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# Medway Council Local Plan

Issues and options  
2012 - 2035



Consultation document - January/February 2016

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# Executive Summary

Issues and Options Consultation Document

## Executive Summary

- 1.1 Medway Council is preparing a new Local Plan to set out a strategy for Medway's development up to 2035. This document represents the first formal stage of this process, as a consultation on Issues and Options to be considered in the preparation of the plan. Consultation will take place between 4 January and 29 February 2016.
- 1.2 The document does not set out detailed policies or identify specific sites for development. Rather, it presents key contextual matters that will be the drivers for the new Local Plan. Central to this is the anticipated increase in Medway's population. Latest data released by government indicates that Medway will see a 21.8% increase in its population by 2037, rising to 322,700 people by 2035. Aligned to this population growth is a need for housing, jobs, shops, facilities and infrastructure.
- 1.3 The Issues and Options document sets out the scale of growth anticipated in Medway up to 2035:

| Forecasts of Development Needs in Medway                   |                           |         |
|--|---------------------------|---------|
| <b>Housing</b><br>(number of dwellings)<br>2012-2035       | Objectively Assessed Need | 29,463  |
| <b>Employment</b><br>(sqm land requirement)<br>2012-2035   | Office                    | 49,943  |
|  | Industrial                | 155,748 |
|  | Warehousing               | 164,263 |
| <b>Retail</b><br>(sqm floorspace requirement)<br>2015-2031 | Convenience               | 10,500  |
|  | Comparison                | 34,900  |

- 1.4 The document raises questions on the most appropriate approaches and locations for supporting sustainable growth in Medway, given the need to protect historic and natural environments and deliver supporting infrastructure. It is structured around the key themes of Housing, Economy, Environment, Natural Resources, Infrastructure and Delivery.
- 1.5 The Issues and Options consultation also invites stakeholders to consider potential approaches that could be taken to a development strategy for the new Local Plan. These include:
- high density town centre and riverside development,
  - incremental suburban development,
  - planned growth of existing settlements,
  - freestanding settlements,
  - urban extensions'
  - role of custom and self build housing, and
  - approaches to the town centres

# Introduction

Issues and Options Consultation Document

## Introduction

- 2.1 Medway Council is preparing a new Local Plan to set out a strategy for Medway's development up to 2035.
- 2.2 The Local Plan considers the development needed in the area, and sets out a framework for directing sustainable development. The plan will make allocations for land for development, and include policies to manage development. It must reach a balance between meeting needs for housing and jobs, infrastructure and services, and protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment. The plan's objectives are to deliver net gains for the area's economy, society and environment.
- 2.3 Once adopted the plan will replace the 'saved' policies in the 2003 Medway Local Plan, the Kent Waste and Minerals Local Plans. It will be used as the basis for making decisions on planning applications.
- 2.4 This Issues and Options consultation document represents the first formal stage in preparing a new Local Plan for Medway. There have been significant changes in Medway since the production of the existing Medway Local Plan and the new plan has to address this change and anticipated needs over the next twenty years. The scale of change and projected growth mean that the new Local Plan must look at new approaches and locations for delivering the housing, jobs and services that the area needs.
- 2.5 This is an early stage in the preparation of the new plan. The council wishes to consult widely to gather further information to help it define the best options for new development locations; the role of our towns, neighbourhoods and villages; looking after the environment and historic features; and securing the infrastructure needed to support growth; and effective policies to deliver quality development in a timely manner.
- 2.6 This document sets out the challenges and issues that the new Local Plan needs to address. Central to this, is the projected increase in population of nearly 50,000 people in Medway by 2035. This growth brings with it a need for nearly 30,000 homes, and supporting infrastructure, services and jobs.
- 2.7 The Local Plan offers an opportunity to shape Medway's growth, directing development to the most sustainable locations, delivering investment to areas that could realise regeneration ambitions, continuing to build Medway's profile as a vibrant and successful place, attractive for its heritage, natural environment and culture.
- 2.8 This document is not a detailed plan, but rather seeks to engage local people, developers, community and interest groups, businesses and statutory organisations, in assessing what are the best choices for a development strategy for Medway over the next 20 years.
- 2.9 It is organised around a series of key themes, setting out key context information and questions that form the basis of this consultation. It also considers the components to be considered in developing a vision for the new



Local Plan, and the approaches that could be taken to allocating development, so that growth provides the best outcomes for Medway.

- 2.10 In the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012, the Government stated its preference for local planning authorities to produce a single Local Plan document, bringing together strategic policies, with land allocations and detailed design and development management policies. As a unitary authority, Medway Council also has responsibility for minerals and waste planning, and these areas will be included in the scope of the new Local Plan.
- 2.11 This is the initial stage of the formal plan preparation process. Following the analysis of the responses received to this Issues and Options consultation, the council will prepare a draft plan setting out preferred options for development, and supporting policies and carry out a next round of consultation. After determining the most sustainable option for a development strategy, the council will publish a draft plan for consultation, and amend the document as needed following the responses to the consultation to produce a final draft of the Local Plan to be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate for independent examination.



# How to respond to the consultation

Issues and Options Consultation Document

## How to respond to the consultation

- 3.1 This consultation is the first formal stage in the preparation of a new Local Plan for Medway. The council is keen to hear from residents, businesses, organisations, community and interest groups to help inform the plan.
- 3.2 The consultation period runs from Monday 4 January 2016 to Monday 29 February 2016. During this time, the council will be holding events and exhibitions to discuss the Local Plan. You can find out more about these events on the council's website at: [www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy)
- 3.3 Comments must be received by 5pm on Monday 29 February 2016.
- 3.4 You can submit comments in the following ways:

By post:

Planning Policy Regeneration, Community & Culture  
Medway Council, Gun Wharf  
Dock Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR

By email:

[Planning.policy@medway.gov.uk](mailto:Planning.policy@medway.gov.uk)

Through an online questionnaire at: [www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy)

- 3.5 Copies of this consultation document are available to view at public libraries across Medway, at the reception desk at the council offices at Gun Wharf, during opening hours, and online at: [www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy).
- 3.6 You can find details of the opening hours of the council offices and libraries at: [www.medway.gov.uk](http://www.medway.gov.uk) or by telephoning 01634 333333.
- 3.7 This information can be made available in other formats from 01634 333333  
If you have any questions about this leaflet and you want to speak to someone in your own language please ring 01634 335577

|         |        |        |        |            |        |             |        |
|---------|--------|--------|--------|------------|--------|-------------|--------|
| বাংলা   | 331780 | हिंदी  | 331783 | کوردی      | 331841 | فارسی       | 331840 |
| 中文      | 331781 | ਪੰਜਾਬੀ | 331784 | ଏକ୍ସକ୍ସକ୍ସ | 331786 | Русский     | 332374 |
| ગુજરાતી | 331782 | Polski | 332373 | اردو       | 331785 | Lietuviškai | 332372 |

- 3.8 Following the end of the consultation, the council will collate and consider all responses received. The findings of the consultation will be published, together with the council's response. The information gathered through the consultation process will be used in developing a draft version of the new Local Plan.

# Context

Issues and Options Consultation Document

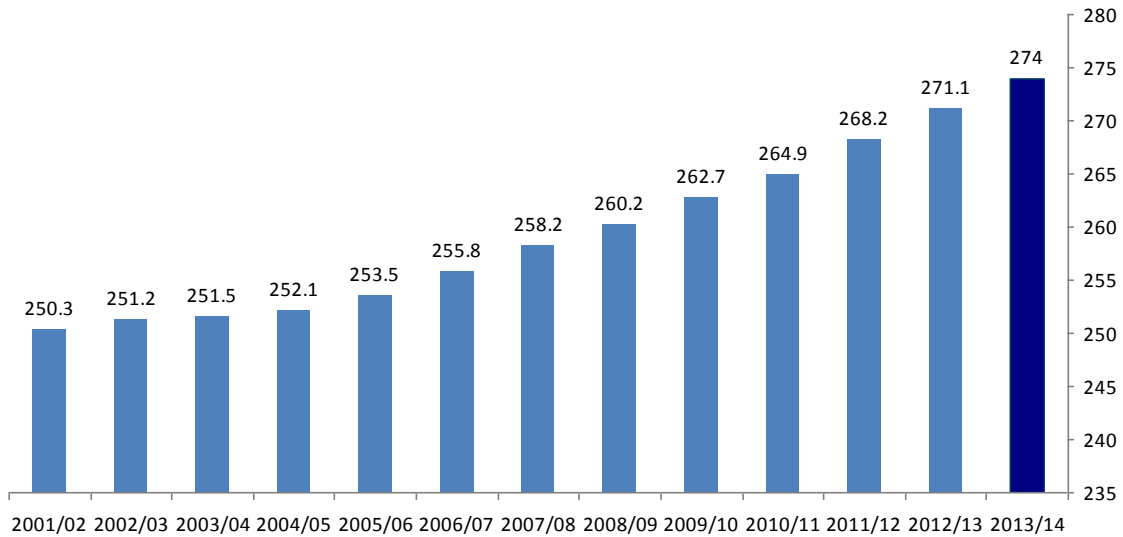
## Context

- 4.1 Medway is made up of a large urban area built up between the river and the downs in north Kent, and an extensive rural area to the north on the Hoo Peninsula. It is distinctive for its five historic towns, its waterfront regeneration, and its dramatic landscapes, with juxtapositions of the natural environment with modern infrastructure and commercial life.
- 4.2 Medway is a dynamic place, seeing 3.4% growth in its population in the last 3 years. Over this time, there has been rapid expansion of the Universities at Medway, new communities and developments rising up on the waterfront, the introduction of HS1 rail services through the urban area, and successful business growth and development of creative industries. This growth has been taking place within the context of a rich cultural and natural heritage.
- 4.3 The new Local Plan needs to respond to the changes seen in Medway over recent years, and to anticipate new opportunities and growth, so that development is best placed to capitalise on benefits to the area, and those aspects of Medway that are most valued are safeguarded into the future.
- 4.4 Medway sits within the Thames Gateway, which continues to be seen as a focus for regeneration and economic growth. Proposals for further strategic infrastructure and development, such as a new Lower Thames Crossing, the Ebbsfleet Garden City, and the proposed London Paramount resort all have a potential bearing on Medway.
- 4.5 Despite the investment seen in Medway over the last decade, significant areas of disadvantage and inequalities remain across Medway. Much of the deprivation is concentrated in central urban areas around Chatham and Gillingham. Data collated in the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) indicate a relative worsening of conditions in some areas compared to neighbourhoods<sup>1</sup> nationally, and around particular themes. Some deprivation themes are of specific concern, such as the relatively high crime levels, child poverty, low educational and skills achievement rates and income levels.
- 4.6 Medway's population was 274,015 in the 2014 Mid Year Estimate<sup>2</sup> and it has been growing at a significant rate with relatively large annual increases in the last three years. Growth levels have been above those seen nationally.

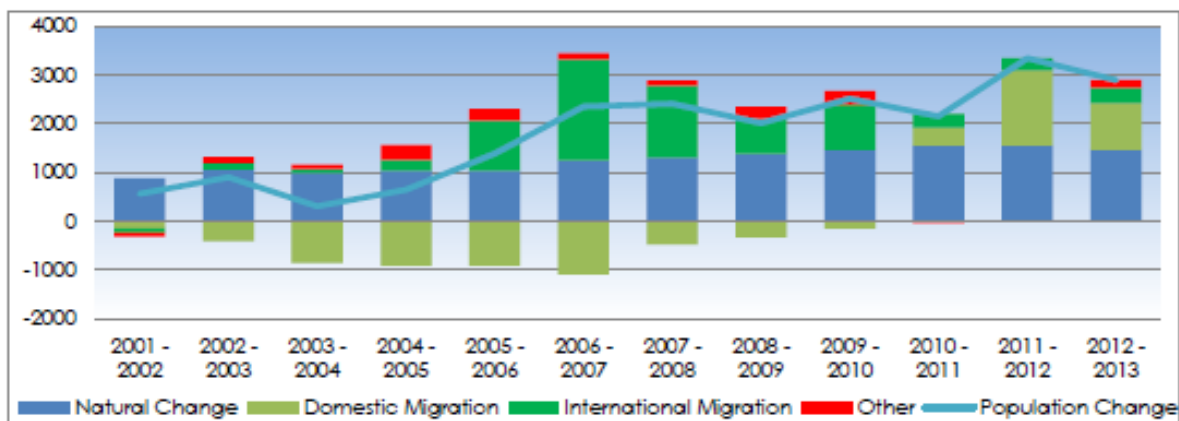
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<sup>1</sup> The IMD is reported by Lower Super Output Area. This is a statistical area with a population between 1,000 and 3,000 people and between 400 and 1,200 households, and so is taken here to be equivalent to a neighbourhood.

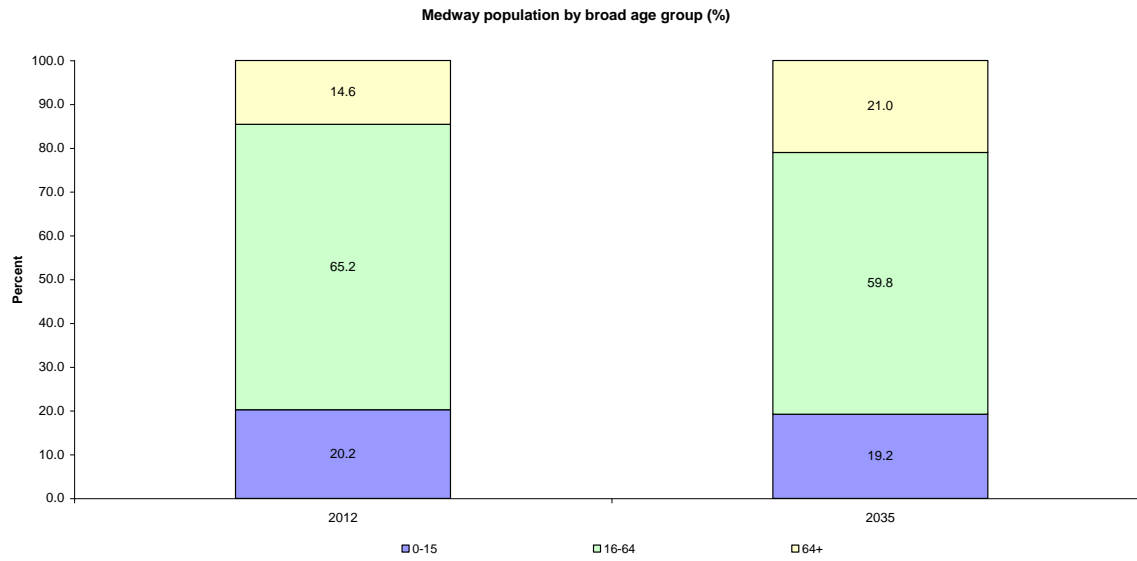
<sup>2</sup> Available at: <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcm%3A77-368259>



4.7 Medway’s growth is primarily down to natural growth – births exceeding deaths, but inward migration, particularly from neighbouring areas and South East London has also been increasing recently.



4.8 Medway’s population is predicted to grow by just over one fifth over the next twenty years. This is above the national level of growth, but in line with trends seen across Kent. The largest growth will be in the over 65’s – with growth in this age group accounting for more than half of the overall population growth in Medway.



4.9 Medway is also becoming a more diverse place, with an increase in its black and ethnic minorities population from 5.4% in 2001 to 10.4% in 2011.



# Developing a vision for Medway in 2035

Issues and Options Consultation Document

## Developing a vision for Medway in 2035

- 5.1 The Local Plan needs to clearly set out a vision for the type of place Medway should be in 2035. The decisions on the use of land in Medway, and the policies in the plan must seek to achieve the aspirations of this vision.
- 5.2 In developing the Local Plan, the council wishes to engage the wider community in establishing this vision, so that the planning strategy encompasses shared ambitions for Medway.
- 5.3 The vision must respond to the key issues and opportunities that Medway faces over the next twenty years. These include:
- Accommodating the projected growth of an 20% increase in Medway's population, and its changing demographics
  - Realising opportunities to drive economic success and addressing inequalities across Medway
  - Developing a modern Medway, delivering quality through regeneration and investment, whilst protecting the best of its past and its natural environment
- 5.4 The purpose of the Local Plan is to guide the future development of Medway, for it to be an economically successful, attractive and vibrant place where people want to be.

### QUESTION

- 1) What do you think should be the key components of and ambitions for the Local Plan's vision for Medway in 2035?

# Strategic Issues

Issues and Options Consultation Document

## Strategic Issues

- 6.1 Medway cannot prepare its Local Plan in isolation, but must consider the wider context, to ensure that its policies align with strategic plans and are coordinated with those of neighbouring areas. Medway's location in the Thames Gateway growth area presents a number of strategic development issues. Ambitions are promoted through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) for the area's regeneration to deliver new homes and jobs in a high quality environment supported by excellent infrastructure. Medway is engaged in this strategic development work through the LEP, and the Thames Gateway Kent Partnership at a north Kent level. In addition to existing investments and regeneration plans, such as HS1 and Ebbsfleet Garden City, the area continues to be the focus of additional strategic developments, such as capacity for a Lower Thames Crossing and London Paramount resort. Radical proposals to develop a new international London airport in the Thames Estuary have not been supported by the Airports Commission.
- 6.2 The proximity to London is a key consideration for Medway, with commuting and access to markets being of particular importance to the area's economy, and a trend for people to move to the area from the southeastern London boroughs. The projected growth of London may have implications for Medway, in common with other parts of the South East, for example, housing demand, business opportunities, and waste management.
- 6.3 Although Medway has a large employment base, there are significant movements of workers into and out of the borough for work. There is net out-commuting to areas such as Maidstone, Tonbridge and Malling, and London.
- 6.4 Work carried out to define Medway's housing market area has shown a complex set of relationships with surrounding boroughs. Two-thirds of house moves in Medway are from existing residents. Apart from the influence of the London housing market, people moving into the area generally come from places close by, such as parts of Gravesham, Swale and Maidstone. Similarly people moving out of Medway tend to look to neighbouring areas, such as Swale, Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling.
- 6.5 Bluewater has a sub-regional shopping role, and has a major impact on retail patterns across the area, drawing 26% of all comparison spend from Medway. Further expansion of the leisure offer at Bluewater could have further implications for Medway's town centres.
- 6.6 As a major urban area, Medway delivers a range of services which may cater for a wider population; e.g., Medway Maritime Hospital provides services for people living in Swale.
- 6.7 The Thames Estuary is a major landscape feature. The council recognises the importance of working at a landscape scale when planning for the natural environment. It works with the Kent and Thames Gateway Nature Partnerships. This collaborative working established a Nature Improvement Area that included investments in habitats on the Hoo Peninsula, and seeks to

deliver the targets of the Kent Biodiversity Strategy through cross boundary biodiversity opportunity areas in the marshes and downs. The North Kent Environmental Planning Group has developed a strategic access mitigation and management strategy to address the potential of recreational disturbance to the special features of the Thames, Medway and Swale Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites. The Thames Estuary 2100 Plan provides a framework for tidal flood risk management in Medway, and the proposals will be built into the Local Plan to ensure safeguarding of land and policy development. The council also works for the conservation and enhancement of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty through its management plan and role in the Joint Advisory Board.

- 6.8 Minerals and waste issues often affect a wider area, and the council participates in regional working groups to share information and coordinate planning.
- 6.9 The council is engaged in ongoing work with neighbouring planning authorities and statutory organisations on cross boundary matters. The Duty to Cooperate has been built into the process of preparing a new Local Plan for Medway, sharing information, and holding early discussions on emerging issues.
- 6.10 The council will seek broad and meaningful input to the consultation process on the Issues and Options report to ensure that strategic issues are effectively addressed in the preparation of the new Local Plan.

#### **QUESTIONS**

- 2) What do you think are the strategic issues that the Local Plan needs to address?
- 3) How should the council respond to these issues?



# Housing

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Housing

7.1 The delivery of land for housing is central to the purpose of the new Local Plan. Medway's growing population needs housing. There are already pressures on the housing market, with rising costs creating difficulties for many households finding somewhere to live.



*Victory Pier Development, Gillingham*

7.2 Medway's housing market has also seen significant changes in recent years. In response to this, Medway Council's housing strategy for 2015-18 sets out four strategic priorities:

- Increase the supply of suitable and affordable homes
- Improve the quality of homes, environment and people's lives
- Promote sustainability by supporting people within their community
- Improve the flexibility of accommodation

7.3 There have been significant changes in recent years to the legislative context affecting housing, and further changes are anticipated through the Housing and Planning Bill. Social housing and welfare reforms have had impacts on the housing sector, and there are continuing issues of affordability.

7.4 Government proposes to introduce permission in principle for housing development on brownfield sites, boost the supply of starter homes, and promote custom and self build as housing options. Further reforms to social housing will also have implications for Medway. At this stage the specifics of many of these initiatives are not yet fully understood. As legislation emerges and developers respond to new opportunities, more updated information will be fed into the preparation of the new Local Plan.

7.5 One of the most noticeable changes in Medway's housing market has been a significant increase in the size of the private rented sector, rising from 9,350 households in 2001 to 18,150 in 2011, a near doubling of the proportion of households in this tenure. This rise in private rented accommodation has been matched by a decrease in households who own their home with a mortgage. Part of this change is related to the growth of the Universities at Medway, with an increased student population seeking rented housing. However, of more significance is the wider national trend for increased use of the private rented sector, aligned to the affordability of home ownership. There is a lower supply of social housing in Medway than found in most comparator authorities.

7.6 The 2011 Census identified 106,209 households and 110,107 household spaces in Medway, an increase of 6% in households and 7% in household



spaces. House prices have been rising, but they remain under the average when compared with neighbouring boroughs.

### **Determining housing need**

- 7.7 In looking forward over the plan period, the council needs to ensure sufficient land is available to provide for housing the area's communities. The plan needs to consider not just the amount of housing needed, but also the size and mix of housing types to meet the needs of different sized households, and those with particular needs, such as older people, people with disabilities, and students.
- 7.8 The Government requires Local Planning Authorities to determine the objectively assessed needs (OAN) for housing in their strategic housing market areas. Work carried out for the North Kent Strategic Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (SHENA)<sup>3</sup> in 2015 has analysed demographic, economic and market signal information to assess the quantity and types of housing that will be needed to meet the projected growth in households over the plan period. This concludes that the Local Plan needs to make provision for up to 29,463 new homes by 2035.
- 7.9 In line with Government requirements, the SHENA has considered the definition of Medway's housing market. Initial work indicates that around two thirds of house moves are from people moving within Medway, and that the local property market has characteristics that distinguish it from surrounding areas. However it has also shown that Medway has complex relationships with a number of neighbouring boroughs, and these could be seen as the basis for a housing market area extending outside of the Medway area.
- 7.10 In preparing the new Local Plan, the council is committed to planning positively to meet the development needs of its area, subject to ensuring that in doing so, development would not conflict with the principles of sustainable development set out in the NPPF. Therefore the council is embarking on the plan preparation process with the intention of meeting the objectively assessed needs identified for Medway's administrative area.
- 7.11 It is recognised that the cost of housing is unaffordable for many people. The council needs to consider the need for 'affordable housing', and make appropriate provision in its housing policies. Medway represents a relatively affordable property market compared to many surrounding areas which can make it attractive to people living in other areas. However with lower earnings in Medway, a considerable proportion of Medway residents struggle to meet the cost of housing. For many, particularly young people, owning a property is well beyond their financial means.
- 7.12 The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)<sup>4</sup> carried out in 2015 for Medway identified a high level of demand for affordable housing, at 17,112

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<sup>3</sup> Available to view at [www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy)

<sup>4</sup> Available to view at: [www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy)

over the plan period. The Local Plan needs to be deliverable, and must demonstrate that the policies are viable. Initial analysis indicates that a percentage of 25% affordable housing would be deliverable on developments of over 15 units, taking into account land values and development costs. Further work is being undertaken to assess whether smaller developments would also be able to support delivery of affordable housing.

### Housing needs of specific groups

7.13 The SHMA has considered the needs of different sections of the community for housing, including:

- Older person households
- Groups with specific support needs
- Younger person households
- BME (non-white) groups
- Rural households

7.14 Some of these specific needs are considered further below.

7.15 Medway's population is ageing. Between 2001 and 2011, there was a 17% increase in the number of people aged 65+. Population projections indicate that this proportion will continue to grow, with forecasts of a 55% rise from 40,500 in 2013 to 67,800 in 2035. With an ageing population comes a greater propensity to health impairments. Incidences of mobility impairments, dementia and other limiting health conditions increase significantly:

| Projected population aged 65+ with health issues <sup>5</sup>      |       |        |        |        |                    |
|--|-------|--------|--------|--------|--------------------|
| Health condition type  | 2015  | 2020   | 2025   | 2030   | % change 2015-2030 |
| A limiting long term illness – day to day activities limited a lot | 9,793 | 11,069 | 12,924 | 14,894 | +52.1              |
| Dementia   | 2,692 | 3,130  | 3,759  | 4,501  | +67.2              |
| Learning disability  | 887   | 995    | 1,114  | 1,275  | +43.7              |
| Admitted to hospital as result of a fall                           | 832   | 964    | 1,158  | 1,312  | +57.7              |

7.16 Alongside this, there may be family members who take on the role of full time carers, often with implications for their own health and lifestyles. A proportion of people will need more targeted care, through residential or nursing homes.

<sup>5</sup> Source: POPPI. Crown copyright 2014. Figures may not sum due to rounding

- 7.17 People with learning and physical disabilities may also have specific requirements for housing, which may need to be delivered through adaptable or purpose built stock.
- 7.18 Medway's black and minority ethnic communities make up 10% of its population. BME households can often be larger in size, contain more children, and have a greater tendency towards accommodating multiple generations than the Medway average.

### **Starter Homes**

- 7.19 In order to help address the difficulties in accessing the housing market, the Government intends that Local Planning Authorities should promote the supply of starter homes, provided at a 20% discount from market prices. Details of the scheme are not yet confirmed, but it is anticipated there will be a need to look widely at opportunities to deliver starter homes in the local area. To achieve the discount on market prices, the Government intends to relax the infrastructure requirements asked of developers. This may bring forward much needed housing, but there is a risk of sites being developed without the range of services and infrastructure that residents expect. Greater pressures may therefore be placed on existing services.
- 7.20 The Government is seeking to make the best use of brownfield land for development of housing. Medway has a well-established regeneration agenda, bringing forward brownfield sites to provide land for new homes and jobs. Many of these sites are already identified in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA) as potentially suitable for development, and some, such as Rochester Riverside and Strood Riverside benefit from existing masterplans, development briefs and in some cases planning permission. The Council may need to consider further sites to meet the Government's expectations for housing development on brownfield sites.

### **Self Build and Custom Build Homes**

- 7.21 The Government is keen to offer greater housing choice, and particularly to support those looking to build their own home. There is an existing pattern of small builders developing single or small housing schemes in Medway, but little information about the scale or nature of this demand. The Council will be required to maintain a register of people interested in finding land for self build housing, and make provision for this specific housing need in the Local Plan. As with starter homes, the Government intends that self and custom build homes will be exempted from many infrastructure requirements.
- 7.22 As this is a recent initiative, further work will be needed over the plan preparation period to assess and respond to the need for this type of housing.

## Student housing

7.23 Medway's student population has grown with the development of the higher and further education offer, notably at Chatham Maritime. The expansion of the Universities at Medway saw increased demand for private rented sector housing, particularly in Gillingham. More recently, purpose built student accommodation has been provided. Work is being carried out to provide more detail of the extent of student households across Medway, the level of demand for accommodation, and the impact on the private rented sector.



*University of Kent, Chatham Maritime*

7.24 The Local Plan will consider the need for student accommodation, and also the opportunities that new developments could offer.

## Gypsy and Traveller accommodation

7.25 Medway has a Council-run traveller site at Cuxton, accommodating 11 households and a travelling showpeople's site in Strood. The remainder of the provision is made up of small, privately owned sites, generally in rural and rural fringe locations on the Hoo Peninsula and south of Rainham.

7.26 An assessment of gypsy and traveller accommodation needs in Medway was carried out in 2013, and identified a need for 22 extra pitches by 2028. However updated Government policy issued in 2015 changed the definition of gypsies and travellers, with more specific requirements on demonstrating the nomadic aspect of their lifestyles. The full implications of this change in Government policy have yet to be assessed. The level and type of need identified in the 2013 assessment may need to be reviewed.

## QUESTIONS

- 4) Do you agree with the approach and conclusions of the assessment of housing needs calculated for Medway over the plan period?
- 5) What do you consider to be the appropriate housing market area for Medway?
- 6) Do you agree that 25% is an appropriate level for the requirement of affordable housing, and what threshold should be set for the scale of development that needs to provide affordable housing?
- 7) What form of housing best meets the needs of Medway's growing population of older people?
- 8) What housing is needed for other specific groups in Medway?
- 9) How can development make a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of Medway's communities?
- 10) Do you have suggestions for potential sites for starter home developments?
- 11) How do you consider the infrastructure needs of starter home and self and custom build developments should be addressed?
- 12) How should the council provide for the demand for land for self and custom build housing? For example, integrated with larger developments, on standalone sites, or linked to placemaking ambitions to deliver highly sustainable and innovative design quality.
- 13) What is the demand for student housing and where would this be best located? For example, would dedicated student housing be appropriate in Medway's town centres?
- 14) What is the level and type of need for gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople's accommodation in Medway, and what criteria should be used to identify appropriate sites?



# Economy

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Economy

- 8.1 Medway is a major economic hub within the South East region and has seen significant shifts in its economic base in recent years. Some traditional manufacturing and port activities have been lost, but a number of advanced manufacturing activities have remained and expanded. The area has also attracted a range of 'new' sectors, from financial and business services to software and gaming development. The innovation seen in responding to economic restructuring is a key component of business in Medway.
- 8.2 There has been a major expansion of higher and further education in Medway. A 'learning quarter' has been established in Chatham Maritime, with the Universities at Medway, Mid Kent College and the University Technical College all located here. This unique offer presents great opportunities to raise skills levels and enable further economic development based on a knowledge economy, providing for higher value employment that could drive the success of the area.
- 8.3 Medway's location within the Thames Gateway offers excellent opportunities to capitalise on regeneration and other investment, and to stimulate business growth, benefitting from connectivity through the motorway and rail networks to the wider economy. It is well placed to accommodate businesses seeking to relocate from London. The area's strengths include its established distribution routes; defined logistics and manufacturing locations; and proximity to the large markets in London and the South East.
- 8.4 However there remain challenges in the local economy, with productivity below the average for Kent and the South East, and skills levels also lagging behind competing areas nearby. The local economy has a focus on lower value activities, which is a weak foundation for economic growth. Although improvements have been achieved in recent years, the unemployment rate remains above the sub-regional average. There are a relatively low number of the largest employers, and historically low rates of business start up and survival rates. The area has experienced a decline in commercial property supply as a result of landowner aspirations for residential development.
- 8.5 As typical of many areas within proximity to London, there is an outward flow of workers to the capital, but also to local employment centres in Kent.

### Medway's economic profile

- 8.6 In 2011, Medway had a working population of 126,689, and 82,800 jobs in the local economy. The area's employment profile shares characteristics of neighbouring areas, but the economy has some specialisms in manufacturing and advanced engineering. Finance and IT businesses are under-represented, compared to regional levels. Ports, wharves and energy infrastructure have been built up around the river and estuary. Some of these installations and industries are of strategic importance.



- 8.7 Medway’s economy runs at just over two thirds of the national level in terms of output. It is among the lowest performing local authorities in the South East, lagging behind Kent and England averages for Gross Valued Added output (GVA), and with a much slower rate of growth than seen in neighbouring authorities and wider context areas. Medway saw a steep decline in 2008, and has been slow to recover post recession, with GVA output not yet back to pre-recessionary levels. Between 2001 and 2014, overall GVA growth in Medway was 5%, compared to 14% across Kent.


| GVA per head (2013) |         |         |
|---------------------|---------|---------|
| Medway              | Kent    | England |
| £15,414             | £19,835 | £24,091 |

- 8.8 A number of factors contribute to this relatively poor economic performance, including significant out-commuting, an economy characterised by lower value activities with an absence of some higher value sectors, and a lower skilled local workforce.
- 8.9 Medway has tended to have a lower employment rate than nationally. There are also fewer jobs per resident worker, a sign of a weaker economy and a shortage in local labour demand. This results in a strong out-commuting flow. More recently, the employment rate has increased significantly, with the gap between Medway and the national rate narrowing. However, among the economically inactive the number of people who are classified as long-term sick remains high.
- 8.10 70% of people who work in Medway live within Medway. However, only 51% of Medway’s economically active residents work in the area, reflecting the high levels of out-commuting. Data from the 2011 census shows that 50,749 people left Medway for work, while 22,700 workers travelled into Medway. The strongest commuting links are with Maidstone, Swale, and Tonbridge and Malling.
- 8.11 The skills profile of the area is critical in attracting and supporting economic growth, with businesses seeking locations with an available pool of suitably skilled labour. Medway compares poorly with neighbouring areas in the skills levels of its workforce. 19% have achieved the highest level of qualifications, compared to a Kent average of 25%, 26% in Maidstone, and 27% in Tonbridge and Malling. Just under a quarter of adults have no qualifications. This proportion rises significantly in some of Medway’s neighbourhoods.

### Employment land

- 8.12 The council has commissioned research through the North Kent SHENA to assess how existing employment sites meet business needs, and the quantity and attributes of land and buildings needed to meet emerging employment needs over the plan period.
- 8.13 This shows that Medway has a wide ranging employment land portfolio, with sites in various locations from historic town centres, riverside locations with

wharfs, out-of-town purpose-built Business Parks, and freestanding semi-rural sites, which tend to be a focus for heavy industries. This diverse portfolio of land can host a range of business operations and presents a significant opportunity. Vacant and available floorspace has fallen in recent years, and occupancy rates have risen. Two thirds of the existing floorspace is concentrated in Medway City Estate, Gillingham Business Park, and Strood. The existing employment land portfolio is summarised below:

- **Chatham town centre and Maritime** provide a range of employment space, with traditional dockyards, old and new office stock (the latter mainly concentrated at Chatham Maritime), and light industrial and warehousing activity. This portfolio provides a base for a wide range of business activities including financial services, ICT, manufacturing and engineering. Employment uses at the Historic Dockyard are integrated into a high quality environment which also includes tourism, residential and leisure uses.
  - **Medway City Estate** is a strong cluster for industrial and light industrial use, and also provides some good quality office stock. However it has poor quality public realm in parts, resulting from its fragmented land ownership, which appears to have a negative impact on the value of stock and nature of businesses locating here.
- 
- **Gillingham Business Park** offers a higher quality environment for businesses with a good quality office and light-industrial stock, catering for both for SME and large operators. It is in single ownership and has a consistent, good quality and well-maintained public realm. This has positive impacts on the value of the stock and nature of businesses.
  - **Medway Innovation Centre** and the **Compass Centre** (within the Universities at Medway campus) provide a specialist offer for micro and SME businesses, a critical component of Medway's economy. The Innovation Centre is in a prime location at Rochester Airport and has been particularly successful in attracting high value activities. These locations have seen increasing occupancy levels and interest from businesses and both could provide a source of growing businesses to support ongoing economic growth throughout the plan period.
  - **Strood** has a collection of industrial estates, including around the **Temple Waterfront** area, which have grown organically over a period of time. Similar sites exist in parts of the other towns, though not in such concentration. They comprise a mix of small estates alongside larger occupiers, and are important generators of local employment.
  - **Kingsnorth and Isle of Grain**, on the Hoo Peninsula, offer significant space for heavy industries, large-scale distribution and businesses

reliant on wharfage. Both have significant potential for intensification and expansion in addition to their existing supply, with capacity to accommodate land-intensive and heavy industry uses that are less likely to be based in urban or urban fringe locations.



*Kingsnorth Jetty, photo courtesy of Angela Groom*

- 8.14 Of these areas, the key office locations are at Chatham Maritime, Gillingham Business Park and Medway City Estate. The office market in Medway is relatively weak, and a shortage of good quality stock has been identified as a major barrier to growth and investment.
- 8.15 Medway also has a number of opportunity sites that can host a variety of employment types. There are regeneration and masterplanning initiatives focussed around Chatham and Rochester Airfield, both with capacity to create attractive offers for high quality office, light industrial and advanced manufacturing uses.

Supply Summary

8.16 Medway’s total employment land supply is summarised in the table below.

| Summary of employment land supply in Medway <sup>6</sup> |                 |                   |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|
|  | Area (ha)       | Total No of Sites |
| Existing Sites   | 923             | 40                |
| Existing Sites - Vacant Land                             | 31 to 32        | 7                 |
| Proposed Sites- Vacant Land                              | 450             | 6                 |
| <b>All Sites</b>   | <b>1,370 ha</b> |                   |

8.17 Whilst the portfolio is generally good, the legacy of historic ‘heavy industry’ lingers in many locations, with the quality of the environment affecting the ability of some sites to attract new occupiers. Despite significant investment in place-making and promotion, external perception of Medway’s employment offer has been slow to change, although a range of higher profile knowledge based activities are beginning to shift this.

**Issues**

8.18 A key issue for the Local Plan will be to secure a successful economic base in Medway, providing a range of jobs for residents and securing sustainable growth without exacerbating the need to travel to access high quality job opportunities. This means providing attractive, available employment land in the right locations and of appropriate formats, offering flexibility to enable buildings and sites to deliver a mix of office, industrial and storage space to meet changing occupier needs. Other policies may also be required to support the conditions to boost productivity and drive up economic value.

8.19 To forecast the scale and nature of economic growth anticipated in Medway over the plan period, calculations have been carried out based on an assessment of the population growth projections, the strengths of the local economy, knowledge of growth sectors, and impacts of major strategic developments such as London Paramount. The research has forecast a growth of around 17,200 new jobs in Medway up to 2037. Over half of these jobs are expected in non-B class activities, such as retail and healthcare.

8.20 Although there is a considerable supply of vacant land identified for future employment use, the majority of this is in a small number of locations with a very similar scale and character. As such, it is questionable whether the nature of this supply will be able to cater for all future requirements. The SHENA research has identified a need for the following quantities of B class employment land over the plan period:

<sup>6</sup> North Kent SHENA

| <b>Medway Employment Land Requirements 2012-2035<br/>(sqm)</b> |         |
|--|---------|
| Office   | 49,943  |
| Industrial   | 155,748 |
| Warehousing  | 164,263 |

- 8.21 There is a particular misalignment between office stock and demand. Most of the good quality stock is contained within large floorplate buildings, while the make-up of the local economy and shifts in occupier demand in recent years suggests there is likely to be limited future demand from large office occupiers locating in Medway. However, these larger floorplates are often difficult or expensive to convert into smaller units. This can limit landowner willingness to adapt buildings to meet SME needs, in turn limiting the capacity of the area to accommodate future demand in a sector of high growth potential. Attractiveness to SMEs may also be limited by the availability of high bandwidth internet connectivity within many business locations, and the inflexibility of lease arrangements on some properties.
- 8.22 The large sites on the Hoo Peninsula are well positioned to compete within the regional market for large scale industrial and distribution activity, but are unlikely to be appropriate locations for office based or SME activity. There is a growing trend for creative and office based businesses to locate closer to town centres and the range of amenities they provide. Therefore, there is likely to be a qualitative need to provide new capacity for these activities as part of mixed-use proposals around the main urban centres. There is already a cluster of creative activity growing around Chatham and Rochester High Streets; provision of new space linked to this could provide an opportunity to lead regeneration in some secondary locations and add to the vibrancy and success of the town centre.
- 8.23 Another key consideration will be the ability to deliver space and communications infrastructure to reflect the needs of the new 'tech' and 'creative' activities coming forward. Often, these businesses do not require space that neatly falls into individual use classes, instead requiring hybrid spaces providing a mix of office, workshop and some storage/distribution space, across a range of scales.
- 8.24 Rochester Airport is identified as a key location to expand high value businesses in Medway. There are also opportunities to establish new offers, for example, through the strategic development the subject of the current planning application at Lodge Hill.
- 8.25 A further issue that will need to be taken into account when determining where and how to plan for economic growth relates to potential competition for available land from other uses, particularly residential which tends to generate higher land values. It is noted in this respect that in order to boost the supply of housing, the Government is relaxing the planning controls safeguarding employment land, making it easier to convert commercial premises to residential uses and encouraging consideration of derelict or unused employment sites for housing development and considered a

“permission in principle” for housing development on some brownfield land. This may have the potential risk of losing employment land and reducing the ability of businesses to locate or expand in Medway.

### **QUESTIONS**

- 15) Where should such sites be located, considering opportunities in existing employment areas, and potential new sites such as Lodge Hill or other developments?
- 16) What are the opportunities for further business growth in and close to town centres in Medway?
- 17) Do you agree with scale of jobs and employment land needs identified for Medway over the plan period?
- 18) How can Medway realise opportunities to capitalise on growth in the wider area, including London?
- 19) How should the plan respond to opportunities arising from the expansion of higher and further education in Medway?
- 20) Is it feasible to reduce the amount of out-commuting from Medway, and what would be required to achieve this?
- 21) How should the plan address the specific locational requirements of some businesses, for example access to wharves?

# Tourism

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Tourism

9.1 Tourism plays an important role in Medway's economy and culture. Much of the activity is focused on the area's rich heritage, notably Rochester and the Historic Dockyard at Chatham, and an extensive offer of festivals, events and concerts. Medway is particularly known for its military heritage, visible in the castles at Rochester and Upnor, forts and defences, the Chatham Historic Dockyard, Royal Engineers museum and Naval memorial. There are also cultural connections with Charles Dickens, extending from historic Rochester to the atmospheric marshes of the Hoo Peninsula.



*Rochester Castle, photo taken by Jamie Ives*

- 9.2 However, Medway is a growing modern city, with a large student population and close connections to London, and its offer to visitors is broadening, as demonstrated in the development of new art galleries, venues and cafes. The Historic Dockyard is increasingly known as the backdrop for many films and primetime TV dramas.
- 9.3 The rural areas of Medway offer great opportunities for walking, cycling, bird watching, fishing and watersports. The RSPB has major reserves on the Hoo Peninsula at Cliffe and High Halstow, offering views of birdlife over the marshes.
- 9.4 Research in support of the preparation of a Destination Management Plan for Medway has indicated that tourism generated nearly £300m of value to Medway in 2012, from over 4 million trips, providing over 4000 FTE jobs and



making up 7% of the area's employment. Day trips form the majority of visits, estimated at 3,640,000 in 2012, compared to 537,000 staying visitor trips. The development of new hotels at Chatham Maritime, Victory Pier and Medway Valley Park has boosted the supply of accommodation in recent years. Further provision is planned in Rochester. Allhallows on the Hoo Peninsula has a large holiday caravan park, attracting people from both the UK and overseas, and the operator is keen to expand and improve the facilities. River based tourism also sees visitors using Medway's marinas for overnight stays.

### Issues

- 9.5 Medway is often seen as a daytrip destination, centred on the well-known heritage attractions of Rochester and the Historic Dockyard. Increasing the length of visits to the area would provide the basis for securing additional spend in the local economy, in accommodation, food and drink and shopping, and allow visitors to explore beyond the main attractions. Opportunities have been identified to extend the visitor accommodation offer, such as through a 'boutique' hotel in Rochester and rural B&Bs, self catering and camping in Medway's countryside.
- 9.6 The proposal for a major entertainment resort on the Swanscombe Peninsula (London Paramount) could offer new opportunities for tourism in Medway. Construction activity could create an increased demand for bedspace for site workers, and in the longer term it is anticipated that although the scheme includes its own hotel developments, some visitors would choose to stay outside the resort. Medway would be well placed to offer accommodation to both workers and visitors. Capturing some of the visitors' time and spend in Medway could provide a significant boost to the local area.
- 9.7 Knowledge of Medway's countryside is often limited and potentially overlooked in favour of other parts of Kent. As a result of this, there has been little investment in visitor facilities and services.
- 9.8 The River Medway is a key defining characteristic of the area, but is often underplayed in the visitor experience. Given that much of the ongoing regeneration focus is on waterfront sites, there is an opportunity to plan connectivity to the river and its estuary from and between existing tourist assets.

### QUESTIONS

- 22) What scale and form of additional visitor accommodation is needed to support and develop a successful tourism sector in Medway?
- 23) What are the opportunities for extending tourism in Medway beyond day trips to the main attractions and events?
- 24) What role does the river and Medway's countryside have to play in developing tourism locally?



# **Retail, commercial leisure & town centres**

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Retail, commercial leisure & town centres

### National trends

- 10.1 Following the economic crisis and recession, the market is now improving, with increases in consumer spending. Expansion is likely to be at a slower pace than previously, and there are still some drags on growth, but retail centres can expect to benefit from the upturn in the wider market economy.
- 10.2 National retailers no longer require stores in every town to achieve coverage, due to the growth of internet shopping. This is part of a trend towards “polarisation” of retailing, with flagship stores in dominant centres and satellite stores in other locations. Value-oriented retailers such as Primark, Wilko and Poundland tend to be reluctant to pay the high rentals associated with flagship retail locations and become concentrated in lower order, small and medium-sized centres, often in prime retail pitch. In the face of this polarisation (and competition from online retail), centres with a unique or specialist retail offer tend to be stronger performers.
- 10.3 Online shopping is an important part of modern retail business, but can be an opportunity as well as a threat to town centres. Many retailers need a local presence to enable click-and-collect operations. This is one of the most significant drivers of growth in online and multi-channel shopping, as retailers continue to experiment with new forms, such as partnerships where online-only retailers offer click-and-collect in local stores. In some circumstances, click-and-collect can drive footfall to town centres in its own right.
- 10.4 Diversification of town centres into locations for more than just retail is an emerging trend, which is expected to be important for their continued success. This would include provision of community facilities, leisure and food and drink uses. Heritage assets and tourism can also be an important draw.
- 10.5 In terms of convenience retail (groceries etc.), the big four supermarkets have significantly reduced expansion and have been closing under-performing stores. Investment in new stores is likely to be less frequent, with operators being more selective about which sites to bring forward. This may result in a programme of improvements and upgrades to existing stores, but it is too early to be certain about what this may involve. Discount supermarkets are continuing to expand, with larger footprints and improving market share.
- 10.6 Out-of-town retailing is the only sector where store numbers have been consistently increasing over the last 15 years. Retailers traditionally found in High Streets have been moving into out-of-town retail parks. Key draws are likely to be the availability of larger, modern floorspace and free parking. There is also a trend for diversification of retail parks to include supporting uses such as food and drink and leisure, to increase dwell time. This could increase the competition between such locations and town centres.
- 10.7 The leisure sector has generally performed well despite the downturn, albeit with individual casualties amongst both independent and multiple brands.

Restaurants, coffee shops and health and fitness uses have all seen expansion. For health and fitness in particular this has been focussed on the more value-oriented end of the market. Pubs are an exception to the generally good health of the leisure sector, with high numbers of closures. Empty units are often converted to other uses such as small-format convenience stores.

### Current position of Medway centres

- 10.8 Chatham is Medway's highest-order centre, but is under-performing against what could be expected for a centre of this size and type. It draws a relatively

low proportion of the available spending power from its local catchment, losing out to centres such as Bluewater, Maidstone and Hempstead Valley. It has particularly low provision of leisure uses including food and drink outlets. This represents a missed opportunity to improve vitality and viability by increasing dwell time and footfall. Chatham also currently lacks a street market.



Chatham High Street

- 10.9 Chatham's vacancy rate is the highest in Medway, and worryingly seems to be rising, against the national trend. This includes a few large & prominent sites such as the former Tesco store on the Brook, and a significant number of units within the Pentagon shopping centre, particularly on the first floor. Since the closure of Tesco, Chatham's convenience offer is limited; a number of independent retailers towards the eastern end of the High Street are performing well, but the remaining supermarkets (Iceland and a small Sainsburys in the Pentagon) do not support much more than top-up shopping. There are indications that the type of units available do not meet the needs of many modern retailers, for example being too small and inflexible.
- 10.10 Recent improvements such as the new bus station and public realm works are a step in the right direction, but significant investment and improvement is necessary if Chatham is to consolidate or improve its market position.
- 10.11 The other centres in Medway are broadly performing as could be expected, serving more local markets. With the exception of Rochester, the leisure offer of the town centres (including food and drink uses) is fairly poor. They would also benefit from investment, particularly in environmental improvements:
- **Gillingham** does not have good provision for convenience retail (groceries etc.) as the only town-centre supermarkets are the Co-Op,

which is under-trading by some margin, probably due to its poor relationship to the High Street, and an Iceland store.

- **Rochester** has a specialist tourist role in addition to acting as a district centre for the local population. It has a much higher proportion of food and drink uses than the other centres, both multiple chains and independent retailers, and an attractive, historic environment. Convenience retail provision is limited, with no supermarket provision in or on the edge of the centre.
- **Strood** Retail Park is performing significantly better than the main town centre, but poor linkages limit the extent to which the town centre benefits from these high levels of trade. Strood is particularly strong in terms of convenience retail, with 74% of visitors citing it as the main reason for their visit. However, the new ASDA store in the town centre is under-trading, suggesting saturation point may have been reached. Strood also suffers from a poor environment, exacerbated by levels of through traffic.
- **Rainham** is the smallest of Medway's town centres, performing a very local role. The environment of the pedestrianised shopping centre is rather tired, and the small Tesco store is significantly overtrading, but there is limited if any physical capacity for increased convenience retail provision. There are parts of the centre where an over-concentration of hot food takeaway uses is undermining its vitality and viability.
- **Hempstead Valley**, although classified as a district centre, does not perform the same role as the town centres. Its offer is mainly limited to retail, with recently improved food and drink provision but few service-type uses (hairdressers, banks etc.). A number of multiple retailers (including Marks and Spencer) have their only full-line store in Medway at Hempstead Valley, suggesting that the success of this centre may have come at the expense of the traditional centres, to some degree.

### Retail capacity

10.12 As part of the SHENA, an assessment has been carried out of capacity for future retail growth across Medway. It takes into account assumptions about population growth, future spending levels and retailer efficiencies, and makes allowances for online shopping and existing committed floorspace (i.e. sites with existing permissions). This results in the following capacity for new retail floorspace:

| Projected retail floorspace capacity |                     |                      |                      |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
|                                      | 2020                | 2025                 | 2031                 |
| Comparison goods floorspace          | -900m <sup>2</sup>  | 13,100m <sup>2</sup> | 34,900m <sup>2</sup> |
| Convenience goods floorspace         | 6,000m <sup>2</sup> | 7,900m <sup>2</sup>  | 10,500m <sup>2</sup> |

- 10.13 Leisure capacity is harder to assess, because the floorspace required can vary significantly. This has therefore been calculated based on the increase in available leisure spend:

| Projected capacity in leisure spend               |               |                |                |
|---|---------------|----------------|----------------|
|   | 2020          | 2025           | 2031           |
| Cultural services                                 | £19.1M        | £39.9M         | £66.5M         |
| Recreation & sporting services                    | £7.7M         | £16.1M         | £26.9M         |
| Restaurants & cafes                               | £61.5M        | £128M          | £213.4M        |
| <b>Total increase in commercial leisure spend</b> | <b>£88.4M</b> | <b>£184.1M</b> | <b>£306.8M</b> |

- 10.14 All the above figures are rounded, and cumulative. The calculations assume that the Medway centres maintain their current market share. However, the SHENA also notes that it may be possible to increase market share through development of an appropriate scale and mix.

### Issues

- 10.15 Competition from Bluewater will remain a major factor in future plans for Medway's centres. Currently, Bluewater draws 26% of available comparison spending from the main catchment of Medway's centres (more than double the spend in Chatham), and a significant proportion of commercial leisure spending. Given national trends, it is unlikely this position will change significantly. Medway's town centres therefore need to develop a different offer, rather than trying to compete directly.

- 10.16 The markets in Gillingham and Strood have, in the past, made a significant contribution to the character and vitality of these centres, but are reported to be struggling recently. Rochester also holds a monthly farmers' market and there have long been ambitions through various masterplans to relocate this in order to better relate to the main centre. Consideration could also be given to whether providing a new or improved market offer in the other town centres could help to support the vitality and viability of the centres as a whole.



- 10.17 Increase in the residential population of town centres can help to maintain vitality and viability by increasing the local catchment, increasing activity levels to improve perceptions of safety, and helping to support the centres' role as transport hubs. Town centres may also have an important role to play in meeting employment need (see Economy chapter), addressing the imbalance between supply and demand, particularly for office-based and creative uses. All Medway's town centres are well connected to London

through HS1 rail links; this is a significant asset in terms of both employment and residential marketability.

- 10.18 Chatham and Strood have a number of large, vacant or underused sites within and on the edge of the town centres which could have potential to accommodate residential development, whether standalone or as part of a mixed used scheme (on upper floors above retail, leisure or employment uses, for example). Opportunities in other centres are smaller-scale, although there is potential for smaller allocations and windfalls may come forward.
- 10.19 Care will have to be taken that any investment in retail and leisure provision meets the needs of the market; larger, modern floorspace is often in high demand. Given the difficulty in predicting longer-term trends in this sector, resilience of town centres is likely to be enhanced by ensuring that flexibility is built into any new development. This could take the form of regular footprints enabling amalgamation and subdivision to suit emerging space requirements, and high quality communications infrastructure to support ongoing technological advances in the sector.

#### QUESTIONS

- 25) Should we focus investment & retail capacity on Chatham to consolidate its position as Medway's highest order centre?
- 26) Should we seek to facilitate development in Chatham of sufficient critical mass to improve market share, or plan for investment to meet currently identified capacity only?
- 27) What should the mix be in Medway's town centres between retail and other supporting uses, including food and drink, commercial leisure, employment and residential?
- 28) Should we consider making provision for a new or replacement supermarket in Gillingham town centre? If so, where should this go?
- 29) What should our approach be to proposals for new or enhanced out of town retail?



# Environment

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Environment

- 11.1 Medway's urban areas sit within a striking landscape of the wooded slopes of the Kent Downs to the south and the expansive estuaries and marshes of the Medway and Thames to the north. The river Medway runs through the urban area, linking the towns and providing an economic, cultural and landscape focus. Medway's countryside is much more than a backdrop to its towns, but is also of international importance for its wildlife and landscape quality, and provides productive agricultural land and a resource for people to explore and engage with nature.



*Ranscombe Farm, Cuxton*

- 11.2 The position of Medway on the North Kent Coast and the natural and farmed landscapes on the Hoo Peninsula mean that it has a wide variety of habitats and a rich diversity of species. Many of these have been recognised nationally and internationally. Around 28% of the area, largely the mudflats, saltmarsh, and freshwater and grazing marshes bordering the Medway and Thames estuaries are Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites due to their international importance for wintering birds. The estuaries have also been included in the first round of designations of Marine Conservation Zones. Sites of Special Scientific Interest make up nearly 30% of Medway's area, with some parts of the Hoo Peninsula being covered by multiple designations, and there are eight nature reserves (national and local).
- 11.3 The Kent Downs to the south of Medway are part of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) that runs across the county from Dover to Downe, and include a Special Area of Conservation in the woodlands near Halling. The AONB is an exceptional landscape, and there are well established policy requirements to conserve and enhance its natural beauty.
- 11.4 Medway's distinctive sense of place is closely linked to its landscape setting and the close proximity of a major urban area to undeveloped landscapes. There is a wide range of different landscape types: coastal marshes; chalk downland; orchards and shelterbelts; large scale arable farmland; and extensive tracks of woodland. Many local areas are highly valued by residents for their character and accessibility, providing settings for towns and villages, and for important heritage and environmental assets.
- 11.5 The Medway Landscape Character Assessment (2011) document<sup>7</sup> has analysed the distinct landscape areas across the borough and provides

<sup>7</sup> [http://www.medway.gov.uk/PDF/Medway%20LCA%20Mar11\\_Main%20report.pdf](http://www.medway.gov.uk/PDF/Medway%20LCA%20Mar11_Main%20report.pdf)

planning guidance for the countryside and urban fringe. The assessment of the condition and sensitivity of the landscape provides evidence to support planning decisions on where and what forms of development are appropriate to protect, enhance and strengthen the key features of the area.

- 11.6 The Metropolitan Green Belt has part of its eastern boundary in Medway, to the west of Strood and around the villages of Halling and Cuxton. In addition to its function in preventing the outward sprawl of London, it provides openness in the narrow area between Medway and Gravesend, managing against the coalescence of the north Kent towns and larger villages.
- 11.7 Medway's network of public rights of way extends to nearly 313km (190 miles), offering opportunities to explore coast and countryside, and connecting routes through the towns and suburbs, and including the Saxon Shore Way and North Downs Way long distance paths. The rollout of the English coastal path around the Medway and Thames estuaries in coming years will further promote opportunities to explore this area.
- 11.8 Planning for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment requires an understanding of the importance of securing connectivity through a wider green infrastructure network. A landscape scale approach helps to build resilience in wildlife responding to climate change, development and other potential pressures. Considering ecosystem services provides greater understanding of the existing and potential multi-functional benefits of landscapes. These can include:
- habitats for wildlife;
  - food production;
  - water storage and filtration;
  - woodland for timber, fuel and as a carbon sink;
  - access to open space to relax, exercise and learn;
  - defining a local sense of place; and
  - a focus for community activities.
- 11.9 Work on the Hoo Peninsula through the GIFT-T project<sup>8</sup> analysed the features of its environment. This analysis was used to work with local people and businesses to develop plans to strengthen the Peninsula's green infrastructure. On a wider scale, the council has commissioned a Green Infrastructure Planning Project to analyse the principle components of Medway's environmental networks. This will help inform the planning process in determining the most sustainable locations for future growth, and securing multi-functional and high quality green infrastructure in new development.

### Issues

- 11.10 There are some 'gaps' in the public rights of way network. In particular, greater access to the river would not only take advantage of Medway's central feature, but could encourage more journeys to be made on foot or bicycle,

<sup>8</sup> GIFT-T Project website <http://www.msep.org.uk/gift-t/>

and promote tourism and community uses around the river. Opportunities exist to join up the river walk through urban Medway, linking its historic towns and waterfront regeneration areas with the wider countryside. Outside of the urban areas, the river and estuary offer potential for improved access, such as a riverside cycle route between Medway and Maidstone. However care is needed to ensure that the special and distinct qualities of the riverside and coastal landscapes are not lost.

- 11.11 There can be tensions between opening up access to the countryside and the needs of wildlife. Research<sup>9</sup> has shown that the internationally important birdlife of the SPAs can be damaged by the impact of people visiting the estuary. Dogs exercising off the lead, cycling and watersports are among the activities shown to cause disturbance to birds. These impacts could be a contributing factor to the decline of birdlife in the estuary. Action is therefore needed to address this potential damage, through avoiding inappropriate development, and land management, wardening and education interventions.
- 11.12 A key challenge for Medway is to accommodate the needs of the area's growing population alongside safeguarding its valued environment. Planning policy and legislation provide strong protection against inappropriate development of the most important designated sites. However non-designated sites can also provide valuable functions for biodiversity, landscape, and access, as the ecosystems services approach demonstrates. Such sites are often closer to where people live, and therefore much valued locally. Securing an effective green infrastructure network through new development will be critical to planning a sustainable future for Medway.

## QUESTIONS

- 30) What are the most effective means to secure and strengthen Medway's environment, in the context of the area's development needs?
- 31) What opportunities should be pursued in the Local Plan to extend connectivity for wildlife and people throughout urban and rural parts of Medway?
- 32) What approach should be taken to determining the role of landscape in producing a spatial strategy for the new Local Plan, and development management policies?

<sup>9</sup> Liley, D. & Underhill-Day, J. (2013). Thames, Medway and Swale Estuaries – Strategic Access Management and Monitoring Strategy. Unpublished report by Footprint Ecology. Link: <http://greaterthamesmarshes.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/NKEPG-140722-Strategic-Access-Management-and-Monitoring-Strategy-FINAL.pdf>

# Built Environment

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Built Environment

### Heritage

- 12.1 The Government states within the NPPF that *“heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in manner appropriate to their significance.”*
- 12.2 Medway has a number of the region’s most significant historic environment assets including the historic City of Rochester and the military heritage of Chatham Historic Dockyard and its defences. It also has historic street patterns and forms of development, for example the long and winding Rochester and Chatham High Streets, and the historic bypass of New Road. Many of Medway’s villages have medieval cores.
- 12.3 In addition, Medway’s unique river and hillside topography is of historic significance in itself. Escarpments and the tops of hills were left undeveloped for military purposes with development confined to lower ground. Medway’s landmark buildings are often of national importance, such as Rochester and Upnor castles, Fort Amherst, the Dockyard and the Cathedral. Together this gives a legacy of unique views and townscapes.
- 12.4 Many of Medway’s heritage assets are protected by statute. There are over 900 listed buildings and 24 conservation areas in Medway. However, the historic environment is inevitably subject to pressures for change to meet new economic or practical demands.

### Design

- 12.5 While Medway has a unique architectural and historic character in an outstanding estuarine landscape, there is also a legacy of former industrial brownfield sites, many in stunning settings, and some run down areas and centres in need of rejuvenation. Low-density suburbs spread out towards the countryside, and surround the older cores of many villages in the area.
- 12.6 It is anticipated that the scale of forecast population growth will require substantial expansion of the built area of Medway and the establishment of new neighbourhoods. This growth offers the opportunity to enhance those parts of the built environment that are rightly valued, and rejuvenate those areas that are not. Within this context, good design will be important in making the most of Medway’s character and landscape, and in making Medway a good place to live and work.

### Issues

- 12.7 Understanding of context and local distinctiveness is key to good design. It is therefore important to know which areas, from individual buildings to streets and whole neighbourhoods, and styles of development are distinctive parts of Medway’s built environment. Conversely, it is equally important to be able to

identify those areas that have a weaker character so that opportunities can be taken to improve and introduce distinctiveness.

- 12.8 Some of Medway's historic areas could be impacted by significant new development, either within the areas themselves (for example, the Star Hill to Sun Pier Conservation Area), or close by, such as the waterfront regeneration sites next Rochester High Street and the Historic Dockyard. New development has the potential to bring economic life back to these areas, but it also has the potential to radically alter existing character. Development of the regeneration areas may well be large scale, including taller buildings, and therefore has the potential to impinge upon, or enhance, the setting of historic areas and landmarks. Medway Council has a View Management Policy<sup>10</sup> with regard to tall buildings (over six storeys high) but this could be extended to other development.
- 12.9 The Local Plan also presents an opportunity to set out requirements and key design principles for the type of development we wish to see delivered in Medway. By seeking to deliver quality we can ensure that new development in Medway delivers successful places, that look, feel and function well, where people want to live. Delivering quality new development requires partnership working between landowners, developers, communities and the Council. Setting out key design principles in the Local Plan can help to facilitate these working relationships by ensuring that landowners and developers can be clear up front about the standards that will be expected and build them into schemes from the earliest stages.

#### QUESTIONS

- 33) What approach should we take to managing Medway's heritage assets, particularly in the context of bringing forward regeneration?
- 34) What characteristics do you think makes a good place to live?
- 35) What areas or characteristics of Medway are most distinctive? How should these be protected, enhanced or reflected in new development?
- 36) What areas of Medway have weaker character and what are the opportunities for improvements?
- 37) What requirements should be sought of new developments in Medway to give them a distinct character and ensure they function well, in both central areas (including brownfield sites) and suburban areas?

<sup>10</sup> Medway Council Strategic Views and Landmarks: A Building Height Policy for Medway, Part 2 (2006) <http://www.medway.gov.uk/PDF/Building%20height%20policy%20appendix.pdf>





# Rural Issues

Issues and Options Consultation Document

## Rural Issues

- 13.1 The rural area makes up the majority of Medway's land area, but accommodates only around 12% of the population, primarily in the villages and hamlets of the Hoo Peninsula and the Medway Valley. The rural community has a notably different profile from the Medway average, with 75% of people being aged 16-64 years, compared with 66% across the whole borough, and a corresponding drop in the proportion of people under 16 (14% compared with 20%).
- 13.2 Medway's rural area is physically very diverse. It encompasses high grade agricultural land, strategic infrastructure and industrial installations, small and large villages, and protected habitats and landscapes. Agriculture is an important land use, including arable and horticultural crops. However, in the context of the larger urban economy, traditional rural business sectors such as agriculture, forestry and fishing only account for 1% of total business numbers in Medway. This compares to 3.3% in the southeast and 6.4% nationally. Like other sectors of the economy, agricultural business needs evolve over time, and the new Local Plan must address potential changes.
- 13.3 Although all villages lie within 12 miles of the urban areas of Medway, they have a strikingly different character and many have a sense of remoteness. Hoo St Werburgh is the largest village and acts as a service centre for the wider Hoo Peninsula. Many of the smaller villages have a limited range of services, and facilities are often in need of investment. In the summer of 2015 the Council undertook a Village Infrastructure Audit in conjunction with Parish Councils. This identified a number of shortfalls in the range, condition and capacity of local services and facilities.
- 13.4 In terms of housing stock, the rural areas have a greater proportion of large properties and relatively few of the smaller homes that may be affordable for first time buyers and young families, when compared to the main urban area.
- 13.5 Public transport in the rural areas can be limited and expensive, particularly in off-peak times. This is perceived as a greater problem on the Hoo Peninsula than in the Medway Valley, where the villages of Halling and Cuxton have railway stations with links to Strood, Maidstone and beyond, in addition to bus services. Around 6% of rural households do not have access to a car or van and are therefore reliant on public transport. This may become an increasing trend, given the aging population in Medway generally and the rural areas more particularly. A key challenge in maintaining the sustainability of Medway's rural communities is therefore securing access to services, jobs and extended choice of homes to support a good quality of community life.
- 13.6 High quality broadband services enable people to access other forms of service delivery, and are essential for many SME businesses including those who work from home. Rural Medway, in common with many rural areas around the country, experiences a poorer quality of broadband and mobile

services. The Broadband Development UK programme<sup>11</sup> is investing in the upgrading of infrastructure to allow rural residents to benefit from improved high speed broadband.

- 13.7 All of Medway's villages (except those around Lower Rainham) have Parish Councils, which provide many of the services and facilities for their areas, such as play areas, allotments, burial grounds, village halls, and also stage community events. In addition to this, Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council are supporting their community with the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan, to identify priorities and actions to address local needs. Work on this started in 2015.

### QUESTIONS

- 38) How should the role of Hoo St Werburgh as a service centre be developed?
- 39) What provision needs to be made for employment in rural Medway?
- 40) How should the Local Plan address the need to maintain and improve access to services in rural areas?
- 41) What consideration should be given to strategic infrastructure and development in rural Medway?
- 42) How can the Local Plan ensure that strategic and local needs are satisfactorily addressed in areas working towards production of a Neighbourhood Plan?

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/broadband-delivery-uk>



# **Infrastructure and Services**

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Infrastructure and Services

### Health

- 14.1 Medway's population faces some health challenges. Average male expectancy is below the national average, and there are pockets of marked health issues in some neighbourhoods, with reduced life expectancy and health impairments. Lifestyle issues including smoking, obesity and alcohol are key contributors to high mortality rates of the major killers in Medway, particularly circulatory disease, cancer and respiratory disease.
- 14.2 A key objective of the Local Plan will be to promote a healthier Medway, seeking opportunities to support healthier lifestyle choices, making it easier for people to:
- access more nutritious food;
  - walk, cycle and exercise locally
  - engage in community life to boost mental wellbeing.
- 14.3 Safe and convenient access to a range of services, open space and the ability to participate in community life are intrinsic to supporting an individual's health and wellbeing.
- 14.4 Healthcare services in Medway are delivered through 55 GP practices, community health centres and the Medway Maritime Hospital. 150 GP practitioners serve a registered patient population of 295,223; this level of patients per GP is one of the highest in Kent<sup>12</sup>. The high number of single practice GPs in converted residential properties is a particular issue, particularly as many approach retirement.

14.5



Medway Maritime Hospital, photo courtesy Stuart Thomas

The Medway Maritime Hospital is the largest and busiest hospital in Kent, serving a population of approximately 400,000 across the areas of Medway and Swale. It is on a constrained site in a tightly knit part of Gillingham, which places pressures on buildings and infrastructure, and can experience difficulties of access. There are increasing trends for healthcare to be delivered in

<sup>12</sup> Kent Growth and Infrastructure Framework 2015 – 2031. Available at: [http://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/50124/Growth-and-Infrastructure-Framework-GIF.pdf](http://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0012/50124/Growth-and-Infrastructure-Framework-GIF.pdf)

community or home settings, which may help reduce the pressure on the hospital.

- 14.6 The Local Plan process presents an opportunity to assess the land needed to accommodate such changes, and any other spatial implications of this approach, for example demand for reliable high-speed communications infrastructure to enable delivery of “telecare” services. This may include consideration of relocation of some, or all, of the services delivered at the hospital site to more accessible locations in Medway.

#### **QUESTIONS**

- 43) What changes to the built environment could facilitate healthier communities?
- 44) How can the Local Plan encourage access to healthy food options and growing opportunities?
- 45) How can the Local Plan most effectively promote greater physical activity in Medway?
- 46) What changes to the current siting of healthcare facilities should be considered in the Local Plan? Are there opportunities to provide new sites, and/or to integrate health services in local communities?





# **Social and Community Infrastructure**

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Social & Community Infrastructure

- 15.1 To ensure both existing and new residents benefit from the growth that will be delivered in Medway over the next twenty years it is important that social and community infrastructure, such as schools, GP surgeries, community centres and leisure facilities, are delivered in support of new developments in a timely fashion and in appropriate locations. There is also a challenge to deliver adaptations and improvements to existing facilities.

### Education



- 15.2 Forecasting of future demand for school places shows that schools in Medway are generally at or close to capacity. The pressures are particularly acute for coming years in secondary schools. All new development coming forward over the plan period will need to contribute towards providing increased capacity in schools to meet the needs arising from their developments.
- 15.3 While some of this investment can be used to expand capacity at existing schools, the scale of growth forecast for Medway over the plan period will also require new provision. This will be a key consideration for areas that are the focus of substantial new development, and schools sites and buildings will need to be incorporated into the plans for major growth locations.

### Community Facilities

- 15.4 There are a number of community facilities across Medway. Relatively few are in purpose-built community centres, with others in church or village halls.

They play an extremely important role in accommodating community events and activities. They are, or can be, spaces for promoting social cohesion. Management of the facilities is also varied, with some run by the Council and others by independent organisations, individual churches, parish councils, charities or private businesses. Often, the financial viability of these facilities can be an issue as the relatively low income generating potential does not always meet maintenance costs, or allow for investment to improve capacity, standards and therefore marketability.

- 15.5 As Medway's communities change, facilities need to be responsive to these demographic shifts. For example, an increase in the black and ethnic minorities communities in Medway could bring new needs for places of worship. An ageing population may be more dependent on facilities that are easily accessible within walking distance.
- 15.6 To be successful in promoting integration, any new facilities delivered as part of large-scale strategic developments, need to be planned with reference to the needs of both existing and new communities. There may be opportunities to invest in improvements to existing facilities to expand their use and functions.

#### QUESTIONS

- 47) How best can the Local Plan secure the provision of new and expanded schools to meet the needs of Medway's communities and ensure that such infrastructure is delivered in a timely manner and located appropriately as a key element of sustainable development?
- 48) What community facilities are needed by Medway's population over the plan period, and how should they be delivered and managed?



# Open Space

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Open Space

16.1 Open space offers multiple benefits for health, tourism, wildlife and place making. The open space network also brings a range of environmental, social and economic services such as:

- Capturing carbon
- Storing rain runoff
- Cooling urban streets and homes
- Providing a home for wildlife
- Preserving historically and culturally rich urban landscapes
- Creating local identity and sense of place.

16.2 Medway Council's open space portfolio totals 1900 hectares, and includes:

- 48 country sites;
- 3 country parks;
- 33 allotments;
- 125 play areas;
- 52 outdoor sports sites; and
- 25 formal parks & gardens.



*Hillyfields  
play area,  
Gillingham*

16.3 A local standard of 3.25ha per 1000 population is currently used as a basis for assessing the level of provision, including that which should be made in new developments. This compares to standards of 6.14ha per 1,000 people in Tonbridge and Malling, 10.1ha in Gravesham and 7.39ha in Swale.

16.4 Medway has existing shortfalls in levels of provision for allotments (-40%), outdoor sport (-25 junior pitches) and play (-38ha). Some types of open space also have quality issues. There is significant spatial variation across Medway, with shortfalls more pronounced in some areas than others.

16.5 The Medway Wildlife Countryside and Open Space Strategy (2008 – 16), sets a vision of celebrated open spaces and countryside. Significant progress has been made towards this vision, with investment of £5.1M in playgrounds, allotments, parks and outdoor sports provision, but there is still work to do to fully realise it. Successes include the creation of seven Green Flag sites, and the establishment of 18 “Friends of...” Groups, taking local responsibility for raising the quality of their open spaces.

### Issues

16.6 In a climate of pressured resources, there is an increasing challenge to secure a positive and sustainable future for Medway's open spaces and the communities that depend on them. New approaches to provision and management must be considered, to enable the council to better respond to current and future challenges around health, climate change, demographics and housing numbers. Continuing the existing approach will not be sustainable.

- 16.7 This may include rationalising the open space estate, allowing some sites to be declared surplus to requirements and put to other uses. The Council's ambition is to preserve the integrity of the open space estate, and given existing shortfalls in some types of provision, it would be a difficult decision. However, given the financial pressures, it cannot be simply ruled out. A less radical alternative might be to reallocate open space between the various types to better match need and supply, instead of seeking to meet shortfall through the provision of new land, with its attendant financial implications. A multi-functional model of open space provision could also reduce shortfalls.
- 16.8 In addition to existing shortfalls, anticipated levels of population and housing growth will put pressure on the open space network, with an anticipated demand of 230ha of new open space based on current standards. Given the importance of open space as a community resource and the benefits it can deliver, this demand will need to be addressed alongside housing growth. A further question is whether this demand should be met in its entirety within development sites. Alternatively, investment could be directed to multi-functional hub sites. Large new developments might accommodate a hub, while others could be in existing urban areas. In reality, a balance would likely be required between the two approaches.
- 16.9 In terms of management, open space delivered through new developments already tends to be managed privately rather than adopted by the Council. However, the approach to management of existing open spaces will also have to be kept under review if the Council's ambition of preserving the estate is to be met. This may mean difficult decisions about which open space types and sites are prioritised for available funding, and which partnerships continue to be delivered. There are other management models that could be considered, for example, increased community participation, which can also help reflect users' changing needs and profiles.

#### QUESTIONS

- 49) Is it an appropriate ambition to preserve the integrity of the open space estate, or should we be seeking to rationalise the estate?
- 50) Should we continue to set a local space standard and seek to address shortfalls by new provision, and if so is the current level of 3.25ha per 1,000 population appropriate?
- 51) Should we move to a multi-functional hub model of provision, and what might this look like in practice?
- 52) Should new development provide on-site open space, investment into the existing estate, or a balance of the two approaches?
- 53) What management models and priorities should we consider? Should we seek to increase community involvement in open space provision and how might this be accomplished?





# Sports Facilities

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Sports Facilities

- 17.1 Sport has a key role to play in promoting health and community life. It is an important part of Medway's cultural offer, and an area where investments have been made to improve the quality of facilities and encourage increased participation rates. Medway has wide-ranging sporting engagement and seeks to promote active lifestyles.
- 17.2 Quantity standards for outdoor sports pitches are encompassed in the open space standard discussed above. For various types of indoor sport, including swimming pools, Sport England sets recommended standards for the level of provision per population. Medway anticipates shortfalls in a number of these types of provision, given the level of population growth expected. It may be possible to meet some of this shortfall through community use of school sports facilities, rather than standalone new facilities, if agreements can be reached with the responsible bodies.
- 17.3 In 2012 Medway Council commissioned a 'Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Facility Study'. This indicated that many facilities in Medway needed improvement. Over a third of football pitches, tennis courts and golf courses were rated as below average, and 60% of bowling greens fell short of expected standards.
- 17.4 In Medway participation in sport is generally lower than the South East and England averages and dropped between 2005/06 and 2014/15:

| Participation levels in sport 2014/2015 |            |         |
|---|------------|---------|
| Medway                                  | South East | England |
| 32.2%                                   | 36.9%      | 35.25%  |

- 17.5 Gillingham Football Club has a strong association with Medway. Priestfield Stadium in Gillingham has a capacity of 11,582. The stadium is within half a mile of Gillingham Railway Station but is located in a predominantly residential area formed of high-density terraced housing. The club has aspirations to upgrade its stadium and has actively been seeking to move to a new location in Medway, releasing the Priestfield site for redevelopment.

### QUESTIONS

- 54) What provision should be made for sport in the Local Plan, including in relation to population growth and new developments?
- 55) How should the Local Plan address the aspirations for a new stadium for Gillingham FC?

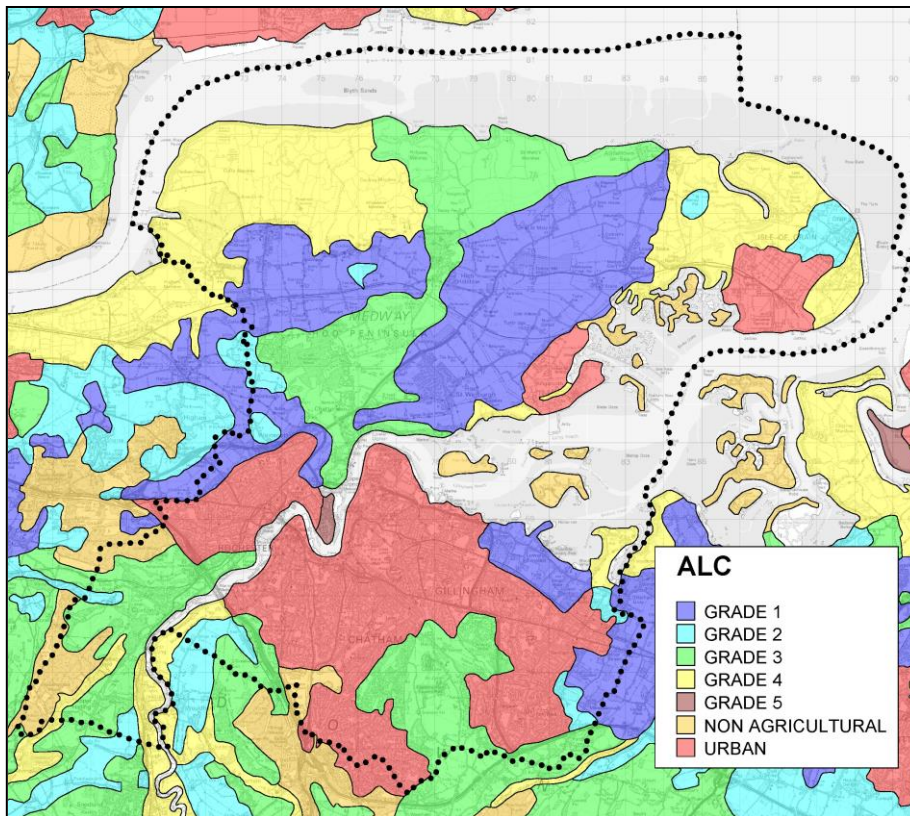
# Natural Resources

Issues and Options Consultation Document

## Natural Resources

### Agricultural Land

- 18.1 Medway has a rich history of farming and it contains some of the best and most versatile agricultural land, as shown on the map below. Traditionally, much of this would have fallen within the North Kent Fruit Belt, and there are remaining orchards in some areas, particularly around Meresborough and in parts of the Hoo Peninsula.



*Agricultural Land Classifications*

- 18.2 Much of this land falls close to existing settlements, and is of interest for potential development. In some areas, the high quality land is not being used productively for agriculture, and the landscape has become degraded, with equine and urban fringe uses predominating.

#### QUESTION

- 56) What weight should be given to the protection of the best and most versatile agricultural land, in the context of considering sustainable locations to accommodate growth in Medway?

# Air Quality

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Air Quality

19.1



*Image courtesy of Stuart Thomas*

In 2015 the Council consulted on an Air Quality Action Plan for Medway. There are currently 3 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within Medway (Central Medway, Pier Road – Gillingham, and High Street – Rainham), all designated in August 2010. These were designated as these areas contained a level of nitrogen dioxide that annually on average exceeds 40ug/m<sup>3</sup>. The reasons for these high levels of nitrogen dioxide are due to transport types and traffic levels (mainly heavy goods vehicles and buses, plus congestion).

19.2

NO<sub>2</sub> has been identified as having various adverse health effects, particularly on the respiratory system. Short-term exposure to this pollutant can increase the likelihood of reaction to allergens such as pollen and has

been known to increase asthma in some people, especially children. It is estimated in that in the UK, air pollution reduces life expectancy of every person by an average of 7-8months, with equivalent health costs of up to £20 billion each year; an added burden on the NHS.

19.3

In Medway, 919 residential properties are within 10m of the roads in the Central AQMA, in Pier Road, there are 22 residential properties and in Rainham, there are 66 residential properties. In Central Medway in particular, there are also a large number of potential development sites within the AQMA, which could result in a large increase in population affected by the pollutant levels.

### QUESTION

- 57) How should the Local Plan address the AQMAs and the potential development sites that could be affected by pollutants in these areas?

# Minerals

Issues and Options Consultation Document

## Minerals

- 20.1 The council must consider its contribution to the sustainable supply of minerals and this is recognised as a cross border issue due to the strategic nature of the resource.
- 20.2 Medway's geology provides deposits of sand and gravel, largely concentrated on the Hoo Peninsula. Their characteristics make them generally attractive for high specification value added concrete production. Total proven aggregate mineral resources in the Medway area are calculated to be 1,640,000 tonnes. The total potential (proven and unproven) river terrace sand and gravel reserves in the unconstrained areas of the Hoo Peninsula may range from 3,345,326 tonnes to 4,547,940 tonnes.
- 20.3 Currently there are no active quarrying operations in Medway, although there is extant planning permission for sand and gravel extraction at Kingsnorth Quarry and reserves at Perry's Farm, Grain.

- 20.4 Medway's wharves at Cliffe, Eurowharf and Isle of Grain make an important contribution to the importation of aggregates, particularly crushed rock and marine dredged aggregates into the south east region. Kent and Medway are together responsible for the importation of 90% of these materials into the region. The use of secondary and recycled aggregates is increasing as a supply source. Monitoring work



*Cliffe Aggregates*

through the authority's Local Aggregate Assessment in 2014 concluded that Medway was making an appropriate contribution to the needs of the region through its supply of this resource.

### QUESTIONS

- 58) What approach should be taken to planning for land won minerals in Medway?
- 59) What are the requirements for wharves and their supporting land-side infrastructure in Medway over the plan period?

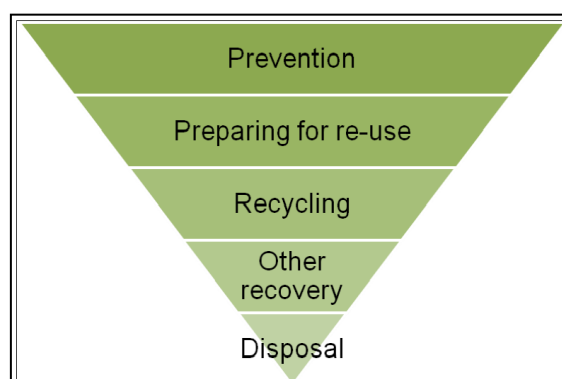


# Waste

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Waste

- 21.1 The Waste Management Plan for England (2013) and the National Planning Policy for Waste (2014) set the planning policy context for waste management. Whilst the NPPF does not contain policies specific to waste, its principles remain relevant.
- 21.2 Waste policy follows the principles established in the Waste Framework Directive<sup>13</sup>
- The European Waste Hierarchy (see below), which provides a framework of how waste management can be made more sustainable. Preventing waste from the outset is considered the best environmental option for waste management, with disposal being the least favourable option.
  - The principle of self-sufficiency, which states that most waste should be treated or disposed of within the region from which it is produced.
  - The proximity principle, which states that waste should generally be managed as close as possible to where it is produced, therefore limiting the environmental impact of transporting waste and creating a more responsible approach to waste generation.



### Waste in Medway

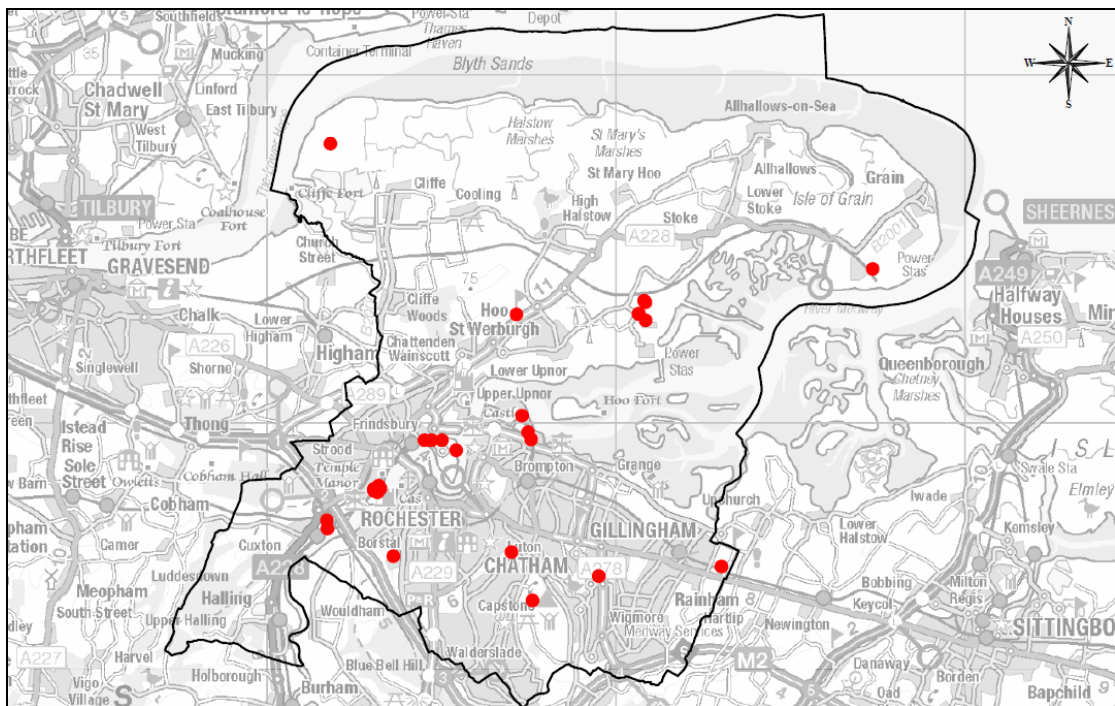
- 21.3 In 2014 Medway produced approximately 120,400 tonnes of household waste (of which approximately 67,300 tonnes was residual waste and the remainder was sent for recycling or composting), and 38,900 tonnes of hazardous waste. Other streams of waste arising in Medway include commercial and industrial waste, and construction, however these are much more difficult to quantify. There are currently 3 Household Waste Recycling Centres open to Medway residents.
- 21.4 The Medway Council Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2005-2020 (2006)<sup>14</sup> aims to drive up rates of household recycling. A recycling rate of

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/waste-legislation-and-regulations#eu-waste-framework-directive>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/medway-waste-management.pdf>

42% was achieved in 2013/14. Much of Medway's household waste is treated outside of the area,

- 21.5 Extensive movements of waste occur between Waste Planning Authorities due to commercial contracts and the location of specialist recovery, recycling or treatment facilities. Evidence is currently being gathered to assess the level of waste that is expected to be generated within Medway across the plan period, taking into account existing contracts for disposal, and cross border waste movements. Medway's participation in the South East Waste Planning Advisory Group (SEWPAG) assists in the coordination of work between Waste Planning Authorities in the area, and participation in this group forms part of the Council's approach to Duty to Cooperate. Consideration will be given to implications of changes in waste management provision in other areas that may result in increased flows of waste into Medway.
- 21.6 Medway has a wide range of waste transfer and processing facilities that handle waste from both within Medway and from neighbouring authorities. In 2013, there were 29 waste transfer and processing facilities in Medway, handling over 650,000 tonnes of waste.



### Issues

- 21.7 The existing Household Waste and Recycling Centres will come under increased pressure with the increasing population over the plan period. This need could be met by upgrades to the existing facilities, but consideration should be given to other options such as merging them into a central purpose-built facility in a more accessible and appropriate location.
- 21.8 The current waste disposal contract is due to expire in 2035. If future disposal options for Medway's waste are to include a waste disposal facility within in

Medway (such as waste to energy), planning for this would need to be considered at least 10-15 years prior to it being required.

- 21.9 A number of Medway's existing Waste Transfer Stations are located at Temple Waterfront, where an extensive regeneration programme is planned. To avoid a loss of waste processing capacity in Medway and the wider region, options will need to be explored for the relocation of these existing businesses.

**QUESTION**

- 60) What provision should the Local Plan make for waste management and disposal in Medway, for both household and commercial streams?

# **Sustainability and climate change**

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

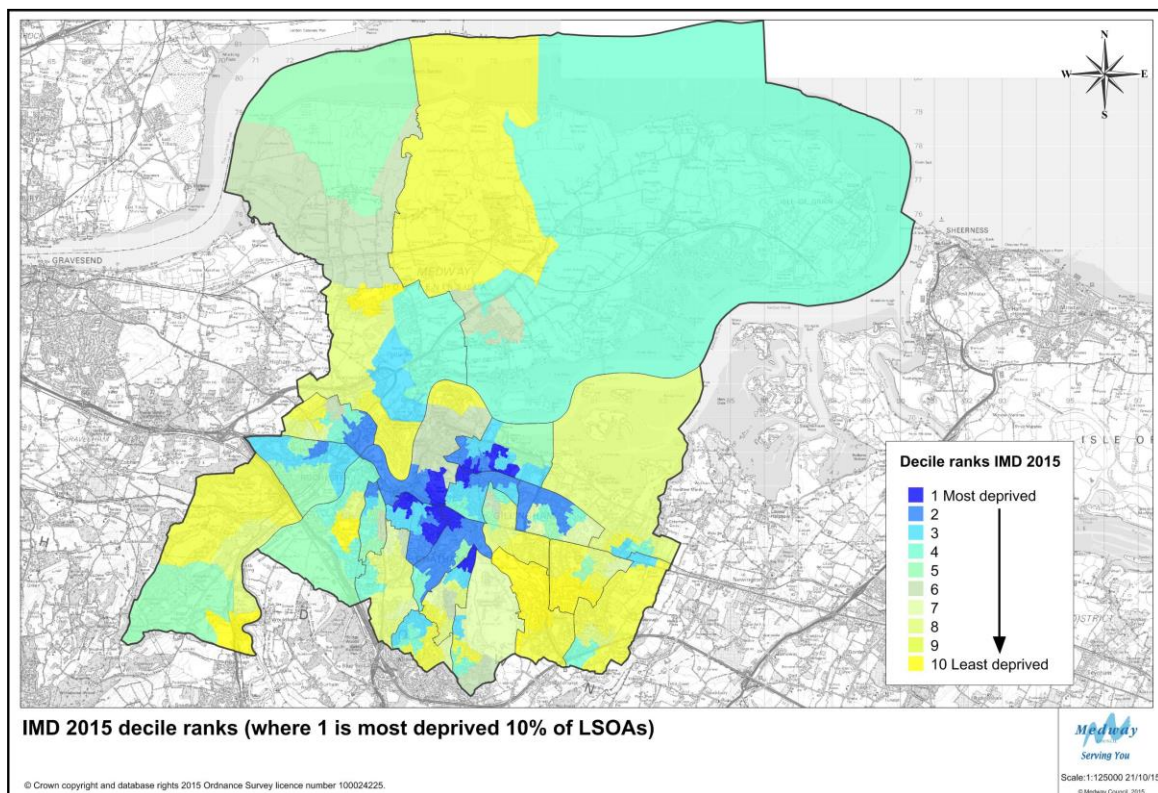
## Sustainability and Climate Change

### Sustainable development

- 22.1 According to national policy set out in the NPPF, “*The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.*” This “*should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision taking.*”
- 22.2 Sustainable development is a difficult term to define. It will be very different in each individual circumstance. In broad terms, it ensures development fulfils economic, social and environmental roles. It is possible for benefits under one strand to outweigh harm under another (and vice versa), but by keeping in mind the principles of sustainability, this can be considered holistically and solutions can be sought to ensure the three roles are appropriately balanced.

### Social sustainability

- 22.3 Social sustainability is often referred to as “equity” or fairness. This is a significant issue for Medway, as the 2015 IMD, discussed in the strategic issues chapter, show that there is considerable variation between the prospects of people living in certain parts of Medway, often within very close proximity to each other. These differences include crime levels, employment levels and health issues, and contribute to a difference of over 5 years in life expectancy (between Cuxton and Halling, at 82.6 years, and Chatham Central, at 77.5 years).



- 22.4 Another aspect of social sustainability is access to services; for example, rural communities across the Peninsula often cite accessibility to Medway Hospital as a key concern while in some urban areas of Medway, safe and convenient access to green spaces is limited. This is also an issue for urban communities, and local neighbourhood centres can have a key role for many people who are dependent on services and facilities, and community networks within short distances from their homes. As online services become part of the mainstream delivery options, access to high quality and reliable broadband is intrinsic to community and economic life and opportunities. There is substantial scope to upgrade the quality of broadband infrastructure across Medway to support the needs of residents and businesses.
- 22.5 Housing is discussed in more detail in a separate chapter, but meeting housing need, including affordable housing, and ensuring this is in locations that enable or improve access to services, is one way that development can contribute to the social role of sustainability.

### **Economic sustainability**

- 22.6 Medway's particularly poor relative performance in relation to employment and income in the 2015 IMD are clearly linked. Medway's position in both of these indicators has worsened since the previous IMD in 2010. Education, skills and training has not seen such a dramatic relative decline, but still shows a significant issue for Medway as a whole, with 43 neighbourhoods in the most deprived 20% and 16 in the most deprived 10%.
- 22.7 There is significant overlap between neighbourhoods ranked poorly on income and employment indicators and those which are most deprived overall and have other issues such as lower life expectancy.

### **Environmental sustainability**

- 22.8 According the NPPF, the environmental role of sustainable development means *"contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy."* The majority of these issues are considered elsewhere in this report, however climate change is discussed in more detail below.

### **Climate change**

- 22.9 The Government acknowledges that *"climate change is one of the most serious threats facing the world today. It is not just a threat to the environment, but also to our national and global security, to poverty eradication and economic prosperity."*<sup>15</sup> All sectors of Government and business will have a role to play in limiting and addressing its impacts.

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<sup>15</sup> Ministerial foreword to "Climate Change: A Risk Assessment"  
<http://www.csap.cam.ac.uk/projects/climate-change-risk-assessment/>

Planning can play a key role in helping local communities, businesses and the natural environment meet this challenge. The NPPF acknowledges that addressing climate change is “*central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development*”.

### *Mitigation*

- 22.10 The key means of mitigating against the most severe climate change is by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. A 2° rise in global average temperature is generally considered to be the limit above which the impacts will become much more significant and difficult for societies to cope with. In order to fulfil its part in enabling this target to be met, the UK Government has established a legally binding target to reduce emissions by 80% by 2050 (compared to 1990 levels), including a “carbon budget” to 2020 requiring 34% reduction levels.
- 22.11 Ways that planning can help to mitigate climate change by reducing greenhouse gas emissions include:
- Increased renewable and low-carbon energy generation
  - Reduced energy demand & improved energy efficiency, both in new buildings and retro-fitting to existing buildings
  - Distributing new development in a pattern that reduces the need for travel and maximises the potential of more sustainable methods of travel, to reduce emissions from private transport use
  - Where new technologies can reduce the emissions from a business or home, supporting planning applications to enable this
- 22.12 The Government has set national standards for energy efficiency in new dwellings, enforced through the Building Regulations, and Local Authorities are discouraged from setting higher local targets.

### *Adaptation*

- 22.13 Some degree of climate change is inevitable, given emissions that have already and are still occurring. The UK will experience rising temperatures, rising sea levels, more frequent extreme weather events and their consequent impacts. Studies of climate change impact nationally and internationally often have to make best estimates of what these might be, and how they might be addressed, because there is not always sufficient evidence to be certain. This complicates our ability to plan for climate change adaptation in order to reduce the future costs of these impacts, but the potential scale of risk is significant and doing nothing is not an option.
- 22.14 Adaptation measures can be taken for both individual buildings and development sites, such as incorporating green space and trees to reduce the urban heat island effect (large urban areas retaining heat, potentially increasing health risks during hot summer months). Consideration will also need to be given to how existing development can adapt to the impacts of climate change, particularly where space for these kinds of measures is



limited. Impacts of climate change in other countries may also have knock-on effects for the UK, so, for example, including space for food in new and existing development could help to increase food security.

## Issues

- 22.15 Improvements to Medway's economy (see the Economy Chapter for more details) could be expected to contribute to the social role of sustainability as well. However, without improvements in education, skills and training, it may be difficult for existing communities to access the opportunities that arise through Medway's growth.
- 22.16 A particular issue for the South East of England is water supply. With hotter, dryer summers likely to become a feature of the UK climate, this could have significant implications for an area which is already seriously water stressed, according to the Environment Agency's 2013 classification. The significant levels of growth expected for Medway will further increase demand on water resources. The Government has set out optional Building Regulations for improved water efficiency in new dwellings, which can be imposed where local evidence justifies this.
- 22.17 Because of the relative uncertainty about potential impacts and solutions, it may be appropriate to focus on measures which are easy and lower-cost to implement, or which bring additional benefits. For example:
- space for food growing can have positive health benefits to local communities;
  - urban trees can increase biodiversity and living in "greener" areas has been shown to improve mental wellbeing
  - orienting buildings to take advantage of natural cooling as an adaptation for anticipated hotter summers reduces energy demand and therefore greenhouse gas emissions, acting as a mitigation measure as well as adaptation

## QUESTIONS

- 61) What should sustainable development look like for Medway? What plans and policies should we put into place to achieve this?
- 62) How can Medway ensure that all communities share in the benefits of growth, in order to reduce the significant inequalities across the area?
- 63) What measures should new development take to mitigate and adapt to the risks posed by climate change?
- 64) How can existing development and communities mitigate and adapt to the risks posed by climate change?
- 65) Should Medway adopt the optional national standards for water efficiency? What local evidence would we need to underpin this?



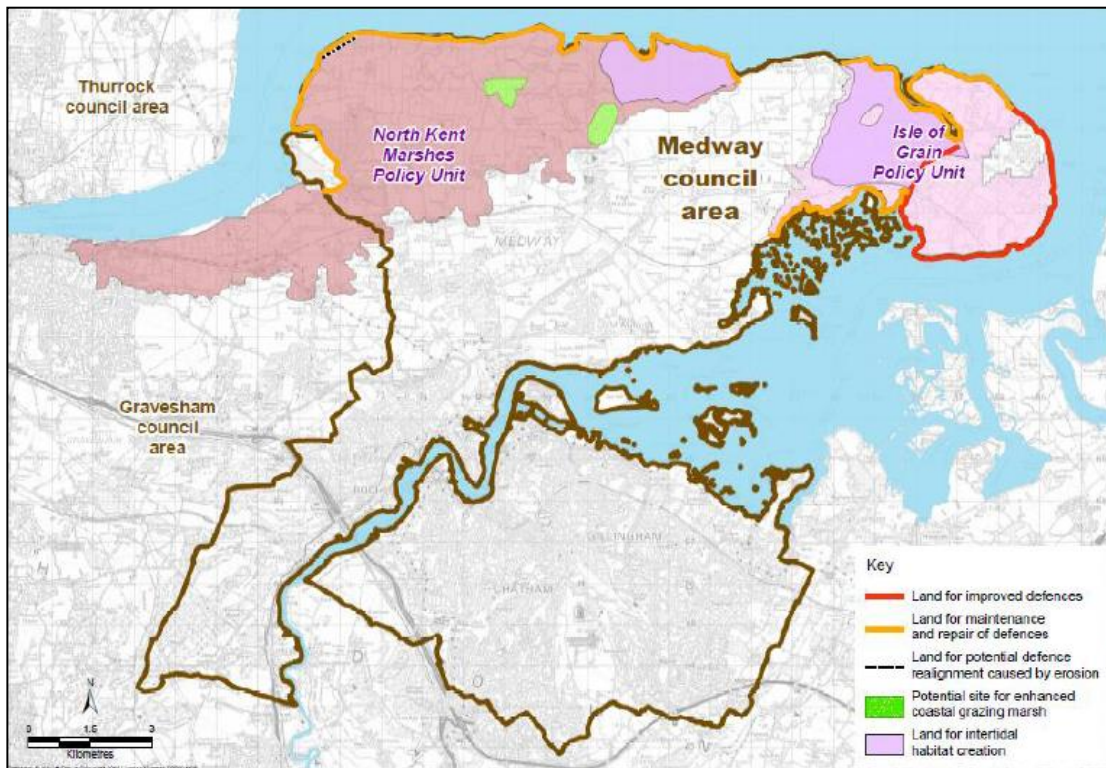
# Flood Risk

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Flood Risk

- 23.1 Flood risk is a combination of the probability and potential consequences of flooding from all sources including from rivers and the sea, rainfall, rising groundwater, and artificial sources such as overwhelmed drainage systems. The NPPF recommends a sequential, risk based approach to the location of development to ensure development can be safely and sustainably delivered.
- 23.2 Climate change, resulting in rising sea levels and increased frequency of extreme weather events, also needs to be taken into account. For new developments, this means ensuring adequate flood defences for sites within tidal flood areas (including the majority of Medway's waterfront regeneration sites), and ensuring that development does not increase the risk of flooding either within the site or elsewhere.
- 23.3 The NPPF states that new development should only be considered appropriate in areas at risk of flooding if priority has been given to the use of Sustainable urban Drainage systems (SuDs), and that SuDs should be provided in all major development unless the particular circumstances of a site make this inappropriate. There are opportunities for multiple benefits to arise from this as, with good design, SuDs can also provide accessible open space, biodiversity enhancements (including as wildlife corridors), improved water quality and attractive landscape features.
- 23.4 Another consequence of rising sea levels is "coastal squeeze". Low lying habitats close to water, such as grazing marsh and intertidal habitats, are squeezed between the rising water levels and inland flood defences. In the Medway context, almost all areas of grazing marsh and intertidal habitats are designated as areas of national or international importance for wildlife, and coastal squeeze therefore presents a significant threat to Medway's natural environment.
- 23.5 The South East Coastal Group, made up of the Environment Agency and local and County Councils have published two Shoreline Management Plans relevant to the Medway Council administrative area. These plans set out policies to manage the impact of coastal flooding and erosion, including coastal squeeze. The plans indicate that in some areas of Medway, flood defences will not be increased to account for climate change, mainly around the North Kent Marshes, Allhallows Marshes and Grain Marshes. A process of managed realignment in these areas will allow for replacement habitat creation. However, the existing built up area at Grain (together with the important transport links leading there) will require continued protection. Some of the existing defences may therefore require improvement in the longer term, to meet increased risks. The majority of these requirements are expected to arise after the end of the current plan period (2040 onwards), but there may be a need to safeguard the land required, and for development coming forward in these areas during the plan period to ensure that any flood defence works required address future risks.

- 23.6 The Medway Council area also contains areas located within two of the Environment Agency's Thames Estuary 2100 policy units which aim to incorporate improvements to existing defences as well as managed realignment.



Indicative land requirements for flood risk management (from TE2100 plan)

## QUESTIONS

- 66) How should flood risk and SuDs be taken into account in planning for growth in Medway?
- 67) What safeguards should be put in place to ensure future requirements for improved flood defences are not compromised?



# Energy

**Issues and Options Consultation Document**

## Energy

### Existing energy provision in Medway

- 24.1 Medway makes a significant contribution to energy supply and security, with three existing operational power stations on the Hoo Peninsula. This includes the very recent replacement of Grain Power Station with an efficient Combined Cycle Gas Turbine station, including a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) circuit that takes waste heat for use in the neighbouring Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal. Plans for replacement of Kingsnorth Power Station, which ceased operation in 2012/13, are currently in abeyance. Damhead Creek power station, also located at Kingsnorth, has permission for a significant expansion in generating capacity.



*Pylons on the Peninsula*

- 24.2 In addition to these large-scale power generation facilities, the LNG importation terminal at Grain is the largest such facility in Europe and has the capacity to supply around 20% of the UK's forecast gas demand. A number of pipelines and cables forming part of the national energy supply network also cross Medway's area.

### Renewable & low carbon energy

- 24.3 Government planning policy, both in the NPPF and in the National Policy Statements (NPS), which apply particularly to large-scale energy generation, is very supportive of renewable energy generation. The NPPF states that there is a *“responsibility on all communities to contribute to energy generation from renewable or low carbon sources”* and that policies in Local Plans should be designed to *“maximise renewable and low-carbon energy development while ensuring that adverse impacts are addressed satisfactorily.”*
- 24.4 The position is different for onshore wind energy, where a recent Ministerial statement and consequent changes to the PPG set out that proposals for wind energy development can only be granted planning permission if it is in an allocated site or zone (not an area of search) and the proposal has the backing of the local community.
- 24.5 Although not low carbon in itself, use of waste heat from fossil fuel power stations can significantly enhance their efficiency, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the need for additional heat generation for the end users. The permission for replacement of Kingsnorth power station included a



requirement that the possibility of waste heat connections be available. At the time of the Lodge Hill planning application, connecting this development to the waste heat from Kingsnorth was found not to be viable.

- 24.6 Fossil fuel power generation can also reduce its climate change impact by use of carbon capture and storage. This technology is not yet in commercial use in the UK, although a number of research projects and pilot studies have been undertaken or are ongoing, with Government support<sup>16</sup>. The replacement Kingsnorth power station has been designed to be carbon capture ready. The NPS for energy require any new coal-fired power stations to include carbon capture technology, and other fossil fuel powered plants to be “carbon capture ready” i.e. capable of retro-fitting the technology.

**Issues**

- 24.7 Energy is a complicated area, with different consent regimes depending on the location and generating capacity, as summarised below:

| Energy consenting regimes  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Onshore  |  | Offshore  |
| Up to 50MW generating capacity   | Between 50MW & 100MW generating capacity   | Between 1MW and 100MW   |
| Determined by the Local Planning Authority under the terms of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  | Submitted to the Planning Inspectorate as a “Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project” (NSIP). NSIP proposals are examined by a Panel of Inspectors and recommend to the relevant Secretary of State whether “development consent” should be granted. | The Marine Management Organisation is responsible for determining these proposals. However, planning permission (or development consent) may still be required for connecting infrastructure such as cabling where this comes ashore. |
| NOTE: Prior to the Planning Act 2008, large-scale energy generation was considered under the Electricity Act instead of as NSIPs. Some proposals submitted under this regime are still going through the process of getting all necessary approvals, including Kingsnorth Power Station. |  |   |

- 24.8 It therefore must be borne in mind that whatever policies the Local Plan includes for energy generation, any proposals above 50MW generating capacity will be determined in accordance with the NPS for energy, and local policies given limited consideration.

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/uk-carbon-capture-and-storage-Government-funding-and-support>

- 24.9 The Medway Renewable Energy Capacity Study was carried out in 2010. It identified potential for wind energy on the Hoo Peninsula (large scale over a restricted area, small scale over most of the Peninsula) and for solar thermal, photovoltaic, heat pumps and biomass to be incorporated into existing and new development. While the wind, solar and biomass resources will not have significantly changed since the time of this study, technology continues to advance in the renewable energy sector. New technologies emerge over time and existing ones can become more efficient in previously marginal situations. It is therefore likely that renewable energy capacity will have increased in Medway since the study was carried out.
- 24.10 Likewise, as heat costs rise and technology matures, the viability of using waste heat from Kingsnorth in large-scale new developments may change. Any large development sites near to the power station should explore this.
- 24.11 Solar farms were not a prominent technology when the Renewable Energy Capacity Study was carried out, but have become more frequent in recent years. Interest on the Peninsula, including previous planning applications, suggest it is considered a viable technology in this area. However, the Government has recently announced it will be ending subsidies for solar farm developments early, and it is not yet known what difference (if any) this will make to potential schemes. The main potential impact from solar farms is landscape harm, and concerns are also often raised about loss of productive agricultural land.
- 24.12 Renewable energy is a fast-moving sector and technologies are continually emerging or developing. Policies which are overly prescriptive risk becoming obsolete well before the end date of the Local Plan. Criteria based policies which are applicable to any renewable technology may be more resilient.

#### QUESTIONS

- 68) Should we allocate sites or zones for wind energy development?
- 69) What policies should we set for other forms of energy development?
- 70) How should we take advantage of opportunities for use of waste heat from the large-scale energy generation on the Peninsula?

# Transport

Issues and Options Consultation Document

## Transport

- 25.1 An effective and efficient transport system is essential to ensure Medway is an environmentally sustainable, economically prosperous and socially inclusive place.
- 25.2 Whilst Medway has enviable strategic transport links to Kent, London and Europe, there are some issues in how the transport system currently operates. A key challenge for the Local Plan will be putting a robust strategy in place to address the deficiencies in the transport network to ensure that it better serves existing residents and provides the necessary increased capacity to accommodate growth anticipated over the plan period.

### Transport in Medway

25.3



Medway is strategically linked by the A2 connecting the five towns. There are river crossings through the Medway Tunnel and across Rochester Bridge, as well as on the M2. Medway is served by rail links, within the area and to/from London and north Kent. There are 5 train stations in Medway, one in each major urban area (Strood, Rochester, Chatham, Rainham and Gillingham), plus two smaller stations on the Medway Valley

line between Medway and Maidstone. The introduction of the HS1 rail line has strengthened strategic links with London and the rest of Europe. All the stations and services are operated by Southeastern. As part of Network Rail's route utilisation strategy, substantial investment is being delivered in a new station for Rochester and platform improvements at Strood.

- 25.4 The bus network extends through the urban and rural areas, with a modern interchange at Chatham Waterfront. Arriva operates approximately 95% of the local network. A bus quality partnership is in place between the Council and Arriva to improve bus journey times and promote patronage increase. The network also extends to the neighbouring towns of Gravesend, Sittingbourne, Maidstone, and to Bluewater. The River Medway acts as a physical barrier, restricting bus routes to some parts of Medway. Although the bus network extends across the rural area, there are some concerns about the frequency, timing and cost of services.
- 25.5 The extensive network of footpaths, cycle-routes, and bridleways across Medway offers routes for functional travel as well as its leisure and tourism role. There are opportunities to enhance the network to encourage people away from using their cars, increasing accessibility across Medway.

Rochester Airport dates back to the 1930s, and is used by light aircraft for leisure, business, training, heritage and emergency services. In 2014, the council approved a masterplan to modernise the airport facilities alongside employment provision. There is also a leisure airfield at Stoke, catering primarily to microlight aircraft.

- 25.6 Medway's waterfront location supports both commercial and leisure marine activities. The ports and wharves offer access close to London, and although developments such as London Gateway may draw trade from local ports, there is ongoing activity. Aligned to the wharves, there is a need to ensure adequate landside capacity for onward movement of freight from deepwater ports and local berths. The marine leisure industry contributes to Medway's culture and economy, with a number of marinas, yachting and motorboat activities. There is a reported demand for additional berths and access points to the river, and opportunities for new business and community activities, where these are sensitive to the natural and historic environments.

### Issues

- 25.7 Although there are good links to the strategic road network, there are some congestion issues on the motorways, and problems on the M2 and M20 often create knock on effects for the local road network. Medway has a number of heavily trafficked roads and some general concern about congestion on the road network, which also results in air quality issues. Some sections of the A2 are operating well beyond their notional capacity, resulting in recurrent congestion especially during peak times. There is also growing overcrowding on peak train services. Further evidence of how growth patterns will influence traffic movements will be required to determine how Medway's transport network will need to adapt over the plan period. The Council is in the process of commissioning this evidence.
- 25.8 The Council can influence the condition of the transport network by making sure that the effect of future planned development on existing infrastructure is minimised, whilst positively planning for new infrastructure where this will be required. Further investments are planned to upgrade links between the Four Elms Roundabout and the Medway Tunnel.

- 25.9 Rates of cycling to work in Medway (0.7%) are well below the national (2%) and regional (1.9%) averages. This may reflect high levels of commuting out of Medway, but may also relate to infrastructure provided for cyclists.



- 25.10 In planning for growth in Medway and responding to Government policy to increase sustainable modes of travel, consideration needs to be given to:
- The capacity of the existing network to accommodate additional growth, and where investments may be needed in new infrastructure;

- An effective, accessible and affordable public transport system;
- Provision for walking and cycling to support options for non vehicular journeys, and make it easier for people to reach local services and facilities and move around Medway;
- Sustainable travel being central to the design of new developments, both in terms of larger-scale strategic sites and those sites which will be integrated into the existing urban fabric;
- Parking provision in town centres, residential and commercial developments.

## QUESTIONS

- 71) What infrastructure is required to support Medway's growth over the plan period?
- 72) What measures should be considered to increase public transport usage and rates of walking and cycling in Medway?
- 73) What provision should be made for car parking?
- 74) What are the requirements for waterside infrastructure, such as docks, wharves, marinas, piers and berths, and their supporting landside facilities, to support commercial and leisure activities?
- 75) How should the aviation facilities at Rochester Airport and Stoke be considered in the Local Plan?

# Deliverability

Issues and Options Consultation Document

## **Deliverability**

- 26.1 When developing the new Local Plan, it will be important to demonstrate that the policies and land allocations within it, are deliverable. There is also a particular emphasis on deliverability of housing land, with various Government initiatives looking at how this can be improved and, crucially, made quicker.

### **Viability**

- 26.2 Some initial assessment of viability has been carried out as part of the SHENA. There will be a need for further evidence to support this for later stages of the plan preparation.
- 26.3 Initial work suggests that while Medway's land values are often significantly lower than in nearby areas, there is sufficient viability to support affordable housing delivery and some contribution towards infrastructure without blocking development. There is some variation in land values, and it is possible that higher value areas (mainly rural Medway, some parts of Chatham Maritime, and central Rochester) may be able to support higher levels of contribution.

### **Infrastructure**

- 26.4 The infrastructure requirements identified in earlier chapters need to be delivered at the appropriate time and locations to meet the needs arising from the significant levels of new development anticipated across the plan period. Subject to viability, the funding for this can often be provided by the developers of the site. For larger schemes, provision within the development site is possible for a range of infrastructure and services, while for smaller schemes and types of infrastructure that serve a larger catchment (such as secondary schools) financial contributions towards the provision or improvement of off-site facilities is more common.
- 26.5 This has previously been through a system of legal agreements known as Section 106 (s.106) agreements, which are individually negotiated for each planning application.
- 26.6 Moving forward, the ability to fund significant levels of infrastructure from s.106 agreements will be reduced. Restrictions on pooling mean that, legally, no more than five individual s.106 agreements are permitted to contribute to a single project or type of infrastructure. Instead, Councils are encouraged to move towards adoption of a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). This will set a charge based on floorspace which will be paid by all new development, subject to exemptions set out in the legislation, for example for affordable housing and starter homes.
- 26.7 Unlike s.106 agreements, CIL does not have to be negotiated separately for each application and therefore provides a high level of certainty for developers and landowners. It also does not have to be spent on



infrastructure needs specifically relating to the individual development, instead being put towards a general funding stream for infrastructure in the local area. While this does have some advantages in terms of prioritising the areas of projects of greatest need, it does present potential issues in terms of ensuring that infrastructure needed to support residents of a new development (or to mitigate its impact) is delivered in a timely manner. This problem may be reduced for large-scale sites as developers can choose to make payments in kind to meet their CIL liability, by providing infrastructure themselves to an equivalent value.

- 26.8 The Council is considering whether to produce a CIL charging schedule alongside the new Local Plan. There will still be a residual role for s.106, for example for delivering affordable housing, the mitigation strategy for impacts on the SPAs (see Environment Chapter) and site-specific requirements such as highway improvement works.

### **New methods of delivery**

- 26.9 In seeking to improve both speed and deliverability, particularly of housing development, the Government has considered and implemented a number of initiatives to remove perceived delays from the planning process. These include:

- Extending **permitted development rights** to change to residential for a range of other uses. Although initially introduced on a temporary basis, many of these permitted changes of use have since been made permanent. Generally, they are implemented by a prior approval procedure which allows the Council to consider specific impacts, but not the principle of the conversion.
- Encouragement for use of **Local Development Orders (LDOs)**. LDOs have been in existence for some time, but have not had a high level of take up. They effectively act as a local permitted development scheme, where the Council sets out types of development which will not need a separate planning permission within certain parameters. The Government has set a requirement for 90% of suitable brownfield land (excluding that already identified for housing use) to be covered by LDOs by 2020. LDOs may also have potential for other sites and uses, for example to encourage economic development in suitable locations.
- **Enterprise Zones** are one of the few initiatives not directed specifically at housing developments. Instead it relates to business development. The Council, in conjunction with the South East LEP, is seeking Enterprise Zone status for Rochester Airport Technology Park.
- **Permission in principle**. This is a new Government policy, and limited information is currently available on how it will operate. It may cover brownfield sites in a similar fashion to LDOs, or it may extend to allocated housing sites, meaning that planning permission would only then be required for the details of the development.

## Issues

- 26.10 While there is evidence of reasonable levels of viability in much of Medway, this is very variable. A high reliance on brownfield and urban development land could leave the Council in a vulnerable position in relation to deliverability, as these sites are often subject to higher and unforeseen costs, such as de-contamination and site clearance. They are also often in areas of lower value. In terms of the waterfront regeneration sites, the cost of flood defences can be a significant issue for viability, and the Council has been exploring alternative funding options for some of these works, for example at Strood Riverside, to unlock development potential.
- 26.11 Other policies in the Local Plan will also have an impact on viability. For example if the Council were to impose specific requirements regarding design, on-site open space provision, or local water efficiency standards, these could potentially increase development costs. The Council will need to carefully consider these impacts throughout the Local Plan process to ensure that the Plan and its policies remain deliverable.
- 26.12 The Council is not the only body responsible for infrastructure provision, and even in areas where it has an overseeing role, it may have limited control over actual provision. For example, while the Council may identify a need for a new school, the Government expect new provision to be primarily in the form of Academies or Free Schools, over which the Council has limited control. There are also a number of sectors, such as health and social care, where the models of delivery are undergoing significant change, making it increasingly difficult to plan for future requirements.
- 26.13 Some housing types are exempt from CIL (see also Strategic Issues), which causes issues in terms of ensuring infrastructure demands arising from these developments are met. In addition to specific types of development, existing floorspace on a site can also be discounted from CIL liability. This has potential to significantly reduce the potential income from CIL in an area like Medway where a high proportion of development is expected to come forward on brownfield land, both allocated and windfall sites.
- 26.14 Large-scale sites, including some of the waterfront regeneration sites, often come with high infrastructure requirements. While CIL will make a contribution to these, it is unlikely to generate sufficient funding in itself. The Council will have to consider what additional funding may be able to support infrastructure delivery in order to secure the benefits of growth. Given general restrictions on public funding at present, there is no guarantee about what level of funding this might involve. There may therefore be difficult decisions about which infrastructure projects or types are prioritised for the available funding.

## QUESTIONS

- 76) How can the Council ensure that the Local Plan and its policies remain deliverable while seeking to ensure that development in the area is high quality and sustainable?
- 77) Should we consider setting different rates of affordable housing and CIL contributions to take account of differing viability between areas of Medway?
- 78) How can we ensure timely and appropriate delivery of infrastructure to meet the needs of new and existing communities? What infrastructure types or projects should be prioritised where funding is limited?
- 79) What use should be made of new methods of delivery to help speed up the planning process, and how can we ensure that quality is not compromised in favour of speed?



# Development Strategy

Issues and Options Consultation Document

## Development Strategy

### Background & Context

- 27.1 Medway is expected to see a significant level of growth over the plan period to 2035. While the area has had significant expansion in the past, it is likely that the rate of growth will be amongst the highest seen, and will have a significant impact on what Medway will be like as a place.
- 27.2 This offers both threats and opportunities. There is a genuine chance for economic, physical and social regeneration to establish the built up area of Medway as an exciting, modern waterfront city fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Ensuring that development meets the needs of all the citizens of Medway in providing high quality homes, jobs, leisure, and educational opportunities, and that it enables healthy and sustainable lifestyles, will be a key part of this renaissance.
- 27.3 There is a need however to protect what makes Medway special; its built and natural heritage. There is also a need to ensure that new development is accompanied by adequate transport and social infrastructure (schools, community facilities, hospitals).
- 27.4 Getting the balance right between protecting what is special and realising the opportunities that growth can bring will not be easy.

### Lodge Hill

- 27.5 In previous iterations of planning policy for Medway, the provision of a new settlement at Lodge Hill was central to the area's development strategy. The current status of this proposal is subject to a great deal of uncertainty. In September 2014, the council's Planning Committee resolved to approve the outline planning application for Lodge Hill. This included development of up to 5000 homes, 43,000m<sup>2</sup> of employment land, and various supporting services and infrastructure. It also included a mitigation and compensation package to address the impact of development on the designated habitats at Lodge Hill, in particular the nightingale population. Following a referral to the Secretary of State, the application was called in. A Public Inquiry is scheduled for 2016.
- 27.6 If it goes forward, the scheme has the potential to make a major contribution to meeting Medway's development needs, providing homes, jobs and services, in a sustainable and planned way through a new settlement. It would provide wider services for communities on the Hoo Peninsula.
- 27.7 However, given the uncertainty on the site, in advance of the outcome of the Public Inquiry, the new local plan must consider options for development, should Lodge Hill not form part of Medway's growth strategy. This involves not only identifying sufficient alternative land for the homes and employment proposed at Lodge Hill, but also a fundamental review of the development strategy being promoted for Medway. In particular, in the absence of development at Lodge Hill, consideration needs to be given to the Hoo

Peninsula in the local plan. To secure the sustainability of the rural settlements on the peninsula, meeting local needs for services is important. The options for further development across the wider Peninsula must be assessed as part of the local plan process.

### Development Principles

27.8 It is important that new development provides for high quality of life. In addition, the government requires development to be as sustainable as possible. In recent years the following principles have come to be recognised as helping to meet these two objectives:

- **Rich Mix of Uses** – *The accommodation of different uses in proximity to each other encourages people to walk and cycle to school, work, and the shops.*
- **Permeability** – *This refers to the ease with which people, not cars, can move through an urban area by a choice of routes. This means all parts of the neighbourhood are accessible, with an emphasis on nodes of activity like shopping centres, adding to its pedestrian-friendliness and urban character.*
- **Urban Blocks** - *A strong framework of streets is not just about movement. It is also about giving structure and form to an area.*
- **Public Transport** – *Bus/tram stops should be planned so that they are safe and accessible to the maximum amount of people giving a real public transport alternative to (but not replacement for) the car.*
- **Density** – *The key to increasing the amount of walking, cycling and public transport use is compactness: if housing is built near to facilities then travel time is reduced, and sustainable methods of transport are encouraged. Increasing compactness also increases vitality and vibrancy of commercial and community services and facilities, by ensuring that there is sufficient footfall and demand to support them. Higher density development also minimises the amount of land that is required for housing and therefore helps to minimise the impact on existing suburban neighbourhoods and the countryside.*

### Patterns of residential development

27.9 The pattern of growth, whether it is high density confined to previously developed sites, or suburban expansion in the countryside (to take but two options) will have a substantial effect on realising the opportunities that come with growth whilst mitigating the threats.

27.10 Alternative patterns of growth, along with their attendant advantages and disadvantages are outlined below:

*High-density town centre and riverside development.*

- 27.11 The last few years has seen the growth of new riverside communities in high-density developments of apartments. This has been successful in meeting new lifestyle trends and enabling a high quality, urban style of living. This trend will continue. Chatham Docks has planning permission for high-density residential development, and it is also encouraged by the masterplans for central Chatham and parts of Strood.
- 27.12 By bringing residents back into urban areas, high-density development can help sustain shops, offices, leisure and other facilities within centres for the benefit of all. It can also enable more sustainable lifestyles that are less dependant on car travel.
- 27.13 However, apartment living is not suitable for everyone. In particular, it is unlikely to provide the space that many families desire and need. In addition, the land that is currently available for high-density living will only be sufficient for a fraction of Medway's housing needs.
- 27.14 Currently, high-density development in Medway does not generally approach the densities seen in London or even in other major urban areas. Increasing densities further could help to reduce land take elsewhere and provide increased critical mass to support facilities, but would have implications in terms of building height and form, and would only be able to provide limited car parking, instead relying on public transport. As such, this type of development would have to be located close to existing or new public transport hubs and preferably close to a good range of facilities.
- 27.15 A further option to maximise the contribution of high density residential development to meeting Medway's growth needs would be to expand it into areas not traditionally proposed for this type of development. This might include existing large-scale development sites at Rochester Riverside and Strood, taking advantage of opportunities to comprehensively plan these areas as new and enhanced neighbourhoods. A strategic approach to renewal in areas of ageing housing stock may also be an option for investing in raising quality standards.
- 27.16 Consideration could also be given to redevelopment of existing employment areas such as Medway City Estate. This would be a difficult and radical strategy, not least because large-scale land assembly would be required and existing businesses would have to be supported through relocation. However, work carried out by Sir Terry Farrell as part of a Thames Gateway regeneration strategy in 2009 showed how redevelopment of Medway City Estate could provide a new urban heart for Medway, incorporating mixed used development and parklands. Clearly this would require careful consideration, as any benefits accruing from such a redevelopment would have to be balanced against the loss of an established and successful employment area, albeit with some identified problems such as poor access and public realm.



*Incremental suburban development*

- 27.17 Previous growth of Medway has been at the periphery of existing built up areas. This is logical and by ensuring that development is near to existing sewerage, water and other utilities, is often easy to achieve. Because of this it is the default option of most developers, who often have landholdings or options in these areas, therefore ensuring that land can be made available for development in a timely manner. However, the scale of growth is such that Medway would see very substantial new housing estates added to all or most of its current edges. This could include Rainham, Capstone, and subject to green belt changes, Strood and Wainscott. It would also see substantial new housing estates around many villages on the Peninsula.
- 27.18 Because the growth is incremental, it can be more difficult to plan for improvements to roads and community facilities. It also has an impact on the countryside areas closest to built-up area of Medway and may therefore be viewed as detrimental by many people.
- 27.19 On the other hand, well planned low-density estates could enable the most sensitive countryside features such as hedgerows, field patterns and important trees to be preserved, and could even enhance access to these areas. Such estates can be attractive in themselves, with good design, and could provide the larger family houses that Medway needs.
- 27.20 It should be noted that because this is often the easiest and quickest form of development, at least some incremental development will be necessary in meeting Medway's housing needs in the short term (i.e. over the next five years). If this option is chosen as the optimum means of providing for the growth of Medway over the whole of the plan period then it may be necessary to review green belt boundaries in order to provide for a sufficient quantum of development.

*Significant planned growth of existing settlements*

- 27.21 By planning for the substantial growth of an existing settlement, it is possible to require substantial improvements to the centre itself to provide better shops, schools and community facilities, improved streets and open spaces, such that the place functions better and the quality of life is improved for all.
- 27.22 The scale of development required by this approach is such that it would radically change the nature of the settlement (for good or bad). It could however, reduce the need for development elsewhere.
- 27.23 This approach is most applicable to Hoo, where growth could enable the provision of facilities that are of benefit to the whole of the Isle of Grain. To sustainably accommodate this level of future growth it might be necessary to reconsider Hoo's character and role, making it into more of a "market town" for the Peninsula, rather than the village simply becoming ever larger as under the incremental growth scenario. With this approach, a larger scale of planned growth would come with improvements to existing facilities and

provision of new. At a smaller scale, development round some of the villages, would provide an increase in population to help support the continuing viability of village shops, pubs and schools.

- 27.24 However, this approach can take longer to deliver, and there is a risk that improvements to infrastructure and facilities may suffer a time-lag from housing delivery, undermining the sustainability of the enlarged settlement and causing problems (albeit temporarily) for existing and new residents.

#### *Freestanding settlements*

- 27.25 Freestanding new settlements in the countryside could minimise the impact on peripheral areas of Medway and existing neighbourhoods. At sufficient scale, this could to reduce the need to build in all areas of Medway.
- 27.26 Because they are planned from new, such settlements offer opportunities to provide a range of shops, schools and other community facilities, parks, and employment in medium density centres and with lower density suburbs within walking distance. Freestanding settlements could also provide an outstanding green infrastructure with country parks, footpaths and bridleways offering increased access to the countryside and open space for the benefit of existing as well as new residents.
- 27.27 The 5000 home settlement proposed for the former military site at Lodge Hill on the Hoo Peninsula is an example of the scale required to make such settlements work. Whether or not Lodge Hill goes forward (see discussion above), there may be scope for further freestanding settlements on the Hoo Peninsula.
- 27.28 There is also scope for smaller freestanding settlements, around 1km in area, planned as 'garden villages' to accommodate up to 2000 houses each along with local shops, parks and primary schools. If placed in reasonably close proximity to larger freestanding settlements, or existing but improved centres such as Hoo, they could help support a greater range of facilities in the larger centres.
- 27.29 New settlements take a long time to plan and deliver. They are therefore unlikely to meet Medway's housing needs in the immediate future although they could help to do so in the medium term. There is also a risk that provision of high quality, modern facilities in a new settlement could "out-compete" existing settlements leading to their decline.

#### *Urban Extensions*

- 27.30 Urban extensions are large-scale planned extensions to an existing built up area. As with large freestanding settlements, each extension would be of sufficient scale to allow for the provision of good community facilities. An added advantage is that urban extensions would be in relatively close proximity to existing transport connections and within easy reach of existing

communities such that these areas could also benefit from improved facilities forming part of the development.

- 27.31 There is scope for such an extension between Rainham and Lower Rainham Road and perhaps between Frindsbury and Chattenden. It would also be possible to plan extensions along the Capstone and Horsted valleys. However, the topography and the surrounding road systems of the valleys are such that development in these areas would be in the form of relatively self-contained enclaves. The benefits that could accrue to surrounding areas would therefore be limited.
- 27.32 Development in any of these locations would erode or largely remove strategic green buffers and could cause coalescence of existing settlements and communities.

#### *Custom and self build*

- 27.33 Custom and self build houses are, as the name suggests, houses that are built by individuals or by small communities of would-be residents. Such developments would be distinctive and offer real opportunities for community development and pride.
- 27.34 They are not likely to be built in sufficient numbers to meet anything other than a small proportion of Medway's housing needs. However, they offer an interesting alternative to the standard housebuilders' product and could be a worthwhile part of major housing developments under any of the above scenarios, or as smaller stand-alone schemes.

#### **Chatham town centre**

- 27.35 The smaller town centres are relatively well defined in terms of their local roles, and while they may need some improvement, protection or investment (as set out in the chapter on Retail, Leisure and Town Centres) this does not go to the heart of Medway's development strategy.
- 27.36 However, questions remain about how Chatham town centre should respond to issues, threats and opportunities over the plan period. As the highest order centre of Medway, the role that Chatham plays in future growth will have a significant impact on the kind of place that Medway as a whole will be. A particular issue is the significant scale of potential development sites in Chatham centre and Waterfront, and how these should best respond to Medway's development needs.
- 27.37 Options for enhancing Chatham town centre include:

#### *Retail and civic heart*

- 27.38 Additional residential development and retail floorspace to help strengthen the town centre's historic function as the retail and civic heart of Medway has been the Council's strategy to date.

27.39 Whilst it has been difficult to attract and retain retail in recent years, this could become more achievable if the concentration of residential in the town centre increases, although it may still be challenging given ongoing retail trends. The success of this strategy is therefore likely to require the delivery of high-density development in the town centre. It may also require redevelopment of existing surface car parks, so will have implications for the parking strategy and public transport strategy.

27.40 Under this scenario the Chatham Waterfront sites might accommodate blocks of residential development with high quality retail space on the ground floor.

*A thriving mixed-use centre*

27.41 Additional employment floorspace and additional residential development, supporting existing retail floorspace.

27.42 Alongside additional residential development (as in the retail heart option), this option would seek to accommodate employment uses suited for town centre locations (see Economy chapter). New (or replacement) office and hybrid/workshop space would be required to be delivered as part of the identified regeneration sites or on existing vacant retail sites. Increasing the amount of employment activity in the town centre would increase footfall thereby making the existing level of floorspace provision more viable and enhancing the vibrancy of the retail offer.

27.43 Given the additional employment floorspace in the town centre it is not expected that there would be space for significant additional retail floorspace. However, this may be a more deliverable strategy given the changing patterns in retail behaviour discussed above, and there may still be scope for improvements to some of the existing retail provision, such as the Pentagon centre (subject to funding).

27.44 Hybrid and workshop type space meet a different sort of need to office accommodation, and as identified in the Economy chapter there is likely to be growing demand for this. However, access and amenity issues can be more problematic than for standard offices, and would need to be carefully considered.

27.45 Under this scenario, the waterfront sites might accommodate a mixture of residential and employment floorspace.

*A vibrant urban neighbourhood and large district centre*

27.46 Maximising additional residential development and allowing for a controlled reduction in retail floorspace.

27.47 Although reducing the scale of the retail offer would reduce choice it may increase the viability and vitality of the area retained by focusing activity. In doing this it would seek to ensure that the town centre accommodated

sufficient retail floorspace to meet demand for convenience goods (i.e. food and drink) but allow for a managed reduction in comparison goods floorspace, assuming that these needs would be met through online shopping or at the established regional and sub-regional shopping hubs.

- 27.48 However, it is likely this would change the character of Chatham from a town centre to a large district centre. Whilst there are good examples of large, vibrant district centres, this would be a significant departure from the historic role of Chatham.
- 27.49 Under this scenario the Chatham Waterfront sites would be almost entirely residential. In addition the High Street could be reduced in length and sites redeveloped for residential development. A more radical version might protect the High Street but seek the long-term redevelopment of the Pentagon Centre to accommodate residential with a reduced scale of retail provision.

### Issues

- 27.50 It is unlikely that a single pattern of development will be able to provide for all of Medway's development needs. There are advantages and disadvantages of each. Good planning will require a more detailed place-by-place analysis with an emphasis of finding the best mix of patterns such that growth needs can be met, and the majority of people can benefit from the opportunities offered by growth.

### QUESTIONS

- 80) Are the development principles right? Should other guiding principles be introduced?
- 81) Do you agree with the assessment of advantages and disadvantages of the various development type options set out above? Are there other advantages and disadvantages that should be considered?
- 82) Which development type (or combination of types) do you think best meets the identified growth requirements for Medway?
- 83) Should we consider more radical approaches to meeting development needs, such as significant increases in density, or large-scale redevelopment of existing employment areas for residential or mixed use?
- 84) Should the green belt boundary be reviewed?
- 85) What provision should be made for mixed use in residential developments, both high density and lower density?
- 86) What approach should be taken to future development opportunities and mix of uses in Chatham town centre and Waterfront?
- 87) Do you agree that the other town centres require improvement in their existing roles, or should we consider holistic review of any of them in conjunction with nearby waterfront regeneration sites?

# How to respond

**The Consultation period runs from 4 January 2016 to 5pm on 29 February 2016**

**By post:** Planning Policy Regeneration, Community & Culture, Medway Council, Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR

**By email:** [Planning.policy@medway.gov.uk](mailto:Planning.policy@medway.gov.uk)

**Online:** [www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy](http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy)

**This information can be made available in other formats from 01634 333333**

If you have any questions about this leaflet and you want to speak to someone in your own language please ring 01634 335577

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