Contents

Foreword

1 Introduction
  1.1 What is a Green & Blue Grid?
  1.2 The Green & Blue Grid and Ashford
  1.3 Objectives of Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid Strategy
  1.4 Role of the Green & Blue Grid
  1.5 Delivering the Green & Blue Grid

2 Defining Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid
  2.1 Approach
  2.2 Research & consultation
  2.3 PPG 17 Assessment
  2.4 Mapping the Grid
  2.5 Context Maps
  2.6 Analysis Maps
  2.7 Green & Blue Grid Layers
  2.8 Focus of the Green & Blue Grid Strategy
  2.9 The Green & Blue Grid Strategy for Ashford & its landscape setting

3 Green & Blue Principles for Ashford & its landscape setting
  3.1 Green & Blue Grid Components
  3.2 Green & Blue Grid Principles
  3.3 Green & Blue Grid Principles: Ashford town centre
  3.4 Green & Blue Grid Principles: Holtingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands
  3.5 Green & Blue Grid Principles: Stour Valley & Stour Gap
  3.6 Green & Blue Grid Principles: Upper Stour Valley South
  3.7 Green & Blue Grid Principles: Bethersden Farmlands

Annexes
A Principal reference documents
B Stakeholders who attended the Green & Blue Grid Workshops
C Sources for GIS Shape files used in developing the Green & Blue Grid maps

Acknowledgements
Maps

Map 1  Location
Map 2  Geology - Context
Map 3  Topography - Context
Map 4  Biodiversity - Context
Map 5  Statutory designations - Context
Map 6  Landscape character - Context
Map 7  Planning and policies - Context
Map 8  Accessibility – Context
Map 9  Open space network: PPG 17 classification - Context
Map 10  Water management - Analysis
Map 11  Biodiversity – Analysis
Map 12  Culture and heritage - Analysis
Map 13  Destinations - Analysis
Map 14a Strategic pedestrian connections - Analysis
Map 14b Cycle connections - Analysis
Map 14c Local connections - Analysis
Map 15  Environmental Stewardship - Analysis
Map 16  Accessible open space - Analysis
Map 17  Borough Core Area - Grid Layer
Map 18  Borough Blue - Grid Layer
Map 19  Borough Ecological Links - Grid Layer
Map 20  Borough Accessibility – Destinations & Connections - Grid
Map 21  Borough Green & Blue Grid
Map 22  Landscape setting of Ashford
Map 23  Landscape character of Ashford’s landscape setting
Map 24  Landscape condition of Ashford’s landscape setting
Map 25  Distinctive landscape elements within Ashford’s landscape setting
Map 26  Ashford Core Area - Grid Layer
Map 27  Ashford Blue Grid Layer
Map 28  Ashford Ecological Links - Grid Layer
Map 29  Ashford Destinations - Grid Layer
Map 30  Ashford Green & Blue Grid - Public open spaces
Map 31  Ashford Green & Blue Grid - Connections
Map 32a Ashford Green & Blue Grid - Priority 1 Routes & open spaces
Map 32b Ashford Green & Blue Grid - Priority 2 Routes & open spaces
Map 33a Ashford PPG 17 - areas deficient in parks & gardens
Map 33b Ashford PPG 17 - areas deficient in allotments
Map 33c Ashford PPG 17 - areas deficient in children’s play facilities
Map 33d Ashford PPG 17 - areas deficient in outdoor sports facilities
Map 33e Ashford PPG 17 - areas deficient in recreational facilities
Map 33f Ashford PPG 17 - areas deficient in natural greenspace
Map 34 Ashford PPG 17 Summary Grid Layer
Map 35  Ashford Green & Blue Grid Components - Key Plan
Map 36a Ashford Town Centre - Core area
Map 36b Ashford Town Centre - Biodiversity
Map 36c Ashford Town centre - Landscape character
Map 36d Ashford Town Centre - Legibility
Map 36e Ashford Town Centre - Provision of open space, sports & recreational facilities
Map 36f Ashford Town Centre - Vision
Map 36g Ashford Town Centre - Access
Map 37a Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands - Core Area
Map 37b Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands - Biodiversity
Map 37c Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands - Landscape Character
Map 37d Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands - Landscape Condition
Map 37e Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands - Legibility
Map 37f Hollingbourne Vale and Hothfield Farmlands - Provision of Open Space, Sports & Recreational Facilities
Map 37g Hollingbourne Vale and Hothfield Farmlands - Vision
Map 37h Hollingbourne Vale and Hothfield Farmlands - Access
Map 38a Stour Valley & Stour Gap - Core Area
Map 38b Stour Valley & Stour Gap - Biodiversity
Map 38c Stour Valley & Stour Gap - Landscape Character
Map 38d Stour Valley & Stour Gap - Landscape Condition
Map 38e Stour Valley & Stour Gap - Legibility
Map 38f Stour Valley & Stour Gap - Provision of Open Space, Sports & Recreational Facilities
## Maps & Figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Map 38g</td>
<td>Stour Valley &amp; Stour Gap – Open spaces</td>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Five step process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 36h</td>
<td>Stour Valley &amp; Stour Gap - Access</td>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>‘Family tree’ - Sequence of maps to develop the Green &amp; Blue Grid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 39a</td>
<td>Upper Stour Valley South - Core Area</td>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>‘Doorstep Links’ diagram</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 39b</td>
<td>Upper Stour Valley South - Biodiversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 39c</td>
<td>Upper Stour Valley South - Landscape Character</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 39d</td>
<td>Upper Stour Valley South - Landscape Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 39e</td>
<td>Upper Stour Valley South – Legibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 39f</td>
<td>Upper Stour Valley South - Provision of Open Space, Sports &amp; Recreational Facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 39g</td>
<td>Upper Stour Valley South - Provision of outdoor sports space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 39h</td>
<td>Upper Stour Valley South - Vision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 39i</td>
<td>Upper Stour Valley South – Public open spaces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 39j</td>
<td>Upper Stour Valley South - Access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40a</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands - Core area</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40b</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands - Biodiversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40c</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands - Landscape Character</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40d</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands – Landscape Condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40e</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands - Legibility</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40f</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands - Provision of Open Space, Sports &amp; Recreational Facilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40g</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands - Provision of Other Open Space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40h</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands - Provision of Outdoor Sport Space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40i</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands - Provision of Natural Green Space</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40j</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands - Vision</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40k</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands – Public open spaces</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Map 40l</td>
<td>Bethersden Farmlands - Access</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foreword

The Ashford Green & Blue Grid Strategy sets the agenda for environmental action across Ashford Borough. The Green & Blue Grid defines an integrated network of areas across Ashford Borough which can be expected to provide multifunctional benefits and which therefore merits significant investment. The Green & Blue Grid Strategy locates this network, describes why it is important and provides a proactive and creative plan of action for ongoing investment in its conservation, management and development.

The Strategy has been funded by a partnership of:

- Ashford Borough Council
- Ashford’s Future
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- South East England Development Agency
- Kent County Council

Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid Strategy has been prepared by Sheils Flynn and incorporates the findings of a parallel PPG 17 Assessment undertaken by Inspace Planning. The PPG 17 Assessment underpins the Green & Blue Grid and has been a fundamental influence on the evolution of the Green & Blue Grid Strategy.

The Green & Blue Grid Strategy will be a key background document to guide the development of green and blue infrastructure within the Local Development Framework. It fulfils all the basic requirements of a standard PPG 17 assessment, but is far more creative and ambitious because it responds to the need to deliver a truly sustainable Growth Area. The aim is to set out an inspiring vision for developing and managing a Green and Blue Grid which demonstrates what could be achieved.

It is important to establish from the outset where the Green and Blue Grid Strategy ‘sits’ in terms of Ashford Borough Council’s emerging Local Development Framework (LDF).

The Green and Blue Grid strategy will represent a key background document within the LDF in relation to Green and Blue infrastructure; it does not therefore represent the formal position of the Council, at this time.

However, the Green and Blue Grid Strategy will help to play a key role in shaping and informing the spatial contents of various Development Plan Documents (DPD) which the Council is intending to produce, including the Chilmington Green and Cheeseman’s Green Area Action Plans and the Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD.

It will also help to shape and inform the content of the Green and Blue Environment Supplementary Planning Document which the Council intends to produce by February 2009. The principal role of this SPD will be to set out the standards across the Borough for open spaces, play and leisure.

Both the forthcoming Supplementary Planning Document and the various Development Plan Documents will be subject to the formal planning consultation processes in due course.

In addition, each of the Development Plans will be subject to an Independent Public Examination, by an appointed Planning Inspector, to determine the Plans ‘soundness’. If found to be ‘sound’, the contents of the Development Plan, coupled with any binding changes the Inspector feels are appropriate to make, can be formally adopted as Council policy.

The Green & Blue Grid Strategy identifies a Green & Blue Grid across the whole Borough. However a more detailed level of mapping and analysis has been applied to the town of Ashford and its landscape setting, to reflect where new development is envisaged, and it is here that the key recommendations apply. The Green and Blue Grid Strategy seeks to inform and complement the detailed masterplanning that will apply in these areas. It is not intended to be prescriptive, but does establish principles to demonstrate how best practice for the development and management of green and blue infrastructure can be applied on the ground. We recognise that there is a need for flexibility and that the principles of the Green and Blue Grid can be implemented in different ways.

Ashford’s environment is one of its greatest unique selling points – this Green & Blue Grid Strategy aims to make the most of this superb asset, for the benefit of wildlife, local communities and Ashford’s economy as a whole.
## 1.1 What is a Green & Blue Grid?

The concept of sustainability rests on efficient use of resources. The environment is a fundamental part of Ashford's resource base and the way it is designed, developed and managed will be a critical influence on the quality of life for existing and future communities. Green infrastructure is the part of the environment which provides multiple benefits and vital functions for the economy, people, wildlife and communities alike. It should be highly valued and a priority for investment.

Green Infrastructure should provide for multi-functional uses eg wildlife, recreational and cultural experience, as well as delivering ecological benefits, flood protection and microclimate control. It includes green spaces and civic areas and should operate at all spatial scales from urban centres through to open countryside.

The term ‘green infrastructure’ commonly includes rivers and floodplains, but the Ashford Green and Blue Grid specifically highlights blue as well as green infrastructure assets, acknowledging the relevance of rivers in defining the green infrastructure of the area.

The ‘green’ part of the Grid can encompass almost any outdoor space, both public and private in the urban and peri-urban area. Such a broad definition includes a wide variety of uses and levels of public access, from public parks where people are free to wander and play as they wish, to areas that are off-limits for privacy, or health and safety reasons. Even though some open areas may not be accessible to the public they may still play an important role in defining the ecological, landscape and aesthetic value of their surroundings.

The ‘blue’ part of the Grid covers the network of rivers, ditches, wetlands, ponds and lakes. As well as providing valuable habitat, this network is essential to the hydrological function of not just Ashford but the Great Stour down to Canterbury and Sandwich. The Blue Grid has a role to play in reducing flood risk, reducing the impact of pollution and allowing the free passage of species, such as trout, crayfish and perhaps even otter, through the town.

## 1.2 The Green & Blue Grid and Ashford

### 1.2.1 Growth area status

Ashford has been identified as one of four major ‘growth areas’ for the South East in the Government’s Sustainable Communities Plan. Ashford has a challenging timescale to accommodate 31,000 additional dwellings and 28,000 new jobs in the Borough by 2031. This means that over the coming years there will be a substantial increase in the rate of house building and associated development such as schools and roads in the Borough, which will all need to be planned for. This requires the adoption of planning policies contained within the emerging Ashford Local Development Framework (LDF) which covers the period to 2021. The sustainable conservation and management of the Green & Blue Grid becomes doubly important in a situation where there is rapid change, so Ashford’s status as one of the four major ‘growth areas’ for the South East1 ensures that the Green & Blue Grid Strategy will be in the spotlight. The sustainable growth agenda provides the opportunity and momentum for an innovative approach.
1.2.2 Policy context

The first document to be produced in the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) was the Core Strategy which sets out the overall spatial vision and objectives for the Borough up until 2021. The Core Strategy is the principal development plan document (DPD) for the Borough and all other documents within the LDF must conform to it. The Core Strategy was adopted in July 2008.

A key-supporting document which informed the preparation of the Core Strategy report was the Greater Ashford Development Framework (GADF). The GADF reflects findings from an extensive programme of consultation events, studies and plan-making decisions undertaken during the course of 2004 and early 2005. It is important to bear in mind that this document covers the period to 2031 whilst the Local Development Framework covers the period to 2021.

One of the key principles underpinning the GADF is that green systems are essential infrastructure and vital to the successful development of Ashford. Green Infrastructure is the sub-regional network of protected sites, nature reserves, green spaces, wetlands and access linkages that intersperse and connect villages and towns, so the inclusion of the countryside surrounding Ashford is vital. The GADF aspired to establishing a green infrastructure framework that is capable of delivering sustainable development throughout Ashford, but which also specifically addressed accessibility and connectivity between neighbourhoods at a local scale. The GADF recognises that Ashford already has green corridors and parks but suggests that this green space legacy needs to be coordinated and enhanced so as to respect biodiversity, enhance local landscape and promote social cohesion.

The principal Development Plan Document in Ashford Borough Council’s Local Development Framework is the Core Strategy. The Green & Blue Grid Strategy will be essential for the delivery of several Core Strategy policies. Of particular relevance is Policy CS18 - Meeting the Community’s Needs. Paragraph 14.9 of the Core Strategy describes the Council’s proposals for six high quality strategic public open spaces across the Ashford Growth area.

These should incorporate a wide range of sport and recreation activities and opportunities, which meet the needs of the wider community. These include:

- Conningbrook/Julie Rose Stadium Area – at the north-eastern edge of the town, there is a prime opportunity in this area to create a regional watersports facility that complements the adjacent stadium facility with associated open space and leisure activities
- Victoria Park – enhancement of the existing town centre park that will serve a much greater local town centre population in the future and is an important local asset
- Discovery Park – a new major open space and recreation facility for Ashford located south west of the town adjoining the proposed Chilmington Green urban extension
- South Willesborough Dykes Wetland Park – this is an area designated as SNCI that lies within the identified 100 year floodplain and covers a large area south of the town centre. The opportunity exists to bring this forward as a major local natural resource that is sustainable, educational and recreational
- Cheeseeman’s Green Park – located in the East Stour river corridor, this would be an important recreational resource for the south-eastern part of the town, serving the major new community at Cheeseeman’s Green/Materbrook
- Green ‘Necklace’ – linking all of the above, a green corridor that uses the river corridors through the town to provide both a local and strategic recreational resource for the town and takes forward the existing ‘Green Corridors’ approach from the existing Borough Local Plan (Policies EN13 and 14).

Paragraph 14.12 of the Core Strategy makes the link to the Green and Blue Grid Strategy:

In Ashford, the ‘green’ structure has close links to the ‘blue’ structure which encompasses the floodplain and water management issues. The ‘blue’ network can complement the ‘green’ structure in providing opportunities for open space and recreational facilities, as well as serving wider purposes of biodiversity and sustainable drainage. A Green and Blue Grid Strategy will be prepared and is intended to be adopted as a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to accompany the Council’s own recreational, open space and play strategies.

The Green and Blue Grid Strategy represents the first step in taking forward this key Core Strategy Policy, which will enhance Ashford’s existing green and blue infrastructure and establish principles for creating new open spaces, habitats and routes to complement the new development.

1.2.3 An agenda for environmental action

Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid is the identified priority green and blue infrastructure for Ashford, its hinterland and the Borough, which will contribute to the type of high quality natural and built environment that is required to deliver sustainable communities. Delivering, protecting and enhancing green infrastructure requires a proactive approach, with ongoing creation of new environmental assets to link with river corridors, footpaths, cycleways, woodlands, nature reserves, urban greenspaces, historic sites and other parts of the network. There is an emphasis on linkage, over and above the protection and enhancement of individual sites.

The town of Ashford is at the confluence of five rivers and the term ‘Green & Blue Grid’ explicitly recognise the crucial importance of water as a key driver in the local environmental context. As rivers channel the flow of water through the landscape, they also act as a conduit for the movement of wildlife so rivers are always a critical element within the overall ecological network. Rivers have historically also been a focus for people, who need water as a resource and use river valleys as obvious natural routes for pathways, roads and rail.

This is a simplified example, but one that serves to demonstrate the inherent multi-functionality of the Green & Blue Grid.

In 2006 the former Countryside Agency commissioned a study titled, ‘Ashford Integrated Water Management and Green Space: Towards a Green & Blue Grid for Ashford’

In September 2007, Sheila Flynn was appointed to take forward this work and prepare a Green & Blue Grid Strategy for Ashford in partnership with key stakeholders.


4 Countryside Agency and Groundwork Trust, 2005, The Countryside in and around Towns – a vision for connecting town and country in the pursuit of sustainable development, CA 207
1.3 Objectives of Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid Strategy

The Green & Blue Grid Strategy provides a joined-up approach to environmental management. It focuses on the relationships between habitats, greenspaces and the wildlife/communities they serve, rather than on the needs of individual sites, species and neighbourhoods. It aims to:

- **Attract economic investment** by creating attractive settings, an overarching vision and high quality, accessible greenspaces for new development, as well as direct opportunities for employment.

- **Generate alternative sources of energy** by promoting a culture in which recycling and renewable energy is encouraged and welcomed.

- **Promote health and well being** by encouraging active exercise and opportunities for contact with nature.

- **Promote education, training and life-long learning** using the local landscape as a learning asset which provides a wealth of cultural, social, historical and natural heritage.

- **Encourage active communities** with a strong community spirit, who will advocate ongoing investment in their local landscape and be a focus for artistic and cultural activities.

- **Promote the production and marketing of local food**, rekindling the traditional links between settlements and their hinterland, raising awareness of local produce and reducing pollution associated with the transport and storage of imported food.

- **Manage key resources** to maximise environmental resilience and adaptability to climate change and to the changes generated by extensive new built development.

- **Enhance biodiversity**, by linking, extending and creating nationally important (BAP) habitats to reverse habitat fragmentation, and by promoting sustainable landscape management practices in all greenspace areas.

- **Create accessible greenspace and wildlife areas** along an integrated network of safe, attractive pedestrian and cycle routes and more effective, functional links between urban areas and the surrounding countryside – for people and wildlife.

- **Promote sustainable transport**, by providing a permeable and logical network of routes between key destinations and open spaces to encourage walking and cycling and by ensuring that public transport routes are incorporated into the wider network.

- **Provide a distinctive landscape setting for built development**, which reinforces the inherent character of local landscapes.

- **Enhance recreation and amenity**, with more opportunities for high quality formal and informal recreation.

- **Sustain local cultural heritage** by investing in the local heritage resource and using it to help develop a strong sense of place and local identity.
1.4 Role of the Green & Blue Grid

The Green and Blue Grid Strategy provides a framework which ensures the multi-functional objectives of the Green and Blue Grid are met through future design and planning decisions at every level. For instance, through:

- development plans, masterplans and design briefs for new built development and open spaces
- landscape management plans for greenspaces
- regeneration projects
- public realm strategies

The challenge is to find a way to articulate the objectives and design principles of the Green and Blue Grid through the Local Development Framework so that the conservation, management and development of Ashford’s green and blue infrastructure becomes an established, anticipated part of the Borough Council’s decisions at every level.

1.5 Delivering the Green & Blue Grid

The Green and Blue Grid strategy will represent a key background document within the LDF in relation to Green and Blue infrastructure. The Green and Blue Grid Strategy will help to play a key role in shaping and informing the spatial contents of various Development Plan Documents (DPD) which the Council is intending to produce. In addition, it will help to shape and inform the contents of the Green and Blue Environment Supplementary Planning Document which the Council intends to produce by February 2009. The principal role of this SPD will be to set out the standards across the Borough for open spaces, play and leisure.

Ashford’s Future is appointing a dedicated Green & Blue Grid Programme Manager to oversee the delivery of projects and initiatives to implement the Green & Blue Grid.

Funding for implementation of the Green and Blue Grid Strategy is likely to be derived from:

- Section 106 agreements
- the strategic tariff
- external funding streams
- other stakeholder initiatives/projects

The balance of funding will differ from one project to the next; the likely contribution from the strategic tariff is not yet clear, but will be determined by a separate Strategic Tariff SPD, which is due to be adopted towards the end of 2008.

The Green & Blue Grid Strategy is accompanied by an Action Plan which identifies priority projects to implement the Green & Blue Grid and provides a template to guide the ongoing process of project delivery. The Action Plan contains schedules of projects and initiatives, cross referenced to the maps in the Strategy report. It is intended to be a flexible working document, designed to be updated as opportunities arise.

The Green & Blue Grid Strategy is also accompanied by a report of the PPG 17 Assessment, which was undertaken as part of the study.
02 Defining Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid

2.1 Approach

The methodology draws on CABE’s guidance for the preparation of Green Space Strategies\(^5\), the Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes & the South Midlands\(^6\) and the guidance accompanying PPG 17\(^7\). The five step sequence of tasks involved in developing Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid Strategy is summarised on Figure 1.

---

\(^5\) Green Space Strategies – a good practice guide, CABE Space
\(^6\) Planning Sustainable Communities – a Green Infrastructure Guide for Milton Keynes & the South Midlands, EQQL Sub Group, 2005
\(^7\) Assessing Needs & Opportunities: a companion guide to PPG 17.
2.2 Research and consultation

The study began with a comprehensive review of all relevant national, regional and local policies and guidance. This was to ensure that the Strategy refers to and is informed by relevant studies and data and that it sits at the appropriate strategic level.

The principal reference documents which have informed the Green & Blue Grid Strategy are summarised in Annex A.

The data collection and research at the beginning of the study and in the Analysis stage was informed by consultation with stakeholders from:

• the Environment Agency
• Kent Wildlife Trust
• Kent County Council - rights of way team
• Kent County Council - Heritage team
• Ashford Borough Council
• Ashford’s Future

There were two stakeholder workshops. The first was held during the early stages of the GIS mapping process, when the form of the Borough-wide Grid was clear, but before the detailed mapping for the town had been developed. This first workshop involved public sector stakeholders, who were asked to comment on how the Green & Blue Grid should develop.

Stakeholders, including representatives from the Ashford Landowners Group, were given a second opportunity to comment on the development of the Green & Blue Grid strategy at a presentation and panel discussion at final draft Report stage, the focus at this stage was on how the Strategy would operate in practice - in relation to the management of existing greenspaces, new projects and funding bids for future initiatives. Stakeholders invited to attend one or both of the workshops are listed in Annex B.

2.3 PPG 17 Assessment

The PPG 17 assessment process is described in a separate Open Space Study for Ashford. There is a strong and direct relationship between the PPG 17 Assessment and the Green & Blue Grid Strategy; the PPG 17 Assessment underpins the Grid and is a key component of it.

The key points where the PPG 17 Assessment and the Green & Blue Grid Strategy inter-relate are:

• Context stage - one of the key outputs from the PPG 17 Assessment - a map showing the classification of the Borough’s open spaces in accordance with the PPG 17 typology is incorporated into the overall baseline Context mapping for the Green & Blue Grid Strategy.

• Analysis stage - data from the PPG 17 Assessment informed the Green & Blue Grid Strategy at the Analysis stage, when the GIS layers showing the spatial distribution of accessible greenspace were incorporated into the overall Grid Layer mapping process.

• Strategy stage - detailed information on deficiencies for different types of open space informed the size and orientation of new public open spaces and the alignment of new and enhanced green grid routes which are recommended as part of the Green & Blue Grid Strategy (see Section 3).

While the Green & Blue Grid Strategy sets the agenda for the development and management of green and blue infrastructure throughout Ashford, the PPG 17 Assessment will also inform discussions about the precise open space requirements within future development areas.

2.4 Mapping the Grid

The Grid has been developed through a Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping process, beginning with baseline empirical data which was readily available from Kent County Council, Ashford Borough Council, Natural England and the Environment Agency. A degree of analysis and interpretation was introduced as the spatial layout of the Grid was progressively refined and the method also incorporates a creative, design-led process so that the Grid reflects some important but subjective aspects of landscape, including those landscape features and experiences which cumulatively contribute to Ashford’s distinctive landscape setting.

Figure 2 summarises the mapping process for developing the Green & Blue Grid.

The initial Context stage involved collating baseline environmental and socio-economic data from a wide range of sources. The data was collated and presented on GIS maps so that the data-sets could be overlaid and compared with ease. The data-sets were then progressively refined as the process was informed by consultation and research.

The resulting Analysis maps (column two in Figure 2) reflect the key functions of the emerging Green and Blue Grid.

The process of interpretation and editing continued as the data deemed to be most relevant to the development of the Grid was extracted and layered. Each of the Analysis maps is informative in its own right, but the process of developing the Grid involved a degree of interpretation and prioritisation.

The third key stage of the mapping summarises the six key Green & Blue Grid layers, which together define the Green and Blue Grid.

The Grid Layer maps were combined to illustrate the Green & Blue Grid at two different scales: at the scale of the Borough, and a more detailed level of analysis for Ashford and the area which forms the landscape setting of the town.

---

*Inspace Planning, 2008, Open Space Study for Ashford Borough*

*PPG 17 audit follows the standard procedure set out in government guidance (Planning Policy Guidance Note 17: Planning for Open Space, Sport & Recreation, ODPM, 2002 PPG 17) and provides a consistent typology to describe the different types of greenspace and civic space, together with an assessment of the existing and future needs of communities for open space, sports and recreational facilities*
2.5 Context Maps

The Context Maps set the scene for the study and together describe the landscape of the Borough. The majority of the data was collated in the form of GIS shape files from existing data-sets, but some of the GIS shape files were digitised for the purposes of this study. The data sources are listed in Annex C.

The following Context Maps are of most relevance in defining Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid:

- Geology
- Topography
- Biodiversity
- Statutory designations
- Landscape character
- Planning & policies
- Accessibility
- Open space network (PPG 17 classification)

Some of the data-sets collated for the Context Maps could be taken forward directly into the subsequent Analysis Maps without further interpretation. The following data-sets are described in the section on Analysis Mapping (in Section 2.7) below to avoid repetition:

- Places of interest
- Art projects and destinations
- Heritage designations and destinations
- Environmental stewardship

Geology - Context [Map 2]

The solid geology describes the physical geography of the Borough, and informs the topography, soils, habitats and cultural history of its landscape. The geology map is the foundation for the grid. Map 2 is a simplified version of the geology map, which shows that there are four principal types of underlying rock. The northern half of the Borough is dominated by the chalk Kent Downs (to the north) and the broad Greensand Ridge, on which the M20 is aligned. To the south of the Greensand, the extensive low-lying and poorly drained Low Weald landscape has developed on the Wealden Clay, while in the southern part of the Borough there is a more resistant sandstone has produced an undulating landscape which forms part of the High Weald (to the south west). The low-lying, alluvial landscapes of Romney Marsh are on the south eastern margins of the Borough.
Topography – Context (Map 3)
The landform map reflects the underlying geology. The high, rolling chalk downs to the north of the Borough and particularly the steep chalk escarpment to the north and east of Ashford form a prominent landscape feature. There are no rivers or streams on the porous rocks of the chalk downs, but the Great Stour has cut a dramatic valley through the chalk escarpment to form the Stour Gap to the north east of Ashford. The Greensand ridge is lower than the chalk, but is still a strong ‘edge’ in the wider landscape which contrasts with the extensive low-lying landscapes of the Low Weald where there are winding streams and numerous scattered ponds. The land rises and becomes more undulating on the edge of the High Weald to the south and west of Bethersden.
Existing habitats, which reflect local variations in geology and soils. For instance calcareous grassland is found on the chalk escarpment and heathland habitats are concentrated along the Greensand Ridge. The map also shows the location of semi-natural ancient woodland, which is of exceptional ecological and scenic value.
The key ecological designations are National Nature Reserves, Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Local Wildlife Sites. The most significant sites are Hothfield Common (an exceptionally rare example of a valley bog within an ancient woodland), the chalklands of the Wye Downs and wetlands such as Willesborough Dykes.
Landscape character - Context [Map 6]
The underlying geology and topography contributes to variations in the character of the landscape. Map 6 shows the landscape character areas from the Kent Landscape Character Assessment. They describe the distinctive character of each part of the landscape.

Kent County Council, 1998, Kent County Landscape Character Assessment, Kent County Council
The landscapes of the Kent Downs and High Weald AONBs are of national importance for their scenic quality. The map also shows the Special Landscape Area designated in Ashford’s Local Plan. The map illustrates the following:

- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- Site Specific Policy
- Allotments
- Parks
- Historic Parks and Gardens
- Open Spaces
- Green Corridor
- Cycle Routes
- Special Landscape Area (SLA)

**Planning and policies - Context (Map 7)**

The landscapes of the Kent Downs and High Weald AONBs are of national importance for their scenic quality. The map also shows the Special Landscape Area designated in Ashford’s Local Plan. 

**Note:** Ashford Borough Local Plan, 2000

© Crown copyright. All rights reserved. 1980 19238 2008
Shows long distance promoted footpaths (such as the Greensand Way, North Downs Way and the Stour Valley Path) and routes which form part of the National Cycle Route System, as well as the wider network of public rights of way which is the baseline for the development of the ‘people’ part of the Grid. The accessibility map also shows railways and railway stations which could be the starting point for walks or cycle rides.
Open space network: PPG 17 classification - Context [Map 9]
The open spaces and sports facilities across the Borough classified in accordance with the PPG 17 typology and described in the separate parallel report of the PPG 17 assessment for Ashford\textsuperscript{12}.

\textsuperscript{12} Inspace Planning, 2008, Open Space Study for Ashford Borough.
2.6 Analysis Maps

The Context Maps were used as a starting point to research and develop ideas for the future Grid at a series of meetings with Kent County Council, the Environment Agency, Kent Wildlife Trust and Ashford Borough Council. Discussions at these meetings focused on key references - existing strategies and reports - which should be used to influence the development of the Grid. These data sources are described in sections 2.6.1-2.6.6 below.

A series of thematic Analysis Maps, prepared at this stage, provided valuable ‘opportunity mapping’ and illustrate the key green and blue infrastructure assets which inform the location of Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid. The Analysis Maps also record known deficiencies, constraints or barriers to the development of the Grid.

The Analysis Maps focus on the following key themes, which reflect the principal functions and objectives of the Green & Blue Grid:

- Water management
- Biodiversity
- Culture and heritage
- Accessibility
- Environmental stewardship
- Accessible greenspace (PPG 17 data)

There was also considerable emphasis on research and fieldwork relating to the theme of landscape - its character, condition and quality. But the Analysis mapping relating to landscape character and condition proved to be most relevant at the more detailed scale of the town of Ashford and its landscape setting, so is described in Sections 2.8 and 2.9 below.
The Ashford Integrated Water Management Strategy sets out the strategic water management policies for Ashford. All of its key recommendations are reflected in the overall objectives for Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid Strategy (see Section 1.3 above) and in the detailed principles to guide the implementation of the grid in Section 3. Elements that can be mapped on the Water Management Analysis Map are:

- passive river floodplains (undefended)
- active river floodplains (defended)
- chalk rivers (a nationally important habitat)
- flood storage reservoirs
- flood storage areas
- created wetlands (in the Willesborough Dykes area)

Without appropriate mitigation measures, the significant increase in urbanism will have a number of adverse impacts on the water environment:

- Groundwater will be at greater risk of pollution and reduced recharge from surface water
- Sensitive chalk river habitats will be at greater risk
- There will be a loss of habitats and species within the strategy area
- Fragmentation of green spaces will affect connectivity between habitats, with possible adverse impacts on biodiversity
- Flood risk to property within Ashford will increase.

---

13 Atkins, Ashford Integrated Water Management Study, 2005
14 Environment Agency (on behalf of Ashford’s Future), Ashford Integrated Water Strategy 2006-2031 (Final), July 2007, Ashford’s Future
2.6.2 Biodiversity - Analysis [Map 11]

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

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

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

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

Kent Wildlife Trust suggests that the minimum width for a viable ecological corridor is 30m.

Kent Wildlife Trust, on behalf of the Wildlife Trusts in the SE, 2006, A Living Landscape for the South East - the ecological network approach to rebuilding biodiversity for the 21st century.
There is a risk that ongoing redevelopment of brownfield and greenfield sites could lead to reduced populations of protected species, in particular reptiles and great crested newts, because of the failure to find adequate receptor sites. Where works affect a protected species or their habitat, mitigation measures will be necessary to ensure the legislation is adhered to. Wherever possible, protected species should be maintained on site, but in many cases for various reasons this is not possible and off-site translocation is the only, albeit less satisfactory resort. Suitable receptor sites are difficult to find, particularly in a situation where such extensive development is proposed.

This is proving to be a significant issue in the Ashford area and plans are underway for a study which will provide guidance on a strategic approach to the conservation of protected species. The situation is increasingly urgent and there is a need to identify and enhance receptor sites which are suitable for the translocation of protected species. The area of search for such sites might usefully include the recommended new public open spaces proposed as part of Ashford’s Green and Blue Grid (see section 2.9.3) as these areas could be owned or managed by the Council.

The Living Landscapes Project provides an empirical basis for prioritising investment and is designed to take account of the characteristics of different types of habitat. The key components of the model are:

- ecological statutory designations e.g. SSSIs, Local Wildlife Sites, which are protected within the planning system
- areas of existing habitat (within the overall ecological network model). The map shows the principal types of existing habitat. These areas should be given priority for habitat management, restoration and recreation
- areas of potential habitat (within the overall ecological network model). These areas of potential habitat have been informed by the Kent Landscape Information System and indicate the type of ecological habitat which should be a priority for habitat creation and management. These areas have potential for habitat creation, but it is not envisaged that it would be necessary or desirable for all the potential habitat to be realised.

The model requires careful interpretation as species differ in their ability to cross between patches of habitat. For instance, heathland species are typically relatively mobile and can cross between quite widely spaced blocks of heathland habitat, while many woodland species can only increase their habitat range if habitats are contiguous. But in general, habitat isolation increases with distance between habitat patches and with the ‘hardness’ of the matrix between those patches. This means that even if it is not possible to create direct continuous links between habitats, the biodiversity value of Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid can still be enhanced by ‘softening’ the matrix of built or cultivated land around the original habitat patch.

16 www.kent.gov.uk/klis. The Kent Landscape Information System identified the potential of each mastermap polygon for the creation of wildlife habitats, based on e.g. existing land use or habitats (i.e., it excludes areas shown as built up in the last habitat survey), adjacent habitats, past land use, soils, geology and topography.


18 Ashford Borough Council, 2008, Ashford Protected Species Strategy – Brief for Consultants. This brief is based on a paper by John Newton (The Ecology Consultancy) and Richard Moyse (Kent Wildlife Trust) entitled Ashford’s expansion & the impact on protected species – a proposal.
2.6.3 Culture and Heritage - Analysis (Map 12)

The cultural elements which have been mapped to inform the development of the Green & Blue Grid are:

- **Roman roads** - two principal Roman Roads (aligned broadly north-east – south-west and north-west to south-east) met at a staggered junction just to the south of Ashford. [Data provided by Kent County Council]

- **Conservation Areas & Listed Buildings** – in the historic town centre of Ashford and in other historic towns across the borough which act as ‘cultural hubs’ – destinations of interest and interpretation within the Grid. [Data from Ashford Local Plan 2000]

- **Parish boundaries** - The later development of the Weald accounts for the large block parishes found there in contrast to the older and smaller interlocking parishes of the Downland. [Data provided by Kent County Council]

- **Historic parks & gardens** – some are important visitor destinations [Data from Ashford Local Plan 2000]

- **Scheduled ancient monuments** – again these may be important visitor destinations and present opportunities for interpretation. [Data from Ashford Local Plan 2000]

The Culture & Heritage Analysis Map also shows centres for local art in and around Ashford, including galleries, festival venues and arts trails. These sites were suggested for inclusion in the Grid by Ashford Borough Council’s Arts Officer:

- **King’s Wood, Challock**, is the centre for the Stour Valley Arts and an open air venue for international arts’ projects, creative outreach arts and education projects and cultural events

- **Ashford School of Art & Design** – two venues in Ashford town centre, with training, courses and regular exhibitions

- **Godinton House** - home of an annual Christmas Art Fair


- **Ashford Town Centre** – venue for the ‘Lost O’ a programme of temporary public artworks by international artists to celebrate/commemorate the loss of Ashford’s ring road as it is transformed into the largest Shared Space scheme in Europe. [Ashford town centre is a focus in Ashford’s Tourism Strategy].
2.6.4 Accessibility

The accessibility environmental asset mapping is divided into two broad components:

- **Destinations - Analysis [Map 13]** - potential points of interest and hubs of activity within the Green & Blue Grid; and

- **Connections - Analysis** - the principal ‘desire lines’ for people which connect centres of population with destinations.

The ‘Connections’ maps (on the following pages) are sub-divided into three separate levels of mapping:

- Strategic pedestrian connections (Map 14a) - promoted routes such as the Greensand Way, the North Downs Way and the Stour Valley Path, railway stations, future park and ride sites and a 1km ‘catchment’ to these routes
- Cycle connections (Map 14b) - Sustrans’ national cycle routes and railway stations
- Local connections (Map 14c) - the network of public rights of way

The relative spacing of the destinations and the density of the connections network together determine the accessibility of the Grid, which in turn is related to centres of population.

- Key local destinations – schools, shops, urban greenspaces [parks, churchyards & cemeteries, recreation grounds, children’s playgrounds, the Ashford Green Corridor] libraries, hospitals. The town centre is an obvious hub, with a cluster of bars, clubs, galleries and cultural venues. (Data from Ashford Local Plan 2000 and the Ashford Borough Council Tourism Strategy).

- Promoted environmental destinations – open access land, nature reserves, community woodlands, Forestry Commission and Woodland Trust sites, the Royal Military Canal and historic parks and gardens. (Sites selected and mapped following an internet search, plus analysis of environmental destinations shown on the Context Maps).

- Historic town and village centres which are likely to be popular visitor destinations and Other tourism destinations, including craft centres, animal parks, vineyards, museums, National Trust sites & gardens, the Wye Crown chalk hill figure, important historic churches. (Sites selected and mapped following an internet search for local tourism destinations).

- Promoted footpaths & bridleways – the Greensand Way, the Stour Valley Path, the North Downs Way and Saxon Shore Way, as well as circular walks promoted by the Ramblers’ Association. (Data from Ramblers’ Association leaflets and website and Kent County Council’s rights of way team).

- National Cycle Routes [Sustrans] – National Route 18 and Regional Route 11. (Data from Sustrans).

- Proposed park and ride sites at the Warren, Chilmington and Waterbrook. (Data from GADF).
2.6.5 Environmental stewardship - Analysis (Map 15)

Data on the current uptake of agri-environmental schemes has been provided by Natural England. The data includes:

- land in the Higher Level Environmental Stewardship scheme
- land in the Entry Level Environmental Stewardship scheme
- land in the former Countryside Stewardship scheme

The data gives some indication of the overall scale of uptake of these agri-environmental initiatives. The schemes will continue to evolve, but there may be scope to use the Grid as a promotional tool, particularly for planners, farmers and land managers who might use the spatial map of the Grid to see which areas of land should be a priority for environmental stewardship.

There may also be opportunities to target landowners in strategic locations where there may be opportunities to create habitat connections or encourage public access.
2.6.6 Accessible open space - Analysis (Map 16)

The Open Space Study for Ashford\textsuperscript{19} provides detailed information on the methods and findings of the PPG 17 audit and assessment, including the recommended local standards of provision for sports and recreational facilities. The key information taken from the PPG 17 assessment to inform the development of the Green & Blue Grid is data to illustrate accessible open spaces and areas which are deficient in sports, leisure and recreation facilities.

Information on the relative deficiencies of other types of open space, including sports and recreation facilities, allotments, cemeteries, parks, children’s play and youth provision was used at a later stage in the process to inform the detailed development of principles and objectives for the Grid.

\textsuperscript{19} Inspace Planning, 2008, Open Space Study for Ashford Borough
2.7 Green & Blue Grid Layers

The process of interpretation and refinement continued as data was combined and tested in different sequences. As the GIS data was compared, there was a need to simplify and edit the maps so that data could be layered without obscuring key information. The resulting Green & Blue Grid Layers maps summarise and simplify the key data from the Analysis Maps, with each data-set shown as a simple contrasting colour. This allows the data-sets to be layered directly to form the Green & Blue Grid. The Grid Layers Maps define the location of the key thematic layers of the Grid throughout the Borough; a more detailed level of mapping for the urban area of Ashford and its hinterland.

The data included on the Grid Layer Maps was selected because it was likely to assist in determining the spatial location of the Grid (as opposed to determining its quality or character). However, any information not included - from research and some aspects of the Analysis Mapping - was not discarded, but remained a constant reference and was used in developing the principles for the detailed Grid Component Mapping which followed.

There are a few changes to the themes which guided the development of the Analysis Maps:

- The protected sites (ecological statutory designated sites and accessible open space (as shown in the PPG 17 assessment) are combined onto a single map. These areas are the ‘core’ green infrastructure of the Grid. The equivalent critical ‘blue infrastructure’ is shown on the Blue Grid Layer Map.
- Data from the Biodiversity - Analysis Map is split into two separate layers – the protected sites form part of the core area, but areas of key areas of potential habitat targeted within the ecological network model are show separately on a Grid Layer Map showing ‘ecological links’.
- Data from the Culture & Heritage - Analysis Map is combined with the mapping of destinations to form part of the Accessibility Grid Layer Map.

In summary, the four Grid Layer Maps for the whole Borough are:
- Borough Core Area - Grid Layer
- Borough Blue Grid Layer
- Borough Ecological Links
- Borough Accessibility

When these four Grid Layer Maps are layered together they illustrate the Green & Blue Grid for Ashford Borough as a whole.

**Borough Core Area - Grid Layer (Map 17)**

This ‘core area’ of the Grid consists of all statutorily protected sites & the ‘accessible greenspace’ identified in the standard assessment of public open spaces, sports and recreational facilities (the PPG 17 assessment), which was undertaken as part of the work for the Green & Blue Grid Strategy.
Borough Blue Grid Layer (Map 18)

Rivers, areas of standing open water, chalk rivers & river floodplains, both the passive (undefended floodplains) and the active (defended) floodplains.
Borough Ecological Links - Grid Layer [Map 19]

The Ecological Links Grid Layer is based on Kent Wildlife Trust’s ecological network model20 and represents a simplified version of the borough-wide Biodiversity Analysis map (Map 11) on page 28.

The key protected ecological habitats are included in the ‘core area’ of the Grid, but the ecological network model also identifies locations where valuable new habitats might most appropriately be restored or re-created within a threshold distance of an existing habitat patch. These areas of potential habitat are important because they have the potential to link with existing habitats and so create ‘corridors’ of habitat to encourage species movement and increase adaptability to climate change.

20 Kent Wildlife Trust, on behalf of the Wildlife Trusts in the SE, 2006, A Living Landscape for the South-East- the ecological network approach to rebuilding biodiversity for the 21st century.
Borough Accessibility – Destinations & Connections
Grid Layer (Map 20)

This ‘layer’ of the Grid includes the principal heritage, cultural and popular destinations for visitors in the Borough. For instance, it includes Conservation Areas within historic towns and villages, historic parks and gardens, areas of open access land and Forestry Commission woodlands which are open to the public. At a local scale it includes schools, shopping centres, libraries, hospitals and all urban greenspaces. These ‘hubs’ of activity within the Green & Blue Grid are linked to centres of population by the ‘connections’ element of the Grid: promoted routes (footpaths, cycleways & bridleways) and public rights of way.
Borough Green & Blue Grid (Map 21)
A multi-functional network of green infrastructure which clarifies the inter-relationships between the four principal ‘layers’ of data.
2.8 Focus of the Green & Blue Grid Strategy

2.8.1 Emphasis on the town of Ashford and its surrounding landscape setting

Ashford’s status as a growth area brings the opportunity to implement best practice on a large scale. Why not deliver a truly sustainable community which will be a pilot to test and demonstrate what can be achieved through careful environmental planning and excellent design? The new development areas place increased emphasis on Ashford’s green and blue infrastructure and on the hinterland of the town which forms the landscape setting for extensive new residential areas. The growth agenda is the catalyst for improving the quality and connectivity of the existing Grid and for developing new green grid routes and greenspaces to cater for new and existing urban communities.

As a result, the Green & Blue Grid is defined at a greater level of detail for Ashford and the hinterland which forms the landscape setting of the town. This reflects more intense pressures on green and blue infrastructure close to the urban area and also the critical role that the Grid will play in developing a sustainable multi-functional matrix of green and blue grid assets to match the scale of the new growth proposed. The Green and Blue Grid is therefore defined at two scales:

- A detailed analysis of the town of Ashford and its landscape setting, which includes principles for developing, managing and conserving green and blue infrastructure within and surrounding the town
- A broader scale of analysis which locates the priority green and blue infrastructure across the whole of the Borough

The area of focus is the Landscape setting of Ashford (Map 22), which is informed by:

- the broad ‘visual envelope’ of Ashford - the area which can generally be seen in views from the edge of Ashford and from which the town is visible (from roads and public rights of way). This broad ‘visual envelope’ was mapped following fieldwork undertaken by car and by bike from local roads and lanes.
- a 1.2 km zone from the edge of Ashford – an easy walking distance.

Ashford’s growth area status means that the proposed urban extensions shown in the Adopted Core Strategy are an influence on the Grid at the scale of the town of Ashford and its hinterland. The more detailed Green and Blue Grid Strategy maps for Ashford therefore include the proposed urban extensions (as shown in the Adopted Core Strategy).

ASHFORD Green & Blue Grid Strategy
2.8.2 Character and condition of Ashford’s landscape setting

A close look at the landscape setting map shows that much of the area within the identified landscape setting of Ashford remains ‘white’ because it does not form part of the mapped environmental assets for Ashford. However, these ‘white areas’ are of value within the Grid because of their strategic location as part of the landscape setting for Ashford, rather than because of their existing green and blue infrastructure assets.

The Green and Blue Grid Strategy provides an opportunity to enhance the landscape setting of Ashford. This means creating a more distinctive sense of place, enhanced biodiversity value and connectivity and providing high quality, accessible greenways (footpaths and cycleways) which encourage people to travel around the town and out into the surrounding countryside on foot and by bike.

Three key Analysis Maps inform the development of the Green & Blue Grid in relation to the town of Ashford:

- Landscape character of Ashford’s setting
- Landscape condition of Ashford’s setting
- Distinctive landscape elements within Ashford’s setting

The data presented on these maps is from a detailed local landscape character assessment\(^1\) of Ashford’s immediate hinterland.

**Landscape character of Ashford’s landscape setting (Map 23)**

A detailed local landscape character assessment of Ashford’s immediate hinterland which nests within and expands on the overarching classification provided by the county landscape character areas. The local landscape character areas identified in this study are based on the detailed Landscape Description Units from the Historic Landscape Character Assessment of Kent\(^2\).

---

\(^1\) Studio Engleback, 2005, Ashford Local Development Framework, Landscape Character Study

\(^2\) Kent County Council, 2002, Historic Landscape Character Assessment of Kent

![Map 23 - Landscape Character of Ashford's Landscape Setting](image-url)
Landscape condition of Ashford’s landscape setting (Map 24)

An analysis of the condition and relative sensitivity of the landscapes surrounding Ashford which was part of the Local Landscape Character Assessment. The explanation for this mapping is set out on p20 of the Scoping and Methodology section of the Local Landscape Character Assessment. The judgement combines an assessment of condition and sensitivity, which indicates the area’s ability to accommodate change. It is intended to assist in formulating policies and guiding decisions on future land management which are tailored to reinforce the character of specific landscape character areas:

- Condition – describes the functional integrity and visual unity of the landscape, e.g., an urban fringe with many detracting elements and loss of unifying features will be of poor condition.

- Sensitivity – refers to the overall character and quality of the landscape and the extent to which these factors will be tolerant of change in general.
Distinctive landscape elements within Ashford’s landscape setting (Map 25)
A map showing key landmarks and landscape features, areas of higher land, areas with distinctive historic field patterns, woodlands and floodplains – all of which contribute to distinctive local landscape character in the countryside immediately surrounding Ashford. This data was collated from the Local Landscape Character Assessment but was also informed by the Green & Blue Grid Context Maps (landform, woodlands, floodplains etc).
2.8.3 Themes & function – ‘doorstep’ links between Ashford and the wider Green & Blue Grid

Given the extensive ‘white’ areas within Ashford’s landscape setting, the zones where the priority green and blue infrastructure network mapped on the Borough-wide Green & Blue Grid meets the edge of Ashford are important. The Doorstep Links diagram [Figure 3] summarises the broad Green & Blue Grid vision which has coloured the development of principles for the Green & Blue Grid within and on the fringes of the urban area. Each of the zones has a distinctive character and/or Green & Blue Grid function and each provides a ‘doorstep’ linking the town to the wider countryside:

- **The Hothfield Common / Godinton Park** area to the north west of Ashford has a heathy, wooded theme and is associated with high quality cultural landscapes

- **The Stour Valley** to the north east is associated with open water and active recreation; the expansive, low-lying agricultural landscapes in this area could be associated with future biomass production

- **The Upper (East) Stour Valley and Willesborough Dykes area** also has a wetland character, but here there is more of an association with nature; again there could be a future role for biomass

- **The extensive woodlands to the south west of Ashford** are associated with active forestry and woodland management, including coppice and community orchards. Much of the area is low-lying, with meadows and ponds, and could function as a focus for secondary or tertiary water treatment.
2.9 The Green & Blue Grid for Ashford and its landscape setting

2.9.1 Evolution of Ashford

Ashford’s historic town centre is on an area of relatively high land adjacent to the confluence of the tributaries to the Great Stour. The river valleys have long been used as transport corridors between local centres, including Maidstone, Canterbury and Folkestone and increasingly for national links between the UK and the European mainland.

In the 18th and 19th centuries five turnpike roads met in Ashford and these excellent road links provided a catalyst for the development of the agricultural market, with timber and iron products from the Weald and wool from Romney Marsh. Most products were transported north to the port of Faversham and from there were taken by boat to London. The next major change came during the 19th century, when the railway arrived (in 1842) and the SE Railway Company chose Ashford as the location for its main works (in 1846). Railway connections have continued to be a major impetus for change in the 20th century, with the development of the International Passenger Station in 1996.

2.9.2 Ashford’s existing green and blue infrastructure and the impact of the new development areas

Ashford has some very positive landscape assets. The town is surrounded by attractive countryside and at the confluence of five rivers, but the existing residential neighbourhoods and open space network have a relatively poor relationship with the local landscape. This is particularly evident on the fringes of the floodplains – Ashford’s green riverside corridors are largely ignored by existing development and rarely provide a positive frontage for buildings and open spaces.

The way the Green and Blue Grid threads through the town centre and links with the countryside immediately surrounding Ashford is critically important. The GADF provides a diagrammatic open space network, but the Green & Blue Grid Strategy refines and develops this in more detail. The aim is to illustrate how the open space network – existing and proposed – can be designed and managed to reflect local landscape and urban character. The planned new development will transform the southern fringes of the town and there is scope for the multi-functional Green & Blue Grid to inform the layout, design and macro landscape setting of the new development areas.

2.9.3 Green and Blue Grid Mapping for Ashford

The Green and Blue Grid Layer Maps for Ashford and the setting of the town are:
- Ashford Core Area - Grid Layer
- Ashford Blue Grid Layer
- Ashford Ecological Links - Grid Layer
- Ashford Destinations - Grid Layer

When layered together, these four maps indicate the location of the Green and Blue Grid for Ashford.

Ashford Core Area - Grid Layer [Map 26]

Statutory protected sites & the ‘accessible greenspace’ identified in the standard assessment of public open spaces, sports and recreational facilities (the PPG 17 assessment). The map highlights Ashford’s existing green and blue infrastructure. The riverside ‘green corridors’ through the centre of Ashford which link to the woodlands on the Greensand ridge to the NE (the Warren and the woodlands associated with the historic parkland at Godinton Park) and the extensive wetland landscapes of Willesborough Dykes. The ‘Green Corridor’ along the Great Stour incorporates Victoria Park, Ashford’s formal civic park, which is a popular destination within the town centre connected to the principal riverside routes.
The growth of Ashford has been shaped by the floodplains of the town’s five rivers – the Great Stour, East Stour, Aylesford Stream, Ruckinge Dyke and Whitewater Dyke. The Blue Grid map also shows the location of the gravel pit lakes adjacent to Julie Rose Stadium.
Ashford Ecological Links - Grid Layer (Map 28)

The Ecological Links Grid Layer is based on Kent Wildlife Trust’s ecological network model.23

The principal ecological links on the fringes of the town link the wooded heathy habitats are along the Greensand Ridge to the NE of the town and through the Brabourne Lees area to the east. There are wetland and riparian habitat links along each of the river corridors through the town, linking the Willesborough Dykes wetlands and extending out into the surrounding landscape. To the south of Ashford, the wet wooded landscapes of the Low Weald are another valuable potential ecological corridor. In general, the Low Weald woodlands are not connected to habitats within or on the fringes of the town, but there is one exception at Purchase Wood, to the west of the proposed Chilmington Green development, where there is potential for woodland habitat links to the nearby extensive core woodland habitats of Etchden Wood.

23 Kent Wildlife Trust, on behalf of the Wildlife Trusts in the SE, 2006, A Living Landscape for the South-East - the ecological network approach to rebuilding biodiversity for the 21st century
Ashford Destinations – Grid Layer (Map 29)

The emphasis is Ashford town centre, the key hub and destination at the heart of the town. The destinations map also shows the location of schools, hospitals, libraries and museums, as well as the historic parkland of Godinton Park.
The Green and Blue Grid Strategy aims to be proactive and creative in and around the town of Ashford, with recommendations for how the existing green and blue infrastructure of the town can be enhanced and increased with new greenspaces and green grid routes to complement the existing (potentially enhanced) Green and Blue Grid.

The Grid layer maps for Ashford were used as the basis for extensive fieldwork – on foot and by bike, which explored opportunities and constraints for developing a hierarchy of Green Grid routes connecting Ashford town centre with key destinations (including the new development areas) within Ashford and on the outer fringes of the town. The recommended Green and Blue Grid for Ashford is shown on two maps:

- Ashford Green & Blue Grid - Public Open Spaces
- Ashford Green & Blue Grid - Connections

Ashford Green & Blue Grid - Public Open Spaces (Map 30)

The open spaces map shows the existing open space network (as per the Ashford Local Plan, 2000) and recommended new public open spaces which are designed to make connections between existing protected (core area) sites and open spaces and to provide a setting for new development. Each of the recommended new public open spaces has the potential to provide multi-functional benefits and some suggest the future shape and orientation of the Primary Parks (which were shown in diagrammatic form in the GADF) and the Strategic Parks (as presented in the more recent Adopted Core Strategy).
The Green & Blue Grid Strategy proposes a hierarchy of strategic routes (cycleways/footpaths/bridleways) which together provide an integrated network of promoted ‘Green Grid’ routes:

- **Strategic routes,** which connect the town centre with the countryside and which are aligned to pass through Ashford’s principal urban neighbourhoods

- **Circular routes** (footpath/cycleways/bridleways) – there are two routes; one ‘inner’ circular route threads between existing and future urban communities (broadly around the edge of the existing built up area); the second ‘outer’ rural circular route runs through the countryside close to the edge of the proposed new GADF development areas

- **Rural recreational routes** encircling Ashford on minor roads and rural lanes within the wider countryside setting. These routes connect communities and the strategic routes to provide an integrated network with a range of choices and destinations.

A detailed description and explanation of the recommended Green and Blue Grid is provided in Section 3, which sets out the principles for developing, managing and creating the Green and Blue Grid in each part of Ashford.
2.9.4 Strategic priorities for investment

Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid Strategy provides an overall vision for developing and enhancing the green and blue infrastructure throughout the town and the wider borough of Ashford. Maps 32a and 32b suggest strategic priorities for investment and provide a summary of the overall Green & Blue Grid Strategy [as set out in detail in Section 3].

Ashford Green & Blue Grid – Priority 1 Routes & open spaces [Map 32a] shows strategic routes and new public open spaces which are top priority. These include the routes linking the town centre to the South Willesborough Dykes Wetland Park and the future Discovery Park along the floodplain of Whitewater Dyke.

The key priority new public open space is the Discovery Park. The boundary of this major new park is not yet defined; the Green & Blue Grid Strategy shows the original GADF boundary with suggested extensions to the north east and north west. The explanation for these suggested extensions is provided in Section 4 (accompanied by detailed maps). The original GADF boundary is shown with a hatched tone because it is indicative and likely to change as plans for the Discovery Park are developed.
Ashford Green & Blue Grid - Priority 2 Routes & open spaces (Map 32b) shows strategic routes and new public open spaces which are secondary priorities. These include:

- the strategic routes along either side of the railway line through the South Willesborough Dykes Wetland Park, linking the town centre to the Park Farm development and the future Cheeseman’s Green development.
- the strategic link between the town centre and Conningbrook Park (crossing the M20 and railway) and linking to the existing Stour Valley Walk
- the green corridor at Aylesford Green to the village of Mersham (through the new development at Waterbrook)
- the town centre to the new Eureka Park development to the north west of the town.

The key strategic new public open spaces on this map are Conningbrook Park and Cheeseman’s Green Park, but the whole of the existing green corridor through Ashford’s town centre (which includes Victoria Park) should be a priority for investment so that the town centre ‘hub’ of the Green & Blue Grid is a high quality, distinctive destination, complementing the rest of the Grid.

Note that the broad area shown for Cheeseman’s Green Strategic Park (taken from the Adopted Core Strategy) is indicative as the site for this park is not yet determined. accompanying the Green & Blue Grid Strategy.
2.9.5 PPG 17 data

The PPG 17 assessment has informed the type (and in some places the orientation) of recommended new public open spaces and connections.

Maps 33a - 33f summarise deficiencies in the principal types of open space within Ashford. A detailed explanation of this data is provided in the report of Ashford’s PPG 17 Assessment.24

24 Inspace Planning, 2008, Open Space Study for Ashford Borough
Ashford PPG 17 Summary Grid Layer (Map 34)

Provides an overall summary of the findings of the PPG 17 Assessment.

It shows the overall accessibility of the different types of open space and recreation facilities in Ashford, highlighting areas where there is a relative deficiency in the provision of these facilities.
3.1 Green & Blue Grid Components

The Green & Blue Grid within Ashford and its hinterland landscape setting is subdivided into five component areas, each with design principles and objectives:

- Ashford town centre
- Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands
- Stour Valley & Stour Gap
- Upper Stour Valley South
- Bethersden Farmlands

Map 35 shows the key component areas, which reflect the landscape character areas of the landscapes surrounding the town, as set out in the Local Landscape Character assessment. The town centre component corresponds to the areas described within the Green Corridor Study.

3.2 Green & Blue Grid Principles

A set of detailed maps illustrates the principles for the Green and Blue Grid in each of the Components.

3.2.1 The evidence base for future investment

The principles are described in relation to the key thematic ‘layers’ which contribute to the Green & Blue Grid and which formed the basis of the Analysis Mapping. They form the evidence base for the Green & Blue Grid in each Component area. They are:

- Core area – the statutorily protected landscapes, accessible greenspaces and river floodplains
- Biodiversity – opportunities for habitat creation and management, including links to habitats of high ecological value. These links reflect the data from Kent Wildlife Trust’s ecological network model.
- Landscape character & condition – opportunities to reinforce the inherent character of the landscape, so enhancing distinctive sense of place and landscape quality
- Landscape legibility – highlight the key landmarks, features of heritage interest and local landscape features so that these are taken into consideration in developing future design briefs and interpretation
- PPG 17 data – in some cases data from the PPG 17 assessment provides evidence to justify the scale, type and orientation of the recommended new open spaces.

Additional diagrams to show the

---

Ashford Borough Council, 2000, Green Corridor Action Plan,

Kent Wildlife Trust, on behalf of the Wildlife Trusts in the SE, 2006, A Living Landscape for the South-East: the ecological network approach to rebuilding biodiversity for the 21st century
infrastructure designed to address specific issues relevant to each component area. These principles should be developed and articulated within project briefs for future environmental projects within Ashford.

The thematic diagrams summarising the Green & Blue Grid principles for the five Components (for Ashford and its hinterland) are each accompanied by an indicative sketch vision for the Component as a whole. These sketches illustrate how the area might look if all the Green & Blue Grid principles were implemented in full. They are intended to be inspirational and illustrate an overall vision for Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid.

### 3.2.2 Strategic Green & Blue Grid projects - priorities for investment

The analysis and mapping underpinning the Green & Blue Grid principles suggests where there might be new public open spaces (to plug gaps in the existing network of greenspaces) and where there should be new green grid routes to enhance connectivity between key destinations and between the urban communities and the countryside surrounding Ashford. The recommended priorities for Green and Blue Grid investment are presented on maps showing:

- Public open spaces - existing public open spaces (based on the Local Plan) and recommended new open spaces, which provide strategically important links within Ashford’s greenspace network. In some cases, the recommended new public open spaces highlight areas where there may be potential to change the boundaries of the primary parks (as shown in the GADF) so that they function more effectively within the overall greenspace network. The boundaries of these recommended new public open spaces are indicative: the principles of the Green and Blue Grid can be implemented in different ways.

- Access - existing and recommended strategic Green Grid routes (footpaths, cycleways and in many cases equestrian routes), circular routes within and on the fringes of the urban area and rural recreational routes. Most ‘existing routes’ are rights of way which would require investment as part of the implementation of the Grid. Recommended routes are completely new routes - not following existing rights of way.

### 3.2.3 Green & Blue Grid action points

The final part of the detailed Green & Blue Grid analysis for each of the five components sets out the objectives and priorities for environmental investment. These objectives are written as action points, based on the evidence provided in the accompanying Green & Blue Grid Principles.

The general action points for each component are followed by suggested priority Green & Blue Grid projects. These will be co-ordinated and delivered by the Green & Blue Grid Programme Manager.
3.3 Green & Blue Grid Principles: Ashford town centre

The town centre is arguably the most critical part of Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid. It is the central hub of activity so investment in high quality greenspaces and links through the town centre will benefit large numbers of people. There is a superb opportunity to re-establish strong physical and cultural connections with the river, with riverside flood meadows, parks, cafes, performance areas and events.

The existing river corridor through the town centre is the focus for a long established Green Corridor of cycleways, footpaths and inked greenspaces, which is also a Local Nature Reserve. The centrepiece of the town centre river corridor is Victoria Park, a traditional formal civic park with extensive lawns, avenues, a play park and sports pitches.

3.3.1 Ashford Town Centre - Core Area (Map 36a)

All the open spaces within Ashford town centre are protected through planning or ecological designations. Ashford’s Green Corridor is a local nature reserve and is managed in accordance with a detailed landscape appraisal and management study. Connections to core areas on the outer edges of the town centre component – Godinton Park to the west, Willesborough Dykes to the south and Conningbrook Park to the east, are exceptionally important for both biodiversity and access.
3.3.2 Ashford Town Centre – Biodiversity (Map 36b)

Ashford’s river corridors are the most important and valuable ecological corridors in the town. They provide a sequence of linked habitats which allow species to move, migrate and adapt to climate change. Links to the core wetland habitats of Willesborough Dykes to the south and the Great Stour floodplains to east (Conningbrook Park) and west are valuable. The biodiversity value of wetland and riparian habitats can be enhanced by creating links to adjacent greenspaces with minor tributaries, hedgerows, native woodland and grassland habitats. There are also opportunities to incorporate habitat links within new developments, as part of SUDS schemes and through native planting which is designed to link riparian habitats.
3.3.3 Ashford Town Centre - Landscape Character (Map 36c)

The river corridors are perceived as a series of linked riverside spaces and green links. Most are relatively small in scale, but they still have the potential to provide a relaxing natural setting and a slower pace. This contact with nature is enormously valuable within the town centre context. However, the central core riverside area does not fulfil this role in an effective way. This is a disorientating area for pedestrians and cyclists as it is severed by road underpasses, overpasses, car parks and the railway.
To the north the river flows between informal greenspaces with residential areas and some sports facilities on either side. Cycleways follow the river and there is a strong matrix of native planting. To the west there is a narrow connection through to the formal grasslands, avenues and play facilities of Victoria Park. The wetland park beside Beaver Road, Victoria Park, Singleton Fishing Lake and the meadow at Buxford Mill are important and attractive destinations along the route.

There is also an attractive sequence of riverside walks and green spaces along Aylesford Stream. At New Town the sports pitches have an open character, but the floodplain becomes more intimate in scale at Aylesford, where the riverside landscapes have a domestic character. The New Town area has a rich industrial heritage, with a complex of historic workshops, warehouses and tracks associated with early railway construction.

There is no Landscape Condition map for the town centre component as this area was not included within the study area for Ashford’s Local Landscape Character Assessment.
3.3.4 Ashford Town Centre – Legibility (Map 36d)

Key landmarks within the town centre are the church, which is sited on the summit of a low hill, the station and the historic mill at the end of the High Street. The river is relatively inconspicuous and often seems ‘lost’ amongst the confusion of over-bridges, railway tracks and buildings which do not respond to the opportunities of a river frontage. The legibility diagram shows that this sense of disorientation and severance is most intense in the town centre.

To the north there is a more successful sequence of riverside spaces; the inner bypass, motorway and railway line are barriers but in between the river is an obvious focus. The riverside routes to the west of the town centre thread between residential areas to the south and a series of transitional industrial zones to the north. Groups of mature trees are important in screening and integrating buildings and transport infrastructure. The retail outlet centre is a local landmark in views from the car, but is perceived as an ‘island’ from a pedestrian perspective.
3.3.5 Ashford Town Centre – Provision of Open Space, Recreation & Sports Facilities (Map 36e)

The PPG 17 Summary Map shows the provision of different types of open space and sports facilities in the centre of Ashford, highlighting areas which are particularly deficient (in red). The PPG 17 Assessment shows that the town centre is generally deficient in the provision of recreational facilities, areas for outdoor sports areas and children’s play areas (with the exception of the Victoria Park area).
3.3.6 The sketch vision for the Ashford Town Centre Component (Map 36f)

The sketch vision is an indicative plan which suggests how the area could be transformed by the implementation of the Green & Blue Grid Principles.
There is no public open spaces map for this component as no recommended new public open spaces are proposed.

3.3.7 Ashford Town Centre – Access (Map 36g)

The riverside connections through the centre of Ashford are well established, but two of the strategic routes shown on the accessibility diagram are not yet in place. One of these is the important connection between the future Discovery Park and the town centre via the Whitewater Dyke floodplain and Willesborough Dykes. Another is a link over the railway to the south west of Conningsbrook Park. Secondary routes link the strategic riverside routes to adjacent neighbourhoods. The points of connection are a series of important gateway landscapes which merit investment.
Ashford Town Centre - Green & Blue Grid Action Points

- **Open up the river as a key focus for riverside built development and cultural activities at the heart of Ashford.** This is a challenging and ambitious target, but one which will be of enormous benefit to large numbers of people.

- **Reinforce the local identity of the riverside spaces,** enhancing local contrasts and variations in character, while ensuring that the experiences and facilities they offer are complementary.

- **Seek opportunities to 'release' sections of the river** so that the dynamics of flood meadows and sculpted landforms are part of the riverside experience. There may be opportunities to enhance access to the river, with terraced riverside paths which provide an option to walk alongside the river, while reducing flood risk.

- **Incorporate new habitats within new developments adjacent to the river and ensure these are connected to wetland and riparian habitats along the main river corridors.** Links to the core wetland habitats of Willesborough Dykes to the south and the Great Stour floodplains to east (Conningbrook Park) and west are valuable. Habitat links within new developments may also function as part of SUDS schemes.

- **Retain and enhance the natural, informal character of the river corridor** so that this key route continues to provide a relaxing natural setting and a slower pace at the heart of the town. Retain all existing mature trees.

- **Encourage collaboration with artists** so that the riverside landscapes are a focus for art and performance, with temporary and permanent exhibits.

Ashford Town Centre – Green & Blue Grid Priority Projects

- **Establish strategic connections** into and out from the core riverside path system through the town centre; to the south alongside Willesborough Dykes to the future Discovery Park and to the north over the railway line to connect to Conningbrook Park. The north-east part of the Green Corridor (to the south of Campbells Factory) is currently not accessible and enhancing connectivity along this key strategic route should be a priority for investment (see Stour Valley & Stour Gap Component).

- **Create town centre riverside spaces which are the focus for active frontages,** with cafes, community buildings and dense residential areas. Enhance the overall legibility of the river corridor through the centre of Ashford, ensuring that future development responds positively to the opportunities of a riverside frontage.

- **Create new and enhanced opportunities for multi-functional greenspaces** which include facilities for active recreation and sports to counteract the current deficiency. Public open space will always be at a premium within the town centre so it is essential that every part of the space available is carefully used to maximise multi-functional benefits.
Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands Component
3.4 Green & Blue Grid Principles: Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands

The Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands Green & Blue Grid Component shows the how the principles for delivering the Green & Blue Grid can be applied in NW Ashford.

3.4.1 Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands - Core area (Map 37a)

The key protected sites and areas of accessible greenspace (as per the PPG 17 assessment) in this part of Ashford are Hothfield Common, the Warren and the woodlands which wrap tightly around the edge of the urban areas, from the Warren to Godinton Park. The drawing also shows the extensive floodplain of the Great Stour and the valley bogs on the west-facing slopes of Hothfield Common, where the river floodplain abuts the ancient woodland/heath at Hothfield Common.
3.4.2 Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands – Biodiversity (Map 37b)

This part of Ashford is relatively rich in biodiversity. The Warren, the Lodge Wood – Marble Wood complex and Hothfield Common are remnant woodlands and heathlands along part of the wider Kent Greensand Ridge. The ancient woodland and heathland of Hothfield Common is exceptionally valuable because it includes a series of valley bogs with a range of rare species. On the south-facing slopes of the ridge, the woodlands and historic parkland of Godinton Park contribute to the woodland mosaic. The wet alder woodlands, flushes of willow and pastures along the course of the river are rich in biodiversity terms, particularly when there are connections to woodlands and semi-improved grassland or scrub habitats on the valley side slopes. To the north of Ashford, there is also a potentially valuable ecological corridor linking the fringes of the North Downs to the Warren via a small, relatively wooded tributary valley, which includes the sequence of lakes at Sandyhurst Farm.
3.4.3 Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands - Landscape Character (Map 37c)

The rolling sequence of ridges and valleys gives this part of Ashford a varied and distinctive character. The Stour Valley is a broad, relatively open valley, but the pastures and arable fields are often enclosed by hedgerows, with groups of hedgerow trees. Small woodlands and lines of trees along the river mark the alignment of the channel in the broad floodplain. To the north the broad greensand ridge has a distinctive wooded character. The historic wooded parkland of Godinton Park, on the immediate fringes of Ashford, is part of a rich mosaic of woodlands, settlement and mixed farmland that extends north-west to the ancient woodland at Hothfield Common. A new corridor of open space and wetland, threading through the new development at Eureka Park, links the open farmland to the NE of Ashford with the golf course. Due north of Ashford, the extensive historic parkland of Eastwell Park marks the edge of the arable land and a complete contrast in landscape character.
3.4.4 Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands – Landscape Condition (Map 37d).

The Landscape Condition map shows that the quality of the landscape on the wooded landscapes of the Greensand ridge, as assessed in Ashford’s Local Landscape Character Assessment, is relatively high, with scores of ‘conserve and reinforce’ or ‘conserve and restore’. To the north and west of the Greensand ridge, there is a swathe of more open rolling arable farmland, with a less distinctive character (which is given much lower scores of ‘restore and create’ and ‘create’ in the landscape condition assessment).
The broad Greensand ridge which extends from Ashford to Hothfield Common dominates the way that the landscape to the north-west of Ashford is perceived. The woodlands on the ridge enhance its presence in the wider landscape and this elevated land has long been the focus for a series of transport routes so it is highly visible in views from the train or the car. The combination of the A20, the M20, the CTRL and the railway within a relatively local area is intrusive and tends to compartmentalise people’s experience of this area. But the woodlands help to absorb the transport infrastructure and, to the south of the ridge, the Stour Valley has an exceptionally tranquil, spacious character.

The historic parklands of Godinton Park and Hothfield Place provide points of interest and Goldwell Hill is a local landmark and viewpoint. The river is sometimes inconspicuous, but is legible within the wider valley wherever its alignment is marked by groups and lines of trees. To the north of the Greensand ridge, the open arable farmland is set against the backdrop of the North Downs. The boundary of Eastwell Park and the historic arched gateway entrance to the Park are local landmarks and points of orientation on the northern edge of Ashford.
3.4.6 Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands – Provision of open space, recreation & sports facilities (Map 37f)

This map shows the provision of different types of open space and sports facilities in NW Ashford, highlighting areas which are particularly deficient (in red). It shows that this part of Ashford is well served, although a small part of the urban neighbourhood in the centre of Kennington is relatively deficient in all types of open space. This helps to make the case for the implementation of the proposed strategic route between Eureka Park and Westwell, provided it is well connected to the existing urban communities.
3.4.7 Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands - Green & Blue Grid Sketch Vision (Map 37g)

The sketch vision for the Hollingbourne Vale and Hothfield Farmlands Component is an indicative plan which suggests how the area could be transformed by the implementation of the Green & Blue Grid Principles in this area.
3.4.8 Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands – Access (Map 37h)

The Greensand Way and Stour Valley Walk are part of the system of radial strategic routes (footpaths and cycleways) that connect NW Ashford with the wider countryside. These key promoted routes are linked by a system of circular routes which provide a variety of loops through different types of landscape and at different distances from the town. Recommended new strategic routes link the Greensand Way to Hothfield Common and the new development at Eureka Park with the countryside in the Westwell area via a sequence of existing (but upgraded) footpaths.

There is no public open spaces map for this component as no new public open spaces are proposed.
Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands - Green & Blue Grid Action Points

- Reinforce the character and legibility of the distinctive Greensand Ridge and Stour Valley landscapes, so that local contrasts in landscape character and pattern are enhanced through ongoing landscape management.

- Promote heathland habitats, particularly in places where there are opportunities to create ‘stepping stones’ to heathland habitats along the Greensand Ridge

- Conserve and enhance semi-natural ancient woodlands, mature species-rich hedgerows, coppiced woodlands, areas of wood pasture and assemblages of veteran trees which are of particularly high ecological value. Aim to increase the connectivity of woodland habitats, linking hedgerows and woodlands with those in the more open farmlands

- Conserve and enhance pastures, wet woodland, alder carr, reed-beds, ditches, hedgerows and hedgerow trees on the valley floor. Give priority to the conservation and replanting of sinuous hedgerows and lines of trees along the river or at the outer margins of the floodplain, where these features mark the break of slope between the valley floor and valley sides

- Encourage wide field margins and a robust hedgerow network within arable fields to enhance the ecological value of the hedgerows as corridors for the movement of wildlife through the intensively farmed areas to the north of the Greensand ridge

- Conserve the character of rural roads, avoiding improvements (kerbs, signage, access roads with wide sight-lines, standard road widths etc) which will erode the rural character of the landscape and encouraging hedgerow conservation and replanting along roads

Hollingbourne Vale & Hothfield Farmlands – Green & Blue Grid Priority Projects

- Create a strategic greenway (footpath/cycleway) along the Greensand Ridge, linking the town centre to Hothfield Common and the network of minor roads within a short distance of the town

- Create a strategic greenway (footpath/cycleway) linking Eureka Park with the village of Westwell and the network of rural roads within the countryside to the north west of Ashford.
### 3.5 Green & Blue Grid Principles: Stour Valley & Stour Gap

The Stour Valley & Stour Gap Green & Blue Grid Component shows how the principles for delivering the Green & Blue Grid can be applied in NE Ashford. The area includes the new North Kennington development, where 605 units are proposed up to 2021. The focus of the Green & Blue Grid in this area is Conningbrook Park, a strategic park in the adopted Core Strategy which is expected to incorporate a regional watersports facility that complements the adjacent stadium facility with associated open space and leisure activities.\(^{27}\)

#### 3.5.1 Stour Valley & Stour Gap - Core area

The core areas are concentrated along the length of the river floodplain and also along the relatively wooded floodplain of Bourne Dyke, a tributary to the Great Stour. The drawing also shows the GADF Primary Park – Conningbrook Park and the ‘strategic gaps’ which could link this park more effectively to existing and future urban communities at Willesborough Lees and East Kennington respectively.

\(^{27}\) Ashford Borough Council, Local Development Framework, Core Strategy Adopted July 2008

---

Component Area with Detail Units
- Core Area
- 300m Buffer to Ancient Woodland
- Blue Grid Area
- Watercourses and Waterbodies
- Urban areas
- Town Centre Regeneration Area
- Primary Employment Development area
- Primary Residential Development area
- Mixed Use Development Area
- Main Urban Extension Area (Core Strategy 2008)
- Possible Direction of Post 2021 Urban Extension

Strategic Parks (Core Strategy 2008)
- Primary Parks
- Primary Parks (Original GADF Document)

Visual Envelope (Approximate)
- 1.2km Extent from Ashford (based on GADF Development)
3.5.2 Stour Valley & Stour Gap – Biodiversity
(Map 38b)

The floodplain of the Great Stour is the principal ecological corridor through this Component, leading north-west from the town centre out to Wye. The Great Stour is of particularly high ecological value because of its status as a Chalk stream. The river flows through an intensively farmed, drained agricultural landscape, which is relatively sterile in ecological terms. The small drainage ditches and tributaries which lead from the valley sides into the Stour are potentially valuable ecological corridors, particularly when they link areas of woodland (such as those near the settlement of Brook) to the main river. One of these tributaries, the Bourne Dyke, is a wooded wetland corridor, with a small-scale mosaic of pasture, woodland and wetland threading through the surrounding arable fields. This remnant landscape demonstrates the rich mix of habitats which could characterise the floodplain of the Great Stour, if the landscape were managed less intensively.
3.5.3 Stour Valley & Stour Gap - Landscape Character (Map 38c)

The area is dominated by a swathe of open, flat arable farmland, with large fields and very little enclosure. The majority of the fields are bounded by small drainage ditches and there are relatively few hedgerows or trees – only small copses scrub and groups of trees, which are dwarfed by the expansive scale of the farmland.

The group of nursery buildings on a slight knoll at Perry Court Farm to the north of the Stour and the parkland associated with Kennington Hall on the fringes of Ashford are small, but distinctive local character areas within the wider arable landscape. To the south the more wooded landscapes on the undulating, steeper valley sides and ridges beyond (in the Brook and Hinxhill areas) contrast with the flat valley floor. The wooded landscape of Bourne Dyke seems well integrated within this wider context of rolling, wooded ridges. To the east, the steep escarpment of the North Downs provides a striking backdrop and sense of place.
3.5.4 Stour Valley & Stour Gap – Landscape Condition (Map 38d)

The Landscape Condition Map shows the quality of the landscape in the wider Stour Valley & Stour Gap area, as assessed in Ashford’s Local Landscape Character Assessment. The majority of the flat, intensively farmed valley floor scores in the ‘create’ or ‘create and restore’ categories on the landscape condition maps – a reflection of the low ecological value and relatively indistinctive landscape character of the area.
3.5.5 Stour Valley & Stour Gap – Legibility (Map 38e)

The wide, flat valley floor, relatively subtle valley side landform and lack of riverside vegetation ensure that there is only a very subtle sense of ‘being in a valley’. This is a very expansive landscape, with long open views all the way from the edge of Ashford to Wye and the North Downs. This expansive quality, together with the strong enclosing backdrop of the North Downs escarpment, gives this landscape an immediate sense of connection with the wider countryside; the town quickly seems far behind and the North Downs provides a sense of drama and scale. The roads tend to be on the low valley flanks, so there are views across the open valley, as well as long views along the river floodplain.

The railway line is at grade along the valley floor and only seems intrusive at places where footpaths pass directly alongside the tracks. The church tower at Wye and the water tower at the Campbells Factory are local landmarks along the valley floor, but the river itself is hardly perceptible in local or longer views.
On the outer fringes of the valley, the wooded landscapes of Eastwell Park to the north and Kennington Park on the edge of Ashford to the west provide a subtle, but distinctive backdrop; the rolling wooded landscapes to the south have a more immediate presence and a stronger influence. Even relatively small blocks of woodland, such as the trees on the fringes of Willesborough Lees and the M20 embankment to the south of Conningbrook Park, contribute a valuable sense of enclosure.

This area seems disconnected from the town centre as the motorway (M20) and railway are perceived barriers between the town centre riverside corridor and Conningbrook Park (in both a physical and intellectual sense).

The denuded river corridor of the Great Stour - no public access and relatively low biodiversity value
3.4.8 Stour Valley & Stour Gap – Provision of Open Space, Recreation & Sports Facilities (Map 38f)

The PPG 17 summary map shows the provision of different types of open space and sports facilities in NE Ashford, highlighting areas which are particularly deficient (in red).

This summary map shows relatively high levels of deficiency in all types of open space in parts of North Willesborough. Some of this deficiency could be alleviated through the extension of Conningbrook Park to the south and west of the existing park, as shown on the recommended new public open space plan (Map 38h). The summary PPG 17 deficiency map also indicates that a small part of the urban neighbourhood in the centre of Kennington is relatively deficient in all types of open space and suggests that there is a need to create accessible routes linking this area to Conningbrook Park.
3.5.7 **Stour Valley & Stour Gap - Green & Blue Grid Sketch Vision**

The sketch vision for the Stour Valley & Stour Gap Component (Map 38g) is an indicative plan which suggests how the area could be transformed by the implementation of the Green & Blue Grid Principles within this area.
3.5.8 Stour Valley & Stour Gap – Open spaces (Map 38h).

The recommended new public open space suggests the potential scale and orientation of the future Conningbrook Park. The suggested boundary of this area is designed to address gaps in the existing greenspace network and respond to the issues and opportunities suggested by the principles mapping.
3.5.9 Stour Valley & Stour Valley Gap – Access (Map 38i).

The Stour Valley Way winds along the southern margins of the floodplain, linking Ashford town centre to Wye. The proposed strategic route echoes this alignment, but follows a new riverside route into the town centre.
A new strategic riverside route (footpath and cycleway) could follow the Great Stour all the way from the Julie Rose Stadium to Wye, running parallel to the existing route along local roads to the south and with a series of inter-connecting links which provide opportunities for a variety of circular walks.

Other strategic routes connect the new communities of North Kennington to Eastwell Park and the village of Boughton Lees, where there is a connection to the North Downs Way. There is also a connection between the urban fringe village of Willesborough Lees and the Wye and Crundale Downs (via Brook).

The outer recreational routes within the countryside to the north and east of Ashford provide further opportunities for loop walks and cycle rides on minor lanes at a short distance from the town.
Stour Valley & Stour Gap - Green & Blue Grid Action Points

• Reinforce the character, legibility and ecological value of the Great Stour, by restoring a wide riparian corridor along the river, with a sequence of meadow, wetlands, reedbeds, wet woodland and scrub, with lines of individual trees marking some of the water courses (the Great Stour and some of its tributaries).

• Enhance the character and biodiversity of the agricultural landscapes on the outer fringes of the floodplain, where possible increasing woodland and hedgerow cover. The small drainage ditches and tributaries which lead from the valley sides into the Stour should be a priority for biodiversity and landscape enhancement, particularly where there are opportunities to create a series of linked habitats between farmland woodlands, hedgerows, riparian habitats and the riverside corridor of the Great Stour.

• Restore and replant hedgerows, hedgerow trees and small woodlands alongside roads throughout the area so that the edges of the floodplain (where most roads are concentrated) have a stronger sense of enclosure.

• Create a distinctive interface between the edge of the new urban development at North Kennington and the wider rural landscape, taking advantage of the narrow stream which runs along this boundary and developing a wooded streamside character set against the open farmland to the east. The stream may function as part of the SUDS system for the new development.

Stour Valley & Stour Gap – Green & Blue Grid Priority Projects

• Extend Conningbrook Park – westwards, so that there is space to create an attractive landscape and greenway connection to the town centre Green Corridor along the river, and eastwards so that the park incorporates the confluence with the Bourne Dyke, maximising opportunities for biodiversity and landscape enhancement. Key influences are:
  - existing poor connectivity between Conningbrook Park/Julie Rose Stadium and the town centre Green Corridor. The motorway and railway are barriers to pedestrian and cycleway connections in this part of the network and there is scope to provide improved linkage between the town centre and rural fringe.
  - opportunities to enhance the biodiversity value of the Great Stour, which is a valuable chalk stream. The recommended new public open space extends as far as the confluence between the Bourne Dyke and the Great Stour, so as to maximise biodiversity value (in terms of connecting core habitats).
  - opportunities to enhance the character, quality and legibility of the Great Stour corridor within the wider open farmland landscape, reinforcing the inherent contrasts between the riparian corridor and surrounding farmland and creating a richly textured local landscape along the river, which provides opportunities for environmental education and interpretation.
  - opportunities to conserve and enhance the woodlands which provide a valuable sense of enclosure on the southern fringes of Conningbrook Park.

Conningbrook Park already provides facilities for active sport and recreation at the Julie Rose Stadium. There is potential to extend these activities, with cycleways along the river and connecting to adjacent neighbourhoods.

The primary function of the park will be active sports and recreation, with an emphasis on water sports. There is scope for running and cycling tracks, with a variety of ‘training routes’ along the recommended new strategic routes and circular routes which link the principal riverside route to the surrounding neighbourhoods. Secondary functions include biodiversity enhancement (restoration of the riverside corridor) and environmental education/interpretation.

• Create a greenway leading all the way along the Great Stour, from Conningbrook Park and Wye, so that the river corridor can be managed as a rich wetland landscape, with a carefully designed cycleway/walkway, interpretation and viewpoints. These richly varied chalk river habitats and landscape could continue right into Ashford town centre and would contrast with the expansive character of the farmland and the long open views from the edge of Ashford to Wye and the North Downs.

• Create a series of inter-connecting circular routes, which provide opportunities for a variety of walks/cycleways – the existing Stour Valley Way winds along the southern margins of the floodplain, parallel to the recommended strategic riverside route and circular Green Grid routes could provide options for different loops and connections, reducing the perceived large scale of the countryside in this part of Ashford.
3.6 Green & Blue Grid Principles: Upper Stour Valley South

The Upper Stour Valley South Green & Blue Grid Component includes the Cheeseman’s Green development area, where 4,300 units are planned for the period leading up to 2021. This figure is expected to rise to 6,500 by 2031. The area also includes Cheeseman’s Green Strategic Park, which is an important recreational resource for the south-eastern part of the town, serving the Cheeseman’s Green/Waterbrook area.

3.6.1 Upper Stour Valley South - Core Area

The core areas are the wetlands of Willesborough Dykes, the floodplain habitats along the East Stour, Ruckinge Dyke and Aylesford Stream and the ancient coppice woodland of Captain’s Wood. There are also several large woodlands on the fringes of the area; to the south these are part of the belt of woodlands which includes Orleston Forest and to the east they are associated with the historic parkland at Hatch Park.

---

3.6.2 Upper Stour Valley South – Biodiversity (Map 39b).

The principal river floodplains (of the Upper East Stour, Ruckinge Dyke & Aylesford Stream) are valuable ecological corridors through an intensively farmed agricultural landscape which otherwise has relatively low ecological interest.

The ecological value of the core Willesborough Dykes wetland and the river floodplain corridors can be enriched by extending and enhancing their connectivity with farmland habitats (unimproved grassland, woodland and hedgerows) on the valley sides. Map 39b shows specific areas of existing and potential ecological habitat on the river floodplain which should be a priority for enhancement.
3.6.3 Upper Stour Valley South - Landscape Character (Map 39c).

The distinctive contrast in landscape character between the river floodplains and the valley sides marks an abrupt change from the expansive, open floodplain landscapes to the more enclosed farmland mosaic on the surrounding higher land. However, there are more subtle transitions in landscape character along the river floodplains: the outer rural floodplain is intensively farmed, with large fields and high levels of drainage; the inner, urban fringe floodplain generally has a richer, more varied character, with a higher proportion of pasture. The new commercial development in the Waterbrook area is prominent and detracts from the local character of the inner floodplain.

The landscape of the Willesborough Dykes is predominantly open pasture, but this area’s unified character has been sub-divided by major roads and the smaller parcels of land feel dominated by noise and ‘squeezed’ by the surrounding buildings.

The alignment of the Roman Road is evident in parts of the Park Farm area as it survives as a camber. Other sites of archaeological importance include evidence of Neolithic remains along the edge of the East Stour floodplain and of post-medieval field boundaries and water management systems within the wider Willesborough Dykes area.29

29 Information provided by Kent County Council Heritage Team, July 2008
3.6.4 Upper Stour Valley South - Landscape Condition (Map 39d).

The Landscape Condition Map shows the quality of the landscape in the wider Upper Stour Valley area, as assessed in Ashford’s Local Landscape Character Assessment. The flat ‘outer’ river floodplain landscapes are scored as ‘create’ on the landscape condition maps, a reflection of their relatively poor ecological value and nondescript landscape character. By contrast the wooded landscapes to the south and the more intimate farmed landscapes near Colliers Hill are given a ‘conserve’ or ‘reinforce’ rating, in response to their distinctive character.
### 3.6.5 Upper Stour Valley South – Legibility
(Map 39e)

The contrasts between the river floodplain landscapes and valley sides and in particular the distinctive landmark of Collier’s Hill provide orientation and a strong sense of place within the Upper Stour landscape. Collier’s Hill is an outlier from the broader Aldington Ridge to the south and panoramic views from the summit of the hill describe the overall topographic setting of Ashford at the confluence of several river valleys. The historic Roman Road, which links Ashford with land to the south east, follows the alignment of the higher ground and reinforces the sense of connection to the surrounding landscape. A much smaller knoll, on the western edge of the Ruckinge Dyke floodplain, provides a bridging point over the CTRL (at Church Hill) and a further historic route and line of orientation.

The major roads and junction (of the A2042 and A2070 (T)) in the centre of the Willesborough Dykes are a dominant and negative influence; the railway is less dominant because it is mostly in cutting.

---

**Map 39e – Upper Stour Valley South – Legibility**
3.6.6 Upper Stour Valley South – Provision of open space, recreation & sports facilities (Map 39f)

The PPG 17 Summary Map shows the provision of different types of open space and sports facilities in SE Ashford, highlighting areas which are particularly deficient (in red).

The cluster of areas with open space deficiency in the Willesborough area highlights the potential importance of the smaller Aylesford Stream floodplain landscapes within Ashford’s overall network of greenspaces and routes. The map also shows that the Stanhope area, to the west of the Willesborough Dykes, suffers from relatively high levels of deprivation (Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2006). Connections to this neighbourhood from the Willesborough Dykes and Discovery Park along the Whitewater Dyke/floodplain are potentially important to ensure that these existing communities are well served and have good access to the surrounding extensive greenspaces.
3.6.7 Upper Stour Valley South – Provision of Outdoor Sports Space (Map 39g).

Map 39g shows the level of deficiency for provision of outdoor sports space in the Upper Stour South Component. It shows that all of the existing urban neighbourhoods surrounding the Willesborough Dykes area lack adequate provision for outdoor sports. Despite the prevalence of natural greenspace in this area, there is a need for more formal sports pitches on well drained land (elevated above the floodplain).
3.6.8 Upper Stour Valley South - Green & Blue Grid Sketch Vision (Map 39h)

The sketch vision for the Upper Stour Valley South Component is an indicative plan which suggests how the area could be transformed by the implementation of the Green & Blue Grid Principles within this area.
3.6.9 Upper Stour Valley South – Public Open Spaces (Map 39i)

The recommended new public open space map shows the potential scale and orientation of an extended complex of public open spaces associated with the Willesborough Dykes Nature Park and the future Cheeseman’s Green Strategic Park, which is intended to provide an important recreational resource for south east Ashford. The suggested boundary of this area is designed to address gaps in the existing greenspace network and respond to the issues and opportunities suggested by the Green & Blue Grid principles mapping.

The area shown for Cheeseman’s Green Park is indicative (and as per GADF) as no specific site for this future park is shown in the Adopted Core Strategy. However, the PPG 17 Assessment indicates extensive provision of natural greenspace but a lack of formal sports, children’s play and recreational facilities so this park must be designed to counteract this deficiency and the ‘area of search’ for Cheeseman’s Green Park may need to be extended to ensure that it includes sufficient well-drained land beyond the floodplain of the East Stour.

The primary function of the recommended public open spaces on the extensive floodplain landscapes of Ruckinge Dyke and the East Stour will be nature conservation and landscape enhancement. These will be relatively open, pristine grazing marshes and floodplain pastures, bordered by woodlands and lines of trees, which also define the alignment of green grid routes and the frontages of new built development.
3.6.10 Upper Stour Valley South – Access (Map 39).

The recommended strategic radial routes between Ashford town centre and the wider countryside run along both sides of the CTRL, avoiding a costly bridge crossing and providing views across the Willesborough Dykes from the elevated railway embankments. These strategic routes link to Park Farm and to each of the proposed new developments; the route through the centre of Cheeseman’s Green and out to Collier’s Hill follows the alignment of the former Roman Road so there are obvious opportunities for interpretation in this area.
A network of circular routes laces between the existing and future urban communities. These routes connect to the Park Wood green corridor across the existing bridge at Church Hill.

Captain’s Wood is an important local destination within the network of strategic routes. The routes tend to follow the outer margins of the river floodplains because this is the most ‘comfortable’ part of the landscape, where people can enjoy looking out over the open floodplain from a place of relative shelter. Investment focused on the outer fringes of the floodplains will generally have exceptionally high multi-functional benefit.
Upper Stour Valley South – Green & Blue Grid Action Points

• Extend and enhance the ecological value of the East Stour, Ruckinge Dyke and Aylesford Stream floodplains, encouraging the extension of valley floor pastures and associated habitats via arable reversion and linking existing wet pastures along the valley floor. Wherever possible, create connections to semi-natural habitats, woodlands, copses and hedgerows on the valley sides so that the rivers function as ecological corridors linking the core wetland at Willesborough Dykes with habitats in the wider catchments.

• Reinforce the distinctive contrasts in character between the valley floor and valley sides. Retain the sinuous hedgerows, strips of woodland and/or individual trees that sometimes mark the break in slope at the outer edges of the floodplain, as these elements have the potential to be distinctive and prominent landscape features which contrast with the geometric patterns of the surrounding farmland.

• Create a more natural river profile in places, allowing controlled flooding and a more natural transition to existing and potential wetland habitats downstream.

• Create buffer zones of semi-natural habitat within and along the outer fringes of river floodplains and encourage low input agricultural systems to reduce the possible impacts of eutrophication.

• Conserve the ancient, coppiced woodland of Captain’s Wood, creating a buffer of woodland edge habitat surrounding the woodland and extending the open space so that it connects visually (and in habitat terms) with the floodplains on either side.

• Reinforce and enhance the distinctive landmark of Collier’s Hill, taking account of its significance as one of the most distinctive local landscape features with Ashford’s landscape setting. Retain the integrity of the landform by avoiding built development on the lower slopes and creating clear links to the footpaths which lead to the summit. Collier’s Hill could remain a farmed landscape, crossed by existing footpaths, or it could become a greenspace within Ashford’s open space system, with meadows and a more formal viewpoint. Either way, this is a strong landscape feature, to be retained and enhanced.

• Reinforce and enhance the character of the landscape on the outer margins of floodplains, particularly on the fringes of the urban areas, where new development can be prominent in long views along and across the floodplains. New tree and hedgerow planting in these areas should be designed to integrate development and there are opportunities to create distinctive and very positive relationships between buildings with a river floodplain frontage and enhanced river floodplain landscapes.

• Develop a more wooded character surrounding the commercial developments in the Waterbrook area, where there are opportunities to screen and integrate existing and future large buildings in a prominent, relatively elevated part of the urban fringe.

Upper Stour Valley South – Green & Blue Grid Priority Projects

• Extend the existing public open space in the Willesborough Dykes area so that it connects to the core habitats at Golden Wood and Captain’s Wood, creating enhanced ecological corridors and attractive floodplain landscapes which will provide a distinctive landscape setting for the new developments. Key influences are:

  - opportunities for biodiversity enhancement along the key ecological corridors, which in this area are aligned along the wide floodplains of the East Stour; Ruckinge Dyke and Aylesford Stream. In particular there are opportunities to create connections to the existing core habitats at Golden Wood (on the Ruckinge Dyke floodplain) and Captain’s Wood (on the higher land separating the Ruckinge Dyke and East Stour floodplains).

  - the need to provide an open space buffer of sufficient scale to protect the ancient woodland of Captain’s Wood and to create strong ecological, landscape and access links to the floodplains on either side of the wood.

  - opportunities to reinforce the inherent contrasts in landscape character between the river floodplain and valley sides. This boundary has particular significance in areas where new development will create a built frontage along the floodplain and the recommended new public open space has been aligned to ensure that the landscape setting for this development is an attractive and rich floodplain landscape, fringes by meandering lines of trees. The precise shape of the recommended open space in this area should be aligned to complement the form and frontages of the future residential areas.

  - opportunities to create a relatively enclosed wooded edge to the floodplain on the southern margins of the Waterbrook development area, where existing and future commercial development is prominent, and in some cases visually intrusive. The scale of recommended new public open space in this area is designed to accommodate a large block of woodland planting, which is of sufficient scale to screen and integrate the extensive buildings and road infrastructure in this area.

• Create a new strategic park for Cheeseman’s Green - The site for the new Cheeseman’s Green Strategic Park will be determined by a detailed feasibility study. The site shown on the Green & Blue Grid Strategy maps is the area indicated in the GADF diagrams and shown as an asterisk in the Adopted Core Strategy. It forms part of the Green & Blue Grid network of routes and green spaces within the wider area. However, the PPG 17 Assessment indicates that this area is deficient in formal sports and recreation facilities and the majority of the GADF Cheeseman’s Green Park area is within the East Stour floodplain so further work will be required to develop a masterplan for the park. The Action Plan accompanying the Green & Blue Grid Strategy includes a diagram showing the potential site, as a starting point for future discussion and analysis.

• Create a new greenspace with enhanced public access and nature conservation in association with planned improvements to Junction 10A - plans for the new junction show that an extensive area within the floodplain of Aylesford Stream may be ‘trapped’ between the sliproads associated with the new junction. There is potential to improve public access (pedestrian/cycle) through this area and to enhance the landscape and biodiversity of the floodplain. The area has the potential to enhance the landscape setting of Sevington Church and the Waterbrook development.

30 Highways Agency, Junction 10A/M20 - Access to the South of Ashford, Public Consultation 13 June to 15 September 2008
3.7 Green & Blue Grid Principles: Bethersden Farmlands

The Bethersden Farmlands Green & Blue Grid Component shows the how the principles for delivering the Green & Blue Grid can be applied in SW Ashford.

This area includes the new Discovery Park (a Strategic Park within the adopted Core Strategy) and the proposed Chilmington Green development area, which will include 3,350 units by 2021, rising to over 7,000 units by 2031.

3.7.1 Bethersden Farmlands - Core Area (Map 40a)

The core areas are the existing greenspaces within SW Ashford, including part of the Willesborough Dykes, areas with statutory designations, such as Purchase Wood and the extensive woodlands to the south of the Component, which stretch between Shadoxhurst and Bromley Green.
3.7.2 Bethersden Farmlands – Biodiversity
(Map 40b)

Many of the woodlands which form the SW boundary to Ashford’s landscape setting are semi-natural ancient oak-ash woodlands, often with areas of former hornbeam coppice and wet woodland, which are of exceptionally high ecological value. Fields within this area often have ponds and areas of damp meadow which, together with the mosaic of woodland, provide a good network of semi-natural habitats.

The ecological value of the farmed landscape tends to decrease to the north (towards the fringes of Ashford), with distance from the woodland edge.
3.7.3 Bethersden Farmlands - Landscape Character (Map 40c)

To the south of the area, the typical Wealden pattern of small fields enclosed by bushy hedgerows is set against a varied and extensive backdrop of woodland. To the north and bordering the existing and future southern fringes of Ashford, the traditional enclosure pattern has broken down as a result of hedgerow removal and field enlargement. The landscape here has a more exposed, simple large scale pattern, but the backdrop of woodland provides a distinctive sense of place, and a destination beyond the urban fringe. The landscape becomes more intimate and domestic in scale, with a more enclosed landscape pattern in the Park Wood area to the north of Kingsnorth.
The area has some important archaeological sites. Westhawk Farm (a scheduled ancient monument) is the site of an important Roman roadside settlement at the junction of the Roman Roads to the south of Ashford. Recent pipeline excavations demonstrate that the alignment of the Roman Road continues to the south across the proposed site of the Discovery Park (where it follows the alignment of a hedgerow) and through the Stubb’s Cross area.

Archaeological excavations along the northern edge of the proposed Discovery park (at Brisley Farm) revealed a late Bronze Age field system overlain by Iron Age remains and the discovery of two ‘warrior burials’ within square ditched enclosures which were probably originally covered by a barrow mound.

Earthworks surrounding Coleman’s Kitchen Wood suggest that there might be some form of Iron Age site at this elevated summit, but further work is required to explore the evidence.

---

21 Oxford Archaeology Monograph, The Roman roadside settlement at Westhawk Farm, Ashford, Kent: excavations 1998-9
22 Information provided by Kent County Council Heritage Team, July 2008
23 Archaeology South East - www.archaeologyse.co.uk/04-Projects/Kent/Brisley-Farm/index.htm
24 Information provided by Kent County Council Heritage Team, July 2008
3.7.4 Bethersden Farmlands - Landscape Condition [Map 40d]

The farmland immediately to the south of the Chilmington Green development area is scored as ‘restore and create’ on the Landscape Condition Map, while the area further south (bordering the woodlands) is scored as ‘conserve and restore’. The Local Landscape Character Assessment implies that this arable farmland has relatively good visual unity with few detractors, but that its landscape value is reduced by loss of hedgerows and a relatively nondescript character.
3.7.5 Bethersden Farmlands – Legibility (Map 40e)

High points at Goldwell Hill, Singleton Hill and particularly the isolated hilltop woodland of Coleman’s Kitchen Wood are prominent landmarks on the approaches to Ashford (on the A28) and provide a valuable opportunity for panoramic views over the countryside to the SW of Ashford. These views are important in understanding the landscape and make a critical contribution to Ashford’s distinctive sense of place.

The slope leading up to Coleman’s Kitchen wood is prominent in views from the lanes to the south and also provides the foreground to the panoramic views across the countryside to the south.

The isolated former coppice woodlands of Purchase Wood, Willow Wood and Bayley Wood are prominent features in the open farmland. The steep, hedged lanes on the slopes of Singleton Hill, the pollarded willows near Great Chilmington and the formal oak-ash avenue of Long Length are also distinctive local features. The river floodplains are not always legible in the wider landscape, but have the potential to have a stronger presence.
3.7.6 Bethersden Farmlands – Provision of Open Space, Recreation & Sports Facilities (Map 40f)

Shows the provision of different types of open space and sports facilities in SW Ashford, highlighting areas which are particularly deficient (in red). The map also shows that the Stanhope area, on the fringe of the Discovery Park and proposed Coleman’s Kitchen Wood strategic green link, suffers from relatively high levels of deprivation (Indices of Multiple Deprivation, 2006).

It makes the case for an extended Discovery Park, which connects up the slope to the existing woodland and viewpoint at Coleman’s Kitchen Wood and through to the Millennium Wood and Environment Centre at Singleton.
The detailed PPG 17 Analysis Maps (Maps 40g, 40h & 40i)

The breakdown of the PPG 17 analysis shows that the existing deficiency in natural green space, outdoor sports space and ‘other’ open space on the southern fringes of the Stanhope area could be significantly reduced if the Discovery Park is extended up the hill to border the Stanhope area, assuming that this part of the greenspace link included a reasonable amount of these types of open space.

‘Other’ open space includes children’s play, facilities for young people and allotments.
3.7.7 Bethersden Farmlands - Green & Blue Grid Sketch Vision

The sketch vision for the Bethersden Farmlands Component [Map 40l] is an indicative plan which suggests how the area could be transformed by the implementation of the objectives of the Green & Blue Grid.
The recommended new public open space suggests the potential scale and orientation of the future Discovery Park. The suggested boundary of this area is designed to address gaps in the existing greenspace network and respond to the issues and opportunities suggested by the principles mapping.
3.7.9 Bethersden Farmlands - Access (Map 40l)

The Greensand Way cuts through the Chilmington Green area and across to Kingsnorth, before turning south to connect to the Saxon Shore Way near Packing Wood. This important promoted route would need to be redirected to form a pleasant link through the new development area. Mock Lane continues across the fields to connect with the woodlands to the south of Chilmington Green as a byway and Regional Cycle Route 18 follows the network of rural lanes to the south. Parts of other footpaths follow the alignment of the Roman Road which cuts across the Weald and into Ashford near Kingsnorth.
The woods immediately to the south (Shadoxhurst to Bromley Lees area) and Etchden Wood (to the south east) are attractive rural destinations within easy walking distance of Ashford, while the village of Great Chart, Purchase Wood, the Environment Centre at Singleton and the future new Discovery Park are local points of interest. The open access woodlands at Orleston Forest (Forestry Commission) are potentially accessible by bike.

The strategic routes link key destinations and link existing and new communities to the town centre and the key destinations in the countryside to the south. The majority follow existing rights of way, and their precise alignment would be influenced by the boundaries of the future Discovery Park.

The recommended inner circular route is aligned to link existing and future communities along the fringes of the existing urban area, while the outer circular route provides a link on the outer fringes of the new development. Other rural routes provide links between the strategic ‘spokes’ and choices for short or long countryside walks/cycle rides.
Bethersden Farmlands - Green & Blue Grid Action Points

- Extend the typical Wealden mosaic of woodland, wet woodland, pasture and damp meadow northwards from Shadoxhurst to the fringes of Ashford, reinforcing this distinctive and ecologically valuable local landscape and taking opportunities to use it as part of sustainable urban drainage systems.

- Conserve and enhance the hedged rural lanes, with mature hedgerow trees, particularly the avenue of Long Length, which are important structuring features within the landscape and valuable models for the design of future cycleways and green grid routes.

- Conserve the hill-top woodlands of Coleman’s Kitchen Wood and on Singleton Hill and the setting for these woodlands, which are prominent in views to Ashford and which provide panoramic viewpoints for the local community.

- Conserve and extend remnant isolated woodlands, enhancing their ecological and visual value by creating woodland edges with a diverse and indented species structure, which are buffered from the surrounding farmland by corridors of species-rich grassland and connected to a network of hedgerows.

- Safeguard the network of low-lying floodplain landscapes, which are ecologically valuable as corridors for species movement. They also provide potentially important landscape features, which enhance the legibility of the landscape, and form a natural conduit for routes linking the major proposed greenspaces of Willesborough Dykes and the Discovery Park.

- Reinforce and enhance the intimate, relatively enclosed character of the landscape in the Park Farm area, which provides an important green corridor between existing and future neighbourhoods. Strategic routes should be designed to forge connections between the Park Farm area and the southern part of the Willesborough Dykes Nature Park to the north, but new planting and carefully designed road crossing points are needed to ensure more positive connections across the Ashford Road (to the west of the area).

Bethersden Farmlands - Green & Blue Grid Priority Projects

- Undertake a feasibility study to explore the function, scale and boundaries of the new Discovery Park to link up the hill to Coleman’s Kitchen Wood, the Millennium Community Woodland and the Environment Centre at Singleton, so that the Discovery Park forms a physical link between the existing urban communities in the Stanhope area, the new communities at Chilmington Green and the countryside to the south of Ashford. The Discovery Park should also be extended along the broad river floodplain of Whitewater Dyke, so creating links to the Willesborough Dykes Nature Park. Key influences are:
  - the prominent area of slope shown on the Legibility diagram, which suggests the scale of the open space link between the valley floodplain and Coleman’s Kitchen Wood
  - opportunities to reinforce the inherent contrasts in character between the landscape of the floodplain, the adjacent hill slope and the wooded hill tops
  - the need to provide an open space buffer of sufficient scale to protect the ancient woodlands of Coleman’s Kitchen Wood and the woodlands on Singleton Hill
  - opportunities to extend the landscape character and ecological value of the Low Weald woodland landscapes, by creating new woodlands and hedgerows which connect with valuable existing wet woodland habitats. Ideally these habitat links should connect the existing ancient woodlands on the higher land to the south of Ashford and should link along the floodplain of Whitewater Dyke to the Willesborough Dykes wetlands.

The Discovery Park will be a park of regional significance with extensive facilities for sports, performance and outdoor events. It will be of sufficient scale to create new habitats, extending the landscapes of the Low Weald northwards to meet the fringe of the town and providing innovative opportunities to explore and understand the natural world. It should also incorporate facilities capable of generating substantial income.

The Discovery Park should be a dynamic, contemporary park, which expresses the Ashford’s transformation and sets high standards for the surrounding development.
## Annex A

### Principal Reference Documents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NATIONAL GUIDANCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>CABE Green Space Strategies – a good practice guide</strong> – guidance on the process for preparing Green Space Strategies and on their layout and content.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future, ODPM, 2004</strong> - The government’s sustainable communities’ policy sets out the challenge of creating clean, safe, attractive environments in which communities can take pride.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Living Places: Cleaner, Safer, Greener, ODPM, 2002</strong> - emphasises the wide ranging and multiple benefits of greenspace and the importance of taking a holistic approach. It outlines the government’s commitment to the creation of accessible networks of high quality parks and diverse green space in towns and cities. Greenspaces, Better Places, Urban Greenspace Taskforce, 2005 - highlights the benefits of urban parks and greenspaces. It places particular emphasis on the contribution greenspaces can make to urban regeneration, health, social cohesion and community development, education, heritage and culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PPS 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, 2005</strong> aims to improve the quality and sustainability of local environments and neighbourhoods, while continuing to protect valued landscapes and natural resources. The implementation of Swale’s Green Grid Strategy will further the same aims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PPS 9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, 2004</strong> is an extension of the Government’s biodiversity strategy, Working with the Grain of Nature: a Biodiversity Strategy for England, 2002. PPS 9 sets out the way in which the Government’s policies for the conservation of biological and geological diversity should be reflected in land use planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PPG 17 - Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation, 2002</strong> requires local authorities to undertake an assessment of their existing and current open space needs. This open space audit is part of Ashford’s Green &amp; Blue Grid Strategy and informs decisions on the distribution and function of open space. It also highlights areas of open space deficiency, taking account of Natural England’s national targets for access to natural green space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PPS 25 – Development &amp; Flood Risk</strong> – sets out government policy in relation to flood risk and new development, including the ‘sequential test’ – interpreted at local level by the Ashford Strategic Flood Risk Assessment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The countryside in and around towns: A vision for connecting town and country in pursuit of sustainable development, The Countryside Agency &amp; Groundwork, 2005</strong> - sets out ten key functions for the countryside in and around towns and explains how these can contribute to a high quality of life for all. The aim is to plan and design urban fringe land uses so that they form a ‘bridge’ to the countryside and a gateway to the town, as well as improving health, providing a setting for environmental education and a focus for recycling and renewable energy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Biodiversity by design: a guide for sustainable communities, Town &amp; Country Planning Association, 2004</strong> - provides guidance on how to maximise the opportunities for biodiversity in the planning and design of sustainable communities. It considers core principles that relate to biodiversity planning, examines methods for site analysis and the design and management of green infrastructure projects and offers case studies from national and international projects which demonstrate approaches which may have the potential for replication in the UK</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEFRA, 2007, Conserving biodiversity in a changing climate – guidance on building capacity to adapt</strong> - sets out a series of guiding principles to help biodiversity plans and projects take explicit account of the impacts of climate change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### REGIONAL GUIDANCE

**Draft South East Regional Plan, May 2006** - Relevant policies are:
- T2 – rural transport (provision for cyclists and pedestrians),
- NRM2 – conservation and improvement of biodiversity
- maintaining & establishing accessible green networks and open greenspace in urban areas,
- C4 – countryside access and rights of way management,
- T5R2 – rural tourism,
- S3 – supporting healthy communities (through access to parks and greenspaces and promoting footpaths and cycleways).

**Regional Economic Strategy for the South East, South East England Development Agency (SEEDA), 2006-2016** - This overarching policy document (which is regularly updated) sets the agenda for SEEDA, defining the region’s priorities and targets. There is an emphasis on sustainable development and the link between well designed, quality green infrastructure and economic development. Included in the Strategy’s targets for ‘sustainable prosperity’ are ‘measurable’ improvements in biodiversity and green infrastructure. The sustainability checklist [www.sustainability-checklist.co.uk](http://www.sustainability-checklist.co.uk) provides a useful toolkit for practitioners, which is of direct relevance to the delivery of the Green & Blue Grid.

**Kent County Council Environment Strategy, 2003** - presents the environmental issues affecting the whole County. Key relevant themes are - On your doorstep, Nature matters, A sense of history, Sustainable settlements & Travel wise. Since the publication of the Kent Environment Strategy, there have been a number of progress reports and the 2007 Progress Report highlights continuing pressure on natural resources and the particular challenge of water management and climate change.

**The Kent & Medway Structure Plan, adopted July 6 2006** - sets out the strategic planning framework for the protection of the environment, major transport priorities, and the scale, pattern and broad location of new development including provision for new housing and major economic development across Kent and Medway. Key relevant policies are ‘Policies for Protecting our Natural Environment’, ‘Promoting Quality of Life in Town and Country’ and Policy TP11: Facilities for Pedestrians and Cyclists.

**Kent Countryside Access Improvement Plan, Kent County Council, Draft 2007** - sets out a 10 year strategy for improving access to the countryside based on local and national research. It aims to increase the usage and enjoyment of public rights of way and open green spaces in Kent.

**Local Transport Plan, Kent County Council, 2006-11** - aims to provide good, safe accessibility to jobs and services for all sections of the community, to improve the environment and health of the community and to widen the choice of available transport by developing public transport and promoting walking and cycling.

**A Living Landscape for the South-East - the ecological network approach to rebuilding biodiversity for the 21st century, Kent Wildlife Trust, on behalf of the Wildlife Trusts in the SE, 2006** - The Kent component of this detailed GIS mapping project demonstrates how a co-ordinated approach to habitat restoration, enhancement and re-creation might function at a strategic scale. The model is based on high quality habitat data and seeks to inform strategic planning and land use management decisions.


**An analysis of accessible natural greenspace provision in the south east, Forestry Commission, 2007** – GIS based analysis of the provision of greenspace which is accessible and open to the public across the whole of the SE region

**Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan, 2004-2009** - provides the management framework for the AONB. Di particular relevance are policies relating to the sustainable management of the AONB’s landscapes, visitor facilities, open access sites and public rights of way, opportunities for sustainable tourism and high quality interpretation and the provision of coordinated information about visitor use, recreation and access.

**Landscape Assessment of Kent, Kent County Council, October 2004** – detailed classification of the whole county into landscape types and character areas.

**Kent Historic Landscape Characterisation, Kent County Council & English Heritage, 2001 [Oxford Archaeological Unit]** describes historical influences on landscape character across Kent and establishes the detailed historical landscape description units on which the local landscape character assessment of the Greater Ashford Area was based.
### LOCAL GUIDANCE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Document</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Ashford Development Framework - Urban Initiatives, 2005</td>
<td>A masterplan framework designed to direct the future growth and development of Ashford in line with its status as one of the national growth areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adopted Core Strategy - Ashford Borough Council, July 2008</td>
<td>This amended version of the Core Strategy was adopted following the Inspector’s Report in July 2008.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submitted Core Strategy – Ashford Borough Council, November 2006</td>
<td>This is the submitted Core Strategy document which is the central part of Ashford’s Local Development Framework. It sets out the Council’s vision for the Borough, a spatial strategy, broad locations for housing and other strategic development needs, guidance on how the highest possible standards of design and sustainability will be delivered, core topic policies and guidance on how the Council will monitor and deliver the Local Development framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Borough Council Local Plan, 2000</td>
<td>The Local Plan was formally adopted by the Borough Council in June 2000. It sets out a framework of plans and policies to guide the development and use of land in the Borough. This includes issues such as the location of housing development, measures to protect the countryside, and retail and employment policies. The Planning &amp; Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 provided for the saving of these Adopted Local Plan policies until 27 September 2007, after which they would expire, but the Secretary of State has compiled a list stating which Local Plan policies should be saved beyond 27 September 2007 and which should be left to expire. These saved policies came into force on 28 September 2007 and will be used as the basis for all decision making; they will remain in place until they are superseded by policies in the LDF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme for Development for the Ashford Growth Area, Ashford’s Future Delivery Board</td>
<td>A high level programme management tool to secure the delivery of the targets set for the Ashford Growth area. The programme summarises the key strategic infrastructure requirements to be met for successful sustainable growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Growth Area Rural Scoping Study – LDA Design, August 2007</td>
<td>A scoping study which looks at the potential impact of Ashford’s growth on future countryside planning across the borough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Integrated Water Management &amp; Greenspace: Towards a Green &amp; Blue Grid for Ashford, Catherine Bickmore Associates &amp; Black &amp; Veatch, 2006</td>
<td>A research study which uses four case studies to explore the synergy between integrated water management and integration of different levels and scales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Integrated Water Management Strategy, 2006-2031, Environment Agency, July 2007 (Final)</td>
<td>Provides a framework to show how Ashford’s water infrastructure and environmental issues can be planned and implemented alongside the spatial planning of a sustainable community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, Ashford Borough Council, October 2006</td>
<td>Advises on the assessment of flood risk, the impact of surface runoff and locations where specific flood mitigation measures are required in relation to proposals in the Local Development Framework.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Review of Greenspace Management, Maxwell Stamp, December 2007</td>
<td>Identifies and evaluates options for ownership, management and funding of greenspace in Ashford during the next 20 years. Of particular relevance is the analysis of the potential to create a dedicated ‘Greenspace Trust’ for key parts of the Green &amp; Blue Grid.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LOCAL GUIDANCE

Planning for Woodlands in Ashford Borough, Forestry Commission, Draft 2007 – guidance to ensure that the opportunities that Forestry Commission and private woodlands present in Ashford are fully realised in future open space and recreation strategies.

Ashford Local Development Framework – Local Landscape Character Study – Studio Engleback, 2005 – a detailed landscape character assessment of the hinterland surrounding the Greater Ashford Development Area which informed the development of the greater Ashford Development Framework. It is based on the detailed historic landscape character units which are within the overall hierarchy of the Kent county landscape character areas and provides a detailed analysis of the condition and distinctive character of the landscape surrounding Ashford.

Green Corridor Action Plan, Ashford Borough Council, 2000 – a strategy to guide the ongoing design and management of the riverside areas through Ashford town centre, which are known as the ‘green corridors’.

Urban Fringe Management Project – brief for Audience Development Plan, Ashford Borough Council, Work in progress

Willesborough Dykes Action Plan, 2007 – identifies priority projects for environmental enhancement and management, together with implications and options for funding.

Willesborough Dykes Community Education Project, 2008, Kentish Stour Countryside Project – working with local schools to develop an understanding of three principal habitats: grassland, water and woodland/hedgerows within an urban environment.

Ashford Borough Council, 2008, Ashford Protected Species Strategy – Brief for Consultants. This brief is for a study which will provide guidance on a strategic approach to the conservation of protected species within the Ashford area, suggesting how to tackle the problem of limited sites for translocation of protected reptiles and amphibians. It is based on a paper by John Newton (The Ecology Consultancy) and Richard Moyse (Kent Wildlife Trust) entitled Ashford’s Expansion & the impact on protected species – a proposal.
Annex B

GIS Data Sets – Sources & Content

Sheils Flynn gratefully acknowledges the data and assistance provided by Kent County Council, the Environment Agency, Kent Wildlife Trust, Natural England, Sustrans, Ashford’s Future and Ashford Borough Council in collating the extensive GIS data-sets used in preparing the GIS mapping which informed the development of Ashford’s Green & Blue Grid.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Data source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Physical attributes</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geology</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Topography</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hydrology</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agricultural land quality</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Planning</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Plan Policy</td>
<td>Ashford Borough Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>County Landscape Policy</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Landscape</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape character [county]</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape character [Ashford]</td>
<td>Ashford Borough Council (data digitised for this study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape condition [county]</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landscape condition [Ashford]</td>
<td>Ashford Borough Council (data digitised for this study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accessibility</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted routes</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public rights of way</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford cycleways</td>
<td>Ashford Future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Cycle Routes</td>
<td>Sustrans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>Data source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All heritage designations/data</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statutory designations</td>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecological network model</td>
<td>Kent Wildlife Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing habitat data</td>
<td>Kent Wildlife Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPG 17 data</td>
<td>Inspace Planning (PPG 17 audit &amp; assessment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Places of Interest/art</td>
<td>Ashford Borough Council (data digitised for this study)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Stewardship</td>
<td>Natural England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Economic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indices of Multiple Deprivation</td>
<td>National Statistics (central government)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex C

Stakeholder Workshop – 5 February, 2.00pm
Stakeholder Workshop – 16 July 10.00am

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Borough Council</td>
<td>Richard Alderton</td>
<td>Head of Planning &amp; Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Borough Council</td>
<td>Daniel Carter</td>
<td>Senior Policy Planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Borough Council</td>
<td>Simon Cole</td>
<td>Planning Policy Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Borough Council</td>
<td>Ann Davies</td>
<td>Parks &amp; Countryside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Borough Council</td>
<td>Steve Parish</td>
<td>Project Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Borough Council</td>
<td>Chris Dixon</td>
<td>Art Projects Co-ordinator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Borough Council</td>
<td>Liz Walker</td>
<td>Landscape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Borough Council</td>
<td>Terry Jones</td>
<td>Nature Conservation &amp; Tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford’s Future</td>
<td>Judith Armitt</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford’s Future</td>
<td>Abigail Raymond</td>
<td>Acting Programme Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford’s Future</td>
<td>Laurieanne Tibbles</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford’s Future</td>
<td>Steven Bosall</td>
<td>Infrastructure Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford’s Future</td>
<td>Stuart Nicholls</td>
<td>Programme Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford’s Future</td>
<td>Andrew Phillips</td>
<td>Sustainable Transport Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Landowners’ Group</td>
<td>Haydn Payne</td>
<td>Planning Director, Berkeley Strategic Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Landowners’ Group</td>
<td>Russell Jarvis</td>
<td>Director, Jarvis Homes Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Landowners’ Group</td>
<td>Ruth McKeown</td>
<td>Representing Capel House Property Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Landowners’ Group</td>
<td>Nathan Edwards</td>
<td>Representing Capel House Property Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashford Landowners’ Group</td>
<td>Robert Stevenson</td>
<td>Director, John Bishop and Associates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPRE, Kent</td>
<td>Sean Furey</td>
<td>Deputy Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecology Consultancy</td>
<td>John Newton</td>
<td>Managing Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>Jo Addis</td>
<td>Sustainable Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environment Agency</td>
<td>Barnie Neaves</td>
<td>Project Manager – Ashford Growth Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Partnerships</td>
<td>Simon Bandy</td>
<td>Senior Regeneration Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry Commission</td>
<td>Terry Jennings</td>
<td>Public Forest Estate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forestry Commission</td>
<td>Jonathan Harding</td>
<td>Area Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greening the Gateway Kent &amp; Medway</td>
<td>Martin Hall</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspace Planning</td>
<td>Graham Jones</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>Andy Corcoran</td>
<td>Highways Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>David Jenkins</td>
<td>Highways Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>Andrew Hutchinson</td>
<td>East Kent Rights of Way Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>Katie Cullen</td>
<td>Area Rights of Way Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>David Jenkins</td>
<td>Highways Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>Faye Faiers</td>
<td>Area Rights of Way Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>Val Hyland</td>
<td>Regeneration &amp; Projects Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>Liz Holliday</td>
<td>Team Leader, Natural Environment &amp; Coast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>John Williams</td>
<td>Head of Heritage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent County Council</td>
<td>Lis Dyson</td>
<td>Heritage team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Downs AONB</td>
<td>Nick Johannsen</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent Wildlife Trust</td>
<td>Richard Moysa</td>
<td>Senior Conservation Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentish Stour Countryside Project</td>
<td>Jon Shelton</td>
<td>Countryside Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Restoration Trust</td>
<td>David Beuzeval</td>
<td>Development Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural England</td>
<td>Marjan Desmet</td>
<td>Team Member - SE Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural England</td>
<td>Brian McDonald</td>
<td>Team Leader SE Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEEDA</td>
<td>Martin Barrow</td>
<td>Senior Development Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEEDA</td>
<td>Valerie Carter</td>
<td>Rural Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEEDA</td>
<td>Adam Ingleby</td>
<td>Head of Environmental Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheils Flynn</td>
<td>Kate Collins</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheils Flynn</td>
<td>Stephen Flynn</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheils Flynn</td>
<td>Eoghan Sheils</td>
<td>Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustrans</td>
<td>Simon Pratt</td>
<td>Regional Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustrans</td>
<td>David Young</td>
<td>Regional Co-ordinator, SE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

Sheils Flynn would like to thank the Steering Group and Inspace Planning for their support and guidance throughout the preparation of the Green & Blue Grid Strategy.

The Steering Group:
Daniel Carter - Ashford Borough Council
Laurienne Tibbles - Ashford’s Future
Val Hyland - Kent County Council

The Inspace Planning team:
Graham Jones
Jim Phillips
Phil Chichester

We would also like to thank all those who participated in the workshops, provided data and who gave their time in consultation meetings. In particular:

Jo Addis - Environment Agency
Richard Alderton - Ashford Borough Council
Stephen Bourner - Ashford’s Future
Richard Dadd - Kent County Council
Ann Davies - Ashford Borough Council
Phil Davies - Ashford Borough Council
Marjan Desmet - Natural England
Chris Dixon - Ashford Borough Council
Lis Dyson - Kent County Council
Faye Faier - Kent County Council
Colin Finch - Kent County Council
Rob Gazzard - Forestry Commission
Chris Giles - Natural England
Simon Pratt - Sustrans
Richard Moyse - Kent Wildlife Trust
Barrie Neaves - Environment Agency
Abigail Raymond - Ashford’s Future
Debbie Salmon - Kent Wildlife Trust
Dan Tuson - Natural England