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Organisation

Hume Planning

On Behalf Of

The Attwood Family

Type of Consultee

Developer/Consultant



Medway Issues and Options 2012-2035

Response of the Attwood Family

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1 **Introduction**

- 1.1 The Objectively Assessed Housing Need minimum target of 29,463 dwellings is supported which equates to an average of up to 1281 dwellings per annum. Medway Council's recognition that this OAN housing target will place great development pressure on Medway Council and that a full range of options must be examined in this fresh context is welcomed.
- 1.2 The Issues and Options document recognises that Medway comprises a built up area which is concentrated between the River Medway and the North Downs with an extensive rural area lying to the north of the river and this forms part of the character of Medway. The protection of the environment and the focus of growth upon opportunities in the urban area is strongly supported by the Attwood Family as a guiding principle for the future spatial strategy of the plan. This approach will serve to both protect Medway's best natural environment and safeguard the rural character of Medway to the north of the river whilst also supporting the wider objectives of the plan to develop tourism.
- 1.3 The Issues and Options Report also recognises the deprivation and areas of disadvantage which are concentrated in the urban areas of Chatham and Gillingham. It is asserted that growth in the rural parts of Medway will not address these inequalities and a shift in thinking by policy makers is required focusing on the "opportunity areas" in or closer to the urban areas.
- 1.4 Medway is subject to out commuting to the main destinations of Maidstone, Tonbridge and London. Accommodating development pressure close to public transport nodes and routes that connect with these destinations advances the case for development to be sited close to the urban area, public transport and motorway linkages. Such a spatial approach is also consistent with the location of Medway within the Thames Gateway growth area.
- 1.5 The Report recognises the increasing ageing population in Medway with population projections suggesting that the over 65's in Medway will increase by 55% over the plan period (40,500 in 2013 to 67,800 by 2035). There is also the need for more affordable housing and a recognition of the economic inequalities across Medway.
- 1.6 Older people will be more reliant on services that are accessible to them including health provision and those in housing need equally should be housed close to employment opportunities and services and facilities. A focus on the most accessible sites close to the urban areas is also warranted on this basis.
- 1.7 The Issues and Option Paper also recognises that provision for "starter homes" is unlikely to deliver the same infrastructure and services. This is a factor that should also influence the locational choice of future housing so that housing development is sited in the most accessible locations closest to the urban areas. These factors strongly favour a spatial approach which focuses development at the edges of the urban area.

- 1.8 Accessibility to the strategic road and public transport network is equally important for future employment land provision to meet the future development needs of Medway . There are opportunity areas close to the motorway within existing breaks between settlements that are capable of providing quality employment and office uses close to the motorway network.
- 1.9 Focusing development close to Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre through a comprehensively planned land use proposal which could also improve road connectivity is also a benefit of development in this location.
- 1.10 The Issues and Options paper recognises that “securing an effective green infrastructure network through new development will be critical to planning a sustainable future for Medway.” This can also be achieved through a comprehensively planned mixed use land proposal.

2 Options for Growth

- 2.1 As highlighted in the Development Strategy of the Issues and Options Paper, the development pressures on Medway to meet the OAN target require previous assumptions to be re-evaluated . The recognition that the role of Lodge Hill as part of the spatial strategy must be revisited is welcomed.
- 2.2 It is considered that the spatial options of new settlements “or garden villages” and a strategy focused on the Hoo Peninsula should be considered after the focus on urban extension opportunities (which will deliver greater sustainability benefits) has been exhausted.

Urban Extension at the Capstone Valley

- 2.3 In referring to the land separating the existing urban areas the Issues and Options Report suggests that “Development in any of these locations would erode or largely remove strategic green buffers and could cause coalescence of existing settlements and communities” Page 72.
- 2.4 Land at Capstone Valley offers the opportunity for quality place making to accommodate in a sustainable way the development pressures of Medway over the plan period.
- 2.5 The Attwood family have a unique ability through their land ownership to provide a deliverable and comprehensively planned extension to the urban area.
- 2.6 Key geographical and sustainable advantages of this land include;-
 - Is immediately adjacent to the urban area and existing services and facilities at Lordswood and Hempstead;

- Adjoins the Capstone County Park;
- Close to Gillingham Business Park and Medway Maritime Hospital;
- Sited close to the Park and Ride facility and public transport;
- Adjoins the motorway network;
- Adjoins the district retail centre of Hempstead Valley

2.7 Landscape evidence prepared by EDP and previously forwarded to the local plan process in response to the “call for sites” exercise identified that the landscape impact could be mitigated in this area. Historically this land has been perceived as an important buffer which prevents the coalescence of Lordswood and Hempstead. It is important in the context of the development pressure placed on Medway by the OAN housing target that all development options are reconsidered and past assumptions about potential directions of growth properly re-evaluated.

2.8 Through the Attwood family’s extensive ownership, it is considered that separation at the urban edge can be maintained through –

- An enlargement of the Capstone Country Park, which is sited within the central area, creating an improved central park for the benefit of the wider community;
- Amalgamation of the existing areas of woodland within the landholding to create a green infrastructure corridor.
- Enhancement of the hedgerow network and tree coverage in parts of the site to preclude the sense of separation.
- The sensitive siting of development within this area working with the topography and incorporating the provision of a number of strategic landscaped areas.

3 Sustainability Benefits of Land at Capstone Valley

3.1 As part of the emerging local plan process a number of different masterplanned options relating to different parts of the landholding and differing scales of growth will be presented to Medway Council. At this stage geographically a number of advantages of this site are highlighted which emphasise the unique accessibility of this option including;

- Proximity to the district centre of Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre (retail)
- Well located to Medway Maritime Hospital (health);

- In close proximity to Gillingham Business Park and with land adjoining the motorway network offers the potential for well sited employment and business land within the potential development area to meet Medway's development requirements (employment)
- Sited close to a Park and Ride facility and offers the potential for significant improvements to public transport connectivity with the central urban areas and also with the district centre at Hempstead Valley through the connection provided to existing local services (transport)
- The site offers an extension to the country park that will increase open space provision in the central area of the corridor which will safeguard this land as a buffer (recreation/open space)
- The comprehensive solution to the site offers the potential for a transport link between North Danes Way and Hempstead Shopping Centre (transport)
- The comprehensive planning land use solution would also allow cycle and footpath connectivity to be enhanced (cycleway/footpath)
- Linkages of the existing woodland blocks and open space within the corridor to create enhanced green network (nature conservation)
- The ability to deliver a mixed use proposal of employment, open space, residential, and community infrastructure including education facilities (education/mix of Community Uses)

4 Summary

- 4.1 A range of sites have separately been presented to Medway Council which warrant individual consideration within the larger land corridor. Collectively, these land parcels offer a comprehensive mixed use land solution that could deliver significant land use benefits whilst still maintaining a sense of separation between Hempstead and Lordswood.
- 4.2 The scale of development pressure to be met as part of this local plan process necessitates Medway Council must reassess previous historical assumptions about this corridor and to look creatively at a permanent solution for this area.
- 4.3 Masterplanning options are currently being prepared to demonstrate how perceptions of coalescence can be avoided whilst delivering creative land use benefits in what has been shown to be a highly sustainable location.

- 4.4 Such a spatial approach to focus growth close to the urban area where it is most likely to help regenerate these areas, will also serve to safeguard the rural character of Medway to the north of the river. The advantages of this opportunity warrant being examined carefully and objectively as part of this local plan process without the prejudice of past assumptions about this development option which have been taken in a different planning context.