
Subject:	GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 3 June 2024
Report of:	Stefanie Bramley, Senior Natural Environment Officer
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Edward Biggs, Portfolio Holder for Planning and Built Environment
Decision Type:	Key Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To report on the responses received to the consultation on the draft Green Infrastructure Strategy and set out a revised strategy and action plan for adoption.

Recommendation:

- a) To adopt and publish the Green Infrastructure Strategy (Appendix 2), as amended following consultation.
- b) To delegate authority to the Head of Planning and Development, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder, to make minor amendments to the Green Infrastructure Strategy prior to its publication.

1. Summary

- 1.1 Ensuring the provision of effective green infrastructure through planning policies and decisions is a principle embedded in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council's emerging Local Plan sets out policies and requirements in relation to green infrastructure, the protection and enhancement of ecological assets, and high-quality design. To support these policies and assist the Council in meeting the requirements being brought forward through the Environment Act 2021, there is a need to produce a Green Infrastructure Strategy for the District.
- 1.2 On 6 March 2023, Cabinet approved the publication of a draft Green Infrastructure Strategy for consultation for a period of 6 weeks. This consultation was undertaken between 3 October 2023 and 14 November 2023. The comments can be viewed in full on the Council's website at the following address: [Dover District Council – Dover District Green Infrastructure Strategy \(objective.co.uk\)](https://www.dover.gov.uk/consultation/dover-district-green-infrastructure-strategy).
- 1.3 The Consultation Statement is attached at Appendix 1. This statement includes the following:
 - Who was consulted on the Strategy.
 - How they were consulted on the Strategy.
 - Summary of comments on the Strategy.
 - Proposed changes to the Strategy.
- 1.4 Appendix 2 includes a final draft of the Strategy document incorporating amendments arising from the consultation.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Council's emerging Local Plan sets out the vision, strategic objectives, and overarching development strategy for the growth of Dover district. The Green Infrastructure Strategy will support the Local Plan and have a significant role in delivering the strategic objectives by responding to, informing and guiding development that comes forward.
- 2.2 Green infrastructure is the term used to describe the natural environmental features of an area and the natural connections (or network) between these features. A green infrastructure network can include street trees, green roofs/walls, parks, private gardens, allotments, sustainable drainage systems, through to wildlife areas, woodlands and wetlands. Linear green infrastructure includes roadside verges, green bridges, field margins, rights of way, access routes, and rivers and ditches.
- 2.3 The Green Infrastructure Strategy is informed by the Dover Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Evidence Report (Bayne and Seijo, 2022)¹, which identifies the baseline position of green infrastructure in the district and provides an assessment of needs and opportunities and potential future actions to improve green infrastructure in the district.
- 2.4 The proposed Green Infrastructure Strategy is a concise document focused on a 'Vision', 'Key Outcomes' and an Action Plan, identifying potential project outlines that could contribute to the aims of the Green Infrastructure Strategy, if the identification of project leads, stakeholders and funding allows. Three 'Core Actions', that are within DDC's control, have been scoped in additional detail, incorporating specific targets and monitoring measures.
- 2.5 Public consultation on the draft Strategy ran for 6 weeks between the 3rd October 2023 and the 14th November 2023. The consultation was advertised by press release and on social media. In addition, 57 organisations and individuals were directly invited to comment, including: parish councils, relevant planning authorities, local and national environmental groups, and statutory agencies. This included Kent County Council, Natural England, Environment Agency, Historic England, Southern Water, Kent Wildlife Trust and CPRE.
- 2.6 The consultees were invited to provide their views on the overall Strategy content and were asked detailed questions on:
- The Vision
 - Key Outcomes A to F
 - The Action Plan, including Core Actions 1 – 3
- 2.7 A key aim of the consultation was to identify any additional projects that could be included in the Action Plan. The consultees were also asked to suggest other existing and potential new green infrastructure projects, and to identify projects in the Action Plan in which they would like to be involved.
- 2.8 The Council received representations from over 70 organisations and individuals. The comments can be viewed in full at: [Dover District Council – Dover District Green Infrastructure Strategy \(objective.co.uk\)](https://www.doverdistrictlocalplan.co.uk/uploads/pdfs/dover-green-and-blue-infrastructure-strategy-evidence-report-may-2022.pdf).
- 2.9 A number of respondents queried why the Strategy title does not refer explicitly to blue as well as green infrastructure. Changing the title would align the Strategy to the

¹ <https://www.doverdistrictlocalplan.co.uk/uploads/pdfs/dover-green-and-blue-infrastructure-strategy-evidence-report-may-2022.pdf>

Evidence Base report². However, 'green infrastructure' is also commonly used to refer to both green and blue features and is used in this way by Natural England in their *Green Infrastructure Framework – Principles and Standards for England*³. Instead of changing the title, a sub-heading has been added: "*Improving the network of green and blue spaces across Dover district*".

- 2.10 The Vision was supported by most respondents, although some made detailed suggestions to strengthen the language, including to increase the prominence of biodiversity within the vision.
- 2.11 The Key Outcomes of the strategy all received broad support. Respondents took the opportunity to highlight a wide range of specific and general environmental concerns, identifying existing issues and providing suggestions for how the outcomes could be achieved.
- 2.12 The Action Plan also received broad support. Suggestions and potential aims for the Action Plan were made throughout the consultation responses.
- 2.13 A few respondents stated that the Strategy should be strengthened, with greater detail and a delivery plan. The intention is for the Action Plan to be a 'living' part of the Strategy, with further detail on the projects to be developed with project partners and added to the Action Plan so that they can be initiated when funding and resources allow. Delivery of the projects will be dependent on resourcing and funding availability, and opportunities for both will be explored.

3. **Summary of Main Amendments**

- 3.1. A sub-title has been added to make it clear that the Strategy refers to both green and blue infrastructure.
- 3.2. Explicit reference to wildlife habitats has been added to the Vision.
- 3.3. Respondents to the consultation suggested numerous additional projects for the Action Plan. Suggestions related to topic-specific issues such as water pollution, protection of valued green spaces, traffic and air pollution, and location-specific actions to address green infrastructure in Alkham Valley, Ash, Preston, Sandwich, St Margaret's, Walmer, Wingham. These have been incorporated where appropriate, either as additional actions for projects already in the Action Plan, or as new projects.
- 3.4. For any of the Action Plan projects to be taken forward, there will be a need for detailed scoping, identification of a project lead and partners, and identification of funding sources. This has been clarified through amendments to the strategy and action plan.

4. **Next Steps**

- 4.1. The three Core Action projects will be initiated following development of the detailed project scopes, including identification of project partners (as appropriate) and timescales for delivery.
- 4.2. The remaining Action Plan projects will be subject to review, clarifying the status of any existing / ongoing projects, identifying potential project leads and partners, potential

² *Dover Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy*, Bayne, S. & Seijo, I. (2022)

³ <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx>

funding sources which could be used to take the projects forward and the timescales in which they could be initiated.

- 4.3. Following Adoption, the Action Plan will be reviewed biannually. This will include reporting of progress on projects to Cabinet. To align with the proposed reporting timescales for the Biodiversity Duty Report, it is proposed that the first review will be reported on as part of that process in early 2026.
- 4.4. Although there is a commitment in the draft document to complete a biannual review of the Action Plan, the Action Plan is a living document and project additions, amendments and updates will be made as necessary.

5 Identification of Options

- 5.1. Option One – To adopt and publish the Green Infrastructure Strategy (as amended following consultation) as set out in Appendix 2.
- 5.2. Option Two – To adopt and publish the Green Infrastructure Strategy as set out in Appendix 2, with additional amendments agreed by the Cabinet.
- 5.3. Option Three - Not to adopt the Green Infrastructure Strategy (Appendix 2).

6 Evaluation of Options

- 6.1. The preferred option is Option 1 because the consultation responses have been considered and the document amended. Not all suggested actions and projects have been included in the document, but this is a living document, and suggested actions and projects will be considered for future iterations of the Action Plan. The Green Infrastructure Strategy will ensure that ambition for the protection and enhancement of the district's green infrastructure network can be taken forward in a coordinated manner with a strong partnership foundation.
- 6.2. The Council could decide not to adopt the Green Infrastructure Strategy, but the Green Infrastructure Strategy is intended to make a substantial contribution to meeting the Biodiversity Duty. The Biodiversity Duty is a Statutory Duty. Not to adopt the Green Infrastructure Strategy would leave DDC with no strategic oversight for the delivery of green infrastructure within the district, and would also mean there is no mechanism to support the delivery of green infrastructure in development proposals to achieve the vision and objectives set out in DDC's emerging Local Plan, and the application of the policies within it.

7 Resource Implications

- 7.1. There will be officer resource required to develop and implement the Core Actions and to help facilitate the scoping of other projects identified in the Action Plan, which will include the identification of project leads, potential partners / stakeholders, delivery mechanisms and potential funding streams. It is not expected that DDC will lead on all the projects.
- 7.2. The development of Core Action 1: Biodiversity Net Gain Strategy will be supported by KCC's Biodiversity Net Gain Officer, a two-year post joint-funded by all Kent local planning authorities using the 2021/22 Defra BNG grant.
- 7.3. To deliver an effective, multifunctional green infrastructure network across the District, DDC may need to make financial commitments to some of the projects delivered

through the Action Plan. Possible funding streams, and any potential for DDC contributions, will be explored and identified as the actions are developed into project proposals; section 3.8 in the Green Infrastructure Strategy (Appendix 2 to this report) indicates potential funding mechanisms. A more detailed review of potential funding sources for the Action Plan projects will be undertaken after Adoption.

8. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

- 8.1. The implementation of the Green Infrastructure Strategy will contribute to and support the Council's Climate Change Strategy.

9. **Corporate Implications**

- 9.1. Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment to add (SK).
- 9.2. Comment from the Principal Solicitor – Planning: The Principal Solicitor – Planning has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comment.
- 9.3. Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report seeking to adopt the Green Infrastructure Strategy (as amended following consultation) does not specifically highlight any equality implications. In discharging their duties members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>

10. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Consultation Statement

Appendix 2 – Dover District Green Infrastructure Strategy. Final (May 2024).

11. **Background Papers**

Green and Blue Infrastructure Evidence Report (Bayne and Seijo, 2022) [NEEB01
Dover Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy Evidence Report
\(doverdistrictlocalplan.co.uk\)](https://www.doverdistrictlocalplan.co.uk/NEEB01_Dover_Green_and_Blue_Infrastructure_Strategy_Evidence_Report)

Contact Officer: Stefanie Bramley, Senior Natural Environment Officer