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FUTURE MEDWAY LOCAL PLAN 2012 TO 2035

Representations on behalf of F D Attwood and Partners

Prepared by Hume Planning Consultancy Ltd

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These representations on the Interim Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Development Strategy (DS) are made on behalf of F D Attwood and Partners who have participated at all earlier stages of consultation for the replacement of the Medway Local Plan of 2003.
- 1.2 Medway Council as Local Planning Authority has failed on two occasions to produce a sound replacement for the time expired Local Plan. On both occasions and when the Council's strategy for replacement was subject to examination, it became clear after partial examination that what was being proposed was unsound. In both cases the Council was forced to withdraw the draft plan.
- 1.3 In these circumstances it would be expected that those producing the new Development Strategy, that is the subject of this consultation, would have paid close attention to and addressed the reasons why the previous attempts and particularly the last attempt to produce a sound plan failed.
- 1.4 In all the documentation that informs the new DS there is no mention of the Council's historic and continuing failure to meet, by a substantial margin, its own housing targets. With no up to date Local Plan this has led to development being allowed on appeal because the Council cannot demonstrate that it has a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land.
- 1.5 While there is recognition that the DS has to meet objectively assessed housing need (OAN) and discussion of the implications of the government's standard approach to OAN, this long standing old problem is proposed to be solved by old solutions that have demonstrably failed and been the reason why the previous draft plan was found unsound.
- 1.6 The Council has produced a document entitled Medway 2035. This contains worthy ambitions and objectives for the future of the Medway Towns and reference is made to it in the Vision and Strategic Objectives Chapter of the DS. The DS mistakenly states that this document will deliver on these objectives, but this is not the case. The Local Plan and only the Local Plan and the policies it will contain is the vehicle for delivering on these promises.
- 1.7 While the Council's municipal governance and interventions will play a part in this process it is the Local Plan that will provide certainty of delivery of housing, employment, regeneration and importantly the infrastructure and its funding needed to provide sustainable development.
- 1.8 The DS and particularly Medway 2035 state that the focus for managing change will be continuing regeneration, but it can be seen from the DS that regeneration will play only a small part in meeting not least housing and employment needs. Regeneration is supported but once again in this respect historically the Council has failed to meet its own targets set out in the 2003 Local Plan.

- 1.9 It follows that sustainable planned urban extensions to the Towns are also required and to a far greater extent than the DS recognises. Instead the DS proposes a strategy that caused the previous draft plan to be found unsound i.e. development within the Chattenden Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Lodge Hill (LH) and what is referred to as a rural town in an unsustainable location. For instance, at paragraph 5.2.2.1 of the Sustainability Appraisal of Development Scenarios (April 2018) a clear search hierarchy is set out, looking first to regeneration of Medway's urban centres, followed by development of a rural town around Hoo and lastly development in smaller centres or suburban locations, (the latter meaning urban extension sites). This search hierarchy, reflected in the SA appraisal, is considered to be flawed and urban extension opportunities should instead be elevated for deliverability and sustainability reasons.
- 1.10 The purpose of the SA is to assess the options for development in accordance with the requirements of an SA as set out in paragraph 1.1 of the SA, basically that flowing from the European Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (2001/42/EC) and accompanying Regulations and Policy.
- 1.11 To provide context for these representations on the DS those elements of the SA relevant to the issues raised are first summarised and comment on the DS is subsequently made referring to the pertinent conclusions of the SA in respect of the four development scenarios set out.

2 SUMMARY OF THE INTERIM SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL.

- 2.1 The document as it stands is quoted as an interim appraisal of four scenarios and an assessment of draft policies in the Emerging Local Plan (MLP). The principal objections to the DS (see below) are to a strategy that proposes development in an unsustainable location on the Hoo Peninsula, the proposed development at Lodge Hill and the failure to recognise that planned urban extensions to the urban area are needed to a far greater extent than currently proposed.
- 2.2 Failure to look at alternatives to development at LH was the reason why the previous draft Local Plan was withdrawn. There is no evidence in the four scenarios set out in the SA to suggest that this has been undertaken at the level of detail required to overcome the previous conclusions of the examining Inspector. It seems foolhardy in the extreme to continue to promote a development at LH, albeit reduced in scale, that is fundamentally at odds with legislation and policy that seeks not only to protect biodiversity capital but enhance it.
- 2.3 This could lead to two untoward outcomes, the first being that the examining Inspector will endorse the previous Inspector's findings in respect of LH and secondly it raises the spectre of a Judicial Review of the draft plan or indeed the plan as proposed to be adopted should it continue to promote development at LH.
- 2.4 The SA is first summarised under the headings below and its conclusions and

recommendations on the four development scenarios discussed when commenting on the DS.

i Biodiversity

- 2.5 Environmental designations are set out in 3.16.2 of the SA ie that the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 implements EU legislation related to the management of natural habitats and wild birds in addition to measures on the protection of SSSIs. DEFRA has also set out guidance and strategies relating to biodiversity management including Making Space for Nature 2010 and Biodiversity 2020: a Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services 2010.
- 2.6 The Framework pulls together policy on environmental designations stating that plans should allocate land for development with the least environmental value, where consistent with other policies in the Framework (para110). Importantly the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where development requiring Appropriate Assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directive is being considered planned or determined (para119). The planning system should also provide net gains to biodiversity (para 109).
- 2.7 Additionally the government published in January 2018; A Green Future; Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment. Amongst many things it aims to protect threatened species and protect wildlife habitats.
- 2.8 Comment is made below on this wide-ranging biodiversity legislation and policy in respect of the SAs conclusions on Scenario 4 which identifies LH for development.

ii Transport

- 2.9 The SA identifies the key issues for traffic in Medway as follows. There are adverse impacts resulting from high traffic volumes and a dependency on the private car. There is limited public transport in the Towns and reduction in NO2 emissions is required. Noise and light pollution associated with traffic, particularly in rural areas needs to be managed.
- 2.10 The SA sees opportunities to improve connectivity across Medway and the wider south east and encourage more sustainable forms of transport such as walking and cycling. No mention is made of improving the public transport offer with better connectivity which should be linked to the other identified opportunity of distributing new development to reduce travel time and at the same time reducing dependency on the private car.

iii Sustainable Locations

- 2.11 The SA has fourteen wide ranging objectives that are used to test the sustainability of the policies and development scenarios that when acted upon will lead to the policies and provisions of the new local plan embracing sustainability in the widest sense having had regard to the constraints and opportunities identified in the Medway Towns.
- 2.12 Uppermost in meeting these objectives is to ensure that development is proposed in

locations that meet not least the biodiversity and transportation objectives outlined above.

- 2.13 A major difficulty identified in comments below on the DS is that the Council's record on housing provision is woeful and the challenge of meeting not just the currently identified requirement considerable, but that seeking to accommodate the government's standard assessment of objectively assessed housing need for Medway, challenging beyond anything ever achieved or even contemplated by the Council.
- 2.14 It follows that having regard to the objectives and findings of the SA the location of development will need to be where its impact is minimised, in locations that on the one hand minimise the need for mitigation and infrastructure and where such locations are readily accessible to a wide range of services. Analysis of the four scenarios set out in the SA (see below) suggests that more planned urban extensions than currently proposed in the DS are necessary.

3 COMMENTS ON THE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY.

Comments are dealt with under the following headings;

- 1) The Location of Development
- 2) Meeting the Housing Requirement
- 3) Transportation
- 4) Employment
- 5) Landscape
- 6) Overall Conclusions

LOCATION OF DEVELOPMENT.

- 3.1 There is recognition within the Sustainability Appraisal of Development Scenarios of how crucial the proposed passenger rail connection to the Peninsula would be to make this location sustainable. The SA also highlights how important that this rail infrastructure will be to the "branding and image" of this location. It is evident that this rail line connection "building block" of the spatial strategy, which focuses on the Hoo Peninsula is dependent on HIF funding. Paragraph 6.8.2.2 of the SA states that "HIF

can provide the opportunity for unlocking potentially high impact strategic infrastructure schemes which can make this vision a potential reality.” Underlying this spatial approach is a belief that an unsustainable and unproven location for the delivery of housing, can be made more sustainable as a result of a new passenger rail corridor. The urban extension model is proven to deliver within a shorter timescale and developer funded infrastructure will also make existing communities in the surrounding area more sustainable and therefore have more wider benefits than a proposition that is based on making an unsustainable location more sustainable to justify its selection. For this reason, the elevated position of the Hoo Peninsula in the search hierarchy and as highlighted in Para 5.2.2.1 of the SA is flawed.

i Lodge Hill

- 3.2 Lodge Hill consists of the former Ministry of Defence site known as Chattenden Barracks. This site has been mooted for development for the last 25-30 years and in the previous draft iteration of a replacement plan was the principal location to fulfil housing and employment needs with a proposed mixed development including up to 6,000 dwellings. Because Lodge Hill was confirmed as a SSSI during the examination of the draft plan and the reason it was withdrawn, there was no discussion of whether LH and the regeneration programme would be enough to provide for identified development needs. This matter is discussed below.
- 3.3 The Council continually promoted the site as brownfield, but this is clearly not the case. The examining Inspector after a site inspection concluded that only about 15% fell into this category the rest properly being classified as greenfield. Subsequent to the withdrawal of the draft plan the Council perversely resolved to grant planning permission to a planning application for mixed use development on the Lodge Hill site that was the subject of 11,000 objections. A departure from the development plan caused the Secretary of State to determine that a public inquiry (since cancelled) was necessary. The developer then walked away.
- 3.4 Because the Council are still misguidedly promoting this site for development, albeit with a reduced proposal of 2,000 dwellings in a mixed development, it is necessary to briefly recall the previous examining Inspector’s conclusion that Lodge Hill was unsuitable for development and that a proper examination of alternatives should be undertaken, an established and necessary balancing exercise that was not evident in the council’s proposals for LH. It will be necessary to demonstrate that such an exercise has been properly undertaken when the plan is again submitted for examination.
- 3.5 In a letter to the Council dated the 21st June 2013 the Inspector concluded that the proposal for Lodge Hill would have a significant adverse impact on the SSSI and the National Planning Policy Framework’s objective of halting the decline in biodiversity. The council will be aware of the government’s 25 Year Environment Plan published on the 11th January 2018 further reinforcing this aspect of the Framework’s environmental capital objectives. The Framework is itself proposed to be revised and this is further discussed below.
- 3.6 The Inspector was not convinced that no reasonable alternatives existed and was not persuaded that any social or economic benefits that might flow from the proposed development at Lodge Hill would outweigh the harm to a site of national importance

for biodiversity.

- 3.7 The Council in the Vision and Strategic Objectives chapter of the DS recognise that the Sustainability Appraisal and Habitat Regulations process will inform the Local Plan and state in paragraph 2.38 that impacts on the environment are best avoided and that opportunities are taken to realise net gains for nature. Paragraph 2.40 states in terms that the "Council has a custodial duty to conserve and enhance the natural environment in particular designated habitats..." Draft Policy NE5 Securing Strong Green Infrastructure includes the following wording; "A high level of protection will be given to Sites of Special Scientific Interest and Ancient Woodland".
- 3.8 When it is realised that the proposal at Lodge Hill means development within, not adjacent to or close to, but within a SSSI, it is once again perverse in the light of the paragraphs quoted above and all that has gone before in this respect, that the Council still consider Lodge Hill to be a sustainable option for development. The substantial level of necessary mitigation pleaded in its favour is evidence of its significant adverse impact. In any event the SA concludes in respect of development at LH that there is a risk mitigation will be unsuccessful.
- 3.9 More worrying is the fact that if this option is proposed in the replacement plan it is likely be found unsound once again or require substantial modifications to be considered with the examination possibly suspended. This is not the way the Government requires plan making to be undertaken. It requires plan making to be expedited and is considering penalties for authorities that are dilatory in this respect. Medway's poor track record is evident for all to see.
- 3.10 It is axiomatic that in seeking land for development local planning authorities should begin by looking for sites that have less development impact than those that constitute Sites of Scientific Interest and Ancient Woodland. The DS states at paragraph 3.60 that if the proposals for Lodge Hill are determined to be sustainable then they would contribute to meeting OAN and could replace the need to release land at Lower Stoke and south of Shawstead Road in the Capstone Valley. In that these alternative sites are not subject to SSSI and Ancient Woodland designation it is difficult to reconcile this statement with that of a responsible plan making authority who will have to defend such an approach at examination.
- 3.11 The SA under Scenario Four, which gives consideration to development at LH, concludes that under Environmental Objectives 6,7 and 8 that the impact of development is significantly negative in the short, medium and long term. These objectives seek to protect and enhance biodiversity features and reduce and adapt to the impacts of climate change and pollution. The scenario is also said to result in the direct loss of high quality biodiversity habitat which is designated a SSSI, significantly impact on notable and protected species and result in the loss of high quality agricultural land.
- 3.12 3.13 It is claimed that the scenario protects Ancient Woodland from development pressure and direct impacts, however it is suggested that future pressure would arise from increased direct access. It is also suggested that monitoring can be undertaken to identify adverse impacts. Such an approach is inimical to the monitoring process in this instance in that once biodiversity is identified as having been significantly impacted, harm and/or loss would have already occurred.

- 3.13 It is quite clear that having regard to the previous examining Inspector's conclusions and those of the SA in respect of Scenario 4 development at Lodge Hill should be removed as a proposal in the replacement plan. F D Attwood and Partners have, through Hume Planning been in discussions with the council in respect of a series of interlinked planned urban extensions in the Hempstead Valley. It is the intention to pursue these through the local plan examination process in order to provide a more sustainable development for up to 2,000 dwellings than that currently proposed at Lodge Hill. Although an early application on part of the landholding is to be progressed within the portion of the landholding identified in the options diagram within the draft plan. Because of the extensive family ownership across virtually the whole of the Hempstead corridor uniquely there is the opportunity for a phased comprehensively planned mixed use phased urban extension that can be delivered in an accelerated way.
- 3.14 The Council is already aware of the arguments surrounding the suitability of these sites, in that they are closer to services and the main centres of population and can enhance and complement existing areas of open space and will provide education and highway benefits (including enhanced public transport linkages and routeways) which will also then be of benefit to the existing surrounding community. This option would also take a lower grade of agricultural land rather than the best and most versatile. The development of this corridor would also deliver transportation benefits which are discussed below.

ii Hoo Peninsula Rural Town

- 3.15 The Hoo Peninsula is isolated from urban Medway, consists mostly of Grade 1 agricultural, has its own distinctive landscape and comprises a number of environmental designations of international and national significance. The term Rural Town suggests this would be an isolated settlement divorced from the urban area. This in turn raises issues of accessibility to services and whether transportation options would be sustainable.
- 3.16 The scale of growth proposed is not identified but it could be substantial looking at the number of sites being considered, and it is recognised that large-scale growth on the Peninsula "is dependent upon significant upgrades in infrastructure, including transport, health, education and wider community facilities" Para 3.28 DS. However, it is doubtful that the Rural Town proposed would develop a critical mass to make it substantially self-sufficient, for example so as to avoid out commuting to find employment. The reality is that it would effectively be an extension and/or consolidation of the existing rural settlements on the Peninsula.
- 3.17 In the first instance the approach to infrastructure provision in association with development should be to focus development where the level of infrastructure required is basically in place and where development can contribute to increasing and/or improve the existing level of infrastructure through that occasioned by the development proposed. The justification for the proposed development on the Peninsula is to suggest that the infrastructure currently lacking in the area could be enhanced by development.
- 3.18 To meet the criteria set out above, new development in Medway will need, in addition to regeneration sites, to focus on a series of planned urban extensions to the Towns.

About seventy percent of the population of the Towns lives south of the River Medway and it is here that development should be concentrated where the level of a wide range of services is closer to the majority of the population compared with the situation on the Peninsula.

- 3.19 The DS recognises that one of the principal difficulties of accommodating additional growth on the Hoo Peninsula is the need to provide sustainable transportation. Development would place additional unacceptable pressure on the A228 which is already heavily congested at peak times with its junction with the M2 and this places a constraint on growth.
- 3.20 Transport solutions for sustainable growth require broadening the choices of how people travel, DS para 3.42. Public transport on the rural Hoo Peninsula is limited and there are higher rates of car usage than are seen in the urban parts of Medway. The strategy looks to upgrade the capacity of the highway network through new connections and improvements at Four Elms and road widening of the A228.
- 3.21 Additionally, consideration is being given to providing a new railway station on the freight only line that traverses the Peninsula and Network Rail is currently evaluating this. Paragraph 11.21 of the DS states that many commuters from the Hoo Peninsula currently drive from villages to stations at Strood, Gravesend or Ebbsfleet and with the scale of growth forecast in this option in the DS this commuting pattern is neither sustainable nor desirable. This commuting pattern adds to congestion on the A228 and congestion contributes to air quality issues at the Designated Air Quality Management Area at Four Elms Hill.
- 3.22 Without a new station it would appear that the level of development for the Peninsula as currently proposed would not be sustainable and cannot be supported. Network Rail will require a robust business case to justify the provision of a new rail service with forecast ticket sales guaranteeing running costs and providing a return on capital. From an operational point of view, it will be necessary to ensure line capacity on the Strood - Gravesend - London line is available during peak operating periods.
- 3.23 The Peninsula development option, if nothing else, relies therefore on a decision by Network Rail concluding that a new station and rail service is feasible. The business case for the station will be reduced by the necessary removal of the Lodge Hill proposal on biodiversity and environmental grounds. Before concluding on this option, a decision from Network Rail will need to be available at the time the plan is examined. Even if Network Rail were to support the principle the delivery of this option would depend on public funding HIF which is a risk to delivery compared with private (developer funded) infrastructure provision for the urban extension sites.
- 3.24 However, to concentrate this level of development in an area divorced from principal services centres and where the burden of new infrastructure provision is considerable is inappropriate given the alternative urban extension option available in the Hempstead corridor.
- 3.25 The SA considers development on the Hoo Peninsula under Scenario 2. It states in terms that there is no detail on the strategy needed to achieve the expansion of the rail network and associated infrastructure.

- 3.26 Also, it is clear from the initial assessment that there is “insufficient information to facilitate an assessment of this scenario against objectives concerning the conservation and enhancement of existing green and open space network (objective 5) and biodiversity features (objective 6). The overall impact against Objectives 5 and 6 is therefore unknown and would depend on the implementation strategy”.
- 3.27 In the description of the scenario it is stated that it would alleviate pressure for development “in suburban areas”. This is taken to mean it would reduce the need for planned urban extensions to the Towns. What is clear is that there is considerable uncertainty surrounding the delivery of this scenario and the examining Inspector will need a robust indication in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan as to how the necessary infrastructure is to be provided, by whom and over what timescale.
- 3.28 Given these considerable uncertainties it can be concluded that Scenario 2 will not bring about the urgently needed and timely delivery of housing and employment development.

MEETING THE HOUSING REQUIREMENT.

- 3.29 The state of housing provision in Medway is precarious. Throughout a period of 31 years the council has significantly failed to provide anything like the necessary level of housing provision and has only met its own development plan target on four occasions during this period. The under supply during this period has been in the order of 6,000 dwellings.
- 3.30 The Council's identified housing requirement for the year 2016/17 was 1281 dwellings. Completions for this year totalled 642 dwellings just 50% of what was required. Equally worrying is that the Council's housing trajectory for 2016/17 anticipated circa 900 dwellings. For next year, 2017/18 the trajectory anticipates about 1,200 dwellings with no evidence of where this total will come from in terms of completed development. The figures quoted are derived from the Council's own *Medway Monitoring Report 1st April 2016 to 1st April 2017 - Volume 1*.
- 3.31 This state of affairs arises because of the Council's refusal to recognise the failure of the anticipated impetus of the regeneration programme and which the council claims is the mainstay of the new DS, as well as its adherence to the Lodge Hill development that has failed to come forward in the anticipated timeframe and which it pursues notwithstanding the examining Inspector's conclusions that development at Lodge Hill would have a significant adverse impact on the SSSI and the Framework's objective of halting the decline in biodiversity. A conclusion that led the Council to withdraw the previous draft Replacement plan. It is clear that a radical approach to overcome this situation is required in the DS in the third attempt at a replacement Local Plan. One that should adopt new solutions to address old long-standing problems.

- 3.32 FD Attwood and Partners have discussed a number of potential development options for the Hempstead corridor with the Medway policy team all of which were consistent with a comprehensive masterplanned and deliverable vision for the totality of the corridor stretching as far south as the M2. The most comprehensive option included a proposal for cross boundary working with Maidstone to secure circa 4,000 dwellings in this location. F D Attwood and Partners propose to pursue this option but for the purposes of the replacement Local Plan will also pursue an alternative growth option that is wholly within the council's administrative boundary (but also consistent with the cross boundary option) to replace the misguided proposal at Lodge Hill.
- 3.33 This will give the examining Inspector the degree of certainty required that these sites will contribute to housing needs and demonstrate that individual parcels within the totality of the landholding, all under the control of F D Attwood and Partners, can be delivered over the plan period alongside necessary infrastructure. Development within Medway Councils administrative area alone could deliver community facilities including a site for a primary school with all existing woodland and public open space remaining which would be reinforced and enhanced by structural landscaping. This proposal is currently the subject of a Transportation Assessment which will be produced at the plan's examination. Hume Planning is prepared to work constructively with the Council to pursue this option as a sustainable and deliverable proposal in the Replacement plan and as part of that process consider in detail, issues surrounding infrastructure delivery, funded by the that would be development.
- 3.34 Even if the Lodge Hill proposal were to go ahead the Hempstead Valley proposal for an additional circa 2,000 dwellings (wholly within the administrative area of Medway) is still necessary for the following reasons.
- 3.35 In September 2017 the Government published a consultation document entitled Planning for the Right Homes in the Right Places that included a proposed standard method of determining local housing need. The supporting information identified an annual housing need up to 2026 for each Local Planning Authority in England.
- 3.36 For Medway the figure is 37,143 or 1,665 dwellings per annum, a substantial increase over the current 1,281 dwellings per annum requirement and what is currently being completed each year. The Government has confirmed its expectation that Local Planning Authorities use the standard method where plans have not yet been submitted for examination, as is the case in Medway. It is relevant that the Sustainability Appraisal itself acknowledges that Scenario 3 will result in a significant shortage (circa 1407 dwellings) of housing against the requirement.
- 3.37 Proposals to revise the Framework include an expectation for objectively assessed housing needs to be accommodated, unless there are strong reasons no to do so; including unmet needs from neighbouring areas.
- 3.38 This lends credence to the 4,000-dwelling cross boundary option being considered by F D Atwood and Partners and ongoing dialogue between F D Attwood and Partners and Medway and Maidstone Councils will be strongly pursued during this process.
- 3.39 It is clear that Medway has a housing delivery problem and as stated above the discrete sites being considered in the 2,000-dwelling option at Hempstead are capable of relatively early delivery compared with potential proposals on the Hoo

Peninsula. The draft revisions to the Framework propose changes in respect of housing delivery.

- 3.40 Scenario 3 of the SA sets out to assess the impact of meeting the 37,143 dwelling requirement. In the description it recognises that provision would occur “through the reallocation of employment sites to housing developments, bringing in additional greenfield sites, and greater reliance on opportunity regeneration sites.....”
- 3.41 When the initial appraisal and recommendations surrounding this option are considered there is even more uncertainty than that identified by the SA in the Hoo Peninsula scenario. The assumption that existing employment sites would be reallocated for housing is vague and confusing. Such sites are not identified and there is no recognition that this approach goes against the emerging employment strategy of providing more employment sites and Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the SA.
- 3.42 This scenario and Scenarios 2 and 4 show clearly that the Council have gone about the sustainability assessment of a draft development strategy in the wrong way. While it is recognised that the relationship between the DS and SA is an iterative process the DS has not firmed up the options enough to make the SA, at this stage, a meaningful exercise. There is too much speculation in the SA of potential impacts resulting in a “high level of uncertainty which should be addressed” (Recommendations for Scenario 2).
- 3.43 These include, in addition to a housing trajectory illustrating delivery over the plan period, that all plans should consider whether it is appropriate to set out a specific rate of development from specific sites. The supply of specific deliverable sites should continue to include a buffer of 20% where there has been significant under delivery of housing over the previous three years, as is the case in Medway.
- 3.44 Where a Local Planning Authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land, as is currently the case in Medway, paragraph 11d of the draft Framework will apply. This states that planning permission should be granted where proposals accord with an up to date development plan without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or where policies are out of date, permission should be granted unless the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed or, any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework when taken as a whole.
- 3.45 This approach, subsequent to a Supreme Court decision, overcomes the confusing debate as to whether housing policies, where a five-year supply cannot be demonstrated, are up to date, an issue which arises from the wording of current Framework. The Government is also proposing a Housing Delivery Test. While these proposals are currently in draft there is no doubt that in order to boost housing supply the Government proposes to scrutinise to a greater extent issues surrounding housing delivery. It will be necessary for the Council to be able to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land at the plan’s examination.
- 3.46 Overall it is clear that more planned urban extensions are necessary and the programme for housing delivery is likely to be quicker. The draft plan suggests that a

creative and innovative approach is required in land use decision-making and in the context of such significant levels of housing pressure upon Medway, this creative approach needs to be applied to the historic approach to the role of green corridors. Within the urban areas, for instance this could involve an objective assessment of how qualitative improvements can be secured and their function and use can be promoted alongside residential led development.

TRANSPORTATION.

- 3.47 The DS states at para 11.1 that an effective and sustainable transport network is intrinsic to how places work well and is a fundamental component of successful growth. Consultation on the emerging Local Plan has highlighted concerns about existing pressures on transport networks and their capacity to accommodate growth.
- 3.48 Medway experiences congestion on a complex highways network resulting from its geographical and historic pattern of development. The Council has commissioned a Strategic Transport Assessment. Modelling suggests that key junctions across Medway and especially in Chatham Town Centre will exceed capacity by 2035 and that some junctions in Chatham already exceed or operate close to capacity. The Strategic Transport Assessment will inform strategic and specific mitigation requirements for sites allocated for development in the local plan.
- 3.49 The Attwood proposal at Hempstead raises the possibility of providing the abandoned Medway Towns Southern Relief Road (MTSSR). This would link Walderslade with Hempstead and Wigmore. Reference to a map shows that traffic from Walderslade, for example, that has Hempstead or Wigmore as a destination has to go into the town centres of Chatham or Gillingham before heading south again to one or the other of these destinations.
- 3.50 To the south of Walderslade, Westfield Sole Road and Lidsing Road provide a link to Hempstead. However, these roads are virtually single carriageway in places, best described as a "rat run" and only used by those to the south of these locations. A MTSSR would not only serve the proposed development but also relieve traffic in the town centre where junctions are already at or close to capacity. This approach is to be contrasted with transport infrastructure provision on the Hoo Peninsula where there would be no wider benefits to Medway overall than occasioned by provision.
- 3.51 There is a ready-made spur at the southern end of North Dane Way which lends itself to providing the initial extension of the MTSSR. Hume Planning and C & A Transport are currently modelling the benefits that such a link could provide, not only for the proposed development at Hempstead but for the wider area including the town centres where impending or existing capacity at junctions is problematic. There would also be considerable advantages to the public transport network. As well as improving local highway capacity and the operation of junctions, this new road link across the corridor has three key benefits

- It will help to reduce current motorway junction “hopping” from Junctions 3 and 4 of the M2 which Highways England are likely to support in principle.
- It will transform bus service connectivity between Lordswood and Hempstead by providing a direct east-west link across the corridor. This is of greater relevance given both the planned expansion of Hempstead shopping centre.
- This strategic relief road will also improve the proposed strategic employment node which is identified in the draft Development Strategy close to M2 Junction 4 as shown at Figure 5.1 of the draft plan.

3.52 Transportation and accessibility appears in Objectives 1, 2, 3, and 4 of the SA and development at Hempstead would address the problems identified above and aid these objectives.

3.53 The Council is to produce an Infrastructure Delivery Plan as part of the local plan process which in the case of proposed development at Hempstead could inform what is required to facilitate a development of 2,000 dwellings in this location. This in turn can also inform a Statement of Common Ground with the council on delivery which can then cross refer to the relevant local plan policies and a package of developer contributions.

EMPLOYMENT.

3.54 The Government has set out its vision for the economy in the Industrial Strategy White Paper 2017 that seeks to boost the UK’s productivity which is the lowest of all the G7 countries. The core ambition of the Local Plan is to strengthen the performance of Medway’s economy and secure quality jobs. A skilled workforce is critical to a successful economy and Medway compares poorly with neighbouring areas.

3.55 However there have been successful developments on the Medway Enterprise Park and one of the strengths of the local economy is advanced manufacturing and technology and through the new plan the council is to capitalise on this. Nonetheless the DS recognises that Medway has a shortfall of quality employment land and in flexible formats that businesses seek. Strategic employment provision is a key component of F D Attwood and Partners masterplanned vision for the corridor proposing a business park close to the motorway junction in the area identified at Figure 5.1 of the draft plan. The proposed B1 business park allocation near J4 of the M2 at Hempstead should be increased to identify a strategic employment location for Medway for the long-term future as this location has good road infrastructure close to the motorway and will provide additional provision to augment Gillingham Business Park which is nearing full capacity.

3.56 In 2015 the Council commissioned an Employment Land Needs Assessment which projects a growth of circa 17,000 jobs over the plan period. The findings of the Assessment indicate that while there is a potential surplus of employment land

represented by the large sites at Kingsnorth and Grain these do not align well with current requirements. This has been the case for a long time and was an issue raised during the passage of the adopted local plan. The Needs Assessment suggests that Lodge Hill could provide a more office and research and development orientated proposition unlike any other site within the identified portfolio (para 9.18). Given the considerable doubt surrounding development at Lodge Hill an alternative employment site/accommodation will need to be found, which can be more suitably met at the M2 Junction 4 node identified at Figure 5.1 of the draft Plan.

- 3.57 Planning Practice Guidance requires that the implications for economic growth are taken into account in establishing the local housing requirement (para 18). It will be necessary to look at job growth over the last say 10 - 15 years and compare this with the level of house building for that period. An assessment can then be made between the level of jobs anticipated over the plan period with the much-increased housing requirement. To date this exercise does not appear to have been undertaken using the figure of 37,143 dwellings over the plan period derived from the Government's standard approach to OAN. The Employment Land Needs Assessment is dated 2015. Given the historically low level of house building against targets there is a possibility that the level of jobs created will need to be greater than the 17,000 anticipated, requiring more land than the DS suggests.
- 3.58 Medway exports labour with a high level of out commuting and Council seeks to tackle this in the emerging plan with a greater degree of labour retention in the Towns. With the higher levels of housing now proposed out commuting will remain high or even increase if the correlation between house building and local job creation is not addressed using up to date data. Lack of evidence in this respect was one of the reasons the first attempt at a replacement plan was withdrawn.
- 3.59 F D Attwood and Partners support job growth and would suggest that more could be done to ensure that good quality flexible business space is made available close to Junction 4 of the M2 motorway a location where there is ready access to the national transport network. The proposed employment allocations on the Hoo Peninsula will not achieve this objective. The SA at Objective 2 seeks to establish employment opportunities at accessible locations in particular Junction 4. Reference has been made above how under Scenario 3 the use of employment sites for housing conflicts with Objectives 2 and 3 of the SA.
- 3.60 Strategic business park provision close to Junction 4 is a key component of each of the F D Attwood and Partners masterplan vision options for the wider Hempstead corridor. The recognition in the plan of the benefits of an employment node close to Junction 4 of the M2 is supported, although the scale of this provision should be increased.

LANDSCAPE.

- 3.61 The Council is updating the Medway Landscape Character Assessment 2011 to

provide a basis for the preferred development strategy of the Local Plan. It should be noted that current Area of Local Landscape Importance designations cover a significant part of undeveloped land in accessible locations, so it is inevitable that to fulfil housing and employment requirements ALLI land will need to be developed. Policies in the Framework make it clear that a locally designated ALLI is at the lower level of priority in terms of weight to be given to its protection (para 113). This will need to be recognised when the Council is considering options for sustainable urban extensions.

- 3.62 Reference is made in all 4 scenarios of the need for greenfield land, to varying degrees, to contribute to meeting Medway's development needs over the plan period.
- 3.63 Reference is made in the DS to a Green Infrastructure Network which can be enhanced by the proposal at Hempstead, ensuring the new development provides appropriate links through footpaths and cycleways, to parks and gardens, including the Capstone Country Park which occupies a central position in the Hempstead corridor, playing fields, allotments and so on.

4 OVERALL CONCLUSIONS.

- 4.1 It will be clear from the foregoing that F D Attwood and Partners, while supporting the ambitions for the Towns set out in Medway 2035, take a different view in respect of the location of development on two counts. The first is that Lodge Hill should be removed from the DS as a possible development proposal and development limited on the Hoo Peninsula, as it does not represent a sustainable location.
- 4.2 The second is that to accommodate the level of housing required much greater use should be made of creating planned urban extensions in sustainable and accessible locations. This has the double benefit of enabling discrete sites to take advantage of existing infrastructure and augment any deficiencies through developer contributions thereby expediting delivery in that development on these sites can be commenced sooner than those that require substantial infrastructure investment such as the necessary major highway improvements and the as yet unconfirmed new railway station on the Hoo Peninsula, which is reliant on public funding.
- 4.3 The examining Inspector for the Local Plan will need to be sure that the infrastructure required for development can be provided commensurate with dwelling provision and population growth and may require a statement of common ground to this effect between those promoting development and the Council, citing the relevant policies in the plan that spell out how this is to be achieved. This is more easily done through discrete planned urban extensions.
- 4.4 While clearly not the complete answer to the emerging plan's strategy the proposals for the Hempstead Valley represent a sustainable solution in a sustainable location bringing the benefits outlined in these representations, primarily sorely needed homes.

As previously stated Hume Planning will continue to work with the council to achieve this objective.

- 4.5 In view of the draft nature of the DS and the differences in approach between the DS proposals and that set out in these representations it is not considered productive at this stage to suggest alternative wording to the draft policies in the document or comment on what the SA sets out to this effect. It will be more productive to do this when the draft plan becomes available for consultation.
- 4.6 There is clearly a lot of work to do to align the DS with the objectives of the SA in formulating a strategy for Medway's development needs over the plan period. Importantly LH was the previous plan's nemesis and for it to remain in the emerging plan is likely to give the examining Inspector the same concerns as those previously voiced and lead to a similar outcome. There is also the likelihood of a Judicial Review of the draft plan or the plan as proposed for adoption if LH remains. Inclusion of LH as a development proposal will further delay the plan yet again and may well lead to Government intervention.