

Appendix I: Draft Strategic Policies

This appendix contains early drafts of the Strategic Policies which will be included in the Regulation 19 Local Plan:

- Policy ST1 Delivering Sustainable Development in Swale
- Policy ST2 Swale Settlement Strategy
- Policy ST3 Climate Change
- Policy ST4 Development Needs for the Borough
- Policy ST5 Building a Strong, Competitive Economy
- Policy ST6 Delivering a wide Choice of High-quality Homes
- Policy ST7 Good Design and Placemaking
- Policy ST8 Health and Wellbeing
- Policy ST9 Planning for Infrastructure
- Policy ST10 Promoting Sustainable Transport and Active Travel
- Policy ST11 Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment
- Policy ST12 Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Strategic Policy ST1 Delivering sustainable development in Swale

Delivering sustainable development in Swale

1. The purpose of the Development Plan is to facilitate and manage sustainable development. There are three dimensions to sustainable development:
 - economic;
 - social; and
 - environmental.
2. Sustainable development means meeting present needs - specifically for homes, jobs, and infrastructure - without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs. It is the core purpose of planning, balancing economic, social, and environmental objectives to create, beautiful, safe, and healthy communities, underpinned by a "presumption in favour of sustainable development."
3. The policies in the Local Plan seek opportunities to make a positive contribution to these dimensions.
4. In essence, the presumption in favour of sustainable development lies at the heart of the Local Plan and should be seen as a golden thread running through it. The strategy for Swale has been shaped by a desire to deliver sustainable growth that brings benefits for all sectors of the community – for existing residents, businesses and organisations as much as for new ones. In order to deliver these benefits, it is necessary to take a bold approach to addressing the impacts of climate change, to embracing opportunities to enhance health and wellbeing through improving our environment and ensuring communities are supported with the opportunities and infrastructure needed to enjoy a good quality of life, including jobs and homes.

5. This policy provides the basis for action and the means to locally determine whether development proposals merit the national presumption in favour of sustainable development. It emphasises the importance of joint working, placing the requirement on all to demonstrate their commitment through specifications.

Policy

To deliver sustainable development in Swale that provides both mitigation and adaptation to climate change, all development proposals will contribute to:

1. Build a strong competitive and green economy by meeting identified needs for inward investment and indigenous growth on allocated and suitable sites, including meeting the needs of under-represented sectors;
2. Ensure the vitality of town centres by: strengthening the principal centre role of Sittingbourne; improving the role of Sheerness as the Island's main centre; or consolidating, proportionate to its scale and character, Faversham's role as a centre for the town itself and its local catchment;
3. Support a prosperous rural economy, especially for sustainable farming and tourism, or where enabling communities to meet local needs or benefiting countryside management;
4. Accord with the Local Plan settlement strategy;
5. Offer the potential to reduce levels of out-commuting and support the aims of the Swale Local Transport Strategy, including the promotion of zero carbon and active transport;
6. Support high quality communications infrastructure;
7. Deliver a wide choice of high quality, low carbon homes by:
 - a. meeting the full, objectively assessed need for housing in the housing market area;
 - b. providing housing opportunity, choice and independence with types of housing for local needs; and
 - c. keeping vitality within rural communities with identified housing needs, proportionate to their character, scale and role;
 - d. promoting energy efficiency, renewable energy and district heat networks on new developments;
 - e. promoting the use of recognised certification schemes to demonstrate the environmental quality of new housing.
8. Achieve good design through reflecting the best of an area's defining characteristics;
9. Promote healthy communities through:
 - a. location of development to achieve safe, mixed uses and shared spaces;
 - b. rejuvenation of deprived communities;
 - c. the Local Plan implementation and delivery plan and schedule;
 - d. safeguarding services and facilities that do or could support communities;

- e. maintaining the individual character, integrity, identities and settings of settlements;
- f. protecting, managing, providing and enhancing open spaces and facilities for sport and recreation;
- g. implementing the Swale natural assets green infrastructure strategy; and
- h. enabling and fostering the conditions for cultural enterprises to establish and flourish within Swale.

10. Meet the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change through:

- a. promotion of sustainable, low carbon and resilient design and construction, the installation and use of renewable energy, the efficient use of natural resources and the management of emissions;
- b. the management and expansion of green infrastructure; and
- c. applying planning policies to manage flood risk and coastal change;

11. Protect and enhance the natural environment by:

- a. applying international, national and local planning policy for:
 - (i) areas designated for their biodiversity (inc. Nature Improvement Areas), geological or landscape importance; and/or
 - (ii) priority habitats and populations of protected and notable species;
- b. using landscape character assessments to protect, and where possible, enhance, the intrinsic character, beauty and tranquillity of the countryside, with emphasis on the estuarine, woodland, dry valley, down-land and horticultural landscapes that define the landscape character of Swale;
- c. integrating the benefits of ecosystems to society across all policy areas;
- d. achieving plentiful native landscaping of local provenance in and around developments;
- e. achieving net gains in biodiversity within and around developments by use of such measures as natural/semi-natural greenspace and the creation of coherent ecological networks;
- f. avoiding significant harm to biodiversity or, when not possible, adequately mitigating it, or, as a last resort, compensating for it with off-site action at identified Biodiversity Opportunity Areas or other appropriate locations;
- g. using areas of lower quality agricultural land for significant levels of development (singly or cumulatively) where compatible with other criteria; and;
- h. applying national planning policy in respect of pollution, despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated, unstable and previously developed land;

i. having regard to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

12. Conserve and enhance the historic environment by applying national and local planning policy through the identification, assessment and integration of development with the importance, form and character of heritage assets (inc. historic landscapes).

Strategic Policy ST2 Swale's Settlement Hierarchy

1. There are a wide range of towns, villages, hamlets and isolated settlements across Swale. The development strategy presents the approach to development to these locations and examines their role within the overall strategy for the broad distribution of growth and decisions about other development.
2. In consideration of the options for our development strategy, we have looked closely at what is set out in Bearing Fruits and seek to complement that strategy with this Local Plan Review.
3. Other key drivers that shape this strategy include delivering sustainable growth, addressing climate change and enhancing health and wellbeing.
4. The Borough of Swale has significant constraints in terms of landscape designations, land at risk of flooding, coastal change and ecological designations. Approximately 60% of the Borough is covered by such constraints. Of the remaining 40%, there are areas that are locally important for their landscape value or high quality agricultural land, for example. To meet the borough's development needs, difficult choices must be made.
5. In the first instance, the availability of brownfield sites are considered. The council has followed an approach of Focussing development on brownfield sites for a while.
6. There are limited opportunities now and within this context, Sittingbourne town centre has been identified as providing considerable redevelopment potential that will yield a minimum of 988 dwellings.
7. Other brownfield sites in Faversham included in the Neighbourhood Plan and in Sheerness that could come forward outside of the Local Plan or through a master plan document that could be prepared.
8. Nevertheless, there are insufficient brownfield sites to deliver the quantum of development needed and the Local Plan Review must look elsewhere to deliver sustainable growth. The process was completed through the HELAA where potential sites have been assessed with the most suitable allocated to meet the borough's housing need.
9. Defining and implementing a settlement strategy is assisted by the identification of settlement tiers that guide the location of development and services. The means that the urban centres and the larger well-connected villages occupy the higher settlement tiers whilst those with strong environmental character, poorer access to services and/or limited capacity for change generally occupy the lower. Settlements are assigned to the tiers as shown in the table below.

Tier	Settlement	Role
Tier1 Principal town	Sittingbourne	Sittingbourne remains at the top of the hierarchy, justified by it being the largest town in the Borough with the greatest range of services and facilities. These include all key and higher-order services and facilities including secondary schools, a college, a minor injuries unit and the Borough's main library. It holds the largest share of the Borough's population and economy with over 2000 employment units. There is a retail centre in the high street,

		Sittingbourne retail park and Princes Street retail park. It is also the location of the Eurolink industrial estate and Trinity trading estate. The ongoing town centre regeneration has and is expanding the leisure and retail offer further with a cinema, hotel and restaurants. Sittingbourne is served by a train station and bus hub with the greatest and most frequent variety of destinations. It is the most sustainable settlement within the Borough.
Tier 2 – Secondary towns	Faversham and Sheerness	Faversham and Sheerness, smaller than Sittingbourne, are unique in their identity and offer all of the key services and facilities and most of the higher-order ones too. Sheerness falls short of having its own hospital but benefits from that nearby at Minster. These towns also offer a wide range of employment, retail and leisure facilities. Faversham, the Borough's smaller market town, acts as a focal point for trade and services for the wider rural area here and has around 780 employment units. For the Isle of Sheppey, Sheerness is its main centre with an employment base in its high street and industry linked to the Port of Sheerness. There are around 430 employment units here. Public transport provision is good at Faversham, and fair at Sheerness but with connections to Sittingbourne. Away from Sittingbourne, these are the Borough's most sustainable locations.
Tier 3 – Urban service centres	Minster & Halfway and Queenborough & Rushenden.	Individually, the settlements within this tier are more limited in their range of services and facilities, although still having many of the key ones but at a lower frequency. However, due to their proximity to each other, Minster and Halfway and Queenborough and Rushenden combined create larger urban service centres which are able to support and be supported by their proximity to Sheerness and each other. There is an employment focus to the West of Minster, at Neatscourt retail park and around Queenborough Creek. Minster and Halfway have around 410 employment units and Queenborough and Rushenden have some 225. Public transport is more limited, although still fair with connections in and amongst each other and Sheerness
Tier 4 – Village service centres	Boughton, Eastchurch, Iwade, Leysdown, Newington and Teynham.	The villages in this tier provide the majority of the following key services and facilities: GP surgeries, primary schools, recreational grounds, convenience stores, public houses, post offices and places of worship. Newington and Teynham have the highest level of services and facilities serving their communities as well as having train stations, but overall, public transport provision is fair or limited. They are more isolated from the strategic road network but generally closest to the main link roads in between (the A249 and the A2). Those on the eastern end of the island have less services and facilities but

		given the distance to the nearest town at Sheerness, act as local centres for their communities. Leysdown and the surround have a unique tourism offer but otherwise would benefit from more diverse employment opportunities, public transport improvements and support for local services. As a whole, the eastern end of the island has around 295 employment units. All of these villages are likely to serve their and the surrounding rural populations' day to day needs with some sharing of services with nearby smaller settlements. They will need to travel to other centres for a wider range of retail, leisure and employment needs.
Tier 5 – Small villages	Bapchild, Bayview, Borden, Bredgar, Conyer, Doddington, Dunkirk, Eastling, Hartlip, Kingsborough Manor, Lewson Street, Lower Halstow, Lynsted, Neames Forstal, Newnham, Oare, Painters Forstal, Rodmersham Green, Selling, Sheldwich Lees, Upchurch and Warden.	These smaller villages vary in size and offer. The more sustainable provide primary schools, recreation grounds, convenience stores and have fair public transport provision. These include the likes of Upchurch, Bredgar and Bapchild. The less sustainable are without a few or most of the key services and facilities with limited or no public transport offer. A common theme for these villages, however, is their isolation from the nearest urban service centres and towns, as well as the main transport corridors to access these locations (the A249 and the A2). Even by foot, there are not always suitable, lit footpaths for use. Single or occasional clusters of villages may contain enough services to meet the day to day needs for their own communities, whilst others would require investment to provide or improve them. Travel to the urban service centres and towns is necessary for many or most needs.
Tier 6 – The open countryside	Baddlesmere, Bobbing, Bobbing Hill, Chestnut Street, Danaway, Dargate, Goodnestone, Graveney, Hernhill, Milstead, Staplestreet, Throwley Forstal and Tunstall.	The remainder of the Borough's settlements are without defined boundaries and form very small villages, hamlets, ribbon development, clusters of houses and isolated houses. Services and facilities here are extremely limited with public transport provision generally limited or non-existent. They are usually well away from the Borough's main transport corridors with poor foot links in and amongst them. Occasionally, a small range of day to day needs can be met but on the whole, there is no immediate access to a wider range of services, facilities and employment opportunities.

10. In combination with the development still being completed from Bearing Fruits, Sittingbourne, as the Borough's principal town remains the main focus for sustainable growth. With the largest share of the Borough's population and economy, it is tightly constrained by environmental designations. The regeneration of the town centre needs to continue to capture the benefits of a growth in population:

- Faversham
- Isle of Sheppey
- Rural local service centres
- Other villages with built up area boundaries
- Outside the built up area boundaries

Policy ST 2

Swale Settlement Strategy

By use of previously developed land within defined built up area boundaries and on sites allocated by the Local Plan, development proposals will be permitted in accordance with the following settlement strategy:

1. The principal town and main Borough urban centre of Sittingbourne will provide the primary urban focus for growth where development will support town centre regeneration and make the best use of previously developed and vacant or underused land;
2. Faversham, as one of the Borough's secondary towns, will provide a key focus for growth where development includes a sustainable urban extension and will deliver significant infrastructure improvements;
3. Redevelopment at Rushenden as an expansion to the Regeneration Area of Queenborough & Rushenden to provide landscape led regeneration that will provide new homes, jobs, infrastructure, open space and community facilities;
4. Village service centres provide the tertiary focus for growth.
5. Small villages with built-up area boundaries that can provide some services and offer more sustainable travel options than private car travel on infill and redevelopment sites within the built up areas boundaries where compatible with the settlement's character, amenity, landscape setting, heritage or biodiversity value; and
6. At locations in the open countryside, outside the built-up area boundaries shown on the Proposals Map, development will not be permitted unless supported by national planning policy and able to demonstrate that it would contribute to protecting and, where appropriate, enhancing the intrinsic value, landscape setting, tranquillity and beauty of the countryside, its buildings and the vitality of rural communities.

Policy ST3 Climate Change

1. As a coastal borough in the south of England, Swale's population and environment is particularly vulnerable to the local impacts of climate change including:
 - drought and water shortages
 - overheating
 - flooding, including from surface water, sewage and tidal sources
 - sea-level rise and coastal squeeze
 - erosion
 - increased storms
2. Effects are already being felt, particularly by communities and businesses and by local ecosystems and landscapes. Generally, the most deprived communities and most depleted ecosystems will be impacted most.
3. In response to the threats of climate change, in June 2019 the Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency. This included a commitment to facilitate the action required to make Swale carbon neutral, with an agreed target of 2045 (updated in 2025 from a former target of 2030). Following on from this the Council has developed, and updated, an Action Plan with actions for departments across the Council.
4. The Council's approach to addressing climate change must be seen within the international context. The UK is a signatory to the international Paris Agreement 2015, brokered via the United Nations. This commits signatories to ensure global average temperatures rise is limited to 2°Celsius above pre-industrial levels, and to pursue a limit of 1.5°C. This commitment requires fast and drastic cuts to global carbon emissions.
5. In 2019 the UK Government also declared a climate emergency and updated the legally binding carbon reduction goal for 2050 enshrined in the Climate Change Act 2008. The Act comes with 5-yearly carbon budgets that are devised by the independent Committee on Climate Change (CCC) and passed into law by Parliament.
6. The CCC's, Seventh Carbon Budget (2025), explains:
 - in nearly all scenarios considered by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), long-term warming exceeds 1.5°C; under current policies, the global carbon budget for 1.5°C would be exhausted by 2030;
 - it is still possible to limit long-term warming with deep and immediate emissions cuts;
 - long-term warming above 1.5°C, even temporarily, will bring impacts that need to be adapted to. The greater the overshoot, the larger the climate risks;
 - a greater overshoot implies a larger need for CO2 removal measures many of which are not yet proven.
7. The urgency of the situation is clear and local plans (and thereby planning applications) have a duty and a mandate to respond, as follows:
 - i. The Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 125 establishes that local plans are obliged to include policies designed to secure that the development and use of land in the local planning authority's area contribute to the mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change;
 - ii. The Climate Change Act 2008 sets the UK's 2050 net zero carbon goal, and also interim 'carbon budgets', that reduce every 5 years;
 - iii. The Planning & Energy Act 2008 grants local planning authorities the power to set reasonable requirements for:

- Energy efficiency standards higher than those set by Building Regulations; and
 - Renewable or low carbon sources 'in the locality of the development' to supply a proportion of energy used at the development.
- iv. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that:
- The planning system should support the transition to net zero by 2050 and take full account of all climate impacts including overheating, water scarcity, storm and flood risks and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure (para 161);
 - Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes, and the risk of overheating and drought from rising temperatures, in line with the objectives and provisions of the Climate Change Act 2008 (para 162);
 - The need to mitigate and adapt to climate change should also be considered in preparing and assessing planning applications, taking into account the full range of potential climate change impacts (para 163);
 - New development should be planned for in ways that help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as through its location, orientation and design (para 164);
 - To help increase the use and supply of renewable and low carbon energy and heat, plans should provide a positive strategy for energy from these sources (para 165).
- v. The Planning Practice Guidance chapter on Climate Change explains why it is important for planning to consider climate change and the legal mandate for such. It highlights opportunities to mitigate and adapt to climate change including:
- Reducing the need for travel and providing sustainable transport;
 - Providing opportunities for renewable and low carbon energy and decentralised energy; and
 - Promoting low-carbon design approaches to reduce energy consumption in new buildings
8. A positive response to the mitigation and adaptation of climate change is fundamental to all new development in Swale and ST3 Climate Change seeks to achieve this. This response cuts across other objectives and policies of the Local Plan including ST1 Delivering sustainable development in Swale, ST4 Development needs for the borough, ST5 Building a strong, competitive economy, ST6 Delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes, ST7 Good design, ST8 Health & Wellbeing, ST9 Planning for Infrastructure and ST10 Promoting Sustainable transport and active travel. When done well, development can bring benefits to Swale's communities, their health and wellbeing, their businesses and the natural environment. If done poorly, the risks are existential.

Policy application

9. Applicants for planning permission are expected to set out how policy ST 11, as well as the Development Management Policies, C1-C5, have been considered and responded to

in a Climate, Energy and Waste Statement, to accompany planning applications. This statement should be proportionate to the scale of the application and the impacts of the development.

Policy

1. All new development must demonstrate how it will mitigate and adapt to climate change and create places which respond to the local and national Climate Emergency by demonstrating that:
 - a. the location and choice of sites, linkages to other sites, layout and land-uses of development have been chosen to mitigate and adapt to climate change;
 - b. new development uses nature-based solutions to provide connected, accessible and multi-functional green spaces, which prioritise climate mitigation and adaption, biodiversity enhancement, health and wellbeing, flood risk mitigation, sustainable drainage and pollution prevention, in accordance with policies ST7 Good design, ST 8 Health and Wellbeing, ST10 Promoting sustainable transport and active travel; ST11 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment and the corresponding development management policies;
 - c. the principles of sustainable design and adaptation, including addressing overheating and creating places that are comfortable to live in and are adapted to climate change, as set out in Policy C1 Sustainable design and construction principles, are considered from the very start of the site selection and design process and integrated into the development;
 - d. new development is net zero carbon in operation, in line with Policies C2 Net zero operational in new build residential development and C3 Net zero operational in new build non-residential development.
 - e. embodied carbon and waste is minimized in line with Policy C4 Embodied carbon and waste;
 - f. renewable energy is enabled where it is appropriate for its site, in line with Policy C5 Renewable energy development and infrastructure;
 - g. existing and new development will be safe from the impacts of climate change, including coastal change and flood risk and contributes to necessary infrastructure where appropriate, in line with policies C6 Coastal Change Management, C7 Implementing the Medway Estuary and Swale Coastal Risk Management Strategy, C8 Flood Risk and C9 Sustainable drainage. Where existing areas are at risk, positive approaches to adaptation and relocation are sought, in accordance with policy C6 Coastal Change Management;
 - h. new development will seek to protect the ecosystem services on which we rely (including our water, air and soil) from all types of pollution and land instability in line with policies C10 Water quality and water resources, C11 Air quality and C12 Pollution and land instability.

Policy ST4 Development Needs for the Borough

Quantum of new housing land

1. The Borough's Local Housing Need for 2027 to 2042 (the timeframe for this plan) has been informed by a local housing needs assessment, conducted using the Government's standard method in national guidance. The need of 1,064¹ dwellings per annum represents an increase of 38% compared with the current local plan, Bearing Fruits that has an objectively assessed need of 776 dwellings per annum for 2014 – 2031. The Local Plan is therefore seeking to allocate sites to accommodate the uplift in numbers for the period 2026 to 2042. The figure for the dwellings needed for this period is calculated by multiplying the number of years in the Local Plan plan period by the Local Housing Need figure calculated using the standard method, i.e. $16 \times 1,064 = 17,024$
2. The supply of all types of sites that have been consented and not built out for the Plan period totals 7,167 and this leaves a residual requirement to accommodate 9,857 dwellings. In identifying supply to meet this residual requirement windfall delivery rates since the monitoring year 2014/15 (period of 12 years) has been considered, and an allowance for windfall is made for small sites (1 to 4 dwellings) for 1,014 dwellings over the last 13 years of the plan period. In addition a large sites (5 or more dwellings) windfall allowance is made of 1,395 dwellings over the last 9 years of the Plan. There have also been two Neighbourhood Plans recently made that combined allocate land for 231 dwellings. These sources of supply result in the need to allocate enough land to accommodate 7,217 additional dwellings through this Local Plan Review. Whilst their remains approximately 1,703 dwellings allocated from the Local Plan Bearing Fruits without planning consent, due to the time past since that Plan was adopted all remaining allocations have been reassessed and where they remain suitable have been included as allocations within this Plan.

New employment land

3. Our strategy focuses on creating a strong supply of employment land to meet the identified need, and improving the quality of our economic offer to create a better business image and a more diverse economic base. It will enable the borough to branch out into under-represented sectors, increase the number of higher growth/value businesses and ensure that it retains and develops existing strengths and foster indigenous growth. In order to meet new floorspace needs, we will provide a range and choice of sites in areas of demand to meet the needs of differing sectors. We will be flexible, and plan positively to accommodate unexpected opportunities and allowing for the upgrading and renewal of our existing, older sites.
4. Our strategy has seen some growth in the out of town retail sector and we remain confident over the delivery of emerging retail schemes in central Sittingbourne. Manufacturing has declined, but relative to Kent and the UK, the sector is strong and our strategy will seek to stabilise this sector and support the emergence of more niche and advanced manufacturing activities. In recent years, the Borough has attracted new distribution and logistics businesses and jobs.

¹ All housing land supply figures and assumptions are based on 1 April 2025 monitoring position including use of the Local housing Need at this base date. The housing land supply will be updated to 1 April 2026 as part of the Local Plans submission.

5. We will continue to promote our strengths in industrial employment, helped by maintaining and enhancing a supply of well-located land and buildings, including those suitable for larger scale distribution. We will be focusing on continued growth from our indigenous (economic land uses) base and have identified sites to capitalise on this potential. Overall, our land bank will be flexible and has sufficient margin to grasp unexpected opportunities, such as those that reinforce the Borough's role as a recognised distribution hub.
6. The needs of the office sector cannot be met easily within the existing land supply. Our strategy for office is supportive of its expansion, especially for central Sittingbourne, around the A249 and at Faversham. Some 55% of the Borough's workforce commute for jobs outside Swale, and while generally the distances travelled are modest we will also encourage employment sectors attractive to those commuting, including those in key sectors such as finance, information and communications and science based activities.
7. Tourism is a major contributor to the local economy and we will capitalise on reduced travel and spending abroad to bring in greater local spending. There will be an emphasis on proposals that successfully integrate land based industries with the Borough's heritage offers and the landscapes of the North Kent marshes, the Blean, the Kent Downs and the horticultural belt. Specifically, given its location and proximity to other tourist centres at Canterbury, Whitstable and Herne Bay, Faversham has strong potential to diversify its economy around tourism, especially its food and drink based offer. On Sheppey we need to address declines in its traditional seaside tourism offer through modernisation and improvements in quality.
8. Although the number of jobs in agriculture and horticulture is relatively small, our strategy anticipates forecast growth in this sector. For this and the wider rural economy, we will respond positively to the new opportunities for diversification and improved resilience for food production, as well as activities in other rural sectors, including growth in community based jobs and services, where these can be successfully integrated within the locality.
9. We are also keen to continue to grow Swale's burgeoning creative industry offer, however this is often a sector that likes to grow organically and outside of the traditional planning allocations route. The DM employment policies give flexibility to allow these businesses to grow and flourish.
10. Improving education provision performance will bring needed improved skills into the local workforce, but this more mobile workforce will need to be able to work and/or set up businesses locally. We will provide flexible planning policies that support a greater choice of opportunity in such areas as the 'sharing economy'. It also remains important to tackle entrenched skill deficiencies so that all can benefit from growth. We will support a better range of opportunities for local people to improve their education and skills, endeavour to secure a further education facility within Sittingbourne town centre, and promote closer links between learning and employment opportunities, including the use of local labour and learning opportunities.

11. How will this strategy be visible in terms of physical development? We will be largely maintaining our current portfolio of sites, with the renewal and intensification of existing sites in and around Sittingbourne, in particular, the growth of its key economic product – the Eurolink business park. Close to the urban areas, the A249 is also likely to remain the focus for meeting any potential for larger scale distribution or industrial uses. On the Isle of Sheppey, the existing large pool of employment sites will be developed for industrial purposes so that the economic benefits of infrastructure investment already made can be accomplished. At Faversham, the approach is to improve the quality and availability of sites on account of the town's good location and the loss of existing sites to other uses.
12. Regeneration policies are also provided for two of the Borough's major strategic employment locations - the Port of Sheerness and the Kent Science Park. These will guide both their immediate needs for growth, and indicate the possibility of longer-term aspirations. Some port related activity will continue to be met as part of the general industrial supply, beyond the port's own portfolio, and the Science Park could attract science, technology and knowledge-based jobs that would help meet the socio-economic objectives of the Plan.

Ensuring the vitality of town centres

13. Our town centres are facing considerable challenges at present and it is the Council's approach that there should be flexibility in the range of uses that are provided in these shopping areas, especially to encourage unexpected opportunities that occur on the fringes of the Primary Shopping Areas. This flexibility will help to enhance the vitality and viability of the Borough's town centres and maximise their contribution to the local economy. A wide range of uses can potentially have a key role in maintaining a diverse and commercially prosperous centre without undermining their primary retail function.

Supporting a prosperous rural economy

14. Our rural areas support a wide range of businesses and the strategy is to support their expansion. However, this will not be by micro-management through the allocation of sites, as innovation comes from locations and sectors that we cannot hope to identify and write into the plan. Flexible planning policies will therefore be supportive of the right business at the right scale and in the right place. Our strategy will also maintain and enhance vibrant and viable rural services, particularly when we are shown innovative new ways of delivering them. A factor affecting the development of the rural economy is the limited availability of land and buildings and we will look to their use for employment before considering other uses such as housing.
15. We intend to further encourage tourism and other businesses that are linked by and harmonised with our landscapes and communities. Across the rural area, business proposals, tourism related or otherwise, able to support the active and sustainable management of the countryside will be supported. See policy E2 The Rural Economy.
16. The strategy does not overlook the importance of the agricultural sector and there are likely to be changes in the way land is used which will present challenges. We will harness the confidence that has re-emerged within fruit production and will encourage

sustainable initiatives that respond to global challenges, including the realignment of the marketplace, climate change and the decline in pollinators, whilst encouraging more local food production and sales.

Swale's Jobs and Housing ratio

17. It is an aspiration of the Council that for our strategic, mixed use sites, for every house that is built a new job is provided. Mixed use was identified in the Employment Land Review 2018 as a practical means of delivering jobs, and a one: one ratio would help to reduce our out-commuting rate, thus reducing congestion and air pollution and help to foster and grow our own economy.

Employment Need

18. The [Employment Land Review update October 2023](#) (ELR) evidences the scale and quality of new land needed to support the Borough's growth over the period of 2022 – 2040. This document provides an update to the [ELR 2018](#) to address recent macro-economic 'shocks' that have led to major structural changes in employment and business habits and significant changes to the planning system and guidance as they relate to the economy and employment.
19. The ELR update 2023 concludes the demand for, and take-up of industrial land has been stronger and faster than was anticipated in the 2018 ELR, led by the strategic distribution market (particularly for retail and 3PLs, but also manufacturing and freight and wholesalers). This has produced a higher need figure at 73 ha – with demand of 48 ha, plus a margin of 25 ha.
20. The ELR update 2023 goes on to set out that the requirement for offices has shifted significantly since the 2018 assessment. Both the demand and the availability of office space remain low and broadly in balance, with the market serving essentially local businesses. Rents are insufficient to stimulate viable development and the long-standing weak performance of the office market, coupled with the shock of Covid and its aftermath has pulled the assessment substantially downwards. The latest assessments of office demand broadly align, suggesting the market is at equilibrium at best, but could equally see contraction. This means that the unmet need for new office floorspace is just 1.1 ha; virtually no requirement.

Policy ST 4

Development needs for the Borough

1. The Council seeks to meet its development needs through the implementation of existing consented sites and by and by allocating sites for development as set out in this Local Plan.

Swale's development needs for jobs and homes 2027 – 2042

2. Land is identified by the Local Plan Review to meet the following development targets:
 - B Class Employment floorspace provision (ha): 73ha
 - Housing provision: 17,024 (1,064 dwellings per annum)

3. The Council will monitor and review the Local Plan as required by national policy. Infrastructure requirements to support housing and employment will be delivered as set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.

Policy ST5 Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

1. The requirement in the PPG and NPPF to plan for business uses - office and industrial/warehousing allocations remains. Use class E does not affect this, for the time being at least. The Employment Land Review (ELR) gave a need figure for Swale so we will allocate for use class B and the parts of use E class that are relevant – office and R&D (E(g)i & ii) and light industrial (E(g)iii). We will refer to them as ‘economic land uses’ through the LPR. This may need to be revised before submission/examination if Government legislation changes.

Building a strong, competitive economy

2. The Council will encourage and support sustainable economic development in Swale and ensure that local residents will benefit from a thriving, healthy and more diverse local economy. The Local Plan will support the local economy by protecting the existing stock of property where it has a reasonable prospect for ongoing employment use and allocating new sites to meet our economic needs.
3. The Council aims to meet the needs of our residents and provide employment opportunities that match their skills and ambitions, whilst attracting inward investment into the borough and supporting our own home-grown businesses to further grow and expand. We will create the conditions to support start-up businesses, especially in our future growth sectors and in the creative, science related and high tech industries.
4. The economic objective of achieving sustainable development through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is “to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.” (NPPF, paragraph 8a.)
5. Policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. (NPPF, paragraph 85.)
6. The creation of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) in April 2011 included Government, Councils, businesses and education providers from Kent, Greater Essex and East Sussex. Their vision was “a more productive and prosperous economy in which everyone has the opportunity to succeed.” Since April 2024, their activities to support local growth have been undertaken by Local Authorities.
7. Prior to Covid-19 Swale’s economy was growing, dominated by manufacturing and a number of small niche sectors. Post Covid-19, the economy remains similar, we are still a net exporter of labour mainly to London and adjoining areas of Kent, with some weaknesses in the local labour market, including relatively high unemployment levels, below average skills and lower earnings. Our rates of new business formation are also currently lower than the county averages. Most of our stock of employment space comprises industrial uses, with comparatively modest amounts of office accommodation, although this has grown in recent years.

8. This policy, along with ST1 and ST4, supports the vision and objectives of Local Plan Strategy to strengthen economic development in the Borough and addresses the issues highlighted by the Swale Employment Land Review (2018) and its Update (2024), the Strategic Market Housing Assessment (2020), the Local Housing Needs Assessment (2020) and the Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment (2019) and Update (2023) to produce a strategy to meet employment needs over the Plan period.
9. In line with the evidence on need this policy supports our future potential growth sectors (see Statement below) and the needs of:
 - the manufacturing sub-sectors and their underlying strengths in certain specialist sectors;
 - the retail sector;
 - the visitor economy (recreation, accommodation and food services);
 - growth focused on the natural environment and heritage offer;
 - our burgeoning creative industry sector; and
 - expansion proposals in the pharmaceutical sector.
10. This policy confirms and encourages the appropriate development of the 'Strategic Employment Locations', as set out in the proposed allocations chapter and within Regeneration and town centre policies as appropriate, at:
 - Sittingbourne, Sheerness and Faversham town centres;
 - Ridham, Kemsley, Eurolink and the Kent Science Park in the Sittingbourne area; and
 - Neatscourt and the Port of Sheerness on the Isle of Sheppey.
 - An objective of the Council is to promote port related activities in and around the Sheerness Port estate Policy Regen 1 (whilst recognising that the port land is outside of the scope of normal planning control) and to promote high tech industries at the Kent Science Park Policy Regen 4.

Statement Box

Swale's Future Potential Growth Sectors

- General and advanced manufacturing and engineering
- Logistics and distribution
- Agriculture/ forestry/woodland
- Financial/business services
- Environmental technologies (low carbon sector)
- Healthcare/biotechnology
- ICT, media/telecommunications
- Construction
- Creative industries
- Retail/leisure, cultural activities, tourism, hotels and catering and boat repair

11. Future growth depends on attracting inward investment, developing the sectors where there are already established strengths and stimulating growth of smaller scale home-grown firms (inc. creating a positive climate to encourage school and higher education leavers to base new businesses in Swale). We also need to diversify into higher value manufacturing, logistics and distribution and the environmental sectors, all of which offer potential that can build on the area's strengths.
12. Agriculture is also an important economic sector and the industry needs to keep pace with the changing context brought about by climate change, food security, global markets, major food retailers and changing legislation/guidance.

The Importance of Swale's Agricultural Sector

- Swale has 37,000 ha of land; of which 24,000 ha is farmed and approximately 60% is classified as best and most versatile (BMV).
- The best and most versatile land (ALC Grades 1, 2 and 3a) farmed in Swale is worth approximately £360 million at the current average market price for good quality arable land in England. It is estimated to support £105m– £255m of agricultural output each year.
- Swale is within the top 20% of local authorities in England with the highest numbers of agricultural workers - Swale had 2,494 workers in 2016. In Swale, the agricultural workforce has increased in recent years.

13. Policy E2 aims to support the agriculture sector adapt to the challenges it faces and continue to be a key feature of Swale's economy.
14. As a Borough with a woodland resource, there is also potential employment through its better management, both for woodland products and as a renewable energy source.
15. This policy safeguards for future use the employment potential of existing land or buildings, but acknowledges the desirability of releasing older, poorer performing industrial sites to other uses. The Employment Land Review 2018 and the Update (2024) assessed the existing stock of premises and land, and identified just six existing sites and no allocations that were suitable for managed release. This safeguarding includes both land or buildings in current employment use or allocation, land where planning permission has expired or other vacant land and premises where their potential for employment remains relevant. For sites not considered suitable or viable, the Council must be convinced that evidence points to wider, fundamental and deep seated structural problems with the site, rather than shorter term difficulties caused by a particular economic context. This is important where allocations and committed employment sites have been made on the basis of a particular economic and/or locational need to serve the plan period. Policy E1 gives more detailed guidance on the evidence that the Council requires.
16. Given the outstanding environment in Swale, this policy seeks to expand our potential for sustainable rural tourism to benefit local communities and raise awareness and support for conservation of the environment. There is an important link between the quality of the environment (both historic and new) and economic development, in particular the area's ability to attract investment, jobs and population. Swale's historic environment has the potential to play a significant role in supporting enterprise, especially in helping under-performing parts of Swale to transform themselves, such

as at Sittingbourne town centre and Sheerness. Also important is our current portfolio of principal tourism assets (see Statement Box 3), with this policy supporting their growth and, if necessary, their protection from inappropriate development proposals.

Swale's Principal Tourism Assets and Potential

- Coast - beaches, cliffs, lively seaside resorts including holiday parks and amusements, wild landscapes and marshes, Saxon Shore Way, King Charles III England Coast Path, Church Marshes, bird life and quiet sailing waters. The Isle of Sheppey is unique within Kent.
- Countryside - down land, valleys, woodlands, orchards, parkland, narrow lanes, picturesque villages and houses and a network of foot and cycle paths (including a National Cycle Route) and bridleways.
- Built heritage - a great range of heritage assets reflecting its Roman and Medieval legacy, its naval and maritime history and its industrial and agricultural past.
- Fruit Heritage - the National Fruit Collection, and 'fruit' celebrations.
- Festivals – such as the Faversham International Hop Festival, Faversham Literary Festival, Brogdale Collections Seasonal Fruit Festivals, Festival of Sheppey
- Market Town of Faversham. A small historic Cinque Port town, lively town centre, unexploited creek and marshland, a multi-faceted town with links to the countryside.
- Unspoilt rural villages.
- Industrial heritage - gunpowder, naval, brewing, aviation, 'defence of the realm', sailing barges, brick and paper-making.
- Naval and aviation history, sustainable rural tourism e.g. walking/cycling, other outdoor activities and sustainable accommodation at Faversham and Sheerness
- Food and drink - high quality restaurants, pubs, brewers and local food suppliers
- Accommodation - small number of hotels, pubs with rooms, guest houses and bed and breakfast establishments, holiday parks and glamping sites

17. For our town centres and the retail and leisure sectors, our Local Plan Strategy indicates that there is a need for further comparison (non-food) floorspace support general growth and to help claw back expenditure lost to other centres and a diversification into the 'experience' sector rather than traditional retail. The creative sectors and arts and culture are an important part of the economy, which benefit from the availability of accessible flexible studio and workspace.
18. We cannot anticipate every business opportunity. This policy indicates a series of 'Priority Locations' where, when demonstrated that an existing employment location or allocation is unsuitable or unavailable for the development in question, appropriate sites will be considered. For such proposals, the Local Plan Strategy and environmental quality should not be compromised. The 'Priority Locations' are:

- the extension of our existing employment sites;
 - where benefits to deprived communities can be achieved;
 - well related to either the A249, A2, the built out section of the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road or A299 Thanet Way; and
 - the re-use of heritage assets or where they could deliver significant benefits to the conservation of landscape and/or biodiversity.
19. Some of our businesses will be at the front line of climate change, either by being affected by future natural processes or by offering potential for the Borough to be a focus for low carbon technologies. This policy supports improved resilience and new business opportunities within this sector.
20. Swale is a net exporter of labour, with a net outflow of 10,394 working commuters, and aside from commuting to London, almost all commuting is very short distance into one of the immediately adjoining local authorities. (Swale ELR, 2018.) Whilst reducing the level of out-commuting will be challenging, this policy is supportive of proposals able to realistically deliver a reduction in commuting out of the Borough, especially for those sectors currently the focus of out-commuting.
21. In May 2024, Swale's employment rate was 80.7% (ages 16 to 64) which was higher than across the South East as a whole and economic inactivity was 18.7% (ages 16 to 64.) ([Swale's employment, unemployment and economic inactivity - ONS](#))
22. Unemployment levels in Swale in 2025 were 4.4%, above the Kent's 4%. (KCC Economic Indicators, www.kcc.gov.uk) Improving the skills performance of the local labour supply is needed.
23. Swale performs above the national median in 3 indicators: median gross weekly resident earnings; employment rate; and 5-year percentage change in employees. Swale performs below the national median in 9 indicators: job density; unemployment rate; median gross weekly workplace earnings; percentage qualified to RQF level 4 and above; percentage qualified to RQF level 2 and above; stock of businesses; 3-year business survival rate; GVA per head; and percentage of employees in the knowledge economy.
24. High speed internet connectivity is important to encourage economic growth, especially in the rural areas. All new development will be required to provide for access to this technology regardless of location.

Policy ST 4

Building a strong, competitive economy

Actions by public, private and voluntary sectors will work towards the delivery of the Local Plan economic strategy.

1. Development proposals for current employment sites that re-provide the same employment land uses will be supported.
2. Development proposals for employment use on sites used for non-employment purposes will be encouraged where they meet the needs identified in the Council's Employment Land Review and/or where other considerations weigh in their favour.

Development proposals will be encouraged where they:

3. Stabilise losses of jobs within the manufacturing sector or exploit competitive strengths in the Swale economy including uplifting sectors related to the visitor economy and expansion of the pharmaceutical and science sectors;
4. Bring forward an increase in homegrown business creation and inward investment, including those able to encourage younger people to retain and use their skills within Swale;
5. Encourage educational facilities or an expansion of vocational learning, developing links between institutions and the private sector or work-based learning at key locations;
6. Grow opportunities for the creative and cultural sector through opportunities in underused properties or new developments for creative start-up space, skills hub, and flexible public facing creative exhibitions and events;
7. Contribute to the delivery of a comprehensive land portfolio for the Borough by:
 - a. safeguarding and maximising the potential of identified 'Strategic Employment Sites';
 - b. bringing forward the stock of existing committed employment sites for industrial use;
 - c. addressing qualitative issues with new provision at Local Plan allocations to support established industrial markets, additional office space, the release of poorer quality locations and the broader upgrade of the supply; or
 - d. managing existing and future employment potential by upgrading older industrial areas.
8. Include sectors that are under-represented in Swale, and/or that may potentially enable a reduction in commuting out of the Borough;
9. Avoid proposals that would harm existing employment locations and allocations where appropriately located and suitable, viable for users under normally functioning economic conditions or required to meet the identified needs for the plan period;
10. Address future challenges to the agricultural and woodland/forestry industries with sustainable and appropriate proposals to create new markets and greater resilience;
11. Safeguard or enhance Swale's 'Principal Tourism Assets' and consolidate or widen the Borough's tourism potential, particularly where embracing principles of sustainable tourism;
12. Focus larger scale development where they utilise the strategic and primary road networks;
13. Support sectors attractive to the local population who would otherwise out-commute for work;
14. Facilitate the delivery of digital infrastructure, including access to high speed Internet connectivity from all new developments;
15. Create improved resilience for existing businesses by measures to address flood risk, climate change and natural processes and lead to an expansion of businesses in the low carbon sectors; or
16. Provided the Local Plan strategy is not significantly compromised, and sites cannot be found within criterion 7, meet unanticipated needs on appropriate sites within one or more of the following 'Priority Locations':
 - a. the extension of an existing employment site;
 - b. where benefits to deprived communities can be achieved;

c. sites well related to the A249, A2, Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road or A299 Thanet Way; or

d.re-use of heritage assets or where delivering significant benefits to the conservation of landscape or biodiversity.

Policy ST6 Delivering a wide Choice of High-quality Homes

Delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes

1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that local plans should make sufficient provision to meet housing needs and that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed. Councils are expected to deliver a wide choice of high-quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities.
2. The Council is committed to delivering housing through the Local Plan that reflects the needs and preferences of local people and that the adverse effects of development on communities is offset by properly funded infrastructure. The Swale Borough Council Corporate Plan (2023– 2027) sets out that the Council will Progress a Local Plan with local needs and capacity at its heart. This will be achieved through this Local Plan by ensuring that future housing delivery is more closely aligned to the Borough's ability and capacity to provide for genuine sustainable housing needs, in terms of location, type and tenure and that the impact of housing growth is offset through improved physical, environmental, social and health infrastructure.
3. The strategic priorities of the Swale Borough Housing, Homelessness & Rough Sleeping Strategy 2023-2027 are to deliver affordable homes; to prevent homelessness; to develop a more efficient housing options service; and to improve conditions in existing homes. Delivering a range of choice of quality homes through the policies and proposals in this Local Plan Review will assist in delivering these priorities.
4. Provision is made in this Local Plan for at least 8,068² dwellings (from non-consented allocated sites) to address the identified local housing need using the standard method set out in the national planning practice guidance. Major new development will be delivered at the strategic sites identified in this plan.
5. In addition to the strategic and non strategic site allocations, new housing development for park homes, older person accommodation and Gypsy, Traveller and Travelling Show people accommodation will be delivered in accordance with the specific policies in this Local Plan.
6. The Boughton and Dunkirk Neighbourhood Plan was made in February 2023 and The Faversham Neighbourhood Plan in December 2024. is already adopted and Faversham Town Council is in the process of preparing their Neighbourhood Plan, The two Plans combined have allocated sites for 263 dwelling over the life of the plan. There are other areas that have been designated Neighbourhood Planning Areas with work commenced but no draft plans prepared to date.
7. The Swale Housing Market Assessment (HMA) update 2026³, provides the evidence needed to identify the mix of housing needed for the Borough during the plan period. It sets out detailed information about the size profile and the tenure split for the period 2026 to 2042 for new dwellings. It also sets out the number of specialist dwellings for older persons needed and the need for new adapted housing to meet the needs of people with disabilities.
8. The government's standard method local housing need calculation for Swale of 1,064 is disaggregated using the Long Term Balancing Housing Markets model (LTBHM) to identify the tenure and size of housing that should be sought over the plan period to best accommodate the future population. The outputs of this model determine the size and

² ² All housing land supply figures and assumptions are based on 1 April 2025 monitoring position including use of the Local housing Need at this base date. The housing land supply will be updated to 1 April 2026 as part of the Local Plans submission.

³ Link to be inserted once published

tenure of the new housing required as a guide, acknowledging that it may be appropriate to divert away from this profile in particular instances.

9. The HMA concluded that affordable rent demand is highest for 3 bed properties, then 1 bed properties, and then followed by demand for 2 bed properties. Given that the HMA is a snapshot in time, the latest information available from the Council's Housing Register should be used as the starting point for identifying and agreeing the sizes of properties need for affordable rent in development proposals.
10. The HMA also sets out in terms of size profile, the greatest demand in market housing is for 4 bed properties (23.8%), followed closely by 2 bed properties (23.1%), with the lowest demand being for 1 bed properties (11%). The tenure split for the new dwellings in the Borough is for 76.8% market housing; 3.3% First Homes, 4.0% Shared ownership, 4.1% affordable rent; and 11.8% Social rent.
11. For specialist dwellings for older persons has a need for 928 additional units of Sheltered housing for older people/ retirement housing and 267 additional Extra care units/ supported living housing over the Plan period. It is also identified that an additional 360 Registered Care spaces (nursing and residential care homes) will be required. The HMA concludes that the need for new adapted housing is required for an additional 5,376 households (and therefore should meet M4(2) space standards) and of those, 1,123 dwellings should be M4(3) Category 3 homes, i.e. dwellings suitable for wheelchair users.
12. The most effective approach to ensuring the housing stock has the flexibility to meet the requirements of the future population is for the Council to implement a policy of universal Category 2 standards in all new build housing. The Viability evidence confirms this can be achieved and that 5% of new dwellings can also achieve the higher standard of M4(3.)

Policy

Development proposals will, as appropriate:

1. Provide affordable housing in accordance with Policy H1;
2. Be steered to locations in accordance with Policy ST 2 (Swale's Settlement strategy), including:
 - i). at local plan and neighbourhood plans allocations and Community Right to Build initiatives;
 - ii). Windfall sites where, its design, layout and landscaping would support and enhance the character of the area and can demonstrate that development of the site within its local context, would benefit the existing community and support sustainable development.
 - iii). town centres when contributing to their vitality and viability; or
 - iv). Deprived communities when improving local housing markets and supporting communities.
3. Use densities determined by the context and the defining character of the area;
4. Provide dwellings that meet minimum space standards M4(2) on 95% of all dwellings and the accessible standards M4(3) on the remaining 5% of dwellings;
5. Achieve the mix of housing types needed as reflected in the findings of the latest Housing Market Assessment or similar needs assessment, and for affordable homes

to use the information from the Council's Housing Register to ascertain specific needs at that time;

6. Meet the housing requirements of specific groups including families, older persons or disabled and other vulnerable persons;
7. Bring vacant homes back into use and up to the relevant standards; and
8. Achieve sustainable, healthy and high quality designed homes in accordance with Policy ST 7 Good Design, ST8 Health and Wellbeing and policies GD1 Local Design Principles and C1 Sustainable design and adaption principles.

Policy ST7 Good Design and Placemaking

1. Swale Borough Council considers that high quality urban design, landscape design and building design is required to enable healthy and happy lifestyles within sustainable communities for its residents and businesses. We must plan and build differently, carefully, beautifully and with a greater conscience for what we are creating for those that come after us.
2. Local distinctiveness and culture are important for placemaking in Swale. A new development may successfully be able to create a sense of place by addressing the following:
 - I. Discover the unique qualities of the physical and natural environment then identify how to both conserve what is special, learn from the findings and apply to new development to create distinctive character.
 - II. Understand how people move around, connect with their social and physical environment, interact and integrate to create walkable communities whilst considering how technology could change this.
 - III. Make places better for people by understanding who will live and work in them and appreciating their needs coupled with regard for the environment by ensuring the right mix of uses whilst allowing for flexibility and agility to adapt to change in the future.
3. There is renewed appreciation of the value of good design as set out in updated national policy, the release of new guidance and the promise of more to come:
 - The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stresses that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and together the two achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places.
 - The National Design Guide (NDG) illustrates how a well-designed place that is beautiful, enduring and successful can be achieved in practice. The Council expects a high level of engagement with this guidance by applicants.
 - The Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission advise how to promote and increase the use of high-quality design for new neighbourhoods in the report 'Living with Beauty' which identifies a number of far ranging priorities and policy recommendations to enhance the quality and design of buildings and spaces, including the need for a greater use of form-based codes.
 - Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) is advancing the preparation of a National Model Design Code, that will set the basis for a consistent approach to Design Codes across England, with an emphasis on the preparation of Codes by Local Authorities and Community Forums as part of local plans. The Council will engage with this process in the future.
4. The Council encourages developers to consider using the Council's design panel, or similar and respond positively to the provisions of the previously stated documents and the following (and successor) publications:
 - I. The Healthy Homes Principles: The Town and Country Planning Association's twelve Healthy Homes Principles.

- II. Building for a Healthy Life: Homes England, NHS England and NHS Improvement. A widely used design tool for creating places that are better for people and nature. Cited by NPPF as a tool helpful for assessing and improving design quality.
- III. Putting Health in Place: NHS England: The Healthy New Towns programme informed ten healthy new town principles which demonstrate to housebuilding, local government, healthcare and local communities how to create new places that offer people improved choices and chances for a healthier life.
- IV. The Manual for Streets: Department for Transport. Emphasises that streets should be places in which people want to live and spend time in, and are not just transport corridors. Aims to reduce the impact of vehicles on residential streets by planning street design intelligently and pro-actively, giving a high priority to the needs of pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport.
- V. Kent Design Guide (and appendices): Prepared by the Kent Design Group, it provides the criteria necessary for assessing planning applications. Helps building designers, engineers, planners and developers achieve high standards of design and construction.
- VI. Secured by Design: An initiative that focuses on crime prevention of homes, commercial premises and schools by promoting the use of security standards for a wide range of applications and products. Now supported locally by Design for Crime Prevention, part of the Kent Design Guide.
- VII. Design guidance from Kent Downs National Landscapes unit: Includes its Landscape Design Handbook and Rural Streets and Lanes Design Handbook.
- VIII. Active Design Guidance: Sport England. A set of design guidelines to promote opportunities for sport and physical activity in the design and layout of development. Promotes sport and activity through three key Active Design principles of - improving accessibility, enhancing amenity and increasing awareness.
- IX. Swale Borough Council Supplementary Guidance and Documents: These include guidance on house extensions, shop fronts and advertisements, landscaping, and converting rural buildings, together with a Supplementary Planning Document on Landscape Character and Biodiversity Assessment and Guidelines 2010 and the Urban Extension Landscape studies, Parking SPD, Town Centre SPD.

Policy

All development will be required to achieve high-quality design that delivers sustainable, resilient and locally distinctive places. Development proposals must demonstrate how they respond to the following principles:

1. **Character and Identity** - Reinforce and enhance the distinctive qualities of Swale's coastal, creek, estuarine and rural landscapes, its historic towns, villages and settlements, and its built and archaeological heritage. Development must contribute positively to local identity and sense of place, responding positively to local character and context while allowing for high-quality and innovative design.
2. **Inclusion and Safety** - Create inclusive environments that promote health, wellbeing and social interaction. Development must ensure that spaces are safe, accessible, easy to navigate and reduce opportunities for crime.
3. **Connectivity and Permeability** - Provide a clear, legible and well-connected network of streets, routes and spaces that are attractive and permeable. Development should prioritise walking, cycling and public transport, and provide strong and integrated

connections within sites and to the surrounding urban and natural environment, including links to the coast, countryside, green spaces and heritage assets where appropriate.

4. **Sustainability and Climate Resilience** - Maximise resource efficiency and minimise carbon emissions, while integrating multifunctional green and blue infrastructure that supports amenity, biodiversity net gain, water management and climate adaptation. Given Swale's particular vulnerability to flood risk, climate change and sea level rise, development must demonstrate resilience to current and future climate impacts.
5. **Well-managed and Built to Last** - Ensure buildings and spaces are durable, adaptable, and designed for longevity, delivering a high standard of amenity. Development must support clear arrangements for long-term stewardship, management, and maintenance, and contribute positively to Swale's built and natural environment.
6. **Context** - Ensure that the use, scale, height, massing, density, and appearance of development are appropriate to their location, responding positively to both the immediate context and the wider area. In smaller settlements, rural areas, and sensitive coastal, creekside, and historic environments, development should take account of the established character, grain, and setting.
7. **Public Spaces** - Deliver high-quality, well-designed public spaces and public realm that support social interaction, community cohesion and opportunities for recreation and cultural activity. Public spaces should respond to and celebrate Swale's distinctive character, including its maritime, industrial and landscape heritage.
8. Development should comply with the detailed requirements of Policy GD1 (Local Design Principles), relevant design codes and masterplans, which provide more specific guidance on achieving these principles.
9. Major and sensitive development proposals will be required to engage with the Council's Design Review Panel at an early stage, in accordance with the Council's Design Review Protocol.

Policy ST8 Health and Wellbeing

1. The Council aim to 'reduce health inequality by developing more productive relationships with local health partners and making health and wellbeing a central consideration in all relevant council decision-making, recognising especially the link between housing and health'.
2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (paragraph 96) stresses the importance of healthy, inclusive and safe places that encourage social interaction, provide good accessibility and support healthy lifestyles. The importance of positive planning for the provision of social infrastructure including schools, health facilities, sports facilities, open spaces, local shops, allotments and community centres. Planning for and protecting existing services and open space are also recognised by the NPPF as important elements of creating healthy communities.
3. The Healthy Places programme was set up in 2013 by Public Health England (PHE) in recognition that where people live, their homes and their communities' connections have a big impact on health and wellbeing and need to be integrated with high-quality health services. The learning from the Healthy New Towns programme has since been distilled into 'Putting Health into Place' 2019 which sets out the role councils, developers and the NHS can play as well as outlining the ten principles for healthy place-making:
 1. Plan ahead collectively
 2. Assess local health and care needs and assets
 3. Connect, involve and empower people and communities
 4. Create compact neighbourhoods
 5. Maximise active travel
 6. Inspire and enable healthy eating
 7. Foster health in homes and buildings
 8. Enable healthy play and leisure
 9. Develop health services that help people stay well
 10. Create integrated health and wellbeing centres
4. The Department of Health and Social Care have published guidance regarding the mutual relationship between wellbeing and health. Healthier lifestyles and good health status are both associated with higher levels of wellbeing and wellbeing is important to health. Therefore, focusing policies on wellbeing could lead to improved wellbeing and also improved health outcomes. The five ways to wellbeing are listed as, connectivity in terms of relationships and community, physical activity, engagement in life, continuous learning and giving back. In addition, there is clear evidence that good work improves health and wellbeing across people's lives.
5. Community programmes to improve diet should address the needs, concerns and interests of local people and can be delivered in formal or informal ways. Increasing knowledge and skills in healthier eating and cooking is assisted with Public Health England's Eatwell Guide which sets out recommendations on eating healthily and achieving a balanced diet.
6. The Marmot Review: Implications for Spatial Planning (2011) identified the role planning can play in affecting health through: the design of developments, ensuring that services are joined up and easier to access, community participation, accessible transport, well located services and by the pursuit of healthy lifestyles through active travel and use of green space.

7. Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On (2020) highlights that: people can expect to spend more of their lives in poor health; improvements to life expectancy have stalled and declined for the poorest 10% of women; the health gap has grown between wealthy and deprived areas and irrespective of wealth or deprivation where you live negatively impacts on life expectancy by nearly five years. The Council is committed to addressing these health inequities.
8. Kent and Medway Councils have set up a joint Health and Wellbeing Board as an advisory joint sub-committee to tackle system-wide health challenges and health inequalities with a focus on adult social care and health integration (local care) and on prevention. The Kent Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy recognises that shaping the physical environment of the community so that it can better promote healthier lifestyles is central to the health improvement role of local authorities. Key health facts for Swale:

Key health facts for Swale box:

- The health of people in Swale is mixed when compared with the average for England. The Public Health England publication Swale Health Profile reveals levels of health/deprivation significantly worse than the England average in the following areas: mortality rate at birth for males; suicide rates; smoking during pregnancy; teenage pregnancies; and prevalence of smoking in adults.
 - The Public Health England publication Swale Health Profile show that obesity levels in children was higher in Swale than in Kent in both reception (11.1%) and year 6 (23.9%).
 - There are significant health inequalities depending on where people live within the Borough. Life expectancy is about 8.3 years lower for men and 6.4 years lower for women in the most deprived areas of Swale than those in the least deprived areas.
9. There are significant health and wellbeing issues in Swale, especially in its deprived communities. To address these issues, it is important that community needs are supported through appropriate physical and social infrastructure and by other facilities and key services which contribute to improving wellbeing and the overall quality of life experienced by residents. The Local Plan, therefore, makes provision for improved access to local services, healthy transport choices such as cycling and walking, access to green infrastructure, open space and active recreation, good design in the built environment and recognises the role that mixed use developments can play in providing healthy communities. Specifically, to encourage healthy eating the negative impact of access to hot food takeaways (use class order sui generis) in close proximity to schools is addressed. In 2020 the PHE and partners provided practical support for local authorities that wish to use the planning system to achieve these important public health outcomes regarding obesity.
 10. On 19th November 2025, the Council declared a mental health crisis which is committed to ending the stigma around men's mental health and promote the support services available to residents such as Mind, MenTalk Health Swale Group, the Samaritans and CALM.
 11. The Council has undertaken an audit of open space and determined standards to be applied to new developments. These can be found in policy INF3 open space, sport and recreation provision. Existing provision, whether of open space, health or other community facilities should also be safeguarded against development proposals that would result in their loss.

12. This policy brings together all the relevant matters affecting health to provide an integrated approach. If fully implemented, an integrated approach toward health should potentially reduce costs to health services in the long term. Health impact assessments will be used to ensure these issues are properly considered and integrated at the planning application stage. The use of such assessments will be appropriate as identified by Local Plan allocations, or when statutory
13. Environmental Impact Assessments are required, or for larger developments within Swale's most deprived wards.
14. In May 2024, the Council signed the Town and Country Planning Association's Healthy Home Pledge. This pledge:
 - Ensures the provision of high-quality homes and places that will protect and promote all residents' physical, mental and social wellbeing, as well as to support planetary health. This is a commitment to ensure all homes meet the Healthy Homes Principles.
 - Is to not knowingly engage in any form of development, activity or decision making likely to create harm to human health.
 - Supports the provision of genuinely affordable homes, based upon people's ability to pay.
 - Ensures all residents have defined legal protections against poor build quality, management or maintenance and landlord harassment.
15. Culture also plays a role in supporting health and wellbeing and should be viewed as fundamental part of living well. Participation in creative and cultural activity can help people feel happier, healthier, more connected and more resilient while also strengthening communities and reducing inequalities. This is highlighted by the Arts Council England (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/developing-creativity-and-culture/health-and-wellbeing/creative-health-wellbeing>). The Council is preparing a cultural statement and more details will follow once it is completed.

Policy

The Council, working in conjunction with relevant organisations, communities and developers, will undertake targeted interventions to identify Swale's most disadvantaged families and communities, improve our understanding of the issues they face, and develop new ways of working to reduce social exclusion and enhance opportunities and quality of life to reduce health inequalities.

Development proposals will, as appropriate:

1. Bring forward accessible new community services and facilities, including sufficient health facilities with developers contributing towards the provision of built facilities and other improvements to healthcare services, as set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan;
2. Safeguard existing community services and facilities where they are viable or can be made so, or where replacement facilities can be provided without leading to any shortfall in provision: access to open space to facilitate physical activity, cultural activity, activities which strengthen social bonds, healthy eating learning, childcare and youth provision;
3. Safeguard or provide multifunctional open space, sport and recreation in accordance with INF3 Open space, sport and recreation provision, additionally enabling access to

nature in accordance with the green infrastructure strategy in ST11 Conserving and enhancing the natural environment;

4. Promote healthier options for transport, including cycling and walking by ensuring that the site chosen for the new place is suitable for sustainable transport links with other places, where appropriate is designed to be mixed use, compact and provided with safe pedestrian and cycle routes to make active travel easier in accordance with ST10 Promoting sustainable transport and active travel;
5. Improve or increase access to a healthy food supply such as allotments, markets and farm shops;
6. Limit new hot food takeaways within 400m of a school perimeters;
7. Create social interaction and safe environments through mixed uses and in the design and layout of new development in accordance with ST6 Delivering a wide choice of high-quality homes ST7 Good design;
8. Create a healthy environment that regulates local climate by providing open space and greenery to achieve shading and cooling, particularly within existing urban environments in accordance with B5 Woodland, orchards, trees and hedgerows;
9. Address air quality in accordance with C11 Air quality;
10. Ensure mitigation and adaptation to climate change through sustainable design and construction in accordance with C1 Sustainable design and adaptation principles; and
11. Undertake and implement a Health Impact Assessment for relevant proposals that are:
 - a. Required to undertake Environmental Impact Assessments; or
 - b. Within Swale's most deprived wards; or
 - c. Identified as required by the Local Plan.

Policy ST9 Planning for Infrastructure

1. The new housing, employment and other development proposed in the Local Plan will increase demands on infrastructure in the Borough. These demands need to be managed and may involve protecting existing infrastructure, identifying where there is capacity and/or securing the timely provision of new infrastructure, which in itself may require land allocations to be made to accommodate it.
2. Identifying and making sufficient provision for infrastructure is an important thread running throughout the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF highlights the role the planning system can play in identifying and co-ordinating the provision of infrastructure⁴ and the need for engagement with infrastructure providers to determine where additional infrastructure is necessary⁵.
3. Infrastructure can include roads and other transport facilities, public transport, utilities, flood defences, schools and other educational facilities, health facilities, cultural services, sports and recreational facilities and open spaces. This is not an exhaustive list and there may be other infrastructure facilities and services, which will be required to deliver the Local Plan.
4. The council, in consultation with partners and service providers, has prepared an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), setting out the key infrastructure and service needs required to support the level of planned growth across the Borough and the individual site allocations. The IDP identifies, where known, how and when this infrastructure might be delivered, who will lead on delivery and a broad indication of timing, costs and funding mechanisms. The key on-site infrastructure needed to support implementation of a particular site allocation has also been identified in the relevant allocation policy. It should be noted that the IDP principally identifies key infrastructure projects and does not include all site-specific infrastructure requirements, which will be dealt with through individual planning applications.
5. The IDP has been published separately and can be viewed on the council's website. The IDP is a 'living' document, which will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The council will continue to engage with service providers to ensure that the IDP provides the most up-to-date picture of the infrastructure needs of the Borough, particularly regarding infrastructure needed to support development later in the plan period, and to monitor progress in the delivery of infrastructure projects, their costs and funding.
6. It is critical that sufficient infrastructure is available to serve new development and that it is delivered in a timely manner to ensure the needs of the occupiers of new development can be met without placing undue burdens on existing infrastructure facilities and services. The policy seeks to ensure that new infrastructure and services are delivered either in advance or alongside the development they are intended to support. Where appropriate, applicants will be expected to collaborate on the provision of infrastructure needed to serve more than one site.
7. In some circumstances, due to the timing of critical infrastructure projects such as off-site highway improvements, it may be necessary for development of a site to be phased to ensure it does not proceed until the provision of this infrastructure. Should this be the

⁴ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf Para 8a

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67aafe8f3b41f783cca46251/NPPF_December_2024.pdf Para 26

case, the council may grant permission with conditions or planning obligations restricting full or partial occupation until the completion of critical infrastructure projects or phases of projects. Where site allocations coming forward are dependent on the delivery of infrastructure projects this has been reflected in the phasing of the allocation in the housing trajectory.

8. In the event issues arise with the delivery of strategic infrastructure required to enable growth, the council will seek to work actively with developers, infrastructure providers and other partner organisations to resolve the issue.
9. The Local Plan is based on a whole plan viability approach. The Whole Plan Viability Assessment has tested whether the Local Plan strategy, taken as a whole, is realistic and able to be delivered and has considered the impact of the Local Plan policies and other requirements on the viability of development likely to come forward over the plan period in the borough. The assessment has found that the policy requirements in this plan are viable across most site typologies.
10. As a starting point, therefore, it is assumed that all development proposals will be viable unless exceptional circumstances are demonstrated, and it should not normally be necessary for viability assessments to be submitted with individual planning applications. It will be for an applicant to justify, in line with paragraph 59 of the NPPF, the need for a viability assessment at the planning application stage. Where the applicant can justify that the particular circumstances warrant the need for a viability assessment the council will follow national guidance, as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance⁶, in determining the weight to be given to the assessment. Any viability assessment should reflect the government's recommended approach to viability assessment and be prepared at the applicant's expense.
11. Where a viability assessment demonstrates to the satisfaction of the council that a reduced level of developer contribution would be appropriate in order to enable the development to be delivered, the council will take a pragmatic approach to seeking developer contributions. In doing so, the council will generally apply the following priority to developer contributions, having regard to the latest IDP:
 - Those that are required to unlock growth, such as strategic highway improvements or ensure the
 - safety of the development, such as flood risk mitigation; then
 - Contributions to local infrastructure delivery to mitigate the impact arising from the development, such
 - as education or health provision; then
 - Affordable housing provision; then
 - Other developer contributions that would not fall into the above.
12. Any changes to this priority will be set out in the council's annual Infrastructure Funding Statement.
13. In recognition that the viability of development may change overtime, particularly for larger development proposals which may take many years to build out, any subsequent planning obligation will need to allow for a review of viability during the lifetime of the development at appropriate trigger points agreed between the council and the applicant.

⁶ [Planning practice guidance - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/planning-practice-guidance)

14. All new development should contribute towards the cost of new infrastructure. Infrastructure funding by developers is most often secured through planning obligations⁷. On-site infrastructure will be secured based on the needs of each proposal and delivered directly by the developer or through financial contributions and/or the provision of land. Off-site infrastructure will be secured through developer contributions.

Policy ST 9

Planning for Infrastructure

The Council will work with Kent County Council, infrastructure providers, applicants and other key stakeholders to ensure that growth over the plan period is supported by necessary infrastructure, facilities and services in a timely manner to meet the needs of communities.

1. The Council will resist the loss or change of use of existing social and community facilities unless it can be demonstrated that:
 - a. The facility is no longer needed for its existing purpose, and the site or building is not needed for an alternative social or community use;
 - b. The current or alternative community uses are not viable; or
 - c. The services can be re-provided in a facility of better quality on the same site or in an alternative location that is equally accessible to the community served.
2. Development proposals, including those allocated in this plan, which give rise to the need for infrastructure improvements will be expected to mitigate their impact either individually or cumulatively and at a rate and scale to meet the needs that arise from that development or a phase of that development. As such development may require to be phased to ensure the co-ordination with delivery of necessary infrastructure. Where appropriate, developers will be expected to collaborate on the provision of infrastructure needed to serve more than one site.
3. The council will regularly update the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to determine the scope, cost and range of infrastructure improvement required to continue supporting the delivery of the Local Plan.

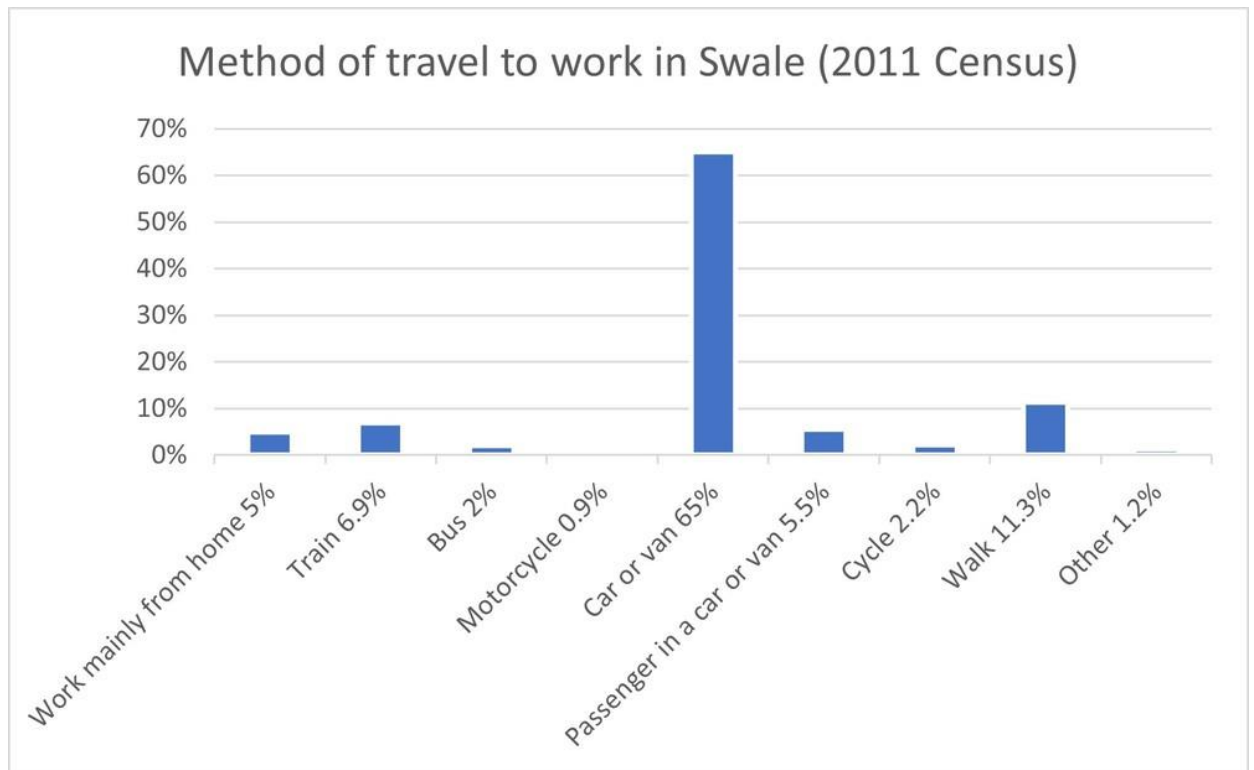
⁷ Either through a Section106 agreement or Section 278 Highway agreement (with Kent County Council)

Policy ST10 Promoting Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

1. One of the objectives of the Local Plan is to enable communities across Swale to become more sustainable. Creating safe and attractive neighbourhoods which promote walking and reduce the dominance of motor vehicles in particular have been found to be associated with increased social interactions and a sense of community. It can also help to create a sense of place and give an area identity. This section provides policies on sustainable and active travel in the borough with an aim of creating modal shift towards sustainable and active modes and less reliance on the private car in the borough.
2. Transportation plays a key role in the delivery of the Local Plan strategy, especially sustainable transport and active travel options. An efficient transport network which has good connectivity with the regional and national network is vital in helping Swale to realise its economic potential. To promote sustainable transport choices and active travel development should firstly, prioritise the needs of pedestrians and cyclists and then assess the role that public transport can contribute towards meeting the travel demands it will generate. Only once those options have been fully explored should further highway improvements be considered in the context of the capacity of the existing highway network. Picture **** Development Transport Hierarchy for Swale is set out within Policy INF 1 on Managing Transport Demand and Impact.
3. The Council declared a Swale Climate and Ecological Emergency in 2019 and a 'living' Action Plan in 2020 which was updated in 2025 Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan. This has a list of actions under Air Quality and Sustainable Transport to promote a wide modal shift towards public transportation and active travel within Swale and its communities.

Travel Patterns

4. The need for an uptake in sustainable transport is more apparent than ever. The population of Swale is increasing with its major towns and villages experiencing growth. Swale has the third largest population in Kent, and in the last 10 years more employment floorspace has been built than anywhere else in the county and Swale has the fourth highest level of dwelling completions over the 10 years to 2014. Swale has high levels of road and fuel use, a below UK average use of public transport, an underdeveloped public transport network and higher than average proportion with no access to a car. Although the increase is modest (1.5% given the increase in workforce between these years), an extra 3,900 persons were commuting between 2001 and 2011, mostly to the nearest larger towns beyond Swale.
5. The way in which people access work shows an increased reliance on car travel, with an increase from 60% to 70% using the car to get to work in Kent. The exception appears to be London commuting, where the proportion driving has remained fairly constant at 38%, train at 46% and bus at 11%. Method of travel to work for Swale residents largely reflects the Kent data, with 70.5% of residents travelling to work by car (drive or passenger in a car or van). The second most popular method is walking with just over and 11% share. Figure **** below shows the travel to work mode share.
6. These results also reflect the 2011 Census results for car ownership in Swale. The proportion of households with one or more cars available has increased to just under 80%, which is an increase on 2001 figures and now makes Swale identical to the Kent average. Kent car ownership as a whole is higher than the national average (80% of households compared with 74% nationally). The rate of increase in car ownership in Swale has been twice the national rate of increase over this period.



7. The commuting data therefore suggests that there has been an increase in out commuting, particularly by car, to other Kent districts, with Medway, Maidstone and Canterbury being the most popular destinations. London commuting has risen only slightly, and whilst car commuting has also increased in absolute terms on this route, train and bus use have maintained their proportionate share of commuters. These figures therefore suggest increasing pressure on the strategic and interurban road network.
8. The UK has seen traffic levels and commuting patterns turned on their heads during 2020. Commuting patterns in Swale are considered to be largely back to normal, other than rail travel into larger hubs such as London. However, Covid travel behaviours and commuting are likely to have been affected and the longer-term impacts of that on Swale are unknown. This presents an opportunity to enable more sustainable travel to be embedded in policy, development and any schemes taken forward within the borough.

Rural Lanes

9. Whilst the development strategy of the Plan and supporting Transport Strategy is focused on locating development where the supporting transport can be provided in the most sustainable way, the Borough also has a rich heritage of rural lanes which contribute greatly to amenity. These may come under pressure with inappropriate development proposals. The issues are considered in the context of Policy B8.

Health and Air Quality

10. Accessible transport links are vital for providing Swale's residents with access to facilities and services across the borough, county and beyond. This includes connecting businesses and communities, as well as reducing social isolation. However, there are negative impacts associated with transport too. Road transport contributes to 32% of Swale's CO₂ emissions and pollutants have a negative impact on air quality, human health and the natural environment, as well as transport increasing noise pollution.

Sustainable transport choices and 'active travel' (travel requiring a person to exercise - such as walking and cycling) in particular are able to provide an opportunity for people to build activity into their daily lives. Currently 60.5% of primary school children, and 33.7% of secondary school children actively travel to school, whilst 13.5% of adults actively travel to work. [Kent's Active Travel Strategy](#) aims to make active travel an attractive and realistic choice for short journeys in Swale.

Swale Transport Model

11. A multi modal strategic transport model has been undertaken during the drafting of the Local Plan Review to reflect the development strategy and proposals of this plan. A total of four scenarios have been tested in the AM (8-9) and PM (17-18) peaks in the year 2037.

* A table will be included showing the Local Plan Review Modelling Scenarios.*

12. The following transport network schemes are seen as necessary to support growth and the full implementation of the Local Plan strategy: (To be filled in before Reg 19.)
13. The Council will work with Kent Highways, as the Highways Authority, on an A2 mitigation strategy to manage the flows of traffic on the A2 and the roads that feed on to it, especially where there are air quality, traffic congestion and road safety issues. This will cost an estimated £1-2m (depending on land values and land availability.)
14. Furthermore, the modelling report has recommended a number of mitigations for the borough which includes schemes relating to the allocated development sites. This is encompassed within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan.
15. Regional and National transport policies have an important role to play in tackling poor air quality, facilitating development and wider environmental and health objectives within Swale.
16. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) continues the core principle of sustainable development, through means such as using technology to reduce the need to travel, using planning policies and decisions to actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest use of public transport, walking and cycling and focusing significant developments in areas which are or can be made sustainable.
17. Transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating development and also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. It is nevertheless recognised that different policies and measures will be needed in different communities and that sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural areas.
18. Key national objectives for transport policy include:
 - Working with relevant transport providers and neighbouring authorities to develop strategies for viable infrastructure necessary (including for the growth of ports) to support sustainable development;
 - Ensuring that opportunities for sustainable and active travel have been taken up to minimise the need for major new transport infrastructure to support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and to reduce congestion;

- Ensuring that the necessary improvements can be undertaken as far as possible within the transport network and are cost effective at mitigating the significant impacts of development;
 - Achieving safe and suitable access to sites for all people and goods; and
 - Designing developments to prioritise pedestrian and cycle access and give access to high quality public transport facilities.
19. The Department for Transport Circular 01/2022: Strategic Road Network and the delivery of sustainable development relates specifically to the impact of proposed development on the strategic road network (SRN) which is operated, maintained and improved by Highways England on behalf of the Department for Transport. The SRN play an important part in enabling and sustaining economic prosperity as part of wider sustainable development objectives, with Highways England ensuring the continued safe operation of the network.
20. For the SRN, development proposals are likely to be acceptable if they can be accommodated within the existing capacity of a section (or link or key junction) of the relevant part of the network; or they do not increase the demand for use of that section which is already operating over capacity, taking account of any mitigation and/ or capacity enhancement measures which may be proposed. Generally, development should only be prevented or refused where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe. Safety of the SRN is the key consideration for judging impact of proposed development.
21. The key issues for the Local Plan are to promote development patterns which minimise the need to travel; encourages the use of sustainable means of transport and minimises journey lengths for everyday activities such as work, education, shopping and leisure. Capacity on the SRN is limited, and additions are difficult, costly and time consuming, so these measures are integral to the local plan approach to reducing the potential for congestion on the SRN.
22. The Circular states that capacity enhancements and infrastructure necessary to deliver strategic growth should be identified through the Local Plan. Where this is identified as necessary, Highways England will work with delivery agencies to assess the suitability, viability and deliverability of such proposals (including funding arrangements). If the need and deliverability is confirmed when balanced against other environmental and practical considerations, it may be considered for inclusion in the Highways England forward programme of works.
23. The objectives of the Circular are reflected throughout the Local Plan in terms of its overall development strategy, land allocations and general policies for guiding design, layout and access, they are supported by and influence complementary plans, projects and funding programmes of the transport providers, highway authorities and the Local Economic Partnership (for Kent, Essex and East Sussex).

Car Parking

24. The NPPF also gives the option for local planning authorities to develop their own vehicle parking standards. Swale Borough Council has set out their [Swale Parking Standards 2020](#) These must be referred to for all residential and non-residential developments within the borough. Further detail on this can be found in Policy DM 11.

Promoting Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

25. Projects to provide new and improved transport infrastructure will play a central role in supporting growth and promoting sustainable transport within the borough as well as creating a shift towards sustainable modes. As major development will largely be concentrated in locations that are, or will be, subject to significant transport improvements, land and facilities will therefore need to be safeguarded in order to ensure delivery of these projects.
26. All transport improvement schemes which are assessed and taken forward by the council should be focused on the promotion of sustainable transport and active travel.
Figure ** Transport Hierarchy** (in Policy INF 1) should be adhered to when appraising all transport schemes within the borough.

Policy ST 10

New development will be located in accordance with Policies ST 1 and Policy ST 2, Local Plan allocations and approved Neighbourhood Plans, which minimise the need to travel for employment and services and facilitate sustainable transport. The Council will promote an uptake of sustainable transport and active travel through the prioritisation of walking, wheeling and cycling, in line with the hierarchy of road users, and the Council's adopted Swale wide Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) and Faversham's LCWIP, along with public transport within all new developments.

The Council will:

1. Promote walking within the borough by ensuring that developments improve the pedestrian environments by supporting public realm improvements including the provision of high-quality safe road crossings, seating, signage and landscaping that are safe and easy to walk through;
2. Promote cycling in the borough by ensuring that developments provide and make a contribution towards high quality and safe cycle routes, provide for accessible, secure cycle parking taking into account the size and location of the development, and make provision for high quality facilities that promote cycle usage including showers, lockers and dryers;
3. Ensure walking and cycling routes are linked to new and existing communities with services and facilities, public transport and the Green Grid network and are accessible for all users;
4. Safeguard and promote the provision of public transport in the borough by ensuring that development contributes towards improvements to bus network infrastructure including access to bus stops, shelters, passenger seating, waiting areas, signage and timetable information. Contributions will be sought where the demand for bus services generated by the development is likely to exceed existing capacity. Contributions may also be sought towards the improvement of other forms of public transport in major developments where appropriate;
5. Where appropriate, be required to provide for the interchange between different modes of transport including the provision of facilities to make interchange easy and convenient for all users – as set out in Policy INF1;

6. Facilitate the greater use of waterways for commercial traffic, where this would not have an unacceptable adverse environmental impact, through working with the Port of Sheerness and other bodies;
7. Contribute to transport network improvements, where capacity is exceeded and or safety standards are unacceptably compromised with particular emphasis on those identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule and in paragraph 4.2.112 above;
8. Make best use of capacity in the network by working together with transport providers to improve the transport network in the most sustainable way, and extending it where necessary, as demonstrated by Transport Assessments and Travel Plans in support of development proposals – as discussed in INF1;
9. Support the provision of major new transport infrastructure in accordance with national and local transport strategies; and
10. Maintain and improve the highway network at key points to improve traffic flows and respond to the impact of new development and regeneration, as set out in the existing Local Transport Strategy.

Policy ST11 Protecting and Enhancing the Natural Environment

1. Swale's diverse and outstanding natural environment is a defining characteristic of the borough. ADD SOMETHING ABOUT ECOSYSTEM SERVICES This policy sets out how our natural environment will be conserved, enhanced, and managed and through this how habitats, species, landscapes, natural resources, the economy and quality of life can recover.

Natural Environment in Swale

2. Details of Swale's natural environment are set out elsewhere in the Local Plan (see table 3.1.3 and the preambles to policies B1 and B2), and include a swathe of designations:
 - Internationally designated wetlands across the Medway and Swale Estuaries and Marshes (Ramsar sites, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas, see Policy B1)
 - Nationally designated sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest, National Nature Reserves and Marine Conservation Zones)
 - Locally designated sites for wildlife (see Policy B1)
 - The Kent Downs National Landscape (see Policy B3)
 - Areas of High Landscape Value (see Policy B2)
 - Coastal Change Management Area (see Policy C6)
 - Important Local Countryside Gaps (see Policy B2)

Swale Biodiversity Baseline Study

3. All of Swale's environments – urban or rural, designated or not - are integral to the quality of our natural environment and are valued by the residents and visitors to the borough. The Council uses its [Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal](#) (2011) Supplementary Planning Document to ensure the protection and enhancement of the Borough's landscapes and habitats (see Policy B2). ADD REF TO URBAN ENVIRONMENTS – G&B Inf Strategy/LNRS

Pressures and impacts

4. Pressures on the natural environment, the landscapes, habitats and species of Swale come from a variety of sources:
 - **Pressures on land from competing interests** – development, infrastructure, renewable energy, agriculture, nature recovery - ref Land Use Framework
 - **Population growth and urban creep** – loss of countryside, water demand/ - water quality etc
 - **Water and soil pollution** including nutrient pollution of rivers, streams (including globally rare chalk streams) and groundwater. Pollution comes from many sources including agriculture and where the capacity of the wastewater network is stretched, particularly during storm overflow events, as well as from fuel combustion, industrial chemicals and metals, pesticides, pharmaceuticals, plastics and silt, many of which do

not break down naturally (eg forever chemicals). Poor land management can exacerbate these issues.

- **Air pollution** from the combustion of fuel and agricultural activity (eg particulates, atmospheric nitrogen and ammonia) can damage both human health and the natural environment.
- **Water demand** from an increasing population is impacting natural habitats through over abstraction and drought (eg disappearing chalk streams, drying of wetlands). At the same time, surface water, sewage and tidal flooding are impacting Swale's habitats, species and human communities.
- **Recreational disturbance** of sensitive wildlife (especially coastal) sites from people visiting, often with their dogs, and straying off designated paths. This can put strain on birds' ability to feed, rest and survive the winter and subsequent spring migration.
- **Fragmentation of habitats** caused by increased land take for development, reduces the space available for connectivity between habitats. Climate change may also mean some species need to move north, but fragmentation makes this harder to achieve.
- **Climate Change** - the risks to Swale's natural environment from Climate Change are widespread and compound the issues outlined above. The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy⁸ and the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment⁹ sets these out, including:
 - rising temperatures, including rising freshwater and sea temperatures and acidification
 - temperature and water disruption (impacts pollinating species, migratory patterns and life cycles)
 - new pests and diseases
 - flooding, sea-level rise, coastal squeeze and coastal erosion
 - drought and extreme rainfall/storms
 - soil erosion, soil aridity and waterlogging
 - wildfires, soil erosion, poor air quality

all of which impacts Swale's habitats (eg chalk streams, seagrass beds, intertidal mudflats) and species (such as the critically endangered European Eel).

5. As well as impacting our natural environment, these impacts also risk our economy (in particular farming), well-being and quality of life.
6. In recognition of the risks to the natural environment caused by the climate crisis, in 2019, Swale Borough Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency and developed an Action Plan.
7. Whilst other policies in this plan (most significantly ST 3 Climate Change and the Development Management Climate Change Policies C1 to C5) address mitigation and adaptation to climate change in detail, ST 11 recognises the interrelationship between the changing climate and impacts on the natural environment and how these issues need to be considered and addressed together so that we can deliver places that can adapt to a changing climate and provide opportunities for people and biodiversity to thrive and for nature to recover.

⁸ 5.1 [Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy 2025 - Part 2](#)

⁹ [UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2022](#)

8. The State of Nature – State of Nature Report '23 – struggling chalk streams, nutrient pollution.
9. Pressure on Mental health and link to policy on Health and Wellbeing.
10. Economic impact on agriculture and tourism.
11. Opportunities too – eg new crops and species, (viniculture), more visitors.

Policy background

12. The National Planning Policy Framework (para 187 onward) sets out that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by (in summary):
 - protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils;
 - recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits of natural capital and ecosystem services
 - maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast and improving appropriate public access
 - minimising impacts and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks and supports species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs
 - preventing development being at risk from, or adversely affected by pollution
 - remediating contaminated land and improving environmental conditions

13. Planning Practice Guidance

- **Environment Act**– about provision to address nature recovery, with targets [The Environment Act - Nature Recovery Laws](#)
- **Planning and Infrastructure Act**– about environmental delivery plans and the nature restoration levy
- **LURA** — about furthering purpose of Protected Landscapes and strengthening legislative framework for nature recovery and ensure support for the conservation of landscapes - LNRS one of 48 strategies to be produced across England, with the aim of joining up national efforts to reverse the decline of biodiversity.
- **NERC ACT**

14. As the overarching policy on the natural environment ST11 both sets out the Council's strategic policy on the natural environment and is the umbrella policy for the Development Management environment policies – most specifically those which relate to climate change, pollution, water, flood risk, biodiversity, landscapes, the coast and agricultural land.

15. **HRA of the Local Plan** - Is being undertaken alongside the preparation of the Local Plan.

Strategic policy areas on the natural environment which ST 11 addresses include:

The Green and Blue Infrastructure (GBI) Strategy

16. In 2020 the Council published [The Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Swale](#) with the following vision:

- a. *to develop a resilient, biodiverse and multi-functional GBI network to contribute to ensuring Swale a great place to live, work and invest, and respond to the climate and ecological emergency.*

17. The Strategy seeks to identify and guide opportunities for a greener, healthier, more biodiverse and prosperous Swale. It sets out Swale's GBI resource and where deficits exist, it explains the priorities for GBI and its multifunctionality. It also looks at the opportunities for GBI in existing development (eg our established towns) as well as in new development – seeking to create a network of green and blue infrastructure across the borough and beyond.

18. The GBI plan identifies four opportunity areas:

- A green and diverse borough
- A healthy blue environment
- A connected, active and healthy Swale
- A beacon for the visitor economy

under which it provides practical advice for the optimisation of Swale's GBI resources. For instance, for our main urban areas it promotes elements such as:

- Town and commercial centre greening
- Urban tree planting
- Provision of sustainable urban drainage
- Optimising green spaces and parks
- Promoting access to waterways
- Promotion of active travel routes, which are green and shaded and stretch across towns and into the countryside
- Promoting wildlife corridors and increasing opportunities for movement and dispersion of species
- Open space and greening provision in new development
- Encouraging community participation and engagement
- Promoting healthy play and leisure
- Enabling access to affordable healthy food and food growing

and always advocating a multi-functional approach where issues and solutions are layered for maximum benefit.

19. New development in Swale will be expected to address and further the opportunities promoted in the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy.

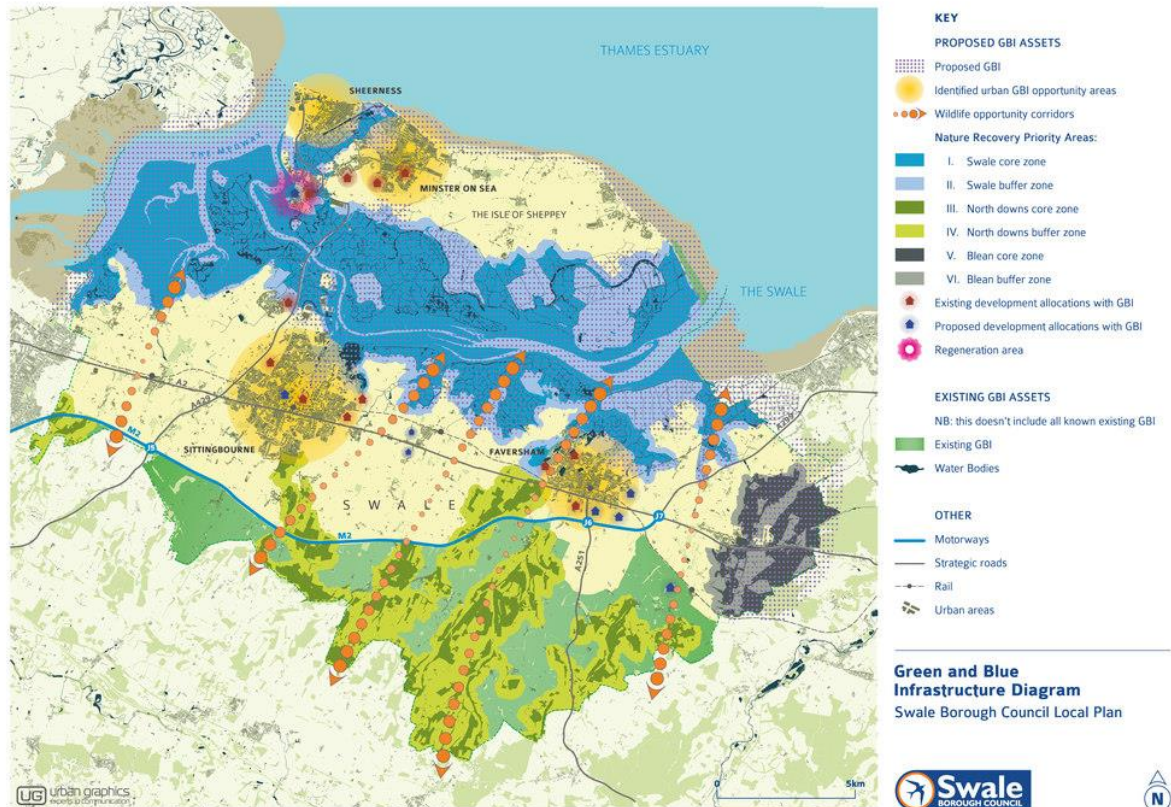


Image: Green and Blue Infrastructure Network

Natural England's Green Infrastructure Framework Standards

20. Natural England (NE) have published Green Infrastructure (GI) Framework's standards to help development deliver against the NPPF's requirements for green infrastructure, taking a strategic approach, deliver solutions to climate change and the nature crisis and make positive contributions to placemaking and urban renewal.

21. NE define the benefits of GI as creating:

- Nature-rich beautiful places
- Active and healthy places
- Thriving and prosperous communities
- Improved water management
- Resilient and climate positive places
- through:
- working in partnership to deliver a vision
- using evidence and good land use practice
- planning strategically
- understanding a place to create well-designed, beautiful and distinctive places
- properly managing, monitoring and evaluating GI

22. NE has produced the following standards:

- Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard
- Accessible Greenspace Standard
- Urban Nature Recovery Standard
- Urban Greening Factor Standard
- Urban Tree Canopy Standard

which define what good green infrastructure looks like for local planners, developers, parks and greenspace managers and communities, and how to plan it strategically to deliver multiple benefits for people and nature. When used together, these standards help stakeholders to deliver the Green Infrastructure Framework's principles and enable everyone to benefit from good green infrastructure provision.

ADD REF TO [Green Infrastructure Map](#) AND [Environmental Benefits for Nature Tool](#) AND HOW THIS WILL BE USED IN SWALE

The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy

23. The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) was published in November 2025. The strategy has been designed to assist Local Authorities/RESPONSIBLE AUTHORITIES /OTHERS in understanding the locations important for conserving and enhancing biodiversity and help meet the challenges that the natural environment is facing.
24. The principles for nature recovery set out in the Kent and Medway LNRS are as follows):
 - **Better** – improve the quality of our existing habitats and ensure they are in a healthy and functioning state by applying and resourcing better and appropriate management of them. We also need to better conserve and safeguard what we already have.
 - **Bigger** – increase the size of our most valuable and important habitat sites, not only extending but buffering them, to protect them from the pressures of human influences.
 - **More** – through habitat restoration and creation, establish new, nature-rich sites that not only provide more space for nature but also provide connectivity between existing core sites.
 - **Joined up** – enhance connections between, and join up, sites, by improving the quality of the land between them, creating new physical corridors and establishing stepping stones.
 - **Nature-based solutions** – work with nature and use natural processes to tackle some of the socio-economic challenges our county faces, maximising the benefits of nature recovery.
 - **Land management and land use** – increase the number of landowners, land managers and farmers using nature-friendly and habitat-sensitive land management and land-use practices, recognising the crucial role they play in helping to deliver a better, more coherent and resilient wildlife network across the county.

The LNRS also has range of Ambitions for the county:

- **Connectivity** – to address fragmentation
- **Nature-based solutions** – to increase carbon sequestration and ecosystem services and soil health

- **Land management and land use** – to increase nature friendly farming which responds to climate change and prevents pollution which managing publicly accessible open spaces better for wildlife
- **Grasslands**
- **Successional habitats**
- **Woodlands trees and hedgerows**
- **Freshwater habitat**
- **Urban habitat**
- **Coastal habitat**
- **Species habitat**

under which a series of priorities sit.

25. Under the requirements of the Environment Act 2021, LNRS are required to produce a biodiversity statement and map, which should:
 - Describe, identify and map biodiversity features within the Local Authority Boundary, including nationally designated sites, other nature reserves and wider areas of important for biodiversity; and
 - Describe, identify and map priorities and opportunities for promoting nature recovery and enhancement.
26. The details of the work undertaken for Kent and Medway, along with advice, guidance (eg a [Developer's Toolkit](#)) and case studies are set out on the [Homepage | Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#)
27. The Kent And Medway LNRS contains a mapping portal which maps:
 - APIBS - Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity – including existing designated sites and irreplaceable habitats
 - Potential Measures - the proposed actions to deliver the priority.
 - ACIBS - Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity - comprise the extent of the potential measures, with areas of particular importance for biodiversity excluded. These are the areas where the Strategy proposes effort should be concentrated to recover nature.

Habitats Regulations Assessments

28. If a development proposal is considered likely to have a significant effect on a protected habitats site (either individually or cumulatively) then an Appropriate Assessment (AA) of the implications for the site will be required under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017/255. If the Council, further to the AA and in consultation with other bodies, is unable to conclude that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site, then it will have to be refused.
29. Applicants will therefore need to provide sufficient information as may be required to undertake the assessment, including implementation of the mitigation hierarchy.

30. More generally, the Council will take a precautionary approach in requiring Habitats Regulations Assessments to be prepared for individual development proposals until a strategic solution has been prepared or where effects of a proposal are deemed to be uncertain. The Council will consider the need for Habitats Regulations Assessments to be undertaken at the reserved matters stage for sites where outline planning permission has already been granted. AGAIN?

Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) for North Kent

31. In 2011, Local Authorities and conservation organisations across north Kent joined together within the North Kent Environment Planning Group to identify the impacts of recreational disturbance on wintering birds within the Special Protection Areas. Following a Visitor and Bird Disturbance Survey, a Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) is now in place, which sets out a range of measures to mitigate any disturbance to birds caused by increasing numbers of recreational visitors.
32. These strategic measures (such as habitat creation, management and wardening) are funded by developer contributions, and are applied to all residential development within 6km of the SPAs (the area mostly likely to result in increased recreational pressure on them). These contributions are collected via Section 106 agreements, or, if implemented in the future, a Community Infrastructure Levy. Some larger developments beyond the 6km radius, or those particularly close to the SPA, may require additional mitigation.
33. Alternatively, developers can gather their own evidence and complete a Habitats Regulations Assessment and implement bespoke mitigation measures. Such an assessment would have to consider the impact of the proposal in combination with other proposed developments, the cost of which is likely to be higher than making a contribution to the implementation of the SAMMS. In most cases, it will not be viable for a development to provide its own bespoke mitigation package.
34. An integral part of the SAMMS will be the monitoring of the effectiveness of the measures put in place through the tariff payments. If this monitoring highlights areas where changes to the mitigation measures are required, these will be implemented by the Partnership.

35. Please see the Partnership's website for more detailed information [Bird Wise](#)

Environment Delivery Plans/Levy - [Environmental Delivery Plans | Local Government Association](#) TO DO

Kent Nature Partnership [About Us | Kent Nature](#)

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas

Water - River basin management plans etc

Nutrient Neutrality

36. Due to raised nitrogen and phosphorous levels at the Stodmarsh National Nature Reserve, in 2020 Natural England issued nutrient neutrality advice for the catchment that feeds that reserve. A small area of Swale is within the Stodmarsh Catchment. As a result of the advice, Local Planning Authorities can only approve development if they are

certain it will not have an adverse effect on the Stodmarsh Nature Reserve ie that schemes are 'nutrient neutral'.

37. Policy C10 Water quality and water resources and its preamble explains the detail on nutrient neutrality and the response to it, including recently developed environmental credits and enhancement schemes.

Biodiversity Net Gain – gov guidance, threshold, need for net gain plan.

Natural Capital/Ecosystem Services/Nature Based Solutions/Biodiversity and Geodiversity – define what these are – here or in B1.

Policy Application

38. All non-householder applications are required to submit a Natural Environment Statement, with any planning application. This should be proportionate to the scale of the development, but should seek to set out the application's response to the Council's declaration of an Ecological Emergency. Where relevant this should include an Ecological Assessment, a Green Infrastructure Plan, a Local Nature Recovery Strategy Response, a Biodiversity Net Gain Plan and a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

Policy

1. Actions by public, private and voluntary sectors will:
 - a. use nature-based solutions to safeguard, restore and enhance the size, quality, diversity and interconnectedness of the natural environment in Swale and reverse the decline in nature, including furthering the delivery of Swale's Green and Blue Infrastructure Network and Strategy and the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy;
 - b. recognise and value natural capital and ecosystems for the wider services they provide, such as for food, water, flood mitigation, disease control, recreation, health and well-being, climate change mitigation;
 - c. provide a focus and opportunities for social inclusion, community development and lifelong learning(?);
2. All non-householder development proposals will, as appropriate, demonstrate via a Natural Environment Statement how the development:
 - a. is appropriate to its location, steered to land of least environmental value and avoids: internationally, nationally and locally designated sites of importance for nature; nationally and locally designated landscapes; best and most versatile agricultural land, in accordance with policies B1 Biodiversity and geodiversity conservation and Biodiversity Net Gain and B2 Conserving and enhancing valued landscapes and B6 Agricultural Land;
 - b. follows the mitigation hierarchy by avoiding, then mitigating, and only as a last resort, compensating for adverse impacts on biodiversity and the natural environment;
 - c. provides protection, enhancement and recovery to the most valuable existing habitats and species (Habitats and Species of principle importance under s.41 of the NERC Act), and the creation of new habitats;

- d. contributes to the recovery and expansion of Swale's natural environment, by fully responding to the Council's Biodiversity Baseline Study, the Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, Natural England's Green Infrastructure Strategy and contributes to the targets of identified Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and of the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
 - e. protects and enhances the intrinsic character and natural beauty of the countryside and the borough's urban natural environment;
- 3. All applications will accord with Policy B1 Biodiversity, geodiversity and biodiversity net gain with regard the hierarchy of biodiversity and geological designations as well as for land that is not specifically designated, but contains features of biodiversity and geodiversity value.
- 4. All relevant development will set out, via a Biodiversity Gain Plan, how development will achieve a measurable, by a recognised metric, net gain of 20% in biodiversity, in accordance with Policy B1 Biodiversity, geodiversity and biodiversity net gain;
- 5. All relevant development will require the completion of project specific Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA), to ensure there are no likely significant effects upon any European designated site. For residential sites within 6km of an access point to any of the North Kent Marshes, development must contribute to its Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy or undertake their own HRA;
- 6. All development will:
 - a. increase opportunities for nature, 'green' the borough and assist with adaptation to the changing climate in existing and proposed development by contributing to the planting of a strategically significant network of street trees, trees in and around formal open spaces and in new gardens, green roofs and green walls, and contribute to approaches to improve the network of habitats at scale and locally (eg though the inclusion of swift and bat boxes and hedgehog highways);
 - b. deliver a high standard of design quality and promote nature-based solutions to protect the intrinsic natural beauty and character of our natural environment in accordance with policies ST7 Good design, GD1 Local Design Principles, B4 The Separation of Settlements – Important Local Countryside Gaps, B8 Rural Lanes and B9 The keeping and grazing of horses and maximise the social, economic, health and environmental benefits of green and blue infrastructure.
 - c. provide new recreational facilities in accordance with Policy INF3 Open space, sport and recreation provision , exploiting opportunities to increase green infrastructure whilst linking urban and countryside areas and to create new 'green' footpath and cycle links between new and existing developments and services and facilities for both recreation and commuting, in accordance with ST 10 Promoting Sustainable Transport and Active Travel and INF1 Managing transport demand and impact;
 - d. create natural environments that promote health and wellbeing and protect Local Green Spaces in accordance with policies ST8 Health and Wellbeing and INF4 Local Green Spaces.
 - e. ensure mitigation and adaptation to climate change is a defining element of any proposals, in accordance with ST 3 Climate Change and the

Development Management Climate Change Policies C1 to C5, prioritising nature-based approaches.

- f. take account of and integrate with natural processes, such as natural flood management, utilising sustainable urban drainage in accordance with Policies C8 Flood Risk and C9 Sustainable Drainage;
- g. ensure development is safe from the risks of flooding and coastal change and does not increase flood risk elsewhere, in accordance with C6 Coastal Change Management, C7 Implementing the Medway Estuary and Swale Risk Management Strategy and C8 Flood Risk;
- h. demonstrate how pollution will be prevented and local environmental conditions, including air, soil and water quality are to be improved by development and how contaminated or unstable land will be remediated
- i. demonstrate how natural resources will be protected and ecosystem services supported, in accordance with C10 Water quality and water resources, C11 Air Quality and C12 Pollution and Land Instability.
- j. protect, enhance and manage the value, character, amenity and tranquillity of the Borough's landscapes, in accordance with Policies B2 Conserving and enhancing valued landscapes and B3 The Kent Downs National Landscape and B7 The Coast.
- k. Demonstrate the protection, enhancement and management, as appropriate, of seascape and coastal processes in accordance with C6 Coastal Change Management, B7 The Coast and C7 Implementing the Medway Estuary and Swale Coastal Risk Management Strategy.

Policy ST12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

1. Swale's built heritage is one of its greatest assets. The Borough has a wealth of historic areas, buildings, and features reflecting its Roman and medieval legacy, its naval and maritime history, and its industrial and agricultural past can still be seen in its principal landscapes of the central North Downs, The Blean, the northern fruit belt, the northern coast and marsh and the Isle of Sheppey. Other important historic landscapes shaped by human intervention are the Borough's grand-scale parklands and more formal gardens and landscape features focussed around imposing country houses such as Doddington Place.
2. Whilst the NPPF and development management policies are likely to be sufficient to deal with detailed proposals affecting heritage assets, this section sets out the significance of our assets at the strategic level and how our Local Plan strategy for heritage is integrated across a range of issues.
3. Heritage assets are defined by the NPPF as a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions. They include designated heritage assets and assets identified by the local planning authority during the process of decision making or through the plan-making process (including local listing).
4. One of the NPPF's core planning principles is to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of current and future generations. It requires local plans to provide a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment and to recognise that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and conserve them in a manner appropriate to their significance. In developing this strategy, local planning authorities should take into account:
 - the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring;
 - the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
 - opportunities to draw on the contribution made by the historic environment to the character of a place.
5. Swale Borough Council adopted a Heritage Strategy in March 2020; the key deliverables have been divided over a period of 12 years through a series of 4 consecutive 3-year actions plans. In addition to the projects centred around conservation and management of existing building stock and identifying non-designated heritage assets, the Council is also committed to developing, disseminating and encouraging further understanding of the heritage diversity within the borough by producing the following heritage theme papers during the 12-year period of the adopted Heritage Strategy as follows:
 - i. Archaeology
 - ii. Aviation and defence heritage
 - iii. Industrial Heritage

- iv. Maritime and defence heritage
- v. Agricultural, horticultural and rural heritage
- vi. Towns and high streets
- vii. Villages and hamlets
- viii. Churches, chapels and memorials
- ix. Historic Landscapes
- x. Museums, collections & Archives (digital/traditional)
- xi. Portable/moveable heritage

6. These themes have been chosen due to the particular vulnerability and typically poor level of understanding of these heritage types.
7. When considering the impact of a proposed development on a designated heritage asset, the NPPF states that considerable importance and weight should be given to its conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be. As heritage assets are irreplaceable, any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification and substantial harm to or loss of a grade II listed building, park or garden should be exceptional.
8. The Local Plan strategy ensures that consideration of the historic environment is central to decision-making. Within each strategic policy, allocation or development management policy, there will rarely be a situation where there is not a relationship with heritage in some form, whether from green infrastructure, landscape, regeneration, economic development, transport, infrastructure planning, tourism, town centres and climate change. This policy recognises this interrelationship.
9. The Borough's rich legacy of heritage assets, both designated and non-designated, allows a broad strategic overview of their significance to be outlined in terms of their importance to the character and distinctiveness of the Borough. This is illustrated by Statement box **. Such assets act as drivers for regeneration and tourism within the Borough and can give developments an identity and character specific to the area. Heritage assets may offer opportunities for potential partnership working with the Council, with amenity groups, building preservation trusts and/or civic societies.

Statement Box **

Strategic overview of Swale's heritage assets

1. Swale's diverse range of heritage assets make a substantial positive contribution to the borough's local character and distinctiveness. They are an irreplaceable resource which justifies conservation and enhancement in a manner appropriate to their significance. Listed buildings, conservation areas, registered parks & gardens and scheduled monuments are all designated heritage assets. However, the term heritage asset includes any valued component of the historic environment, be it a building, monument, site, place, area or landscape, which is positively identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions.

2. Both designated and non-designated assets are identified by the council during the plan-making process and through the planning application process. Their identification is a response to the recognition that they hold meaning to society and this justifies a degree of protection in planning decisions.
3. A study undertaken by Historic England about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted our social lives includes our access to and engagement with our precious heritage and it has found that 'historic places convey a sense of uniqueness and awe and are strong emotional pillars connecting communities... heritage can also improve personal wellbeing, by helping us understand our past, our individual and communal identity and help us connect with the places where we live'.
4. The heritage sector therefore has an important role to play in our individual mental wellbeing in the future, and visiting heritage can ease the challenges associated with dementia and Alzheimer's disease.
5. The Royal Society of Arts, in partnership with the British Council, recently conducted a study in light of the Black Lives Matter movement. The RSA identified six domains of heritage: historical built environment; museums, archives and artefacts; industrial heritage; parks and open space; landscape and natural heritage; and culture and memories. Heritage is therefore both tangible and intangible. The study concluded that:
6. We all have 'heritage' and it belongs to everyone but heritage narratives can reinforce power inequalities. Some heritage is privileged over others. Narratives around heritage, identity, place and belonging can be controversial. They can exclude the heritage of minorities and they can sometimes be hijacked by far right, nationalist agendas about national identity and who belongs. In reality, there are multiple heritages: 'established' heritage, working class heritage, Black heritage, South Asian heritage, place-based heritage. Harnessed positively, the authors believe heritage can help bring diverse communities together and bridge the increasingly polarised public discourse in the UK.'
7. Swale currently has: 1,439 listed building entries, comprising nearly 2000 buildings, 22 Scheduled Monuments and 4,818 sites on the Kent Historic Environment Record. There are also 50 designated conservation areas and 4 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens in the borough.
8. Broadly, our assets comprise:
 - historic landscapes - the central North Downs, The Blean, the northern fruit belt, the northern coast and marsh and the Isle of Sheppey; early settlements around Roman Watling Street and coastal creeks;
 - Saxon and Norman settlements evidenced by e.g. defensive sites and churches;
 - former monastic establishments at Faversham and Minster;
 - medieval farmsteads with attendant barns, oast houses and outbuildings;
 - time-span (of buildings present) and urban form/morphology of Faversham;
 - rural lanes and droving tracks;
 - the array of coaching inns along the ancient Watling Street route (now the A2), particularly focused at Sittingbourne, together with other features e.g. milestones, associated with its travelling past;
 - the legacy of historic and ongoing industries in the borough's landscapes and townscapes, including gunpowder production, milling, brewing, brick making, barge building, paper production and maritime trading;

- structures and features relating to pioneer aviators and the establishment of Great War and WW2 airfields at Leysdown and Eastchurch, at Sheppey;
 - centuries of Naval history at the former Royal Naval Dockyard at Sheerness;
 - Great War defences to the west of Sittingbourne and along the Sheppey coast;
 - World War II defensive structures, including those of strategic importance in the Battle of Britain;
 - remnants of prehistoric activity in Swale, particularly across Sheppey and at Milton Creek, Sittingbourne.
 - numerous villages, hamlets and parkland estates; and
 - Swale's currently unknown archaeological sites.
9. The overview in Statement ****** is not intended to be a replacement for establishing the presence and value of heritage assets when considering new development. However, given the importance of many such assets, full weight to their preservation and enhancement will be given. In order to further assist the identification of heritage assets, the council has embarked on producing a list of Swale's non-designated local heritage assets.
 10. Parts of Swale's heritage are at risk. Historically, this has typically been from neglect, but more recently, it has been from changing needs and requirements. This is especially true for our high streets, where a growing demand for online shopping and housing has put the future of some buildings, and in some cases a number of our high streets as a whole at risk. For its part, the Council will aim to remove or reduce this risk over time, but will be especially supportive of sustainable proposals that bring the buildings in these areas back into viable and appropriate use, especially where they can contribute to our regeneration aspirations and make a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of the area, based upon an understanding and evaluation of its defining characteristics.
 11. Within historic landscapes, historic patterns of land use define the 'grain' of existing patterns of settlement and landscape. As with urban development, new development is more likely to be successfully integrated into the Borough if it respects and responds to its context and provides for a sustainable low carbon future. Its layout should take account of the historic landscape of the area. Existing patterns of roads, lanes, paths, hedgerow networks and field boundaries should help to shape new development, allowing the older landscape to show through the modern development. Historic landscape analysis will enable judgements to be made about the relative importance of different components of the landscape so that priorities can be set for conservation and enhancement.
 12. Overall, development proposals will be informed by the integrity, form and character of settlements and historic landscapes within our settlement strategy, using these assets as a strong starting place for planning change. They will also consider the broad heritage issues identified by the settlement strategy (Policy ST2), and within development management policies. When bringing forward development proposals, a continuous assessment of considering designated and non-designated heritage assets should be demonstrated from site and desk-based heritage assessment, master planning and development briefs through to design and access statements, as appropriate. The fruits of this important and necessary work will be apparent in the design, layout and detail of the proposals.
 13. Understanding the significance of heritage assets is vital to the sustainable evolution of managing change, and maintenance of the historic environment. The idea of 'significance'

lies at the core of these principles. Significance is a collective term for the sum of all the heritage values attached to a place, be it a building an archaeological site or a larger historic area such as a whole village or landscape. Applicants must include an assessment of significance of any heritage asset affected, including any contribution made by their setting, based on Historic England's guidance on the subject outlined in 'Conservation Principles' and in Statements of Heritage Significance: Analysing Significance in Heritage Assets (Historic England Advice Note 12). The level of detail to be provided in any assessment should be proportionate to the heritage asset's significance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on that significance.

Policy

1. Heritage assets within the Borough are an irreplaceable resource that contribute to its character, identity, economy, and quality of life. Development affecting heritage assets will be required to conserve and, where appropriate, enhance their significance, including their setting, in a manner proportionate to their importance.
2. Designated heritage assets will be given great weight in decision-making. Any harm to, or loss of, their significance, including their setting, must be clearly justified and will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Substantial harm or total loss will be exceptional and will only be permitted where substantial public benefits outweigh that harm or loss.
3. Applications affecting non-designated heritage assets, directly or indirectly, will be assessed through a balanced judgement, having regard to the significance of the asset and the scale of any harm or loss.
4. Development proposals must respond, where applicable, to the following principles:
5. Conserve and respond positively to the significance, form and character of settlements, historic landscapes and heritage assets;
6. Support the sensitive and sustainable use of heritage assets, including those identified as being at risk on national or local registers;
7. Promote the understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of heritage assets through interpretation, education and, where appropriate, public access;
8. Ensure that measures to address climate change and sustainable development are sensitively designed and implemented to avoid unacceptable harm to the significance of heritage assets;
9. Recognise the importance of archaeological remains, historic landscapes and the broader setting of heritage assets; and
10. Recognise and account for cumulative or incremental impacts on heritage assets and their settings.
11. Where appropriate, conservation and enhancement measures will be secured through planning conditions or obligations.