



4.5 GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE



Natural Green Space &
Strategic Projects



Parkland

CURRENT SITUATION

Kent's high quality natural and semi natural environment plays a valuable role, providing natural goods such as food and timber as well as space for recreation; regulating air quality, water quality whilst reducing climate risks; and creating an attractive, characterful identity that draws residents, employers and visitors into the county.

The broader natural environment is supported by a network of more formal green infrastructure assets. Natural England defines GI as strategically planned and delivered network comprising the broadest range of high quality green spaces and other environmental features including natural and semi natural green space, parks and gardens, amenity space, green and blue corridors (verges and rivers) as well as a range of other greenspaces including allotments and cemeteries).

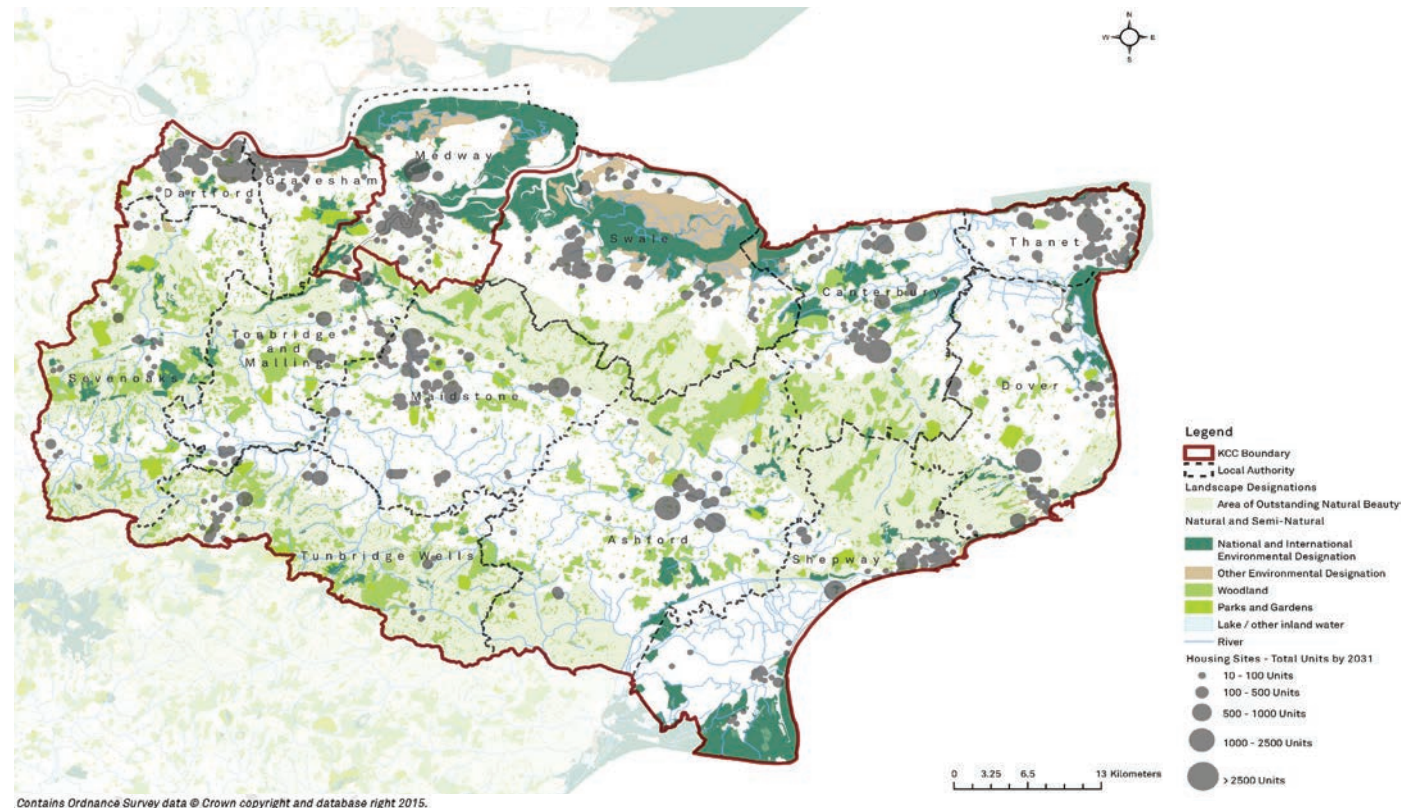
HEADLINES

- 90 strategic parks and gardens
- 45,000ha of broadleaf woodland

- The Kent Downs and High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty cover approximately 32 % of the county.
- 116 sites of national and international importance for nature conservation

Figure 4.13 Kent & Medway

Existing Green Infrastructure



GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

KCC take a holistic view of green infrastructure by including the natural assets that make up the countryside as well as strategic sites. These assets provide a range of productive, regulating and cultural services that have tangible economic value for the County. Work by Kent County Council and Kent Nature Partnership in developing a county-wide 'Natural Capital Account' will provide greater insight into the role of the natural environment plays in supporting a range of cross cutting priorities including economic prosperity, improved health and well-being, reduced flood risks, carbon reduction and water quality improvements. This evidence will help target green infrastructure investment to accommodate growth in a way that not only minimises the impact on the value derived from the county's 'Natural Capital' but delivers opportunities to leverage greater economic and societal benefits from green space.

Investment will be needed to enhance existing green spaces and provide new multifunctional green infrastructure to:

- Reduce the impact of development on the landscape character. A survey of tourists to Kent, who add £2.5bn to the Kent economy each year, cites the landscape as the main reason for visiting.
- Support the AONBs to the same extent to which National Parks are funded, country parks and the wider countryside
- Provide alternative natural and semi natural greenspace to mitigate the potential impact of additional visitors and residents on both protected habitats and more broadly the ecosystems that underpin the services provided
- Provide access to both urban green space and the wider countryside in order to realise community benefits such as recreation, health and well-being.

- Improve connectivity both for biodiversity and people,
- Deliver natural approaches to managing climate risks, such as Natural England's work to reduce flood risk through woodland planting, reducing the urban heat island effect in towns and cities and providing more sustainable drainage.
- Utilise and enhance the rights of way network more effectively to address safer walking and cycling routes to schools and local facilities, supporting sustainable transport initiatives, the rural economy and a healthier population.

It should be noted that North Kent Environmental Planning group has undertaken considerable work on the green infrastructure requirements to ensure mitigation of growth on the SPAs, impacting on North Kent, Canterbury, Thanet and Dover.

EXAMPLE SPECIFIC PROJECTS IDENTIFIED

Around 149 Green Infrastructure projects covering new natural and semi-natural green space, amenity green space, parks and gardens, and allotments have already been identified in relation to growth requirements across Kent. Some strategic projects include:

- Kent Downs AONB improvements, especially to improve the condition of the chalk grassland – £2.4m
- Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA and Ramsar Mitigation Strategy, to reduce the impact of growth on sensitive ecological environments - £500k
- Green Grid links in Dartford to improve connectivity over and along the River Darent - £1.4m
- Medway's Country Park Development funding for new and improved country park provision - £500k

FUTURE REQUIREMENTS TO MEET GROWTH



Kent & Medway

263ha

Natural Green space



Kent & Medway

105ha

new parkland



Kent & Medway

53ha

allotment space

INFRASTRUCTURE COSTS

The following infrastructure requirements have been identified based on AECOM analysis using Natural England standards and Cost estimates have been applied using UK benchmarks.



Kent & Medway

£23,120,000

Parks



Kent & Medway

£11,560,000

allotment space



Kent & Medway

£28,897,000

natural green space



Kent & Medway

£20,520,000

Other Specific Projects

The following costs and funding have been identified for Kent and Medway:

Cost = £84,100,000

Secured Funding = £6,030,000

Expected Funding = £31,240,000

Funding Gap = £46,830,000