

MEDWAY GREEN AND BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE FRAMEWORK



CONSULTATION – OCTOBER 2026

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Medway is defined by its outstanding natural assets. The River Medway, its extensive estuary and marshes, the Kent Downs, areas of ancient woodland, chalk grassland, traditional orchards, country parks and a network of urban green spaces together create a rich and distinctive landscape that supports biodiversity, recreation, health and wellbeing, climate resilience and economic prosperity.
- 1.2 Green Infrastructure is defined in national planning policy as a network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity. It includes rivers, wetlands, coastal habitats, parks, woodlands, street trees, open spaces and sustainable drainage systems. These assets provide multiple benefits, helping to support wildlife, improve physical and mental health, reduce flood risk, cool urban areas, store carbon and create attractive places in which people want to live, work and visit.
- 1.3 As Medway continues to grow and responds to the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and health inequalities, protecting and enhancing its green and blue infrastructure will be increasingly important. This framework recognises green and blue infrastructure as essential infrastructure and sets out a framework for its protection, enhancement and creation.
- 1.4 The work seeks to strengthen Medway's ecological network, improve access to nature, support sustainable development and maximise the benefits that natural systems provide for communities and the environment. By building on Medway's unique environmental assets and creating a more connected and resilient network of green and blue spaces, the framework will help deliver a greener, healthier and more sustainable Medway for future generations.
- 1.5 This document considers green and blue infrastructure in five broad areas:
 - Biodiversity, Trees and Woodlands
 - Blue Infrastructure and the Coast
 - Access, Recreation and Active Travel
 - Health and Wellbeing
 - Landscape Character and Heritage
- 1.6 It sets out key principles, opportunities and priorities for strengthening green and blue infrastructure in Medway. This framework responds to the expectations of national policy and the Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework by establishing a basis to guide investment, inform planning and support the delivery of a multifunctional green infrastructure network that enhances biodiversity, strengthens climate resilience and improves access to nature for existing and future communities.

Policy Context

- 1.7 Green infrastructure is a fundamental component of sustainable development and provides a strategic framework for delivering biodiversity recovery, climate resilience, health and wellbeing benefits, active travel opportunities and high-quality places.

National Policy Context

- 1.8 The [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, secure measurable gains for biodiversity, improve access to high-quality open spaces and support climate change mitigation and adaptation. The NPPF promotes the delivery of multifunctional green infrastructure networks that provide a range of environmental, social and economic benefits, recognising their role as an essential component of sustainable communities.
- 1.9 The national approach to green infrastructure planning has been strengthened through the publication of Natural England's [Green Infrastructure Framework](#). The Framework provides a consistent methodology for local authorities to assess, plan and deliver green infrastructure and establishes a series of standards relating to strategic green infrastructure planning, access to nature, active travel, urban greening and urban tree canopy cover. It advocates the creation of connected and multifunctional networks that support nature recovery, climate resilience and healthy communities.
- 1.10 The [Environment Act 2021](#) and associated policy initiatives, including Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies, further reinforce the importance of green infrastructure as a mechanism for creating and connecting habitats, supporting ecological resilience and delivering wider environmental improvements. Green infrastructure is also recognised as a key component of climate adaptation through its role in managing surface water, reducing flood risk, mitigating urban heat island effects and improving air quality.

Local Policy, Plans and Guidance

- 1.11 The [Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) (LNRS), published in 2025, provides the strategic framework for nature recovery across the county. It identifies priorities for habitat restoration, ecological connectivity and species recovery, together with spatial priorities for action and investment. The LNRS promotes a landscape-scale approach to nature recovery and recognises the role of green and blue infrastructure in delivering wider benefits including climate resilience, water management, health and wellbeing and sustainable development.
- 1.12 The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has a statutory role in influencing all tiers of planning, with the express requirement that strategic

development, minerals and waste, neighbourhood and local plans must all have regard to any local nature recovery strategy that relates to all or part of the local planning authority's area. It is a material consideration to help decision-makers direct losses and impacts away from our most valuable natural assets and direct action and investment to areas of greatest need and benefit - a key informative tool for place-making and planning rather than a directive. It is an integral part of informing green infrastructure planning in Medway.

- 1.13 A number of Medway Council's plans and strategies support the protection and enhancement of green infrastructure. These include:

[One Medway Council Plan](#) - a key priority is enjoying clean, green, safe and connected communities

[Medway Local Plan](#) – the proposed new Local Plan includes strategic objectives and policies to promote green infrastructure. [Neighbourhood plans](#) also provide policies for local areas.

[Medway Climate Change Action Plan](#) – includes ambitions for a green and resilient Medway and sustainable travel and transport.

[Medway Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#) – prioritises safe, connected and sustainable places.

[Medway Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan](#) – a 10 year strategy to improve walking and cycling in Medway.

[Medway Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#) – sets out priorities for improving the network of public rights of way.

2. Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priority 1: Nature Recovery and Ecological Resilience

Protect, enhance and expand Medway's core biodiversity assets, priority habitats and designated wildlife sites. Strengthen ecological connectivity through a resilient green and blue infrastructure network that enables species movement, supports nature recovery and helps biodiversity adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Strategic Priority 2: Healthy, Inclusive and Accessible Communities

Ensure that everyone has access to high-quality, attractive and inclusive green and blue spaces close to where they live. Prioritise improvements in areas experiencing deprivation or unequal access to greenspace, helping to reduce health inequalities and strengthen connections between people and nature.

Strategic Priority 3: Supporting Sustainable Growth

Ensure that green and blue infrastructure provision keeps pace with population growth and development, providing the natural assets, recreation opportunities and environmental benefits needed to support existing and future communities across Medway.

Strategic Priority 4: Active Travel and Sustainable Connections

Create a well-connected network of walking, cycling and multi-user routes that links communities, employment areas, services and green spaces. Support modal shift, improve air quality, reduce congestion and enable healthier lifestyles through greater opportunities for active travel.

Strategic Priority 5: Climate Resilience and Water Management

Maximise the role of green and blue infrastructure in adapting to climate change and managing flood risk. Promote the integration of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) within new development, identify opportunities for retrofit schemes, and support nature-based solutions such as saltmarsh restoration and natural flood management measures.

Strategic Priority 6: Landscape, Heritage and Place

Protect and enhance Medway's distinctive landscapes, river corridors, coastlines and historic environment. Ensure that green and blue infrastructure contributes positively to local character, reinforces a strong sense of place and celebrates the area's natural and cultural heritage.

Strategic Priority 7: Evidence, Innovation and Partnership Working

Strengthen the evidence base for green and blue infrastructure planning through research, monitoring and collaboration. Improve understanding of the relationship between accessible greenspace, health outcomes and community wellbeing, using evidence to guide future investment and decision-making.

Cross-Cutting Principle

Deliver a connected network of multifunctional green and blue infrastructure that provides benefits for nature, health, climate resilience, sustainable growth and place-making across Medway.

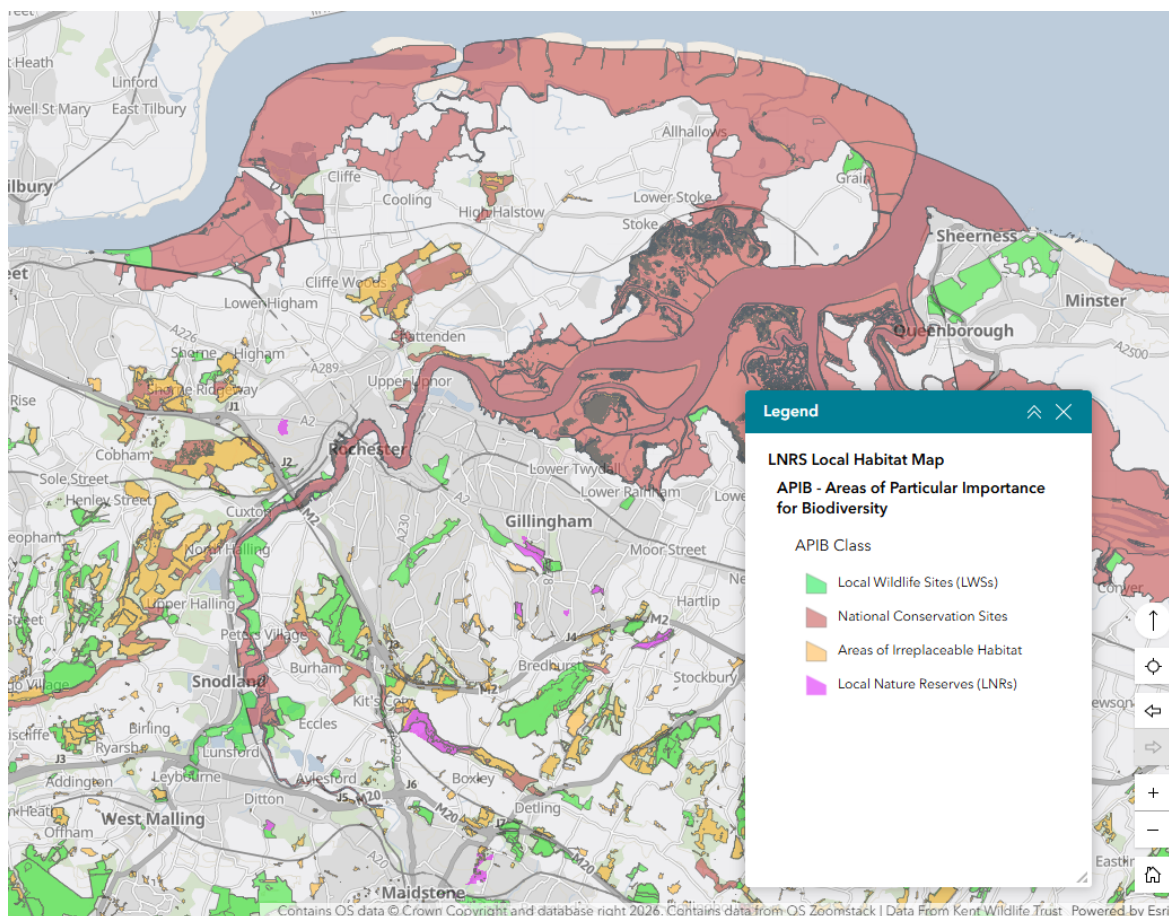
3 Overview of Medway's Green and Blue Infrastructure

3.1 Biodiversity, Trees and Woodlands

3.1.1 Medway is home to outstanding biodiversity. There are expansive areas of nature conservation habitats which, in turn, support a host of rare and important species. Medway's coastal and wetland habitats are considered of international importance, whilst other habitats, including ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, chalk grassland and lowland meadows are of value for their nature conservation interest, with many of these being highly protected. Medway has a number of priority habitats and species in the Kent and Medway LNRs.

Medway's Protected Wildlife Sites

3.1.2 Medway's outstanding biodiversity is reflected in the high proportion of Medway which is protected under nature conservation designations. Around 30% of Medway's area, including inshore areas, is protected under a nature conservation designation. Around 26% of this is designated due to its international importance for nature. This is illustrated in the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS):



Medway's Outstanding Habitats and Species

A Rich and Diverse Coastline

- 3.1.3 Situated next to two estuaries, Medway has an outstanding coastline. The intertidal habitats are particularly important, with large areas of sediment and mudflats; the most extensive in Kent. These areas are not vegetated but support vast numbers of invertebrates. When exposed at high tide the mudflats are the feeding area for thousands of waterfowl and waders. It is for this reason the area is designated as of international importance for birds as a Special Protection Area. Where the mudflats are higher, saltmarsh develops, formed by plants which are capable of being submerged in salt water. The Peninsula also has Kent's largest area of saline lagoons at Cliffe Pools. The Hoo Peninsula and Medway coastline is included in the UNESCO East Coast Wetlands bid.
- 3.1.4 The whole of the Medway estuary is also a Marine Conservation Zone. The transition between fresh and sea water, combined with tidal movement, creates a fertile environment and a complex ecosystem. The estuary is home to scarce invertebrates and is the nursery ground for many species of fish. This includes smelt; a highly threatened fish species and food source for birds and other fish. There are also areas of seagrass beds in shallow inshore waters. This hugely important habitat supports food for wildfowl and shelter for juvenile fish and shellfish.
- 3.1.5 Next to the coast lies coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, usually grazed by cattle or sheep. Medway has just under a quarter of this Kent BAP priority habitat. There are extensive areas on the Hoo Peninsula, to the north of Cliffe and Cooling and around Allhallows and Grain. Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh was generally reclaimed from saltmarsh and is criss-crossed with ditches, which control water levels.
- 3.1.6 There are also reedbeds, another priority habitat. These features make the marsh especially important for water voles, a species which has declined severely in recent years. The marshes also support waterfowl, which use both the coast and mudflats and inland area, and birds of prey such as the rare marsh harrier.

Trees and Woodlands

- 3.1.7 Trees and woodland are a vital component of Green Infrastructure and Natural Capital in Medway. They are a critical and cost-effective means of adapting to and mitigating the impact of climate change, and essential for our mental and physical health. They can improve air quality, reduce surface water flooding, mitigate the urban heat island effect, and calm traffic. They promote wellbeing by providing contact with nature. Their aesthetic and cultural values are well recognised by communities. They also support biodiversity and connect habitats together.

- 3.1.8 Whilst a significant number of trees in Medway are in private ownership, Medway Council owns and is responsible for more than 18,000 individually plotted trees growing in urban settings. For example, trees growing on streets and in parks, open spaces, car parks and cemeteries. In addition to this there are many thousands more trees growing in schools, country parks and on other land which the council owns, as well as large areas of woodland.
- 3.1.9 In 2025, the council and Friends of Cozenton Park Community Tree Nursery set up Medway's first community tree nursery located at Cozenton Park in Rainham. The long-term aim is to grow trees from locally harvested tree seed and plant these across Medway such as open spaces, schools and the local community. The project aims to promote the importance of trees through public engagement, growing new skills and working with local schools.
- 3.1.10 Woodland is not evenly spread across Medway. Some urban areas and parts of the Hoo Peninsula for example have little or no woodland at all. Most woodland is concentrated in Cuxton & Halling, Lordswood & Walderslade, Cliffe Woods, north of Capstone and north of Chattenden.
- 3.1.11 Much of the woodland in Medway is identified in the Kent Biodiversity Strategy 2020 to 2045 as Priority Habitat. Half of Medway's woodland is within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and approximately 693 hectares, or 47% of Medway's woodland is designated as Ancient Woodland.
- 3.1.12 Most Ancient Woodland is located on the Kent Downs above Cuxton and Halling and to the north of Chattenden. There are other clustered areas of Ancient Woodland around the Capstone Valley, in Hempstead and in Lordswood. A small area of Ancient Woodland west of Upper Halling is included in the North Downs Woodlands Special Area of Conservation in recognition of its international importance for rare beech and yew woodland.
- 3.1.13 The Woodland Trust Ancient Tree Inventory maps the oldest and most important trees in the UK. The inventory records the presence of ancient trees, veteran trees (recognised as being irreplaceable habitat) and otherwise notable specimens scattered throughout Medway. There are already more than 190,000 trees listed but there are thousands more to add.
- 3.1.14 Scrub habitats are also an important habitat for another of Medway's special species, the nightingale. This species has declined by 90% in the last 50 years and Lodge Hill is an important site.
- 3.1.15 The 'Green Infrastructure Framework' published by Natural England sets out five key standards, one of which is the 'Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard'. This standard recommends that measuring base line tree canopy cover, and monitoring increases, as the best and easiest metric for measuring success. Tree canopy cover is "the layer of leaves, branches, and tree stems that cover the ground when viewed from above". The Council is working on a Tree Strategy and promotes increased tree canopy cover.



Glorious Grasslands

3.1.16 Much of Medway is grassland. Although a large proportion of this is improved for pasture, there are also some very special grasslands.

3.1.17 Chalk grassland is a scarce and specialised habitat. Largely confined to the chalk hills of southern England it can be very floristically diverse. It also supports a range of insects including rare and beautiful butterflies. There remain areas of chalk grassland in Medway. Several of these are within the urban area following the chalk ridges, for example at Darland Banks, managed by Kent Wildlife Trust, and Coney and Daisy Banks. There are also small areas on the Kent Downs around Cuxton and in other areas where there are chalky outcrops, for example alongside the M2. The habitat is usually maintained by sheep grazing and can be lost to scrub if sites are not managed. Preventing encroachment by scrub can be particularly difficult on urban sites where grazing is not possible.

3.1.18 Ranscombe Farm Reserve, near Cuxton, is one of the most important places in Britain for rare wildflowers, particularly arable flowers. These include corncockle, Venus's looking-glass, and blue pimpernel, as well as three types of poppies and orchids. The area has changed little in over 350 years, meaning it also supports a huge range of other wildlife, including dormouse, woodland butterflies and the elephant hawk-moth.

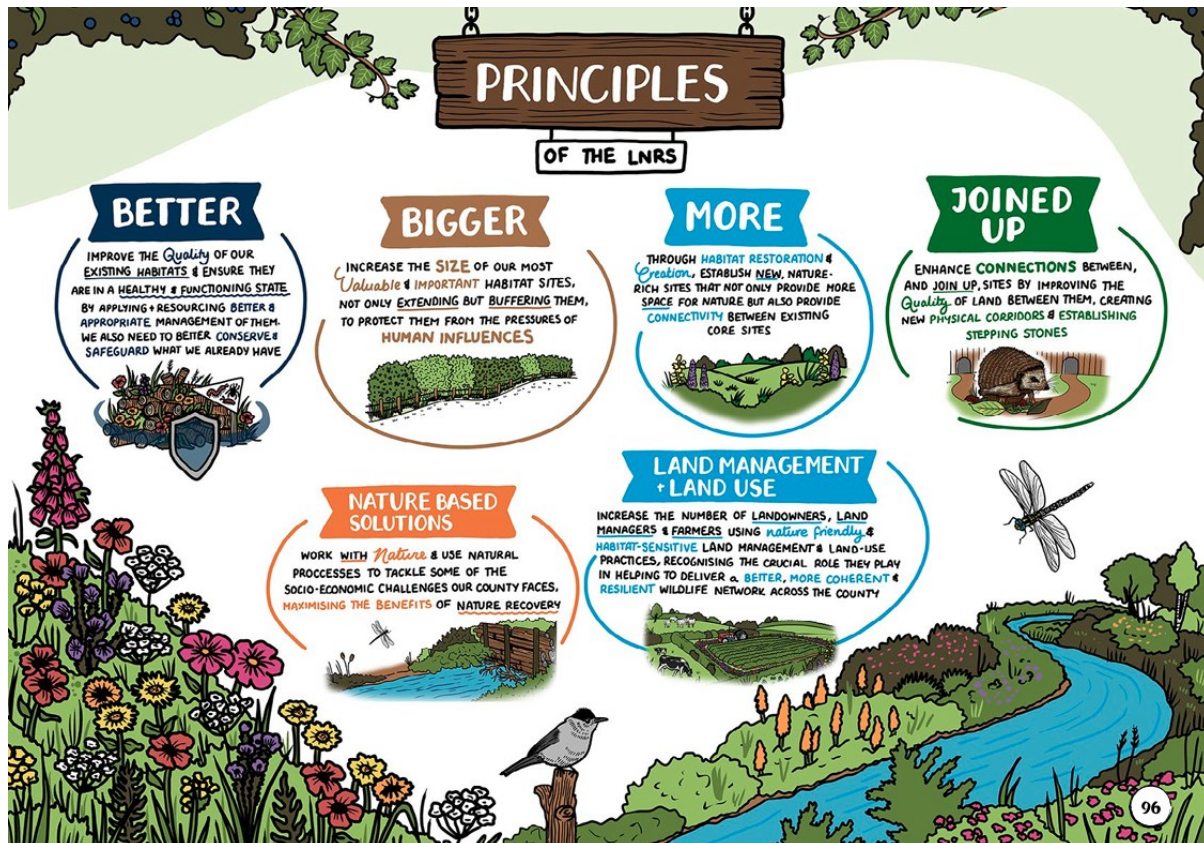
3.1.19 The newly established North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve is a significant opportunity to promote landscape scale enhancement to the parts of the NNR that are in Medway strategically linked to the wider NNR area.

Biodiversity Networks

3.1.20 The review of England's wildlife sites and ecological network, 'Making Space for Nature', concluded that biodiversity habitats do not form a coherent and

resilient ecological network capable of responding to the challenges of climate change and other pressures.

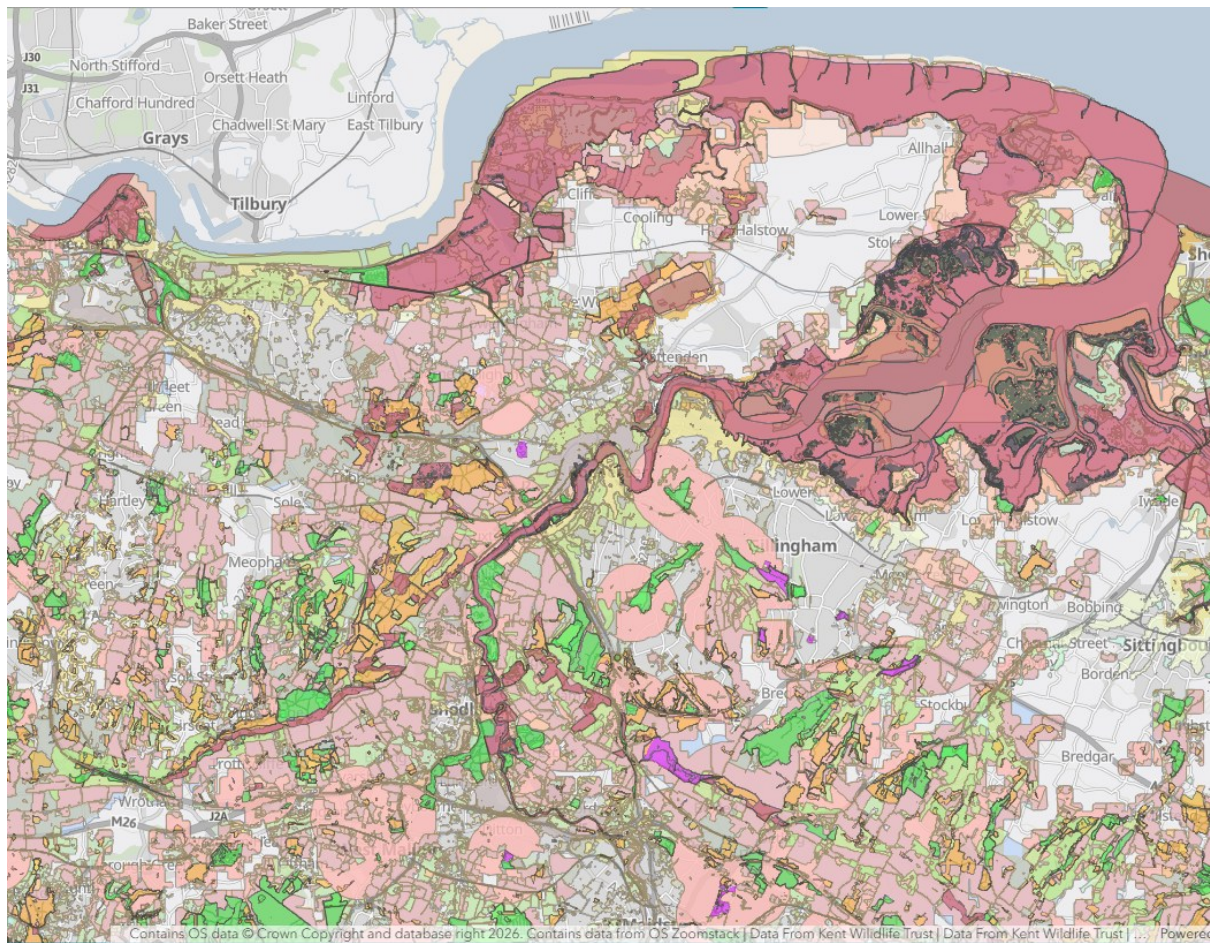
3.1.21 Strategic planning for nature conservation at the landscape scale is required to manage pressures and to restore functioning ecological networks. The Kent and Medway LNRS sets out the principles and priorities for resilient green networks.

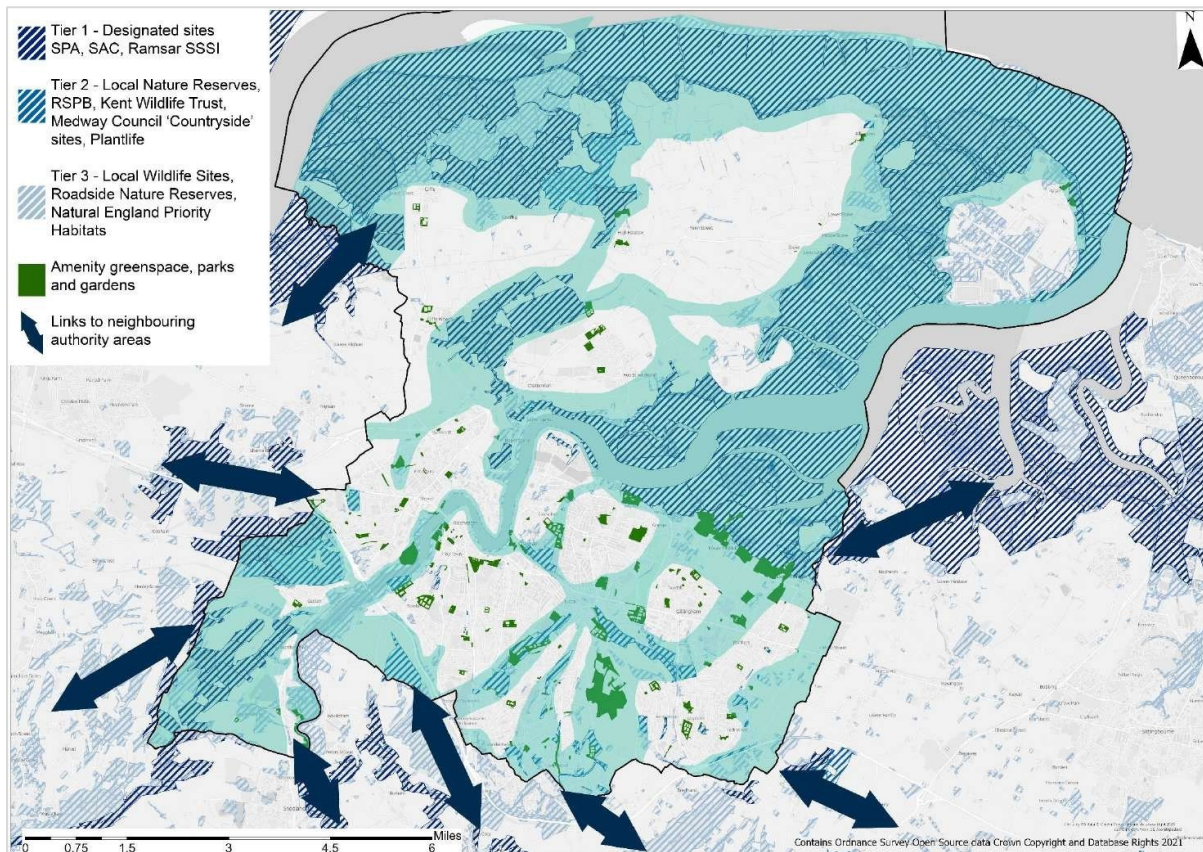


3.1.22 Green infrastructure is important in supporting a landscape-scale or 'nature network' approach, through securing biodiversity value in a planned way. Green infrastructure also helps to bring nature into urban centres, which also connects people with wildlife.

3.1.23 The concept of green and blue corridors as areas in which to improve and connect biodiversity has been supported for many years in Medway. Biodiversity Opportunity Areas also reflect the concentration of nature conservation assets, setting spatial areas in which to improve nature as a priority. There are other approaches, for example B-Lines, developed by Buglife, which show insect 'pathways' through town and countryside. Natural England has developed habitat network mapping based on priority habitats. All sources identify the important corridors – along the Medway and Thames estuaries and marshes of the Hoo Peninsula, the River Medway and the woodlands and other habitats of the Kent Downs. Most sources identify links

across the Hoo Peninsula and urban area but the exact location of the corridors varies.





3.1.26 Within these areas, priorities should be to reflect the principles, guidance and opportunities in the LNRS to:

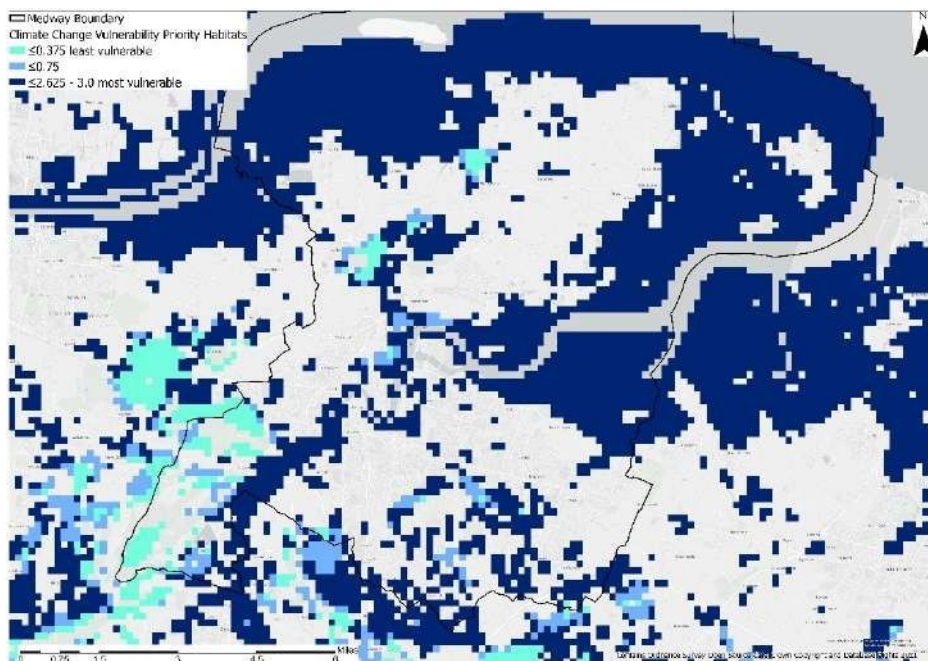
- Improve the biodiversity value of existing semi-natural sites as the core assets of the corridors, conserving and enhancing the nature within the sites and ensuring they are under appropriate management;
- Buffering and expanding these sites by creating hospitable areas for nature around them;
- Create new sites for nature;
- Creating stepping stone sites within the corridors by making sites better for nature. This could include parks, urban greenspace and gardens.

3.1.27 The mapping of these corridors does not mean that biodiversity improvements are only needed in these areas. In the urban areas especially, there are discrete and important sites which are stepping stone sites for nature.

3.1.28 All development sites should seek biodiversity enhancement on site and ensure permeability for wildlife through the site as well as enhancements for wildlife, including hedgehog corridors and swift boxes. This is particularly important for sites within the corridors. Development must also seek biodiversity net gain in line with national planning legislation and Local Plan policies.

Climate Change

- 3.1.29 Climate change over coming decades will bring a range of direct and indirect pressures on biodiversity. Many species and habitats are strongly influenced by temperature and rainfall and the interactions between these.
- 3.1.30 Natural England has developed a climate change vulnerability model to assess the vulnerability of priority habitats. The model uses four measurements which, when combined, provide an overall assessment of vulnerability to climate change.
- 3.1.31 The mapping shows that the estuary habitats, although extensive and not fragmented, are highly vulnerable to climate change impacts. This is due to both sea level rise and the potential of drier summers. The highly fragmented areas of priority habitat, especially grassland sites, in urban Medway are also vulnerable. Whilst the large blocks of woodland around Cuxton and Halling are less vulnerable, the smaller, isolated woodlands across Medway, including the Hoo Peninsula, are more vulnerable.



Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- Climate change impacts compounded by other threats to habitats and species;
- Lack of resources to manage some nature conservation sites sustainably and in the long term;
- Small, fragmented and disconnected sites in some areas particularly in urban Medway;

- Development has been identified as the greatest pressure on Kent habitats, through loss of land and increased population. This pressure can be mitigated through obligations on developers to deliver biodiversity net gain;
- Recreational pressure on urban and rural sites can cause disturbance to wildlife (although partly mitigated by the North Kent 'Bird Wise' Strategic Access Management and Mitigation programme);
- Recreational pressure and anti-social behaviour can hinder the implementation of conservation management, e.g. grazing on urban sites, as well as cause direct damage;
- Farming has a significant impact on biodiversity and there is uncertainty around the future of this and future farming and environment payments. 'Farming in Protected Landscapes' within the Kent Downs National Landscape may bring significant benefits to this part of Medway;
- Woodland which is small, fragmented and not managed;
- Pressures and threats arising from current and emerging pests, diseases, and invasive species (including, for example, Oak Processionary Moth, Ash Dieback), on the health of vegetation and safe access to sites;
- Some Sites of Special Scientific Interest are in unfavourable condition;
- A wide range of pollutants, from many sources with the most widespread current harm from excess nutrients (phosphate and compounds of nitrogen) in air and water. There has also been a rise in concern over plastics pollution, particularly in the water environment;
- Lack of information on some species and habitats (although this is being addressed in some areas by the Medway Urban Greenspaces Forum);
- Some Kent Biodiversity Action Plan species under threat and declining.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

Protect, enhance and improve the core biodiversity sites and take action for priority species

- Protect and enhance the sites which form the core of the biodiversity network – those sites designated for nature conservation and those with known biodiversity value.
- Ensure that Medway-owned sites with nature conservation value are protected and their value enhanced, bringing declining sites into good condition and reducing sources of harm.
- Protect, enhance and seek to expand areas of Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority habitats which are notable within Medway - chalk grassland, traditional orchards, coastal and floodplain grazing marsh.
- Protect and seek to increase populations of LRNS and Kent Biodiversity Strategy priority species which are notable within Medway – water vole, common blue butterfly, turtle doves, nightingale, shrill carder bee, lapwing and Sandwich tern.

- Target increases in tree canopy cover at a ward or area level where there are deficiencies using the Tree Equity Score tool and where tree and woodland establishment will link habitats.
- Review and undertake mapping of ancient, veteran, and notable trees for Medway, as part of the Ancient Tree Inventory, administered by the Woodland Trust.

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

- Reduce sources of harm to existing biodiversity sites.
- Develop ecologically resilient and varied landscapes through conserving and enhancing local variation within sites and habitats and making space for the natural development of rivers and coasts.
- Establish ecological networks through habitat protection, restoration and creation through the LNRS.
- Integrate climate change adaptation and mitigation measures into conservation management, planning and practice.
- Work with partners to deliver a resilient network and with neighbouring authorities to develop connections over local authority boundaries.
- Seek to create mosaics and overall abundance of wildlife alongside the protection of specific habitats and species.
- Work with the Kent Nature Partnership to deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy as part of the National Nature Recovery Network.
- Ensure there is no net loss of trees, woodland, and hedgerows in Medway and that they are managed to a high standard, healthy and resilient to threats from pests and
- Continue to increase the number of wildflower verges on council owned land.

Link people and nature

- Celebrate and raise awareness of Medway's iconic species and habitats and the need to conserve them.
- Deliver education and engagement events through Medway's country parks and wider events and cultural programmes.
- Get people involved in conservation activities and tree planting.
- Support Friends groups and the Medway Urban Greenspaces Forum to further community engagement and action for nature and greenspace.
- Promote the action of residents to improve wildlife through gardening for wildlife, create hedgehog highways and install swift boxes.
- Incorporate nature into Medway-owned parks and amenity spaces so that people can experience nature close to where they live and create stepping stones for wildlife, for example through permanent wildlife areas such as wildflower meadows.
- Designate more Local Nature Reserves to increase the hectare provision per 1,000 people.

- Improve school grounds, including tree planting, growing spaces and wildflower gardens.

Adapt and mitigate for climate change impacts

- Bring forward multi-functional nature-based solutions as cost effective, climate adapted and biodiversity-supporting alternatives to 'grey' engineering solutions.
- Increase tree and woodland cover, with an emphasis on areas with a Tree Equity Score that is below the required standard and where establishment will enhance habitat connections ensuring that this follows the principles of 'right tree, right place'. Trees should be planted where this fits with the landscape character and should not be planted on sites with other biodiversity interest which would be lost through tree planting. Urban trees should be fitting for the size and location of space.
- Identify habitat areas within Medway for protection as carbon sinks and wildlife habitats. This should include both terrestrial and marine habitats.
- Ensure that tree and woodland planting and establishment follows the principles of 'right tree, right place and for the right reasons'. Planting should complement and strengthen the existing landscape character and not have any adverse impact on other significant biodiversity interest.

Ensure development is sustainable

- Seek a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in line with planning policy.
- Incorporate biodiversity into housing developments, including hedgehog highways, swift boxes and biodiversity-friendly planting in streets and gardens.

Actions for the River Medway and coast are detailed under the 'Blue Infrastructure and the Coast' theme

3.2 Access, Recreation and Active Travel

- 3.2.1 Access to greenspace, the countryside and natural environments is important for health and both physical and mental wellbeing. Access networks can also support active travel through cycling and walking, which also supports health, as well as reducing congestion and pollution. Access to nature can also help people to connect to nature and become more involved and engaged in caring for it.

Accessible Greenspaces

- 3.2.2 Open spaces not only provide areas for recreation and access, they can enhance the landscape and urban setting, help to mitigate against air pollution and provide nature conservation habitats. Ensuring that open spaces provide a range of these benefits is critical to green infrastructure planning.
- 3.2.3 There are a wide range of accessible greenspaces in Medway, from the larger country parks of Capstone and Riverside, through to smaller amenity areas, outdoor sports areas and semi-natural spaces. Some of these are owned and managed by Medway Council, but some valuable spaces are managed by other organisations. New housing developments will be expected to provide high quality, accessible greenspace for their new residents.
- 3.2.4 The largest areas of accessible greenspace, which also contain habitats of biodiversity importance, are Riverside Country Park, Capstone Farm Country Park, and Deangate Community Parkland and Ranscombe Farm Nature Reserve (managed by Plantlife). An assessment of Medway's open spaces found the two country parks were the most visited in Medway and that people travel from both within Medway and from other areas to visit them. There are a range of facilities on offer, including visitor centres, café and toilets, waymarked trails for a range of users, play areas and accessible paths.
- 3.2.5 There are other important parks and gardens in Medway which are valued by residents. Notable parks include The Great Lines Heritage Park, which forms an extensive area of greenspace in Chatham and Gillingham. The Heritage Park brings together several important heritage features, including Fort Amherst, Chatham Lines, the Field of Fire along with Medway Park Sports Centre. Other larger sites include Jackson's Field, Gillingham Park, Cozenton Park and Broomhill Park. These parks draw visitors from a wider catchment area than would be expected for parks of their size. Other notable parks include The Strand, adjacent to the estuary at Gillingham, and The Vines and other parks in historic Rochester. There are deficiencies in supply of parks across most areas of Medway, most notably in the Strood and rural area.
- 3.2.6 There are many accessible semi-natural open spaces in urban Medway. These include the important and extensive green corridors on the chalk ridges through urban Medway – Daisy and Coney Banks and the Horsted Valley, along with Darland Banks. Other urban seminatural sites include Rede

Common Local Nature Reserve (Strood), Watts Meadow (Rochester), Princes Park (Wayfield), Baty's Marsh (Borstal) and extensive woodlands both in Medway and in neighbouring local authority areas around Walderslade, Lordswood and Hempstead.

- 3.2.7 In the rural areas are also several nature reserves, including Ranscombe Farm Reserve, Northward Hill and Cliffe Pools RSPB reserves, Nashenden Valley and Grain Country Park. Recently the Council has been establishing Deangate Community Parkland.
- 3.2.8 Amenity greenspaces are landscaped areas with no designated specific use, but which provide visual amenity. Amenity greenspaces are varied - they can form part of a wider site, e.g. around sports pitches, can be small, incidental sites or can form larger areas. They offer opportunities for informal recreation such as play or dog walking and are usually close to where people live. They may also offer opportunities for urban wildlife. They form an important part of the green 'fabric' especially in urban areas.
- 3.2.9 Equipped play areas are also often greenspaces and offer local spaces for young people to exercise. Highest play provision is in Gillingham, Strood and rural areas. The lowest levels of provision are in Rochester and Chatham
- 3.2.10 However, there is a lack of open space provision for communities in some parts of Medway, particularly in those urban areas which were developed with high-density housing in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Open space provision is low in Gillingham South, Rochester East, Strood North, Rainham Central, Chatham Central, Rainham South, Walderslade and Princes Park.
- 3.2.11 Details of the greenspace assets and demands are set out in the [Medway Open Space Assessment](#), 2024.

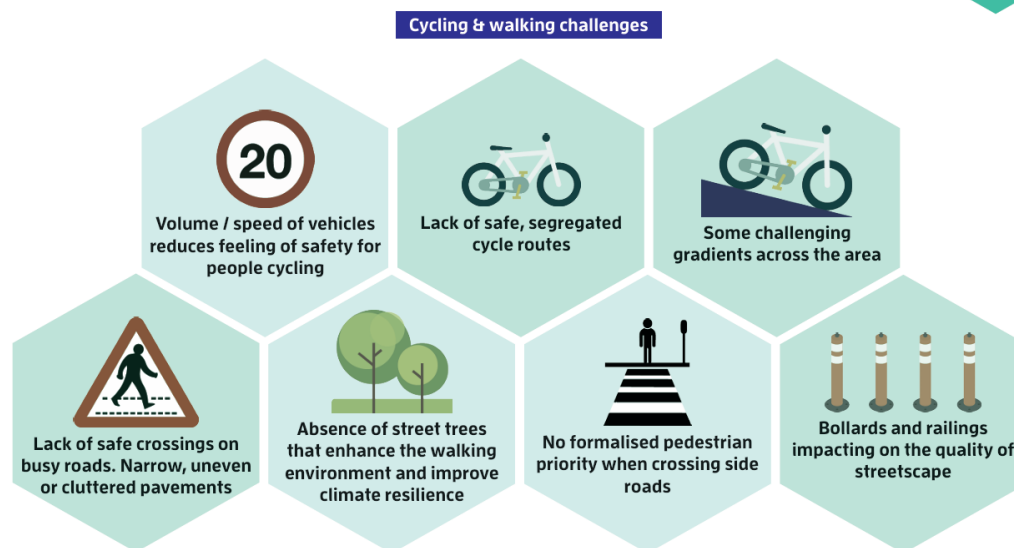
Cycle Routes

- 3.2.12 Medway has 81 miles of cycle paths. Some of these routes are off route and traffic-free which is important to support a wider range of people to cycle. The National Cycle Route 1 passes through Medway, including a traffic free section along the Medway estuary and through Riverside Country Park.
- 3.2.13 In recent years Medway has invested £2.5 million in cycling. It has created on-road cycle paths that make it easier to cycle safely get to places like Gillingham Business Park, Strood Retail Park, Rainham High Street and St Mary's Island. There are also schemes prepared to improve existing shared cycle and pedestrian footways in the district. Medway also promotes Living Street's International Walk to School Month (October) and Sustrans Bike to School week.
- 3.2.14 The Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan sets out priorities for improvements across the network and tackling barriers to cycling.

Current challenges

Audits of the existing and proposed walking and cycling network has highlighted a range of issues and challenges we will try to address over time.

This has highlighted a range of challenges for both walking and cycling.



Public Rights of Way

3.2.15 Public rights of way are a free and accessible resource. There are public rights of way across the whole of Medway in both the countryside and rural areas.

3.2.16 There are approximately 186 miles of public rights of way in Medway. There are four types – footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways. All of these can be used by pedestrians. Cyclists and equestrians can use bridleways, restricted byways and byways, and these can form useful links in the active travel network.

3.2.17 There is a section of the North Downs Way National Trail within Medway. The King Charles III England Coastal Path from Grain to Woolwich opened in 2021 and has the status of a national trail, with this section forming part of the Thames Path National Trail linking the 'source to sea' Thames route. The 160 mile Saxon Shore Way trail, which follows the former Roman coastline through Kent to East Sussex, enters Medway near Cliffe, then passes across the Hoo Peninsula, before following the Medway estuary to Rochester and through Riverside Country Park. Medway Council has also produced shorter promoted routes.

3.2.18 Medway's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP) recognises the importance of public rights of way for many people, including those with mobility impairments and health needs. The ROWIP sets out the priorities for improving rights of way to meet the needs of the public, now and in the future.

3.2.19 The main priorities of the ROWIP are to support health and wellbeing, improve accessibility, increase active travel and improve information:

- Protect the network and maintain it in the best condition possible, prioritising safety and areas of greatest need. This includes maintaining the network, clearing obstructive or dangerous vegetation and keeping structures in good condition. Priority paths are those in and near urban areas, well-used paths and those linking town and countryside;
- Ensure that the network evolves to meet current and future needs and that connectivity for all users is improved;
- Ensure that access improvements are strategically planned to meet Medway's needs including larger-scale strategic projects where necessary;
- Ensure that housing growth is positive and has no detrimental effect on public rights of way, and that improvements to public rights of way are secured through new development, including new multiuser, high quality routes and that urban and countryside areas are linked;
- Create and improve the connections of 'higher status' routes for equestrians and cyclists;
- Provide new promotional resources which support residents in accessing their public rights of way, the visitor economy, people with disabilities or other under-represented users. Routes to be promoted in in urban and rural areas to support a wide range of users
- Support more people with disabilities and under-represented groups in accessing public rights of way. Improve understanding barriers and work with partners to carry out physical and promotional improvements;
- Support improved health and wellbeing through improving accessibility and working with health walks and public health partners.

Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- There is a supply of accessible greenspace across urban Medway, although some areas are lacking particular types of space;
- There is less greenspace in the densely populated areas of Gillingham South, Rochester East, Strood North, Rainham Central, Chatham Central, Rainham South, Walderslade and Princes Park;
- Due to the large urban population, many sites have high use. Some sites attract visitors from further afield than would be expected for a site of their size, indicating a high demand.
- Pressures on greenspace will increase due to the increase in population. It is important that adequate greenspace, active travel links and upgrades to public rights of way area provided and that these are maintained to a high standard;
- Safety is an important consideration for users and some urban sites suffer from anti-social behaviour issues. Overgrown areas, poor sight lines, vandalism and litter can increase perceptions of lack of safety;
- There remains pressure on resources for greenspace and public rights of way maintenance due to ongoing strain on local government resources. Lack of

maintenance, alongside obvious vandalism and neglect have been shown to deter people from using open spaces;

- The two country parks, Capstone and Riverside, attract high numbers of visitors from Medway and beyond. However, most people need to drive to these sites and they do not fulfil the need for local greenspace for most people;
- There is a good supply of cycle routes, but most of these are shared with traffic. Greenways and traffic-free routes are important to encourage less-experienced cyclists.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

Ensure that greenspace provision keeps pace with population growth and provides for Medway's future residents

- Ensure that greenspace provision meets the standards set out in Medway's Local Plan and, in addition to this, that development delivers high quality greenspace provision to meet the needs of new residents, with no net loss.
- Manage greenspaces to ensure that they can accommodate high levels of visits, providing infrastructure and maintenance to meet high demand.
- Seek new greenspace in areas where there is a deficit.
- Where development is taking place, ensure that public rights of way are improved and, where possible, provide multi-user routes and new connections.
- Invest in public rights of way, particularly those linking town and countryside, to ensure they are accessible to a wide range of people.
- Plan strategically to ensure accessible greenspace, cycle routes, walkable spaces and public rights of way are connected, especially in areas of development, so that opportunities are not lost and gains are delivered.

Support increased active travel, to relieve congestion and air pollution and encourage healthy living through a strategic cycle network and walking routes.

- Make civic spaces more accessible and welcoming using green infrastructure to encourage people to walk and cycle.
- Integrate green infrastructure into new masterplanning in ways that promote active travel, recreation and leisure, and support community and social engagement.
- Ensure urban public rights of way are more fully utilised, keeping them clear from flytipping, signing them and upgrading for cycling use where possible.
- Implement more cycling routes.
- Develop urban promoted walking trails.
- Seek greenways and traffic-free routes where possible.

Prioritise improving access to greenspace and creating greener communities in areas of deprivation or where there is poor or unequal access.

- Ensure improvements are carefully planned with local consultation to provide equitable and sustainable benefits and to understand the actual and potential local benefits of greenspace.
- Ensure greenspace includes thoughtful and inclusive physical design, to deliver multiple outcomes to attract different population groups.

3.3 Blue Infrastructure and the Coast

- 3.3.1 Blue infrastructure in its many forms is an important feature of Medway district. Water has determined the location of the Medway towns, with water the driving force for the location of settlements and industry. Water has shaped, and continues to shape, the heritage and character of the landscape. The wild and open landscape, with its extensive salt marshes, ditches, fleets and reedbeds are an iconic landscape of the Hoo Peninsula. This area is outstanding for its biodiversity, as outlined previously).
- 3.3.2 Water makes Medway district particularly outstanding for biodiversity. Over half (55%) of Kent's river and stream habitats and 13% of its standing water are found in Medway and Kent's largest saline lagoon habitat is at Cliffe on the Hoo Peninsula.
- 3.3.3 Medway Council's River Strategy aims to bring together river stakeholders to improve the river offer through four themes; Sporting & Leisure, Natural Environment & Habitats, Tourism, Arts, Culture & Events and Business & Economy. The River Strategy will explore how existing infrastructure of piers, wharves and river access points can be improved to create strategic docking areas to support river tour operators and use of the river as potential public transport links.

The River Medway

- 3.3.4 The River Medway is the most prominent blue infrastructure feature of Medway. The river rises in Sussex 70 miles from the mouth of the Medway at Sheerness and passes through areas of outstanding natural beauty and the towns of Tonbridge and Maidstone before finishing its journey to the Thames in Medway district. All of the river through Medway is tidal. The river has immense biodiversity and historical importance. It has been an artery for trade and commerce using the river for transport as well as Chatham Dockyard being a key military industrial complex for nearly 400 years, employing significant numbers of local people before closing in 1984.
- 3.3.5 At the southern extent, where the river enters Medway district to the south of Halling, the river winds through a broad valley carved through the North Downs. The river gradually widens through Rochester until Upnor, where the Medway expands to a wide estuary. In these reaches are saltmarshes and mudflats, interspersed with many islands. This area is particularly rich in wildlife, and also important for its heritage features. Features and priorities for the river are explored in further detail in the River Medway Priority Area.

Pools and Lakes from Medway's Industrial Heritage

- 3.3.6 The legacy of quarrying and digging for minerals has left a legacy of pools and lakes. Chalk was quarried in many places to support the cement industry of the 19th and early 20th centuries which was booming along most of the Medway estuary. On the Hoo Peninsula, clay was excavated to support the cement industry. Cliffe Pools is a series of fresh pools and saline lagoons

formed from former clay diggings and depositions of river dredgings. Since 2001 the area has been owned by the RSPB and is now a reserve with public access. The site is renowned for wading birds, with large flocks moving in from the Thames estuary at high tide. It also supports many passage birds as well as breeding avocets, redshanks, lapwings and ringed plover.



- 3.3.7 St Andrew's Lake near Halling is also a well-known feature. The lake has developed in a former chalk quarry and has crystal clear bright blue water due to the suspension of tiny chalk particles in the water.
- 3.3.8 At St Mary's Island, to the north of Chatham, are three dockyard basins. There is a long a rich heritage in this area, with the island having been used for many purposes, including defence and housing prisoners. The basins were created in the late 1800's by driving piles into the marsh. Since the area was redeveloped the basins are used for watersports and as a marina.

The Coast

- 3.3.9 Medway has an extensive coastline of over 36 miles including the Thames. Along the northern edge of the Hoo Peninsula the coast is the outer part of the tidal Thames Estuary. The shoreline is protected through sea defences and walls, with grazing marsh on the low-lying land beyond. At the eastern extent of the Hoo Peninsula, at the Isle of Grain, the coastline becomes the Medway Estuary. The outer estuary is broad, with many islands, becoming narrower through the Medway towns and inland.
- 3.3.10 In some areas natural areas of beaches, saltmarshes and mudflats remain. Maintaining the current defence lines within the estuary will result in increased instances of 'coastal squeeze' – the reduction in area of these important habitats as sea levels rise. With high rates of sea level rise and low rates of sediment supply intertidal saltmarsh and mudflat habitats may suffer erosion where defences or high land constrain the landward movement of the shoreline.
- 3.3.11 The management of Medway's coastline is covered in two Shoreline Management Plans (SMP) – for the Medway Estuary and for the Isle of Grain alongside the Medway and Swale Strategy Study. In some areas the policy is

to maintain flood defences to protect important structures and infrastructure. In other places the policy is to allow managed retreat.



Beach near St Mary Hoo

Medway Estuary and Swale Strategy

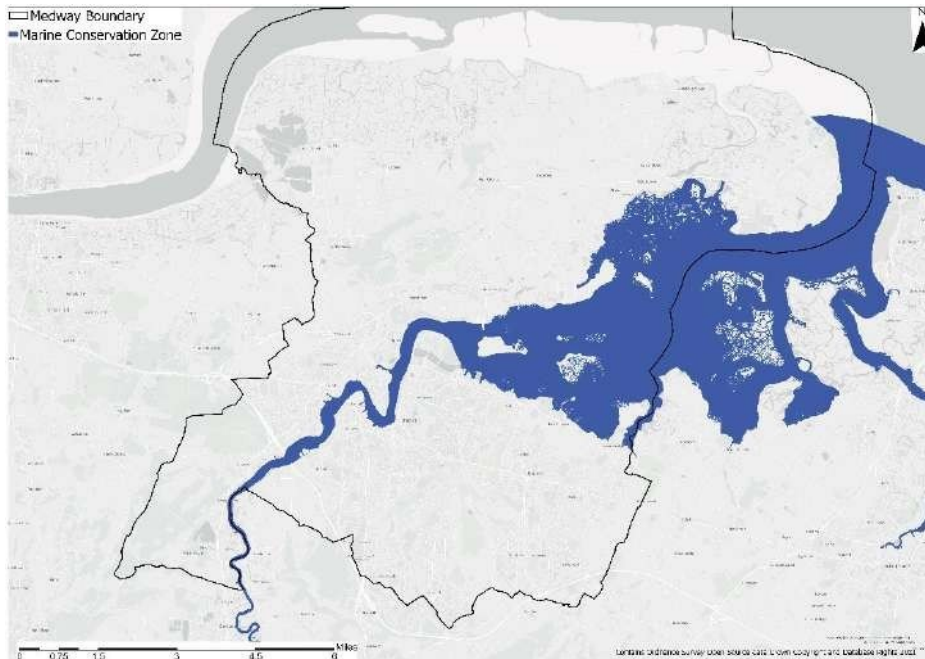
3.3.12 The SMP provide the strategic, long-term approach to managing the coastal flood erosion risk, setting policies such as “hold the line” or “manage realignment” based on sustainability and climate change projections. Building on this, the Medway Estuary and Swale Strategy (MEASS) Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategy (FCERMS) translate these high-level SMP policies into more detailed, short- to medium-term actions, identifying specific interventions to manage tidal flood risk, maintain or adapt defences, and support habitat creation where realignment is proposed. Together these documents are critical for guiding spatial planning decisions, ensuring development aligns with future change, and balancing flood risk management with environment objectives.

Medway Estuary Marine Conservation Zone

3.3.13 The inshore Medway Estuary Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) covers the single tidal system with the Swale to the east and includes everything to mean high water. Within the MCZ there is a complex and dynamic ecosystem. The mix of fresh and sea waters, combined with the tidal movement, create changing levels of salinity and nutrients providing a fertile environment for

wildlife, particularly invertebrates, fish and birds. It is surrounded by low lying intertidal areas of saltmarsh and mudflat, which are conserved under other designations. The site has been designated due to the presence of the tentacled lagoon-worm and estuarine rocky habitats and intertidal rock features which are rare within the South East.

Medway Estuary Marine Conservation Zone



Salt Fleet Flats Reserve

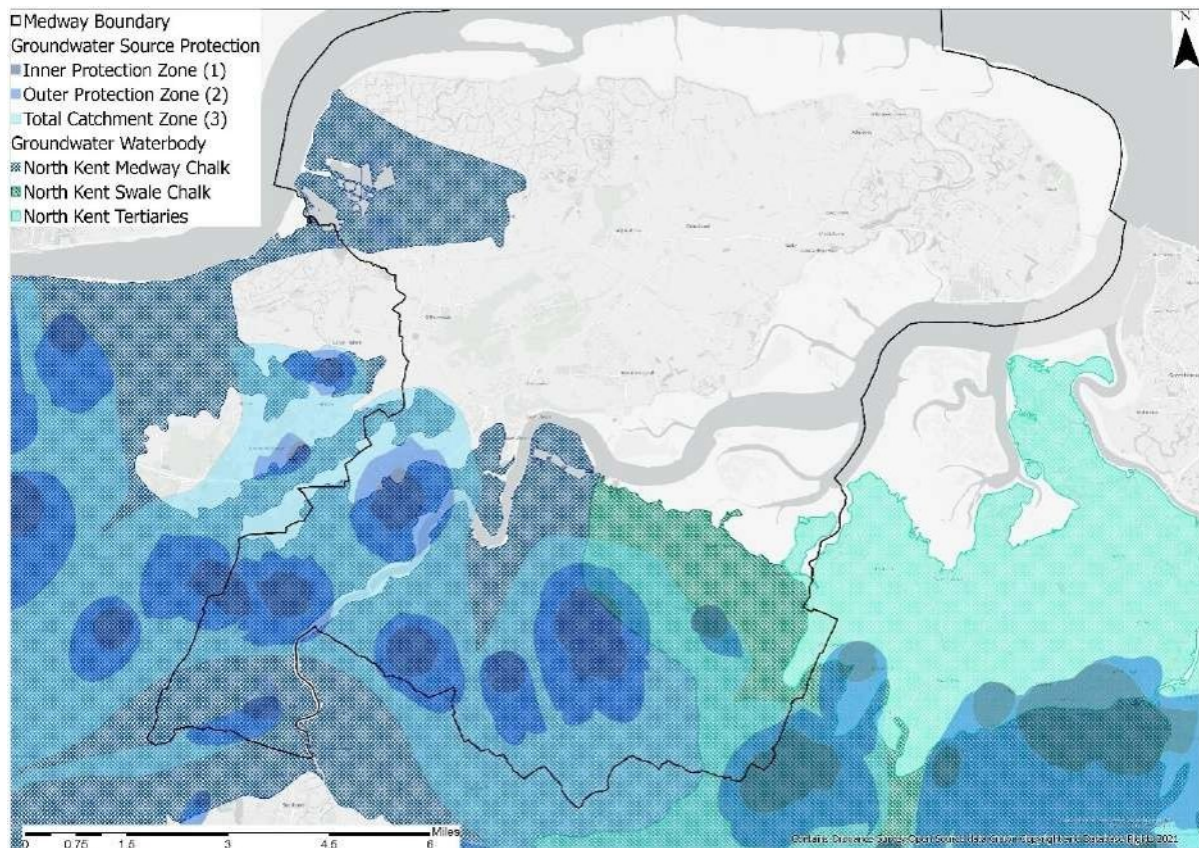
3.3.14 Salt Fleet Flats on the north coast of the Hoo Peninsula is an area of managed retreat. Around 700 m of the sea wall was breached and an inland wall of 2.4 km constructed to create new habitat as compensation for the London Gateway Port development. Around 65 hectares of habitat were created for wildlife, comprising mudflats and saltmarsh.



Water Resources

3.3.15 Surface and groundwater water quality is vitally important for water supply, general amenity, recreation, fisheries and nature conservation supporting domestic, industrial and agricultural uses. In Medway there are several groundwater sources that are predominantly in the urban area and Medway Valley. These are highlighted via the Environment Agency Groundwater Source Protection Zones that aim to protect the water quality of groundwater sources.

Groundwater Waterbodies and Groundwater Source Protection Zones



3.3.16 Lying under Medway is the principal chalk aquifer of the North Downs. Groundwater source protection extend across the aquifer to protect sources of water. These zones help to protect the precious aquifer from pollution, such as petrol or soakaways from septic tanks.

3.3.17 Drinking water is supplied by a mixture of groundwater and rivers. Use of water has an impact on aquatic ecosystems. There is a need to protect water source and limit water use.

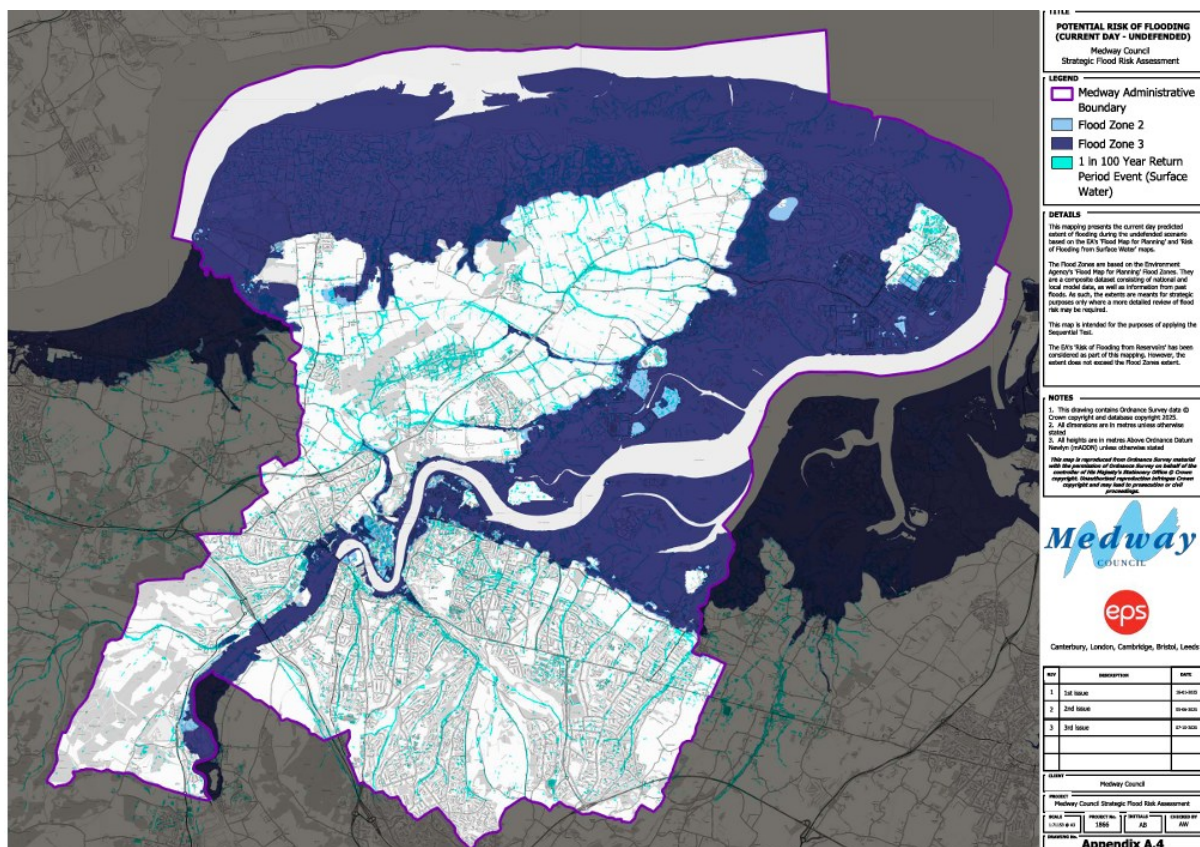
3.3.18 Medway is an area of serious water stress as identified by the Environment Agency. Southern Water and Southeast Water are the statutory water suppliers in Medway. There is a shared interest in the protection of groundwater supplies and the efficient use of resources.

Flood and Water Management

3.3.19 Medway communities are at risk of flooding from a number of sources, including tidal and surface water flooding, as well as flooding from groundwater, streams and ditches. A national assessment of surface water flood risk indicates that Medway is one of 116 communities throughout England which is considered to be at significant risk of surface water flooding.⁵¹ Currently, tidal flood risk infrastructure provides a varying level of protection to the areas of ecological importance across the low-lying land in the north of Medway, and the strategically important towns situated along the tidal River Medway.

3.3.20 Current UK projections for future climate change indicate that there will be more frequent short duration high intensity rainfall and more frequent periods of long duration rainfall.

3.3.21 The Council has prepared a [Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#) to inform work on the new Local Plan.



Sustainable Urban Drainage Schemes (SuDs)

3.3.22 Sustainable Drainage Schemes are a way of managing surface water flood risk. The surface water can be managed by using green spaces to capture water in natural features like swales, ponds, tree pits and rain gardens to

allow it to soak into the ground or be evaporated. This reduces the need for traditional piped drainage networks to be used to manage surface water within the built environment. SuDs can also be multi-functional and, if designed properly, can provide amenity value, reduce the impacts of climate change, and create spaces for nature.

- 3.3.23 Green infrastructure is recognised as one of the key assets used for implementing or retrofitting SuDs. An increased frequency of intense rainfall events, combined with a drainage network that quickly reaches capacity, will lead to more frequent flooding, but by allowing surface water, which would normally enter this network, to discharge into green space will help to reduce the risk of flooding.
- 3.3.24 New development could incorporate SuDs schemes that are integral to the GI provided, including providing a management and maintenance plan that will improve the water quality by removing pollutants and putting clean water back into the environment. Plants and vegetation will help provide essential food and habitat for local wildlife, and benefit biodiversity overall. The Council provides [technical guidance on SuDs](#) applications and discharging drainage conditions on development.
- 3.3.25 However, new development forms only a small part of the current urban areas. If retrofit SuDs can be incorporated into existing developed areas, then the opportunities for delivering sustainable solutions that offer multiple benefits will be much greater.
- 3.3.26 There are many opportunities for taking a different approach to managing surface water that fits into the current urban landscape, whilst also addressing the issues of flood risk and water quality management. SuDS are known to be more adaptable and flexible than traditional solutions, allowing future modification to cope with climate and other changes in urban areas.
- 3.3.26 Retrofitting SuDS can potentially help solve some of the flooding risks and water quality problems that may be faced in Medway, now and in the future. Such measures provide a more joined up approach to managing surface water across wider areas, supporting the water cycle as a whole, helping to green urban areas and generating multiple benefits in-line with an ecosystem's services approach.
- 3.3.27 Planning SuDs that are an integral part of future green infrastructure is key to the success of future development, including arrangements for maintenance – which needs to be understood and planned in the early design stages.

Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- National Planning Policy expects Local Plans to account for water management via the consideration of flood risk, coastal change, climate change, water quality, water supply and wastewater.
- Medway is at risk of flooding from a number of sources, including tidal and surface water flooding, as well as flooding from groundwater, streams and ditches
- Current UK projections for future climate change indicate that there will be more frequent short duration high intensity rainfall and more frequent periods of long duration rainfall. Climate change is also expected to bring hotter, drier summers alongside wetter winters but not necessarily in tandem.⁵²
- Summer droughts are also likely to be more frequent alongside an increased risk of flooding. This combined with increased demand from development requires a proactive approach to the management of these risks via the planning system.
- Wetland biodiversity and habitats are at greater threat from climate change impacts than other habitats.
- An increased population will lead to demand for water.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

Incorporate SuDS schemes into new development and retrofit into existing green infrastructure where such an approach is appropriate to help address flooding issues.

- Integrate SuDS into the design of new green infrastructure rather than a separate feature and consider and include future maintenance of the system in the early stages of SuDS design.
- SuDS should be designed to be multi-functional to support biodiversity and amenity uses. Look at ways in which SuDS can be retrofitted into existing open space can be retrofitted to alleviate surface water flooding in problem areas.
- Community consultation should be undertaken when retrofitting SuDS.

Protect water resources and protect and enhance the biodiversity value of water and wetland habitats.

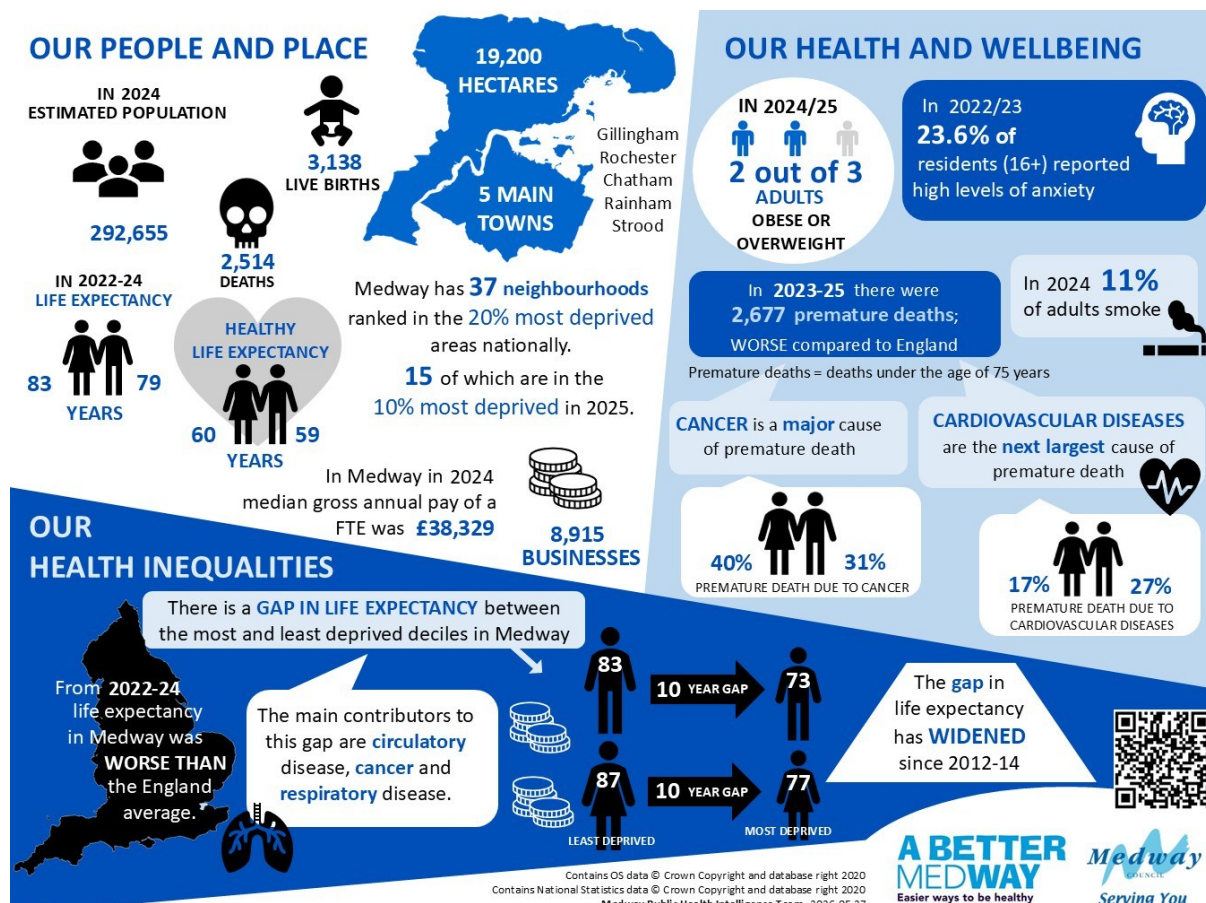
- Enhance the biodiversity of wetland features of the Medway and Swale estuaries and other wetland features of Medway through working with partners and landowners.
- Ensure water recreation, and enhanced access to the riverside are balanced with biodiversity interest.
- Engage people with Medway's outstanding wetland, riverine, marine and coastal wildlife to increase knowledge and action to protect these environments.
- Support actions to reduce water consumption.

3.4 Health and Wellbeing

- 3.4.1 Poor health not only has a negative impact on individuals, it also incurs a cost to society. This is through both the direct costs of health care and in reduced economic outputs due to, for example, lower employee productivity and higher absence rates. Poor health can also lead to early mortality, and physical inactivity is associated with 1 in 6 deaths in the UK.
- 3.4.2 Being physically active is strongly linked to better health and wellbeing. There is an established causal link between physical activity and many chronic health conditions, including coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes and mental health problems. Walking in particular has been described as “*the nearest activity to perfect exercise*”, being the easiest, most accessible and cost-effective way for most people to increase their physical activity.
- 3.4.3 Access to and physical activity in the natural environment also has a greater impact on mental health, with exercise in all types of green environment bringing improvements in self-esteem, positive mood and anxiety levels.

Medway's Health and Wellbeing

- 3.4.4 The infographics below summarise Medway's health and wellbeing statistics and inequalities.



3.4.5 Medway's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JSNA) aims to “ensure everyone in Medway lives a long, healthy, and happy life” through making Medway a place where help is easily available, places are connected and where people have a seamless journey between services.

3.4.6 Key priorities from this strategy of relevance to this strategy are:

- Healthier and longer lives for everyone: people in Medway are supported to live healthy, long and happy lives, and value selfcare.
- Safe, connected and sustainable places: People and organisations work together to create a sustainable, clean and a green environment; green spaces can be accessed and used by all; and people feel safe in their neighbourhood.

A Marmot Place

3.4.7 Medway is starting an exciting journey to becoming a [Marmot Place](#). Marmot Places are communities committed to reducing health inequalities and helping everyone live a longer and healthier life.

3.4.8 Health is not just about doctors and genetics. It's shaped by things including clean air and access to open spaces. The Marmot Review states that the fair distribution of health, wellbeing and sustainability are important social goals. These are influenced by a wide range of factors, one of which is the environment. The review recognises the importance of good quality greenspace in tackling health inequality. However, the availability and quality of access to greenspace is not evenly distributed, with those in deprived urban areas often having less access. In addition, health and wellbeing have historically been poorly integrated with spatial planning. This leads to the creation of places which do not support people in improving their health through regular activity, or places which contribute to poor health through high levels of road pollution.

Introduction of Active Parks

3.4.9 Active Parks, as an internal accreditation, are aimed at maximising the value of Medway's open spaces in supporting physical activity, health, and wellbeing.

3.4.10 Active Parks are spaces that are intentionally designed and programmed to encourage residents to be more physically active through a combination of accessible facilities, natural environments, and inclusive opportunities. They provide a mix of formal sports provision, informal recreation, and organised activity programmes, enabling people of all ages and abilities to be active within their local community.

3.4.11 The approach aligns with the Medway One Plan by supporting the ambition to help residents “get active” and lead healthier lives. It also contributes to the

Medway Health and Wellbeing Strategy, with a strong focus on prevention, improving mental and physical health outcomes, and enabling independent, healthier lifestyles.

3.4.12 Active Parks play a key role in tackling health inequalities by ensuring that free or low-cost opportunities for activity are available locally, particularly in areas where residents may face barriers to participation. The approach reflects the Marmot Place-based Principles, recognising the importance of high-quality, inclusive environments in shaping health outcomes and supporting healthier communities.

3.4.13 By identifying and developing a network of Active Parks, Medway Council can better target investment, improve infrastructure, and enhance programming across its greenspaces. This will help create vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable community spaces that promote activity, wellbeing, social connection, and pride in place.

Air Quality in Medway

3.4.14 The impact of air quality upon health is unquestionable. Long and short term exposure to poor air quality can have health impacts ranging from premature death due to cardiovascular disease and lung cancer, aggravation of asthma and other allergic illnesses, and reduced quality of life. Approximately 5% of all deaths in Medway are attributable to long-term exposure to particulate air pollution (PM2.5).

3.4.15 The Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership provides strategic direction across the county and has a health and communications subgroup which provides advice on the health implications of air pollution. Medway Council's Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP), describes the air quality assessment process in Medway, identifies the role of traffic in the current picture and also sets out a range of transport-focussed measures to improve air quality.

3.4.16 The latest AQAP for Medway updates recommendations to improve air quality in Central Medway and Four Elms Air Quality Management Areas to work towards meeting the national air quality objective for the protection of human health.

3.4.17 Carefully positioned green infrastructure that incorporates the right type of vegetation, separates people from pollution by introducing barriers and extends the distance between the pollution source and individuals is known to make a difference for acute and chronic air pollution exposure.

3.4.18 Where possible road and pavement layouts, should incorporate urban greening schemes, and providing active travel routes through greenspace all helping to reduce exposure to air pollution, improve health and reduce health inequalities.

Green Infrastructure to Support Health and Wellbeing - Active Travel and Healthy Lifestyles

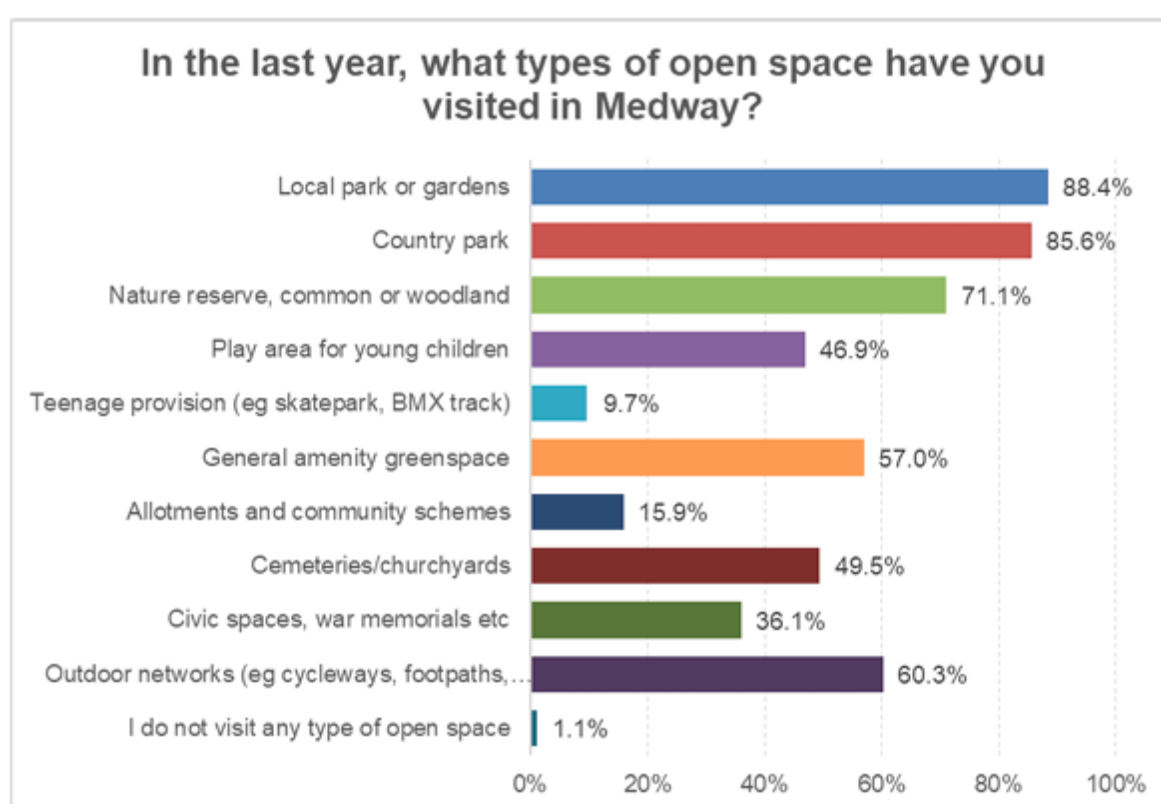
- 3.4.19 Active travel allows people to be physically active as part of their daily lives, bringing health and wellbeing benefits as well as saving money and reducing the need to find additional time for exercise. It helps both the environment and health through reducing air pollution and outputs of climate change gases. It can not only help reduce congestion in urban areas it may also provide a quicker journey than by motor vehicle. Investment in active travel also makes economic sense, with a high benefit to cost ratio for many schemes.
- 3.4.20 People could get most of the exercise they need by walking or cycling short, everyday journeys. Feedback from Kent residents and organisations shows that the main reasons for not using active travel to make these short journeys are a perceived lack of suitable continuous routes between homes and community services, workplaces or schools, and not enough promotion of existing routes. Other issues include a lack of facilities, such as lockers and secure bicycle parking, obstacles in cycle lanes and footways, and concerns over safety.
- 3.4.21 However, a well-designed, accessible environment can encourage people to walk or cycle, and people cycle more when there is cycle infrastructure and separation from traffic. Therefore, making it easier for people to walk, cycle, scoot or wheel their way to their destination is not only the greenest option, but one that brings significant physical and mental health benefits. Streets are also more welcoming for all users with seating areas, plants, cycle parking or other community facilities.
- 3.4.22 The Council's work, including Transport, Planning and Public Health services promotes sustainable travel. Medway Health Walks, now also known as Ramblers Wellbeing Walks in Medway are a community-led initiative designed to promote physical and mental wellbeing through accessible group walking activities across the Medway area. Other projects also include Nordic Walking and self-guided walks which are available on our website:
<https://explorekent.org/explore-medway/>
- Explore Medway is the go-to website to discover Medway's award-winning green spaces, historic landmarks, outdoor activities, and much more. The website makes it easy for residents and visitors alike to explore everything the area has to offer and plan their next outdoor activity.*
- 3.4.23 Cycling and Medway Cycle Group: Medway's Active Travel Coordinator has developed several cycling projects including volunteer led cycling groups and the "on yer bike" programme for adults to learn to cycle. The Active Medway Cycling Projects, delivered as part of Medway Council's wider active travel programme, aims to promote healthier lifestyles through community-based

cycling initiatives. These initiatives include led cycling groups, Learn to Ride sessions, Learn to Fix workshops, and Dr Bike maintenance events, all designed to provide participants with opportunities to improve their physical activity levels, develop their cycling confidence, and gain practical knowledge in cycle maintenance

Access to Greenspace

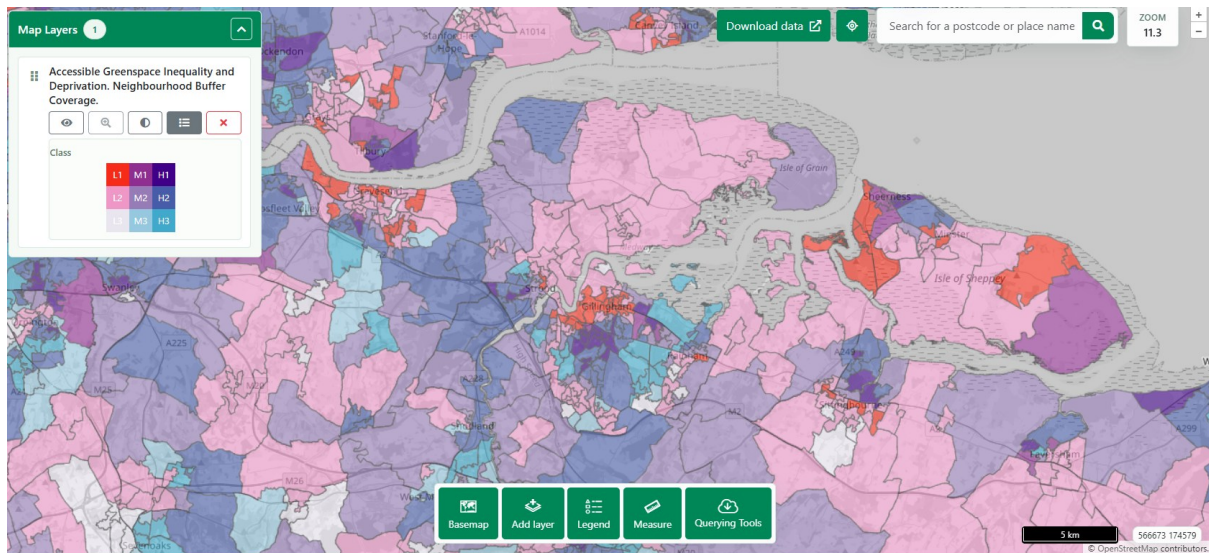
3.4.24 The [Natural England People and Nature Surveys](#) for England report on engagement with the natural environment and barriers. The [Medway Open Spaces Study, 2024](#) collected information on how people used greenspaces across Medway.

Figure 3.1.1: Types of open spaces visited in the last year



3.4.25 The study provides information on accessibility to different types of greenspaces across Medway. There is notable variation, with many areas having some deficiencies in parks and gardens, and a more mixed picture against other typologies. Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework sets an [Accessible Greenspace Standard](#).

3.4.26 Natural England's Green Infrastructure mapping shows marked variations in accessible green space across Medway.



3.4.27 People living with disabilities also have access needs. This can be physical improvements, such as additional seating or handrails, or more information on how accessible places are. Disability will affect many people during their lifetime. Only 17% of disabled people were born with their impairment. The majority of disabled people acquire their disability later in life, with 44% of pension age adults being disabled. It is important that open spaces and public rights of way are made as accessible as possible so that people can benefit from the health and wellbeing gains from being outdoors, throughout their lives and no matter what form of disability they may be living with.

Allotments and Community Growing Spaces

3.4.28 Allotments not only provide green havens, often in urban areas, they provide important greenspaces for accessing nature and healthy exercise. Out of 38 allotments in Medway, 28 are owned and managed by Medway Council, 9 owned and managed by Parish Councils and one owned by a trust. Overall provision is 14.26 plots per 1,000 households, which is below the recommended 20 plot per 1,000 household standard⁴⁰ (but higher than many neighbouring authorities). Provision of plots is highest in Gillingham and lowest in Chatham and Rainham.

3.4.29 Other types of community growing space provide greenspace and a place to bring communities together. There is a growing interest in community gardens and community orchards. The Kent Biodiversity Strategy has the target to increase traditional orchards by 67 hectares across Kent. The old nursery site at Cozenton Park in Rainham has been developed into a community tree nursery and will have a community garden and small allotment plots. The council is looking at the feasibility of creating other new allotment sites too, as well as expecting major developments to be providing new allotment sites as part of their on-site open space provision.

Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- Some areas of poor health also have low levels of greenspace;
- There is a good supply of greenspace across Medway but not all of this space is accessible. Access to some spaces is limited due to terrain, perceptions of safety and lack of infrastructure.
- Medway, in line with the rest of England, has an ageing population. This will mean more people have health needs, mobility issues and will be living with disability.
- Active lifestyles and healthy eating must be reinforced by ensuring that there are good quality opportunities in the natural environment which can be carried through to old age.
- Medway has significantly higher rates of obesity than the England average, and marked health inequalities
- Evidence shows that spending time in nature is also good for mental wellbeing. Medway has a range of good quality green spaces, such as Capstone Farm Country Park, Riverside Country Park and Great Lines Heritage Park. These should be invested in for the future, along with other local green spaces.
- Investing in Green and Blue Infrastructure will ensure that the health and wellbeing challenges faced in Medway can be better supported, especially if they are informed by local health data, the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment and the Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

Providing access to green infrastructure close to home and which is inclusive for all.

- Plan strategically for a reduced car Medway – planning strategically to link public rights of way, cycle routes and greenspaces.
- Ensure that greenspace is provided by new development so that everyone has access to greenspace close to home, following the council's policy standards and NE's Green Infrastructure Framework.
- Maximise appropriate access to the riverside, mindful of sensitivities, with improved access to and along this route, as this has the potential to provide a level and attractive linear route for all abilities.
- Use green infrastructure in civic spaces and urban streets to make these places more attractive for walking and cycling, improving health and reducing car travel.
- Make routes and spaces as accessible as possible.
- Link town with countryside through improved routes and public rights of way.

- Time spent in ‘blue space’ – near water – has also been found to improve mental and physical health. Improve appropriate access to these resources in Medway.
- Embed green and blue infrastructure into regeneration plans and cultural programmes and strategies.

Support people in taking healthy exercise.

- Update and revise promoted routes using public rights of way in both urban and rural areas, providing more information on accessibility.
- Improve routes which are used by Medway Health Walks.
- Continue to support Medway Health Walks and the Medway Cycling Projects.
- Work with partners to understand better the specific needs of those with mobility or other disabilities.
- Create more spaces to support community growing – allotment facilities, gardens, edible trails and green walls and educate and support residents in utilising these.

Initiate local evidence-informed research to understand the impact that accessible greenspace has on local health outcomes, especially for disadvantaged groups.

- Support meaningful engagement to understand why some communities do not use greenspace, even when it is relatively close, to reveal the complex and diverse ways greenspace is thought about and used.
- Monitor and evaluate local changes in access to greenspace, in conjunction with health data over time, to understanding of what works, for whom and how.
- Establish interventions, such as green social prescribing initiatives, that will support people who do not use greenspace to begin using it.

3.5 Landscape Character and Heritage

- 3.5.1 There are a wide range of different landscape types in Medway - coastal marshes, chalk downland, orchards and shelter belts, largescale arable farmland and extensive tracts of woodland. It also includes landscapes that are strongly influenced by the built development. The diverse landscape character underpins Medway's green and blue infrastructure assets, providing its population a unique 'sense of place' in which to live, work and play.
- 3.5.2 To the north of the Medway towns is the Hoo Peninsula, a large finger of land surrounded by the Thames and Medway estuaries. South of the Medway towns, the landscape slopes gently upwards to the North Downs, with a distinct valley where the River Medway cuts through the North Downs.
- 3.5.3 This unique topography of hills, valleys, woodland, rivers and salt marsh has sustained life in the area for millennia - the earliest known settlement is evidenced through the early-Neolithic chambered long barrows of the lower Medway Valley, dating to around 4,000 BC.
- 3.5.4 Medway's location on the rivers Medway and Thames provided the basis for the first settlements. The deep-water, mud-banked River Medway allowed the repair and storage of ships, in turn supporting ports, wharves and industry, alongside the Royal Navy Dockyard and its fortifications, barracks and defensive structures.
- 3.5.5 The Medway and Thames rivers are engrained in the cultural heritage of Medway and have long been the lifeblood for settlement in the area, providing food, raw materials, transport, employment, leisure, artistic inspiration and even protection from invasion.
- 3.5.6 Medway benefits from a wealth of heritage assets, many of which are protected under designations including Listed Building, Scheduled Ancient Monument, Historic Parks and Garden, or are within a Conservation Area. Further information is available in the Medway [Heritage Asset Review](#).
- 3.5.7 Medway's heritage has an increasingly important role in supporting sustainable growth and stimulating regeneration. Integrating heritage assets into regeneration schemes has been shown to create popular, successful developments, bringing life back into under-performing or neglected areas.
- 3.5.8 The history of Medway has also shaped the landscape and green and blue infrastructure. Medway's industrial heritage, for example, has created many quarries which are now wetlands or lakes, historic piers providing access to the riverside and the fruit belt of the 'Garden of England'.
- 3.5.9 Due to the diverse topography in Medway where a number of valleys and a river characterise much of the area, a number of strategic viewpoints become apparent. These viewpoints highlight some of Medway's landmark buildings,

such as the Covered Slips in the Historic Dockyard, or the many historic churches (such as St Mary Magdalen in Gillingham, All Saints in Strood, Hoo St Werburgh, and St Margarets in Rochester) that occupy the higher ground in Medway. It is landmarks such as these that define much of the Medway's broad landscape and skyline, providing a unique and identifiable character.

Landscape Character

3.5.10 Landscape character underpins green and blue infrastructure planning. Green infrastructure actions and new green infrastructure needs to take account of the landscape character of the surroundings.

3.5.11 Three [National Character Assessment Areas](#) (NCAs) cover Medway - the Greater Thames Estuary (NCA 81), the North Kent Plain (NCA 113) and the North Downs (NCA119).

Greater Thames Estuary (NCA 81)

3.5.12 The Greater Thames Estuary NCA is a remote and tranquil landscape of shallow creeks, drowned estuaries, low-lying islands, mudflats, broad tracts of tidal salt marsh and reclaimed grazing marsh. Sea defences protect areas of reclaimed grazing marsh, its associated ancient fleet and ditch systems and productive arable farmland. Historic military landmarks are characteristic features of the coastal landscape.

The North Kent Plain (NCA 113)

3.5.13 The North Kent Plain NCA is the strip of land between the Thames Estuary to the north and the Kent Downs to the south. The area is a low and gently undulating, generally open landscape. Shelterbelts occur in the fruit-growing areas, but the agricultural land is mostly devoid of hedgerows, although there are some significant ancient woodlands. It is a very productive agricultural area with traditional orchards, soft fruits and other horticultural produce.

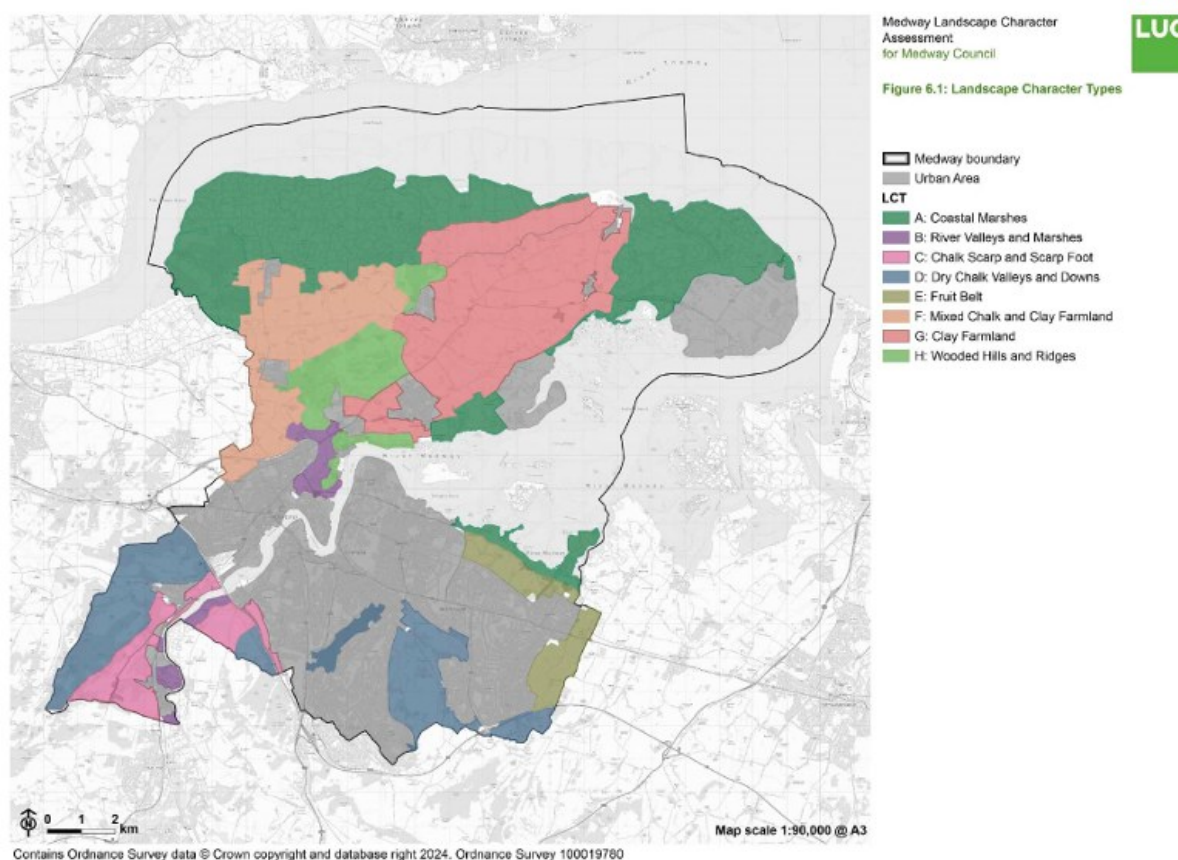
The North Downs (NCA 119)

3.5.14 The North Downs NCA chain of chalk hills stretches from Surrey to the White Cliffs of Dover. It is a landscape of small villages and scattered farms, of sunken lanes and ancient drove roads. Agriculture is important with many ancient woodlands.

3.5.15 An updated [Medway Landscape Character Assessment](#) was published in 2024. This forms part of the evidence base for the new Medway Local Plan and is used in advising on planning applications.

3.5.16 This study identified principal landscape character types, which were further detailed in landscape character areas for the assessment and recommendations for landscape management.

Figure 6.1: Landscape Character Types



Extract from Medway Landscape Character Assessment, 2024

Heritage

3.5.17 The Medway [Heritage Asset Review](#) details the distinctive aspects of Medway's heritage, including designated assets. The Council is also progressing work on non-designated local heritage asset list in collaboration with local stakeholders and communities.

3.5.18 There are many important heritage assets in Medway. Seen together in the wider landscape today, the presence of historic sites is marked by the surrounding green infrastructure, as it jostles with sprawling urban development. The loss of open uninterrupted meadows between military sites due to urbanisation has eroded the once impressive views of military presence along and above the River Medway. However, Chatham's distinguished history remains readable from vantage points in the urban landscape and townscape, in near, medium, and long-distance views. These vantage points are part of the green infrastructure network and have much to contribute to community placemaking and identity as well as biodiversity.

Military and Defence

3.5.19 Military and defensive structures have had an extremely important influence on the historic landscape in Medway. The earliest evidence of military occupation in Medway dates to the Roman invasion of England and subsequent settlement at Rochester in 43 AD. 1547 saw the arrival of the Royal Navy to the River Medway, when Chatham Dockyard was established. Chatham remained an important naval base and dockyard through to the late 20th century. Many forts were built in strategic places and now overlook or are set in important areas of greenspace. Many fortifications were constructed in the 19th century on the Hoo Peninsula, including Slough Fort, Grain Fort, Hoo Fort, Darnet Fort and Cliffe Fort. Nearby Cliffe Explosives Works is also a scheduled monument, now set in isolated and peaceful surroundings with views of the abandoned buildings and ruins. Other fortifications were land facing - Fort Darland, Fort Luton, Fort Horsted, Fort Bridgewood and Fort Borstal. These fortifications were positioned in a semi-circle on hilltops to oversee approaches at a distance of approximately 2 miles from Chatham Dockyard. Each fortification was surrounded by a large field of fire, kept clear to deny an approaching enemy of cover. Today, the Field of Fire at Great Lines is now part of a locally designated Heritage Park. It is valued as an open space with public access. The wide views it offers over Fort Amherst, Chatham town and the River Medway are of great landmark and scenic value. There are also many 20th Century defences, built for both the World Wars, such as pillboxes or gun emplacements, which are listed would also have had an open green or blue field of fire.



Historic Gardens

3.5.20 There are many historic parks and gardens in Medway. Kent Gardens Trust has reviewed around 30 historic parks and gardens in the Medway area to

assess their value and significance. Most of the gardens are situated in urban areas and many are open to the public.

3.5.21 Eastgate House in Rochester has several surviving features of the Arts and Crafts garden designed in the 1920s by the renowned architect, Sir Guy Dawber. There are several other designed and historic green spaces to the south of the centre of Rochester which provide relaxing places for the local community and a social and communal connection with the City's ecclesiastical history. Bishops Court Garden, for example, is built on raised ground and has extensive views to the River Medway and Rochester Castle. Jacksons Field (part of which is a Scheduled Monument), Fort Pitt Gardens and Victoria Gardens also contribute to the scenic quality of the wider area through the panoramic views they offer over the towns, the River Medway and beyond. Gillingham Park is a good example of an intact, surviving Edwardian Park layout in a style promoted by the influential 19th century horticulturalist and writer JC Loudon.

3.5.22 These gardens greatly contribute to the green infrastructure, urban fabric and local character and distinctiveness of Medway.

Historic Landscape Characterisation

3.5.23 Historic Landscape Characterisation (HLC) helps to define local distinctiveness and historic environment characteristics. Further information is provided in the Medway Heritage Asset Review. [Historic England's Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project](#) details the characteristics of this distinctive part of Medway.

Drivers of Change, Pressures and Threats

- Loss of the distinctive landscape character and biodiversity of the eastern Thames and Medway Marshes because of loss of inter-tidal areas and salt marsh;
- Loss of the distinctive landscape character of the North Kent Fruit Belt because of development, orchard loss, poor land management and changes of land use;
- Intensification of agricultural from the mid-20th Century resulted in the loss of hedgerows and woodland;
- Impact of new development on landscape character due to coalescence between rural settlements and new, hard, urban edges affecting character and local distinctiveness;
- Loss of local distinctiveness resulting from a move away from traditional farming land uses (e.g. orchards, pasture) and the introduction of intrusive elements relating to new land uses;
- Fragmentation of landscape and lack of connectivity because of infrastructure, such as pylons, power lines and roads, particularly on the Hoo Peninsula;

- Negative impact of new development on the setting of cultural assets, particularly in Conservation Areas, and the setting of Listed Buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments;
- Threat from new development to ancient woodland, including fragmentation and loss of woodland edge habitats and features;
- Loss of rural character of ancient lanes because of new patterns of settlement, increased vehicular usage, and insensitive signage;
- Loss of archaeological remains as a result of development or land management;
- New industrial complexes, pressure to increase housing provision and ancillary structures including roads and associated developments all form growing pressures on the character of the landscape. Such developments may be particularly visible within the flat landscape of the estuary;
- Tourism and formal recreation-related uses of the estuary and increasing visitor pressure may reduce the feeling of remoteness and wilderness in some areas;
- A requirement for increasing renewable energy generation could have an impact in Medway;
- Through climate change, sea level rise is likely to result in significant losses of salt marsh and other habitats through coastal squeeze, with increased pressure on coastal defence structures due to reduced wave attenuation by the salt marsh and pressure on active dynamic coastal processes;
- Climate change may result in changes to the type of crops which are grown and changes in land management in response to climate change, potentially having an impact on biodiversity and landscape character.

Needs, Opportunities and Priorities

Strengthen landscape character and ensure green and blue infrastructure enhances and fits with local landscape character.

- Protect transitional landscapes around urban fringe and built development from insensitive development and from urban– rural fringe activities that might erode distinctive character and degrade landscape condition.
- Creation of a strongly wooded landscape framework, with extensive broad leaved woodland planting in large blocks.
- The use of linear planting along roadsides to reduce the intrusion of traffic and the suburbanising influence of ribbon development, strong belts of woodland along major roads.
- The planting of hedgerows, shelter belts and small woods around the fringes of built areas, to reduce their visual intrusion and provide a strong landscape framework into which future development can be absorbed.
- Strengthening and reinforcement of natural features like watercourses as accessible green corridors linking built up areas with the wider countryside.

Open countryside, particularly on the fringes of urban areas has an important role to play in buffering, separating and protecting the local identity of different communities.

- Kent Fruit Belt and all areas of ancient woodland and chalk grassland. Retain a strong sense of local distinctiveness and rural character within countryside areas.
- Strengthen and reinforce landscape structure in urban–rural fringe areas and across the wider countryside. Ensure that the edges of new and existing urban and rural settlements blend comfortably with the surrounding countryside.
- Protect and enhance high quality landscapes along the Thames and Medway estuaries; the landscape of the North Downs; the traditional orchard and shelter belt field pattern of the Kent Fruit Belt.

Ensure heritage is recognised in green infrastructure planning and interpretation.

- Promote and enhance cultural heritage assets within rural and urban areas, and where appropriate enable multifunctional green infrastructure.
- Improve accessibility of cultural heritage sites through sustainable transport links and enhanced interpretation (where appropriate).
- Identify heritage which contributes to the urban fabric and local distinctiveness which can be used to guide future development.
- Identify and protect important viewpoints of heritage assets and ensure that the historic natural environment is respected and interpreted through new development.
- Protect distinctive and prominent landscape features; including views from the Thames and Medway estuaries and across the marshes; green backdrops, escarpments, wooded ridges and open farmed hills.

4. Medway-Wide Strategic Themes and Delivery Priorities

1. Nature Recovery

Protect, restore and expand Medway's network of habitats to support biodiversity recovery and strengthen ecological resilience.

Delivery priorities

- Deliver landscape-scale habitat creation and restoration across the Hoo Peninsula, Medway Estuary and wider countryside.
- Protect and enhance internationally and nationally important wildlife sites, including estuarine habitats, ancient woodland, chalk grassland and wetlands.
- Improve ecological connectivity through wildlife corridors, hedgerows, woodland belts, river corridors and green infrastructure networks.
- Support species recovery through habitat management for breeding waders, nightingales, pollinators and other priority species.
- Restore degraded land, including mineral sites and appropriate brownfield land, to create high-value habitats.
- Work with landowners, conservation organisations and neighbouring authorities to deliver the Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Biodiversity Net Gain objectives.

2. Climate Resilience

Use green and blue infrastructure to help Medway adapt to climate change while delivering environmental, social and economic benefits.

Delivery priorities

- Enhance natural flood management and integrate multifunctional SuDS within new and existing developments.
 - Protect and restore wetlands, floodplains and coastal habitats to improve water management and address coastal squeeze.
 - Increase tree canopy cover, urban greening and habitat creation to reduce urban heat impacts and improve climate resilience.
 - Improve hydrological management of marshes, rivers and wetlands.
 - Promote nature-based solutions that contribute to carbon sequestration and climate adaptation.
 - Ensure long-term stewardship and maintenance arrangements are embedded within green infrastructure delivery.
-

3. Access and Active Travel

Create a connected, inclusive and attractive network of green spaces, public rights of way and active travel routes.

Delivery priorities

- Improve access to existing greenspaces, particularly in areas of deficiency and deprivation.
 - Invest in public rights of way, bridleways, cycling routes and multi-user paths across both urban and rural Medway.
 - Strengthen connections between towns, waterfronts, countryside destinations, country parks and nature reserves.
 - Deliver strategic walking and cycling corridors linked to growth areas and regeneration projects.
 - Expand traffic-free routes, promoted trails and the King Charles III England Coast Path.
 - Improve accessibility, wayfinding and information so that routes and destinations can be enjoyed by a wider range of users.
-

4. Health and Wellbeing

Support healthier, more active and socially connected communities through high-quality green and blue infrastructure.

Delivery priorities

- Ensure all communities have access to high-quality greenspace close to home.
 - Design greenspaces to be inclusive, safe and welcoming to people of all ages and abilities.
 - Support outdoor recreation, informal leisure, play and opportunities for contact with nature.
 - Promote green social prescribing and initiatives that encourage people to use greenspaces.
 - Expand community growing opportunities including allotments, orchards, edible trails and community gardens.
 - Improve the quality and management of parks, country parks and natural greenspaces to meet growing visitor demand.
-

5. Place-Making and Regeneration

Use green and blue infrastructure as a fundamental component of sustainable growth, regeneration and high-quality placemaking.

Delivery priorities

- Integrate green and blue infrastructure into the planning, design and delivery of new development.
- Deliver greener town centres, waterfronts, public spaces and streets through regeneration programmes and masterplans.

- Create multifunctional networks that support biodiversity, recreation, climate resilience and active travel.
- Enhance urban public realm through tree planting, greening initiatives and blue infrastructure improvements.
- Ensure development contributes to connected green infrastructure networks and does not create barriers to movement.
- Use green infrastructure investment to support economic regeneration and create attractive places to live, work and visit.

6. Heritage and Landscape Character

Protect and celebrate Medway's distinctive landscapes, historic environment and cultural heritage through green and blue infrastructure.

Delivery priorities

- Conserve and enhance the distinctive character of the Hoo Peninsula, Medway Valley, Kent Downs and estuarine landscapes.
- Protect important views, skylines, river corridors and landscape features that contribute to local identity.
- Improve access to, understanding of and interpretation of heritage assets and cultural landscapes.
- Integrate heritage considerations into regeneration, development and green infrastructure projects.
- Promote opportunities for cultural engagement, tourism and learning linked to the natural and historic environment.
- Ensure new development responds positively to local landscape character and historic context.

Cross-Cutting Outcome

Together, these six themes will support the delivery of **a connected, climate-resilient, nature-rich Medway where all communities have access to high-quality green and blue infrastructure that enhances biodiversity, health, heritage, recreation and sustainable growth.**

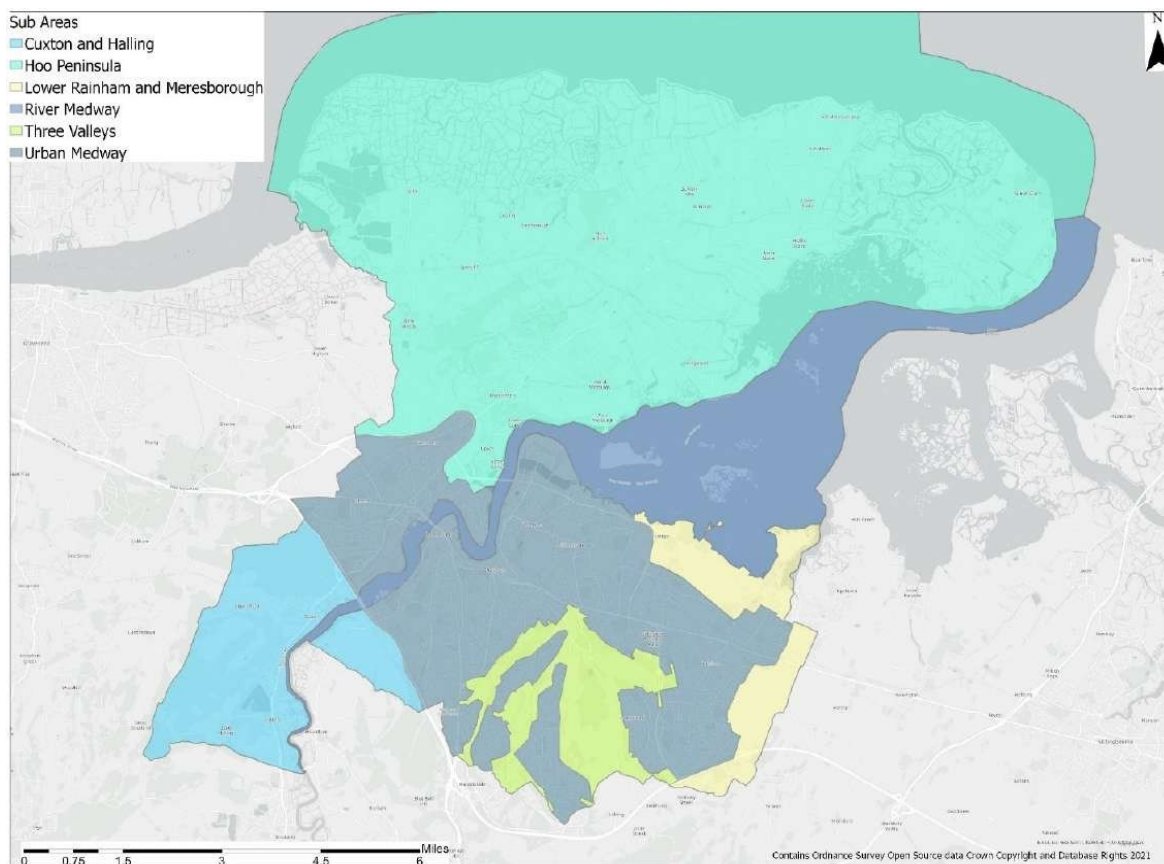
5. Area Priorities

To identify priorities, needs and actions at a more local level, Medway has been split into six areas. These areas have similarities in terms of characteristic or landscapes.

The six areas are shown in and are:

- Hoo Peninsula;
- Wider urban Medway; within which the following areas are examined in more detail:
 - Lower Rainham and Meresborough;
 - The three green corridors of Horsted Valley, Princes Park and Capstone valley;
- Medway Valley - Cuxton and Halling; and
- The River Medway.

Green and Blue Infrastructure Sub-Areas



5.1 Hoo Peninsula: Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure



- 5.1.1 The Hoo Peninsula functions as Medway's principal landscape-scale biodiversity and heritage asset. It provides a critical ecological corridor between the Thames and Medway estuaries, supports internationally important wildlife habitats, delivers opportunities for recreation and active travel, and safeguards a unique cultural landscape that contributes significantly to Medway's identity, environmental resilience and quality of life.
- 5.1.2 The Hoo Peninsula is one of Medway's most distinctive landscapes, defined by its position between the Thames and Medway estuaries and characterised by a striking contrast between internationally important coastal habitats, productive farmland, historic settlements, military heritage, industry and energy infrastructure. A central ridge of higher ground slopes towards extensive marshes and estuarine landscapes, creating a unique mosaic of open countryside, grazing marsh, mudflats, woodland, orchards and coastal habitats.
- 5.1.3 The peninsula is renowned for its sense of remoteness, tranquillity and expansive views. Large areas of open marshland, water, and estuary create dramatic landscapes of wide horizons and "big skies" that contribute significantly to Medway's natural character and identity. Historic villages, forts and castles sit alongside modern industrial facilities, reflecting a landscape shaped by both natural processes and centuries of human activity.
- 5.1.4 The area is internationally important for biodiversity. Its estuarine and coastal habitats support significant populations of overwintering and migratory birds, and there are wider key sites such as Cliffe Pools, Northward Hill and Chattenden Woods. The peninsula plays an important role within regional nature recovery networks and offers significant opportunities for habitat restoration, ecological connectivity and climate adaptation.
- 5.1.5 The landscape is equally rich in cultural heritage. Historic settlement patterns, medieval field systems, military fortifications and former industrial landscapes reveal the peninsula's long relationship with agriculture, defence, river trade and estuarine resources. The findings of the Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project highlight the importance of understanding and conserving these landscape patterns as the area continues to evolve.
- 5.1.6 The peninsula also provides some of Medway's most valuable recreational assets. Nationally significant routes including the King Charles III England Coast Path and Saxon Shore Way, together with local cycling and walking networks such as the Heron Trail, connect residents and visitors to the area's landscapes, heritage and wildlife. The developing Deangate Community Parkland, Grain Coastal Park and other accessible green spaces offer opportunities for recreation, health and wellbeing, although parts of the eastern peninsula continue to experience more limited access and higher levels of health inequality.

5.1.7 Local communities have been developing Neighbourhood Plans which promote the area's rural character and heritage and access to green infrastructure.

Key Opportunities

- Protect and enhance internationally important coastal, estuarine and marshland habitats.
- Strengthen ecological networks to support nature recovery and climate resilience.
- Conserve the peninsula's distinctive historic landscape character and military heritage.
- Maintain the separation and identity of rural communities through strategic green infrastructure.
- Improve public access to nature through enhanced walking, cycling and coastal routes.
- Create new multifunctional green spaces in areas with limited provision, particularly in eastern communities.
- Promote sustainable tourism, heritage interpretation and nature-based recreation.
- Support landscape adaptation to climate change, including sea level rise and coastal change.
- Reinforce the peninsula's strong sense of place, tranquillity and panoramic estuarine landscapes.
- Influence the planning and design of new development to strengthen green infrastructure networks and offer.

5.2 Urban Medway: Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure



- 5.2.1 Urban Medway serves as the borough's principal population, cultural and economic centre. Its green and blue infrastructure network plays a critical role in improving health, supporting regeneration, adapting to climate change and enhancing quality of life. The River Medway, Great Lines Heritage Park, urban parks, waterways, public spaces and active travel corridors collectively form the backbone of a connected network that links communities with nature, culture, heritage and opportunity. Strategic investment in this network will be essential to creating a healthier, greener and more resilient Medway.
- 5.2.2 Urban Medway forms the heart of the borough, encompassing the interconnected communities of Strood, Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham. Shaped by the River Medway and centuries of maritime, military and industrial activity, it is Medway's principal area of population, regeneration and economic growth. The area contains a rich mixture of historic town centres, waterfronts, residential neighbourhoods, parks, cultural assets and employment areas, all connected by a distinctive landscape of river corridors, chalk ridges, valleys and open spaces.
- 5.2.3 The River Medway is the defining feature of the area. It provided the foundation for the growth of Rochester and the later expansion of the wider Medway conurbation through trade, shipbuilding and industry. The development of the Royal Naval Dockyard at Chatham and associated military infrastructure transformed a series of villages into a major urban centre, leaving a legacy of historic dockyards, forts, defensive lines, industrial heritage and distinctive urban form that continues to influence Medway's identity today.
- 5.2.4 Urban Medway contains many of the borough's most significant public parks and recreational spaces, including Great Lines Heritage Park, Gillingham Park, Jackson's Field, Broomhill Park, The Strand, The Vines, Rede Common and numerous local nature reserves and accessible open spaces. Together with the River Medway and surrounding chalk landscapes, these assets provide opportunities for recreation, active travel, biodiversity, cultural engagement and public wellbeing within a densely populated urban environment.
- 5.2.5 The area faces significant challenges relating to health inequalities, access to greenspace, air quality and climate resilience. Deficiencies in park provision exist across several neighbourhoods, while some communities experience poorer health outcomes, lower levels of physical activity and unequal access to quality green infrastructure. Air Quality Management Areas and flood risk from tidal, surface water and groundwater sources further highlight the need for an integrated approach to green and blue infrastructure planning.
- 5.2.6 At the same time, Urban Medway presents some of the greatest opportunities for green infrastructure investment. Major regeneration projects across

waterfront locations, town centres and strategic development sites provide opportunities to create a greener, healthier and more connected urban environment. Planning policy and guidance includes the Arches Chatham Neighbourhood Plan, Chatham Design Code, and town centre masterplans. Improvements to public realm, active travel networks, riverside access, urban greening, sustainable drainage and biodiversity enhancement can help deliver multiple benefits for residents while contributing to Medway's wider ambitions for regeneration, climate resilience and placemaking.

- 5.2.7 The River Medway itself is a strategic asset that has the potential to become a stronger focus for recreation, sustainable transport, nature recovery, health and wellbeing. Enhancing connections between communities and the waterfront through accessible walking and cycling routes can help create a coherent borough-wide green and blue infrastructure network.

Key Opportunities

- Expand and improve access to parks, natural greenspaces and recreational facilities, particularly in areas of identified deficiency.
- Strengthen walking, cycling and active travel networks connecting neighbourhoods, town centres, employment areas, education facilities and the waterfront.
- Create a continuous and accessible river corridor with improved public access, recreation opportunities and habitat enhancement.
- Integrate green infrastructure into regeneration and masterplanning projects to support placemaking, climate resilience and public health.
- Improve air quality through urban greening, tree planting and measures that encourage sustainable travel.
- Deliver multifunctional Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) that reduce flood risk, improve water quality and enhance biodiversity.
- Increase urban tree canopy cover and target investment towards neighbourhoods with the lowest levels of tree equity.
- Create more community growing spaces, allotments and nature-rich neighbourhood environments.
- Improve connections between cultural heritage assets, parks, waterways and public rights of way.
- Use green and blue infrastructure projects to support behavioural change, social prescribing and wider health and wellbeing outcomes.
- Incorporate heritage interpretation, public art and cultural programming into green infrastructure improvements.
- Enhance biodiversity within urban areas through habitat creation, ecological corridors and nature-positive design.

5.3 Lower Rainham and Meresborough: Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure



- 5.3.1 Lower Rainham and Meresborough serves as an important urban-rural interface landscapes. It provides a strategic green wedge that links the Medway Estuary, Riverside Country Park, surrounding countryside and urban communities. The area performs vital functions for biodiversity, landscape character, recreation, climate resilience and health and wellbeing, while helping to preserve local distinctiveness and providing accessible countryside experiences for a large urban population.
- 5.3.2 The Lower Rainham and Meresborough area provides a critical transition between the urban Medway conurbation and the wider Kent countryside, performing an important role in landscape separation, ecological connectivity and public access to nature.
- 5.3.3 The landscape is characterised by a diverse pattern of orchards, arable fields, pasture, horticultural land, shelter belts, hedgerows and small woodlands set within gently rolling topography. Although traditional orchard landscapes have declined over time and parts of the area have experienced increasing urban fringe pressures, the countryside retains a strong rural identity and continues to provide an important setting for neighbouring communities. The area also contributes significantly to the landscape framework of southern Medway, helping to maintain the openness, character and environmental quality of the urban edge.
- 5.3.4 The estuary frontage and adjacent marshes form part of an important ecological corridor connecting urban areas with the wider countryside and internationally significant habitats associated with the Medway Marshes. The area supports biodiversity through a network of farmland, woodland, wetland and estuarine habitats and serves as a valuable wildlife corridor linking urban Medway to the wider natural environment.
- 5.3.5 A key asset is Riverside Country Park, one of Medway's principal strategic green spaces and a major recreational destination attracting visitors from across the area. The park offers extensive access to the Medway Estuary, including walking and cycling routes along National Cycle Network Route 1, the King Charles III England Coast Path, Berengrave Local Nature Reserve and community growing initiatives such as the Lower Bloors Lane community orchard. Together these assets provide opportunities for recreation, nature engagement, active travel and environmental education.
- 5.3.6 Despite these strengths, access between neighbouring urban communities and the countryside remains fragmented. Many residents can see and value the surrounding landscapes but experience difficulties accessing them directly on foot or by cycle. Improving connections between residential areas, Riverside Country Park, the estuary, public rights of way and the wider

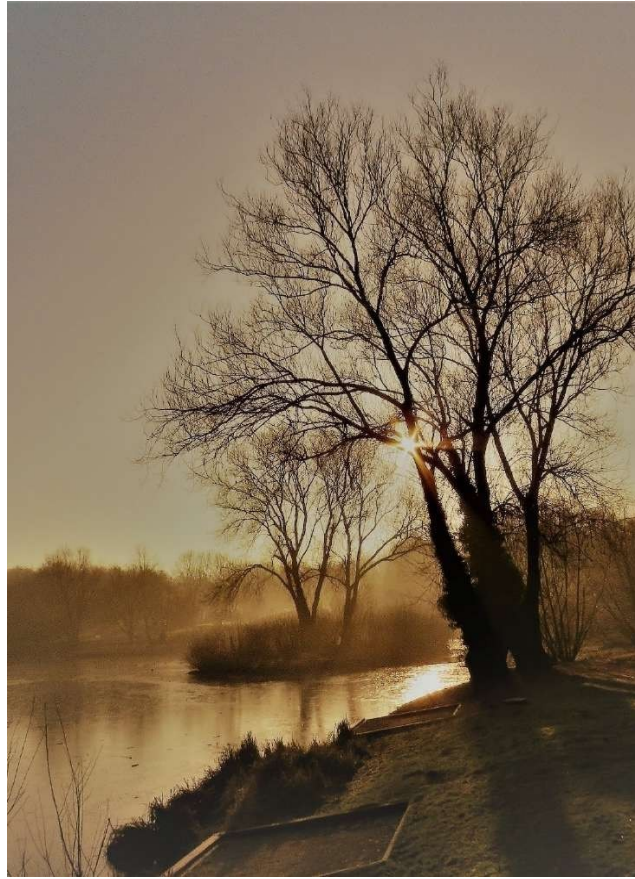
countryside represents one of the greatest opportunities for green infrastructure investment in this area.

- 5.3.7 The landscape also has significant cultural value. Historic relationships between estuarine marshes, farming systems, orchards, settlements and transport routes remain evident in the landscape and provide opportunities for interpretation, education and community engagement. The area's fruit-growing heritage in particular offers opportunities to link environmental enhancement with healthy lifestyles, community food production and cultural identity.

Key Opportunities

- Enhance the role of Riverside Country Park as a strategic destination for nature, recreation, climate resilience and environmental education.
- Secure quality and resilient green infrastructure through new development,
- Strengthen ecological connections between the Medway Marshes, estuary habitats, farmland and surrounding countryside.
- Improve walking, cycling and public rights of way connections between urban communities and the countryside.
- Create accessible multi-user routes linking residential areas, schools, open spaces and the riverside.
- Maximise opportunities presented by the King Charles III England Coast Path and National Cycle Network Route 1.
- Restore and reinforce traditional landscape features including orchards, hedgerows, shelter belts and small woodlands.
- Protect and enhance the area's function as a green buffer between settlements and sensitive environmental designations.
- Deliver multifunctional Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) to address surface water flooding while supporting biodiversity and public amenity.
- Create additional community growing spaces, orchards, edible landscapes and food production initiatives linked to local heritage.
- Improve access to the estuary and river frontage for people of all ages and abilities.
- Strengthen green corridors along watercourses and urban edges to connect communities with the wider countryside.
- Maintain and enhance landscape connections to the Kent Downs and ecological networks beyond the Medway boundary.

5.4 Three Valleys: Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure



- 5.4.1 The Three Valleys connect densely populated urban communities to the Kent Downs National Landscape, ancient woodlands, nature reserves and the wider countryside. They provide essential biodiversity corridors, accessible natural greenspace, heritage settings and climate resilience functions, while supporting health and wellbeing for thousands of residents. As highly accessible landscapes within the urban area, the valleys are fundamental to delivering Medway's aspirations for nature recovery, active travel, healthy communities and environmental resilience.
- 5.4.2 The Three Valleys area comprises the Horsted Valley, Princes Park Valley and Capstone Valley, forming a series of interconnected green corridors that extend through the heart of urban Medway and connect communities with the wider countryside, ancient woodlands and the Kent Downs National Landscape. These corridors represent some of Medway's most important green infrastructure assets, providing strategic landscape, biodiversity, recreation, health and climate resilience functions within an otherwise densely developed urban environment. Horsted Valley is a designated Local Nature Reserve.
- 5.4.3 Together, the valleys create a distinctive network of accessible natural landscapes that link urban neighbourhoods to the wider countryside. Their dramatic chalk slopes, wooded valleys, open farmland and species-rich grasslands form a strong landscape framework that contributes significantly to Medway's local character and sense of place. They also provide important ecological connections between urban greenspaces and the extensive habitats of the Kent Downs and surrounding countryside beyond Medway's boundaries.
- 5.4.4 The Horsted Valley is characterised by steep chalk slopes, remnant chalk grassland and a sequence of connected greenspaces extending from Luton to Walderslade. Historic military heritage assets, including Fort Horsted and Fort Luton, provide visual landmarks overlooking the valley, while Daisy and Coney Banks retain important areas of chalk grassland and semi-natural habitat. At its southern end, the valley connects into Taddington Valley and the wider Walderslade woodlands, creating an important cross-boundary ecological corridor.
- 5.4.5 The central valley provides a green link running through a more urbanised landscape, connecting Princes Park with a network of school grounds, open spaces and woodlands including Chestnut Wood and Dargets Wood. This corridor demonstrates the importance of a wide range of green spaces, both public and private, in supporting biodiversity, recreation and active travel within urban environments.
- 5.4.6 The eastern valley is focused on the nationally significant habitats of Darland Banks and the wider Capstone Valley landscape. Darland Banks Nature

Reserve contains extensive chalk grassland of high ecological value and supports important populations of rare chalk grassland species. Ancient woodland remnants, including Ambley Wood and Grove Wood, contribute additional biodiversity value and landscape character. Capstone Farm Country Park is a key destination and the wider area provides an important transition between the urban area and the Kent Downs National Landscape.

- 5.4.7 The valleys perform a critical role in supporting public health and wellbeing. Their proximity to some of Medway's most densely populated neighbourhoods provides opportunities for everyday access to nature, recreation, active travel and informal exercise. They also function as strategic green wedges that maintain separation between communities, provide attractive settings for development and reinforce Medway's distinctive landscape structure.
- 5.4.8 The recent designation of the Horsted Valley Local Nature Reserve and proposals to introduce conservation grazing present significant opportunities to enhance biodiversity, restore chalk grassland habitats and increase opportunities for people to connect with nature. Alongside ongoing habitat management at Darland Banks and investment in Capstone Country Park, these initiatives can further strengthen the valleys' role as flagship examples of nature recovery and accessible greenspace within urban Medway.

Key Opportunities

- Strengthen the role of the Three Valleys as strategic green corridors linking urban communities with the Kent Downs National Landscape and wider countryside, and secure the strategic green network as part of planned development in the Capstone area.
- Enhance biodiversity through restoration and expansion of chalk grassland, woodland, hedgerow and meadow habitats.
- Support the management of Horsted Valley Local Nature Reserve, including the introduction of conservation grazing to improve ecological condition and visitor experience.
- Continue investment in Darland Banks and Capstone Farm Country Park as flagship biodiversity and recreation destinations.
- Protect, buffer and enhance ancient woodlands and their ecological connectivity.
- Improve cross-boundary habitat networks with neighbouring local authorities and landowners.
- Strengthen wildlife corridors through hedgerow planting, woodland expansion and habitat creation across the valleys.
- Improve public rights of way, walking routes and cycling connections linking urban areas with countryside destinations, realising opportunities with new development.
- Develop accessible promoted routes and health-focused walking networks.

- Increase opportunities for environmental education, interpretation and community engagement.
- Enhance access to heritage assets including Fort Horsted, Fort Luton and other historic landscape features.
- Improve management of urban fringe pressures such as fly-tipping, inappropriate signage and landscape fragmentation.
- Ensure development reinforces landscape character, biodiversity connectivity and green infrastructure networks.
- Enhance the landscape framework around urban edges through woodland, shelterbelt and hedgerow planting.
- Protect key views, landscape settings and gateways to the Kent Downs National Landscape.

5.5 Medway Valley (Cuxton and Halling): Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure



- 5.5.1 The Medway Valley forms an important strategic landscape corridor, linking the River Medway, the North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve, the Kent Downs National Landscape and extensive ancient woodland networks. It provides critical ecological connectivity, nationally significant biodiversity resources, valued recreational opportunities and a distinctive cultural landscape shaped by centuries of interaction between people, industry and nature.
- 5.5.2 As a gateway between urban Medway and the wider countryside, the valley plays a vital role in supporting nature recovery, climate resilience, health and wellbeing, sustainable tourism and landscape conservation.
- 5.5.3 The Medway Valley is one of Medway's most distinctive and nationally significant landscapes, formed by the River Medway as it passes through the dramatic chalk escarpments of the North Downs. Encompassing the settlements of Cuxton, Halling, Upper Halling and Upper Bush, the area combines outstanding natural beauty, extensive ancient woodland, important habitats, industrial heritage and recreational assets within a landscape that is largely protected by its designation as part of the Kent Downs National Landscape and the Metropolitan Green Belt.
- 5.5.4 The River Medway forms the defining feature of the valley, creating a broad corridor framed by steep wooded slopes, chalk cliffs and open panoramic views. Historically shaped by quarrying, cement production, transport and river-based industries, the area retains a distinctive cultural landscape characterised by former quarries, flooded lakes, wharves and industrial landforms. Many of these previously developed sites have undergone natural regeneration, creating valuable habitats and recreational destinations such as St Andrews Lakes, while maintaining a strong sense of place rooted in the valley's industrial past.
- 5.5.5 The Medway Valley is Medway's most heavily wooded landscape. Extensive woodland cover, much of it ancient, blankets the valley sides and upper slopes of the North Downs, creating one of the borough's most important ecological networks. These woodlands extend into neighbouring authority areas and form part of a wider landscape-scale habitat network that supports biodiversity, carbon storage, climate resilience and public enjoyment. Ancient woodland, veteran trees and species-rich woodland habitats contribute significantly to both local and national nature conservation objectives.
- 5.5.6 The area contains several nationally important biodiversity assets. It includes part of the North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve. Ranscombe Farm Nature Reserve is recognised as one of Britain's most important sites for rare arable plants, while also supporting extensive woodland habitats and part of the historic Cobham Park landscape. Nashenden Down demonstrates successful habitat restoration through the

creation of species-rich grasslands, ponds and hedgerows. Along the valley floor, Halling Marshes and associated wetland habitats support ecological diversity and strengthen habitat links along the River Medway corridor.

- 5.5.7 The recent designation of the North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve provides significant opportunities for coordinated landscape-scale enhancement, habitat restoration and improved public access. This strengthens the area's role as a strategic ecological resource within Kent and the wider South East.
- 5.5.8 The valley is also an important recreational and wellbeing asset. The North Downs Way National Trail, an extensive network of public rights of way, promoted walking routes and access to open countryside make the area a valuable destination for residents and visitors alike. Although local health outcomes are comparatively positive, the valley's accessibility from urban Medway allows it to play an important role in supporting physical activity, mental wellbeing and access to nature for communities elsewhere in the borough.
- 5.5.9 Despite its strengths, the Medway Valley faces ongoing pressures from transport infrastructure, fragmented former industrial land, urban fringe activities and increasing recreational demand. Strategic management will be required to protect its landscape character, strengthen ecological connectivity and ensure that increased access is compatible with the conservation of its nationally important natural and heritage assets.

Key Opportunities

- Support the objectives of the North Kent Woods and Downs National Nature Reserve through landscape-scale habitat restoration and coordinated management.
- Strengthen biodiversity networks between ancient woodlands, chalk grasslands, wetlands and riverside habitats.
- Continue to support Plantlife's work at Ranscombe Farm Nature Reserve, including conservation of nationally important arable flora.
- Enhance the ecological and recreational value of Halling Marshes and other wetland habitats.
- Promote sustainable woodland management and improve the resilience of ancient woodland habitats.
- Strengthen habitat and recreational links between Cobham Park, Ranscombe Farm, Shorne Woods Country Park, Holly Hill and adjoining woodland networks.
- Improve access from urban Medway into the valley through upgraded public rights of way and sustainable transport links.
- Establish and promote stronger connections from Strood and Cuxton into the wider countryside, including improved crossings beneath the M2 corridor.

- Develop a multi-user route linking Cuxton Railway Station, Strood and key countryside destinations.
- Improve accessibility and usability of public rights of way through enhanced maintenance, wayfinding and cycling infrastructure.
- Update and promote walking, cycling and accessible countryside routes, including links to the North Downs Way National Trail.
- Support tourism and sustainable access initiatives associated with the Medway Valley railway corridor.
- Protect and interpret the area's industrial heritage, including former quarries, transport infrastructure and riverside industries, and strengthen connections between heritage, nature and community engagement.
- Continue collaboration with neighbouring authorities, landowners and conservation organisations to support landscape-scale environmental enhancement.
- Implement relevant Kent Downs National Landscape management objectives and landscape design guidance.
- Address illegal access, fly-tipping and urban fringe pressures while maintaining the valley's rural character and tranquillity.

5.6 River Medway: Strategic Green and Blue Infrastructure



- 5.6.1 The River Medway is the spine of Medway's green and blue infrastructure network. The river supports biodiversity, recreation, health and wellbeing, heritage, tourism, sustainable transport, flood management and climate resilience. Its future enhancement will be fundamental to delivering Medway's ambitions for sustainable growth, environmental recovery and place-making, making it the borough's most important strategic blue infrastructure asset.
- 5.6.2 The River Medway is the defining environmental, cultural and economic asset of Medway, extending from the borough's southern boundary at Halling through the urban waterfronts of Strood, Rochester, Chatham and Gillingham before widening into the internationally important Medway Estuary and reaching the North Sea at the Isle of Grain. As a tidal river throughout its length within Medway, it forms the borough's principal blue infrastructure corridor, shaping settlement patterns, landscape character, biodiversity, recreation, regeneration and cultural identity.
- 5.6.3 For centuries the river has been central to Medway's development. It provided access for trade, industry, defence and naval operations, underpinning the growth of the historic dockyard, riverfront industries and settlements that evolved into the Medway conurbation. Defences including Upnor Castle, Hoo Fort, Darnet Fort and numerous military installations reflect the river's strategic importance, while surviving docks, wharves, maritime structures and industrial landscapes provide an enduring legacy that contributes significantly to Medway's distinctive sense of place.
- 5.6.4 The character of the river changes significantly along its course. In the south, the river meanders through the dramatic landscape of the North Downs between Halling and Cuxton. Moving northwards through urban Medway, the watercourse broadens and becomes increasingly urban in character, before opening into the expansive estuarine landscape between Upnor, St Mary's Island, the Hoo Peninsula and the Isle of Grain. Throughout its length the river provides striking views, distinctive waterfront environments and a strong visual focus for surrounding communities.
- 5.6.5 The River Medway is also one of Medway's most important ecological assets. Its estuarine habitats, including mudflats, grazing marshes, reedbeds and saltmarsh, form part of a nationally and internationally significant network supporting migratory and overwintering bird populations, fish, invertebrates and coastal wildlife. The river functions as a strategic biodiversity corridor linking the Medway Valley, urban waterfronts, marshes and the wider Thames and Medway estuary systems.
- 5.6.6 The river will play an increasingly important role in climate adaptation. Rising sea levels, changing rainfall patterns and increasing flood risk are likely to affect riverside communities, habitats and infrastructure. Natural flood management measures, habitat restoration and the protection and expansion

of saltmarsh habitats will be critical in helping the river corridor adapt to future environmental change while maintaining its ecological and recreational value.

- 5.6.7 The River Medway also offers substantial benefits for health and wellbeing. Access to "blue spaces" is increasingly recognised for its contribution to physical and mental health, and the river provides opportunities for walking, cycling, boating, wildlife observation, leisure and informal recreation. Existing riverside parks, promenades, rights of way and waterfront destinations provide valued recreational assets, although public access remains fragmented in places and there is significant potential to establish a more continuous and connected riverside network.
- 5.6.8 As Medway continues to deliver substantial regeneration along its waterfronts, the river presents a unique opportunity to create a coherent network of green and blue infrastructure that supports sustainable growth, placemaking, nature recovery, climate resilience and cultural expression.

Key Opportunities

- Place the River Medway at the heart of regeneration, placemaking and waterfront redevelopment projects.
- Create a continuous riverside network of accessible open spaces, promenades, walking routes and cycling corridors.
- Improve public access to and along the river while safeguarding sensitive habitats.
- Deliver the ambitions of the Medway River Strategy and associated waterfront regeneration programmes.
- Strengthen east-west and north-south active travel connections linked to the river corridor.
- Promote the King Charles III England Coast Path and strengthen its connections to local communities and visitor destinations.
- Protect, restore and expand saltmarsh, reedbed, grazing marsh and mudflat habitats.
- Support nature recovery projects in partnership with the Medway and Swale Estuary Partnership and other environmental organisations.
- Deliver climate adaptation measures that address sea level rise, flood risk and coastal squeeze.
- Maintain and enhance the river's role as an important biodiversity corridor.
- Support sustainable recreation and tourism opportunities linked to the river and estuary.
- Implement Bird Wise North Kent measures to manage recreational impacts on internationally important bird populations.
- Protect and celebrate maritime, military and industrial heritage assets associated with the river.

- Improve interpretation of the river's cultural significance through public realm, heritage and arts projects.
- Safeguard strategic views, landmarks and distinctive waterfront landscapes.
- Develop new nature conservation assets, including opportunities such as Temple Marsh Local Nature Reserve.
- Integrate green and blue infrastructure into all major riverside development and regeneration schemes.

6. Delivery

- 6.1 Delivering this strategy will require partnerships between many organisations and individuals and across many Medway Council teams.
- 6.2 The aims in this strategy are not all within the remit of Medway Council to deliver but are considered important in order to set out an ambition for Medway. They will require funding, which will also entail working with partners, local communities and developers to secure; and new and innovative ways of working. Local communities, schools, universities, community organisations and individuals all have an important role to play in improving green and blue infrastructure.
- 6.3 Green and blue infrastructure is all around us and gardens too can make an important contribution to the health of urban areas, for example through providing habitat for pollinators, through water harvesting or the creation of drought gardens.
- 6.4 To achieve many of the objectives in this strategy requires partnership working, not only between local authorities and organisations, but with local communities as well. Local organisations and individuals are important in deciding how the objectives of this strategy can be taken forward locally, in helping to develop projects and in seeking funding. Local communities may wish to develop projects to green their local school or park, to carry out tree planting, clear out their local watercourse or provide more areas for pollinators - or may have other ideas and priorities to improve their local area. Medway Council already supports many Friends Groups and will continue to support communities in taking steps to improve their green spaces, green infrastructure and biodiversity wherever possible.

Development

- 6.5 Green and blue infrastructure is an essential element in ensuring the delivery of sustainable development, as well as supporting the quality of life and health and wellbeing of residents, economic growth and the future resilience and prosperity of Medway. In meeting the requirements of national and local planning policies for green infrastructure, Medway Council will expect development to support the priorities of this Green and Blue Infrastructure Framework and the Kent and Medway LNRS.
- 6.6 Development will be expected to contribute to the delivery of the priorities in this framework, which could include:
 - Contribution to biodiversity and delivery of biodiversity net gain and the LNRS
 - Wildlife corridors and semi-natural green space

- Enhancement of biodiversity features
- Access corridors for pedestrians and cyclists
- A range of accessible high quality green space to meet the needs of new residents
- Provision to ensure ongoing maintenance of green infrastructure
- Tree planting and retention of existing trees and woodland
- Sustainable drainage schemes
- Improvements to watercourses
- Green and blue infrastructure network improvements which link to features beyond the development boundary
- Specific objectives and projects contained in this framework