1.0 Introduction

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6.0 GBI in Sittingbourne

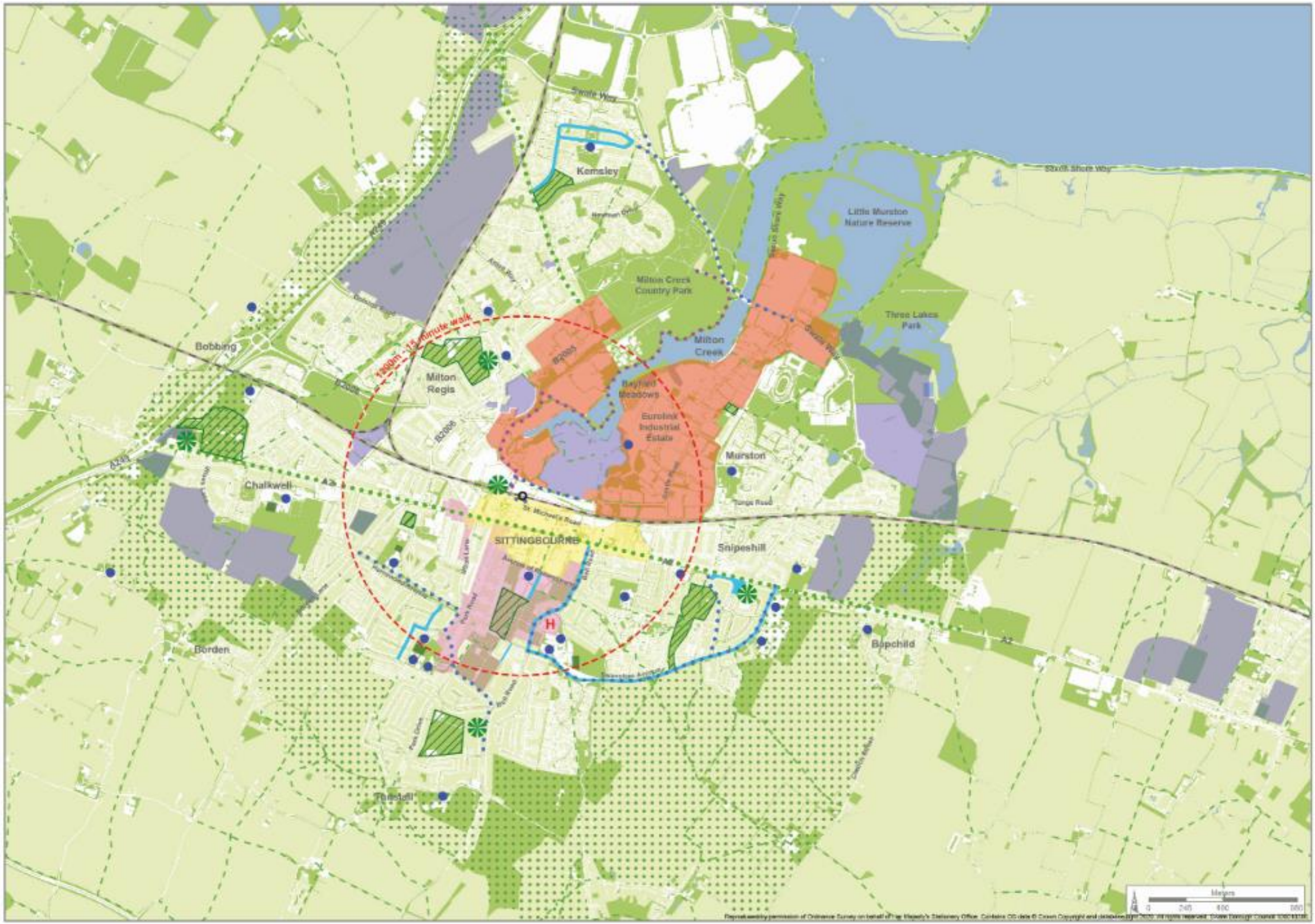
6.1 As mentioned earlier, Sittingbourne is Swale's main town, and primary employment and service centre. Accordingly, it is the most populated of Swale's three main towns, with a population of approximately 42,000 people. The town centre is orientated on an east-west axis with the historic High Street comprising a central point and providing retail services. Sittingbourne Retail Park lies to the north of the town off the B2006 Eurolink Way.

6.2 Once an industrial town, Sittingbourne now has a large commuter base for people working in London as the town has a high speed rail link to London St Pancras, providing opportunities to enhance the multiple benefits of Sittingbourne's accessible location. Despite its good rail links, some areas of Sittingbourne suffer from poor air quality. Four of Swale's five AQMAs are located in and near to Sittingbourne, located along the High Street through Newington, East Street, St Paul's Street and London Road in Teynham. The planting of street trees and other urban greening interventions such as green roofs absorb pollutants to combat poor air quality, if active travel routes are simultaneously provided to reduce traffic and reduce emissions.

6.3 Sittingbourne's poor quality green urban environment, primarily in the centre and north east of the town, is referenced in Swale's Adopted Local Plan (2017) and is stated to include a deficiency in parks and gardens, street trees and other open spaces. The GBI Typology Map for Sittingbourne (Figure 2) outlined a large area to the north of the A2, concentrated around the Eurolink Business Park, which suffers from lack of GBI. Figure 2 also shows that in the core of the town centre itself, to the south of the A2, there is an absence of GBI.

6.4 The more multi-functional of Sittingbourne's existing GBI assets lie on the outskirts of the town, including large areas occupied by orchards. Although these areas provide shading, food provision and carbon storage amongst other functions and should be valued for their functions, they are not publicly accessible, providing limited direct benefits to Sittingbourne's human population. Milton Creek performs moderately in terms of functions, however it's central, waterside location and array of events on offer makes this area a key GI asset for the town. The town centre itself lacks areas of multi-functional GBI though there are nine parks and open spaces nestled within the built form and in surrounding residential areas that respond to local need. There are opportunities to increase access to these existing parks by walking and cycling, and further optimise those green spaces, to create more multi-functional, inviting and readily accessible spaces.

Figure 24: Key Diagram – Urban GBI Strategy for Sittingbourne



GBI Opportunities in Sittingbourne

6.5 The earlier chapters have established that Sittingbourne has a number of existing GBI assets, but there are still areas of need, presenting significant opportunity for a more comprehensive and connected network of GBI to deliver a range of socio-economic benefits.

6.6 The aim of the Urban GI Strategy for Sittingbourne is to create a greener setting to the town to benefit the town's health, biodiversity and economic performance.

6.7 There are a number of opportunities to retrofit GBI in Sittingbourne's urban environment. Opportunities are set out below under each objective, and are displayed on the Key Diagram for Sittingbourne in Figure 24. It is important to note that not all GBI interventions can be displayed on the Key Diagram. Where social interventions are proposed, they are described in the text below.

Proposals

6.8 The remainder of this section, including the Key Diagram (Figure 24) and accompanying schedule (Table 3), outline the proposed projects interventions, actions to be implemented in Sittingbourne within the Plan Period to 2037-2038, subject to the availability of funding and consented development. The projects are organised under the key themes of this GBI Strategy, and align with the objectives for Urban GBI introduced earlier. The Key Diagram is overlaid over the existing GBI resource to show clearly where proposals are intended to address areas of non GBI, or complement or improve existing GBI assets.

A Green and Biodiverse Borough

Town Centre Greening

6.9 Greening of Sittingbourne's town centre was initially promoted through the Sittingbourne Town Centre and Milton Creek Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)[1] which was adopted in September 2010 and is now outdated. To respond to the current context, a revised Sittingbourne Town Centre Development Framework is underway, which presents a key opportunity to enhance GBI provision in the town centre. An area suitable for town centre greening has been identified on the Key Diagram.

6.10 Many of Sittingbourne's key streets and residential streets have no street tree cover so there is opportunity to prepare a programme of implementation. Within this area, the following is recommended, where appropriate:

- Corridor greening along the A2 and High Street comprising street trees, rain gardens and tree pits
- Pocket parks (less than 0.4 hectares)
- Green roofs and walls on new and existing buildings
- Improvements to the public realm
- Enhance road verges along key gateways, including the A2 London Road, the B2005 Mill Way and Borden Lane, by introducing stretches of wildflower meadow
- Greening of alleyways which run perpendicular to the High Street

6.11 The greening of alleyways between the High Street, St Michaels Road to the north and the network of roads to the south, must include measures which are suited to narrow pathways, ensuring access remains safe. This may include hanging baskets or narrow planters. Gateways to alleyways may include green walls and signposts.

Existing alleyway running south from the High Street

[1] Milton Creek Supplementary Planning Document (2010)
https://www.swale.gov.uk/sittingbourne-milton-creek-regen/

6.12 Green walls can roofs provide a range of benefits including increased evapotranspiration, reduced storm water flow, improved air quality and noise reduction, as well as providing amenity value. Future town centre redevelopment presents opportunities for the integration of green walls into the built environment, and may represent a flagship project for the borough. The below image shows a vertical green wall near Tower Bridge, in London, which is irrigated by rainwater. The green wall was retrofitted onto an existing building, enhancing the local environment, providing a habitat for wildlife, and reducing runoff.

Vertical rain garden near Tower Bridge, London (Source: Landscape Institute. 2015)

6.13 The future regeneration of Sittingbourne town centre also presents an opportunity to consult with and work alongside local business owners to encourage and support the retrofitting of green walls and roofs onto existing buildings.

6.14 Generally, town centre greening can result in the provision of shade and passive cooling. Scientific research into air temperatures in urban areas shows that green sites are generally cooler than non-green sites[2].

Increase Urban Tree Planting for Corridor Greening

6.15 Tree planting along Sittingbourne's major corridors has many benefits. The Landscape Institute states that *'street trees can add aesthetic quality to an urban area, but will also reduce airborne pollution, provide shade, reduce urban heat island effects, mitigate wind chill and turbulence and increase biodiversity*[3].'

6.16 Along the A2 corridor through Sittingbourne, built form fronts onto the pavement edge in many places, so it is unlikely street trees would be feasible along the whole stretch of the route. Where properties front the road, community engagement and education schemes can raise awareness of 'greening' gardens for the benefit of biodiversity. Greener gardens along the A2 corridor for example would also contribute to place-making, and contribute to cleaner air. Corridor greening can be implemented alongside SuDS schemes to manage surface water runoff.

[2] https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236332932_Urban_greening_to_cool_towns_and_cities_A_systematic_review_of_the_empirical_evidence

[3] Landscape Institute Position Statement - Green Infrastructure: An integrated approach to land use (2013)

6.17 The B2005 connecting Sittingbourne town centre with Kemsley is bound by properties which are set back from the road. A marked cycleway runs along stretches of the road. The corridor is a busy commuter route, and has the potential to encourage more car users to swap their commutes for biking or walking by creating a more attractive, safer setting. The numerous existing roadside verges could be diversified for wildflowers and SuDS schemes, and safety and perception of surrounding GBI could be increased by providing some areas of separation between the cycleway from the road through small areas of street tree or hedgerow planting, or rain gardens.

6.18 The cycleway along Swale Way, connecting Sittingbourne town centre and Milton Creek Country Park would benefit from similar interventions. The Country Park as a 'destination' along the cycle route provides an incentive for recreational users, commuters and tourists alike to use the cycle route. The aim would be to make the cycleway a calmer, greener route by providing separation between the busy traffic flow along the Swale Way corridor.

Commercial Area Greening

6.19 Figures 2 and 12 highlighted that Sittingbourne's main commercial area, the Eurolink Industrial Estate, is largely devoid of GBI despite the high working population. The Key Diagram for Sittingbourne shows an indicative area where GBI interventions should be focussed for commercial greening. Interventions such as street trees to create a green corridor along Castle Road, providing pocket parks and improving green active travel routes to the existing Milton Creek Country Park and the town centre, will all contribute to creating a greener working environment.

6.20 Existing green spaces on the outskirts of the Eurolink Industrial Estate create potential opportunities for employee recreation if access is improved. Three Lakes Park and Little Murston Nature Reserve are to the north east of the industrial park, on the northern side of the Swale Way. Three Lakes Park, designated as an SSSI, is currently occupied by Sittingbourne Angling Club. Introducing some levels of public access could maximise the proximity of this GBI asset to this key employment area. The existing pond and planting at Bayford Meadows Kart Circuit at the western end of Symmonds Drive is another example of a local green space which is currently publically inaccessible.

6.21 Greening should also be promoted at other new employment sites and for existing business areas as planning applications are submitted for re-development. The sites should be designed to deliver a high quality green setting for building form and providing space for recreation. For existing commercial sites, where businesses own land surrounding their property, businesses should be encouraged to develop multi-functional outdoor spaces for recreational use of staff and for biodiversity enhancements. This may include the provision of seating areas with tree planting for shade, wildlflower planting and provision of pathways and gardens for staff use. Guidance can be made available through SBC and other channels such as The Wildlife Trust. Businesses should be aware incentives such as local grants. For example, the Green Space Business Award® is a project developed by DS Smith, a packaging company, and Keep Britain Tidy, to encourage business owners to improve environmental standards in nearby recreational areas. Contributing to the introduction of greener and safer cyleways for staff to reach work is one example.

Optimise Existing Green Spaces and Parks

6.22 Milton Creek Country Park was first introduced in Section 2.0, where its focus on community participation and engagement was highlighted. The Milton Creek area to the north of the town centre, which is now often referred to as the 'green heart' of Sittingbourne was once primarily industrial in nature. The green space, which provides a range of natural habitats, now enables a direct link via the Saxon Shore Way, through the town centre to the surrounding countryside and coast and is a key recreational and biodiversity asset providing benefits for both Sittingbourne's population and the environment. Figure 12 shows that Milton Creek Country Park performs moderate to high in terms of multi-functionality. Some areas of the park perform particularly well for wildlife such as the three ponds which have been especially created for Great Crested Newts and wildflower meadows which attract pollinators. These areas can also provide an educational benefit, encouraging local residents to learn more about nature.

6.23 Though there are seven pedestrian access points into the country park, including through Kemsley Recreation Ground, Newman Drive and Walsby Drive, visibility of access points into the country park is generally poor. 'A' Frame gates are currently in place, though 'gateway' entrances using signposting at highly visible entrances, such as the entrance to the west of Swale Way, to increase awareness and visibility of the park. The cycleway link between the town centre and the park is unattractive, running along Swale Way and through an industrial area, following routes of heavy traffic congestion. The greening of this route, along with the introduction of more obvious way-marking, could provide a more pleasant and legible route. As the cycleway follows road sides, there is opportunity to integrate SuDS intograss verge alongside the route, to divert road run-off into tree pits and roadside swales and gullies.

6.24 There are other areas for improvement in terms of access, such as providing public toilets and car park and other key services to benefit all park users. Though the priority is to encourage people to walk or cycle to the park, stakeholders have advised that Milton Creek requires a suitable car parking facility.

6.25 Swale's Open Space Strategy (2010) was the first step in the optimisation of Sittingbourne's parks and green spaces. It included an audit of all existing spaces, to see where parks are performing well and where there is room for improvement. Public Access also remains at the heart of the emerging Open Spaces and Play Strategy (2017-2022) for the borough.

6.26 Sittingbourne's other parks and green spaces have seen little investment in comparison to Milton Creek Country Park and would benefit from a wider range of activities on offer, in places designed in an inviting way to make it easy for people to participate. A potential strategy for optimising Sittingbourne's Rectory Playing Field is provided in Section 5.0 and the principles can be translated to Sittingbourne's other open spaces. Many of Sittingbourne's existing green spaces are nestled in urban areas, making safe access a potential issue.

6.27 The King George V Playing Field for example is accessible from an access gate set between properties, from Woodstock Road. By providing a 'gateway' entrance, improving the approach to the Playing Field, and increasing signage, there is an opportunity to enhance the usage of the park. Another 'gateway' is proposed to Kemsley Recreation Ground off Forge Road. There is no existing frontage to the park so improving the presence of the park with street trees or a public art feature could increase the attractiveness of the park. Ensuring parks form key sections of active travel routes can also encourage people to divert from their usual route to or from work and school to enjoy the local green space.

6.28 There are many informal amenity green spaces nestled within residential developments throughout the urban area of Sittingbourne. Amenity green spaces comprise informal recreation spaces and green spaces, providing opportunity for activities close to home or work. Though they often provide a central point to residential communities, enhancing the appearance of residential development, Sittingbourne's amenity green spaces are predominantly amenity grass with little biodiversity value and are under-used as community spaces. Proximity of amenity green spaces to homes and schools makes them a good opportunity for optimising for multiple uses. In some newer developments such as Reams Way in Kemsley and Bluebell Drive, there are children's play areas which increase usage of these spaces. Otherwise, improvements may include wildflower and tree planting, introducing seating spaces, and providing informal sport opportunities. These interventions can contribute to making amenity spaces a well-used focal point for a community, and a local haven for wildlife, whilst retrofitting SuDS.

Example of Existing Amenity Green Space off Ridham Drive, Kemsley

6.29 Going forward, ensuring parks and green spaces provide maximum benefits for people and biodiversity may involve workshops with local residents, and can even be a community-led process, guided by SBC. This approach allows local communities and groups to take ownership over what their local spaces to see improvements tailored to need.

Promote provision of multifunctional GBI in new development

6.30 As shown in the Key Diagram (Figure 24), there are many housing and employment allocations on Sittingbourne's settlement edge. 43% of all residential development is planned to be located in Sittingbourne (Local Plan, 2017). This new development should be integrated with existing and proposed GBI, but also presents an opportunity to require high quality, well-integrated GBI into proposals.

6.31 The edge of settlement location of many of Sittingbourne's allocations means that requirements should be set for ensuring that the wider countryside is linked to the city centre through strategic allocations, and that existing linkages are retained and improved, such as access to the Saxon Shore Way. For example, the location of housing allocation A 20 at Orbital, Staplehurst Road would introduce new development in a predominantly residential area largely influenced by the adjacent railway.

6.32 The allocation lies directly adjacent to The Meads Community Woodland, providing an opportunity for the allocation has potential to provide an attractive through-route for pedestrians in Chalkwell and Milton Regis to access the woodlands.

6.33 Opportunities also exist to maximise the benefits of GBI in terms of the image of the area, improving setting of the adjacent community woodland. Each new development would require GBI tailored to the site context, which should be drawn from the Guidance for GBI in new development, presented in Section 9.0 of this Strategy.

A Healthy Blue Environment

Sustainable Drainage Schemes (SuDS)

6.34 Over the past few years, there have been an increasing number of SuDS schemes incorporated into Sittingbourne's urban form, which have been delivered predominantly through the BEGIN project (see Section 2.0). As part of the BEGIN project, the Bell Road SuDS project for example incorporates a wildflower meadow to reduce flood risk through roadside SuDS whilst promoting community stewardship and responsibility. Bell Road has been identified on the Key Diagram as an opportunity area for SuDS, to highlight the need for ongoing management. Future schemes should identify where localised flooding may be mitigated through SuDS, and use lessons learned from the Bell Road scheme.

6.35 SuDS schemes through Sittingbourne's urban environment can also contribute to the town centre greening objective. Street side rain gardens can contribute to reducing surface water runoff, whilst greening routes to work and school, promoting education of GBI initiatives and can be part of a nature recovery network for wildlife through the urban environment (see case studies on following page).

6.36 According to the Environment Agency, the southern section of the Eurolink Industrial Estate is at high risk from surface water flooding, as well as a large area of Grove Park in Chalkwell and linear areas following the flowpaths of watercourses north-south through Sittingbourne.

6.37 SuDS initiatives such as road side rain gardens and tree pits along main streets such as Avenue of Remembrance and Swanstree Avenue could double as active travel routes whilst mimicking the natural environment. Networks of SuDS along secondary residential streets such as Chaucer Road, West Ridge and Windsor Drive which are at high risk of surface water flooding, could alleviate flood risk, reduce pressure on the sewer network and create a more attractive street scene.

6.38 Implementing SuDS schemes presents an opportunity for education and community engagement. For example, the image below shows a street tree scheme in Manchester. Through a simple diagram painted onto the ground showing the flow path of surface water which is retained by the tree pits, it not only creates interest for commuters of all ages passing by, but also is an educational tool, to express the value of the bringing the natural world into our urban environments.

Interactive SuDS Scheme.

Box 6.1: Bridget Joyce Square

CASE STUDY
Bridget Joyce Square, London

The Bridget Joyce Square SuDS project was created to improve water quality and reduce surface water flood risk alongside transforming a dangerous road into a safe community space for socialising and commuting.

This section of Australia Road in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham lies between a school and two playgrounds. The road was at high risk of surface water flooding due to its location within the Counter Creek Sewer catchment, which is described as one of London's 'lost rivers'. The project included the conversion of the road into a pedestrian and cyclist space with 1,320m^2 of permeable paving. Rainfall is directed to bio-retention basins and rain gardens which also take rainwater from the roof of the school.

The project covers an area of 0.3ha, is designed to hold 55m^3 of water and incorporates 120m^2 of rain gardens. Community engagement was a key part of the project which they are now able to benefit from as the scheme provides a new events space for the local community by the entrance of the school. In addition to this, 49 trees were planted as part of the project.

References:
Text/Image 1 and 2:
https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/climate-change/surface-water/bridget-joyce-square-suds
Text/Image 3:
https://openhouselondon.open-city.org.uk/listings/6693

Box 6.2: Greener Grange Town

CASE STUDY
Greener Grange Town, Cardiff

Greener Grangetown is a sustainable drainage system (SuDS) project that has also been designed to transform the quality of the public realm across a Cardiff neighbourhood (with similar characteristics to some Sittingbourne neighbourhoods in terms of building form and street layout).

108 rain gardens deliver visual amenity improvements and a more sustainable approach to rainwater treatment. The result is a more resilient urban sewer network and a street environment that is more attractive - and more useful - for residents and commuters.

This green infrastructure project in Cardiff, removes more than 40,000m^3 of rainwater each year from entering the combined sewer network, whilst creating attractive and safer routes to work and school.

References:
https://www.arup.com/projects/greener-grangetown

6.39 Milton Creek is a shallow tidal inlet running north-east from Sittingbourne to join the Swale at Elmley Reach. Milton Creek Country Park is open to the creek in its eastern section, so is enjoyed by residents for amenity purposes.

6.40 The Saxon Shore Way provides access along the western edge of the creek from Sittingbourne town centre, providing a great community asset for recreational purposes.

6.41 To the east of Sittingbourne is the Mill Pond, which once fed a watermill at Tonge for over 900 years. The Mill Pond attracts many visitors, now set within a public access park which is a focal point for tourism, easily accessible from Bapchild and north east Sittingbourne through the existing footpath network. A stream leaves the pond, rising to the north east of the A2, running alongside Tonge Barn, through Tonge, with an outfall at Conyer Creek. Improving public access along this stream would provide a tranquil route linking Sittingbourne with Conyer, whilst extending the recreational offer at the Mill Pond.

A Connected, Active and Healthy Swale

Active Travel Routes and Easier Access to GBI from Homes, Work and Schools

6.42 At present, Sittingbourne town centre, is quite car dominated, resulting in higher pollution levels and the wider town is home to largest concentration of AQMAs of any of Swale's towns. The A2 runs through the centre of the town which dissects the urban form into two rough halves.

6.43 The Key Diagram (Figure 24) demonstrates a 15 minute walking radius from the town centre. Within this area, active travel should be promoted and leaving the car at home should be advocated as the 'norm.' The retrofitting of GBI into the urban form to create attractive, safe routes to school and work can play a role in encouraging sustainable travel.

6.44 There is currently pedestrian severance between the new housing development to the north of the Eurolink way and Sittingbourne Railway Station. Though the development is in the immediate vicinity of the railway station, the road network and configuration of sites in the locality prevent direct access to the station and onwards to the town centre. An active travel route created by a network of street trees and signposting is proposed along Eurolink Way and Milton Road towards the station.

6.45 In the residential area to the south of the A2, the cluster of schools in close proximity creates an opportunity to make walking to and from school the preferred option for pupils and their parents or carers.

6.46 The following roads have been identified for their potential to incorporate active travel routes:

- Swale Way
- Homewood Avenue to Ufton Lane
- Bell Road to Swanstree Avenue

6.47 The proposed routes pass adjacent to some of Sittingbourne's parks, to encourage recreational use on the journey from work or school. The proposals for active travel routes also link with the SuDS proposals under the Healthy Blue Environment theme. By integrating rain gardens and street trees into the street scene, the locality becomes an attractive environment encouraging people to work and play.

6.48 The Key Diagram shows the existing routes for walkers and cyclists in Sittingbourne as opportunities for enhancement. These opportunities should include better way-finding, signposting and maintenance. For example, the Saxon Shore Way represents a key connectivity asset for Sittingbourne, and is accessible from the town centre, at a spur from Milton Creek Country Park. By providing signage to indicate travel times and destinations along the route of the Saxon Shore Way, and including better signage from Sittingbourne town centre to the route, there could be many more people benefitting from the access to blue infrastructure and recreational exercise. At this stage, these existing footpaths for improvement are indicative and will be informed further by the emerging Sustrans Feasibility Study.

<u>Enhance Existing Routes for Walkers and Cyclists</u>

6.49 As well as retrofitting GBI into roads and routes to promote active travel, Sittingbourne must also improve existing footpaths and routes to increase their use. There is a good network of footpaths linking surrounding smaller villages such as Borden, Tunstall, Highstead and Bapchild with the main settlement edge. Though the network exists, it is not comprehensive in all places, with inadequate way marking and poor maintenance.

6.50 To encourage people of surrounding settlements to walk and cycle to the town centre, there is a need for better signage and upkeep. As well as encouraging people to travel into Sittingbourne, this path network provides access for town centre residents to access surrounding areas of green space and the Kent Downs AONB. Therefore, their importance should not be overlooked due to their settlement edge location.

6.51 Many of Sittingbourne's existing routes pass through areas of historic, cultural and wildlife interest such as the Saxon Shore Way, and PRoW alongside the Little Murton Nature Reserve. Where appropriate, viewpoints should be created using seating and informative signage to increase a sense of awareness of surroundings and create interest.

Routes to Schools

6.52 Access to Sittingbourne's primary schools and nurseries is currently facing pressures from heavy traffic flow and a lack of formal crossings, especially at busy junctions. Busy roads make school drop-off and pick-up difficult and creates obstacles in safe road crossings.

6.53 To encourage parents and children to leave cars at home, and walk or cycle to school, there are options for making routes more interactive, where possible. For example, the earlier case study of Bridget Joyce Square in London shows where sustainable drainage features have been integrated into the public realm.

6.54 Three objectives to improve routes to schools, to create safer, more accessible and attractive environments include:

- Deter car use by banning cars in a wide radius
- Encourage active travel to school by improving physical environments through GBI interventions
- Increase education and awareness of the benefits of active travel for both children and families

6.55 Encouraging active travel to school will involve the creation of safer, more appealing routes for children and parents, making leaving the car at home the easier option. Implementing GBI along existing routes to school can be a great way to encourage people of all ages to leave the car at home. Examples of possibilities to enhance active travel routes around Westlands Primary School are outlined.

Potential Safer Routes to School: Westlands Primary School

6.56 Westlands Primary School lies on the northern side of Homewood Avenue, in the south eastern part of Sittingbourne. There are three pedestrian entrances to the school along Homewood Avenue, one being the main entrance which also provides vehicular access. There is a fourth access at the junction between Johnson Road and Barrow Grove, to the north east of the school, providing both pedestrian and vehicular access. Homewood Avenue is a very busy route, with parked cars on pavements and two-way traffic making crossing difficult and unsafe at drop-off and pick-up times.

6.57 Safe routes to Westlands should follow those currently used by pupils as far as possible, which are those outlined on Figure 25. Example interventions to make safer routes to Westlands Primary may include the following, which would be subject to further detailed design:

- Implement traffic calming measures along Homewood Avenue, which already benefits from pavements and grass verges on either side of the road. Planting street trees can not only act as a traffic calming measure but also soften the street scene and provide habitats; and
- Create interest for children along roadsides. This may include pathways mown through roadside wildflower verges or interactive SuDS schemes like the one shown in Figure 25

Figure 25: Potential Future Safer Routes to Schools Scheme at the Westlands Primary School

Education and Awareness around Active Travel to Schools

6.58 Alongside interventions to the physical environment outlined above, using Westlands Primary School as an example, there are opportunities to increase education and awareness around the benefits of walking or cycling to school, through a range of interventions for both pupils and parents. Education initiatives, though not directly GBI proposals in themselves, should be implemented alongside the promotion of walking and cycling and greener environments.

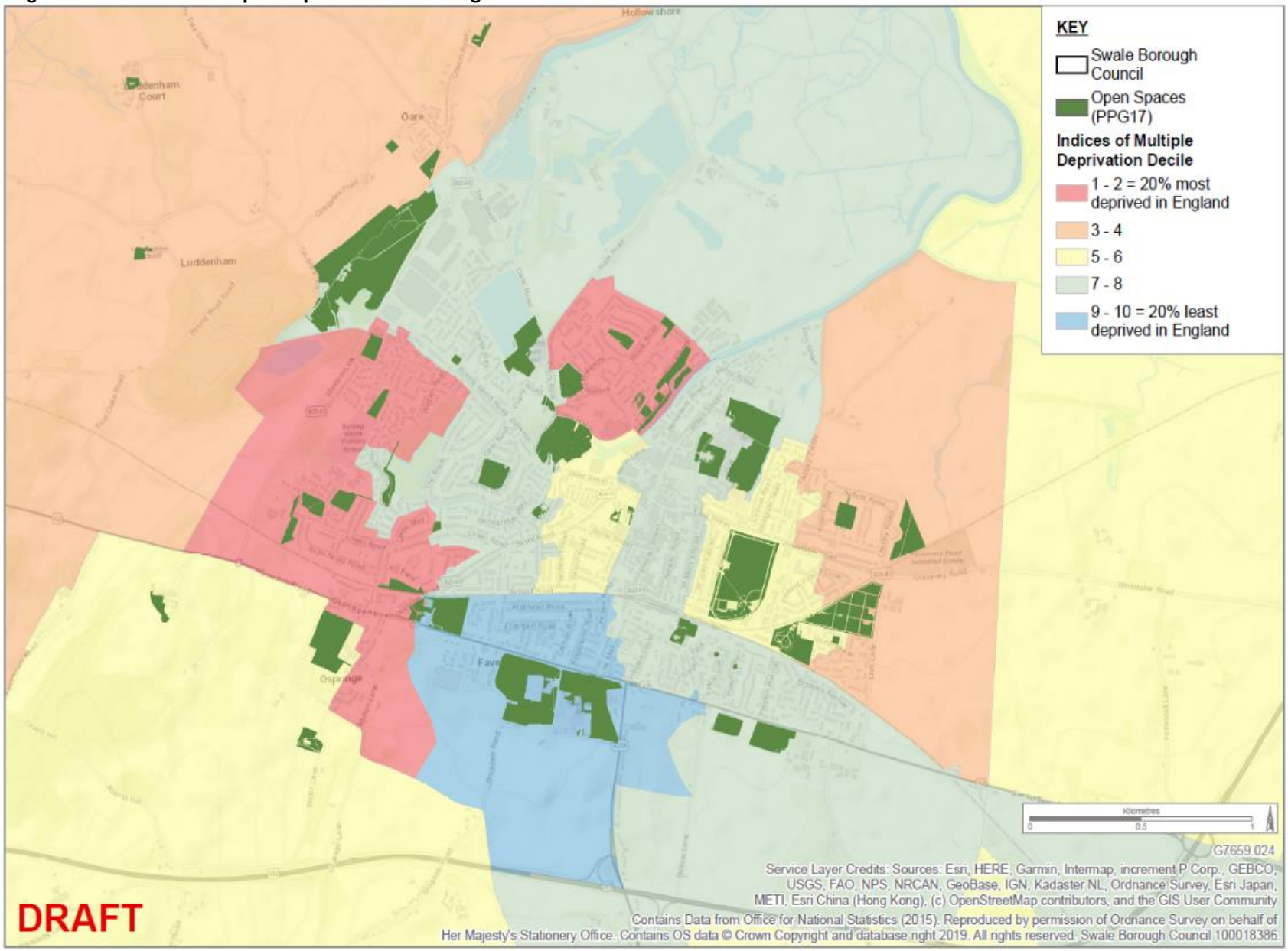
Encourage community participation and engagement through GBI initiatives

6.59 As shown in Figure 26, levels of deprivation vary throughout Sittingbourne, with the areas of Milton Regis and Chalkwell are in the 20% most deprived in England. Social prescribing, targeting the most deprived areas would have benefits for general wellbeing, mental health and reducing isolation. Social prescribing services refers to enabling GPs, nurses and other primary healthcare professionals to refer people to a range of non-clinical services, which may include health walks, Forest Schools, Green Gyms and volunteer groups. The social prescribing service would benefit from the town's close proximity to the surrounding countryside accessible by the PRoW network, to increase the programme on offer. Referring people to these activities can increase outdoor activity, engagement with nature and decrease the prevalence of social isolation.

6.60 Sittingbourne can take lead from Faversham, where a social prescribing service is up and running through the use of Red Zebra Community Solutions. See the Urban GBI Strategy for Faversham for further information.

6.61 As demonstrated throughout this Strategy, there is plentiful existing projects and activities for residents to engage with across Sittingbourne. Milton Creek Country Park for example is a hub of activity, running community events and activities weekly. Raising awareness and improving access for all should be a priority, to make the most of existing opportunities for improving health and wellbeing and decreasing social isolation.

Figure 26: Index of Multiple Deprivation in Sittingbourne



Promote Healthy Play and Leisure

6.62 Many of the examples drawn on throughout this Urban GBI Strategy for Sittingbourne make reference to promoting healthy play. For example, the use of interactive features along active travel routes are examples of encouraging engagement and fun through GBI.

6.63 Many schools in Sittingbourne already have Forest School activities underway as part of the curriculum. Children are invited to spend lessons in the outdoor environment, learning key skills whilst also receiving the benefits of GBI such as improved mental and physical wellbeing. Encouraging Forest Schools and part of the curriculum in all schools across Sittingbourne will enable the benefits to be felt more widely.

6.64 Within Sittingbourne's existing outdoor spaces, including parks and amenity spaces, opportunities for natural and healthy play are in their plenty. Figure X shows an existing outdoor play space in a residential development off Reams Way in Kemsley, Sittingbourne. This space, which was once just open grassland, has been transformed into a play space with interest through mounding, and the use of natural materials.

Existing play space in Kemsley, off Reams Way

Enable Access to Affordable, Healthy Food and Food Growing

6.65 The Key Diagram indicates a number of Sittingbourne's school grounds where by working together with the Wildlife Trust, there is potential to create school allotments. By encouraging students to participate in growing local food, the stewardship approach can be adopted, with a sense of ownership. With appropriate planting allotments will also contribute to the nature recovery network within the town, and can be a hub for wider community engagement including for education purposes and to reduce the sense of marginalisation in the community. Allotments can be integrated into wider GBI networks for wider reaching impacts. For example, the potential school allotment at Minterne Community Junior School is nestled between proposals for SuDS, an active travel route and a proposed area in which to optimise high townscape value through GI.

A Beacon for the Visitor Economy

High Quality Gateway GBI

6.66 As identified under the Optimising Parks and Gardens subheading, some of Sittingbourne's parks have been identified as requiring improvements to their approaches and entrances. In terms of the visitor economy, gateway GI refers to creating attractive arrival points and approaches to the town centre. These are identified at the railway station and at key approaches to the town via the A2 at Chalkwell and Snipeshill.

Active Travel Routes Linking Public Transport Hubs and Tourist Attractions

6.67 The Saxon Shore Way providing onward links to Kent's coastline, as well as Milton Creek Country Park, are both key assets for Sittingbourne. An active travel route is proposed linking the railway station to these GBI assets. It is important that this feature is accompanied by way-marking and publicity, to encourage visitors to leave the train at Sittingbourne and experience the coastline.

6.68 The town centre greening proposals explained earlier in this chapter will make Sittingbourne's town core more attractive. Making the town centre an attractive place to live and work can stimulate inward investment and contribute to wider public realm improvements, retain small businesses and encourage the town centre to flourish and increase visitor 'dwell time'.. Increasing the offer in Sittingbourne, can stimulate tourist spending and make the town an attractive place for overnight stays with onward visits to other parts of the Borough including the Kent Downs AONB, Elmley Nature Reserve, and the many beaches and coastal parks on the Isle of Sheppey

Optimising Areas of High Townscape Value through GBI

6.69 The area to the south of the town centre is home to a concentration of buildings and spaces of historic and architectural interest. GBI enhancements and interventions in this area can enhance the quality of place and the setting of the existing heritage assets. This is covered in more detail in the Sittingbourne Town Centre Development Framework.

Schedule of Actions

6.70 To bring together the Urban GBI Strategy for Sittingbourne, Table 3 below outlines a proposed 'Schedule of Actions'. Proposed actions are grouped under the four opportunity areas, with a delivery partners and potential funding streams outlined. Further information regarding each funding stream, including examples of organisations which fall into each category, can be found in Appendix B Funding.

Table 3: Schedule of Actions – Sittingbourne Urban GBI Strategy

Activities	Actions	Lead Partner	Delivery Partners	Potential Funding Streams
A Green and Biodiverse Borough				
Town centre greening	Enhance road verges along key gateways, including the A2 London Road, the B2005 Mill Way and Borden Lane, by introducing stretches of wildflower meadow.	Wildlife Trust (Bee Roads) in partnership with Bumblebee Conservation Trust	SBC; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Grant funding secured for the Bee Roads project
	Work with developers and investors to ensure that GBI is delivered within the upcoming Sittingbourne Town Centre Development Framework.	SBC	Businesses, Investors	Fiscal initiatives e.g. BID; Commercial Finance
	Carry out alleyway greening projects, linking the High Street to neighbouring streets.	SBC	Wildlife Trust, Businesses	Multi-agency public sector funding; Commercial Finance
	Work with local business owners to encourage and support the retrofitting of GI to their buildings using green walls and green roofs.	SBC	Town Council	Fiscal initiatives e.g. BID; Mainstream public sector funding; Commercial Finance
	Encourage interventions that provide shade and passive cooling such as street tree planting schemes.	SBC	Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding
Urban Tree Planting and Corridor Greening	Increase tree cover/planting along the main transport corridors including the A2 and B2005	Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Wildlife Trust; Town Council	Mainstream public sector funding
	Provide some native species to contribute to the nature recovery network	Wildlife Trust	SBC	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; potential CIL contributions
	Green the cycleway between Milton Creek Country Park and Sittingbourne town centre	SBC	Sustrans; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Mainstream public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
Commercial area greening	Work with owners of commercial and industrial premises to improve the local environment around commercial sites	SBC	Businesses; Kent Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; Fiscal initiatives e.g. BID; Commercial Finance

	Implement pocket parks within existing commercial areas, such as the Eurolink Industrial Estate	SBC	Businesses; Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Fiscal initiatives; Voluntary Maintenance
Optimise green spaces and parks	Provide gateways to existing parks and gardens	Wildlife Trust	SBC; Community Groups	Mainstream public sector funding; Multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
	Milton Creek Country Park Improvements ○ Improve visibility of access points into Milton Creek Country Park through signposting and way-marking ○ Create gateway entrance points at the most visible entrance locations ○ Increase accessibility for all demographics by providing formalised car parking provision, toilets and amenities	Friends of Milton Creek and Milton Creek Trust	SBC; Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding (Local Grants from SBC and/or KCC); Income Generating Opportunities; Potential CIL contributions; Voluntary Maintenance
	Invest in existing amenity green spaces within residential areas to create multi-functional and accessible green spaces	SBC	Community Groups	Potential CIL contributions; Multi-agency public sector funding; Voluntary Maintenance
Promote provision of multi-functional GBI in development	Ensure that all development sites adhere to open space requirements, provide multi-functional GI and contribute to the wider GI network	SBC	Developers; Wildlife Trust	Developer funds
	Ensure that the wider countryside is linked to the town centre through strategic allocations and that corridor linkages into the town are retained in the future.	SBC	Developers; Wildlife Trust	CIL contributions; S106
	Encourage new development to connect to and improve existing sustainable transport routes and create new cycleways and greenways where relevant	SBC	Developers; Wildlife Trust	CIL contributions; S106
	Ensure that existing allocations consider GBI, connectivity and active travel routes and SuDS	SBC	Developers; Wildlife Trust	CIL contributions; S106

A Healthy Blue Environment				
Opportunities for SuDS	Work together with the Kent County Council Highways and Transportation to assess the potential and rainfall storage alongside roads	Kent County Council SuDS Team	Environment Agency; SBC; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ;	Mainstream public sector funding
	Implement suitable SuDS type tree pits alongside urban street tree planting	Kent County Council SuDS Team	Environment Agency; SBC; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ;	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Incorporate SuDS into new development to manage surface water	Kent County Council SuDS Team	Environment Agency; SBC; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ;	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
Promote access to waterways	Improve access to the Milton Creek Way through green corridor links	SBC	Friends of Milton Creek and Milton Creek Trust; Sustrans	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
A Healthy, Connected and Active Swale				
Active travel routes to work and school	Improve the pedestrian route from Sittingbourne Railway Station to the town centre	SBC	Sustrans; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ; Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
	Along high footfall commuter routes such as Bell Road, Ufton Lane, and North Street, implement corridor greening initiatives to maximise the potential for increased walking and cycling.	SBC	Sustrans; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ; Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
	Increase pedestrian and cyclist permeability between Sittingbourne Railway Station and the Crown Quay housing development to the north of the Eurolink Way.	SBC	Sustrans; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ; Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions

	Invest in Safer Routes to Schools Programmes, by greening the road networks surrounding schools, creating car free zones and introducing traffic calming measures.	SBC	Sustrans, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation , Primary and Secondary School Leadership	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
Encourage community participation and engagement through GBI initiatives	Increase involvement in and awareness of outdoor activities run from Milton Creek Country Park	Friends of Milton Creek and Milton Creek Trust	SBC, Red Zebra Community Solutions	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Commercial Finance
	Set up a social prescribing services system, learning lessons from the system in Faversham.	Kent and Medway CCG	Red Zebra Community Solutions, SBC	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
Promote healthy play and leisure	Encourage Forest Schools to form part of the curriculum in all schools across Sittingbourne	SBC	Primary and Secondary School Leadership; School Boards; Wildlife Trust; Forest Schools	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Retrofit existing amenity spaces for outdoor activity, including natural play space	SBC	Community Groups	CIL Contributions; Mainstream Public Sector Funding
Enhance existing and create new routes for walkers and cyclists	Where footpaths pass through areas of historic/cultural/wildlife interest, create viewpoints using seating and informative signage	SBC	Sustrans; Natural England; Historic England; Medway Swale Estuary Partnership	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding such as HLF
	Provide adequate way-marking including signage indicating travel times and destinations along the Saxon Shore Way, including better signage from Sittingbourne town centre to the route.	SBC	Sustrans; Medway Swale Estuary Partnership	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
	Provide gateways to the wider countryside, including the AONB to the south, by increasing signage, way-marking and improving quality of existing footpaths	SBC	Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ; SBC; Developers; Kent Downs AONB	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions

			Unit; NFU	
Enable access to affordable healthy food and food growing	Work together with schools and the Wildlife Trust to improve wildlife habitats and create school allotments on school grounds	School Boards	SBC; Parent Teacher Associations; Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
A Beacon for the Visitor Economy				
Active travel routes linking public transport hubs and tourist attractions	Improve the arrival experience to the town centre, including enhanced pedestrian access to and from Sittingbourne Train Station	SBC	Visit Kent; Sustrans	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
High quality gateway spaces at arrival points in town centres	Conduct a baseline inspection of the gateways illustrated on the key diagram for Sittingbourne & undertake more detailed proposals	SBC	Visit Kent	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Improve the sense of arrival at Sittingbourne railway station	SBC	Wildlife Trust	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
	Create gateway signage of a consistent design	Visit Kent	SBC	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
Optimise areas of high townscape value through GI	Enhance the setting of existing architectural and heritage assets through GBI enhancements, Refer to Sittingbourne Town Centre Development Framework.	SBC	Historic England; Wildlife Trust	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding

7.0 GBI in Faversham

7.1 Faversham, a historic market town, with a population of approximately 19,600, has excellent railway links to London. Its character is influenced by both its maritime and industrial heritage as well as present day links with food and brewing. Forty percent of Faversham's town centre is designated as a conservation area and the town is home to 500 listed buildings, reflecting the town's historic significance and presenting opportunities to respond to and enhance this heritage through sensitive and appropriate GBI provision. The town is bordered by distinctive countryside and agricultural land, and is close to the Kent Downs AONB. Faversham lies in the eastern section of the borough, to the north of the A2.

7.2 The form of the town is varied, though largely compact. In the town centre, there is a fine-grained block structure, resulting in very few street trees and limited amenity space. South of the town centre, but north of the railway line, there is a grid of residential streets with front gardens, where trees and vegetation contribute to the presence of GBI within street scenes. The Brents Residential Community in the north of the town has more amenity spaces interspersed throughout built form, with intermittent street trees. Industrial estates lie on the outer edges of Faversham, bordering the surrounding countryside.

7.3 As demonstrated in Figure 13, GBI multi-functionality varies throughout Faversham. In general, the lowest levels of multi-functionality are seen within the town centre, where tightly woven built form dominates. Faversham Creek is also has a lower number of functions.

7.4 There are some pockets of high multi-functionality, including Oare and Gunpowder Works Country Park, to the north west of the town, as well as woodlands on the town's outskirts. Within the urban form itself, Faversham Recreation Ground delivers a moderate number of functions, with some of the wooded areas around the perimeter standing out as being highly multi-functional.

7.5 The Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan was made on 24th June 2017, following a successful referendum outcome. The boundary of the Neighbourhood Plan is limited to the Faversham Creek area, though its objectives remain relevant to this urban GBI Strategy for their role in promoting sustainable development and responding to local need.

The following objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan are relevant to this Urban GBI Strategy:

2. Manage the threat of flood by safeguarding functional floodplain and ensuring that such measures necessary to protect the area are undertaken

4. Reinforce the Creek's public destination potential

5. Encourage greater use of the Creek, especially by communities at Davington/ North Preston, by creating multi-function green space on the Front Brents and in the Stonebridge allotments for wildlife, water management, cultural, recreational and tourism activities

7. Avoid significant harm to areas designated for their ecological importance, whilst ensuring that a network of habitats is provided

8. Improve capacity and safety for cyclists at pinch points to and from the area and pedestrian and cycle links between Davington and North Preston to the town centre via the Creek13. Create living and working environments that respond to the Creek's rich and outstanding maritime heritage

14. Maintain and enhance the surrounding townscape setting of the Creek, its roofscape and higher ground, allotments, waterways, landmark buildings and urban marshland edges

15. Open up pedestrian/cycle/visual connections to adjacent marshland landscapes by creating a creek-edge route

16. Improve community safety around the basin by creating activity and natural surveillance

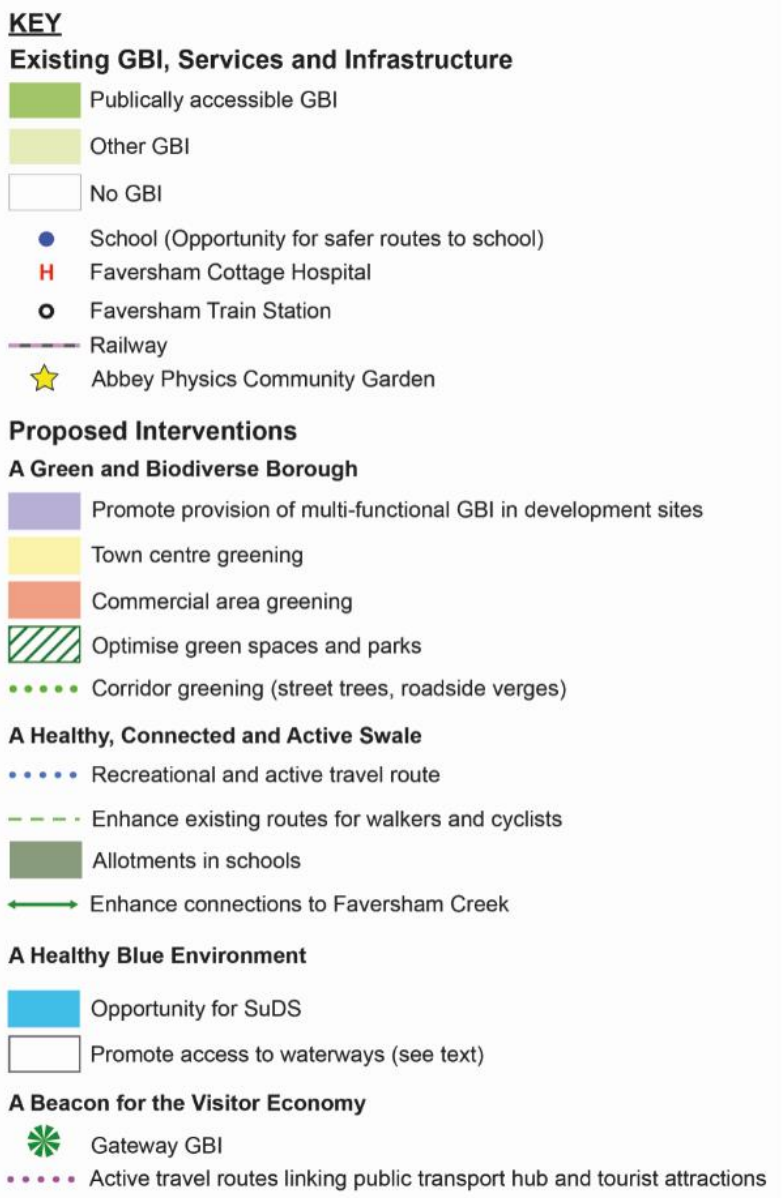
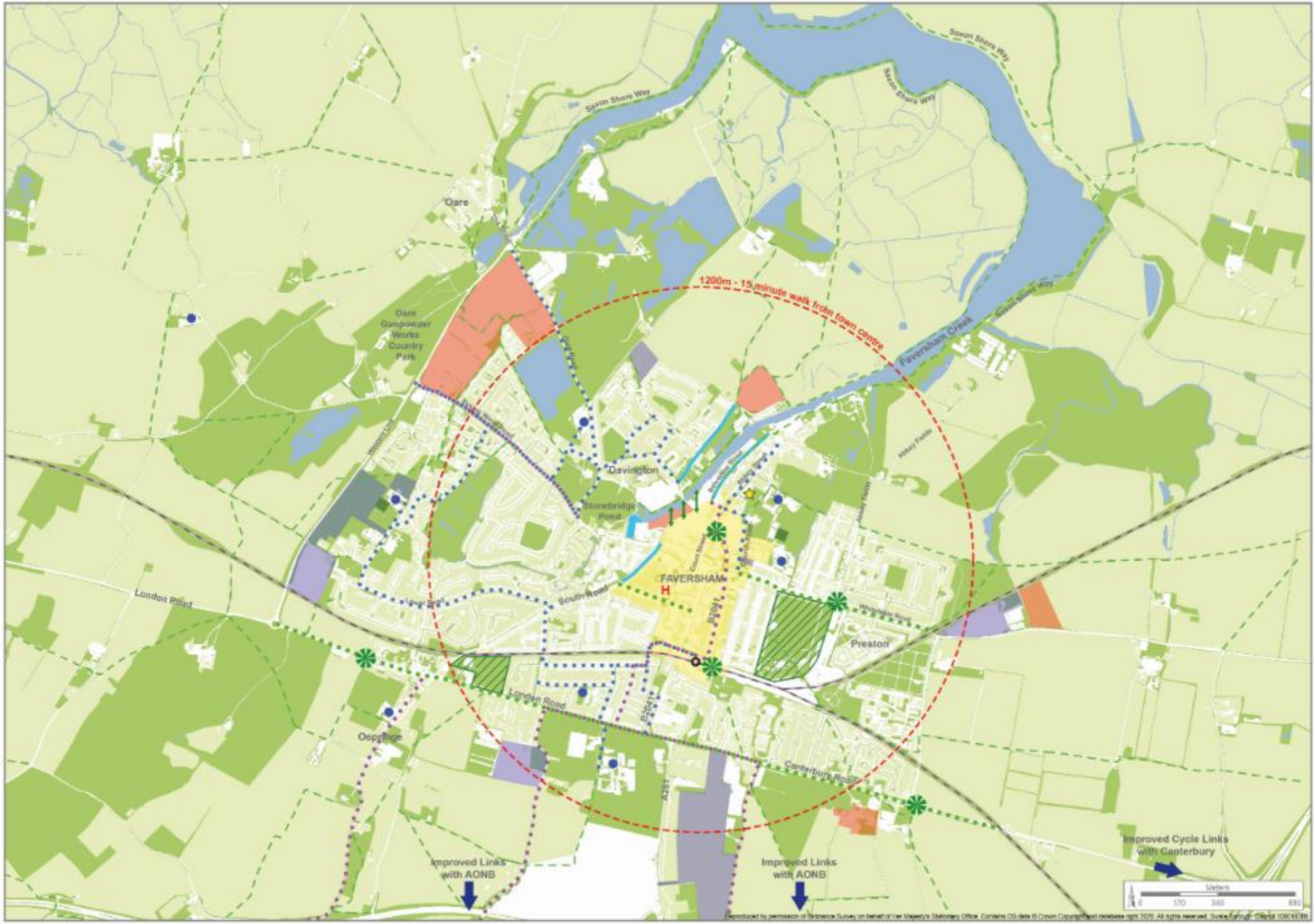


Figure 27: Key Diagram – Urban GBI Strategy for Faversham



A Green and Biodiverse Borough

Town Centre Greening

7.6 Faversham's town centre comprises a medieval market town formation, arranged around tight grid layout. Built form is prominent, as narrow pavements and buildings fronting the road have created little room for GBI over the years. As shown in Figure 3, this has resulted in a town core largely absent of GBI. As demonstrated in Section 5.0 of this Strategy, there are many benefits of living in close proximity to GBI, and a high quality historic environment can help to create places where people want to live and work, whilst enhancing Faversham's rich cultural heritage.

7.7 Faversham's town centre public realm centres on the Front Brents and Crab Island Town Greens, the market place, the surrounding shopping streets, the railway station and car parks. Much of Faversham's town centre has no street tree cover so there is opportunity to prepare a programme of implementation. In some areas, where pavements are wider, there is potential to implement street trees and rain gardens. Along Court Street for example, there are wider pavements, large areas of hardstanding and cobbles which would benefit from sensitively integrated public realm improvements through GBI.

Potential areas for public realm improvements through street trees and rain gardens along Court Street

Potential areas for public realm improvements through street trees and rain gardens along Court Street

7.8 The use of rain gardens and planted tree pits for SuDS, integrated as part of traffic calming measures can make improvements town centre improvements multi-functional, to provide habitats for wildlife, amenity value, reduce flood risk and provide shade.

7.9 Though abundant with historical interest, the square at Market Place is particularly absent of GBI. This area is often busy, being home to Faversham Market and a range of shopping facilities. Well-designed GBI integrated into the public realm can improve experience and deliver a range of benefits to residents, visitors and nature. Due to the central location of the square, and personal meaning to Faversham residents, the design and implementation of GBI within this area would benefit from public consultation. The involvement of businesses around the square can present opportunities for greening outside shopfronts, whether that be through planters, hanging baskets or green walls, where permitted by statutory historic designations.

7.10 Vehicular access is severely restricted, so in many cases pedestrians take priority over pedestrians. The full pedestrianisation of Market Place presents further opportunity for greening this area of the town centre, as the absence of cars creates additional area for green space. Further benefits of pedestrianisation include improved air quality and a reduction in noise pollution.

Market Place Square, with a view to the Guild Hall in the right

7.11 Back Lane, passing beneath no.12 Market Place, is the principal pedestrian access into Market Place from the main town centre car park. However this historic lane passes between rather unappealing rear extensions. Previously accessible, more attractive routes such as Hugh Place and Beddington Square are now gated to the public. The closure of these pedestrian routes has markedly reduced the permeability of the town centre environment in the approach from the south. Re-instating permeability through greening alternative routes is important for pedestrian permeability.

7.12 Due to the tightly knit nature of Faversham's urban form, private gardens and other forms of private property have an important role to play in greening of the town centre. Individual gardens within the town centre may be small but they create important green links between the built form and the wider countryside, forming vital wildlife corridors. They also have the ability to provide health and wellbeing benefits, air quality improvements and localised cooling through shading. Their close proximity to homes and therefore their ease of accessibility should therefore not be overlooked as part of a well-connected GBI network for a range of benefits.

7.13 Stone Street, shown on Figure 27 as a potential corridor for urban greening is one example of where private gardens can play an important role in connecting up GBI networks for wildlife. Narrow pavements and on-street parking present barriers to other forms of greening such as street trees and rain gardens. However, the greening of adjacent gardens fronting the road can contribute to an improved public realm, whilst linking up habitats.

Typical house type on Stone Street, presenting opportunity for the greening of private gardens

7.14 There are many resources already available through the Wildlife Trust, providing valuable information on how to garden for maximum ecological benefit. Local hubs for advice and guidance, such as the Abbey Physic Community Garden, would present opportunities for shared learning.

Urban Tree Planting and Corridor Greening

7.15 Along the A2 corridor to the south of Faversham, built form stands close to the road edge in a similar way to Sittingbourne, though the route is already green along most of the section, with mature hedges lining the road, and mature garden vegetation fronting the road side.

7.16 The B2040 Whitstable Road, which runs to the north of Faversham Recreation Ground is a well-used route into the town centre from the east. Properties front both side of the road with small front gardens, and public footpaths run along both sides of the road. Opportunities for greening are limited, though there are small spaces for rain gardens within the road layout, such as the junction with Millford Road, and opportunities for garden greening.

7.17 There is scope for wildflower planting on existing grass verges throughout the town centre, increasing multi-functionality and contributing to a comprehensive and connected wildlife network.

Commercial Area Greening

7.18 Industry in Faversham is concentrated to the eastern edge of Western Link, as well as the retail area within the town centre. To the east of Western Link, large warehouses occupy large areas and are typically surrounded by hardstanding and access roads. Although there is a strong tree belt along the eastern edge of Western Link, providing screening from the road, the area surrounding the warehouses and units would benefit from tree planting. Benefits include reduced energy demand for heating and cooling. In the car park of the superstore in this area, tree planting has the added benefit of shading for parked vehicles reducing the urban 'heat island' effect and improving shopper experience. Rain gardens and bioswales can reduce the risk of flooding by slowing surface water runoff and again improve user experience.

7.19 Future commercial development in Faversham should consider the following proposals:

- Green roofs/walls
- Tree Planting
- Rain gardens and bioswales
- Pocket parks for workers
- Enhanced connections to existing PRoW

7.20 The benefits of these was discussed at paragraphs 6.9 to 6.14 and these could be secured through the planning process.

Optimising Existing Parks and Green Spaces

7.21 In general, Faversham town centre has deficiencies in parks and gardens, formal outdoor sports facilities and amenity green space. This could be partly due to the nature of the built form; as a historic market town, terraced properties are dense and built form is fine-grained with little green space other than in gardens. The green spaces which do exist in Faversham, including Faversham Recreation Ground, King George V Recreation Ground and the Abbey Physic Garden, well managed, well used and valued community spaces, with a variety of activities. The Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park also lies on the outskirts of the town and is considered in more detail on in paragraphs 7.23 – 7.25.

Faversham Recreation Ground

A1: Improved footpath surfaces and edges along historic boundary routes
A2: Historic walks redesigned as informal woodland style paths with wildflower, bulbs and natural play elements
B1: Lodge building refurbished with cafe kiosk to frontage and public WC
B2: Performance space with formal garden, steps and power point
C1: Upgrading of sports changing pavilion including internal public toilet provision and community room
C2: Toilets converted for storage facility
C3: Improve compliant access
D1: Improve toddler play provision. Play area extended
D2: Improve junior play provision. Play area extended
D3: Outdoor fitness area
D4: Natural and imaginative play along linear walk
E1: Reinstate vertical bar railings to Whistable Road and Park Road
E2: Drinking fountain plinth restored
E3: Original wrought iron gates refurbished
F1: Improved lighting at the Lodge
F2: Interpretation wayfinding signs at the Lodge building, fountain plinth and entrances
F3: Car park improvements
F4: Restricted vehicle access using bollards
F5: Pedestrian access route to car park on Jubilee Way
F6: Location reinforced for car parking to serve users of the bowling and tennis clubs

Figure 28: Improvements to Faversham Recreation Ground under the Heritage Lottery Fund grant

7.22 As mentioned earlier in Section 2.0, Faversham Recreation Ground is currently undergoing a heritage led regeneration scheme to improve the park's facilities and encourage community engagement. Works include play area improvements, restoration of heritage features, improved pedestrian access refurbishment of changing pavilion and toilet block and implementing and programme of events including a performance space (Figure 28). Part of the refurbishment includes the employment of a part time Activity Coordinator and Ranger post to encourage and undertake events, activities and volunteering on site. The Activity Coordinator role provides a friendly face within the community, important for increasing engagement in outdoor activity amongst all demographics. The benefits of increased engagement including informal learning opportunities, skills development and increased community resilience. Previous activities at the Recreation Ground include litter picking and craft workshops, which were well received by the local community.

Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park

7.23 Oare Gunpowder Works County Park lies on the north western edge of Faversham which is an important biodiversity asset and was linked to the former Gunpowder Industry in Faversham.

7.24 The Country Park is a hub for volunteer activity and community engagement. Friends of Oare Gunpowder Works, a volunteer group, led by the Green Spaces officer at Swale Borough Council, meet every Thursday and once a month on the second Sunday. The group tasks carry out a range of tasks including tree planting, tree felling, fence fixing and litter picking.

7.25 There is need for better, more comprehensive pedestrian connections to the country park, which is outlined under the '*A Connected, Active and Healthy Swale*' theme in this section.

Amenity Green Space

7.26 There are many amenity green spaces within residential developments throughout the urban form of Faversham. Through community input, these spaces should receive investment to ensure they provide maximum benefit to people and wildlife. Currently, many of Faverham's amenity green space comprises closely mown grass which limits the multi-functionality of these areas. Diversification of planting, and the addition of seating areas can provide communal space and habitats for wildlife within the urban fabric.

7.27 Swale's Open Space Strategy (2010) and the subsequent emerging Open Spaces and Play Strategy 2017-2022, provide an initial steer in the optimisation of Sittingbourne's parks and green spaces. It included an audit of all existing spaces, to see where parks are performing well and where there is room for improvement.

7.28 Paragraph 6.28 outlines a range of interventions which are appropriate to the informal nature of amenity green spaces, to improve their multi-functionality for both people and wildlife. These are also applicable to Faversham's amenity green spaces. Going forward, ensuring parks and green spaces provide maximum benefits for people and biodiversity may involve workshops with local residents, and can even be a community-led process, guided by SBC. This approach allows local communities and groups to take ownership over what their local spaces to see improvements tailored to need.

Promote Provision of Multifunctional GBI in New Development

7.29 As shown in the Key Diagram (Figure 27), there are several housing and employment allocations on Faversham, the largest between to the south of the A2 Canterbury Road, and to the east of Western Link. The Western Link site is already being progressed by a developer, although future phases must align with this Strategy.

7.30 For the outline planning application for up to 250 dwellings at Preston Fields, south of the A2, which is awaiting a decision, future reserved matters applications must be integrated with existing and proposed GBI. The proximity of the allocation to the Kent Downs AONB offers a potential to provide a 'gateway development' to the AONB. A signposted PRoW through the site, linking surrounding residential development, including that to the north of the A2 Canterbury Road, to the AONB would increase access on foot to the AONB to maximise the recreational potential of this greenspace.

A Healthy Blue Environment

Sustainable Drainage Systems

7.31 As referred to below, Faversham town centre is liable to tidal flooding from Faversham Creek, which has a floodplain typically 100m to 200m wide. Three tributaries of the creek also run through thetown from the outskirts. . During more extreme events, Flooding of the creek can also indirectly cause flooding from the sewer system as water back-flows through the system. Therefore the vital role of SuDS within the urban fabric of the town must not be overlooked, for their potential in reducing surface water runoff whilst contributing to benefits for people and wildlife.

7.32 Using evidence from recent flood events, including the tidal surge of December 2013 which resulted in numerous flooded properties bordering Faversham Creek, the Key Diagram (Figure 27) identifies areas suitable for the sensitive integration of SuDS. Along Faversham Creek, Belvedere Road, Church Road and parts of Upper Brents lie in Flood Zone 3. SuDS is often associated with large green spaces, however, there are a range of SuDS features which can be easily designed into constrained urban settings which would suit the nature of the built form along the streets in the flood plain, such as Belvedere Road. According to Kent County Council's design guidance on Masterplanning for SuDS[4], space efficient SuDS include green roofs, bioretention gardens, permeable paving, rills, rainwater harvesting, hardscape storage, micro-wetlands, and bioretention tree pits. These SuDS are also suitable for the town centre, to be implemented alongside town centre greening measures for multi-functional proposals.

The junction between Belvedere Road and Sager Road which presents opportunity for rain gardens and tree pits.

Westbrook Stream

7.33 The Westbrook is a spring-fed chalk stream, which runs to the west of Faversham, and flows roughly north into Faversham Creek and The Swale beyond. The historic course of the stream runs from a spring at Lorenden in the south west of Faversham, along Water Lane, through Ospringe and past the area of Chart Mills – a Scheduled Monument and one of the oldest of Faversham's three gunpowder factories. This latter section to Chart Mills is culverted. The woodland at The Knole comprises various springs which feed into the Westbrook near Chart Mills. The construction of the M2 motorway has altered the course of the spring at Lorenden. This alteration, as well as heavy water abstraction, means that the upstream reaches of the Faversham often run dry.

[4] https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0020/23582/Masterplanning-for-SuDS-Part-4.pdf

7.34 Once the stream runs at surface again, it runs north through Stonebridge Way Estate and is culverted under West Street, before entering Stonebridge Pond. The stream then flows through Stonebridge Allotments, over a weir and sluices, with an outfall in Faversham Creek, at which point the stream becomes brackish.

7.35 The Westbrook Stream and Stonebridge Pond is an important community green space in Faversham. The multi-functionality mapping for Faversham (Figure 13) begins to demonstrate the multiple functions performed by the stream. The stream and its network of paths offers a recreational asset, linking different areas of the town, and is also a wildlife corridor offering ecological refuge for a range of species. The stream as a whole is one of many wildlife corridors and recreational assets which connects Faversham Creek to Bysing Wood and the North Downs.

7.36 Locally important heritage features, owing to Faversham's Gunpowder history, are evident along the bank structure and at Chart Mills. Buildings associated with the gunpowder industry stretched from Ospringe to Faversham Creek, powering multiple Mills, during which time the course of the creek was modified for materials transportation. Preservation of archaeology associated with this time is an important objective for the Westbrook.

7.37 Within policy (Local Plan, 2017), the Westbrook Stream and Stonebridge Pond is designated as a Local Green Space.

7.38 The Westbrook Stream is classed as an Ordinary Watercourse, though is not designated under the Water Framework Directive (WFD), so there are no WFD classifications or further WFD information to determine the quality of the watercourse.

7.39 The water quality is not routinely tested though is thought to be of reasonably good quality, due to the presence of indicator species. However the stream is vulnerable to pollution caused by run off from nearby roads. The Friends of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond (FWSP) Community Group, along with the Medway and Swale Estuary Partnership have undertaken work to establish the baseline conditions of the stream, improve water quality and flow and increase community stewardship. FWSP produced a Management Plan in 2016, and since then there have been a couple of modest funding grants to assist in carrying out various projects.

7.40 The Westbrook can be categorised into three general sections, for which interventions are addressed in turn:

- Upstream (Lorenden to Chart Mill)
- Middle stretch (Chart Mill to Stonebridge Pond)
- Downstream –(Stonebridge Pond to Faversham Creek)

Upstream – Lorenden to Chart Mill

7.41 The upstream section of the Westbrook, from Lorenden to Ospringe runs dry even during very wet periods, although signs suggest that the upper reaches of the Westbrook once carried significant flow. The section from Ospringe to Chart Mill is in culvert.

Middle Stretch – Chart Mill to Stonebridge Pond

7.42 Active springs provide water downstream of the old water mill/culvert at Stonebridge Way. The middle stretch of the Westbrook is characterised by low flow and a shallow gradient, and therefore high levels of siltation. Because of the low water levels, the middle stretch of the river suffers from the poorest water quality due to surface water runoff containing pollutants from roads.

Downstream - Stonebridge Pond to Faversham Creek

7.43 Stonebridge Pond is bound by allotments to the north and east, and West Street to the south and south west, beyond which is residential development along Stonebridge Way. There is good public access at this section. From Stonebridge Pond, the Westbrook flows in a north easterly direction to its outfall at Faversham Creek.

Figure 29: Flow path of the Westbrook Stream

7.44 Siltation is also an issue at Stonebridge Pond, just like the middle reaches of the stream. However, the pond is significantly deep in places, and addressing the issue of siltation would require a large project, beyond the expertise and resourcing of volunteer groups. Extensive machinery, and Environment Agency consent, would be required to dispose of the silt deposits. Though not an immediate threat to the pond, Stonebridge Pond will eventually dry out due to continued silt deposits if not addressed, and important habitat will be lost. This issue must be kept on the horizon, though an immediate fix is not possible without significant investment.

Stonebridge Pond

Public Access

7.45 The levels of public access along the Westbrook and at Stonebridge Pond vary. Generally one side of the stream is privately owned comprising residential gardens with the opposite side being publically owned and managed by KCC/Swale Borough Council as public open green space. The woodland at The Knole is owned privately by many owners and is not accessible to the public. The Stonebridge Pond Allotments are owned by Faversham Town Council and are only accessible to allotment holders.

7.46 Despite generally good public access, there are some areas where recreational amenity may be improved. Low-cost maintenance projects such as improved fencing along the middle stretches of the Westbrook will improve recreational amenity. There are opportunities to make a feature of the heritage assets along the river banks, through sensitively designed signage, to reinforce the historic significance of the area and draw on a sense of place. It is often the case that when users are aware of the historical and ecological significance of a place, they are more likely to keep to designated pathways and decrease wider disturbance Some signage around Stonebridge Pond has already been installed, providing education about the wildlife at the pond.

7.47 There is currently no public access in the upper reaches of the Westbrook. Extending the access corridor north would provide access to Bysing Wood, increasing the length of the recreational corridor for public enjoyment.

Allotments at Stonebridge Pond

Wildlife and Biodiversity

7.48 As a chalk stream, the Westbrook should be able to support a wide range of species. However, the Westbrook has a number of barriers including culverts and weird, preventing fish and eel passage.

7.49 Adjacent to and upstream of The Knole, works have been underway since 2018 for the installation of a gently curving, 'low flow channel'. The FWSP, supported by the North West Kent Countryside Partnership, have carried out a process of installing a series of stakes and bundles of thin chestnut branches – 'faggot bundles' - into the section of the Westbrook north of West Street. In times of high flow, water will fill the stream channel and the areas behind the bundles will silt up. The aim is to naturally narrow the stream to create more diversity in stream flow and habitat. It is important for these works to continue to reach their full benefit.

7.50 Behind The Knole, is an area of wet woodland. Due to the dryness of the river upstream of this point, the wet woodland is largely in decline. This section is in private ownership, though management interventions are required to conserve this important habitat.

7.51 Ongoing wildlife recording is important for the management of resources and to monitor whether the work being undertaken along the stream could be more effective. The frequent running of Citizen Science[5] projects is one way of 'upskilling' volunteers for the conservation and enhancement of habitats. Citizen Science schemes can also seek to involve the wider community beyond the FWSP volunteer groups, and can involve local school groups or holiday clubs. Anyone can take part and no special skills are required. There are online resources available to provide guidance to FWSP or another organisation for the rollout of such projects.

[5] 'The practice of public participation and collaboration in scientific research to increase scientific knowledge. Through citizen science, people share and contribute to data monitoring and collection programs' (Source: National Geographic Encyclopedia)

Protect, Enhance and Enable Sustainable Access to Waterways

7.52 The tidal Faversham Creek runs to the north east of the town, and links Faversham town centre to The Swale. The area around the Creek remained largely industrial until recently. The character of the area has now changed significantly, with the decline of industry and its replacement with areas of residential development on both sides of the Creek. It has also become a focus for small-scale retail and the emerging creative and cultural sector. The creek itself has long been in decline, with the Creek basin now partially silted, with a strong presence of car parks along the water's edge.

7.53 The waterfront at the creek basin is currently an under-used asset, with poor quality public access and large areas of hardstanding, which presents an excellent opportunity for improvement right in the heart of Faversham. Faversham Creek and its tributary, Oare Creek, have expansive views out to the flat, coastal landscapes, presenting a great opportunity to connect people to GBI through this 'gateway' area along the Creekside.

Faversham Creek

7.54 However currently, Faversham Creek is visually isolated from the rest of town centre and has unfulfilled potential in being a core part of the historic public realm, entrenched in its port history. Improving links between the town centre and the creek is a priority. A new waterfront public realm, with GBI at its heart, including clear, signposted routes from the town centre would create a lively and accessible waterfront destination.

7.55 There were once original walkways around the entire basin which have slowly been replaced by areas of car parking and industrial buildings. The restoration of this access would contribute to restoring the creek as a key part of the town centre, and contribute to the visitor economy. It would also provide better onward connections to the Saxon Shore Way, which runs alongside the creek.

7.56 Where development is proposed along the banks of the creek, such as that proposed within Faversham Creek Neighbourhood Plan, careful and imaginative design of new development should be central in order to celebrate the river rather than turn its back on it.

7.57 Upstream from the Creek Basin, Faversham Creek becomes a meandering tree-lined stream served by footpaths running alongside the water's edge, providing attractive routes to the town centre. These routes should be conserved and maintained, whilst providing way-marking enhancements were necessary.

A Connected, Active and Healthy Swale

Active Travel Routes and Easier Access to GBI from Homes, Work and Schools

7.58 The Key Diagram (Figure 27) demonstrates a 15 minute walking radius from the town centre. Within this area, active travel should be promoted and leaving the car at home should be advocated as the 'norm.' The retrofitting of GBI into the urban form to create attractive, safe routes to school and work can play a role in encouraging sustainable travel.

Routes to Schools

7.59 As mentioned throughout this strategy, the school journey is an important opportunity to establish regular physical activity for children by encouraging, and making it possible, for children to walk, cycle or scooter to school.

7.60 Traffic danger is a common reason within Faversham for parents for not allowing their children to walk or cycle to school. Traffic volume and cycle safety are important issues to be tackled, exacerbated by narrow streets within the town centre. Greening routes to schools, and increasing safety can increase the uptake of travelling to school on foot or by cycle. In turn, the number of cars on the roads, especially around school drop off points would reduce.

7.61 One other pipeline project to overcome traffic congestion is the '20's plenty' campaign which advocates for a town-wide 20mph limit. The project should be supported by SBC, schools, parents and the wider public for its role in increasing road safety, and should be coupled with greening initiatives.

7.62 The Key Diagram (Figure X) shows proposals for active travel routes around schools. In a similar way to the above, the aim would be to normalise walking or cycling to school by greening routes to schools, and where this isn't ideal, parents could park a distance away and travel the last part of the journey on foot. Proposals may include street trees, rain gardens, green crossings and increasing awareness of the benefits.

7.63 Stakeholder consultation highlighted that one potential, beneficial green active travel route would connect the Knole to Stonebridge way, which was not identified in the Sustrans Audit. Further discussion would be required about enabling dual pedestrian and cycling use.

Routes to Work

7.64 A large proportion of Faversham's residents work outside of the borough, with 70% of journeys into Canterbury generated from Faversham alone (Local Plan, 2018). The predominant modes of travel are car and train.

7.65 The direct route for people travelling to Canterbury by bike is along the A2. Between Dunkirk and Canterbury there is an existing dual use pavement for pedestrians and cyclists. However, from Faversham to Brenley Corner, the stretch of the A2 is dangerous for cyclists with fast flowing traffic and no cycle path. Between Brenley Corner and Dunkirk, cyclists often divert from the A2 to pass through Bloughton-under-Blean before re-joining the dual use cycleway onwards to Canterbury. Considering the large proportion of Faversham's residents that work in Canterbury, the safety of this route is important for encouraging active travel.

Access to Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park

7.66 The Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park is a significant green asset for the population of Faversham, which lies on the north west of the town. The park is open to the public seven days a week, though current access is predominantly by car with parking in front of the visitor centre.

7.67 Faversham's proximity to Oare and Gunpowder Works Country Park should be maximised by reducing the severance caused by Western Link. Greenways or safe crossing points should be provided from Davington and from the commercial area in the north western section of Faversham. For the wider population to benefit, the Key Diagram (Figure X) proposes active travel routes between the city centre and the Country Park, utilising the linear nature of Bysing Wood Road.

Box 7.1 Sustrans School Streets

CASE STUDY
Sustrans School Streets

Sustrans School Streets is a programme to support schools and local authorities to trial and implement school streets across the UK. The aim is to tackle congestion, poor air quality and road safety concerns that many schools experience, by restricting motor traffic at the school gates, generally at drop-off and pick-up times.

A growing number of towns and cities are working with Sustrans to trial the School Streets approach. In 2019, jointly with the non-for profit organisation Playing Out, Sustrans helped 40 schools across the UK to close their road traffic. The image below shows chalk drawing on the road surface at a school in Newport to create a new crossing point and a fun, exciting environment.

In Tower Hamlets, School Streets are set to be coupled with tree planting to offer shelter and extra greenery, green walls on school buildings to filter air, and increased bike and scooter storage.

References:
Paragraphs 1-2 and Image: https://www.sustrans.org.uk/our-blog/opinion/2019/november/stepping-up-for-safer-school-streets/
Paragraph 3:
https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/transport_and_streets/roads,_highways_and_pavements/School_Streets.aspx

Encourage Community Participation and Engagement through GBI Initiatives

Abbey Physic Garden

7.68 The Abbey Physic Community Garden is one green space to which medical practitioners currently refer residents through social prescribing. However, it is also well-used space by the general public, in the north-east of the town, tucked away behind the churchyard of St. Mary of Charity church.

7.69 Not only is the garden a haven for wildlife, but central to the running of the walled-garden is community involvement. Volunteers, who are all members of the Abbey Physic Community Garden organisation, are referred by mental health services, charities concerned with homelessness and drug abuse, and increasingly by GPs and self-referral. This process of referral is often referred to as social prescribing. The running of the garden with community involvement as a central process, presents lessons and opportunities for other green spaces across Faversham and Swale more widely.

Red Zebra Social Prescribing

7.70 Red Zebra Community Solutions has created a 'Connect Well online directory' to help improve the links between health professionals including GPs and nurses, and the voluntary and community sector. In Swale, the directory currently only operates in Faversham, with other services in Canterbury and Whitstable for example, holding a total of over 350 activities for those prescribed to get involved in. A large proportion of the 350 activities available have some link to GBI and outdoor activity.

7.71 In terms of conservation, gardening and general health and wellbeing, people of all ages across Faversham are already being prescribed by their health practitioners to the following activities through Red Zebra:

- Abbey Physic Gardening Group, woodworking group and Men's Shed Group
- Friends of Oare Gunpowder Works Volunteer Group
- Better Balance and Lower Limb classes at Faversham Outdoor Gym
- Lawn Bowls at Faversham Recreation Bowling Club

7.72 Where possible, the opportunities on offer for outdoor engagement and activity should be expanded in Faversham, though achievements to date should be celebrated. Monitoring and engagement with people taking part in activities would present opportunities for enhancement and identify further need. The principles and lessons learned through the Red Zebra schemes should inform the rollout of social prescribing across Swale's other towns to help with personal and community resilience.

Promote Healthy Play and Leisure

7.73 Encouraging families to be more active is an achievable aim but in order to be feasible, accessible and attractive to families, options for outdoor activity as a family must be enjoyable. Off road cycling helps with both of these as the range of accessibility increases greatly with cycling, meaning attractions around Faversham would become within reach. Tag-along bikes and adaptors to tow children's bikes mean that even small children can be brought along, but these are preferable in an off road setting as they can affect stability and manoeuvrability.

7.74 Safe off road cycle routes directly out of town in Faversham are limited. Cycle route 1 leaves the town via Abbeyfields Road which is in poor condition and heavily potholed, leading past a sewage works. The cycle route quickly leaves the creekside, which potentially could be an attractive route if diverted, before passing along narrow roads which present hazards for cyclists.

7.75 The Great Stour Way, in the neighbouring authority of Canterbury, is a good model of an off road cycle track, with access from the city centre. The key is that these routes need direct access from towns to ensure that families without access to bike carriers and a vehicle can reach cycle routes from their doorsteps for recreation and exercise.

Enable Access to Affordable Healthy Food and Food Growing

7.76 Faversham is already home to many flourishing allotments, such as the large allotment which lies adjacent to Stonebridge Pond on fertile ground. Other allotments include North Preston, Millfield and St Nicholas Road. All allotments are popular and often almost fully occupied, highlighting a willingness among local residents to grow and eat local produce. The Abbey Physic Garden also provides education to its volunteers on food growing.

7.77 To broaden the demographics involved in food growing, the Key Diagram indicates a number of Faversham's school grounds where by working together with the Wildlife Trust, there is potential to create allotments. At Queen Elizabeth Grammar School there is potential to share allotments with St.Mary of Charity Primary School, to act as a hub for wider community engagement.

A Beacon for the Visitor Economy

Promote High Quality Gateway Spaces at Arrival Points

7.78 As first impressions are key, the Key Diagram proposes the use of GBI to enhance the arrival point at Faversham train station. The existing arrival experience onto Station Road is dominated by built form and hardstanding. The brick wall along the southern edge of Station Road could be an opportunity for greening, through implementing green walls or climbing planters. This could be complemented by wall art to celebrate the heritage of Faversham, involving local residents and school children.

7.79 Lower cost interventions include planters and signposting to welcome visitors to the town. Ensuring clear, way-marked onward journeys is essential to providing an inviting experience.

Existing boundary wall along the southern side of Station Road.

7.80 Other gateways have been identified on the Key Diagram at key approaches to the town via the A2 and along Whitstable Road. At Whitstable Road, the integration of gateway GBI with Faversham Recreation Ground presents an opportunity to create an attractive arrival point to the town centre as well as a gateway to the green space itself. The gateway may include increasing the planting to provide visual interest around the existing access gate in the north western corner of the Recreation Ground where it runs adjacent to Whitstable Road.

Active Travel Routes from Public Transport Hubs to Visitor Attractions

7.81 On arrival at Faversham Train Station, the proximity to the AONB should be promoted. Cycle hire close to the entrance point would enable visitors to access the AONB without the need for a car. Many nearby attractions are accessible by bike as outlined in Section 5.0 of the Strategy. = The Key Diagram shows a potential active travel route between the train station and the AONB.

7.82 Similarly, convenient and safe routes to the town centre should be signposted, with routes greened where possible.

Optimise Areas of High Townscape Value

7.83 Although Faversham has no areas of High Townscape Value designated through adopted policy, is not to say the GBI should not play a vital role in enhancing the setting of Faversham's many heritage assets.

7.84 Court Street for example is special for its outstanding assembly of buildings dating from between C15-C18, many timber-framed. The foreground of these historic buildings is currently dominated by parking bays along stretches of the road. GBI can contribute to improving the settings of existing properties. Improving the public realm along Court Street, and interspersing parking with street trees and planting can have benefits not only for the setting of heritage assets, but also for biodiversity, air pollution and shading from the sun.

Schedule of Actions

7.85 To bring together the Urban GBI Strategy for Faversham, table 4 below outlines a proposed 'Schedule of Actions'. Proposed actions are grouped under the four opportunity areas, with a delivery partners and potential funding streams outlined. Further information regarding each funding stream, including examples of organisations which fall into each category, can be found in Appendix B Funding.

Table 4: Schedule of Actions – Faversham Urban GBI Strategy

Activities	Actions	Lead	Partners	Funding
A Green and Biodiverse Borough				
Town Centre Greening	Increase street tree cover across the town centre.	Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	SBC, Town Council	Mainstream public sector funding; Fiscal initiatives e.g. BID; Commercial Finance
	In areas where wider streets and pavements permit such as Court Street, implement rain gardens and street trees to enhance the public realm and reduce surface water runoff.	Kent County Council SuDS Team	Town Council, SBC	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions; Commercial Finance
	Work with local business owners and residents to green the square at Market Place	SBC	Businesses, Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; Fiscal initiatives e.g. BID; Commercial Finance
	Re-instate pedestrian permeability between the town centre and the area to the south by greening alternative routes.	SBC	Sustrans, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation , Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
	Raise public awareness of the importance of wildlife-rich front gardens, including planting and trees, to enhance biodiversity, improve public realm and reduce flood risk	Wildlife Trust	Town Council; SBC, Schools	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding
Urban Tree Planting and Corridor Greening	Increase tree cover/planting along the main transport corridors including the A2	Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Wildlife Trust; Town Council	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
Commercial area greening	Work with owners of commercial and industrial premises to improve the local environment around commercial sites	SBC	Businesses; Kent Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; Fiscal initiatives e.g. BID; Commercial Finance
Optimise green	Provide gateways to existing parks and gardens	SBC	Wildlife Trust; Community Groups	Mainstream public sector funding; Multi-agency public sector

spaces and parks				funding; Potential CIL contributions
	Invest in existing amenity green spaces within residential areas to create multi-functional and accessible green spaces	SBC	Community Groups	Mainstream public sector funding
Promote provision of multi-functional GBI in development	Ensure that all development sites adhere to requirements and recommendations of the Swale GBI Strategy including connected and multifunctional GBI	SBC	Developers; Wildlife Trust	Developer funds
	Ensure that the wider countryside is linked to the town centre through the allocated site and that corridor linkages into the town are retained in the future.	SBC	Developers; Sustrans Wildlife Trust	CIL contributions; S106
	Encourage new development to connect to and improve existing sustainable transport routes and create new cycleways and greenways where feasible	SBC	Developers; Sustrans	CIL contributions; S106
A Healthy Blue Environment				
Opportunities for SuDS	Implement SuDS in residential areas alongside Faversham Creek	Kent County Council SuDS Team	Environment Agency; SBC; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ;	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Implement suitable SuDS tree pits as part of street tree planting	Kent County Council SuDS Team	Environment Agency; SBC; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ;	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Incorporate SuDS into new development to manage surface water	Kent County Council SuDS Team	Environment Agency; SBC; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ;	CIL contributions; S106
Westbrook Stream	Improve recreational amenity along the Westbrook through appropriate interventions such as footpath and fencing improvements and signposting	Friends of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond	SBC	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Use GBI and signposting to enhance the setting of heritage features along the Westbrook	Friends of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond	SBC, Historic England	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding e.g. HLF
	Investigate the potential to extend public access northwards to Bysing Wood	SBC	Friends of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond; Sustrans	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding

	Support the continuation of the 'low flow channel' work	Friends of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond	SBC, Environment Agency	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Fiscal initiatives e.g. LCF
	Run Citizen Science projects where appropriate to assist in monitoring the effectiveness of interventions	Friends of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond	SBC	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	lLonger term project to address siltation at Stonebridge Pond	Friends of the Westbrook and Stonebridge Pond	Environment Agency	Environment Agency
Promote access to waterways	Enhance pedestrian connections between Faversham Creek and the town centre	SBC	Sustrans	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Fiscal initiatives e.g. BID
	Increase public access along the banks of Faversham Creek, restoring historic footways and removing large areas of hardstanding	SBC	Business owners along the Creek, Sustrans, Environment Agency	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Public realm improvements through GBI along Faversham Creek to create an attractive waterside environment	SBC	Business owners along the Creek, Environment Agency	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
A Healthy, Connected and Active Swale				
Active travel routes	Improve the pedestrian route from Faversham Railway Station to the town centre	SBC	Sustrans; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ; Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Fiscal initiatives e.g. BID
	Support and rollout the '20 is Plenty' Campaign across the town centre, prioritising streets around schools with supporting GBI measures	Town Council	SBC; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Investigate the potential for Sustrans School Streets Initiative	Town Council	SBC, Sustrans; Kent County Council Highways and	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector

			Transportation	funding
	Green the road networks surrounding schools, creating car free zones and introducing traffic calming measures.	SBC	Sustrans, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation , Primary and Secondary School Leadership	Mainstream public sector funding
	Increase safety for cyclists along the A2 between Faversham and Brenley Corner to provide onward connections to Canterbury	SBC	Sustrans, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Mainstream public sector funding
Encourage community participation and engagement through GBI initiatives	Increase awareness of initiatives such as the outdoor gym at the Recreation Ground.	Town Council	Red Zebra Community Solutions, SBC, Kent and Medway CCG, GPs	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Build upon the existing social prescribing services system, learning lessons about need by conducting surveys and consultation with users of the service, and people who would benefit from participation	Red Zebra Community Solutions	SBC, Kent and Medway CCG, GPs	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Celebrate and expand participation in initiatives at Abbey Physic Community Garden	Abbey Physic Community Garden Volunteers	SBC, Kent and Medway CCG, GPs	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
Promote healthy play and leisure	Encourage Forest Schools to form part of the curriculum in all schools across Faversham	SBC	Forest Schools, Primary and Secondary School Leadership; School Boards; Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Improve cycle routes directly out of Faversham town centre including Cycle Route 1. Investigate potential for diversion along the Creekside	Sustrans	Kent County Council Highways and Transportation , SBC	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
Enhance existing and create new	Improve pedestrian and cycle connections between the town centre, residential neighbourhoods and the Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park	Sustrans; Friends of Oare and Gunpowder Works Country Park	Kent County Council Highways and Transportation , SBC	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector

routes for walkers and cyclists				funding; Potential CIL contributions; Income generating opportunities
	Where footpaths pass through areas of historic/cultural/wildlife interest such as along Faversham Creek, create viewpoints using seating and informative signage	SBC	Sustrans; Natural England; Historic England; Medway Swale Estuary Partnership	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
	Provide signage indicating travel times and destinations along the Saxon Shore Way, including better signage from Faversham town centre to the route	SBC	Sustrans; Medway Swale Estuary Partnership	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
	Provide gateways to the wider countryside, including the AONB to the south, by increasing signage, way-marking and improving quality of existing footpaths	SBC	Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ; SBC; Developers; Kent Downs AONB Unit; NFU	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
Enable access to affordable healthy food and food growing	Work together with schools and the Wildlife Trust to improve wildlife habitats and create school allotments on school grounds	School Boards	SBC; Parent Teacher Associations; Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Potential CIL contributions
A Beacon for the Visitor Economy				
Active travel routes linking public transport hubs and tourist attractions	Improve the arrival experience to the town centre from Faversham train station and key road corridors through GBI enhancements	SBC	Visit Kent; Sustrans	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Establish high quality, car free access to the Kent Downs AONB using existing routes which run south from the town such as Faversham Road, Brogdale Road and Selling Road	Sustrans	Visit Kent, SBC	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-

				agency public sector funding
High quality gateway spaces at arrival points in town centres	Conduct a baseline inspection of the gateways illustrated on the key diagram for Faversham	SBC	Visit Kent	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Upgrade the green space around Faversham train station to improve the sense of arrival	SBC	Wildlife Trust, Visit Kent	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Create gateway signage of a consistent design	Visit Kent	SBC	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
Optimise areas of high townscape value through GI	Enhance the setting of existing architectural and heritage assets through GBI enhancements	SBC	Historic England; Wildlife Trust	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding e.g. HLF

8.0 Sheerness and Minster

Sheerness

8.1 Sheerness is the main town of the Isle of Sheppey with a population of 12,500. It is distinctive for its role as a traditional seaside town, its historic naval dockyard and the current Port of Sheerness which gives access via its deep water berths to larger ships. The town centre functions as the main shopping and service centre for the Island's residents and visitors.

8.2 Some of England's 20% most deprived neighbourhoods are in Sheerness and this is manifested in the poorer levels of educational attainment, ability to access jobs and health. The Local Plan (2017) also refers to Sheerness' town centre which is struggling to retain its role as the main commercial and service centre on the island. The Local Plan has a number of ambitions for the town centre including improving its vitality, providing a 'beacon' for coastal rejuvenation and preparing a longer term heritage strategy.

8.3 In terms of green and blue infrastructure (GBI), Sheerness has a number of significant assets, including the promenade and seafront and this extends east towards Minster. Sheerness is characterised by relatively high density development, although there are some GBI assets around the town centre including Beach Fields Park, Trinity Gardens, the 'Moat', a water body separating the town centre from the Port and the beach and seafront.

8.4 There is also the Queenborough Lines which extends along most of the southern edge of the settlement forming a 'spine' of GBI. The Queenborough Lines is as a former military canal and Scheduled Monument and has a multi-user route and accessible green space along its edge. Barton's Point Coastal Park, which includes a lake for watersports and other recreational activities, is at the eastern end of Queenborough Lines. Sports pitches at the eastern edge of Sheerness also front onto Queenborough Lines. In the residential areas to the west there are some park spaces including Festival Field and the Fleet. Opposite the Fleet there is a large allotment site and a linear waterbody also called the Fleet.

Minster

8.5 The seafront extends east from Sheerness towards Minster where land rises up towards sea cliffs and higher land to the south which is occupied by the historic core of the town, including Minster Abbey. Minster is a predominantly residential area and has a population of 14,789. In terms of health and multiple deprivation, most areas are considered to correspond to the England average, although there are two areas, Kent Avenue and New Road respectively that are in the 20% deprived in England. Several key elements of social infrastructure are in Minster including the main campus of the Oasis Academy and the Isle of Sheppey Community Hospital. The Local Plan includes several existing and potential allocation sites for housing.

8.6 In terms of GBI, Minster also has a promenade and beach and the semi-natural green space that rises up from the seafront towards Royal Oak Point. The two main area green spaces and park are at the Glen and space accessed from Mills Close. There is also the semi-natural green space at Thistle Hill Way which was opened in 1999 and has established successfully as a wooded area with a series footpaths, glades and spaces for people to exercise.

Figure 30: Key Diagram – Urban GBI Strategy for Sheerness and Minster

A Green and Biodiverse Borough

Town Centre Greening

Sheerness

8.8 Parts of Sheerness town centre pre-date the 20th Century and it is characterised by a fine grained pattern of streets, with buildings fronting onto the street and limited space for street trees or other GBI features. There is however opportunity to adapt to these constraints by proposing:

- Hanging baskets secured to lamp posts or buildings
- 'Parklets' accommodating seating, decks and small trees and shrubs
- Green roofs and walls on new and existing buildings
- Adaptation of existing green space
- Adaptation of vacant sites into 'meanwhile' GBI space

8.9 Hanging baskets are a common feature on high streets and residential streets in England and a coordinated approach could bring much visual amenity to the streetscene of High Street and Broadway. Flowering plants in hanging baskets also attract pollinators.

8.10 A parklet is a semi-permanent public pavement extension combining seating, trees, shrubs, flowers and bike parking. Parklets do not require a permanent concrete base and provide a space for people to sit with small trees and shrubs introducing greenery to streets where it would not be feasible to plant below ground level. The pedestrian space around the Clock Tower at the intersection of High Street and Broadway would have potential to accommodate a parklet.

Parklet (Example) Courtesy of Metristem Design

8.11 There are a number of alleyways (including Rides Mill Passage) that connect onto High Street that would benefit from retrofitting green walls. This would enhance the pedestrian environment providing visual amenity to users of the passageway and the High Street and could have a positive impact on footfall and people presence. A second alleyway extends east from High Street and this would benefit from a similar 'greening' treatment and would provide an enhanced route to Trinity Gardens (see below).

8.12 Other small spaces at the eastern end of Wood Street and Rose Street and near their intersection with High Street would benefit from some retrofitted parklets introducing planters, greening of walls and seating to provide cooling and visual amenity to the streetscene.

Minster Abbey

8.13 Providing an accessible green space in the town centre would allow residents, visitors and workers to enjoy the environment and would contribute to the visual amenity of the streetscene. This could include the adaptation of the established Trinity Gardens (grounds of Holy Trinity Church) through the management of the mature trees that could introduce more daylight and views, the provision of more seating and smaller scale planting to enhance the space.

8.14 There is a redundant older building south of Trinity Gardens with some unkempt ground to the perimeter. This could be converted into an attractive temporary 'meanwhile' space, with self-seeded vegetation and materials cleared. Planters with small trees and shrubs could be planted to the perimeter to improve visual amenity and streetscene.

8.15 The active Sheerness Town Council and other local community groups (Sheppey Matters) could take lead for the implementation and upkeep of some of these features.

Minster

8.16 The network of streets and area near to Minster Abbey include a number of mature trees conveying a wooded character, however there is off road parking and several vacant sites that undermine the quality and distinctiveness of the centre of the settlement. The central area would benefit from a similar treatment to that proposed for Sheerness town centre including hanging baskets, 'parklets' associated with food and beverage premises and, subject to the necessary approvals, the adaptation of vacant sites for accessible 'pocket parks'. The vacant sites are near to High Street to the south of the Abbey and could be transformed into small pocket parks for residents and visitors with seating, planting, interpretation. The pocket parks would enhance the centre of Minster and take advantage of the views south across the Swale and towards the Kent Downs.

Increase Urban Tree Planting for Corridor Greening

8.17 Marine Parade is the main corridor linking Sheerness with Minster and it is highly prominent. There is potential for some sections of street tree planting in spaces between the road and the sea defence wall up to the settlement boundary. This would bring a number of benefits including visual amenity, provide shade and cooling and contribute to biodiversity.

8.18 A section of the wall west of the intersection of Marine Parade and Seager Road has a sloping profile and is retained by interlocking concrete units with small gaps filled with soil. The small gaps have been colonised with weeds but there would be opportunity to replace the material with a subsoil that could support wildflowers planting. This would greatly improve the visual appearance of the corridor, while also attracting pollinators and improving biodiversity.

8.19 Climbing plants have been successfully introduced to a section of the sea defence wall opposite the main access to the Oasis Academy (school site). The section of the planted wall coincides with a pedestrian access to the promenade. Other sections of the sea wall could be planted in a similar manner, particularly around pedestrian access points to improve legibility and enhance the pedestrian experience.

8.20 There is a sloping retaining wall, with interlocking blockwork, on the southern side of Marine Parade and the boundary with Barton's Point Coastal Park. Opportunities for wildflower planting could also be considered between the interlocking blockwork. Similar benefits would be achieved as referred to earlier.

8.21 Brielle Way (A249) provides the main approach from the 'mainland' into Sheerness. There are grass verges along much of the corridor and the opportunity for street tree planting to improve the visual amenity of the approach into the town and enhance biodiversity. Any tree species selected should be native with the proximity to the Kent Biodiversity Strategy Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) extending across the mouth of the River Medway and along the Swale.

Optimise Existing Green Spaces and Parks

Sheerness

8.22 Festival Field and the Fleet both provide accessible amenity green space in the western part of the town for play, informal sport and recreation. However there would be opportunity to optimise those spaces for further benefit for people and nature. Festival Field (approx. 3ha) is characterised by a large area of close mown grass, some informal sports pitches, a play area, some intermittent tree planting and boundaries defined by railings. There are a number of potential features that could be retrofitted to help meet some of the needs of people and nature and to boost the GBI functionality of the space. Measures could include the planting of native hedgerows along railing boundaries to improve visual amenity, air quality and biodiversity. The hedgerow could be extended at the eastern boundary of the space to partly screen the neighbouring warehouses. Additional 'avenue' tree planting could be planted near to the boundary with New Road, bringing an enhanced sense of enclosure and visual amenity. There would be opportunity to strengthen the planting along the northern boundary of Festival Field. Beyond this boundary is the railway and the Port of Sheerness, so strengthening the edge with native woodland edge planting would eventually screen some views towards building form in the Port, help to reduce noise, improve air quality and enhance biodiversity. The approach to maintaining grass could be altered to the margins of the main field and play area by introducing wildflower meadows reducing costs for the Council, while improving biodiversity. The play area could be diversified with the inclusion of 'natural' materials such as tree trunks and boulders to provide opportunities for more creative play.

8.23 There are two primary schools within close proximity of Festival Field and there would be opportunity to provide several features to assist with learning including a community orchard and pond area with marginal planting. These features could be located in the north eastern corner of the space opposite the St Edwards RC School to enable some natural surveillance and a sense of ownership.

8.24 The Fleet (approx.1ha) is characterised by an area of close mown grass with some established tree planting to the edge of the space and two smaller areas retained as wildflower meadow. There are several features that could be retrofitted to help meet some of the needs of local people and nature and to boost the GBI functionality of the space. This could include planting sections of native hedgerow to improve the sense of enclosure to the space. This would be particularly appropriate near to the edge with Medway Road and the wildflower meadow planting could be extended alongside any hedgerow planting to enhance biodiversity. There would also be potential to include some seating along an informal footpath to the perimeter of the space and this is likely to encourage use of the space.

8.25 Subject to road levels and drainage system there would also be potential to create a swale alongside one side of the Fleet at the interface of the open space and the road. The swale would accommodate surface water runoff from the road and there would be opportunity to plant wet grassland species and aquatic plants. The swale would provide an interesting visual feature in the park, manage surface water runoff sustainably and enhance biodiversity. The case study in Chapter 5.0 at Alma Road in London demonstrates a successful precedent for incorporating a swale into a streetscape.

Minster

8.26 The Glen (approx. 8ha) is a distinctive green space with a varied topography, diverse planting, interesting arrangement of space and a range of views. In terms of the management of the spaces, there is a mix of closely mown grass and meadow, however no footpath network to assist the user.

8.27 The Glen is in the north western part of Minster and is largely concealed by neighbouring residential development, although there is access gained from a number of cul-de-sacs. The nearest main road is The Broadway to the west, with access to the site gained from The Glen, a short residential road to the north west but with no signposting.

8.28 To address the deficiencies, the site would benefit from a number of enhancements including signposting from the main road network and the design of a series of gateway spaces at each access point. These could include some tree planting, seating, interpretation and an informal footpath linking each gateway to maximise the use of the space. On the lowest ground, infiltration basins could be constructed and established to enhance surface drainage, provide a habitat for wildlife and an interesting visual feature. The mowing regime could be modified to include more species rich grassland and wildflower meadows.

The Glen, Minster

Promote provision of multifunctional GBI in new development

8.29 The Key Diagram (Figure 30) shows there are several potential development sites for housing and employment. The housing sites tend to be the southern fringes of Minster and the employment sites along the A249 corridor.

8.30 In terms of the progression of these sites there is an excellent opportunity to integrate GBI from the outset of the design process where it is considered as critical infrastructure on an equal basis with utilities and roads.

8.31 For the housing sites there is an opportunity to propose a comprehensive and connected network of GBI that deliver many functions including recreation, active travel, SuDS, habitats for nature and climate change adaptation including the provision of shade and cooling. Such an approach would enhance the design, layout and appearance of the development and is likely to raise the commercial value of the housing for the developer.

8.32 Employment sites should consider a similar approach, with a particular focus on the development frontage, boundaries and provision of outdoor space for employees. Any proposals for GBI in development should also recognise any assets in or near to the site. All the development sites are in or near to Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA) identified in the draft Kent Biodiversity Strategy (2019-2044) and GBI proposals will need to recognise and contribute to the relevant species and habitats.

8.33 The 700 home development of to the west of Barton Hill Drive, Minster, received outline planning approval in March 2020. The Council should ensure that a comprehensive and connected network of GBI is proposed for any reserved matters application. More specifically any proposals should include a suitable GBI frontage onto the A2500 and the interface with the BOA to the south. Strong links should also be established with the existing semi-natural green space at Thistle Hill Way.

A Healthy Blue Environment

8.34 Queenborough Lines and the Fleet are the two main water bodies in Sheerness and they provide a number of benefits including visual amenity and a setting for recreation and active travel. Neither of the water bodies would be designated under the Water Framework Directive (WFD) but with the proximity of people and nature an early action would be to test water quality. This would establish if any fertilisers, herbicides or pesticides are being released into the water bodies from neighbouring land and consider actions to address any issues arising.

8.35 As these water bodies have limited connection to a wider water network it is likely that they are subject to a lack of oxygenation with algae and blanket weed growth. To address this potential issue, there would be opportunity to consider oxygenating plants to control algal blooms and improve the water quality.

8.36 As a Scheduled Monument any GBI proposals to the edge or setting of Queenborough Lines would need to be agreed with Historic England. A more detailed study could be undertaken to consider GBI improvements that could improve the edges and setting of the water body for the benefit of people and nature.

Queenborough Lines, Sheerness

8.37 The Fleet has the visual appearance of a meandering watercourse and a more detailed study could consider opportunities for diversifying planting to the margins to improve water quality, biodiversity and enhance the experience of pedestrians and cyclists.

8.38 The rationale for sustainable drainage schemes (SuDS) was highlighted under the Urban GI Strategies for Sittingbourne and Faversham. The potential for a SuDS scheme was described for the optimisation of green space at the Fleet in Sheerness and this approach could be applied to other locations.

A Connected, Active and Healthy Swale

Active Travel Routes and Easier Access to GBI from Homes, Work and Schools

8.39 Sustrans are currently working with Swale Borough Council and Kent County Council on active travel proposals in the Sheerness area and these will provide opportunity to access work and education without using the car. In addition, the Sheerness Way provides a 'loop' around Sheerness, with a spur to Minster on the sea front. The disposition of the route makes it convenient for residents accessing facilities Sheerness and attractive for visitors as it passes along the seafront and Queenborough Lines. There are a number of opportunities to retrofit GBI features along these routes particularly along the corridor of the Queenborough Lines and intersections with primary road network to improve the experience of the cyclist and pedestrian. The Sheerness Way passes next to Festival Field and the Fleet and the GBI proposals described earlier would benefit users of the route.

8.40 As a complementary initiative to GBI, there would be the opportunity to create a cycle version of the very successful Saturday morning 5km Park Run initiative across the UK. The 'Sheerness Way' Loop provides an ideal 8km circuit of the town and a marshalled cycle 'sportif' could promote participation on the island and raise the profile of the sport with its physical and social benefits.

Safer Routes to School, Health Facilities and Green Space

8.41 The Urban GBI Strategy for Sittingbourne and Faversham outlined several schemes to encourage children and their carers to walk, cycle or scooter to school. Working with Sustrans, there is potential for active travel routes around all the other schools in Sheerness and Minster and the school locations are indicated on the Key Diagram. Box 7.1 is a case study 'Sustrans Schools Streets' outlining the approach create a safer and greener environment for active travel.

8.42 At Thistle Hill in Minster there is an implemented scheme for the primary school at Thistle Hill which has a number of segregated cycling and walking routes from neighbouring areas. The active travel infrastructure also serves the Sheppey Community Hospital and green space at Thistle Hill Way.

Promote Healthy Play and Leisure

8.43 The Isle of Sheppey provides residents with the opportunity to spend their leisure time in its varied landscapes and coastline. The modest size of the island and interesting features including beaches, sea front promenade, Queenborough Lines and Minster Abbey make it accessible for residents to enjoy active play and leisure.

8.44 The earlier sections highlighted that existing cycling and walking routes are focussed around the 'Sheerness Way', with wider links between Sheerness and Minster and around Thistle Hill. The Sustrans Study promotes the longer term existing routes would need to be 'joined up' to create a connected network of routes, particularly from the edges of Sheerness and Minster so residents can access assets around the island.

Queenborough Lines – linear green space

Enable Access to Affordable, Healthy Food and Food Growing

8.45 Sheerness has two large allotments; at the Fleet and at Richmond Street next to the Queenborough Lines. Both are easily accessible from the 'Sheerness Way' loop. The allotment at the Fleet has a concealed position set behind housing and garages on Medway Road. Working with the potential improvements proposed for the open space at the Fleet, referred to earlier, there would the opportunity to acquire several of the garage units and replace these and the adjacent hardstanding with a garden or a facility for selling allotment produce. This would also form a gateway feature for the allotment with the potential to raise the profile and interest in food growing.

8.46 The earlier section on optimising green spaces promoted opportunities to alter the management of some areas of close mown grass with wildflower meadows. The Queenborough Lines includes an extensive linear strip of close mown grass. Replacing some of this with wildflower meadow would attract pollinators and in turn would enhance the fertilization process of the fruit and vegetable crop on the Richmond Street allotment. This enhancement would also contribute to the Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) on the southern side of the Queenborough Lines.

8.47 There are currently no allotment sites in Minster. A more detailed study forming part of an update to the Swale Open Space Strategy (2009-2014) would establish the need for allotments in Minster in terms of quantity, accessibility and potential location of sites.

A Beacon for the Visitor Economy

Promote High Quality Gateway Spaces and Arrival Points

Sheerness

8.48 Tourism is a vital part of the Isle of Sheppey economy and many visitors arrive at the railway station where their first impressions of Sheerness are formed. There would be opportunity to rationalise the arrangements outside the railway station so that it becomes more pedestrian centred gateway space, with public realm improvements, suitable street trees, hedgerows and planters. This could greatly improve the pedestrian experience which could extend to the pedestrian link to Beach Fields Park, Beach Street, promenade and beach.

8.49 Beach Fields Park is an established asset with a play facility and an associated green space next to the Sheppey Leisure Complex. Some of the boundaries to these spaces would benefit from some hedge and 'avenue' tree planting for better definition and visual screening from some neighbouring uses. Appropriate ornamental planting along sections of Beach Street would enhance the visitor experience. These improvements would also greatly enhance the Sheerness Burgundy Trail which forms a circular route revealing the history of local people, places and events. The Trail starts at the railway station and then heads towards the Moat and then along the seafront promenade, returning back along Broadway and High Street.

8.50 There is second walking trail 'Blue Town' which navigates part of the historic naval dockyard to the west of the town centre. There would be some opportunities for GBI along this route with some complementary public realm improvements to the streetscene. GBI improvements could include street trees, hedgerow planting and planters. The Moat and the Naval Terrace are two heritage features at the eastern edge of Blue Town and within a five minute walk from the station. Subject to the necessary approvals installation of a circular walk to the Moat would provide visitors with an interesting walking circuit linking the station, Naval Terrace and beach. There would also be opportunity to enhance the green space fronting the Naval Terrace and Dockyard Church. These GBI measure could also provide a link between the Blue Town Trail and the Sheerness Burgundy Trail.

8.51 The Queenborough Lines is an interesting feature for visitors and in addition to the corridor improvements to Marine Parade (referred to earlier) the would be opportunity for a gateway space near to the southern edge of High Street and the Scheduled Monument. The space could configured around some appropriate public realm improvements, seating, tree planting and interpretation.

Minster

8.52 Minster Abbey was founded in 664AD and is a significant heritage asset in the town. It occupies the highest point of the island and there are some panoramic views from some of the neighbouring streets over the Swale and towards the Kent Downs AONB. There would be some opportunities for GBI that could be complemented by townscape and public realm improvements, interpretation and a heritage walking trail. These opportunities would combine with the proposals for town centre greening referred to earlier.

Table 5: Schedule of Actions – Sheerness and Minster Urban GBI Strategy

Activities	Actions	Lead	Partners	Funding
A Green and Biodiverse Borough				
Town Centre Greening	**Sheerness**			
	Hanging baskets secured to lamp posts or buildings	Town Council	SBC, Sheppy Matters, Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; Fiscal initiatives e.g. BID; Commercial Finance
	Implement parklets were appropriate, such as the pedestrian space around the Clock Tower at the intersection of High Street and Broadway.	Town Council	SBC, Businesses, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities; Commercial Finance
	Retrofit green walls into existing alleyways such as Rides Mill Passage and the alleyway extending east from the High Street to Trinity Gardens.	Town Council	SBC, Sheppey Matters, Businesses, Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; Fiscal initiatives e.g. BID; Commercial Finance
	Adapt Trinity Gardens to become an accessible green space, through the management of mature trees, seating provision and smaller scale planting.	Town Council	SBC, Sheppey Matters, Sustrans, Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities
	Minster			
	Adapt vacant sites near to the High Street and south of the Abbey for pocket parks, with seating, planting and interpretation.	Town Council	SBC, Businesses, Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Fiscal initiatives e.g. BID; Commercial Finance
Urban Tree Planting and Corridor Greening	Increase tree planting along Marine Parade between Sherrness and Minster	Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	SBC, Wildlife Trust; Town Council	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development

				Opportunities
	Tree planting along Brielle Way (A249) where there are existing grass verges	Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	SBC, Wildlife Trust; Town Council	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities
	Wildflower planting at the intersection of Marine Parade and Seager Road	Wildlife Trust	SBC, Town Council	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities eg BNG Funding
	Wildflower planting along the sloping retaining wall on the southern side of Marine Parade	Wildlife Trust	SBC, Environment Agency	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities eg BNG Funding
	Introduce climbing plants along the sea wall, taking inspiration from the existing section at the Oasis Academy.	Wildlife Trust	SBC, Environment Agency	Mainstream public sector funding; or Multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities eg BNG Funding
Optimise green spaces and parks	**Sheerness**			
	Retrofit features such as native hedgerows, avenue tree planting, strengthened boundary planting, natural play features and wildflower planting into Festival Field.	SBC	Town Council, Wildlife Trust, Community Groups, Sheppey Matters	Mainstream public sector funding; Multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities
	Provide learning opportunities in the north eastern section of Festival Field such as a community orchard and pond area.	SBC	Town Council, Wildlife Trust, Community Groups,	Mainstream public sector funding; Multi-agency public sector

			Sheppey Matters	funding; Planning and Development Opportunities
	Retrofit features such as native hedgerow, extending the wildflower meadow and include some seating along an informal path at The Fleet.	SBC	Town Council, Wildlife Trust, Community Groups, Sheppey Matters	Mainstream public sector funding; Multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities
	Create a swale alongside one side of the Fleet at the interface of the open space and the road. This is subject to road levels and drainage system.	Kent County Council SuDS Team	Environment Agency; SBC; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation ;	Mainstream public sector funding
	Minster			
	Enhancements at The Glen open space: • Signposting from the main road network • Gateway spaces at each access point including tree planting, seating, interpretation • An informal footpath linking each gateway • On the lowest ground, infiltration basins could be constructed and established to enhance surface drainage • Modified mowing regime to include more species rich grassland and wildflower meadows	SBC	Town Council, Wildlife Trust, Community Groups, Sheppey Matters	Mainstream public sector funding; Multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities
Promote provision of multi-functional GBI in development	Ensure that all development sites deliver a comprehensive and connected network of GBI that deliver many functions including recreation, active travel, SuDS, habitats for nature and climate change adaptation including the provision of shade and cooling.	SBC	Developers; Wildlife Trust	Developer Funds
	Employment sites should consider a similar approach to above, with a particular focus on the development frontage, boundaries and provision of outdoor space for employees.	SBC	Developers; Businesses; Wildlife Trust	Developer Funds
	The Council should ensure that a comprehensive and connected network of GBI is proposed for any reserved matters applications associated with the 700 home Barton Hill Drive development.	SBC	Developers; Wildlife Trust	Developer Funds

A Healthy Blue Environment				
Water Quality	Test the water quality of the Queenborough Lines and the Fleet to establish is any fertilisers, herbicides or pesticides are being released into the water bodies.	Environment Agency	SBC; Historic England	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Potential detailed study into opportunities for diversifying planting along the Fleet and improving water quality.	SBC	Environment Agency; Town Council	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
A Healthy, Connected and Active Swale				
Active travel routes	Retrofit GBI features along the Sheerness Way, and along the corridor of the Queenborough Lines and intersections with primary road network to improve the experience of the cyclist and pedestrian.	Town Council	SBC; Sustrans; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities
	Create a cycle version of the successful Saturday morning 5km Park Run initiative across the UK using the 'Sheerness Way' Loop which provides an ideal 8km circuit of the town	Town Council	SBC; Sustrans; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities
	Implement active travel routes around all schools in Sheerness and Minster	Town Council	SBC; Sustrans; Kent County Council Highways and Transportation	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
Enable access to affordable healthy food and food growing	Develop a gateway feature to the allotment at the Fleet, which may include a garden or a facility for selling allotment produce.	SBC	SBC; School Boards; Wildlife Trust	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities
	Replacing some of the linear strip of close mown grass along the Queenborough Lines with wildflower meadow would attract pollinators and in turn would enhance the fertilization process of the fruit and vegetable crop on the Richmond Street allotment.	Wildlife Trust	SBC, Town Council	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities

	As there are currently no allotment sites in Minster, undertake a detailed study forming part of an update to the Swale Open Space Strategy (2009-2014) to establish the need for allotments in Minster in terms of quantity, accessibility and potential location of sites.	SBC	Town Council; Academic Institutions	Mainstream public sector funding
A Beacon for the Visitor Economy				
High quality gateway spaces at arrival points in town centres	**Sheerness**			
	Create a more pedestrian centred gateway space at Sheerness train station, with public realm improvements, suitable street trees, hedgerows and planters.	SBC	Visit Kent, Sustrans, Businesses	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Enhancements to Beach Fields Park: • Hedge and avenue tree planting along boundaries • Appropriate ornamental planting along Beach Street	SBC	Wildlife Trust, Town Council, Visit Kent, Sheppey Matters	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Retrofit GBI, such as street trees, hedgerow planting and planters, along the 'Blue Town' trail, with complementary public realm improvements to the street scene.	SBC	Wildlife Trust, Town Council, Visit Kent, Sheppey Matters	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding
	Install of a circular walk linking the Moat, the station, Naval Terrace and beach.	Town Council	Sustrans, SBC, Visit Kent	EU funding; Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities
	Enhance the green space fronting the Naval Terrace and Dockyard Church.	SBC	Wildlife Trust, Town Council, Visit Kent, Sheppey Matters	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities

	Minster			
	GBI improvements at Minster Abbey: • Townscape and public realm improvements • Interpretation • Heritage Walking Trail	Wildlife Trust	SBC, Minster Abbey, Town Council, Historic England	Mainstream public sector funding; or multi-agency public sector funding; Planning and Development Opportunities