



AGENDA

ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING

Date: Wednesday, 11 January 2023

Time: 7.00 pm

Venue: Council Chamber, Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, ME10 3HT*

Membership:

Councillors Richard Darby, Steve Davey, Oliver Eakin, James Hall, Ann Hampshire, Nicholas Hampshire, Pete Neal, Julian Saunders (Chair), David Simmons, Sarah Stephen, Eddie Thomas, Roger Truelove, Tim Valentine (Vice-Chair), Tony Winckless and Corrie Woodford.

Quorum = 5

Pages

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The Chair will ask Members if they have any disclosable pecuniary interests (DPIs) or disclosable non-pecuniary interests (DNPIs) to declare in respect of items on the agenda. Members with a DPI in an item must leave the room for that item and may not participate in the debate or vote.

Aside from disclosable interests, where a fair-minded and informed observer would think there was a real possibility that a Member might be biased or predetermined on an item, the Member should declare this and leave the room while that item is considered.

Members who are in any doubt about interests, bias or predetermination should contact the monitoring officer for advice prior to the meeting.

4. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the [Meeting](#) held on 3 November 2022 (Minute Nos. 415 – 421) and the Extraordinary Meeting held on 19 December 2022 (Minute Nos. to follow) as correct records.

Part B reports for the Environment Committee to decide

- | | | |
|----|--|---------|
| 5. | Forward Decisions Plan | 5 - 6 |
| 6. | Open Spaces and Play Strategy - a review | 7 - 42 |
| 7. | Sittingbourne Car Club Proposal | 43 - 52 |
| 8. | Exclusion of the Press and Public | |

To decide whether to pass the resolution set out below in respect of the following item:

That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 and 4.

3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).
4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the authority or a Minister of the Crown and any employees of, or office holders under, the authority.

9. Sittingbourne Car Club Proposal - a review - Exempt Appendix 1

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Issued on Tuesday, 3 January 2023

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**Chief Executive, Swale Borough Council,
Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME10 3HT**

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Environment Committee Forward Decisions Plan – 11 January 2023

Report title, background information and recommendation(s)	Date of meeting	Open or exempt?	Lead Officer and report author
Open Spaces and Play Strategy – a review	January 2023	Open	Head of Service: Head of Environment and Leisure, Martyn Cassell Lead Officer: Graeme Tuff
Sittingbourne Car Club Proposal	January 2023	Open report exempt appendix	Head of Service: Head of Environment and Leisure, Martyn Cassell Lead Officer: Grace Couch
Air Quality Action Plan	Early 2023	Open	Head of Service: Environmental Health Service, Tracey Beattie Lead Officer: Clare Lydon
BBQs motion and policy	March 2023	Open	Head of Service: Head of Environment and Leisure, Martyn Cassell Lead Officer: Graeme Tuff

Scrapsgate field horse riding area	March 2023	Open	Head of Service: Head of Environment and Leisure, Martyn Cassell Lead Officer: Graeme Tuff
Marine Town Food waste and Alternate weekly Refuse and Recycling roll out	March 2023	Open	Head of Service: Head of Environment and Leisure, Martyn Cassell Lead Officer: Alister Andrews/Kelly Mehmet
Public conveniences – early discussion on new contract	Mid-2023	Open	Head of Service: Head of Environment and Leisure, Martyn Cassell Lead Officer: Alister Andrews

Environment Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	11 January 2023
Report Title	Open Spaces and Play Strategy – A Review
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell, Head of Environment & Leisure
Lead Officer	Graeme Tuff, Greenspaces Manager
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. To consider the initial views and contributions of Members in the development of the new Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the basis for starting the process and consideration of a reviewed and updated Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy for Swale. It seeks Member thoughts, ideas and ultimate agreement to a process that will provide the necessary strategy for the period 2023-2028. As open space areas come under the oversight of the Environment Committee it is expected that this discussion will focus on open space, with the play area element having been considered by Community Committee.
- 1.2 The Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy is a key document used not only for the strategic direction of the service but also an evidence base for the Local Plan. The current version was developed in 2017 and now requires updating with an initial technical assessment which will provide detailed evidence of quantity, quality, accessibility and need. The report identifies the specific Local Plan requirements and relevant corporate policies.

2 Background

- 2.1 The current Open Spaces and Play Strategy 2018-2022 was developed in 2017 and sought to define, the Council's plans to protect, manage, and enhance its open spaces and play areas over the period of the plan. A copy is enclosed as Appendix I.
- 2.2 The strategy's purpose is to provide a sound body of evidence for supporting open space policies within the local plan, identify key opportunities and strategic imperatives, plan for delivery improvements to new and existing spaces and set standards for provision, quality and accessibility.
- 2.3 The current document provides background to the strategy such as a vision and context, summarises the technical assessment, identifies the challenges,

provides recommendations and action plan and also identifies the need and source for funding.

- 2.4 Open Space is defined as those spaces that generally provide unlimited free public access to usable open space, with access over the majority of the open space for people.

Open space is a generic term and encompasses a range of types:

- Parks & Gardens
- Natural/Semi/Natural Greenspace
- Green Corridors
- Outdoor Sports, Gyms and Playing Pitches
- General Amenity Greenspace
- Play Areas
- Cemeteries, Closed Churchyards and other burial grounds

National Planning Policy

- 2.5 The National Planning Policy Framework recognises the importance of having access to a network of high-quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity to the health and well-being of our communities. As such, planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. Information from these assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate, linking this provision with nature-based strategies such as green and blue infrastructure.

- 2.6 Officers currently use Policy DM 17 of the adopted Local Plan to consider the needs arising from new development and how best to meet them, which itself was guided by the Council's Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy (2018-2022). The Local Plan Review will need to revise this policy using an updated evidence base led by the Planning Practice Guidance. A new Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy along with any others deemed necessary, will be used to inform a robust policy for future needs and where they should be located, in the Local Plan Review.

Corporate Plan

- 2.7 The Corporate Plan is the overarching statement of the Council's strategic priorities and is arranged into 4 broad priorities:
- Priority 1 - Building the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs
 - Priority 2 - Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges
 - Priority 3 - Tackling deprivation and creating equal opportunities for everyone
 - Priority 4 - Renewing local democracy and making the Council fit for the future

While open space has a role to play in several of the Corporate Plan priorities given its link to homes through new development and equal opportunities through community engagement, its key strand is Priority 2 and the value placed on the environment and its ability to respond to climate change and increase biodiversity through various initiatives.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed to review and develop a new strategy over the coming months. This involves several stages and key pieces of work including production of an up to date and robust technical assessment that will identify and guide the specific recommendations for the new strategy. This will then be fully considered by Members along with external consultation on the draft strategy.

Key Principals

- 3.3 Key principals in the current strategy include the following:
- Protect the Council's existing open space network
 - Provide spaces to encourage a healthy community
 - Focus on enhancing/improving the quality of key open spaces
 - Promote the benefits open space has for people living and visiting Swale and enriching the biodiversity for wildlife
 - Support the development of facilities in open space to recognise the needs of users with disabilities and benefits of emotional and holistic approaches that open spaces can bring.
 - Maximise the benefits of the open space and play facilities that comes with increased housing development required under the local plan
- 3.4 Members are asked to consider the current strategy at Appendix I and principals above to suggest any changes or increased emphasis for the new strategy. Questions such as;
- The level of emphasis placed on the Declaration of a Climate and Ecological Emergency in 2019 that superseded the development of the current strategy. A summary and key open space actions are included at Appendix II.
 - How important is tree planting to include specifically within the strategy.
 - Views on the future provision of new burial space in cemeteries.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Keep the existing strategy as it is or not have a strategy at all. The strategy is a key component as evidence base for the Local Plan and to guide the principals of the Council's management of current and future open space.
- 4.2 If the evidence base and strategy were not to be reviewed and updated, there is significant risk that the Local Plan would not be found as sound and that the service would not have the appropriate strategic guidance required to fulfil its potential in relation to the Corporate Plan.

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 This is the first stage of developing the new strategy and we are seeking both Community and Environment Committee Members initial thoughts and guidance on the principals for a new strategy.
- 5.2 The new draft strategy will go through a process of Member consideration and external consultation before final agreement.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	The reviewed Open Space and Play Area Strategy would align specifically and directly to Priority 2 of the Corporate Plan - Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges. In addition, it links to Priority 1 through its association with the Local Plan by providing the evidence base and showing need for appropriate development.
Financial, Resource and Property	None identified at this stage. However, the technical assessment will require funding which will be determined following the meeting and whilst we research the scope of the work. Major changes in policy may result in increased costs and would therefore need to be assessed against the budget framework.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	None identified at this stage.
Crime and Disorder	None identified at this stage.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The new strategy has a significant part to play in the future strategic direction for the service, the requirements placed upon new development via the Local Plan and how the Council responds effectively to the climate and ecological emergency.
Health and Wellbeing	Open spaces and play areas can contribute significantly to health and well-being as evidenced by the usage and value placed upon them by the community during the Covid crises. The strategy will link with the Health and Care Partnership and can positively contribute to obesity work through the Population Health Management Group. The strategy will provide the basis and evidence for need and accessibility in both existing and new communities.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.

Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage.
Equality and Diversity	There are no differential equality issues raised by the proposals in this report at this time, although one of the key strands of the strategy review is to identify appropriate accessibility standards to open space and play areas for the whole community.
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage.

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy 2018-2022
- Appendix II: Climate and Ecological Emergency – Summary and Key Open Space Actions

8 Background Papers

- None

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Open Spaces and Play Area Strategy

2018-2022



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Forword

I am pleased to present the revised Open Spaces and Play Strategy for the Borough of Swale.

The Strategy shows how the Council, with the support of partners and residents, will protect, enhance and maintain our fantastic open space assets over the next four years.

The Strategy is the culmination of a range of inspections and assessments undertaken over the last year. It provides an important evidence base and sets out how we will make decisions on our open spaces sites. It supports the Swale Local Plan: Bearing Fruits 2031 and helps to ensure we have enough spaces and that the quality is maintained.

Formal parks and gardens, informal residential open spaces, playgrounds, allotments, coast line and other natural habitats play an important role in a community and can greatly benefit the health and well-being of the population. They provide opportunities for formal sport, play or simply a place to meet with friends and neighbours.

I would like to send special thanks to the many people who volunteer in our open spaces to provide activities or to help keep them looking good.

Councillor David Simmons.

Cabinet Portfolio Holder Environmental and Rural Affairs

Section 1: Introduction and Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

The strategy is for the borough of Swale. It was prepared in 2017 and sets out how the Council plans to protect, manage and enhance its open spaces over a four year period.

The strategy will be reviewed annually and updated every four years to harmonise with Local Plan revisions and expected changes to the Swale housing allocations. The strategy has been prepared by Swale Borough Council with technical assistance from Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd in preparing the space audit and assessment.

1.2 Definition of Open Space

The principle of public access lies at the heart of this open space strategy. Therefore, for the purpose of this strategy, open space is defined as:

Public open space which provides:

- generally unlimited free public access;
- genuinely useable open space for people; and
- Accessibility over the great majority of the open space.

This strategy does not include open space which is provided as private or paid for provision, e.g. playing fields within school grounds, golf courses and private estate gardens. It also does not include incidental areas, such as verges or streets (unless defined as part of a civic open space or other typologies below) or areas of land with the sole purpose of protection of wildlife without public access.

1.3 Typologies of Open Space

The use of the term 'open space' is generic; in reality it covers a range of types. For the purpose of this strategy and for the completed audit of the existing Council owned open space, the following typologies have been defined by the primary use:

Typology	Description	Example
Parks and Gardens	Large areas of open space, the majority of which will be publically accessible, close to public transport links and provide a range of facilities and features offering recreational, ecological, landscape, cultural or green infrastructure benefits. These open spaces may also include areas for water recreation	King Georges Playing Field, Sittingbourne
Natural / Semi-natural Greenspace	Informal and natural green space provides the opportunity to promote meaningful and safe recreation. This open space typology covers a wide range of uses, including woodland areas, wetland areas, heath-land Meadow and water recreation spaces	Milton Creek Country Park
Green Corridors	Relatively continuous areas of 'The Green Open Spaces' leading through the Swale area which may include spaces of water recreation.	Mid Kent Downs
Outdoor Sports, Outdoor Gyms & Playing pitches	Outdoor sports space includes all formally laid out sport and playing pitches for a number of different sporting activities (including rugby, football, netball, hockey, tennis and basketball). This does not include indoor sports provision or facilities.	King Georges Playing Field, Faversham
General Amenity greenspace	Most commonly (but not exclusively) in residential areas including informal recreation spaces, green space in and around housing, village greens. This may also include areas for water recreation.	Village Green, Bapchild

Play areas	This covers provision for children and teenagers, and includes play areas, skateboard parks, MUGA's, and other more informal areas (for example teenage shelters, kick walls). This typology typically sits within other open space typologies such as General Amenity or Strategic Parks.	Thistle Hill Play Area
Cemeteries, closed church yards and other burial grounds	Publically accessible cemeteries, churchyards and closed churchyards /cemeteries.	Faversham Cemetery

These categories are not always mutually exclusive. For example, a Green Corridor can contain informal kick about and play space and most typologies can contain significant provision for wildlife.

1.4 Executive Summary

Open Spaces enrich the quality of our lives and contribute towards healthy living. They help define and add to the character of a place as well as provide vital green infrastructure for wildlife, biodiversity, water, tranquillity, recreation, play, food production and off road pedestrian and cycling routes.

Swale's stunning and distinctive environment is one of the Borough's greatest assets. It includes an outstanding range of internationally and nationally important landscapes, focusing on the extensive grazing marshes, mudflats and saltmarshes of the Swale estuary, but also including wetlands, chalk downland and ancient woodland.

Swale currently enjoys a wide range of Open Spaces across its urban, rural and coastal environment. It has the benefit of existing wildlife sites, protected landscapes and a network of accessible countryside. It also has the benefit of having many organisations and groups of people active in the community who take great interest in their current and future local environment.

This Strategy attempts to focus on what's important for Swale's Open Space provision for the next 4 years in consideration of previous studies and strategies, recent audits, consultation and the adopted Swale Borough Local Plan (2017) and current work to develop revisions to the Local Plan.

The draft strategy and technical assessment were posted on the Council's web site for an eight week public consultation period in Spring 2018 with an on line survey and comments section. This was publicised in the Council's 'Inside Swale' publication which is distributed to households in the Borough. An invitation was also issued to local stakeholder organisations such as local environmental agencies, Town and Parish Councils to submit their comments on the draft strategy.

The adopted strategy reflects the views and comments resulting from the consultation responses which led to changes in the Open Spaces management policies and additions to the action plan.

The key conclusions and proposals are:

- There is sufficient provision of Council owned and managed open spaces across the seven open space typologies for the current population, with the exception of cemetery capacity.
- The focus for the next four years is on enhancing the quality of existing open spaces that were assessed as low quality, with particular attention to play areas where 1 in 3 of all Council current play areas are of low quality.
- A £500,000 rolling programme to refurbish a number of play areas during the life of the strategy.
- To invest at least £100,000 per year for 5 years on existing open spaces through section 106 developer contributions held in reserves supplemented where possible by securing grant funding.
- A small number of sites that were subject to external assessment and as being low quality and low value should be considered as redundant and disposed of or repurposed, using the standard assessment, nationally recognised criteria and consultation with local ward councillors
- The provision of new spaces associated with development/housing sites as set out in the Local Plan will address the expected demand for the next four years.
- Additional public space provision associated with new developments across the Borough will not be adopted by the Council for ongoing maintenance and management, unless there is an overwhelming case to provide a strategic new open space or the protection of important natural habitat and biodiversity.
- Developers will be responsible for funding the required open space provision related to future new development and put in place arrangements for funding the ongoing maintenance of the open space and an approved model of a community based Management Company to provide a quality space.

1.5 Purpose

The strategy has been prepared to:

- Provide a sound body of evidence for supporting open space policies within the Local Plan;
- Identify key opportunities and strategic imperatives, plan for the delivery of improvements to existing open spaces and new open spaces triggered by development unless there is a strategic value in doing so; and
- Provide a working document that sets standards for open space provision in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility, and a process for regular and future review.

1.6 Vision

The strategy is seen as a continuation of the good work prepared and being implemented by many organisations and individuals across the Borough. It is aimed to give a strategic and policy direction in relation to Public Open Space provision against predicted population growth.

The overarching vision of the strategy and its recommendations follow 5 guiding principles:

1. Protect the Council's existing open space network
2. Provide spaces to encourage a healthy community
3. Focus on enhancing/improving the quality of key open spaces
4. Promote the benefits open space has for people living and visiting Swale and enriching the biodiversity for wildlife.
5. Support the development of facilities in open spaces to recognise the needs of users with disabilities and the benefits of emotional and holistic approaches that open spaces can bring.
6. Maximise the benefits of the open space and play facilities that comes with the increased housing development required under the Local Plan.

1.7 National Planning Policy for open spaces.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012

The NPPF set out the Government's planning policies for England, and how these are expected to be applied. In relation to the provision of public open space the NPPF states:

"...The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities..."¹ and that "Access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation can make an important contribution to the health and well-being of communities."²

Planning policies and decisions should promote:

"Safe and accessible developments, containing clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas."³

And the NPPF requires that:

"Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the needs for open space, sports and recreation facilities and opportunities for new provision. The assessments should identify specific needs and quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses of open space, sports and recreational facilities in the local area. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sports and recreational provision are required."

Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss."⁴

¹ National Planning Policy Framework – Promoting healthy communities, 69

² National Planning Policy Framework – Promoting healthy communities, 73

³ National Planning Policy Framework – Promoting healthy communities, 69

⁴ National Planning Policy Framework – Promoting healthy communities, 73-74

The NPPF also make specific reference to biodiversity and geodiversity:

“To minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, planning policies should:

- plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries;
- identify and map components of the local ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by local partnerships for habitat restoration or creation;
- promote the preservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations, linked to national and local targets, and identify suitable indicators for monitoring biodiversity in the plan;
- aim to prevent harm to geological conservation interests; and
- where Nature Improvement Areas are identified in Local Plans, consider specifying the types of development that may be appropriate in these Areas.”⁵

The NPPF also details “three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental”⁶. These dimensions have provided a framework and shaped the approach to assessing public open space.

PPG17 Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation

This document, which was current at the time of the preparation of the Swale Borough Council Local Plan 2000, has now been replaced by the NPPF. However, the specific requirement of PPG17 for an open space audit is considered good practice by the borough Council. A new open space audit has therefore been undertaken to accompany this strategy and to inform the planning of the Council’s priorities for management of its existing open spaces. The approach of the audit has considered guidelines and recommendations within PPG17.

⁵ National Planning Policy Framework – Promoting healthy communities, 117

⁶ National Planning Policy Framework – Promoting healthy communities, 7

Accessible Natural Green Space Guidance NE265, Natural England 2011

NE265 is the latest review of work begun by Natural England in the early 1990s to establish standards for accessible natural green space. The Guidance retains Natural England's existing Accessible Natural Green Space Standards (ANGSt). The standards are non-statutory but are very widely accepted as representing an ideal quantitative and qualitative standard which should be used to inform the provision of natural open space in new developments and the management of existing open space.

The Strategy will have due regard for the guidance and will achieve access to natural green space in new residential areas through the provision of an extended green corridor network which will provide small natural areas close to homes and off-road connections to larger natural green spaces

1.8 Swale Strategic Context

This Strategy supports the aims of the Swale Corporate Plan 2015-2018 with links to each of the three priorities – A Borough to Be Proud of, A community to be Proud of and a Council to be Proud of.

The Strategy (and supporting technical assessment) will provide an evidence base for open space policy within the Swale Borough Local Plan 2031.

The Open Space and Play Strategy is informed by the Playing Pitch Strategy 2016 -2026 and previous Play Strategy of 2007-2012. There are two action plans addressing the local natural environment and biodiversity: Swale Green Grid Framework 2016¹. and the Biodiversity Action Plan 2016.



¹ Green Grid is a strategic, joined up approach to land management. It focuses on the relationship between green spaces and the communities they serve and aims to maximise the potential multi-functional benefits of a well-designed public realm.

1.9 Local Plan

Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan 2017

Bearing Fruits 2031, The Swale Borough Local Plan 2017, is the most important planning document for the borough, setting out the vision and overall development strategy for the area and how it will be achieved for the period from 2014-2031. It identifies where development will take place and how the natural environment and built heritage of the borough will be protected and enhanced.

It allocates major sites and locations for housing and employment to meet the needs of our growing population and in accordance with national planning policy and practice. An early review of the Plan will emerge to take account of revised Government new housing allocations.

There are a number of policies which relate to the protection and future provision of sport and open space. These include Policy CP5: Health and Wellbeing, Policy CP7: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment - providing for green infrastructure, Policy DM17: Open Space, Sports and Recreation provision and Policy DM18: Local Green Spaces as set out below:

Policy CP 7

Conserving and enhancing the natural environment - providing for green infrastructure

The Council will work with partners and developers to ensure the protection, enhancement and delivery, as appropriate, of the Swale natural assets and green infrastructure network and its associated strategy

Development proposals will, as appropriate:

1. Recognise and value ecosystems for the wider services they provide, such as for food, water, flood mitigation, disease control, recreation, health and well-being;
2. Protect the integrity of the existing green infrastructure network as illustrated by the Natural Assets and Green Infrastructure Strategy Map, having regard to the status of those designated for their importance as set out by Policy DM25 and Policy DM29;
3. Where assessment indicates that it is necessary to enhance and extend the network (including when management, mitigation and/or compensatory actions are required to address adverse harm), be guided by the Green Infrastructure Network and Strategy Map, prioritising actions toward identified Biodiversity Opportunity Areas;

4. Ensure that there is no adverse effect on the integrity of a SAC, SPA or Ramsar site, alone or in combination with other plan and projects, as it would not be in accordance with the aims and objectives of this Local Plan;
5. Require the completion of project specific Habitats Regulations Assessment, in accordance with Policy DM28, to ensure there are no likely significant effects upon any European designated site.
For residential sites within 6km of an access point to any of the North Kent Marshes, development must contribute to its Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy;
6. Contribute to the objectives of the Nature Partnerships and Nature Improvement Areas in Kent;
7. Make the enhancement of biodiversity and landscape as their primary purpose;
8. Promote the expansion of Swale's natural assets and green infrastructure, including within new and existing developments, by:
 - a. delivering a high standard of design quality to maximise the social, economic, health and environmental benefits of green infrastructure;
 - b. providing a focus for social inclusion, community development and lifelong learning;
 - c. taking into account the guidelines and recommendations of relevant management plans and guidance, Biodiversity Action Plans and Supplementary Planning Documents;
 - d. contributing to the protection, conservation and management of historic landscapes, archaeological and built heritage assets;
 - e. achieving, where possible, a net gain of biodiversity;
 - f. providing new recreational facilities in accordance with Policy DM17, exploiting opportunities to link urban and countryside areas and to create new footpath and cycle links;
 - g. taking account of and integrating with natural processes, such as flood risk and utilising sustainable urban drainage; and
 - h. including proposals to 'green' existing and proposed developed areas by increasing opportunities for nature in domestic gardens, streets and buildings, including street trees and in and around formal open spaces and sports provision.

Policy DM 18

Local green spaces

Sites are designated as Local Green Spaces, as shown on the Proposals Map.

Within designated Local Green Spaces planning permission will not be granted other than for:

1. The construction of a new building for one of the following purposes: essential facilities for outdoor sport or recreation, cemeteries, allotment use, or other uses of land where preserving the openness of the Local Green Space and not conflicting with its purpose;
2. The re-use or replacement of an existing building, provided the re-use does not include any associated uses of land around the building which might conflict with the openness of the Local Green Space or the purposes of including land within it; and
3. The carrying out of an engineering or other operation or the making of any material change of use of land, provided that it maintains the openness and character of the Local Green Space.

Local Plan Review

An early review for the Local Plan was acknowledged as necessary by the Inspector. This is partly as a result of Kent County Council Highways concerns over the local highway network capacity to accommodate growth to 2031. The timescale the Inspector has recommended for adoption of a review is April 2022. This would require a quick update to this Open Spaces Strategy to ensure any needs arising out of new housing allocations will be highlighted through the Local Plan review process.

BIRDS (Known as Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy)

Local Authorities across North Kent have joined Natural England and other agencies and organisations within the North Kent Environment Planning Group to identify the impacts of recreational disturbance on SPA birds. Designated European Wildlife Sites in North Kent include three Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites: the Thames Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar site, the Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and Ramsar Site, and the Swale SPA and Ramsar Site.

There has been a decline in the number of birds using these sites in recent years. Studies show that this could be due to people using the estuary and marshes for recreation purposes. The North Kent Bird Disturbance Report concludes that all new housing development within 6km of the North Kent Ramsar Sites or Special Protection Areas (including the Thames Estuary and Marshes) and larger housing development beyond 6km from the sites could have an adverse impact on them. This is because new housing development is likely to lead to further increases in recreational use of the sites which means that further declines in the bird population cannot be ruled out. Possible mitigation measures are set out

in the Thames, Medway and Swale Estuaries Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy. Having considered a number of options, North Kent Planning Authorities have imposed a tariff on new housing development. The money raised will be used to pay for schemes to avoid the adverse impacts of new housing development on the birds.

1.10 Local Green Spaces

The National Planning Policy Framework states that Local Plans should be able to identify Local Green Spaces for special protection. By designating these spaces the Council will be able to protect them from development and ensure their retention for enjoyment by the local community. It explains that spaces to be designated will be of particular importance and demonstrably special to local communities because of, for instance, their recreational value and tranquillity, heritage or biodiversity value.

Local Green Space designations differ from Village Green registration which is handled by Kent County Council under separate legislation that is outside the remit of national planning policy and the Local Plan.

The Council has undertaken an assessment of potential Local Green Spaces against defined criteria and this is published separately in Local Plan Technical Paper No. 2. The 111 designated sites in question have, for the most part, been put forward by local communities themselves and have been the subject of specific consultation with landowners and occupiers. The areas represent a wide diversity of types, ranging from coastal cliff tops, allotments and recreation grounds through to private country parks, urban woodland and informally used urban fringe land.

The sites designated as Local Green Spaces are shown on the Proposal Maps. Policy DM18 can have no direct influence on the management of these sites, although clearly the Borough, Parish and Town Councils wish to see their current usage continue. However, Policy DM18 will be used to preserve these Local Green Spaces and proposals for development which would conflict with the purposes of designating the land will not be permitted, other than in very special circumstances.

The designated sites can all be viewed in chapter 9 of the Local Plan

<http://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s7987/FULL%20COUNCIL%2026%20JULY%20Local%20Plan%20Item%20Appdx%201%20Bearing%20Fruits%202031%20The%20Swale%20Borough%20Local%20Plan.pdf>

Section 2: The way forward

2.1 Technical Assessment Report summary

The technical assessment report of the Council's Open spaces was completed by the Council assisted by the detailed audit work of the appointed consultants, Knight, Kavanagh & Page Ltd.

The technical report has addressed what open space provision exists in the Borough, its condition, distribution and overall quality by using standard assessment methodology developed for Planning Policy Guidance 17(PPG17), aligned with the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

The audit and assessment of the existing open space in report is broadly focused on three primary considerations:

- Quantity
- Quality
- Value

There is also an audit of accessibility by applying national distance standards based on proximity of open space types to nearby conurbations.

The aggregated audit results summarised the information by typology, identifying deficiencies by quality and value to enable a grading assessment for each open space as high, adequate or low. It also considers previous audits, studies and reviews such as the Open Space Study 2008 and the Play Strategy 2007-2012.

The accumulated information led to the seven recommendations as set out below in section 2.4 'Open Space Assessment recommendations' and will also help the Council prioritise investment and provision over the next four years and the required revisions of the Local Plan.

2.2 Open space challenges

Improving the quality of the open space infrastructure has been, and remains, one of the Council's top priorities. However, stretched financial resources have led to increasing pressure to reduce Council spending generally.

This has brought about a need to re-assess the costs of maintaining these spaces and the way they may be managed in the future. This generates choices in whether the Council continues managing poor quality spaces that currently offer limited value to a local community.

There may well be some tough decisions to be made in order to achieve the high quality, safe, clean and sustainable open spaces that we aspire to. We will keep residents and ward councillors regularly informed so there is a shared understanding of the Council's intentions and objectives.

The evidence prepared for the Strategy helps steer where to apply these themes and how they may be implemented.

Recommendations in 2.4 provide more detail. The recommendations will be refined and rationalised following further consultation and testing against the evidence. There is a great potential to help strengthen Swale's Open Space provision by giving a series of interrelated actions that are all working towards the same goal.

2.3 Play Areas: Future Provision

One of the key open space typologies is play areas.

This section sets out future direction for play development and maintenance of play areas within SBC, taking into consideration national guidance and local provision based on the assessment work undertaken by the Council's consultants in assessing quantity, quality, access and type.

It also acknowledges the largest population increase for Swale when compared with all the Kent Council areas both in real and percentage terms, between 2015 and 2016 with further predicted growth, increasing by an additional 2,600 people (+1.8%), of which 24.6% are expected to be aged 0-15 years.

The previous strategy considered Children and Young People's play provision which focussed on informal and formal opportunities for 0-18 year olds. Since then there has been a wider focus on outdoor exercise provision for adults with the introduction of outdoor gyms in the borough's open spaces to help promote improved health and increasing fitness.

The strategy aimed amongst other things;

- To acknowledge the importance of play for children and young people both for themselves and for communities in general.
- To identify the work of all agencies involved in providing play opportunities children and young people to assist in developing a co-ordinated approach, identifying gaps in provision and reducing duplication.
- To make effective use of funding, including but not limited to that available through the Children's Play Initiative.

- To ensure that sustainability is built into children's play provision in the longer term.
- To improve children's access and accessibility to safe place to play and socialise.
- To provide more and better local and inclusive opportunities where they are most needed, evidenced by the results of audits and community engagement.
- To improve public open spaces as an environment to play.

This report suggests that the future strategy continues the ethos of the previous strategy whilst understanding the constraints of the current financial climate. National funding streams have dwindled and internal maintenance budgets are being stretched alongside contributions from developments.

The assessment audit identified 101 play sites across the Borough, of which the Council manages 79 sites, with the remaining 22 play sites in the borough managed by a range of organisations such as parish councils, housing associations and developer led management organisations. These sites all add to the offer but do not impact financially or on the resources of SBC.

In recognition of the need to improve play areas, the Council has introduced a £500,000 rolling programme to refurbish a number of play areas during the life of the strategy.

In addition the Council also manages a number of skate parks, multi-use games areas, 9 outdoor gyms and also coordinates the design and commissioning of new play areas, predominantly funded through developer contributions. The Council is funding a new £300,000 skate park as part of the Mill project in Sittingbourne.

Zurich Municipal inspects the Council managed play areas annually and give an independent assessment of quality and identify any risks that the Council need to consider. Throughout the remainder of the year the operational staff and the Council's Open Space contractor also carry out regular inspections.

Our intention is to provide quality facilities for play despite increasing financial difficulties. In order to ensure this, it is proposed there are two standards of playground:

Flagship Play Sites (NEAPs¹) – that SBC provides a flagship play site in each of the main conurbations, Sittingbourne, Sheerness and Faversham. These will be top quality 'destination' facilities that people would travel further for and are aimed at providing variety for all age groups 0-18 years. The focus will not be solely be on children's play but look to new and innovative approaches to engaging teenagers/older youths. There will also be a focus on accessible facilities for disabled users and adult fitness equipment.

Local Standard Play Areas (LEAPs¹) – the rest of the existing play areas have been assessed on quality and value, what elements are safe and fit for purpose and the quantity of sites within the standard walking catchments. They will be maintained to a safe standard suitable for the basic use of play e.g. swing, climb, and slide.

Appendix A sets out the criteria for these play area types

¹ LEAP play areas are a medium size facility of approx 500-1000m². The main difference between a LEAP and NEAP playzones is that even though both are designed for children to play on, the NEAP park area also has an area for kickabout soccer which is usually designed to be a MUGA multi use games area.

Youth sport and play sites – where existing facilities remain in good condition; the intention would be to keep multi-use games areas, basketball hoops, football goal ends, outdoor gyms and skate parks in the current locations.

The total budget for playground repairs and the replacement of equipment for the council's 79 play sites, including vandalism costs, is £40k annually.

Major external funding programmes such as the Big Lottery Children's Play Initiative have disappeared and it is increasingly harder to get the amount of capital needed for full playground replacement.

While developer contributions provide for new play areas to be created and then adopted by the Council including a commuted sum for ten years of maintenance, the Council inherits the ongoing maintenance liabilities from year 11.

To address the need to improve the overall quality of play areas managed, the Council will explore:

- Disposal of redundant or low quality and low value sites.

There are a small number of play areas identified in the assessment as low quality and low value which need to be considered for disposal using the criteria set out in the technical assessment data, the catchment area and proximity to other play areas and national standards. Approving the disposal of a specific site will be authorised through a delegated decision to the Cabinet Portfolio Member Environment and Rural Affairs in consultation with local ward Councillors based on the technical report audit criteria and assessment: quality, community value and accessibility to alternative sites and usage

The annual strategy refresh will include analysis of the other identified low quality low value sites to consider a priority order for refurbishment or in a small amount of cases possible closure.

Poor maintenance of equipment or lack of money to replace ageing stock can lead to legal implications and/or insurance claims from members of the public. SBC has a responsibility for play areas in the same way as all public open spaces.

2.4 Open Spaces and Play Strategy Recommendations

The following section provides a summary on the key findings in the application of the quantity, quality and accessibility standards. It incorporates and recommends what the Council should be seeking to achieve in order to address the issues highlighted.

Recommendation a)

- ◆ ***Ensure low quality sites with a high community value are prioritised for future enhancement***

The policy approach to these sites should be to enhance their quality to the applied standards (i.e. high quality). This is especially the case if the site is deemed to be of high value to the local community. Therefore, they should initially be protected, if they are not already so, in order for their quality to be improved.

The open spaces assessment document identifies those sites that should be given consideration for enhancement if possible.

Recommendation b)

- ◆ ***Ensure all sites assessed as high for quality and value are protected***

Sites within this category should be viewed as being key forms of open space provision. The quality and value matrix in the Open Spaces assessment document identifies those sites rating high for quality and value.

Recommendation c)

- ◆ ***Destination (Strategic) Sites should be recognised through protection and enhancement***

There are a number of sites across Swale with strategic multi-functional roles which serve a large part or whole of the Borough. These 'destination' sites provide a wide range of diverse opportunities associated with several different forms of open space which users are willing to travel greater distances in order to access. Sites considered as 'destinations' in Swale include:

- ◆ Bartons Point Coastal Park
- ◆ Leysdown Coastal Park
- ◆ Perry Wood
- ◆ Milton Creek Country
- ◆ Oare Gunpowder Works Country Park

Such sites currently help to meet the identified ‘catchment gaps’ in the provision for other open space typologies. The Council should seek to ensure the role and quality of these sites through continued enhancement so providing a diverse range of features. This is in order to provide a stronger secondary role and will also help to minimise the need for new provision when considering gaps in catchment areas.

Recommendation d)

- ◆ ***Recognise types of open space that are surplus to requirements and/or those of low quality and value and determine their future use using the criteria set out in the technical assessment data and national standards.***

For sites identified as having an oversupply for the current/future population or those being of low value and/or low quality (as shown in the open space assessment document), a decision on their future use needs to be made. If no improvements can be made, no shortfall in other open space typologies is noted, or it is not feasible to change the primary typology of the site, then the site may be redundant/‘surplus to requirements’. Options for disposal or repurposing should be considered and this will involve Ward members in the process.

Recommendation e)

- ◆ ***The need for additional cemetery provision should be led by demand rather than population calculations***

No standards have been set for the provision of cemeteries. Instead provision should be determined by future projected demand for burial space.

The Assessment Report highlights there are currently only 10 years of burial capacity across Swale and given the complexities of securing and preparing suitable land this policy seeks to set a policy of having 20 years burial capacity. The need for additional burial space is therefore a key objective for the Council to identify an appropriate new site.

Recommendation f)

The Council will no longer adopt future open spaces from developers and organisations unless there is an overwhelming case to provide a strategic new open space or the protection of important natural habitat and biodiversity.

The Local Plan identifies additional new open space provision requirements to support new housing developments, traditionally funded by developer contributions.

The Council will encourage developers to fund and create quality open spaces and also provide management arrangements for the ongoing upkeep and provision of the publicly accessible spaces. This can be through either direct developer management or legal transfer to a local community association or Trust supported by a commuted sum, funded by the Developer.

The Council will develop a process which will include:

- considering a range of options for future management of open spaces
- looking at national guidelines
- Explore reinforcing the terms of section 106 agreements with management companies
- consultation with ward members on the proposed process to be adopted.

The Council will also pursue the principle of sustainability in enhancing our existing open spaces by seeking developer contributions towards such existing facilities that are in close proximity to new developments as detailed in section 3.3 of the strategy

Recommendation g)

◆ *Promote alternative future management arrangements for open spaces*

The national review of Parks undertaken by the Government select committee in 2016/17 provided discussion around different types of management models for public open spaces. This recommendation encourages Swale Borough Council to look at sites and models that may work locally. This links strongly to our Community Asset Transfer policy which is outlined later in this document. Focus will be on more efficient ways of managing or attracting new income to reduce down the financial burden on public money.

2.5 Strategy Action Plan

The development of an action plan provides a baseline of proposed outputs and targets that will be reviewed annually.

- a. To invest at least £100,000 capital spending per year for 5 years on existing open spaces through developer contributions, grants, capital works and disposals.
- b. To invest £500,000 in a rolling programme to refurbish a number of play areas during the life of the strategy.
- c. To achieve at least 3 Green Flag parks and open spaces in the next 5 years.

- d. To review our open space portfolio and identify relevant sites for investment, disposal or alternative uses by September 2018, linked to our successful programme of Community Asset Transfer and in consultation with the relevant Ward Members.
- e. To actively promote our open spaces in partnership with other agencies and voluntary groups as places to sustain and improve health and wellbeing.
- f. To increase the amount of open space under a wildlife management regime by 5 hectares and by December 2022.
- g. Seek improvement of horticulture in our open spaces to enrich the biodiversity
- h. To increase community involvement in open space management by providing support to new or existing community groups.
- i. To ensure actions in relation to Local Plan Policy DM 17 are put in place to protect existing open space and private playing fields , to help negotiate new open space in future housing developments and to continue the designation of Local Green Space across the Borough.
- j. Look at new methods of operation and potential commercial ventures to help meet the ongoing cost of maintaining open space facilities
- k. A Borough wide review of public conveniences to also consider an audit of existing Changing Places toilets provision.

3: Funding the improvements

3.1 Council funding

The Council does not have unlimited budgets for open space management and improvement. Careful consideration must be given to ensure that any works carried out to open spaces are affordable and sustainable in the long term.

The strategy acknowledges that even though funding is limited, there are still opportunities for the Council, working with partners and volunteers, to deliver safe, active, and well managed spaces. New methods of operation and potential commercial ventures will also be explored to help meet the ongoing cost of maintaining open space facilities.

As identified in section 2.3 'Play Areas: Future Provision', we have funded a £500,000 rolling programme over four years to upgrade play areas to help address the under investment in play areas and raise the quality and value.

To invest at least £100,000 per year for 5 years on existing open spaces through 'section 106' developer contributions held in reserves and securing external grant funding. A proportion of the funds will be allocated for enhancements to the Destination sites as listed in Recommendation 3.

The allocated sums will greatly assist officers in leveraging additional match funding or contributions from external bodies such as charities, town and parish councils and community groups.

3.2 Community Asset Transfer

Community Asset Transfer (CAT) is a shift in management and/or ownership of land or buildings from public bodies (most commonly local authorities) to communities (community and voluntary sector groups, community enterprises, social enterprises).

The Council recognises the value of enabling local community partners to take more responsibility for local assets, a process which can help to bring in external funding for its sites. With suitable safeguards in place, this can bring real benefits to both residents and the Council. The Council's CAT policy aims are:

- i. Sustain viability and improve service provision;
- ii. Deliver sustainable solutions that are accepted, agreed, 'owned' and driven by the local community;
- iii. Increase the number of local people helping to run or own local services or assets;
- iv. Realise wider community benefits such as increased levels of volunteering, social capital and civic participation; and
- v. Improve the leverage of external funding into the local area through increased funding opportunities, encouraging economic development, and social enterprise activity.
- vi. Transfer options can range from freehold, a long lease, a shorter lease or a licence to occupy. However, for most transfers, where grants or loans are sought for capital development, the length of tenure will need to be long enough to secure external investment. Therefore, community asset transfer is usually taken to mean a long lease of up to 125 years but in certain circumstances the period can be shorter.

The full policy can be viewed on the Council's website.

3.3 Open Spaces Contribution Costs

This strategy determines quantity and quality of provision not only of the existing facilities in each open space typology, but also the requirement for any provision provided as part of new development within the borough.

Commuted Sum for Maintenance

Recommendation F identifies that the Council will only seek to adopt new open space where it is of strategic importance or for the protection of important natural habitat and biodiversity. Where this is applicable, the Council will seek a 10 year commuted sum to manage and maintain the land as accessible public open space.

The commuted sum is calculated based on typical grounds maintenance costs and includes a calculation that takes estimated account of both inflation and bank interest. If a play area is required and included on site an additional supplemental sum will be sought to cover the additional costs incurred.

- The Commuted Sum - £235.00 per dwelling
- Supplemental Play Area Commuted Sum - £57.00 per dwelling

These figures will be reviewed annually in March to ensure they remain in line with industry costs and published on the Council website.

Off-Site Contributions

There are sites where although open space is provided as part of the development, it is not appropriate for facilities such as play or formal sports facilities to be incorporated. This could be due to the scale of the development not generating appropriate areas of land or because there are adjacent facilities that with enhancement and increase in capacity can adequately cater for the increased population generated by new development. The calculation formula will be subject to regular review.

While national information is not easily available to identify costs of all facilities, the contribution sums are calculated based on technical costs identified for example in Sport England's Facility Cost Guidance.

As such the Council will seek to collect appropriate contributions from developers where able, to increase capacity and quality to cater for the new communities.

- Contribution for off-site formal sports - £593.00 per dwelling
- Contribution for off-site play/fitness - £446.00 per dwelling.

These figures will be reviewed annually in March to ensure they remain in line with industry costs and published on the Council website.

Appendix A. SBC PLAY AREA CRITERIA

FLAGSHIP PLAY SITES:

A flagship play area should include the following items:

- Innovative headline piece of equipment i.e. Viking ship, zip wire, L climbing wall etc.
- Play centre for all ages; 3-7, 8-14, 15+, 15-17, + adults e.g. outdoor gym.
- Multi-gym equipment or Multi-use games area
- Roundabout
- Car Parking
- Slide
- Swings
- Basket swing
- Rocker
- Perimeter fencing
- Ample seating area
- Picnic benches
- Bins
- Signage
- Wet pour safety surface throughout (not bark pit or safety matting)
- High population area (high footfall within 20 minutes walking distance) *
- DDA specific play equipment - designed, installed and maintained with specialist equipment to ensure that disabled children and their parents can enjoy playing in a safe and stimulating environment.

* Consider possible changes to existing assessment criteria in line with nationally agreed standard guidelines

LOCAL STANDARD PLAY AREA:

Adequate provision of equipment to provide play provision for lower usage which include:

- Swings (junior and baby)
- Slide
- Multi-frame climbing area
- Rocker
- Basic Seating
- Bins
- Signage
- Perimeter fencing where required (based on risk assessment)
- DDA compliant equipment where possible
- Equipment specific safety surfacing

Copies of this Swale Borough Council strategy are available on the Council website www.swale.gov.uk
If you would like further hard copies or alternative versions (e.g. large print, audio, different language)
we will do our best to accommodate your request. Please contact the Council at:

Swale Borough Council,
Swale House,
East Street,
Sittingbourne
Kent, ME10 3HT

Customer Service Centre 01795 417850

Appendix II

Climate and Ecological Emergency – Summary and Key Open Space Actions

Swale Declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in 2019, recognising the need to protect local species alongside mitigating climate change. The Action Plan includes the objective: To improve development outcomes which support and improve people and places, access and recreation, connectivity and green spaces and the natural and built environment. Some reports recommend Swale should more than double our tree cover by 2030.

Ecology, biodiversity and green space are vital to both mitigating climate change and to helping us to adapt to the inevitable climate change due to historic carbon emissions. We rely on these assets for our quality of life, and provision of food and water. Protecting and enhancing these assets is vital. Green spaces and planting in urban areas promote good physical and mental health.

Relevant actions include:

- Tree planting on council land (target; 148,100 trees or 60 acres of woodland) to offset 20% of council emissions.
- Minimise use of fertilizers, pesticides and weed killers
- Encourage coppicing of council woodland to promote biodiversity and use of local woodland products in Swale's country parks.
- Engage business and community groups to support tree planting and conservation work in Swale's efforts to achieve action 1
- Support Swale in Bloom working with schools, community groups, voluntary groups and Town and Parish Councils to enhance local habitats and wildlife corridors improving biodiversity conditions across Swale

Although not related to biodiversity, the following action is also still relevant to open spaces:

- Ensure LED lighting is fitted across the council estate, including parks and open spaces.

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Environment Committee Meeting	
Meeting Date	Wednesday 11 th January 2023
Report Title	Sittingbourne Car Club Proposal
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins - Director Regeneration & Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Martyn Cassell – Head of Environment & Leisure
Lead Officer	Grace Couch – Climate and Ecological Emergency Project Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agree to a car club expansion of two hybrid vehicles and one electric vehicle in Sittingbourne. 2. Proceed with a direct award of £29,262 to Hiyacar via the TPPL framework, with an additional cost of ~£4000 for a dedicated car club charge point funded from section 106.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1. After the success of the Hiyacar run Car Club in Faversham, this proposal is being put forward to expand the scheme to Sittingbourne. The scheme would include 3 low emission vehicles in the town centre that can be booked at a low cost to promote modal shift away from car ownership, reducing emissions.
- 1.2. The report summarises the benefits of expanding the scheme, the justification for the vehicle locations and the proposed route for procurement.

2 Background

- 2.1 Providing a car club was included as a top 10 priority for 2021 in the Climate and Ecological Emergency Action Plan. This was achieved with the establishment of a pilot 3-car club in Faversham Town Centre in April 2022 after awarding the competitive Expression of Interest process to Hiyacar.
- 2.2 The recently established car club has proven successful so far, with a high utilisation rate. A car club is deemed successful once utilisation has reached 30-40% (due to utilisation rates being calculated across a 24/7 period). The utilisation levels over the last 90 days for the Faversham car club are as follows:
 - i. Queens Hall – 50.5%
 - ii. Institute Road – 43.6%
 - iii. Central Car Park – 30.0%

2.3 Hiyacar also produce quarterly KPIs on the Faversham Car Club, with a summary below:

- Estimated carbon savings - Over the first quarter 27 drivers saved a total of 6.39 tonnes of CO2 (0.24 tonnes of CO2 per driver saved).
- Estimated customer savings - Total saved by 27 drivers over the first quarter is £23,781.19 (£881 saved per driver for the first quarter.)

2.4 Success of the Faversham Car Club has also been measured anecdotally, with testimonies provided by customers:

- i. *Having opted out of a company car scheme now I work from home, this is a great solution to hiring cars locally when you need one. We hired to go to Latitude and got free fuel included for the weekend. - Victoria G*
- ii. *Convenient central location and really easy to use. The car was perfect, online instructions were clear for a newbie - I would definitely use Hiyacar again! - Robert N*
- iii. *I have several times this summer used Hiyacar for days out at the seaside or to visit country house gardens. I once used it to drive to a vaccination centre that was inaccessible by train. Booking the cars (even at relatively short notice) is always straightforward, and the checking in and out process is easy. The Swale Car Club cars are modern, clean, and in excellent condition to drive. Overall the Hiyacar experience has been a lot of fun. I'm really grateful to have such a useful service so close by to my house. I'm really looking forward to my next booking on Monday - driving a modern hybrid car is a joy compared with driving my previous car. - Thomas P*
- iv. *This is a really cost effective and eco-friendly way of having access to a car. More vehicles like this please.*
- v. Customer satisfaction levels and feedback:
 - Hiyacar rating average - 4.96/5
 - Vehicles rating average - 4.83/5

2.5 By expanding the Car Club to Sittingbourne, the council will create additional incentives for modal shift to occur, in which residents increasingly rely on public transport or active travel rather than car ownership. Studies have shown that a car club can take between 6-12 cars off the road per year and discourage second car purchase. This reduces transport costs for residents, while easing congestion, reducing parking pressure and improving air quality.

2.6 When considering the expansion of the car club, both Sittingbourne and Sheerness were considered by both the Council and via a feasibility assessment from Hiyacar. Although the Council has ambitions to expand the car club across the borough in the future, the outcome of this study points towards Sittingbourne as the most suitable location for this next phase. This is accompanied by a range of developments working with Hiyacar to quantify the mitigation provided by EV car clubs, with potential for car club vehicles to be included in developments in 3 sites in and around Sittingbourne and in Newington.

2.7 To understand the suitability of Sittingbourne as a location for the next Car Club in Swale, heat maps demonstrating the viability and likely usage of a car club for both Sittingbourne and Sheerness can be found in Appendices 2 & 3. These maps demonstrate that Sittingbourne is the more suitable location at present, but that plans for Sheerness could be considered at a later date.

2.8 The proposed car park locations for car club vehicles in Sittingbourne are:

- Spring Street Car Park
- Albany Road Car Park
- Bell Road Car Park



2.9 By financially contributing to a car club expansion with Hiyacar during its set up, the scheme will be self-financing by the end of the contract. Due to the success of the Faversham car club, Hiyacar have agreed to provide a quote for a Sittingbourne car club launching in Spring 2023 and ending in February 2025 - the same time as the existing Faversham car club contract. This is instead of the standard 3 year financial model used.

2.10 Providing an EV comes at an additional cost of £1560 to the contract, however including an EV provides opportunities for 'try before you buy' and will help to encourage residents to make the change. This will require funding to install an additional compatible charge point. It is proposed that this is installed at Albany Road Car Park, which will come at a lower cost due to existing future proofed charging infrastructure (quotes to be obtained but estimated to be ~£4000 or less).

- 2.11 To be able to expand the car club with the same provider and bring consistency and scale across the Borough, it is proposed to provide a direct award to Hiyacar using the TPPL Framework Agreement at a total cost of £27,702 (hybrid) or £29,262 (hybrid/electric) over two years.
- 2.12 A framework is an agreement between a contracting authority, such as The Procurement Partnership Limited (TPPL), and one or more suppliers which establishes the terms under which a supplier will enter into a contract with a member in the period during which the framework agreement applies. In effect, this means that the Council is able to use this contract arranged by TPPL without having to go out to tender itself.
- 2.13 The Council has section 106 funding available from Sittingbourne housing developments to spend on improving air quality and it is felt that allocating some of this funding for the car club will help us to meet the objectives.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Agree to a two-year car club expansion of two hybrid vehicles and one electric vehicle in Sittingbourne.
- 3.2 Proceed with a direct award of £29,262 to Hiyacar via the TPPL framework, with an additional cost of approximately £4000 for a dedicated car club charge point funded by section 106.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 Members could choose not to expand the car club and redirect the remaining s106 monies to other projects.
- 4.2 Agree to a two-year car club expansion of three hybrid vehicles in Sittingbourne and proceed with a direct award of £27,702 to Hiyacar via the TPPL framework. This is not recommended as we want residents to be able to trial use of an electric vehicle and hopefully encourage more to transfer from existing internal combustion engines.

5 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	<p>Investing in our environment and responding positively to global challenges</p> <p>The Climate and Ecological Emergency is recognised as the biggest global challenge this generation will face. Car Clubs have been shown to accelerate the route to increased active travel and lower car usage, which is essential to meeting Swale’s target of net-zero across the borough by 2030. At present 24% of commutes in Swale</p>

	are carried out by low emission methods, and this will need to exceed 40% by 2030 to meet our targets.
Financial, Resource and Property	£88,000 is available through the s106 Air Quality Mitigation funds from 16/507877/4 Crown Quay. These funds would be used to support the 2-year car club in Sittingbourne. Using this funding will also cover the cost of the charge point to enable an electric vehicle in the car club (quotes to be obtained).
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	The Framework Agreement has been reviewed by Legal and no issues have been identified.
Crime and Disorder	Car parks and assets within them such as car club vehicles could be susceptible to vandalism adding to the annual maintenance costs. Incidents such as these are covered by Hiyacar's insurance and maintenance policies.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The Climate and Ecological Emergency is recognised as the biggest global challenge this generation will face. Car Clubs have been shown to accelerate the route to increased active travel and lower car usage, which is essential to meeting Swale's target of net-zero across the borough by 2030. At present 24% of commuting journeys in Swale are carried out by low emission methods, and this will need to exceed 40% by 2030 to meet our targets.
Health and Wellbeing	Improved air quality as a result of modal shift will have a positive impact on the health of residents.
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage.
Risk Management and Health and Safety	Health and safety measures will be included in the appropriate measures within the final contract agreed with the supplier.
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage. An Equality Impact Assessment was completed for the Faversham car club, in which no negative impacts on protected characteristics were identified for this type of project.
Privacy and Data Protection	Data Protection principles will be adhered to when implementing data collection exercises within the scope of the project.

6 Appendices

Appendix 1 - Cost breakdown (Exempt)

Appendix 2 - Sittingbourne Heat Map

Appendix 3 – Sheerness Heat Map

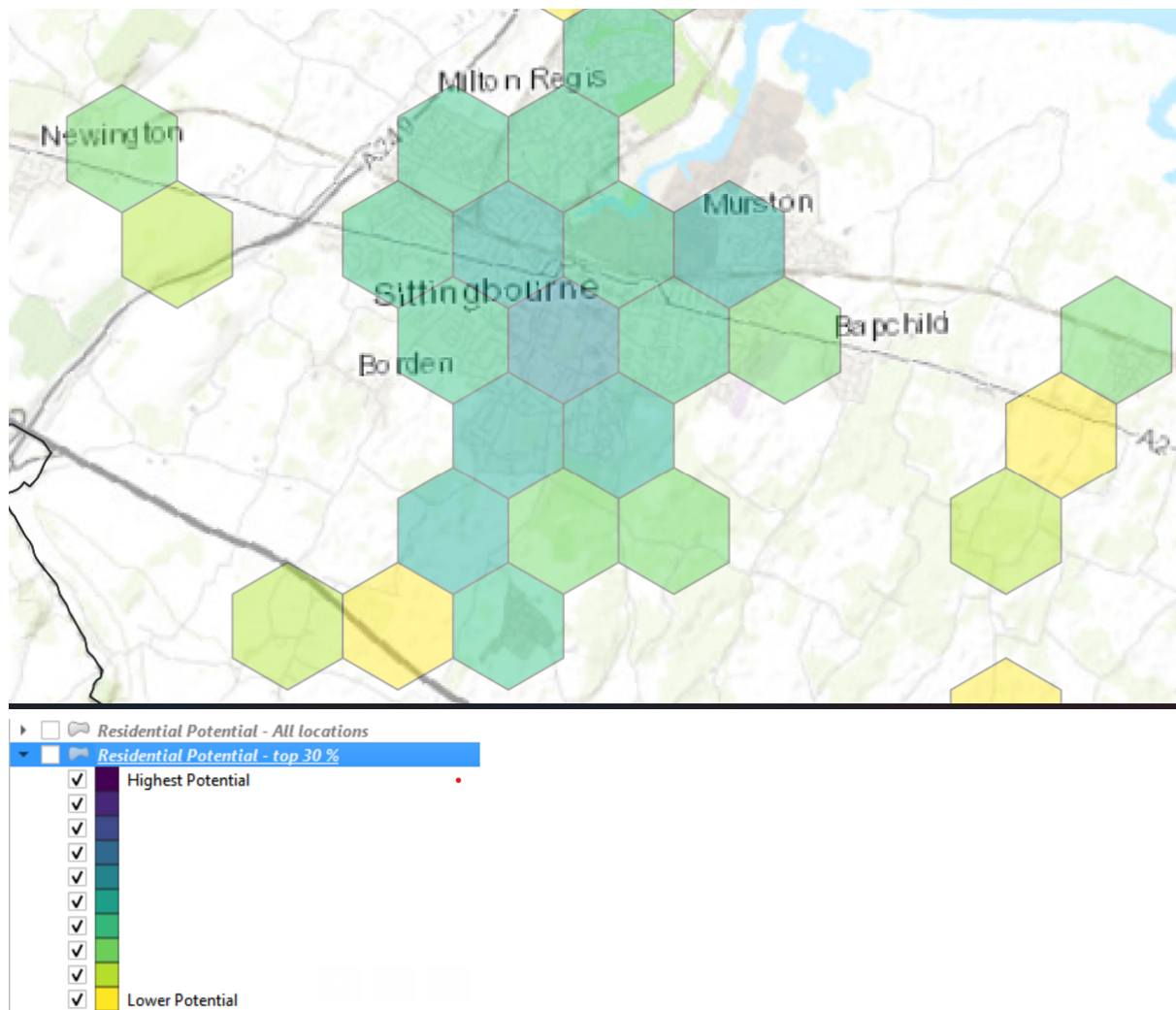
Steer Heat Map For Car Club Potential Sittingbourne

Hiyacar has worked with the Steer Group to produce a mapping tool which measures the following factors that are key indicators for car club potential and from these produce an overall heat map of car club potential for the area.

- Population, population growth and population density (higher densities increase potential)
- Student presence
- Travel to work (lower car use can increase potential)
- Public transport provision (higher provision can increase potential)
- Car ownership (descriptive factor, car ownership levels can influence marketing strategy)
- Access to local services (greater provision of local services can increase potential)
- Qualifications (higher qualifications can increase potential)
- Income (higher incomes can increase potential)

The Population, Travel to Work, Car Ownership and Qualifications data is mapped at a hexcell layer, the hexcell layer is approximately 1 kilometre in size. This results in the identification of areas of high potential and insight into why these areas have good potential. We use this data to narrow down the search for good parking locations. Once we have narrowed down the location we then look for high profile, easily accessible parking spaces which are not under trees (sap from trees makes the cars dirty very quickly) or outside schools & pubs (for safety & damage avoidance).

The Steer car club potential heat map for Sittingbourne, below, indicates that there seems to be a number of areas which indicate potential for the uptake of car clubs.



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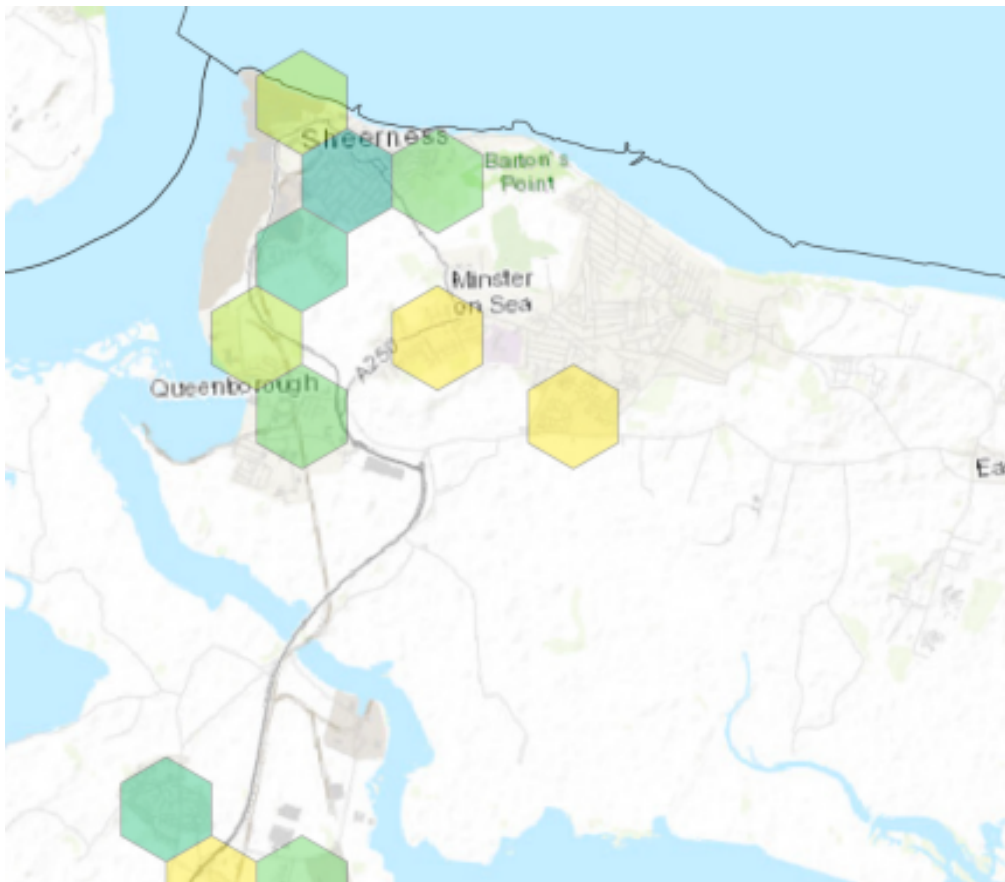
Steer Heat Map For Car Club Potential Sheerness

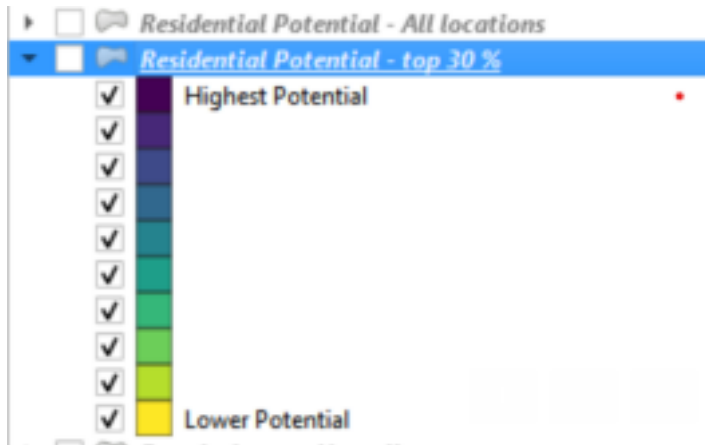
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The Steer car club potential heat map for Sheerness, below, indicates that the center of Sheerness indicates a moderate potential for the uptake of car clubs.





The heat map indicates that Sheerness does not lie in a high potential area, Sittingbourne is a much more attractive location to launch a car club and Hiyacar have a preference to launch in Sittingbourne over Sheerness.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3, 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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