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Ashford Borough Council

GREEN CORRIDOR ACTION PLAN 2017

Appendix 3 – Open Space Strategy 2017



Green Corridor Plan 2017



GREEN CORRIDOR PLAN 2017

Part one

Introduction and Vision

National and Local Policy

Links to other documents and inititatives

Mapping of the Green Corridor

Part two

Plan - Description of sections & proposed Actions and Projects

- Wing A – The Railway Stations to Willesborough, Kennington and Conningbrook
- Wing B – The Railway Stations to, Victoria Park, Singleton Lake and Great Chart
- Wing C – The Railway Stations to South Willesborough Dykes, Kingsnorth and Park Farm

Part three

Implementing and funding the Plan

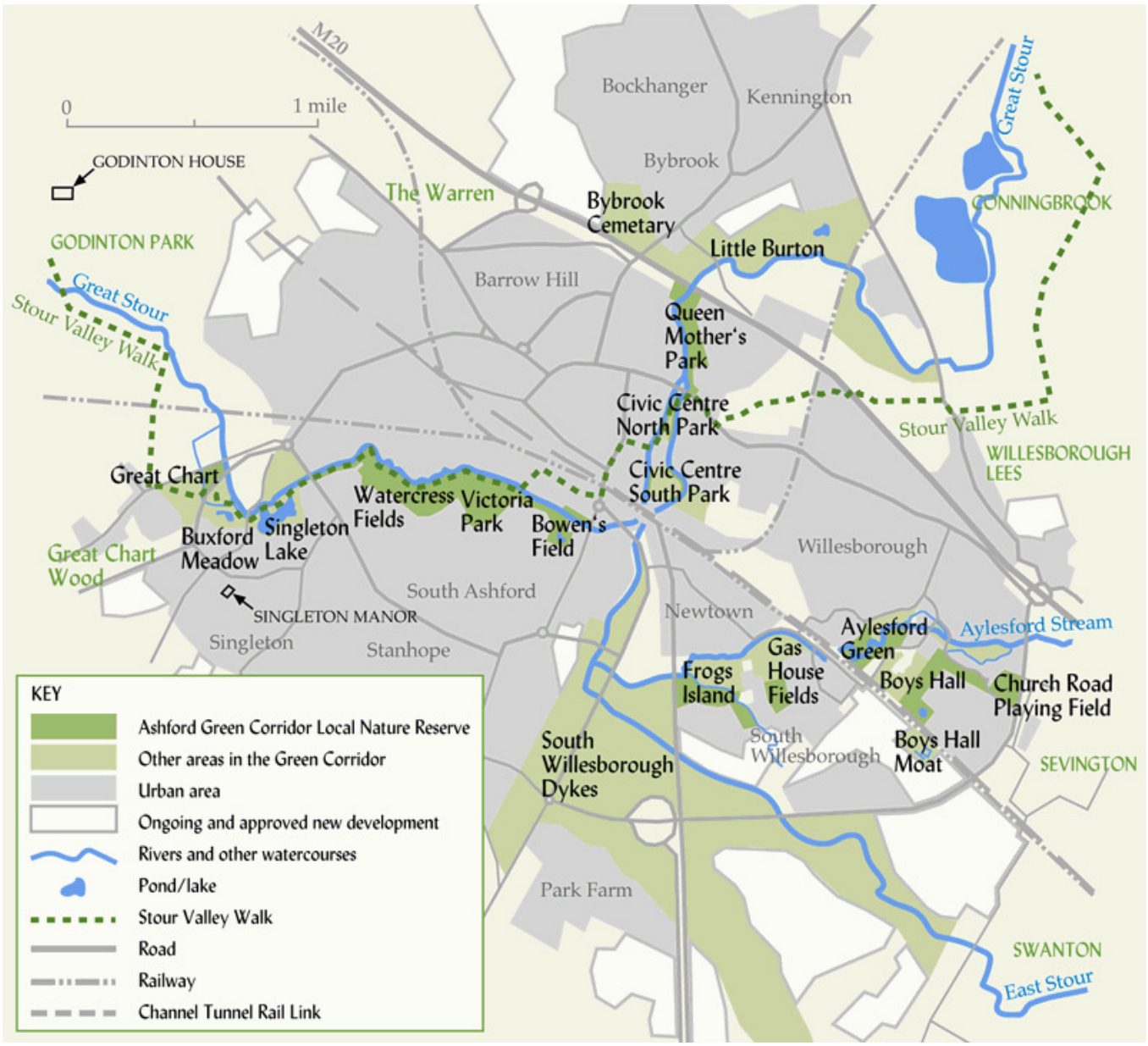
The role of the Borough Council

Contribution by private sector, landowners, public bodies and voluntary groups

Monitoring the Plan

Appendices

1. Current Green Corridor Boundary Designation (showing proposed additions)
2. Consultation Attendees



(Green Corridor – 2000 designation)

Introduction

In 2000 Ashford Borough Council formulated a Green Corridor Action Plan which informed requirements for infrastructure projects in the Ashford Green Corridor in relation with partners and others. The Action Plan set out a structure for mapping out the green corridor, identified projects, funding and funding gaps and laid out how future funding will be allocated from different sources to individual areas.

The production of this 2017 Plan reviews and updates the position from the original 2000 Green Corridor Action Plan. This includes agreeing extensions to the current Green Corridor network and establishing proposed improvements within the plan. This is to fit alongside the Ashford Local Plan and the Ashford Open Space Strategy up to 2030.

Aims of this Review

- To review the current designation of the Green Corridor and propose further land to be designated as Green Corridor.
- To identify possible projects within the Green Corridor until 2030 to run concurrently with the Local Plan
- To be a supporting document to the overarching Open Space Strategy
- To inform our partners and stakeholders of the Green Corridor of our plans from the stakeholder consultation work carried out to consider options within the Green Corridor

What is the Ashford Green Corridor?

The Green Corridor is a network of largely green open areas made up of recreation space and other green and blue spaces alongside the Great and East Stour rivers flowing through Ashford. The riverside areas have remained largely undeveloped, due to being within the flood plain and provide a unique opportunity for improving the quality of the urban environment and for establishing green links between the town and surrounding countryside. The presence of two rivers joining in the centre of Ashford has greatly influenced how the town has evolved and will continue to do so in the future.

The Great Stour and East Stour Rivers as well as the Aylesford Stream are at the centre of the Green Corridor and as they are located within the floodzones they act as flood plain and water storage preventing flooding, as well as being important habitats for biodiversity.

In addition to the rivers and riversides, the green corridor includes woodlands, orchards, ponds, lakes, meadows and play and recreation spaces such as Victoria Park and Willesborough Dykes, and the whole area is an important part of the community green infrastructure.

The Green Corridor falls within the Mid Kent Greensand and Gault Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). BOAs, of which there are 16 in Kent, provide a framework for Local Authorities to identify areas of best opportunity for habitat creation and connectivity.

Much of the Green Corridor is also designated as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and and Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). However, all of the green corridor area is extremely valuable for wildlife, as the undesignated areas create important wildlife corridors through the urban area between the designated nature sites.

The land ownership of the Green Corridor designation is varied. Much is within the ownership of Ashford Borough Council, but there are many private owners, organisations or other individuals.

The Green Corridor Nature Reserve is promoted and enhanced by the Kentish Stour Countryside Project (KSCP) (in partnership with ABC and KCC). For more information on this group, or details of how to get involved in Green Corridor projects, please visit the website **www.ashfordgreencorridor.org.uk**.

Benefits of the Green Corridor

It is recognised that urban river corridors can deliver a wealth of social, economic and environmental services including landscape value, flood control, water quality, ecosystem vibrancy, economic opportunity, recreation and wellbeing. These potentially attractive and ecologically important urban spaces offer the opportunity to create high-quality sustainable communities.

Overall the Green Corridor provides welcome breaks between built up areas of new and old development through the Town Centre and urban areas of Kennington, Willesborough and South Ashford into the countryside beyond, with footpaths, cycleways and open spaces of recreation, landscape and ecological value.

The Green Corridor is a key piece of the Towns Green Infrastructure. It offers multi-functional uses offering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits to the local community, including:

- Providing valuable wildlife habitiats and corridors and protecting nature conservation areas and the biodiversity within them, linking urban habitats to the countryside;
- Offering educational and play opportunities for all with a variety of open spaces both for active sports and more gentle recreation;
- Providing natural drainage systems and flood plain and water storage which prevents flooding;
- Adding to the visual attractions of the town and complementing other initiatives to regenerate urban areas and the economy and giving the areas a positive image and identity;
- Providing pedestrian and cycle routes through the town which are not just for recreational purposes but make a crucial contribution to day to day travel and transportation needs; and
- Providing a tranquil atmosphere in contrast to the noise and congestion in other parts of the town, Improving quality of life and enabling more sustainable lifestyles, creating health benefits for residents.

The council has sought to raise the profile of these important green and blue riverside areas by protecting and enhancing the wildlife corridors in particular. The council aims to work with others to undertake improvements by requiring nearby developments to make a positive contribution to the green corridors. It is hoped that the contents of this Plan will enable full advantage to be made of the riverside and green spaces in Ashford, along with protection and enhancement, by guiding the actions of all those involved from the public, private and voluntary sectors.

The revised Plan proposes revisions to the boundary of the Green corridor, and new action points based on evidence from the Green and Blue Grid Strategy (2008), Open Spaces Strategy 2008, Land Management Plan 2014, Cycling Strategy 2106 and Landscape assessments in consultation with stakeholders such as the Kent Stour Countryside Project, Kent Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency.

National Guidance

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies that the conserving and enhancing the natural environment is a core planning principle of sustainable development. The objectives for the planning system is set out in Paragraphs 109 and 114;

(109) "The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- *Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;*
- *Recognising the wider benefits of ecosystem services;*
- *Minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.*

(114) "local planning authorities should… 'set out a strategic approach in their local plans, planning positively for the creation, protection, enhancement and management networks of biodiversity and green infrastructure."

In adddition to the NPPF the government issued a White Paper called 'The Natural Choice: Securing the Value of Nature', which refers to the role of planning to protect and improve the natural environment by facilitating coherent and resisilient ecological networks that reflect the value of natural systems. The paper also states that urban green infrastructure is '*one of the most effective tools available to us in managing environmental risks such as flooding'.*

Local Planning Policy

The concept of having green corridors in Ashford as a key element of the planning strategy for the town was first introduced in the Ashford Local Plan adopted in 1994. This approach has proved to be very successful both in terms of protecting the areas from inappropriate development and the guiding of the large number of improvements that have been carried out.

The Green Corridor Action Plan 2000 was originally approved by Ashford Borough Council, following wide consultation, and adopted as Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG1) to the Ashford Borough Local Plan 2000.

This draft 2017 revision of the document will support the Local Plan to 2030 and will supersede the 2000 document, once adopted.

Other Documents and Initiatives

It is important that this plan is not viewed in isolation. Below are some of the other documents and initiatives directly linked to the Green Corridor Plan:

Ashford Land Management Plan

Ashford Green and Blue Grid Strategy

Ashford Open Space Strategy

Ashford Playing Pitch Strategy

Site Specific Management Plans

The adoption by Ashford Borough Council of Singleton Lake and Buxford Meadow

The founding of Conningbrook Lakes Country Park

Kent Biodiversity Action Plan

Biodiversity simply means variety of life and refers to the range of species that inhabit the earth, along with the habitats within which they live. Declining numbers and types of species - both common and rare - means that action needs to be taken at national, regional and local levels to halt this. The Kent Biodiversity Action Plan was the first step in responding to international initiatives such as the “Convention on Biodiversity” – (one of the outcomes of the Rio Earth Summit) and national initiatives including “Biodiversity: The U.K. Steering Group Report”.

The Partnership's (which partnership?)Steering Group reviewed the 1997 Kent Biodiversity Action Plan and has now produced a set of 28 Kent Habitat Action Plans. Each Plan denotes the importance of conserving, enhancing and restoring the natural condition of a habitat by working together on projects. The Kent BAP seeks to be proactive in setting out what needs to be achieved in order to safeguard a future for biodiversity. It is a separate form of conservation to the protection of biodiversity offered by statutory legislation.

The Green Corridor falls within the Mid Kent Greensand and Gault Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA). BOAs, of which there are 16 in Kent, are a spatial reflection of the Kent BAP and

provide a useful framework for Local Authorities to identify areas of best opportunity for habitat creation and connectivity, contributing to meeting the requirements of paragraphs 109, 114 and 117 of the NPPF. Targets for the Mid Kent Greensand and Gault BOA include the pursuing of opportunities to restore or recreate wetland habitats along the river Stour particularly where this may

- provide opportunities for flood risk management and for recreation;
- contribute to the conservation of priority species;
- extend and buffer Local Wildlife Sites;
- contribute to the enhancement of species-rich neutral grassland to bring it to UK BAP priority habitat Lowland Meadow quality.

OUR STOUR - Ashford's river character areas

This document was produced by the Environment Agency, in partnership with KSCP and a number of other organisations which are members of the Ashford Water Group. It has been used as evidence towards this Plan update and suggests how 'Big Society' ideals could bring communities together to improve the quality of every aspect of Ashford's riverside landscape – to create an environment that we are all proud of and can enjoy.

The Water Framework Directive

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) replaces previous legislation with integrated management of water quality, quantity, physical habitat and ecology. The WFD is produced by the European Commission (EC). WFD implementation is being managed at the macro level by the Environment Agency in its role as the 'Competent Authority'.

State of Environment in the South East Region

The Environment Agency has a wide range of interests and responsibilities concerning pollution prevention and control and the management and regulation of the water environment. Each year they publish a State of the Environment report for the South East Region. The aim is to present information that will inform the decisions and actions across the region that can help protect and improve the environment for everyone who lives there. It includes a number of reports on water, wildlife and land, including an indicator for River Habitat restoration.

ABC Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document

The aim of the Landscape Character Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which was adopted by the Council in April 2011, is to promote regard for the landscape and to ensure new development makes a positive contribution to the landscape, including its key characteristics and features in which it is located.

Sustainable Community Strategy 2008-2018

The Community Strategy is an 'umbrella' document for the whole of Ashford borough. It begins to set out a shared long-term vision for the area that reflects local aspirations and provides a way of agreeing what the priorities should be. It therefore draws upon all regional, county, borough and neighbourhood strategies and plans.

One of its aims is to ensure that places of real quality are created in new developments with attractive open spaces that contribute to the 'green necklace' of spaces around the town, along with major new resources like the Willesborough Dykes Nature Park and the Discovery Park.

Local Transport Plan for Kent and Ashford Cycling Strategy

These documents are produced by Kent County Council (KCC) and encourage more people to walk and cycle rather than use cars by creating a network of footpaths and cycleways throughout Ashford. The existing and proposed routes through the green corridor are a vital part of this network.

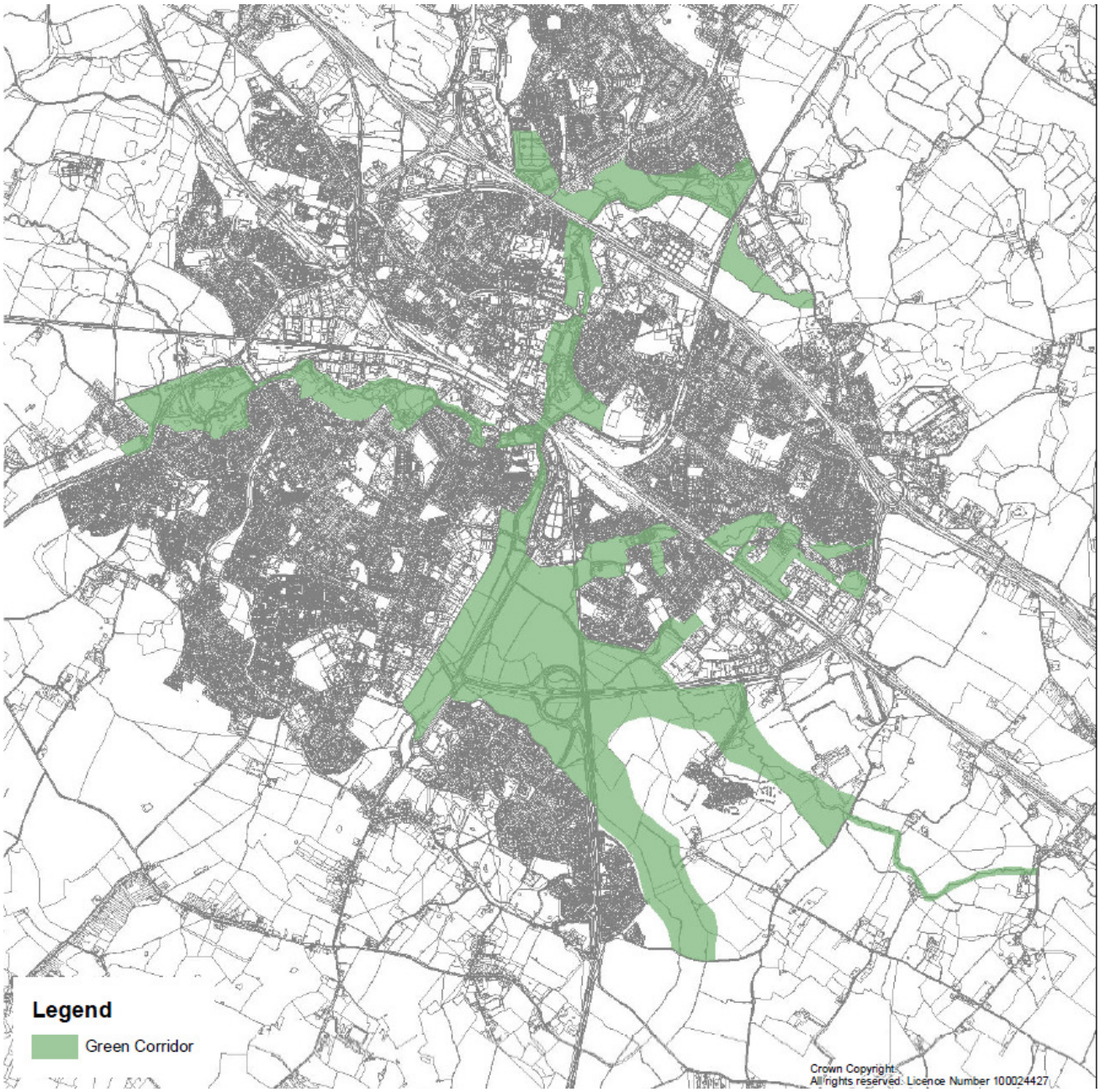
The Countryside Access Improvement Plan

The Countryside Access Improvement Plan is a 10-year Strategy prepared by KCC for improving access to the countryside based on local and national research and covers the years 2007 – 2017. This plan, as with the Ashford Cycling Strategy, has involved much consultation with organisations outside of Kent County Council, as well as members of the public.

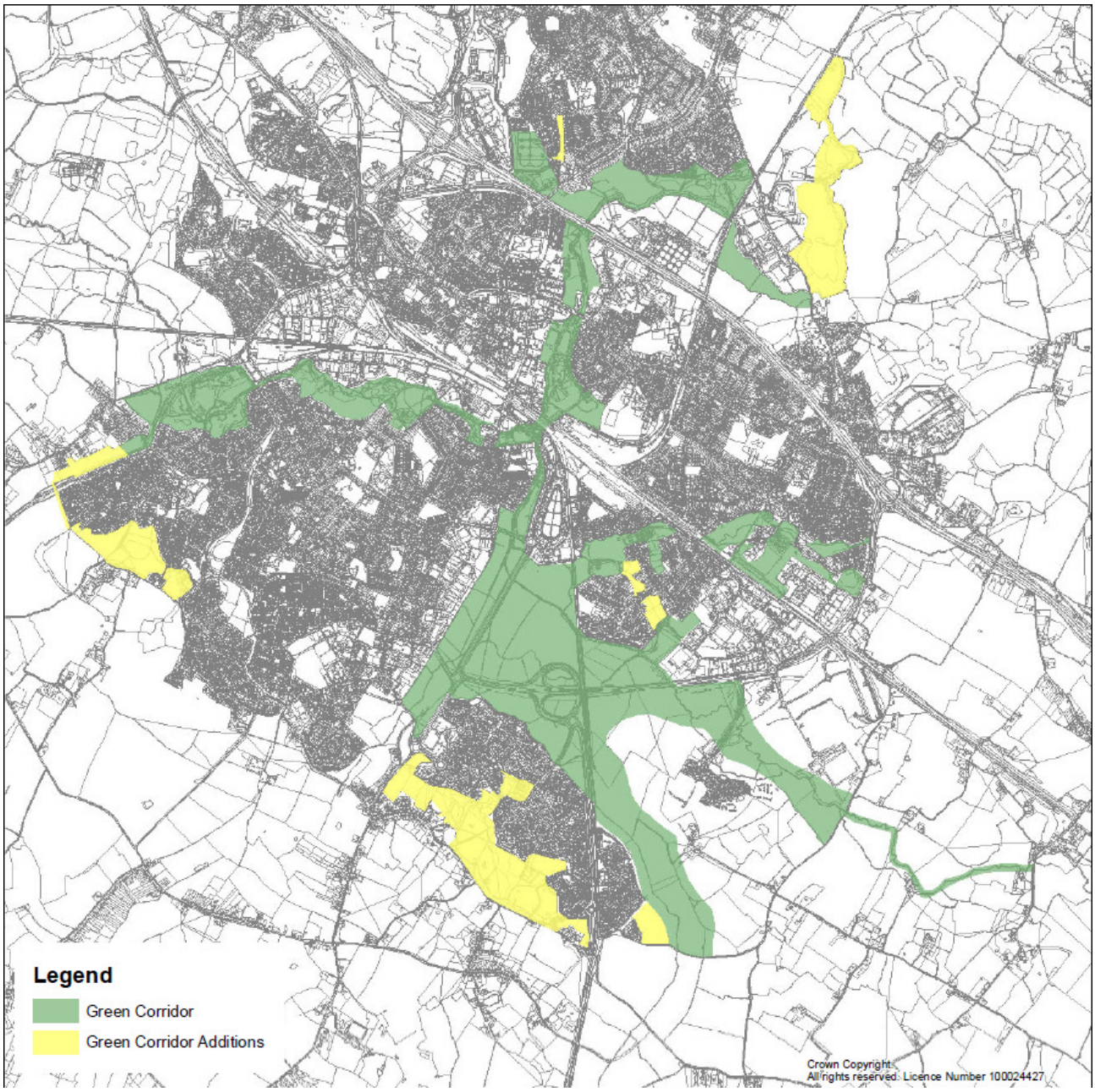
The aims of the plan are to determine whether the present public rights of way in Kent meet the current and future needs of the public and Increase opportunities for leisure and exercise. All new routes are developed with commuting and links to leisure routes in mind – for example the proposed Butterfly Network will use existing strategic routes and National Cycle Route 18 to expand further trails out into woodland areas and link villages further out in rural areas of the Ashford Borough to Ashford Town Centre.

Mapping of the Green Corridor

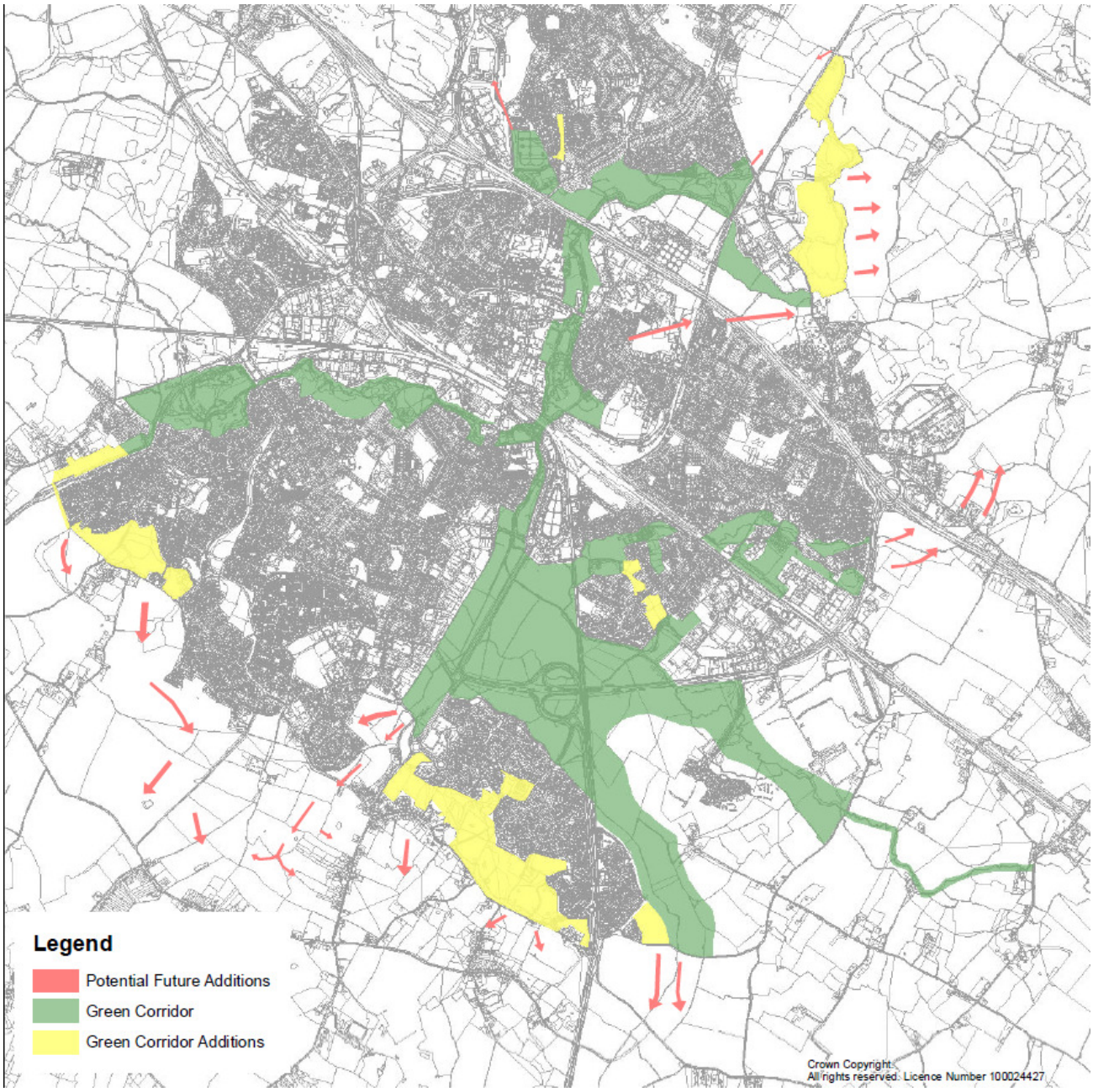
Current designation (as adopted in 2000)



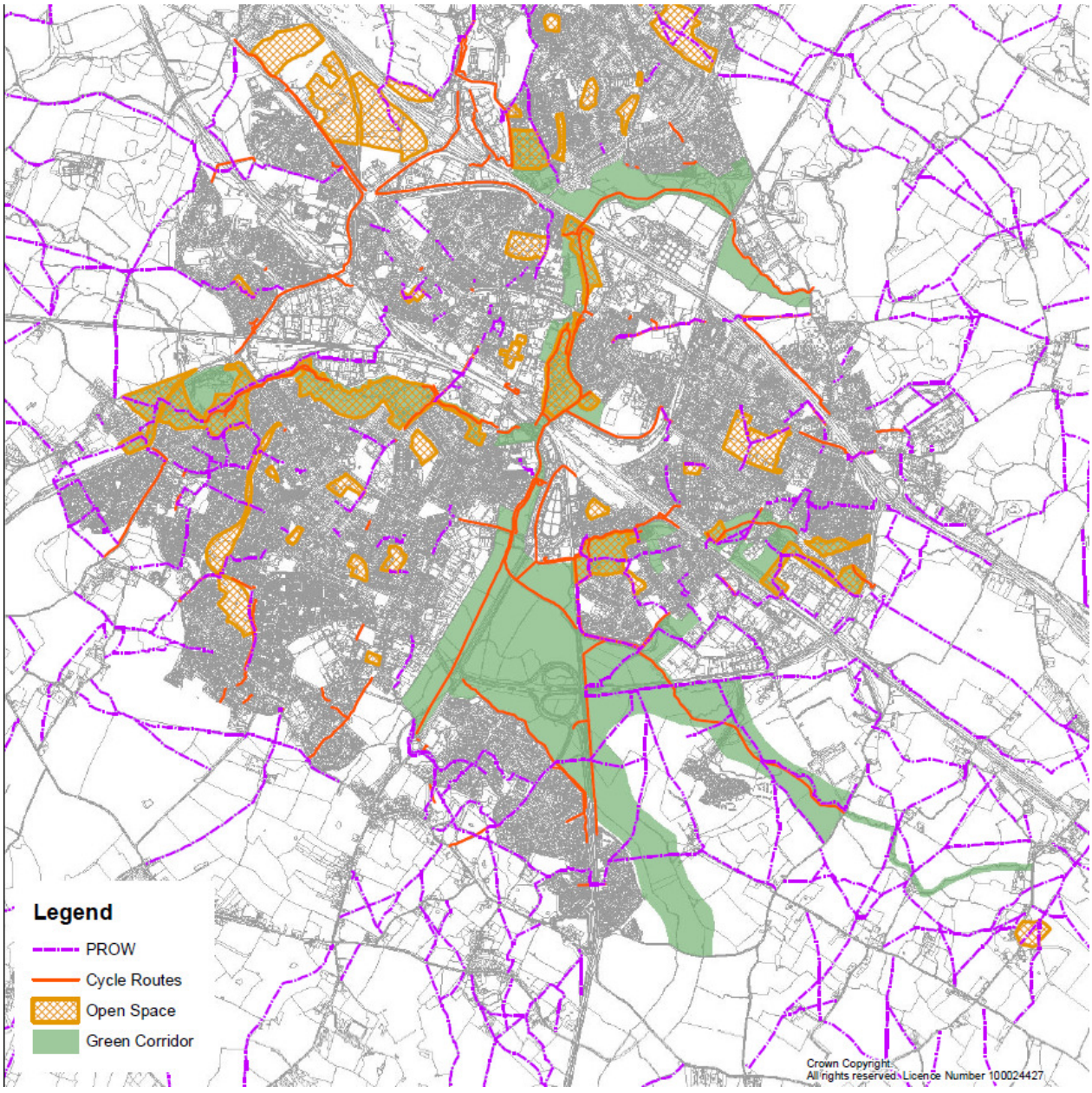
New designation (to be adopted for 2017)



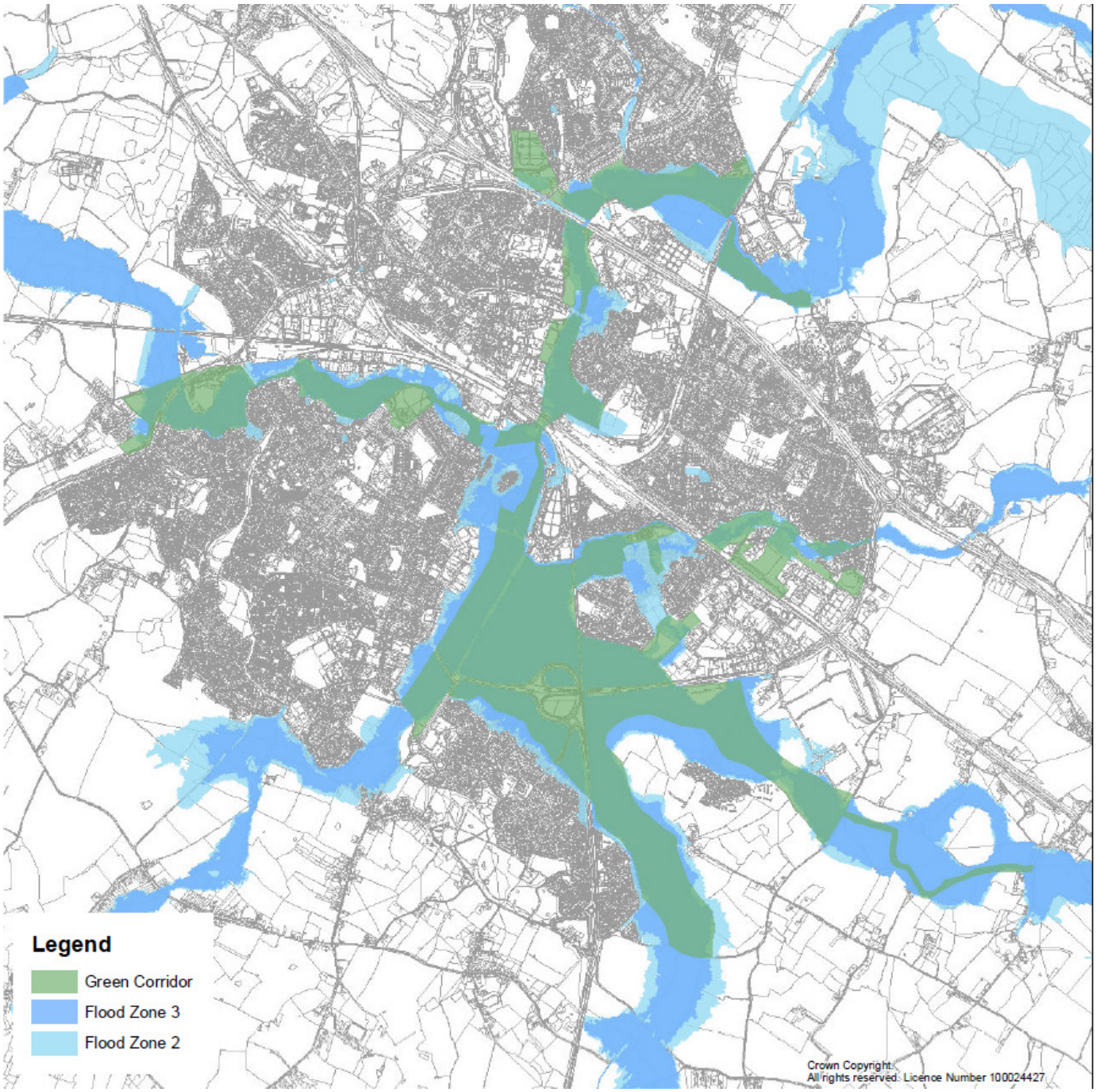
Options for future designations (for future review)



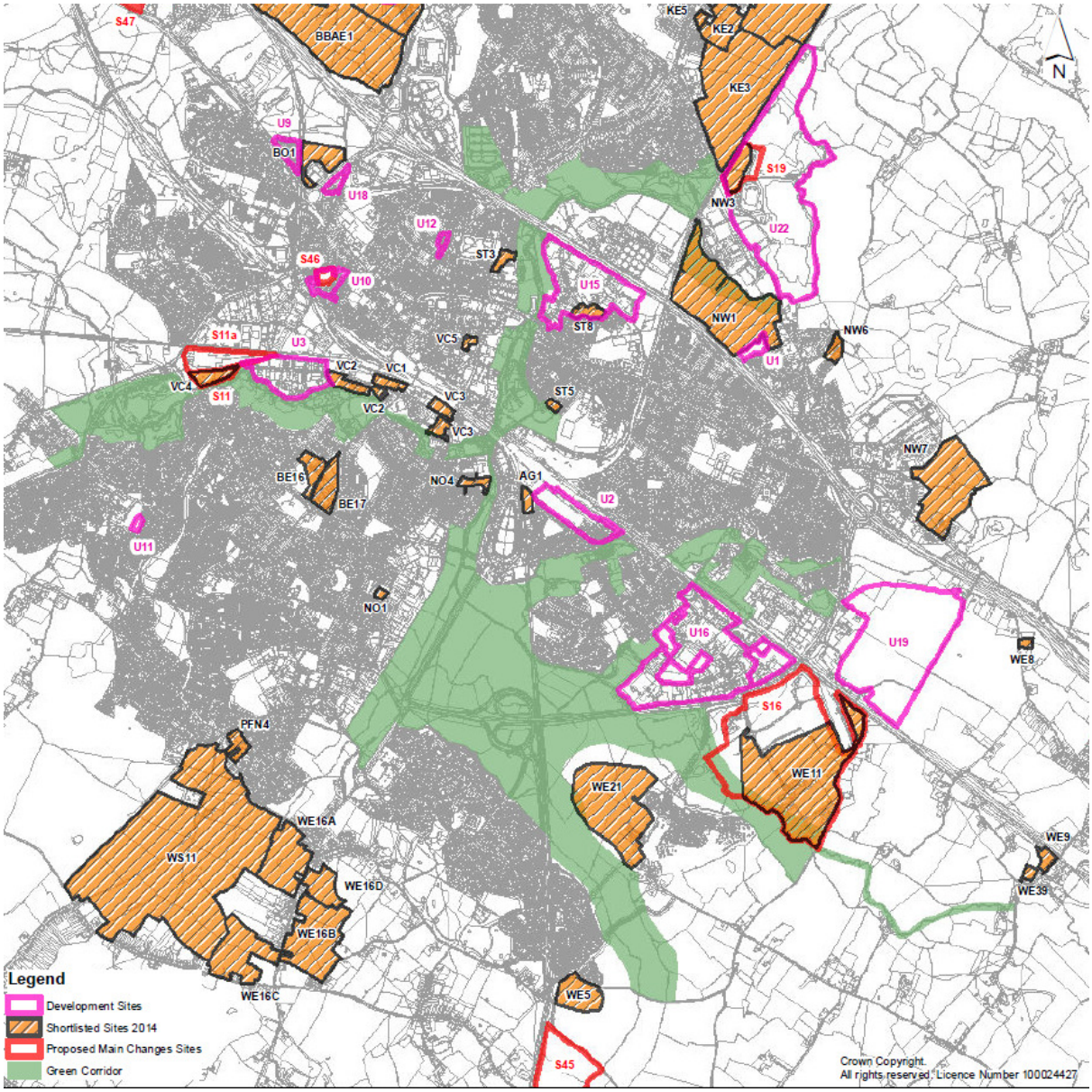
Existing Green Corridor with Public Rights of Way, Cycle Routes and Public Open Space to show connectivity between open spaces.



Existing Green Corridor and relationship with Flood Zones



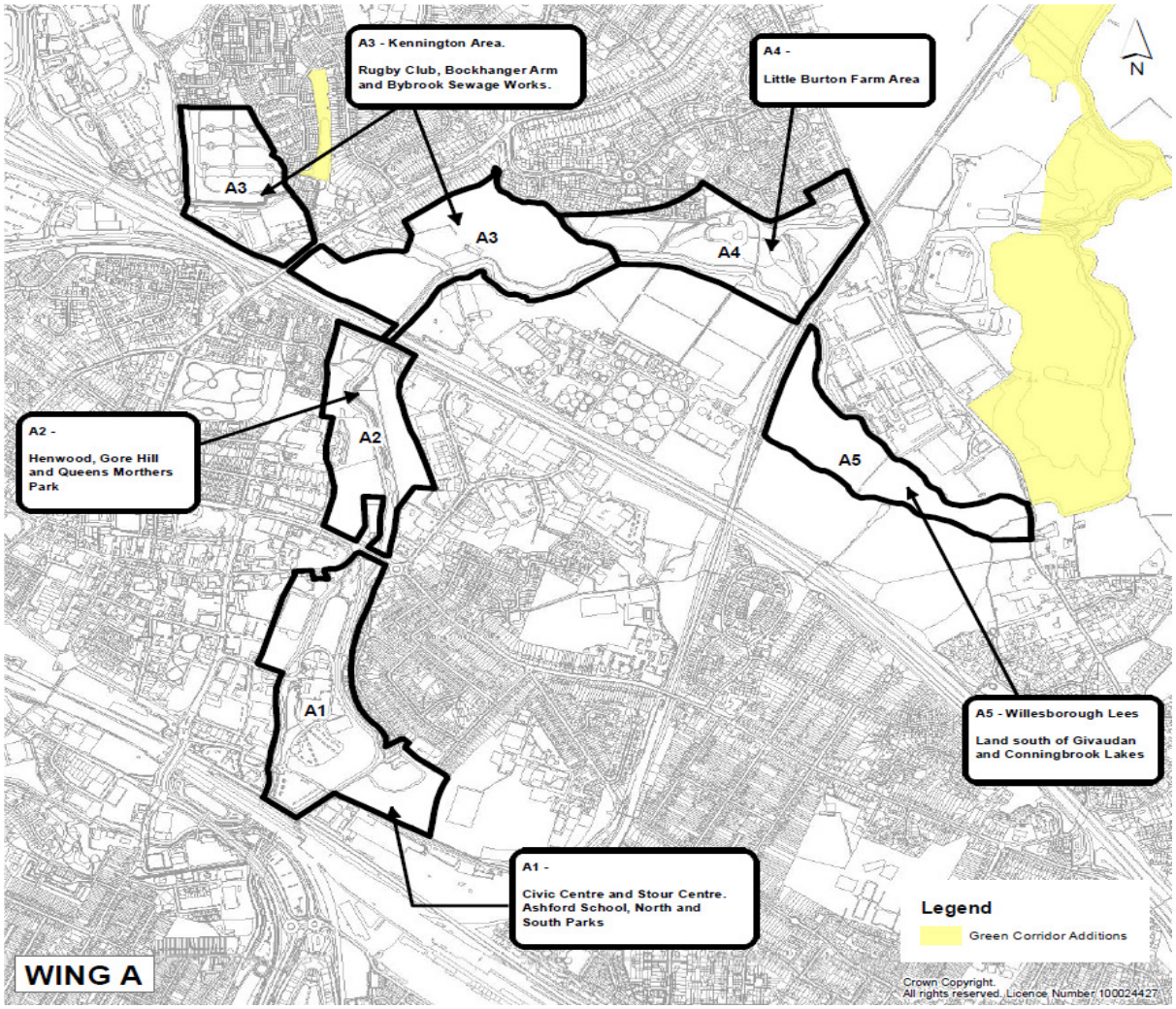
Existing Green Corridor in relation to existing development sites and proposed shortlisted development sites (draft Local Plan) – subject to change.



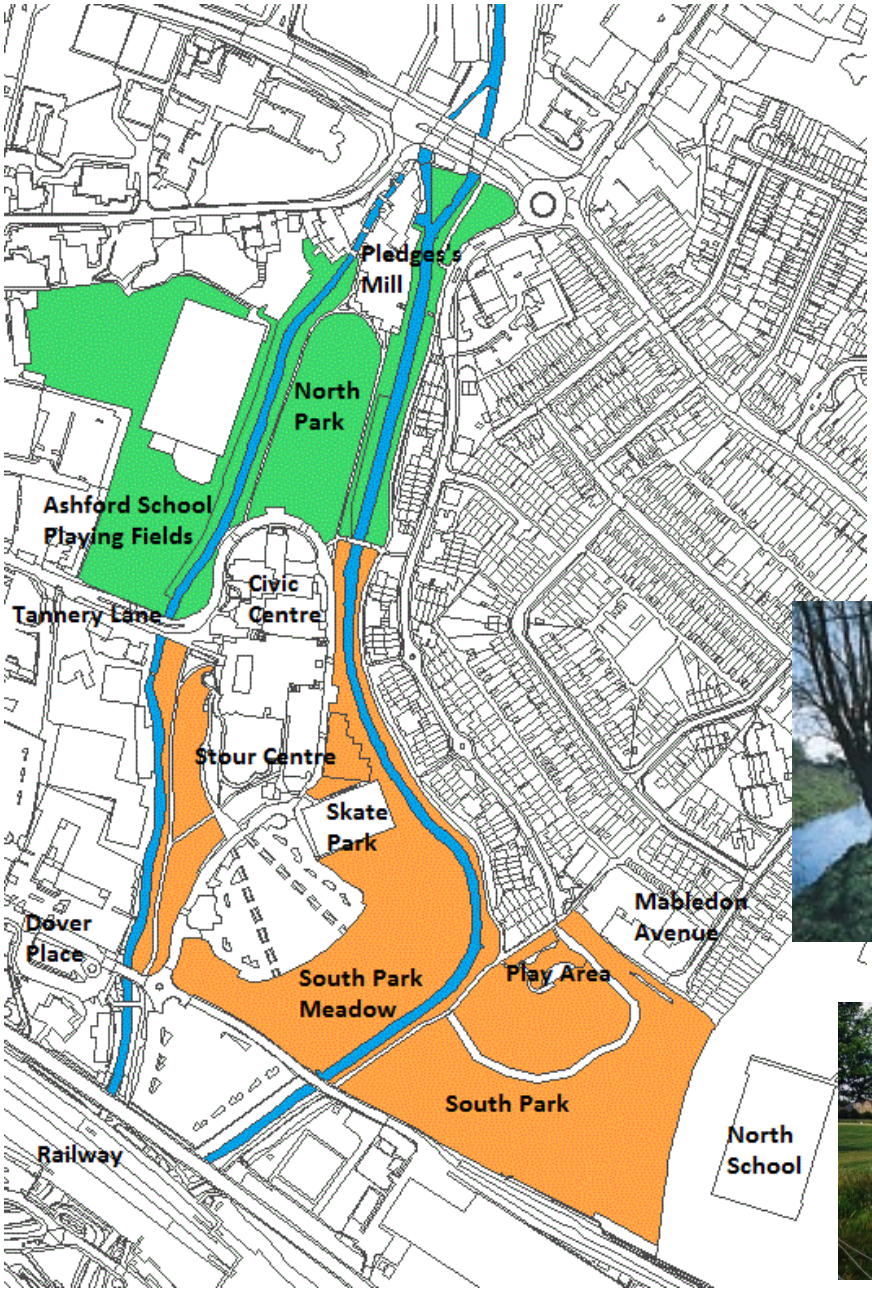
THE PLAN

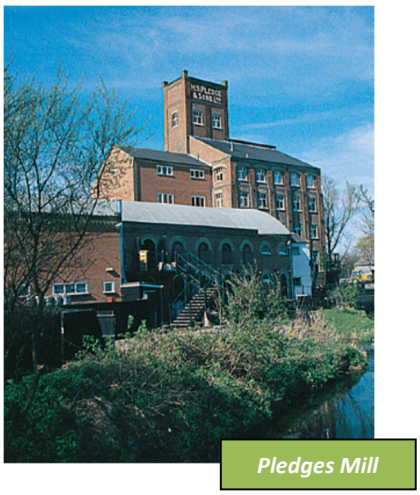
This section is divided into 3 parts, one for each wing of the green corridor. Within each section is a series of maps, photographs and descriptions of the Green Corridor Area along with the proposed opportunities in the additional Green Corridor Land. The text briefly describes the character and function of each wing and gives further details of specific proposed improvements to the riverside environment.

Wing A – South Park Meadow, North Park, Queen Mother's Park, Rugby Club, Bybrook, Little Burton Farm, Givaudan & Conningbrook Lakes



A1 - Civic & Stour Centre and North and South Parks





Pledges Mill



North Park



South Park Meadow

North Park

North Park is an open urban park, and a major destination as it is frequently used for events and informal recreation. It is within a key movement area where many people travel to the station, Stour Centre and Town Centre. The main feature of the park is the pollarded willows, an important habitat for a range of invertebrate species. KCSP, working with ABC, installed a number of sculptured animal seats by artist Steve Portchmouth in 2012.

The confluence of the East Stour and Great Stour is at Pledge's Mill which stands at the northern end of North park. The Environment Agency removed the weirs at Pledges Mill in 2013 and created a fish passage to enable fish to swim upstream and spawn and to improve river conditions generally.

The Ashford school playing and sports field is a large attractive area of open space on the west side of the river, opposite North Park, which contributes to the river corridor habitat.

This area is at the centre of the Town and the Green Corridor and is an important part of the movement network, where many footpaths and cycle paths link to other areas of town, the station, the surrounding schools and the recreation and play areas in and around the Stour Centre.

South Park

There is a Local Nature Reserve along the East river through South Park. Although this is a busy thoroughfare (cycle path and footpaths) and close to the skate park, a survey has shown that Water Voles are present in this stretch of riverside. The bridge over the river is a good viewpoint where Moorhens and Grey Wagtails can be spotted.

The area adjacent to the Stour Centre car park is a new wild flower meadow, completed in June 2014 by the Environment Agency, ABC, KSCP and KCC. The Meadow is an 8000sqm area of wetland meadow including scrapes, new trees and hedges, and raised earthworks around the edge protect the car park from flooding. River bank improvements were also carried out to improve flow conditions and habitat. It opened to the public in 2016.

A1: Proposed Key Projects and Enhancements

	Habitat Enhancement	Key Projects	Comments
North Park	• Water course Invasive Species removal (Himalayan Balsam) • Rotational river bank cuts to increase species diversity (5 year rotation) • Maintenance of existing pollards • Introduction of wild flower species in increase diversity in vegetation beside river		

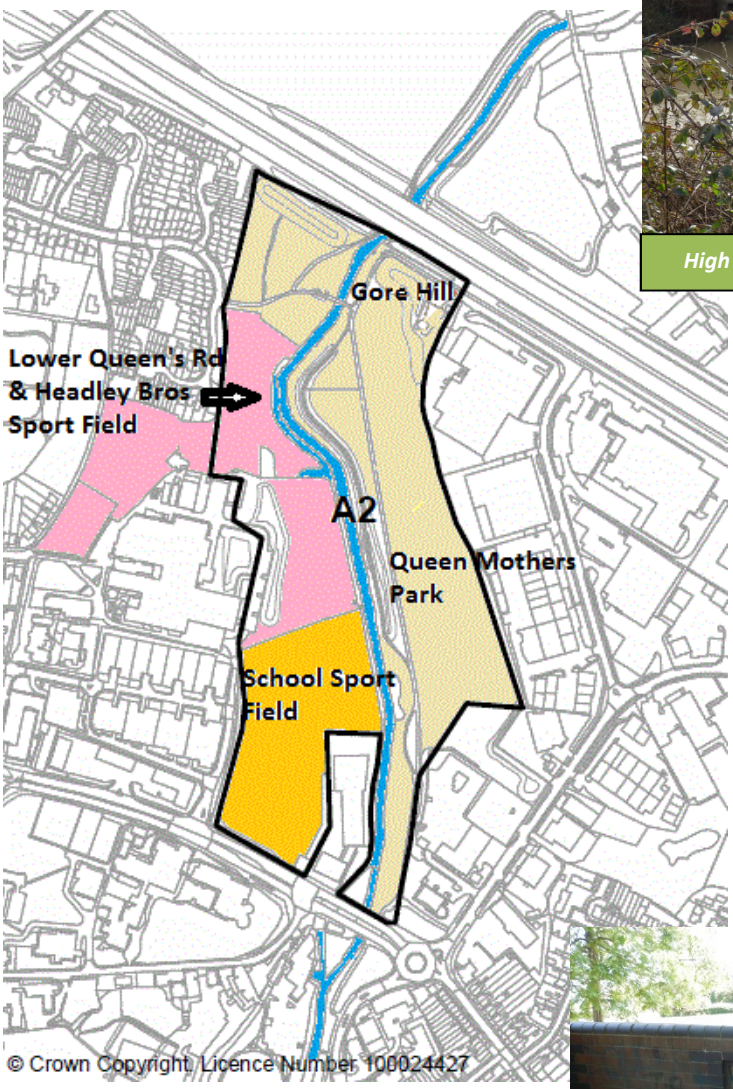
South Park	• Water course Invasive Species removal (Himalayan Balsam) • Rotational river bank cuts to increase species diversity (5 year rotation) • Monitoring of site for biodiversity and management to improve status • Some tree planting on western bank	• The remainder of the site could be brought forward as informal public open space with an improved wildlife habitat. • Footpaths/cycleways in to Mabledon Avenue that will link to the nearby services in Mill Court and the Stour Leisure Centre	
Ashford School Playing Fields	• Increase and improve riverside habitat conditions and provide educational opportunities		
Opportunity Area: Dover Place/Tannery Lane		• Designated area of open space next to the river, ideally incorporating public art, providing access and views • Construction of new wetland habitats beside the river/developments to mitigate losses which will provide a good buffer zone to maintain habitat quality and corridors for wildlife. • Links between the riverside to other open spaces within new development • The planting of semi-mature trees (native species) to relate well to both nearby buildings, spaces and the riverside • A link between the path next to the river in South Park to pedestrian and cycle routes through the	These areas are adjacent to the Green Corridor, incl. the river Great Stour and also within the Commercial Quarter Redevelopment area. There have been recent applications for Dover Place and Kent Wool Growers which have proposed enhancements to the area such as SUDS treatments, river remodelling and new pedestrian crossings over the river.

		site to the railway station including an attractively designed bridge.	

A2 - Queen Mother's Park and Gore Hill



Queen Mother's Park





High Water at M20 underpass – Jan 2015



National Cycle Route 18



School Playing Field



Martyrs Field Memorial seat

Queen Mother's Park

The Queen Mother's Park is an area that has been set aside for informal relaxation alongside the river. The southern part of the park is known as Martyrs Field. A memorial Stone and seat was erected in 1974 to mark the history of this area, which was used for public executions during the 16th century. On the opposite bank to Martyrs' Field is an industrial / commercial estate – Riverside Industrial Park.

There are benches and a footpath runs the length of the park as well as National Cycle Route 18. There is also a series of three sculptures installed in 2007 by Martin Brockman and Mark Sidders as part of the Ashford Green Corridor project. The park is open in aspect with clusters of trees. Access to the river is limited due to steep banks but vegetation has been cleared in places to provide key viewing points. There are areas that have been set aside for native wild flowers and natural habitat. It is an important part of the Green Corridor with a mixture of meadow grass and shrubbery. Most of this area is designated as a Local Nature Reserve.

Gore Hill

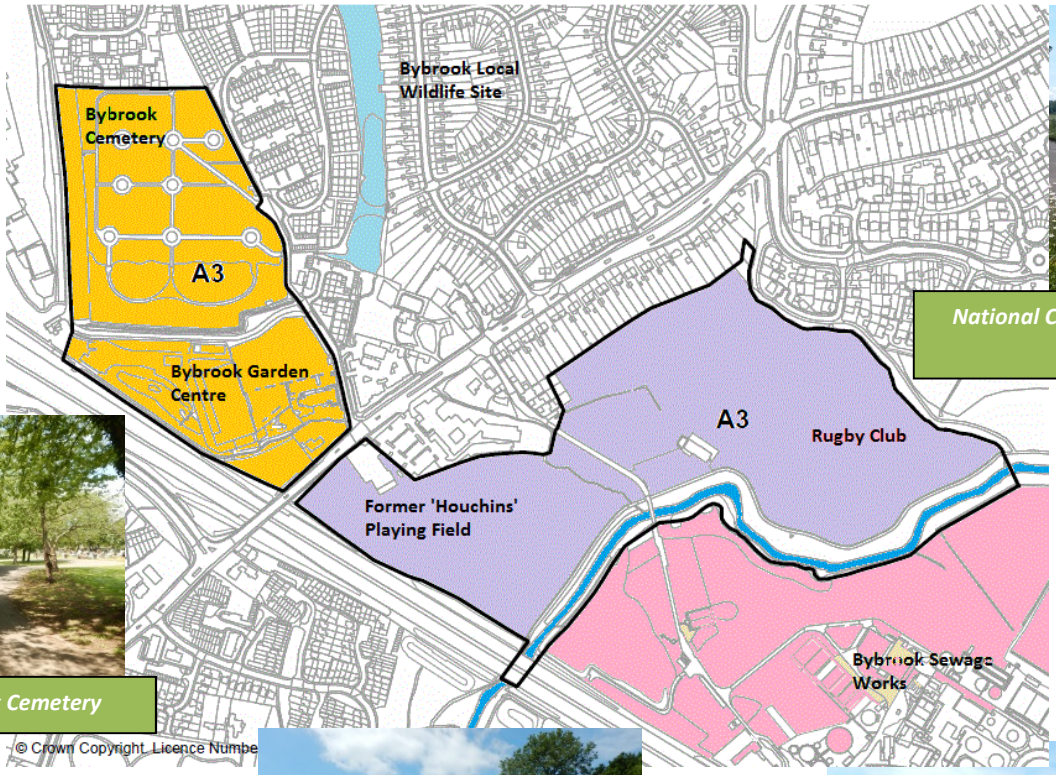
Gore Hill is a pleasantly landscaped open space. There is an underpass that continues the pedestrian and cycle route under the M20, but this becomes impassable at times of flooding. The scrubbed bank up to the M20 is a valuable habitat for a range of small mammals, birds and possibly reptiles. The Environment Agency carried out significant bank works on this stretch of the River in 2011/12 close to the M20 bridge which improved water flow and quality and the riverside habitats. The local community run events in this space and a boardwalk section was installed to provide a circular route around a small watercourse which is rich in wildlife.

A2: Proposed Key Projects and Enhancements

	Habitat Enhancement	Key Projects	Comments
Queen Mothers Park	• Benches replacement/maintenance and possible relocation to provide river views • Selective tree thinning to open up over shaded areas of river and improve emergent vegetation and biodiversity generally • Planting trees to screen Henwood Industrial Estate buildings and the Motorway • Invasive removal (Himalayan Balsam) • Rotational bank cuts to increase species diversity (5 year rotation)	• Project to push the existing raised earth back beside the Great River Stour back to the edge, closer to Henwood. To provide increase in flood storage area and a wetland habitat. It would require re-routing of the existing cycle path and footpath. • Provide a solution to resolve the flooding issue of the M20 underpass – further research	

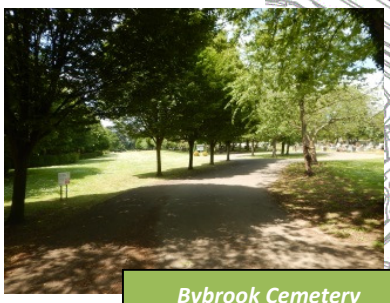
	• River work to narrow sections of the river, improve flow rates, hydrology and water quality on this slow and straight section of river (EA consent required)	and development needed.	
Gore Hill	• Management of the scrubbed bank and trees next to the M20 • Invasive removal (Himalayan Balsam) • Rotational bank cuts to increase species diversity (5 year rotation) • Willow management on berms/lower banks • Some limited management of ditch to retain habitat quality.		
Ashford School Sports Field	• Maintaining pollarded willows		
Opportunity Area: Lower Queens Road and Headley Sports Ground		• Ensure the built form and layout respects the setting of the Green Corridor (buffer zone/SUDS/habitat mitigation (trees etc.) and enhancements). • Provide links to existing pedestrian/cycle paths surrounding the site, including improving accessibility into and through the Green Corridor to the east of the site.	There is an opportunity to enhance the area of the sports field and part of the woodland that is within the Green Corridor boundary. Part of the site is adjacent to housing allocation site. The current Policy requires development proposals.

A3 – Bybrook Garden Centre, Former ‘Houchins’ Field and Rugby Club

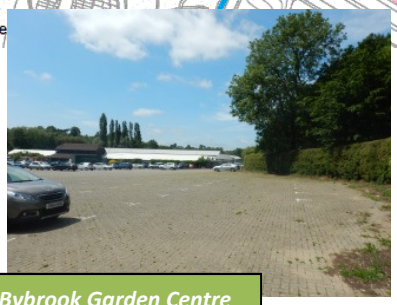




National Cycle Path 18 alongside Rugby Club



Bybrook Cemetery



Bybrook Garden Centre



View of Rugby Club from Little Burton Farm

Bybrook Barn Garden Centre & Cemetery (Known as the “Bockhanger Arm”)

Bybrook Barn garden centre and doctors’ surgery is mostly buildings and car parking, however, it is still open in character and the large cemetery in the northern part of this section of the green corridor contributes towards this openness. The area is also important as it links the leisure development of Eureka Park with the river corridor.

There is an area to the east of the cemetery which is a designated Local Wildlife Site. KCSP are working alongside Kennington Community Forum and creating a 'Friends of Bybrook LWS' group to create a management plan for this whole area.

Former "Houchins" Playing Field and Ashford Rugby Club

This large area of flat, open flood plain is an important green break between Kennington and the rest of Ashford. The river, as it passes through this section, is winding and attractive, and also joins the Kennington Stream. The land is in private ownership but there is access across the site though Kinney's Lane which joins the National Cycle Path Route 18 and a footpath which is fenced.

The Rugby Club have been located around this area since the 1970's and accessed from Kinney's Lane. The club is very active and the site is well used, even though the area is within flood zones 2 & 3.

Addition to Green Corridor Designation: Bybrook Local Wildlife Site (extension of A3)

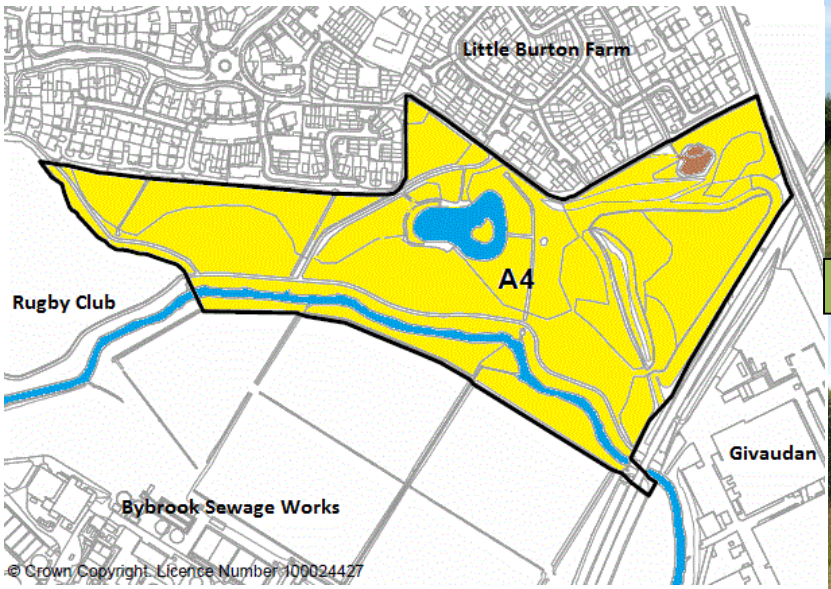
Bybrook Local Wildlife Site is currently under some restoration work by a group of local volunteers led by KSCP**,** It consists of 2 mill ponds, and wet woodland coppice (alder carr and Fen) which is a Biodiversity Action Landscape. This site has an ordinary Water course (Bybrook Stream) that also benefits biodiversity and connects to the River Great Stour. In close proximity to designated Green Corridor land at Bybrook Cemetery.

A3: Proposed Key Projects and Enhancements

	Habitat Enhancement	Key Projects	Comments
Bybrook Barn		A network of cycle ways/footpaths should be designed to directly connect the Eureka Leisure Park to Kennington and the Rugby Club with its riverside route into Ashford. A safe and convenient means of crossing the A28 for pedestrians and cyclists will be essential to link this part of the green corridor network.	
Bybrook Local Wildlife Site			**Proposed as additional Green Corridor land.**

Former 'Houchins' Field and Ashford Rugby Club	• Invasive removal (Himalayan Balsam) and Japanese Knotweed • Tree thinning to control over-shading of river • River work to improve flow dynamics and water quality (EA consent required) • Replacing current fence along the footpath and cycle way with a hedge. Visually more appropriate but more importantly would allow greater movement for wildlife. Fencing will need to remain to ensure site security while hedge establishes.		
Opportunity Area: Bybrook Sewage Works			On the southern side of the river, Southern Water Services and KSCP created a wildlife habitat on their land. A wide variety of birds are attracted here, and it is an important link for the biodiversity within the riverside location. Opportunities to make further improvements on the old filtration beds should be explored, with potential for Green Corridor designation and protection in the future. However, public access is not possible here.

A4 – Little Burton Farm and A5 – South of Givaudan to Conningbrook Lakes





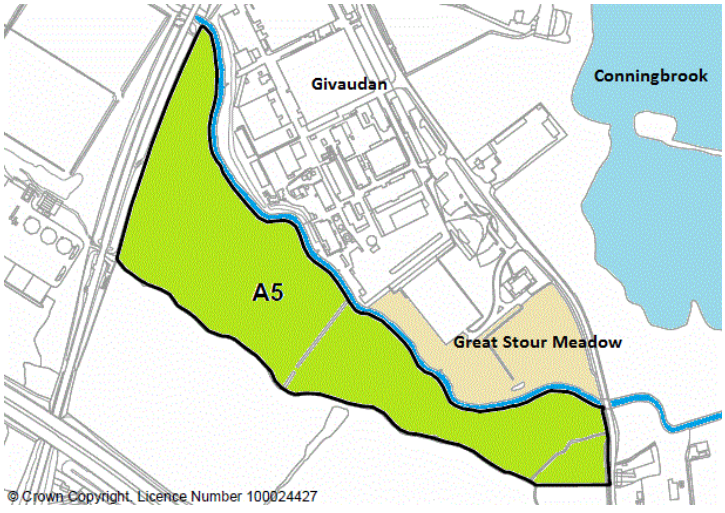
Cycle path along Little Burton Farm



View towards Givaudan from Little Burton Farm

A4: Little Burton Farm

The area south of the Little Burton Farm development is a large area of open space which includes a play area and cycle/footpath, and the riverside area of approximately 1500 sq. meters of long meadow. It also includes a significant area of semi-mature woodland, part of which is BAP priority habitat, Wet Woodland. There is also an area of wetland/scrub in the north eastern area of the site that is excellent for wildlife. National Cycle Route 18 runs through the area, towards Conningbrook Lakes.





Givaudan - Great Stour

A5: South of Givaudan Land

This section of the green corridor extends from the Canterbury railway line to Kennington Road, Willesborough and is in agricultural use. It provides an open environment within the boundaries of the town and access to the attractive countryside of the Stour Valley, in which it is located. It is also a key connecting arm to Givaudan and Conningbrook Lakes, although has no public access.

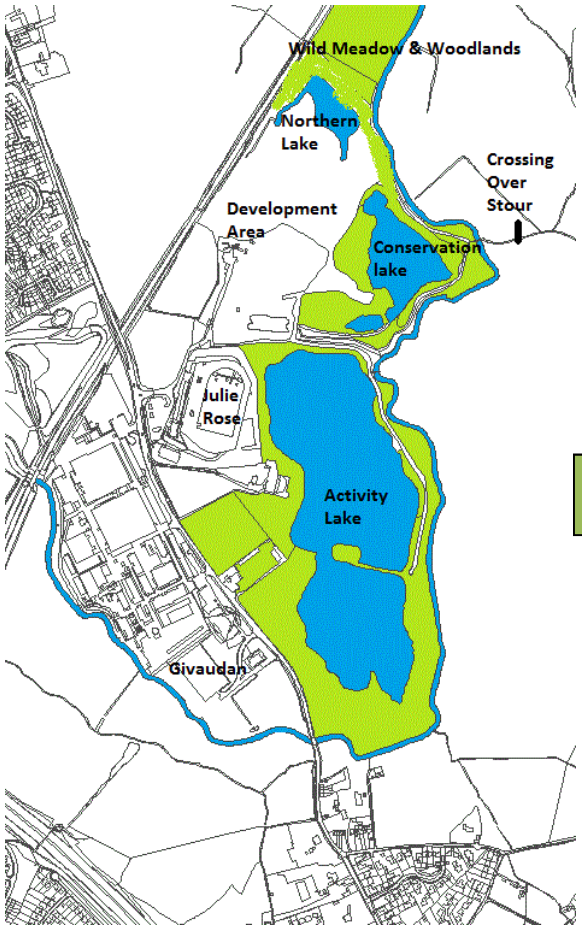
The Environment Agency has recently carried out river channel work in this area and this has created habitats and established new berms and emergent vegetation. Additional river corridor management and improvements of nearby fields could enhance this area further.

Addition to Green Corridor Designation: Conningbrook Lakes Country Park (A6)

Conningbrook Lakes is a new country water park, opened in 2015. The 2 most northern lakes are part of the designated Local Wildlife Site (Great Stour Ashford to Fordwich), which will be improved and the site includes 1.5 miles of river frontage. The developers will also be creating a wetland area and wildlife meadow.

Kent Wildlife Trust (KWT) has signed an agreement with ABC (and Mid Kent Fisheries) to help manage the wildlife interest at the Conningbrook Lakes Country Park.

The area is along the river corridor, within the flood zone, on national cycle route 18 and is a designated wildlife site and therefore meets the requirements of GC designation.



Conningbrook – Extension to GC Designation

A4, A5 and A6: Proposed Key Projects and Enhancements

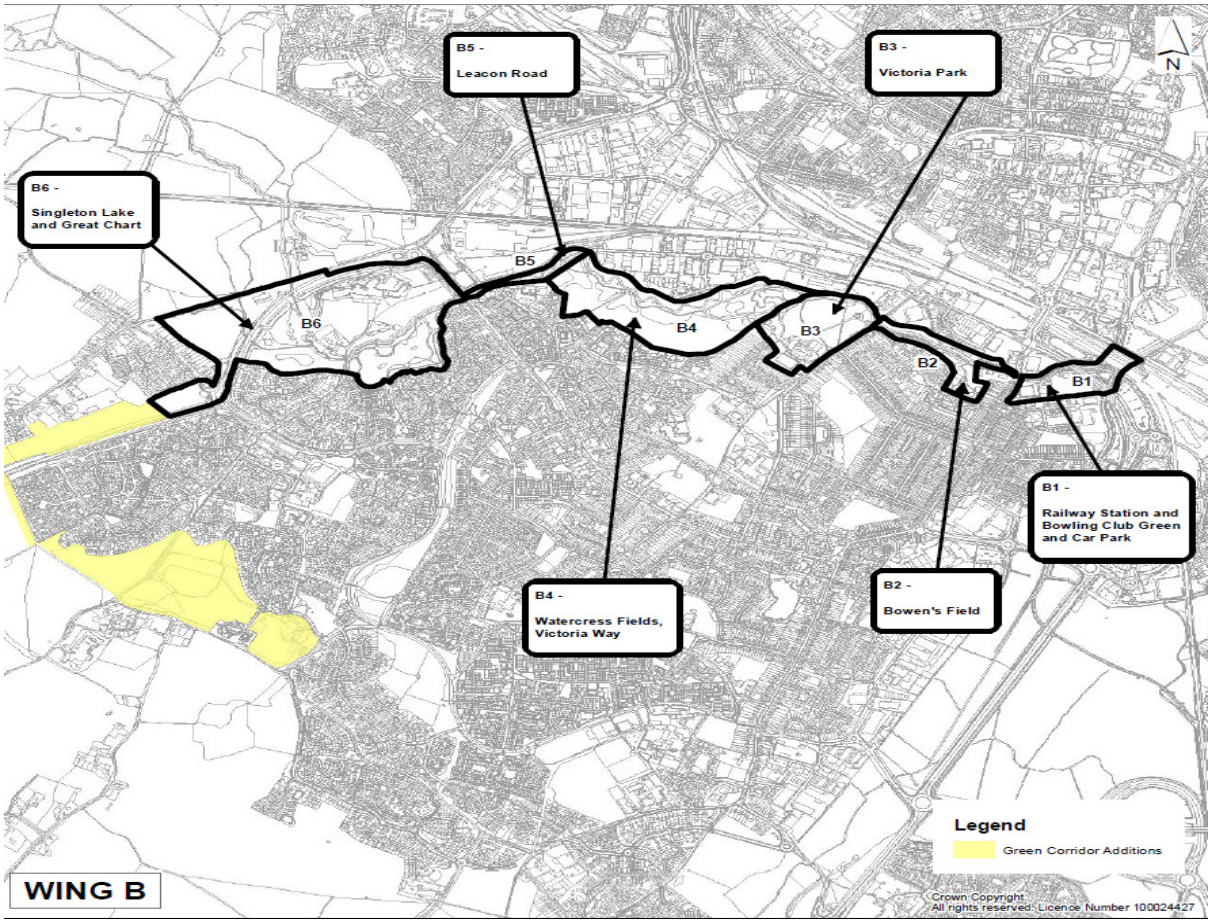
	Habitat Enhancement	Key Projects	Comments
Little Burton Farm	• Invasive removal (Himalayan Balsam) and Japanese Knotweed • Ongoing meadow management to establish and enhance meadow areas		
Little Burton Farm and Givaudan Land		• Bird survey of wetland area to inform management recommendations • Restoration work to remove litter and increase wildlife value of lake • Woodland management – coppicing and walk/s through area to be developed • New tree planting to connect woodland to river and on bank (EA consent required) • Ongoing meadow management to establish and enhance meadow areas • New public benches overlooking the river / maintaining viewing access • Hedge planting along Rugby club boundary adjacent to footpath. • Community engagement activities • A safe crossing route using National Cycle Path 18, which joins the area in	Management plan needed with actions to upgrade landscape management and increase wildlife value of this diverse space

		Conningbrook should be explored.	
Conningbrook Country Park		• Current master planning of the whole site taking place to provide leisure areas, play area, conservation areas and opportunities for water and land based community clubs	**Proposed as additional Green Corridor land.**

POTENTIAL FUTURE EXTENSION AREAS – Wing A

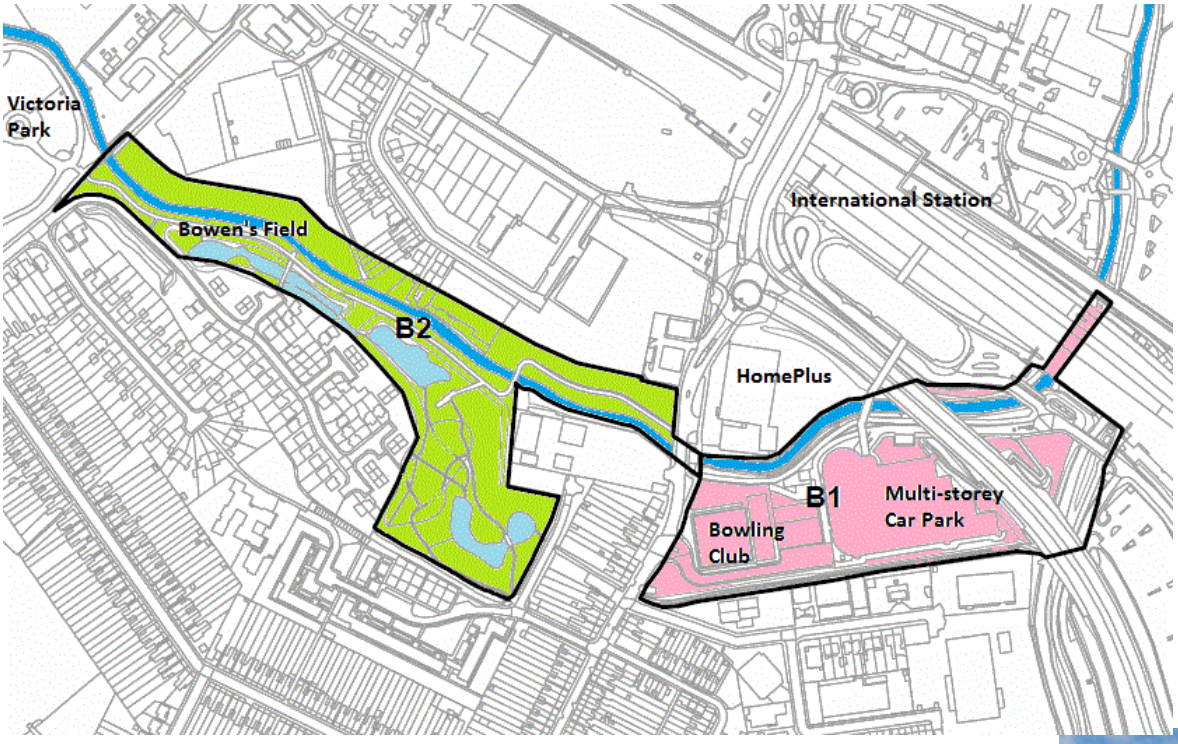
The areas around Conningbrook Lakes have potential to become GC designations in the future, particularly if future development is located to the north. Connections would be required to link the areas together, across the railway lines. Land to the east of the lakes also have high potential for ecology importance and may be considered for designation in future.

Wing B – Railway Station, Bowling Club Green, Bowen's Field, Victoria Park, Watercress Fields, Leacon Road, Singleton Lake and Great Chart.



B1 – International Station Car Park and Bowling Green

B2 – Bowen's Field Local Nature Reserve

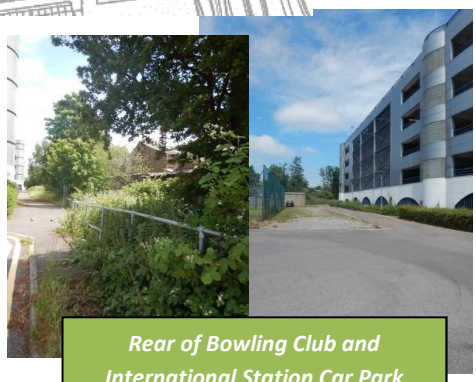




Bowen's Field



Underpass



Rear of Bowling Club and International Station Car Park

B1 – International Station Car Park and Bowling Green

The Great Stour passes under the railway through a long unwelcoming underpass, and then emerges around the car parks for the station, before passing under the Romney Marsh dual carriageway. It then emerges between Home Plus and the Bowling Club. In all there are ten crossings of the Great Stour along this short length. It is an important link for pedestrians and cyclists in the town and station as it is one of the few places the railways can be crossed. The underpasses too are particularly unattractive. Views of the river are obscured by vegetation, but the overgrown nature of this section allows essential habitat and cover for wildlife, in this very urbanised and canalised section of the river corridor. ***Improvements to Sections A1, B1 and C1 of the green corridor need to be prepared in a joint strategy, in***

partnership with the Landowners to improve the appearance and habitat value of this whole, difficult but prominent area

B2 – Bowen's Field Local Nature Reserve

Bowen's Field is an informal recreation area and Local Nature Reserve, adjacent to the Great Stour. It is thought that this site was one of the last areas to be farmed in Ashford, it belonged to a local livestock trader called Mr Sidney Herbert Bowen, and he is commemorated on a plaque at the entrance to the site from Victoria Park. The site is now a flood storage area consisting of damp grassland, with a large pond where Blue-tailed Damselfly, Azure Damselfly, Smooth Newt, and Common frog have been recorded.

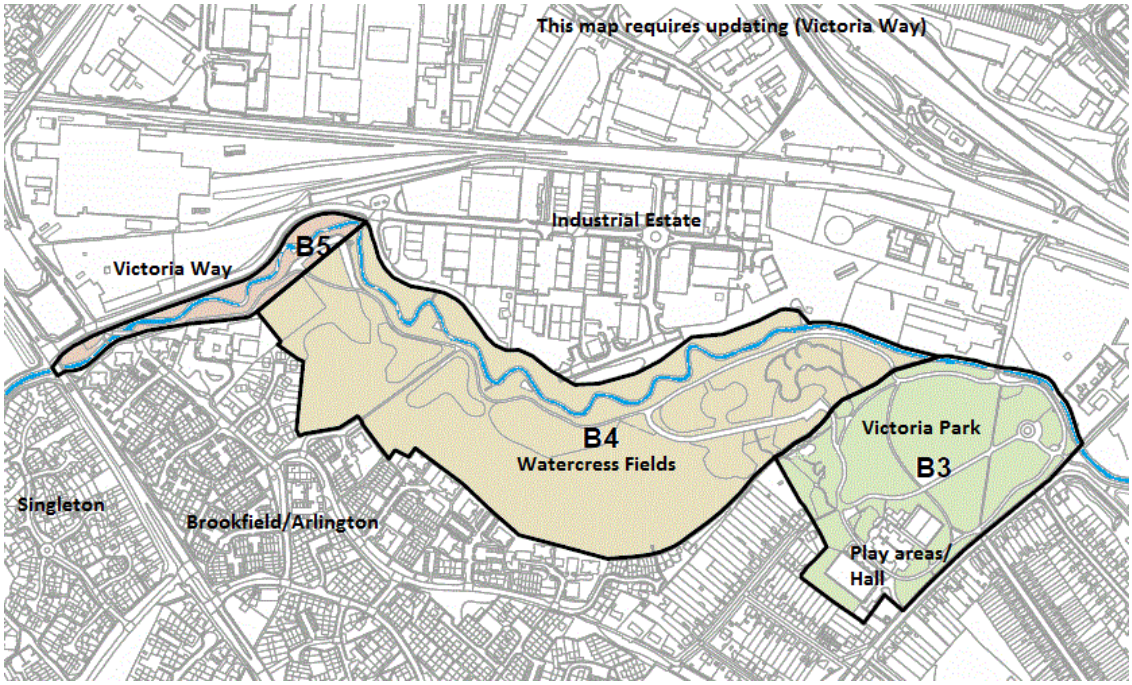
This area has a key role providing floodwater storage capacity. The land was adopted by the borough council who have carried out a number of improvements which includes; creating a pond and planting a variety of reeds to improve the visual aspect and conservation value; building a footpath/cycle way and bridge next to the river and planting/replacing trees. Retention basins have been re-contoured and planted with a variety of reeds to improve the visual aspect and their conservation value. The work has also made the area a far more interesting place for visitors to walk with a number of species of butterfly, kingfishers and reed buntings visiting there, whilst retaining a grassed area for people to play.

B1 and B2: Proposed Key Projects and Enhancements

	Habitat Enhancement	Key Projects	Comments
International Station Car Park Area	• In subway and tunnel areas: Encouraging vegetative growth (day light lighting) OR adding boxes for bat habitat • Planting around the tunnel entrance – native species shrubs on the banks and climbers • Some limited 'opening up' for views of the river • Invasive removal (Himalayan Balsam) • There is potential to make this area more attractive with planting, as the underpasses tend to be bleak and unattractive areas.		An improvement plan is required for the whole area around the International Passenger Station, which currently consists of a sequence of underpasses / subways and linking routes that are narrow, dark and relatively sparse of vegetation
Bowen's Field	• Invasive removal (Himalayan Balsam – Riverside/Canadian Pondweed – Pond) • Rotational bank cuts to increase species diversity (5 year rotation)		

	• Bankside tree planting on the southern edge of the river to provide some cover and shading for fish and other species. (EA consent required). • Installing seating • Encouraging vegetative diversity including some sections around the pond through clearing and planting • Engagement with riparian owners of northern band to address issues of garden waste etc • Management of water courses within the site • Willow Carr and scrub management		
Opportunity area: Homeplus			There may be an opportunity in the future, if the Homeplus site is redeveloped, to improve this area of the river corridor and the connections with Bowens Field, with the creations of SUDS, new wetland habitats, river enhancements and a buffer zone.

B3 – Victoria Park, B4 – Watercress Fields and B5 – Victoria Way





Hubert Fountain



Victoria Park



Watercress Fields



Ford

B3 - Victoria Park

Victoria Park is part of the largest and one of the most important areas of public open space in Ashford and is regularly used as a venue for festivals and events. The northern area is a designated Local Nature Reserve. It contains mature ornamental trees and a small area of woodland. Some of the trees were planted in the early part of the 20th century to commemorate local townspeople and members of the royal family. There is a small pond at the bottom of the park surrounded by a rocky garden which has an excellent population of mostly smooth and palmate newts.

Over the last 15 years the council has undertaken a large number of improvements. Some of the key improvements include restoring the Hubert Fountain in 1998 (a Heritage Lottery grant was received) and it was refurbished again in 2007, planting traditional fruit trees and Kent Cobb Nut trees as 'public orchards', play areas, landscaping, seating and footpaths and cycleways.

Victoria Park Masterplan

Master planning has been developed for Victoria Park with consultants Allen Scott. The plan is looking to improve the offer of this destination site which is of great importance to Ashford. This plan is currently in a second stage development planning process to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the Parks For People funding. The plan features remodeling areas of the park to make them more accessible, improving the play offer, upgrading the Grade 2 listed Victorian Fountain and improving the toilet provision and car parking provision plus other works.

B4 – Watercress Fields

Watercress Fields was previously occupied by formal football pitches, but is now solely an area for informal recreation. It is an important site linking areas in the south of Ashford to the Town Centre and other parts of the Green Corridor and is designated as a nature reserve. The river has a natural profile with many meanders, and wide margins of vegetation that support riverside species such as cuckoo flower and alder. The woodland on the northern bank not only provides wildlife habitat but provides a screen for the Chart Industrial Estate.

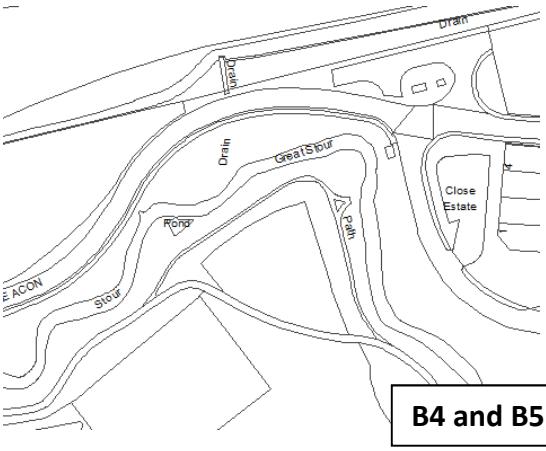
Wildflower meadow areas have been created along the parks southern edge and beside areas of woodland, plus a 'traditional' community orchard 'Watercress Orchard' was planted in 2012/13 with community participation, on the western section.

B5 – Leacon Road/Victoria Way

Along this section of Leacon Road/Victoria Way there are some riverside sculptures of aquatic wildlife and an old fording point that once linked this area with Beaver Lane. The whole area here is designated as a Local Wildlife Site and contains footpaths and cyclepath. The occupiers of the industrial estate have worked hard to improve the quality of run-off water entering the river.

KEY PROJECTS – RIVER IMPROVEMENTS AREAS B3 to B5

River enhancement is required on the straight sluggish section running between B3/B4 areas – this could include bank changes to narrow the channel and provide a 2 stage channel. In the North West corner, where B4 joins B5, the river runs very close to Victoria Way road and footpath, which is causing bank erosion and creating a vulnerable area which may undermine this major route.



B4 and B5 RIVER BYPASS LOOP

B3, B4 and B5: Proposed Key Projects and Enhancements

	Habitat Enhancement	Key Projects	Comments
Victoria Park	• Invasive Removal (Himalayan Balsam) • Rotational bank cuts to increase species diversity (5 year rotation)	• Parks for People Heritage Lottery Funding – remodelling major areas of the park for improvement to Heritage, access and leisure offer.	In association with development, new or enhanced pedestrian/cycle routes should be provided along the river, building on and extending the existing network. There is potential to link a public area to the Fountain and explore the introduction of formal pavilions and bandstands in the park. Riverbanks should also be enhanced for biodiversity in connection with development and public art could also be provided within a green buffer between the park and new development. The Environment Agency's byelaw restrictions regarding building near to river banks will need to be applied to layouts of new development
Watercress Fields	• Invasive removal (Himalayan Balsam) • Rotational bank cuts to increase species diversity (5 year rotation) • Increase wildflower meadow areas and tree coverage in selected areas including extending existing wet woodland which separate Victoria Park from Watercress Fields		
Opportunity area: Leacon		• Green corridor linkage with National Cycle	• New development at Leacon Road, adjacent to Matalan should

Road/Victoria Way		Network and new development at Leacon Road • Improving the appearance around the ford on Leacon Road	connect to the National Cycle Network that runs through the Green Corridor opposite the site, connecting Victoria Park and Singleton Lake, along with enhancing visual and biodiversity opportunities on route. • A comprehensive improvement scheme needs to be drawn up involving local residents and the EA
River improvements from B3 through to B5		• Proposal to create a high flow channel across the 'the loop' and reduce the velocity of the water including a new footbridge.	This will create a temporary island. This work would require modelling and licensing from the EA.

B6 - Singleton Lake, Buxford Meadow and Great Chart



Underpass between Buxford and Great Chart

Buxford Meadow

Singleton Lake

Buxford Meadow

Buxford Meadow is one of the most important wildlife habitats in the green corridor. It contains a large pond and is adjacent to the Great Stour and a millstream for Buxford Mill flows through it. The Stour Valley Walk PROW passes through the wood leading to Great Chart through an underpass and beyond, however, the underpass is not welcoming and requires maintenance.

The site consists of a wet meadow with a pond in the centre whose margins consist predominantly of reedmace. The pond supports a diverse array of wildlife including common frogs, toads and smooth newts but may have contamination and transfer to other sites should be avoided. The site is also ideal for small mammals - Field Vole and Pygmy Shrew have been recorded in the grassland and Woodmice and Bank Vole in the woodland.

There is also an area of wet woodland, with the wet glades supporting large areas of Water mint. The footpath through the wet meadow is often puddled and difficult to walk through.

The area has recently had some improvements such as a new footbridge across the Buxford Dyke, which itself is an important habitat for biodiversity. Children have also created a new informal water channel off the perched section of the river which runs through the woods to join the millstream. There is a KSCP management plan for the whole of this area. New interpretation boards have been installed in 2017.

Singleton Lake

Singleton Lake is a focal point for this part of the green corridor, which together with the surrounding open space is an attractive and important informal leisure area in Ashford. It also provides flood storage and is a designated wildlife site. The man made fishing lake has parking, picnic areas and good links to the rest of the Green Corridor and wider countryside in the Great Chart area. It is managed by a number of local groups including volunteers and the Ashford Angling Association, but does suffer from some anti-social behaviour, particularly illegal night fishing.

The lake has areas of willow and alder around its perimeter as well as small areas of reedbed. At night Daubenton's bat can be seen flying over the water. Singleton Lake supports a variety of common bird species, as well as birds that are unlikely to be seen elsewhere in the Green Corridor including Great Crested Grebe and Reed Warbler. Two damselfly species have been recorded at the site, Common Blue Damselfly and Blue-tailed Damselfly.

Great Chart Nature Reserve

The Great Chart Nature Reserve is adjacent to the playing field, There is a pond inside which the river dissects. The great Chart playing fields to the north of the A28 are an important gap between Great Chart and Singleton. A new pedestrian access bridge has been installed. The recreation space to the south west is a well used space and contains a play area.

Addition to Green Corridor Designation: Great Chart Wood, Hillcrest Allotments, Singleton West through to Ashford Community Woodland (B7)

This area links together with B6 from Great Chart Recreation Ground and wraps round housing at Singleton through to Ashford Community Woodland to provide an important green corridor buffer zone between Singleton and Mock Lane/ Chilmington Green.

B6: Proposed Key Projects and Enhancements

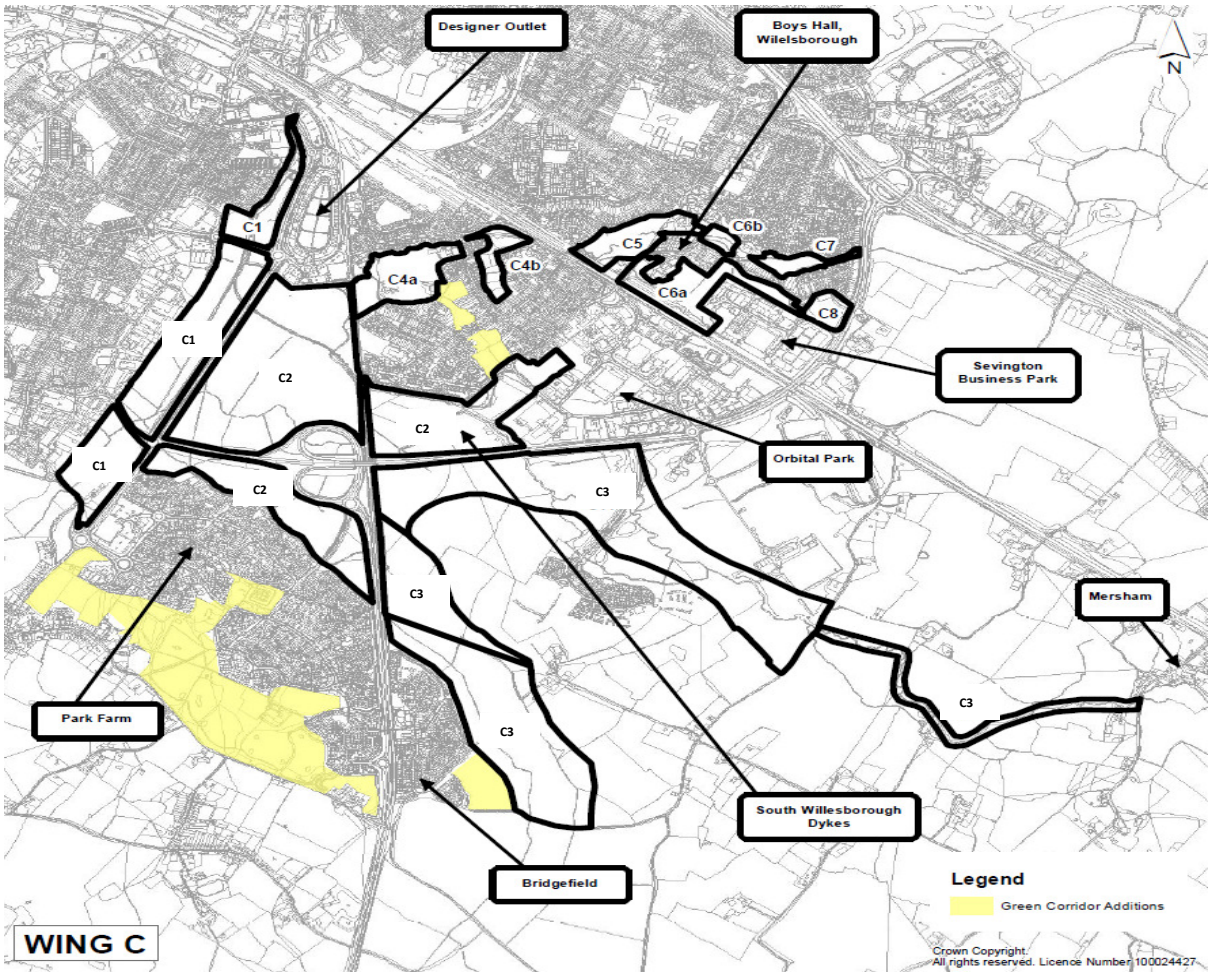
	Habitat Enhancement	Key Projects	Comments
Buxford Meadow	• The northern part of the site next to the river is wet woodland and needs to be managed. • Rotational coppice regime needed to create a mosaic of structure, including glades within the woodland • Mown pathways punctuated with small clearings • Biannual cut and clear • Boundary edges kept wild and natural with creep kept back. • Opportunity for volunteering task days	• New raised boardwalk to improve year round access • Work to the underpass to improve its appearance and encourage more use. • Formalising the channel around the mill to create a fish passage and footpaths around this well used area.	The meadow area is often flooded and impassable, the very informal character of the area needs retaining and public access carefully managed through to the underpass area. Work and funding for the fish passage currently being undertaken by KSCP working with the EA. There are identified biohazards within the pond area – therefore this area must be left well alone to stop spread of heavily invasive species
Singleton Lake	• Improvements to viewing locations and access for visitors, such as providing new or restoring existing furniture and bank vegetation maintenance and enhancements, cutting back overgrown areas. • An ordinary watercourse (ditch) runs through the area which requires ongoing maintenance to ensure the flow of water through into the river during wet periods. • Stretch of river to the north of the lake – open up some shaded sections, improvements to flow	• A new bridge between the car park and Singleton Lake – the existing bridge is old and needs replacing. • Change identity of North Meadow for leisure/family use with the creation of a more natural, dynamic play space and designated area for football.	

	conditions and rotational 5 year bank cuts to increase species.		

POTENTIAL FUTURE EXTENSION AREAS – Wing B

The areas around Chilmington Green from Ashford Community Woodland through to the future Discovery Park have potential to become GC designations in the future, to create green links and green buffer zones between development. Connections would be required to link the areas together. Land to the south also has high potential for ecology importance and habitat creation.

Wing C Map – South Willesborough Dykes, Bridgefield, Boys Hall, Park Farm



Sections C1, C2 and C3 – South Willesborough Dykes LWS

C1 - Land between International Passenger Station, Outlet and west of Romney Marsh Road, C2 – Land between the Outlet, South Willesborough and Park Farm and C3 – Land at Cheeseman's Green to Mersham



Area south of Bushy Royds – C2

South View of Whitewater Dyke from B&Q bridge - C1



Finberry Development – Biodiversity Mitigation



Cheeseman's Green Area





South Willesborough Dykes Greenway Path – Park Farm area (Opened in 2015) – C2

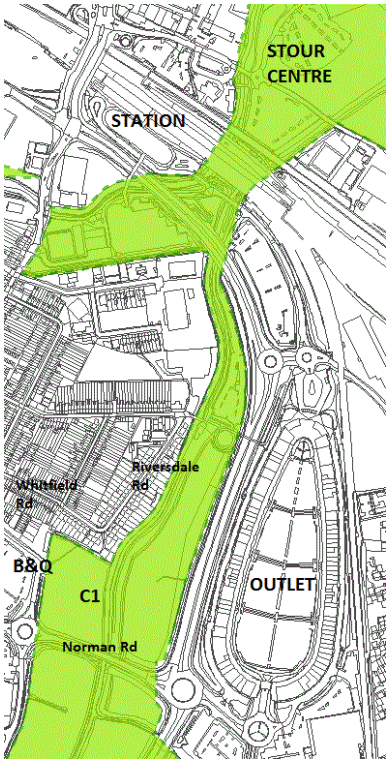
South Willesborough Dykes

Most of this area of Green Corridor is designated as the South Willesborough Dykes Local Wildlife Site. It is located along the A2070 and is highly visible along this key entrance to the Town. The East Stour River, Aylesford Stream and a number of Dykes run through this large area which is mainly private sheep fields drained by the dykes. The East Stour runs through Cheeseman's Green to Mersham and a tributary stream (Aylesford Stream) runs between Newtown and South Willesborough and into the East Stour. There is limited access to the public in many of the areas (with the exception of Park Farm) but the area is none-the-less important in terms of the geology of the area, being in the river floodplain and in supporting neutral, wet grassland species. Grazing has influenced the composition of the grassland habitat.

C1 – Land between International Passenger Station, Outlet and west of Romney Marsh Road

This linear piece of land is a key approach to the Town Centre, International Passenger Station and Designer Outlet Centre. In the center of this extensive linear area of land are the East Stour and the Whitewater Dyke, which are surrounded by fields used mainly for grazing. The area contains a strong tree edge and acts as an important buffer between the existing built up area and the A2042. The area contains a cycle path towards the Town Centre and a footpath and bridge over the main road to the Outlet.

There are opportunities, in partnership with the landowners to improve the appearance of the whole area around the International Passenger Station including Wing C1 of the green corridor. Specific schemes will need to be identified, proposing improvements to the roundabouts and highway verges, including maintenance practices (See B1 Section Project)





View Of East Stour from Norman Rd Bridge (looking north)

C2 – Land between the Outlet, South Willesborough and Park Farm

This extensive area between the outlet center, South Willesborough and Park Farm forms a substantial part of the South Willesborough Local Wildlife Site. It is a unique habitat that is important for a wide range of birds, plants, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. The Willesborough Dykes foot and cycle path opened in 2014 and runs along the eastern edge of this area, connecting existing paths and enables access from Park Farm thorough to Ashford.

The green space behind the path has been sown with wildflower meadow seed. A raised area running along the railway track on the eastern boundary has been planted with 4000 mixed native tree species (winter 2013/14) to create a habitat for hazel dormice. This habitat creation work links with existing habitat along the southern boundary of the site and A2070. The Borough Council shares Riparian ownership with the adjoining landowner of the Hart Dyke, which runs along the southern boundary of this area. The storm ditch running parallel is owned and the responsibility of Southern Water Services.

The area around Bushy Royds is bounded by the Hastings Railway line, the Southern Orbital Road, the East Stour River and Orbital Park. New bays have been created along the riverbank after obtaining the agreement of the landowner.

C3 – Land at Cheeseman's Green to Mersham

This part of the green corridor follows the East Stour, which runs towards Mersham, through Cheeseman's Green (Finberry) and Waterbrook in 2 avenues. The Bilham Dyke and Ruckinge Dyke run to the east of Park Farm East (Bridgefield) and the new development of Finberry lies between these dykes and the East Stour River in the eastern avenue.

The new development of Finberry, although not in the Green Corridor, has included a number of measures to mitigate against the development and enhance the biodiversity in the area. There is a large flood attenuation pond and smaller ponds throughout the development which provide SUDS and will create habitats. Ecological networks have been enhanced with the provision of underpasses for dormice and mitigation areas for newts.

Additions to Green Corridor Desingation

Bridgefield Park – Extension of C3

The creation and development of Bridgefield Park is currrently taking shape on the ground with funding from S106 and will provide a green corridor link from the Bridgefield development to Park Farm South East. This area will be managed by Kingsnorth Parish Council via a lease and will include leisure and conservation areas.

Park Farm Buffer Zone – C9

This area on the boundary of Park Farm is an important established green corridor that sits between Park Farm and Kingsnorth. It acts as an attractive green buffer zone between development and encourages diversive habitats to flourish. Some of the parcels are managed by tennant farmers grazing the land and a new area of Country Park will be developed in partnership with Kent Wildlife Trust.

C1, C2 and C3: Proposed Key Projects and Enhancements

	Habitat Enhancement	Key Projects	Comments
Opportunity Area: Norman Road	• Establish a habitat friendly grazing regime and reducing grazing levels • Creating scrapes and ponds, planting native trees including black poplars and willows, making berms on the western side of the river and on the eastern side extending the area of scrub and fence it off to create a secluded area for wildlife.	• Creating a safe crossing on Norman Road as part of the footpath/cycle network • A footpath/cycleway link between Whitfield Road/Riversdale Road and Norman Road. • A new area of public open space on land between the river, Norman Road and Whitfield Road/Riversdale Road. • The Whitewater Dyke terraced to form new emergent habitat.	In the long term, new development sites in this highly visible and important area must be high quality and innovative and will need to contribute towards improving the appearance of the green corridor and take into account the flood risks.
South Willesborough Dykes Nature Reserve	• Detailed plans and funding arrangements for long term management and maintenance of the green corridor in this area.	• Working with developers to design and layout well defined wide green corridors with footpath/cycle routes through new developments. This includes measures to protect and improve wildlife habitats through the Green Corridor within the design.	Providing access to the area by pedestrians/cyclists especially to the new developments and links across the Southern Orbital Road is a critical part of the coordinated approach to land use and transport planning in the area.

Cheeseman's Green	• Maintaining unimproved grassland • Reducing grazing levels	• Creating new wetland habitats • Working with developers to design and layout well defined wide green corridors with footpath/cycle routes through new developments. This includes measures to protect and improve wildlife habitats through the Green Corridor within the design.	Implementing a plan requires the co-operation of land owners who need to agree to habitat improvements being carried out on their land.

South Willesborough

C4a – Frog's Island and C4b – Gas House Fields

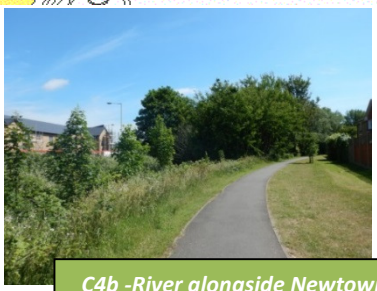


Aylesford Stream

SWAN Centre


Frog's Orchard


Land rear of Bushy Royds


C4b -River alongside Newtown Works

C4a – Herbert Road nature reserve and the Swan Centre

C4a is a large area which includes the SWAN community centre and associated recreation fields in the northern section. Part of the recreation fields are designated nature reserve; Herbert Road Nature Reserve is also known as Frog's Island nature reserve. The Aylesford Stream runs along the northern boundary and the stream banks and triangle of land on the

western edge have been sown for wildflower meadow. The area contains footpaths and cycle paths which are well used as access to the supermarket and outlet centre. Fishing platforms and seating areas carved into the river channels allow full DDA access to the water's edge. Two elegant, low maintenance bridges sit comfortably in the flat landscape.

The area known as Frog's Island (sometimes referred to as Cudworth Rec) is divided from the SWAN centre by an ordinary watercourse/ drain, hedges and trees. Several scrapes have been created which provide good habitat for a range of wetland wildflower species. Ruddy darter, banded demoiselle, blue tailed and common blue damselfly have been recorded at the site. A relatively wide margin of wildflower / meadow grows beside the ditch. A footpath runs through the area and there is also an area of informal 'garden style' seating.

C4b – Gas House Fields

C4b is known as Gas House Fields, so called because the site used to contain a gas works operated by South Eastern Railway. The area is a popular place for locals and visitors and contains a number of fields in the center area used by the SWAN young Farmers to hold their livestock and other animals.

The Aylesford Stream (Old Mill Stream in this location) runs along the northern edge of this parcel. This northern area is an area of scrubby woodland known as 'The Spinney' that is managed by a local environment group called South Willesborough and Newtown Environment Group (SWANEG). The area provides habitat for small mammals, birds and bats. The banks of the stream consist of longer riparian vegetation.

A footpath runs around the southern area of this parcel and joins Cudworth Road to an area behind the housing along Gladstone Road. This footpath starts on Frogs Orchard.

Additions to Green Corridor Designation

Frog's Orchard – Extension of C4a

Frog's Orchard is designated as part of the local nature reserve. The area is a relatively new community orchard with meadow grass along one edge and over 70 fruit trees. The Waterbrook Dyke runs along its eastern boundary.

Bushy Royds – Extension of C4a

The eastern area which joins the rear gardens of Cudworth Road properties is open meadow and grass, with trees and scrub and occasionally used for grazing sheep. Bushy Royds, consists of an informal parking area and grass used as informal recreation area by local children. Behind it a larger meadow like area, with a ditch running through it, which provides good habitat and biodiversity.

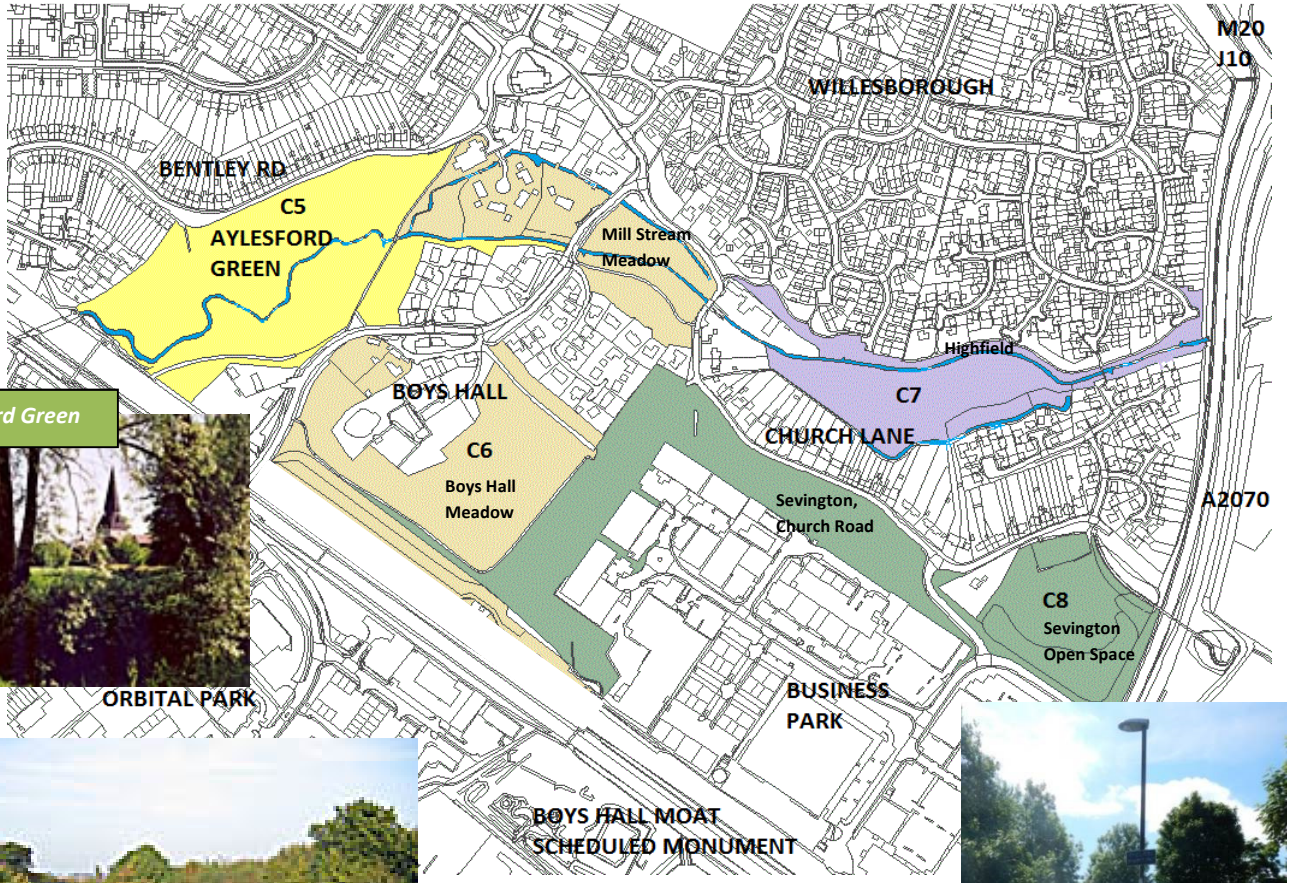
Currently there is community involvement in the area with local environment group South Willesborough and Newtown Environment Group (SWANEG).

C4a and C4b: Proposed Key Projects and Enhancements

	Habitat Enhancement	Key Projects	Comments
Aylesford Stream	• Longer vegetation strips close to the stream (maintaining some access and viewing areas) • Rotational bank cuts to increase species diversity (5 year rotation) • The creation of fish weirs to assist in fish passage • Invasive control • River Restoration in selected areas	•	

Willesborough & Sevington

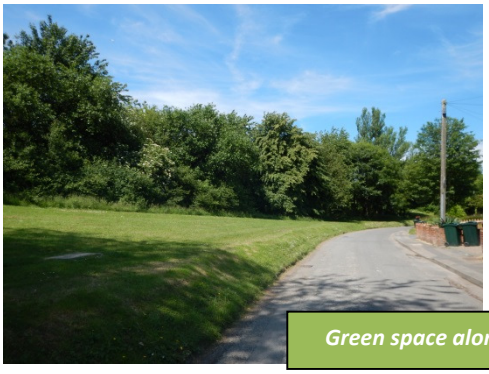
Sections C5 – C8, Aylesford Green, Boys Hall, Church Road



Aylesford Green



Land around Boys Hall



Green space along Church Road



Footpath over A2070

C5 – Aylesford Green

Aylesford Green is an attractive area linked to South Willesborough by a pedestrian bridge over High Speed 1 onto Newtown Road. The northern area is in private ownership and has limited access. The southern section of the area is designated local nature reserve. The site has a variety of habitats including a wide margin of long vegetation by the Aylesford Stream that forms an important habitat for invertebrates, birds and small mammals. Banded

Demoiselle and Common Blue Damselfly have been recorded at the site. A small wooded area dominated by ash and alder borders Boys Hall Road. Wood mice have been recorded in this area and Long-tailed tits are often seen perching in ash trees, particularly in winter. Pollarded willows by the Aylesford Stream provide an attractive area adjacent to Bentley Road.

C6 – Boys Hall and Mill Stream Meadow

This area of open space is to the south of Boys Hall, adjacent to Ashford Business Park, and lies north of the railway line. An informal footpath is partially surfaced across this section. The main habitat type is species poor rough grassland. Species include a dominance of grasses such as cock's foot, Yorkshire fog, timothy and false oat grass. An area of orchard appears to be left unmanaged near the existing Boys Hall property and is bordered by tall wild privet hedgerows on two sides. There is a pedestrian bridge over High Speed 1, linking this site with Boys Hall Moat, scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM). Adjacent to the bridge is an area of reedbed.

The area to the north contains the Aylesford Stream. There are a number of mature trees especially along the river which increase the attractiveness of the area. This type of habitat is very important for birds. The area has unrestricted public access with 2 footpaths.

C7 – Highfield and Private Land

The Aylesford Stream emerges from under the A2070 in a single channel but soon splits into two, one being a mill race. This area provides a break to the densely built residential area to the north of the river but is privately owned. There are a number of mature trees along the river which increase the attractiveness of the area. This type of habitat is very important for birds. There is a footpath along the northern bank of the river which links into the adjoining housing.

C8 – Sevington Open Space

This area was partly designed as a buffer zone to screen the business park from the residential areas to the north. Open space created as part of the Boys Hall development has provided assured continuity with sections C5 and C6 and greatly enhanced its usefulness as green corridor.

C5 to C8: Proposed Key Projects and Enhancements

	Habitat Enhancement	Key Projects	Comments
Aylesford Green	• Cutting and clear the grass once a year • Planting trees to be managed as pollards plus additional trees • Investigating creating fish weirs and small scrapes and other wildlife habitat improvements • Investigate and possibly remove existing weir (obstructing fish passage) • New trees should also be planted along Bentley Road	• A new cycleway alongside Bentley Road.	Conserving the countryside character of the area is very important and management practices should reflect this.
North of Boys Hall and Church Lane	• Create a new wildflower meadow • Cut and clear other areas of grass twice a year.	• Footpath along the northern bank of the river which links into the adjoining housing needs to be widened to a footpath/cycle way	
North of Business Park		• Replacement trees on banks next to Ashford Business Park	

POTENTIAL FUTURE EXTENSION AREAS – Wing C

Wilesborough Dykes

There is potential that if development extends further in the future, that this area of Green Corridor designation should be extended further south, along the dykes.

Willesborough & Sevington

There is potential to extend the green corridor across the A2070, using the footbridge link and following the route of the Aylesford Stream towards Juntion 10 of the M20. However, this should be explored further once the final plans for Junction 10a have been implemented. There is additional potential to extend further, over the M20 and A20 towards to Local Wildlife sites to the north of the William Harvey Hospital, particularly if these areas are developed.

Part Three - Implementing the Plan & Further Work

This section of the Plan identifies how this plan will be implemented and further work which needs to be undertaken by the Borough Council and others.

The role of the Borough Council

The improvements identified in this Plan will be implemented over a number of years. As each project comes on stream the detailed proposals will need to be drawn up and agreed by all those involved. The finances are likely to continue come from a range of sources, including Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and Section 106 contributions, and other grants and sponsorship necessary to secure the implementation and maintenance.

The range of successful Green Corridor projects that have been successfully delivered to date, is very much due to the partnerships formed between the public, private and voluntary sectors, and the combining of their resources and expertise to implement both small and large projects.

The Council enforces protection and promotes enhancement of the Green Corridors through planning policies. These currently include Saved Borough Local Plan Policies EN13 and EN14, Policy TC26 of the Town Centre Area Action Plan and Policy U21 of the emerging Urban Sites and Infrastructure Development Plan Document. These policies will be reviewed as part of the draft Local Plan. Specific guidance in the Public Green Spaces and Water Environment SPD will also be updated.

For the Green Corridors Plan initiatives to succeed, resources need to be drawn from a variety of sources. The Borough Council has an important role to play, both by directly funding projects, always bearing in mind the other competing claims on the limited resources available, and acting as a "catalyst" encouraging others to get involved.

Because contributions come from a variety of sources and their timing is difficult to predict, different elements of this plan will come forward at different times, and priority projects identified may change over time. Where possible the Council will update the project list at Appendix 1 annually.

Funding

The Council has been very successful in securing funding from external sources in the past and the number of sources of funding specifically targeted towards assisting projects to improve the quality of the environment has increased. This will be continued.

Maintenance Practices on Council Owned Land

The specifications for maintaining riverside areas, such as grass cutting regimes on land owned by the borough council will be continually reviewed to enable, where possible, the encouragement of semi-natural riverside habitats where wildlife can thrive (e.g. grassland areas seeded with wild flowers and cut once a year after seeds are set). With careful thought this will bring benefits for wildlife and can improve the appearance of riverside areas.

Publicity and Promotion

The borough council, along with Kent County Council now promote walking and cycling through the Ashford Green Corridor Nature Reserve on its website.

There are also numerous information leaflets available through the Ashford Green Corridor website.

A simple signage system for routes though the green corridor needs to be devised. High priority will be given to the provision of signposting as it is an invaluable way of increasing public awareness and use at a relatively low cost.

The Design and Adoption of Footpaths and Cycle Routes

It is usual practice for new footpaths/cycleways to be built to a particular specification to enable them to be adopted by Kent County Council (KCC), as the “Highway Authority”. Maintenance of the routes therefore becomes the responsibility of KCC. There are, however, circumstances when the construction of the typical three metre wide path, with red and black surfacing and lighting would not be appropriate because of the harmful impact on the appearance of the environment.

Increasing opportunities for leisure and exercise is a main focus of the Countryside Access Improvement Plan and the Ashford Cycling Strategy. All new routes are developed with commuting and links to leisure routes in mind.

Contribution by the private sector, public bodies and voluntary groups

There are a number of other public bodies who have already contributed towards projects within the green corridor. These include the Countryside Agency, Environment Agency and Natural England. Such organisations may be in a position to either carry out works directly themselves, or providing funding to enable others to do so.

Riparian rights and responsibilities

The rivers through Ashford are generally owned by the riparian owners along their length; that is, the owner of the land adjoining the river Is likely to own the river as well. If land registry plans do not show otherwise, it is presumed the riparian ownership extends to the centreline of the watercourse.

Riparian owners have rights and responsibilities. In general terms, riparian owners must accept water from their upstream neighbour and pass it on, together with drainage from their own land, to their neighbour downstream. The ultimate responsibility for maintenance of the watercourse, including the riverbanks, rests with the riparian owner. This could include clearing obstructions, repairing the banks, protecting vegetation, maintaining and managing trees, removing debris and litter clearance. Riverside owners also have a role to play in pollution prevention, reporting pollution incidents and flooding, safeguarding and enhancing habitats, improving fisheries, and encouraging walkers and anglers.

Environment Agency

Most of the rivers in Ashford are designated ‘main’ rivers under the jurisdiction of the Environment Agency. This does not remove the riparian owner’s responsibilities but it does infer ‘permissive powers’ on the Environment Agency to carry out certain activities. It is important that riparian owners preserve access to the banks of watercourses for maintenance and safety purposes.

The consent from the Environment Agency is required for any works in, over, under or on the banks of a main river. This is in addition to any planning permission that may be required.

The Environment Agency has a key role to play in enhancing the green corridors – amongst its other responsibilities it is required (Water Act 1989, s8) to manage the water environment so as to:

- further conservation and enhancement of the natural environment; and
- promote facilities for sport and other forms of recreation including public access.

Kent Wildlife Trust

The Kent Wildlife Trust is the leading conservation organisation covering the whole of Kent and Medway, dedicated to protecting wildlife and wild habitats for everyone to enjoy. In partnership with ABC the Kent Wildlife Trust have been commissioned to manage and maintain Conningbrook Country Park within the new additional land to the Ashford Green Corridor, also with other sites proposed to come forward over the lifecycle of this Plan. With their longstanding knowledge and experience of managing conservation sites the Borough Council can ensure these habitats are protected and further work is carried out to improve Biodiversity across the Borough.

Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership

The Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership is one of 9 countryside management partnerships covering Kent, playing a vital role in the conservation and enhancement of the Kent countryside and coast.

KSCP conserve, enhance and promote the countryside and urban green space of the Stour Valley, working closely with local communities and landowners to promote both landscape and nature conservation and develop opportunities for interpretation, education, community development and countryside access. It operates as a working partnership of sponsoring organisations, Partnership staff and local people. Kent County Council administer the Partnership.

KSCP has a special role to play in the Ashford Green Corridor (AGC) as it has worked with Ashford Borough Council for over 25 years advising and establishing the many wildlife habitats found throughout the AGC today. KSCP run regular volunteer tasks, many of which take place in the AGC, and they promote the AGC through their website and by producing interpretation panels and the AGC leaflet. KSCP also work with sponsoring organisations and local people to raise funds and develop projects that engage communities with their local spaces.

Private sector

The Councils policies on Green Corridors Local Plan explain how the developers of sites adjoining the river corridors must make a positive contribution to the function and amenity value of the corridors. This includes site specific guidance where relevant, and which may be supplemented by survey work. The acceptability of proposals for development will be judged in the context of this guidance.

Where private owners are responsible for parts of the green corridor the issue of maintenance arises. Either the developers agree to maintain 'their' stretch of the river corridor or they may give a commuted sum to the council, and in this way enable the council to take on maintenance responsibility. The latter is the preferred approach in most

situations. The council is in a better position to adopt a more consistent approach to open space management and to exploit the 'economies of scale' that exist.

Private companies may support environmental/conservation projects either through grants or by direct sponsorship. The private sector in Ashford will hopefully be supportive of sponsoring further green corridor improvements such as additional landscaping. The co-operation of landowners is essential and the council will need to work closely with the relevant owners. Other companies who take an active interest in the promotion of the town may also be interested in sponsoring publicity documents or improvements such as tree planting or help finance projects undertaken by volunteers.

The Voluntary Sector

The continued involvement of the voluntary sector is essential. This sector includes organisations such as the Kent Wildlife Trust; the Ramblers Association, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers; Ashford Conservation Volunteers and many others. Here there are two essential commodities - expertise and enthusiasm for the environment. Active participation by local residents such as the South Willesborough and Newtown Environment Group, in carrying out projects can provide a real sense of ownership and satisfaction for the local community.

Further work

Public Green Spaces and Water Environment Supplementary Planning Document (SDP)

Linked to the actions from the Ashford Open Space Strategy 2017 a review of the PGS & WE SPD will include details of the proposed enhancements and projects through the Green Corridor in relation to development sites identified in the Local Plan.

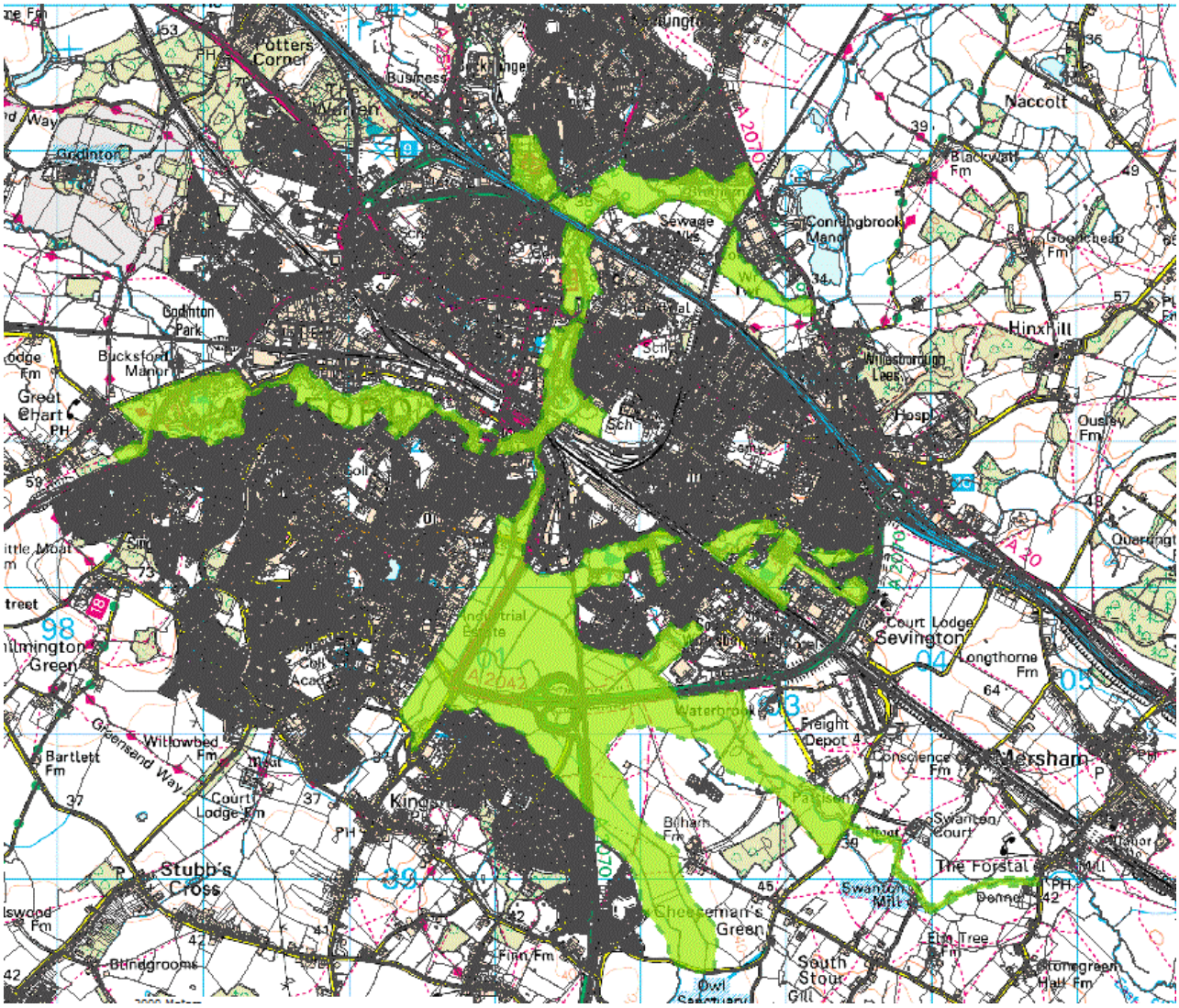
Monitoring the Success of the Plan

Progress that has been made towards implementing the Green Corridor Plan will continue to be monitored, along with the Local Plan 2030, and updated with regards to funding and priorities which will evolve on a regular basis, particularly when new development proposals are initiated. This may also include carrying out species and user surveys and preparing of regular progress reports, linked to the improvements recommended through this plan.

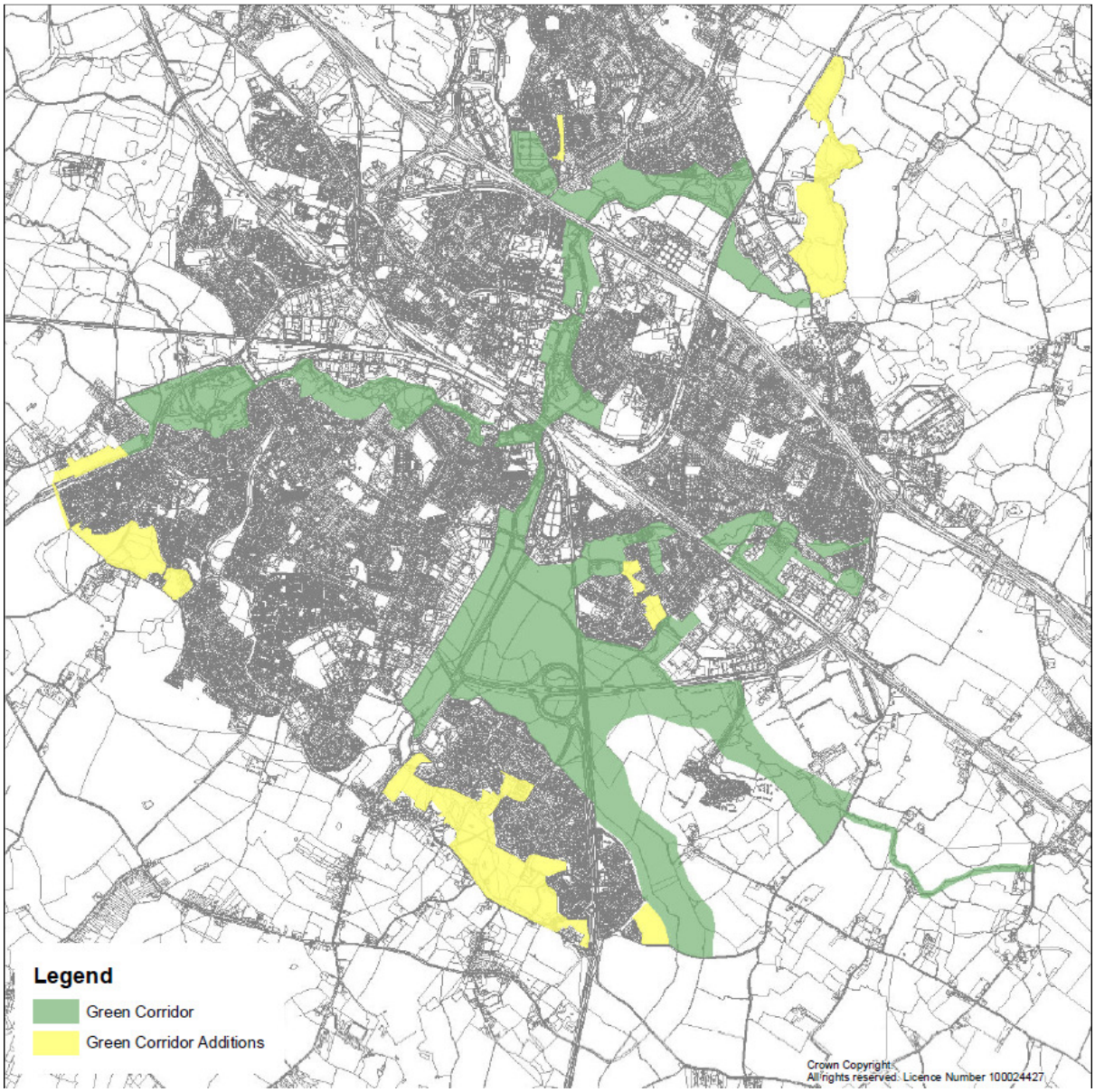
Appendices

Appendix 1 - Maps

Previous Green corridor boundary (2000)



New Green Corridor Boundary (2017)



Appendix 2: Consultation Summary

A consultation event on the draft Green Corridor Action Plan was held by ABC, assisted by KSCP and EA on Tuesday 21st July 2015 at Singleton Environment Centre.

A number of comments were received and considered for inclusion in the draft AP.

Attendees	
Name	**Organisation**
Ruth Childs	Kent County Council – Wildlife Officer
William Moreno	Kent Nature Partnership
Faye Faiers	KCC PROW
Brenda Hedley	Kenardington PC
David Brown	North Willesborough Forum
Bob Shrubb	South Ashford Community Forum
Rob Kilkie	SWAN Group Com. Member
Cllr Jenny Webb	ABC (Norman Ward)
Guy Wilson	North Willesborough Community Forum
John Bridle	Kent Countryside Access Forum (Chair)
Anne Rolfe	KCAF Equestrian Access
Theresa Trussell	BHS Access (Equestrian) E. Kent
Matt Mordaunt	Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership
Cllr Kate Hooker	Aylesford Green Ward
Diane Comely	KSCP
Jon Shelton	KSCP
John Clayton	Ashford Community Woodland
Hilary Moorby	Kingsnorth PC
Vanessa Evans	Kent Wildlife Trust
Ann Davies	ABC - Street Scene and Open Space Manager
Emily Neighbour	Central Ashford Community Forum
Jonathan Dance	Central Ashford Community Forum
Christine Green	Central Ashford Community Forum
Chris Morley	Kennington Community Forum
Vicky Aitkenhead	Connningbrook Lakes Warden
Angus Willson	Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council
Bill Barrett	Ward Member Singleton South (ABC)
Terry Jones	ABC - Nature Conservation and Tourism Officer
Cllr Jessamy Blanford	Lead Ward Member for Environment and Culture
Barrie Neaves	Environment Agency
Richard Alderton	ABC - Head of Planning and Development
Daniel Carter	ABC – Principal Policy Planner
Carly Pettit	ABC – Policy Planner