



Hoo Saint Werburgh Parish Council

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Hoo St Werburgh Parish Council

Comments in respect Local Plan Consultation Document of Medway Council

The council's vision is to “achieve growth for all” to make Medway an excellent place to live, work, learn and visit, but it does not seem to take in consideration this statement for those living on the Peninsula.

The need for new homes, must not detract from the need of adequate planning process
There should be no shortcuts the need of proper public consultation should never be overlooked despite how attractive the site might look to developers and planner’s public opinion must be taken into consideration

It is our belief that before any developments as noted in all four scenarios should fit all three Dimensions to become a sustainable development those being;
Economic - is the land used in the right place
Social - does it meet provision of accessibility to local services
Environmental - saving natural resources, minimising pollution,

And in all scenarios the harm to both the character and the appearance of the Peninsula cannot be underestimated.

We do not believe that a full sustainability plan has been made or published.

Some questions needing answering by the council.

All four local plan options include no development in Strood Rural Ward (Cliffe, Cliffe Woods, Wainscott, Frindsbury, Upnor). Why is this?

Why is all the weight of development being put onto the Peninsula and particularly Hoo St Werburgh?

Why is the allocation for development not proportionally, evenly, and fairly spread across all? communities in Medway?

The Peninsula with one major road on and off it, there is only so much transport capacity in order to avoid 'bottlenecking' the transport system on and off the Peninsula at peak times. So why do Medway continue to target it with “small rural town” projection without explanation of how is this to be achieved.

Any local plan was always going to include an increase in housing on the Peninsula however achieving it in a sustainable way without harming the Peninsula's natural environment will need very careful planning and will need to take in the hopes and needs of those living within the Peninsula already.

The need of a walk in medical centre/cottage hospital is paramount importance to accommodate any extra homes and would make it less challenging for residents to access Medway hospital and of course would relieve stress on an often-failing local hospital.

The phrase "affordable housing" is overused and needs much more information on how to define affordable, no mention of "suitable" housing, given the increase in older population, single storey buildings should be available close to medical and community facilities with good public transport links.

There is also a need for single occupancy homes with an ever-increasing number of people living alone and of course homes for local born and locally employed people on the Peninsula with a large element of starter homes.

And the need for nursing and care homes is all part of any local community.

And of course, the creation of open recreational areas not only for use of the young and families but from the older people too.

The Hoo Peninsula has had more than its fair share of developments over the last local plan period but understand that there will be new investment in our area and with that in mind we have some suggestions for your consideration

The feasibility of brand new settlements or villages rather than expanding or merging existing settlements which will change the character and 'village status' of those existing villages. For example, a brand-new village could be built between Hoo St Werburgh and Stoke (call it 'Kingsnorth') with visible and clear green field buffers both sides of such a new settlement - this would respect the village status of both Hoo St Werburgh and Stoke the opportunity for river frontage properties would also be a great advantage.

Small number of extra homes could be built within High Halstow, Grain and Allhallows and Frindsbury and more at Upnor and at Cliffe and Cliffe woods to ease the pressure of numbers on Hoo St Werburgh.

To take advantage of all empty property space above shops in high street and shopping centres which could be developed into compact accommodation and a complete rethink of large office spaces like Mountbatten House that could with encouragement and financial support be used for single occupancy Use.

The logical conclusion would be to build on areas around Capstone Valley and other smaller areas in the urban area of the Medway Towns with less valuable land.

The advantages of this would be: -

- 1) The farmland is grade 3.
- 2) There is a thriving shopping centre not far away at Hempstead Valley and a bit further down Hoathway, Gillingham Business Park with many large retail outlets, a skating rink, medical facilities, vets, and much more, and a large Tesco and garden centre on the other side of the road. This area alone is the size of Hoo St Werburgh Village.

- 3) Have the council sought to liaise with the neighbouring authority to build up to the Motorway and provide an enhanced road link. There are many miles of open countryside to the south of the motorway easily accessible to residents.
- 4) There is already a large country park and ski slope on the doorstep for the residents to enjoy.
- 5) The area is very close to the M2 providing excellent road links to London and the coast.
- 6) Ash Tree Lane could be improved to give better access to Gillingham from North Dane Way.

Medway is already listed as an area of "Water Stress" and so any developments must be water friendly And rainwater transfer facilities must be incorporated to all new developments

The use of school sports facilities should be encouraged especially at a time when the council continues to allow social and sports clubs on the Peninsula to be closed down and built on.

Medway council should discourage unwarranted development on agriculture lands we must protect the high-quality farming land and the history we have in arable and fruit farming on the Hoo Peninsula. Once this land is concreted on its gone forever

Air quality in and around the Medway tunnel and of course Four Elms Hill and Wainscott areas is a major concern and any increase in road traffic will exacerbate the levels of nitrogen dioxide.

The use of Lodge Hill as a country park would be give not only those on the Peninsula but the whole of Medway a green lung for leisure and recreation and would give much needed health benefits to the whole of Medway's population.

Yours faithfully

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Mrs S Babington
Parish Clerk
Hoo St Werburgh Parish Council