

**Sevenoaks District Council
Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity**

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INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This background paper examines the existing Green Infrastructure and important habitats and species within Sevenoaks District and looks at the need to maintain and/or enhance this resource over the period to 2026. The assessment is made with reference to the national, regional and local policy, the strategic and local needs of the district and the opportunities afforded within it.
- 1.2 The document contains information to justify the approach taken in the Core Strategy. It will also inform the preparation of the Allocations DPD which will set out the Green Infrastructure Network. The relevant documents and their importance in determining the development of local Policy are set out below.

What is Green Infrastructure?

- 1.3 Green Infrastructure is a planned and managed network of green/open spaces. The network should be multifunctional being designed and managed to support environmental, social and cultural benefits. One of these functions is to conserve and enhance biodiversity, as well as reflecting local character and contributing to quality of life.
- 1.4 These spaces may range from formal parks/gardens in town centres, out door sports facilities and natural Greenspace to allotments, church yards and accessible countryside on the fringes of settlements.

Relevant National Planning Policy

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development

2.1 PPS1 sets out a series of key principles and advice on different aspects of planning for sustainable development including spatial planning, design and community involvement.¹

Planning and Climate Change: Supplement to PPS 1

2.2 Planning and Climate Change sets out how spatial planning should contribute to reducing emissions (mitigation) and take into account the unavoidable consequences (adaptation). It forms part of a wider package of actions to help deliver the Government's ambition of achieving zero carbon development. Para 20 states that Development plan policies should take account of environmental issues such as:

- the mitigation of the effects of, and adaptation to, climate change
- the protection of the wider countryside; the conservation and enhancement of wildlife species and habitats and the promotion of biodiversity; the need to improve the built and natural environment in and around urban areas and rural settlements, including the provision of good quality open space; the conservation of soil quality .

Para 27 states that plans should –

- (v) Provide improved access for all open space, sport and recreation, by ensuring that new development is located where everyone can access services or facilities on foot, bicycle or public transport. and
- (ix) Enhance as well as protect biodiversity, natural habitats, the historic environment and landscape and townscape character.²

Planning Policy Guidance 2 Green Belts

2.3 PPG2 outlines the history and extent of Green Belts and explains their purposes. The land-use objectives are detailed and the presumption against inappropriate development is set out. There are five purposes of including land in Green Belts:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;

¹ The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Planning Policy Statement 1 Delivering Sustainable Development at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/planningpolicystatement1.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

² Communities and Local Government Planning and Climate Change at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/ppscclimatechange.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

2.4 Once Green Belts have been defined, the use of land in them has a positive role to play in fulfilling the following objectives:

- to provide opportunities for access to the open countryside for the urban population;
- to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and outdoor recreation near urban areas;
- to retain attractive landscapes, and enhance landscapes, near to where people live;
- to improve damaged and derelict land around towns;
- to secure nature conservation interest; and
- to retain land in agricultural, forestry and related uses.³

Planning Policy Statement 7 Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

2.5 PPS7 confirms that AONBs have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty and that the conservation of wildlife and the cultural heritage are important considerations in these areas. In Para 25 it also refers to local landscape designations and recognises that there are areas of landscape outside nationally designated areas that are particularly highly valued locally.

Para 26 states that

*Planning authorities should aim to secure environmental improvements and maximise a range of beneficial uses of The Countryside around Urban Areas, whilst reducing potential conflicts between neighbouring land uses. This should include improvement of public access (e.g. through support for country parks and community forests) and facilitating the provision of appropriate sport and recreation facilities.*⁴

Planning Policy Statement 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.

2.6 The Government's objectives for planning are:

to promote sustainable development by ensuring that biological and geological diversity are conserved and enhanced as an integral part of social, environmental and economic development
to conserve, enhance and restore the diversity of England's wildlife and geology by sustaining, and where possible improving, the quality and extent of natural habitat

³ The Department of Communities and Local Government [Planning Policy Guidance 2 :Green Belts](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/155499.pdf) at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/155499.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

⁴ The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister [Planning Policy Statement 7 :Sustainable Development in Rural Areas](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147402.pdf) at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147402.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

and geological and geomorphological sites; the natural physical processes on which they depend; and the populations of naturally occurring species which they support.

to contribute to rural renewal and urban renaissance by: enhancing biodiversity in green spaces and among developments so that they are used by wildlife and valued by people, recognising that healthy functional ecosystems can contribute to a better quality of life and to people's sense of well-being;

be based upon up-to-date information about the environmental characteristics of their areas. These characteristics should include the relevant biodiversity and geological resources of the area. In reviewing environmental characteristics local authorities should assess the potential to sustain and enhance those resources.

aim to maintain, and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests.

should ensure that appropriate weight is attached to designated sites of international, national and local importance; protected species; and to biodiversity and geological interests within the wider environment.

should promote opportunities for the incorporation of beneficial biodiversity and geological features within the design of development.

2.7 LDFs should:

indicate the location of designated sites of importance for biodiversity and geodiversity, making clear distinctions between the hierarchy of international, national, regional and locally designated sites; and

identify any areas or sites for the restoration or creation of new priority habitats which contribute to regional targets, and support this restoration or creation through appropriate policies.

2.8 SSSIs should be given a high degree of protection under the planning system through appropriate policies in plans.

(For further information on the ecology within the SSSIs in Sevenoaks District see links below. For a full list of SSSIs within Sevenoaks District see Appendix A)

Regional and Local Sites of biodiversity and geological interest

2.9 Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIGGS) - have a fundamental role to play in meeting overall national biodiversity and geological targets; contributing to the quality of life and the well-being of the community; and in supporting research and education. Criteria-based policies should be established in local development documents against which proposals for any development on, or affecting, such sites will be judged.

(For further information on the ecology within the LWSs and LNRs in Sevenoaks District see links below. For a full list of LWSs and LNRs see Appendix A)

Ancient Woodland and Other Important Natural Habitats

2.10 Ancient woodland is a valuable biodiversity resource both for its diversity of species and for its longevity as woodland. Once lost it cannot be recreated. Local planning authorities should identify any areas of ancient woodland in their areas that do not have statutory protection (e.g. as a SSSI). Ancient woodlands are areas of land which have had continuous woodland cover since at least 1600AD, a wood present in 1600AD is likely to have developed naturally. It may be: ancient semi-natural woodland; ancient woodland sites that have retained the native tree and shrub cover that has not been planted, although it may have been managed by coppicing or felling and allowed to regenerate naturally; ancient replanted woodland; or ancient woodland sites where the original native tree cover has been felled and replaced by planting, usually with conifers. Important features of ancient woodland often survive in many of these woods, including characteristic ground flora and fauna, and archaeology.

Networks of Natural Habitats -

2.11 Ecological networks or Biodiversity Opportunity Areas provide a valuable resource. They can link sites of biodiversity importance and provide routes or stepping stones for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species in the wider environment. Local authorities should aim to maintain networks by avoiding or repairing the fragmentation and isolation of natural habitats through policies in plans. Such networks should be protected from development, and, where possible, strengthened by or integrated within it. This may be done as part of a wider strategy for the protection and extension of open space and access routes such as canals and rivers, including those within urban areas.

(For further information on Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species in Sevenoaks District, Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats and Species & Biodiversity Opportunity Areas see links below and Appendix B)

Species Protection

2.12 Many individual wildlife species receive statutory protection under a range of legislative provisions, 7 and specific policies in respect of these species should not be included in local development documents. Other species have been identified as requiring conservation action as species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. Local authorities should take measures to protect the habitats of these species from further decline through policies in local development documents and should ensure that these species are protected from the adverse effects of development, where appropriate, by using planning conditions or obligations.^{5 6}

(For further information on Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species in Sevenoaks

⁵ The office of the Deputy Prime Minister Planning Policy Statement 9 : Biodiversity and Geological Conservation at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147408.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010.

⁶ The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation A guide to good practice at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/143792.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

Planning Policy Guidance 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation.

2.13 Open spaces, sport and recreation all underpin people's quality of life. Well designed and implemented planning policies for open space, sport and recreation are therefore fundamental to delivering broader Government objectives. These include:

- supporting an urban renaissance - local networks of high quality and well managed and maintained open spaces, sports and recreational facilities help create urban environments that are attractive, clean and safe. Green spaces in urban areas perform vital functions as areas for nature conservation and biodiversity and by acting as 'green lungs' can assist in meeting objectives to improve air quality.
- supporting a rural renewal - the countryside can provide opportunities for recreation and visitors can play an important role in the regeneration of the economies of rural areas. Open spaces within rural settlements and accessibility to local sports and recreational facilities contribute to the quality of life and well being of people who live in rural areas.
- promotion of social inclusion and community cohesion - well planned and maintained open spaces and good quality sports and recreational facilities can play a major part in improving people's sense of well being in the place they live. As a focal point for community activities, they can bring together members of deprived communities and provide opportunities for people for social interaction.
- health and well being - open spaces, sports and recreational facilities have a vital role to play in promoting healthy living and preventing illness, and in the social development of children of all ages through play, sporting activities and interaction with others.
- promoting more sustainable development - by ensuring that open space, sports and recreational facilities (particularly in urban areas) are easily accessible by walking and cycling and that more heavily used or intensive sports and recreational facilities are planned for locations well served by public transport.

Urban Fringe Areas

2.14 The countryside around towns provides a valuable resource for the provision of sport and recreation, particularly in situations where there is an absence of land in urban areas to meet provision. Local authorities should encourage the creation of sports and recreational facilities in such areas and the development of areas of managed countryside, such as country parks, community forests, and agricultural

showground's.

Recreational Rights of Way

- 2.15 Rights of way are an important recreational facility, which local authorities should protect and enhance. Local authorities should seek opportunities to provide better facilities for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks.⁷

Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17

- 2.16 The guidance for PPG17 reflects the Government's policy objectives for open space, sport and recreation provision. It makes clear that achieving these outcomes depends on planning authorities first undertaking local assessments of need and audits of provision. This Companion Guide therefore sets out one way in which they can do so.⁸

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

- 2.17 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places an obligation on Local Authorities and other public bodies to preserve biodiversity.

40 (1) Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity.

(3) Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat.

(4) Public authority means any of the following:- (c) a public body (including a government department, a local authority and a local planning authority);

(5) In this section local authority. means a county council, a district council, a parish council, a London borough council, the Common Council of the City of London or the Council of the Isles of Scilly; local planning authority has the same meaning as in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (c. 8);

- 2.18 Priority ss41 lists agreed by the Secretary of State detail Priority Habitats and Priority Species which are under threat providing protection for such species within the planning system. Section 41 of the NERC Act states

⁷ The Department of Communities and Local Government Planning Policy Guidance 17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/ppg17.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

⁸ The Department of Communities and Local Government Assessing Needs and Opportunities: A Companion Guide to PPG17 at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/156780.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

41 (1) *The Secretary of State must, as respects England, publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitat which in the Secretary of State's opinion are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity.*

(2) *Before publishing any list the Secretary of State must consult Natural England as to the living organisms or types of habitat to be included in the list.*

(3) *Without prejudice to section 40(1) and (2), the Secretary of State must—*

(a) *take such steps as appear to the Secretary of State to be reasonably practicable to further the conservation of the living organisms and types of habitat included in any list published under this section, or*

(b) *Promote the taking by others of such steps.*⁹

Defra explanatory notes state that

The S41 list will be used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 "to have regard" to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions. In particular:

○ *Regional Planning Bodies and Local Planning Authorities will use it to identify the species and habitats that should be afforded priority when applying the requirements of Planning Policy Statement 9 (PPS9) to maintain, restore and enhance species and habitats.*

○ *Local Planning Authorities will use it to identify the species and habitats that require specific consideration in dealing with planning and development control, recognising that under PPS the aim of planning decisions should be to avoid harm to all biodiversity.*

○ *All Public Bodies will use it to identify species or habitats that should be given priority when implementing the NERC Section 40 duty.*¹⁰

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (updated within the CROW Act 2000)

2.19 The Wildlife and Countryside Act identifies a number of species which receive special protection within planning. Some of these species are protected under European law, whereas some are rare or threatened within Britain.

1 (i) Subject to the provisions of this part, if any person intentionally—kills, injures or takes any wild bird takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use, being built or takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird he

⁹ Office of Public Sector Information The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (Part 3 Wildlife etc) at http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060016_en_4#pt3-pb1-11g40 accessed on 3.2.2010

¹⁰ Defra Guidance for Local Authorities on implementing the Biodiversity Duty at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/documents/la-guid-english.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

shall be guilty of an offence.

9 (1) *Subject to the provisions of this part if any person intentionally kills, injures or takes any animal included in schedule 5 he shall be guilty of an offence.*

(2)*Subject to the provisions of this part, if any person has in his possession or control any live or dead wild animal included in schedule 5 or any part of, or anything derived from such an animal, he shall be guilty of an offence.*

Subject to the provisions of this part, if any person intentionally- damages or destroys or obstructs access to any structure or place which any wild animal included in schedule 5 uses for shelter or protection or disturbs any such animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose. He shall be guilty of an offence.

*Subject to the provision of this part if any person sells, offers or exposes for sale, or has in his possession or transports for the purpose of sale any live or dead wild animal included in schedule 5 or any part of or anything derived from such an animal or publishes or causes to be published any advertisement likely to be understood as conveying that he buys or sells or intends to buy or sell any of these things he shall be guilty of an offence.*¹¹

(For further information on international and national policy regarding the protection of Biodiversity Action Plan or Priority habitats and Biodiversity Action Plan or priority species protected species and other endangered species see part 2)

Legislation relating to Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats and Species

International Legislation

- 2.20 The Convention of Biological Diversity signed in 1992, by 110 parties, as part of the Rio Janeiro Earth Summit, lays out the international community's commitment to environmental protection and recognition that biodiversity is central to sustainable development.¹²

Article 1 of the Convention of Biological Diversity states that:-

*“The objectives of this convention to be pursued in accordance with its relevant provisions are the conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, including by appropriate access to genetic resources and by appropriate transfer of relevant technologies taking into account all rights over these resources and to technologies and by appropriate funding.”*¹³

¹¹ Joint Nature Conservation Committee [The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 \(Part 1\)](http://www.jncc.gov.uk/PDF/waca1981_part1.pdf) at http://www.jncc.gov.uk/PDF/waca1981_part1.pdf accessed on 3.2.2010

¹² Lafer C (2004) [CBD News The Convention Biological Diversity from Conception to Implementation](#)
Published by Secretariat of the convention of Biological Diversity, Canada

¹³ Convention of Biological diversity [The Convention of Biological Diversity from Conception to](#)

Five themes have been devised to ensure the above aim and the convention's targets for 2010 are met.¹⁴

- ❖ Integrating biodiversity into urban planning.
- ❖ Promoting biodiversity-friendly urban development.
- ❖ Managing urban biodiversity.
- ❖ Ensuring that business practices enhance biodiversity.
- ❖ Promoting awareness of biodiversity in urban communities.

National Legislation

2.21 The UK Biodiversity Action Plan is the UK's response to the aims of the Biological Convention¹⁵ and:-

- ❖ Describes the UK's biological resources.
- ❖ Commits a detailed plan for the protection of these resources.
- ❖ Major reviews of the Priority Species and Habitats are underway, and the targets for these priorities are complete.

2.22 Section 41 of The Natural Environment and Communities Act 2006 commits the Secretary of State to publishing a list of the habitats and species which are of principal importance in the preservation of biodiversity, in consultation with Natural England. The Secretary of State must take such steps as appears reasonably practical to further the conservation of the habitats and species on the list and promote the taking by others of such steps. Further, the Secretary of State must keep the list under review, and make appropriate revisions, publishing any list so revised.¹⁶

2.23 Within the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended by the CROW Act 2000¹⁷ certain species are protected. There are varying levels of protection, as laid out in Chapter 69, Part 1 (1) for birds Part 1 (9) other fauna. Lists of protected birds, animals and plants are contained in Schedule 1¹⁸, 5¹⁹, 7²⁰ and 8²¹ with birds

Implementation at <http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/CBD-10th-anniversary.pdf> accessed on 2.3.2009

¹⁴ Convention of Biological diversity Local Authorities and Biological Diversity at

<http://www.cbd.int/authorities/> accessed on 2.3.2009

¹⁵ Encyclopaedia of the Atmospheric Environment Local Agenda 21 at

http://www.ace.mmu.ac.uk/eae/sustainability/Older/Local_Agenda21.html accessed on 2.3.2009

¹⁶ Office of Public Sector Information Part 3 Wildlife etc Biodiversity at

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060016_en_4#pt3-pb1-11g41 accessed on 2.3.2009

¹⁷ The Joint Nature Conservation Committee Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) Chapter 69 at

http://www.jncc.gov.uk/PDF/waca1981_part1.pdf accessed on 15.7.2009

¹⁸ The Joint Nature Conservation Committee Schedule 1 Birds that are Protected by Special Penalties at

http://www.jncc.gov.uk/PDF/waca1981_schedule1.pdf accessed on 15.7.2009

¹⁹ The Joint Nature Conservation Committee Schedule 5 Animals which are Protected at

http://www.jncc.gov.uk/PDF/waca1981_schedule5.pdf accessed on 15.7.2009

²⁰ The Joint Nature Conservation Committee Protection of Certain Mammals at

http://www.jncc.gov.uk/PDF/waca1981_schedule7.pdf accessed on 15.7.2009

²¹ The Joint Nature Conservation Committee Schedule 8 Plants which are Protected at

http://www.jncc.gov.uk/PDF/waca1981_schedule8.pdf accessed on 15.7.2009

and animals that can be killed listed in Schedule 2²² and 6²³.

2.22 ²⁴ ²⁵ Policy Planning Statement 9 (PPS9) Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (2005) contain government policies regarding biodiversity conservation. Regional planning bodies need to take these policies into account when formulating Regional Spatial Strategies (RSS) as do Local Authorities when preparing Local Development Frameworks (LDF)

The government's objectives are -

To promote sustainable development.

To conserve, enhance and restore the diversity of England's wildlife and geology

To contribute to rural renewal and urban renaissance

There are a number of core principles within paragraph 1 which aim to ensure that

Policy and planning decisions are based on up to date ecological information

Biodiversity is maintained, enhanced, restored and added to.

Internationally, nationally and locally designated sites, protected species and biodiversity are protected and are given appropriate weight by planning authorities.

Biodiversity features are incorporated into development design.

Planning decisions do not harm biodiversity and if harm is caused appropriate mitigation and compensation is agreed.

Paragraph 5 deals with biodiversity within LDFs stating that:- LDF should:

indicate the location of designated sites of importance for biodiversity and geodiversity, making clear distinctions between the hierarchy of international, national, regional and locally designated sites; and

identify any areas or sites for the restoration or creation of new priority habitats which contribute to regional targets, and support this restoration or creation through appropriate policies

Paragraph 12 ^{deals} with ecological networks and Green Infrastructure stating that:-

Networks of natural habitats provide a valuable resource. They can link sites of biodiversity importance and provide routes or stepping stones for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of species in the wider environment. Local

²² The Joint Nature Conservation Committee Schedule 2 Birds that maybe Killed or Taken at http://www.jncc.gov.uk/PDF/waca1981_schedule2.pdf accessed on 15.7.2009

²³ The Joint Nature Conservation Committee Schedule 6 Animals that may be Killed or Taken by Certain Methods at http://www.jncc.gov.uk/PDF/waca1981_schedule6.pdf accessed on 15.7.2009

²⁴ The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Planning Policy Statement 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147408.pdf> accessed on 8.7.2009

²⁵ The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation A Guide for Good Practice <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/143792.pdf> accessed on 8.7.2009

authorities should aim to maintain networks by avoiding or repairing the fragmentation and isolation of natural habitats through policies in plans. Such networks should be protected from development, and, where possible, strengthened by or integrated within it. This may be done as part of a wider strategy for the protection and extension of open space and access routes such as canals and rivers, including those within urban areas.^{26 27}

²⁶ The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Planning Policy Statement 9 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/147408.pdf> accessed on 8.7.2009

²⁷ The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Planning for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation A Guide for Good Practice <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/143792.pdf> accessed 08.7.2009

Regional Policy

The South East Plan ²⁸

Policy CC8. Green Infrastructure (GI)

2.18 The policy states *Local authorities and partners will work together to plan, provide and manage connected and substantial networks of accessible multi-functional green space. Networks should be planned to include both existing and new green infrastructure. They need to be planned and managed to deliver the widest range of linked environmental and social benefits including conserving and enhancing biodiversity as well as landscape, recreation, water management, social and cultural benefits to underpin individual and community health and 'well being'. They will be created and managed as a framework of green spaces and other natural features that will boost the sustainable development of settlements and increase the environmental capacity of the locality and region as a whole, helping communities to be more resilient to the effects of climate change. The provisions of this policy apply region-wide. However, the successful designation and management of green infrastructure will be particularly important in areas designated as regional hubs, where growth may impact on sites of international nature conservation importance (14) or where there is a need to enhance the existing environmental capacity of an area.*

Green Infrastructure Assets

- 2.19 The following areas can form part of networks of Green Infrastructure:
- parks and gardens - including urban parks, country parks and formal gardens
 - natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces
 - woodlands, including ancient woodland, wet woodland and broadleaved woodland, urban forestry and scrub,
 - grasslands including downlands, acidic grassland, lowland meadows and wetlands,
 - Rivers and streams and open water,
 - Wastelands, derelict open land and rock areas e.g. cliffs, quarries and pits commonly known as Brownfield sites.
 - green corridors - including river and canal banks, cycleways, and rights of way
 - outdoor sports facilities (with natural or artificial surfaces, either publicly or privately owned) including tennis courts, bowling greens, sports pitches, golf courses, athletics tracks,
 - school and other institutional playing fields, and other outdoor sports areas

²⁸ Government Office for the South East The South East Plan at <http://www.gos.gov.uk/gose/planning/regionalPlanning/815640/> accessed on 3.2.2010

- amenity greenspace (most commonly, but not exclusively, in housing areas) – including informal recreation spaces, greenspaces in and around housing, domestic gardens and village greens.
- provision for children and teenagers - including play areas, skateboard parks, outdoor basketball hoops, and other more informal areas (e.g. 'hanging out' areas, teenage shelters)
- allotments, community gardens, and city (urban) farms
- cemeteries and churchyards
- accessible countryside in urban fringe areas
- river and canal corridors
- green roofs and walls

Policy C3: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

2.21 The policy states that *High priority will be given to conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the region's AONBs. Positive land management policies should be developed to sustain the areas' landscape quality. Proposals which support the economies and social well being of the AONBs and their communities, will be encouraged provided that they do not conflict with the aim of conserving and enhancing natural beauty.*

Policy C4: Landscape and Countryside Management

2.22 The policy states that *Outside nationally designated landscapes, positive and high quality management of the region's open countryside will be encouraged and supported, In particular, planning authorities and other agencies in their plans and programmes should recognise, and aim to protect and enhance, the diversity and local distinctiveness of the region's landscape, informed by landscape character assessment. Local authorities should develop criteria-based policies to ensure that all development respects and enhances local landscape character,-securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided.*

2.23 The Government's overall aim is to promote a multi-purpose, inclusive and thriving countryside which respects local distinctiveness and protects our valued landscapes. success.

Policy C5: Managing the Rural Urban Fringe

2.24 *Local development documents should:*

*identify issues and opportunities that require action to deliver a sustainable multi-functional rural-urban fringe,
plan positively for facilities connected with the sustainable management of urban areas
identify any parts of the rural-urban fringe around settlements that are currently or potentially subject to dereliction.*

Policy C6: Countryside Access and Rights of Way Management

2.25 The policy states that LA should *encourage access to the countryside, by:*

- *maintaining, enhancing and promoting the Public Rights of Way system, and permissive and longer distance routes, to facilitate access within, to and from the countryside for visitors and all members of the local community*
- *identifying opportunities and planning for routes within and between settlements, seeking to reduce car use for shorter journeys.*
- *where possible, making new routes multi-functional to allow for benefits for multiple users and contribute to the wider objectives of green infrastructure.*

2.26 The region has a well-used public rights of way network, which provides a major opportunity to improve the well-being of individuals through exercise and access to countryside. This should be maintained and enhanced, recognising the need of visitors and local communities, to enable people to visit and enjoy the region's countryside and ensure that it can be enjoyed by all, as well as providing opportunities to enhance green infrastructure networks and reduce car use for shorter journeys within or between settlements.

Policy NRM5: Conservation and Improvement of Biodiversity

2.27 The policy states that *Local planning authorities and other bodies shall avoid a net loss of biodiversity, and actively pursue opportunities to achieve a net gain across the region.* It outlines a series of specific measures including protection of designated sites and opportunities for improvement. These include

- v. They shall ensure appropriate access to areas of wildlife importance, identifying areas of opportunity for biodiversity improvement and setting targets reflecting those in the table headed “ Regional Biodiversity Targets” – Summary for 2010 and 2026” below. Opportunities for biodiversity improvement, including connection of sites, large scale habitat restoration, enhancement and re-creation in the areas of strategic opportunity for biodiversity improvement (Diagram NRM3)should be pursued, and*
- vii They shall require green infrastructure to be identified, developed and implemented in conjunction with new development.*

Para 9.17 states that

- *Planning has an important and positive role to play in protecting and enhancing the region's biodiversity, and helping natural systems to adapt to climate change impacts. Local authorities, government agencies and other organisations should work together to achieve biodiversity.*

Policy NRM7: Woodlands

2.28 Policy NRM7 deals with the protection of woodland and states that

- *In the development and implementation of local development documents and other strategies, local authorities and other bodies will support the implementation of the Regional Forestry and Woodland Framework, ensuring the value and character of the region's woodland are protected and enhanced.*

Policy LF9: Green Belt Management

2.29 This policy applies to the London Fringe Area and states that *LDD will promote improved management to increase opportunities for access to the open countryside, the retention of attractive landscapes and enhancement of damaged ones, and conservation in areas of the rural-urban fringe easily accessible to people within the sub-region and beyond. The Green Arc (South West) initiative to manage and enhance Metropolitan Green Belt countryside as a multi-functional resource, integrated with greenspace strategies in urban areas, will be promoted and management plans for the Surrey Hills, Kent Downs and High Weald AONBs supported. (Note the Green Arc is a Surrey Hills initiative.)*

2.30 Policy LF9 promotes specific initiatives to manage Green Belt countryside as a multi-functional resource. This will support a more positive role for the Green Belt as well as secure improvements to countryside easily accessible to people within the sub-region and beyond, in line with the advice on urban rural fringe land management in Policy C5: Managing the Rural-Urban Fringe.

The South East England Biodiversity Forum (SEEBF)

2.31 SEEBF is an independent advisory group made up of statutory bodies, local authorities and non-government organisations which identifies, advises upon and responds to the biodiversity challenges in the South East. It engages key regional stakeholders to ensure that development in the South East is truly sustainable.²⁹ SEEBF formulated the South East Biodiversity Strategy (SEBS) as a response to the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. This strategy ensures that priority habitats and species present within the South East are protected maintained and enhanced. The strategy's vision is That the South East's:-

*landscapes and water bodies, coasts and seas, towns and cities - where living things and their habitats are part of healthy, functioning ecosystems; where we value our natural environment, where biodiversity is embedded in policies and decisions, and where more people enjoy, understand and act to improve the natural world about them.*³⁰

The aim of SEBS is to:-

Be a clear, coherent and inspiring vision for the South East

²⁹ The South East Biodiversity Forum What is SEEBF at <http://www.sebiodiversity.org.uk/> accessed on 9.7.2009

³⁰ The South East Biodiversity Forum The Biodiversity Challenge at <http://strategy.sebiodiversity.org.uk/> accessed on 9.7.2009

Provide a framework for the delivery of biodiversity targets that guide and support all those who have an impact on biodiversity in the region
Embed a landscape scale approach to restoring whole ecosystems in the working practices and policies of all partners
Create the space needed for wildlife to respond to climate change
Enable all organisations in the South East to support and improve biodiversity across the region
Be a core element within the strategies and delivery plans of organisations across the South East region

There are a number of elements to the strategy:-

- Biodiversity Opportunity Areas for the South East
- Targets for BAP habitats and species
- Responsibilities of organisations signed up to the strategy
- A clear framework for coordinated delivery of BAP targets across the region;
- Accountability for leading partnership working towards BAP targets;
- Guidance and support for key stakeholders and target audiences;
- Best practice examples; and Standardised reporting;³¹

Biodiversity Opportunities Action Plan (BAPs)

2.32 The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan was formulated in 1997 by the Kent Biodiversity Partnership Steering Group which is comprised of statutory and non statutory groups³² and seeks to establish targets for BAP habitats and species in the context of international, national and regional plans. The aim of the Kent BAP is:- *To conserve and enhance biological diversity in Kent and to contribute to the conservation of national and global biodiversity.*

2.33 Objectives have been formulated which include:-

To maintain and, where practicable, to enhance: the overall populations and natural ranges of native species and the quality and range of wildlife habitats and ecosystems; internationally and nationally important and threatened species, habitats and ecosystems; Species, habitats and natural and managed ecosystems that are characteristic of Kent; the biodiversity of natural and semi-natural habitats, where this has diminished recent decades.

To increase public awareness of, and involvement in, conserving biodiversity.
To identify priorities for habitat and species conservation in Kent and set realistic targets and timescales for these.³³

³¹ The South East Biodiversity Forum The SEB Strategy at <http://strategy.sebiodiversity.org.uk/pages/our-aims.html> accessed on 9.7.2009

³² The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group Steering Group at <http://www.kentbap.org.uk/ourpartners/steeringgroups/> accessed on 9.7.2009

³³ The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan Steering Group The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan at <http://www.kentbap.org.uk/assets/library/documents/kbapfull.pdf> accessed on 8.7.2009

- 2.34 All nine counties in the South East have undertaken a mapping exercise on behalf of the South East Biodiversity Forum (SEEBF) identifying areas of greatest biodiversity opportunity. These Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) form the basis of the South East Biodiversity Strategy.³⁴ The process was guided by a standardised approach, using existing habitat data and information on potential for habitat restoration and recreation. In Kent this work was based on an existing GIS model which used Kent Habitat Survey and Kent Landscape Information System (KLIS) data to produce a model ecological network for the county. The approach has been tested through local and regional consultations, with more than 30 organisations directly involved in identifying the BOAs.
- 2.35 Kent contains sixteen BOAs, covering 40% of land and inter-tidal habitats. For each BOA a detailed description and map has been prepared explaining the reasons for selection and existing resources³⁵ and a full description of the mapping process is also available.³⁶ The aim of the BOAs is to link these valuable habitats and sites into connected ecological corridors with the aim of:-
- Conserving and extending the Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats within Kent.
 - Conserving and strengthening Biodiversity Action Plan Species which use this habitat.
 - Buffering designated sites
 - Providing wildlife friendly routes through which species can migrate in response to climate change or development

(For more information on BAPs and BOAs see links below, Section 3 and Appendix B)

³⁴ The South East Biodiversity Partnership at <http://strategy.sebiodiversity.org.uk/map.php> accessed on 26.6.2009

³⁵ The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan Kent BAP Resources Centre at <http://www.kentbap.org.uk/resources/boas/> accessed on 5.10.2009

³⁶ The South East Biodiversity Partnership Opportunity Area mapping methodology at http://strategy.sebiodiversity.org.uk/data/files/BOA/opportunity_area_mapping_methodology_0808.doc accessed on 5.10.2009

3 Designated sites

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

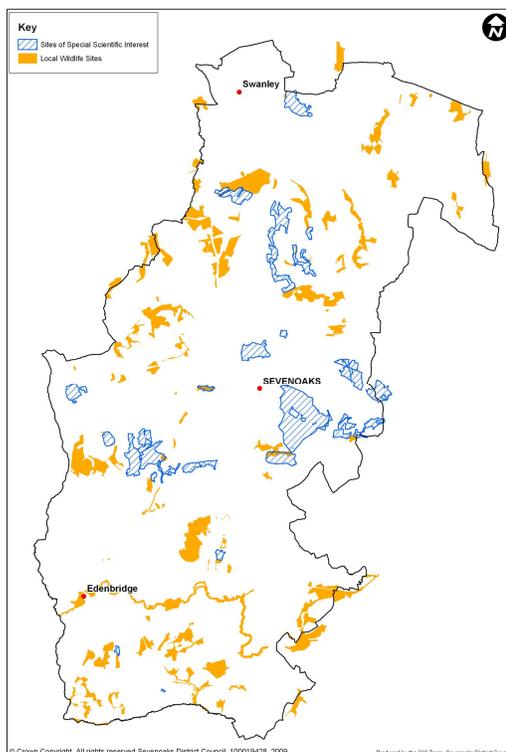


Figure 1: SSSIs and LWSs within Sevenoaks District

- 3.1 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are some of the country's very best wildlife and geological sites with only European sites being given higher protection. Natural England has the responsibility for identifying and protecting SSSIs under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- 3.2 There 17 SSSIs in the Sevenoaks District. The district does not have any sites of international importance however Appropriate Assessment has been undertaken to assess the impact of development on European Sites outside the district.³⁷

(For further details on the ecology contained within the SSSIs see links to citation. A full list of SSSI'S is in appendix A).

Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats

- 3.3 Sevenoaks District contains a number of Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats or s41 habitats and Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species or s41 species under

³⁷ Natural England [Sites of Special Scientific Interest](http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/ssi/index.cfm) at <http://www.sssi.naturalengland.org.uk/Special/ssi/index.cfm> accessed on 3.2.2010

the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006.³⁸ where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating 50ha on new lowland meadow in blocks of at least 2ha by 2015. The areas covered are shown in Figure 3 and a table showing habitats and Biodiversity Action Plans is in Appendix A.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs)

3.4 Greensands, Heaths and Commons Biodiversity Opportunity Area

3.5 The Greensands Heath and Commons Biodiversity Area stretches from Westerham on the county border to Maidstone. It incorporates the greensands ridge which rises out of the vale of the Low Weald. There are 10 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), 11 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and 1 Roadside Nature Reserve (RNR) Part of Westerham Mines SSSI is designated as country park, identified as Stubbs Wood³⁹ and Dryhill SSSI is a Local Nature Reserve. (LNR)⁴⁰ Between the core sites there are fragments of ancient woodland and small pockets of neutral and acidic grassland, with numerous ponds in the weald. Habitats of special interest are ancient woodland on the acidic plateau, ragstone scarp and gault clay at the base of the scarp, relict heath commons, acidic and calcareous grassland and a number of important water bodies.⁴¹ The Greensands Ridge runs throughout west Sussex, Surrey Hampshire and Kent and so provides an important corridor not only between districts but on a County basis. The ridge is one of a number of ridges which interlace the Wealden landscape. It is the remains of the Wealden Dome which rose from the sea 10-20 million years ago. Over time the chalk cap has worn away, exposing the greensands on the plateau, with further erosion of the clay forming a basin and exposing the ragstone layer, and the clay below. The North and South Downs form the remainder of the dome facing each other across the Weald.⁴²

3.6 The targets for the Greensands Heaths and Commons BOA are:-

Pursue opportunities for creation of acid grassland and heathland where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating, by 2015, up to 145ha in blocks of at least 1ha and no more than 500m from other existing or new semi-natural habitat.

³⁸ Biodiversity Action Reporting System Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 - Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England at <http://www.ukbap-reporting.org.uk/news/details.asp?X=45> accessed on 2.3.2009

³⁹ Kent County Council Stubbs Wood at http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/countryside_and_coast/parks_and_open_spaces/country_parks/stubbs_wood.aspx accessed on 15.1.2010

⁴⁰ Kent County Council Dryhill Local Nature Reserve at http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/countryside_and_coast/parks_and_open_spaces/country_parks/dryhill_local_nature_reserve.aspx accessed on 15.1.2010

⁴¹ Kent Biodiversity Action Plan Greensands, Heath and Commons Biodiversity Opportunity Area at http://www.kentbap.org.uk/assets/library/documents/Opportunity_Area_Statement_-_Greensand_Heaths_and_Commons_FI.doc accessed 19.1.2010

⁴² West Sussex County Council The Wealden Landscape at <http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/content/environment/the-west-sussex-countryside/the-low-weald/the-downs-link.en?page=3> accessed on 18.1.2010

Enhance or reinstate woodland management – including wood pasture management where appropriate – and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.

Pursue opportunities for quarries to be restored to maximize their biodiversity potential. Where appropriate, seek restoration to heathland and/or acid grassland as a condition of permissions for aggregates extraction

Engage communities within target areas by raising awareness of biodiversity and encouraging them to get involved in biodiversity action

Medway and Low Weald Wetlands and Grasslands Biodiversity Opportunity Area

3.7 The Medway and Low Weald Wetlands and grassland Biodiversity Opportunity Area covers a number of districts with only a small part in Sevenoaks. The BOA incorporates important river corridors including the River Medway, the River Sherway and within Sevenoaks the River Eden. Polebrook Farm is the only SSSI within the Sevenoaks district with 6 LWS and an RNR. Parts of the River Eden have been designated as an LNR.⁴³ Throughout the BOA there are *numerous* fragments of ancient woodland and many small ponds, as well as pockets of neutral grassland.⁴⁴ Habitats of importance within the BOA include ancient wet broadleaved woodland, water courses and associated water bodies, lowland meadow and fen.

3.8 The Targets for the Medway and Low Weald Wetlands and Grasslands are:-

Pursue opportunities for creation of wider river floodplains with riparian corridors around natural drainage channels.

Pursue opportunities for the establishment, by 2020, of a new, landscape-scale, freshwater wetland complex, including fen, wet woodland, reedbed and wet grassland, in which successional processes are allowed to proceed. In this context, a 'landscape-scale' complex should be considered as extending over at least 1000 hectares.

Secure the appropriate conservation management of all existing Lowland Meadows.

Pursue opportunities to create new species-rich neutral grassland, particularly close the Marden Meadows SSSI and south of Sevenoaks, where this will contribute to meeting the target of creating, by 2015, 100ha in the Low Weald and High Weald, in blocks of 2ha or more.

Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.

⁴³ Kent Biodiversity Action Plan Medway and Low Weald Biodiversity Opportunity Area at http://www.kentbap.org.uk/assets/library/documents/Opportunity_Area_Statement_-_Low_Weald_Woodland_FINAL.doc accessed on 25.1.2010

⁴⁴ Kent County Council Kent Landscape Information System at <http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/default.asp> accessed 4.1.2010

Continue to encourage the positive management, restoration and re-creation of hedgerows, particularly where this would reconnect other habitats or enhance the landscape, in particular where these have been removed due to agricultural intensification.

Improve the management of invasive species in and alongside water courses. Maintain, restore, recreate and buffer ponds, particularly to establish networks of sites to support great crested newt.

High Weald Biodiversity Opportunity Area

3.19 The High Weald Biodiversity Opportunity Area covers a large area extending through southern Sevenoaks into adjoining districts. There are two SSSIs within Sevenoaks, Cowden Pound Pastures SSSI and Cowden Meadows SSSI. Other core sites include 9 LWSs and 1 RNR. Important landscape features are *woodlands*, wooded gills and Shaws interspersed between areas of acidic grassland on the higher slopes and lowland meadows on the lower slopes and the valley floor. Numerous streams and flushes interlace the landscape with natural ponds being present throughout the area. Interesting features of this landscape are the sandstone outcrops or bluffs that rise above the farmland and woodland.^{45 46}

3.20 The targets for the High Weald BOA are:-

Restore, recreate and enhance woodland through active conservation management, particularly locally unique gill woodlands, heathy woodlands and wood pasture. Restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland. Secure the appropriate conservation management of all existing Lowland Meadows.

Pursue opportunities to create new species-rich neutral grassland where this will contribute to meeting the target of 100ha in the Low Weald and High Weald, in blocks of 2ha or more, by 2015.

Reinforce the intricate matrix of habitats by restoring and recreating heathland, acid grassland, and neutral grassland, and reconnecting fragmented woodlands. In the Pembury area, at least 5ha of heathland should be restored and at least 15ha of heathland and acid grassland created by 2015. Opportunities should be taken for heathland or acid grassland restoration as part of woodland management, for example at Bedgebury Forest and Hemsted Forest. Additional opportunities for creation of acid grassland and heathland should be pursued where this would contribute to the county-wide target of creating up to 145ha by 2015.

Pursue other opportunities to create new acid grassland and heathland where this will contribute to the county-wide target of, by 2015, up to 50ha in blocks of at least 1ha and no more than 500m from other existing or new semi-natural habitat.

Maintain and restore water courses and maintain, restore and create ponds.

⁴⁵ Kent Biodiversity Action Plan High Weald Biodiversity Opportunity Area at http://www.kentbap.org.uk/assets/library/documents/Opportunity_Area_Statement_-_High_Weald_FINAL.doc accessed on 25.1.2010

⁴⁶ Kent County Council Kent Landscape Information System at <http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/default.asp> accessed 4.1.2010

Central North Downs Biodiversity Opportunity Area

3.21 The Central Downs Biodiversity Opportunity Area extends throughout the northern part of the Sevenoaks district stretching from Knockhill in the west and extending into Tonbridge and Malling district. To the north the BOA extends up to Farningham Woods SSSI. The BOA is mostly contained within a triangle of land bounded by the M20, M26 and M25.⁴⁷ There are 11 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), 4 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and 1 Roadside Nature reserves (RNR). Lullingstone Park and Preston Hill are also country parks. Farningham Woods SSSI being designated as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR).⁴⁸ Between these core sites there are numerous fragmented ancient woodlands with small patches of neutral grassland throughout the BOA.⁴⁹ Habitats of special interest are chalk downland on the scarp of the North Downs and the Darent Gap, substantial areas of ancient woodland and wood pasture as well as veteran trees and the river Darent and associated floodplain.

3.22 The targets for the Central Downs BOA are:-

Restore, extend and reconnect chalk grassland. By 2015, restore at least 10ha of chalk grassland in the Darent Valley area, and pursue opportunities for:
Chalk grassland creation where this would contribute to the target of 250ha;
Additional chalk grassland restoration to meet the county-wide target of 150ha.
Enhance or reinstate woodland management, and restore plantations on ancient woodland sites to native woodland; extend and reconnect fragmented woodlands where this would not conflict with grassland conservation and enhancement.
Restore natural floodplain habitats, and restore/create flower-rich neutral grassland on suitable soils. Pursue opportunities for creation of species-rich neutral grassland

Threats to Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats and Species

3.23 Pollution

All unimproved grassland species survive only if the soil is nutrient-poor with flora growing in a thin layer of soil on top of sandstone, ragstone, chalk, clay or gravel. In many cases, species rely on a few food plants or even a single species. Grassland is vulnerable to increases in soil nutrients, particularly nitrogen, as a result of agricultural run-off and deposition of aerial pollution (such as the (NOx)

⁴⁷ Kent Biodiversity Action Plan Central North Downs Biodiversity Opportunity Area at http://www.kentbap.org.uk/assets/library/documents/Opportunity_Area_Statement_-_Central_North_Downs_FINAL.doc accessed on 18.1.2010

⁴⁸ Sevenoaks Borough Council Countryside at http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/leisure_culture/261.asp accessed on 17.1.2010

⁴⁹ Kent County Council Kent Landscape Information System at <http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/default.asp> accessed 4.1.2010

emitted by car exhausts). Fertiliser used in cultivation increases nutrients, conditions becoming conducive to growth of invasive grasses which swamp tender grasses flowering plants and shrubs on which the specialised fauna feed.⁵⁰

Pollution may also affect the water bodies and water courses which in turn would have an impact on the habitats with which they are associated. Runoff from roads can contain oil, heavy metals and salt. Oil will cause a layer to form on the water and deprive the aquatic life of oxygen, heavy metals in high concentration will poison the ecosystems present within the water network and salt can increase the water's salinity providing conditions not conducive to freshwater species survival

Policy Options

The health of the water network can be protected by buffering water courses so polluting elements are absorbed by the surrounding land before entering the water. Highways and large roads should have flood attenuation built in with traps to filtrate any runoff.

3.24 Human Disturbance

Human disturbance can have an impact on lowland meadow and calcareous grassland. Trampling, caused by high visitor pressure damages sensitive flora species within the grassland, depriving the specialised fauna of essential food species. Dog faeces left by dog walkers nutrifies the soil encouraging the growth of the thistles, docks and the more invasive grasses limiting opportunities for the growth of the tendered more beneficial species.⁵¹

Trampling can also be a threat to the delicate woodland ground flora present in ancient woodland. These species are slow to spread with germination depending on good management and lack of disturbance. This is one reason why such species are an important indicator of the age of this habitat. If the ground flora is damaged within these sites it is likely to take generations for the woodland to recover.

Policy Options

Priority habitats and species can be protected from human disturbance by formulating policies to ensure either development has no impact on sensitive ecology or that the developer provides appropriate mitigation and compensation measures to counter balance any impacts. The management of footpath routes away from sensitive areas, the creation of an urban green infrastructure providing more convenient, less sensitive natural spaces for the population to enjoy and extension, re-creation and buffering of designated sites will limit human impact on the most ecologically valuable habitats and species.

⁵⁰ Debbie Salmon Kent Wildlife Trust

⁵¹ Debbie Salmon Kent Wildlife Trust

3.25 Development

Ancient woodland has been in existence for over 400 years. Ground flora and invertebrate fauna is often diverse with certain species existing only in these habitats. Plant species particularly associated with ancient woodland are referred to as ancient woodland indicator species, and can be used to identify ancient woodland sites. The importance of this habitat for wildlife is directly related to its long existence, and is irreplaceable if lost. Historically, much ancient woodland has been lost to development and agriculture. This has slowed, and further, significant, direct loss of ancient woodland is unlikely.

Development can also have an impact on other Biodiversity habitats either by direct take or added human pressure on the surrounding countryside. *See previous section for the impacts of human disturbance.)*

Policies and ensure no further development is agreed which contributes to loss of priority habitats would ensure preservation of habitat remaining will help to protect priority habitats. Substantial buffers of habitats within developments and appropriate funding for long term management would ensure all existing and created habitats are kept in favourable condition.

3.26 Lack of Management

The biggest threat to ancient woodland is neglect and poor management. Traditionally, woods were coppiced. However as wood use declined, coppicing has become less common and now many ancient woodlands are unmanaged and overgrown. Reduction of coppicing has led to a change in the physical structure of woodland, a decrease in diversity of woodland ground flora and a catastrophic loss of woodland butterflies.⁵²

Grassland composition is largely dependant on the ph of soils within the area. Soils with a ph below 7 form acidic grassland and heathland, a ph of 5-7 will lead to neutral grassland and ph above 7 is alkaline forming downland. The above habitats originally evolved as large ungulates created clearings in primeval woodland by grazing. Specialist flora colonised these clearings with fauna adapting to survive within the particular habitat. With the settlement of man these glades were extended by clearing woodland, in the Bronze Age to create grazing for cattle and land for crops.

As grassland was originally created, and maintained, by man, it is vulnerable to changes in management. Abandonment of grazing or more labour intensive mowing regimes lead to changes in the flora, including increases in competitive plants. Scrub clearance is essential within these habitats. Although grazing animals eat woody material, periodic scrub clearance by cutting or firing has been

⁵² Moyse R Personal Communication Kent Wildlife Trust

historically used to enable tender herbs grasses and shrubs to survive in open ground. If scrub invasion occurs, habitats quickly become lost to woodland, tree cover stifling growth of distinctive flora and limiting food for fauna. Specialised fauna and flora become scarce or extinct.

Policy Options

Policy can influence appropriate management by ensuring all land owned by the district is in favourable condition. Priority habitats are protected and extended within development by the use of appropriate conditions and that landowners and communities are encouraged to manage land for biodiversity with the council supporting agri-environmental schemes and other funding streams.

3.27 Fragmentation

The loss of ancient woodland bought about by development has led to fragmentation, with only small pockets of ancient woodland remaining where once there was extensive woodland cover. Due to the age of this woodland, the species which rely on this habitat such as dormice, specialised invertebrates and woodland orchids are unable to spread between fragments and have become isolated. Due to the low populations the fragments are able to support these species are vulnerable the local extinction due to local weather events and further loss or degradation of the woodlands.

The growth in industry and urban development, pollution and climate change have led to unimproved grassland becoming increasingly rare. What remains often comprises of small fragments, unconnected to other habitat. The size of remaining fragments and populations of both flora and fauna are often small, with decreasing genetic diversity, leading to inbreeding. The remaining populations become vulnerable to local disasters with bad weather, increase in pollution, or more habitat loss wiping out isolated populations, re-colonisation being unlikely due to the distance between habitat fragments.

Policy Options

Infrastructure in line with NRM5 and CC8 of the South East Plan will do much to decrease fragmentation. By focusing on greening urban open spaces and infrastructure within towns and new development, permeability will be assured for wildlife within the urban environment. Landscape habitat enhancement of the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas will provide habitat connections between the urban and rural environment of Sevenoaks, linkages between districts and Counties. This infrastructure will remove barriers to migration, ensure small local populations can form larger meta populations and create landscape scale gains to aid the increase of BAP species and habitats.

3.28 Invasion by alien species

The popularity of gardening with non indigenous species in Victorian times resulted in foreign species escaping into the natural environment either by deliberate planting on estates, dumping of cuttings in the countryside or general spread. With no predators to limit growth and an ability to produce huge amounts of seeds and runners, alien plants quickly spread swamping indigenous ground and shrub flora and creating a monoculture of one species..⁵³

Policy Options

Within planning applications, countryside management and the creation of green infrastructure every effort should be made to eradicate the above species to ensure healthy native ecosystems in Sevenoaks and beyond.

(For more details of threats to BOAs see Appendix B)

Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)

3.29 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are designated as they contain habitats and species which are of county importance. Designation of LWSs helps to deliver the Kent Biodiversity Action Plan targets and the National Indicator 197. There are 57 LWSs in Sevenoaks district which incorporate Biodiversity Action Plan or Priority habitats such as ancient and other broad leaved woodland, lowland meadow and acidic grasslands, rivers and streams and other water bodies. Local Wildlife Sites used to be known as Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs).

(For further details on the ecology contained within the LWSs see links. A complete list of designated sites can be found in Table 3 For the location of LWSs see figures 1 and 4)

Local Nature Reserves (LNR)

3.30 Local Nature Reserves are for both people and wildlife. They are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally. The District has 3 LNRs, Farningham Woods Farningham Land adjacent to Glebe House, Hartley and Dry Hill Park Sundridge.⁵⁴

(For further details on the ecology contained within the LNRs see links. A complete list of designated sites can be found in Table 3. For the location of LNRs see figure 5)

Country Parks

3.31 Country Parks all provide a wide range of opportunities for recreation, health and education and improve the quality of life for their local communities. Country Parks

⁵³ Debbie Salmon Kent Wildlife Trust

⁵⁴ Natural England [How are Local Nature Reserves Declared at http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designatedareas/lnr/declaration.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/designatedareas/lnr/declaration.aspx) accessed on 3.2.2010

were established as a result of the 1968 Countryside Act.

- 3.32 The District has 10 Country Parks. KCC manage Lullingstone & Preston Hill Dry Hill Stubbs Wood and SDC Manage Farningham Woods, Shoreham Woods, Oxenhill Shaw & Meadow Kemsing, Downs Seal Chart, Fawke & Bitchet Commons Westerham Commons, and Hanging Bank Ide Hill.⁵⁵

(For further details on the ecology contained within the Country Parks and links to site information. A complete list of designated sites can be found in Table 3. For the location of Country Parks see figure 1 and 4)

Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs)

- 3.33 The Roadside Nature Reserve Project was set up in 1994 to identify, protect and manage road verges of importance for wildlife. It is run as a partnership between Kent Wildlife Trust and Kent County Council, with a part time officer based at the Trust who liaises with the contractors who cut the verges as well as working with a dedicated group of volunteers to manage some of the reserves. There are 8 RNRs within the Sevenoaks District.⁵⁶

(For further details on the ecology contained within the RNRs and links to site information. For the location of RNRs see figure 4)

Woodland Trust Sites

- 3.34 The Woodland Trust was founded in 1972, it acquires and protects woods The District has 6 Sites - Rogers Wood Fawkham Green, Choaks Wood, 9 Hole wood, Eynsford Mount wood Farningham, Hallow wood Badgers Mount adj A225 Otford, Land at Morants Court Dunton Green.⁵⁷

Kent Wildlife Trust Reserves

- 3.35 Kent Wildlife Trust has a number of reserves in the Sevenoaks district. Each reserve is a special place for wildlife. Sites include Polhill Bank - Otford, East of Shoreham Road - Otford, Kemsing Downs, Bough Beech, Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve, Breeches Wood - Chiddingstone Causeway, Stick Hill - Edenbridge.⁵⁸

Agricultural Land

- 3.36 While the majority of the District is classified as Good agricultural land, the area

⁵⁵ Kent County Council [Kent Country Parks](http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/countryside_and_coast/parks_and_open_spaces/kent_country_parks.aspx) at http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure_and_culture/countryside_and_coast/parks_and_open_spaces/kent_country_parks.aspx accessed on 3.2.2010

⁵⁶ Kent Wildlife Trust [Roadside Nature Reserves](http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-work/roadside-nature-reserves/) at <http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-work/roadside-nature-reserves/> accessed on 4.2.2010

⁵⁷ The Woodland Trust [About us](http://www.woodlandtrustshop.com/about_us) at http://www.woodlandtrustshop.com/about_us accessed on 3.2.2010

⁵⁸ Kent Wildlife Trust [Visitor Centres and Reserves](http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/) at <http://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/reserves/> accessed on 3.2.2010

around Swanley, Hextable, South Darenth and southwards along the Darenth Valley is classified as Very Good. There is a band of Poor and Non Agricultural land to the south and east of Sevenoaks Town and along the Greensand ridge to Westerham.⁵⁹

Landscape

Natural England Natural Areas

3.37 Natural England produced “Natural Areas in London and South East England” in 1999. This work divided England into a series of Natural Areas with boundaries which are based on the distribution of wildlife and natural features and the land use patterns and human history of each area. They are not formal designations but are intended to identify the chief threats to, and opportunities for, nature conservation. The approach defines issues and sets objectives as a starting point for action to protect and manage biodiversity and geological assets.^{60 61 62}

Parts of five Natural Areas cover Sevenoaks District Council’s area. These are:

- (i) North Kent Plain
- (ii) North Downs
- (iii) Wealden Greensand
- (iv) Low Weald and
- (v) High Weald

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

3.38 60% (22,600ha) of the Sevenoaks district is designated as AONB.

The Kent Downs Kent Downs AONB

3.39 The Kent Downs AONB is a diverse and vibrant landscape with dramatic chalk escarpments, secluded dry valleys, networks of tiny lanes and historic hedgerows, ancient woodlands, traditional orchards, locally distinctive villages, unique wildlife and many sites of historic and cultural interest. It was nationally designated⁶³ an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in 1968. AONB covers an area of 878 sq. km

⁵⁹ Kent County Council Kent Landscape Information System at <http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/default.asp> accessed 4.1.2010

⁶⁰ Kent County Council Kent Landscape Information System at <http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/default.asp> accessed 4.1.2010

⁶¹ Natural England Nature on the Map at <http://www.natureonthemap.org.uk/map.aspx?map=bap> accessed on 3.2.2010

⁶² Natural England Natural Areas at <http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/englands/naturalareas.aspx> accessed on 3.2.2010

⁶³ Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Kent Downs Designation at <http://www.kentdowns.org.uk/designation.html> accessed on 3.2.2010

stretching from Dover to the Surrey Border. The semi-natural Biodiversity Action Plan habitats of particular importance in the Kent Downs are:

- Unimproved chalk downland
- Ancient woodland
- Chalk streams
- Acid grassland and heaths
- Species-rich hedgerows
- Farmland habitats
- Old orchards
- Wood pasture and parkland

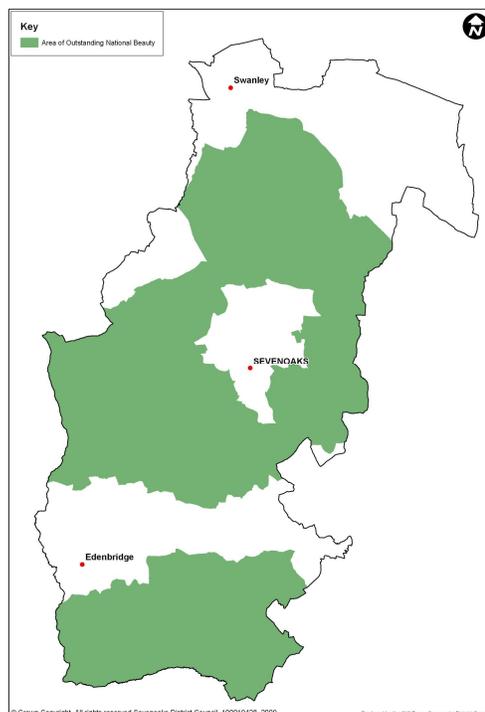


Figure 3: Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

3.40 The first Kent Downs AONB management plan was published in April 2004; the first revision was published in April 2009. The management plan sets in place clear aims, policies and actions for the conservation management and enhancement of the AONB for a five year period and sets a longer term vision.⁶⁴

Relevant Policies include

AEU3 Investment to secure sustainable, high quality, low impact and easy access routes from towns and growth areas to the AONB will be pursued.

AEU4 The sustainable and enhanced management and promotion of open

⁶⁴ Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-2014 at <http://www.kentdowns.org.uk/Mplanmain.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

access sites will be encouraged where it conforms to AONB policies.

AEU7 Improvements to the Rights of Way Network to provide and improve countryside access, including waymarking, signposting and maintenance, which conforms with AONB policies and design guidance, will be supported through the Countryside Access Improvement Plan.

AEU9 The establishment and management of new public rights of way, particularly for walkers, horse riders and cyclists, together with a safer and better connecting network will be supported, where they conform to policies to conserve and enhance the AONB.

AEU10 High standards of landscape and recreational management, accessible visitor facilities and access opportunities, and increased opportunities for learning through a programme of training, events, guided walks and gateway routes and sites will be supported.⁶⁵

The High Weald AONB

3.41 A number of key components make up this landscape. Rolling hills⁶⁶, with sandstone outcrops and cut by streams to form steep-sided ravines (called gills); small irregular shaped fields⁶⁷ and patches of heathland; abundant woodlands⁶⁸; scattered farmsteads⁶⁹ and sunken lanes⁷⁰ and paths. The High Weald covers an area of 1,457 sq. km and covers the Wealden areas of four counties, Kent, East Sussex, West Sussex and Surrey. The Management Plan addresses the primary purpose of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty - the conservation and enhancement of the special features that represent its natural beauty 2nd edition in March 2009. Policies relating to countryside access include:

AEU2 The sustainable management of open access sites through the Local Access Forums, and the partnership approach to the statutory Rights of Way Improvement plan will be supported.

AEU4 Improvements to the waymarking, signposting and maintenance of public rights of way network will be encouraged.

AEU6 Provision and management of safe and quiet links between the Public

⁶⁵ Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2009-2014 at <http://www.kentdowns.org.uk/Mplanmain.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

⁶⁶ High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty The Landform Story Rolling Hills at <http://www.highweald.org/text.asp?PageId=256> accessed on 3.2.2010

⁶⁷ High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty The Field and Heaths Story at <http://www.highweald.org/text.asp?PageId=255> accessed on 3.2.2010

⁶⁸ High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty The Woodland Story at <http://www.highweald.org/text.asp?PageId=257> accessed on 3.2.2010

⁶⁹ High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty The Settlement Story at <http://www.highweald.org/text.asp?PageId=259> accessed on 3.2.2010

⁷⁰ High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty The Routeways Story at <http://www.highweald.org/text.asp?PageId=258> accessed on 3.2.2010

Rights of Way, particularly for walkers, horse riders and cyclists, will be supported.⁷¹

Local Plan Landscape Designations

Special Landscape Areas (SLA)

3.42 Certain areas within Kent County have been designated as Special Landscape Areas (SLAs) because of their strategic landscape importance and scenic significance in a Kent-wide context. Their detailed boundaries were defined in the Sevenoaks Local Plans however the Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006 stated that SLAs exclude areas that fall within AONB. These are The North Downs and the Greensand Ridge SLAs

Local Landscape Importance (ALLI)

3.43 The Local Plan also designated ALLIs which contribute to the rural character of the area, offer a visual contrast to the built area, contain the spread of development and provide for passive recreation. These are landscapes of a quality and attractiveness which merits recognition and protection.

Historic Parks and Gardens

3.44 English Heritage produces a Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England. There are currently 17 areas registered within Sevenoaks District. Hall Place - Leigh, Penshurst Place, Redleaf Estate - Penshurst, Swaylands - Penshurst, Knole, Long Barn - Sevenoaks Weald, Combe Bank - Sundridge, Chartwell, Squerreys Court - Westerham, Hever Castle, Franks Hall - Horton Kirby and South Darenth, Riverhill House - Sevenoaks, Chevening House, Chiddingstone Castle, Stonewall Bank – Chiddingstone, Emmetts – Ide Hill and The Japanese Garden Bitchet Green.

Sevenoaks District Countryside Assessment

3.45 The Sevenoaks District Countryside Assessment was produced to define and describe the different types and character areas of the landscape in the Sevenoaks District, and then to evaluate each area in terms of the condition of the landscape and its sensitivity. It has been adopted by the Council as SPG.

3.46 It is not a tool designed to resist all change within the landscape. Rather, it recognises that landscapes are continually evolving. An understanding of character will ensure that any change or development does not undermine whatever is valued or characteristic in a particular landscape. This data should be used to inform policy-makers, forward planners, architects, highway engineers, developers and development control officers on management, development conservation or

⁷¹ High Weald [The High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2004](http://www.highweald.org/uploads/HW%20management%20plan%202009.pdf) at <http://www.highweald.org/uploads/HW%20management%20plan%202009.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

change in the landscape.⁷²

- 3.47 The report defines 13 broad landscape types which are found over the District and 53 individual local landscape character areas. See Table 1

Table 1 Character Areas in Sevenoaks District Council

Landscape Type	Character Areas:
Mixed Settled Downs	Ash-cum-Ridley Fawkham Hartley and New Ash Green West Kingsdown
Downs Farmlands	Eynsford and Shoreham Downs Eynsford Downs (East) Farningham Farmlands Horton Kirby Downs Horton Kirby Plateau
Wooded Downs	East Hill Woodlands Knockholt and Halstead Downs
Scarp Landscapes	Kemsing Scarp Knockholt Scarp
Scarp-foot Farmland Estates	Kemsing Scarp-Foot Estates Knockholt Scarp-Foot Estates
Fringe Landscapes	Badgers Mount Crockenhill Fringe Farningham Woods Hextable Fringe
Downs River Valleys	Darent Valley – Eynsford and Shoreham ,Horton Kirby, Otford Valley – East, West
Gault Clay vale	Darent Valley – Sundridge and Chipstead ,Westerham and Brasted Kemsing Clay Farmlands
Greensand Parks and Farmlands	Ide Hill Knole Park Sundridge Farmlands Westerham and Brasted Parklands
Charts	Seal Chart Sevenoaks Eastern Chart Sevenoaks Wooded Chart Westerham and Brasted Chart
Low Weald	Bough Beech Reservoir and Low Weald Farmlands Charcott Farmlands Edenbridge , Sevenoaks Weald and Underriver
High Weald	Chiddingstone Farmlands Chiddingstone Hoath Plateau Chiddingstone Wooded Pastures Cowden Farmlands Enfield Farmlands Fordcombe Marsh Green Wooded Pastures North Leigh Farmlands Penshurst and Leigh Parklands
Eden and Upper Medway Valleys	Eden Valley – Chiddingstone – Edenbridge Hever Penshurst Upper Medway –Penshurst

- 3.48 The Sevenoaks Countryside Assessment makes a number of comments on the quality of the landscape and on the areas which are under pressure and suggest some actions. These are as follows:-

3.49 Biodiversity

Biodiversity protection and enhancement in the region will be achieved by:

⁷² Jacobs Babbie Sevenoaks District Countryside Assessment at <http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/countrysidecharacterassessment.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

- Conserving and enhancing the extent and quality of designated conservation sites, especially those afforded the highest levels of protection under international and national legislation.
- Conserving and enhancing the diversity and distribution of habitats and species, as designated sites only represent the best examples of their kind.
- Recognising the importance of green networks and open green space within urban and suburban areas and taking steps to protect and enhance the provision of these
- Recognising the particular nature of urban wildlife (including those on public land). These may be of local importance for wildlife and for the provision of quality green-spaces

3.50 Fringe landscapes

- Pressure for new development is the most obvious challenge to existing landscape character. A particular problem is the growth of unremarkable development which has no local distinction or relevance to the site or to the local settlement pattern, and this may include post 1801 linear built development which is frequently cited as a detracting feature within the landscape. New development on the fringe of an existing urban area often introduces an incongruous or harsh urban edge into the adjacent landscape. In addition, the spread of suburban elements, such as coniferous planting, often constitute major detracting elements in the view.
- Pressures on fringe landscapes include major recreational uses such as at West Kingsdown - there is a growing demand for the landscape in these areas to sustain urban recreational activities.
- The growth of horseculture has had a marked influence on the condition of the landscape around many settlements, leading to the addition of inappropriate fencing and stabling to the view and the deterioration of the small-scale historic enclosed landscape amongst other factors.

Actions

- The creation of a landscape framework that recognises existing post 1801 settlement and any recent existing development, this should also recognise the fundamental basis of the landscape in soils, topography, vegetation, and the scale and pattern of the existing landscape.
- The conservation of existing cultural elements that create a sense of place will be of prime importance. The enhancement of the settings of historic settlement cores - such as Hextable - would restore a more profound sense of place to many of the expanded settlements.

3.51 Agricultural landscapes

- In the farmed landscape, the network of hedgerows is often vulnerable. Due to

current agricultural practice, hedgerows lose their function in arable (and residential) landscapes, but still form an essential part of the ecological network, in particular where they act as a wildlife corridor. A frequent problem is the over-mature hedgerow being supplemented or replaced with post and wire fencing. The form of modern agricultural buildings is also often a detractor in the landscape, most of these buildings being of large scale and having no local distinction.

- The Sevenoaks area has experienced an extensive loss of riparian landscape both in the Eden and Darent Valleys. In general, there is a lack of sensitive management of trees, and little replacement planting. Small areas of water meadows persist, but this type of landscape is generally in decline.

Actions

- Where hedgerows have been removed, i.e. in large-scale arable farmland, there will be a need for the implementation of new semi-natural habitats, along with the introduction of sensitive land management.
- Where hedgerows are characteristic but in poor condition, the integrity of these field boundaries and roadside hedges should be restored by replanting and careful management.

3.52 General settlement pattern and pressure for development

- The characteristic pattern of rural settlement, which often includes small dwellings and farmsteads located in direct relationship to the landform (such as isolated farmsteads on ridges in the Eynsford Downs) is greatly at risk from zoned or opportunist development. One general problem of the more remote parts of the Downs is the development of small buildings and small holdings – many probably having achieved deemed planning permission over time, but in the majority of cases incorporating unsympathetic land-uses and poor quality building (such as corrugated iron stabling, storage of waste goods etc).

3.53 Motorway corridors, major communication routes

- Motorway corridors, local highways and major communication routes have a large-scale impact on landform, including landscapes near Eynsford and Shoreham, Badger's Mount, Otford etc. The integration of transport and rail corridors into the wider landscape is needed; most major roads do not currently contribute to local distinctiveness. In particular, junctions and pockets of road-associated open space are treated as part of the linear corridor, but have no association with the landscape into which they lead.
- The loss of distinctive features along rural roads is also an issue. Narrow verge-less roads, such as those which are characteristic in the Downs, may deteriorate if subject to widening or experiencing an excessive number of

vehicles, causing damage to chalk banks and hedgerows.

- As roads approach urban edges, they often lose distinctive qualities and suffer abrupt transitions from the rural to the urban landscape.

Actions

- Local design codes are needed for these areas in order to embrace both highway standards and distinctive features appropriate to the area.

The Green Infrastructure Network

3.54 Work on the network will include consideration of possibilities for strengthening linkages between open spaces and potential wildlife corridors, including links between urban and rural open spaces.

The impact of development on the Green Infrastructure network is limited. The proposed allocation of new development avoids extending built development into the countryside and, within urban areas, studies to identify potential development sites will avoid sites designated for their wildlife value and open spaces of amenity or recreational value.

The amount of new development allocated to meet the requirements of the South East Plan is relatively limited. While this is in line with the strategy to protect the natural environment the lack of development means a lack of funding for the provision of new facilities.

The Green Infrastructure Network will be developed through the Allocations DPD which will identify areas of value for open space, sport and recreation purposes and protect them from development. It will also bring forward proposals for new sites to address deficiencies in provision identified in the Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study where they are supported by the local community.

Kent Access Improvement Plan

(designated recreational paths and cycle routes)

3.55 The plan sets out the county's aspirations for the countryside access network, its purpose to increase the usage and enjoyment of public rights of way and open green space to contribute to reducing congestion, support rural business and economy, education, health and, most importantly, the quality of life of the people.

This is a working document that –

- *Evaluates the extent to which local rights of way meet the present and likely future needs of the public.*

- *Assesses the opportunities provided by local rights of way for exercise and other forms of open-air recreation and the enjoyment of Kent.*
- *Assesses the accessibility of local rights of way to blind or partially sighted persons and others with mobility problems.*
- *Provides a strategy for future proactive management of countryside access in Kent to put in place a more meaningful and sustainable network.*
- *Supports bids for external funding by demonstrating links to a wide range of local and national strategies, in order to maximise opportunities for funding.*
- *Provides a catalyst for actions that both improve the countryside access estate and raise its profile*

3.56 It states that LDF's should not only provide the framework for protecting and enhancing rights of way and green space within future development but also include public rights of way within their travel strategies. Policy contained within these documents will be hugely influential on the ability to create new links within development. Our research has shown that good quality off-road routes such as the Tonbridge to Penshurst Cycle trail, are very popular for leisure cyclists and family groups, and actually create new demand after construction.⁷³ The need for three specific new routes was identified during our research; one of which is a cycle route through the Darent Valley.

Greening the Gateway

3.57 Greening the Gateway calls for the landscape to be regarded as the *functional green* infrastructure which is needed to create a positive sense of place, provide environmental protection for local communities and enhance the quality of life. It will incorporate both public open space and privately owned land. It needs to be attractive and accessible, to reflect local character and to deliver wide ranging environmental benefits.

3.58 It is important that the LDF take full account of this greenspace strategy. In east London, south Essex and north Kent a collaborative approach to existing and potential greenspace has been developed by partnerships of local authorities and others, embracing the concept of *Green Grid*. The precise approach varies from place to place, but in each case *Green Grid* emphasises the importance of physically linking together parcels of greenspace. Local authorities should –

- Audit existing greenspace resources and other land use as early as possible and assess local needs in accordance with requirements of PPG17
- Develop borough-wide greenspace strategy, with particular attention to its relationship to other local authority strategies for air quality, health and recreation, sustainability, social inclusion, economic regeneration, biodiversity, etc.

⁷³ Kent County Council *Countryside Access Improvement Plan* at <https://shareweb.kent.gov.uk/Documents/environment-and-planning/public-rights-of-way/countryside-access-improvement-plan.pdf> accessed on 3.2.2010

- Encourage inclusion of elements of the Thames Gateway greenspace strategy, such as SUDS and structural planting as part of new development, through development control Implement the greenspace strategy by working in partnership with government agencies, NGOs and neighbouring local authorities.⁷⁴

3.59 While this strategy covers the Thames Gateway, its influence spreads beyond this designated area into adjoining authorities and beyond.

3.60 In Sevenoaks The Darent Valley Path is already a catalyst for a series of environmental projects, and The Green Cluster Studies offer an opportunity for an “overarching, coordinated vision, which promotes the valley, while reflecting the strong contrasts”

3.61 The proposal for a “new national cycle route running the length of the valley will connect the Thames City to Sea Path with the North Downs Way. This greenway will link a sequence of projects focusing on conservation, enhanced connectivity and interpretation along the valley. The river corridor environment is an attractive, but inherently sensitive environment which will benefit from a pro-active approach to visitor management. So activities will be promoted and concentrated at three major gateways:

- Dartford’s Central Park – a focus for information and a well connected hub from which a large urban population can begin to explore the Darent Valley;
- A new countryside gateway at the South Darent lakes, where there is space for active recreation, wetland and woodland habitat enhancement and an opportunity to improve the landscape setting of local villages, all within easy walking and cycling distance from Dartford;
- Lullingstone County Park – the gateway to the Upper Darent Valley where investment will focus on high quality facilities for visitors, including a car park, café, shop, information, picnic area, nature trails and guided routes.”

⁷⁴ Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway Greening the Gateway at <http://www.gtgkm.org.uk/index.php> accessed on 3.2.2010

Open Space

4.1 Open Space Sport and Recreation Study (January 2009)

The study provided an audit of the existing open space provisions across Sevenoaks District. The study also identified any local need, deficiencies and surpluses of provision and provided options for addressing any arising shortfalls. The study assessed 8 of 10 the typologies of open space identified by PPG17 including all the greenspace typologies:

4.2 Amenity Green Space

223 spaces encompassing 81ha
Provision of 0.74ha per 1000 population

Main conclusion - *The Council should consider quality and access improvements to the lowest scoring value sites.*

4.3 Parks and Gardens

18 parks and gardens covering 546ha
Provision of 5.15ha per 1000 population

Main conclusions - *Investigate the possibility of increasing access to, and/or the provision of, parks and gardens for residents to the south of the railway line in Swanley. Long term planning to be undertaken for new park or garden site in the West Kingsdown area*

4.4 Natural and Semi-Natural Green Space

170 sites accounting for 235ha
Provision of 21.5ha per 1000 population

Main conclusion - *The Council should focus upon accessibility and quality improvements to existing sites rather than new provision*

4.5 Provision for Children and Young People

75 facilities totalling 5.18ha

Main conclusions - *New play areas should follow the guidance in the Council's Play Strategy and offer a varied and an enriched play environment. The Council should prioritise new provision in western Swanley; central, western and southern areas of Central Sevenoaks; West Kingsdown, Kemsing, Eynsford and Well Hill; Marlpit Hill and Leigh.*

4.6 Outdoor Sports Facilities

Main conclusions - *The Council to consider undertaking a playing pitch strategy and sports facility strategy in partnership with external partners
The Council to consider future outdoor sports provision in West Kingsdown and Well Hill – subject to more detailed reviews of demand and within the Marlpit Hill area.*

4.7 Allotments and Community Gardens

33 sites covering 41.1ha
Provision of 0.38ha per 1000 population

Main conclusions - *The Council should consider a new allotment site for Hextable and look for opportunities to locate potential sites in the centre of Swanley. “
The Council to consider new allotment site(s) along the south, east and west edges of the built up area of Central Sevenoaks, over the period to 2026.
The Council to prioritise new allotment provision in the New Ash Green and Sundridge/Brasted area.
“Subject to adequate demand levels, the Council should seek new sites in West Kingsdown, Kemsing, Halstead/Knockholt Pound and South Darenth areas.”
“The Council to provide new allotment sites in the Edenbridge/Marlpit Hill areas through a combination of re-provision and new provision.*

4.8 Green Corridors

2 main corridors: Hextable and Glendale Green Corridors

Main conclusions - *Ensure all new major developments contain green corridors to reduce dependence on cars for short journeys.
The Council should provide additional litter and dog fouling bins at green corridors within their control where this is appropriate and necessary.” “
The Council should investigate how to increase the security and safety of green corridors.*

4.9 Cemeteries and Churchyards

Main conclusion - *Adopt the quality standard for all sites in the district*⁷⁵

Public Rights of Way and Cycle Routes

Cycle routes

⁷⁵ Sevenoaks District Council Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study at http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/open_space_study_without_appendices.pdf accessed on 3.2.2010

- 4.10 The Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport 2009 – 2026 consultation draft. The coverage of the national Cycle network in central Kent and in Sevenoaks District is particularly poor. The only regional cycle route is route 12 which connects Penshurst and Tonbridge passing through Leigh in the very southeast of the District. The local Sustrans group has identified a potential new route connecting Edenbridge with regional route 12.
- 4.11 While the dispersed rural nature of the District and its topology act as barriers to the development of extensive cycle routes across the District there is scope for improving the networks within the urban areas of Sevenoaks Swanley and Edenbridge⁷⁶

Rights of Way

- 4.12 A Public right of way (PRoW) is a highway which anybody may use at any time. They are mainly paths for walkers, cyclists and horse riders. They allow people to explore and enjoy the countryside or they can be used for short journeys such as to school, to church, to work or to local shops. Sevenoaks has 462 miles (744 km) of rights of way which 11% of the total for Kent.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Kent County Council Kent Landscape Information System at <http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/default.asp> accessed 4.1.2010

⁷⁷ Kent County Council Kent Landscape Information System at <http://extranet7.kent.gov.uk/klis/default.asp> accessed 4.1.2010

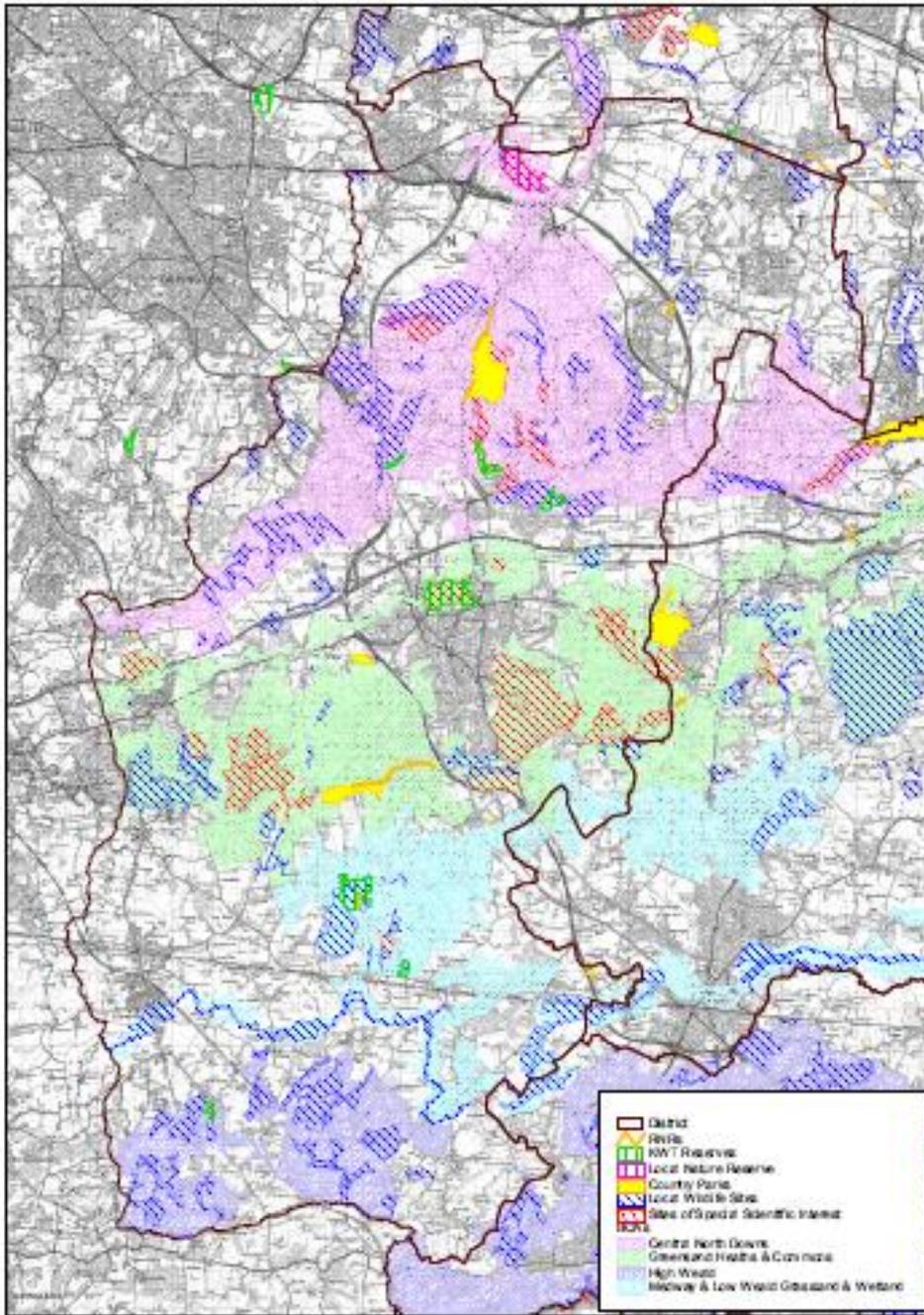
Summary and Policy Options

5.1 **Summary of the assets** See fig 3 and 4

- ❖ The District has a high proportion of designated areas and there are areas of unique ancient woodland and grass downland.
- ❖ predominantly rural despite its close proximity to London and the high quality landscape is an important aspect of the character of the district.
- ❖ 93% Green Belt land.
- ❖ 60% (22,600ha) designated Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Parts of the district fall into the High Weald and Kent Downs AONB.
- ❖ Almost a fifth (18%) of the district is woodland generally spread out across the district in small pockets.
- ❖ 17 nationally listed historic parks and gardens with a further 15 on a county list.
- ❖ 17 Sites of Special Scientific Interest.
- ❖ 57 Local Wildlife Sites.
- ❖ A number of Country Parks.
- ❖ Local Nature Reserves.
- ❖ 8 Roadside Nature Reserves.

Figure 3

BOAs & protected areas in Sevenoaks District



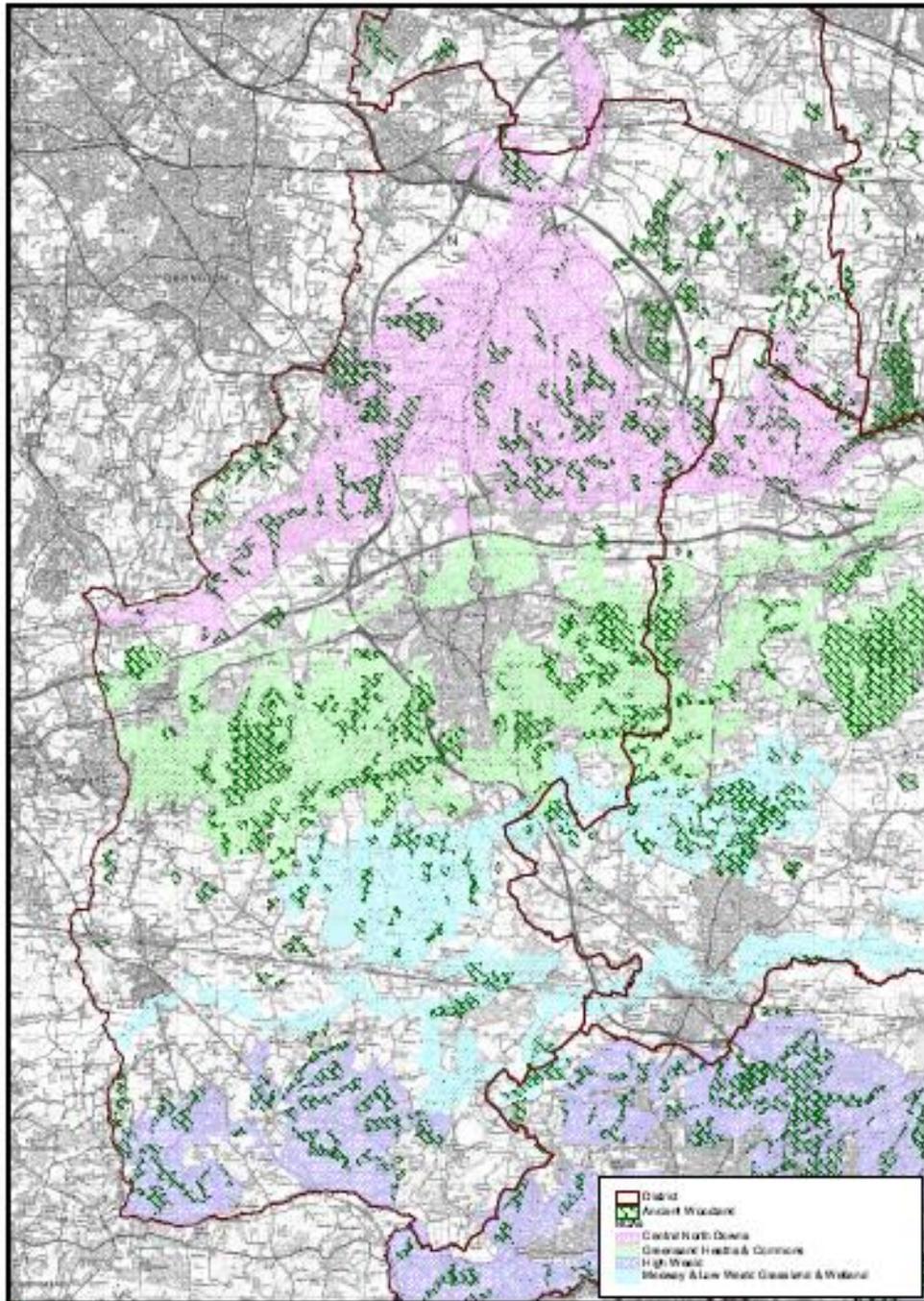
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Figure 4

BOAs & ancient woodland in Sevenoaks District



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Summary of Conclusions

5.2 Potential policies opportunities for the protection/enhancement of the District's Green Infrastructure

- ❖ Provide policies in the LDF to :
 - conserve, enhance and restore biodiversity in accordance with National and Regional policy.
 - ensure the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty in the region's AONBs.
 - support the implementation of the AONB Management Plans.
 - support the implementation of BOA Action Plans.
 - ensure that all development respects and enhances local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided.
 - develop a green Infrastructure network through the Allocations DPD and secure a delivery mechanism for its implementation.
 - promote sustainable development and opportunities for the incorporation of beneficial biodiversity and geological features within the design of development.
 - contribute to rural renewal/renaissance by enhancing biodiversity in green spaces and among developments.
 - implement the recommendations from the open space, sport and recreation study.
 - improve links from town to country.