

## Gravesham Borough Council

### Response on Hoo New Routes to Growth

New Routes to Good Growth proposes strategic road and rail infrastructure and environmental improvements to enable the delivery of 11,000 homes, meeting over a third of Medway's housing needs by 2035.

As Medway Council is aware from previous comments, the Borough Council supports the proposals, in principal, as a pragmatic solution to provide significant housing land supply as a rounded growth proposal which includes infrastructure upfront.

The views of the Borough Council provided within this representation, is not about the detail of the proposals within Medway, but the wider implications for the transport system as a whole of the additional trips generated by the proposals, and any implications for communities within Gravesham.

The transport infrastructure proposed, as currently understood, includes:

- Phase 1: new junction onto the A289 to link to Islingham Farm Road
- Phase 2: new relined road linking Upchat roundabout to A228
- In further phases a improvements to various junctions on the A228 and A289
- Electrification for Isle of Grain branch as far as a new Hoo station along with upgrading works to accommodate passenger trains. This includes from the Gravesham perspective:
  - Loop from Hoo junction to Cliffe junction
  - Closure of NS140 Kings Crossing
  - Accommodation bridge to replace a level crossing at Church Street (also NS138)
  - Signalling and electrification infrastructure

On the highway side, the consultation provides outline details of the road proposals but no information about the resulting traffic flows on the network or their justification. The A2/M2/A289 junction at Three Crutches already has issues at peak times (pre COVID) and no information is given on how this might change. There may be knock on implications for the A226 through Higham and into Gravesend if congestion causes traffic to seek alternative routes. Further there is the combined impact of this scheme, other development in Medway, and the proposals for the Lower Thames Crossing on the operation of the A2 through Gravesham. These impacts are both within the respective construction and operational phases

On the rail proposal Gravesham has already commented on the Environmental Impact Assessment scoping raising a number of matters that need to be examined, though these may not necessarily give rise to significant issues once analysed. The main concerns are the implications for the Higham Church Street area from the nature conservation, historic environment, landscape, and PROW points of view. These relate primarily to the new accommodation bridge at Church Street across the railway, replacing the accommodation

level crossing, and the proposed closure of Kings Crossing (NS140). The closure of Kings Crossing has implications for accessing locations north of the railway line within lengthened journeys for those that currently use that crossing.

There is a wider potential concern over the possible knock on effects on Lower Higham from changes in demand for services from Higham station. Currently it does act as a point of access to the rail system for those from the Peninsula rather than Strood station as historically assumed in Medway planning decisions, albeit Gravesend or Ebbsfleet International may be more attractive because of the higher services levels and what the intended destination is. A new station east of Sharnal Street might change that, though relative fare levels and parking charges at the stations will be relevant. Without a new station, the rail project as a whole, or the rail project being delayed due to issues over the electrification timescale, there would be significant potential issues over the role of Higham Station and wider implications on the transport network. The Borough Council considers that Medway Council needs to be modelling the implications of such variants within Medway and across the wider network.

The Borough Council is willing to work with Medway Council to explore these issues and how they might be addressed where relevant. As Gravesham is a Borough Council, Medway Council will also need to work with Kent County Council as the Highways Authority and Highways England on strategic and local highway implications affecting Gravesham.

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