

Scoping Report for the Swale Borough Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal (SA)

July 2018

Quality information

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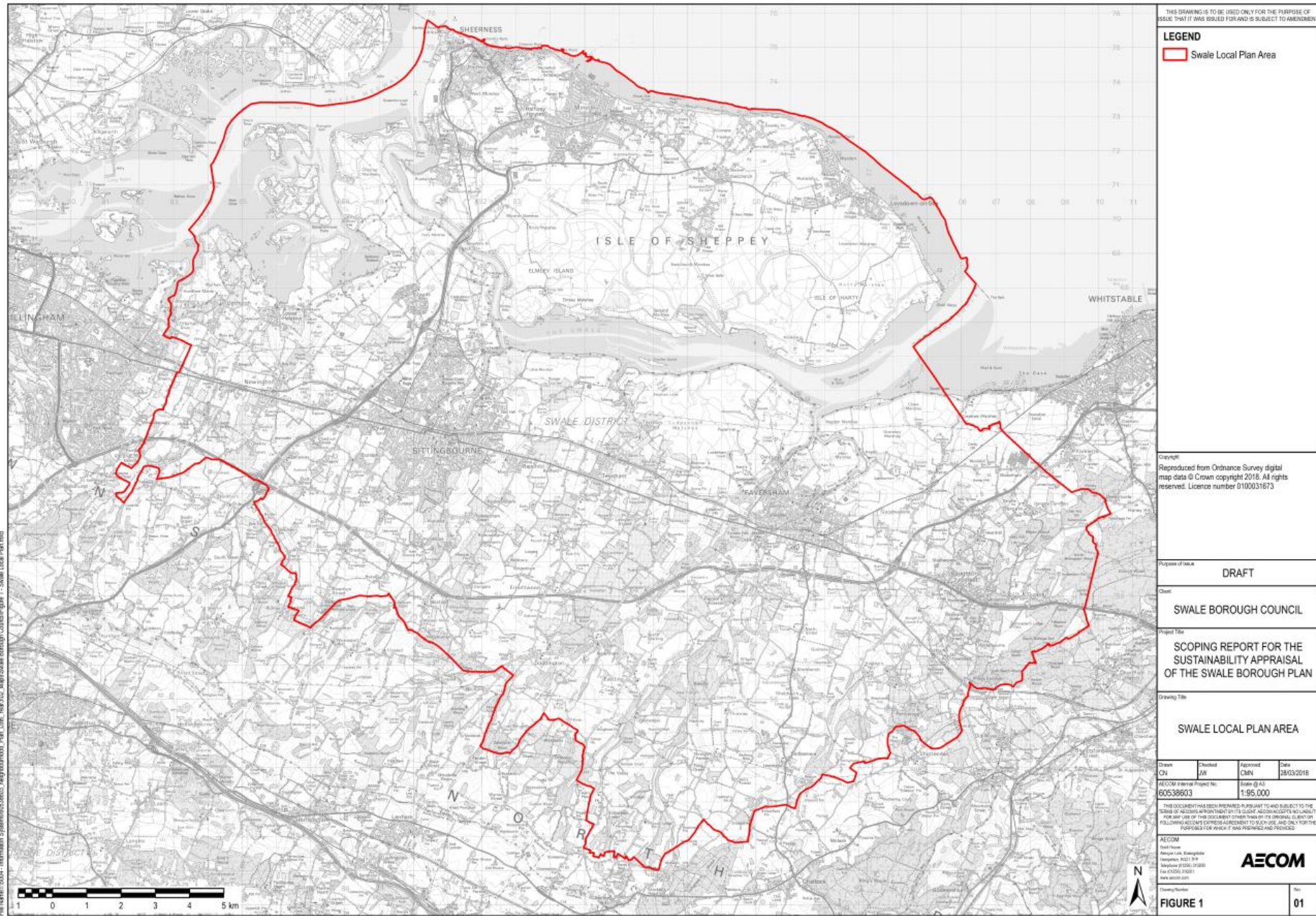
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Figure 1.1 Swale Borough Local Plan Area



1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 AECOM is commissioned by Swale Borough Council ('the Council') to lead on Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of the emerging Swale Local Plan Review. The plan is at a very early stage of development, with adoption anticipated in 2022.
- 1.2 Once adopted, the plan will establish a spatial strategy in relation to housing and employment growth up to 2038 (also dealing with other land uses, e.g. retail and community uses), allocate sites to deliver that strategy and establish policies to guide the planning application process. The Local Plan Review will replace the adopted Bearing Fruits 2031 Local Plan 2017 (the adopted Local Plan).

SA explained

- 1.3 SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the likely effects of a draft plan, and alternatives, in terms of sustainability issues, with a view to avoiding and mitigating adverse effects and maximising the positives. The aim is to ensure that the plan contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 1.4 SA must be undertaken in accordance with specific procedural requirements, as established by the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes ('SEA') Regulations 2004. Two key procedural requirements of the SEA Regulations are that:
 1. When deciding on 'the scope and level of detail of the information' which must be included within the key output report - namely the report published for consultation alongside the draft plan - there is a consultation with certain nationally designated authorities, namely the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England; and
 2. A report (the 'SA Report') is published for consultation alongside the draft plan (i.e. the draft Local Plan Review) that 'identifies, describes and evaluates' the likely significant effects of implementing 'the plan [i.e. the Local Plan Review], and reasonable alternatives'.

This scoping report

- 1.5 This 'Scoping Report' is concerned with item 1 above. It presents a suggested scope for the SA so that the designated authorities can provide timely comment. This report is also published for consultation more widely.
- 1.6 This scoping report was prepared prior to the publication of the final revised NPPF in July 2018. The context of scoping is always 'live' and represents a snapshot in time in what is an ever-evolving context.

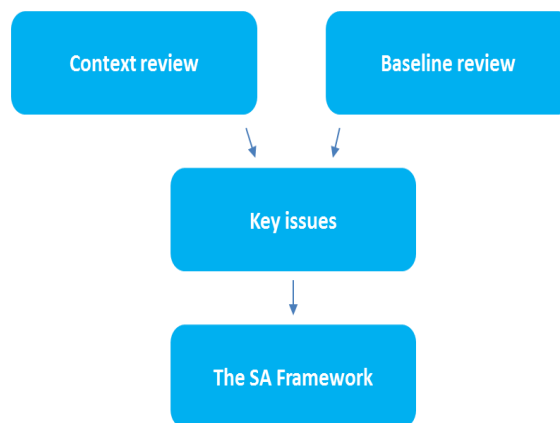
Approach to scoping

1.7 Scoping essentially involves identifying a ‘framework’ of sustainability issues and objectives that should be a focus of, and provide a methodological framework for, the appraisal of the emerging plan (and reasonable alternatives).

1.8 In order to facilitate the identification of sustainability issues/objectives, scoping firstly involves review of the ‘context’ and ‘baseline’. Scoping therefore involves the following steps -

1. Context review - a review of existing policy and issues/objectives established by Government, the Council and other key organisations.
2. Baseline review - a review of current situation locally and a consideration of how this might evolve in the absence of the plan.
3. Key issues summary - a summary of the key (in the sense that the plan may have an effect) problems and opportunities identified through steps (1) and (2).
4. SA Framework development - a refinement of the key issues.

Figure 1.1: The scoping process



Structure of this report

1.9 Scoping steps 1 to 4 have been completed, and the outcomes are presented for consultation within this report.

1.10 Rather than presenting the outcomes of steps 1 to 4 sequentially within this report, the outcomes of steps 1 to 4 are presented under the following thematic headings in turn -

- Air quality
- Biodiversity
- Climate change mitigation
- Communities
- Economy and employment
- Flood risk
- Heritage
- Housing
- Land
- Landscape
- Transport
- Water

1.11 These themes reflect the anticipated broad scope of sustainability issues/objectives likely to be of greatest relevance to the emerging Swale Local Plan Review. It is intended that presenting the scoping information under these themes will help enable the reader to easily locate the information of greatest interest to them.

1.12 The discussion of scoping under each SA theme is presented in Sections 2 to 13. A final section then discusses ‘next steps’.

2. Air quality

Context

National

2.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Planning policies should sustain compliance with and contribute towards EU limit values or national objectives for pollutants, taking into account the presence of Air Quality Management Areas and the cumulative impacts on air quality from individual sites in local areas. Planning decisions should ensure that any new development in Air Quality Management Areas is consistent with the local air quality action plan.
- New and existing developments should be prevented from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution

2.2 The draft revised NPPF adds that “opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts should be identified such as through traffic and travel management, and green infrastructure provision and enhancement” and encourages Local Authorities to do so at the plan making stage.¹

2.3 The government published the ‘UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations’ in July 2017. This is the air quality plan for bringing nitrogen dioxide - currently the only the statutory air quality limit the UK is failing to meet - within statutory limits in the shortest possible time. The plan identifies that “the link between improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions is particularly important” and that consequently the UK government is determined to be at the forefront of vehicle innovation by making motoring cleaner.

Regional

2.4 The Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership is a multi-authority structure of eleven Kent authorities including nine lower tier authorities, Medway Unitary Authority and Kent County Council (KCC). The Network collects and monitors data on air quality from 18 monitoring sites across Kent. This data has been used to produce two technical Air Quality Planning Guidance documents to inform planning decisions. The aim is to improve regional air quality and speed up planning decision taking through the application of a consistent approach to air quality planning across the region.²

Local

2.5 Swale Borough Council is required to monitor air quality across the district under Section 82 of the Environment Act (1995), report regularly to Defra and take action where nationally set levels are likely to be exceeded. Monitoring is undertaken to assess levels of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulates.

2.6 Areas where exceedances are observed must be declared as Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) and local authorities are required to produce an Air Quality Action Plan (AQAP) to improve air quality in declared AQMAs. Work is ongoing to consolidate all five AQAPs in Swale into a single Strategic Air Quality Action Plan covering the period 2018-2022.

¹ MHCLG (2018) ‘National Planning Policy Framework – draft text for consultation’ [online], available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685289/Draft_revised_National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf

² Kent and Medway Air Quality Partnership [online], available from: <http://www.kentair.org.uk> [last accessed 19/03/18]

- 2.7 Swale Borough Council developed an Air Quality Planning Technical Guidance documents in December 2016 to help developers and applicants understand potential air quality impacts of proposed development and adopt appropriate mitigation.

Baseline

Current baseline

- 2.8 There are a number of air quality monitoring sites around the Borough. As of 2017 there are three sites with automatic analysers at Newington, Ospringe and St Pauls. Additionally there are passive diffusion tubes are at a further 57 locations around the Borough.
- 2.9 To meet its reporting obligations Swale Borough Council produces an annual Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR). Headline findings from the 2017 Swale Borough Air Quality Annual Status Report include:³
- Five locations show frequent exceedances of the annual air quality objective level for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and are therefore subject to the below AQMAs.
 - Particulate matter (PM10) concentrations are not exceeding air quality objectives but that monitoring of PM10 should continue.
- 2.10 The five AQMAs in the Borough are:
- AQMA 1 – Newington - encompasses those parts of London Road and the High Street (each sections of the A2) with a 30mph speed limit in the village of Newington.
 - AQMA No 2 Ospringe extended – all of Ospringe Street in the village of Ospringe, a section of the A2 on the western edge of Faversham.
 - AQMA No 3 – East Street, Sittingbourne – A stretch of the centrally located East Street where traffic queues on approach to the roundabout.
 - AQMA No 4 – St Pauls Street, Sittingbourne – A stretch of St Pauls Street where traffic queues on approach to the roundabout.
 - AQMA No 5 – Teynham – A strip of the A2 as it flows through Teynham village.
- 2.11 As all five AQMAs in the Borough are affected by similar issues and causes the Council is currently working on a combined AQAP to encompass all five individual AQAPs and cover the period to 2022. A common plan with measures to improve air pollution for all will be sought as an outcome of process.

Future baseline

- 2.12 New housing and employment provision in the Borough has the potential to negatively impact air quality through increasing traffic flows and the associated levels of pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide. Areas of particular sensitivity to increased traffic flows are likely to be the existing AQMAs along the A2/London Road corridor, particularly at pinch points in the major settlements and through areas of speed restrictions in the smaller villages.
- 2.13 This impact will be mitigated in part by the completion of the final phase of the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road which the Council remain committed to delivering. Additional planned road infrastructure improvements are expected to contribute to a degree of congestion relief.

³ Swale Borough Council 'Interim Air Quality Action Plan' [online] available from:
http://services.swale.gov.uk/meetings/documents/s8359/Interim%20AQAP_Swale_2017_v10_final%20draft.pdf

Key issues and objectives

2.14 The following key issues emerge from the context and baseline review -

- There are five Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) in the Borough, all of which relate to exceedances in nitrogen dioxide (NO₂)
- There are not currently any exceedances of Particulate matter (PM₁₀) concentrations in the Borough; monitoring will continue to help ensure this position is maintained.

2.15 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Support the achievement of air quality improvement objectives within the Borough's 5 designated AQMAs, and;
- Seek to minimise air pollution more generally, such as through supporting or enabling the use of low emission technologies and encouraging sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling.

3. Biodiversity

Context

National

- 3.1 A key message from the NPPF includes the commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity by minimising impacts and achieving net gains in biodiversity wherever possible. Promote the ‘preservation, restoration and recreation of priority habitats, ecological networks’ and the ‘protection and recovery of priority species’. Plan for biodiversity at a landscape-scale across local authority boundaries.
- 3.2 The draft revised NPPF, though not yet adopted, places a greater emphasis on biodiversity in plan making including enhancing habitat networks, green infrastructure and natural capital at a larger than local scale.⁴
- 3.3 The statutory duty on public bodies, including plan making authorities, to conserve biodiversity was established by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).⁵
- 3.4 The government published “A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment” in 2018 which sets out a 25 year strategy for helping the natural environment “*regain and retain good health*” and calls for “*an approach to agriculture, forestry, land use and fishing that puts environment first*”.⁶
- 3.5 There are a range of other national level policy and guidance documents with a focus on protecting and enhancing biodiversity. In 2011 Defra published the Natural Environment White Paper (NEWP)⁷ which outlined the government’s vision for the natural environment for the subsequent 5 decades. The White Paper reiterated the importance that a healthy, functioning natural environment has for critical issues such as sustained economic growth, prospering communities and personal wellbeing.
- 3.6 Following the publication of the NEWP, Defra published Biodiversity 2020⁸ in 2011, a national strategy for biodiversity policy to 2020. The key aims of the strategy are to halt loss of biodiversity-supporting habitats and to improve ecological networks and ecosystems and these are supported by a commitment to implementing a more integrated approach to conservation involving all tiers of government along with the voluntary, academic and business sectors and the public.
- 3.7 A degree of biodiversity loss can be an inevitable part of the development process in some instances though there is a growing awareness of re-provision and offsetting. The Biodiversity Offsetting Green Paper (September 2013)⁹ sets out conservation activities designed to compensate for residual losses and establishes a framework for exploring offsetting biodiversity losses.
- 3.8 The NEWP announced that offsetting would be tested in pilot areas and six pilot areas were subsequently identified (Devon, Doncaster, Essex, Greater Norwich, Nottinghamshire and

⁴ MHCLG (2018) ‘NPPF Draft text for consultation’ [online], available from:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/685289/Draft_revised_National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf

⁵ Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 [online] available at:
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents> Accessed March 2018

⁶ Defra (2018) A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment [online], available from:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/693158/25-year-environment-plan.pdf

⁷ Defra (2012) The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature (Natural Environment White Paper) [online] available at:
<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm80/8082/8082.pdf> Accessed March 2018

⁸ Defra (2011) Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England’s wildlife and ecosystem services [online] available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-2020-a-strategy-for-england-s-wildlife-and-ecosystem-services>
Accessed March 2018

⁹ Defra (2013) Biodiversity Offsetting in England Green Paper [online] available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/biodiversity-offsetting-in-england> Accessed March 2018

Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire (CSWAPO). Results from the pilot areas were published in 2014 and conclude that “*whilst biodiversity offsetting has the potential to deliver improvements in biodiversity outcomes it will require additional resources and ecological expertise in local authorities to deliver it, and will increase costs overall for developers*”.¹⁰

Regional

- 3.9 The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan establishes the key regional Biodiversity context for the Kent and Medway region including identifying 20 Biodiversity Action Plan habitat types across the region. Each habitat type has specific conservation aims and is associated with particular priority species.¹¹
- 3.10 This is supported by the Kent Environment Strategy (KES) (2016), a document broader in scope than biodiversity alone but with a core message that Kent’s natural environment is its primary infrastructure and that the value of biodiversity therefore extends to factors including the economic and social wellbeing of the region. The KES notes that Kent’s 2010 biodiversity targets were not met and that biodiversity across the region has continued to decline since. To address this, the KES is intended to interlink with and inform plan making across the region.
- 3.11 The ‘Living Landscape for the South East’ guidance was produced by the South East Wildlife Trusts in 2006. Although it is now an older document the vision for an ‘ecological network for the South East’ remains relevant and important in the context of addressing biodiversity decline at a regional level.
- 3.12 A Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS) is in place for the Thames, Medway and Swale Estuaries area and spans a number of authorities including Swale. This sets out a strategy to “*resolve disturbance issues to wintering birds*”¹².

Local

- 3.13 Key biodiversity objectives from the adopted Local Plan include:
- Ensuring development proposals include the enhancement of biodiversity as a primary objective. For example, this could take the form of increased delivery of green infrastructure within new developments to provide wildlife habitats and corridors.
 - Protecting and enhancing Swale’s natural assets by working to recognise and value ecosystems for their full range of benefits and services. In practice this could mean actions such as incorporating areas of woodland or grassland into new developments to capture the amenity value of these features as well as the biodiversity value.
- 3.14 The Swale Biodiversity Action Plan (2016) provides a local focus for the objectives of the broader Kent BAP with the specific intention of informing local actions which could have an impact on biodiversity. This could mean identifying opportunities for behaviour change which avoids harm to biodiversity or supporting existing efforts to mitigate the impact of development on biodiversity.

Baseline

Current baseline

- 3.15 Swale Borough supports a rich and diverse range of species and habitats, particularly in relation to its coastal areas and wetlands but also in some areas further inland. As a result there are a wide range of protective designations in the Borough across international, national

¹⁰ Defra (2014) Evaluation of the Biodiversity Offsetting pilot phase – WC1051 [online], available from: <http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&ProjectID=18229&FromSearch=Y&Publisher=1&SearchText=WC1051&SortString=ProjectCode&SortOrder=Asc&Paging=10#Description>

¹¹ Kent Biodiversity Action Plan [online], available from: <http://kentbap.org.uk/>

¹² Footprint Ecology (2014), ‘Thames, Medway and Swale Estuaries – Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy’ [online], available from: <https://birdwise.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/North-Kent-SAMMS-Report-2014.pdf>

and local levels of designation. The high biodiversity value within these protected areas has sometimes been recognised at different levels simultaneously meaning a number of designations overlap.

Internationally designated sites

- 3.16 There are two Ramsar sites which are either partly or mostly within the Borough. Ramsar sites are wetland areas of international significance protected under the Ramsar Convention of 1976. The Medway Estuary & Marshes Ramsar site lies partly within the Borough's north west corner and it extends along much of the greater Thames Estuary area. The Swale Ramsar site is almost entirely within the Borough and is focussed on the southern and south eastern coasts of the Isle of Sheppey, The Swale body of water itself plus some of the waterways on the Isle of Sheppey.
- 3.17 There are two Special Protection Areas which are either partly or mostly within the Borough. These are the Medway Estuary and Marshes SPA and The Swale SPA both of which follow the same extent as their namesake Ramsar sites.
- 3.18 Additionally, there are two Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) within the Borough. The Queendown Warren SAC covers the same extent as the SSSI of the same name in the Borough's far south west corner. A small area of the Blean Complex SAC is located within the Borough's eastern boundary though the majority of this SAC is located within neighbouring Canterbury.
- 3.19 There are additional internationally designated sites outside the administrative boundaries of the Borough which could be impacted by development.

Nationally designated sites

- 3.20 There are also four separate Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the Borough. The Medway Estuary and Marshes site and The Swale are again subject to this additional designation. There are a further two SSSIs at Queendown Warren in the Borough's far south west corner and the Sheppey Cliffs and Foreshore SSSI along a stretch of the northern coast of the Isle of Sheppey.
- 3.21 The Swale Estuary Marine Conservation Zone and the Medway Estuary Marine Conservation Zone both extend across large parts of the Borough. Marine Conservation Zones were established in 2009 as an additional mechanism for protecting marine species and habitats of national importance.
- 3.22 There are three National Nature Reserves either entirely or partly within the Borough. Elmley NNR and The Swale NNR are both located on the southern side of the Isle of Sheppey facing onto the Swale and support large number of waterfowl, wildfowl and wading birds. Around half of the Blean Woods NNR, part of the largest ancient broadleaved woodland in southern Britain,¹³ is located within the Borough.
- 3.23 There are four designated RSPB reserves within the Borough, two on the Isle of Sheppey (Harty Marshes and Great Bells Farm) and two which extend in the Borough from Canterbury (Blean Woods and Seasalter Levels).
- 3.24 There are additional nationally designated sites outside the administrative boundaries of the Borough which could be impacted by development.

Locally designated sites

- 3.25 There are three Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) in the Borough. LNRs recognise places of local wildlife or geological interest. The LNR at Queendown Warren overlaps with the SSSI and SAC designations on the site. The other two LNRs are Oare Marshes and South Bank of The Swale on the mainland coast north of Faversham. There are an additional 36 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS).

¹³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/kents-national-nature-reserves/kents-national-nature-reserves#blean-woods>

Ancient woodland

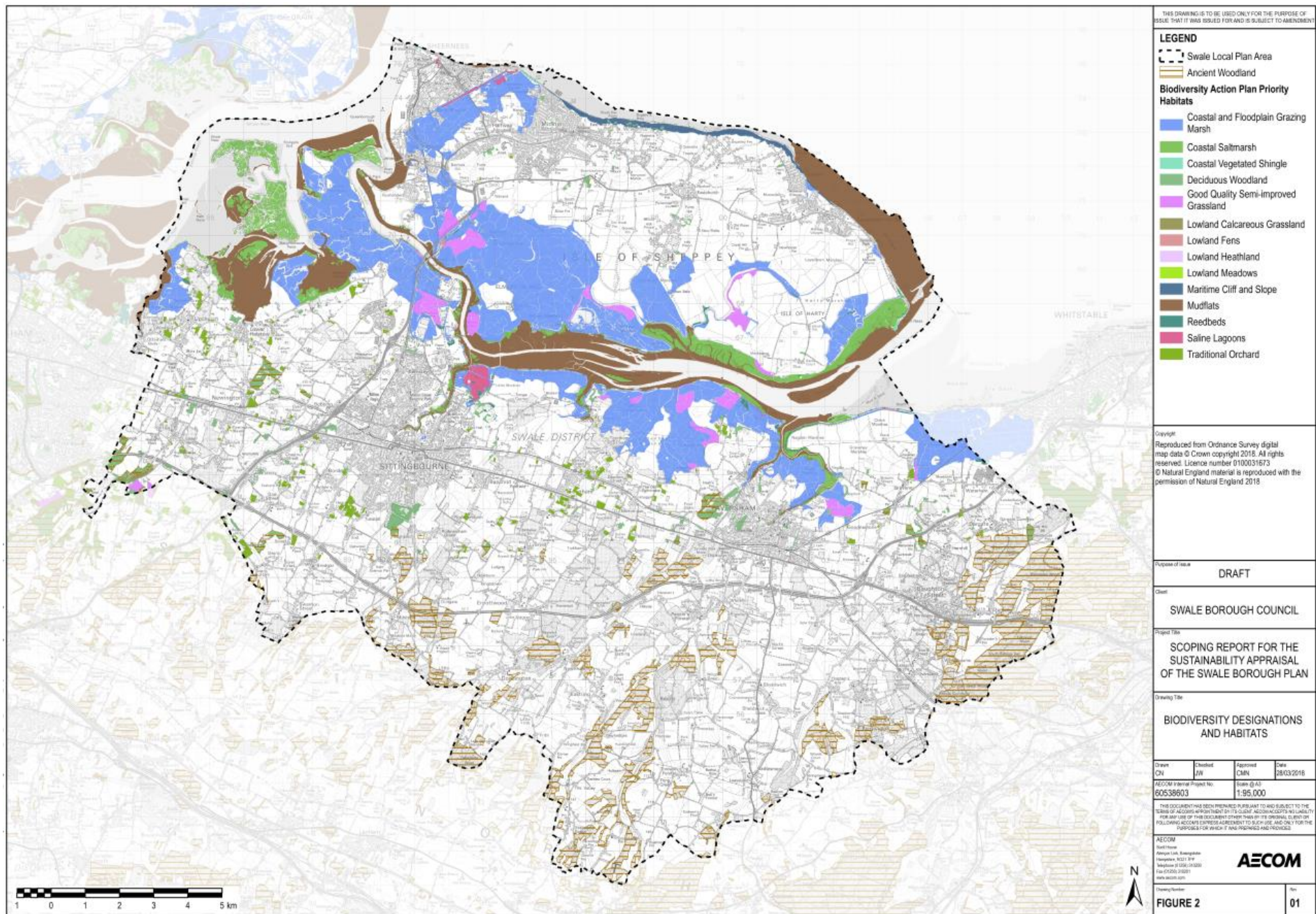
- 3.26 There is an extensive network of ancient woodland and ancient replanted woodland within the Borough though this is almost entirely located in the southern half of the Borough, South of the M2/A299. There are particularly dense clusters of ancient woodland east of Boughton Street and around the Borough's south eastern boundary.

Biodiversity Opportunity Areas

- 3.27 The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan identifies a number of Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) across the County including a number which include parts of the Borough. BOAs are intended to help identify opportunities to facilitate biodiversity gains through “habitat enhancement, restoration and recreation.”¹⁴ There are three BOAs which include parts of the Borough, the North Kent Marshes BOA, the Blean BOA and the Mid Kent Downs, Woods and Scarp.

¹⁴ Kent Biodiversity Action Plan [online], available from: <http://www.kentbap.org.uk/kent-boas/> [last accessed 13/03/18].

Figure 3.1 Biodiversity designations and habitats



Future baseline

- 3.28 Habitats and species have the potential to come under increasing pressure from the provision of new housing, employment and infrastructure in the Borough, including at designated sites. This could include increased disturbance (recreational, noise and light) and atmospheric pollution as well as the loss of habitats and fragmentation of biodiversity networks. The loss and fragmentation of habitats will be exacerbated by the effects of climate change, which has the potential to lead to changes in the distribution and abundance of species and changes to the composition and character of habitats. Coastal defences along much of the coastline prevent intertidal habitats from shifting landward in response to rising sea levels. As a result, these habitats are being gradually degraded and reduced in extent, with knock-on effects on the waterbirds and other species they support.
- 3.29 Benefits for biodiversity have the potential to arise from the increasing integration of biodiversity considerations within forward planning and efforts to improve green infrastructure networks across the Borough and sub-regionally. To maintain and improve the condition of biodiversity in the future it will be important to not only protect and enhance important habitats but to identify and enhance the connections between them.

Key issues and objectives

- 3.30 The following key issues emerge from the context and baseline review:
- There are two internationally designated sites (the Ramsar sites of Medway Estuary and Marshes and The Swale) within the Borough. The key issues of relevance for the Local Plan and SA include coastal squeeze through further development and increased levels of public access/disturbance.
 - There are four European designated sites in the Borough, two Special Areas of Conservation and two Special Protection Areas.
 - There are four SSSIs in the Borough.
 - There are three LNR and 36 LWS within the Borough.
 - There is an extensive network of ancient woodland within the Borough though its distribution is not even and most ancient woodland is concentrated south of the M2/A299 corridor.
 - The Borough contains a wide variety and large number of BAP priority habitats including many which reflect its coastal location such as ‘coastal and floodplain grazing marsh’; ‘saline lagoons’; ‘mudflats’; ‘coastal saltmarsh’; ‘reedbeds’; ‘maritime cliff and slope’; ‘coastal vegetated shingle’ along with land-based habitats including ‘good quality semi-improved grassland’; ‘deciduous woodland’; ‘wood pasture and parkland’; ‘traditional orchard’ and ‘lowland calcareous grassland’.
- 3.31 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:
- Minimise, and avoid where possible, impacts to biodiversity, both within and beyond designated and non-designated sites of international, national or local significance.
 - Achieve biodiversity net gain including through the long term enhancement and creation of well-connected, functional habitats.

4. Climate change mitigation

Context

National

4.1 Climate change presents challenges at all levels from the global scale to the local. This is reflected in the range of policy responses across the different tiers of government in the UK. The key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework include:

- Supporting the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate as a ‘core planning principle’. To support the move to a low carbon future, local planning authorities should: plan for new development in locations and ways which reduce greenhouse gas emissions; actively support energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings; and when setting any local requirement for a building’s sustainability, do so in a way consistent with the Government’s zero carbon buildings policy and adopt nationally described standards.
- Planning for new development in locations and ways which reduce greenhouse gas emissions; actively support energy efficiency improvements to existing buildings; and when setting any local requirement for a building’s sustainability, do so in a way consistent with the Government’s zero carbon buildings policy and adopt nationally described standards.

4.2 The draft revised NPPF says that “plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account the long-term implications for flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity, and landscapes”.

4.3 The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment is published on a 5-yearly cycle in accordance with the requirements of the Climate Change Act 2008. It required the Government to compile an assessment of the risks for the UK arising from climate change, and then to develop an adaptation programme to address those risks and deliver resilience to climate change on the ground. For both the 2012 and the 2017 UK Climate Change Risk Assessment, the Adaptation Sub-Committee commissioned an evidence report¹⁵ containing six priority risk areas requiring additional action in the next five years:

- Flooding and coastal change risks to communities, businesses and infrastructure;
- Risks to health, well-being and productivity from high temperatures;
- Risk of shortages in the public water supply, and for agriculture, energy generation and industry;
- Risks to natural capital, including terrestrial, coastal, marine and freshwater ecosystems, soils and biodiversity;
- Risks to domestic and international food production and trade; and
- New and emerging pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species, affecting people, plants and animals

4.4 The UK Climate Change Act¹⁶ was passed in 2008 and established a framework to develop an economically credible emissions reduction path. It also highlighted the role it would take in contributing to collective action to tackle climate change under the Kyoto Protocol, and more recently as part of the UN-led Paris Agreement.

¹⁵ DEFRA (2017): ‘UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Report January 2017’, [online] available to download from: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017>> [last accessed 13/02/18]

¹⁶ HM Government (2008): ‘Climate Change Act 2008’, [online] accessible via <<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents>> [last accessed 13/02/18]

- 4.5 The Committee of Climate Change published a 2012 report entitled ‘How Local Authorities can Reduce Emissions and Manage Climate Change Risk’¹⁷ which emphasises the crucial role councils have in helping the UK meet its carbon targets and preparing for the impacts of climate change. It outlines specific opportunities for reducing emissions and highlights good practice examples from a number of local authorities.

Regional

- 4.6 Swale Borough has an extensive coastline and this means that Swale and the wider north Kent region it is within could be particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Correspondingly there are a number of regional level policy documents which seek to acknowledge and address this threat
- 4.7 The key documents include the Medway Estuary and Swale Shoreline Management Plan (SMP)¹⁸ and the Isle of Grain to South Foreland SMP¹⁹ (both adopted in 2010) which provide a large scale assessment of risks to the Medway Estuary and Swale coast and promote policies to manage the coastline sustainably until the 22nd century. The objectives include defining, in general terms, where flooding and erosion as a result of climate change present risks to people and assets in the Plan area.
- 4.8 Taking these two SMPs adopted in 2010 as a starting point, the Medway Estuary and Swale Flood and Coastal Risk Management Strategy, due for publication in Autumn 2018, will “*determine the best economic, environmental and technically appropriate approach*” to managing flood risk and will “*identify suitable schemes to deliver the policies set out within the Medway Estuary and Swale SMP*”²⁰.
- 4.9 At an administrative regional level the Kent Environment Strategy (2016)²¹ identifies that Kent’s natural environment has an important role to play in reducing risks from climate change and that key impacts from climate change on the county are likely to include increased water stress and increased vulnerability to climate-related weather events such as coastal flooding.

Local

- 4.10 The adopted Local Plan acknowledges the impact of climate change on a range of local factors. The adopted Local Plan seeks to mitigate likely effects of climate change through implementing sustainable design and construction techniques, through effective coastal management and promoting renewable and low carbon energy. The importance of climate change adaptation and mitigation in Swale is reflected in the adopted Local Plan.
- 4.11 The adopted Local Plan’s Core Objectives which features “Adapt[ing] to climate change with innovation, reduced use of resources, managed risk to our communities and opportunities for biodiversity to thrive” as its first core objective. Specific strategies proposed by the adopted Local Plan include the implementing sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as “the norm” in new development.²²
- 4.12 The adopted Local Plan identifies particular threats from climate change to coastal erosion, food production, biodiversity, agriculture and transport. Responses to the threat are summarised in Policy ST1 which includes the following passage:

¹⁷ CCC (2012), ‘How local authorities can reduce emissions and manage climate risks’, [online]; available from: <https://www.theccc.org.uk/publication/how-local-authorities-can-reduce-emissions-and-manage-climate-risks/>

¹⁸ Environment Agency (2010) ‘SMP 9 Medway Estuary and Swale’ [online], available from: <http://www.se-coastalgroup.org.uk/medway-estuary-and-swale-2008/> [last accessed 20/03/18]

¹⁹ Environment Agency (2010) ‘SMP 10 Isle of Grain to South Foreland’ [online], available from: <http://www.se-coastalgroup.org.uk/iogtosf2008/> [last accessed 30/05/18].

²⁰ Environment Agency (2018) ‘Medway Estuary and Swale flood and coastal risk management strategy – public consultation’ [online] available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/medway-estuary-and-swale-flood-and-coastal-risk-management-strategy/medway-estuary-and-swale-flood-and-coastal-risk-management-strategy> [accessed 24/05/18].

²¹ Kent County Council (2016) ‘Kent Environment Strategy’ [online] available from: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/environmental-policies/climate-change/kent-environment-strategy> [last accessed 20/03/18].

²² Swale Borough Council, ‘Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan’ [online], available from: <https://www.swale.gov.uk/local-plan-for-swale/> (paragraph 4.1.49)

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

- a) Promotion of sustainable design and construction, the expansion of renewable energy, the efficient use of natural resources and the management of emissions;
- b) The management and expansion of green infrastructure; and
- c) Applying planning policies to manage flood risk and coastal change.”

Baseline

Current baseline

4.13 Reducing greenhouse gas (GhG) emissions is generally acknowledged as a key element of climate change mitigation and CO₂ emissions are particularly associated with a changing climate. In this context emissions are monitored and recorded at Local Authority level to enable high-emitting areas to identify and mitigate sources of emissions. These are presented in Table 4.1 below:

Table 4.1 Local Authority CO₂ emissions estimates within the scope of influence of Local Authorities 2005-2015 (kt CO₂) 2005-2015²³

	Industrial and commercial (t CO ₂)	Domestic (t CO ₂)	Transport (t CO ₂)	Total (t CO ₂)
Swale Borough				
2005	4.8	2.4	1.5	8.6
2006	5.7	2.3	1.5	9.6
2007	6.0	2.3	1.5	9.7
2008	5.2	2.3	1.4	8.9
2009	4.6	2.0	1.4	7.9
2010	7.6	2.2	1.3	11.1
2011	6.3	1.9	1.3	9.5
2012	3.1	2.0	1.3	6.3
2013	2.9	1.9	1.3	6.1
2014	2.3	1.6	1.3	5.2
2015	2.3	1.5	1.3	5.2
South East				
2005	2.6	2.5	1.9	6.9
2006	2.5	2.5	1.8	6.9
2007	2.4	2.4	1.8	6.7

²³ Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2017) UK local authority and regional carbon dioxide emissions national statistics: 2005-2015: subset dataset Local Authority CO₂ emissions estimates within the scope of influence of Local Authorities 2005-2015 (kt CO₂) (available at: <<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/uk-local-authority-and-regional-carbon-dioxide-emissions-national-statistics-2005-2015>> last accessed 21/03/18]

	Industrial and commercial (t CO2)	Domestic (t CO2)	Transport (t CO2)	Total (t CO2)
2008	2.4	2.4	1.7	6.5
2009	2.1	2.2	1.6	5.9
2010	2.3	2.3	1.6	6.2
2011	2.0	2.0	1.6	5.6
2012	2.1	2.2	1.5	5.8
2013	2.0	2.1	1.5	5.5
2014	1.6	1.7	1.5	4.9
2015	1.5	1.7	1.5	4.7
England				
2005	3.0	2.5	1.7	7.2
2006	3.0	2.5	1.7	7.1
2007	2.8	2.4	1.7	6.9
2008	2.7	2.4	1.6	6.7
2009	2.4	2.1	1.5	6.1
2010	2.5	2.3	1.5	6.3
2011	2.2	2.0	1.4	5.7
2012	2.4	2.1	1.4	5.9
2013	2.3	2.0	1.4	5.7
2014	1.9	1.7	1.4	5.0
2015	1.7	1.6	1.4	4.8

4.14 Table 4.1 illustrates that Swale’s CO2 emissions have stabilised and decreased in recent years though they remain higher than emissions levels for the South East region and England as a whole. This reflects the high level of industrial activity in the Borough including major port facilities at Sheerness and the extensive industrial and light industrial uses at the Eurolink industrial area of Sittingbourne. Despite the high (though decreasing) levels of industrial emissions domestic contributions to CO2 emissions are actually lower in Swale than at regional and national levels suggesting that whilst the Borough’s economy is currently underpinned by industrial activity its residents are able to practice lower than average emission-generating behaviours.

Future baseline

4.15 Climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events in the Borough, with increases in mean summer and winter temperatures, increases in mean precipitation in winter and decreases in mean precipitation in summer. The UK Climate

Projections (UKCP09) team have estimated that under a medium emissions scenario, the central estimate of change in winter mean precipitation is an increase of 16%, while there is estimated to be an average drop in summer precipitation of 19%. This is likely to increase the risk of flooding in winter months and increase water shortages during summer months with an increased need for resilience and adaptation.

- 4.16 In terms of climate change mitigation, per capita emissions are likely to continue to decrease as energy efficiency measures, renewable energy production and new technologies become more widely adopted. This relates to issues such as transport, as increased take up of more energy efficient vehicles and electric vehicles takes place. However, increases in the built footprint of the Borough may lead to increases in overall emissions if efficiency measures do not keep pace and future expansion phases of Eurolink could have potential to increase the number of sources of emissions even as efficiencies reduce their individual impact.

Key issues and objectives

- Overall CO2 emissions are now following a downward trend after several years of volatility but this is from an elevated baseline and overall emissions remain high in comparison to regional and national averages. This reflects the industrial nature of much business activity in Swale.
 - Whilst industrial emissions in particular are high, domestic and transport emissions for the Borough are at or below regional and national averages. This is a positive position and it will be important for new development to integrate with sustainable transport networks and incorporate design and construction techniques which help maintain and further improve current outcomes.
 - Swale has a long coastline which could potentially make it increasingly vulnerable to future climate-related weather events and coastal erosion.
- 4.17 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:
- Minimise per capita greenhouse gas emissions from transport, industry and the built environment.
 - Deliver Sustainable Drainage Systems and other measure with a view to future proofing and building climate change resilience
 - Deliver high standards of energy efficiency and water efficiency in new development.

5. Communities

Context

National

5.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in relation to communities include:

- To 'boost significantly the supply of housing', local planning authorities should meet the 'full, objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing' in their area. They should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period.
- With a view to creating 'sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities' authorities should ensure provision of affordable housing onsite or externally where robustly justified.
- The planning system can play an important role in facilitating social interaction and creating healthy, inclusive communities.
- Promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.
- Ensure that developments create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion. Places should contain clear and legible pedestrian routes, and high quality public spaces, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas.
- Ensuring that there is a 'sufficient choice of school places' is of 'great importance' and there is a need to take a 'proactive, positive and collaborative approach' to bringing forward 'development that will widen choice in education'.

5.2 Key messages from the draft revised NPPF include new guidance that planning policies should:

- Take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all sections of the community.
- Consider the social and economic benefits of estate regeneration.
- Enable and support healthy lifestyles through provision of facilities such as accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.

Local

5.3 The adopted Local Plan aims to deliver healthy, sustainable communities in Swale but identifies that this will be a challenge in some instances. Significant social, economic and environmental disparities are identified as particular challenges, especially concentrations of deprivation on the Isle of Sheppey and in Sittingbourne. To address this, the adopted Local Plan aims to improve connectivity of most isolated communities and harness growth to provide greener and more prosperous communities across the Borough.

Baseline

Current baseline

5.4 Census data provides an important statistical baseline for our understanding of a population. The 2001 and 2011 census data for Swale of particular relevance to population and communities is presented below:

Table 5.1 Population growth 2001-2011²⁴

Date	Swale	South East	England
2001	122,801	8,000,645	49,138,831
2011	135,835	8,634,750	53,012,456
Population Change 2001-2011	10.6%	7.9%	7.9%

5.5 At the 2011 census the population in Swale Borough was 135,835, an increase of 13,034 people or 10.6% since 2001 (see Table 5.1) or an annual growth rate of 1.06% per annum. This rate of growth was higher than that for the South East region or for England as a whole.

Table 5.2 Age structure (2001)

Age Group	Swale	South East	England
0-15	21.6%	19.9%	20.1%
16-24	10.2%	10.6%	10.9%
25-44	28.2%	28.9%	29.3%
45-59	20%	19.5%	18.9%
60+	20%	21.1%	20.8%
Total population	122,801	8,000,645	49,138,831

Table 5.3 Age structure (2011)

Age Group	Swale	South East	England
0-15	20.1%	19%	18.9%
16-24	10.8%	11.2%	11.9%
25-44	25.4%	26.5%	27.5%
45-59	20.2%	19.9%	19.4%
60+	23.5%	23.4%	22.3%
Total population	135,835	8,634,750	53,012,456

²⁴ Ibid.

Table 5.4 Age structure (mid-2016 estimate)

Age Group	Swale	South East	England
0-15	20.0%	19.1%	18.0%
16-24	10.4%	10.7%	12.2%
25-44	24.0%	25.1%	26.5%
45-59	21.0%	20.8%	20.1%
60+	24.6%	24.3%	23.2%
Total population	145,042	9,026,297	55,268,100

5.6 Tables 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 illustrates that the age structure of the Borough is broadly aligned with that at regional and national levels although there is a slightly higher proportion of under-15s and over 60s and a slightly lower proportion of 16-44 year olds than the South East and England as a whole.

5.7 As per Table 5.5 below, the 2016 mid-year population estimate released by the ONS indicates that this rate of growth is being sustained. The mid-2016 population of Swale was estimated at 145,042, a growth of 6.8% over the 5 years since the 2011 census, equivalent to an annual growth rate of 1.35%.²⁵

Table 5.5 Swale population change 2011 - 2016

Age group	2011 population (census data)	2016 population (mid-year estimate)	% change 2011-2016
0-15	27,296	28,955	+6.1%
16-24	14,703	15,129	+1.6%
25-44	34,522	34,831	+1.1%
45-59	27,467	30,445	+10.9%
60+	31,847	35,682	+14%
Total Population	135,835	145,042	+6.8%

Household Deprivation

5.8 Census statistics measure deprivation across four 'dimensions' of deprivation, summarized below:

- Employment: Any person in the household (not a full-time student) that is either unemployed or long-term sick.
- Education: No person in the household has at least a level 2 qualification and no person aged 16-18 is a full-time student.
- Health and disability: Any person in the household that has generally 'bad' or 'very bad' health, or has a long term health problem.
- Housing: The household accommodation is either overcrowded (with an occupancy rating of -1 or less), in a shared dwelling or has no central heating.

Table 5.6 Relative household deprivation dimensions

	Swale	South East	England
Household not	40.1%	47.7%	42.5%

²⁵ ONS, 'Population Estimate for UK, England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland: mid-2012 to mid-2016' [online] available from:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

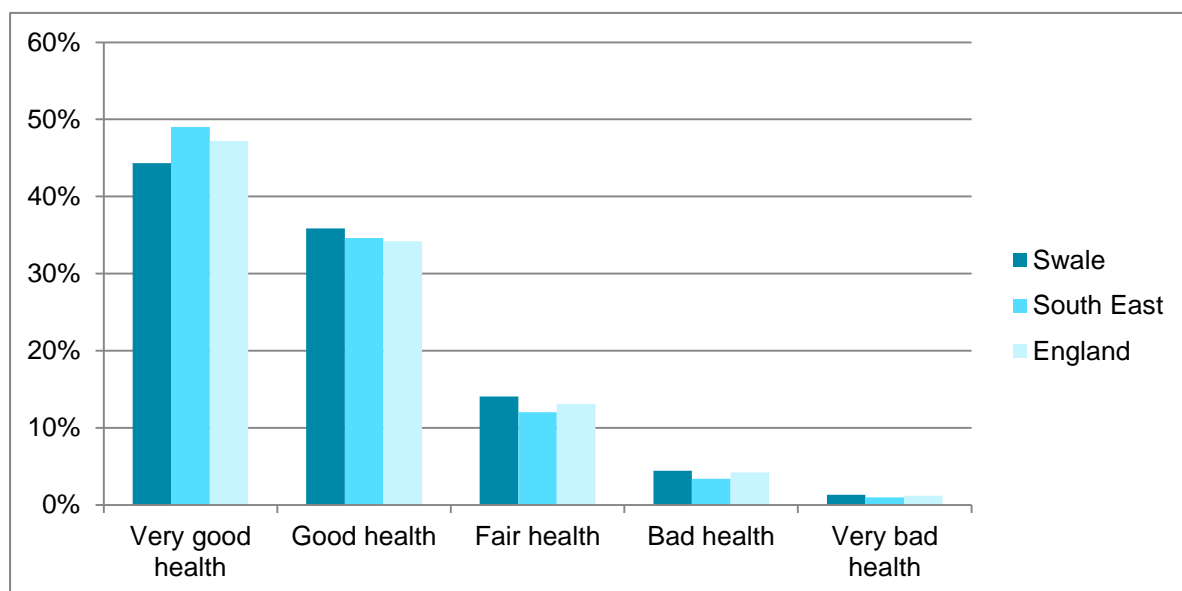
	Swale	South East	England
deprived			
Deprived in 1 dimension	33.1%	32.2%	32.7%
Deprived in 2 dimensions	20.6%	16%	19.1%
Deprived in 3 dimensions	5.6%	3.7%	5.1%
Deprived in 4 dimensions	0.6%	0.4%	0.5%

5.9 Table 5.3 illustrates that when compared with the South East and England as a whole Swale has slightly higher proportions of deprivation across all dimensions and a lower proportion of households which are not deprived. However, these headline figures conceal the fact that there are considerable contrasts within the Borough and the adopted 2017 Local Plan notes that whilst deprivation is particularly acute in areas of Sheppey, such as Queenborough, there are also areas of affluence and very low deprivation across the rural areas and within Faversham. This highlights the diversity and complexity of needs within the Borough.

Health and wellbeing

5.10 Figure 5.1 shows that on balance general health outcomes in Swale are slightly below the level of those at regional and national levels. Although slightly more people in the borough are in 'Good' health, this is offset by a fewer people in 'Very Good' health compared with the South East and England as a whole. Correspondingly, there are slightly more people in bad or very bad health in Swale (5.8%) than in the South East region (4.4%) though this is broadly in line with the national average (5.4%).

Figure 5.1 General Health²⁶



²⁶ ONS, Census 2011: 'General Health' (Table QS302EW)

Table 5.7 Long term health category²⁷

	Swale	South East	England
Day-to-day activities limited a lot	5.5%	6.9%	8.3%
Day-to-day activities limited a little	7.3%	8.8%	9.3%
Day-to-day activities not limited	87.2%	84.3%	82.4%

5.11 Table 5.7 shows that in terms of long term health and disability residents in the Borough have generally better outcomes than at regional and national levels. In the 2011 census only 5.5% of Swale residents reported long term health significant limits their day-to-day activities compared with 6.9% in the South East region and 8.3% in England as a whole.

5.12 Allocations in the adopted Local Plan include a number of community benefits. These include financial contributions for Sheppey Community Hospital from the allocation at Thistle Hill in Minster; 15ha of open space and new pedestrian and cycle links at Stones Farm in Sittingbourne; and the creation of a new country park and community facilities associated with the Iwade expansion.

Future baseline

5.13 There could be potential for the annual rate of population growth of 1%+ to continue into the short and medium term as the mid-2016 population estimate even indicates a slight increase in the population growth rate from the 2011 census. This will have implications for sustainability in the Borough as additional residents will create additional pressure on community infrastructure and services.

5.14 However, this growth could also bring opportunities to lever in investment which enhances existing infrastructure and services, addresses deprivation associated with isolated communities, enhances internal linkages and those with surrounding areas and encourages opportunities for healthy lifestyle choices to be designed-in to new development.

5.15 The adopted Local Plan includes positive and ambitious regeneration strategies to transform four areas within the borough. Whilst the objectives of this are wide ranging there is likely to be a significant social and community aspect to the improvements, particularly in relation to improved public realm and improved infrastructure and facilities. The four areas are central Sittingbourne, Queenborough and Rushenden, the Port of Sheerness and Kent Science Park. Regeneration will achieve community benefits such as an “*enhanced civic quarter*” and “*further education facilities*” (Sittingbourne); improving “*housing choice to restore the local housing market area*” (Queenborough and Rushenden) and enhancing “*the significance or heritage assets*” (Port of Sheerness).

Key issues and objectives

5.16 The following key issues emerge from the context and baseline review:

- Overall levels of household deprivation are broadly aligned with national averages though the Borough contains pockets of higher deprivation, particularly on the Isle of Sheppey, as well as areas of affluence and low deprivation.
- Increasing pressure on community infrastructure is likely from a growing population though this could also bring opportunities for new development to enhance access to community infrastructure and services.
- A proactive approach to regeneration is being undertaken in the Borough which is anticipated to deliver a range of social and community benefits.

²⁷ ONS, Census 2011: ‘Long Term Health Problem or Disability’ (Table QS303EW)

5.17 In light of these key issues it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Support good access to existing and planned community infrastructure for new and existing residents.
- Promote and support healthy communities, including through increasing access to green infrastructure and open space.

6. Economy and employment

Context

National

6.1 Good planning has a key role to play in ensuring economic prosperity and meeting the demand for jobs and resources. Consequently the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) features a number of messages on economy and employment, including:

- The planning system can make a contribution to building a strong, responsive economy by ‘ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure’.
- Capitalise on ‘inherent strengths’, and to meet the ‘twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future’.
- Support new and emerging business sectors, including positively planning for ‘clusters or networks of knowledge driven, creative or high technology industries’.
- Support competitive town centre environments.
- Edge of town developments should only be considered where they have good access. This should be followed with an impact assessment to ensure the town centre remains viable in the long term.

6.2 The NPPF is clear that Local Plans have an important role to play in economic prosperity at a Local Authority level. This includes:

- Setting out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth;
- Supporting existing business sectors and planning for new or emerging sectors;
- Identifying priority areas for economic regeneration;
- Facilitating flexible working practices
- Avoiding protecting land for employment where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use.

6.3 Key messages from the draft revised NPPF include new guidance that planning policies should :

- ‘seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment’; and
- ‘be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan’ in order to ‘enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances’.

6.4 The Local Growth White Paper (2010)²⁸ notes that government interventions should support investment that will have a long term impact on growth, working with markets rather than seeking to create artificial and unsustainable growth. The White Paper identifies that economic policy should be judged on the degree to which it delivers strong, sustainable and balanced growth of income and employment over the long-term. More specifically, growth should be: broad-based industrially and geographically, ensuring everyone has access to the opportunities that growth brings (including future generations), whilst also focused on businesses that compete with the best internationally.

²⁸ Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010, Local Growth: Realising Every Place’s Potential [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/local-growth-realising-every-places-potential-hc-7961> Accessed Aug 2017

Regional

- 6.5 Kent and Medway Growth Deal (2014) (Kent County Council) sets out an investment and growth strategy for the region's economy; identifies key employment sectors in Swale including life sciences, land-based (agriculture/horticulture) and manufacturing.
- 6.6 The South East LEP Strategic Economic Plan (2014) identifies opportunities and priorities to support local economic and population growth in the South East region through private and public funding.

Local

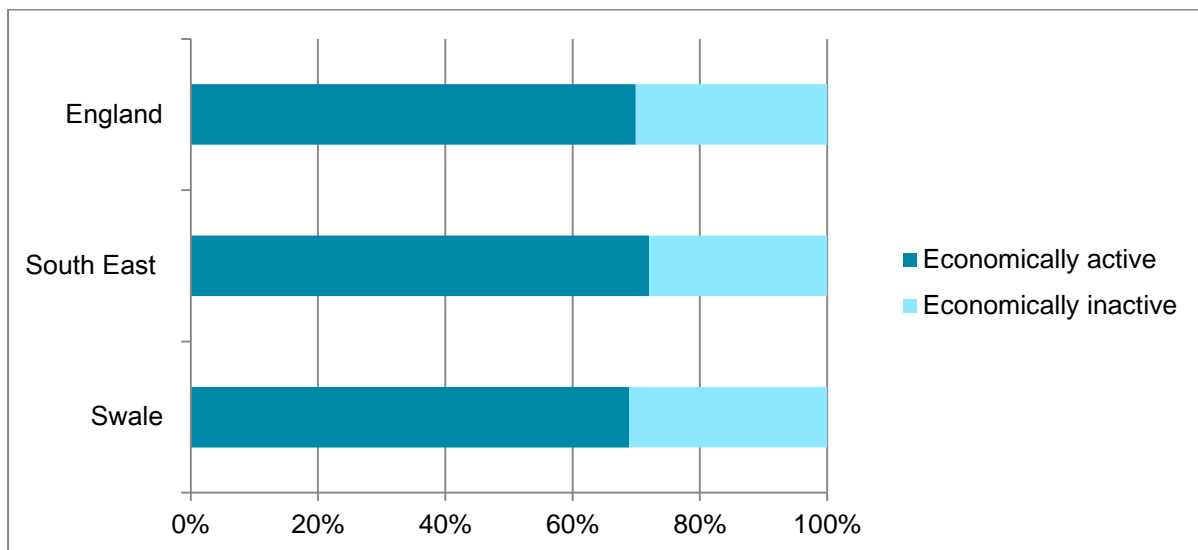
- 6.7 A key goal of the adopted Local Plan is to ensure that a steady supply of employment land comes forward over the plan to improve both quantity and quality of employment offer in the Borough. The adopted Local Plan aims to provide opportunities for the 56% of residents who travel elsewhere for work to find employment within the Borough and anticipates that an improving school performance will boost the skills of the local workforce.
- 6.8 Significant 'Regeneration Areas' are identified in the adopted Local Plan at Central Sittingbourne, Queenborough and Rushenden, The Port of Sheerness and Kent Science Park which offer opportunities for growth and beautification of existing retail and employment areas.
- 6.9 The adopted Local Plan identifies the Borough's two strategic employment locations as the Port of Sheerness and Kent Science Park and targets further growth at both locations over the plan period to support a growing population and to continue to position the Borough as an attractive place to work.
- 6.10 The Swale Visitor Economy Framework 2018-2023 identifies the significant economic potential of tourism in Swale and sets out an objective to increase tourism's value to the Borough from £193m of visitor spending to £218m by 2023.

Baseline

Current baseline

- 6.11 Swale's location within an economically significant region provides a key driver for growth and this supports a range of sectors which underpin the Borough's economy. The A249 corridor running between Sittingbourne and Sheerness on the Isle of Sheppey is home to significant manufacturing, defence and automotive industry employers as well as opportunities related to the Kent Centre for Offshore Renewable Engineering (CORE). The Kent Science Park near Sittingbourne is a centre for science and research-based jobs. The Eurolink Industrial Park has been through several phases of expansion and supports significant distribution, light industrial and warehousing activities. The productive soils of the Borough's traditional fruit belt continue to represent an important part of the local economy. The public sector, in particular the major prisons on the Isle of Sheppey, is another significant employer.

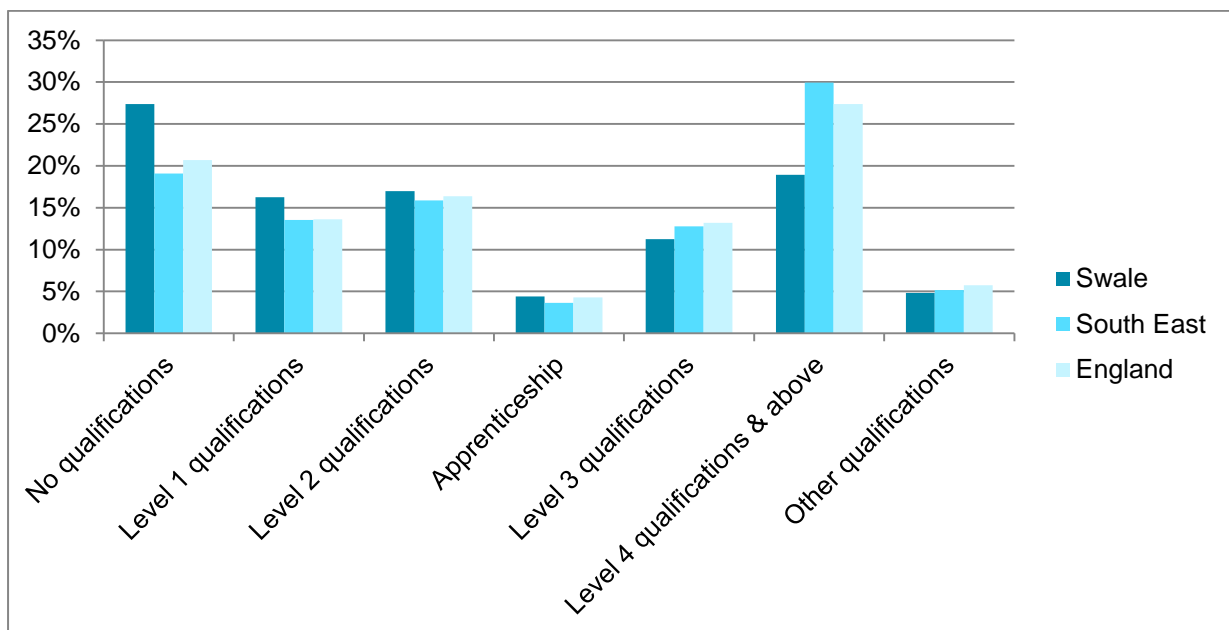
Figure 6.1 Economic activity rates



6.12 Figure 6.1 illustrates that at 68.9% the rate of economic activity of employment-age residents in Swale is below the average for the South East (72.1%) but aligned with the national average (69.9%).

6.13 The average unemployment rate in the Borough is also higher than regional and national unemployment averages. According to the 2011 census data unemployment in the Borough was 5.4%, compared to 4.0% in the East and 4.4% for England.

Figure 6.2 Highest level qualifications

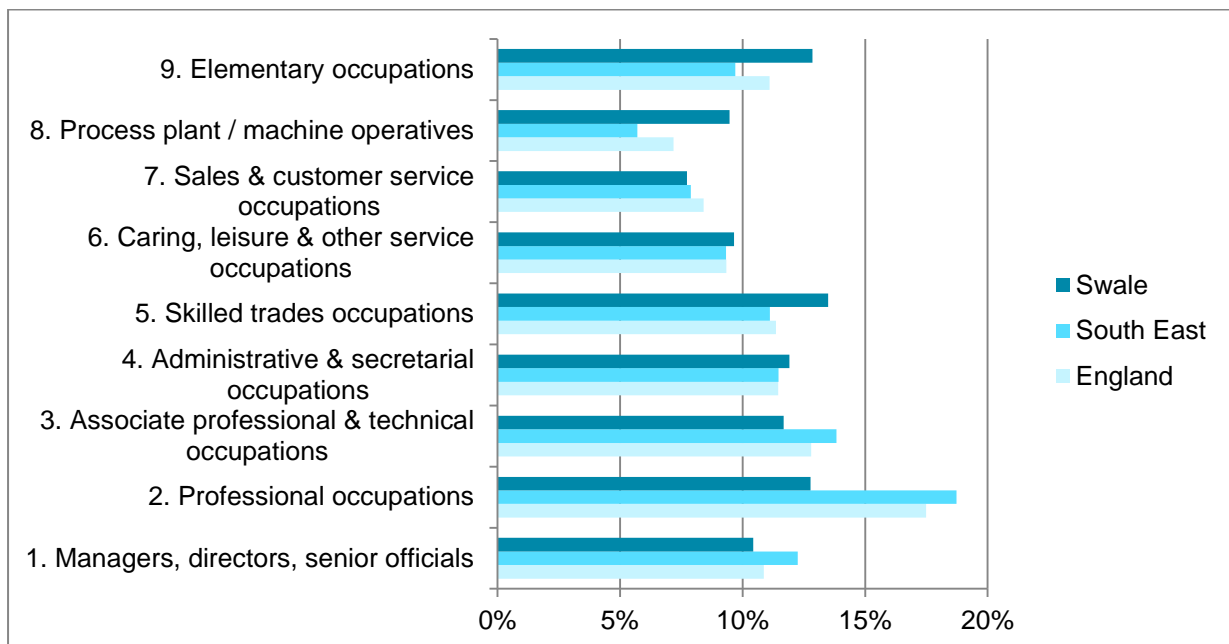


6.14 The Borough records generally lower levels of formal qualification attainment compared to regional and national figures. Just 18.9% of residents aged 16 and above have at least a Level 4 Qualification²⁹, fewer than at regional level (29.9%) and national level (27.4%). Correspondingly, a much greater proportion of Swale’s population have no qualifications (27.4%) than at regional level (19.1%) or national level (20.7%). This reflects the fact that Sittingbourne is the largest town in Kent without further education provision.³⁰

²⁹ ONS (2011) Census 2011, Qualifications and Students (WD501EW) [online] available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census>

³⁰ http://kmep.org.uk/documents/KMEP_Growth_Deal.pdf [last accessed 25/03/18].

Figure 6.3 Occupation of residents aged 16-74 in full time employment



6.15 Figure 6.3 highlights the high proportion of residents employed in elementary occupations and lower proportion of residents in professional occupations. This is consistent with the relatively low educational attainment in the Borough.

6.16 However, it is also apparent that Swale may have potential for a broader-based economy as currently no single sector provides a dominant source of employment. The three most well represented sectors – elementary occupations, skilled trades and professional occupations – are each from very different parts of the skills hierarchy which suggests that the Borough has potential to achieve a more diversified economy and sustainable variety of employment with potential to support both economic and population growth.

Future baseline

6.17 The adopted Local Plan has identified several sectors with potential to support economic growth in the future.³¹ These include:

- General and advanced manufacturing
- Distribution
- Agriculture
- Finance and services
- Low carbon technologies
- Healthcare and biotech
- ICT and telecommunications
- Construction
- Retail, leisure and tourism

6.18 These opportunities assume growth both in high tech industries and further consolidation in sectors which are already established and successful, such as agriculture. The wide range of sectors projected to have potential for growth within the Borough may help support sustainable residential growth but it will be important to integrate development with economic opportunities and to maximise the potential of the growing high-tech sector where possible.

³¹ Ibid

- 6.19 Relatively low educational attainment in the Borough might suggest that the successful science, research and development sectors as well as advanced manufacturing may be drawing some of its resources from outside the Borough. This could have implications for the levels of congestion on the Borough's road network among other things. Boosting educational attainment within the Borough could help further enhance the diversity and sustainability of the Borough's economy whilst also helping high tech employers source workers more locally.
- 6.20 Regeneration of Central Sittingbourne is expected to reinvigorate the town centre and attract additional users through the enhancement of the town centre retail offer, provision of a cinema and performance space and enhanced connectivity between the train station and the town centre.
- 6.21 This dovetails with the Swale Visitor Economy Framework 2018-2023 which sets out an objective to increase tourism's value to the Borough from £193m to £218m by 2023 through priorities including developing and promoting different local identities, improving infrastructure and public realm, supporting specific tourism sectors and developing the Borough's cultural offer.

Key issues and objectives

- 6.22 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:
- Swale's economy is traditionally narrow but shows signs of diversification by providing a range of employment from low skilled through to skilled trades to professional occupations. This suggests a sustainable economic platform for further growth in the Borough could be achievable.
 - Average educational attainment is lower and levels of economic inactivity among working-age residents slightly higher than regional and national averages.
 - The current absence of further education facilities in the Borough is likely contributing to lower attainment of Level 4 qualifications than regional and national averages.
 - Infrastructure upgrades will be necessary to avoid future growth being constrained, particularly at Junction 5 of the M2.
 - The identified regeneration opportunities in the main town centres in the Borough have potential to act as a catalyst for increased economic investment and growth.
- 6.23 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:
- Support the achievement of economic growth objectives, including in targeted growth sectors and established employment sectors.
 - Support a strong, diverse and resilient economy that provides opportunities for all.
 - Support and enhance the vitality of the Borough's town centres including through the identification of further regeneration opportunities where appropriate.
 - Support provision of further education facilities in the Borough where practicable.

7. Flood risk

Context

National

- 7.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) recognises the critical role that planning has to play in managing and mitigating the threat from flooding to communities. The key messages from the NPPF include:
- Direct development away from areas highest at risk of flooding, with development not to be allocated if there are reasonably available sites appropriate for the proposed development in areas with a lower probability of flooding. Where development is necessary, it should be made safe without increasing levels of flood risk elsewhere.
 - Take account of the effects of climate change in the long term, taking into account a range of factors including flooding. Adopt proactive strategies to adaptation and manage risks through adaptation measures including well planned green infrastructure.
- 7.2 The draft revised NPPF adds that major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) unless there is clear evidence that this would be inappropriate.
- 7.3 The Climate Change Act 2008³² established a framework to develop an economically credible emissions reduction path. The Act sets targets for greenhouse gas (GHG) emission reductions through action in the UK of at least 80% by 2050, and reductions in CO₂ emissions of at least 26% by 2020, against a 1990 baseline.
- 7.4 The Flood and Water Management Act (2010)³³ sets out measures to ensure that risk from all sources of flooding, not just rivers and seas, are managed more effectively. This includes: incorporating greater resilience measures into the design of new buildings; utilising the environment in order to reduce flooding; identifying areas suitable for inundation and water storage to reduce the risk of flooding elsewhere; roll back development in coastal areas to avoid damage from flooding or coastal erosion; and creating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).

Regional

- 7.5 The Medway Estuary and Swale and The Isle of Grain to South Foreland SMPs (2008)³⁴ identify sustainable long-term policies to protect coastal communities and environments through a range of measures and strategies ranging from actively intervening to protect built up areas to managing the natural erosion and change to coastlines in less populated areas.
- 7.6 Flood Risk to Communities (Swale) (2017)³⁵ prepared by Kent County Council in conjunction with the Environment Agency and Swale Borough Council provides an overall picture of flood risk in the Borough and proposes approaches to managing and mitigating identified risks.
- 7.7 The Medway Estuary and Swale Strategy (MEASS) is being prepared by the Environment Agency and will review the regional SMPs to add detail to the SMP framework and set flood risk and coastal erosion objectives for the 100 year period.

³² Climate Change Act 2008 [online] available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/27/contents> Accessed Aug 2017

³³ Flood and Water Management Act (2010) [online] available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/29/contents> Accessed Aug 2017

³⁴ South East Coastal Group 'Shoreline Management Plans' [online] available from: <http://www.se-coastalgroup.org.uk/category/shoreline-management-plans/> [last accessed 28/03/18].

³⁵ Kent County Council (2017), 'Flood Risk to Communities – Swale' [online], available from https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0010/71668/Flood-risk-to-communities-in-Swale.pdf [last accessed 29/03/18]

Local

- 7.8 The adopted Local Plan identifies that Swale's coastline is in 'the front line of climate change' and is therefore vulnerable to flooding and coastal erosion. The Local Plan establishes that a strategy of adaptation and mitigation will be employed including:
- Establishing a coastal change management area
 - Expecting new developments to incorporate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) as standard
 - Encouraging sustainable design and construction in all developments
 - Directing development towards the least vulnerable and most sustainable locations
- 7.9 The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for the Borough was prepared in 2009 and informs the plan-making process, assists development management decision making and assists developers in the preparation of Flood Risk Assessments. The SFRA identifies that land adjoining Faversham Creek is largely within Flood Zone 3b which is functional flood plain. Consequently, a Supplementary Statement for Faversham Creek was prepared in 2010 to provide specific guidance on development in the Faversham Creek area in light of its Flood Zone 3b status.
- 7.10 The Swale Surface Water Management Plan (2012) identifies 22 surface water flooding 'hotspots' across the Borough a number of general and site specific actions to manage flood risk at these locations³⁶.

Baseline

Current baseline

- 7.11 Swale Borough has 111km of coastline, the longest of any local authority in Kent, and this is reflected in the level of flood risk in the Borough. Major flood events have occurred in the Borough with relative frequency with the most significant occurring in 1953, 1978 and 2013.

Figure 7.1 below illustrates the extent of river and sea flood risk in the Borough:

³⁶ Kent County Council (2012), 'Swale Surface Water Management Plan' [online], available from: https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/50015/Swale_SWMP_Stage_1_Report.pdf [accessed 24/03/18].

Figure 7.1: River and sea flood risk³⁷ (approximate Plan Area shown in red)



7.12 The Borough’s coastal location and low lying landform make it vulnerable to flooding and correspondingly the majority of the coastal areas of the district fall within Flood Zone 3. The SFRA Level 2 found that an area immediately adjacent to Faversham Creek was within Flood Zone 3b which is functional flood plain. Some of the more populated areas of the Borough which are within Flood Zone 3, such as Sheerness, benefit from flood defences.

7.13 The majority of the non-coastal areas of the Borough are in the lowest risk Flood Zone 1.

7.14 There is more widespread risk of surface water flooding throughout the Borough associated with the extensive network of minor water courses and drainage ditches which crisscross the area, particularly in lower lying parts of the Borough. In most non-coastal areas surface water flood risk is only evident in very narrow corridors either side of a watercourse though in the lower lying parts of Sittingbourne, Faversham, Sheppey and coastal rural areas the surface water flood risk can be much broader.

Future baseline

7.15 Development can have the potential to increase flood risk through factors such as changing surface and ground water flows, overloading existing inputs to the drainage and wastewater networks or increasing the number of residents exposed to areas of existing flood risk.

7.16 Maintaining and enhancing tidal flood defences will be key to ensuring the impact from future flood events is mitigated. The 2017 Flood Risk to Communities (Swale) document notes that tidal defences “prevented inundation” during the 2013 flood event, highlighting their importance. Increasing pressure on tidal and fluvial defences is widely anticipated from climate change and it will be important that future development is well integrated with current and future flood risk planning.

³⁷ HM Government (2018), ‘Flood map for planning’ [online], available from: <https://flood-map-for-planning.service.gov.uk/> [accessed 29/03/18].

Key issues and objectives

7.17 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:

- Coastal parts of the Borough are vulnerable to flooding with the main sources of flooding being the Medway, Swale and Thames estuaries.
- Tidal flood defences are in place to protect some particularly vulnerable areas of coastline.
- Flood risk is also high adjacent to some smaller waterways, particularly around Faversham Creek and Conyer Creek.
- Climate change is likely to increase sea levels and cause weather to become more variable. It is therefore likely that the flood risk from tidal sources in the Borough will continue to increase over time.

7.18 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Avoid and mitigate flood risk by directing development away from the areas of the Borough at the highest risk of flooding.
- Support the priorities identified in the Medway Estuary and Swale SMP and the Isle of Grain to South Foreland SMP.

8. Heritage

Context

National

- 8.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places a high degree of significance on managing harm to heritage assets through high quality design of new development and conserving heritage assets. 'Heritage assets' is a broad term and can refer to a wide variety of built heritage from pre-historic to recent history. It can also take account of the roles and character that the natural environment can have on helping define the particular character of historic buildings and structures. Therefore there is a degree of overlap between conserving and enhancing built heritage and the natural environment.
- 8.2 The NPPF requires Local Authorities to:
- Protect and enhance valued landscapes, giving particular weight to those identified as being of national importance.
 - Maintain the character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes, particularly in areas defined as Heritage Coast, and improve public access to and enjoyment of the coast.
 - Recognise that heritage assets are an 'irreplaceable resource' and conserve them in a 'manner appropriate to their significance'.
- 8.3 The draft revised NPPF adds that developers should be required to 'record and advance understanding of the significance' of any heritage assets that will be lost through development and that these records must then be publically accessible.
- 8.4 The NPPF's messages on Heritage are supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)³⁸ which itself includes the key message that local authorities should set out in their Local Plans a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The strategy should recognise that conservation is not a passive exercise. In developing their strategy, local planning authorities should identify specific opportunities within their area for the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets.
- 8.5 Historic Environment for England (2010)³⁹ sets out the Government's vision for the historic environment. It calls for those who have the power to shape the historic environment to recognise its value and to manage it in an intelligent manner in light of the contribution that it can make to social, economic and cultural life.

Regional

- 8.6 The Kent Environment Strategy (2016) reinforces the links between landscape and historic character by aiming to strengthen the understanding of the health, social and economic value of historical assets in Kent to enhance the protection and enjoyment of the region's historic character.

Local

- 8.7 The adopted Local Plan identifies that historic assets and the historic environment make an important contribution to the Borough's sense of place and identity. The Plan establishes that a

³⁸ Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) National Planning Practice Guidance [online] available at: <http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/> Accessed Aug 2017

³⁹ HM Government (2010) The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England [online] available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/6763.aspx Accessed Aug 2017

heritage strategy will be developed to sustain and enhance the significance of designated and non-designated heritage assets.

8.8 The Swale Heritage Asset Review (2015) comprehensively identifies and assesses Swale’s historic environment, the needs and conservation status of its assets to inform the preparation of the proposed Heritage Strategy.

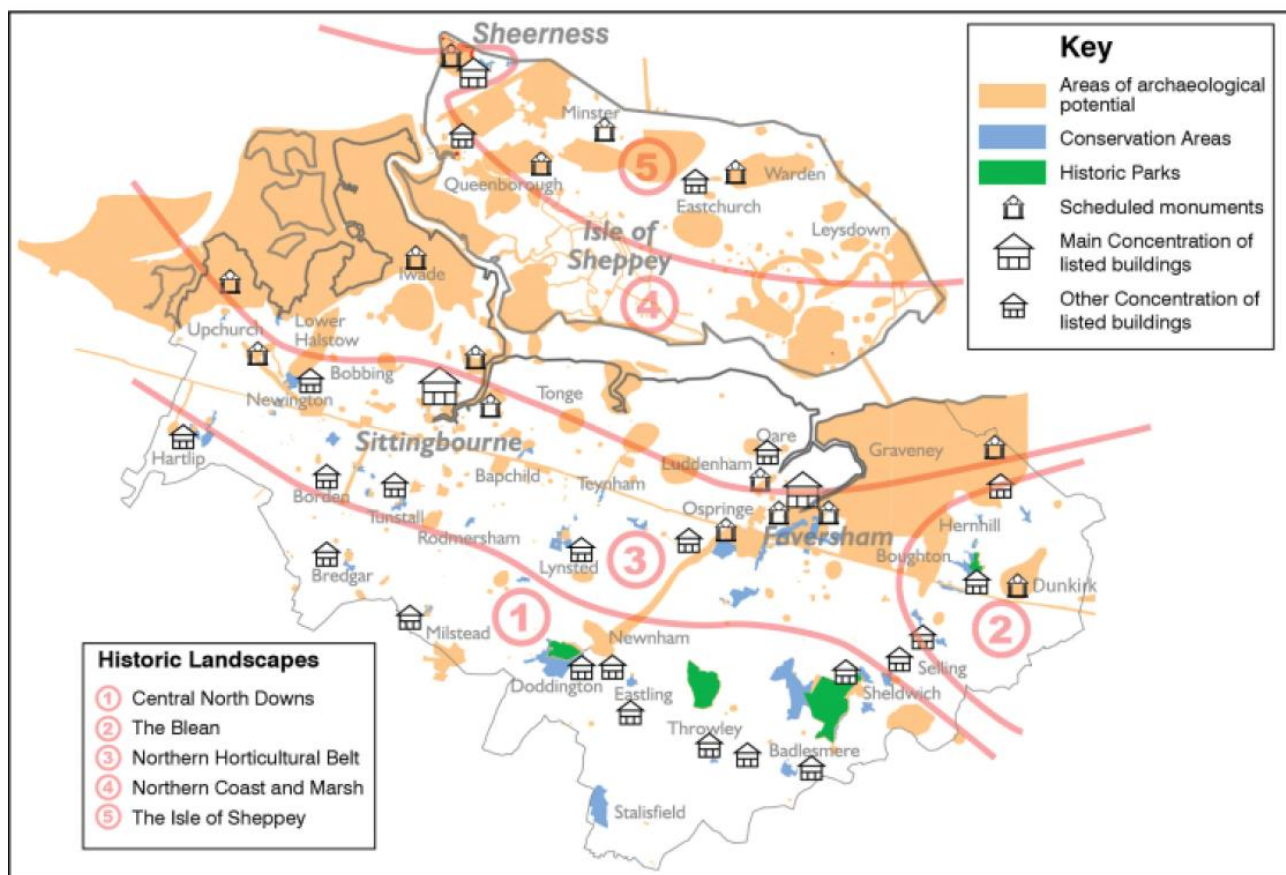
Baseline

Current baseline

8.9 Swale has a large number of historic assets including:

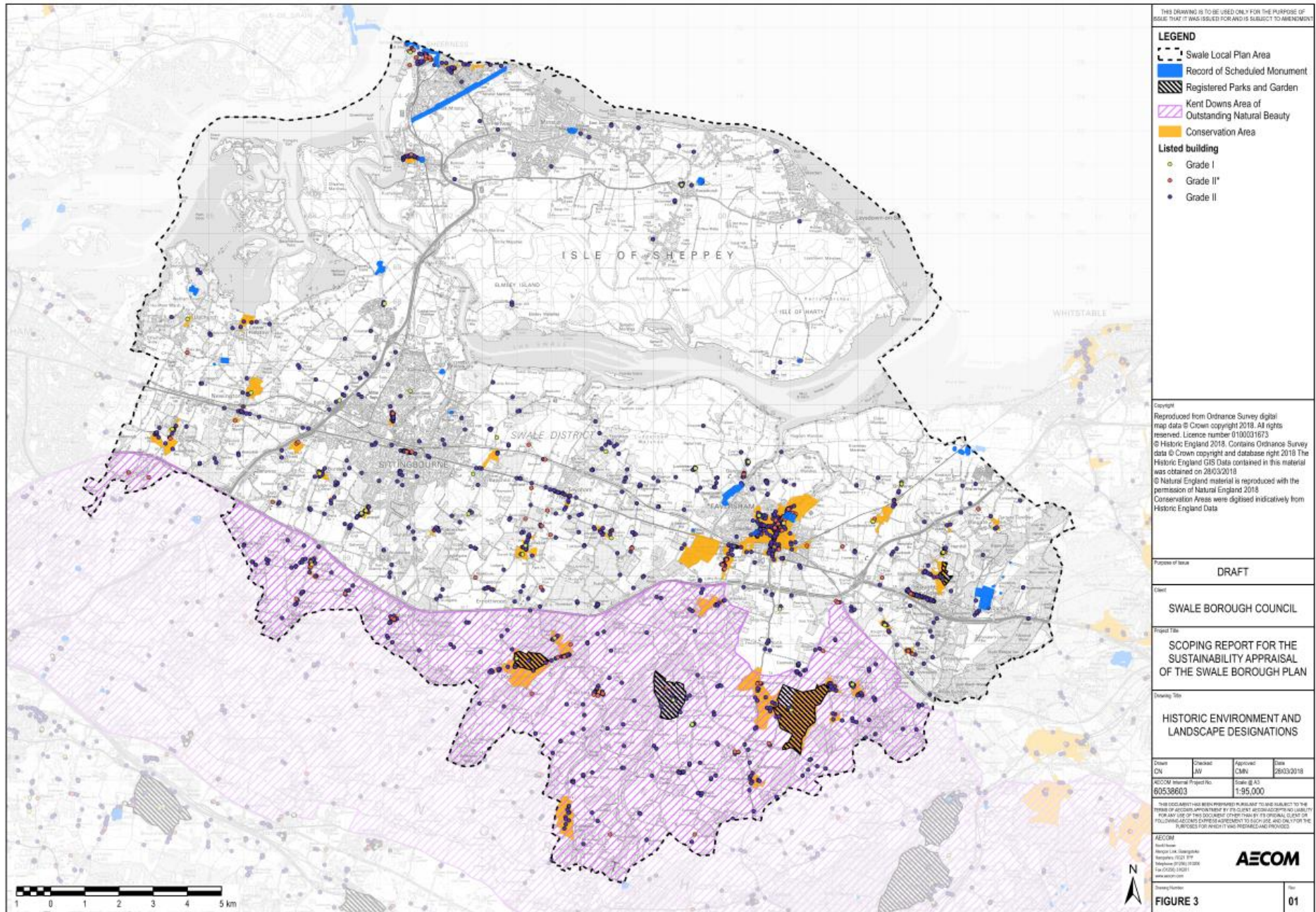
- 1,856 listed buildings, including 91 at Grade II* and 37 at Grade I
- 22 scheduled monuments;
- 4 registered historic parks and gardens, and;
- 50 designated conservation areas.

Figure 8.1 Historic assets and features in Swale (overview)⁴⁰



⁴⁰ Swale Borough Council (2017), 'Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan' [online], available from: <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> [last accessed 26/03/18].

Figure 8.2 Historic assets in Swale (detailed)



- 8.10 The Borough has historic features from a broad time span and includes evidence of Roman, Saxon and Norman settlements through to World War II defences along the coastline and elsewhere. The historic landscapes of the North Downs, the Blean, the fruit belt and the coastal marshes along with historic patterns of land use contribute further to the fabric of the Borough's heritage.
- 8.11 The Borough's strategic coastal location at the mouth of the Thames estuary is reflected in its maritime heritage particularly the defence infrastructure associated with the former Royal Navy dockyard and Bluetown in Sheerness. The historic character of central Sittingbourne and the rich historic fabric of the market town of Faversham are also key heritage characteristics of the Borough.

Future baseline

- 8.12 New development within the Borough has the potential to impact heritage assets and their settings through inappropriate design and layout. There are already a number of historic assets at risk and these could potentially deteriorate further without intervention or as a result of inappropriate development.
- 8.13 It should be noted, however, that existing historic environment designations will continue to offer a degree of protection to cultural heritage assets and their settings. Additionally, new development need not be harmful to the significance of a heritage asset and can provide opportunities to enhance the setting of an asset and better reveal its significance.

Key issues and objectives

- 8.14 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:
- There are a range of designated heritage assets present within the Borough, including 22 Scheduled Monuments, 50 Conservation Areas and 1,856 listed buildings.
 - There are 18 designated heritage assets identified by Historic England as being at risk ranging from historic naval defence structures to churches to the entire High Streets of Sittingbourne and Milton Regis.
- 8.15 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objective:
- Conserve and enhance heritage assets and contribute to the maintenance of historic character through design, layout and setting of new development.

9. Housing

Context

National

9.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Boosting ‘significantly the supply of housing’, local planning authorities should meet the ‘full, objectively assessed need for market and affordable housing’ in their area. They should prepare a Strategic Housing Market Assessment to assess their full housing needs, working with neighbouring authorities where housing market areas cross administrative boundaries. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment should identify the scale and mix of housing and the range of tenures that the local population is likely to need over the plan period.
- In rural areas local planning authorities should plan housing development to reflect local needs, particularly for affordable housing, including through rural exception sites where appropriate.
- The NPPF attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Design should reinforce local distinctiveness, raise the standard more generally in the area and address the connections between people and places.
- Local Planning Authorities should work with the other local authorities in the relevant housing market area or functional economic market area in line with the duty to cooperate. This is because such needs are rarely constrained precisely by local authority administrative boundaries.

9.2 Key messages from the draft revised NPPF include:

- Small sites can make a key contribution to meeting housing need and that Local Authorities should therefore ensure that at least 20% of identified housing sites are half a hectare or smaller.
- Strategic plans should set out a housing requirement figure for designated neighbourhood areas

9.3 In February 2017 the government published the Housing White Paper titled ‘Fixing our broken housing market’.⁴¹ Key points in relation to housing delivery include a new standardised methodology for calculating housing need and a drive to increase densities in the most sustainable locations, particularly near transport hubs such as train stations. For Swale this new calculation results in a significant increase in Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) from the current position of 776 dwellings per annum to 1,054 dwellings per annum.

Local

9.4 Key messages from the adopted Local Plan in relation to housing include:

- Delivering a wide choice of high quality homes, of good design and creating safe accessible and attractive places through development are key objectives.
- Objectively Assessed Housing Need is 13,126 dwellings over the Plan Period or 776 dwellings per annum.
- Affordable housing need is 190 dwellings per annum though viability issues could suppress true delivery.

⁴¹ MHCLG (2017), ‘Housing White Paper’ [online], available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/housing-white-paper>

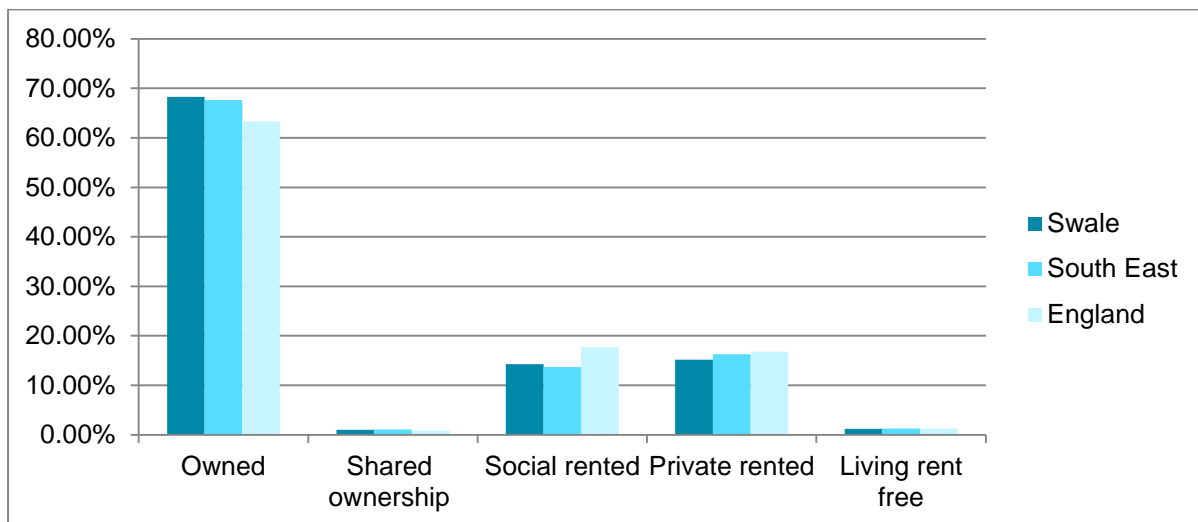
- 85% of housing delivery will be delivered in the Swale Thame Gateway (Sittingbourne and Sheppey) with the remaining 15% delivered at Faversham and the rest of Swale.

Baseline

Current baseline

9.5 There is considerable housing pressure in Swale, as with many areas in the South East of England, and trends in the Borough more closely reflect those of the South East region than those on a national scale. This is illustrated in part by Figure 9.1 below:

Figure 9.1 Housing tenure



9.6 Figure 9.1 illustrates that housing tenure in the Borough is broadly in line with regional averages though there are some disparities with national averages. The rate of home ownership in Swale is 68.3%, slightly higher than the South East (67.6%) and higher than England as a whole (63.3%). Correspondingly there is a slightly smaller private rental sector in Swale than at regional and national levels.

9.7 The 2015/16 Swale Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), which is the most recently published, notes that housing completions over the first two years of the Local Plan period (2014/15 and 2015/16) averaged 608 dwellings per annum (dpa). This completion rate is below the target of 776 dpa but represents an increase on the five year average (465 dpa) and ten year average (556 dpa).⁴²

9.8 The 2015/16 AMR notes that affordable housing delivery dropped from 156 dwellings in 2014/15 to just 60 in 2015/16, well short of the Council's 30% target. The AMR attributes this drop to changes in national policy rather than local factors.

Future baseline

9.9 The Government's proposed changes to the methodology for calculating housing need show an indicative increase of nearly 25% in the level of need per annum for Swale.⁴³ Current Objectively Assessed Need is for 776 dpa which rises to 1,054 dpa under the proposed standardised methodology. Whilst the standardised methodology is not yet adopted the scale of potential increase in need clearly indicates that a significant increase in the level of development is likely to be required in the Borough.

⁴² Swale Borough Council (2016), 'The Swale Borough Local Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2015/16' [online], available from: <https://archive.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-General/Planning-Policy/Annual-Monitoring-Report/AMR-2015-16.pdf> [last accessed 24/03/18].

⁴³ MHCLG (2017), 'Planning for the right homes in the right places' [online], available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/planning-for-the-right-homes-in-the-right-places-consultation-proposals#history> [last accessed 01/04/18].

- 9.10 There are a number of constraints in the Borough including flood risk, AONB designation and large amounts of best and most versatile land and it may be the case that future development will need to be delivered at higher densities within existing settlements or via new settlements to ensure need is met.
- 9.11 Swale Borough Council were successful in the first round of their 2017 bid for central government funding via the Housing Investment Fund (HIF) mechanism for the Queenborough and Rushenden Regeneration scheme and it is anticipated that up to 1,180 dwellings will come forward over the Plan Period. This scheme seeks to unlock capacity on existing brownfield sites on the Isle of Sheppey through central government funding.

Key issues and objectives

- 9.12 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:
- The adopted Local Plan includes a housing delivery target of 776 dpa.
 - The 2015/2016 Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) records an average delivery over the preceding ten years of 556 dpa meaning current rates of housing delivery will need to be enhanced to meet the target.
 - The proposed standardised methodology for housing need calculation would see Swale's annual housing need increase from 776 dpa to 1,054 dpa. The proposed changes are not yet adopted but indicate that the Borough may need to find even more supply than currently planned for.
 - There is a need for more affordable housing in the Borough of 190 dwellings per annum though in practice viability issues negatively impact delivery of affordable housing.
- 9.13 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:
- Support timely delivery of market housing and affordable housing.
 - Promote an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures.
 - Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community.

10. Land

Context

National

10.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Protecting and enhancing soils and protecting the value of best and most versatile agricultural land where applicable. This means that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.
- Preventing new or existing development from being ‘adversely affected’ by the presence of ‘unacceptable levels’ of soil pollution or land instability and be willing to remediate and mitigate ‘despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate’.
- Encouraging the effective use of land’ through the reuse of land which has been previously developed, ‘provided that this is not of high environmental value’.

10.2 The draft revised NPPF stresses the importance of protecting and enhancing bio- and geodiversity which represents a shift in tone away from minimising harm towards a more positive emphasis on enhancement.

10.3 Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England⁴⁴ sets out a vision for soil use in England which includes better protection for agricultural soils, protecting stores of soil carbon, improving the resilience of soils to climate change and preventing soil pollution. The essential message in relation to development is that pressure on soils is likely to increase in line with development pressure and the planning system should seek to mitigate this.

10.4 Government Review of Waste Policy in England⁴⁵ recognises that environmental benefits and economic growth can be the result of a more sustainable approach to the use of materials.

Regional

10.5 Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (KMWLP) 2013-2030 sets out the strategy for mineral provision and waste management in Kent. In two-tier authorities Minerals and Waste Planning is the responsibility of the higher tier authority, in this case Kent County Council who adopted the current Plan in 2016 and is currently undertaking an Early Partial Review of the Plan.

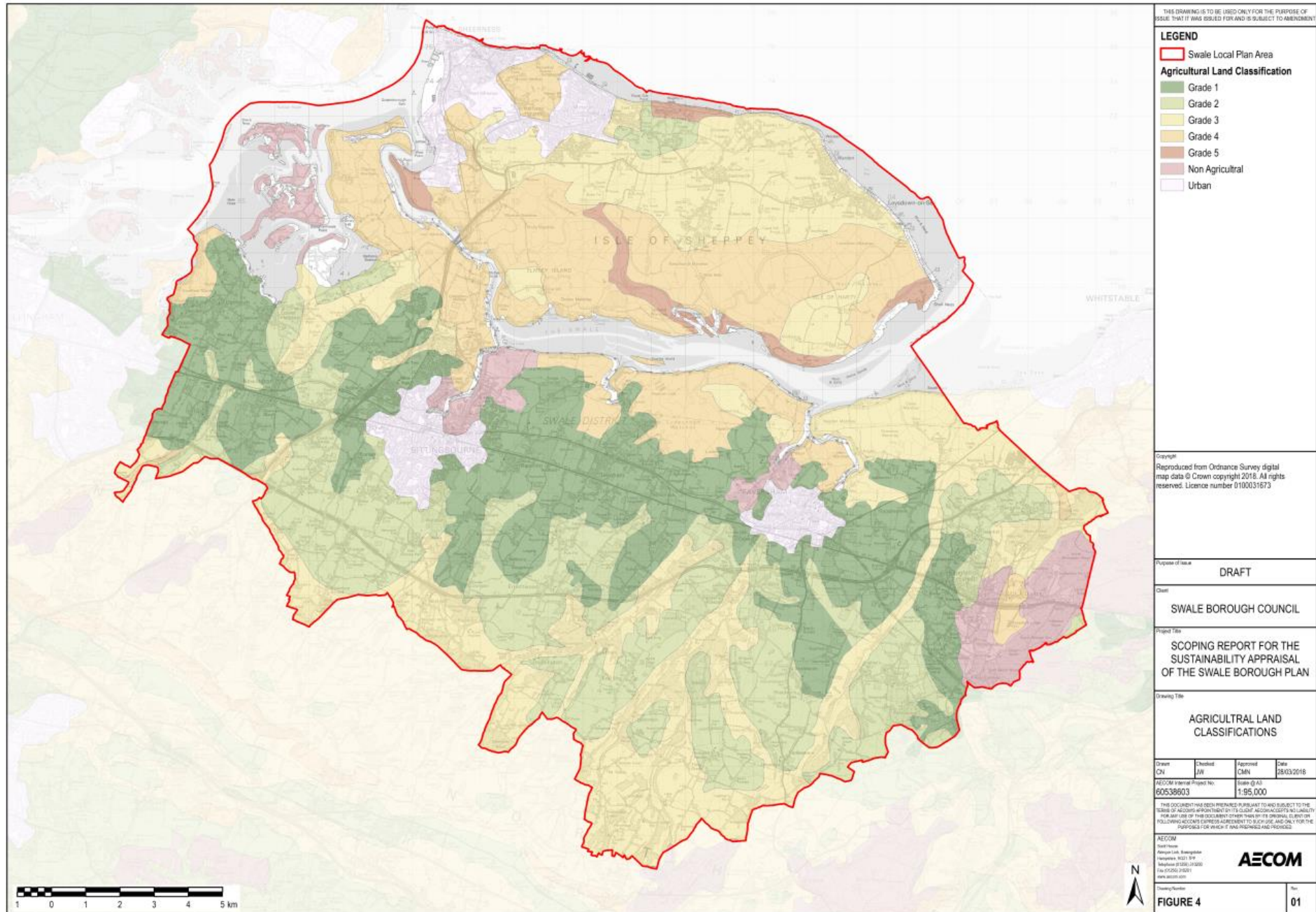
Local

10.6 The Borough’s rich agricultural heritage is a key theme in the adopted Local Plan. The Plan identifies the importance in protecting the rich fertile soils which underpin this. The importance of soil quality to the future of fruit growing and other traditional agriculture in the Borough is identified, both as a way of protecting food security and employment and as a means of preserving the Borough’s traditions and heritage.

⁴⁴ Defra (2009) Safeguarding our Soils: A strategy for England [online] available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/safeguarding-our-soils-a-strategy-for-england> [last accessed 29/03/18]

⁴⁵ Defra (2011) Government Review of Waste Policy in England [online] available at: <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13540-waste-policy-review110614.pdf>

Figure 10.1 Agricultural land classification



Baseline

Current baseline

- 10.7 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) classifies land into six grades (plus ‘non-agricultural’ and ‘urban’), where Grades 1 to 3a are recognised as being the ‘best and most versatile’ land and Grades 3b to 5 are of poorer quality. The subdivision of Grade 3 into 3a and 3b has not been undertaken on a national scale, including within the Plan area, and Grade 3 land is therefore presumed to be best and most versatile unless and until evidence can be provided to demonstrate it is 3b not 3a.
- 10.8 There is considerable diversity of agricultural land quality within the Borough. Areas of Grades 1 to 5 are all present as well as land classified as ‘non-agricultural’ and as ‘urban’ (see Figure 10.1). A band of Grade 1 and 2 runs through the centre of the Borough forming the spine of the Fruit Belt, punctuated by the urban areas of Sittingbourne and Faversham. To the south of this, as the Fruit Belt gives way to the Kent Downs AONB, the land transitions to Grade 3.
- 10.9 Land immediately to the north of the Fruit Belt is generally of poorer quality. A large strip of land either side of the Swale estuary on both the mainland and the Isle of Sheppey is Grade 4 and there are areas of Grade 5 around some coastal areas of Sheppey along with urban and non-agricultural land around Sheerness. The north east of the Island sees a return to better quality land with an area of Grade 3 and a pocket of Grade 2 land occupying much of the north east.
- 10.10 The KMWLP identifies significant minerals safeguarding areas in the Borough. The majority of these are made up of either sub-alluvial river terrace deposits on Sheppey or areas of brickearth mostly concentrated along the A2 corridor and Fruit Belt area. The KMWLP also defines exemptions from the presumption to safeguard designated minerals deposits in these areas.
- 10.11 Kent County Council (KCC) is the Waste Disposal Authority for Swale. KCC operates three Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) within the Borough located at Sittingbourne, Faversham and Sheerness.

Future baseline

- 10.12 Existing planning policy encourages the efficient use of land and a preference for the recycling and development of brownfield land to meet as greater a proportion of development needs as possible. However, there are a range of reasons why developing greenfield land can also be necessary to help meet identified needs, particularly if brownfield land supply is limited or constrained by factors such as contamination from previous uses.
- 10.13 Therefore, although Sittingbourne, Sheerness and, to a lesser extent, Faversham are important regional settlements and could have potential to support a degree of brownfield development very few authorities are able to meet their needs through brownfield land alone and it is therefore likely that development will be necessary on land currently in agricultural use. Although there are areas within the Borough which are of lower quality much of these areas have significant other constraints in practice. For example, much of the area of Grade 4 is on Sheppey but this area would be inappropriate to develop on the basis of flood risk, biodiversity and other constraints.
- 10.14 It is considered likely therefore that a degree of future development within the Borough will be directed towards areas of the best and most versatile agricultural land. It could be important to identify opportunities to direct development towards areas of Grade 3 and away from Grades 1 and 2.
- 10.15 New development is likely to increase demand for waste and recycling services and could potentially require expansion of existing HWRCs and Waste Transfer Stations or the creations of new ones.

Key issues and objectives

10.16 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:

- Land classified as the best and most versatile agricultural land is present in parts of the Borough including significant areas of Grade 1 land.
- Extensive areas of minerals safeguarding extend across parts of the Borough and could have potential to impact the deliverability of sites in some areas.

10.17 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objective:

- Promote the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources, including supporting development which avoids the best and most versatile agricultural land and development which makes effective use of previously developed land.

11. Landscape

Context

National

11.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) establishes that Local authorities should set out in their Local Plans a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment. The strategy should recognise that conservation is not a passive exercise. In developing their strategy, local planning authorities should identify specific opportunities within their area for the conservation and enhancement of heritage assets.

11.2 Other key messages include:

- Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, giving particular weight to those identified as being of national importance.
- Maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, protecting and enhancing its distinctive landscapes, particularly in areas defined as Heritage Coast, and improve public access to and enjoyment of the coast.
- Recognising that heritage assets are an ‘irreplaceable resource’ and conserve them in a ‘manner appropriate to their significance’.
- Local plans should include strategic policies for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, including landscape. This includes designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.

11.3 The draft revised NPPF adds that:

- Planning policies and decisions should recognise “the wider benefits from natural capital including the economic and other benefits of agricultural land, trees and woodland”.
- Planning policies should maintain the character of and enhance access to the undeveloped coast.

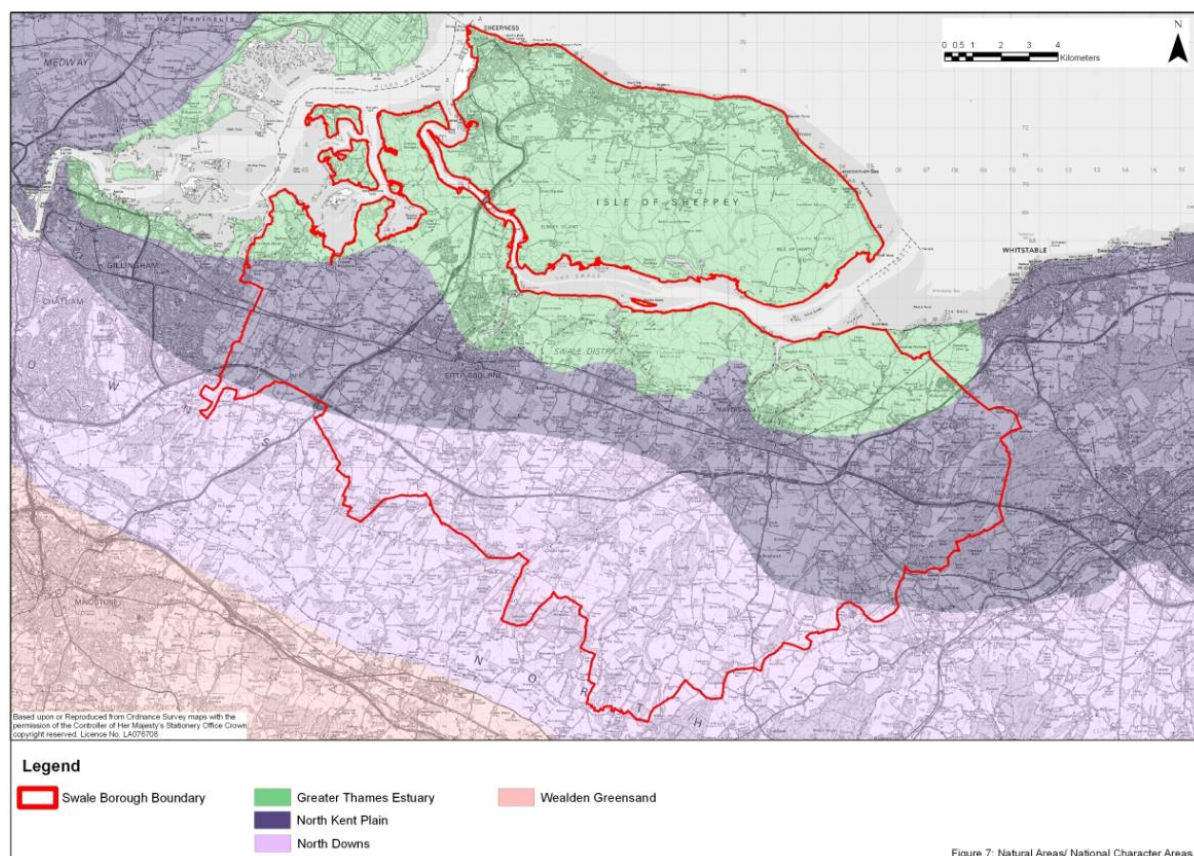
11.4 Historic Environment for England⁴⁶ sets out the Government’s vision for the historic environment. It calls for those who have the power to shape the historic environment to recognise its value and to manage it in an intelligent manner in light of the contribution that it can make to social, economic and cultural life. Also of note is the reference to promoting the role of the historic environment within the Government’s response to climate change and the wider sustainable development agenda.

11.5 Natural England’s National Character Area profiles divide England in 159 distinct natural areas based on their landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, historic, cultural and economic characteristics.⁴⁷ National Character Areas (NCAs) follow natural features in the landscape and are not aligned with administrative boundaries. NCA profiles describe the features which shape each of these landscapes, providing a broad context to its character. The Borough is split between three National Character Areas (NCAs), each of which run in a lateral east-west alignment. These are NCA 81 Greater Thames Estuary; NCA 113 North Kent Plain; and NCA 119 North Downs.

⁴⁶ HM Government (2010) The Government’s Statement on the Historic Environment for England [online] available at: http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/+/http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/publications/6763.aspx [accessed 16/03/18].

⁴⁷ Natural England (2012) ‘National Character Area profiles’ [online], available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-character-area-profiles-data-for-local-decision-making> [accessed 24/05/18].

Figure 11.1 National Character Areas in Swale Borough⁴⁸



Regional

11.6 The Kent Landscape Character Assessment (2004)⁴⁹ provides a high level, county-wide character assessment intended to be supported at a local level by further district specific and site specific character assessments where necessary. Landscape character often transcends administrative boundaries as character is generally informed by natural features such as geology. It is therefore often appropriate to explore landscape character at a strategic scale to inform more local assessments where necessary.

11.7 Kent Downs AONB Management Plan 2014 – 2019⁵⁰ seeks an approach to managing development within the AONB which is sustainable in terms of preserving the area's tranquillity and remoteness, its setting and views, its rural character and its landscape. The Management Plan identifies a range of threats to the AONB, the most significant of which include urban growth and associated infrastructure development in close proximity to the AONB and the corresponding increase in visitors to the area.

Local

11.8 The adopted Local Plan identifies that the Borough has a number of distinctive landscapes in addition to those protected by AONB designation. These are the central North Downs, the Northern Horticultural Belt, the Forest of Blean, the Northern Coast and Marshland and the Isle of Sheppey and its sub-areas.

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Kent County Council, 'Kent's Landscape Assessment' [online] available from: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/environment-waste-and-planning-policies/countryside-policies-and-reports/kents-landscape-assessment>

⁵⁰ Kent Downs AONB Partnership 'Management Plan 2014-2019' (2014) [online], available from: http://www.kentdowns.org.uk/uploads/documents/KD_AONB_final_plan_09.09.14.compressed.pdf

- 11.9 The adopted Local Plan notes that the separate identify of the Borough’s settlements contributes to the wider sense of landscape and townscape character within the Borough and. defines a number of ‘Important Local Countryside Gaps’ between settlements.
- 11.10 The Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal Supplementary Planning Document (2011) provides a criteria-based evidence base for informing strategic and site specific development by identifying the “diversity and distinctiveness” of landscapes within the Borough.⁵¹

Baseline

Current baseline

- 11.11 The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) covers much of the south of the Borough extending to most of the area south of the M2 motorway. Although the motorway provides a degree of severance between the AONB and the rest of the Borough some areas to the north of the M2 are likely to fall within the setting of the AONB. AONB is a designation which carries a significant degree of development constraint to help protect the features and characteristics of particular natural beauty and which might be most vulnerable to development.
- 11.12 The adopted Local Plan includes several Local Landscape Designations identified as Areas of High Landscape Value. These are split between larger Kent Level features which are “*scenically important in a county-wide context*” (consisting of the North Downs, Blean Woods and North Kent Marshes) and Swale Level Areas of High Landscape Value (consisting of land between Tonge and Luddenham; Iwade, Newington and Lower Halstow; Boughton Street, Henhill, Dargate and Staplestreet; and Sheppey Court and Diggs Marshes). Although these areas do not benefit from national designation the Plan requires development proposals within them to protect local landscape character and enhance the future appearance of the designated landscape where possible.
- 11.13 The Isle of Sheppey and the coastal areas of the Borough fall within the Greater Thames Estuary NCA, characterised by low lying island; mud flats; tidal salt marsh; and grazing marsh.
- 11.14 A central band between the coast and the south of the Borough fall within the North Kent Plain NCA, often called the ‘Fruit Belt’, characterised by low, flat topography; productive agricultural soils; orchards and other horticulture; and significant areas of ancient woodland.
- 11.15 The southern area of the Borough falls within the Wealden Greensand NCA which is characterised by the area’s natural beauty, its scarp-and-slope topography which often yields long range views plus areas of extensive woodland and ancient woodland.
- 11.16 The 2011 Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal found that there are five broad landscape types and 42 local ‘character areas’ within the Borough, highlighting the diversity of landscapes, the contrast between the coastal and hinterland areas of the Borough and the richness of the natural landscape.
- 11.17 The 2014-2019 Kent Downs AONB Management Plan identifies 13 separate character areas within the AONB although the entire section of AONB within the Borough falls within a single one of these, the Mid Kent Downs character area.

Future baseline

- 11.18 New development within the Borough has the potential to lead to incremental changes in landscape quality in and around the Borough. This could include the loss of landscape features or the visual impact on existing features from inappropriate development. There could also be

⁵¹ Swale Borough Council (2011), ‘Swale Landscape Character and Biodiversity Appraisal SPD’ [online] available from: <http://www.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-General/Planning-Policy/Landscape-Character-Appraisal-Final-Sept-2011/Introduction-reduced-size.pdf> [last accessed 19/03/18].

potential for new development to impact landscape quality in the vicinity of the road network from increased traffic flows.

Key issues and objectives

11.19 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:

- The south of the Borough lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, including most land south of the M2.
- The Borough straddles three distinct National Character Areas, the Thames Estuary NCA, North Kent Plains NCA and Wealden Greensand NCA.
- There is considerable diversity of localised character in the Borough with 42 local character areas identified by the 2011 Swale Landscape Character Appraisal.

11.20 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Protect and enhance the character and quality of the Borough's landscapes and townscapes through appropriate design and layout of new development.
- Protect and enhance the Kent Downs AONB where possible.
- Preserve important open gaps between settlements.

12. Transport

Context

National

12.1 Key messages from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) include:

- Encouraging Local Authorities to prepare plans in which transport objectives are closely aligned to environmental objectives. For example, by encouraging land use and transport development which supports a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions and reduces congestion.
- Protecting and exploiting opportunities for the use of sustainable transport modes. In practice this could mean measures such as densifying development around transport hubs to reduce the need to travel by private vehicle.
- Embedding green infrastructure into new developments to encourage walking and cycling as attractive transport options for shorter distances.

12.2 The draft revised NPPF adds that transport issues should be considered ‘from the earliest stages of plan making’ to identify and address potential impacts on transport networks, exploit new technologies, pursue opportunities to promote cycling and integrate patterns of movement into scheme design.

Regional

12.3 The Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework (2015) provides a strategic view of growth distribution and infrastructure provision at a regional scale and identifies the capacity enhancements to Junctions 5 and 7 of the M2 as key strategic priorities for the region, not just the Borough.

12.4 Kent County Council Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth Without Gridlock 2016-2031 identifies that strategic transport priorities for Swale include:

- Improvements to Junctions 5 and 7 of the M2;
- Enhancing capacity on the A249 corridor; improving opportunities for east-west travel on the Isle of Sheppey and improving public transport connections within Sheppey and between Sheppey and the mainland.
- Enhancing capacity both on high speed and mainline rail services. The Transport Plan also identifies that cost of rail travel prevents its full potential to contribute to sustainable growth from being unlocked.

12.5 Kent County Council Active Travel Strategy aims to promote walking and cycling as practical and attractive means of transport for short journeys in Kent to contribute to improved health outcomes, reduced congestion, reduced pollution and lower costs at an individual and shared level.

Local

12.6 The adopted Local Plan includes themes which appear at regional level as well as more Borough-specific issues. The key messages include:

- Capacity at Junction 5 of the M2 is the most significant transport constraint in the Borough.
 - The Borough generally benefits from a strategic location along a major transport corridor between London and international rail services and ports.

- The Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road A2 Link. An area of search north of the A2 is safeguarded within which it is anticipated the missing link of the northern relief road will be delivered via Local Plan review.
- The Isle of Sheppey's transport network is underdeveloped and contributes to isolation and deprivation on the island.
- Patterns of growth to be managed in line with NPPF objectives to maximise opportunities to travel by walking, cycling and public transport.

Baseline

Current baseline

Road network and congestion

- 12.7 The Borough is well connected to the Strategic Road network although the connectivity is strongest in an east-west alignment and connectivity to the south is more limited. The M2 motorway and A2 trunk road both connect Swale with London to the west. The A2 continues east, connecting the borough with Canterbury and Dover. The M2 terminates within the Borough and becomes the A299, providing a link to the north east Kent coast to Margate.
- 12.8 The principal north-south route is the A249 which links the Isle of Sheppey with Sittingbourne and onwards to Maidstone and the M20. This principal north-south route is augmented by a number of local and rural roads across the Borough of more limited capacity. There is one single principle east-west route on the Isle of Sheppey.
- 12.9 Long term capacity issues at Junction 5 of the M2 are subject to a planned £50-100m improvement programme by Highways England programmed to commence in 2019/20.⁵² Kent County Council have identified further capacity issues at Junction 7 of the M2 where existing capacity is coming under sustained pressure from local and regional growth.⁵³

Rail network

- 12.10 Swale is well connected to the rail network and there are a total of 9 stations within the borough. The Chatham Main Line runs east-west through the Borough with stations at Newington, Sittingbourne, Teynham, Faversham and Oversland. The Sheerness branch line runs north from Sittingbourne to the Isle of Sheppey with stations at Kemsley, Swale, Queenborough and Sheerness.
- 12.11 Services in the Borough are operated by Southeastern and include some services on the Javelin High Speed train to St Pancras International. There are up to 5 services an hour between Sittingbourne and London (to various termini though predominantly London Victoria for mainline services and St Pancras for High Speed services); up to 2 services an hour between Sittingbourne and Canterbury and up to 3 services an hour between Sittingbourne and Dover. Travel time between Sittingbourne and St Pancras is around 1 hour but between Sittingbourne and other London termini it can be as much as 90 minutes. Travel time between Sittingbourne and Dover can vary between around 35 minutes to around 90 minutes.

Walking and cycling network

- 12.12 National Cycle Route 1, a long distance signed route stretching 1,695 miles between Dover and the Shetland Islands, passes through the Borough on its Dover-London section.
- 12.13 Route 1 joins National Cycle Route 174 which, when complete, will be a 9 mile route around Queenborough and Sheerness on the Isle of Sheppey.

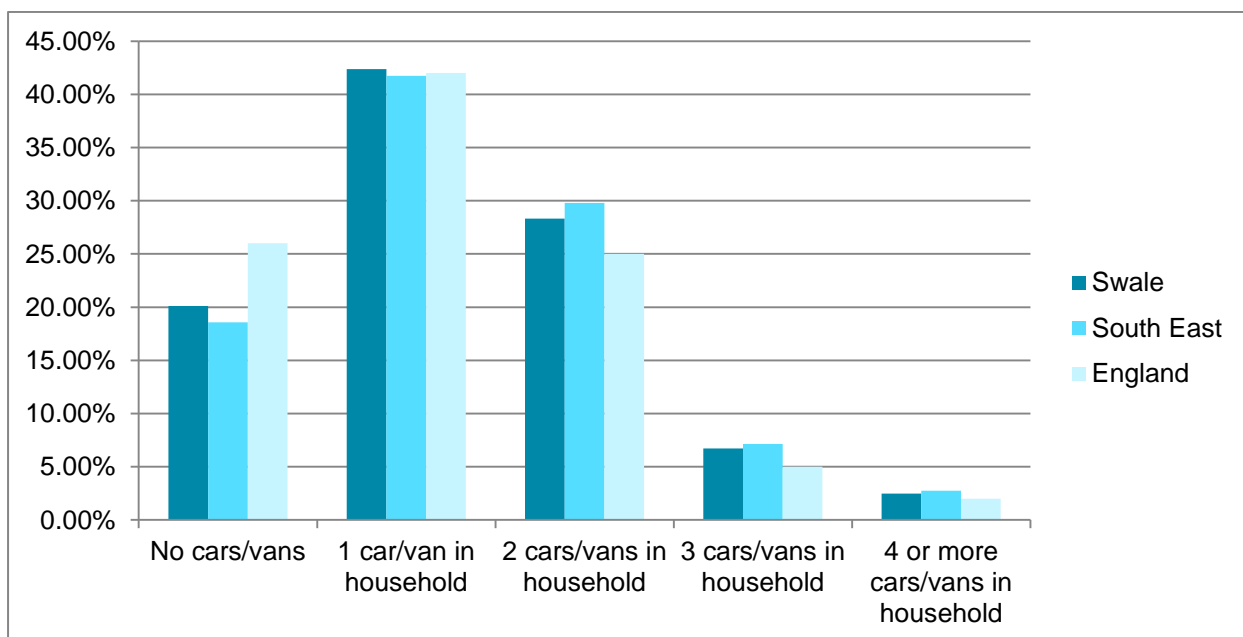
⁵² Highways England (2017) 'Improvements and Major Road Projects' [online]; available from: <http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/m2-junction-5-improvements/> [last accessed 14/03/18].

⁵³ KCC (2016) http://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0011/72668/Local-transport-plan-4.pdf

Car and van availability

12.14 Figure 12.1 shows that at 20.1% the proportion of households in Swale with no access to a car or van is higher than the wider South East region (19%) though lower than England as a whole (26%). Car ownership overall in the Borough is higher than the national average including multiple car ownership with 37.5% of households in Swale owning 2 or more cars compared to 32% nationwide. This may reflect that many residents commute to jobs outside the Borough and some therefore require access to more than one car per household to ensure all economically active household members can access work.

Figure 12.1 Car and van ownership⁵⁴

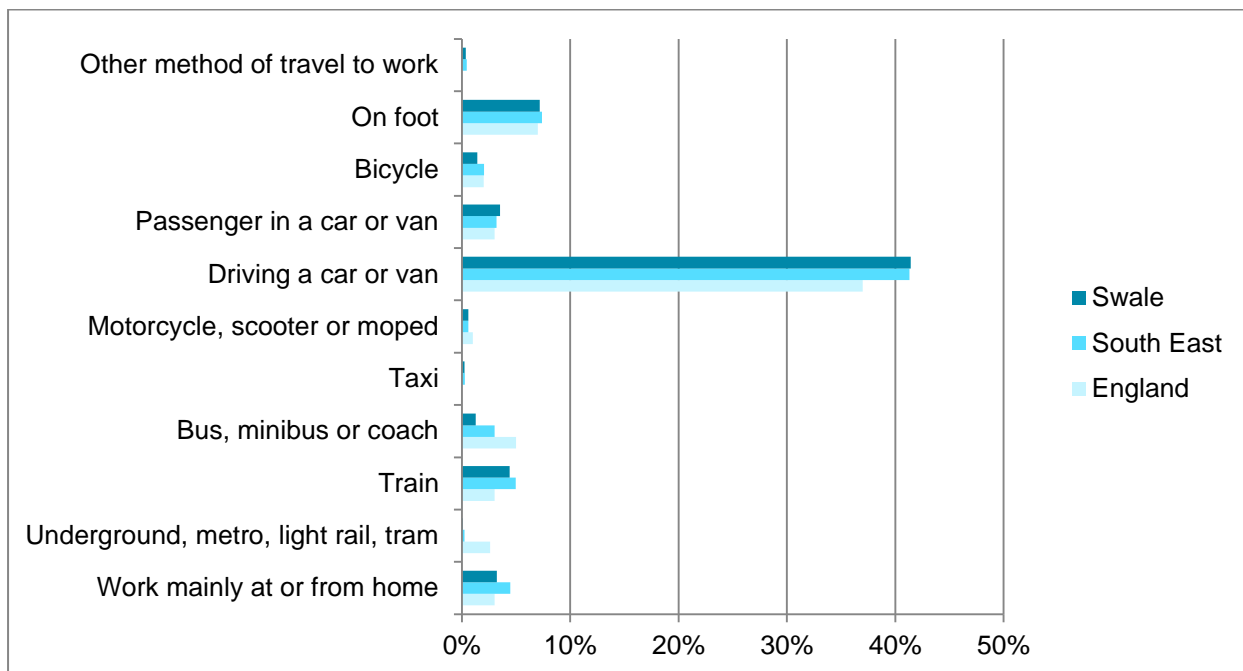


Travel to work

12.15 Figure 12.2 shows that the most common method of travelling to work in the Borough is by car or van (41.4%), in line with average for the South East (41.3%) and higher than the average for England as a whole (36.9%). This reflects the fact that many residents commute to jobs outside the Borough. Whilst the car dominates travel to work choices walking to work is a clear second most popular option at 7.2% though bicycle use is very low at 1.4%. Bus travel as a commuting option appears to be underexploited as just 1.3% of the population use this option in Swale compared with 3% in the South East and 5% in England as a whole.

⁵⁴ ONS (2011), Census 2011: 'Car or Van Availability 2011', (Table QS416EW)

Figure 12.2 Travel to work ⁵⁵



Future baseline

- 12.16 The M2/A2 corridor and the railway line offer a natural focus for development but existing capacity issues on the road network could constrain growth without improvement. Further improvement to transport within the Borough, and particularly to isolated areas of the Isle of Sheppey, could play an important role in tackling entrenched deprivation in some areas of the Borough.
- 12.17 An area of search for the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road A2 Link has been safeguarded but is likely to only come forward via Local Plan review or as part of a new Local Plan. Should the Northern Relief Road be completed there will be implications for wider traffic movements, potentially including higher flows onto the A2 through Teynham and Ospringe which is already experiencing capacity issues.
- 12.18 Current high levels of relatively short distance commuting flows within Swale and between Swale and Medway contribute to the significant pressure on the A2 and M2. New development therefore represents both a risk of exacerbating this and also an opportunity to facilitate active and sustainable travel options to mitigate pressure.
- 12.19 There could be opportunities for future development to better integrate with sustainable transport networks by facilitating more travel to work by bicycle and boosting existing good levels of travel by foot through good design and associated infrastructure improvements. There could be scope to reduce dependence on car travel as a means of accessing work by enhancing the currently low levels of bus commuting in the Borough.
- 12.20 Rural and remote communities, particularly those on the east of the Isle of Sheppey, will benefit from an enhanced public transport offer to address issues surrounding lack of access to services and facilities which stem from access to service centres.

⁵⁵ ONS (2011), Census 2011: 'Method of Travel to Work 2011' (Table QS701EW)

Key issues and objectives

12.21 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review:

- Around 80% of the population own a car or van and cars and vans represent by far the most popular travel to work method at 41.4%. The next most popular method of commuting is by foot at 7.2% of the population. Car dependence is therefore relatively high in the Borough.
- The Borough has good access to the rail network and is only around an hour from London St Pancras. Connections to other London termini are also strong as are links to key employment centres on the same rail corridor, particularly Dover.
- There is good connectivity with the Strategic Road Network via the M2, A2 and A249. However, north-south connections are weaker than east-west connections and recent growth is placing increasing pressure on key road junctions, particularly at Junctions 5 and 7 of the M2.
- Whilst the 2006 opening of the Sheppey Crossing provided additional capacity on road travel to the Isle of Sheppey some western communities on the island remain isolated and disconnected from the rest of the Borough.
- There is a clear transport corridor through the centre of the Borough along the alignment of the M2, A2 and railway line. Whilst this area is already home to services and infrastructure and is likely to provide some of the most sustainable locations for growth there is a risk of pushing the existing infrastructure over capacity without enhancement.
- There are opportunities to unlock further growth through infrastructure upgrades, particularly at key junctions on the M2.

12.22 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Promote sustainable transport use, including supporting the creation of additional walking and cycling routes, and reduce the need to travel, particularly by private vehicle.
- Support the completion of existing transport objectives such as the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road.

13. Water

Context

National

- 13.1 The NPPF is clear that plan making has a very important role to play in relation to water supply, particularly in terms of mitigating the increased pressure on water supply anticipated from climate change. The NPPF identifies water supply infrastructure as one of a number of key strategic priorities for local planning authorities and emphasises the importance of planning collaboratively with other authorities and external providers to meet need at a larger than local scale.
- 13.2 The Water Framework Directive (2000) requires a management plan to be prepared for water catchment areas to inform planning and help meet objectives and obligations in areas such as water efficiency and sustainable drainage.
- 13.3 The Water White Paper 2011⁵⁶ sets out the Government's vision for a more resilient water sector. It states the measures that will be taken to tackle issues such as poorly performing ecosystems, and the combined impacts of climate change and population growth on stressed water resources.

Regional

- 13.4 Water Resource Management Plans are prepared by water companies and aim to ensure that appropriate planning is undertaken so that supply continues to meet demand into the future, even under water stressed conditions. WRMPs cover 25 year planning periods to ensure that long term needs, trends and changes are considered appropriately. Water companies' areas of responsibility do not necessarily correspond with administrative geographies and Swale is served by two different water companies. The key regional documents therefore are the Southern Water WRMP 2015 – 2040⁵⁷ and the South East Water WRMP 2015 – 2040⁵⁸ though it is noted that both companies are currently preparing draft plans for the next WRMP period.

Local

- 13.5 The key message from the adopted Local Plan in relation to water supply is that the Borough is within an area of 'serious water stress' and that water resources in Swale will come under even further pressure from growth in the Borough. The Local Plan therefore aims to make efficient use of water resources to protect supply. Specific measures in relation to new development are proposed to deliver this aim, principally the requirement that new homes be designed to achieve a minimum water efficiency of 110 litres per person per day. Additionally, the Plan requires applicants to agree water supply with water companies prior to development commencement to ensure supply is protected.
- 13.6 A Water Infrastructure and Environmental Capacity Assessment was completed for the Council by consultants Scott Wilson in 2010 and forms part of the evidence base for the adopted Local Plan. Assessment of future capacity of the WwTWs is based on levels of growth proposed by the adopted Local Plan.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Defra (2011) Water for life (The Water White Paper) [online] available at <<http://www.official-documents.gov.uk/document/cm82/8230/8230.pdf>> [last accessed 09/02/18]

⁵⁷ Southern Water (2015) 'Water Resources Plan' [online], available at: <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/water-resources-plan>

⁵⁸ South East Water (2015) 'Final Water Resources Management Plan – Technical Report' [online] available at: <https://corporate.southeastwater.co.uk/about-us/our-plans/water-resources-management-plan-2014> [last accessed 29/03/18]

⁵⁹ Scott Wilson (2010), 'Water Infrastructure and Environmental Capacity Assessment' [online], available from: <http://www.swale.gov.uk/assets/Planning-General/Planning-Policy/Topic-Paper/Swale-WCS-FINAL-for-web.pdf> [accessed 24/05/18].

Baseline

Current baseline

- 13.7 The River Medway and The Swale represent the most significant watercourses in the Borough whilst a network of smaller rivers, creeks and streams provide a number of additional watercourses of varying degrees of significance. The low-lying Isle of Sheppey is extensively criss-crossed with minor watercourses and associated marshland.
- 13.8 The Borough's potable water is supplied by two different water companies, Southern Water and South East Water. For the purposes of Water Resource Management Planning (WRMP) the Borough lies within two separate Water Resource Zones (WRZs), Kent Medway WRZ which is supplied by Southern Water and Ashford WRZ which is supplied by South East Water
- 13.9 Wastewater and sewerage services are provided by Southern Water for the whole of the Borough. There are six WwTWs in the Borough at Eastchurch, Faversham, Motney Hill, Queenborough, Sittingbourne and Teynham.
- 13.10 The south of the Borough contains a number of separate groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs). SPZs have been defined by the Environment Agency in England and Wales to protect groundwater sources such as wells, boreholes and springs which provide a potable water abstraction sites. The zones show the risk of contamination from activities that might cause groundwater pollution in the area. There are 18 distinct areas categorised as Zone 1 (the Inner Protection Zone), defined by the EA by a "travel time of 50 days or less from any point within the zone at, or below, the water table". Three broader areas in the Borough are categorised as Zone 2 (the Outer Protection Zone), defined by "the 400 day travel time from a point below the water table" and there is a more limited area of Zone 3 (the Total Catchment) defined by "the total area needed to support abstraction or discharge".⁶⁰
- 13.11 The overwhelming majority of the Borough is not designated as a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone though a very small area in the Borough's east clips the Great Stour NVZ for groundwater. The EU Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC) requires member states to identify areas where groundwater has nitrate concentrations of more than 50 mg/l nitrate or is thought to be at risk of nitrate contamination if action is not taken. These areas are designated as Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) and as such are recognised as being at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution. Member states are required to establish Action Programmes in order to reduce and prevent further nitrate contamination.

Future baseline

- 13.12 Water availability in the wider area may be affected by expected regional increases in population and by an increased occurrence of drought as a result of climate change. Poorly planned development could lead to unsustainable pressure on an already water-stressed region and potentially compromise the capacity of water companies to jointly plan for future need.
- 13.13 The Borough's SPZs are generally concentrated to the south of Borough and could be less likely to be affected by future development given the level of other constraints in this part of the Borough. However, capacity should be calculated to allow for connection by existing properties to new sewers particularly where development is in SPZ1 and 2 and existing cess pits or septic tanks pose a risk to water quality.
- 13.14 The future capacity of WwTWs tested in the 2010 Water Infrastructure and Environmental Capacity Assessment was based on growth proposed in the adopted Local Plan and therefore does not take account of any potential additional growth to be proposed in the Local Plan Review. The future baseline sees exceedances of Dry Weather Flow (DWF) at the WwTWs at

⁶⁰ Environment Agency (2015), 'Source Protection Zones [Merged]' [online], available at <https://data.gov.uk/dataset/source-protection-zones-merged1> [last accessed 28/02/18].

Sittingbourne based on all four growth scenarios proposed in the adopted Local Plan. Queenborough WwTWs sees DWF exceedances under the highest growth scenario.

Key issues and objectives

13.15 The following key issues emerge from the context baseline review

- The Borough is part of a wider water-stressed region covering much of South East England. This means there is potential for demand for water to outstrip supply both now and in the future. It is generally acknowledged that climate change and overdevelopment can exacerbate water stress.
- The Borough is served by two water companies and falls within two different Water Resource Zones. The west of the Borough is within the Kent Medway Water Resource Zone which is supplied by Southern Water. The east of the Borough is within the Ashford Water Resource Zone which is supplied by South East Water.
- The baseline growth scenario of the adopted Local Plan is likely to see exceedances of DWF in at least one WwTWs in the Borough. Whilst this is not necessarily a showstopper constraint should the Local Plan review propose significantly higher growth again then a full Water Cycle Study may be necessary to fully assess the likely impact.

13.16 In light of the key issues discussed above it is proposed that the SA framework should include the following objectives:

- Promote sustainable forms of development which minimise water consumption and wastewater flows, including the use of innovative features and techniques.
- Maintain and enhance the quality of both surface and ground water resources where possible consistent with the aims of the Water Framework Directive.
- Promote efficient and sustainable use of natural resources.

14. Next steps

Subsequent stages for the SA process

14.1 Scoping is the first stage in a five-stage SA process:

- Scoping (NPPG Stage A)
- Appraising reasonable alternatives, with a view to informing preparation of the draft plan, and subsequent assessment of the draft plan (NPPG Stage B)
- Preparation of the SA Report with a view to informing consultation (NPPG Stage C)
- Consultation on the SA Report (NPPG Stage D)
- Publication of a statement at the time of plan adoption which ‘tells the story’ of plan-making/SA (NPPG Stage E)

14.2 Accordingly, the next stage will therefore involve the development and assessment of reasonable alternatives for the Local Plan. An SA Report will accompany a Local Plan Issues and Options Document for public consultation in due course.

Consultation on the scoping report

14.3 Public involvement through consultation is a key element of the SA process. At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies but not full consultation with the public.

14.4 The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England. The Scoping Report has been released to these three statutory consultees. consultees are invited to comment on the content of this Scoping Report, in particular the evidence base for the SA, the identified key issues and the proposed SA Framework.

14.5 All comments received on the Scoping Report will be reviewed and will influence the development of the SA where appropriate.

Appendix A – the SA Framework

SA Framework

Topic	SA objectives
Air Quality	<p>Support the achievement of air quality improvement objectives within the Borough’s 5 designated AQMAs.</p> <p>Seek to minimise air pollution more generally, such as through supporting or enabling the use of low emission technologies and encouraging sustainable modes of transport such as walking and cycling.</p>
Biodiversity	<p>Minimise, and avoid where possible, impacts to biodiversity, both within and beyond designated and non-designated sites of international, national or local significance.</p> <p>Achieve biodiversity net gain including through the long term enhancement and creation of well-connected, functional habitats.</p>
Climate change mitigation	<p>Minimise per capita greenhouse gas emissions from transport, industry and the built environment.</p> <p>Deliver Sustainable Drainage Systems and other measure with a view to future proofing and building climate change resilience</p> <p>Deliver high standards of energy efficiency and water efficiency in new development.</p>
Communities	<p>Support good access to existing and planned community infrastructure for new and existing residents.</p> <p>Promote and support healthy communities, including through increasing access to green infrastructure and open space.</p>
Economy and employment	<p>Support the achievement of economic growth objectives, including in targeted growth sectors and established employment sectors.</p> <p>Support a strong, diverse and resilient economy that provides opportunities for all.</p> <p>Support and enhance the vitality of the Borough’s town centres including through the identification of further regeneration opportunities where appropriate.</p> <p>Support provision of further education facilities in the Borough where practicable.</p>
Flood risk	<p>Avoid and mitigate flood risk by directing development away from the areas of the Borough at the highest risk of flooding.</p> <p>Support the priorities identified in the Medway Estuary and Swale Shoreline Management Plan and the Isle of Grain to South Foreland Shoreline Management Plan.</p>
Heritage	<p>Conserve and enhance heritage assets and contribute to the maintenance of historic character through design, layout and setting of new development.</p>

Housing	<p>Support timely delivery of market housing and affordable housing.</p> <p>Promote an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures.</p> <p>Cater for existing and future residents' needs as well as the needs of different groups in the community.</p>
Land	<p>Promote the efficient and sustainable use of natural resources, including supporting development which avoids the best and most versatile agricultural land.</p>
Landscape	<p>Protect and enhance the character and quality of the Borough's landscapes and townscapes through appropriate design and layout of new development.</p> <p>Protect and enhance the Kent Downs AONB where possible.</p> <p>Preserve important open gaps between settlements.</p>
Transport	<p>Promote sustainable transport use, including supporting the creation of additional walking and cycling routes, and reduce the need to travel, particularly by private vehicle.</p> <p>Support the completion of existing transport objectives such as the Sittingbourne Northern Relief Road.</p>
Water	<p>Promote sustainable forms of development which minimise water consumption and wastewater flows.</p> <p>Maintain and enhance the quality of both surface and ground water resources where possible consistent with the aims of the Water Framework Directive.</p> <p>Promote efficient and sustainable use of natural resources.</p>