Appendix I

Swale Green Grid Strategy

June 2016

Swale Borough Council

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

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

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

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

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

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Swale's Green Grid Delivery Plan is available as a separate document containing Green Grid project schedules cross referenced to a GIS map of all the Green Grid projects. It is regularly updated

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People & Places

Natural & Built Environment

Access & Recreation

Connectivity & Green Spaces

1 Green Grid Framework

1.1 Context

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

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

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

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

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

While a planning constraints approach can continue to conserve important green spaces, it will not be adequate to achieve these multifaceted goals. Instead there is a need to take a positive, proactive and holistic approach to delivering a sustainable and diverse landscape framework for Swale's communities.

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

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

1.2 Why a Green Grid?

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

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

1.3 How does it add value?

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

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

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

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

1.4 What will it deliver?

The Green Grid will:

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

1.5 The case for investment

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

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

1.6 Delivering strategic priorities

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

1.6.1 National priorities

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

1.6.2 Swale Borough Council priorities

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

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

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

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

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

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

2 Green Grid Components

2.1 Swale environmental resource

2.1.1 Landscape character

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

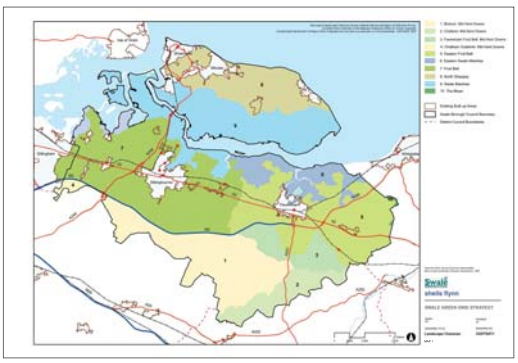
Swale's landscape character assessment sets out the hierarchy of landscape character areas for Swale – from the three regional joint character areas to the 10 landscape character areas defined at country level by Kent County and a detailed subdivision into 42 local landscape character areas.

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

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

Assessment of landscape character is particularly pertinent for Green Grid projects because it describes how a landscape is perceived. It highlights aspects of landscape character such as scale, texture, colour, form, enclosure and complexity which suggest how different landscapes feel and how new interventions can be designed to enhance aspects of landscape character which are valued by local people.

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



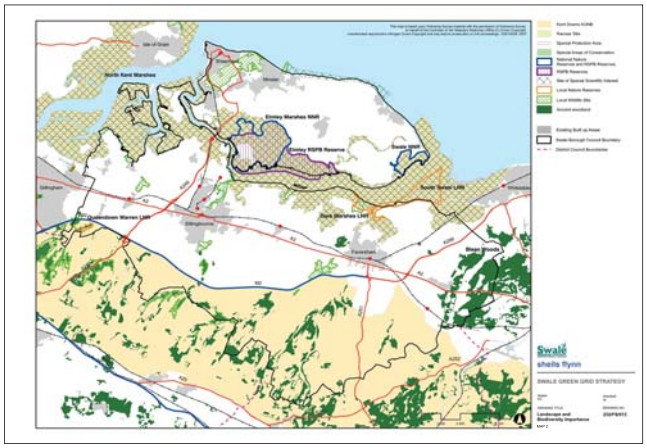
Map 1 - Kent Landscape Character areas
(See Page 16)

2.1.2 Landscape significance – Statutory designations

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

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

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



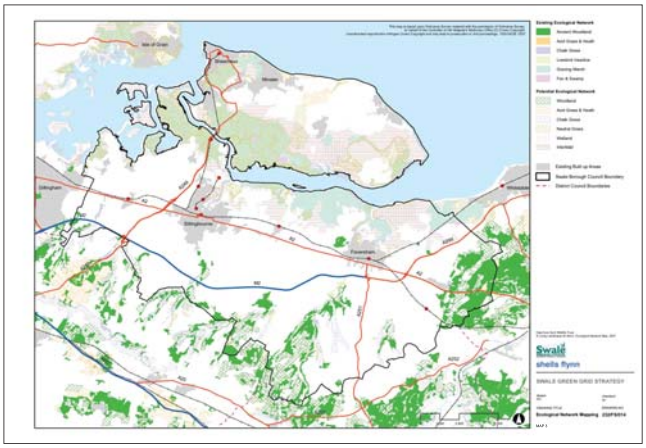
Map 2 - Landscape & Biodiversity Importance
(See Page 18)

2.1.3 Ecological network mapping

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

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

- small, isolated areas of habitat are likely to hold proportionately fewer species than larger areas, and the populations of these species are likely to be more vulnerable to local extinction;
- functional connectivity between areas of wildlife habitat is likely to make it easier for populations of species to shift in response to climate change;
- the small and isolated nature of most areas of wildlife habitat in the UK poses a significant risk to biodiversity, particularly in the face of likely climate change.



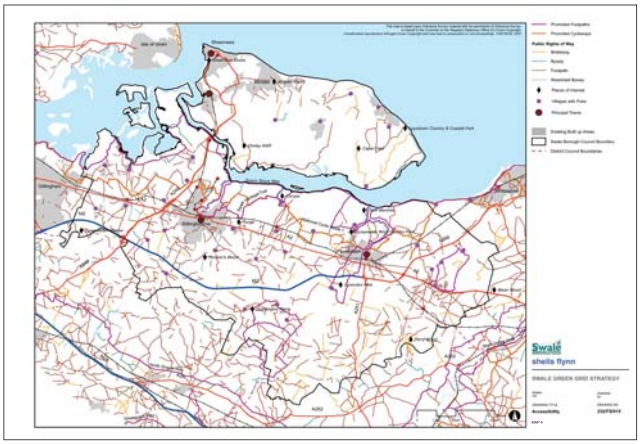
Map 3 - Ecological Network model
(See Page 20)

The ecological network model for Kent identifies:

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

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

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



Map 4 - Accessibility
(See Page 22)

2.2 Green Grid Opportunities

2.2.1 Public rights of way

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

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

2.2.2 Swale's regeneration priorities

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

- Queenborough & Rushenden – aims to provide 1,100 new homes alongside new employment, with up to 2 million sq ft of new floor space. The project is part of the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) economic assets programme. To date there has been investment in the new road infrastructure to provide a direct link to the A249; site preparation works for 20 ha of employment development; approximately 20 ha of brownfield land acquired for re-development for residential; preparation of the first phase of residential land for the market; completion of the retail-led first and second phases of employment development at Neats Court with the opening of 55,000 sq ft Morrisons and KFC food retail unit, 67,000 sq ft of new units for B&M, Iceland, Sports Direct and Poundland; planning permission and commencement of works to deliver a new 6000,000 sq ft Regional Distribution Centre for Aldi
- Sittingbourne – in 2011, the Spirit of Sittingbourne consortium was selected by the Council as its development partner to regenerate Sittingbourne Town Centre. The proposals will provide a wide range of new facilities and housing with an aim to generate significant economic improvement and employment in the borough. The Eurolink Business Park in Sittingbourne has grown to be one of Kent's largest business areas with a new phase, Eurolink Phase Five, having recently been granted outline planning consent with the potential to provide a further 43,000 metres of development and up to 1,000 jobs. Kemsley Fields, Business Park, including G-Park, Sittingbourne is positioned to the north of Sittingbourne and is in a strategic location to take full advantage of the area's good transport links, including road, rail and port. There remains scope for further development and the ability to deliver build to suit facilities from 127,500 sq ft to 540,000 sq ft. Kent Science Park provides 500,000 sq ft of existing space and is home to over 60 companies, perating across a range of technologies.
- Sheerness – Public realm improvements, improved links between the town centre, the sea and the historic dockyard, gateway features, public art etc to substantially improve the environment for residents, visitors and investors.
- Faversham - town centre public realm improvements; Faversham Town

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

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

2.2.3 Projects with Green Grid potential

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

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

3 Green Grid Vision

3.1 Green Grid Structure

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

1. **Greenspaces** – the hierarchy of greenspace resources includes managed open spaces, nature reserves, urban squares, streets, allotments, cemeteries, derelict land and private gardens. They provide recreational, social, cultural, wildlife and community benefits.

2. **Corridors** – a network of routes including :rivers, estuaries & creeks – water has shaped Swale's cultural and physical development and the 'blue' component of the Grid is central to the borough's distinctive identity. Swale's waterfronts hold a natural fascination for people and 'unlocking' their potential (by enhancing waterfront access and the redevelopment of major river frontage sites) is a key objective of the Green Grid.

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

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

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

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

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

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

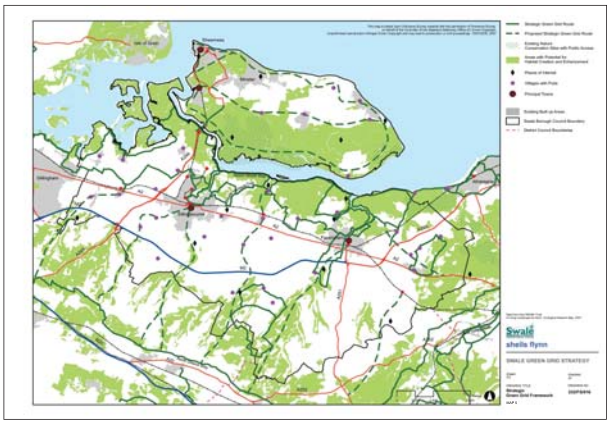
3. **Hubs** – the town centres and principal rural settlements which are the 'shop window' of the Borough, providing an introduction to local heritage and culture, as well as opportunities for recreation, events, activities and social contact. Other green infrastructure 'hubs' are visitor attractions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

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

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

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

3.2 Strategic Green Grid Framework Plan



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

3.2.1 'Layers' of key information

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

3.2.2 Strategic Green Grid Framework Plan

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

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

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

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

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

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

Map 1 - Swale Green Grid Strategy: Kent landscape character areas

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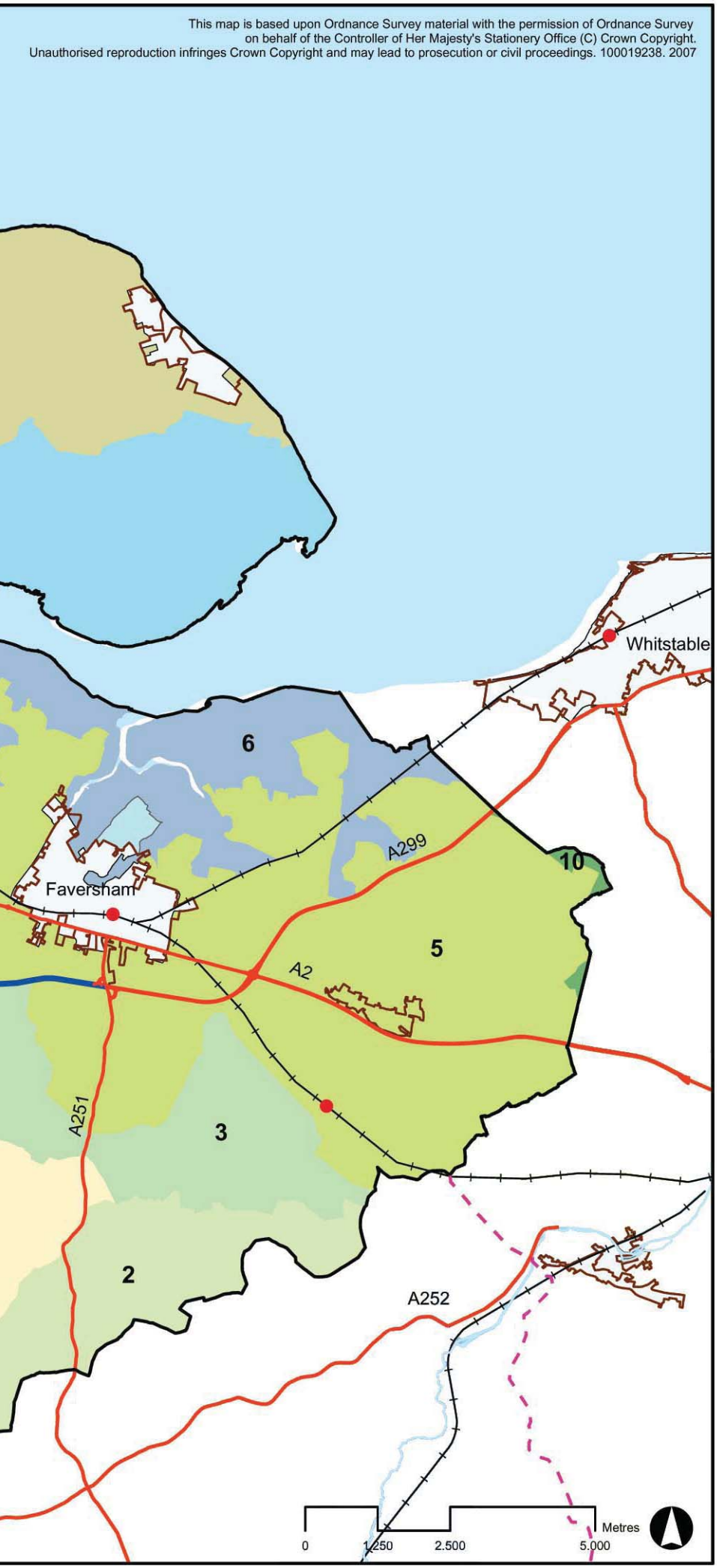

1. Bicknor: Mid Kent Downs
2. Challock: Mid Kent Downs
3. Faversham Fruit Belt: Mid Kent Downs
4. Chatham Outskirts: Mid Kent Downs
5. Eastern Fruit Belt
6. Eastern Swale Marshes
7. Fruit Belt
8. North Sheppey
9. Swale Marshes
10. The Blean

Existing Built up Areas

Swale Borough Council Boundary

District Council Boundaries

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

Swale Borough Council

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SWALE GREEN GRID STRATEGY

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DG

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DRAWING TITLE
Landscape Character

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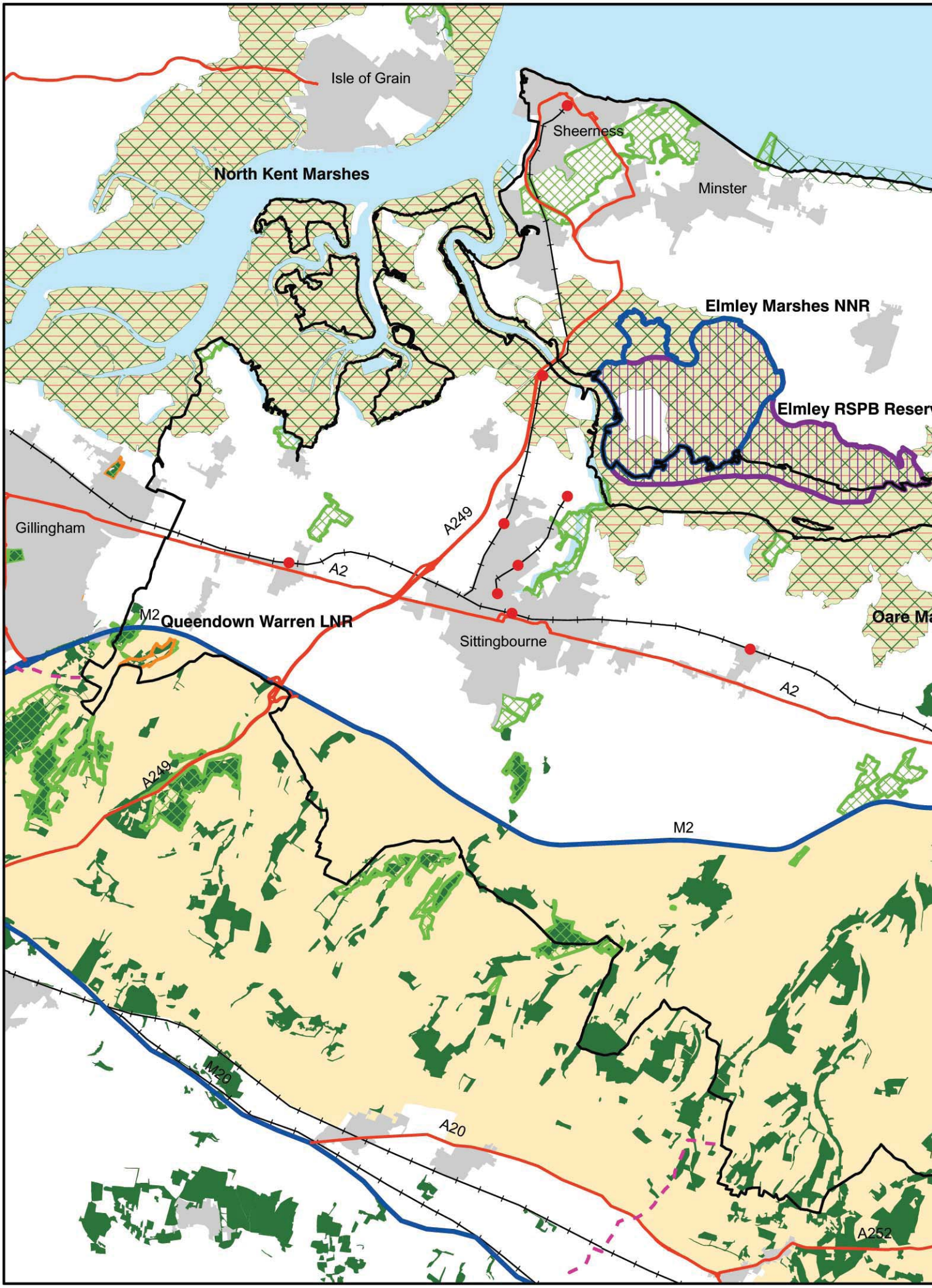
MAP 1

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



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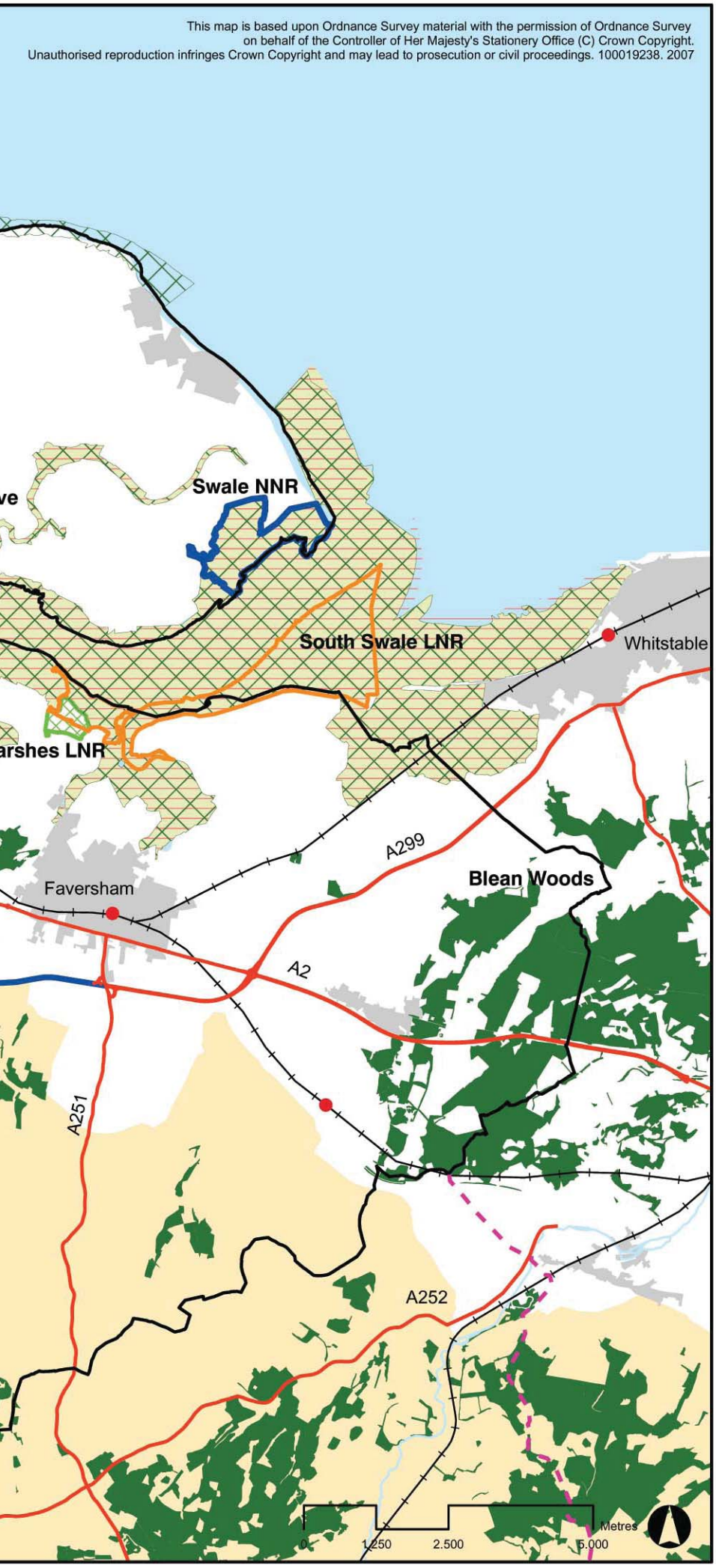

- Kent Downs AONB
- Ramsar Site
- Special Protection Area
- Special Areas of Conservation
- National Nature Reserves and RSPB Reserves
- Elmley NNR
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Local Nature Reserves
- Local Wildlife Site
- Ancient woodland
- Existing Built up Areas
- Swale Borough Council Boundary
- District Council Boundaries

Swale Borough Council

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SWALE GREEN GRID STRATEGY

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DRAWING TITLE
Landscape and Biodiversity Importance

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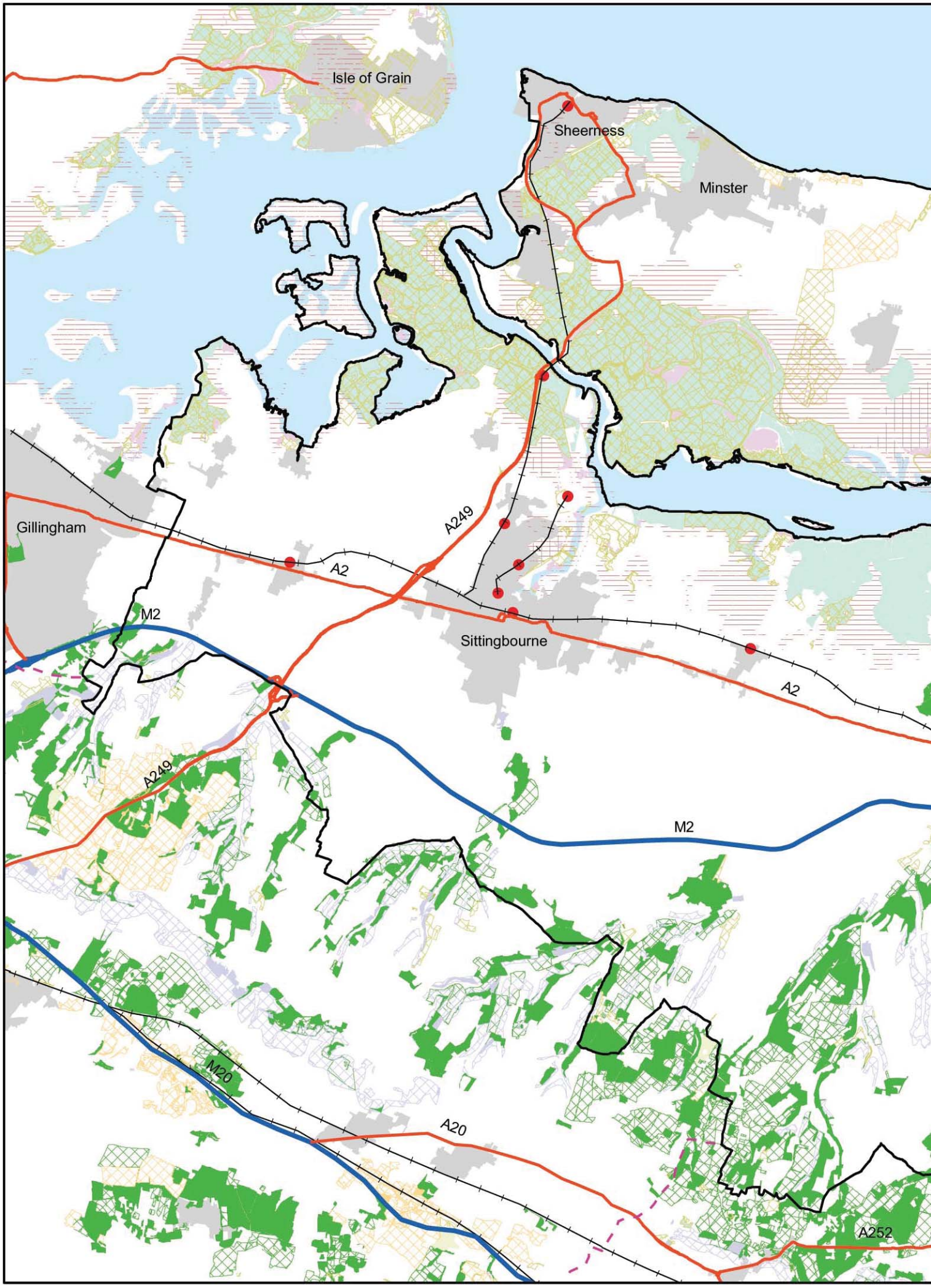
MAP 2

Map 3 - Swale Green Grid Strategy: Ecological Network Model



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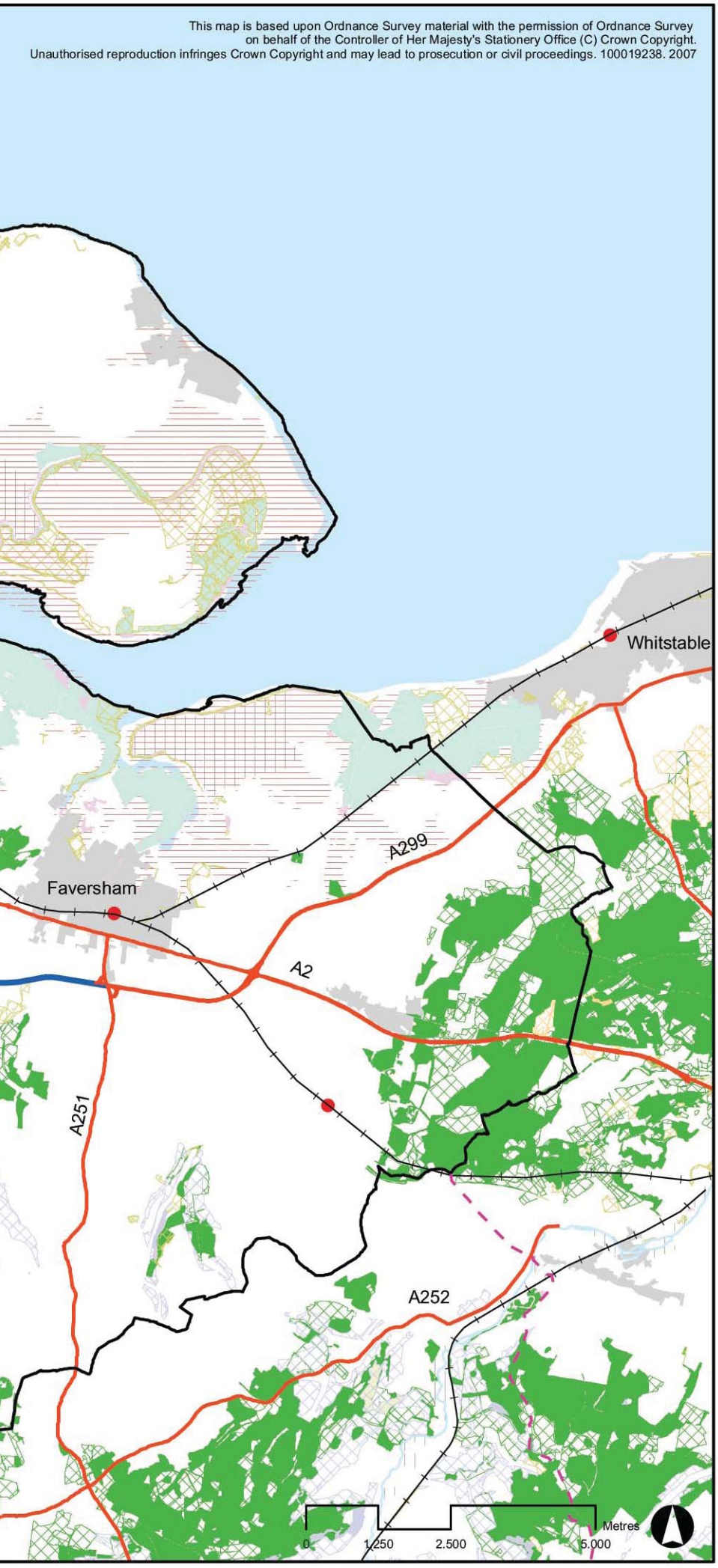

Existing Ecological Network

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

Potential Ecological Network

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

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

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

Swale Borough Council
North Kent Coast

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SWALE GREEN GRID STRATEGY

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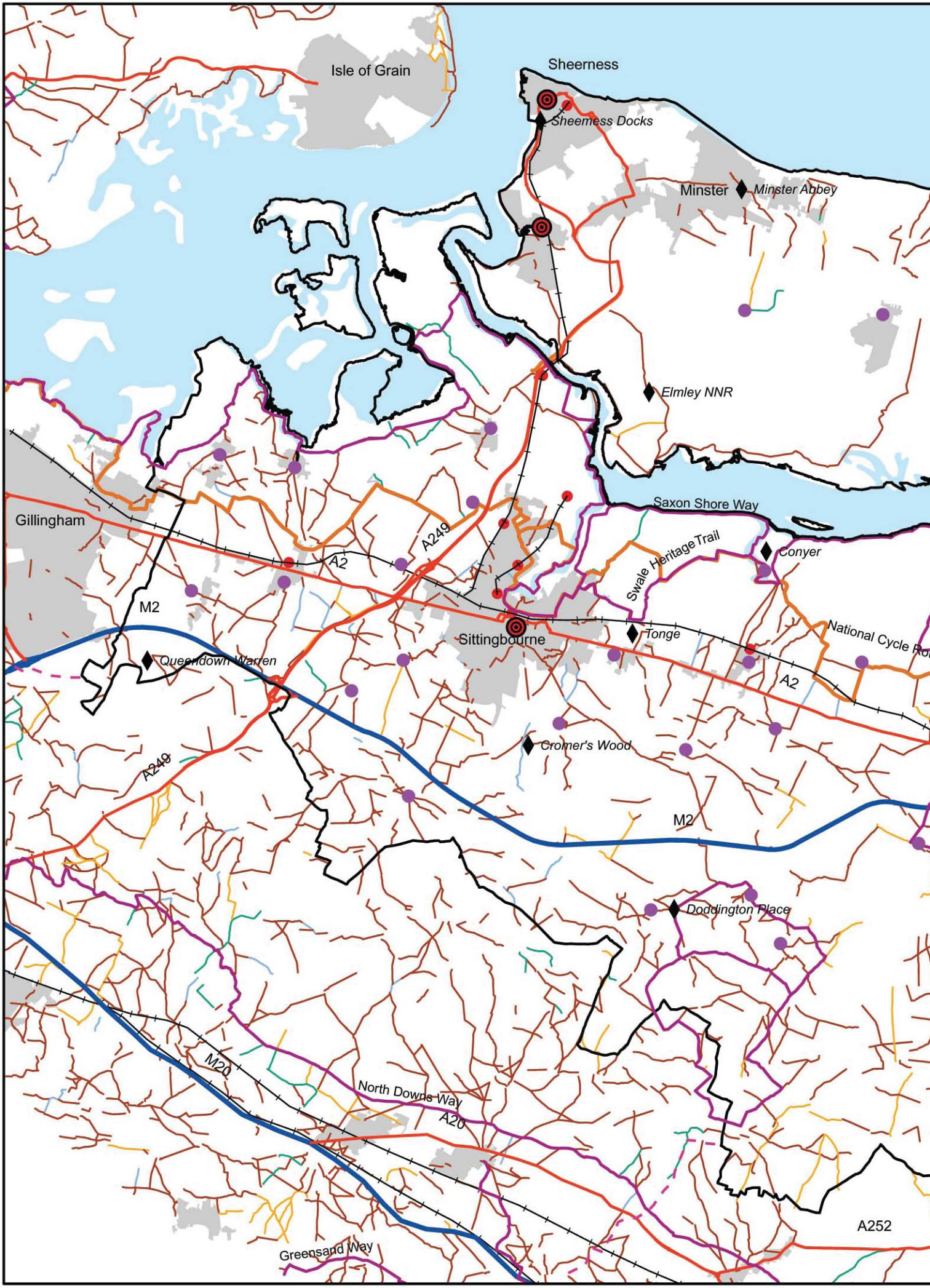
DRAWING TITLE	DRAWING NO
Ecological Network Mapping	**232/FS/014**

MAP 3

Map 4 - Swale Green Grid Strategy: Accessibility



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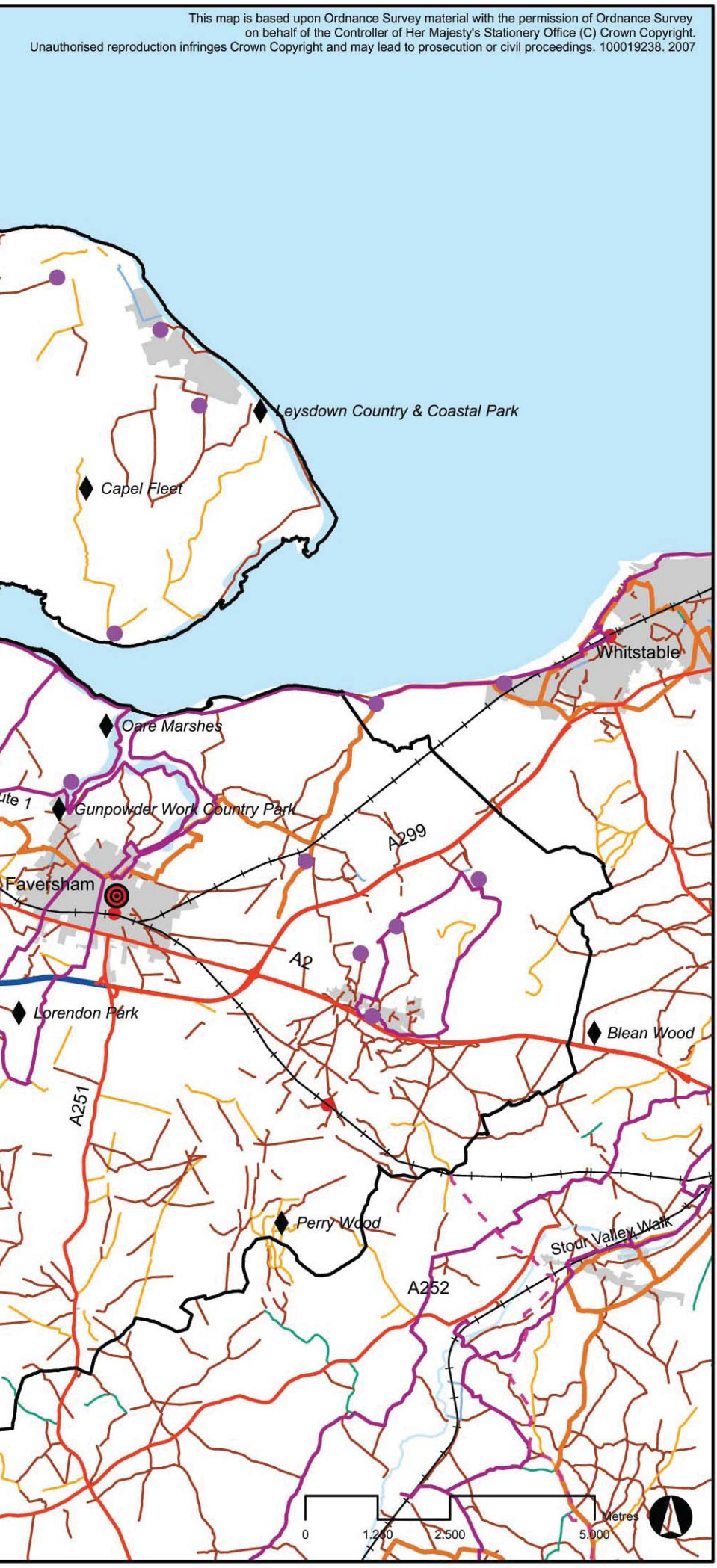

- Promoted Footpaths
- Promoted Cycleways

Public Rights of Way

- Bridleway
- Byway
- Footpath
- Restricted Byway
- Places of Interest
- Villages with Pubs
- Principal Towns

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

Swale Borough Council

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SWALE GREEN GRID STRATEGY

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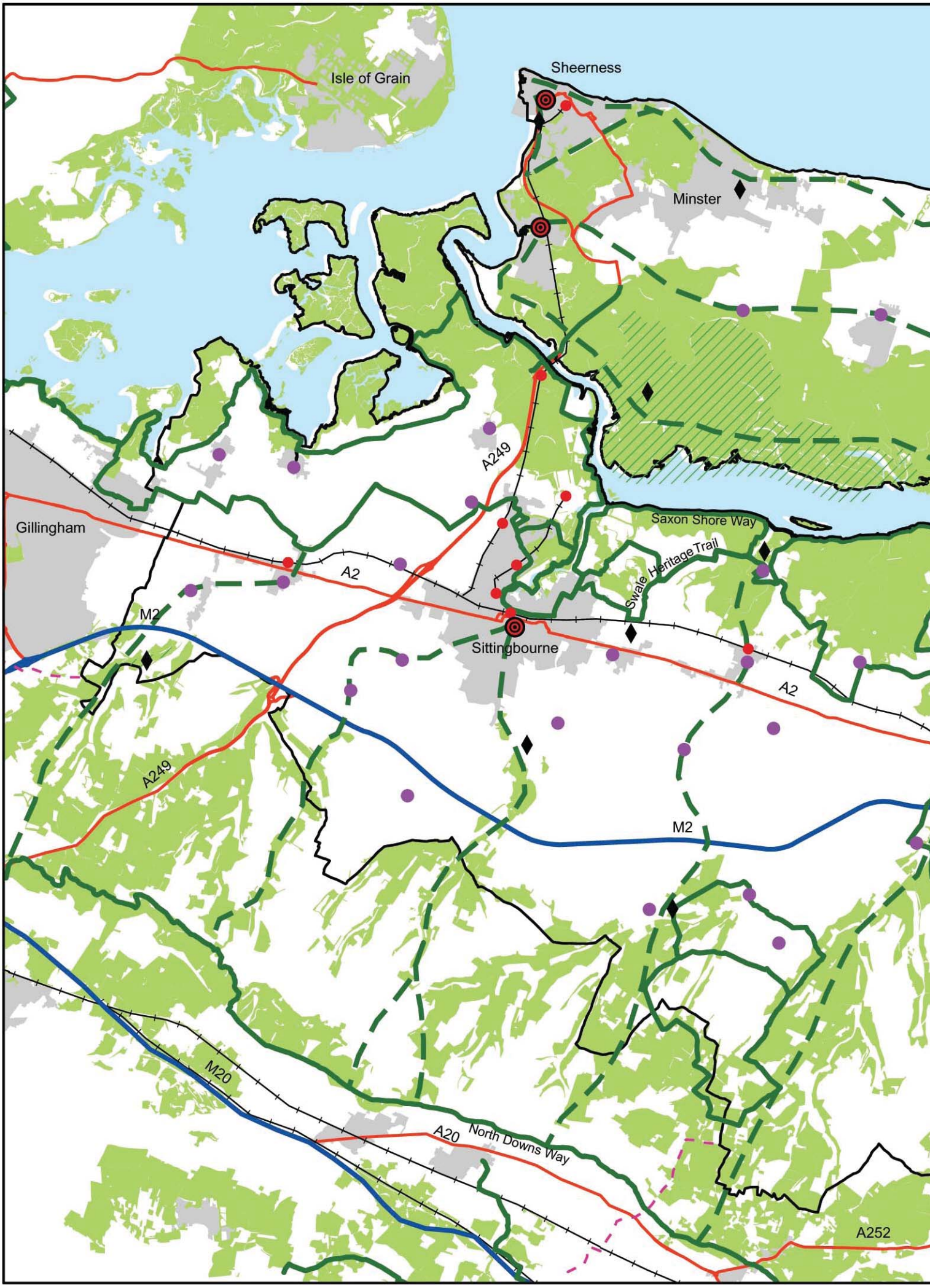
Accessibility

DRAWING NO
232/FS/015

MAP 4

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



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

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

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SWALE GREEN GRID STRATEGY

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DRAWING TITLE
Strategic Green Grid Framework

DRAWING NO
232/FS/016

MAP 5

Annex A - National Policy

Policy document	Relevance
DEFRA Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services	A national strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services. Sets out the strategic direction for biodiversity policy to 2020 on land (including rivers and lakes) and at sea.
Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA)	The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 require PCTs and local authorities to produce a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) of the health and wellbeing of their local community. They identify the key issues affecting health and wellbeing of local people.
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	**PPG 17** - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, 2002 requires local authorities to undertake an assessment of their existing and current open space needs. This open space audit is part of Swale's Open Space Strategy and informs decisions on the distribution and function of open space. It also highlights areas of open space deficiency, taking account of Natural England's national targets for access to natural green space. **PPS 7** – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, 2005 aims to improve the quality and sustainability of local environments and neighbourhoods, while continuing to protect valued landscapes and natural resources. The implementation of Swale's Green Grid Strategy will further the same aims. **PPS 9** – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, 2004 is an extension of the Government's biodiversity strategy, Working with the Grain of Nature: a Biodiversity Strategy for England, 2002. PPS 9 sets out the way in which the Government's policies for the conservation of biological and geological diversity should be reflected in land use planning. Swale's Green Grid offers a key tool for the delivery of biodiversity in line with Kent's Living Landscapes ecological network model and in a manner which is sensitive to the inherent character of Swale.
The DEFRA Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP) The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (2011)	The natural environment covers living things in all their diversity: wildlife, rivers and streams, lakes and seas, urban green space and open countryside, forests and farmed lands.
Localism Act 2011	The key components of the Act include: • new freedoms and flexibilities for local government • new rights and powers for communities and individuals • reform to make the planning system more democratic and more effective • reform to ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally

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

Local Policy	
Policy document	**Relevance**
Swale Corporate Plan 2015 - 2018	See separate table in Annex B
Sustainable Community Strategy(updated 2012) to 2031	Details priorities to 2031 Targets are summarised under 7 key themes. The implementation of Swale's Green Grid will make a direct contribution to the delivery of 4 of the themes: • Vibrant and safe – provide accessible, safe but interesting public spaces and recreation facilities where there are fulfilling opportunities for everyone • Green and clean – ensure that preservation and enhancement of the natural environment is fully integrated into Swale's regeneration and renewal and to create a sustainable network of green public open space • Connected – an efficient and integrated sustainable transport and communication network, capable of supporting a growing population and increased economic opportunity • Sustainable neighbourhoods – exemplary urban and rural environments in which people chose to live and work.
Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal (Jacobs, 2011)	Incorporates both landscape and biodiversity elements without one study; it provides an evidence base to protect highly valued local areas of landscape within Swale as well as a useful tool for planners, land managers, developers and conservation bodies
Swale Regeneration Framework, 2006 – 2016, Swale Forward	Swale's Regeneration Framework sets out the overall vision for regeneration in Swale. The key locations for regeneration highlighted in the Framework are also listed within the Swale Green Grid Strategy and there is a direct link between investment in regeneration and investment in the Green Grid network. The Green Grid Strategy also reflects the emphasis in the Regeneration Framework on sense of place and the need to ensure that physical development contributes to local identity and distinctiveness
Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan 2014 - 2031	The Swale Borough Local Plan, contains a range of policies and proposals aimed at protecting and raising environmental quality and increasing the provision of new open spaces accessible by local communities. Sites proposed for development, particularly those within the urban areas, will be required to provide new green and open spaces which will all contribute to the wider Green Grid objectives.

Annex B - Links to Swales Corporate Plan

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

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

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

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Revised by Swale Borough Council in conjunction with Swale Green Grid Partnership 2016
Designed by Swale Borough Council's Communications Team.