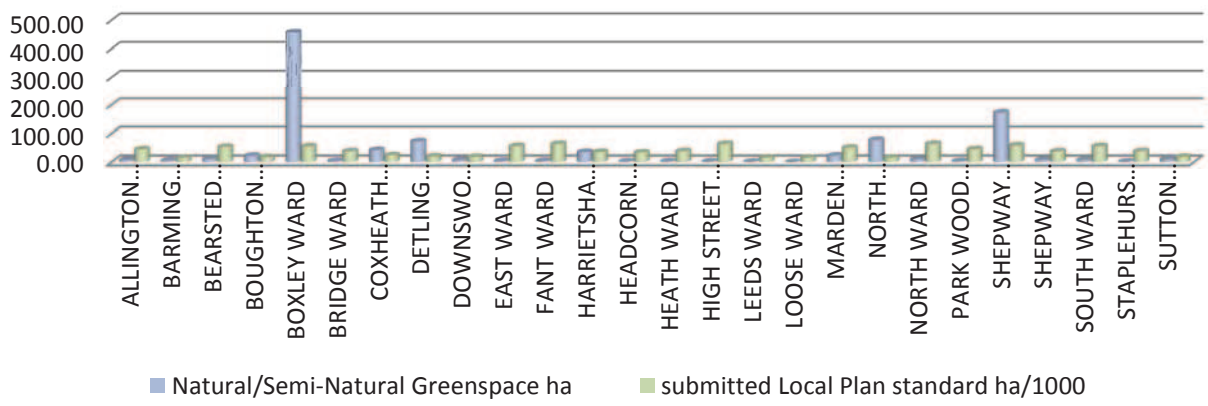
### Amenity Greenspace



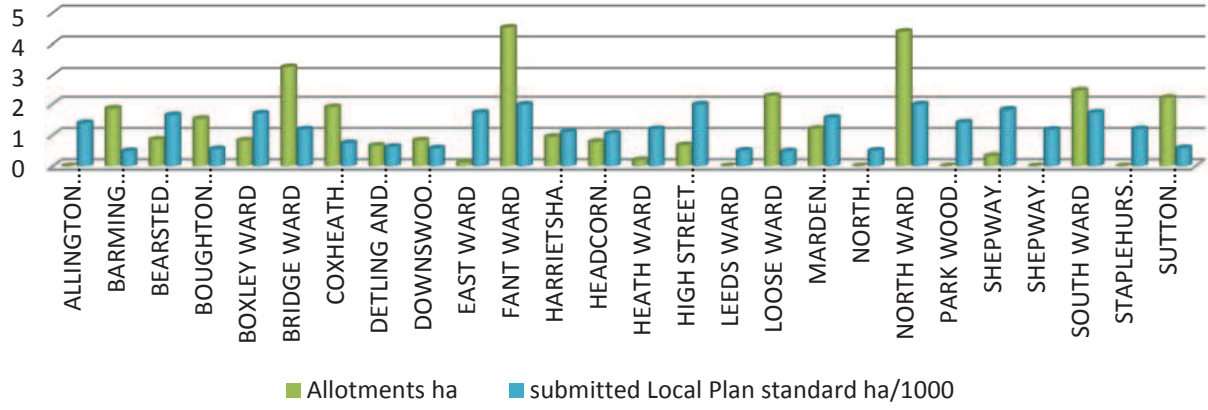
### Children's Play Space



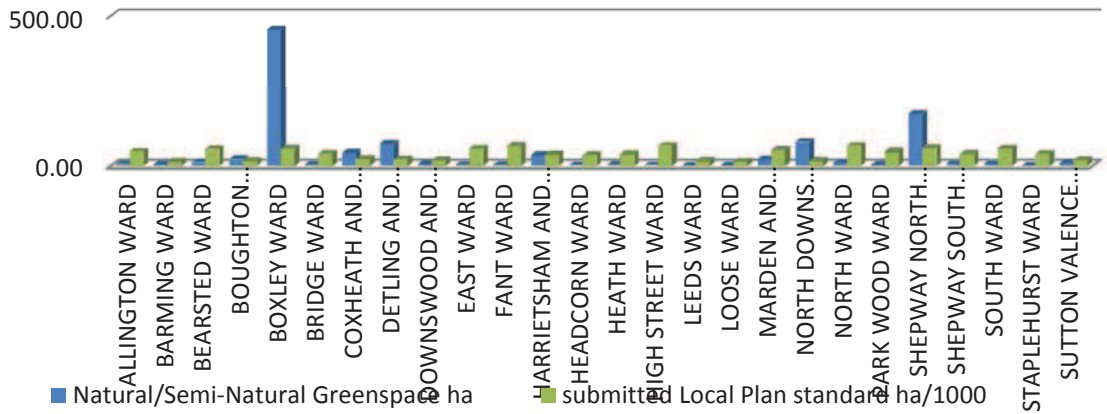
### Natural/Semi-natural Greenspace



## Allotments



## Outdoor sports facilities




**Comparative table of Open Space identifying deficiencies by place**

	<b>Amenity Green Space Provision</b>	<b>Children's Play Space Provision</b>	<b>Natural/ Semi Natural Greenspace Provision</b>	<b>Allotments Provision</b>	<b>Outdoor sports facilities Provision</b>
<b>Open Spaces Quality Audit Survey Results</b>	Very Good	Fair/Poor	Good	NA	Very poor
	<b>Amenity Green Spaces Deficiencies</b>	<b>Children's Play Space Deficiencies</b>	<b>Natural/ Semi Natural Greenspace Deficiencies</b>	<b>Allotments Deficiencies</b>	<b>Outdoor sports facilities Deficiencies</b>
<b>Assessment against New (2016 Local Plan) Standards</b>	North, Fant, High Street and Bearsted wards in Maidstone urban area	Maidstone urban area & Marden, Staplehurst & Headcorn	Maidstone urban area & Staplehurst, Headcorn & Marden	East, Shepway north, Park Wood, Allington, High Street & Shepway wards in Maidstone urban area & Staplehurst	All apart from Shepway north & Boxley
<b>Accessibility Mapping</b>	Parts of Allington & North Wards in Maidstone Urban Area	Bearsted (N & S of A20) South Loose (E & W of A229) Maidstone Town Centre & Sutton Valance	Lenham, Headcorn, Coxheath, Headcorn, Staplehurst, Marden & Sutton Valance	Parkwood Bearstead Allington Staplehurst Marden Harrietsham Coxheath Staplehurst	Langley Headcorn Staplehurst



- 4.54. Using the qualitative information from the Open Spaces Quality Audit, analysing the Accessibility Maps and the quantitative analysis utilising the new (Local Plan 2016) standards shows the following current open space deficiencies by place/ward:
- 4.55. **Amenity Green Space**  
Current deficiency within Maidstone - North, Fant, High Street, Bearsted, Allington and North Wards
- 4.56. **Children's Play Space**  
Considered as, at best ,fair in most of the borough but deficient in the urban area of Maidstone and, possibly, Marden, Staplehurst, Headcorn and Sutton Valance.
- 4.57. **Natural/Semi natural Greenspace**  
Whilst considered as good in general, deficient in the urban area of Maidstone and Staplehurst, Headcorn and Marden and, possibly, Lenham, Coxheath and Sutton Valance.
- 4.58. **Allotments**  
Deficient in most of the Maidstone urban area and Staplehurst.
- 4.59. **Outdoor Sports Facilities**  
Considered as very poor with indications of deficiencies in most of the borough but will be better informed by the Playing Pitches Strategy (2016/17).

## Blue infrastructure: rivers and waterbodies

- 4.60. With five main rivers amounting to approximately 70km in length Maidstone Borough has an extensive network of blue infrastructure providing a distinctive landscape and benefits for people and wildlife, but it also has the risk of flooding. The main watercourse through the borough is the River Medway with major tributaries, the River Beult and the River Teise joining the Medway at Yalding, upstream of Maidstone town. The River Lesser Teise, River Len and River Loose are also tributaries of the River Medway. In addition, the Great Stour is a watercourse within the Maidstone Borough boundary under riparian ownership and is part of the Kentish Stour catchment area. The source of the Great Stour is located near Lenham. The watercourse flows from the east of Lenham before continuing to flow south east out of the Borough towards Charing. Only a short reach of the river, approximately 5 km, is within Maidstone Borough.
- 4.61. The Medway Valley is the largest river catchment in the borough (and indeed the whole of Kent) and the River Medway as the principal river is navigable over all of its length through the borough<sup>17</sup>. It is an example of a classic lowland river and cuts through the Greensand Ridge beyond Yalding and reaches its tidal limit at Allington Lock, before cutting through the chalk and flowing northwards to the Rochester estuary. The River Medway is a visitor attraction, which provides an attractive landscape over most of its length and public access is generally well served by the towpath. Extensive riverside walks (right) and moorings have been created including within Maidstone town centre. Around Allington there are a number of attractions - the fine, rolling and wooded countryside, the Listed Allington Castle, the locks, a marina, a large public house, riverside walks and the Museum of Kent Life. Upstream from Maidstone town there are picturesque medieval bridges at East Farleigh, Teston and Yalding. A picnic area is provided at Teston with walks in adjoining meadows, and a focal point at a river lock. A continuous towpath runs along the riverbank, and in addition to the picnic area at Teston there is a substantial area of meadowland available for informal public recreation at Yalding, called The Lees.
- 
- 4.62. As with all rivers, the River Medway and its tributaries give rise to flooding following heavy rainfall. Normal levels can be controlled by a number of locks and sluices as far upstream as Tonbridge but these do not provide any form of flood management. The Leigh Flood Storage Reservoir upstream from Tonbridge is operated to reduce flood flows through Tonbridge Town Centre. However, this benefit reduces with distance downstream owing to contributory inflows from the tributaries. Therefore, much of the Medway floodplain through the borough of Maidstone is undefended against flooding.

<sup>17</sup> Maidstone Borough Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, 2008

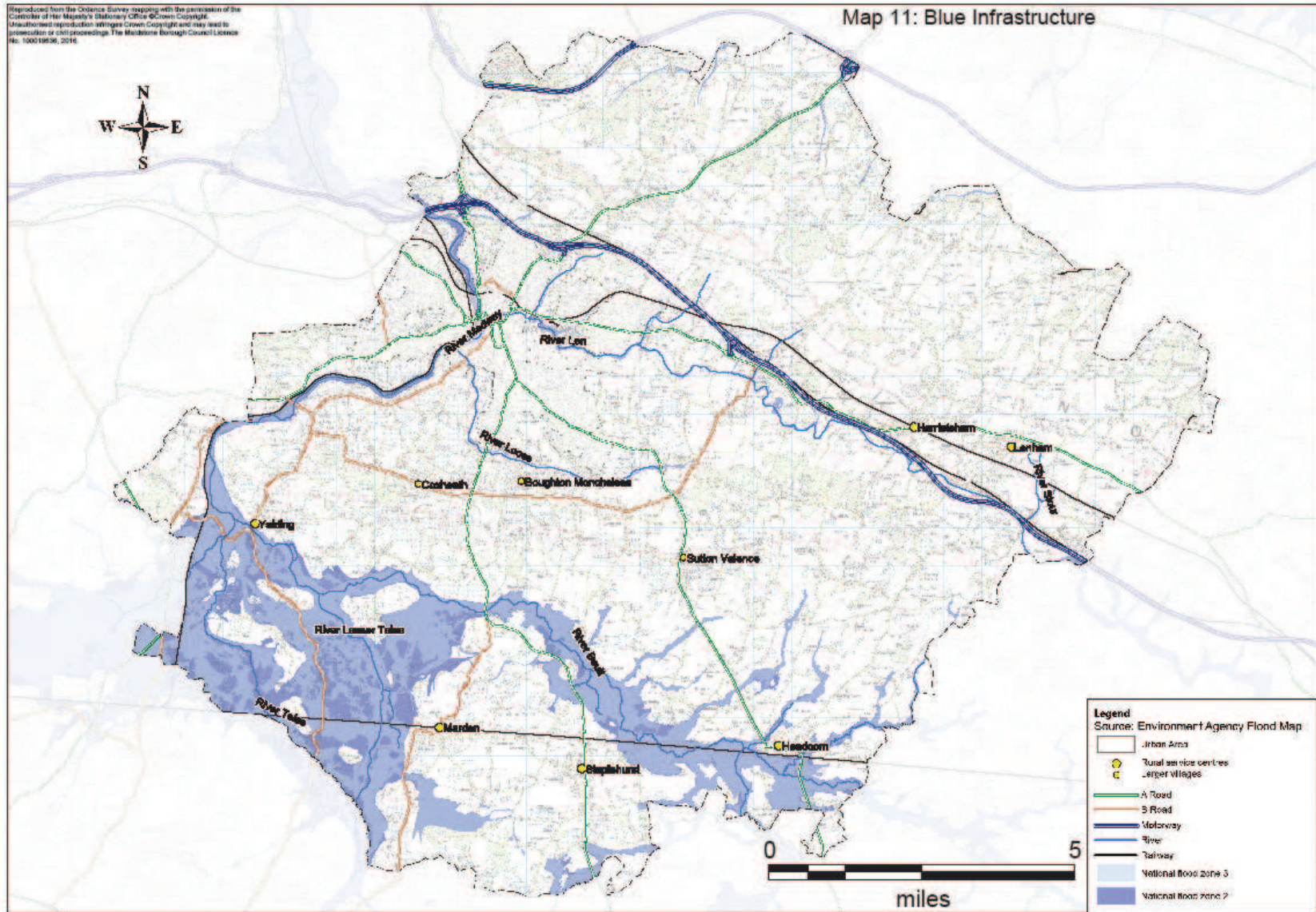
- 4.63. Map11 shows the extent of the functional floodplain including the predicted climate change influence.



- 4.64. A mixture of urban, parkland, agricultural and recreational sites make up the habitats across the Middle Medway Catchment. Along the length of the river and streams in the catchment there are several issues, which prevent them from filling their full potential for wildlife, including barriers to fish migration (such as locks and weirs) and pollution. The Environment Agency have recently installed a fish pass at Teston lock and have plans for another one at East Farleigh (subject to funding)

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Map 11: Blue Infrastructure



- 4.65. The River Len flows from headwaters between Lenham and Harrietsham into the Medway where it forms an open pond, originally a mill pond potentially dating from the Medieval Period when it would have formed part of the Archbishops Palace complex. The River Len is well known for the numerous mills which used the healthy flow of the river during the Medieval and Post Medieval periods and perhaps earlier. In these places, the narrow waters of the Len form attractive mill ponds with a wide array of water fowl including the unusual black swans at Leeds Castle. Along the length of the River Len to the east of the town there is a central band of mature broadleaved woodland and an area of ancient woodland to the east; both designated as Local Wildlife Sites. This strip of habitat connects well with more open sections to the east and, in conjunction with Mote Park, provides a potential corridor for wildlife movement between the town centre and the rural areas to the east. The River Len meanders through Mote Park beneath ragstone footbridges and a section of the River to the west of Mote Park has been designated as the River Len Local Nature Reserve due to its varied and abundant flora and fauna including water vole, Desmoulin's whorl snail and white legged damselfly. Public access to the River is limited beyond the town and Mote Park.
- 4.66. The Loose Stream is a small tributary of the Medway, which rises near Langley and flows through the Parishes of Boughton Monchelsea, Loose and Tovil before joining the River Medway. The Loose Valley Conservation Area extending some two miles in length was designated due to the heritage value of the numerous mills and associated structures (ponds, mill races etc) that harnessed the Loose stream for power over several hundred years. Riparian vegetation lines the waterways and provides a corridor of wildlife interest. With 8.5ha of the Loose Valley owned and managed by a voluntary organisation, the Loose Amenities Association, it is also a much valued landscape and a recreational amenity for local people.
- 4.67. The Rivers Beult and Teise rise from the east and south of the borough respectively merging and joining the Upper Medway near Yalding (below) prior to continuing as the River Medway through Maidstone and on to the Medway Towns before issuing into the Thames Estuary.



- 4.68. The River Teise and the Lesser Teise are narrow and their routes are defined by native vegetation. The rivers are not widely visible although tree belts and ditches provide a coherent habitat network. Large swathes of intensively farmed arable land have led to many ditches being filled with algae from fertiliser runoff. The Bewl Water reservoir management system at times adversely impacts on the functioning of the river. The River Beult flows for most of its length over Wealden Clay which has greatly influenced its ecology (right). Being one of the few lowland clay rivers to retain much

of the flora and fauna of its habitat type the river was designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1994. The rivers' designation was given partly for its diverse range of submerged and floating channel vegetation and due to the presence of two nationally scarce invertebrates as well as a general abundance of other rarer invertebrates such as dragonflies. The river is publicly accessible along significant stretches although there is not a continuous riverside footpath. Fishing is popular on the river with a variety of species caught and observed on a regular basis.

## Sustainable movement links

- 4.69. The borough has an extensive network of publicly accessible paths and tracks, including many popular public footpaths close to Maidstone town and the villages, as well as popular long distance walks such as the North Downs Way, the Medway Valley Walk, the Stour Valley Walk and the Greensand Way along the Greensand Ridge. The urban area also has a comprehensive, well-used network of paths that link neighbourhoods with work and leisure.



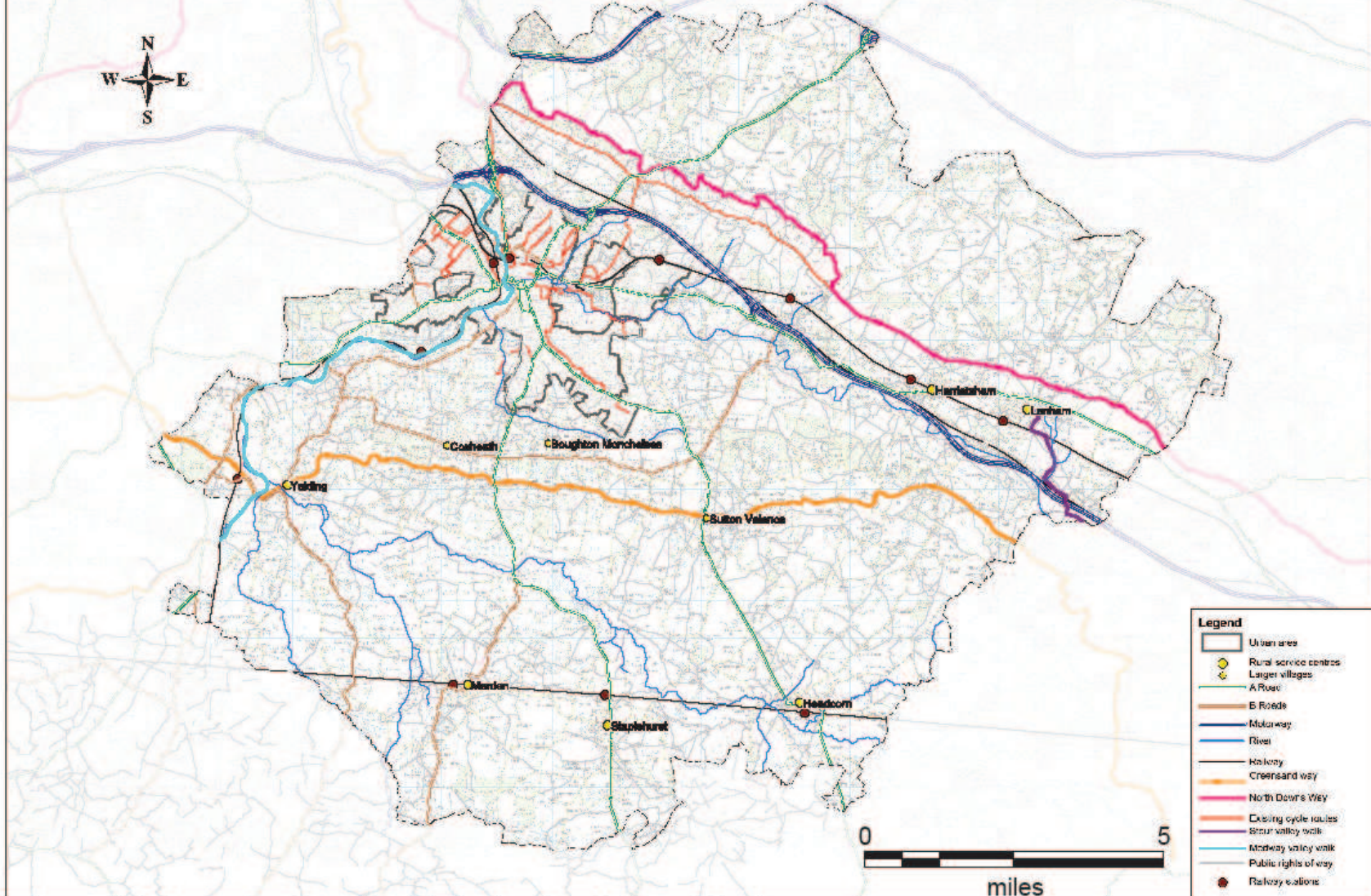
- 4.70. National Route 17 of the National Cycle Network connects Rochester, via Maidstone and Ashford, to join with National Route 2 on the South coast between Folkestone and Lydd following the line of the North Downs Way National Trail. Maidstone also has a Regional Route (RR20) for cyclists which originates in the town centre and extends along the A20 London Road into Tonbridge and Malling. A section of the route within Maidstone Borough is traffic free and provides good linkages to local schools in the residential area of Allington. There is also a recently established route leading from the town centre to Detling village, where it connects to the Pilgrims Way Cycle Route in the North Downs. This provides an excellent cross-district cycling amenity for residents of Maidstone and beyond.
- 4.71.** Many of these routes are legally protected Public Rights of Way and Kent County Council manages a larger rights of way network than any other local authority<sup>18</sup>. Map 12 shows the main route.

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<sup>18</sup> Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan, Draft April 2013

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Map 12- Sustainable movement links





## Community involvement and education

- 4.72. Local people are best placed to help decide what is needed in their local environment. Greater community involvement in green space management has led to numerous improvements to green infrastructure across the borough, in many cases generating more active positive use of the space. It also reduces a source of conflict between people and the council or other maintenance providers, in relation to the ongoing maintenance of green infrastructure. Mote Park, Clare Park and South Park all have active Friends groups who get involved in park management and events.
- 4.73.** Natural environments that are connected to local communities can provide a range of educational opportunities and assist in reconnecting society with the natural environment. The Maidstone countryside, and the green and blue spaces within its towns, are a fantastic educational resource not just about the natural world, but all aspects of the school curriculum from history to maths. Communities tend to be particularly keen to understand, protect and utilise their own local heritage assets. Local community archaeology projects can appeal to schools, families, young, old and those who like working at home or being out in the countryside. This broad community appeal can really help enhance the awareness, understanding and appreciation of the borough, its heritage and distinctive character. Organisations such as Medway Valley Partnership and the Kent Wildlife Trust offer a wide range of opportunities to schools and the wider public to get involved in educational events, talks and hands on practical tasks. Volunteering on environmental projects helps people gain valuable skills, giving increased confidence and potentially helping them in gaining employment.

## Key issues

### The impact of climate change

- 4.74. Climate change is increasingly likely to affect everyone with hotter, drier summers, wetter, milder winters and the number and extent of storms, floods and heat waves increasing. In Maidstone borough climate change is a particular challenge, especially the threat from extreme weather events. The borough suffered extensive flooding in 2000, and more recently in 2013/14, a heat wave in 2003, quickly followed by a two year drought. By 2020 Kent could be facing a 1.4°C temperature increase, 7% less rainfall in summer and more rainfall in winter. By 2050 the temperature could have risen by 2.8°C, and there could be 24% less rainfall in summer. To help reduce the impact of climate change, the borough must help achieve the national target to cut carbon dioxide emissions by 80% by 2050 and the Kent target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions (measured as CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent) to 60% below 1990 levels by 2030<sup>19</sup>.
- 4.75. The largest proportion of Maidstone Borough's carbon emissions comes from industrial and commercial activity with lesser but still significant emissions from transport and domestic energy use.
- 4.76. As one of the driest parts of England, coupled with high population density and household water use, there are significant pressures on water resources in Maidstone borough and the wider Kent area which affect both the water environment and water supplies. Over the next few decades, there will be increasing pressures from the rising population and associated development. Climate change could have a major impact on the water that will be available for consumption<sup>20</sup>. All rivers and streams in the area are under increasing threat from the pressures of abstraction, river channel modifications and management, decreases in water quality, development, agriculture and climate change. Aquifer protection zones have been designated in the north and east of the area

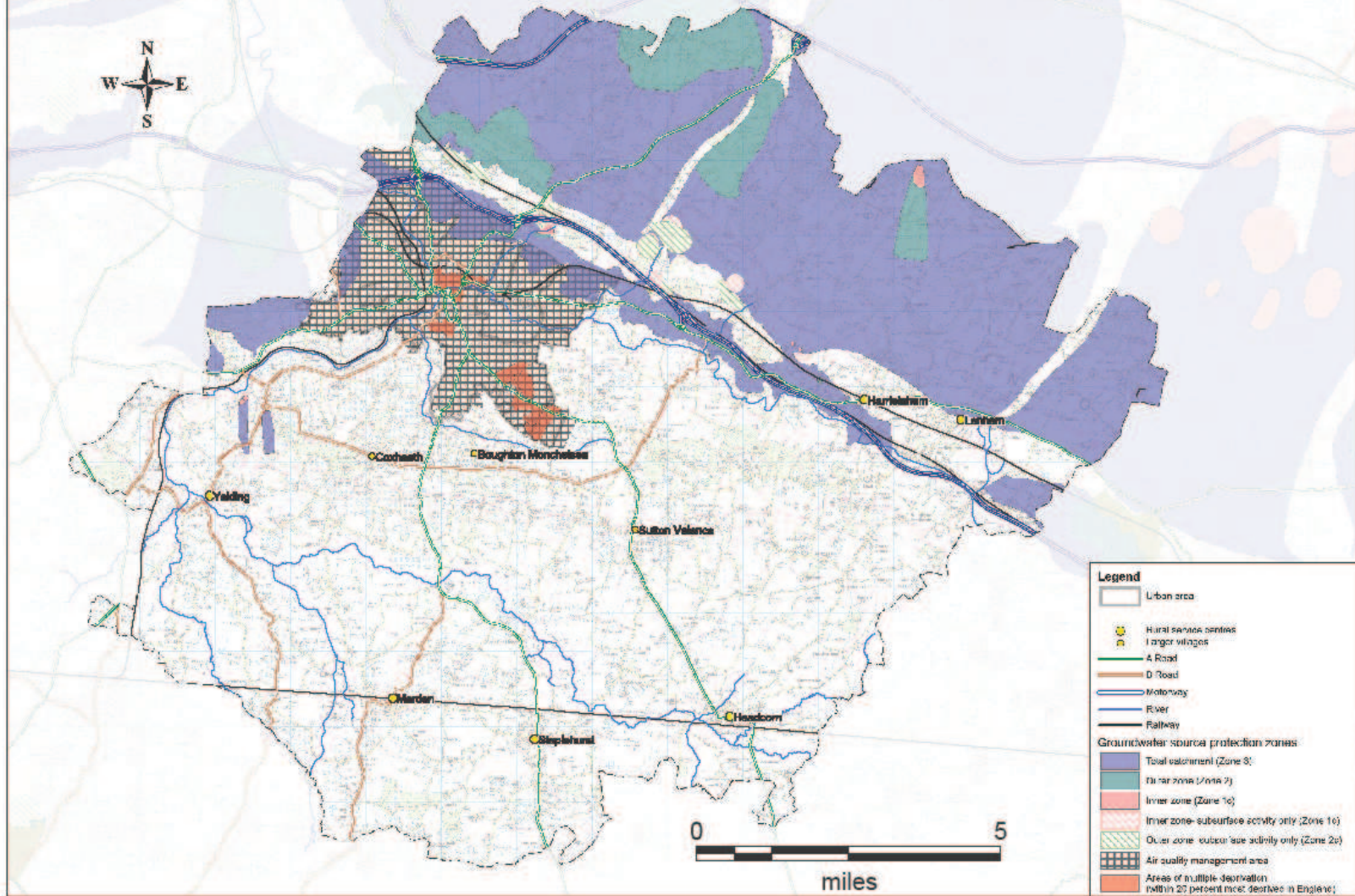
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<sup>19</sup> Growing the Garden of England: A strategy for environment and economy in Kent, Kent Forum, July 2011

<sup>20</sup> The state of water in Kent, Kent Water Summit, Environment Agency, June 2012

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Map 13- Issues



- 4.77. The majority of flood risk from watercourses within the borough is from fluvial flooding. In the vicinity of Allington there is also a risk of tidal flooding . Map 11 shows the extent of the functional floodplain taking into account climate change projections. Some areas of Maidstone town are within the functional floodplain of the River Medway, River Len, River Loose and their tributaries and are therefore at risk from frequent flooding. Historically the centre of Maidstone has flooded both in the November 1960 and September 1968 floods and 70 people were also affected by the floods in Maidstone in October 2000.
- 4.78. While fluvial flood risk does form a significant component of flood risk within the borough, there are also a high number of incidents of surface water flooding. Increased housing provision will also put a strain on water resources and further urbanisation if carried out without due care could lead to increased run off and hence flooding. New developments will have to be more robust, and designed to manage water effectively and provide shade. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment highlights the importance of the installation and maintenance of adequate drainage or sustainable urban drainage (SUDs), particularly when considering the planning of new development (right). Well designed and constructed sustainable drainage infrastructure can play a major part in improving green and blue infrastructure with benefits in terms of water resources, water quality, enhanced biodiversity and public amenity and reduced flood risk. Conversely, poorly designed drainage networks can increase flood risk and reduce water quality, incurring long term financial damages.



- 4.79. Changing climatic conditions will also affect the ability of wildlife to survive locally and is also likely to result in species shifting their geographical distribution from parts of Europe, like the Mediterranean into the Southeast. Both of these scenarios mean that planning co-ordinated conservation effort across the Southeast and connected regions will play an important factor in the success to conserve biodiversity from a both a local and global perspective. BRANCH a project to examine the effects of climate change on biodiversity in Kent reported that there is an urgent need to ensure greater connectivity of habitats across Kent to ensure that species shifting geographical distributions due to climate change affects are possible.

## Gaps in the connectivity of green and blue infrastructure resources and inequalities in accessibility to public open space

- 4.80. Gaps in provision of green and blue infrastructure relate to gaps in green corridors as well as missing links between existing spaces. There is a relative lack of green and blue infrastructure within the more densely built up area of Maidstone's town centre. Although Maidstone benefits from relatively good connectivity in terms of road and rail, the borough suffers from high levels of traffic which causes congestion problems, particularly in the town centre. This impacts on the economy and also has a negative impact upon air quality which can be damaging to the health of local people. Public consultation revealed that a large proportion of Maidstone's population view the transport system and particularly the accessibility of public transport, as inadequate. Maidstone also has the highest number of casualties (people killed or seriously injured) of any district in Kent<sup>21</sup>. More sustainable forms of travel on footpaths and cycleways (below) provide the opportunity for green corridors and provide an alternative to the car. However, although there is an extensive public rights of way network, it is fragmented and limited in some areas, such as along the Medway tributary rivers and along the 'green wedges' from the town centre.



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<sup>21</sup> Maidstone 2020. The Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone Borough 2009-2020



- 4.81. Access to nature on an everyday basis helps to secure quality of life for all. This is widely recognised by both the public and voluntary sectors with programmes to encourage participation such as walk4life, organised by Walk England and visit woods, an online database coordinated by the Woodland Trust for finding woods to visit throughout England. The Maidstone group of the 'Ramblers' is a local organisation which promotes walking and helps Kent County Council with the upkeep of the footpath network. Provision of places to access nature is important for giving everyone the opportunity to take advantage of the benefits that nature provides. There is substantial evidence that demonstrates the value of green spaces and contact with nature for improving mental well-being and physical health. Natural England's recommended Accessible Natural Greenspace Standard (ANGSt) which has been adopted by the Borough Council, recommends that people live within 300m of a 2ha natural greenspace, 2km of a 20ha natural greenspace and 5km of a 100ha natural green space. Map 8 shows there are significant areas across the rural parts of the Borough in particular around the settlements of Headcorn, Marden and Staplehurst where people do not have convenient access to publicly accessible natural greenspace. Although the natural environment of the countryside provides a resource for able-bodied people in these rural areas, local, accessible natural green space should be available close to where people live for those less able.
- 4.82. A well connected ecological network also helps wildlife move, feed, disperse, migrate and reproduce while delivering many ecosystem services such as improved health and wellbeing, mitigating climate change, crop pollination for food production and local environmental quality. Through environmental stewardship schemes run by Natural England and the Forestry Commission a significant area of the borough is currently managed to promote biodiversity.
- 4.83. Changes in agricultural practices have a major influence on both habitats and species. There has been a trend towards predominantly arable agriculture, loss of hedgerows, habitat fragmentation, land drainage, improvement of grassland and widespread use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers – all of which decrease biodiversity on

farmland. The decline of markets for woodland products has led to the abandonment of traditional woodland management such as coppicing and pollarding allowing dense undergrowth to shade out herbaceous species including spring flowers. Replanting with non-native tree species, particularly conifers, also has a detrimental effect on the ground flora by preventing sunlight reaching the woodland floor.



- 4.84. There is a continuing pressure for expansion of the urban areas to meet economic and social needs to build on open areas, such as gardens, school fields, allotments, open spaces and on urban fringes, which, if not managed carefully through the planning process, can lead to a loss of urban wildlife habitats and fragmentation. Road improvements and new roads have direct effects on habitats by causing disturbance to, or loss of, roadside verges, hedgerows, trees, ditches and farmland. Large numbers of street trees have been lost across Maidstone Borough to road widening, cable damage, wind-blow and disease. Infilling within and between rural settlements is also a threat to habitats such as unimproved pastures, wetlands and scrub.
- 4.85. Careful consideration is required through the planning process to ensure that increased light pollution from urban expansion does not impact on the biodiversity of local green and blue infrastructure. Adverse effects can potentially include causing migratory birds to collide with lit buildings, false dawns which disrupt bird behaviour, moth deaths, and the disruption of tree and plant biological mechanisms that are controlled by day length.
- 4.86. Noise pollution is also increased through urban expansion and can cause stress to animals, interfere with delicate predator-prey interactions, and cause detrimental effects on mating behaviour of animals. Such considerations need to be addressed through ecological appraisals as part of the planning application process.

## Landscape and townscape quality

- 4.87. The borough is over 90% rural in nature, the rich and varied landscape provides a distinctive and in many cases attractive setting to the towns and other settlements.



However, landscape character is not static. For example, many farming landscapes are under pressure due to intensification of arable cultivation. The use of polytunnels for example can impact on landscape character, as well as biodiversity and flooding. Solar panels can have significant impact on landscapes. Traditional orchards of large trees with understorey grazing are difficult and uneconomic to manage and are being grubbed or replaced by smaller fruit trees grown in closely spaced, parallel rows (above). Their greater uniformity and more intensive management have reduced the associated wildlife and landscape value of these orchards although they continue to provide a modern and important link to a historic landscape component. Nevertheless, there are still numerous areas of landscape with a well-developed traditional patchwork of fruit fields, shelterbelts and woodlands that are worthy of conservation.

- 4.88. Whilst it is important to retain pattern and diversity in the landscape to ensure that character and local distinctiveness are maintained, this is not necessarily about keeping the landscape as it is but more about preventing everywhere becoming the same. We need to ensure that landscapes are visually satisfying and give enjoyment to those who visit them, and those who live and work in them. We also need to ensure that the cultural heritage embodied in the landscape is not lost.
- 4.89. Maidstone's historic environment is a fundamental part of the borough's economic wealth and social well-being, and a strong driver of tourism in the area, the benefits of which are far-reaching. This rich historical resource is very vulnerable to damage and loss from pressure for development and agricultural intensification and it is essential to ensure historic assets are protected and remain robust and viable.
- 4.90. The 2012 Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment identified 58 landscape character areas at the borough scale and a further 51 landscape character areas nested within the borough wide areas at the detailed level. Smaller areas were also assessed around the urban fringe of Maidstone. The condition and sensitivity of each of these areas was analysed. The assessment of condition evaluated the pattern of the landscape and the presence of incongruous features on the unity of the landscape. It also evaluated how well the landscape functions as a habitat for flora and fauna and the condition of cultural or 'man-made' elements such as enclosure, built elements and roads. Sensitivity is a measure of the ability of a landscape to accept change without



causing irreparable damage to the essential fabric and distinctiveness of that landscape. The analysis resulted in a matrix based on condition and sensitivity which aims to assist in the direction of any policy that might be applied to the land.

- 4.91. The pressure for expansion of the urban areas to meet economic and social needs if not managed carefully through the planning process could lead to a loss of the borough's most valued and sensitive landscape.

## Water and air quality

- 4.92. Good air and water quality are critically important to providing the basic life support system that we all depend upon. The availability and quality of water is becoming a major issue. Increased abstraction from aquifers causes reduced water levels in many wetlands. Increased urban development, requiring additional water supplies, puts mounting pressure on the water resource. Agriculture, industry and residential areas all produce pollutants which can affect the quality of wetlands, open water bodies and flowing waters. Nutrient enrichment, or eutrophication, stimulates the growth of aquatic algae to the detriment of other wetland and aquatic plants. Bacterial growth also reduces the amount of oxygen available to fish and other aquatic animals. The ecological status of the River Medway is listed in the Thames River Basin District Management Plan as (Moderate), the River Beult (Poor), the River Teise and Lesser Teise (Moderate) and the River Len (below) (Bad)<sup>22</sup>.



- 4.93. On the River Beult, although designated as a SSSI for its diverse range of submerged and floating channel vegetation and the presence of two nationally scarce invertebrates as well as a general abundance of other rarer invertebrates such as dragonflies, canalisation has reduced riparian diversity and the many structures which bridge the river are barriers to fish migration in the upper system. These structures have also impounded the river often creating a very slow flowing system which has increased siltation. Pollution such as phosphates and nitrates are also an issue and in areas where pollution flows over riparian areas the vegetation can be dominated by more competitive species such as nettle and thistle. Non-native invasive flora are also issues on the Lower Beult and the catchment generally. The River Beult catchment is identified by Natural England as a catchment sensitive farming priority area. The Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative encourages farming communities to manage

<sup>22</sup> River Basin Management Plan Thames River Basin District , Defra and Environment Agency, 2009

risks of runoff and leaching in order to reduce sediment, pesticide, nutrient and faecal matter, losses to water from yards and fields.

- 4.94. Some of the domestic water supply in the Borough is abstracted from underground and Source Protection Zones are in place to protect vulnerable groundwater areas (see Map 13). These zones show the risk of contamination from any activities that might cause pollution in the area. The 'Inner Zone' is defined by the 50 day travel time from any point below the water table to the source, the 'Outer Zone' is defined by the 400 day travel time from any point below the water table to the source and the 'Total Catchment' is defined as the area around a source within which all groundwater recharge is presumed to be discharged at the source.
- 4.95. Commuting by car from rural settlements to work in towns and cities is increasing, and the amount of freight carried by road has never been higher. This leads to increasing pressure to build new roads and improve existing ones. Vehicles directly contribute to air, noise, and water pollution. Air quality particularly that related to road transport and congestion is a significant issue<sup>23</sup>. Maidstone's town centre, key road junctions and the M20 are all subject to poor air quality. Three new hotspots for the road vehicle pollutant Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) have been identified in Maidstone's urban area, in addition to the existing Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the Maidstone urban area and on the M20 between junctions 7 and 8 (see Map 13). NO<sub>2</sub> causes respiratory illnesses and possibly increases the risk of lung infections. Young children and people with asthma are the most sensitive to this pollutant.

### Health inequalities

- 4.96. Life expectancy for men and women living in the borough is comparable with the regional average. However, life expectancy for men in the most deprived wards is five years below the borough average and for women is 2.4 years lower. Maidstone also has a higher estimated percentage of obese adults than the England average – at 26.5 per cent (24.2% nationally). Whilst the rate of adult participation in sport and recreation rate in Maidstone is above the average for England, it still only amounts to 22% of the adult population. Reception year children classified as obese is similar to the England average, but school aged children spending at least 3 hours a week on physical activity at school is 11.3% below the national average. This data suggests that there should be a focus on encouraging children to take more exercise<sup>24</sup>.
- 4.97. Green spaces in the community can also provide significant social benefit. This enhanced 'social capital' includes social bridging features such as community networks, civic engagement, sense of belonging and equality, co-operation with others and trust in the community. GBI can also facilitate social bonding features, providing activities and environs in which families and friends can engage.
- 4.98. Quality affects how people perceive their local green space and therefore how often they visit. Evidence suggests that levels of social interaction can be directly influenced

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<sup>23</sup> Maidstone 2020. The Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone Borough 2009-2020

<sup>24</sup> Maidstone 2020. The Sustainable Community Strategy for Maidstone Borough 2009-2020

by the availability of green space, particularly in urban areas. There is great opportunity to increase social interaction through schemes that encourage people to take part in improving their natural environment.

## **The need to accommodate development to meet the projected needs of the community**

- 4.99. The quality of the environment impacts on people's quality of life, health and the attractiveness of an area to inward investment. With a significant number of new homes and businesses planned within the borough over the next 20 years, it will be crucial to consider the integration of high quality green and blue infrastructure from the outset. In addition, the pressure to use agricultural land for solar farms is increasing with potentially large impacts on landscape character and visual amenity.
- 4.100. Maidstone's towns and villages are shaped and made distinctive by the local landscape. The overall settlement pattern across the borough's countryside is characterised by a large number of small villages surrounding a handful of larger,



more substantial settlements. It is important these settlements retain their individual identities, as there can be a delicate balance between settlement proximity and separation<sup>25</sup>. Elements of green and blue infrastructure can in practice serve more than one community (from adjoining settlements or beyond the Borough boundary regardless of where these may be located. If future settlements are to be places people want to live, planners and developers must continue to work with the

<sup>25</sup> Interim Approval of Maidstone Borough Local Plan Policies, 13 March 2013.

landscape – in deciding where to build and in how new developments are laid out. New developments can have a major impact on the landscape creating concern amongst existing residents but in finding solutions to the current housing shortage, it will not be possible to protect every greenfield site. What is needed is an understanding of habitats and the landscape condition, sensitivity and context and a strong landscape framework in place which maximises the multi-functional benefits that green and blue infrastructure can bring to new development.

## 5. Key Principles and Opportunities

- 5.1. The main purpose of the green and blue infrastructure strategy is to maximise the functionality and therefore the benefits of the resource in Maidstone Borough and to help deliver the council's wider community and planning objectives. Key principles and opportunities for conserving, improving and creating green and blue infrastructure have therefore been considered for each of the seven themes identified and these are shown below and summarised on Map 14

### Mitigating and adapting to climate change



- 5.2. Climate change will increasingly affect water and land resources, and have an impact on biodiversity. The increasingly extreme weather it will bring affects everyone with more likelihood of flooding and periods of drought. Maidstone borough should contribute to national targets for reducing carbon dioxide emissions to mitigate climate change impacts in line with Growing the Garden of England: A strategy for environment and economy in Kent – 2011.

### 5.3. Key issues

- Pressures on the quantity and quality of water resources.

- Increased run off from development and potential impact on flooding.
- Additional heat and the need for shade.
- Connectivity of habitats may be insufficient to ensure species migration.
- Need to reduce carbon emissions.

#### **5.4. How can the green and blue infrastructure help?**

- Effective planning of the green and blue infrastructure network will help reduce the flood risk to people and property. Green spaces next to rivers and streams can create natural flood storage areas.
- Trees and other plants process rainwater (through interception, evaporation and transpiration) and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) which include elements of green infrastructure like swales can help reduce the risk from surface water flooding particularly in high risk areas; a 10% increase in green infrastructure on a site can see a 5% reduction in surface water run off<sup>26</sup>.
- Trees and woodlands help circulate air, provide shade and keep the built environment cool. Without them the urban area could be at least 5°C hotter<sup>27</sup> than the rural area making life more difficult particularly for younger and older people, who are more vulnerable to heat.
- Trees store carbon helping to reduce the impact of climate change.
- A well-connected green and blue network within and beyond the borough helps prevent species loss, allowing species to migrate or inhabit new areas and establish healthy ecosystems in a more suitable climate to survive.
- Creating networks of green spaces within new development including green roofs and living walls as well as using trees with bird and bat boxes can provide important stepping stones so wildlife can be more resilient to climate change, as well as creating a healthy environment for people. Measures to help nature can be built into housing, e.g. swift bricks where appropriate.
- Green corridors and strategic green spaces provide space for people to walk and cycle instead of using the car, helping reduce the amount of carbon dioxide going into the atmosphere.
- Green space for growing fruit and vegetables locally including allotments reduces carbon emissions by limiting the distance food travels to the local market.
- Green space can provide space for renewable energy technologies and local fuel crops helping to increase the amount of clean energy produced and used.

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<sup>26</sup> Adapting Cities for Climate Change: The Role of The Green Infrastructure, Gill, S., Handley, J., Ennos, A., and Pauleit, S., 2007

<sup>27</sup> Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services, DEFRA, 2011

## 5.5. Good Practice

### **River Medway, Len, Beult and Teise Catchment Improvement Groups**

Through funding and support from the Environment Agency and local authorities, Medway Valley Partnership have set up catchment improvement groups for rivers in the Middle Medway catchment and the Kent High Weald Partnership are leading on the River Teise catchment. Representatives from river user groups, local authorities, land managers and owners and third sector organisations review river issues, opportunities, challenges and threats. The aim is to prioritise needs and develop catchment improvement plans to improve the river quality in the short and long-term through all partners. The catchment improvement groups look at the chemical water quality, physical structures, river flow, biodiversity, accessibility, recreation, abstraction, diffuse and point source pollution. Outline catchment improvement plans are being drawn up with the groups to deliver river improvements.

### **Kent Downs Woodfuel Pathfinder (KDWfP)**

Around 50% of the woodland in the Kent Downs is unmanaged and in poor condition. Encouraging better woodland management is therefore a key priority as it can have important impacts on landscape, biodiversity and the local economy. It is also important for land owners, estate managers and farmers, not least because tax and agricultural policy require the active management of woodland assets. The Kent Downs Woodfuel Pathfinder, established in 2011 by Kent County Council in partnership with the Forestry Commission and managed by the AONB Unit, explores and delivers a range of interventions to help the woodheat sector evolve to a fully self-supporting industry whilst also delivering market driven management of Kent's woods and enhanced biodiversity via the re-establishment of traditional woodland practices such as coppicing.

### **Environmental stewardship**

Agri-environment schemes such as Environmental stewardship are voluntary agreements that pay farmers and other land managers to manage their land in an environmentally sensitive way including new hedge or tree planting, pond restoration and protection of archaeological sites. They enable productivity while supporting the natural environment and the natural services that it provides. Environmental stewardship in Kent has improved more than 4000 hectares of habitat for wildlife and more than 450 ha of habitat has been created by farmers and landowners across the county.

### **Free tree scheme**

A free tree scheme has given approximately 1500 free trees to residents in Maidstone each year since its launch in 2005.



## Key principles and opportunities for Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure



### 5.6. Conserve and improve

- Conserve and enhance existing green spaces and water environment assets, maximising their benefits.
- Conserve and restore green spaces and water environment as flood storage next to rivers and restrict development on floodplain.
- Deliver the river catchment improvement plan actions in partnership led by Medway Valley Countryside Partnership and Kent High Weald Partnership.
- Continue Stewardship Schemes with farmers and landowners to create new or improved wildlife corridors in the rural area.

### 5.7. Create new opportunities

- Reinforce the 'connectivity' and 'accessibility' of green and blue infrastructure resources to form a robust network for wildlife, integrated with networks in adjacent authorities.
- Carry out targeted planting of hedgerows to link habitats and counter habitat fragmentation.
- Require creative use of sustainable drainage systems sensitive to ecological needs in new development to help reduce flood risk.
- Plant more trees within the existing built up areas including the centre of Maidstone town, areas of multiple deprivation, and along the M20 corridor - particularly larger forest species trees, to help store carbon, filter pollutants and keep the urban area cool.
- Promote and create sustainable wildlife friendly green spaces and landscape areas as well as green roofs living walls, bird and bat boxes within new development and in urban areas providing more stepping stones for wildlife and making them more resilient to climate change.
- Develop the potential for biomass in Maidstone Borough through the Kent Pathfinder Project in partnership with the Forestry Commission.

- Encourage local food growing schemes and ensure sufficient supply of allotments and community gardens.

## **Integrating sustainable movement and access for all**

5.8. Maidstone suffers from a high level of traffic bringing problems of congestion, air



pollution and a high level of road casualties. The borough has a good network of footpaths and the town has a several cycleways, but the network is fragmented in places and people do not always feel safe using the routes. Access to nature for local people is variable with some urban areas poorly connected to local green spaces. Fragmented sustainable links also means fragmented habitats.

### **5.9. Key issues**

- Public Rights of Way network is fragmented and poorly connected in some areas, requiring the use of often very busy roads.
- Perceptions of safety particularly with an ageing population can be a barrier to use of footpaths.
- Significant area in the south of the borough where people do not have convenient access to larger areas of natural greenspace.
- Loss of green spaces within the built up area to development leading to a loss of urban wildlife habitats and fragmentation.
- Lack of trees within the more densely built up area of Maidstone's town centre results in a lack of stepping stones for species migration.

### **5.10. How can the green and blue infrastructure help?**

- Green corridors, river corridors or larger parks and green spaces provide an attractive, quality environment for cyclists and pedestrians to travel sustainably between home, work, school, shops and services instead of by car.
- The public rights of way network provides sustainable access to the countryside by walking, cycling, and horse riding and is particularly valuable close to Maidstone, the smaller settlements and for tourists.
- Promoted trails and circular walks actively encourage use of paths in the wider countryside. This can increase use of nearby village services and rural attractions.

- Safe, easy to use access to open green spaces provides opportunities for people to benefit from an attractive and diverse natural environment as part of their everyday lives and by so doing, encourages them to look after it.

### 5.11. Good practice

#### Connecting communities

The project provides low cost, high value interventions to change perceptions of walking and cycling and unlock attractive links between local communities and key destinations.

Cycle/footpath links improving access to Maidstone Hospital and between Holborough Lakes and Snodland Station are nearing completion<sup>28</sup>.

### 5.12. Key principles and opportunities for Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure



### 5.13. Conserve and improve

- Maintain public rights of distance walks and promoted walks and rides borough to a high standard prioritisation of route influenced by local
- Improve the quality and existing paths, signage and furniture to and through spaces, especially lower isolated green spaces and corridors to encourage greater use, particularly by older people, those with children and those with disabilities.
- Conserve the few surviving 'green lanes' (roads which have never been paved) and byways (similar routes managed as public rights of way) and promote their way, long cycleways and through the with maintenance communities. surfaces of street existing green quality or along green



<sup>28</sup> Growing the Garden of England: A strategy for environment and economy in Kent, Kent Forum, July 2011  
Kent Environment Strategy Monitoring 2013

use by pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians and prevent damage by motorised vehicles.

#### **5.14. Create new opportunities**

- Work with partners to secure new routes in areas of high demand and where possible in direct response to customer requests.
- Create improve connections along and between green corridors and Public Rights of Way particularly along the River Medway in the town centre and along other river corridors to encourage sustainable travel modes.
- Create an improved green corridor between Mote Park and Whatman Park through Maidstone town centre.
- Work towards the creation of improved green links from Maidstone town centre into the countryside utilising the green wedges.
- Incorporate multifunctional, sustainable routes (including wide inviting footpath routes through green corridors) in the design of new development and protect existing rights of way to ensure that walking and cycling can become the preferred choice for new residents.
- Increase opportunities for horse riders and cyclists with access to new paths supporting their recreational needs, particularly in the south of the borough where there is a lower provision.
- Designate a network of 'quiet lanes' across the borough to help fill gaps in the fragmented public rights of way network.

## Promoting a distinctive townscape and landscape



5.15. Maidstone's rich natural and cultural heritage provides a distinctive landscape that is essential to the borough's economic success. The often fragile resources which make up this landscape are vulnerable to loss or damage, particularly in areas with pressure for development, and need to be preserved or improved.

### 5.16. Key issues

- Local landscapes being lost to new development
- Areas of landscape and townscape which are less attractive and lacking in features typical of the area.
- Heritage landscapes such as Ancient Woodland and traditional orchards vulnerable to damage and loss.
- Changes in agricultural practices with loss of hedgerows, habitat fragmentation, land drainage, improvement of grassland and widespread use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers and polytunnels.
- Abandonment of traditional woodland management such as coppicing and pollarding and planting of non-native trees.

### 5.17. How can the green and blue infrastructure help

- Underlying geology and soils influence the type of trees, plants, wildlife and ecosystems that live in the local landscape.
- Geology and soil affects agricultural land quality influencing where different types of farming are more likely to take place, which in turn influences the landscape character.
- Traditional field patterns, hedgerows and wetlands reinforce the distinctive landscape in different parts of the borough.
- Green corridors and wider green wedges provide clear separation between urban neighbourhoods and between settlements. Keeping them is essential to protecting the distinctive identity of each settlement and preventing coalescence.
- Green space and landscape features including trees can contribute significantly to the character of the borough's give built up areas.

### 5.18. Good practice

#### Valley of Visions

Valley of Visions is an impressive landscape-scale project working in partnership with communities, landowners and local organisations to conserve the landscape, wildlife and rich heritage of the Medway Gap, and encourage residents and visitors to learn about and enjoy this part of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In 2007 the Valley of Visions Landscape Partnership Scheme was created with a £2.5 million grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, awarded to conserve and celebrate this unique landscape. Chalk grassland restoration, new community trails and the conservation of important heritage sites are some of the successful projects undertaken.

#### The Kent and Medway Road Verge Project

Managed by a partnership between Kent Highways Services and Kent Wildlife Trust this project identifies, protects and manages road verges which contain threatened habitats or wildlife. Roadside nature reserves, marked by special signs, can link existing wildlife areas, helping to reconnect and restore landscape. This benefits both people and wildlife and makes nature more resilient to future change. They provide vital wildlife corridors for many species, particularly reptiles such as slow-worms and viviparous lizards, and mammals such as badgers. The project has a road verge project officer, based with the Trust, who works with a dedicated team of voluntary road verge wardens to maintain the condition of the verges and monitor their wildlife interest.

## Key principles and opportunities for Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure



### 5.19. Conserve and improve

- Conserve and enhance the scenic beauty of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting and the setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Beauty, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.
- Conserve and enhance designated 'Landscapes of Local Value'
- Ensure the diversity of landscape character in the borough is recognised and managed in a sensitive manner.
- Preserve the general extent of Maidstone town's green and blue corridors, and look for opportunities to enhance to reinforce the stellate pattern of green infrastructure and prevent coalescence of neighbourhoods.
- Retain valued and historic green spaces and trees within the built up areas of the borough and ensure new developments are designed sensitively to fit appropriately into the existing townscape/landscape.
- Ensure the qualities and local distinctiveness of the historic environment are recognised and protected from inappropriate development, particularly through the rural cycling routes ion of Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Conservation Areas and Listed Parks and Gardens.

### 5.20. Create new opportunities

- Improve and restore landscape in poor condition especially in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Extend the High Weald Transition Zone project in Tunbridge Wells Borough to the Laddingford Low Weald area where landscape enhancements would help match the landscape quality of the surrounding area.

- Create a framework and action plan for each of Maidstone town's green and blue corridors.
- Improve degraded and poor quality urban green spaces with the involvement of the local community to enhance townscape character and quality.
- Promote and encourage traditional agricultural practices such as traditional orchards that conserve or enhance local landscape character and create new traditional orchards and platts.
- Encourage developers of large sites in locations with a history of orchards to provide appropriately managed community orchards as part of their proposal.
- Encourage developers of large sites in locations with heritage assets and landscapes to provide heritage enhancement measures
- Raise awareness of and improve access to historic parks and gardens through the creation of up to date information on accessible historic parks and gardens



## Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, water and air quality

- 5.21. Maidstone Borough's diverse mosaic of ecological habitats is dependent on clean water and clean air, which are also critical for human health. Five Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA) are located in the borough (Greensand Heaths and Commons, Medway Low Weald Grassland and Wetland, Medway Gap North Kent Downs, Mid Kent Downs Woods and Scarp and Mid Kent Greensand and Gault), which show where the greatest gains can be made from habitat enhancement, restoration and recreation as these areas offer the best opportunities for establishing large habitat areas and/or networks or wildlife habitats. Much of the green infrastructure of the Borough is a working, productive environment and the production of food, fuel and timber relies on biodiversity and ecological processes to maintain water quality and supply, soil quality and pollination of crops. Increased urbanisation and vehicle traffic is affecting water and air quality in the borough, as well as posing a threat to wildlife. The ecological status of Maidstone's rivers is poor and Maidstone's town centre, key road junctions and the M20 are all subject to poor air quality. Non native invasive plants are a problem in many areas where they can out- compete native plants, damage riverbanks and landscapes, increase flood risk and reduce habitat availability for native wildlife.



### 5.22. Key issues

- Fragmented habitats.
- Availability and quality of water.
- Pressure on the water resource.
- Poor ecological status of the borough's rivers.
- Maidstone's town centre, key road junctions and the M20 are all subject to poor air quality.
- Pollution caused by agriculture and industry.

### 5.23. How can the green and blue infrastructure help?

- Urban trees improve air quality by reducing air temperature and directly removing pollutants from the air<sup>29</sup>. As different species can capture different sizes of particulate (Freer-Smith et al 300 2005) a broad range of species should be

<sup>29</sup> Tiwary, A., et al. (2009) 'An integrated tool to assess the role of new planting in PM10 capture and the human health benefits: A case study in London', Environmental Pollution, 157(10), pp. 2645-2653

considered for planting in any air quality strategy. Generally, the larger the leaf area the greater the rate of pollution removal.

- Provision of habitats rich in wildflowers and reducing use of pesticides will support the insects required for pollination of crops.
- Green and blue infrastructure can support new opportunities for farmers and landowners such as creating locally distinctive food and drink or providing space for energy crops, like biomass and biofuels to supply a local market for renewable energy.
- Protected SSSIs, Local Nature Reserves and Local Wildlife Sites provide space where priority habitats and species can become established and thrive.
- Green and blue corridors including railway lines, rivers, and roadsides as well as individual trees and avenues between green spaces create healthy ecological networks that help wildlife move, feed, disperse, migrate or reproduce.
- Green spaces can provide dark areas where wildlife can retreat from areas with light pollution.
- Trees and plants including reed beds can naturally filter or diffuse urban pollution so that it does not reach soils and rivers, helping to improve soil and water quality and support healthy ecosystems.
- Creating space in new development for habitats provides important stepping stones for wildlife and helps them adapt to climate change.
- Access to stimulating, biodiverse space helps people learn, understand and enjoy nature which encourages them to support its protection.

#### 5.24. Good practice

##### **Save our magnificent meadows**

Wildflower meadows and grassland are Kent's most threatened habitat and are fundamental to the patchwork landscape of the county. They have suffered huge declines in recent decades as a result of the pressure associated with agriculture and development and the impact of inappropriate management. The loss of these habitats is also linked to the decline of many invertebrate species, including a number of Biodiversity Action Plan priority species. The Save our magnificent meadows project aims to halt this decline and improve the biodiversity of meadows through a three year project which aims to increase recognition of the value of meadows within local communities and the wider population with supportive networks of meadow champions. To maximise impact the project will focus on the Low Weald which is important for its meadow habitats, particularly wet and riverside meadows, and one of the most significant lowland meadow sites in Kent, Marden Meadows SSSI. The project will be delivered primarily through a 'community landscape approach'. This multi-faceted approach will link community engagement with landscape-scale habitat improvement, offering the maximum benefits in both areas and seeking to create lasting change. Three community landscape areas have been identified: Yalding Riverside Meadows, Low Weald Villages and Sevenoaks and Tonbridge Weald.

## Heaths Countryside Corridor

A local community project born out of a desire to provide places for local people to go and for wildlife to thrive now owns and manages three sites in the Lenham Heath and Charing Heath area. The objectives of the Heaths Countryside Corridor are 'to conserve and enhance, for the benefit of the public, the natural beauty and habitats of the Greensand belt area around Charing and Lenham and to educate the public in all matters relating to the natural and physical environment and its conservation and protection'. With support from Kent Wildlife Trust, Rail Link Countryside Initiative, Kentish Stour Countryside Project and Mid Kent Downs Countryside Partnership, the project has improved footpaths, provided leaflets and education packs and on site interpretation as well as planting and habitat management.

### 5.25. Key principles and opportunities for Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure



### 5.26. Conserve and improve

- Conserve the characteristic flora, fauna and physical habitat features of rivers including their winterbourne stretches.
- Restore River Beult SSSI so that it changes from 'unfavourable' to 'unfavourable improving' and ultimately to 'favourable' condition
- Continue to implement the Invasive Non-Native Species control programme led by Medway Valley Countryside Partnership
- Implement the River Len Local Nature Reserve – Habitat Management Plan.
- Conserve and improve water habitats such as that being carried out at the River Len at Mote Park with the Friends of Mote Park Group, Medway anglers and Maidstone Borough Council.
- Identify and protect ponds of high biodiversity value and enhance the ecological quality and diversity focusing on the designated Wealden Great Crested Newt Important Area for Ponds.
- Conserve and restore ancient woodlands to their native composition through the removal of the non-native components, and by actively encouraging natural regeneration.

## 5.27. Create new opportunities

- Link together key habitats to form wider landscape-scale networks across the borough and beyond reflecting the approach of the Kent Living Landscape/biodiversity opportunity area project (supporting the Kent Wildlife Trust in managing the lowland calcareous sites and seek opportunities to create new chalk grassland in the Capstone Bredhurst improvement area and enhanced woodland and additional chalk grassland restoration in the Mid Kent Downs Woods and Scarp BOA).
- Restore, create and expand the 12 priority habitats through positive management of land and working with developers and others to create new habitat as part of green infrastructure planning and design in new developments.
- Combine landscape improvements and enhanced biodiversity in areas where biodiversity opportunity areas and areas for landscape improvement and restoration coincide: Bredhurst Dry Valleys area in the North Downs and the Laddingford Low Weald area in the south west of the borough.



- Develop a tree planting programme focused on air quality management areas, in particular the town centre and near the M20 between junction 8 and 9, with an emphasis on planting more large tree species.
- Incrementally green Maidstone town centre through the introduction of street trees and naturalisation of green spaces such as amenity grassland flanking the River Medway.
- Work with the Environment Agency and other partners to improve the Water Framework Directive classifications of Maidstone Borough's rivers and support the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership, the Kent High Weald Partnership and the Stour Valley Countryside Partnership in delivery of the river catchment improvement plan actions.
- Where appropriate and feasible, actively work to replace culverts, canalisation, weirs and other modifications of the borough's rivers with ecologically friendly alternatives.
- Develop woodland management plans which draw on traditional techniques.
- Designate more sites as local nature reserves to protect more land for biodiversity to help meet the Natural England standard of 1ha local nature reserve per 1,000 population and to provide more space for outdoor classrooms.
- Provide new accessible wildlife friendly green space and treescapes, improving the biodiversity value of existing spaces and bankside habitats, particularly along and close to green corridors.
- Ensure new developments create new priority habitats for species that are most at risk in the Maidstone BAP and improve specific biodiversity poor spaces.
- Ensure that existing protected habitats and species are accommodated and appropriately mitigated in all new development.

- Target agri-environmental stewardship schemes to habitats where there is limited progress towards achieving favourable condition as listed in the LBAP, (lowland dry acid grassland, lowland meadow, wet woodland, lowland heathland, lowland wood pasture and parkland).
- Raise public awareness of the importance of wild space for biodiversity and management techniques applied to enhance biodiversity.

## Providing opportunities for sport, recreation, quiet enjoyment and health



5.28. Encouraging healthy physical activity is key to tackling the borough's health inequalities, particularly in areas of multiple deprivation and amongst children where the problems are most acute. There are many opportunities to make more use of the benefits that green and blue infrastructure provides as an effective and low-cost health resource.

### 5.29. Key issues

- Life expectancy for men in the most deprived wards is five years below the borough average and for women is 2.4 years lower.
- Obesity in adults and lack of exercise for school children.
- Poor quality or inaccessible public spaces limit the benefits they could be providing to local people.
- Poor quality outdoor sports pitches and lack of access to open space in some areas limit the opportunities for physical activity.

### 5.30. How can the green and blue infrastructure help?

- Access to green and blue infrastructure provides opportunities for formal sport or informal exercise and an effective and low-cost health resource.
- Access to nature can encourage participation in physical activity. Evidence suggests that being outdoors in nature is an important factor that helps to maintain people's motivation to keep fit. Many participants in health walks cite the changing seasons and variety of wildlife as a major encouragement to continue attending. This type of 'green exercise' – physical activity undertaken in the outdoors – connects people to nature in their local area<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Securing the value of nature in Kent, 2011.

- Access to affordable, quality outdoor sports facilities will encourage more people to take part in sport.
- Contact with nature can help to prevent, alleviate and assist recovery from mental health problems. In particular, natural environments help to lower levels of stress, enhance mood, increase concentration and boost self-esteem.
- A network of child friendly, playable green spaces particularly close to where people live and on the routes to schools will encourage more children to play outdoors.
- Green routes encourage people to walk or cycle instead of taking the car, reducing unhealthy air pollution as well as promoting physical fitness.



### 5.31. Good practice

#### **Naturally Active**

Funded by the BIG Lottery Fund, Naturally Active is a project managed by the North West Kent Countryside Partnership covering the areas of Dartford, Gravesham, Sevenoaks and Bexley. It supports groups to access the countryside through a variety of outdoor activities such as improving a green space, wildlife photography and outdoor sports. Naturally Active aims to help improve mental wellbeing as well as the obvious physical benefits gained through being active. The success of the project will be measured on the long term sustainability of groups and their activities and as such the project aims to support groups in forming links to other organisations and providing training in green-skills, personal development and project leadership.

#### **Green Gym**

Green Gym is a scheme run by the The Conservation Volunteers, (TCV) which inspires people to improve their health and the environment at the same time. Experienced leaders guide volunteers through a range of conservation projects in the outdoors that benefit local green spaces. People learn practical skills, boosting their confidence and improving strength and stamina. The first Green Gym was launched in 1998 and there are now more than 80 nationwide. Evaluation of the Green Gym scheme in 2008 concluded that the overall physical health status of participants improved considerably, most significantly for people with the poorest physical and mental health.

In Kent, there are 2 green gyms, one at the Singleton Environment Centre in Ashford and another at Bedgebury National Pinetum in Goudhurst. Volunteers get involved in a wide variety of tasks such as pond management, scrub clearance, and coppicing woodland<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Securing the value of nature in Kent, 2011.

### 5.32. Key principles and opportunities for Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure

#### 5.33. Conserve and improve

- Protect existing publicly accessible green space.
- Protect outdoor sports pitches from loss through development or require their replacement and improvement.

#### 5.34. Create new opportunities

- Improve connectivity between green spaces, particularly along river corridors and between and within new and existing housing areas to help encourage their active use.
- Enhance quality and multi functionality of green spaces and redesign some existing green spaces to help address small gaps in provision and encourage more positive recreational activity.



- Ensure new green and blue infrastructure is provided to serve new development and areas of deprivation together with appropriate management and secure funding to maintain public open spaces to a high standard.
- Improve the quality of existing public pitches so they can accommodate more matches at peak times particularly for junior football.
- Secure more community access to affordable sports facilities particularly at schools to widen the availability of quality sports facilities close to home.
- Provide outdoor activities to encourage use of green spaces and explore the potential to set up a green gym in the borough.
- Incorporate exercise equipment in existing and new spaces to encourage healthy lifestyles particularly for those who do not wish to participate in organised activities or team sports in conjunction with local communities.
- Encourage the use of the rivers and their banks for sport and recreation where this is compatible with nature conservation and environmental policies.
- Encourage landowners to permit the use of woodlands for recreation where this is compatible with land management requirements and nature conservation policies.



## Providing community involvement and opportunities for education



5.35. When people are involved in their local environment, they are more likely to respect and take care of it. Engaging local people is essential to creating places that work. It is also the most cost effective way to deliver improvements and maintain sites to a high quality. The green and blue infrastructure network also provides a fantastic educational resource.

### 5.36. Key issues

- Public parks and green space funding is under pressure and community involvement in management and volunteering can help secure additional resources.
- Anti-social behaviour in public green spaces can detract from use and therefore benefits.
- Lack of knowledge about the value of the natural environment in the local community means they are not always as protective of it.
- Schools are missing an opportunity if the natural environment is not used as part of learning.

### 5.37. How can the green and blue infrastructure help?

- Attractive spaces that are well managed and maintained generate positive use and encourage a variety of activities by all age groups and abilities. Involving local people in their design, management and maintenance helps address local needs. Children and young people in particular can provide valuable insights into what makes a good play space to help reduce pockets of anti social behaviour that may exist.
- Green spaces can generate civic pride and community ownership; Friends groups regularly use their spaces and are best placed to help put together a management plan to make sure their space is well looked after and provides facilities and

activities that local people want. They are better informed about their needs to apply for external funding from organisations like the National Lottery to see improvements take place more quickly on the ground.



- Green spaces provide a venue for outdoor learning across all aspects of the school curriculum.
- Providing volunteer opportunities on environmental projects can harness community energy and skills and add social value to green and blue infrastructure. Experience gained through working with specialist organisations like the Medway Valley Partnership can also prove attractive to employers.
- Providing activities for children and young people can inspire them to love and take care of the natural world throughout their lives.

### 5.38. Good practice

#### **Thursday Action Group**

The Medway Valley Countryside Partnership volunteer Thursday Action Group team carry out practical countryside projects on a weekly basis, including tree and hedge planting, pond clearing, bank protection and footpath work. They gained the Queens Award for Voluntary Services in 2010 for their work to maintain, protect and improve the biodiversity of the local countryside.

#### **Friends of Mote Park**

The friends of Mote Park are a group of residents who help to look after the park. A number of parks in the borough have active friends groups who add value to the council's management of the parks with events, fundraising and activities.

#### **Vinters Valley Nature Reserve**

Comprising over 40 hectares and once part of a large 18th century country estate, Vinters Valley Nature Reserve has been transformed with the help of the local community, into a much loved natural space. Leased from Kent County Council and Maidstone Borough Council, the reserve is managed by a Trust set up by local people. A 'Friends of the Reserve' scheme allows people to contribute financially towards the upkeep of the reserve in return for a quarterly newsletter and the opportunity to participate in wildlife events on the reserve. Monthly volunteer workdays during the autumn and winter also offer local people the chance to gain hands-on experience on the practical side of conservation.

### **5.39. Key principles and opportunities for Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure**

#### **5.40. Conserve and improve**

- Ensure continued support for voluntary and not for profit organisations such as the Medway Valley Countryside Partnership and the Kent Downs AONB Unit, who engage and involve local communities with a high degree of added value.
- Ensure local communities are kept informed of significant projects to improve green spaces by direct contact, meetings with representatives and use of the media and carry out consultation before site management plans are written.
- Support and encourage the development of 'Friends of parks' and similar groups and greater involvement in the delivery of improvements to green spaces and water bodies through projects.
- Improve publicity about sites such as parks and gardens, with better leaflets, events, website coverage and other promotional material and regularly inform the media of important issues relating to green spaces.

#### **5.41. Create new opportunities**

- Develop an umbrella group for environmental voluntary organisations to share information and resources.
- Foster the development of conservation volunteers.
- Consider further delegating management of sporting facilities, allotments and other activities to user groups.
- Encourage more franchises for catering and other green space facilities in appropriate locations to increase use of green spaces.
- Involve people, particularly the young, in environmental initiatives such as tree planting and develop a programme of educational walks and talks.
- Encourage the Kent Downs AONB Unit to hold educational events with local schools each year.

## Retaining and enhancing a quality environment for investment and through development



5.42. The need for new housing and other development in Maidstone borough puts pressure on the green and blue infrastructure network but can also bring opportunities. Careful siting and design of new developments can enhance landscape quality and create new green and blue spaces. The development of poor quality brownfield sites offers the opportunity for urban greening and environmental improvements. Residents in new development will put pressure on existing accessible open space and it is important that a range of new or improved open spaces is brought forward to meet this new demand. Updated local open space standards for new developments have been devised based on evidence about the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing open spaces (See Policy DM22 – Open space and recreation in Appendix 1).

5.43. Good development considers the planning and design of the environment throughout the building process - from land acquisition and planning through to occupation with an understanding that the provision of high quality, attractive green spaces and access to green infrastructure delivers higher value for everyone. This approach can help unlock development sites as it can improve the chances of achieving consensus amongst stakeholders at the planning stages of a project. New development will also be more acceptable if it complements local landscape character and works with the grain of historic settlement.

### 5.44. Key issues

- Pressure on the landscape and vulnerable habitats.
- Potential loss of local landscape and historic character and coalescence of settlements.
- Lack of recreational space for new populations.
- Conflict between need for new development and space for flood storage and sustainable drainage systems.
- Pressure on drinking water supplies

### 5.45. How can the green and blue infrastructure help?

- A high quality green setting can help realise increased saleability and rentability of both housing and commercial property.

- Skilful planning and design of green and blue infrastructure will optimise the full development potential of a given location and is essential in creating sustainable development.
- Green routes for walking and cycling can help connect new and existing communities, ensuring new development is well integrated into existing settlements and retains an open, green character particularly in rural areas..
- A high quality, well-designed network of green and blue spaces within developments will create places that users will want to spend more time in leading to benefits for local businesses such as increased footfall and time spent.
- Intelligent use of existing green and blue infrastructure and the imaginative disposal/incorporation of on site resources such as clean subsoil and recyclable materials delivers reduced development costs.
- New developments designed with an understanding of landscape and historic character and function can be more acceptable to an existing community, and ensure a speedier path through the planning process.
- Green infrastructure can help mitigate any negative impacts of light pollution from new developments on wildlife and habitats.

#### **5.46. Good practice**

##### **Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Landscape Design Handbook, 2005**

This easy to use, well-illustrated handbook provides design guidance for anyone involved in new developments in the area. It aims to conserve and enhance the special characteristics of the AONB as a whole and the distinctiveness of the individual character areas.

##### **The Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) Supplement, 2013**

assimilates typical planting lists to reflect the landscape character types identified by the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2012. In addition, the supplement contains general landscape guidance and design guidance for successfully integrating specific types of development within certain contexts such as the conversion of agricultural buildings; equestrian development; golf courses; residential areas; transport corridors and car parks. This guidance can help assimilate development more sensitively into local landscapes and will be retained until a Landscape Character Guidelines Supplementary Planning Document is published.

#### **5.47. Key principles and opportunities for Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure**

#### **5.48. Create new opportunities**

- Adopt updated local open space standards for new developments based on a strong evidence base about the quantity, quality and accessibility of existing open spaces.
- Resist new development in flood plains and encourage water sensitive urban design which provides sustainable drainage systems, biodiverse flood storage areas and wetlands as part of new development.

- Ensure new strategic housing allocations to the south east of Maidstone town increase accessibility of open space for the adjacent areas of multiple deprivation.
- Produce good practice guidance for integrating green and blue infrastructure into new developments, drawing on the findings of this strategy and the landscape character assessment and Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
- Support Parishes in producing neighbourhood plans to provide detailed local guidance for developers on green and blue infrastructure.
- Encourage developers to work with local communities at the pre-application stage of the planning process to ensure local knowledge and views are taken into account from the outset.
- Ensure developers provide details of how the green and blue infrastructure elements of their proposals, including public open spaces, sites managed for their biodiversity, geodiversity or heritage interest, will be managed and maintained over the long-term.

## **Integrating Proposals for Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure**

- 5.49. The key opportunities and principles for conserving, improving and creating green and blue infrastructure are brought together in a strategic framework plan (Map 14).
- 5.50. The framework plan identifies and prioritises four broad areas where green and blue infrastructure interventions will have the most impact on achieving the strategy objectives: the Capstone-Bredhurst area, the M20 corridor, River Beult corridor and Laddingford/Low Weald area. In addition it highlights designated Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, river catchment improvement areas and the eight poorest quality publicly accessible green space sites, which should be a priority for improvement.
- 5.51. Maidstone urban area is also a priority for improvements due to the high population levels, level of multiple deprivation and need to mitigate effects of air pollution through tree planting and encouraging active, sustainable travel. The framework plan indicates green and blue corridors in the urban area to conserve and improve to help achieve these objectives. Developing more detailed green and blue infrastructure plans for the Maidstone urban area will be an important next step and is included in the strategy action plan.
- 5.52. Map 14 the Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework Plan identifies where spatially-specific proposals for Maidstone Borough's green and blue infrastructure will interact and link with green infrastructure proposals of adjoining districts, including Tunbridge Wells Council's High Weald/Low Weald links project, Tonbridge & Malling Council's 'Principal Green Corridors' and Swale Council's 'Strategic Green Grid Routes'.
- 5.53. Detailed projects and proposals are identified in the strategy action plan.

## 6. Delivering the strategy

### Delivery Framework

- 6.1. The vision, objectives and proposals of this strategy need to be translated into action through the Delivery Framework<sup>32</sup>
- 6.2. As the planning, design and management of the green and blue infrastructure resource is the responsibility of many different organisations, the strategy can only be delivered successfully in partnership.
- 6.3. A list of key stakeholders is included below:

#### Key stakeholders

Maidstone Borough Council councillors  
Kent County Council (Maidstone Borough) councillors  
Maidstone Borough parish council councillors  
Maidstone Borough resident associations  
Maidstone Borough resident groups  
Maidstone Borough Council (cross-departmental)  
Kent County Council (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  
Friends of parks and Allotment Association representatives

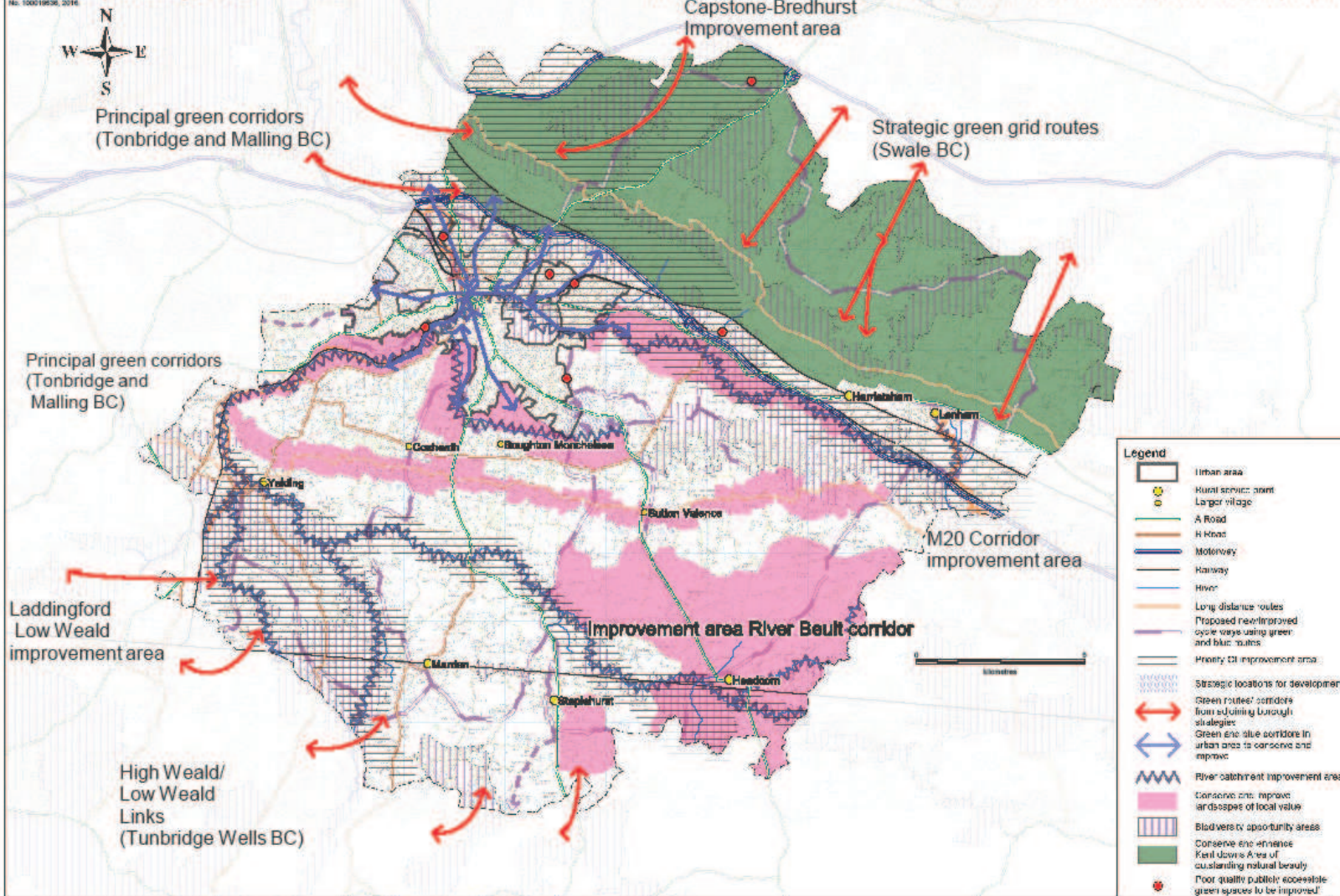
- 6.4. As part of the development of this strategy, key stakeholders have agreed an accompanying action plan<sup>33</sup>. The action plan is grouped into a number of themes to help deliver the strategy's vision and objectives. Each action also identifies which green and blue strategy objectives it would help to meet and identifies a timescale and lead partner.
- 6.5. The Maidstone Local Plan (2016) and planning decisions can play an important role in securing the protection and enhancement of the Borough's green and blue infrastructure. For this reason the strategy identifies specific planning actions (see paragraph 2.27: How can Planning support the green and blue infrastructure strategy?).

<sup>32</sup> Appendix 1: Green and Blue Infrastructure Delivery Framework

<sup>33</sup> Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy: Action Plan April 2016

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### Map 14: Green and blue infrastructure framework plan

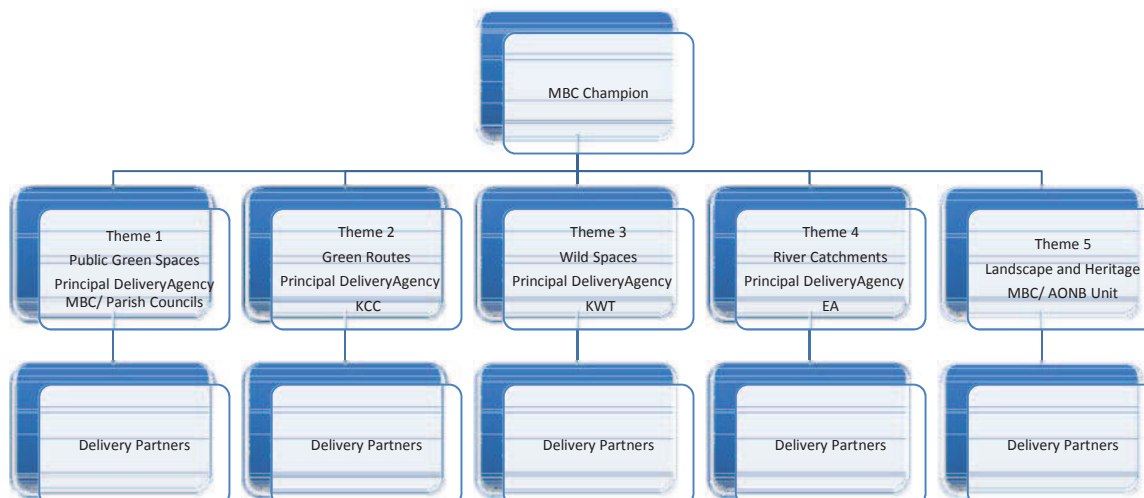


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## Maidstone Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy:

### Proposed delivery structure



- 6.6. The Maidstone green and blue infrastructure forum should monitor the delivery of the action plan, with the results published annually. Annual monitoring will help show progress, identify areas where delivery of the strategy is not taking place and provide vital information to feedback to partners and stakeholders
- 6.7. The action plan should be a live document which is reviewed and updated annually to reflect changing priorities and resources, or as new opportunities present themselves

### Neighbouring authorities

- 6.8. Maidstone's green and blue infrastructure does not stop at the borough boundary and the green and blue infrastructure plans and policies of the five neighbouring boroughs (Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling, Medway, Swale and Ashford), have been taken into consideration in preparing this strategy along with those led by Kent County Council. Relevant cross border proposals and projects are included within the proposals (see Map 14). Cross-border liaison and engagement will be important to achieve shared aims and objectives including effective transfer of information. It is recommended that representatives of neighbouring authorities join the green and blue infrastructure forum.

### Review

- 6.9. A review of the strategy will be considered where:
- There is significant change in European and national legislation, or national or local policy; or
  - The Maidstone green and blue infrastructure forum considers that the green and blue infrastructure strategy is insufficiently effective in delivering its vision and objectives.

## Appendix 1: Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Delivery Framework

### Executive Summary:

- Evidence for the Local Plan
- Sets strategic direction and vision for Green & Blue Infrastructure for the borough and identifies delivery opportunities through partnership working and the seeking of external funding and investment. Sets a framework that will underpin the 10 year Open Spaces Plan that will be drawn up by MBC Parks & Open Spaces Team.
- Will provide a framework for partner agencies to agree and deliver actions to benefit Green & Blue Infrastructure in the borough that are outside the direct control of MBC.

### Delivery Framework:

Key Themes	Key Issues Identified by GBIS	Strategic Objectives
Mitigating and adapting to climate change 136	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pressures on the quantity and quality of water resources.</li> <li>• Increased run off from development and potential impact on flooding.</li> <li>• Additional heat and the need for shade.</li> <li>• Connectivity of habitats may be insufficient to ensure species migration.</li> <li>• Need to reduce carbon emissions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To avoid increased flood risk, increase shade and enhance the sustainable connections to key destinations and the countryside, creating a robust and resilient landscape with improved links between wildlife habitats.</li> <li>• To minimise the effects of pollution and soil erosion on river catchments, and improve quality and accessibility.</li> </ul>
Integrating sustainable movement and access for all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public Rights of Way network is fragmented and poorly connected in some areas, requiring the use of often very busy roads.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactively seek opportunities to enhance sustainable and safe connections to key destinations and the countryside by working with partners to improve</li> </ul>

137	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceptions of safety particularly with an ageing population can be a barrier to use of footpaths.</li> <li>• Significant area in the south of the borough where people do not have convenient access to larger areas of natural greenspace.</li> <li>• Loss of green spaces within the built up area to development leading to a loss of urban wildlife habitats and fragmentation.</li> <li>• Lack of trees within the more densely built up area of Maidstone's town centre results in a lack of stepping stones for species migration.</li> </ul>	<p>sustainable access by footpaths, riverside walks, cycleways and bridleways.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To provide new open space of all typologies to address specific deficiencies identified in specific areas.</li> <li>• Investigate the potential for 'Urban Greening' through provision of street trees and green infrastructure enhancements to the public realm.</li> </ul>
Promoting a distinctive townscape and landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local landscapes being lost to new development</li> <li>• Areas of landscape and townscape which are less attractive and lacking in features typical of the area.</li> <li>• Heritage landscapes such as Ancient Woodland and traditional orchards vulnerable to damage and loss.</li> <li>• Changes in agricultural practices with loss of hedgerows, habitat fragmentation, land drainage, improvement of</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conserve and enhance valued open spaces, heritage and tree cover and create new high quality, well linked green spaces to serve new development.</li> <li>• Conserve and enhance the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting, maintain landscapes of local value and restore and improve sensitive landscape in the poorest condition.</li> </ul>

	<p>grassland and widespread use of pesticides, herbicides and fertilisers and polytunnels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Abandonment of traditional woodland management such as coppicing and pollarding and planting of non-native trees.</li> </ul>		
138	<p>Maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, water and air quality</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fragmented habitats.</li> <li>Availability and quality of water.</li> <li>Pressure on the water resource.</li> <li>Poor ecological status of the borough's rivers.</li> <li>Maidstone's town centre, key road junctions and the M20 are all subject to poor air quality.</li> <li>Pollution caused by agriculture and industry.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the quality of publicly accessible parks and green spaces with the aim of achieving 'good' standard in accordance with the quality audit 2014 and redesign where needed to address gaps in provision.</li> <li>Review and update the Maidstone Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) to ensure detailed consideration given to the provision of linked habitat corridors in green space management plans to enhance the biodiversity of all public open spaces.</li> <li>Work with partner agencies to retain existing, and encourage new, wildlife habitats and landscape features and improve river and air quality.</li> </ul>
	<p>Providing opportunities for sport, recreation, quiet enjoyment and health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life expectancy for men in the most deprived wards is five years below the borough</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the quality of publicly accessible parks and green spaces with the aim of achieving</li> </ul>

	<p>average and for women is 2.4 years lower.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Obesity in adults and lack of exercise for school children.</li> <li>• Poor quality or inaccessible public spaces limit the benefits they could be providing to local people.</li> <li>• Poor quality outdoor sports pitches and lack of access to open space in some areas limit the opportunities for physical activity.</li> </ul>	<p>'good' standard in accordance with the quality audit 2014 and redesign where needed to address gaps in provision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a playing pitch strategy to understand quantity, quality and accessibility of sports pitches and identify surpluses and deficits.</li> <li>• Investigate provision of new open space of all typologies to address specific deficiencies identified in specific areas.</li> </ul>
Retaining and enhancing a quality environment for investment and through development 139	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pressure on the landscape and vulnerable habitats.</li> <li>• Potential loss of local landscape and historic character and coalescence of settlements.</li> <li>• Lack of recreational space for new populations.</li> <li>• Conflict between need for new development and space for flood storage and sustainable drainage systems.</li> <li>• Pressure on drinking water supplies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a high quality environment and development standards which form the benchmark for new, high quality, well planned developments with sufficient well integrated, high quality green spaces.</li> </ul>
Providing community involvement and opportunities for education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public parks and green space funding is under pressure and community involvement in management and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage and educate local communities, schools and partner agencies to improve green spaces of all typologies through direct</li> </ul>

	<p>volunteering can help secure additional resources.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anti-social behaviour in public green spaces can detract from use and therefore benefits.</li> <li>• Lack of knowledge about the value of the natural environment in the local community means they are not always as protective of it.</li> <li>• Schools are missing an opportunity if the natural environment is not used as part of learning.</li> </ul>	<p>contact, meetings with representatives and use of the media.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To achieve greater community involvement in the planning and management of green spaces and encourage the use of green and blue infrastructure as an educational resource.</li> </ul>
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140 Areas not covered by the strategy / within the remit of external partner agencies:

- The GBIS does not cover the future needs of people, but is focussed on the environment, biodiversity and the countryside. More detail on the specific needs of different areas of the population will be identified and dealt with in the more detailed delivery of actions that will sit under the GIS and the Delivery Framework, for example through the 10 Year Open Spaces Strategy.
- A number of detailed actions are proposed by stakeholders as a result of the workshops during May 2016 that cannot be taken forward by MBC. The council will work with partners to influence where it can, the delivery of these actions by the appropriate agencies. The broad scope of these actions is set out below.

Proposed delivery structure themes:	Summary of proposed actions:
Public Green Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of education packs for schools to encourage greater use of open spaces.</li> </ul>

Green Routes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improvements to accessibility of PROW's, footpaths, cycleways and bridleways including specific schemes identified in the Integrated Transport Strategy and the Walking and Cycling Strategy.</li> <li>• Creation of quiet lanes, and retention of green lanes and byways.</li> <li>• Enhanced accessibility to play areas and areas of amenity open space.</li> </ul>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">141</p> Wild Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver outstanding actions in Maidstone LBAP habitat action plans.</li> <li>• Targeted planting of hedgerows to link habitats and counter habitat fragmentation especially Medway and Len River Valleys, dip slope of Kent Downs AONB and Greensand Ridge.</li> <li>• Continue to resource and extend the Kent and Medway Road Verge Project and manage roadside nature reserves to promote biodiversity and management of wildflower meadows and grassland through the Save Our Magnificent Meadows project and prioritise the Low Weald and urban areas.</li> <li>• Engage with businesses, local authorities and the forestry/ woodland sector to ensure the sustainable management of woodland in the Kent Downs and Greensand Ridge – beyond minimum standards and develop the potential for sustainable woodland management through fencing and building material and biomass through the Kent Pathfinder Project.</li> <li>• Increase reed beds for nitrate removal and provide phosphate removal in the River Len (designated as 'Bad' quality under the Water Framework Directive) as a whole river project to prevent nutrient enrichment across the catchment and enhance alder carr and other vegetation along the corridor of the river.</li> </ul>
River Catchments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve quality and accessibility of Medway riverside.</li> <li>• Implement location specific actions with Maidstone Stage 1 Surface water Management Plan.</li> <li>• Draft and implement River Catchment Improvement</li> </ul>

	<p>Plans to improve the quality of the water environment through partnership working.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prevent condition of water bodies getting worse and if this does occur, develop a plan of action to reverse the decline.</li> <li>• Improve understanding of Water Framework Directive role in delivering planning and land management to ensure any future developments take account of Water Framework Directive.</li> </ul>
Landscape and Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify, manage or restore and where appropriate create viewpoints to and from the AONB.</li> <li>• Specific enhancements within the AONB as identified in the AONB Action Plan.</li> <li>• Encourage creation of new apple and cherry orchards and nut plats along transport routes within specific geographical areas such as the Low Weald and Greensand Ridge to help restore local landscape character.</li> </ul>



## Appendix 2: Strategies which help support green and blue infrastructure

### Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014 - 2019

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2014 - 2019 sets out a number of policies within the Kent Downs AONB which stretches beyond the borough but which will help maintain and enhance key components of the green and blue infrastructure within this part of the borough, including:

#### *Landform and landscape character – policies*

- **LLC1** The protection, conservation and enhancement of special characteristics and qualities, natural beauty and landscape character of the Kent Downs AONB will be supported and pursued.
- **LLC7** The development of strategic landscape action plans for Landscape Character Areas of the AONB which are most at threat or where greatest opportunity lie will be supported and pursued.

#### *Biodiversity – policies*

- **BD1** - The maintenance and enhancement of existing designated sites and priority habitats, their extension and connection, will be pursued through sensitive management, fragmentation reduction and restoration. Creation of new habitats and habitat corridors will be pursued, informed by landscape character, through collaboration to establish functional ecological networks and high quality green infrastructure.
- **BD2** - Local, regional and national biodiversity targets and spatial priorities for habitats and species distinctive to the Kent Downs will be supported; a Kent Downs AONB response to Biodiversity 2020 targets will be pursued.
- **BD4** – Targeting of advice, grants and planning agreements to reduce fragmentation and enhance the distinctive biodiversity of the Kent Downs will be pursued.
- **BD6** - The protection, conservation and extension of Kent Downs priority and distinctive habitats and species will be supported through the Local Plan process, development management decisions and the promotion of the Biodiversity Duty of Regard (NERC Act 2006).

#### *Woodland and trees – policies*

- **WT1** – Threats to the existing extent of woodland and transitional habitats around woodland will be resisted. Extension of both habitat types will be supported where appropriate to landscape character. The loss of ancient woodland will be opposed.
- **WT6** - The identification, protection, management and planned replacement and reintroduction of fine specimen and 'veteran' trees will be pursued.

#### *Access, enjoyment and understanding – policies*

- **AEU2** – Diversions and stopping up of PRowS will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that they will not have a detrimental impact on the opportunities for access and quiet enjoyment of the AONB landscape and historic character.
- **AEU3** – Investment to secure sustainable, high quality, low impact and easy access multiuser routes from towns and growth areas to the AONB will be pursued.
- **AEU7** – Improvements to the Rights of Way Network to provide and improve countryside access, health and well-being opportunities, including way-marking, signposting and maintenance, new routes and establishment of higher right which conforms with AONB policies and design guidance, will be supported.
- **AEU12** – Support will be given to the North Downs Way and England Coast Path National Trails as the main promoted route in the Kent Downs.

## **Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000**

The saved policies from the Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000 help protect existing green and blue infrastructure or allocates sites for new open space.

ENV1 Pollution (Air, Land and Water)

ENV4 Noise

ENV5 Protection of Trees

ENV6 Landscaping, Surfacing and Boundary Treatment

ENV7 Riverside Zone of Special Townscape Importance

ENV16 Archaeological Remains of National Importance

ENV17 Important Archaeological Sites

ENV18 Land with Archaeological Potential

ENV19 Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest

ENV20 Important Historic Parks and Gardens

ENV22 Urban Open Space

ENV23 Loss of Open Space and Recreation Facilities

ENV24 Site Specific Public Open Space Allocations

ENV25 Allotments

ENV26 Development Affecting Public Footpaths and Public Rights of Way

ENV27 New Footpath, Cycleway and Bridleway Proposals

ENV28 Development in the Countryside

ENV29 Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land

ENV30 Metropolitan Green Belt

Maidstone has two adopted local plan documents (formerly known as development plan documents – DPD) which are part of the local plan. These documents contain planning policies and should be read with the saved policies of the Maidstone Borough Wide Local Plan 2000:

Affordable Housing DPD (2006)

Open Space DPD (2006)

## **Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2016**

The Publication version of the **Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2016** contains a number of policies which support the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy:

### **Policy SP17 Countryside**

*The countryside is defined as all those parts of the plan area outside the settlement boundaries of the Maidstone urban area, rural service centres and larger villages defined on the policies map.*

- 1. Provided proposals do not harm the character and appearance of an area, the following types of development will be permitted in the countryside...*
- 2. Where proposals meet criterion 1, development in the countryside will be permitted if:*
  - i. The type, siting, materials and design, mass and scale of development and the level of activity maintains, or where possible, enhances local distinctiveness including landscape features; and*
  - ii. Impacts on the appearance and character of the landscape can be appropriately mitigated. Suitability and required mitigation will be assessed through the submission of Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments to support development proposals in appropriate circumstances.*
- 3. The loss of local shops and community facilities which serve villages will be resisted. In all cases, another beneficial community use should be sought before permission is granted for the removal of these facilities;*
- 4. Proposals will be supported which facilitate the efficient use of the borough's significant agricultural land and soil resource provided any adverse impacts on the appearance and character of the landscape can be appropriately mitigated;*
- 5. The distinctive character of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and its setting, the setting of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the extent and openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt will be rigorously conserved, maintained and enhanced where appropriate;*
- 6. The Greensand Ridge, Medway Valley, Len Valley, Loose Valley, and Low Weald as defined on the policies map, will be conserved, maintained and enhanced where appropriate as landscapes of local value;*
- 7. Development in the countryside will retain the setting of and separation of individual settlements; and*
- 8. Natural and historic assets, including characteristic landscape features, wildlife and water resources, will be protected from damage with any unavoidable impacts mitigated. Account should be taken of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan and the Maidstone Borough Landscape Character Guidelines supplementary planning document.*

### **Policy OS1 - Open space allocations**

Sites are identified for provision of publicly accessible open space to complement the growth identified in the local plan.

### **Policy DM3 - Historic and natural environment**

- 1. To enable Maidstone borough to retain a high quality of living and to be able to respond to the effects of climate change, developers will ensure that new development protects and enhances the historic and natural environment, where appropriate, by incorporating measures to:*
  - i. Protect positive historic and landscape character, heritage assets and their settings, areas of Ancient Woodland, veteran trees, trees with significant amenity value, important hedgerows, features of biological or geological interest, and the existing public rights of way*

network from inappropriate development and ensure that these assets do not suffer any adverse impacts as a result of development;

ii. Avoid damage to and inappropriate development within or adjacent to:

a. Cultural heritage assets protected by international, national or local designation and other non-designated heritage assets recognised for their archaeological, architectural or historic significance, or their settings;

b. Internationally, nationally and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; and

c. Local Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats.

iii. Control pollution to protect ground and surface waters where necessary and mitigate against the deterioration of water bodies and adverse impacts on Groundwater Source Protection Zones, and/or incorporate measures to improve the ecological status of water bodies as appropriate;

iv. Enhance, extend and connect designated sites of importance for biodiversity, priority habitats and fragmented Ancient Woodland; support opportunities for the creation of new Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats; create, enhance, restore and connect other habitats, including links to habitats outside Maidstone Borough, where opportunities arise;

v. Provide for the long term maintenance and management of all heritage and natural assets, including landscape character, associated with the development;

vi. Mitigate for and adapt to the effects of climate change; and

vii. Positively contribute to the improvement of accessibility of natural green space within walking distance of housing, employment, health and education facilities and to the creation of a wider network of new links between green and blue spaces including links to the Public Rights of Way network.

2. Protect and enhance the character, distinctiveness, diversity and quality of Maidstone's landscape and townscape by the careful, sensitive management and design of development.

3. Where appropriate, development proposals will be expected to appraise the value of the borough's historic and natural environment through the provision of the following:

i. An ecological evaluation of development sites and any additional land put forward for mitigation purposes to take full account of the biodiversity present, including the potential for the retention and provision of native plant species;

ii. Heritage and arboricultural assessments to take full account of any past or present heritage and natural assets connected with the development and associated sites; and

iii. A landscape and visual impact assessment to take full account of the significance of, and potential effects of change on, the landscape as an environmental resource together with views and visual amenity.

4. Publicly accessible open space should be designed as part of the overall green and blue infrastructure and layout of a site, taking advantage of the potential for multiple benefits including enhanced play, wildlife, sustainable urban drainage, tree planting and landscape provision. The form and function of green infrastructure will reflect a site's characteristics, nature, location and existing or future deficits.

5. Development proposals will not be permitted where they lead to adverse impacts on natural and heritage assets for which mitigation measures or, as a last resort, compensation appropriate to the scale and nature of the impacts cannot be achieved.

Account should be taken of the Landscape Character Guidelines SPD, the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy and the Kent Downs AONB Management Plan.

## Policy DM22 – Open space and recreation

1. For new housing or mixed use development sites, the council will seek to deliver the following categories of publicly accessible open space provision in accordance with the specified standards:

- i. **Quantity standards**

<b>Open space type</b>	<b>Draft standard (ha/1000 population)</b>	<b>Minimum size of facility (ha)</b>
Amenity green space (e.g. informal recreation spaces, recreation grounds, village greens, urban parks, formal gardens and playing fields)	0.7	0.1
Provision for children and young people (e.g. equipped play areas, ball courts, outdoor basketball hoop areas, skateboard parks, teenage shelters and "hangouts")	0.25	0.25 excluding a buffer zone but in cases where accessibility to children's and young peoples provision is poor, for example outside a reasonable walking distance or where the crossing of major roads is necessary, smaller areas of open space may be justified on-site.
Publicly accessible outdoor sports (e.g. outdoor sports pitches, tennis, bowls, athletics and other sports)	1.6	To meet the technical standards produced by Sport England or the relevant governing bodies of sport.
Allotments and community gardens (e.g. land used for the growing of own produce, including urban farms. Does not include private gardens)	0.2	0.66
Natural/semi-natural areas of open space (e.g. woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, wetlands, open and running water, banks to rivers, land and ponds, wastelands, closed cemeteries and graveyards)	6.5	0.2

- ii. **Quality Standards**

All new open spaces should meet the following general standards:

- a. Be designed as part of the green infrastructure network in a locality, contributing to local landscape character, connecting with local routes and green corridors for people and wildlife as well as providing multi-functional benefits such as addressing surface water management priorities;
- b. Provide a location and shape for the space which allows for meaningful and safe recreation and be sufficiently overlooked by active building frontages;

- c. Be easily found and accessible by road, cycleway, footpaths and public transport including by those with disabilities, with pedestrian crossings on roads where appropriate;
- d. Make the entrances accessible for all users, of appropriate size and inviting with a welcoming sign where appropriate;
- e. Provide clearly defined boundaries with fences or hedges where needed to ensure safety of users;
- f. Where appropriate provide interest and activities for a wide range of users in particular meeting the needs of elderly and less able users as well as children, young people and families;
- g. Where appropriate provide seats, litter bins and appropriate lighting to ensure safety of users without adversely affecting wildlife;
- h. Provide a range of planting, with appropriate mix of predominantly indigenous species, maintained to a good standard;
- i. Promote biodiversity on-site through design, choice of species and management practices;
- j. Submit an Open Space Layout and Design statement, to incorporate ecological management measures for approval by the council; and
- k. Provide a Management Plan with adequate resources identified for on-going management and maintenance.

In improving existing open space provision, the council will have regard to these standards.

### iii. **Accessibility Standards**

If open space cannot be provided in full on development sites, due to site constraints, housing delivery expectations on allocated sites, or location, then provision should be provided off-site where it is within the distance from the development site identified in the accessibility standard.

<b>Open space type</b>	<b>Accessibility standard (radius from open space)</b>
Amenity green space (e.g. informal recreation spaces, recreation grounds, village greens, urban parks, formal gardens and playing fields)	400m
Provision for children and young people (e.g. equipped play areas, ball courts, outdoor basketball hoop areas, skateboard parks, teenage shelters and "hangouts")	600m
Publicly accessible outdoor sports (e.g. outdoor sports pitches, tennis, bowls, athletics and other sports)	1000m
Allotments and community gardens (e.g. land used for the growing of own produce, including urban farms. Does not include private gardens)	1000m
Natural/semi-natural areas of open space (e.g. woodlands, urban forestry, scrub, grasslands, wetlands, open and running water, banks to rivers, land and ponds, wastelands, closed cemeteries and graveyards)	300m (2ha site)
	2km (20ha site)
	5km (100ha site)
	10km (500ha site)

2. A financial contribution in lieu of open space provision will be acceptable, provided:
  - i. The proposed development site would be of insufficient size in itself to make the appropriate new provision; or
  - ii. The open space cannot be accommodated on-site due to site constraints, housing delivery expectations on allocated sites or location, and alternative appropriate off-site provision cannot be identified.
3. Where it can be demonstrated that existing open space provision can either wholly or partially mitigate the impacts of development in accordance with the above standards, the council may seek a reduced level of provision or financial contribution. Developers should take full account of open space requirements at an early stage of the development management process and are encouraged to engage with the council to determine the most appropriate quantum, type and location of open space provision.
4. The council will operate the policy flexibly to secure the provision of the typologies of open space which are most needed in the relevant area, taking account of the above standards and the suitability of the site to accommodate the identified needs.
5. Proposals for, and including, new publicly accessible open space and recreation provision will, where feasible, seek to reinforce existing landscape character, as defined in the Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment.
6. Proposals for, and including, new publicly accessible open space and recreation provision shall respect the amenities of neighbouring occupiers, by ensuring that development does not result in excessive levels of noise or light pollution. New lighting relating to such development will also preserve the character and visual amenity of the countryside.
7. Proposals for new development which would result in the net loss of open space or sport and recreation facilities will not be permitted unless there is a proven overriding need for the development. In addition, the development will only be permitted if:
  - i. There is no resulting deficiency in open space or recreation facilities in the locality when assessed against the quality standards of this policy; or
  - ii. An alternative provision, determined to be of an equivalent community benefit by the Borough Council and community representatives can be provided to replace the loss.
8. In dealing with applications to develop existing open areas within the urban area, rural service centres, larger villages and other locations, the Borough Council will have regard to the impact of the loss of the contribution that the existing site makes to the character, amenity and biodiversity of the area.

The Open Space supplementary planning document will contain further detail on how the policy will be implemented.

### Appendix 3: List of legislation, strategies, documents, projects and organisations referenced in the strategy

1. European Commission (2013) Environment, Green Infrastructure <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/ecosystems/>
2. [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010](#)
3. UK Legislation (2013) The Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents>
4. [Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006](#)
5. [National Planning Policy Framework](#)
6. [Planning Policy Guidance - Natural Environment](#)
7. [Sport England Delivering Sport and Recreation](#)
8. [Submission version Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2016](#)
9. [Kent Biodiversity Partnership](#)
10. [Kent Nature Partnership](#)
11. [Maidstone's Biodiversity Strategy](#)
12. [Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2013](#)
13. Kent Habitat Survey 2012 <http://www.archnature.eu>
14. Kent Habitat Survey 2012 <http://www.archnature.eu>
15. Maidstone Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2008 [http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/23060/Strategic-Flood-Risk-Assessment-REDUCED.pdf](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/23060/Strategic-Flood-Risk-Assessment-REDUCED.pdf)
16. [Kent Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2013-2017](#)
17. [Growing the Garden of England: A strategy for environment and economy in Kent, 2011](#)
18. [The State of water in Kent, Kent water Summit, Environment Agency, June 2012](#)
19. [Maidstone Landscape Character Assessment 2013](#)
20. [Maidstone Community Development Strategy 2012-16](#)
21. [Thames River Basin District Thames River Basin Management Plan..., Updated: December 2015](#)
22. [Maidstone Community Development Strategy 2012-16](#)
23. [Maidstone Community Development Strategy 2012-16](#)
24. [Submission version Maidstone Borough Local Plan 2016](#)
25. Adapting Cities for Climate Change: The Role of Green Infrastructure, Gill , S., Handley J., Ennos, A., and Pauleit, S., 2007 [http://urbanspace.rec.org/files/Article\\_Gill\\_Adapting\\_Cities\\_for\\_CC.pdf](http://urbanspace.rec.org/files/Article_Gill_Adapting_Cities_for_CC.pdf)
26. [Biodiversity 2020: a strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services](#)
27. [Growing the Garden of England: A strategy for environment and economy in Kent, 2011](#)
28. Tiwary, A., et al. (2009) 'An integrated tool to assess the role of new planting in PM10 capture and the human health benefits: A case study in London', Environmental Pollution, 157(10), pp. 2645-2653 <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19501436>
29. [Securing the Value of Nature in Kent \(2011\)](#)
30. [Securing the Value of Nature in Kent \(2011\)](#)



<b>Strategic Planning, Sustainability &amp; Transportation Committee</b>	<b>12 July 2016</b>
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Is the final decision on the recommendations in this report to be made at this meeting?	<b>Yes</b>
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## Community Infrastructure Levy: Draft Charging Schedule

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee
<b>Lead Director or Head of Service</b>	Rob Jarman: Head of Planning and Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Andrew Thompson: Principal Planning Officer
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

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

That the Strategic Planning, Sustainability and Transportation Committee is recommended to:

1. Approve the Draft Charging Schedule, Draft Regulation 123 List and Draft Instalments Policy for consultation under Regulation 16 of the Community Infrastructure Levy (“CIL”) Regulations 2010 (as amended).
2. Instruct officers to commence work on the consideration of potential options for CIL governance and administrative arrangements.

**This report relates to the following corporate priorities:**

Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all and Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough

- Securing provision of and improvements to infrastructure in our Borough

**Timetable**

<i>Meeting</i>	<i>Date</i>
Strategic Planning, Sustainability & Transportation Committee	12 July 2016

# Community Infrastructure Levy: Draft Charging Schedule

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule was undertaken alongside the Regulation 18 consultation on the emerging Local Plan in Spring 2014. Responses to the consultation were considered by the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 September 2014. In the intervening period the Local Plan has taken priority and has been subject to two further rounds of consultation and a series of evidence updates. The Council submitted the Local Plan to the Secretary of State for independent examination on 20 May 2016 and the submission draft Local Plan and its evidence base provides the basis on which to progress the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Consultation on the Draft Charging Schedule (Appendix A) is therefore the next step in the process of introducing the CIL in Maidstone Borough.
- 1.2 The Draft Charging Schedule sets out how the CIL will be applied to development in Maidstone. The document identifies the proposed rates that would be charged for different types of development, and whether and how this varies between different locations within the borough. Charges are calculated in pounds (£) per square metre of net additional floorspace.
- 1.3 In setting CIL rates, Charging Authorities must strike an appropriate balance between the desirability of funding infrastructure and the viability of development. CIL rates should not be set near the margins of viability as this could threaten the deliverability of development in the Local Plan. The Revised Plan and CIL Viability Study July 2015, undertaken by Peter Brett Associates, is therefore a key piece of evidence as the work demonstrates that development in Maidstone will continue to be viable after the combined costs of affordable housing requirements, ongoing section 106 costs<sup>1</sup> and CIL charges are applied.
- 1.4 Analysis of potential CIL receipts confirms that the CIL will make a significant financial contribution towards the delivery of infrastructure within Maidstone. Projections at June 2016 indicate that the CIL could provide funding in the region of £30m although it should be noted that development sites will continue to come forward in advance of the Charging Schedule's adoption, meaning that some developments included in these projections will make contributions through section 106 planning obligations instead of through the CIL.
- 1.5 The evidence demonstrates that CIL charges can be introduced for certain types of development within the borough whilst maintaining the viability of development proposed in the Local Plan. The Committee is therefore recommended to approve the Draft Charging Schedule for consultation.

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<sup>1</sup> Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990

- 1.6 The Committee is also recommended to approve the Draft Regulation 123 List (Appendix B) and Draft Instalments Policy (Appendix C) for consultation. These documents do not form part of the Draft Charging Schedule itself, and can be amended without instigating a full review of the Schedule, but provide important additional information on how the CIL will be implemented in Maidstone.
- 1.7 The CIL Regulations stipulate that a Charging Authority must consult on a Draft Charging Schedule for a minimum of four weeks however, as part of the consultation period will overlap with the school summer holidays, it is proposed to undertake consultation for a period of six weeks, The consultation will therefore commence on Friday 5 August and close on Friday 16 September.
- 1.8 Alongside development of the Charging Schedule it is important that consideration is given to how the CIL will be implemented once it is adopted. This will include developing governance arrangements to provide an effective framework for decision making on the allocation and spend of CIL receipts, in addition to the administrative and procedural measures required for the day-to-day management of the CIL. To ensure that appropriate arrangements can be established in a timely manner to support the implementation of the CIL, Councillors are recommended to instruct officers to commence work to assess the options available for CIL governance arrangements and to consider potential administrative arrangements for the CIL.

## **2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

### **Context**

- 2.1 The Maidstone Cabinet confirmed its commitment to develop a CIL for Maidstone Borough on 16 May 2012. Following consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule in spring 2014, the publication of the Draft Charging Schedule for consultation will be the next stage in the process of introducing the CIL in Maidstone. Although the timescales for subsequent stages of CIL examination and adoption are dependent upon those of the Local Plan examination, the overall objective is to introduce the CIL Charging Schedule in a timely manner following adoption of the Local Plan.
- 2.2 Since the introduction of the CIL Regulations<sup>2</sup> in 2010, the use of section 106 agreements to secure infrastructure has become progressively more restrictive. The Regulations set into statute the tests for the use of planning obligations, and therefore proposed obligations are now subject to increased scrutiny by local planning authorities and developers, to ensure they comply with the strict tests. More recently, amendments to the CIL Regulations have restricted the use of additional planning obligations where there are already five or more in place for a particular infrastructure type or project. In certain circumstances this could mean that financial contributions from some sites are not collected, simply because the pooling limit has already been reached.
- 2.3 These restrictions have potentially the most significant impact for the more strategic infrastructure schemes, such as major transport or education projects. One of the key advantages of the CIL is that these restrictions do not apply, and

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<sup>2</sup> The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended)

CIL receipts collected across the borough can be used towards strategic infrastructure projects, required to support the overall quantum of development proposed in the Local Plan. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (May 2016) identifies a number of strategic infrastructure schemes where the pooling of developer contributions will be critical to ensure that projects can be delivered.

- 2.4 It is important to note however that the CIL is not intended to replace mainstream funding for infrastructure, but rather to reduce the gap between the cost of providing infrastructure to support planned growth and the funding available to deliver infrastructure. Government guidance is clear that the CIL cannot be expected to pay for all the infrastructure required but is expected to make a significant contribution.

### **The Draft Charging Schedule**

- 2.5 The development of a CIL Charging Schedule is intrinsically linked to the emerging Local Plan in a number of ways. The setting of CIL rates must be informed by the viability evidence underpinning the Local Plan, and the council must demonstrate that the introduction of the CIL would not put delivery of the Local Plan at risk through viability issues. In setting the rates the council must have regard to the Local Plan's requirements for affordable housing, which represent a significant cost to development and will continue to be secured through section 106 agreements, together with any ongoing section 106 requirements (e.g. on-site open space) and a degree of buffer to account for changes in site specific circumstances.
- 2.6 The Revised Plan and CIL Viability Study, undertaken by Peter Brett Associates, was published in July 2015. The study assessed a range of different named and hypothetical developments to determine the level of "headroom" available to meet policy requirements, including CIL and affordable housing. This Committee considered the findings of the Viability Study and the setting of affordable housing requirements in July and August last year, and these requirements are set out in Policy DM13 of the submission draft Local Plan 2016. With the affordable housing rates now established in the submission draft version of the Local Plan, it is possible to determine the corresponding rates for CIL charges, based on the technical recommendations of the Viability Study.
- 2.7 The Viability Study confirms that there is sufficient "headroom" in viability terms to charge the CIL for residential development, retirement and extra care housing and for retail development (excluding comparison retail within the town centre). All other types of CIL liable floorspace, including business and commercial development, are shown not to be viable with a CIL charge. Further explanation of the proposed CIL charges is set out in paragraphs 2.23 – 2.25 however a summary of the charges and corresponding affordable housing requirements is set out in Table 1

Table 1: Affordable Housing requirements (DM13) and proposed CIL Charges

Development	Affordable housing (%)	CIL Charge (£ per m2)
Residential (Urban)	30	93
Residential (Rural)	40	99
H1 (11) Springfield, Royal Engineers, Road, Maidstone	20	77
Retirement and extra care housing	20	45
Retail - wholly or mainly convenience	n/a	150
Retail - wholly or mainly comparison outside of the town centre	n/a	75
All other forms of CIL liable floorspace	n/a	0

2.8 As required by CIL Regulations, it is considered that these rates strike an appropriate balance between the desirability of funding infrastructure from the CIL and the potential impact on the economic viability of development. The Viability Study demonstrates that development will continue to be viable, taking account of the significant affordable housing requirements, the rates allow for an appropriate buffer for additional section 106 costs and for changes in site specific circumstances, whilst ensuring that the CIL will make a significant contribution towards the delivery of infrastructure.

### The Regulation 123 List

2.9 On adoption of the CIL Charging Schedule, the council will be expected to significantly scale back the use of section 106 planning obligations, which will generally be limited to site specific requirements necessary to serve an individual development e.g. on-site open space provision. The CIL will therefore become the primary mechanism by which developers make contributions towards strategic infrastructure projects, such as major transport or education schemes which can serve a number of developments. Policy ID1 in the submission draft Local Plan establishes this broad approach, and provides the basis for the infrastructure policies in Policy H1 which set out how developers will be expected to pay for different types of infrastructure, and through which route.

2.10 Crucially, it will not be possible to seek additional contributions through section 106 planning obligations for infrastructure types or projects which are identified in the Regulation 123 List as eligible for funding through the CIL. The purpose of producing the Regulation 123 List is therefore to demonstrate that developers will not, in effect, be charged twice for the same piece of infrastructure.

2.11 There is no prescribed approach for producing a Regulation 123 List. The List can be very generic with open infrastructure “types” (e.g. education) so that all schemes within that category would be eligible for CIL funding but no further section 106 obligations could be sought for this type of infrastructure. At the other end of the spectrum, the List could be very specific, identifying a list of specific infrastructure “projects” so that only these schemes would be eligible for CIL funding.

- 2.12 Policy ID1 however clearly establishes that strategic infrastructure will be funded through the CIL and not through section 106 planning obligations, and therefore it is appropriate to take a more generic approach to the Regulation 123 List. To ensure that section 106 planning obligations, or agreements under section 278 of the Highways Act, can continue to be used for site specific infrastructure requirements, the draft Regulation 123 List also identifies exclusions to the use of CIL. It is considered that this approach, together with the accompanying policies in the Local Plan, establishes clearly that developers will not be charged twice for the same piece of infrastructure whilst ensuring that the council will not be unduly restricted in seeking to secure legitimate site specific mitigation through section 106 planning obligations.
- 2.13 The Regulation 123 List can be kept under review and updated by the council, subject to consultation, without necessarily instigating a full review of the Charging Schedule. Accordingly, the draft Regulation 123 List is published alongside the Charging Schedule rather than within the Schedule itself.

### **The Funding Gap**

- 2.14 The CIL is not intended to replace mainstream funding for services. It is intended to reduce the gap between the cost of providing, operating and maintaining the infrastructure required to support planned development, and the amount of money available from other sources.
- 2.15 One of the key pieces of supporting evidence required to justify the introduction of the CIL is the identification of an “aggregate funding gap”. This calculation must demonstrate that the infrastructure requirements proposed to be funded through the CIL cannot be fully funded by known sources of funding, including existing section 106 planning obligations and potential CIL receipts. The information on which the calculation is based must be taken from the infrastructure evidence base produced to support the Local Plan, including the IDP.
- 2.16 Although, on the face of it, this test appears somewhat at odds with demonstrating deliverability of infrastructure requirements, government guidance recognises that CIL cannot be expected to fund all infrastructure requirements and that it can be difficult to pinpoint other infrastructure funding sources beyond the short term. The key test is to show that there is a sufficient funding gap to justify the introduction of the CIL.
- 2.17 Any funding gap calculation will provide only a snapshot in time, based on the infrastructure evidence base available, the cost estimates associated with identified schemes, and an analysis of funding available to contribute towards delivery. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (May 2016) identifies a series of critical and essential infrastructure schemes required to support delivery of the Local Plan to 2031 and considered to be eligible for CIL funding. These schemes have been used to derive an estimated cost of infrastructure which could be funded wholly or partly through the CIL.
- 2.18 It should be noted that site specific mitigation schemes, for which funding from the CIL will not be sought, are not included in the CIL funding gap analysis. The overall cost of providing infrastructure to support the Local Plan is therefore somewhat higher than that shown in Table 2 below however these additional

infrastructure costs will be met through section 106 planning obligations, agreements under section 278 of the Highways Act or through planning conditions. Similarly, schemes which are already fully funded through other sources, such as the Bridges Gyratory improvements, are excluded from the analysis.

2.19 To determine the funding potentially available towards the delivery of these schemes requires an assessment of funding already secured through section 106 planning obligations, a projection of potential CIL receipts and an understanding of funding potentially available from other sources. This analysis has been undertaken at June 2016 (Appendix D). Given the number of moving parts involved in this analysis, the figures will require updating at key stages of the CIL process however a summary of the June 2016 analysis is provided below.

Table 2: Aggregate funding gap analysis

Infrastructure which may be funded wholly or partly through the CIL	Critical (£)	Essential (£)	Total (£)
Highways and Transportation	14,297,350	19,664,691	33,962,041
Education Provision	18,000,000	15,694,000	33,694,000
Health Provision		5,483,000	5,483,000
Social and Community Infrastructure		1,712,725	1,712,725
Public Services		108,500	108,500
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>32,297,350</b>	<b>42,662,916</b>	<b>74,960,266</b>
Potential funding from s106 planning obligations (£) <sup>(1) (2)</sup>			32,997,968
Projected CIL income (£) <sup>(3)</sup>			29,729,265
Potential funding from other sources			3,000,000
<b>AGGREGATE FUNDING GAP (£)</b>			<b>9,233,033</b>

(1) Contributions agreed (subject to conditions precedent and payment triggers) and contributions resolved by Planning Committee subject to the completion of a s106 legal agreement correct as of 15 June 2016;

(2) Where the precise level of contributions is yet to be determined, for instance where development yield and/or dwelling mix are not confirmed through an outline planning permission, maximum figures have been applied. Once these details are established corresponding figures may be revised downwards.

(3) This figure includes potential income from relevant Local Plan development which has not received planning consent or a resolution from Planning Committee to grant planning consent subject to completion of a s106 legal agreement at 15 June 2016.

2.20 As mentioned above, these figures are subject to near constant change; the determination of further planning applications prior to the introduction of the CIL will result in additional funding being available through section 106 planning obligations, but will reduce the projected CIL income. Further infrastructure evidence, including cost refinements for infrastructure items included in the IDP, could result in upward or downward revisions.

2.21 The impact of the “neighbourhood portion” of CIL receipts should not be underestimated either. In areas with adopted neighbourhood plans, the proportion of CIL receipts passed to Parish Councils, or spent on behalf of communities where there is no Parish Council, increases from the default 15% to 25%. These monies can be spent on a much wider range of infrastructure improvements than the monies retained by the Charging Authority, and Parish Councils or communities can choose themselves how to use the neighbourhood portion. These monies can therefore not be relied upon to deliver funding towards schemes identified for potential CIL funding and the projected CIL income available to deliver these may reduce over time as further neighbourhood plans are adopted. The analysis does however demonstrate an

aggregate funding gap and therefore provides justification for the introduction of the CIL in Maidstone Borough.

2.22 Whilst the scale of the projected funding gap is significant, this must be seen in the wider context that the CIL is not intended to replace mainstream funding for services, and is not expected to pay for all infrastructure requirements. As further context, it is also helpful to consider the funding gaps identified by other Kent authorities who have developed a CIL Charging Schedule: Sevenoaks District Council adopted the CIL in 2014 with an identified gap of £18m, whilst Shepway District Council identified a funding gap of between £18.6m - £64m as part of their recent CIL examination. In the nearby East Sussex authorities of Rother and Wealden District Councils, funding gaps of £133m and £73m respectively were identified through the examination of their Charging Schedules whilst Ashford Borough Council has recently projected a CIL funding gap in the region of £60m as part of its consultation on a Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule. The current projection for Maidstone is clearly much less substantial than these figures, and indicates that the CIL would indeed make a significant contribution towards meeting the infrastructure needs of planned growth in the borough.

### **Changes from Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule**

2.23 The main changes to the Charging Schedule have arisen as a result of the updated Viability Study with the revised residential charges now somewhat higher for the urban area and somewhat lower for the rural areas. These revised rates reflect the increase in sales values between 2013 (when the previous viability study was undertaken) and 2015, and also modifications to the methodology used by the viability consultants, based on experience at Independent Examination, peer reviews and improved market conditions. Fundamentally however, the borough-wide viability picture remains relatively similar, with development in the rural areas demonstrably more viable than in the urban areas. The difference in the rates recommended by the consultants between 2013 and 2015 is relatively modest, with the most significant change being the increase in the affordable housing requirements for sites within the urban area from 20-25% to 30% as set out in Policy DM13.

2.24 Site specific assessments were undertaken for two large urban brownfield sites, one of which is no longer available for development, and the study identifies that site H1 (11) Springfield, Royal Engineers Road, Maidstone is significantly less viable than the urban area more generally. The CIL rate and affordable housing requirements have been reduced accordingly. The updated Viability Study also shows an improvement in the viability of retirement and extra care housing and this is reflected in both Policy DM13 and the proposed CIL rate for this type of development.

2.25 In respect of non-residential development the picture is largely unchanged between the consultants' recommendations from 2013 and 2015. Although the charges for convenience retail are somewhat lower, they are now shown to be viable both within and outside of the town centre. A separate rate for comparison retail is proposed exclusively outside of the town centre however. Recent CIL examinations demonstrate that a distinction in terms of convenience and comparison retail can be justified where this is supported by robust evidence, and so the Charging Schedule no longer refers to the size of retail



developments and differentiates instead by convenience/comparison. Retail apart, all other tested development typologies demonstrably cannot sustain a CIL charge, as was the case in 2013. This results in a £0 per sqm charge for all other types of CIL liable floorspace, including office and business development.

- 2.26 These changes directly address a number of the comments made in response to the consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule. As part of the consultation however, a number of comments were received suggesting further changes to the Charging Schedule, including the addition of an instalments policy to stagger CIL payments, the introduction of exceptional circumstances relief and the additional of a mechanism for “in-kind” CIL payments e.g. through land for the provision of infrastructure. Whilst it is not considered necessary to introduce relief for exceptional circumstances, as the Regulations already allow for relief for a variety of development types, the Draft Charging Schedule does now include a mechanism for CIL “in-kind” payments. A Draft Instalments Policy (Appendix C) is also proposed.
- 2.27 The CIL Regulations require full payment of the chargeable amount within 60 days following commencement of development. This represents a significant change to how developer contributions are currently paid under section 106 planning obligations, where payments often do not become due until a proportion of the development is completed or occupied, and are often staggered over two or three payments. In cases where there is an outline planning permission with longer term phasing plans, the CIL Regulations set out that each separate phase of development is treated as a separate “chargeable development” and therefore payments can be staggered to correspond with the phased tranches of development. Although this provision may help to spread the cost of CIL payments to an extent, the Regulations were amended in 2011 to enable Charging Authorities to apply locally set instalments policies in order to allow for the timing of payments to depart from the default approach.
- 2.28 Comments received from the development industry in response to the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule consultation contend that the lack of an instalments policy could present deliverability issues, particularly for larger schemes. Similar concerns have been raised across the country and it is becoming increasingly common for Charging Authorities to introduce an instalments policy alongside their Charging Schedules, in order to respond to these issues. It is recommended that a policy allowing for staged payments should be introduced in order to stagger payments over a number of months following commencement of development, and to provide for a greater number of instalments proportionate to the overall CIL liability. A summary of the Draft Instalments Policy is set out in Table 3.
- 2.29 Similarly to the Draft Regulation 123 List, the Draft Instalments Policy does not form part of the Draft Charging Schedule itself and instead will be published alongside the Schedule. The Instalments Policy can therefore be kept under review and updated as necessary without generating the need for a full review of the CIL Charging Schedule.

Table 3: Draft Instalments Policy

Total Amount of CIL Liability	Number of Instalments	Payment Periods and Proportion of CIL Due			
Amounts up to £250,000	1	100% payable within 60 days of commencement of development.			
Amounts over £250,000 and up to £500,000	2	50% payable within 60 days of commencement of development	50% payable within 12 months of commencement of development		
Amounts over £500,000 and up to £1,000,000	3	30% payable within 60 days of commencement of development	30% payable within 12 months of commencement of development	40% payable within 24 months of commencement of development	
Amounts over £1,000,000	4	20% payable within 60 days of commencement of development	20% payable within 12 months of commencement of development	30% payable within 24 months of commencement of development	30% payable within 36 months of commencement of development

2.30 The CIL Regulations also provide for payment to be made “in kind” through the transfer of land for the provision of necessary infrastructure, with the value of this deducted from the overall CIL liability. Although such “in kind” payments may be rare, there may be circumstances where the provision of land in lieu of payment may provide opportunities for the delivery of strategic infrastructure. Acceptance of any “in kind” payments would be entirely at the Council’s discretion. The Draft Charging Schedule sets out the specific circumstances in which payment “in kind” may be considered.

2.31 In terms of exceptional circumstances relief some respondents to the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule commented that relief should be considered where the amount of CIL liability could affect the viability of development. It is considered however that the proposed rates are based on up-to-date viability evidence and allow for a significant buffer to account for changes in site specific circumstances. Exceptional circumstances relief would be extremely rare: applicable only where a section 106 agreement is also in place, and where the value of this exceeds the cost of the CIL charge. Additionally, any exceptional relief must not constitute a notifiable state aid and the Charging Authority must first give notice publically of its intention to have an exceptional circumstances policy. Given the very limited scope in the

application of the relief, the dilution of the key benefits of the CIL and the practical and resource implications, it is not proposed to introduce such a policy.

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## **CIL Governance and Administrative Arrangements**

- 2.32 The CIL Regulations are not prescriptive in respect of precisely how Charging Authorities make decisions on the spending or allocation of CIL receipts. Charging Authorities have some scope therefore to implement a decision making framework tailored to their individual requirements and a variety of approaches have been adopted across the country.
- 2.33 A specific workstream is therefore required to assess the available options for CIL governance arrangements and to determine the appropriate decision making framework for Maidstone Borough Council in its future role as Charging Authority. Key elements of this framework are likely to include both the processes by which recommendations are developed and the final decision making process itself. The role of infrastructure providers, council officers and elected councillors within this framework will need to be considered, together with the need for any additional detailed infrastructure information required to support and inform decision making.
- 2.34 To ensure that the required governance arrangements can be put in place in a timely manner to support the implementation of the CIL, the Committee is recommended to instruct officers to commence work to assess the options available for CIL governance arrangements. It is anticipated that this assessment will inform a report which can be considered by this Committee in the autumn, however the availability of officer resources to progress this work is clearly subject to the timing and progress of the Local Plan examination.
- 2.35 Alongside the development of governance arrangements, consideration must also be given to the appropriate administrative framework for the day-to-day management of the CIL. Key elements of this will include the details regarding how the Council collects, monitors and reports CIL receipts and how and when payments are made to local councils (the neighbourhood portion). At the meeting of Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 September 2014, the Committee made the following recommendation:
- “The Head of Planning and Development be recommended to ensure representatives from parish councils and Area Committee Officers are involved in the design of the process for administering the distribution of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), before consulting fully with all parish councils, before the Local Plan is adopted, so parish councils are assured Maidstone Borough Council fulfils its’ duty to pass the appropriate level of CIL receipts to local councils.*
- 2.36 In accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny recommendation, officers will engage with Parish Council representatives and Area Committee Officers to progress this element of the work with a view to consulting all Parish Councils on the process for administering and distributing CIL receipts. It is anticipated that progress on the development of options for CIL administrative arrangements will also be reported to this Committee in the autumn, subject to the Local Plan examination timetable.

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### 3. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

**Option A:** Approve the CIL Draft Charging Schedule for consultation under Regulation 16 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended). This option should be selected if the Draft Charging Schedule is considered to be fit for purpose.

**Option B:** Reject the CIL Draft Charging Schedule for consultation under Regulation 16 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010 (as amended). This option should be selected if the Draft Charging Schedule is not considered to be fit for purpose.

**Option C:** Instruct officers to commence work on the consideration of potential options for CIL governance and administrative arrangements.

**Option D:** Delay work on the consideration of options for CIL governance and administrative arrangements.

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### 4. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Option A is recommended. The CIL Draft Charging Schedule is informed by an extensive and up-to-date evidence base and has taken account of responses to the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule. The introduction of the Charging Schedule will make a significant contribution towards the delivery of strategic infrastructure required to support the delivery of planned growth whilst ensuring an appropriate balance is struck between the desirability of infrastructure delivery and development viability.

4.2 Option C is also recommended. It is important that appropriate governance and administrative arrangements are put in place in a timely manner to support implementation of the CIL.

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### 5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

5.1 The results of consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule were considered by the Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 16 September 2014 and have been re-examined in light of updated viability evidence and Local Plan progress. During that September 2014 meeting the Committee resolved to fully involve the Parish Councils in the design of the process for administering the distribution of the CIL, and work to progress this is proposed as part of the recommendations.

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

- 6.1 The Draft Charging Schedule and supporting documentation will be published for consultation on Friday 5 August 2016 for a period of six weeks. Responses received will be analysed and reported to this Committee in October 2016 to seek a recommendation to Full Council to approve the Draft Charging Schedule, and any proposed changes arising as a result of the consultation process, for submission for independent examination. The timing of examination and adoption of the CIL is likely to be dependent on progress of the Local Plan examination.
- 6.2 Officers will commence work on options for CIL governance and administrative arrangements, with the intention of reporting back to this Committee in the autumn.

## 7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The CIL Charging Schedule will support the delivery of the Local Plan and will assist in the delivery of the Council's corporate priorities.	Head of Planning and Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	The CIL will help to overcome some of the existing challenges in securing the delivery of necessary strategic infrastructure. Any delay in the introduction of CIL could exacerbate these issues.	Head of Planning and Development
<b>Financial</b>	The CIL will provide a significant source of funding towards delivery of the infrastructure needed to support development in the borough. Up to 5% of annual CIL receipts can be retained by the Council for use towards the cost of CIL administration.	Head of Finance & Resources
<b>Staffing</b>	Management, monitoring and administration of the CIL may require a dedicated resource to ensure its effective implementation. Separately, more detailed infrastructure planning work is likely to be required to inform decision making on the allocation of CIL monies.	Head of Planning and Development
<b>Legal</b>	The Draft Charging Schedule and accompanying evidence base is required to facilitate its progression through Examination in Public, to adoption.	Team Leader (Planning), Mid Kent Legal Services
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>	The IDP identifies the infrastructure necessary to support development in a	Policy & Information

	sustainable manner, and therefore seeks to minimise the potential equality impacts of new development in the borough. The CIL will play a key role in delivering key strategic and community infrastructure which should benefit those equality groups most in need.	Manager
<b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b>	The CIL will play a key role in delivering the infrastructure required to support planned development in order to minimise the environmental and social impacts of new development, whilst facilitating economic development and growth within the borough.	Head of Planning and Development
<b>Community Safety</b>	The CIL will play a key role in the delivery of infrastructure schemes required to mitigate the safety impacts of new development such as transport schemes and potentially policing infrastructure.	Head of Planning and Development
<b>Human Rights Act</b>	N/A	Head of Planning and Development
<b>Procurement</b>	Consultants are used to prepare specialist or technical evidence to support the CIL and the Local Plan and are appointed in accordance with the Council's procurement procedures.	Head of Planning and Development Section 151 Officer
<b>Asset Management</b>	N/A	Head of Planning and Development

## 8. REPORT APPENDICES

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix A: Community Infrastructure Levy – Draft Charging Schedule (July 2016)
- Appendix B: Draft Regulation 123 List (July 2016)
- Appendix C: Draft Instalments Policy (July 2016)
- Appendix D: Funding Gap Analysis (June 2016)

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## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Background Paper A: Infrastructure Delivery Plan (May 2016)  
[http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/121129/SUB-011-Infrastructure-Delivery-Plan-May-2016.pdf](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/121129/SUB-011-Infrastructure-Delivery-Plan-May-2016.pdf)
- Background Paper B: Revised Plan and CIL Viability Study (July 2015)

[http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0011/94736/Revised-Plan-and-Community-Infrastructure-Levy-CIL-Viability-Study-2015.pdf](http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/94736/Revised-Plan-and-Community-Infrastructure-Levy-CIL-Viability-Study-2015.pdf)

**Maidstone Borough Council**

**Maidstone Community  
Infrastructure Levy – Draft  
Charging Schedule**



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**1.1** The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Draft Charging Schedule consultation starts on (DATE TBC)

**1.2** Comments on the Draft Charging Schedule can be submitted to the Council's online consultation web page at: [maidstone-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal](http://maidstone-consult.limehouse.co.uk/portal).

**1.3** Comments can also be submitted using the CIL consultation form, which is available from the council web page, or in hard copy from the Spatial Policy team. CIL consultation forms or other written comments can be submitted either electronically or by post.

### Introduction

**2.1** Consultation on the Preliminary Draft CIL Charging Schedule was undertaken between 21 March and 7 May 2014, alongside consultation on the draft Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2011 - 2031). Planning, Transport and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee subsequently considered responses to the consultation on 16 September 2014.

**2.2** This document produces the Draft CIL Charging Schedule for consultation which is the next stage in the process in introducing the CIL for Maidstone Borough.

**2.3** The Council will seek to implement the CIL in a timely manner following adoption of the Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2011 - 2031). The table below outlines the key stages and timetable for adoption of CIL.

Stage	Date
Preliminary Draft CIL Charging Schedule	March - May 2014
Draft Charging Schedule	August 2016
Submission of CIL Draft Schedule to Planning Inspectorate	October 2016
CIL Examination	January 2017 <sup>(1)</sup>
Adoption and implementation of CIL	Summer 2017 <sup>(2)</sup>

Table 1: CIL Timetable

1. Dependent upon outcome of Local Plan EiP
2. Dependent upon outcome of Local Plan EiP

**2.4** The Government considers that the CIL should provide a faster, fairer, more certain and transparent means of collecting developer contributions towards infrastructure, compared to individually negotiated section 106 agreements. The CIL is a per square metre charge payable on almost all new development which creates net additional floorspace (calculated on gross internal area). The charge can be differentiated by geographical area, and by development type, and must be based on viability evidence.

**2.5** The purpose of the charge is to provide a funding source which will help to deliver necessary infrastructure to accommodate new development across the borough. This necessary infrastructure is identified within the Maidstone Borough Local Plan and the accompanying Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

**2.6** Some types of development, notably affordable housing, self-build housing and charitable uses, are exempt from being charged the CIL. A size threshold of 100m<sup>2</sup> also applies to non-residential developments. Where exemptions do not apply, the council must set a CIL charge, even if it is £0 per m<sup>2</sup>. The proposed CIL charging rates are set out in part five of this document.

**2.7** In light of the viability evidence, and given the very rare circumstances in which relevant criteria would be satisfied, the council has decided not to introduce exceptional circumstances relief policy.

### Infrastructure Delivery

#### Maidstone Borough Local Plan

**3.1** The Maidstone Borough Local Plan (2011 - 2031) will replace the existing Maidstone Borough-Wide Local Plan 2000. The new Local Plan sets out a strategy to meet identified development needs for housing through the provision of at least 18,560 homes, in addition to new employment, retail and open space and gypsy and traveller accommodation.

**3.2** The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) sets out the infrastructure schemes which have been identified as necessary to support the delivery of development proposed in the Maidstone Borough Local Plan. The IDP is published separately to the Local Plan and is updated as necessary. The infrastructure identified in the IDP is not intended to deal with existing deficits, rather it is to accommodate new development. However, in practice these two outcomes are often delivered together.

**3.3** The council has produced the IDP in consultation with a range of local service providers and partners, including but not limited to Southern Water, South East Water, Kent County Council, West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group and the Environment Agency. The IDP takes account of the latest available evidence including documents such as the Integrated Transport Strategy and the County Council's School Commissioning Plan for Kent, and identifies broadly how and when the schemes will be delivered.

#### Relationship between the CIL and Section 106 planning obligations

**3.4** The Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations (2010) (as amended) set into statute the tests for using section 106 planning obligations. This represents a tightening of the rules and has meant that local planning authorities and developers are both being more careful with regard to what potential planning obligations can be considered legitimate.

##### Tests for a section 106 planning obligation

A planning obligation may only constitute a reason for granting planning permission for the development if the obligation is -

- a. necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms;
- b. directly related to the development; and
- c. fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

**3.5** In addition, the CIL Regulations now restrict the pooling of section 106 agreements where five or more obligations for that project or type of infrastructure have already been entered into since 6 April 2010. The introduction of the CIL will therefore provide greater flexibility for the council and infrastructure providers in delivering strategic infrastructure, as receipts can be pooled and spent without such restrictions.

**3.6** Following the introduction of the CIL, the use of section 106 agreements will be scaled back and limited to site specific infrastructure necessary to make development acceptable in planning terms. The CIL will therefore become the primary mechanism by which developers make contributions towards the delivery of strategic infrastructure. The list of relevant infrastructure (Regulation 123 List) sets out how the CIL and section 106 agreements will be used following the introduction of the CIL.

**3.7** Where the council provides funding for infrastructure from CIL receipts, it will require an agreement, similar to a deed of obligation [used with section 106 obligations], that specifies how the infrastructure provider will use the funding for its intended purpose.

### **List of relevant infrastructure (Regulation 123 List)**

**3.8** The Local Plan and IDP support the development of the CIL Regulation 123 List which identifies the infrastructure types and/or projects intended to be funded wholly or partly by the CIL. The council must demonstrate that developers will not be charged twice for the same infrastructure projects, and therefore the Regulation 123 List also identifies the exclusions where section 106 agreements will continue to be used to fund infrastructure.

**3.9** It should be noted that the inclusion of a project or type of infrastructure in this list does not represent a commitment from the council to fund it, either in whole or in part. The order of the table does not imply any order of preference for the use of CIL receipts.

**3.10** The list of relevant infrastructure will be reviewed each year as part of the council's CIL monitoring process. This review will determine, as the Local Plan period progresses, whether the list remains appropriate to be able to deliver infrastructure in support of the Local Plan. This will take into account the ongoing performance of infrastructure delivery and will determine if for any reason the list needs to be amended. The council must consult on amendments to the list of relevant infrastructure, however, the specific process for doing this is within the council's discretion. Amendments to the list that adversely affect plan viability will prompt a necessary review of the charging schedule.

## Local Plan and CIL Viability Testing

**4.1** In July 2015, the council published a Revised Plan and CIL Viability Study<sup>(1)</sup> undertaken by Peter Brett Associates to inform updated Maidstone Borough Local Plan policies and the continued development of the CIL. The Viability Study considered the viability and deliverability of the Local Plan as a whole and assessed the viability of development allocations to inform the setting of CIL charging rates.

**4.2** The Viability Study provides a high level analysis, undertaken in accordance with the Royal Institute for Chartered Surveyors (RICS) valuation guidance, and tested a number of hypothetical and named schemes that represent the proposed allocation of development land, as identified in the Local Plan. The approach involves a comparison of the "residual value" with a benchmark land value to determine the balance that could be available to support policy costs, such as affordable housing and infrastructure.

**4.3** The viability testing was split between residential and non-residential uses.

### Residential

**4.4** To provide comprehensive coverage of the variety sites and schemes proposed in the Local Plan, some 24 different typologies of residential development were tested. The factors considered included small/large sites, brownfield/greenfield development and urban/rural locations, in addition to more specialist types of residential development including care homes, extra care facilities and retirement homes. Site specific assessments were undertaken for two urban brownfield development sites, including Springfield, Royal Engineers Road, Maidstone (Policy H1 (11) in the Local Plan).

**4.5** The assessment indicated that all typologies tested were viable without policy requirements, and proceeded to test a number of alternative scenarios to establish potential viability at a range of affordable housing rates. The assessment was used to inform the setting of affordable housing rates in the Local Plan, as set out in Policy DM13. A summary of the rates is provided below.

Development Type/Location	Affordable Housing Rate (%)
Residential (Urban)	30
Residential (Rural)	40
Residential (Springfield H1 (11) )	20
Retirement housing / extra care	20
Residential care homes / nursing homes	0

Table 2: Local Plan Affordable Housing Rates (Policy DM13)

1 <http://www.maidstone.gov.uk/residents/planning/local-plan/evidence>



**4.6** Taking these rates into account, CIL charges are calculated using the residual "headroom" and allowing for a buffer to account for potential section 106/278 costs and changes in site specific circumstances.

### **Non-residential**

**4.7** Viability testing of non-residential uses adopted a similarly high level approach and considered the viability of 10 different typologies including a variety of retail, commercial and business uses to reflect the types of uses likely to come forward during the period of the Local Plan. The assessment specifically considered the viability of retail and office uses within the town centre.

**4.8** The development types tested do not need to coincide with those defined in the Use Classes Order (as updated in 2013). In practice this means that for viability and CIL purposes, a degree of sensitivity can be applied to uses that in traditional terms might be considered to be part of the same use class. The principal example of such differentiation within the same use class having been applied is in the case of retail. Charging Authorities have sought to justify a differentiation between convenience and comparison retail, based on varying characteristics and, importantly, significant differences in development viability. In Maidstone, it is clear that town centre comparison retail cannot sustain a CIL charge, whereas comparison retail located outside of the town centre can. The assessment suggests however that convenience retailing can sustain a CIL charge both within and outside of the town centre.

**4.9** Although a variety of other non-residential uses were tested for viability, the assessment indicates that none of the other uses would be able to sustain a CIL charge.

## Implementation

### Setting the CIL Rates

**5.1** The rates are informed by the viability evidence base at a level that does not put the overall quantum of development proposed in the Local Plan at risk. CIL charges should not be set near the margins of viability and therefore the proposed rates accommodate an adequate buffer to allow for potential section 106/278 costs and changes in site specific circumstances. In accordance with the CIL Regulations, for any types of uses that are unable to sustain a CIL charge a £0 CIL rate has been applied.

**5.2** Charges for residential development vary depending on the location of development. Development located outside of the Urban Boundary will attract the higher rate whereas development located within the Urban Boundary will attract the lower rate. Land at Springfield, Royal Engineers Road, Maidstone (Policy H1 (11)) attracts a significantly lower rate, based on the viability evidence. Zone maps 1 and 2 at Appendix A show the boundaries applicable to residential development.

**5.3** Charges for comparison retail also vary depending on the location of development. Development outside the Town Centre Boundary will attract a charge, whilst development within the Town Centre Boundary will not. Zone map 3 at Appendix A shows the boundaries applicable to comparison retail development.

**5.4** All other charges apply at the same rate across the borough.

**5.5** The proposed charging schedule is set out below.

<b>Development Type / Location</b>	<b>CIL Charge (£ per sqm)</b>
Residential (Within the Urban Boundary)	<b>£93</b>
Residential (Outside the Urban Boundary)	<b>£99</b>
Site H1 (11) Springfield, Royal Engineers Road, Maidstone	<b>£77</b>
Retirement and extra care housing	<b>£45</b>
Retail - wholly or mainly convenience	<b>£150</b>
Retail - wholly or mainly comparison (Outside the Town Centre Boundary)	<b>£75</b>
All other forms of CIL liable floorspace	<b>£0</b>

Table 3: Proposed CIL Charging Rates

### Payment in Kind

**5.6** In accordance with Regulation 73 of the CIL Regulations, the Council may support the payment of part of a CIL liability in the form of one or more land payments. This will be subject to the following conditions:

- The Council must be satisfied that the land to be transferred would be appropriate for the provision of necessary infrastructure to support growth in the Borough. It is entirely at the Council's discretion as to whether to accept a land transfer in lieu of CIL.
- Transfers of land as payment in kind in lieu of CIL will only take place in exceptional circumstances and is in addition to any transfer of land which may be required via section 106 agreements.
- The chargeable development must not have commenced before a written agreement with the Council to pay part of the CIL amount in land has been made. This agreement must state the value of the land to be transferred.
- The person transferring the land to the charging authority as payment must have assumed liability to pay CIL and completed the relevant CIL forms.
- The land to be transferred must be valued by a suitably qualified and experienced independent person as agreed with the Council. The valuation must represent a fair market price for the land on the day that it is valued and reflect the relevant purposes for which the land will be utilised.
- The land, subject to the transfer, must be free from any interest in land and encumbrance to the land, buildings or structures.
- The land, subject to the transfer, must be fit for a relevant purpose being the provision of necessary infrastructure to support growth in the Borough.
- The Council may transfer the land, at no cost, to a third party for the provision of infrastructure.

### Duty to pass CIL to local councils

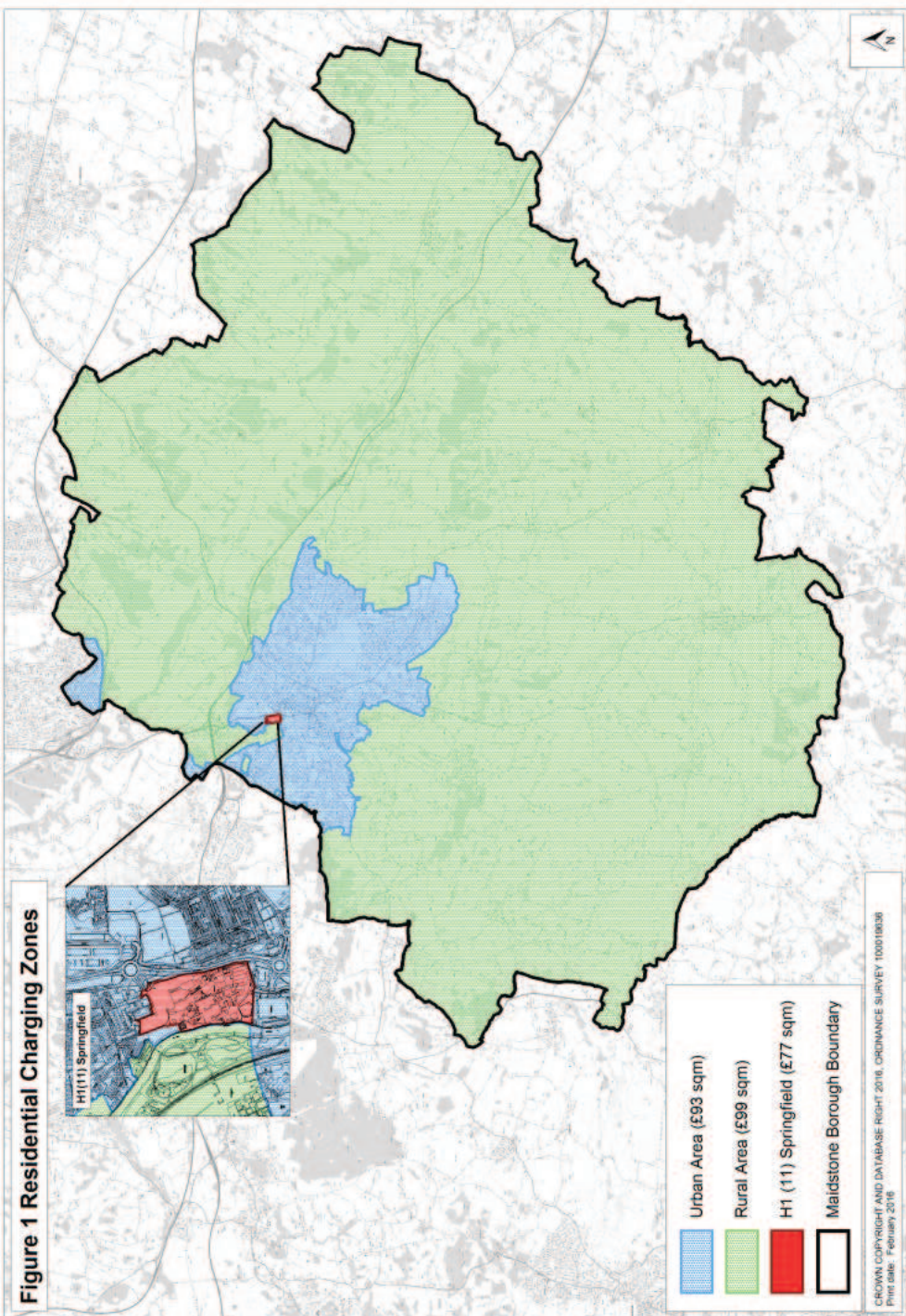
**6.1** The Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) Regulations 2013 make provision for a proportion of CIL receipts - known as the neighbourhood portion - to be passed to Parish Councils, or be spent on behalf of communities where there is no Parish Council. The proportion passed to the Parish Council, or spent on behalf of the neighbourhood, is dependent on whether or not a neighbourhood plan has been "made" within the relevant area.

**6.2** In areas where no neighbourhood plan is in place, 15% of the receipts associated with a development in that area (capped at £100 per existing council tax dwelling) will be paid to the Parish Council or will be spent on behalf of the community. Where a neighbourhood plan has been "made" 25% of CIL receipts (with no cap) will be passed to the Parish Council or will be spent on behalf of the community.

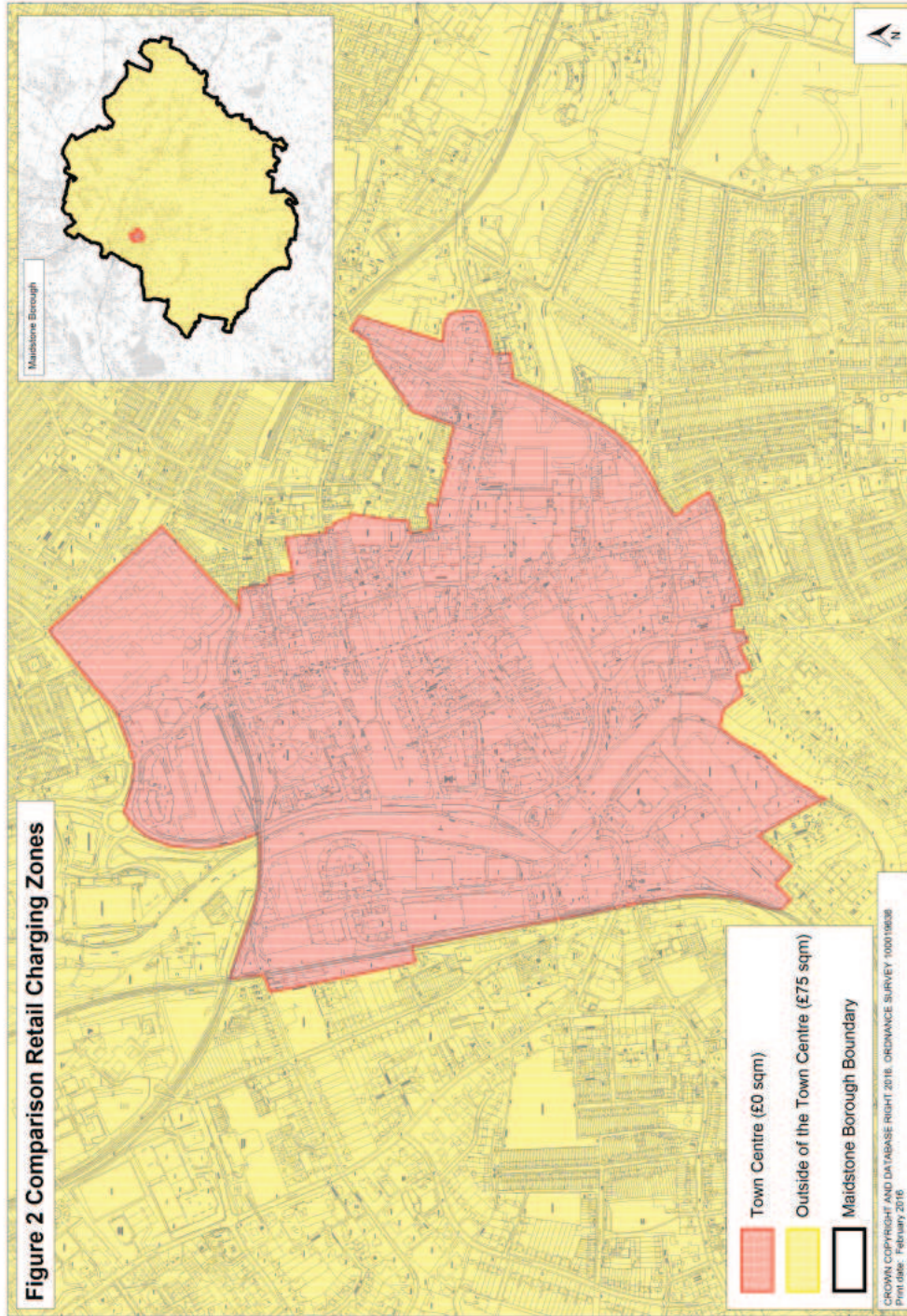
**6.3** Much of Maidstone Town lies outside of established Parish boundaries and a significant level of development is expected within this area. CIL receipts collected in this area will be retained by the council as Charging Authority, however the council will engage with the communities where development has taken place and agree with them how best to spend the neighbourhood funding. Where development takes place within an area with a neighbourhood plan, the council and communities will consider how the neighbourhood portion can be used to deliver the infrastructure identified in the neighbourhood plan as required to address the demands of development.

**6.4** The neighbourhood portion of the levy funding is subject to a much wider definition in regards to how the monies can be spent. The monies must be spent on supporting the development of the area however this can be achieved through:

- The provision, improvement, replacement, operations or maintenance of infrastructure; or
- Anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area.



# Appendix A . CIL charging zones



## Calculation of the CIL Charge

The method of calculation of the CIL charge is set out in Regulation 40 in the CIL Regulations 2010 as amended by the 2014 Regulations:

### “Calculation of chargeable amount

**40.-(1)** The collecting authority must calculate the amount of CIL payable (“chargeable amount”) in respect of a chargeable development in accordance with this regulation.

(2) The chargeable amount is an amount equal to the aggregate of the amounts of CIL chargeable at each of the relevant rates.

(3) But where that amount is less than £50 the chargeable amount is deemed to be zero.

(4) The relevant rates are the rates, taken from the relevant charging schedules, at which CIL is chargeable in respect of the chargeable development.

(5) The amount of CIL chargeable at a given relevant rate (R) must be calculated by applying the following formula-

$$\frac{R \times A \times I_p}{I_c}$$

Where-

A = the deemed net area chargeable at Rate R, calculated in accordance with paragraph (7);

$I_p$  = the index figure for the year in which planning permission was granted; and

$I_c$  = the index figure for the year in which the charging schedule containing rate R took effect.

(6) In this regulation the index figure for a given year is-

(a) the figure for 1<sup>st</sup> November for the preceding year in the national All-in Tender Price Index published from time to time by the Building Cost Information Service of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors(1); or

(b) if the All-in Tender Price Index ceases to be published, the figure for 1<sup>st</sup> November for the preceding year in the retail prices index.

(7) The value of A must be calculated by applying the following formula-

$$\frac{G_R - K_R - (G_R \times E)}{G}$$

Where -

$G$  = the gross internal area of the chargeable development;

$G_R$  = the gross internal area of the part of the chargeable development chargeable at rate R;

$K_R$  = the aggregate of the gross internal areas of the following-

- i. retained parts of in-use buildings, and
- ii. for other relevant buildings, retained parts where the intended use following completion of the chargeable development is a use that is able to be carried on lawfully and permanently without further planning permission in that part on the day before planning permission first permits the chargeable development;

$E$  = the aggregate of the following-

- i. the gross internal areas of parts of in-use buildings that are to be demolished before completion of the chargeable development, and
- ii. for the second and subsequent phases of a phased planning permission, the value  $E_x$  (as determined under paragraph (8)), unless  $E_x$  is negative,

provided that no part of any building may be taken into account under both of paragraphs (i) and (ii) above.

(8) The value  $E_x$  must be calculated by applying the following formula-

$$E_p - (G_p - K_{PR})$$

Where-

$E_p$  = the value of E for the previously commended phase of the planning permission;

$G_p$  = the value of G for the previously commenced phase of the planning permission; and

$K_{PR}$  = the total of the values of  $K_R$  for the previously commenced phase of the planning permission.

(9) Where a collecting authority does not have sufficient information, or information of sufficient quality, to enable it to establish that a relevant building is an in-use building, it may deem it not to be an in-use building.



(10) Where a collecting authority does not have sufficient information, or information of sufficient quality, to enable it to establish-

- a. whether part of a building falls within a description in the definitions of  $K_R$  and E in paragraph (7); or
- b. the gross internal area of any part of a building falling within such a description,

It may deem the gross internal area of the part in question to be zero.

(11) In this regulation-

“building” does not include-

- i. a building into which people do not normally go,
- ii. a building into which people go intermittently for the purpose of maintaining or inspecting machinery, or
- iii. a building for which planning permission was granted for a limited period;

“in-use building” means a building which-

- i. is a relevant building, and
- ii. contains a part that been in lawful use for continuous period of at least six months within the period of three years ending on the day planning permission first permits the chargeable development;

“new build” means that part of the chargeable development which will comprise new buildings and enlargements to existing buildings;

“relevant building” means a building which is situated on the relevant land on the day planning permission first permits the chargeable development;

“relevant charging schedules” means the charging schedules which are in effect-

- i. at the time planning permission first permits the chargeable development, and
- ii. in the area in which the chargeable development will be situated;

“retained part” means part of a building which will be-

- i. on the relevant land on completion of the chargeable development (excluding new build),
- ii. part of the chargeable development on completion, and
- iii. chargeable at rate R.

1. Registered in England and Wales RC00487.”

## Appendix B

### Maidstone Borough Council

#### Community Infrastructure Levy: Draft Regulation 123 List (July 2016)

Regulation 123 of the CIL Regulations (as amended) requires a council to identify the infrastructure types and/or projects which it intends will be, or may be, wholly or partly funded through the CIL. The inclusion of a project or type of infrastructure in the Regulation 123 List does not represent a commitment from the council to fund it, either in whole or in part. The order of the table does not imply any order of preference for the use of CIL receipts.

<b>Infrastructure projects/types that may be funded wholly or partly through the CIL</b>	<b>Exclusions – To be funded through s106 planning obligations, s278 of the Highway Act; other legislation or through planning condition</b>
<p><b>Highways and transportation</b></p> <p>Transport infrastructure including highway improvement schemes, walking and cycling (including public realm) and public transport infrastructure and improvements.</p>	<p>On or off site infrastructure and improvements required to make the development acceptable in planning terms.</p>
<p><b>Education provision</b></p> <p>Education infrastructure including primary and secondary education infrastructure and improvements.</p>	<p>On or off site primary and secondary school facilities required specifically to serve a new development including the following schemes identified in the IDP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Provision of a new primary school on site H1 (10) Land South of Sutton Road;</li> <li>- Up to 1FE expansion of Greenfields Community Primary School, Maidstone; and</li> <li>- Provision of a new 2FE primary school within Broad Location H2 (2) Invicta Barracks, Maidstone.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Health provision</b></p> <p>Health infrastructure including primary healthcare infrastructure and improvements.</p>	<p>On or off site health infrastructure facilities required to make the development acceptable in planning terms.</p>
<p><b>Social and community infrastructure</b></p> <p>Social and community infrastructure including social care infrastructure, libraries and community facilities.</p>	<p>On or off site community facilities required to make the development acceptable in planning terms.</p>
<p><b>Public services infrastructure</b></p> <p>Public services infrastructure including police, fire and ambulance service infrastructure and</p>	<p>On or off site waste management infrastructure required to make the development acceptable in planning terms.</p>

strategic waste management infrastructure	
<p><b>Green and blue infrastructure</b></p> <p>Strategic green and blue infrastructure measures and improvements.</p>	On or off site infrastructure, including open space, improvements and mitigation required to make the development acceptable in planning terms.
<p><b>Flood prevention and mitigation</b></p> <p>Strategic flood prevention and mitigation infrastructure measures and improvements.</p>	On or off site infrastructure, improvements and mitigation, including drainage infrastructure, required to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

Maidstone Borough Council

Community Infrastructure Levy: Draft Instalments Policy (July 2016)

The CIL Regulations allow the Charging Authority to implement a locally derived instalments policy in place of the default position which requires full payment within 60 days of commencement. Under Regulation 9 of the CIL Regulations, where a site has an outline planning permission with longer term phasing plans, each separate phase of development is treated as a separate "chargeable development" and for clarification, the instalments policy will to each phase. The draft instalments policy is outlined below.

<b>Total Amount of CIL Liability</b>	<b>Number of Instalments</b>	<b>Payment Periods and Proportion of CIL Due</b>			
Amounts up to £250,000	1	100% payable within 60 days of commencement of development.			
Amounts over £250,000 and up to £500,000	2	50% payable within 60 days of commencement of development	Remaining 50% payable within 12 months of commencement of development		
Amounts over £500,000 and up to £1,000,000	3	30% payable within 60 days of commencement of development	Further 30% payable within 12 months of commencement of development	Remaining 40% payable within 24 months of commencement of development	
Amounts over £1,000,000	4	20% payable within 60 days of commencement of development	Further 20% payable within 12 months of commencement of development	Further 30% payable within 24 months of commencement of development	Remaining 30% payable within 36 months of commencement of development

## Appendix D

### Maidstone Borough Council

#### Community Infrastructure Levy: Funding Gap Analysis (June 2016)

In order to justify the introduction of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) it is necessary to demonstrate that there is an aggregate funding gap between the cost of providing the infrastructure required to support planned growth and the amount of funding available to deliver that infrastructure.

#### **Infrastructure Costs**

The Council's Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (May 2016) identifies a series of critical and essential infrastructure schemes which could be funded wholly or partly through the Levy. These schemes are set out in Table 1 below to provide an estimated cost of infrastructure identified for potential CIL funding. It is important to note that the IDP is a "living document" and may be updated or amended over time as new evidence is made available or as schemes are refined or progressed. Schemes to be funded through future section 106 legal agreements will not be CIL-eligible and are not included in Table 1.

Table 1: List of infrastructure schemes which may be funded wholly or partly through the CIL

Scheme	Estimated Cost	IDP Ref.
Schedule A: Highways and Transportation		
Romney Place Bus Lane	£60,000	HTTC2
Maidstone Bus Station improvements	£2,000,000	HTTC3
Pedestrianisation of Earl Street	£972,000	HTTC6
Maidstone East commuter car park	£9,000,000	HTTC13
Improvements to the pedestrian environment and public realm on Rose Yard, Pudding Lane and Market Buildings.	£1,520,000	HTTC14
Increased frequency of 333 / 334 route.	£2,700,000 <sup>(1)</sup>	HTJ75
Bus prioritisation measures from the Willington Street junction to the Wheatsheaf junction.	£3,800,000	HTSE1
A229/A274 Wheatsheaf junction.	£725,000 <sup>(2)</sup>	HTSE6
Improvements to the approaches to the town centre between the Wheatsheaf junction and the Bridge Gyratory signal junctions.	Unknown	HTSE7
Improvements to bus services along Sutton Road.	£2,700,000 <sup>(1)</sup>	HTSE8

Traffic signalisation of M20 J5.	£575,000 <sup>(2)</sup>	HTNW2
Provision of an additional lane at the Coldharbour roundabout.	£2,600,000	HTNW3
Improvements at the junction of Fountain Lane and A26.	£400,000	HTNW4
Improvements at the junction of Hermitage Lane and London Road.	£750,000 <sup>(2)</sup>	HTNW5
Boughton Lane and at the junction of Boughton Lane and the A229.	£150,000 <sup>(3)</sup>	HTUA1
Improvements at Linton Crossroads.	£650,000 <sup>(3)</sup>	HTC1
Increased frequency of the No. 89 route.	£900,000 <sup>(1)</sup>	HTC2
A20 Ashford Road highways improvements, Harrietsham.	£1,100,000	HTHA1
Highway improvements to accommodate Lenham Broad Location	£2,000,000 <sup>(4)</sup>	HTL2
Package of improvements to Marden Rail Station	£87,691 <sup>(5)</sup>	HTM1
Improvements at the junction of A229, Headcorn Road, Station Road and Marden Road, Staplehurst.	£172,350 <sup>(3)</sup>	HTS1
Improvements to public and passenger facilities at Staplehurst Rail Station.	£1,100,000	HTS4
Highways and Transportation TOTAL	£33,962,041	
Schedule B: Education Provision		
1FE expansion of The Maplesden Noakes School.	£3,000,000	EDM2
1FE expansion of The Maidstone Grammar School.	£3,000,000	EDM3
Provision of a new 2FE primary school on site H1 (2) Land East of Hermitage Lane.	£6,000,000	EDM4
Provision of a new 2FE primary school on site H1 (5) Langley Park.	£6,000,000	EDM5
1FE expansion of South Borough Primary School.	£2,600,000	EDM7
1FE expansion of Cornwallis Academy	£3,000,000	EDR1
1FE expansion of Harrietsham or Lenham Primary School.	£1,770,000	EDR2
0.6FE expansion of Marden Primary School	£1,439,000	EDR3

0.5FE at Staplehurst Primary School	£885,000	EDR5
Provision of a new 2FE primary school at Lenham Broad Location	£6,000,000	EDR6
Education Provision TOTAL	£33,694,000	
Schedule C: Health Provision		
Works at Brewer Street Surgery	£224,000	HPU1
Works at Bower Mount Medical Centre	£97,000	HPU2
Works at The Vine Medical Centre	£150,000	HPU3
Works at Barming Medical Practice	£150,000	HPU4
Works at Blackthorn Medical Centre	£150,000	HPU5
Works at Aylesford Medical Centre	£224,000	HPU6
Works at Allington Park Surgery/Allington Clinic	£73,000	HPU7
Works at the Mote Medical Practice	£275,000	HPU8
Works at Orchard Medical Centre, Langley	£224,000	HPU9
Works at Wallis Avenue Surgery	£170,000	HPU10
Works at Grove Park Surgery	£93,000	HPU11
Works at New Grove Green Surgery	£243,000	HPU12
Works at Bearsted Medical Practice	£264,000	HPU13
Works at Sutton Valence Surgery	£100,000	HPU14
Works at Cobtree Medical Practice	£100,000	HPU15
Works at Boughton Lane Surgery	£50,000	HPU16
Works at Marden Medical Practice	£378,000	HPR1
Works at Glebe Medical Centre	£339,000	HPR2
Works at The Len Valley Practice	£207,000	HPR3
Works at Headcorn Surgery	£370,000	HPR4
Works at Staplehurst Medical Centre	£847,000	HPR5

Works at Orchard Medical Centre, Coxheath	£308,000	HPR6
Works at Stockett Lane Surgery	£224,000	HPR7
Works at Yalding GP Practice	£223,000	HPR8
Health Provision TOTAL	£5,483,000	
Schedule E: Public Services		
Community First Responder scheme at Bearsted	£7,000	PS1
Community First Responder scheme at Harrietsham	£14,000	PS2
Community First Responder scheme at Lenham	£7,000	PS3
Community First Responder scheme at Marden	£17,500	PS4
Community First Responder scheme at Staplehurst	£28,000	PS5
Community First Responder scheme at Headcorn	£17,500	PS6
Community First Responder scheme at Yalding	£10,500	PS7
Community First Responder scheme at Hollingbourne	£7,000	PS8
Public Services TOTAL	£108,500	
TOTAL COST	£73,247,541	

- (1) Cost estimates exclude deductions for revenue generated by the scheme.
- (2) Cost estimates include 50% allowance for potential costs of land acquisition and statutory undertakings.
- (3) Cost estimates exclude cost of statutory undertakings.
- (4) Broad cost estimate including 100% allowance for contingency and potential costs of land acquisition and statutory undertakings.
- (5) Cost unknown – figure based on contributions secured to date.

In addition to the schemes identified in Table 1, the IDP confirms that the County Council will continue to seek developer contributions towards small scale improvements and equipment for a range of social and community infrastructure though the lifetime of the Local Plan. Although no specific schemes are currently identified or costed in the IDP schedules, analysis of contributions secured from consents on development sites allocated in the emerging Local Plan indicates an average per dwelling contribution of around £175 towards libraries, social care, community learning and youth services. It is likely that similar costs will continue and therefore, to assist in establishing a realistic estimate of future infrastructure costs, a total of £1,712,725 is incorporated into the calculations.

In addition to identifying the key schemes necessary to support the delivery of the Local Plan, the IDP looks to distinguish between schemes which can be considered critical, essential or desirable in the context of the strategy as a whole. At this time desirable schemes are not included in the funding gap analysis, as they often relate to the more strategic Local Plan objectives, rather than the delivery



of physical development. A breakdown of the above costs in terms of critical and essential infrastructure is provided below.

Table 2: Infrastructure cost breakdown by schedule and category

Infrastructure which may be funded wholly or partly through the CIL	Critical (£)	Essential (£)	Total (£)
Highways and Transportation	14,297,350	19,664,691	33,962,041
Education Provision	18,000,000	15,694,000	33,694,000
Health Provision		5,483,000	5,483,000
Social and Community Infrastructure		1,712,725	1,712,725
Public Services		108,500	108,500
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>32,297,350</b>	<b>42,662,916</b>	<b>74,960,266</b>

### Calculating the Funding Gap

To calculate the aggregate funding gap it is necessary to establish what funding may be available to deliver infrastructure included on the list. This can be summarised in three key categories: (1) existing section 106 agreements or unilateral undertakings; (2) projected future CIL receipts; and (3) other funding sources.

#### Existing Section 106 Agreements

At present, developer contributions towards the provision of strategic infrastructure are generally secured through section 106 agreements or unilateral undertakings. A full review (June 2016 snapshot) of these contributions has been undertaken to inform an assessment of the levels of funding that may be available to deliver the schemes identified in Table 1.

The total amount potentially available from section 106 agreements or unilateral undertakings for the delivery of infrastructure in the Regulation 123 List will change over time however as additional planning permissions will be granted prior to the adoption of the CIL. Separately, the levels of funding anticipated from individual developments may be refined when detailed permissions (known as reserved matters) establish the precise number of units and/or dwelling mix following an outline planning permission. Contributions towards education infrastructure for instance are often calculated per pupil or per housing unit, and therefore a precise figure may not be calculable until these variables are known.

It is also important to note that although specific contributions may be established through a legal agreement, contributions will only be realised if the planning permission goes on to be implemented, and may only become available to deliver projects once relevant trigger points are reached. Additionally, section 106 agreements usually include a clause stipulating the date by which the funding must be spent on the identified infrastructure projects – often a period of 10 years. If the monies are not spent by the specified date there may be a requirement to return the funding to the developer.

### Projected CIL Receipts

Once the CIL is adopted the Levy will provide a significant source of additional funding which can be used towards the delivery of the infrastructure necessary to support planned growth. Projecting potential CIL receipts is therefore critical to inform an understanding of the overall funding available to support infrastructure delivery. The total amount available for the delivery of infrastructure in the Regulation 123 List will however depend on a number of factors including the amount of floorspace created (e.g. the size of new homes or the potential for re-use of existing buildings on site) and the proportion payable to local councils or spent on behalf of local councils (the neighbourhood portion). The neighbourhood portion rises from 15% to 25% where development takes place in an area with an adopted Neighbourhood Development Plan and these monies do not need to be spent on schemes identified in the IDP.

As additional planning permissions are granted prior to the adoption of the CIL, although the amount of funding from section 106 agreements may increase, projected CIL receipts will be revised downwards.

### Other funding sources

It may be the case that, through the lifetime of the Local Plan, other funding sources could become available which could help to meet the costs of infrastructure provision. One potential source of funding is from the Council's capital budget and monies have already been allocated towards infrastructure projects connected with the Local Plan, including the Bridges Gyratory scheme (IDP Ref. HTTC1) and Medway Towpath scheme (IDP Ref. HTTC9). The Council's existing Medium Term Financial Strategy identifies a further £3m of capital funding available towards the delivery of infrastructure schemes identified in the IDP and therefore this has been factored into the funding gap calculations as it likely to be used towards schemes identified in Table 1.

Another potentially significant source of funding for infrastructure provision could be the Local Growth Fund (LGF). Through LGF Round 1, some £8.9m was secured towards the delivery of Park and Ride infrastructure at sites near M20 J7 and Linton Crossroads, Coxheath. These schemes have since been removed from the Local Plan and the County Council has recently received approval from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) for the provisional re-allocation of £1.3m of these monies towards the Willington Street/Wallis Avenue/Sutton Road junction improvements (IDP Ref. HTSE2). Work to assess the potential for re-allocation of the remaining £7.6m remains ongoing however and there is no certainty that the monies can be used towards any of the schemes identified in Table 1. Accordingly, these monies are not factored into the funding gap calculations. This position will be monitored however and updated as necessary in subsequent iterations of this analysis.

Other funding sources may become available through the lifetime of the Local Plan, however it is difficult to predict the availability of such funding, as recognised in the National Planning Policy Guidance. Any additional confirmed funding which can be used towards the delivery of schemes identified in Table 1 will be taken into account as this analysis is updated.

Table 3. Aggregate Funding Gap analysis

Infrastructure which may be funded wholly or partly by the CIL	Critical (£)	Essential (£)	Total (£)
Highways and Transportation	14,297,350	19,664,691	33,962,041
Education Provision	18,000,000	15,694,000	33,694,000
Health Provision		5,483,000	5,483,000
Social and Community Infrastructure		1,712,725	1,712,725
Public Services		108,500	108,500
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>32,297,350</b>	<b>42,662,916</b>	<b>74,960,266</b>
Potential funding from s106 planning obligations (£) <sup>(1) (2)</sup>			32,997,968
Projected CIL income (£) <sup>(3)</sup>			29,729,265
Potential funding from other sources			3,000,000
<b>AGGREGATE FUNDING GAP (£)</b>			<b>9,233,033</b>

(1) Contributions agreed (subject to conditions precedent and payment triggers) and contributions resolved by Planning Committee subject to the completion of a s106 legal agreement correct as of 15 June 2016;

(2) Where the precise level of contributions is yet to be determined, for instance where development yield and/or dwelling mix are not confirmed through an outline planning permission, maximum figures have been applied. Once these details are established corresponding figures may be revised downwards.

(3) This figure includes potential income from relevant Local Plan development which has not received planning consent or a resolution from Planning Committee to grant planning consent subject to completion of a s106 legal agreement at 15 June 2016.

## Output and Review

The above analysis confirms that there is an aggregate funding gap between the cost of providing the infrastructure required to support delivery of the Local and the potential funding available to deliver these projects. The analysis provides only a snapshot however and will be kept under regular review.