

AGENDA

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND REVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 28 September 2016

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT

Membership:

Councillors Sarah Aldridge, Mike Baldock, Monique Bonney, Andy Booth (Vice-Chairman), Lloyd Bowen (Chairman), Katy Coleman, Nicholas Hampshire, Harrison, James Hunt, George Samuel and Ben Stokes.

Quorum = 3

Pages

1. Fire Evacuation Procedure

The Chairman will advise the meeting of the evacuation procedures to follow in the event of an emergency. This is particularly important for visitors and members of the public who will be unfamiliar with the building and procedures.

The Chairman will inform the meeting whether there is a planned evacuation drill due to take place, what the alarm sounds like (i.e. ringing bells), where the closest emergency exit route is, and where the second closest emergency exit route is, in the event that the closest exit or route is blocked.

The Chairman will inform the meeting that:

(a) in the event of the alarm sounding, everybody must leave the building via the nearest safe available exit and gather at the Assembly points at the far side of the Car Park; and

(b) the lifts must not be used in the event of an evacuation.

Any officers present at the meeting will aid with the evacuation.

It is important that the Chairman is informed of any person attending who is disabled or unable to use the stairs, so that suitable arrangements may be made in the event of an emergency.

2. Apologies for Absence and Confirmation of Substitutes

3. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 June 2016 (Minute Nos. 712 - 716) as a correct record.

4. Declarations of Interest

Councillors should not act or take decisions in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves or their spouse, civil partner or person with whom they are living with as a spouse or civil partner. They must declare and resolve any interests and relationships.

The Chairman will ask Members if they have any interests to declare in respect of items on this agenda, under the following headings:

(a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) under the Localism Act 2011. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DPI, the Member must leave the meeting and not take part in the discussion or vote. This applies even if there is provision for public speaking.

(b) Disclosable Non Pecuniary (DNPI) under the Code of Conduct adopted by the Council in May 2012. The nature as well as the existence of any such interest must be declared. After declaring a DNPI interest, the Member may stay, speak and vote on the matter.

(c) Where it is possible that a fair-minded and informed observer, having considered the facts would conclude that there was a real possibility that the Member might be predetermined or biased the Member should declare their predetermination or bias and then leave the room while that item is considered.

Advice to Members: If any Councillor has any doubt about the existence or nature of any DPI or DNPI which he/she may have in any item on this agenda, he/she should seek advice from the Director of Corporate Services as Monitoring Officer, the Head of Legal or from other Solicitors in Legal Services as early as possible, and in advance of the Meeting.

Part B reports for the Committee to decide

5. Swale Green Grid Partnership - Swale Green Grid Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan 1 - 60

The Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs and the Economy and Community Services Manager have been invited to attend for this item.

6. Committee Work Programme 61 - 64

The Committee is asked to review and discuss the Committee's Work Programme for the remainder of the year.

Issued on Monday, 19 September 2016

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Director of Corporate Services, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT

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Policy Development and Review Committee

Meeting Date	Wednesday 28 September 2016
Report Title	Swale Green Grid Partnership – Swale Green Grid Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan
Cabinet Member	Cllr David Simmons, Cabinet Member for Environment and Rural Affairs
SMT Lead	Emma Wiggins
Head of Service	Charlotte Hudson
Lead Officer	Lyn Newton
Recommendations	1. To provide feedback and input into the draft Swale Green Grid Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan as part of the consultation

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides details regarding a Swale Green Grid Strategy (Appendix I) and Biodiversity Action Plan (Appendix II).
- 1.2 The Council, on behalf of the Swale Green Grid Partnership, wishes to consult residents, businesses and local organisations that may have an interest before seeking approval to adopt.

2 Background

- 1.3 The current strategies, prepared in 2007, have been used as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and continue to support planning and external funding applications made by local organisations. The Swale Green Grid Partnership managed by the Council and comprising statutory environment agencies, has now refreshed the Swale Green Grid Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan to reflect the current environment framework including legislative changes.
- 1.4 The Swale Green Grid Strategy provides a vision for planning, designing and managing green spaces as an interconnected network rather than isolated sites; the strategy is a framework for partner agencies, organisations and individuals involved in the management of the environment in Swale. The Biodiversity Action Plan provides a framework for protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geology and soils and co-ordinated working to secure coherent ecological networks and a reversal in declines in the quality and diversity of the environment and provides a platform for partner agencies, communities and individuals to work together to conserve the Borough's wildlife.
- 1.5 The Swale Green Grid Partnership is keen to undertake a broad consultation before adopting the strategies.

3 Proposal

1.6 The report invites the Committee to consider the draft Swale Green Grid Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan.

1.7 Feedback from the Committee is specifically sought on the following issues

- Do the strategies provide a framework for partnership working in Swale? (Please provide any additional comments)
- Do the strategies support delivery of green infrastructure in Swale? (Please provide any additional comments)
- Do the strategies take account of current policy? If not, what else could be reflected?
- Are the priorities and themes relevant? If not, what else could be included?
- Are there any potential unintended negative consequences to groups with protected characteristics from implementing these strategies?
- Are there any general comments?

4 Alternative Options

1.8 Do nothing – this is not recommended as the Council along with its environmental partners are keen to encourage environmental stewardship through its local community actions.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

1.9 Planning Policy Officers from the Council and the statutory environmental agencies from the Swale Green Grid Partnership have contributed to the drafting of the Swale Green Grid Strategy and Biodiversity Action Plan. .

1.10 An 8 week consultation will be undertaken with residents, businesses and local organisations; internal service areas will also be included (e.g. greenspaces, leisure and technical services)

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	A Borough To Be Proud Of – priority theme focuses on actions which promote Swale as a physical place A Community To Be Proud Of – priority theme focuses on the

	Council's aspirations for the people of Swale
Financial, Resource and Property	The Council has a working budget of £1,000 used to support quarterly meetings, site visits and partners' funding applications; partner agencies bring resources (financial and human) for project delivery in Swale.
Legal and Statutory	None identified at this stage
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage
Sustainability	High quality, distinct urban and rural landscapes, accessible diverse open spaces and contact with wildlife are increasingly recognised as key components of sustainable communities contributing to people's quality of life and supporting economic and social programmes
Health and Wellbeing	The Green Grid in particular will promote health and wellbeing by encouraging active exercise and opportunities for contact with nature; enhance recreation and amenity with more opportunities for high quality formal and information recreation; strengthen and make connections between new and existing communities and their local environment, by building on Swale's distinctive environment, the Green Grid will inspire people to be proud of where they live, work and to enjoy being active and having more contact with nature; produce and promote local food through local food markets and direct marketing initiatives
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage
Equality and Diversity	Both strategies seek to promote positive community engagement but an Equalities Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the wider consultation and final strategies

7 Appendices

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

- Appendix I: Swale Green Grid Strategy
- Appendix II: Biodiversity Action Plan

8 Background Papers

None

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Swale Green Grid Strategy



June 2016

Swale Borough Council

The Borough of Swale is situated on the North Kent Coast between the Medway Towns and Canterbury and is a diverse area comprising four areas, Faversham, the Isle of Sheppey, Sittingbourne and the rural hinterland.

Swale has spectacular natural assets, ranging from the unique coastal marshlands to the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The area is also scattered with attractive towns and villages. The quality of these environments is a major asset to the area, not only to the quality of life for people that live and work locally but also to future prosperity, impacting upon the area's ability to attract visitors and investment.

The Council has an important role in safeguarding and enhancing our natural and built environments. We will integrate this into our regeneration programme.



The Swale Green Grid Partnership comprises representatives of the following organisations:

Swale Borough Council, Natural England, Groundwork Kent and Medway, Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Unit (AONB), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Kent Wildlife Trust, and the Environment Agency.

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People & Places

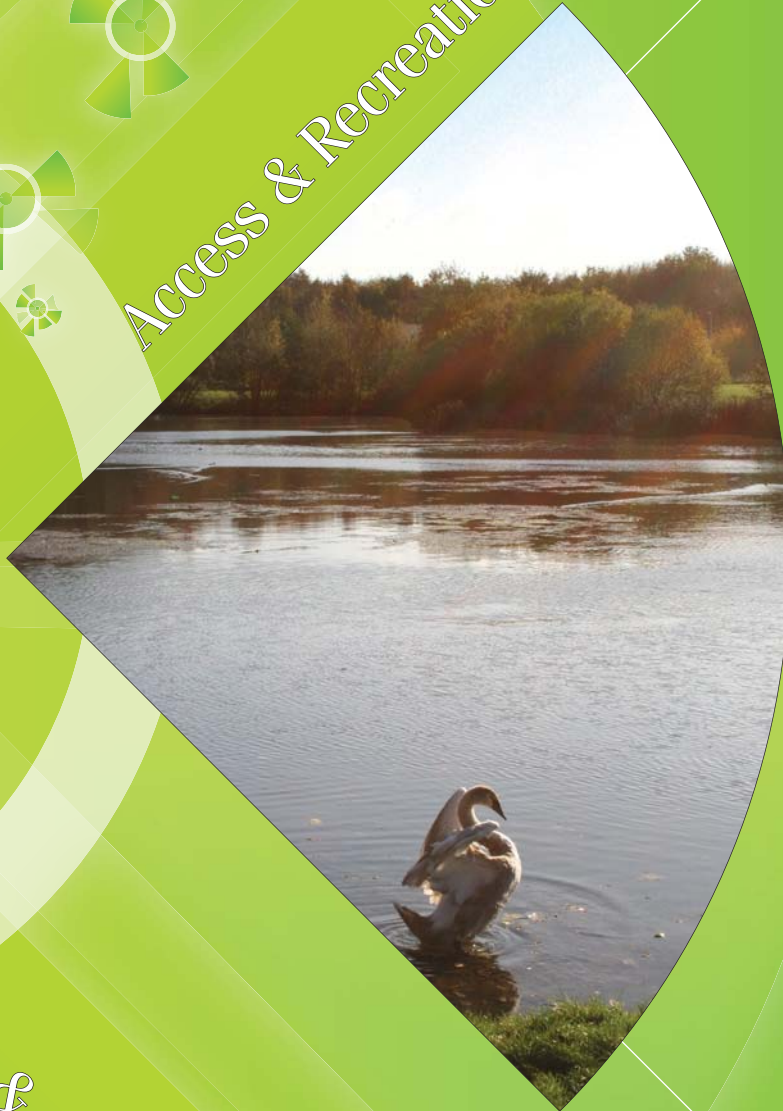


Natural & Built Environment





Access & Recreation



Connectivity & Green Spaces



1 Green Grid Framework

1.1 Context

Swale's stunning and distinctive environment is the Borough's greatest asset. It includes an outstanding range of internationally and nationally important landscapes, focusing on the extensive grazing marshes, mudflats and saltmarshes of the Swale estuary, but also including wetlands, chalk downland and ancient woodland. Swale's outstanding natural environment is complemented by its rich cultural heritage.

Highlights are the historic dockland at Sheerness, the defensive moat of Queenborough Lines, Sittingbourne's diverse industrial base, which includes barge building, brick-making and paper mills, orchards within the rural 'fruit belt' and the historic creekside market town of Faversham, where hop growing has fuelled the local brewing industry and where boats and fine historic buildings are juxtaposed at the heart of the town.

Many of these superb landscapes are accessible to the public and Swale's Open Space Strategy sets out the Borough's vision for its open spaces. It will establish a framework for future investment which balances the need to protect Swale's natural environment with the need to improve the quality and distribution of public open spaces and facilities for sport and recreation.

Swale is the focus for significant investment via a range of infrastructure, employment, housing, environment and community initiatives. With new investment comes high expectations and Swale must demonstrate best practice in delivering sustainable development on the ground.

A focused and visionary environmental agenda will be central to successful regeneration. High quality, distinct urban and rural landscapes, accessible diverse open spaces and contact with wildlife are increasingly recognised as key components of sustainable communities, contributing to people's quality of life and supporting economic and social programmes.

While a planning constraints approach can continue to conserve important green spaces, it will not be adequate to achieve these multifaceted goals. Instead there is a need to

take a positive, proactive and holistic approach to delivering a sustainable and diverse landscape framework for Swale's communities.

This Green Grid Strategy explains what the Green Grid is, why it will make a difference and how it can take forward and help to deliver the regeneration priorities for Swale.

A separate Action Plan sets out a range of projects for delivering the Swale Green Grid.

1.2 Why a Green Grid?

Green Grid is a strategic, joined up approach to land management. It focuses on the relationship between green spaces and the communities they serve and aims to maximise the potential multi-functional benefits of a well-designed public realm.

The Green Grid aims to create a network of multi-functional green spaces providing sustainable access within urban centres and development zones, and beyond the development areas in the urban fringe and rural areas of influence.



1.3 How does it add value?

The Green Grid approach offers a strategic vision, which inspires confidence in private and public sectors alike. By planning, designing and managing green spaces as an interconnected network, rather than as isolated sites, Green Grid can add value to existing projects, justify prioritisation decisions and provide a carefully phased and tailored investment.

It is a design-led approach which requires co-ordination of a wide range of stakeholder interests and engagement with local communities. The role of this Green Grid Strategy is to promote, guide and co-ordinate investment in Swale's Green Grid. The Action Plan is the key tool for Green Grid project planning, management and implementation. It provides:

- contact details for key stakeholders involved in the delivery of Swale's Green Grid;
- information on leadership and accountability; and...

The detail of the Green Grid will vary from community to community but the overarching, sustainable principles will remain the same providing a clear and workable framework for every agency, organisation and individual involved in the future management of the environment of Swale.

1.4 What will it deliver?

The Green Grid will:

- create more accessible greenspace and wildlife areas along an integrated network of safe, attractive pedestrian and cycle routes;
- manage key resources by designing greenspace areas so that they also function as water retention areas for flood alleviation and new developments in accordance with the principles of sustainable drainage;

- reduce pollution by increasing vegetation cover (which absorbs noxious gases and improves local micro-climatic conditions) and by encouraging walking and cycling to reduce dependency on the car;
- promote health and wellbeing by encouraging active exercise and opportunities for contact with nature;
- promote sustainable transport, by providing a permeable and logical network of routes between key destinations and open spaces to encourage walking and cycling and by ensuring that public transport routes are incorporated into the wider network;
- improve the aesthetic qualities of Swale's outstanding landscape, providing a strong landscape infrastructure which reinforces local character;
- enhance recreation & amenity, with more opportunities for high quality formal & informal recreation;
- encourage active communities with a strong community spirit which will advocate ongoing investment in their local landscape;
- enhance education, training and life-long learning, using the local landscape as a learning asset which provides a wealth of cultural, social historical and natural heritage;
- attract economic investment through creating attractive settings and high quality, accessible green open spaces for new development, as well as direct opportunities for employment;
- enhance local cultural heritage by managing the cultural heritage resource and using it to help develop a sense of place and sense of identity;
- strengthen and make connections between new and existing communities and their local environment, by building on Swale's distinctive environment, the Green Grid will inspire people to be proud of where they live, work and to enjoy being active and having more contact with nature;
- enhance biodiversity by linking, extending and creating habitats, by promoting sustainable landscape management practices in all greenspace areas and by raising awareness of biodiversity issues amongst local residents and visitors;
- produce & promote local food through local food markets and direct marketing initiatives.



1.5 The case for investment

There is an obvious and direct connection between investment in green infrastructure and enhanced land values. Surveys demonstrate that properties close to existing green spaces have higher values and that there are commercial benefits in creating an environment that is attractive to buyers. The CABI report also suggests that the cumulative influence of a network of parks and greenspaces has the potential to achieve wider value uplift.

Swale's Green Grid is seen as a key component in the regeneration of the region, providing opportunities to link new and existing communities with Swale's distinctive natural environment via a sustainable network of green spaces.

1.6 Delivering strategic priorities

The Swale Green Grid offers the potential to deliver strategic priorities at national, regional and local scales. The table in Annex A – Swale Green Grid Policy Context describes how Swale's Green Grid Strategy fits within the overall policy context and demonstrates how the Green Grid concept contributes to key policy objectives. Key points are summarised below.

1.6.1 National priorities

A series of key government documents have established a policy context which places strong emphasis on the value of green infrastructure in delivering improved quality of life and contributing to economic regeneration. More recently there has been an emphasis on responding to climate change.

1.6.2 Swale Borough Council priorities

In Swale, the Green Grid Strategy will contribute to the delivery of the Borough Council's Vision for Swale via the three priorities set out in the Corporate Plan.

1. A Borough to be Proud of
2. A Community to be Proud of
3. A Council to be Proud of

This plan is the key policy document for the delivery of Swale's Green Grid as it provides the framework to guide the Council's allocation of resources.

Swale's Green Grid will help to deliver all of the Corporate Plan's priorities, but there is an obvious and direct connection between delivery of Green Grid benefits (see Section 1.4) and the delivery of the Corporate Plan's priorities – A Borough to be Proud of and A Community to Be Proud of.

Annex A sets out a summary of the links between the priorities from Swale's Corporate Plan and the benefits which will be delivered through its Green Grid Strategy.

- 1 Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, July 2007, Urban parks, open space & residential property values and CABI, March 2005, Does money grow on trees?
- 2 Swale Forward, 2004, Swale: State of the Borough Report Swale Forward, Interim Regeneration Framework, 2005-6 ODPM, 2004, Creating Sustainable Communities: Greening the Gateway – a greenspace strategy for Thames Gateway, HMSO
- 3 Swale Forward, Interim Regeneration Framework, 2005-6
- 4 ODPM, 2004, Creating Sustainable Communities: Greening the Gateway – a greenspace strategy for Thames Gateway, HMSO



2 Green Grid Components

2.1 Swale environmental resource

2.1.1 Landscape character

The Swale Landscape Character Assessment describes how the character of Swale's landscape has been shaped by the interaction of the natural environment and human activities. The character assessment incorporates a sequence of maps which illustrate the geology of Swale, patterns of landform, drainage and biodiversity. It also describes historical influences on landscape character.

Swale's landscape character assessment sets out the hierarchy of landscape character areas for Swale – from the three regional joint character areas to the 10 landscape character areas defined at county level by Kent County and a detailed subdivision into 42 local landscape character areas.

Map 1 summarises the county level landscape character areas, which highlight local variations – for instance, areas where orchards are predominant, or where fields have an irregular pattern or where the farmland has a more open, sweeping scale.

The landscape character assessment provides an objective guide to making places which reinforce and enhance local distinctiveness. It does this by describing the inherent diversity of the landscape and by drawing attention to the specific patterns of landform, land cover, land use and settlement which make one place different to another.

Assessment of landscape character is particularly pertinent for Green Grid projects because it describes how a landscape is perceived. It highlights aspects of landscape

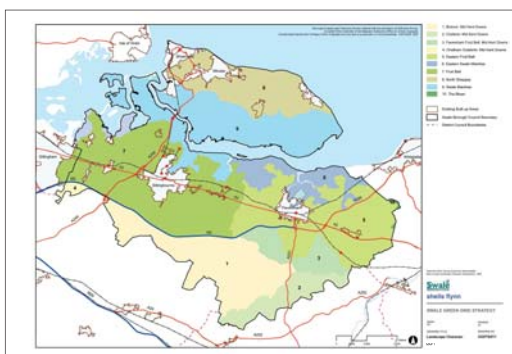
character such as scale, texture, colour, form, enclosure and complexity which suggest how different landscapes feel and how new interventions can be designed to enhance aspects of landscape character which are valued by local people.

The idea is to encourage positive landscape change and avoid a standardised approach: every new building, road, wall and stile should be designed with local landscape character in mind so that new developments (at every scale) are harmonious with their setting and make a positive contribution to local diversity and distinctiveness.

2.1.2 Landscape significance – Statutory designations

The character and quality of Swale's landscape is reflected by the many designations that protect large parts of it. Map 3 shows the key landscape and biodiversity designations, all of which demonstrate the international and national importance of Swale's landscapes. These include:

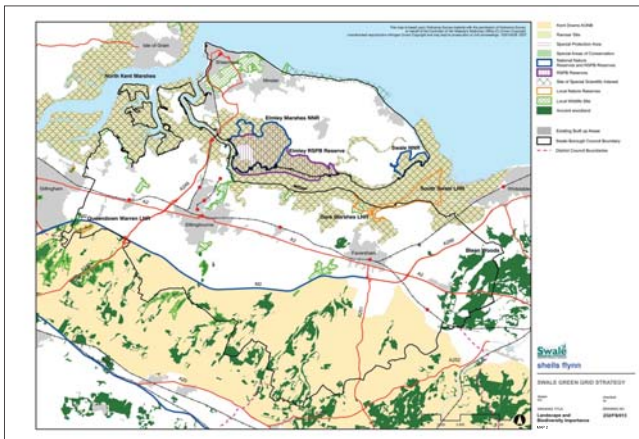
- the international importance of the North Kent Marshes Ramsar Site.
- the Special Protection Areas of Blean Woods, the North Downs and North Kent Marshes
- National Nature Reserves at Elmley Marshes and Swale
- Special Areas of Conservation at Queendown Warren and the Blean woodland complex
- the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty



Map 1 - Kent Landscape Character areas
(See Page 16)



Map 3 also shows the Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and the Local Wildlife Sites (formerly known as Sites of Nature Conservation importance). The map immediately highlights the immense value of Swale’s landscapes in a national and pan European context. It also demonstrates the strong contrasts in character between two types of landscape which are attractive and highly valued – the wild, expansive north Kent marshes and the chalklands of the Kent Downs AONB.



Map 2 - Landscape & Biodiversity Importance (See Page 18)

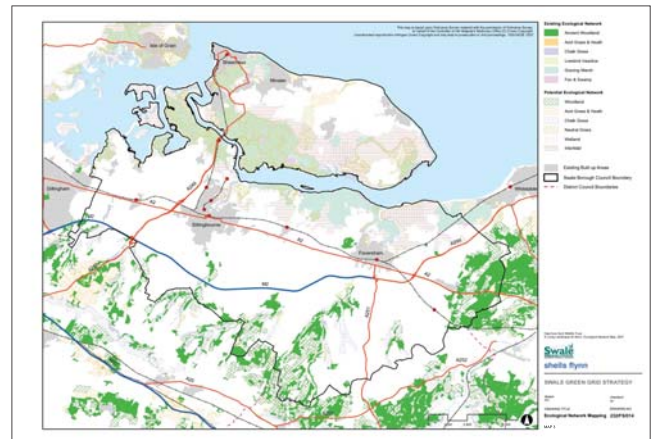
2.1.3 Ecological network mapping

Kent Wildlife Trust has developed an exemplary ecological network mapping project – A Living Landscape for the South-East. The Kent component of this detailed GIS mapping project demonstrates how a co-ordinated approach to habitat restoration, enhancement and re-creation might function at a strategic scale. The model is based on high quality habitat data and seeks to inform strategic planning and land use management decisions.

The argument for creating inter-connected ecological networks and large habitat areas is based on the fact that:

- small, isolated areas of habitat are likely to hold proportionately fewer species than larger areas, and the populations of these species are likely to be more vulnerable to local extinction;
- functional connectivity between areas of wildlife habitat is likely to make it easier for populations of species to shift in response to climate change;

- the small and isolated nature of most areas of wildlife habitat in the UK poses a significant risk to biodiversity, particularly in the face of likely climate change.



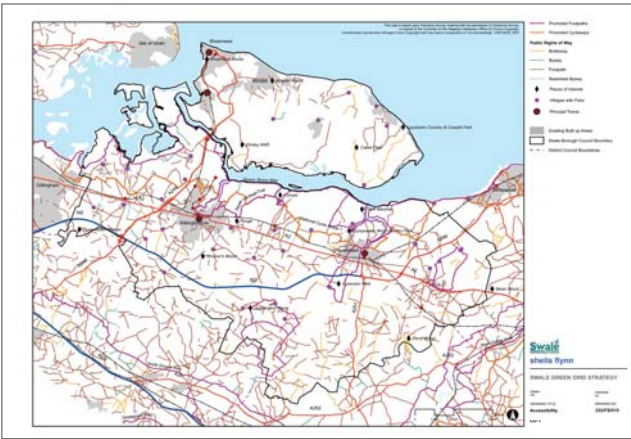
Map 3 - Ecological Network model (See Page 20)

The ecological network model for Kent identifies:

- existing habitat patches, with priority given to BAP habitats, the largest blocks and then those closest to them;
- locations where new habitats of the same type might most appropriately be restored or recreated within a threshold distance of an existing habitat patch (using the habitat opportunity mapping developed as part of the Kent Lifescapes Study).

Drawing on the ecological network model for Kent, the core biodiversity challenges for the Swale Green Grid are to:

- create larger habitat blocks by linking existing habitat patches, giving priority to BAP species, designated and protected sites and ancient woodland;
- create physical connections between habitat patches, either in the form of a series of ‘stepping stone’ patches of habitat or as linear ‘corridors’; and
- focus efforts to improve the wildlife value of farmland or areas of built development surrounding the blocks and corridors of important habitats highlighted on the ecological model.



Map 4 - Accessibility
(See Page 22)

2.2 Green Grid Opportunities

2.2.1 Public rights of way

Green Grid projects will extend and enhance the existing network of public rights of way, linking urban areas with the surrounding countryside, and neighbourhoods with local destinations, such as schools, workplaces, parks and other managed greenspaces.

Map 5 summarises the existing network of public rights of way, highlighting promoted footpaths, such as the Saxon Shore Way and cycle routes, including National Cycle Route 1. It also shows principal destinations - public parks, recreation facilities, community woodlands and nature reserves.

2.2.2 Swale's regeneration priorities

Parts of Swale, particularly urban areas, experience dereliction and poor environmental quality. Examples are Milton Regis, Queenborough & Rushenden, Sheerness and Blue Town. Swale's regeneration opportunities for investment at:

- Queenborough & Rushenden – aims to provide 1,100 new homes alongside new employment, with up to 2 million sq ft of new floor space. The project is part of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) economic assets programme. To date there has been investment in the new road infrastructure to provide a direct link to the A249; site preparation works for 20 ha of employment development; approximately 20 ha of brownfield

land acquired for re-development for residential; preparation of the first phase of residential land for the market; completion of the retail-led first and second phases of employment development at Neats Court with the opening of 55,000 sq ft Morrisons and KFC food retail unit, 67,000 sq ft of new units for B&M, Iceland, Sports Direct and Poundland; planning permission and commencement of works to deliver a new 6000,000 sq ft Regional Distribution Centre for Aldi

- Sittingbourne – in 2011, the Spirit of Sittingbourne consortium was selected by the Council as its development partner to regenerate Sittingbourne Town Centre. The proposals will provide a wide range of new facilities and housing with an aim to generate significant economic improvement and employment in the borough. The Eurolink Business Park in Sittingbourne has grown to be one of Kent's largest business areas with a new phase, Eurolink Phase Five, having recently been granted outline planning consent with the potential to provide a further 43,000 metres of development and up to 1,000 jobs. Kemsley Fields, Business Park, including G-Park, Sittingbourne is positioned to the north of Sittingbourne and is in a strategic location to take full advantage of the area's good transport links, including road, rail and port. There remains scope for further development and the ability to deliver build to suit facilities from 127,500 sq ft to 540,000 sq ft. Kent Science Park provides 500,000 sq ft of existing space and is home to over 60 companies, perating across a range of technologies.
- Sheerness – Public realm improvements, improved links between the town centre, the sea and the historic dockyard, gateway features, public art etc to substantially improve the environment for residents, visitors and investors.
- Faversham - town centre public realm improvements; Faversham Town

Council has been undertaking work on the Neighbourhood Plan since October 2011 and was part of the Government's Neighbourhood Planning Vanguard Scheme. Improvements will be consistent with the town's architectural and historical heritage.

- Targeted urban intervention public realm improvements in other urban locations where they can be linked with delivery of new housing, to combat deprivation or facilitate economic development. Investment in regeneration provides opportunities to develop and deliver Green Grid projects

2.2.3 Projects with Green Grid potential

The Green Grid Strategy aims to add value to ongoing environmental projects and initiatives by identifying gaps and opportunities for connections, additions and new linked projects. So it will be guided by a range of existing projects and investment opportunities which have the potential to deliver Green Grid benefits.

Not all of Swale's Green Grid projects have a specific site – many are thematic initiatives such as marketing schemes for local food, promoting health walks or environmental education schemes.

3 Green Grid Vision

3.1 Green Grid Structure

The spatial structure of Swale's network of Green Grid projects and opportunities can be understood in terms of six components:

1. **Greenspaces** – the hierarchy of greenspace resources includes managed open spaces, nature reserves, urban squares, streets, allotments, cemeteries, derelict land and private gardens. They provide recreational, social, cultural, wildlife and community benefits.
2. **Corridors** – a network of routes including rivers, estuaries & creeks – water has shaped Swale's cultural and physical development and the 'blue' component of the Grid is central to the borough's distinctive identity. Swale's waterfronts hold a natural fascination for people and 'unlocking' their potential (by enhancing waterfront access and the redevelopment of major river frontage sites) is a key objective of the Green Grid.

Habitat links – which connect habitats or features of high biodiversity value such as river floodplains, ancient woodlands and chalk grassland

Local connector - routes connecting settlements to the wider countryside, which might be enhanced through footpath/cycleway improvements, shared space schemes or street landscape improvements

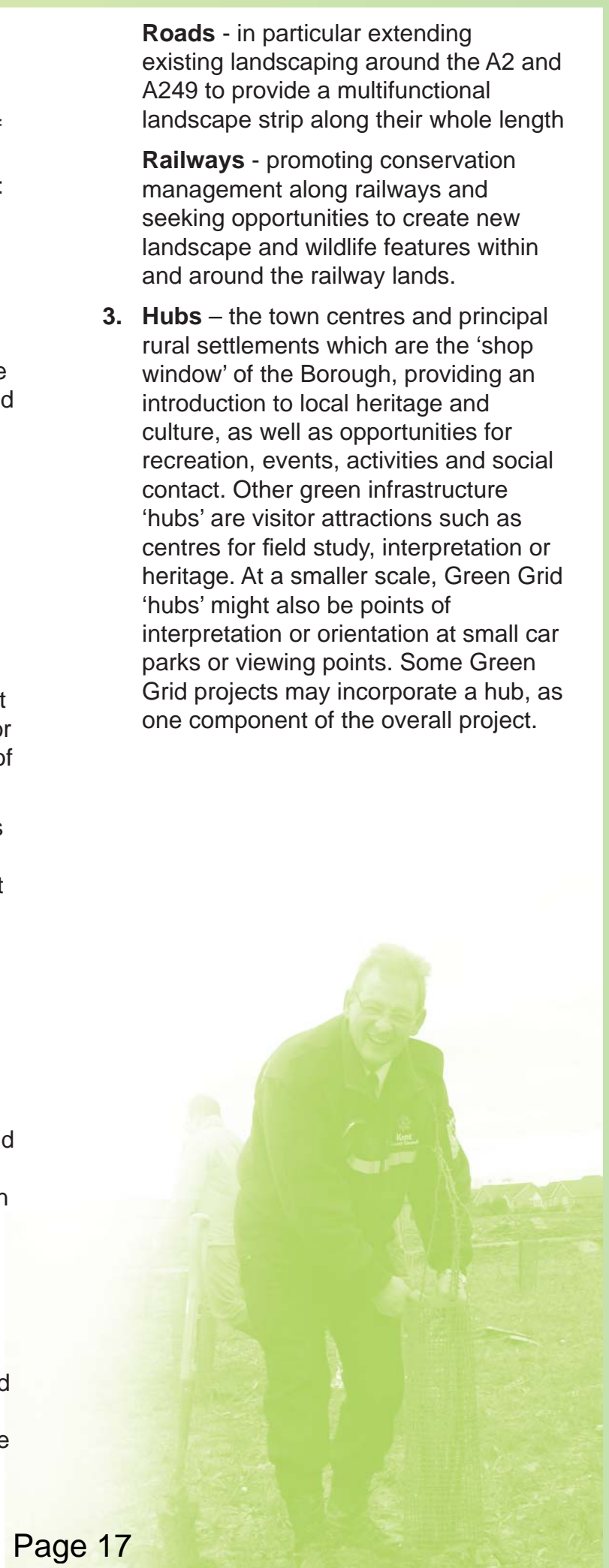
Circular routes – often designed around subject or area-based (locally distinct) themes and incorporating interpretation eg Faversham circular walks and the 'Harty Trail and Sheerness Way' cycle routes.

Strategic long distance routes - including the Saxon Shore Way, National Cycle Route and the proposed coastal access path where enhanced landscaping will, additionally, contribute to quality of the route

Roads - in particular extending existing landscaping around the A2 and A249 to provide a multifunctional landscape strip along their whole length

Railways - promoting conservation management along railways and seeking opportunities to create new landscape and wildlife features within and around the railway lands.

3. **Hubs** – the town centres and principal rural settlements which are the 'shop window' of the Borough, providing an introduction to local heritage and culture, as well as opportunities for recreation, events, activities and social contact. Other green infrastructure 'hubs' are visitor attractions such as centres for field study, interpretation or heritage. At a smaller scale, Green Grid 'hubs' might also be points of interpretation or orientation at small car parks or viewing points. Some Green Grid projects may incorporate a hub, as one component of the overall project.

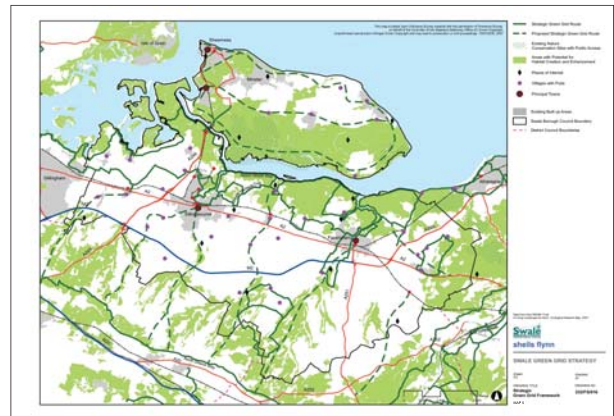


4. Gateways - Gateways indicate transition and provide a sense of arrival. In the context of the Green Grid, the key gateways occur on the main approach routes to the Borough and to individual settlements. Approach routes are not limited to roads but include main routes from stations and other public transport nodes as well as pedestrian and cycle routes. All gateways should make a statement, reflecting the quality of the Grid and individual character of the surrounding area. Some Green Grid projects may incorporate a gateway, as one component of the overall project.

5. Major development sites - Green Grid provides the opportunity and a rationale for greenspace within new developments and as part of targeted regeneration projects.

6. Wider area initiatives – land management and habitat enhancement projects. In Swale there is a strong focus on the marshes, but land management projects are also concentrated on the chalk downs, areas of ancient woodland and heritage orchards. New projects may offer scope to enhance degraded areas, reinforcing local landscape character and ecological value. Changes in agricultural practice and the associated environmental grant structure will have a role to play.

3.2 Strategic Green Grid Framework Plan



Map 5 - Strategic Green Grid Framework (See Page 24)

3.2.1 'Layers' of key information

Swale's Strategic Green Grid Framework Plan is informed by combining key information from the landscape character, landscape significance, ecological network and accessibility maps. This is essentially a 'sieve mapping' process, which takes account of these key influences and highlights areas and connections which should be part of Swale's strategic Green Grid network.

3.2.2 Strategic Green Grid Framework Plan

The strategic Green Grid routes focus on the principal connections between:

- centres of population and the wider countryside, taking account of the location of railway stations, places of interest and opportunities to experience the different types of landscape in Swale

- nationally important habitats and areas where there is potential for habitat creation and enhancement, taking account of the data from the ecological network model.

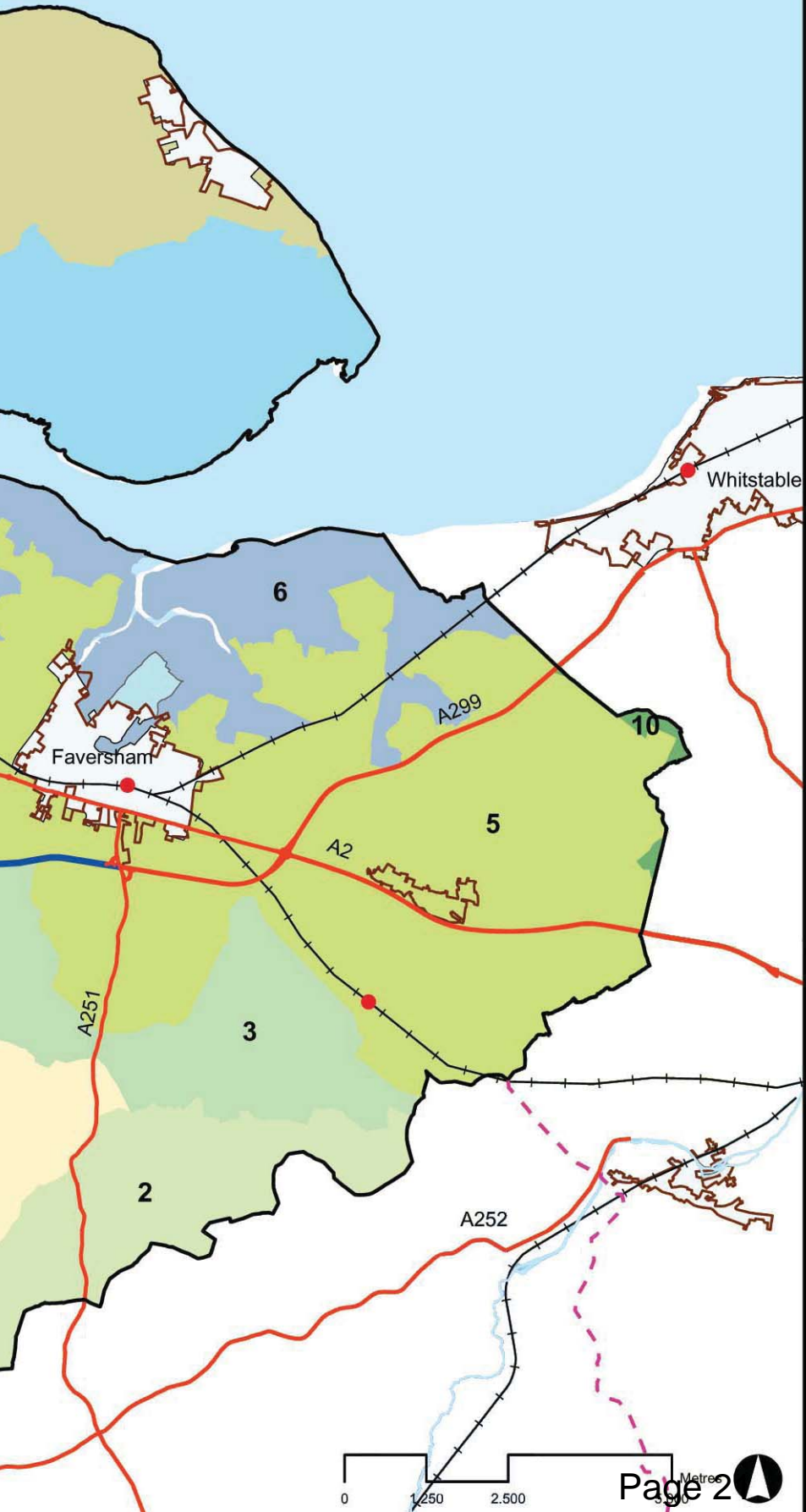
The Strategic Green Grid Framework Plan illustrates only the strategic Green Grid routes, which provide an overall framework for the network of smaller routes and public access and habitat enhancement projects which together make up the Green Grid.

The existing strategic Green Grid routes are along the Swale estuary and marshes – the Saxon Shore Way and National Cycle Route One. The Faversham circular walks, the Sheppey cycle routes and the Strategic Green Grid Framework Plan illustrates the principal of connections between key settlements and the North Downs Way, with promoted strategic Green Grid routes and appropriate landscape or habitat enhancement projects within the chalk valleys which link the Downs to the Swale.

The proposed routes are broadly aligned to link places of interest, villages and areas with potential for habitat enhancement.



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- 1. Bicknor: Mid Kent Downs
 - 2. Challock: Mid Kent Downs
 - 3. Faversham Fruit Belt: Mid Kent Downs
 - 4. Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs
 - 5. Eastern Fruit Belt
 - 6. Eastern Swale Marshes
 - 7. Fruit Belt
 - 8. North Sheppey
 - 9. Swale Marshes
 - 10. The Blean
- Existing Built up Areas
 - Swale Borough Council Boundary
 - District Council Boundaries

Data from Kent County Council & Jacobs Babbit
 Kent County Landscape Character Assessment, 1994



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SWALE GREEN GRID STRATEGY

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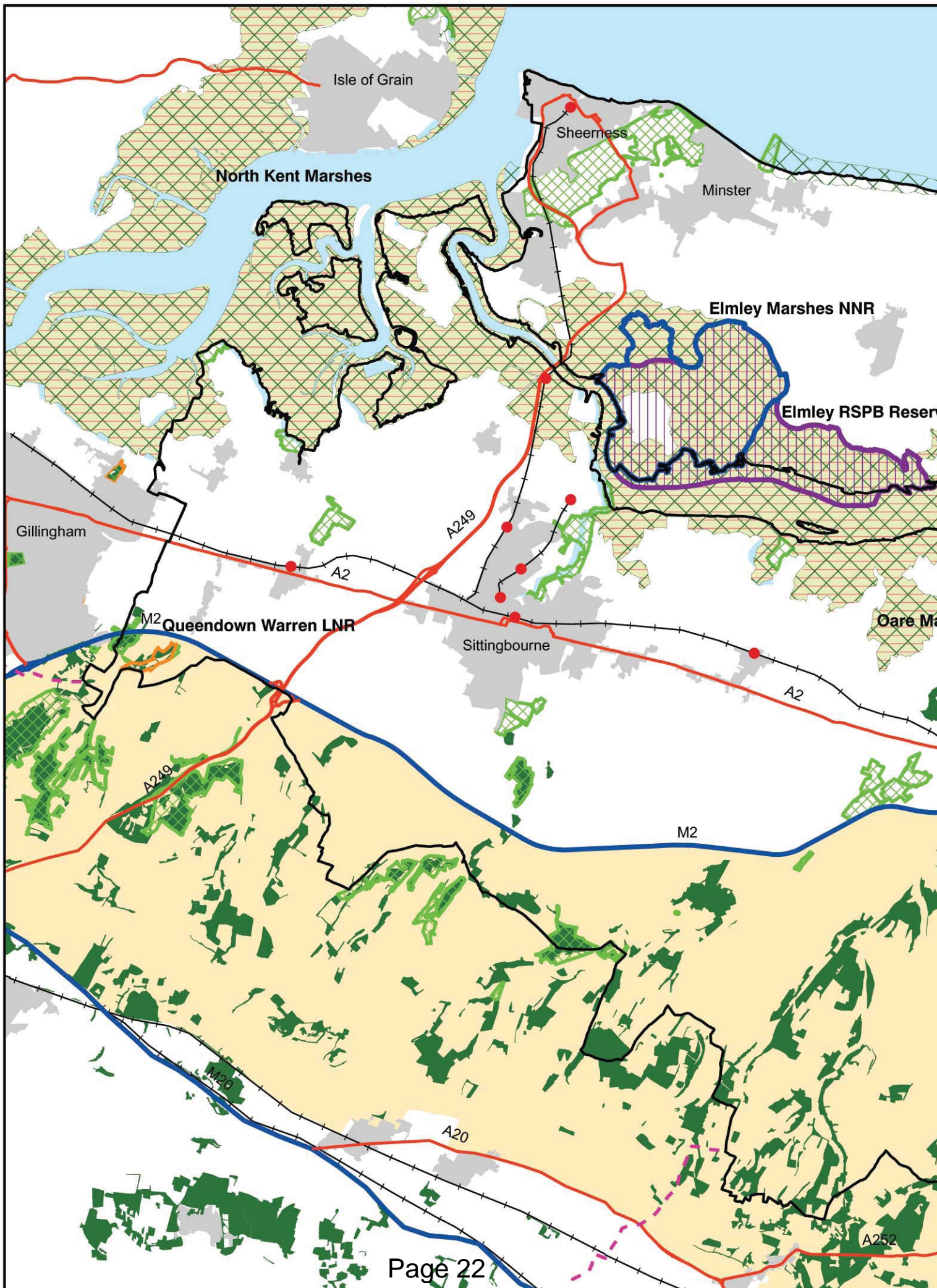
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Landscape Character

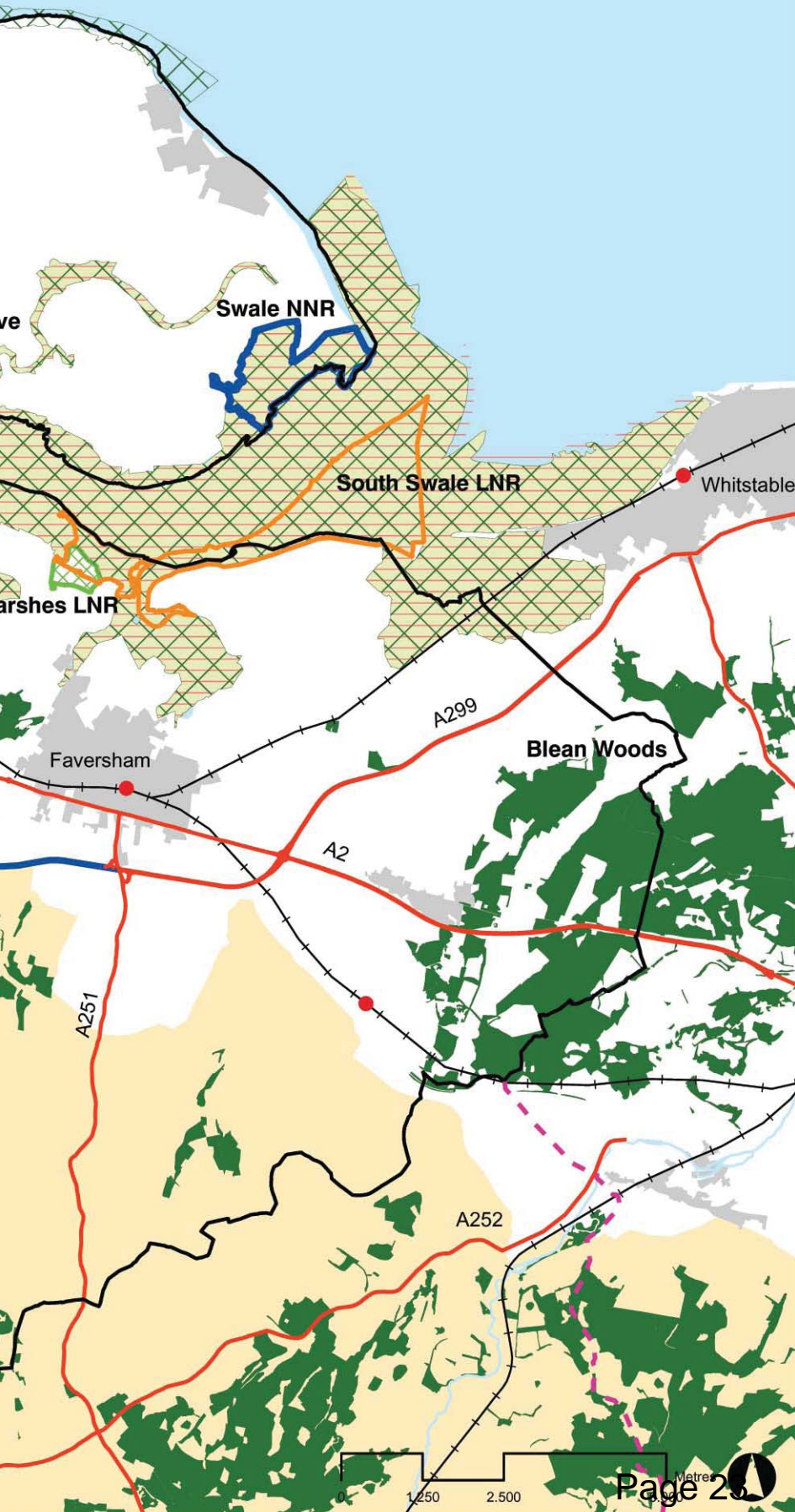
232/FS/011

MAP 1

Map 2 - Swale Green Grid Strategy: landscape & biodiversity importance



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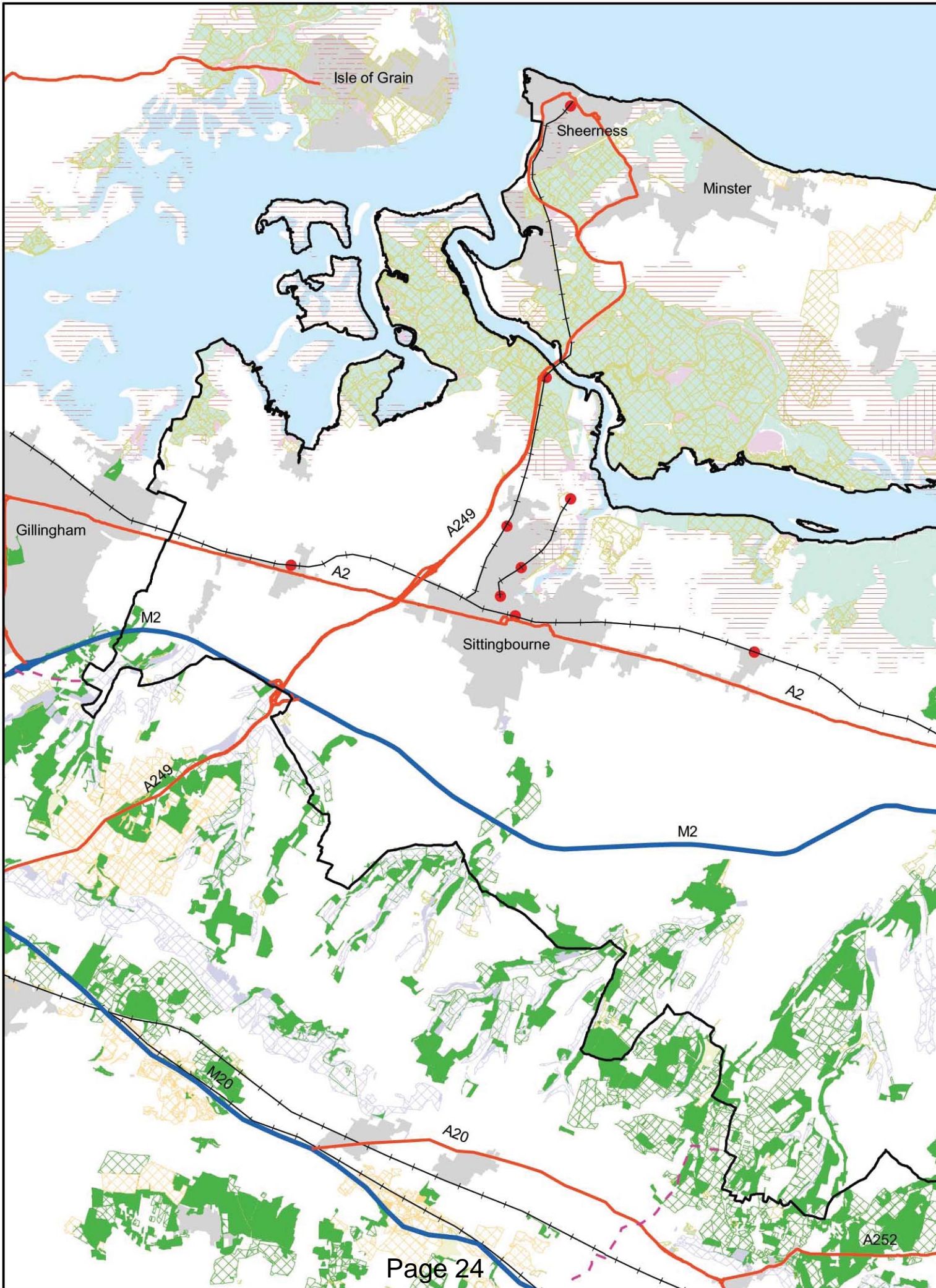
- Kent Downs AONB
- Ramsar Site
- Special Protection Area
- Special Areas of Conservation
- National Nature Reserves and RSPB Reserves
- Elmley NNR
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserves
- Local Wildlife Site
- Ancient woodland

- Existing Built up Areas
- Swale Borough Council Boundary
- District Council Boundaries

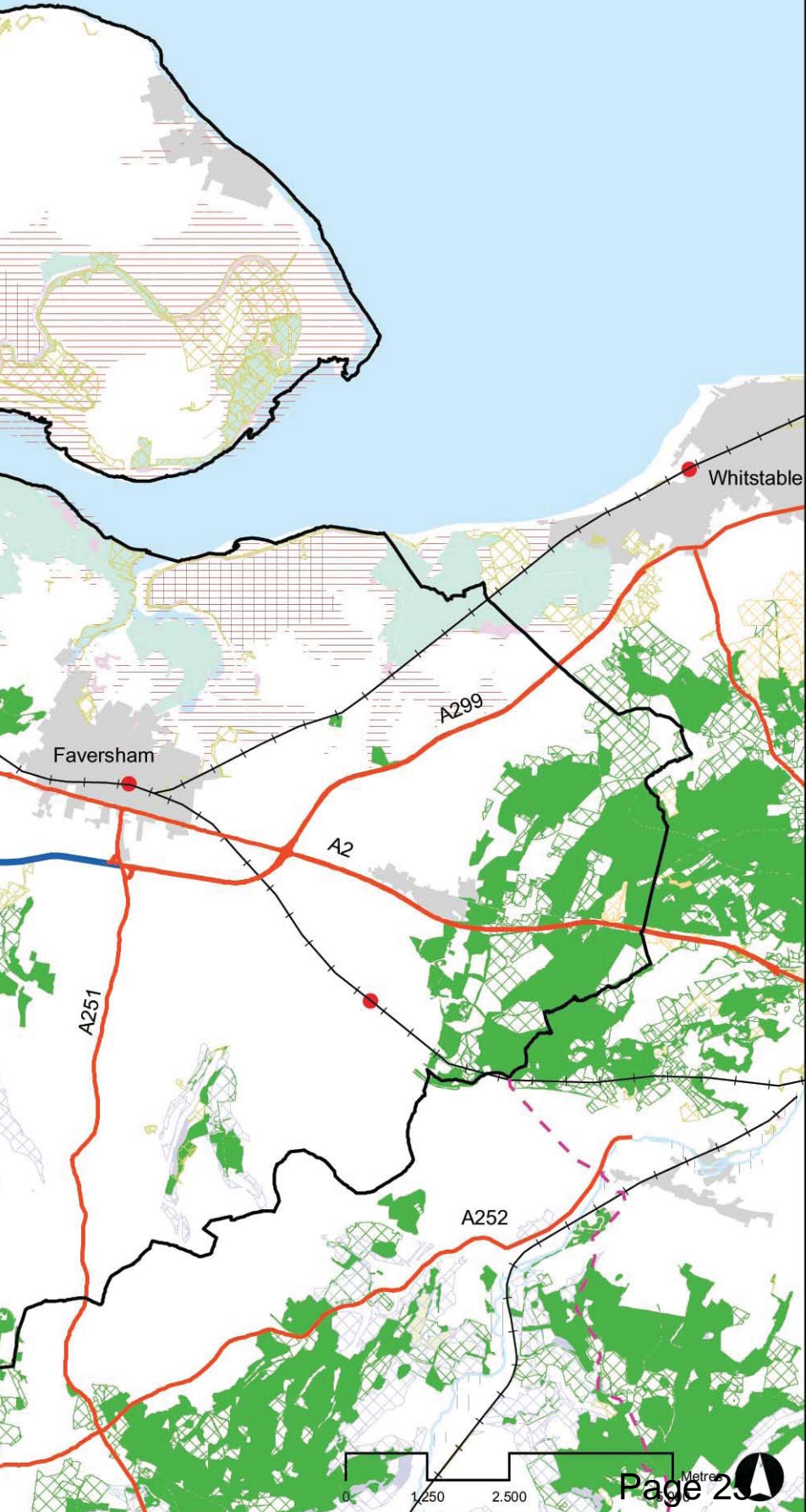
Swale
BOROUGH COUNCIL
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SWALE GREEN GRID STRATEGY

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MAP 2	



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Existing Ecological Network

- Ancient Woodland
- Acid Grass & Heath
- Chalk Grass
- Lowland meadow
- Grazing Marsh
- Fen & Swamp

Potential Ecological Network

- Woodland
- Acid Grass & Heath
- Chalk Grass
- Neutral Grass
- Wetland
- Intertidal

Existing Built up Areas

Swale Borough Council Boundary

District Council Boundaries

Data from Kent Wildlife Trust
A Living Landscape for Kent - Ecological Network Map, 2007



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SWALE GREEN GRID STRATEGY

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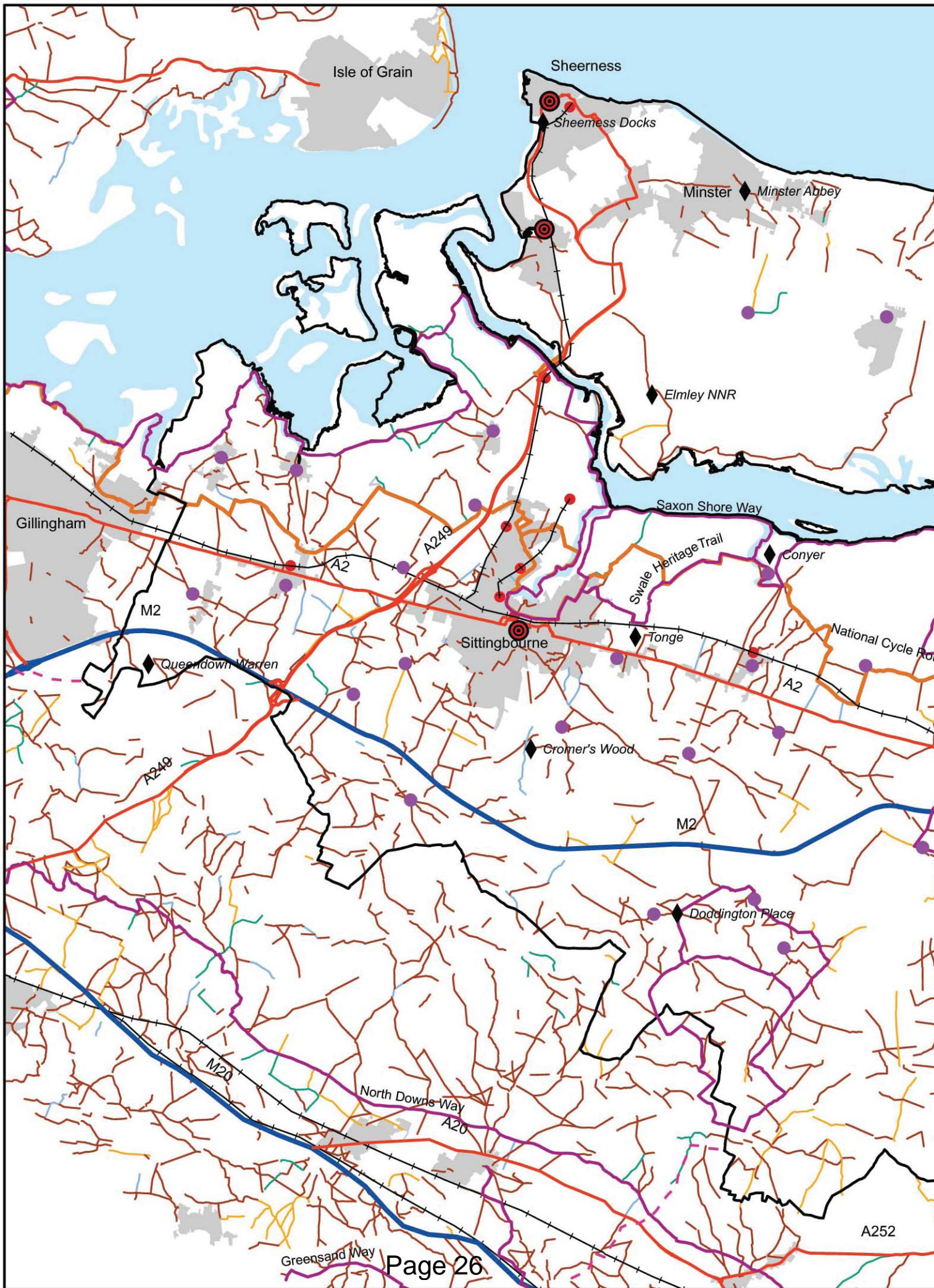
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Ecological Network Mapping 232/FS/014

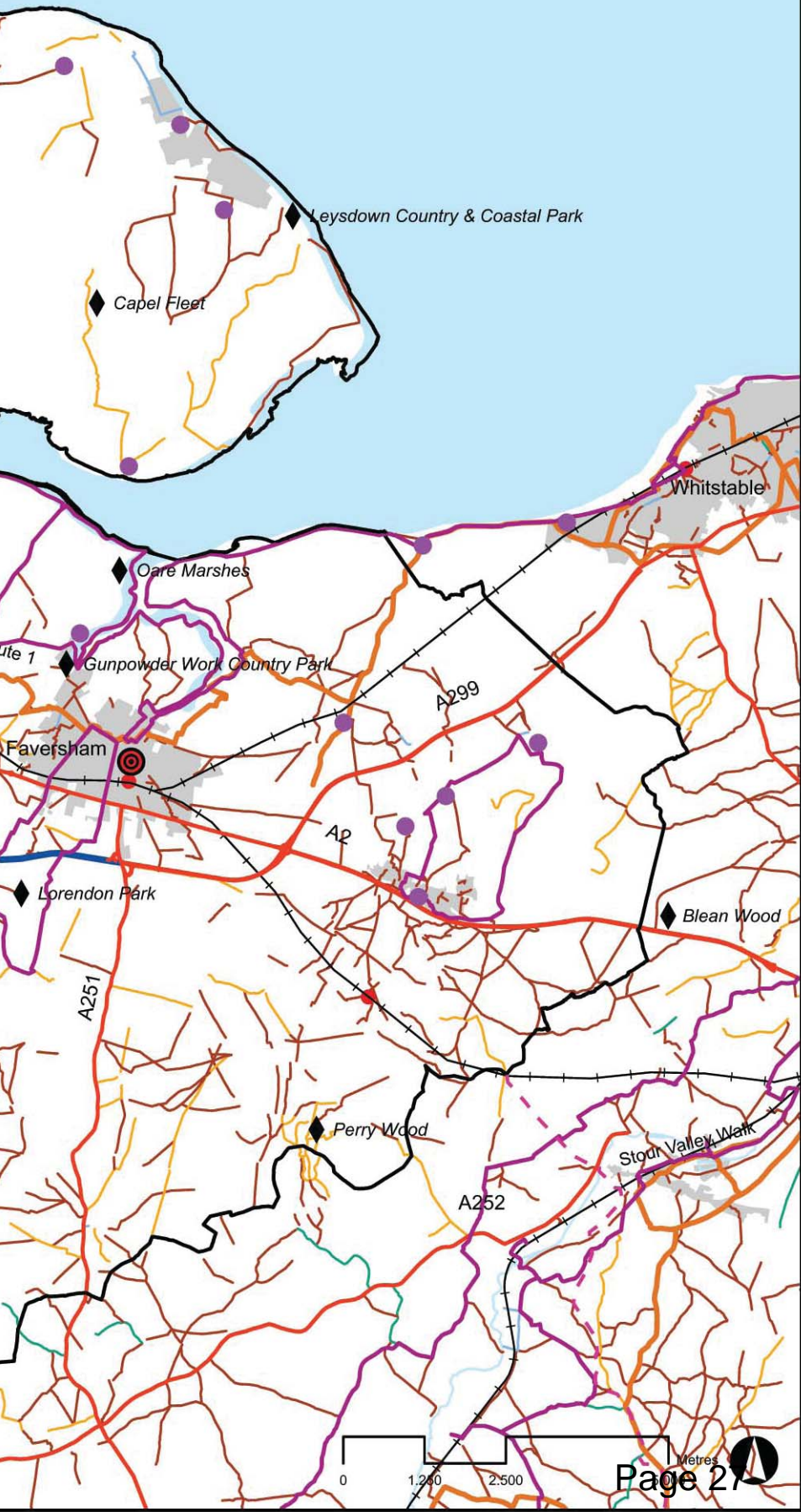
MAP 3



Map 4 - Swale Green Grid Strategy: Accessibility



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- Promoted Footpaths
- Promoted Cycleways

Public Rights of Way

- Bridleway
- Byway
- Footpath
- Restricted Byway

- ◆ Places of Interest
- Villages with Pubs
- ◎ Principal Towns

- Existing Built up Areas
- Swale Borough Council Boundary
- District Council Boundaries

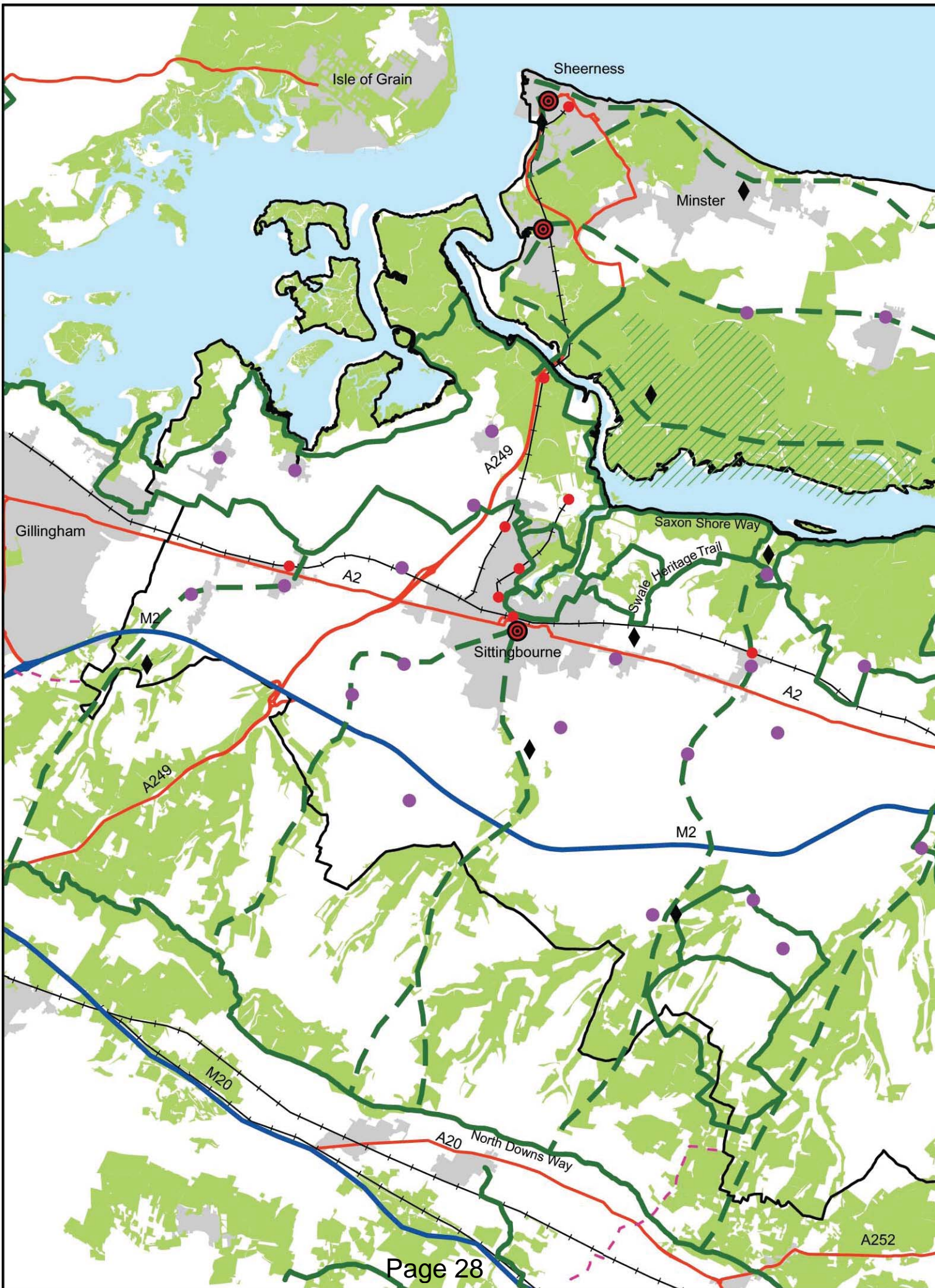


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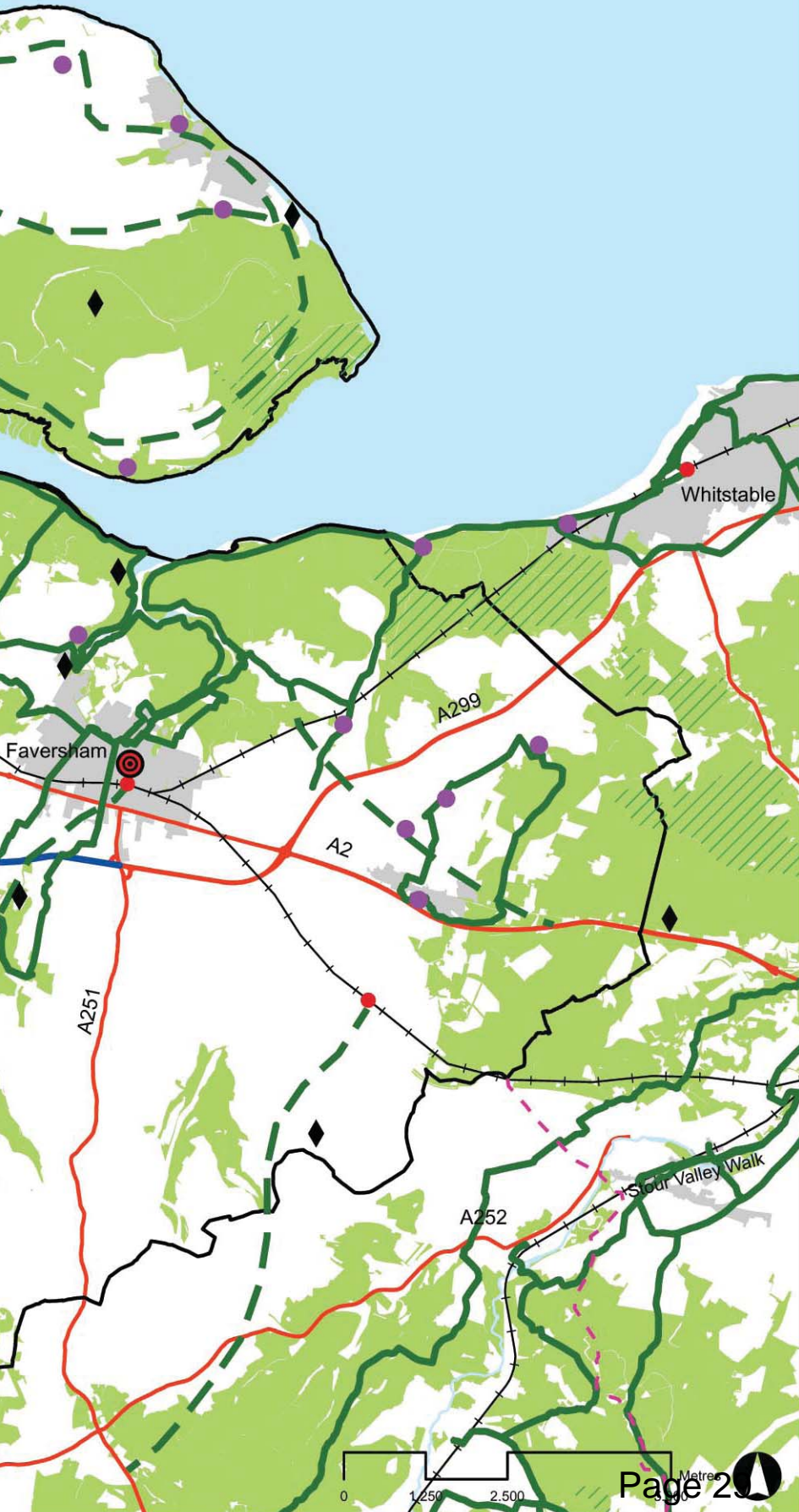
SWALE GREEN GRID STRATEGY







drawn DG	checked SF
DRAWING TITLE Accessibility	DRAWING NO 232/FS/015
MAP 4	

Map 5 - Swale Green Grid Strategy: Strategic Green Grid Framework



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-  Strategic Green Grid Route
-  Proposed Strategic Green Grid Route
-  Existing Nature Conservation Sites with Public Access
-  Areas with Potential for Habitat Creation and Enhancement
-  Places of Interest
-  Villages with Pubs
-  Principal Towns
-  Existing Built up Areas
-  Swale Borough Council Boundary
-  District Council Boundaries

Data from Kent Wildlife Trust
A Living Landscape for Kent - Ecological Network Map, 2007



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SWALE GREEN GRID STRATEGY

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DRAWING TITLE
**Strategic
Green Grid Framework**

DRAWING NO
232/FS/016

MAP 5

Annex A - National Policy

Policy document	Relevance
<p><i>DEFRA Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services</i></p>	<p>A national strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services. Sets out the strategic direction for biodiversity policy to 2020 on land (including rivers and lakes) and at sea.</p>
<p><i>Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)</i></p>	<p>The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 require PCTs and local authorities to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of the health and wellbeing of their local community. They identify the key issues affecting health and wellbeing of local people.</p>
<p><i>National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)</i></p>	<p>PPG 17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, 2002 requires local authorities to undertake an assessment of their existing and current open space needs. This open space audit is part of Swale's Open Space Strategy and informs decisions on the distribution and function of open space. It also highlights areas of open space deficiency, taking account of Natural England's national targets for access to natural green space.</p> <p>PPS 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, 2005 aims to improve the quality and sustainability of local environments and neighbourhoods, while continuing to protect valued landscapes and natural resources. The implementation of Swale's Green Grid Strategy will further the same aims.</p> <p>PPS 9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, 2004 is an extension of the Government's biodiversity strategy, Working with the Grain of Nature: a Biodiversity Strategy for England, 2002. PPS 9 sets out the way in which the Government's policies for the conservation of biological and geological diversity should be reflected in land use planning. Swale's Green Grid offers a key tool for the delivery of biodiversity in line with Kent's Living Landscapes ecological network model and in a manner which is sensitive to the inherent character of Swale.</p>
<p>The DEFRA Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (2011)</p>	<p>The natural environment covers living things in all their diversity: wildlife, rivers and streams, lakes and seas, urban green space and open countryside, forests and farmed lands.</p>
<p><i>Localism Act 2011</i></p>	<p>The key components of the Act include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new freedoms and flexibilities for local government • new rights and powers for communities and individuals • reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective • reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally

Regional Policy

Policy document	Relevance
<p><i>South East Local Enterprise Partnership – Rural Strategy 2015 - 2021 (2015)</i></p>	<p>A strategy to enable continued economic growth, absorb the development of new infrastructure, business and urban expansion and to manage the rural environment to provide clean air, water and safe and nutritious food for the growing population. Protecting landscape and habitats, safeguarding rural communities</p>
<p><i>Kent Nature Partnership – Kent Biodiversity 2020 and beyond – a strategy for the natural environment 2015-2025</i></p>	<p>Sets out the framework including priorities for the natural environment in Kent and Medway recognising that actions will be delivered by organisations and individuals across the county.</p>
<p><i>Kent County Council a Strategy for environment, economy and health, March 2016</i></p>	<p>Strategy recognises Kent’s unique, rich and diverse environment which provides significant benefits to the county’s economy and the health and wellbeing of its residents. It sets out challenges – air quality, transport, water, severe weather, heat and flooding, land-use changes, biodiversity, energy consumption and generation. The strategy has been developed to provide a framework to ensure that resources are utilised to greatest impact.</p>
<p><i>Local Transport Plan, Kent County Council, 2006-11</i></p>	<p>Kent’s Local Transport Plan aims to provide good, safe accessibility to jobs and services for all sections of the community, to improve the environment and health of the community and to widen the choice of available transport by developing public transport and promoting walking and cycling. The Swale Green Grid will make a strong contribution to all these policy objectives.</p>
<p><i>Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, 2014-2019</i></p>	<p>Running along the southern boundary of Swale, the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is an internationally recognised natural landscape area designated under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and protected by various statute including the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. The AONB management plan provides the management framework for the AONB. The AONB is an important landscape and recreational resource for the communities of Swale and Swale’s Green Grid will take account of, and develop options for, access to the AONB. Of particular relevance are policies relating to the sustainable management of the AONB’s landscapes, visitor facilities, open access sites and public rights of way, opportunities for sustainable tourism and high quality interpretation and the provision of coordinated information about visitor use, recreation and access across the AONB.</p>

Local Policy

Policy document	Relevance
<p><i>Swale Corporate Plan 2015 - 2018</i></p>	<p>See separate table in Annex B</p>
<p><i>Sustainable Community Strategy(updated 2012) to 2031</i></p>	<p>Details priorities to 2031 Targets are summarised under 7 key themes. The implementation of Swale's Green Grid will make a direct contribution to the delivery of 4 of the themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vibrant and safe – provide accessible, safe but interesting public spaces and recreation facilities where there are fulfilling opportunities for everyone • Green and clean – ensure that preservation and enhancement of the natural environment is fully integrated into Swale's regeneration and renewal and to create a sustainable network of green public open space • Connected – an efficient and integrated sustainable transport and communication network, capable of supporting a growing population and increased economic opportunity • Sustainable neighbourhoods – exemplary urban and rural environments in which people chose to live and work.
<p><i>Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal (Jacobs, 2011)</i></p>	<p>Incorporates both landscape and biodiversity elements without one study; it provides an evidence base to protect highly valued local areas of landscape within Swale as well as a useful tool for planners, land managers, developers and conservation bodies</p>
<p><i>Swale Regeneration Framework, 2006 – 2016, Swale Forward</i></p>	<p>Swale's Regeneration Framework sets out the overall vision for regeneration in Swale. The key locations for regeneration highlighted in the Framework are also listed within the Swale Green Grid Strategy and there is a direct link between investment in regeneration and investment in the Green Grid network. The Green Grid Strategy also reflects the emphasis in the Regeneration Framework on sense of place and the need to ensure that physical development contributes to local identity and distinctiveness</p>
<p><i>Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan 2014 - 2031</i></p>	<p>The Swale Borough Local Plan, contains a range of policies and proposals aimed at protecting and raising environmental quality and increasing the provision of new open spaces accessible by local communities. Sites proposed for development, particularly those within the urban areas, will be required to provide new green and open spaces which will all contribute to the wider Green Grid objectives.</p>

Annex B - Links to Swales Corporate Plan

Swale Corporate Plan & Swale Green Grid: Cross-cutting themes & priorities

Swale Corporate Plan Priorities	Green Grid benefits
<p><i>A Borough to be proud of...</i></p>	<p>Attract investment – Provide a setting for investment, complementing inward investment in homes, jobs and tourism. High quality landscape settings and integrated access will enhance property values and help to attract investors and residents</p> <p>Employment opportunities - large scale green space provision can also have a direct impact on the local economy providing employment opportunities for local contractors, nurseries and grounds maintenance contractors through both the public and private sectors. Opportunities are likely to be generated in the fields of outdoor education, play leadership, horticultural therapy, sport supervision and countryside interpretation.</p> <p>There may also be the scope to develop commercial operations based on timber crops and green waste recycling.</p>
<p><i>A Community to be proud of...</i></p>	<p>Reinforce local distinctiveness - a strong landscape infrastructure will establish urban and rural character and provide a setting for new development, promoting a sense of place and installing community pride.</p> <p>Sustainable transport - accessible greenspace and wildlife areas along with an integrated network of safe, attractive cycle and pedestrian routes are at the heart of the Green Grid. The network of green routes will enhance access to green space but will also provide safe, attractive routes to schools, work and shops providing a real alternative to car based travel.</p> <p>Contact with nature - landscape improvements based on sustainable principles will bring people closer to nature and provide both physical and visual contact with wildlife and natural environments.</p> <p>Manage greenspace assets - the Green Grid will maximise the potential of the greenspace resource of the Borough, which ranges from cemeteries and pocket parks to allotments, private gardens and parks, to serve local needs whilst ensuring that more sensitive sites and wildlife areas are protected for future generations.</p> <p>Enhance biodiversity value - the Green Grid will substantially benefit local wildlife, contribute to local Biodiversity Action Plan objectives and raise awareness of biodiversity issues amongst local residents. Existing areas of ecological interest will be identified and enhanced, development of new spaces and the review of current open space, squares and streetscapes will create opportunities for additional habitat as well as green corridors to increase connectivity between natural areas which will assist colonisation and the movement of wildlife.</p> <p>Environmental education - Through the adoption of sustainable management practices in all greenspace areas, wildlife will be brought into the urban area and closer to people providing opportunities for education, interpretation and contact. This will help to increase quality of life and provide a platform for raising awareness of biodiversity and sustainability issues.</p>

Swale Corporate Plan Priorities	Green Grid benefits
	<p>Recreation - The Green Grid will improve access to meet the needs of a larger number of people, identify opportunities for open space and access creation within existing and new developments and ensure a coherent and integrated approach to open space and access provision. It will also provide improvements in both the quality and quantity of facilities for formal and informal recreation. This is has been identified as the highest cultural priority by residents of the Borough. Drawing on an objective assessment of current provision and community needs</p> <p>Community engagement - In addition to preserving and celebrating local heritage and culture, the Green Grid will have a direct practical, cultural and social role. Accessible green spaces in close proximity to where people live will provide opportunities for social interaction, cultural events and other non-recreation activities such as volunteering, environmental education, art festivals and outdoor performance. Opportunities for community involvement will provide a common interest and promote social engagement. Involvement will also create a sense of local achievement and pride of place which can do much to raise community aspirations and will, over the longer term, help to ensure successful ownership and protect investment in the landscape.</p> <p>Healthy lifestyles - preventative health care is increasingly highlighted as a principal benefit of adopting a bold approach to greenspace planning and implementation. Contact with greenspace can reduce stress and contribute to health and a sense of well being. Involvement in greenspace can benefit people with sensory and other disabilities. An integrated, accessible and diverse greenspace also promotes and provides opportunities and facilities for more active exercise whether through formal sport, organised activities or informal recreation.</p> <p>Education - the local landscape is a valuable learning asset at all levels providing a wealth of cultural, social, historical, natural heritage and environmental resources. The Green Grid will help to identify and protect these resources and, through interpretation and in partnership with interest groups, increase access and local appreciation. The Green Grid will also provide practical training opportunities (for instance in horticulture, countryside management, interpretation and construction, helping to address the increasing shortage of people with practical skills.</p>
<p><i>A Council to be proud of...</i></p>	<p>Partnership working - Sustainable principles are being promoted and supported in relation to new developments, in agriculture, across business and in daily lives. Mechanisms, partnerships and the knowledge to deliver landscape and access enhancements exist within the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Green Grid Strategy can ensure that this effort is co-ordinated towards a common plan, by providing access to advice and support, promoting best practice and identifying deficiencies in the network and delivery process.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 34</p>

Contacting Swale Green Grid Partnership

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Swale Biodiversity Action Plan

Revised June 2016



Swale Green Grid Partnership

Swale Biodiversity Action Plan

Revised June 2016

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Photographs on front cover
 Main Photo courtesy of R Canis
 Wigeon in flight courtesy of John Whitting

Introduction

What is biodiversity?

Present-day life can, at times, appear to be highly complex yet this is nothing compared to the variety of life in the natural world. It has become a form of shorthand to use the word 'biodiversity' to refer to the full range of animals and plants found in Swale, Kent, the UK and the world as a whole.

Biodiversity can be used to describe not only the easily observed wildlife of every day life – starlings in your garden, the fox crossing from a flowering and grassy roadside verge to an urban garden and the trees bursting into leaf – but also the invertebrates in the soil, mosses, fungi, bacteria and even viruses.

Why does biodiversity matter?

Most people would agree that wild animals and plants are important in their own right and it is also true that biodiversity contributes to our economy, supports our society and improves our quality of life. Natural and managed wildlife habitats can help to stabilise the soil, reduce the risk of flooding, and improve air quality. The natural environment of Swale can support local tourism initiatives and businesses, and provide a setting for regeneration. Not least, the natural environment contributes to our mental and physical health and wellbeing, education and development of community spirit through a shared interest and enjoyment of our natural spaces.

By ignoring biodiversity in Swale, we will risk environmental, economic and spiritual loss. Protecting and enhancing biodiversity will help to ensure that current and future residents have opportunities to maintain and improve their physical and mental wellbeing, and that economic development and regeneration are truly sustainable.

What is the Swale Biodiversity Action Plan?

The Swale BAP is intended to provide a sound basis for local actions working in partnership with environmental agencies to conserve, protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Borough. Conserving and enhancing Swale's natural environment is at the heart of the Local Plan. This means protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geology and soils and co-ordinated working to secure coherent ecological networks and a reversal in declines in the quality and diversity of the environment. The Local Plan recognises the value of ecosystems for the support they give to communities such as food, water, flood, disease control, recreation and health and well-being. The Swale BAP offers residents and businesses an opportunity to work together to conserve the Borough's wildlife.

Swale's environment is particularly diverse, with a range of semi-natural and man-made habitats which include the sea, coastal mudflats, coastal shingle, soft cliffs, grazing marsh, chalk grassland, scrub, broad-leaved woodland, open freshwater, rivers and streams, arable land, orchards, conifer plantations, parks, gardens, urban areas and post-industrial land. Some of these habitats are recognised as being of national and even international importance, while other areas are recognised as important at county and local level. They support a countless number of wild species, many of which are noted as being rare or threatened in the UK.

How does the Swale BAP fit in with Kent and UK plans?

The Swale BAP forms a positive part of the efforts being made at district, county and national scale to fulfil commitments made by the UK at the landmark **Earth Summit** in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 at which a new form of environmental governance, environmental agreements on climate change and biodiversity were reached. With biological resources vital to the economic and social development of countries across the world, the signing of the **Convention on Biological Diversity** by over 150 countries, including the UK, recognised the need to halt the worldwide loss of animals, plant species and genetic resources.

Following Rio+20 (2012), the UK supported and contributed to the development of the **UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals** and the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** of which there are two objectives particularly relevant for biodiversity:

- Goal 14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development
- Goal 15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

The report ***Biodiversity: the UK Action Plan*** (1994) outlined plans to conserve biodiversity in response to the Rio Convention, providing a framework to protect and enhance biological diversity throughout the UK. The four UK countries developed their own country strategies for biodiversity and a shared vision for UK biodiversity conservation ***Conserving Biodiversity – the UK Approach*** (1997). This in turn was succeeded by the ***UK Post - 2010 Biodiversity Framework*** (2012).

The UK List of Priority Species and Habitats (2007) remains an important reference source and had been used to draw up statutory lists of priority habitats at a new country level rather than UK level as required under Section 41 (England) of ***The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006***. The habitats increased from 49 to 65 (www.jncc.defra.gov.uk).

Local authorities have a key role to play in the conservation of biodiversity and this is now recognised and formalised within Section 40 of the ***Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006***:

“Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity”

The Kent Nature Partnership, awarded Local Nature Partnership (LNP) status in 2012, seeks to drive positive change in the local natural environment through a three pronged approach setting out a county framework – Habitat Improvement, Health and Wellbeing and Rural and Green Economy. Prepared by the Kent LNP, the ***Kent Biodiversity Strategy – Kent Biodiversity 2020 and beyond – a strategy for the natural environment 2015 -2025*** (<http://www.kentnature.org.uk/biodiversity-strategy.html>) sets out what needs to be achieved in order to safeguard a future for the county’s biodiversity. 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 Swale Biodiversity Action Plan 2016

The first Swale BAP was drawn up in 2001 and was subsequently revised in 2008. The Swale Bap (2016) represents a review of these documents by Swale Green Grid environmental partners and takes account of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2015-2025 in particular.

Focusing on conserving and enhancing nationally and locally important biodiversity, and informed by the recent landscape characterisation of the Borough (www.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-General/Planning-Policy/Landscape-Character-Appraisal-Final-Sept-2011/Introduction-reduced-size.pdf) this plan aims to conserve, protect and enhance the biodiversity of the Borough of Swale and capture the enthusiasm and support of local people. **The Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal** may be read in conjunction with the following:

Habitats Regulations Assessment (April 2015)

(<http://archive.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-General/Planning-Policy/Evidence-Base/Local-Plan-2014/Further-evidence-2015/Habitats-Regulation-Asessment-April-15-web.pdf>)

The Habitats Regulations Assessment Mitigation (April 2015) (<http://archive.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-General/Planning-Policy/Evidence-Base/Local-Plan-2014/SBC-EIP-Statements/SBCPS063-Matter-6.2-FINAL.pdf>)

Green Spaces and conserving/enhancing the landscape (April 2015)

(<http://archive.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-General/Planning-Policy/Evidence-Base/Local-Plan-2014/SBC-EIP-Statements/SBCPS064-Matter-6.3-FINAL.pdf>)

The actions in the Swale BAP have been arranged into distinct categories. These are:

General Biodiversity Conservation actions not specific to a particular habitat, and largely dealing with land-use planning and other action where the local authority will need to take the lead on delivery.

Community actions directed at supporting and encouraging local communities to take action for wildlife.

Actions specific to particular habitats **priority habitats** for action in Swale and comprise:

- **Orchards** (includes the UK BAP priority habitat *Traditional Orchards*).
- **Estuary habitats** (includes the UK BAP priority habitats *Coastal Saltmarsh, Intertidal Mudflats, Seagrass Beds, Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh and Saline Lagoons*).
- **Woodlands** (includes the UK BAP priority habitats *Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland and Wood-Pasture and Parkland*).
- Wild flower grassland (includes the UK BAP priority habitats *Lowland Calcareous Grassland, Lowland Meadows and Lowland Dry Acid Grassland*).
- **Farmland** (includes the UK BAP priority habitat *Arable Field Margins*).
- **Built-up areas** and gardens (includes the UK BAP priority habitat *Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land*).

General Biodiversity Conservation

Background

The planning system has an increasingly important role in the conservation of wildlife. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other policy documents emphasise the need to protect important sites, plan for green infrastructure and plan for ecological networks at 'landscape scales' taking account the anticipated effects of climate change. National policy reflects the commitment to 'halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in the EU by 2020'.

The NPPF is clear that pursuing sustainable development includes **moving from a net loss of biodiversity to achieving net gains for nature**, and that a core principle for planning is that it should contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. It states further in terms of its environmental role as contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, **and as part this, helping to improve biodiversity**, use natural resources prudently, minimize waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

There is a clear role for a wide range of partners to seek to ensure that planning in, and affecting, Swale brings the kind of benefits to wildlife envisaged in Government planning policy. It is the local authority, however, which will take the lead in setting local planning direction and policy through the Local Plan.

Under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), local authorities have a duty to have regard, in the exercise of their functions, to the conservation of biodiversity. Good practice guidance issued by Defra (***Guidance for Local Authorities on Implementing the Biodiversity Duty***, 2007) states:

- Biodiversity conservation involves taking opportunities to enhance biodiversity, as well as protect it.
- Local authorities should play the leading role in establishing systems to conserve and enhance Local Wildlife Sites and to give proper consideration to biodiversity outside designated areas.
- Management of local authority sites is important both in providing habitats for wildlife and in reducing environmental impacts that affect biodiversity.
- Biodiversity conservation measures need to have regard both to designated sites and priority species, and to wider species and habitats.
- A wide variety of sites are important in this respect including designated sites and nature reserves, green infrastructure, buildings, school grounds, wetland and coastal sites, highways and rights of way, farms and tenanted land.

Through the Local Plan there is a commitment to an urban Green Infrastructure Strategy. The strategy seeks to promote the expansion of Swale's natural assets and green infrastructure, including within new and existing developments, by:

- Delivering a high standard of design quality to maximise the social, economic, health and environmental benefits of green infrastructure
- Providing a focus for social inclusion, community development and lifelong learning

- Taking into account the guidelines and recommendations of relevant management plans and guidance, Biodiversity Action Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents
- Contributing to the protection, conservation and management of historic landscapes, archaeological and built heritage assets
- Achieving where possible, a net gain of biodiversity
- Providing new recreation facilities, exploiting opportunities to link urban and countryside areas and to create new footpath and cycle links

By maintaining its involvement in the Swale BAP, and working to take forward the actions set out below and throughout the rest of this document, Swale Borough Council and its partners will be able to demonstrate their commitment to wildlife in compliance with its duty to have regard to biodiversity conservation.

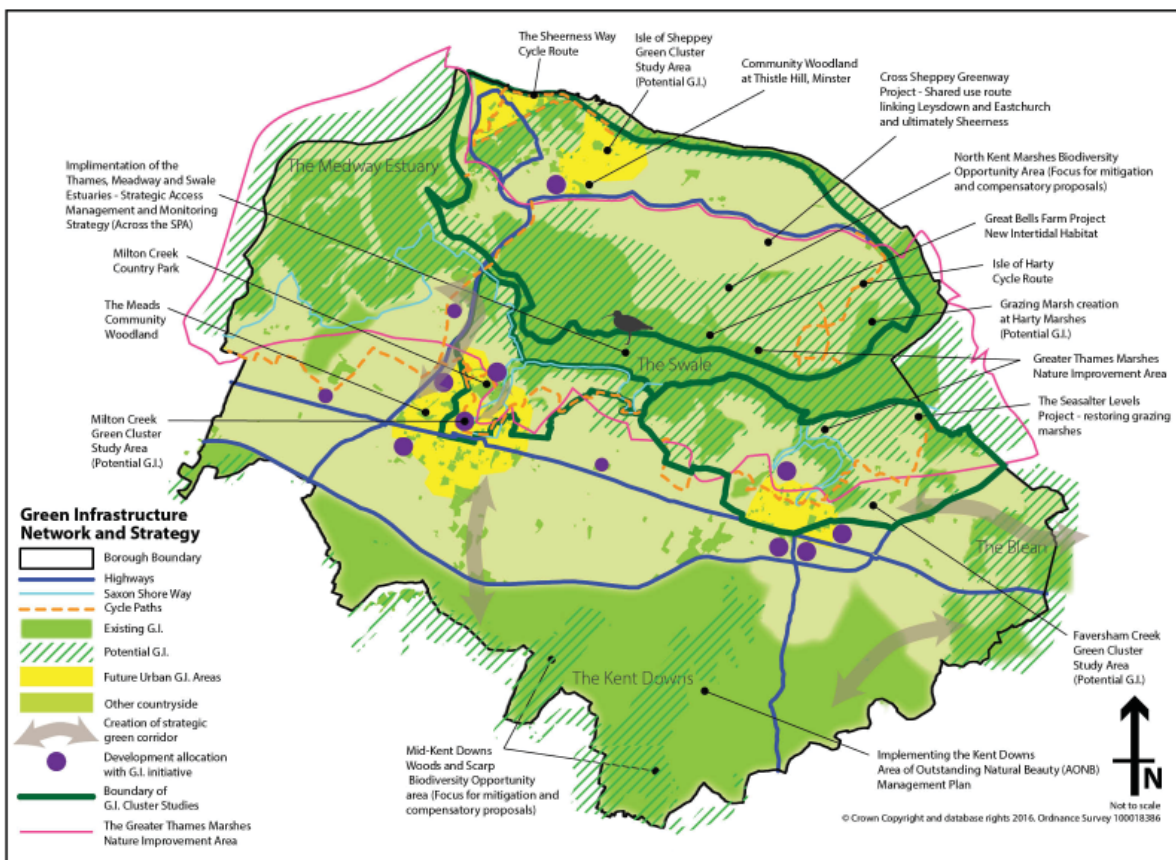


Figure 1. Natural Assets and Green Infrastructure Network

General actions

- 1) The emerging Swale Local Plan, Bearing Fruits 2031 will include policies to protect BAP habitats. The Local Plan will also guide approaches and create more robust ecological and landscape structures including a natural assets and green infrastructure strategy culminating in the creation of a major new green infrastructure initiative within the A249 corridor, connecting both Sittingbourne and Iwade, together with other green links through to Kemsley and Milton Creek. At Faversham, new space at Oare will be established whilst habitat creation to compensate for development and/or climate change will take place on Sheppey.

- 2) As far as possible, all sites supporting habitat of county importance will be designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs). The Kent Nature Partnership oversees the selection of LWSs in this county, using robust, scientifically-determined criteria and local knowledge and understanding of this area's natural environment. The Partnership is made up of a great variety of stakeholders including local authorities, public bodies, nature conservation NGOs and groups representing landowners and farmers.
- 3) The importance of 'brownfield' sites for wildlife will be taken into account in planning policies and decisions ensuring that development proposals for brownfield sites give consideration to conservation of wildlife. **The State of Brownfields in the Thames Gateway** (2012) quantified the ecological importance of brownfield land for biodiversity at a landscape scale. (www.buglife.org.uk).
- 4) The provision of support and advice by Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) to site owners and/or managers, including local authority owned green spaces, will ensure that there is a net increase in the number of Local Wildlife Sites in positive conservation management.
- 5) There will be an inventory of council-owned sites prepared by KWT supporting semi-natural habitats, together with a programme for the preparation and delivery of site management plans for each site: priority will be given to
 - i) sites designated as Local Wildlife Sites and
 - ii) sites within target landscape units (see Figures 4 and 5).

Community

Background

Local residents often want to be involved in the protection and enhancement of their local environment, individually or through a local community group, parish council or countryside group. This not only provides a way to achieve important benefits for wildlife, but also can help people stay fit and healthy, and provide a way to strengthen local communities.

Parish plans are being developed by many parish councils, and these often indicate the importance that many village residents attach to the environment. Parish councils have a duty to have regard to conserving biodiversity, because they are 'public authorities' in the meaning of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Support for local environmental activities is one way in which they can show that they are complying with this duty.

Action by local communities may be particularly important for wildlife habitats which occur in numerous small patches. In particular, ponds and traditional orchards occur in small, scattered blocks across the Borough, and can provide ideal projects to enrich local life – as well as being very important for wildlife. Almost every parish in Swale has at least one traditional orchard, and every parish has a number of ponds – even if some are garden ponds. There is huge potential, therefore, for people to take part in census and management of these important habitats.

Community orchards offer a way of saving vulnerable old orchards and species and opportunities to plant new ones. They provide places for quiet contemplation or

local festivities, a reservoir of local varieties of fruit and a refuge for wildlife. They may be in private ownership, owned or leased for or by the community (or held by agreement) by a community group, parish council, or by a local authority or voluntary body. As well as enjoying the place, local people may share the harvest or profit from its sale, with the opportunity of taking responsibility for work in the orchard.

Trends

Old orchards are characterised by well-established fruit (apple, pear, cherry, damson and cobnut) on vigorous rootstocks and at traditional standard spacing, with a grass sward usually either grazed by livestock or cut for hay. The most important sites for wildlife are the older, traditional standard orchards, as these tend to be extensively managed and contain mature trees of a variety of species. Most remaining old orchards, however, are no longer commercially managed owing to their declining yield, consumer demand for new varieties, and health and safety issues regarding the use of ladders. However, there is a growing interest in community orchards as a way of saving vulnerable old orchards and planting new ones, and this is dealt with in more detail under 'Orchards', below. Swale has the highest concentration on non-intensive orchards of any Kent district: though only occupying 10% of the county's land surface, Swale has a third (458ha) of non-intensive orchards in Kent.

Pond Conservation (www.freshwaterhabitats.org.uk) notes that, although ponds are still common almost everywhere in Britain, the number of ponds has dropped by around 500,000 in the last 100 years. To be considered a priority habitat, the pond must be of high conservation or ecological importance, be home to species, plants or animals or have other attributes such as being rare, old or part of a special landscape. Around 20% of the UK's 400,000 ponds (not including those in gardens) might meet one or more these criteria but many that remain are badly affected by pollution. In fact recent research shows 80% of wildlife ponds in the UK are in a 'poor' or 'very poor' state. The effects of this loss on wildlife are devastating, as freshwater ponds provide many species with valuable breeding and feeding habitat. Ponds have and continue to be lost to urban development and landscape change, agricultural drainage and in-filling, fragmentation and through poor management.

There is an increasing trend for community involvement in local nature conservation projects, with large numbers of people volunteering to conserve local wildlife sites and nature reserves, planting hedges and trees including community orchards, working to improve school grounds and churchyards, or supporting the work of conservation organisations.

Action with parishes and local communities

- 1) The Swale Green Grid Partnership will signpost relevant environment organisation(s) to support work with local communities on Parish Environment Plans, and, in particular:
 - a) To support work to conserve and enhance ponds (particularly where these are identified as important ponds under the criteria in the National Ponds Habitat Action Plan (http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/pdf/UKBAP_BAPHabitats-42-Ponds.pdf) or where there are networks of ponds supporting great crested newt).
 - b) To maintain, enhance and extend traditional or non-intensively managed orchards, in particular where this will help meet targets in the Kent, Regional or National Biodiversity Action Plans.

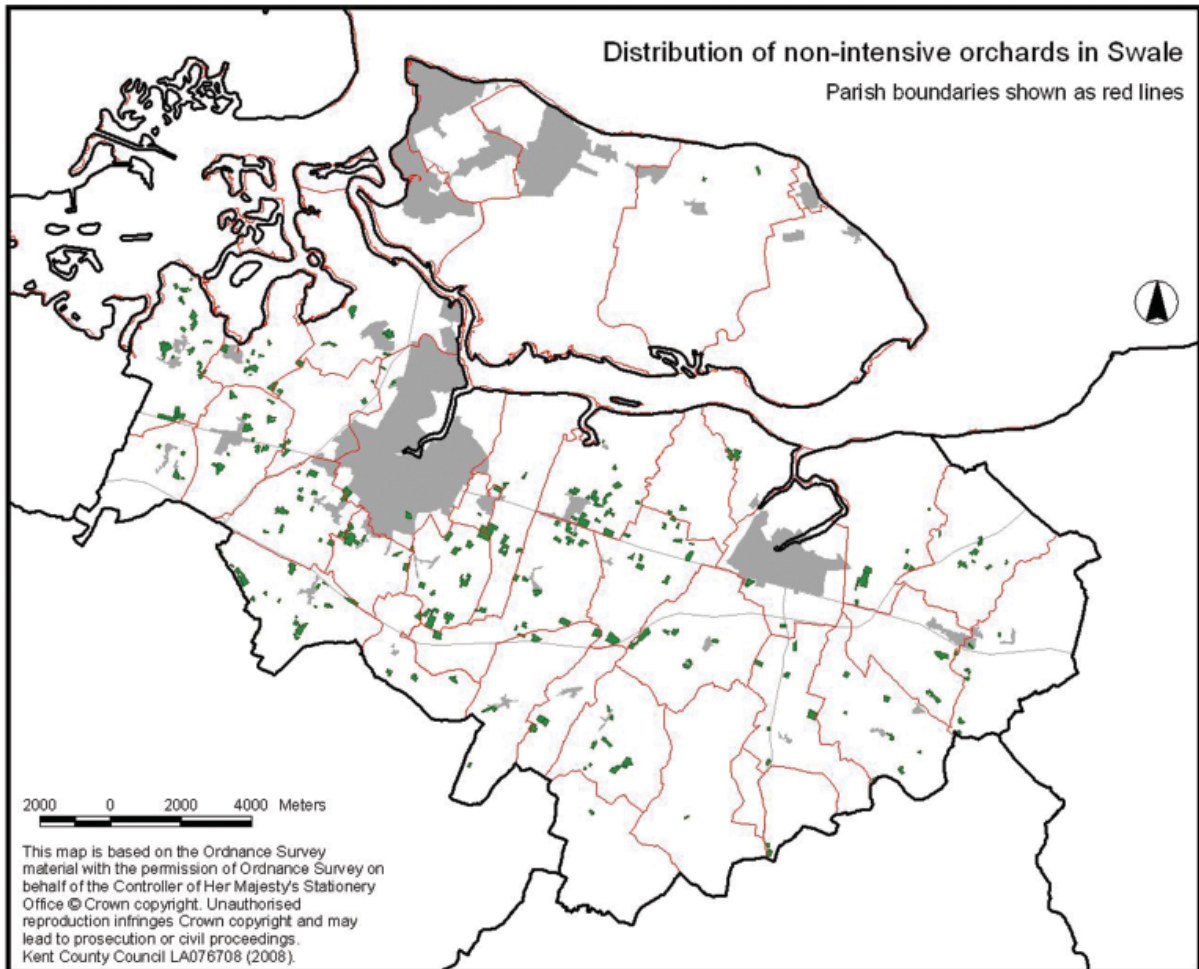


Figure 2. Distribution of non-intensive orchards in Swale

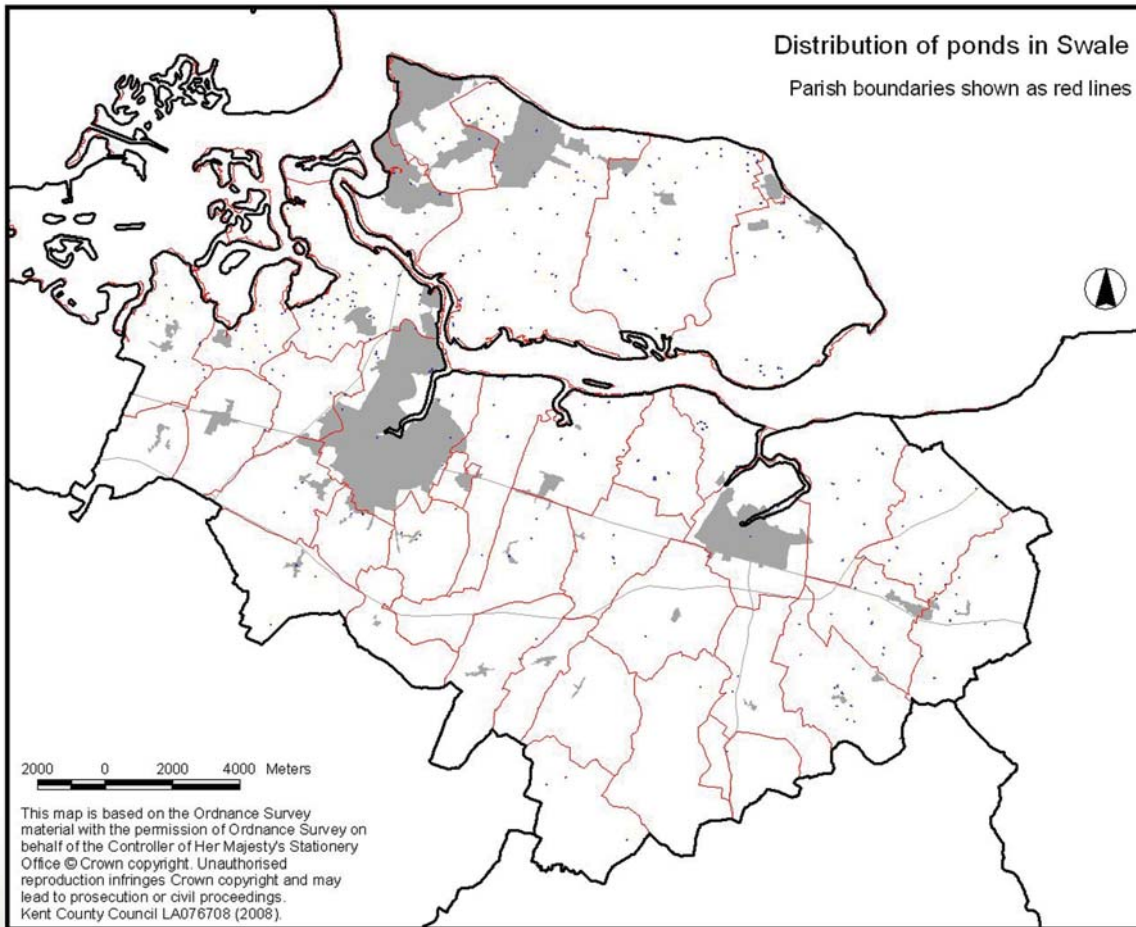


Figure 3. Distribution of ponds in Swale

Orchards

Background

Traditional orchards have long been valued for their importance to wildlife. However, it is only very recently that their importance has been formally recognised with their inclusion as a priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Traditional Orchards are defined as orchards over 40 years of age which are characterised by well established fruit (apple, pear, cherry and plum) or cobnut on vigorous rootstocks and at traditional standard spacing (apple, cherry and plum must have less than 150 tree stations to the hectare), with a grass sward usually grazed by livestock or cut for hay.

The suitability of the soil in much of Swale, with its rich brick earth, combined with excellent and expanding transport links, sustained a vibrant and thriving commercial industry until the mid 1960s. In Swale the majority of remaining traditional old orchards are now cherries with a selection of varieties; traditional apple, pear and plum orchards have for the most part been grubbed to make way for modern, commercially productive orchards.

The most important sites for wildlife are the older, traditional orchards with standard-sized trees, as these tend to be less intensively managed and to contain mature trees which are most likely to support a wider range of species, including those

associated with dead wood. The noble chafer, a nationally rare beetle previously thought extinct in Kent has recently been discovered in a traditional plum orchard in Iwade, and has highlighted the importance of Swale's orchards in a county context. Swale has as many as 274 old traditional orchards, covering an area of 458ha, the highest concentration in any Kent district (see Figure 2). Though occupying only 10% of Kent's land surface, Swale is covered by 30% of all Kent's non-intensive orchards.

Trends

Since the middle of the 20th Century, changes to the economics of farming, and the availability of semi-dwarfing rootstocks (which reduce the height of mature trees, making the fruit easier to pick), have led to a decline in the acreage of fruit, and loss of traditional orchards. Swale has retained its fruit growing industry, but it is the smaller growing rootstocks that have prevailed.

There is a growing interest in community orchards as a way of saving vulnerable old orchards and planting new ones. These can provide places for quiet contemplation or local festivities, a reservoir of local varieties of fruit and a refuge for wildlife. Local people may share the harvest or profit from its sale, with the opportunity of taking responsibility for work in the orchard. Such projects are already running at Lynsted, Iwade, Sheldwich, Belmont and Milstead.

Action for traditional orchards

- 1) The Swale Local Plan will include policies to protect BAP habitats with support being given to the most valuable traditional orchard habitats.
- 2) Projects for the maintenance, restoration and creation of traditionally managed orchards will be supported by the most relevant environment partner where they form part of wider projects for the restoration of wildlife habitats at a landscape scale.

Estuary Habitats



Photograph courtesy of John Whitting

Background

The character of Swale is strongly influenced by the Borough's estuary habitats. Much of the land in and around Swale's coast consists of UK BAP priority habitats, including

- Intertidal mudflats in the Swale and the Medway Estuary, and to the north of Sheppey.
- Saltmarsh in the Swale and the Medway Estuary.
- Coastal grazing marsh, particularly along the Swale, but also in the Medway Estuary to the west of the Borough.
- Seagrass beds on the mudflats in the Swale.
- Saline lagoons, in the form of the defensive canals at Queenborough Lines and the boating lake at Barton's Point Country Park.

Mudflats, saltmarsh, grazing marsh and seagrass beds are treated as separate habitats in the UK BAP, and it is the case that certain species rely more on one sort of habitat than another: for example

- Mudflats, intertidal saltmarsh and seagrass beds are important nursery habitats for sea fish.
- Grazing marsh is an important habitat for water voles (a very rapidly declining species for which Sheppey remains a very important refuge) as well as for many insect species associated with wet ditches.
- Saline lagoons support a number of species tolerant of brackish conditions, but unable to survive in fresh or fully saline water, including the tasselweeds (*Ruppia* spp.) and the lagoon cockle.

It is the combination of estuary habitats which is important for supporting much estuary wildlife, especially the populations of wild birds for which the Swale and the Medway Estuary are internationally important. The many thousands of ducks, geese and wading birds which visit the Medway and Swale in the winter, or pass through on migration, make use of different parts of the estuary – and different types of habitat – to feed or to rest in safety.

Because of the vital importance of Swale's estuary habitats to the conservation of wildlife on a European scale, almost the entire area has been designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under European law. They are also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) under UK law, in recognition not just of their importance for birds, but also their national importance for the conservation of saltmarsh and grazing marsh plant communities.

Trends

Historically, estuary habitats have been subject to huge pressures from land reclamation, agricultural improvement and industrial development, all of which have led to substantial habitat loss. Land reclamation has significantly slowed and the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2006 (www.legislation.gov.uk) have made it considerably more difficult to convert grazing marsh to arable farming (a significant cause of past loss of this habitat).

Nonetheless, estuary habitats continue to be threatened. Sea-level rise, particularly at the rate expected under future climate change, is leading to 'coastal squeeze' whereby intertidal habitats are losing space between the increasingly high low-water marks and fixed coastal defences. The Thames Estuary 2100 project (www.environment-agency.gov.uk/te2100), looking at future coastal defence needs, is investigating how existing coastal defences can be set back in order to provide space for intertidal habitats as sea levels continue to rise. This is not only important for wildlife, but will also reduce future flood defence costs: intertidal habitats play

an important role in reducing the energy of waves as they move inshore, so that sea defences are easier to build and maintain, and are less likely to be overtopped during storms.

Perhaps surprisingly, given the known importance of habitats such as grazing marsh, estuary habitats continue to be affected by development pressure. Impacts can be direct, through development of the habitats themselves, or indirect, through increased need for hard sea defences, increased pollution (for example, as a result of effluent discharge, which is known to affect seagrass beds), or alteration of the complex dynamics of the currents and sediments which maintain the character and wildlife of Swale's coast.

Pressure from amenity use is continuing to increase, particularly from recreational use of boats and personal water craft (e.g. jet-skis), and potentially even from walkers using the coast and sea-walls where access routes run close to important bird roosting or feeding areas. Disturbance to breeding birds and to wintering or migrating birds can make a critical difference to population survival, and will require careful management if there is not to be significant conflict between people's enjoyment of the coast and its wildlife interest.

These pressures need to be managed and work with North Kent districts to ensure that indirect impacts upon estuarine habitats can be compensated through habitat creation/management and /or the implementation of the Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy, 2014 (SAMMS) that will enable developer contributions to be levied to implement it.

Action for estuary habitats

- 1) The Swale Local Plan will include policies to protect BAP habitats. There will be a presumption against any development encroaching upon estuary or intertidal habitats, including grazing marsh, saltmarsh and mudflats. Any unavoidable losses to development will be compensated by appropriate habitat creation within the target areas identified in Figure 4. The SAMMS will be used to support the determination of planning applications and inform any Local Plan review and the Council's Community Infrastructure Levy'.
- 2) Opportunities will be sought by the Medway Swale Estuary Partnership (MSEP) and realised coastal and wetland habitats in the target areas shown in Figure 3. This should include:
 - a) Managed retreat of flood defences in order to create new saltmarsh and mudflats, including where opportunities are presented by new developments next to estuaries and the coast.
 - b) Protecting, enhancing and extending habitats within or next to Milton, Conyer, Oare and Faversham Creeks, including securing the positive management of Local Wildlife Sites.
- 3) Work with Natural England to ensure widespread consultation on National Coastal Path strategy and its relationship to Swale; gain a better understanding of impact on fixed route including increased footfall and challenges to habitats in proximity.

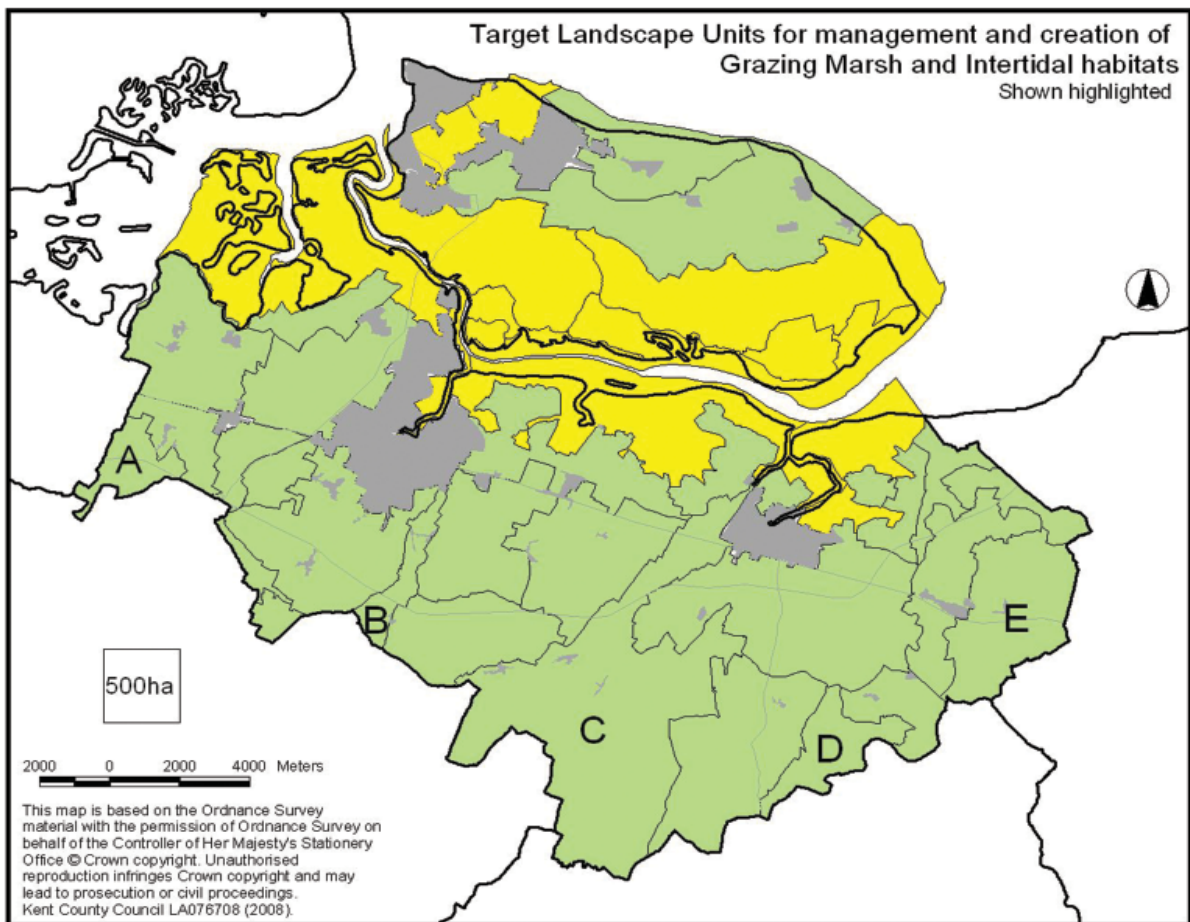


Figure 4. Target areas for grazing marsh and intertidal habitats

Woodlands



Background

Swale is not a heavily wooded Borough, with woodland and scrub covering only around 6% of the Borough compared with 13% for Kent as a whole. In Swale, most woodland is in the south of the Borough, on the dip slope of the North Downs, and in the east of the Borough, where it occurs on the sand and gravel geology at the western edge of the Blean.

Most of the woodland in Swale is ancient woodland that is known to have been wooded since at least the year 1600, and is much richer in wildlife than more recent woodland. Ancient woodland is well known for its rich flora, which, in Swale, includes plants such as wood anemone, herb paris and early purple orchid, and is also important for woodland invertebrates.

Although most of the Borough's woodland is ancient, this does not mean that it has not been modified by human activity. Historically, most has been managed as coppice, with a timber crop being taken every five to twenty years, and this has influenced both the physical structure of the woodland, and the species which can be supported. In places, the original woodland cover has been replaced by plantations of broad-leaved or coniferous trees.

Woodland in Swale supports a number of species identified in the UK BAP as priorities for action, including dormouse, Bechstein's bat, tree pipit (which occurs in recently coppiced woodland), lesser spotted woodpecker, hawfinch (now a very rare bird in Kent), great crested newt, lesser butterfly orchid and fly orchid. Other species of note include nightingale, a species for which Kent is particularly important, and common buzzard, a bird which has recently re-colonised Kent after an absence of many decades.

Significant areas of Swale's woodland are of county or national importance. Part of the Church Wood, Blean Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies within Swale, and is close to woodland blocks of county importance (designated as Local Wildlife Sites) at South Blean, Blean Woods (West) and Perry Wood. An important complex of smaller woodland Local Wildlife Sites on the dip slope of the North Downs includes Endings Wood, Putt Wood, Oakenpole Wood, Divan Wood, and woodland on the Belmont Estate.

Trends

In Kent, woodland cover has increased over the last hundred years, largely as a result of new plantation and abandonment of land (for example, where reduction in grazing has led to scrub development on chalk grassland and heathland). Ancient woodland, though generally protected from development or loss to agriculture, has continued to decline slowly, for example, as a result of road building. Many woodlands remain small and isolated and, therefore, may be vulnerable to extreme weather events associated with climate change, such as storms and high winds.

Traditional woodland management is normally coppicing. Such management has declined drastically, with associated loss of species associated with open woodland habitats, such as woodland butterflies, but perhaps with some benefits for species associated with less disturbed woodland habitats. The lack of dead wood and absence of large, ancient trees in coppiced woodlands, for example, can mean that it is poor for fungi and wood-boring insects such as beetles.

The increased emphasis on wood as a sustainable biofuel may make coppice management more economically viable in future, with benefits for those species associated with this kind of habitat. Care will be needed, however, to ensure that the continuing presence of decaying timber as a niche for invertebrates and lower order plants is well recognised, and that secondary woodland habitat features, such as streams, ponds and glades are also maintained and enhanced.

Action for woodlands

- 1) The Swale Local Plan will include policies to protect BAP habitats and other ancient woodland. Support will be given to the identification as Local Wildlife Sites of all woodlands meeting the appropriate criteria.
- 2) Opportunities by the most appropriate environmental organisation will be sought and realised for enhancing, extending and connecting woodlands in target areas B-E shown in Figure 5. This should include:
 - a) Securing the positive management of Local Wildlife Sites.
 - b) Identifying and taking forward potential landscape-scale habitat restoration projects.
 - c) Encouraging and, where appropriate, undertaking the removal of non-native species from ancient woodlands.

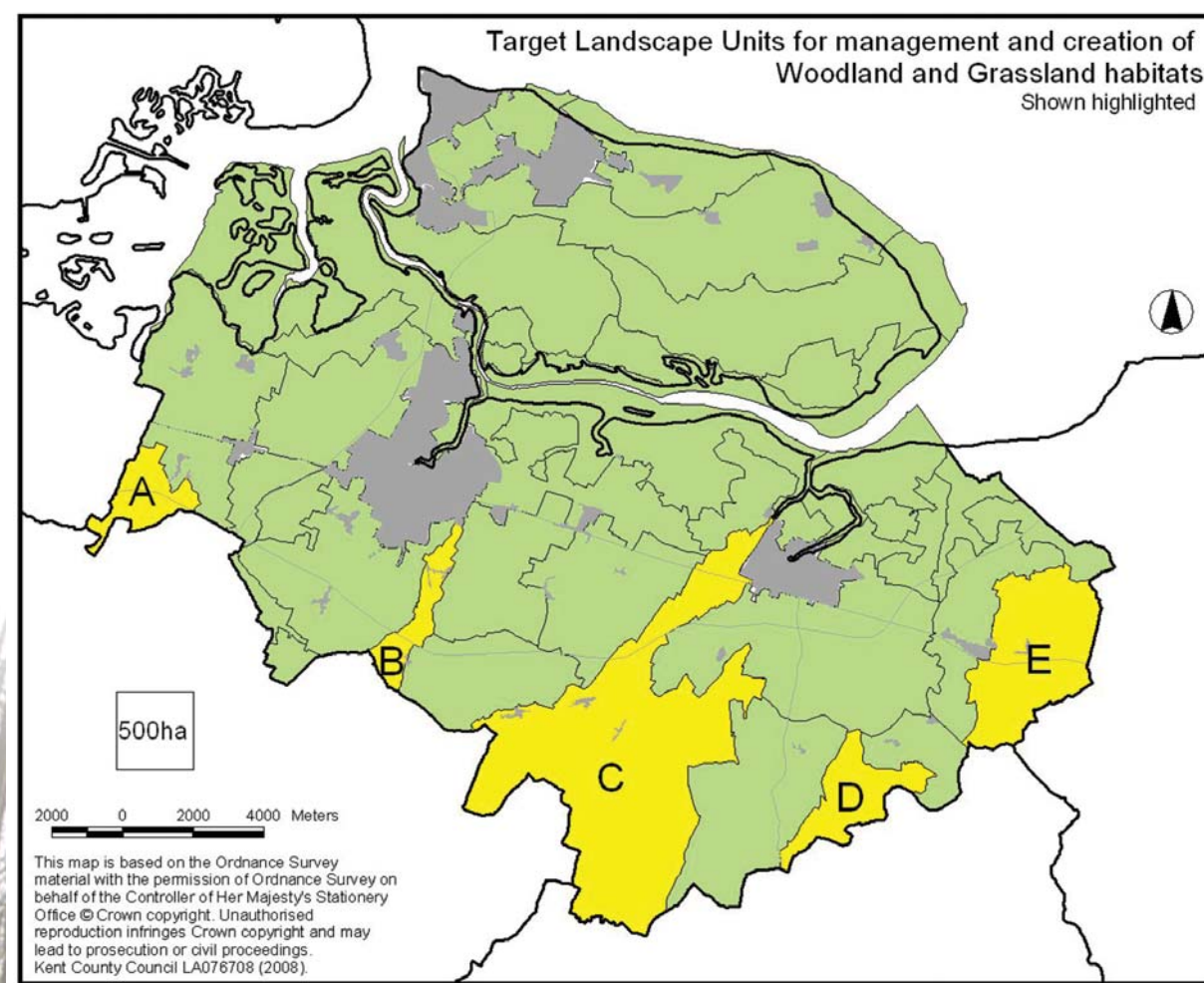


Figure 5. Target areas for woodland and grassland habitats

Wildflower grassland



Background

Flower filled meadows and open areas of grassland peppered with flowers make this a habitat with great appeal to people. Traditionally managed, flower-rich grassland is now a very rare habitat in Swale as in the rest of Kent, and, indeed, the UK. As a result, many wild species associated with grassland are under significant threat.

Swale does have large areas of coastal grassland, most of which is important as coastal grazing marsh. These are important for breeding and wintering birds but often dominated by grasses and not rich in wildflowers. The remaining flower-rich grassland in Swale is largely restricted to a few patches of chalk grassland in the south of the Borough.

The most significant area is Queendown Warren, near Hartlip, which is of international importance and recognised as a Special Area of Conservation under European law, both for its chalk grassland habitat and its important populations of wild orchids. Other areas of chalk grassland are scattered across valley sides in the southern part of the Borough, and more can be found on road verges, a number of which are designated as Roadside Nature Reserves for this reason.

Other small areas of flower-rich grassland do occur, but are small and scattered: examples include the chalk grassland which has developed on the floor of Highsted Quarries Local Wildlife Site and the tiny area of neutral grassland at Doddington Churchyard (churchyards, having escaped agricultural change, can support relict areas of high quality grassland).

Wildflower grasslands can support populations of wild orchids, including, in Swale, common spotted orchid, early spider orchid, fragrant orchid, man orchid (a UK BAP priority species) and pyramidal orchid. Other important species associated with species-rich grassland include birds such as skylark and yellowhammer (both UK BAP priority species), and a large number of butterflies, moths, and other insects such as glow-worms. The decline of many of these species is associated with loss of flower-rich grassland and the increased intensity of management of agricultural

grassland. Loss of insects has led to loss of the species that depend on them, and the rapid decline of some, once-common bat species is almost certainly due to loss of beetles and moths associated with traditionally managed grassland.

Trends

The substantial long-term loss of wildflower grasslands has been associated with agricultural change. Flower-rich grassland is often unproductive compared with agricultural grasslands, so that traditional grasslands have been converted either to arable, improved with fertilizers or by reseeded with agricultural grasses, or, as in the case of much chalk grassland, abandoned altogether.

Remaining areas of wildflower grassland are now small and fragmented, so that the species they support exist in isolated populations which are vulnerable to climate change impacts. There is increased emphasis, therefore, on creating larger habitat blocks, and creating better links across the landscape. There is a role for the creation of wildflower grasslands as part of new built developments, where they can be incorporated as attractive elements of open spaces and verges, or even as green roofs or walls.

Action for wildflower grassland

- 1) Within target area A shown in Figure 5, projects for the maintenance, restoration or recreation of species-rich chalk grassland will be supported by the most appropriate environmental organisation in partnership with the community'.
- 2) Within other target areas shown in Figure 5, projects for the maintenance, restoration or recreation of species-rich grassland will be supported where they form part of wider projects for the restoration and reconnection of wildlife habitats at a landscape scale.
- 3) Plans and proposals for landscaping and other green infrastructure associated with development and regeneration will include flower-rich grassland as a major element, particularly where there is potential to support populations of rare bumblebees.

Farmland



Background

Although so much emphasis is placed upon built development and its impact, it is farming which has had, and continues to have, the greatest influence on the environment. It provides the backdrop and setting for built development and has created the landscape within which other wildlife habitats sit. The future of Swale as a whole, and the quality of life of its residents, is significantly linked with the actions of landowners, farmers, and landscape managers.

A number of UK BAP priority species are associated particularly with farmland, including brown hare (which occurs in arable land on the Downs as well as on coastal grazing marsh) and a suite of birds including corn bunting, grey partridge, lapwing, skylark, tree sparrow, turtle dove, yellow wagtail and yellow hammer. Many previously widespread species (such as some of the bumblebee species now included in the UK BAP) would have originally been associated with farmland. In recognition of this, agri-environment grant schemes, such as the Entry Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/environmental-stewardship>), aim to encourage action for these species.

Impacts of farming upon wildlife have been both positive and negative: for example, in the past, much grazing marsh has been converted to arable land. It is still the case, however, that most remaining grazing marsh is in private ownership and actively farmed, including the majority of the area within the Swale SSSI.

Increasingly, the importance of the wider environment to quality of life – and to economic and social development is being recognised. Emphasis is being put on so-called ‘ecosystem services’, that is, the benefits which society gets from the environment, such as amelioration of climate, reduction of food risk, recreation and amenity, and both mental and physical well-being. The farmed environment has a huge role in delivering these services, and its health and good management is of great significance to everyone.

It is also the case that wildlife-friendly farmland can act to buffer and connect areas of wildlife habitat, and, as such, has a critical role in any proposals to link and extend habitats in order to create large habitat blocks.

Trends

Pressures on farmland and on farmers continue to change rapidly. At the time of writing (2016), land prices are rising because of increases in wheat prices, and there is a likelihood that any increase in the demand for biofuels will increase prices further. 'Countryside Stewardship (CS) provides financial incentives for land managers to look after their environment through activities such as:

- conserving and restoring wildlife habitats
- food risk management
- woodland creation and management
- reducing widespread water pollution from agriculture
- keeping the character of the countryside
- preserving features important to the history of the rural landscape
- encouraging educational access

(<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/countryside-stewardship-get-paid-for-environmental-land-management>)

Built development also has an impact on farming, and farming close to extensive areas of built development can be a difficult task, leading to economic losses for farmers and resulting in a loss of quality in the urban fringe environment.

Action for farmland

- 1) Within or adjacent to the target areas shown in Figures 4 and 5, farmers and other land-owners will be encouraged by the Swale Green Grid Partnership to undertake action to improve farmland habitats in order to protect and enhance farmland biodiversity, particularly where:
 - a) This would result in the maintenance, enhancement, restoration or recreation of BAP Priority Habitats.
 - b) Nectar and grass strips, which would favour bumblebees and other pollinating insects, can be created within or adjacent to the target areas shown in Figure 4.
 - c) This would help support existing populations of important farmland birds, including tree sparrow, corn bunting, grey partridge, turtle dove, yellow wagtail and lapwing, particularly within target areas identified by RSPB.
 - d) It would support the delivery of a landscape-scale habitat restoration project.

Built-up areas and gardens



Background

The variety of habitats found in built-up areas and gardens, which is taken here to include previously developed land – so-called ‘brownfield’ sites – not only contributes to biodiversity but also provide opportunities for people to have close contact with wildlife.

The huge variety of sites includes urban and rural settlements, school grounds, hospital and care homes, caravan parks, farm buildings, industrial estates, retail parks, waste and derelict land, urban parkland, transport infrastructure, domestic gardens, allotments, churchyards and cemeteries. Heritage sites may also be included in this category.

Careful management of built-up areas and gardens can provide good wildlife habitats and for many people their main or only contact with the natural environment. It is also the case that some brownfield sites have developed substantial wildlife interest in the absence of management. **The State of Brownfields in the Thames Gateway** (2012) found that 198 sites (over 40%) showed High or Medium potential for invertebrate biodiversity. (www.buglife.org.uk).

The importance of sites of this nature has led to several being designated as Local Wildlife Sites, including Bysing Wood and Oare Gravel Pits, Conyer Pits, and Doddington Churchyard. Other areas, such as Murston Pits and the former Elmley Village and Cement Works are now part of larger Sites of Special Scientific Interest. Built-up areas and gardens provide suitable habitats for a number of UK BAP priority species, including hedgehog, pipistrelle bat, song thrush, spotted flycatcher, common toad and stag beetle. Other species may have a strong association with buildings where structures often mimic their favoured natural habitats, for example bats, house martins and swifts, and even lichens (for which churchyards can be especially important). Brownfield sites can be particularly important for rare insects, including, in Swale, the very rare shrill carder bumblebee.

Trends

In contrast to many other habitats, built-up areas and gardens are increasing in extent, though pressure for building on brownfield sites may threaten some of the most important areas. There are also suggestions that the quality of the built environment (from the point of view of wildlife) may be decreasing: for example, declines in urban sparrow populations may be linked to loss of cover in gardens, which may in turn be driven by the need to provide off-road parking; and improved building regulations are making it harder for bats, as well as swifts and other birds, to gain access to cavities in buildings.

Action for built areas and gardens

- 1) The Swale Local Plan will include policies for the identification and delivery of green infrastructure, and will identify how new development will be expected to contribute to this.
- 2) The positive conservation management of roadside nature reserves will be encouraged by the most appropriate environmental organisation working in partnership with the community.
- 3) Swale in Bloom to continue to work with The Kent Wildlife Trust to promote wildlife gardening in Swale. In particular, the Wild About Gardens Awards (www.kentwildlifetrust.org) will continue to be supported with local partners such as Amicus Horizon.
- 4) Swale Borough Council and its partners will sign up to Britain in Bloom (<https://www.rhs.org.uk/communities/campaigns/britain-in-bloom/about-rhs-britain-in-bloom>) RHS Britain in Bloom. Swale in Bloom will encourage and support local 'In Bloom' and other gardening and environmental groups by helping them raise funds, improve their skills and plant knowledge and organise and take part in garden competitions including entries to South East in Bloom and Britain in Bloom
- 5) The In-Bloom Co-ordinator works with local delivery partners (schools, community groups, town and parish councils) to support the Centenary '100 in 100' planting scheme – the planting of 100 new poppy areas in Swale to coincide with centenary commemorations.
- 6) The In-Bloom Co-ordinator will work with local delivery partners (schools, community groups, town and parish councils) to add bird boxes to appropriate buildings

Contacting Swale Green Grid Partnership

Swale Green Grid Partnership

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Policies, plans and strategies due for review in 2016/17

Policies, plans and strategies	Service unit	Due date for publication of new/revised policy, plan or strategy	Policy Development and Review Committee dates	Commentary
Green Grid Strategy	Economy and Community Services	October 2016	28 September 2016	
Biodiversity Action Plan	Economy and Community Services	October 2016	28 September 2016	
Council Tax Benefit/Localisation Policy	Resident Services	October 2016	TBA	
Stray Dog Policy	Economy and Community Services	December 2016	TBA	
Environmental Response Enforcement and Prosecution Policy	Economy and Community Services	February 2017	TBA	
Property Strategy (including the Community Asset Transfer Policy)	Property Services	December 2016	29 November 2016	
Community Safety Partnership Strategic Assessment	Economy and Community Services	March 2016	17 January 2017	This document is adopted by the Swale Community Safety Partnership

Policies, plans and strategies	Service unit	Due date for publication of new/revised policy, plan or strategy	Policy Development and Review Committee dates	Commentary
				rather than SBC
Council's Policy on use of Section 215 Powers	Planning Services	-	17 January 2017	Follow-up to Committee's review of this issue last year
Sport and Physical Activity Strategy	Economy and Community Services	March 2017	22 February 2017	
Homelessness Strategy	Resident Services	April 2017	TBA	Combined Housing and Homelessness Strategy to be produced
Housing Strategy	Resident Services	-	-	See above
Rural Housing Strategy	Resident Services	-	-	Will form part of the combined Housing and Homelessness Strategy.
Tenancy Strategy	Resident Services	By end of 2017	22 February 2017	
Economic Development Strategy	Economy and Community Services	March 2017	22 February 2017	
Corporate Plan 2015-18 – Annual refresh	Policy and Performance	May 2017	22 February 2017	The Corporate Plan is set for a three year period but is refreshed annually to ensure the

Policies, plans and strategies	Service unit	Due date for publication of new/revised policy, plan or strategy	Policy Development and Review Committee dates	Commentary
				priority themes and key outcomes are still the right ones.
Kent Affordable Warmth Strategy	Resident Services	?	?	
Swale Environmental Health Service Enforcement Policy	Environmental Health	October 2017	N/A	Likely to be revised during 2017/18
Kent Waste Management Strategy local implementation plan	Commissioning and Customer Contact		N/A	Likely to be produced during 2017/18

Policy Development and Review Committee dates 2016/17

- 28 September 2016;
- 26 October 2016;
- 29 November 2016;
- 17 January 2017; and
- 22 February 2017.

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