

**Agenda Item No:** 11  
**Report To:** Cabinet  
**Date of Meeting:** 9<sup>th</sup> November 2017  
**Report Title:** Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)  
**Report Author & Job Title:** Emma Powell, Open Space Planning Development Officer



**Portfolio Holder** **Cllr. Mike Bennett**  
**Portfolio Holder for:** **Culture, Leisure, Environment and Heritage**

**Summary:** The Open Spaces Strategy has been produced to detail how Ashford Borough Council, in partnership with a range of organisations, plans to protect, enhance and provide open spaces to 2030 and helps inform relevant sections of the emerging Local Plan.

Following formal consultation of the draft Open Space Strategy, a number of comments have been received (refer Appendix 1) which has resulted in a few updates to certain parts of the strategy.

This report seeks endorsement of the final strategy, a copy of which can be found in the Members Room and on the Ashford Borough Council website.

**Key Decision:** NO

**Significantly Affected Wards:** Borough wide

**Recommendations:** **The Cabinet is recommended to:-**

- I. Note the representations made against the draft Open Space Strategy following consultation;**
- II. Endorse the final Open Space Strategy for adoption by the Council;**
- III. Delegate authority to the Director of Place and Space, in consultation with the necessary Portfolio Holders, to agree final formatting and minor editing and to put in place all action plans necessary to implement the Open Space Strategy.**

**Policy Overview:** The strategy fulfils requirements for the emerging Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2012).

**Financial** Continued support for open space provision is set out in the

**Implications:** recommendations and the Council will need to work with partners to secure external funding and agree support as projects come forward throughout the life of the strategy and its associated action plan.

**Legal Implications** None identified at this time.

**Equalities Impact Assessment** See Attached

**Other Material Implications:** Continued support from key officers for the open space sector

**Exempt from Publication:** **NO**

**Background Papers:** -

**Contact:** Emma.Powell@ashford.gov.uk – Tel: (01233) 330444

## **Report Title: Adoption of the Open Space Strategy**

### **Introduction and Background**

1. At the 15<sup>th</sup> June 2017 Cabinet meeting, the Portfolio Holder introduced the draft Open Space Strategy, produced by Allen Scott Landscape Architecture and officers of the Council, which would enable the Council, in partnership with key stakeholders, to ensure current and future demand for public open space was met in terms of quality, quantity, value and access.
2. The report sought endorsement of the draft strategy and authority to complete public consultation, to incorporate any appropriate changes and complete the final version of the strategy.
3. The draft Open Space Strategy was uploaded onto the Council's consultation portal in July 2017 and upon logging in a comment form could be completed. Comments could also be submitted via email or hard copy. Ward Councillors, Town & Parish Councils and partner environmental organisations were directly approached for comment.
4. In all cases, participants were asked whether they considered that the draft Open Space Strategy followed the appropriate planning policy guidance; that the evidence base and audit is broadly accurate; and that they agree with the actions in the Green Corridor Action Plan and findings of the Play Audit.
5. The draft Open Space Strategy was out to consultation for six weeks ending 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

### **Consultation Results**

6. During the draft strategy consultation period, a total of 27 responses were received. These representations are summarised in Appendix 1 under the questions asked.
7. The majority of the replies were positive towards the content of the report. Some of the respondents used the consultation process as an opportunity to discuss specific open space design or management issues. These comments have been forwarded to relevant officers within the council.
8. The Open Space Strategy has been amended and expanded to take account of the relevant representations. The final version is available on the Ashford Borough Council website and a copy is available in the Members Room. Officers in Culture also have printed versions available.

## **Open Space Strategy**

9. Open space is defined as public open space which provides generally unlimited free public access; genuinely useable open space for people; and accessibility over the great majority of the open space. This strategy does not include open space which is provided as private or paid for provision, e.g. playing fields within school grounds, golf courses and private estate gardens. It also does not include incidental areas, such as verges or streets or areas of land with the sole purpose of protection of wildlife without public access.
10. The strategy identifies strategic recommendations to be adopted by the Council and its partners to ensure there are agreed priorities to meet current and projected demand. These recommendations focus on:
  - a) relevant opportunities to maximise usage of existing open space;
  - b) strategic planning of proposed open space across the borough to reflect local need; and
  - c) the different approaches that can be adopted for open space management.
11. The overall proposals focus on ensuring that any current or projected shortfalls in open space provision are prioritised during the life of the emerging Local Plan. The strategy deliberately separates the urban and rural areas of the borough, to allow for the different contexts and pressures of development. The strategy also details key issues for the urban and rural areas which are considered and addressed within the strategic recommendations.

## **Implications and Risk Assessment**

12. Without this strategy the Borough Council is at risk of challenge on planning applications relating to open space provision. Also, without this key strategic document the Borough as a whole is at risk of missing opportunities for funding, development and not supporting the Council's aims of supporting quality public open space provision.
13. The Council will need to continue to work with partners to secure funding for new and existing projects from the most appropriate sources and in line with the recommendations identified.
14. The Council has a crucial leadership role to play in facilitating elements of the work which will be identified as a result of the Action Plan process. This will include supporting a newly formed Open Space Working Group and acting as a central point of contact within the Borough on open space issues. This will involve support from officers across a range of disciplines but mainly from the Culture, Planning and Environment teams.

## **Equalities Impact Assessment**

15. Members are referred to the attached Assessment. The key issues arising are that the strategy will not have a negative impact on people with protected characteristics. Provision will need to be made to continue providing facilities for people with different abilities and characteristics.

## Options and Reason for Recommendation

16. As identified above under Risks, it is important the Council produce this strategy in consultation with key stakeholders and the public. The work by Allen Scott Landscape Architecture has followed CABI Space guidance and the PPG17 companion guide. Therefore, it is recommended that the strategy is adopted.

## Next Steps

17. If the Cabinet is minded to adopt the strategy, the Director of Place and Space and relevant officers, in consultation with the appropriate Portfolio Holders, will produce an action plan to cover the first three years of the strategy to help focus project work and general implementation of the strategy.
18. The Action Plan will include elements as identified in the strategy's recommendations such as further consultation with parish councils around future provision and a review of the Public Green Spaces and Water Environment SPD.
19. The Action plan will not commit the Council to funding at this time beyond any current resource available or identified. Projects and funding strategies will be part of individual projects and these will be brought forward as appropriate and for Cabinet endorsement/sign off as required.

## Conclusion

20. The Open Space Strategy forms an integral part of the Council's commitment to providing and supporting public open space for the Borough. The strategy provides evidence for the development of associated policies in the emerging Local Plan and provides a clear way forward to ensure the quantity and quality of provision meets current and future demand.
21. The Open Space Strategy will inform relevant sections of the emerging Local Plan to ensure future demand for public open space is met. It provides a framework of standards for open space provision in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility, and a process for regular and future review.

## Portfolio Holder's Views

22. *I fully support the evidence-based approach offered by this strategy and recommend its adoption.*

Cllr Mike Bennett

## Contact and Email

Emma Powell, Open Space Planning Development Officer.  
[Emma.Powell@ashford.gov.uk](mailto:Emma.Powell@ashford.gov.uk)

# Equality Impact Assessment

---

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:

- (a) No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
- (b) Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
- (c) Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
- (d) Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

## Public sector equality duty

2. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
  - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
  - (c) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).

3. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

## Protected characteristics

4. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership\*
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation

\*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

## Due regard

5. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.
6. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
  - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
  - Encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.
7. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the

potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.

8. In terms of timing:

- Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
- Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
- The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

**Case law principles**

9. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:

- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
- Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.
- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a

policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.

- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on "Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making" (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

<b>Lead officer:</b>	Emma Powell
<b>Decision maker:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Decision:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy, project, service, contract</li> <li>• Review, change, new, stop</li> </ul>	Adopt the Open Space Strategy for Ashford Borough Council
<b>Date of decision:</b> The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	9 <sup>th</sup> November 2017
<b>Summary of the proposed decision:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aims and objectives</li> <li>• Key actions</li> <li>• Expected outcomes</li> <li>• Who will be affected and how?</li> <li>• How many people will be affected?</li> </ul>	<p>To ask for Member's approval to adopt the Open Space Strategy for Ashford Borough which has been compiled jointly by external consultants Allen Scott Landscape Architecture and Ashford Borough Council. The strategy considers current and future need for public open space and informs the Local Plan.</p> <p>The adoption of the strategy will affect the population borough-wide.</p>
<b>Information and research:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline the information and research that has informed the decision.</li> <li>• Include sources and key findings.</li> </ul>	<p>The Strategy has been formed from research in to the current availability of public open space and opportunities and the potential future shortfall through housing growth.</p> <p>Sources have included GIS data, management organisations, town and parish councils</p> <p>Key findings include ensuring provision of quality open space in terms of capital investment and management; strategic open space connections; strategic investment and planning in open space provision.</p>
<b>Consultation:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What specific consultation has occurred on this decision?</li> <li>• What were the results of the consultation?</li> <li>• Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics?</li> <li>• What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics?</li> </ul>	<p>Consultation was undertaken with stakeholders during the research process of the strategy. The draft strategy was available for public consultation for six weeks, completed 20<sup>th</sup> September 2017.</p> <p>The consultation has resulted in key findings above.</p> <p>The decision will have no impact on people with different protected characteristics.</p> <p>The decision to adopt the Strategy positively affects people with different protected characteristics</p>



**Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.**

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

<b>Protected characteristic</b>	<b>Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None</b>	<b>Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral</b>
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	MEDIUM	POSITIVE
Middle age	MEDIUM	POSITIVE
Young adult	MEDIUM	POSITIVE
Children	MEDIUM	POSITIVE
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	MEDIUM	POSITIVE
Mental	MEDIUM	POSITIVE
Sensory	LOW	NEUTRAL
<u>GENDER RE- ASSIGNMENT</u>	NONE	NEUTRAL
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	NONE	NEUTRAL
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	NONE	NEUTRAL
<u>RACE</u>	NONE	NEUTRAL
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	NONE	NEUTRAL
<u>SEX</u> Men	NONE	NEUTRAL
Women	NONE	NEUTRAL
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	NONE	NEUTRAL

<b>Mitigating negative impact:</b> Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.	N/A
---	-----

**Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?**

Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC’s [Essential Guide](#), alongside fuller [PSED Technical Guidance](#).

Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1) Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	YES
2) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	YES
3) Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	YES

<p><b>Conclusion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish.</li> <li>There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above).</li> <li>Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be made or whether any residual impacts are justified.</li> <li>How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported?</li> </ul>	<p>Due regard has been made to the equality duty, from start to finish of the Open Space Strategy process.</p> <p>There will be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision</p> <p>The proposal meets the aims of the equality duty as all sections of the community including those with protected characteristics will benefit from the enhancements to the centre.</p> <p>Monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation will be undertaken and reported by the partners.</p> <p><i>The council’s revised policy register will assist services to meet this</i></p>
<p><b>EIA completion date:</b></p>	<p>04-010-17</p>

## Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)

### Ashford Borough Council

## Public Consultation Review: August – September 2017

- 1.1 The draft Open Space Strategy was out to consultation for six weeks ending September 20<sup>th</sup> 2017.
- 1.2 The document was publically available for viewing on the Ashford Borough Council website, with a questionnaire format for all comments.
- 1.3 The consultation resulted in the following:
- Six questionnaires via the consultation portal
  - Three hard copy questionnaires received via post
  - 17 emails
  - One telephone call
- 1.4 The majority of the replies were positive towards the content of the report. The replies have been collated and commented on in the next section of this document.
- 1.5 Some of the respondents used the consultation process as an opportunity to discuss specific open spaces. These comments have been forwarded to relevant officers within the council. The comments have also shaped and informed the observations and recommendations within the strategy.
- 1.1 Section 2 of the report has been updated to reflect the consultation process following the draft.

### Consultation responses

- 1.2 Questionnaire responses:

<b>1</b>	<b>In general do you consider the draft Open Space Strategy follows the appropriate planning policy guidance?</b>
Yes	9
No	
Comment 01	Yes, but you need to ensure the built edge of Ashford has a buffer between that edge and the villages. In other words extend the green necklace to create a green belt around urban Ashford. This will protect the quality of the rural villages and give the urban area quick access to managed spaces.
<i>ABC reply</i>	<i>The proposed spatial planning process will consider creating a buffer of open space where it is feasible, as part of the necessary green infrastructure. Paragraph 7.35 – 7.36 SRO7 provides some detail.</i>

## Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)

<b>2</b>	<b>Do you consider the evidence base and audit that underpins the draft Open Space Strategy’s findings, is broadly accurate?</b>
Yes	8
No	1
Comment 02	Yes, but greater weight should be given to casual access to "buffer zones" such as Kingsnorth. These need to be protected from development but accessible to casual walkers etc.
ABC reply	<i>The Green Corridor Plan (Appendix 3) details where this green space designation is to be extended, e.g. the Kingsnorth ‘buffer zone’ is to be included.</i>
Comment 03	I may have misunderstood (the maps are impossible to decipher) but it seems ABC has used a calculation based on a ratio of overall population in the town to space provided. This ignores the fact that many new blocks of flats are planned for the town centre but little or no extra green space is being added to cater for that population increase. The fact that green space is being created elsewhere is very welcome but it doesn't solve the problem of a lack of easily accessible green space for the proposed flats.
ABC reply	<p><i>It is agreed that the town centre has a lack of green space, and it will be difficult for new developments to resolve this and provide meaningful areas of on-site public open space. Necessary green infrastructure will provide some on site green space (e.g. drainage schemes), and roof gardens can be provided to cater for new residents.</i></p> <p><i>The play review identifies a lack of provision, p46: ‘Although there is play provision circling the Town Centre within 600m, the centre lacks an equipped play area immediately available to shoppers using the High Street. An aim is to identify a space for play within the town centre.’</i></p> <p><i>An additional strategic recommendation has been included: SRU11 - Research possibilities for public open space within Ashford town centre.</i></p> <p><i>Financial contributions from town centre developments will also be required to improve existing off-site open spaces close to Ashford town centre e.g. Victoria Park.</i></p> <p><i>The quality of the mapping has been reviewed and updated, however there are limitations as the format is at size A4.</i></p>
Comment 04	It is not up to date, as regards rural areas, as the key findings state.
ABC reply	<i>Agreed. Regarding the rural areas, it is proposed to liaise with all Parish Councils so that the open space database can be as accurate as possible. This will be an on-going process as the quantity and quality of open space changes. The database is considered a ‘live’</i>

## Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)

	<i>document, with the detail in the strategy representing a snapshot in time.</i>
<b>3</b>	<b>Do you agree with the key findings identified at p51 in the draft Open Space Strategy?</b>
Yes	8
No	1
Comment 05	Within the urban area there is a lack of policy towards Bybrook Nature area, a valuable 4 acres area which needs to be opened up to public access.
<i>ABC reply</i>	<i>This site is currently part of an investigation into fly-tipping, and cannot be opened to the public at the moment. It is part of the Green Corridor and therefore in terms of policy is covered by that designation. However it is agreed that the site requires improved long term management. The comment has been forwarded to the Nature Conservation Officer.</i>
Comment 06	Cannot answer this because p51 in the document does not contain any key findings.
<i>ABC reply</i>	<i>This section of the report has been reviewed; the detail is still considered to provide key findings of the open space audit.</i>
<b>4</b>	<b>Do you agree with the strategic recommendations identified in Section 7 in the draft Open Space Strategy?</b>
Yes	8
No	1
Comment 07	Yes but you need to factor your requirements into KCC Open Space Strategy. This is because KCC has responsibilities for some Country Parks but none of these are in Ashford. This is wrong and KCC should be willing to support some of Ashford's open spaces. Further KCC are developing their Growth Infrastructure Funding plan for the future, this funding may be accessible.
<i>ABC reply</i>	<i>Noted – an initial introduction meeting has been undertaken with KCC regarding the work of Cultural Services; future meetings will include the discussion of public open space.</i>

## Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)

Comment 08	<p>SRO4 - I feel there is a danger that the creation of 'new models of sustainable management and partnerships' may mean: too many groups involved leading to a lack of accountability; a lack of agreement, between partner groups, on actions to take, leading to stagnation and inaction; a lack of transparency and consultation of local people. I feel definitions of 'sustainable management' would be helpful here. It also concerns me that when ABC gives power to a third party to manage open spaces, this could lead to poor management of that space, to charges being introduced or to restrictions on who can use the space being introduced.</p> <p>SRO7 - the idea of hubs of local provision is fine, so long as all residents still have open spaces which are properly accessible to all, for example within walking distance of a small child. I would not support open space provision that left some residents having to walk long distances or to drive to access the spaces.</p>
ABC reply	<p><i>SR04 – The concept of sustainable management is to ensure that open space management meets the community’s needs in the long term. Experience has demonstrated that where management is exclusively provided by the council it is not necessarily fit for purpose – Parish Councils, environmental organisations and community groups can be better placed to provide management, with the additional benefits of third party funding, opportunities for volunteers, relevant qualifications and experience, and a steer on the long term management, driven by local aspirations. Paragraph 7.23 in the report now details.</i></p> <p><i>It is recognised however that a system of monitoring the management of public open spaces is necessary; paragraph 7.29 has been amended.</i></p> <p><i>SR07 – Noted. Where this is hard to achieve it is the routes to open spaces that we will work towards improving.</i></p>
<b>5</b>	<b>Do you agree with the actions in the Green Corridor Plan?</b>
Yes	8
No	1
Comment 09	Yes, but build in the buffer zones to protect the villages from the urban edge.
ABC reply	<i>The spatial planning process will work towards achieving this.</i>
Comment 10	I do agree with the plan but wanted to comment that the proposal for North Meadow is exactly what Great Chart with Singleton Parish Council proposed but ABC refused to support its maintenance! I'm astonished and a not a little angry that the proposal is included here when ABC have refused to support it.

## Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)

<i>ABC reply</i>	<i>Comment noted. The draft Green Corridor Plan was written prior to the meeting regarding this proposed space. The proposal is not yet finalised, and the comment has been forwarded to the relevant open space officers who attended the meeting.</i>
<b>6</b>	<b>Do you agree with the findings from the Play Audit?</b>
Yes	5
No	1
Comment 11	Site safety is paramount and responsibility for regular audits must be clear and accessible to the public
<i>ABC reply</i>	<i>Comment noted and forwarded to the relevant open space officer. Regular audits are undertaken by both the in-house grounds maintenance team Aspire, and by external auditors.</i>
Comment 12	The key findings are sound but fail to mention the very real problems at Singleton Oast Play Park. The sap from the lime trees renders the play surface dangerously slippery. The park needs to be totally redeveloped to manage this problem. My suggestion would be a more natural play park with mud kitchens and wooden play sculptures.
<i>ABC reply</i>	<i>Comment noted and forwarded to the relevant open space officer.</i>
<b>7</b>	<b>Are there any additional critical points which you wish to make?</b>
Yes	9
No	
Comment 13	Further to the work done by the Bybrook, Bockhanger and South Ashford Advisory Group it has come to my attention that the Green and Open Spaces in the Urban areas should be protected at all costs. With the intensification of urbanisation in these areas the temptation is to use plots of green space to build on. I feel we should safe guard such areas. Especially ones near or adjacent to play areas. One example being the green field adjacent to the St Anne's Play Area in St Annes Road, which is a small sized play area with a 50metre by 100 metre green field alongside. I feel areas like this should be made permanent fixtures of the green landscape and never built on. Otherwise we will get to a point where our children's children have very few areas to play.
<i>ABC reply</i>	<i>The Green Corridor designation is to be extended into some urban areas within the Ashford town, which will help to safeguard areas of open space. The review of play areas across the borough is still underway, and will consider adjacent open spaces where relevant. The comment has been forwarded to the relevant open space officer.</i>
Comment 14	Bybrook Nature Reserve is a forgotten gem in the Borough - please support it.
<i>ABC reply</i>	<i>Please refer to the reply to Comment 05</i>

## Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)

Comment 15	<p>Much has been made of Conningbrook Lake being a water sports facility in this strategy. I'm a Cub leader and have booked the lake for water activities several times. Every time we have had to cancel because the lake has been unusable due to algae in the water. I feel this problem should be recognised and accommodated in the strategy.</p>
ABC reply	<p><i>The strategy is not the appropriate document to accommodate detail at a site specific level. The issue of algae in the water is a management element, and an aeration system will be installed during December 2017 to help combat this problem.</i></p>
Comment 16	<p>The Draft Open Space Strategy focuses heavily on Ashford itself and the needs of the rural parts of the borough are not covered in any detail. Although I broadly support the objectives of the review I believe much more work needs to be done to assess and address the needs of the rural areas.</p> <p>As a resident of Tenterden I am concerned that plans for the town seem to be mainly focussed on increasing our housing stock. Tent 1A and 1B are currently being built on what used to be green space, thus diminishing the amount of green space that is within easy reach (i.e. walking distance) of the town.</p> <p>Tenterden is essentially a rural town, and its reputation for being the "jewel in the Weald of Kent" attracts many tourists, with all the commercial benefits this brings. I feel strongly that care needs to be taken to ensure that the features that make Tenterden such an attractive and unique place to visit and live in are retained and enhanced. The green / open space that remains, with its wealth of flora and fauna, is an integral and vital part of the town's identity and should therefore be protected for the benefit of the town's visitors as well as the needs and well-being of its growing population.</p>
ABC reply	<p><i>Regarding the rural areas, it is proposed to liaise with all Parish Councils and provide support on enhancing existing open spaces, and planning for new open space where it is needed. This process has already begun.</i></p> <p><i>Tenterden requires its own specific audit in terms of quantity, quality and accessibility, to determine the under/over supply of public open space.</i></p> <p><i>The strategy identifies SRR 2 – Create Tenterden Strategic Hub; the potential for this will need to be in partnership with the town council, who have the lead responsibility for public open space provision.</i></p>
Comment 17	<p>Comment on 6.8, 3rd bullet point: Protect, enhance and provide Sandyhurst Lane open space hub We strongly welcome the principle of a Sandyhurst Lane open space green hub, and believe that this would be greatly enhanced if it were possible to extend it to link to the rich biodiversity opportunity area to the north of Sandyhurst Lane.</p>



## Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)

	<p>Figure 10, the Spatial Diagram of the Urban Area (p. 65) appears to show the land area below Sandyhurst Lane (it is difficult to see clearly what this covers in the online version). We are thinking of the equivalent area to the north of Sandyhurst Lane, presumably in the Rural Area. Here the Biodiversity Opportunity Area runs through the ancient woodland of Podberry Wood into the wildlife site of Lodge Wood and down to Sandyhurst Lane. An arm of the Lodge Wood wildlife site extends towards the ancient woodland on the Lenacre Farm site also to the north of Sandyhurst Lane. These areas of woodland and biodiversity abut or lie close to the Sandyhurst open space green hub, and to the east are within the setting of the Kent Downs AONB. This area to the north of Sandyhurst Lane forms an important part of the rural fringe of Ashford urban area and could be envisaged as an element of the green open spaces surrounding urban Ashford.</p> <p>Although privately owned we feel this area is important in the light of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1.13 b) Landscape quality and views are preserved so the spaces can still provide the best possible visual amenity and</li> <li>• 7.15 Open space, whether or not there is public access to it, is important for its contribution to the quality of urban life by providing important green lungs, visual breaks and wildlife habitats in built-up areas. Open space enhances the character of residential areas, civic buildings, conservation areas, listed buildings and archaeological sites. It can also help to attract business and tourism and can contribute to the process of Urban and Rural regeneration.</li> </ul> <p>We would appreciate it if this extension of the Sandyhurst Lane hub could be considered.</p>
<p><i>ABC reply</i></p>	<p><i>As part of the spatial planning process, if new areas of public open space are required then consideration will be given to available opportunities.</i></p> <p><i>As part of the planning process, the wider landscape character and designations should shape any proposals for built development, and as such any developments within the vicinity of Sandyhurst Lane should take into account the local Biodiversity Opportunity Area, Ancient Woodland etc.</i></p> <p><i>However Ashford Borough Council are not able to simply designate private land as Public Open Space; neither the Local Plan process or the Open Space Strategy can accommodate such a designation unless part of a wider set of proposals for development, land transfer, adoption, etc.</i></p>
<p>Comment 18</p>	<p>The Parish Council welcome this document which covers all the public open space in the Borough, Rural and Urban.</p> <p>The parish Council understand that Open Space comprises all publically owned land in the Borough which has free open access to the public. Does not include privately owned land or areas which require an entrance fee.</p>

## Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)

	<p>Section 1. The Parish Council agrees with the 5 overarching themes as expressed in the executive summary.</p> <p>Table 1.9 The Council agrees with the categories as set out in this table. Questions whether forestry commission owned land is included. Not sure who owns Kingwood quoted in the table.</p> <p>Figure 2. This map defines urban and rural land, the Parish Council understand that the area to the north of the Parish including the village is Urban while the area to the south of the village, Stubbs Cross and Steeds lane, is regarded as rural.</p> <p>Section 2. The Parish Council agrees with the benefits of open spaces as set out in this section and endorse the Vision set out in this section. It welcomes the intention to work with Parish and Town councils in maintaining and improving the existing open spaces. The Parish Council welcomes the intention to improve walking and cycling routes in both rural and urban areas.</p> <p>Kingsnorth require space for allotments. There is a good demand for them in the Parish.</p> <p>The Council consider that communication between neighbouring Parishes is essential when considering the provision of recreational facilities.</p> <p>Section 4. Audits of open space. Table 2-4.</p> <p>These table state that the Borough has an over provision of open space. Kingsnorth with 45+ ha is picked out. This must not be used as an excuse to not provide any further open space. Much of the open and proposed open space in the Local Plan is very important for the connectivity for both humans and wildlife. Kingsnorth has a large quantity of housing proposed in the Local plan and all this must have associated Open Space.</p>
<p><i>ABC reply</i></p>	<p><i>Table 1.9 – Kings Wood is known to be owned by the Forestry Commission, and has been included in the quantity audit. Orlestone Wood has also been included.</i></p> <p><i>Allotments for Kingsnorth are planned for as part of the new public open space at Bridgefield.</i></p> <p><i>An over provision of public open space in terms of quantity can be misleading, and does not account for the quality and accessibility of the open spaces, which will be considered as part of the open space planning process for new development.</i></p>
<p>Comment 19</p>	<p>The audit of Open Space is incomplete for Pluckley, as follows:</p> <p>The parking area in The Street</p> <p>The village hall and garden</p> <p>The following Designated Local green Spaces:</p> <p>The triangle of land at the junction of Fir Toll and Station Road</p> <p>The area between the station car park and The Grove.</p> <p>Current developments allow for Field 1 at the Brickworks site to be retained as Open Space, and an allotment at the Thorne Yard site.</p>
<p><i>ABC reply</i></p>	<p><i>Noted – mapping will be updated as necessary, however not all the sites will necessary qualify as public open space.</i></p>

## Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)

<p>Comment 20</p>	<p>Wye PC supports the five themes identified in the Executive Summary. In particular, to <i>‘Provide new open space to expand the network strategically’</i> The Consultation Portal ‘Open spaces enrich the quality of our lives and contribute towards a healthy lifestyle. They help define and add to the character and history of a place as well as provide vital green infrastructure for wildlife, biodiversity, water, tranquillity, recreation, play, food production and safe off-road pedestrian and cycling routes.’</p> <p>Wye PC agrees that ‘Ashford borough currently enjoys a wide range of open spaces across its urban and rural environment. The borough has the benefit of existing wildlife sites, protected landscapes and a network of accessible countryside.’ However the typology Natural / Semi-natural Greenspace is aggregated and misleading and does not provide clear guidance for planning purposes.</p> <p><b>Para.</b></p> <p>1.4 The borough has the benefit of existing wildlife sites, protected landscapes and a network of accessible countryside. Agreed, but the typology used does not make a clear distinction between rural open space on the expanding urban fringes of Ashford, and internationally designated nature reserves with public access. See 1.9.</p> <p>1.9 Natural / Semi-natural Greenspace There is no qualitative distinction across this broad typology. In particular, where public access is ancillary to the main purpose of designated sites, e.g. SAC, NNR, which is conservation and access may be restricted for wildlife conservation reasons, grazing management. See 1.10 This distinction is recognised in 1.12 3.</p> <p>1.10 Therefore, open spaces are categorised according to their primary use. Further work is needed to disaggregate the Natural / Semi-natural Greenspace category into meaningful typologies. This distorts the data in Table 2 which shows and overprovision of Natural / Semi-natural Greenspace 1,254.84 ha over provision</p> <p>Figure 10 – Spatial Diagram – Urban Area Wye PC supports the proposed eastward extension of Conningbrook Lakes County Park into the parish of Wye with Hinxhill. This area is understood to cover the existing flood plain.</p> <p>Figure 10 – Spatial Diagram – Urban Area Wye PC supports the proposed creation of new publicly accessible open space in the parish of Wye with Hinxhill, east of Willesborough and connected areas.</p>

## Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)

<p>ABC reply</p>	<p><i>It is acknowledged that an over provision of public open space in terms of quantity can be misleading, and does not account for the quality and accessibility offer of the open spaces. Paragraph 4.16 specifies that caution should be given to the value of the quantity data. The quantity, quality and accessibility of specific existing open spaces will be considered during the planning process when new development is proposed. Therefore where public access is ancillary to the main purpose of the site, this will be accounted for as part of the planning process.</i></p> <p><i>Informal open space provision is aggregated as it follows the process within the current Public Green Space and Water Environment SPD, which allows for the widest consideration when planning new provision or improvements to existing open space.</i></p>
------------------	---

1.3 Further comments were provided by email. These were typically very detailed and therefore have not been included in full. The comments are summarised as:

- Comment 21: Format and mapping of the Green Corridor Plan – *Noted: the GCAP has been reviewed and updated, refer Appendix 3*
- Comment 22: Need to check if there is an immediate demand for new cemetery provision. Potentially provision is available for the next twenty years. – *Noted: this will be reviewed with the Head of Environment and Land Management*
- Comment 23: Is there a need to secure land for future cemetery provision at this point in time? - *Noted – for discussion with the Head of Environment and Land Management*
- Comment 24: Vacancy rates for allotments suggests there is not a need for new sites – *Noted – for discussion with the Head of Environment and Land Management*
- Comment 25: Public Open Space Adoption is being reviewed internally by the Policy team – *Noted – for further discussion with the Policy Team as this work will be a part of the review of the PGS & WE SPD (SRO 5, p71)*
- Comment 26: The establishment of an Open Space Forum should be in place of an existing task group – *Noted – for further discussion with the relevant forum members*
- Comment 27: Ultimate decisions regarding land management rests with the council, and not a committee - *Noted*
- Comment 28: With reference to models of management, tighter controls are necessary to ensure quality management; current caretaker schemes provide some evidence of potential pitfalls – *Noted: It is recognised that a system of monitoring the management of public open spaces is necessary; paragraph 7.29 has been amended to reflect this.*
- Comment 29: Could review current outdoor charges/license fees for events to take place and look for commercial sponsors to take on the costs or pay towards the costs of high profile areas they would like their name

## Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)

on / be associated with – *Noted: paragraph 7.20 has been amended to reflect this.*

- Comment 30: Request for an audited piece of open space, in public ownership, to be removed from the strategy as the owner wishes to develop the site– *Noted: currently under internal discussion; the open space remains in the audit.*

### 1.4 Comments on specific public open spaces:

- Comment 31: Singleton Oast play area: review adjoining open space
- Comment 32: Singleton East, West and Central Greenways: leave and maintain
- Comment 33: Singleton Lake (North Field): develop for recreation, with a MUGA
- Comment 34: Singleton Lake: Enforcement around the lake to deal with anti-social behaviour issues, deal with litter
- Comment 35: St Annes Play Area and Green Space: Invest in both spaces
- Comment 36: Cuckoo Park: Provide a hard surface to the kickabout area
- Comment 37: Noakes Meadow: Invest in the site with regards play, informal ball games, and manage litter
- Comment 38: St Stephens Walk Play Area: Repair / replace play equipment and litter pick
- Comment 39: Key Points:
  - 1) Litter collections in and around every play area need to occur weekly, every week. Not just when asked for ad-hoc or on a monthly basis.
  - 2) Visible inspections of every play area once a month to assess condition of play instruments for damage / wear and tear.
  - 3) ASB assessments on a rolling basis in co-ordination between Cultural Services and ABC's CSU, with spot checks on play areas at random times to assess for ASB.

*As the strategy does not directly consider individual open spaces in detail, all comments have been forwarded to relevant officers within the council*

### 1.5 Comments on specific private open space:

- Comment 40: Ten representations were submitted by email concerning an area of land in Tenterden known locally as 'Limes Land'. The council have been asked to provide an official designation of 'Open Green Space'.

*As part of the spatial planning process, if new areas of open space are required then consideration will be given to available opportunities. Ashford Borough Council are not able to simply designate private land as Public Open Space. The question of a Local Green Space designation in terms of the National Planning Policy Framework paras 76-77 has been forwarded to colleagues for consideration.*

## **Appendix 1 – Adoption of the Open Space Strategy (2017 – 2030)**

- 1.6 Comment 41: One telephone call was received, to clarify the names of open spaces at South Willesborough.

*Mapping has been updated to reflect this*