

# Authority Monitoring Report





# Natural & Historic Environment



## In this Section:

- *Designated Environmental Sites*
- *Biodiversity Net Gain*
- *National Landscapes*
- *Air Quality*
- *Quality of River Dour*
- *Historic Environment*

# Natural Environment

This chapter reports on the monitoring indicators of the Natural Environment Policies from the Local Plan:

- **SP13 – Protecting the districts Hierarchy of Designated Environmental Sites and Biodiversity Assets Environmental Sites**
- **SP14 – Enhancing Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity**
- **NE1 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)**
- **NE2 – Landscape Character and the National Landscapes**
- **NE3 – Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy**
- **NE4 – Air Quality**

## Designated Environmental Sites

Strategic Policy SP13 aims to conserve and enhance the district's important natural landscapes and water environments, to ensure these assets can continue to be experienced and valued by residents and visitors and are protected from inappropriate development.

Part of the district is covered by Kent Downs National Landscape. There are also nationally registered Heritage Coasts. See our [Green Infrastructure Strategy](#) for more information.

There are five internationally designated environmental sites within the district which this policy aims to protect. They include Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which focus on avian species, and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) which protect other flora and fauna:

- Dover to Kingsdown Cliffs SAC
- Lydden and Temple Ewell Downs SAC
- Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA
- Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay Ramsar Site
- Sandwich Bay SAC

## Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)

A Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is land designated as an SSSI under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). Most of the district's SSSI units are in 'favourable' or 'unfavourable recovering' condition, demonstrating good conservation of these assets. Exceptions are at:

- Alkham, Lydden and Swingfield Woods SSSI – unfavourable declining due to high levels of sycamore, one unit;
- Dover to Kingsdown Cliffs SSSI - unfavourable no change due to lack of grazing management, three units;
- Sandwich Bay to Hacklinge Marshes SSSI – unfavourable / no change due to inappropriate ditch management (five units) and one unfavourable declining unit.

## Local Wildlife Sites & Ancient Woodland

Local Wildlife sites are locally chosen sites identified as scientifically important wildlife and biodiversity corridors.

Ancient woods are areas of woodland that have existed in perpetuity since at least AD 1600.

No planning permissions were granted in the district in 2024/25 which would cause loss of, or detrimental impact to, any designated Local Wildlife Sites or Ancient Woodland, which are protected by SP13.

## Thanet Coast & Sandwich Bay SPA Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy

This SPA is nationally and internationally designated due to its nature conservation importance for migratory birds, such as over-wintering turnstones, European Golden Plovers and breeding Little Terns. Evidence shows that recreational activity can cause harmful disturbance to these species.

The Local Plan includes Policy NE3 to address this issue and requires financial contributions to be paid from new residential development which is inside a 9km zone of influence (ZOI) towards the mitigation and monitoring strategy. View the strategy here: [Thanet Coast and Sandwich Bay SPA Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy \(SAMMS\)](#)

Prior to Policy NE3 being implemented, the council's strategy for the SPA mitigation applied to major

development proposals across the district. Therefore, the data for the monitoring year 2024/2025 partly reflects the previous strategy which would have been applied to the relevant applications before Local Plan adoption.

## Development proposals contributing to SPA Mitigation and Monitoring Strategy (SAMMS)

During 2024/2025 seven applications secured contributions towards the SAMMS under NE3, through either a legal agreement (UU/S106), or through our new [online developer contributions payment forms](#).

## Biodiversity Net Gain

### Development proposals, habitat creation, restoration, and management

From 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024, Biodiversity net gain (BNG) became mandatory for major development made under the Town and Country Planning Act (TCPA) 1990, subject to the [exemptions or transitional provisions to BNG set out in government guidance](#).

Eligible developments must meet the mandatory requirement of a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain over the pre-development biodiversity value of the site. This mandatory requirement is included in Policy NE1 of the Local Plan. The minimum information which must be submitted is set out in [The Biodiversity Gain \(Town and Country Planning\) \(Modifications and Amendments\) \(England\) Regulations 2024](#) and [Planning Practice Guidance on Biodiversity Net Gain](#).

- For more information about Kent's ecosystem, plants and wildlife please refer to KCC's [Kent Environment Strategy](#)
- For more information on The Council's Green Infrastructure Strategy, please visit our [website](#).

The [Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) was published by KCC in November 2025. This strategy identifies priorities for nature and the recommended actions to deliver them. It also maps where the actions should be targeted to deliver the greatest outcomes for habitats and species. The strategy can be viewed on the '[Making Space for Nature](#)' website. The statutory biodiversity metric tool for BNG includes a strategic significance (SS) multiplier to incentivise targeted habitat creation and enhancement in areas identified as "mapped measures", within a local nature recovery strategy (LNRS).

Additional reporting on BNG (Local Plan Policy NE1) and how it is being implemented though planning applications and monitored long term will be included in future AMRs. From March 2026, the council will be publishing a Biodiversity Duty Report.

## Kent Downs National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty)



Image 1 – Policies Map area showing National Landscape Designation

Image 1 shows the area the National Landscape designation covers in the district (green area outlined in blue).

Policy NE2 of the Local Plan sets out specific requirements for developments within the National Landscape designation. Major development proposals will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances, as set out by National Policy.

## Planning applications granted and completed within the National Landscape

In National Policy, Major applications are defined as housing sites containing 10 or more dwellings, or of a size greater than 0.5 hectares, or non-residential sites providing additional floorspace of 1,000m<sup>2</sup> or more, or a site of 1 hectare or more. However, in terms of an assessment of major development in the context of the National Landscape requirements, this may be different to the definition above and can include any scale of site which may impact on the designation.

In 2024/25 one planning application was permitted in the National Landscape for 15 homes in St Margaret's at Cliffe – this site was allocated in the Local Plan (Policy SAP40) at which time it was determined it was not major development, and no objection was received from the Kent Downs National Landscape Unit.

## Air Quality

The council are part of the Kent Air Quality Partnership, which was established in 1992 to work towards improving the quality of Kent's air. The Partnership is made up of representatives from each district's transport, planning and environment departments, Kent County Council, the Environment Agency, National Power and other stakeholders related to air quality issues.

The Council adopted the [Air Quality Action Plan \(2024-2028\)](#) in 2024. Further information can be found at the links below:

- [DDC Air Quality Monitoring Website](#)
- [Home - Defra, UK](#)
- [Air quality - Kent County Council](#)

Development proposals that might lead to a significant deterioration in air quality or national air quality objectives being exceeded, must carry out an Air Quality Assessment. This can either be alone, or in combination with other committed development, carried out in accordance with the relevant guidance and utilising the DEFRA Emissions Factor Toolkit. Detailed requirements are set out in Policy NE4 of the Local Plan.

Table C.1 (below) is taken from the [Dover District Council 2025 Air Quality Annual Status Report](#) and lists two applications that qualify for an Air Quality Assessment:

**Table C.1 - Planning Applications within Dover District Council (2024)**

Reference	Location	Details	Status	Comments
24/00293	Land At The Corner Of Townwall Street And Woolcomber Street Dover CT16 1QF	Erection of a drive thru restaurant, car parking, car charging bays, substation, landscaping and associated works, including Customer Order Displays (COD) and a height restrictor	Status: Awaiting decision Application received May-24	Air quality assessment has been submitted
24/00181	The Beacon Project Bench Street Dover Kent	Full application for the erection of an up to four storeys in height building for uses including education, offices, studio, gallery and cafe (Use Classes E(g)(i), E(b) and F1)	Grant Planning Permission Aug-24	Air quality assessment has been submitted

## The River Dour

Policy NE6 of the Local Plan sets out specific requirements for applications within the area of the River Dour Corridor to consider the important ecosystem of the chalk stream. This is to ensure there are no adverse impacts on water quality.

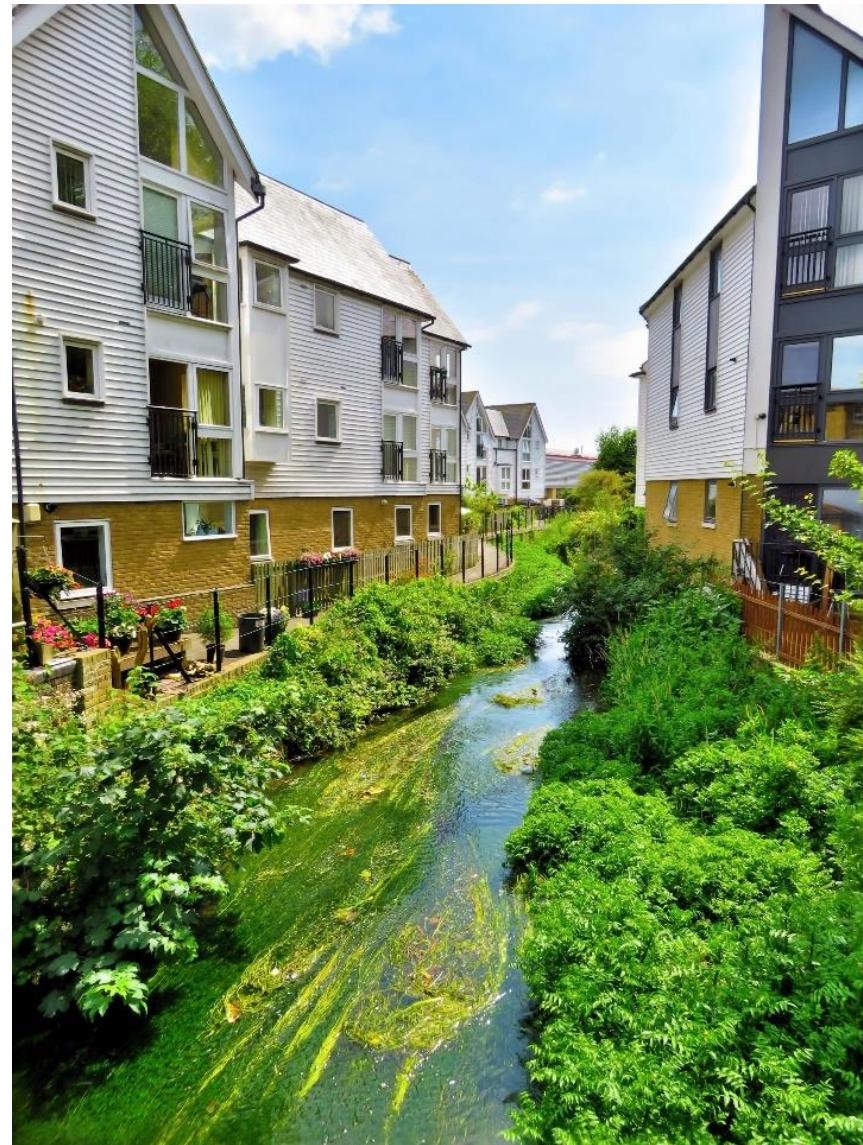
No applications in the monitoring period were assessed under Policy NE6.

Image 2 – The River Dour



*Image credit: White Cliffs Countryside Partnership*

Image 3 – The River Dour



*Image credit: White Cliffs Countryside Partnership*

# Historic Environment

The Local Plan includes the following policies on the historic environment:

- **SP15 – Protecting the district's Historic Environment**
- **HE1 – Designated and non-Designated Heritage Assets**
- **HE2 – Conservation Areas**
- **HE3 – Archaeology**
- **HE4 – Historic Parks and Gardens**

Dover has a rich historic environment and contains:

- 1,926 listed buildings
- 57 Conservation Areas
- 50 Scheduled Monuments
- 6 Historic Parks and Gardens
- 1 protected wreck site
- 14,000 entries on the Kent Historic Environment Record

The [Heritage Strategy](#) for the district sets out more information.

The main aims of the policies in the Local Plan are to conserve and enhance the heritage assets in the district, in order to protect their significance and ensure they can be appreciated and enjoyed by current and future residents.

All planning applications which have the potential to impact on heritage assets and the historic environment are required to submit Heritage Statements to support their proposals.

During the 2024/2025 monitoring year, the council had two decisions appealed which were refused for being contrary to these heritage policies.

Both appeals were dismissed, demonstrating the efficacy of policies HE1-HE4.

Image 4 – St Anthony's Church, Alkham



Image credit: Dover District Council