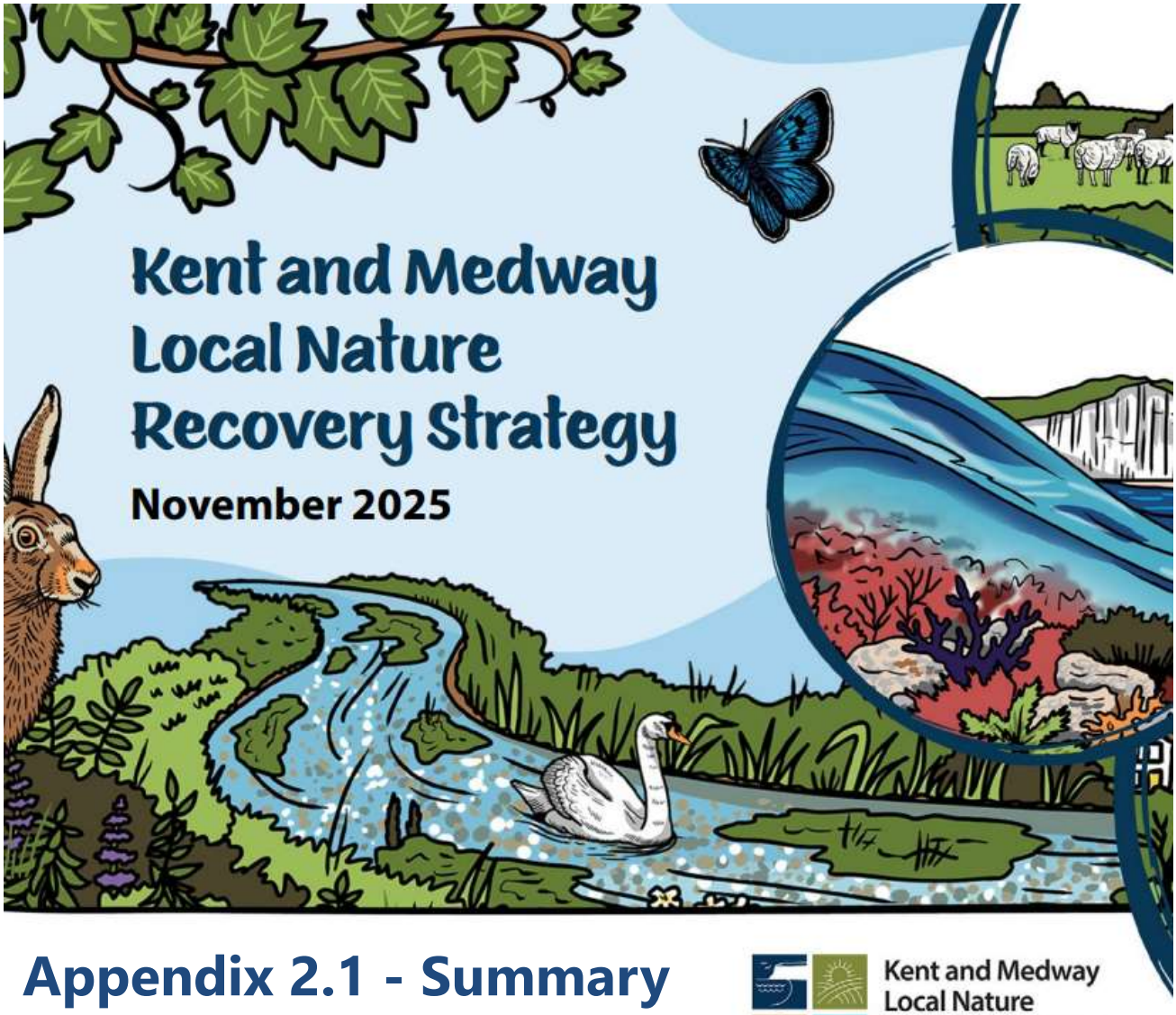

Appendix 2.1 - Summary of Local Plans Review

Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery strategy

Making space for the county's nature

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

ASHFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Summary of district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the local plan and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Flood Risk: Ashford is particularly at risk from fluvial flooding as five main rivers converge in the town- the Great Stour, East Stour, Aylesford Stream, Whitewater Dyke and Ruckinge Dyke. Two flood storage reservoirs currently protect the town from this flooding. Whilst the Ashford urban area has had significant investment in flood alleviation in recent years, there are some areas of the town still considered to be at risk of flooding by the Environment Agency, notably in South Ashford.

Water stress: Lower Greensand and Chalk aquifers are under pressure from existing groundwater abstractions with 'no water available for licensing' to protect river ecology.

Development pressures: Intense pressures on green and blue infrastructure close to the urban area.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection from development where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty, including the Kent Downs and High Weald National Landscapes.

Woodlands: Ashford Council are working with Kent Wildlife Trust for the protection of notable woodlands in district: Kings Wood - Challock, Hothfield Heathlands, Ashford Warren and Hoad's Wood, Hamstreet Woods, Orlestone Forest and Ashford Community Woodland.
In 2009, about 10.6% of the borough was found to be covered by ancient woodland, some protected by Tree Preservation Orders but they seek to ensure that this irreplaceable resource is only lost in "exceptional" cases.

Ashford's Green Corridor: Located within the flood zone, it acts as a flood plain and water storage, as well as being an important habitat for biodiversity. All along the green corridor highly valuable habitats for wildlife are found, providing an important network for the movement of wildlife through the urban areas, between designated nature sites and out towards the countryside.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives.

Ashford Green Corridor: Future potential additional areas mapped to enhance the corridors.

Within development: Conserve and enhance the natural environment including designated and undesignated landscapes and biodiversity. Promote a connected green infrastructure network that plays a role in managing flood risk, delivers net gains in biodiversity and improves access to nature. Ensure new development is resilient to, and mitigates against the effects of climate change.

Priorities for habitat creation:

Woodland: Specific sites in local plan, such as Policy S3- Court Lodge.

Ashford Green Corridor: Potential future expansion areas mapped- Wing A, B &C.

Green and Blue Infrastructure: Create accessible greenspace and wildlife areas along an integrated network of safe, attractive pedestrian and cycle routes and more effective, functional links between urban areas and the surrounding countryside – for people and wildlife. Enhance biodiversity**,** by linking, extending and creating nationally important (BAP) habitats to reverse habitat fragmentation, and by promoting sustainable landscape management practises in all greenspace areas.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Clean and plentiful water; Climate Change mitigation and adaptation; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Ashford local plan 2030 (2019), Ashford Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2017), ABC Corporate Plan, 2022-2024 (2021), Landscape Character SPD (2011), Green Corridor Action Plan (2017), Public Green Spaces & Water Environment SPD (2012), Green & Blue Grid Strategy (2008), Open Space Strategy (2017), Sustainable Drainage SPD (2010), Ashford Water Cycle Study (2016), Flood Risk Report (2014), Ancient Woodland Inventory for Ashford Borough, Kent, (2009), Neighbourhood Plans.

Links from the Ashford Borough Council website and district projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

CANTERBURY CITY COUNCIL

Summary of some of the district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the adopted Local Plan (2017), the draft Local Plan and other strategies and plans

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment include:

Flood Risk: Approximately 15% of the district lies within Flood Zone 3 and is considered to be at high risk of flooding from the sea and/or from watercourses, including river valleys associated with the Great Stour, Little Stour, Wingham, Nailbourne and Sarre Penn.

Water Quality and Quantity: Both water quantity and quality are important issues for the district.

Development: Pressure for development means there is potential for loss of woodland, including valuable semi-natural woodlands, increased growth places pressure on existing infrastructure.

Decline in management practices: The ongoing decline in traditional woodland management practices is leading to under management of farm woodlands and copses resulting in the loss of species diversity. There is pressure on semi-natural woodlands (including ancient woodland) from a lack of management or inappropriate management, as well as from the spread of invasive non-native plants which can prevent regeneration of native woodland.

Priorities for protecting habitats include:

Designated sites: Protection from development where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty, including the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Green Gaps: Protect Green gaps, such as those between Urban areas of Herne Bay and Whitstable, between Canterbury and Sturry and between Canterbury and Bridge.

Woodland: Woodland is a particularly important habitat in the district. Nearly two thirds of Kent's deciduous woodland is in Canterbury district. Much of this is ancient woodland or 'priority' habitat. The Blean is a particularly important area of woodland, which crosses into neighbouring local authority areas, where there remain large, relatively well-connected blocks of ancient and semi-natural woodland.

Green and Blue Infrastructure Network: Protect existing network.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats include:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives.

Tree expansion areas: These should be considered priority ‘areas of search’ for larger-scale projects. However, there will be merit in planting trees, woodlands and hedgerows outside of these areas, and expanding trees in other areas should not be discounted.

The Blean Woodland Complex: Support projects that restore, enhance, expand and connect the valued woodland habitat.

Pollinator Habitat: Protect, promote, manage and increase suitable habitat and connectivity between existing habitat for pollinators.

Green and blue infrastructure: Opportunity for open space/ biodiversity opportunities, green corridors, buffers and landscape improvements within development sites as well as opportunity for expansion across the district. Improving connectivity along the Stour.

Within development: Providing multi-benefit connections or corridors between habitats, considering ecological connectivity and pollinators, as well as accessibility and usability by people. Development across the district will need to incorporate measures to deliver a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain in line with draft Policy DS21, having regard to Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and/or Nature Recovery Networks. Provide and sustain a multifunctional and coherent green and, where appropriate, blue infrastructure network, which maximises the ecological potential of existing assets, new open space provision, tree planting and other features of the development such as sustainable drainage systems and landscape buffers.

Priorities for habitat creation include:

Green infrastructure: Provision is made for a range of new open spaces and sports and recreation facilities.

Broad Oak Reservoir and Country Park: The draft allocation site presents a key opportunity for water infrastructure to support development in the district and wider area, as well as providing green infrastructure.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023) include:

Air Quality; Clean and Plentiful Water; Using resources from nature sustainably; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Reduce risk of harm from environmental hazards; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Draft Local Plan, 2040 (2024), Green Infrastructure Strategy 2018 – 2031, Tree, Woodland and Hedgerow Strategy 2024 – 2040, Green Gaps and Local Green Spaces Review (2021), Draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2022), Climate Change Action Plan 2021- 2030, Riverside Strategy 2023-2028, Landscape Character Assessment and Biodiversity Appraisal (2020), Pollinator Action Plan 2023-2028, Bridge Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2037.

Links from the Canterbury City Council website were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

DARTFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Summary of district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the local plan and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Flood Risk: The fluvial flood risk mainly arises from the River Darent, and the tidal flood risk mainly arises from the River Thames and extends into the lower reaches of the River Darent.

Development and infrastructure: Pressure from a rapidly growing population on the natural environment from increased housing, transport and infrastructure needs.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection from development where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty, including the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Green Grid Network: The designated sites, priority habitats, key water bodies and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas form part of the Green Grid network to be protected.

From development: Development on sites designated for their biodiversity value will not be granted planning permission unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the biodiversity value will not be adversely affected by the proposals.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives.

Green Grid Network: Improve existing green and blue infrastructure such as open spaces and water bodies, achieving appropriate new multi-functional greenspaces, and enhancing biodiversity.

Within development: Provide a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain.

Priorities for habitat creation:

Within development: Upgrade and expand the Green Grid Network through new development to help prioritise and deliver connected Green and Blue Infrastructure and active travel improvements.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Maximise our resources, minimise our waste; Using resources from nature sustainably; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Local Plan to 2037 (2024), Corporate Plan, 2024- 2027, Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2023), Green Infrastructure Paper (2021), Net Zero Strategy, 2024- 2030, Habitat Assessment (2021), Open Space Report (2016), Stone Neighbourhood Plan (2022).

Links from the Dartford Borough Council website and district projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

DOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

Summary of district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the local plan and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Flood risk: Flood risk to Dover District is dominated by tidal flooding, although the settlements of Dover and Sandwich have an additional risk from fluvial flooding, from the River Dour and River Stour respectively. The risk of flooding varies across the District. The coastal settlements of Sandwich, Deal and Dover are all, to some degree, at risk of flooding from the sea.

Coastal Change: In recent history the anecdotal evidence and recorded beach profile surveys have shown that there has been a significant redistribution of material along the District's frontage with significant erosion and reduction in the volume of shingle along the coastline.

Development: Pressure on suitable and available sites to cater for housing demand.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection from development where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty, including the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Blue Infrastructure: Protection of the rivers and the coast through management plans.

Green Infrastructure Network: Protecting the network as well as tree planting, protection and replacement**.**

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives.

Green and blue infrastructure Network: Implement action plans to enhance and restore habitats and increase sustainable water management.

Within Development: Provide a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Proposals for BNG should be delivered on-site, taking into account local green infrastructure priorities set out in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the Dover District Green Infrastructure Strategy and the Kent Biodiversity Strategy.

Priorities for habitat creation:

Within development: Tree planting, landscaping management plan, connect to and improve the wider ecological networks in which development is located, providing on-site green infrastructure that connects to off-site networks.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides; Maximise our resources, minimise our waste; Using resources from nature sustainably; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Dover District Local Plan 2040 (2024), Green Infrastructure Strategy (2024), Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA Strategic Access Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy (SAMM) (2023), Corporate Plan (2020-2024), Flood Risk to Communities Dover (2017), Review of Coastal Change Management Areas in Dover District (2018), Climate Change Topic Paper (2022), Ash Neighbourhood Plan (2021), Worth Neighbourhood Plan (2014).

Links from the Dover District Council website and district projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

EBBSFLEET DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Summary of priorities for nature and the wider environment

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Dry: Gravesham and Dartford are some of the driest areas in the Southeast.

Flood risk: Ebbsfleet's proximity to the River Thames and the River Ebbsfleet also means that despite the low level of rain, there is a need to ensure that the site is resilient to flood risk.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Biodiversity: The landscapes of Ebbsfleet's quarries, lakes and rivers are rich in ecology, providing a diverse range of habitats that include the SSSI on the Swanscombe Peninsula, the Ebbsfleet Marshes and the calciferous stream of the River Ebbsfleet.

Green and blue infrastructure: 40% of the Ebbsfleet development area will be dedicated to green and blue space.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

Garden Grid Network: To enhance the network of green and blue infrastructure, biodiversity enhancement and identify opportunities to increase general ecosystem services. Build upon the biodiversity that is already flourishing within former industrial sites, there remains a significant opportunity to enhance biodiversity connections and deliver an ambitious level of biodiversity gain. This landscape also provides a broad range of opportunities to open up access to green space for residents, and use the space for exercise, recreation and community food production, while engaging with nature.

Flood resilience: Projects to prioritise green and blue sustainable drainage to achieve resilience to 1% annual exceedance probability. Ensure that EDC sites are resilient to tidal and surface water flooding.

Water Quality: Improve the water quality to enhance the amenity of water bodies and to allow wildlife to flourish.

Priorities for habitat creation:

Tree planting: Deliver tree-lined streets and high quality, drought tolerant planted verges across Ebbsfleet to support the biodiversity, including the 'Ebbsfleet Gateway' strategic planting programme for strategic highways.

Parks and open spaces: A network of parks and open spaces planned with 7 major parks in Ebbsfleet Garden City. Engage residents with wildlife management in own homes and open spaces.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Maximise our resources, minimise our waste; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Implementation Framework Summary (2017), Ebbsfleet Environmental Sustainability Framework (2023), Sustainable Performance Framework (2023).

Links from the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation website were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

FOLKSTONE & HYTHE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Summary of district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the local plan and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Water Stress: An area of serious water stress and one of the driest districts in England

Flood Risk: Areas in Folkestone and Hythe are at risk of flooding from a number of sources, including tidal and surface water flooding, as well as flooding from groundwater, streams, ditches and the coast. Storm events and surges can also affect the district. For example, flooding along the Pent Stream is caused by poor urban drainage and high intensity storm events. There is also a risk of tide-locking in the future as a result of a rise in sea level.

Climate Change: Increased sea level, flooding, drought affect the district.

Disease: One of the more publicised diseases which is seriously affecting trees in the Folkestone and Hythe district and across east Kent is ash dieback.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection from development where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty, including the Kent Downs National Landscape.

Green and Blue Infrastructure Network: Protect existing network and priority habitats using management plans.

Priority habitats: Protect priority habitats from climate change.

Core Biodiversity Network: Protect existing network

Trees and Woodland: Folkestone and Hythe's tree canopy is around 8% of its area, less than half of the Kent average of 17%. Romney Marsh ward was reported as having the lowest level of canopy, at 1.1%. The highest was Hythe at 19%. There is a distinct north-south divide in the district.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives

Trees and Woodland: Opportunities to increase woodland and trees across the district should be sought. Opportunities for increasing tree cover are possible on both publicly owned land and private land.

Green Infrastructure: Create functioning ecological networks for pollinators. Create an ecologically resilient network to join habitats, allow species to move and to help nature adapt to climate change

Blue Infrastructure: Enhance the biodiversity value of water and wetland habitats.

Within Development: Deliver biodiversity net gain and investigate the viability of an uplift from the statutory 10%, subject to viability and soundness testing. SuDS schemes into new development and retrofit into existing green infrastructure where such an approach is appropriate to help address flooding issues

Priorities for habitat creation:

Green Infrastructure: Creation of green infrastructure, biodiversity corridors and connections to the countryside 'Folkstone Green Chain'.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Using resources from nature sustainably; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Main Report (2023), Local Plan (2020), Corporate Plan (2021).

Links from the Folkstone & Hythe District Council website and district projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

GRAVESHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Summary of district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the adopted and emerging local plans and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Water quality: Water quality within the Medway catchment area has been rated by the Environment Agency as poor due mainly to land and agricultural management. A significant portion of the borough, to the east and south of the urban area, is within a 'nitrate vulnerable zone', where agricultural fertilisers are controlled.

Water stress: Gravesham lies with an area which is water stressed and where there are significant demands on water resources. Most of the borough's water comes from chalk aquifers.

Flood risk: The greatest risk is tidal flooding from the River Thames. This risk will increase over time due to climate change induced sea level rise. Whilst the majority of areas susceptible to tidal flooding benefit from existing flood defences, these have a limited design life and will require on-going maintenance, upgrading and improvement over the Local Plan period and beyond.

Climate Change: Climate change projections predict warmer wetter winters and hotter drier summers, along with an increased frequency and intensity of extreme weather, will increase the need for GBI to provide resilience to climate changes.

Development: A number of major developments are expected over the local plan period, putting pressure on the environment with potential release land currently designated as Green Belt to meet identified development needs.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection from development where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty. Including the Metropolitan Green Belt and Kent Downs National Landscape which sit within the district.

Trees and woodland: Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are made to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands because of their amenity value. Many of the woodlands in rural areas are ancient woodlands. National and local planning policies seek to ensure that this irreplaceable resource is only lost in exceptional cases.

Green Infrastructure: Multifunctional linked network of green spaces, footpaths, cycle routes and wildlife stepping stones and corridors are protected.

Blue Infrastructure: The River Thames and associated wetland habitats are the borough's most significant blue infrastructure asset, as a key site for biodiversity and recreation, but also the area of the borough most vulnerable to climate change for protection.

From development: Where possible development should avoid harm, loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, locally identified biodiversity assets or designated sites.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives

Green and blue Infrastructure network: Proposals, the primary purpose of which are to conserve or enhance biodiversity and the creation of a coherent network of ecological sites, stepping stones and pathways will be supported. Opportunities should be taken to connect and improve ecological networks and linkages both within Gravesham and to similar networks in adjoining areas. Manage recreation pressure and antisocial behaviour on the marshes.

Woodland and grassland: Protect, reconnect, extend and buffer fragmented habitats including traditional orchards, chalk grassland, and ancient woodland. Improve management and use of incidental greenspaces and road verges.

Within development: Development should be designed to retain trees, hedgerows and woodland that contribute positively to the amenity of the site and surrounding area and which are important in terms of landscape, townscape, biodiversity or heritage. Require/encourage urban greening and the greening of new development.

Priorities for habitat creation:

In development: New development often provides opportunities for planting new trees, woodland and hedgerows as part of a scheme.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Reg 18, Local Plan (2020), Local Plan Core Strategy (2014), Gravesham Green and Blue Infrastructure Study (2022), Water and Flood Risk Background paper (2020), Climate Change Strategy 2022-2030, Local Development Scheme 2019-2021, Climate Change Action Plan.

Links from the Gravesham Borough Council website and district projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

Summary of priorities for nature and the wider environment from county strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Flood risk: The coastal areas of Kent are at significant risk of flooding, in particular the Romney Marshes, Dartford and Gravesend are at high risk of coastal and tidal flooding. Flood defences are in place in many of these areas to reduce the risk. The floodplains of the Rivers Medway, Beult, Stour and Darent present a significant risk of fluvial flooding in Kent, there are some flood defences for these areas. This is one of the highest risks of any Lead Local Flood Authority in England. All areas are at some risk of surface water flooding, but the risk is generally concentrated in urban areas.

Water stress: Kent is one of the driest regions in England and Wales and our water resources are under continued pressure requiring careful management and planning. In Kent 73% of our public water supply is taken from groundwater with the remainder from rivers or storage reservoirs. In Kent we are already using most of the capacity in the county and in some places already exceeding it. This water stress will be exacerbated by a growing population and climate change.

Climate Change: Alongside increased impact on other pressures, disrupting seasonal patterns and flowering periods of plants, climate change is impacting pollinators. It affects the timing of flowering plants that they rely on for food and disrupts nesting behaviours and emergence after winter. It is also thought that a warming climate could restrict or alter the range of pollinators.

Pests and disease: Kent's trees are not only at risk from land use change and development but also pests and diseases. Our landscape still features the scars of Dutch elm disease and is now impacted again by Ash dieback and other pests and diseases such as the Oriental chestnut gall wasp and sweet chestnut blight. The county is particularly vulnerable given its proximity to the continent, meaning Kent's tree population is often impacted by 'new' pests and diseases sooner than other parts of the country.

Land management: Agricultural intensification, use of pesticides and degradation of soil, have had a negative impact on our fragile ecological networks.

Development and infrastructure: An increasing population puts pressure on the need for housing and infrastructure sites to support the growth.

Financial restraints: Public sector finances continue to be constrained and across the county, we will need to work more efficiently with the resources that we have. This means identifying opportunities to deliver across outcomes, working in partnership and accessing external funding wherever possible to deliver our priorities.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection of all designated sites where possible, including Kent Downs & High Weald National Landscapes and the Metropolitan green belt.

Woodland and trees: Kent has an average tree canopy cover of 17% (above the England average of 16%). In terms of distribution across the county, west Kent districts have a far greater canopy cover (28-30%) than those in east Kent (4-9%).

Green infrastructure: Countryside partnerships and country parks, PRoW, cycle networks and pollinator pathways.

Blue infrastructure: Coastal and freshwater protection and management plans

From mineral and waste sites: Where possible avoid negative impacts on the environment.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

Green infrastructure:

Biodiversity: Kent Biodiversity Strategy (to be replaced by the LNRS). Priorities for terrestrial ecosystems, habitats and species; freshwater and intertidal ecosystems, habitats and species; marine ecosystems, habitats and species and connecting people with the natural environment by 2045.

Trees and woodlands: Kent Plan Tree sets an ambition for Kent to extend tree cover by 1.5 million new trees and increase the county's average canopy cover to 19%. Furthermore, our existing woodland and trees health will be restored and afforded greater protection from loss.

Pollinators: Kent County Council to manage the land it owns, controls and influences in a way which benefits pollinators' habitat and forage and work with partners across the county to better protect pollinators and improve the habitats on which they rely.

Blue Infrastructure: Use of management plans and policies to improve blue infrastructure.

Within development: Aims to work with districts to secure a policy commitment of 20% biodiversity net gain in Kent. Refresh the Kent Design Guide to reflect clean growth, net-zero targets, and climate change adaptation. Potential to adopt and/or reference the refreshed Kent Design Guide as Supplementary Planning Documents, in line with Local Plan updates.

Priorities for habitat creation:

Green infrastructure:

Trees and woodland: Deliver against the tree establishment target.

Priority habitats: Actions in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy (to be replaced by the LNRS)

Within planning: Work with planners and developers to create a planned strategic green infrastructure which incorporates the PROW network to promote and encourage sustainable, active travel and provide opportunities for leisure and recreation.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Maximise our resources, minimise our waste; Using resources from nature sustainably; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Draft Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan, 2024-39 (2023), Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (2024), Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan (2024), Kent Environmental Strategy (2016), Kent's Plan Bee (2022), Kent and Medway Shoreline Pollution Emergency Plan (2023), Plan Tree Strategy (2022), Kent Biodiversity Strategy (2022), Kent Landscape Assessment (2004), Flood Risk Management Strategy (2017), Rights of Way Improvement Plan (2018), Active Travel Strategy (2018), Heritage Conservation Strategy (2022), Local Transport Plan 5 (2024).

Links from the Kent County Council website and projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Summary of district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the local plan and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Water Quality: Agriculture, industry and residential areas all produce pollutants which can affect the quality of wetlands, open water bodies and flowing waters. 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).

Flood Risk: 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. 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.

Recreational: Two European sites are sensitive to recreation pressure, North Downs Woodland SAC and Medway Estuary & Marshes SPA/Ramsar site. Residential development within 6km of Medway Estuary & Marshes SPA/Ramsar site has been found through visitor surveys to contribute to disturbance of birds at the site.

Development: Increased development pressures have led to the loss, damage or fragmentation of biodiversity assets. There is continued pressure to meet housing and infrastructure needs.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection of all designated sites where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty, including Kent Downs & High Weald National Landscapes and the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Green and blue infrastructure: Green and blue infrastructure (GBI) is made up of a network of natural components of open space and water which lie within and between the borough's towns and villages to retain.

Ancient woodland: 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.

Wildlife disturbance: The Council will continue to support Natural England in the review of the mitigation strategy as new visitor survey data becomes available, to ensure that the strategy continues to be appropriate.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives.

Green and blue infrastructure: Enhance the character of the existing green and blue infrastructure and promote linkages between areas of environmental value. Develop and enhance a high-quality network of green and blue spaces building on the assets that already exist. Enhance and expand wetland coverage across the Borough to support nutrient neutrality, flood prevention, and enhance biodiversity. Deliver blue management and improvement plans.

Trees and woodland: Increase borough canopy cover expanding ancient forests and reconnecting of existing woodland including urban woods, and greening town centres.

Semi-natural space: Develop Supplementary Planning Documents for Garden community and other strategic development sites that ensure are exemplar for biodiversity and deliver semi natural open space.

Within development: Green infrastructure planning and design in new developments, they do not significantly increase the fragmentation of wildlife habitats and provide for all types of publicly accessible open space to a specified standard. Deliver a minimum 20% biodiversity net gain on new residential development, having regard to Biodiversity Opportunity Areas.

Priorities for habitat creation:

Green and blue infrastructure: There is a relative lack of green and blue infrastructure within the more densely built-up area of Maidstone's town centre. Creation in gaps. Create new opportunities in the urban area.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Maximise our resources, minimise our waste; Using resources from nature sustainably; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Local Plan Review, 2021 – 2038 (2024), Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2016), Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan (2023) , North Loose Neighbourhood Development Plan, 2015-2031, Loose Neighbourhood Plan, 2018 - 2031 (2019), Marden Neighbourhood Plan, 2017 - 2031 (2020), Staplehurst Neighbourhood Plan, 2016-2031 (2016), Boughton Monchelsea Neighbourhood Plan up to 2031 (2021), Lenham Neighbourhood Plan, 2017-2031 (2021), Otham Neighbourhood Plan (2020-2035).

Links from the Maidstone Borough Council website and district projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

MEDWAY COUNCIL

Summary of priorities for nature and the wider environment from the emerging local plan and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Water Stress: Medway is an area of serious water stress as identified by the Environment Agency. Medway will have a supply and demand deficit of between 25 and 35 million litres of water a day - if no action is taken before the population grows and as the climate changes.

Flood risk: The Medway Towns are at risk of flooding from a number of sources, including tidal and surface water flooding, as well as flooding from groundwater, streams and ditches.

Climate Change: Medway as a coastal area is particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels, and changes in temperature and precipitation have impacts for landscape, food production, nature and people.

Development and infrastructure pressures: Huge pressure on housing needs for an increasing population, also pressure on the existing transport networks across Medway.

Financial: The withdrawal of Government funding from the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) for strategic transport and environmental schemes means that the Council will look at alternatives for securing investment in transport and green infrastructure across Medway.

Coastal Squeeze: Affecting multiple designated sites.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection of all designated sites where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty, including Kent Downs National Landscapes and the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Strategic Gap: maintain the separation of Medway from Maidstone and the Medway Gap urban area.

Blue infrastructure: Use of coastal management plans to protect natural areas of beaches, saltmarshes and mudflats to remain whilst fighting ‘coastal squeeze’ and freshwater management plans.

Green infrastructure; Medway has in the past, suffered substantial losses of trees and woodlands in order to accommodate development. The council intends to prevent any significant further loss and will seek to increase tree cover wherever possible. Protection of undesignated habitats.

From development: The environmental quality and image of the area should be upgraded through the highest urban design and landscape standards being pursued in new development and regeneration.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives.

Green and blue infrastructure: To secure a robust green and blue infrastructure network across land and water that protects and enhances the assets of the natural and historic environments in urban and rural Medway; providing resilience for nature through better connectivity and conditions; informing the design and sustainability of new development; and supporting healthier lifestyles.

Within development: Seek 20% Biodiversity Net Gain through development, subject to viability and soundness testing. Incorporate biodiversity into housing developments, including hedgehog highways, swift boxes and biodiversity-friendly planting in streets and gardens. Deliver ambitious biodiversity improvements through the Hoo Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) and it's associated Strategic Environmental Management Scheme (SEMS).

Priorities for habitat creation:

Conservation parks: To improve public access to, and knowledge of, the nature conservation resources of the marshes, fostering conservation and enhancement jointly with recreation and "green tourism". People could be attracted to these areas because of their wildlife interest, but appropriate management would need to ensure that the number of visitors did not cause damage.

Green corridors: Buglife show opportunities to create corridors for pollinators.

Green infrastructure: Create an ecologically resilient network to join habitats, allow species to move and to help nature adapt to climate change.

Within development: New development could incorporate SuDs schemes that are integral to the GI provided, including providing a management and maintenance plan that will improve the water quality by removing pollutants and putting clean water back into the environment. Plants and vegetation will help provide essential food and habitat for local wildlife, and benefit biodiversity overall. Medway Council is working towards 20% biodiversity net gain.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Maximise our resources, minimise our waste; Using resources from nature sustainably; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Local Plan (2003), Reg 18, Local Plan to 2041 (2023), Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework (2021), Habitat Regulations Assessment (2023), Sustainability Appraisal of the Medway Local Plan (2023), Medway Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2020 – 2030, Medway's Joint Local Health & Wellbeing Strategy 2024-2028, Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy.

Links from the Medway Council website and projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL

Summary of district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the emerging local plan and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Flood risk: The main source of flooding in Sevenoaks District has been fluvial. The Level 1 SFRA identifies Edenbridge, Hever, Penshurst and Chipstead as the most notable locations at risk from surface water flooding.

Water stress: Sevenoaks District lies in an area of serious water stress (as per the Environment Agency's classification) which is under growing pressure due to increased demand, pollution, poor land management, unsustainable abstraction and the impacts of climate change.

Development: A growing population has led to development pressures. The options would all have an impact on both the Green Belt and the AONB. All options include Green Belt release.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection of all designated sites where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty, including Kent Downs & High Weald National Landscapes and the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Blue & Green infrastructure: The BGI network will be protected. Proposals which maintain, restore and enhance the Blue Green Infrastructure network will be supported. Proposals for major development will be expected to identify, as a baseline, existing Blue Green Infrastructure features and its condition, on-site, off-site and links with the BGI network.

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

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives.

Green infrastructure: Opportunities to extend and improve through the network

Development: Blue green infrastructure features should include, but are not limited to: Open, space, green roofs and walls, trees, hedges and hedgerows- including street trees, sustainable drainage systems, ponds, ditches and watercourses and features for species e.g. bird boxes or nests. A 20% BNG target for Sevenoaks District is still under consideration, and will be further tested through viability evidence.

Priorities for habitat creation:

Green infrastructure: Opportunities for creation of new routes.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Reg 18, Local Plan to 2040 (2023), Allocations and Development Management Plan (2015), Local Development Framework, Core Strategy (2011), Indicative Local Housing Need (2024), Climate Change Strategy (2024), Open Space Study (2018), Biodiversity Analysis (2018), Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Development Plan (2023), Swanley Neighbourhood Plan (2024).

Links from the Sevenoaks District Council website and district projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

SWALE BOROUGH COUNCIL

Summary of district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the local plan and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Development and infrastructure: The population in swale is growing and putting pressure on the environment for development. There is also increased recreational pressure on designated sites.

Flood risk: Many areas around the Medway Estuary and Swale are low-lying and at significant risk of flooding.

Water Stress: Swale lies within an area of serious water stress as classified by the Environment Agency

Coastal squeeze: Intertidal areas such as saltmarsh and mudflats, which can be seen at low tide, will be underwater for longer in the future and then be lost, as sea levels rise and 'squeeze' it against the existing defences.

Climate Change: Communities, landscapes and biodiversity are vulnerable to climate change through changes to water resources, flood risk, erosion, damage to habitats due to storminess and habitat fragmentation.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection of all designated sites where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty, including Kent Downs National Landscape.

Trees and woodland: Swale's average tree canopy was estimated at 9.5%, falling below the 17% Kent and Medway average and the 19% coverage target outlined by KCC. Safeguard existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows, employing the necessary mechanisms to conserve our outstanding resource.

Green Infrastructure Network: The Council will work with partners and developers to ensure the protection, enhancement and delivery, as appropriate, of the Swale natural assets and green infrastructure network and its associated strategy.

Blue infrastructure Network: Protect existing networks through management and implementation plans, particularly the coast and Faversham Creek.

Countryside Gaps: Safeguard the open and undeveloped character of the areas; prevent encroachment and piecemeal erosion by built development or changes to the rural open character.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives.

Green and Blue infrastructure Network: Build upon and extend existing green and blue infrastructure using Wildlife Opportunity Corridors (Improving north-south habitat connectivity across Swale) and the Potential Nature Recovery Network (Suitable land within 500m from designated sites to enhance).

Trees and woodland: Improvements to the Blean Complex

Within development: Development proposals must safeguard what is important, introduce new features and mitigate the remaining impacts, including use of compensation where unacceptable harm remains or where a net gain in biodiversity can be achieved. In such cases the Council will use existing and develop new mechanisms to ensure adequate compensation. Development proposals will, as appropriate, achieve a measurable, by a recognised metric, net gain of 20% in biodiversity'.

Priorities for habitat creation:

Green infrastructure: Opportunities within the urban environment for greening and tree planting.

Within development: Demonstration of a contribution to the network of green infrastructure and biodiversity, including through tree planting, green roofs and walls, soft landscaping and sustainable drainage systems.

Habitat compensation: We cannot stop sea level rise but we can try and compensate for the loss of habitat caused by our built flood defences, by creating new areas of suitable habitat.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Local Plan to 2031 (2017), Reg 19, Local Plan (2021), Biodiversity Baseline Study (2020), Green Blue Infrastructure Strategy (2020), Air Quality Action Plan, 2023-2028 (2023), Draft Tree Strategy Scoping Document (2024), Medway Estuary And Swale Strategy Consultation, Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategy (2024), Boughton & Dunkirk Neighbourhood Plan to 2031, Faversham Neighbourhood Plan (2023), Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan.

Links from the Swale Borough Council website and district projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL

Summary of district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the local plan and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Development: Thanet's open countryside is particularly vulnerable to development because of its limited extent, the openness and flatness of the rural landscape and the proximity of the towns.

Recreation: The coast is particularly vulnerable to recreational pressures on migratory birds, and increased development increases the strain.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection of all designated sites where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty.

Green Wedges: Significant in shaping the character of Thanet which has historically been a 'horseshoe' of built development wrapping around the coast. The Green Wedges are distinct from other types of open space as they provide a link between the open countryside and land which penetrates into the urban areas. The Green Wedges also make a valuable contribution to green infrastructure for the District.

Trees: Thanet has relatively few trees. The Council will therefore seek to retain existing trees as part of any proposed developments through the making of Tree Preservation Orders and through use of planning conditions where appropriate.

Semi-natural habitat: The Council seeks to retain hedges and other semi-natural habitat, such as ponds and species-rich grassland, together with new planting, as they lend maturity to a development and can enhance biodiversity and wildlife habitats.

Green infrastructure network: Protect, maintain and enhance the district's biodiversity and natural environment, including open and recreational space to create a coherent network of Green Infrastructure that can better support wildlife and human health.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives.

Green Wedges: There is potential for habitat creation and enhancement in the Green Wedges, and sites designated for nature conservation. The Council will work with landowners, developers and other appropriate organisations to improve the opportunity for biodiversity.

Within development: Development proposals will, where appropriate, be required to make a positive contribution to the conservation, enhancement and management of biodiversity and geodiversity assets resulting in a net gain for biodiversity assets. All development proposals should, where possible, safeguard Thanet's Green Infrastructure network and enhance it by integrating new multifunctional Green Infrastructure provision in the design of developments.

Thanet council is committed to delivering the mandatory requirement of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for qualifying development. The Council is at an early stage of reviewing the local plan and as part of this process will investigate a range of options in relation to BNG which may include the potential of delivering more than 10% on either all or certain types of sites subject to viability and soundness testing.

Priorities for habitat creation:

Woodland creation: Opportunities for hedgerow and woodland creation through the Pocket Woodland Project.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides; Maximise our resources, minimise our waste; Using resources from nature sustainably; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Local Plan (2020), Open Space Strategy (2018), Local Development Scheme (2022), Landscape Character Assessment (2017), Net Zero Strategy (2023), Active Thanet (2018), Site Management Plan: Westbrook Undercliff , Biodiversity Strategy , Westgate on Sea Neighbourhood Plan (2019-2031), Broadstairs and St Peters Neighbourhood plan 2018-2031 (2021), Air Quality Management Area (2023).

Links from the Thanet District Council website and district projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

TONBRIDGE AND MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

Summary of district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the emerging local plan and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Flood risk: The risks of flooding from rivers (fluvial flooding) are pertinent to Tonbridge and Malling owing to the Rivers Medway, Bourne and Hawden Stream and their tributaries which flow through the borough

Climate Change: The worsening of climate change risks extreme weather events such as flooding and drought which would have a huge impact on biodiversity.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection of all designated sites where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty, including the Kent Downs & High Weald National Landscape and the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Trees and Woodland: The Ancient Woodland Inventory identifies that approximately 11% of the borough is ancient woodland. Ancient woodland will be protected where possible. The extent of tree cover and the hedgerow network should be maintained and enhanced.

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

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent Biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives.

Green infrastructure Network: The Green Infrastructure Network Diagram seeks to address the issue of the connectivity of wildlife habitats in the interests of protecting, and where possible, enhancing local biodiversity and allowing them to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Within development: Seeking a higher target than 10% for Biodiversity Net Gain will need to be viability tested to ensure the delivery of a higher target does not put at risk the delivery of other local standards in the Local Plan e.g. affordable housing, open space etc.

Priorities for habitat creation:

Trees and woodland: Provision should be made for the creation of new woodland and hedgerows, especially indigenous broad-leaved species, at appropriate

locations to support and enhance the Green Infrastructure Network. Ancient woodland where possible should be enhanced through improved management.

Within development: Major developments will, where practicable and proportionate, provide opportunities for habitat creation, and where possible maximise opportunities for net biodiversity gains on site.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Maximise our resources, minimise our waste; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Reg 18, Local Plan (2022), Biodiversity Duty (2024), Corporate Strategy (2023), Climate Change Strategy (2020), Development Plan Document (2010), Green Infrastructure Strategy (2018), Local Development Scheme (2022).

KENT & MEDWAY LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY SUPPORTING AUTHORITIES

TUNBRIDGE WELLS BOROUGH COUNCIL

Summary of district priorities for nature and the wider environment from the local plan and other strategies

Main threats and pressures on the natural environment:

Flood risk: This areas to the north and west of Paddock Wood are particularly prone to flooding.

Development: Tonbridge Wells is under pressure from development and the subsequent infrastructure pressures to support it, particularly on its Green Belt and in the High Weald National Landscape.

Priorities for protecting habitats:

Designated sites: Protection of all designated sites where possible, whilst also retaining natural beauty, including the High Weald National Landscape and the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Trees and woodlands: The borough is largely characterised by an abundant amount of tree cover in both the rural (22% woodland cover) and urban areas (with nearly 34% tree cover in Royal Tunbridge Wells itself). Loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, resulting from development proposals shall not be allowed unless there are wholly exceptional reasons.

Green, Grey and Blue infrastructure: Development proposals will be expected to identify and protect existing green, grey, and blue infrastructure.

Priorities for enhancing or restoring habitats:

KBS and BOAs: Support of Kent biodiversity Strategy (KBS) and current (to be replaced by the LNRS) Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) objectives.

Within development: Development proposals will be expected maximise opportunities for new infrastructure that supports climate change adaptation and ecosystem services, and makes a positive contribution to strengthening and restoring a healthy and integrated network of habitats and green spaces for the benefit of nature, people, and the economy.

Priorities for habitat creation:

Green and Blue infrastructure: Actions for creation of new habitats in Biodiversity Action Plan and proposals in the Green Infrastructure Plan.

Within development: Development proposals should maximise opportunities for increasing biodiversity potential, and retaining and enhancing blue/green infrastructure features, including SuDS; Proposals that affect existing biodiversity,

geodiversity, and blue/green infrastructure must be designed to avoid, mitigate, or compensate for any potential harm, resulting in a net gain. Deliver the mandatory 10% for BNG.

Priorities for wider environmental benefits (25 Year Environment Plan Goals 2023):

Air Quality; Clean and plentiful water; Managing exposure to chemicals and pesticides; Maximise our resources, minimise our waste; Using resources from nature sustainably; Mitigating and adapting to climate change; Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment.

Local plans and strategies reviewed and referenced in the full review:

Local Plan (2021), Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (2021), Open Space Strategy (2017), Local Biodiversity Action Plan (2008), Protecting Ashdown Forest, Green Infrastructure Plan (2014), Green Infrastructure Framework (2021), Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2021), Interim BNG Project (2022-2023)

Links from the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council website and district projects were also used, a full list is available in the full review.