



Issues and Options Consultation Summary Report

March 2017

Medway
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Contents

	<i>Section</i>	<i>Page</i>
1.	Introduction	3
2.	Consultation programme	5
3.	Compliance with the Statement of Community Involvement	8
4.	Meeting the Duty to Cooperate	10
5.	Consultation thematic workshops	12
6.	Responses to consultation	18

Appendices

Appendix 1: Copy of Issues and Options survey form

Appendix 2: Consultation programme

Appendix 3: Copy of promotional material for Issues and Options consultation

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Medway Council published a Regulation 18 Issues and Options document¹ in January 2016 as the first formal stage of consultation in preparing a new Local Plan for Medway. The new Local Plan covers the period from 2012 to 2035, and on adoption will replace the 2003 Medway Local Plan.
- 1.2 This report provides a record of the consultation process, and an outline of the comments made on the Issues and Options document.
- 1.3 Medway has experienced much change since the current Local Plan was adopted in 2003. It is also projected to continue to grow as one of the largest urban areas in the south east, to a population of over 330,000 people by 2035. Medway is a complex and strikingly diverse area, comprising densely built urban areas, strategic transport and energy infrastructure, extensive tracts of countryside, including marshes, parts of the Kent Downs, woodland, productive farmland, small villages, and the important river and estuarine Medway. Much of the rural and estuarine environment is designated of international or national importance. The new Local Plan must plan positively to meet the development needs of Medway's increasing population, whilst securing the qualities of its natural and historic environments.
- 1.4 In starting out on the preparation of the new Medway Local Plan, the council sought to engage diverse stakeholders in identifying relevant issues and how these should be addressed in preparing a strategy for Medway's successful growth. The Issues and Options consultation document presented information on the projected development needs for housing, employment and retail, for the growing population. It outlined information on the key issues for Medway's economy, society and environment that need consideration in planning for the delivery of sustainable development over the plan period.
- 1.5 The Issues and Options consultation document did not set out proposed policies or land allocations for potential development. It was a high level strategic document that sought to engage people, businesses, local groups, statutory and voluntary organisations, and wider stakeholders in considering how Medway's development could best be managed to secure successful and sustainable growth.
- 1.6 The consultation document included questions based around key themes, and sought comments on different aspects of planning Medway's development up to 2035.
- 1.7 The council consulted on the Issues and Options document for eight weeks, from 4 January to 29 February 2016. The consultation was largely managed through online resources, using the council's website and social media. Planning officers also arranged a number of consultation events to support further discussions on key issues and wider participation in the development of the new Medway Local Plan. Further details of the consultation programme are set out in section 2 of this report.

¹ Available to view at:

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/PDF/Final%20Issues%20and%20Options%20Public%20Consultation%20Copy.pdf>

- 1.8 231 written responses were received to the consultation. Comments came from a broad section of stakeholders, and covered a wide range of matters. Copies of all of the responses received are published on the council's Local Plan website – www.medway.gov.uk/futuremedway. A summary of the key issues raised, and an analysis of responses is set out in Section 6 of this report.
- 1.9 The information provided at this early stage of the preparation of the Medway Local Plan has been taken into account in drafting the Development Options document, published for consultation in January 2017.

2. CONSULTATION PROGRAMME

- 2.1 Consultation on the Medway Local Plan 'Issues and Options' technical document was carried out between 4 January and 29 February 2016. The council sought views from residents, members, developers, neighbouring local authorities, organisations and community groups to inform the direction to be taken in the new Local Plan. The consultation programme was in accordance with the Medway Statement of Community Involvement, 2014², that sets out the standards for how the council consults and engages with people on planning matters.
- 2.2 The consultation was largely managed through online resources, email and social media, in line with corporate communications protocol. The consultation document was available to view on the council's website and responses could be made via an online questionnaire³. There was a strong presence on the council's website and use of the Medway Council social media accounts to alert people to the consultation, specific consultation events, and to encourage their participation.
- 2.3 The Planning Service recognised that the consultation process needed to be broader than the online materials and process. Paper copies of the consultation document were available at all public libraries and Medway Council community hubs across Medway. Copies of the document were also sent to all Medway Parish Councils. The council contacted over 1000 people on its Local Plan consultation database, which included letters to a number of residents who had indicated that they wanted to be kept informed of progress on planning policy matters. A Public Notice was placed in the Kent Messenger to alert people to the consultation.
- 2.4 The Local Plan consultation database has been built up over a number of years. It includes contact details of all statutory organisations with an interest in Medway's development. It has a wide range of contacts – voluntary and community groups; individuals, many of whom live in Medway; businesses, developers, landowners and planning consultants and representatives of partnerships. The database covers social, economic and environmental interests. It is regularly updated, and anyone who contacts the Planning Policy team is asked if they would like to be added to the database, so that they can be kept updated of work on development policy in Medway. The majority of contacts include email addresses, but there are also many postal contacts, primarily in the local community. The council used the database to send notification of the start of the Issues and Options consultation directly by email or letter to all contacts.
- 2.5 The council has a 'Big Screen' in central Chatham which forms part of the regeneration plans for the area. This large outdoor screen is in a prominent position facing the Chatham Waterfront bus interchange and close to the primary shopping area, in an area of high footfall. The screen was used to publicise the consultation and the events and exhibitions organised for the public.

² Available to view at : <http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Medway%20SCI%202014.pdf>

³ Available to view at Appendix 1

- 2.6 A number of events were organised as part of the consultation to broaden engagement in the Local Plan preparation work. This included:
- Consultation workshops and presentations in local areas
 - Staffed exhibitions in community venues
 - Thematic based events
- 2.7 In rural Medway, this included events in Hoo, Deangate Ridge, Halling and Cliffe and Cliffe Woods. In Cliffe and Cliffe Woods, Medway Council worked jointly with the Neighbourhood Planning Group to gather information to feed into both the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. In urban Medway, events were held in Strood, Rainham, Rochester, Gillingham and Chatham. A full schedule of the events held during the consultation are set out at Appendix 2.
- 2.8 Workshops were arranged to share information from the consultation document, and to promote discussion and gather comments on how the new Local Plan should address the area's economic, social and environmental needs, and realise opportunities for improvements. Invites were sent to local community and business representatives, as well as advertising to the general public.
- 2.9 Planning officers staffed exhibitions in community venues, including leisure centres, country parks, and community centres across Medway, where people were able to find out more about the Local Plan and speak to officers.
- 2.10 The council organised a number of meetings focusing on distinct themes in the consultation document. These covered the issues of housing, employment, health, education infrastructure, and the natural environment. These were roundtable discussions, with invites issued to representatives of organisations, businesses, groups and the local community, appropriate to the thematic matter. These workshops provided opportunities to discuss thematic and technical issues in more detail. More information on these events is set out in Section 5 of this report.
- 2.11 Officers also attended a number of partnership meetings during the consultation to raise issues in the emerging Local Plan, and seek input to the consultation. This provided access to a diverse range of key stakeholders in Medway, including businesses, housing and education providers, community and voluntary organisations.
- 2.12 Briefings were held for Medway councillors in advance of, and during the consultation.
- 2.13 Officers also visited railway stations and Chatham's Waterfront bus station to hand out flyers about the Issues and Options consultation, and encourage people to take part and submit comments.
- 2.14 This broad approach to publicising the consultation and seeking comments was considered useful in reaching different sectors of interests in Medway. It was noted that local

community based publicity for exhibitions and events was very helpful in increasing attendance. The council will make greater use of local community networks and venues in publicising future events arranged as part of consultation on later stages of the Local Plan. It is noted that there are good opportunities to make better use of local newsletters and social media groups to increase awareness of the work on the Local Plan, and encourage more local people to participate in the next stages of the plan preparation. The council welcomes further information on local contacts.

3. COMPLIANCE WITH THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT (SCI)

- 3.1 The consultation carried out by the council has complied with the statutory requirements set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Development) (England) Regulations 2012 (Regulation 18)⁴. The Issues and Options consultation ran for 8 weeks between 4th January and 29th February 2016 and sought the involvement of a wide range of specific and general consultation bodies. These included voluntary bodies whose activities benefit Medway; bodies representing the interests of different racial, ethnic or national groups in Medway; bodies representing the interests of disabled people in Medway; and bodies representing business interests in Medway.
- 3.2 Medway Council has prepared and updated in 2014, a Medway Statement of Community Involvement⁵. This sets out the approaches and standards to be followed in carrying out consultation on planning matters. This includes the preparation of planning policy documents, such as the Local Plan.
- 3.3 Public involvement in the Local Plan Issues and Options consultation in 2016 was carried out following the approach set out in Medway Council's Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (2014).
- 3.4 A wide range of engagement methods were used to promote the Issues and Options consultation document in order to make contact with a good cross-section of stakeholders, this included:
- **Email and letters** sent directly to all contacts on the Local Plan consultation database
 - All materials made available on the **Council's website** including an **online questionnaire**.
 - **Reference copies** of the consultation document were available to view at the council's offices, libraries and community hubs across Medway.
 - **Leaflets** and other **publicity documents** made available at key Council contact points across Medway, doctor's surgeries and other community venues.
 - Officers visited train and bus stations **to hand out leaflets** and talk to people about the consultation.
 - **Social media** publicity and activities through the Council's corporate accounts.
 - Publicity slots on Chatham's **Big Screen**.
 - **Public exhibitions** staffed by council officers in community settings throughout Medway
 - **Public meetings and workshops** in localities across urban and rural Medway, open to local people and inviting community representatives and businesses.
 - **Presentations and discussions at partnership meetings** to reach a range of sectoral and community interests
 - **Thematic workshops** arranged around key issues, with invited representatives from business, community and services.

⁴ Available to view at: http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/767/pdfs/ukxi_20120767_en.pdf

⁵ Available to view at : <http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Medway%20SCI%202014.pdf>

Use of information gathered

- 3.5 All written comments submitted as part of the Issues and Options consultation were recorded as formal responses to this stage of preparation of the emerging Local Plan. The information was added to the consultation recording system. The written representations have been published on the council's website on the Planning Policy pages, as part of the formal record of plan preparation.
- 3.6 Contact details of respondents have been added to the Local Plan consultation database. The council will retain the contact details for future Local Plan consultations, unless individuals have specifically asked the council not to. Personal address or contact details of individuals who responded to the consultation have been withheld from publication.
- 3.7 The information submitted to the Issues and Options consultation, including personal contact details, have been recorded as part of the formal record of the plan preparation process. Such contact information is held by the council for the sole purpose of the Local Plan work. Details will not be shared with any other council services, or used for other purposes than Planning Policy. Information will be held until an appropriate period after the adoption of the Local Plan as part of the formal record of plan preparation.

4. MEETING THE DUTY TO COOPERATE

- 4.1 The emerging Medway Local Plan is being prepared in the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Localism Act 2011 and other relevant legislation. In support of the preparation of the new Medway Local Plan the Council is committed to *'engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis'* with other Local Planning Authorities and Public Bodies to address *'strategic matters'*. This legal obligation is known as the *'Duty to Cooperate'*. In particular the Duty to Cooperate requires the Council to work with neighbouring authorities, including Kent County Council, to address strategic issues that *'cross administrative boundaries'* for example the provision of infrastructure or meeting housing needs.
- 4.2 Further details of the council's approach to secure effective engagement on cross border strategic matters is set out in the Medway Duty to Cooperate scoping report, 2017.
- 4.3 The Duty to Cooperate on cross boundary strategic issues is embedded in Medway's plan making process. This has informed work in the preparation of the Issues and Options consultation document, specifically the production of the evidence base to identify key matters for the consultation document.
- 4.4 The North Kent Strategic Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (SHENA) was developed with specific reference to the Duty to Cooperate. It was jointly commissioned with Gravesham Borough Council and provides an evidence base for the housing, employment and retail development needs for the new Local Plan.
- 4.5 Meetings and workshops have taken place with neighbouring local planning authorities and key stakeholders throughout the process of preparing the SHENA. This involved sharing baseline and analytical work on development needs, and providing opportunities for neighbouring authorities to raise comments on the issues and conclusions reached by the consultants in producing the North Kent SHENA.
- 4.6 A key area for consideration has been the definition of the Medway Housing Market Area and calculation of Objectively Assessed Needs. In addition to the SHENA Duty to Cooperate workshops and meetings held throughout 2015 and 2016, Medway Council met separately with Gravesham Borough Council, Maidstone Borough Council, Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and Swale Borough Council to discuss these issues.

Consulting on Issues and Options

- 4.7 The council contacted all statutory consultees who represent interests on cross border strategic matters as part of the consultation on the Issues and Options document, seeking their comments to inform the development of the new Local Plan. One section of the consultation document specifically considered strategic issues and views were sought on whether the council had appropriately identified the relevant matters.

- 4.8 Responses were received from neighbouring local planning authorities, Mayor of London, statutory bodies and health, infrastructure and utilities providers.
- 4.9 Responses to the consultation question on strategic issues indicated that the council had identified the relevant issues of concern in preparing the new Local Plan.
- 4.10 The council organised a stakeholder workshop with prescribed Duty to Cooperate bodies in February 2016 as a specific event during the Issues and Options consultation.
- 4.11 This meeting was held on 11 February 2016, and had representatives from the following organisations:
- Highways England
 - Network Rail
 - Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
 - Swale Borough Council
 - Gravesham Borough Council
 - Thurrock Borough Council
 - Sevenoaks District Council
 - Dartford Borough Council
 - Kent County Council
 - Homes and Communities Agency
- 4.12 Planning officers gave a presentation on the Issues and Options document, with a particular focus on what were perceived to be the main strategic issues to consider under the Duty to Cooperate. There was a roundtable discussion on arising matters. These included the timetable for producing the Medway Local Plan, and engagement with representatives of the Department of Communities and Local Government, given that Medway would not be in a position to have an updated Local Plan in place by early 2017. These discussions broadened into consideration of the implications of recent and upcoming national planning policy changes, including provision for Self Build and Custom housebuilding, Permission in Principle. The meeting discussed how the influence of London had been considered in the early work on the new Local Plan.
- 4.13 Transport was a particular matter of interest, including consideration of the Lower Thames Crossing, input from Network Rail and its upcoming route study. Other matters discussed included minerals and waste, and cross border movements; and health – particularly the Medway Maritime Hospital that serves part of the Swale area.
- 4.14 The council is continuing to engage with Duty to Cooperate bodies as an integral part of the preparation of the new Local Plan. Further specific engagement activities will be held in conjunction with the Development Options consultation in early 2017.

5. CONSULTATION EVENTS

5.1 The council held a number of meetings on the Issues and Options document in community venues across Medway, open to all to attend. It also organised a series of thematic workshops to consider key issues in more detail. The meetings took the format of a short presentation on the Issues and Options document followed by a round table discussion on key issues. The thematic based events were useful in gathering more detailed information to determine components of the plan's vision and objectives and support the development of policies. Invites to the workshops were sent to key stakeholders and representatives of business and community interests relevant to the thematic issues. Planning officers also attended partnership meetings where they presented on the emerging Local Plan and opened up discussion on issues arising. Specific meetings were held with youth representatives and a number of local partnerships, including Town Centre Fora in Rochester and Chatham, Chatham Maritime Trust and Medway Swale Estuary Partnership.

5.2 Meetings were held on the following topics: housing, employment, environment, education and community infrastructure, health.

Environmental workshops – 16 January and 9 February 2016

5.3 Two workshops were organised on this theme. The first event was organised for a Saturday morning on 16 January, and aimed at representatives of local voluntary and community groups. The second event was organised for 9 February and aimed at representatives of statutory organisations and larger environmental charities.

5.4 The issues discussed included the options for meeting Medway's development needs and the potential impact on the environment. Air quality was of particular concern, given that further growth could exacerbate traffic generated pollutants in designated Air Quality Management Areas. Managing car use was identified as a key matter for the Local Plan.

5.5 Opportunities to extend and strengthen green infrastructure in Medway were supported, such as promotion of a riverside walk, and adding to the wider network for walkers, cyclists and riders. Links to 'blue infrastructure' were important. A number of areas of Medway were considered to be under-served with open space. There were concerns that further parks and green spaces could be lost to development pressures.

5.6 Participants identified a range of local landscape and heritage features that were important to secure Medway's distinctive sense of place. It was suggested that more could be made of the role and function of the river Medway and its estuary in planning the area's future. The importance of the environment in the vision and strategy for Medway's growth was highlighted. The Local Plan needed to look at wider issues than housing and employment land. There were considered to be good opportunities to link people and places through a distinctive landscape.

5.7 A sensitive balance needed to be achieved between opening up access to the countryside and protecting the special features of designated habitats, particularly around the estuarine landscapes. Promoting use of quality and valued local green spaces was suggested as part of a strategic approach.

5.8 Some groups sought greater policy grounds to protect green spaces, in both rural and urban areas. This topic was widened up to consider protection of the countryside and its separate rural character. A 'national park' designation for the Hoo Peninsula was suggested.

Medway Youth Parliament – Local Plan workshop 5 February 2016

5.9 Medway Youth Parliament is made up of young people representing different interests and areas across the borough. Youth Parliament members were asked their views on a number of the key issues to be addressed in the new Local Plan. Their comments are outlined below:

- Housing

5.10 People could see that Medway was developing, with new infrastructure, for example Rochester station – which they associated with the new housing in the area. Some strong local communities were identified, associated with new areas which have been developed.

5.11 Some concerns were raised in terms of the scale of population growth that Medway is likely to see and that this could put a strain on services; schools, GPs and health facilities. There was concern that insufficient new green space was provided with new residential development. Two locations were mentioned in relation to future housing at Hoo and Capstone Valley.

5.12 In terms of solutions for the identified issues the following points were suggested: better integration within and between communities, services to be considered in line with population growth and community involvement in the planning process.

- Economy

5.13 The opening of the new University Technical College was welcomed and its associated opportunities. It was noted that many new small businesses in Medway are thriving. It was considered that there was a good choice of training opportunities in Medway as well as a diverse range of career paths open to Medway's young people.

5.14 However, there was a general lack of awareness of available job opportunities. More needed to be done to give young people the opportunity to get into a career, boost the number of apprenticeships, address limited opportunities for young people in the local economy, and raise the amount of training available locally and the supply of jobs for students.

5.15 Better advice and general support for young people should be available.

- Town Centres

5.16 Medway's town centres were seen as being 'the centres of the communities' and the regeneration of Chatham Waterfront was noted. There were concerns however. Points mentioned in relation to issues that were seen as not working were 'the lack of thriving high streets', community engagement within town centres and linking areas of regeneration alongside 'old Chatham'.

5.17 The group sought a balance between the old and the new, with new buildings complementing the old.

- Sports/leisure facilities

5.18 The new Medway Park was identified as something that was working well; it was described positively and the 'park system' was seen as exclusive.

5.19 However the cost of using such facilities in Medway was problematic, and further issues were identified with the degree to which they were user friendly and accessible. Some facilities as seen as outdated and run down, and it was considered that some parks in Medway could offer more sports facilities.

5.20 The group supported the integration of services and a 'collaborative effort' to make the facilities more effective and efficient.

Housing workshop – 10 February 2016

5.21 This was attended by representatives of private developers and social housing providers.

5.22 The discussion covered a wide range of housing issues including: the Medway Housing Market, housing delivery, housing affordability, housing and wellbeing, developing communities, Custom/Self build options, student accommodation and impact on the housing market.

5.23 Medway was viewed as an area with much potential for housing development, but were issues with profitability for developers. There are challenges with viability in bringing forward brownfield sites. Medway needed institutional investors to compensate for private investors selling off property due to changes to tax system.

5.24 Link between housing and health was seen as important and should be addressed at the design stage to develop attractive, healthy residential areas, with flexible living units, adaptable to life stage (life long homes). However, there were considered to be some limitations in how far this could be implemented.

5.25 Many more starter homes were needed. There was reported to be limited interest in custom and self- build housing. Residential developments should integrate market and social housing. The impact of the student population on the Medway housing market and the private rented sector was queried and more information sought on plans for additional student accommodation.

Health workshop – 16 February 2016

5.26 The meeting was attended by representatives of Medway Public Health, Medway Foundation Trust and the voluntary sector. The group supported further engagement of the Medway Hospital in the development of the Local Plan, for effective and coordinated planning of services in line with growth. There was a recognised need for more outreach provision, and opportunities to deliver more health services in community settings. However availability of funding was a constraint.

- 5.27 The workshop considered opportunities to promote healthier eating, including control of food premises, healthy eating initiatives in community centres, fresh produce market stalls, and community spaces for food growing.
- 5.28 The group supported investment and promotion of greenspaces to encourage exercise, and planning to facilitate travel choices by walking and cycling.

Education and Community Infrastructure workshop – 17 February 2016

- 5.29 This event was attended by representatives of service providers. There was a current identified need for both primary and secondary schools in Medway, with only some schools with spare capacity. There were shortages of childcare provision in central Chatham and Gillingham. Government policy which is promoting access to childcare has increased demand, and has resulted in pressures on nursery and crèche facilities. New developments need to provide for pre-school as well as school places for the increased population. Planned development with integrated infrastructure was more successful than incremental growth.
- 5.30 A primary school has a land take of 1.5 hectares and a secondary school needs up to 10 hectares. The group discussed the feasibility of building schools at higher densities. The wider catchment area of secondary schools can place additional strains on transport networks. Wider improvements to transport networks were needed, including provision of public transport options.
- 5.31 The meeting discussed the role of Free Schools in education provision, and the potential to respond to areas under pressure of places.
- 5.32 Opportunities for multi-functional buildings were recognised, including such services as libraries, adult education and children’s centres on shared sites. Management and income for community facilities were noted as frequent challenges to maintain and improve standards.
- 5.33 Growth in town centres was supported, and considered suitable locations for older people to live, with good access to services. Reducing car use and making better use of car park locations were promoted.
- 5.34 It was noted that educational attainment was not raised simply by building new schools, but better access to schools was a positive step.

Economic issues workshop – 23 February 2016

- 5.35 This was attended by representatives from local businesses in Medway, across a range of sectors.
- 5.36 Attendees were interested to find out more about the evidence surrounding the issue of Medway’s continuing growth which represents a significant driver for the development proposals in the plan.
- 5.37 A concern was raised that a number of attendees felt that housing targets were taking priority over the protecting of Medway’s economic interests, with Chatham Docks being

cited as an example of an employment site that is under pressure and causing future uncertainty for businesses.

- 5.38 The discussion moved on to cover issues around how to retain Medway's business community and what locations should be promoted. The Council's support for the development of Rochester Airport and associated employment opportunities was raised as an example with the suggestion that a similar approach was needed for Medway's ports.
- 5.39 The need for a good supply of suitably qualified labour was highlighted as being a key issue for businesses to be able to remain trading in the area, with the training of young local people identified to assist with a shortage of engineers.
- 5.40 Transport infrastructure improvements were cited as something which would assist Medway businesses to improve general transportation of goods and making Medway more accessible for labour movements. Access routes into Medway were limited, and issues were compounded by poorly connected public transport. If transport continues to act as a barrier people will choose London over Medway. Medway City Estate was cited as an example of an area that has become unsustainable due to access issues.
- 5.41 Another option suggested to boost business was making greater use of the river and its links onto rail.
- 5.42 The workshop culminated in an open discussion around Medway's image as a business location and the experience potential staff may have of working in Medway. Businesses need to be able to attract new talent and the area needs a wider offer of good transport networks, a night-time economy, good leisure facilities, a pleasant broader working environment with facilities for staff to use at lunchtime. If all these factors are accounted for, companies wishing to relocate from London due to development pressures may then choose Medway as a more affordable business location.
- 5.43 The expansion of the Universities was discussed in terms of an opportunity for newly qualified labour supply. This included retention of graduates and how Medway can compete with other areas to avoid skilled workers from relocating. The need for effective engagement between Universities and business was raised – 'working in parallel' - linking practical experience. Improving Medway's image for students was discussed. This was considered to tie in with developing an evening economy and a wider range of evening attractions, with Dockside suggested as a location for a broader range of uses.

Community Events

- 5.44 Events were held in a number of locations across Medway where people could view exhibition materials and speak to planning officers. Events were held at Cliffe, Cliffe Woods, Halling, Deangate Ridge, Rainham and Strood. Comments cards were available for people to record their views. The cards asked:
- What do you think are the key issues facing Medway?
 - How should the Local Plan address these issues?

- 5.45 42 comments cards were completed. Half of these came from a particularly well attended event at Cliffe Woods, that was held jointly with the Neighbourhood Planning group.
- 5.46 Respondents were keen for the Council to work speedily to get the Local Plan in place, but to be realistic and take account of local views. There was a clear recognition that housing was required. There was a preference for the re-development of brownfield sites in the first instance and exploring higher density. This approach was favoured to limit the need to release greenfield land for development. Some respondents commented that the housing mix should reflect the needs of a growing and diverse population, offering flexibility for different housing needs.
- 5.47 People noted existing problems with transport and were concerned that further growth would exacerbate issues, such as difficulties in parking in residential areas, and associated problems for pedestrian safety. Many also mentioned problems in accessing health services, with concerns about the local hospital, and people experiencing difficulties in obtaining GP appointments.
- 5.48 There was much concern about the impact of development on infrastructure; such as roads, trains, bus services, schools, hospitals, healthcare facilities, community provision and utilities (water, electricity, gas, sewage and broadband). In particular, many roads were cited as being 'over capacity' (such as the B2000, A228, A249 and A2) and access from motorways (M2 and M20) becoming increasingly difficult for users of the local road network. The increasing numbers of HGV movements were also raised, with reference made to the B2000 towards Cliffe. Respondents were also keen to explore how the plan would address additional flows resulting from the proposed Lower Thames Crossing. Concerns were also expressed about the impact on employment and ability to attract business to the area as a result.
- 5.49 There was also a clear message from respondents that the Council should seek a balance for the use of rural areas for development, retaining village envelopes and protect against the loss of village heritage and the distinctive character of the rural areas. One of the recurring themes, was that the best and most versatile land should be protected and agricultural heritage safeguarded. This was noted in the context of the increasing important of food security.
- 5.50 Concern was raised about the loss of open green space, important landscapes (such as Areas of Local Landscape Importance) and wildlife habitat. Enhancements to flood defences, open space, sports provision and cycle/walking networks were proposed, including the possibility of a riverside route along the Medway Valley.

6. RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION

Overview of responses

- 6.1 The council invited comments on the matters set out in the Issues and Options document. Views were sought on a series of questions relating to the main themes of the document. Many respondents focused on selected areas of interest, rather than commenting on all technical areas.
- 6.2 231 written responses were received to the consultation. These were largely submitted through the online questionnaire and by email/letter to the council. 42 written responses were submitted in conjunction with the consultation events held in villages and towns across Medway.
- 6.3 The responses fell into a number of broad categories of stakeholders:
- Residents
 - Developers and Planning Agents
 - Local Authorities and statutory organisations
 - Community and charitable organisations, political parties and local businesses
- 6.4 The largest proportion of responses came from the public at 39% followed by charity/community groups (15%).

Proportion of total responses by respondent type	
Public	39 %
Charity/Community group	15 %
Developer/Planning Consultant	15 %
Government/Public body	14 %
Councillor/MP	11 %
Other	3 %
Business	3 %

- 6.5 A number of themes were of greatest interest, and attracted a higher number of comments. Housing was a key interest, with comments submitted from all sectors of respondents. Of the twenty-four themes set out in document, those which attracted the most responses were: housing, economy, development strategy, retail, transport, open space, built environment, Infrastructure & Services, Rural issues and Environment.
- 6.6 Responses to housing represented just over 17% of all responses with 59% of all respondents replying to a housing question.
- 6.7 The themes of most interest to residents were 'Housing', 'Infrastructure & Services' then 'Vision'. Representations received from residents had a commonly raised concern about the

impact of development on infrastructure, and the need to address current pressures in services, such as health care, education and transport.

- 6.8 The themes of most interest to the charities and community groups were ‘Built environment’ then ‘Housing’ and ‘Vision’.
- 6.9 The themes of most interest to developers/consultants were ‘Housing’, ‘Development strategy’, ‘Strategic issues’ and ‘Economy’. The most detailed comments were largely submitted by this sector. Representations from developers and landowners were generally in connection with the promotion of sites for development. In some cases additional information was submitted, indicating potential interest in bringing sites forward in advance of the Local Plan.
- 6.10 The themes of most interest to Government/Public bodies were ‘Housing’, ‘Economy’ and ‘Transport’. Those of most interest to Councillors or MPs were ‘Housing’, ‘Economy’ ‘Retail’ and ‘Open Space’, and for businesses they were ‘Infrastructure & services’ and ‘Vision’.

Summary of Responses by Theme

- 6.11 An outline of the main issues raised in the responses are set out by theme below. The questions posed in the Issues and Options document and questionnaire are listed by key sections.

Vision

- Q.1. *What do you think should be the key components of and ambitions for the Local Plan’s vision for Medway in 2035?*

Sector	Number of Responses
Business	4
Charity/Community/Faith Group	12
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	7
Developer/Consultant	12
Government/Public Body	7
Member of the public	25
Other	2

- 6.12 The majority of respondents identified development needs for housing, economic growth and infrastructure delivery as central to the vision for Medway’s growth up to 2035. However this was in the context of protecting and valuing the local environment, respecting distinctiveness, to provide a good quality of life, and to realise positive growth in Medway that benefits local people.

Consideration of comments

6.13 These aspects are central to the draft vision for Medway set out in the Development Options consultation document.

Strategic Issues

Q.2. *What do you think are the strategic issues that the Local Plan needs to address?*

Q.3. *How should the council respond to these issues?*

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	5
Charity/Community/Faith Group	23
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	8
Developer/Consultant	31
Government/Public Body	15
Member of the public	55
Other	4

6.13 Medway’s future growth has a high profile in the Local Plan and local people were concerned that sufficient infrastructure be planned to accommodate the levels of growth predicted for Medway. There were many references to maintaining a balance in developing Medway, in order not to lose what makes Medway attractive to residents and visitors.

6.14 Three main areas stood out as being of most concern to respondents – within the context of an expanding area - housing, transport infrastructure and employment. Local people requested that plans for Medway incorporate the right mix of infrastructure to achieve sustainable development. Responses sought an adequate supply of housing being planned for in the right locations, with good links to services, transport facilities and employment locations.

6.15 Over half of respondents made reference to housing affordability and location being a priority. There should be a balance in developing Medway, providing a good mix of uses and making best use of brownfield land in preference to greenfield sites.

Consideration of comments

6.16 The Council supports the points raised by respondents, and these strategic issues are seen as key to the overall objectives of the Local Plan, as set out in draft in the Development Options consultation document.

6.17 The ultimate aim is for Medway to achieve its potential as a successful, vibrant, modern city, benefitting from:

- A sufficient supply of attractive, well located, affordable housing.
- Local job opportunities that match the scale and skills of the local population to reduce the need to travel out of Medway for employment.
- A strong and attractive network of green spaces and heritage.

6.18 The council is responding to the population and household projections for Medway published by government agencies in seeking to plan positively for the development needs of its communities. A strong, well-planned development strategy can secure the best for the local area through a coordinated approach.

Housing

6.19 This was a key area of interest in the consultation, and people were asked to give their views on a number of different aspects of housing.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	20
Charity/Community/Faith Group	78
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	59
Developer/Consultant	89
Government/Public Body	45
Member of the public	252
Other	34

Q.4. Do you agree with the approach and conclusions of the assessment of housing needs calculated for Medway over the plan period?

6.20 This question specifically sought views on the calculation of Objectively Assessed Need for housing. This was of particular interest to developers and agents, and organisations. There were varying opinions, but the majority was supportive. Residents in particular raised concerns about the impact of housing development on local infrastructure. Pressures on the housing market from people moving into Medway, specifically from London, were noted, and respondents wanted to see housing for local people. There were varying views raised on the methodology, and how migration should be accounted for. Some developers argued for a higher Objectively Assessed Need for housing, but other responses considered the identified levels should be lower. There were comments on the accuracy of long term projections for population, and a need to review and update evidence.

Q.5. What do you consider to be the appropriate housing market area for Medway?

6.21 Responses were varied to this question. As a technical matter, it was addressed most specifically by the 'professional' representatives in the development and planning sectors, including neighbouring local authorities.

6.22 Many responses from the general public understood this question as relating to the local property market. These referred to segments of the population looking for housing in Medway. Frequent comments were that young people, couples and those with young families were key groups seeking housing, but the needs of older people were also recognised. There were concerns raised about the affordability of housing, especially for

local people. There was support for a balanced mix of housing to meet the needs of a range of groups. Development on brownfield and urban sites was suggested.

6.23 Technical representatives referred to the geographical definition of the housing market area. There was some support for the area set out in the supporting Strategic Housing Market Assessment, which identified a wider relationship with neighbouring authorities. Some respondents referred to the potential links to the London area. Others viewed that Medway was a self contained housing market. The definition was challenged by some neighbouring local authorities, as it was not consistent with their own evidence, and market signals, such as house prices varied significantly.

6.24 Many comments referred to meeting Objectively Assessed Housing need, and supported Medway in seeking to meet its needs within the authority area, rather than seeking to look to the wider Housing Market Area. The Duty to Cooperate was frequently mentioned in this context.

Consideration of comments

6.25 The council continues to engage with neighbouring local authorities and the wider area in cross border issues relating to housing. It recognises that the strongest housing market relationships to the south of the borough are with a small number of wards in Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling. Work on the Development Options consultation document has sought alternative approaches to meeting the full housing needs within Medway's boundary. The council is monitoring data on demographic and market signals to take account of any changes, and is engaging with the Mayor of London in the implications of the review of the London Plan.

Q.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?

6.26 A number of responses supported a level of 25% being set as a policy for the delivery of affordable housing on developments. However this question attracted varying opinions. There were comments seeking further clarification on how this proposed level had been calculated. Some questioned the definition of affordable housing, and raised concerns that many local people could not access decent housing within their budget. There was support for a higher proportion of housing to be 'affordable', and for the policy to apply on smaller developments. This was an issue noted in some rural areas.

6.27 Others considered a level of 25% to be high, and raised concerns about the potential impact on viability, and suggested that the level be lowered. These respondents noted the need for further work to be carried out in establishing viability of policies, and taking account of anticipated further planning and housing legislation, as the plan.

- 6.28 Some responses from the development sector linked this matter to the calculation of the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing. They noted that the full levels of need for affordable housing would not be satisfied by a policy level set at 25%. These representations proposed that the council raise the level of OAN to better meet a higher need for affordable housing.

Consideration of comments

- 6.29 The council recognises the need to review the evidence base and assess the impacts of the emerging Local Plan policies on viability to ensure that the Plan is deliverable. This technical work will confirm an appropriate level for an affordable housing contribution to be set as the policy for the new Local Plan. This will seek to meet the objectives of meeting a range of housing needs, including access to affordable housing, and satisfying tests of viability.

Q.7. What form of housing best meets the needs of Medway's growing population of older people?

- 6.30 Population data and projections show that the number of older people in Medway is increasing. In preparing the new Local Plan, the council needs to give consideration to specific housing needs for this sector of the community. Varying views were put forward, but common themes were that homes should be close to local services and facilities, designed to be accessible, built to 'Lifelong Homes' standard, and provision should be flexible to cover a range of needs, including on-site support. Bungalows and flats were both suggested, but many comments sought a broad range of housing types to meet the different circumstances of older people.

Q.8. What housing is needed for other specific groups in Medway?

- 6.31 In relation to housing need for specific groups, housing for disabled residents was most frequently mentioned. It was considered that housing should be located near to family/friends and close to good services/infrastructure, so that people with disabilities had access to support and services, and reduced the risk of isolation. Other specific groups listed were the young and young families, with responses referring to the need for small, affordable units and starter homes. Accommodation for elderly residents was also identified, associated with the need for adaptable units. Student housing was noted by a smaller number of respondents.

Q.9. How can development make a positive contribution to the health and wellbeing of Medway's communities?

- 6.32 The most popular response theme was the need for open, green spaces to enable people to be active. The importance of good quality housing was also identified. 'Civic pride' was also seen as a means for people to feel well connected to their neighbourhood.

Q.10. Do you have suggestions for potential sites for starter home developments?

Q.11. *How do you consider the infrastructure needs of starter home and self and custom build developments should be addressed?*

Q.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.*

6.33 This section had fewer detailed comments. Generally the responses supported the provision of starter homes. Many replies identified concerns with infrastructure provision, and considered this matter intrinsic to planning for these forms of housing. It was felt that starter homes should be sustainable development, integrated with existing communities, accessible to facilities with associated infrastructure and good transport links. Some replies suggested the use of brownfield sites as locations for development and provision to be made on larger development sites. It was noted that there were costs associated with starter home provision and a query on how these would be met.

6.34 A number of responses considered that provision should be made for Self Build and Custom housebuilding on larger development sites. However developers pointed out potential problems with such an approach. A range of locations including brownfield sites and rural areas were suggested for this sector. There was some recognition of the potential for well designed and sited self build housing to contribute positively to place making.

Q.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?*

6.35 Respondents considered that new student accommodation should be located close to the Universities, or close to town centres where students could access a range of services and facilities, with good transport links. Some responses noted the potential for disturbance and impacts on residential amenity with student housing in wider communities – accommodation for students should therefore sited sensitively.

Q.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?*

6.36 There was support for a modest provision of accommodation for gypsy, traveller and travelling showpeople, in line with the needs identified. A number of respondents stressed that there should be more engagement with these communities. Some commented on potential for disturbance and detrimental impacts on the local environment, and suggested more clarity on policy and regulations. Location of new sites should take account of environmental designations, provide access to key services, and reflect the cultural attachments within these communities.

Consideration of comments

- 6.37 The Council has acknowledged the points raised by respondents in its approaches in the Development Options consultation document to planning for housing needs. This refers to the mix of housing needed by different groups, promoting quality development, with housing linked to the delivery of infrastructure, and accessible to services and facilities to support a good quality of life.
- 6.38 Further advice on the requirements of Starter Homes legislation is anticipated shortly in conjunction with the Housing White Paper. The council will consider the updated policy position and make provision as appropriate in its housing policies and allocations in the Local Plan.
- 6.39 The emerging student accommodation policy states that provision for students will be predominantly located close to the higher and further education establishments in Medway where there is deemed to be an identified local need.
- 6.40 The council will favourably consider opportunities for student accommodation in town centres where the development can be shown to make a positive contribution to the vitality and sustainability of the centres, and does not have a negative impact on the core functions of the town centres. These locations must be well served by public transport and accessible to a wide range of town centre, leisure and community uses.
- 6.41 The emerging Gypsy, Traveller policy approach states that:
- Existing sites shall be safeguarded;
 - The provision for the identified need for gypsy, traveller and travelling show people accommodation needs within the plan period, to be established by a refreshed GTAA;
 - New sites should be sustainably located with access to local facilities Sites should not be isolated, but should respect the existing communities.

Economic Development

- 6.42 Securing a strong and diverse economy is a key aim for Medway's growth up to 2035.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	9
Charity/Community/Faith Group	44
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	36
Developer/Consultant	33
Government/Public Body	28
Member of the public	122
Other	14

- Q.15. Where should employment sites be located, considering opportunities in existing employment areas, and potential new sites such as Lodge Hill or other developments?*

- 6.43 A number of responses, especially from members of the public, expressed their concerns about the potential impacts of wider development, particularly on services and the environment.
- 6.44 For those who supported the provision of employment land in Medway, there was support for the opportunities to promote the area's regeneration and bring brownfield sites and under-used areas in or near town centres into productive use, as well as redevelopment/upgrades to existing employment areas to improve the quality of the offer to businesses.
- 6.45 It was broadly viewed that good quality employment land in Medway needed to benefit from good access and provide flexible workspace to respond to changing business needs. A number of responses indicated the need for specific infrastructure investments to improve accessibility. There were limited suggestions on where such sites could be best located, but Rochester Airport business park, Chatham Maritime and the Hoo Peninsula were mentioned. There were mixed opinions on the suitability of sites on the Hoo Peninsula, including Lodge Hill, for employment uses. Views were submitted on the potential of different areas in Medway, including Chatham town centre and rural and suburban areas in delivering development for business, housing, services and wider infrastructure.
- Q.16. What are the opportunities for further business growth in and close to town centres in Medway?*
- 6.46 There were a limited number of comments on the opportunities for business growth close to town centres in Medway.
- 6.47 Those who commented expressed some concerns about the condition of some of Medway's town centres, and supported strengthening these areas. Outside of the main centres, there were opportunities identified at Chatham Maritime and Rochester Airport, and other existing employment areas. Business growth was seen to be linked to specific sectors, such as maritime and cultural and creative industries, that could be expanding, and connected to improvement of skills levels in the local area. Issues regarding transport were re-iterated.
- Q.17. Do you agree with scale of jobs and employment land needs identified for Medway over the plan period?*
- 6.48 There were few responses to this question, and a number of people felt that they did not have the technical knowledge to assess the employment needs projected for Medway. There were also comments on the potential for change in forecasting, as conditions change over the plan period. There were mixed opinions on whether the scale of need set out in the consultation document was achievable, or if it failed to be sufficiently ambitious. Good infrastructure and accessibility were considered a basis for economic growth, and the point of encouraging use of brownfield land was reiterated. There was also support for bringing existing employment land allocations into productive use. People expressed ambitions for addressing the large out-commuting flow of workers from Medway, through creating more and better quality jobs locally, and supporting the growth of SME businesses.

Q.18. How can Medway realise opportunities to capitalise on growth in the wider area, including London?

6.49 Comments received largely supported the potential for Medway to strengthen its economy, but identified the need to address negative perceptions of the area. There were mixed views on whether existing transport connections represented opportunities for the area, or presented barriers to growth, that would need to be addressed through further investments in infrastructure. Having an attractive offer for businesses, both in the key components of employment land and floorspace, and the wider area were seen as important. A number of responses indicated that they wanted to promote local distinctiveness, and local employment opportunities.

6.50 The Thames Gateway location and recognition of the area's links to London were noted in some responses, and considered to offer strategic opportunities.

6.51 Some responses highlighted the link to improving skills levels as intrinsic to successful economic growth.

Q.19. How should the plan respond to opportunities arising from the expansion of higher and further education in Medway?

6.52 Largely comments supported the retention of skilled graduates in the local economy and called for better links with businesses, and strategic working to promote the provision of appropriate graduate job opportunities in the local market. However a few responses noted concern about the impact of students on the local jobs and housing markets.

6.53 The University of Kent strongly supported the recognition of the 'Learning Quarter' in Medway, and saw further opportunities for development, and contributions to the cultural and economic spheres of Medway.

Q.20. Is it feasible to reduce the amount of out-commuting from Medway, and what would be required to achieve this?

6.54 A number of responses had limited confidence in Medway being able to successfully turn around the out-commuting pattern, particularly to London. Many of the comments related to commuting to London, and there were few references to the other employment areas, such as Maidstone, that are key destinations for workers in Medway. However other responses considered that there was scope to reduce out-commuting, through the encouragement of new business opportunities, arising from inward investment, business support and re-use of brownfield sites. High value jobs were needed to attract people to work more locally. Key components of quality employment land, such as access and flexible workspace were identified as important to supporting business growth.

Q.21. How should the plan address the specific locational requirements of some businesses, for example access to wharves?

6.55 Some respondents wanted recognition of the needs of specific sectors, such as marine, minerals and agriculture. Infrastructure requirements, particularly transport were also mentioned. Opportunities to use the river for transport were suggested. The competition from residential uses on waterfront sites was considered to present challenges to businesses needing these locations, and a number of responses supported policies to retain wharves and associated infrastructure. Potential conflict between business uses and environmental designations needed to be addressed carefully. Wider support may be needed to secure economic success

General comments on Economy Issues

6.56 A wide range of responses were made as ‘general comments’ on the theme of the economy. Many related to the particular interests of the respondents. The replies included the opportunities and requirements of different industries, such as the creative, marine, renewable energy and tourism sectors, and sites such as Chatham Maritime, the Universities at Medway, and large employment sites on the Hoo Peninsula. Some considered that business estates needed to be more flexible in accommodating a wider range of business use classes. Investment in infrastructure was called for by some. Issues raised covered the importance of education, training and apprenticeships to promote higher quality and better paid jobs for local people. It was noted that commuters do provide value to the local area, in terms of spend in local services.

6.57 A successful economy was placed in the context of wider ambitions for Medway’s Local Plan, for example, vibrant town centres would attract businesses and grow confidence in the area, and be a location for creative based industries. Economic growth also needed to respect the area’s environment.

Consideration of comments

6.58 In relation to the local economy the Council will:

- seek to boost Medway’s economic performance, securing a range of jobs for its workforce;
- work with stakeholders to support sustainable economic growth and job creation;
- seek to increase the productivity of Medway’s economy, as measured through GVA, through support for higher value employment.

Tourism

6.59 Tourism was considered as a specific employment sector, and its role in promoting a successful Medway.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	3
Charity/Community/Faith Group	27
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	15
Developer/Consultant	10
Government/Public Body	10

Member of the public	53
Other	6

Q.22. What scale and form of additional visitor accommodation is needed to support and develop a successful tourism sector in Medway?

6.60 There was a wide range of views on visitor accommodation, with some respondents stating that there was an under supply of hotel accommodation in Medway and others stating that there was an over supply.

6.61 The level of quality experienced in the hotel market was frequently mentioned, with a number of respondents pointing towards a need for more, higher quality provision to support the needs of the local tourism sector. Equally the need for more quality, budget accommodation was raised with the need for more caravan park type holiday accommodation.

6.62 Overall there appears to be the need for an overall improvement and a wider offer of tourism accommodation.

Q.23. What are the opportunities for extending tourism in Medway beyond day trips to the main attractions and events?

6.63 Many suggested that the tourism offer in Medway is fragmented, with a need for joined up marketing to promote Medway tourism as a whole, particularly to higher spending visitors with international promotion being raised as a specific area of opportunity.

6.64 Promoting and opening up 'wildlife/natural environment' tourism in Medway was strongly supported, with much reference to sustainable tourism and an overall need for a sensitive approach to protect the value of the natural environment.

Q.24. What role does the river and Medway's countryside have to play in developing tourism locally?

6.65 The use of the River as a means of further developing Medway's tourism sector received much support, however, again many respondents had concerns about the effect this may have on the environment and that extending tourism should not be at the expense of the overall beauty of the area.

Consideration of comments

6.66 Achieving greater value from the use of Medway's river frontage is a key aspect of the council's regeneration plans, indeed the draft vision for the new Local Plan states that 'Medway will be a leading waterfront University City' by 2035, which highlights the importance the Council places on the river and the recognition of its value to the wider area.

6.67 The council will positively promote sustainable tourism development that can make a positive contribution to Medway's economy and cultural life. Appropriate proposals for the

development of tourism facilities and visitor accommodation will be supported where they meet the principles of sustainable development.

- 6.68 Tourism developments that can contribute positively to the regeneration of Medway, consistent with the council’s vision, and extend the cultural offer will be considered favourably. Opportunities for development to enhance the vibrancy and vitality of town centres will be welcomed.

Retail, commercial leisure and town centres

- 6.69 The role of town centres is a key issue, especially in the context of changing retail patterns. This topic was of particular interest to residents.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	12
Charity/Community/Faith Group	32
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	26
Developer/Consultant	12
Government/Public Body	14
Member of the public	82
Other	8

- Q.25. *Should we focus investment & retail capacity on Chatham to consolidate its position as Medway’s highest order centre?*
- Q.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?*
- Q.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?*
- Q.28. *Should we consider making provision for a new or replacement supermarket in Gillingham town centre? If so, where should this go?*
- Q.29. *What should our approach be to proposals for new or enhanced out of town retail?*

- 6.70 Just under half of respondents supported Chatham as being promoted as the main centre in Medway. Quite a high proportion of responses came from members of the public on this issue. Numerous suggestions were put forward for how Chatham could be developed and its status raised. The importance of its heritage was recognised, and other comments sought to increase the profile of its riverfront position, develop its hotel offer and drawing on the expanding University sector. Overall a need was recognised to improve the facilities – for

example parking - in Chatham and improving links to the immediate surrounding area and beyond – this includes improved public transport.

6.71 In terms of improving the overall offer in Medway town centres, more housing and better food and drink outlets were identified as being of most importance.

6.72 There is support for Medway town centres, with a significant proportion of responses not supporting the development of out of town retail facilities which could draw away trade from the high streets which have seen much pressure over recent years.

6.73 There was also support for smaller town and neighbourhood centres and a greater variety of uses to avoid over concentrations of fast food outlets and beauty salons with suggestions of better defined roles for each Medway town centre.

Consideration of comments

6.74 The Local Plan shall be addressing all of these issues, managing uses in each town centre to strengthen their character and retain their unique offer. The provision of floor space will be assessed to ensure it is in line with need. The vitality of town centres will be prioritised for example by tackling vacant units within the retail core.

Environment

6.75 The protection and enhancement of a strong natural environment, and safeguarding natural resources is a core component of sustainable development and central to the new Local Plan.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	24
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	14
Developer/Consultant	17
Government/Public Body	17
Member of the public	70
Other	4

Q.30. *What are the most effective means to secure and strengthen Medway’s environment, in the context of the area’s development needs?*

Q.31. *What opportunities should be pursued in the Local Plan to extend connectivity for wildlife and people throughout urban and rural parts of Medway?*

Q.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?*

6.76 The key themes that were raised in relation to the environment were:

- Strong support for protecting and enhancing the existing environment, in view of that appropriate and sensitive development;
- Improved infrastructure for accessing the environment;
- Securing the environment with better partnership working;
- Environmentally friendly modes of transport for improved connectivity;
- Extending green corridors;
- Support for protecting the landscape, new development to have good/sympathetic design.

Consideration of comments

- 6.77 The council will protect the network of green infrastructure across rural and urban Medway. New development should provide for green infrastructure that supports the successful integration of development into the landscape, and contributes to improved connectivity and public access, biodiversity, landscape conservation, design, management of heritage features, recreation and seeks opportunities to strengthen the resilience of the natural environment.
- 6.78 Opportunities will be sought to promote and enhance the public rights of way network, including footpaths, bridleways and cycle routes, in particular to address existing gaps in connectivity and extend appropriate access along the riverside.

Built Environment

6.79 This area attracted many comments from residents.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	1
Charity/Community/Faith Group	37
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	22
Developer/Consultant	4
Government/Public Body	16
Member of the public	83
Other	9

- Q.33. *What approach should we take to managing Medway’s heritage assets, particularly in the context of bringing forward regeneration?*
- Q.34. *What characteristics do you think makes a good place to live?*
- Q.35. *What areas or characteristics of Medway are most distinctive? How should these be protected, enhanced or reflected in new development?*
- Q.36. *What areas of Medway have weaker character and what are the opportunities for improvements?*

Q.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?*

6.80 Comments focused on preserving and enhancing heritage assets for future generations, to support the tourism offer and focus for regeneration efforts. There was also great emphasis placed on more definitive policy formation to ensure that a number of distinctive sightlines are safeguarded through the use of Supplementary Planning Documents, design standards and view management.

6.81 The most distinctive area within Medway was considered to be its rich military and naval history (which included the Historic Dockyard and its fortifications) closely followed by Rochester. However, respondents were also keen to promote river frontage and green space.

6.82 Luton and Wayfield were identified as areas of having particularly weak character, along with densely populated areas of Chatham and Gillingham. Poor social infrastructure was cited as the main area for improvement.

6.83 Respondents cited green open space, nature and biodiversity as the main characteristics that make Medway a good place to live and therefore, focus would be to safeguard such areas. Additionally, particular attention was focused upon championing high quality, safe and inclusive design to improve place identity.

6.84 The key requirements for new development were for the integration with the existing built character in terms of appearance, massing and scale; provision of amenity space/open space and enhancement of the natural environment.

Consideration of comments

6.85 The impact of new development on the local environment is a key concern to respondents. Under the emerging design policy, the council will seek that all development must be of a high quality design and make a positive contribution, appropriate to the character and appearance of its surroundings with appropriate landscaping that contributes to the local green infrastructure network. In particular housing must be designed to support 'place making' to create high quality public spaces and to retain local distinctiveness and identity.

6.86 The importance of protecting the historic environment from negative impacts of new development is also recognised in the emerging heritage policy approach.

Rural Issues

6.87 The rural parts of Medway have a number of specific considerations, which formed a section in the consultation document.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	24
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	24
Developer/Consultant	11
Government/Public Body	15
Member of the public	66
Other	8

Q.38. How should the role of Hoo St Werburgh as a service centre be developed?

Q.39. What provision needs to be made for employment in rural Medway?

Q.40. How should the Local Plan address the need to maintain and improve access to services in rural areas?

Q.41. What consideration should be given to strategic infrastructure and development in rural Medway?

Q.42. How can the Local Plan ensure that strategic and local needs are satisfactorily addressed in areas working towards production of a Neighbourhood Plan?

6.88 Respondents generally emphasised the importance of improvements to infrastructure, in particular the road network, if Hoo St Werburgh is to be developed as a service centre. An improved retail offer in this location would reduce the need to travel to other town centres. A detailed response considered that the provision of new homes would support the viability of the existing centre at Hoo. However, a resident expressed concern that recent housing developments have not resulted in improvements to the centre. The same respondent also considered that the physical constraints of the village centre may limit its expansion as a service centre. Further individual responses suggested Hoo would require a range of improvements, including opportunities for young people, dementia-friendly initiatives and general cleanliness.

6.89 Improvements required to transport and internet broadband infrastructure presented a recurrent theme. Respondents also stated that the Local Plan should recognise that car dependency is more pronounced in rural areas and therefore access to services should be addressed through adequate parking provision. Different views were provided concerning the impact of new housing and service provision, however some responses suggested basic services might be secured through planning conditions.

- 6.90 Several responses raised the feasibility of converting the existing branch railway line for public services. One response made reference to the national planning policy requirement to protect wharves and railheads, while another emphasised the need to confine heavy industrial development to Kingsnorth and Grain. Some respondents stressed the need to protect the environment and agricultural uses, with special attention afforded to the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 6.91 Respondents provided a range of comments relating to the type and scale of employment in rural Medway, such as the conversion of existing vacant/derelict farm buildings. A response suggested leisure facilities in proximity to Deangate may attract office or retail sector employment. Increased marine or heritage-led tourism activities may also increase employment opportunities. However, several responses highlighted the need for improved transport and internet broadband infrastructure to facilitate employment. Local employment opportunities will be crucial in reducing the need to travel.
- 6.92 Various means of public participation were overwhelmingly seen as the most effective way to ensure strategic and local needs are addressed in the neighbourhood planning process. Ideally, there would be ongoing cooperation during the production of the emerging Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans.

Consideration of comments

- 6.93 At the development options stage it was noted that residents and stakeholders supported the protection of green spaces (both urban and rural) and the important features of the area's natural and historic environment.
- 6.94 Rural areas feature in most of the development options in some way, and while there is considerable focus in Medway's central urban areas, it is unlikely that the full range of development needs could be met solely in the identified regeneration areas on brownfield land. Therefore greenfield sites in rural areas are being considered for their potential to contribute to sustainable development over the plan period.
- 6.95 However in developing Medway up to 2035, attention must be given to retaining and securing a distinct rural character that distinguishes development in this area from the urban areas of Medway and to open up opportunities for rural residents. It is aimed to enhance the provision of services and jobs and support the growth of rural businesses, which is a key part of promoting sustainable villages and providing for the needs of rural residents.

Infrastructure and Services - Health

- 6.70 Specific regard was had to the opportunities for improving the health of Medway's communities.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	29
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	19
Developer/Consultant	2
Government/Public Body	12
Member of the public	93
Other	8

Q.43. *What changes to the built environment could facilitate healthier communities?*

Q.44. *How can the Local Plan encourage access to healthy food options and growing opportunities?*

Q.45. *How can the Local Plan most effectively promote greater physical activity in Medway?*

Q.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?*

6.71 Respondents gave suggestions for a range of measures to promote healthier lifestyles through the built environment. Improvements to pavements and footpaths and an integrated cycle network were sought to encourage walking and cycling and to facilitate 'active travel'. Specific design principles and improvements to street lighting were cited as ways to reduce incidents and the fear of crime. Some responses underlined the role of public spaces – and particularly their maintenance – in enabling social and community activity, while another response made reference to place-making and dementia. Improvements to air quality would also have a significant impact on health. In addition to promoting physical activity, the provision of allotments, community orchards and food markets, along with the reduction in the number of fast food outlets, were all suggested as measures to promote access to healthy food. Some respondents proposed specific sites for new healthcare facilities, including Canterbury Street, Gillingham, Chattenden and Rochester Airport, or as an integral part of larger developments. Any new facility would need to reflect a strategic review undertaken by the NHS.

Consideration of comments

6.72 The Council has acknowledged the points raised by respondents in its policy approach set out in the Development Options document to tackle health inequalities and contribute to an improved quality of life. The emerging Local Plan is promoting improved social and economic opportunities.

6.73 The development plan will be addressing many of the key aspects raised in consultation responses sought as components of sustainable communities, where people can enjoy the living environment, feel safe and want to make a contribution to their local area. The Development Options consultation document recognises ambitions to achieve a dementia friendly environment in Medway, as part of the objectives set for the plan. Health facilities have been identified as one of the most important aspects of infrastructure planning for local people. In developing the Local Plan, the council will work with health commissioners and services to coordinate and plan for the effective provision of services in line with the level of need of Medway’s growing and changing population.

Social and community infrastructure

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	13
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	11
Developer/Consultant	3
Government/Public Body	9
Member of the public	35
Other	3

Q.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?*

Q.48. *What community facilities are needed by Medway’s population over the plan period, and how should they be delivered and managed?*

6.74 Developer contributions were considered the most effective means of securing new and expanded schools. Some respondents stated that new schools should be built in locations which would minimise the need to travel. Many respondents voiced concerns about the capacity of existing schools to accommodate more pupils. Respondents indicated that a range of new community facilities would be needed over the plan period, such as community halls and public spaces where people can socialise and support cultural activities. Such facilities should be accessible, affordable and flexible. Some responses identified facilities for specific groups, including young people, older people and people with disabilities. It was recognised that cross border use of facilities needed consideration.

Consideration of comments

6.75 The council recognises the importance of community facilities as a key component of the social aspect of sustainable development. Planning for a sufficient supply of school places is particular concern in the context of Medway’s significant growth, and proportion of families with young children in the local communities. Detailed infrastructure planning will determine the scale and location of new and expanded schools required to ensure

sustainable development. Any loss of existing wider community facilities to other development uses will be avoided and all new development will need to demonstrate that there is sufficient provision for community facilities.

6.76 Infrastructure planning is key to coordinating Medway’s planned growth to ensure that provision is made for the right scale and type of community facilities in line with the level of need for a broad range of community groups.

Open space

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	40
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	24
Developer/Consultant	5
Government/Public Body	17
Member of the public	86
Other	9

Q.49. Is it an appropriate ambition to preserve the integrity of the open space estate, or should we be seeking to rationalise the estate?

Q.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?

Q.51. Should we move to a multi-functional hub model of provision, and what might this look like in practice?

Q.52. Should new development provide on-site open space, investment into the existing estate, or a balance of the two approaches?

Q.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?

6.77 Respondents overwhelmingly preferred the preservation of the existing open space sites, although three responses expressed support for rationalisation where there was clear evidence that specific sites are considered to be unsuitable. The majority of responses were also in favour of setting a local space standard. However there was no consensus as to the exact ratio (ha / 1,000 people). Some responses made reference to the particular geographical constraints of Medway, while others pointed to the unfavourable comparisons with neighbouring areas in access to open space. Most responses preferred a balanced approach to the provision of open space, based on a site-specific assessment. Some responses supported on-site provision for major housing developments. A detailed representation highlighted the value of accessible ‘pocket parks’, which could prove to be vital spaces, especially for older people.

6.78 Respondents expressed either moderate support or strong opposition to a ‘multi-functional hub model’. Responses in support acknowledged the anticipated efficiency savings, while responses in opposition cited access and quality issues. Respondents provided a rich variety of suggestions for the management of open spaces, including the ‘Friends of ...’ groups, long term leases, through other volunteering opportunities, and allocating public spaces for graffiti art (in order to discourage vandalism elsewhere).

Consideration of comments

6.79 The Council acknowledges the points raised by respondents in its approach to formulating a Local Plan open space policy and a Green Infrastructure policy. The council recognises the importance of open spaces for residents, and considers that developing on the current network of parks would damage the quality of urban areas, and impact on objectives for a green and healthier Medway. No such land has been identified as surplus to the needs of the area. Therefore development on urban parks and open spaces has not been considered an appropriate approach to planning for Medway’s growth over the plan period.

6.80 The emerging Local Plan seeks to protect open space, as detailed under the emerging Green Infrastructure policy which values access to open space for relaxation, health, socialising and learning. Green infrastructure will serve to integrate new development into the landscape.

6.81 Points raised by respondents around means of managing open-space in Medway. Criteria will be set for establishing and maintaining local green spaces with enhanced public rights of way serving to link key public spaces.

Sports

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	11
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	10
Developer/Consultant	2
Government/Public Body	7
Member of the public	37
Other	3

Q.54. What provision should be made for sport in the Local Plan, including in relation to population growth and new developments?

Q.55. How should the Local Plan address the aspirations for a new stadium for Gillingham FC?

6.82 Many responses came from the general public in response to the sports section compared to other topics. There was a definite recognition of the importance of sport and related

facilities in Medway and the need to protect existing provision, as well as identifying the role that the Local Plan could play in facilitating the sector’s growth and integration with the broader growth of the area.

- 6.83 The question regarding Gillingham Football Club stadium received just as much interest as the question on the overall provision of sports facilities. Many respondents supported the relocation of the stadium and saw the Local Plan as playing an important role in allocating land for a new stadium for Gillingham Football Club.

Consideration of comments

- 6.84 The value of sport and the contribution it makes towards the general well-being of the local population is recognised in the emerging Local Plan. While there has been significant investment and upgrading of sports facilities in Medway, the Council recognises that there are many opportunities to develop greater participation in sporting activities among the local population to help address health inequalities. Existing sports facilities will be protected and new developments will be assessed for their requirement to provide additional provision for sports facilities. The council will work with Gillingham Football Club to develop an appropriate strategy to secure the club’s future in Medway.

Natural Resources - Agricultural Land

- 6.85 Medway includes a significant proportion of the best and most versatile farmland and supports an important sector of the rural economy.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	5
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	5
Developer/Consultant	5
Government/Public Body	2
Member of the public	23
Other	2

Q.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?

- 6.86 The general consensus amongst respondents was to protect all agricultural land. This was a particularly strongly held view of residents. However, with a need to plan positively for growth in Medway, it was acknowledged that some loss of agricultural land was unavoidable over the long term. Potential development was advocated on Brownfield sites in the first instance.

Consideration of comments

- 6.87 The starting point for the development strategy in the Medway Local Plan is making the most effective use of land that can deliver on the strategic objectives set for Medway's growth. Making the best use of land is central to the development strategy under the Local Plan and endeavours to promote the use of brownfield land in line with Government policy. The Council acknowledges the points raised by respondents in its approach to agricultural land under the Local Plan.
- 6.88 The council is following government policy to promote the use of brownfield land. However the Council recognises that the scale of development needs in the area will not be served by brownfield land alone. Therefore greenfield sites in suburban and rural areas may have to form a part of Medway's development strategy for the new Local Plan. Greenfield land that is free from environmental constraints of lesser value for landscape and agricultural purposes may also need be considered for development where they are suitably located for services and infrastructure.
- 6.89 The council will support the land based sector in Medway, through seeking to direct development to land of lesser agricultural land, where feasible, and promoting the sustainable development and diversification of farming and other land based rural businesses, where the proposals can demonstrate positive benefits.

Air Quality

- 6.90 There are a number of areas designated in Medway as Air Quality Management Areas, in recognition of the poor air quality levels, largely arising from traffic.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	6
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	5
Developer/Consultant	
Government/Public Body	4
Member of the public	13
Other	2

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

- 6.91 Respondents were keen to promote modal shift away from cars. In particular, comments focused upon the promotion of low emission vehicles, dedicated electric changing points and a dedicated network of cycling/walking routes throughout the Borough. However the consensus amongst respondents was that there would be an inevitable increase in congestion in AQMAs. To offset this, respondents supported traffic restrictions, a reduction in freight travel and expansion of air quality monitoring as the plan progresses. Additionally, the publication of air quality data and enhanced guidance through supplementary policy documents were generally supported.

Consideration of comments

- 6.92 The Council recognises the detrimental impact that poor air quality can have on human health; where possible it will endeavour to improve air quality through restricting development or requiring acceptable and effective mitigation measures.
- 6.93 The responses identified parks and open spaces as important ‘green lungs’ for Medway residents. The Council supports the retention of a resilient network of green spaces, particularly in urban Medway, as a core component of the emerging development approach.

Minerals

- 6.94 As a unitary authority, Medway has responsibility for planning for the steady and sustainable supply of minerals.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	11
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	9
Developer/Consultant	4
Government/Public Body	7
Member of the public	21
Other	3

Q.58. What approach should be taken to planning for land won minerals in Medway?

Q.59. What are the requirements for wharves and their supporting land-side infrastructure in Medway over the plan period?

- 6.95 Respondents recognised the importance of the minerals resources in Medway; however the environmental impact of extraction was of great importance. Respondents also felt that high quality remediation following cessation of extraction was necessary. Wharves were considered to be a great asset to Medway, with 75% of respondents indicating that they should be safeguarded from development. Of most concern was the movement of minerals by road, with the highest proportion of responses indicating that minerals both from wharves and quarries should be transported by rail or water.

Consideration of comments

- 6.96 Respondents noted concerns of the environmental impact of the extraction of minerals and associated transportation. Sustainability is a key aspect of the minerals policy with this principle covering all aspects of the extraction, transportation and subsequent restoration of extraction sites back to their original condition.

Waste & Recycling

6.97 As a unitary authority, Medway has responsibility for the planning of the sustainable management of waste.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	1
Charity/Community/Faith Group	5
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	5
Developer/Consultant	
Government/Public Body	8
Member of the public	15
Other	2

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

6.98 Overall the encouragement for further methods of recycling was considered the most favoured approach. The next largest proportion of the responses felt that improvements to the existing Household Waste Recycling Centres were necessary. However an equal number of respondents were content with existing arrangements. Many responses also felt it was important to reduce waste at its origin, or to reduce the amount sent to landfill.

Consideration of comments

6.99 There was strong support for the recycling of waste in Medway. The emerging waste and recycling policy seeks to divert waste away from landfill and prioritising recycling options on all new developments. The plan seeks to allocate additional sites for waste management facilities, which will address the issue for the need for improvements to be made, in line with anticipated growth in waste generated by an increasing population.

Sustainability and climate change

6.100 The Local Plan must seek to promote sustainable development and address and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	33
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	22
Developer/Consultant	5
Government/Public Body	13
Member of the public	60
Other	11

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

6.101 With regard to the development of planning policies to achieve sustainable development in Medway, respondents prioritised green energy production, improved public transport, access to green space and better healthcare as being of the greatest importance.

6.102 Respondents felt it was important to take steps to mitigate the risks of climate change, with flooding being highlighted as being of major concern for new development. The siting of new developments away from areas of flood risk and the creation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) were considered to be of the greatest importance, followed by the promotion of low-carbon buildings and the integration of green technologies.

6.103 Similarly, a preference was also indicated towards the retrofitting of green technology to existing development to improve the energy efficiency, followed by the retention of existing trees and encouraging further planting.

6.104 In order for all communities to share in the benefits of growth in Medway, most respondents felt that encouraging economic mobility was the best means of achieving this.

Consideration of comments

6.105 Under the draft objectives set for the Medway Local Plan, a key ambition identified is to address the challenges of climate change, seeking opportunities to promote carbon reduction and mitigation measures, and reduce the risk of flooding.

6.105 Medway's vision to 2035 is for growth that will promote a low carbon economy, seeking to address and mitigate climate change. This includes measures incorporated into housing design for example, living spaces that can adapt to the impact of climate change.

6.106 The council is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of the area and encourages improvements in the use of green technologies. It notes the support and suggestions for sustainable development to be incorporated in the Local Plan.

Flood Risk

6.107 Medway’s location next to the river and estuary that name the authority presents a number of areas that are subject to risk of flooding.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	10
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	9
Developer/Consultant	3
Government/Public Body	5
Member of the public	22
Other	4

Q.66. *How should flood risk and SuDs be taken into account in planning for growth in Medway?*

Q.67. *What safeguards should be put in place to ensure future requirements for improved flood defences are not compromised?*

6.108 Flooding was an important issue for respondents, with a clear emphasis on the protection of flood plains and marshland and avoiding development on land at the risk of flooding. The provision of Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SuDs) was highly regarded and should be integral to early discussions about potential development and not considered as an after thought.

6.109 Within the context of recent adverse flooding events across the UK, it was felt that all proposed development should be above the worst-case anticipated sea level rise and above established flood plains. Respondents advocated implementing flooding policies now, even though there is a greater risk beyond the life of the Plan period. One respondent focused on the longevity of materials that would form future flood defences.

Consideration of comments

6.110 Enabling development that is not at risk of flooding is of paramount importance to the Local Plan. This key point forms part of the strategic vision for Medway’s development by 2035, as well as a component of the draft strategic objectives set for the plan. The emerging flood risk policy supports a sequential, risk-based approach and the use of SUDs.

Energy

6.111 Consideration needs to be given in the plan to conventional and renewable forms of energy.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	16
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	15
Developer/Consultant	1
Government/Public Body	7
Member of the public	36
Other	6

Q.68. Should we allocate sites or zones for wind energy development?

Q.69. What policies should we set for other forms of energy development?

Q.70. How should we take advantage of opportunities for use of waste heat from the large-scale energy generation on the Peninsula?

6.112 On the whole respondents were generally supportive of the production of energy from renewable sources. Both wind and solar energy were most favourable, with respondents supporting both household solar microgeneration and large scale commercial solar farms. The preferred location for both wind and solar energy production on a commercial scale was the previously developed industrial land on the Isle of Grain. However concern was raised over potential environmental or visual impacts.

6.113 The harnessing of waste heat from power stations and the carbon capture was supported with respondents regularly citing similar projects in Scandinavia, Germany and Iceland. However, a large proportion of respondents were unaware of the specific benefits or the technology.

Consideration of comments

6.114 Consultees were concerned about the environmental and visual impacts of energy facilities on the surrounding area. The emerging energy policy approach clearly identifies the criteria under which proposals for new power generation would be deemed acceptable – the first being an assessment of the impact on the natural environment and the surrounding area.

6.115 The council is committed to reducing the carbon footprint of the area and supports renewable and low carbon energy development using a variety of technologies. Respondents were most supportive of solar technology. This is supported in the emerging Local Plan along with other renewable technologies.

Transport

6.116 An effective and sustainable transport network is intrinsic to the delivery of a sound and sustainable development strategy for Medway's growth.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	3
Charity/Community/Faith Group	34
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	27
Developer/Consultant	12
Government/Public Body	22
Member of the public	77
Other	9

Q.71. What infrastructure is required to support Medway's growth over the plan period?

Q.72. What measures should be considered to increase public transport usage and rates of walking and cycling in Medway?

6.117 Respondents identified a wide range of infrastructure requirements to support Medway's growth, from major highway schemes to Public Rights of Way improvements. Many responses focussed on investment in walking and cycling infrastructure. Respondents also suggested the introduction of a new River Medway crossing, along with a river taxi service. The feasibility of a light rail network was also raised. Improved partnership working was seen as an important factor in public transport provision, while shuttle services serving rural areas would be welcome. Bus travel concession schemes were also identified, with specific reference made to the ageing population.

Q.73. What provision should be made for car parking?

6.118 The issue of car parking produced strong views, with many highlighting the perceived lack of adequate capacity as part of recent developments. Many other responses were concerned with the level of on-street parking in permit-controlled areas. Some responses suggested the allocation of parking spaces to encourage the uptake of electric / low emissions vehicles. The cost of parking in town centres was also raised.

Q.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?

6.119 Respondents largely expressed support for the retention of and/or additional waterside infrastructure in relation to commercial and leisure activities. Furthermore, public access to areas fronting the river should be encouraged. However, one response stated Chatham Docks should not be protected due to a reported oversupply of land and emerging proposals for the Port of Sheerness.

Q.75. *How should the aviation facilities at Rochester Airport and Stoke be considered in the Local Plan?*

6.120 The consultation produced a mixed response in relation to aviation facilities. Some responses suggested that Rochester Airport should be closed, presenting a site for alternative uses, while others valued the potential of the site to deliver economic growth. The views on this topic were often expressed in strong terms.

Consideration of comments

6.121 An emerging strategic level policy ('Sustainable Transport') supports the Medway Local Transport Plan (2011-26) and aims to improve infrastructure, mitigate the impacts of development, secure better environmental outcomes and to cooperate with the relevant authorities concerning the proposed Lower Thames Crossing.

6.122 In addition to achieving the appropriate number and allocation of parking spaces, the proposed 'Vehicle Parking' and 'Cycle Parking' policies draw on research and 'best practice guides' to inform the design principles. Moreover, 'Connectivity and Permeability' has been proposed to ensure street layouts promote ease of movement along safe routes and integrate with adjacent built-up areas.

6.123 The policy approach 'Transport and the River Medway' seeks to protect existing waterside infrastructure, including Thamesport and remaining capacity at Chatham Docks, and encourage leisure activities while respecting and enhancing the marine environment. The 'Aviation' policy approach states that Rochester Airport should be safeguarded to provide a strategic gateway and an economic hub, however proposals will need to demonstrate how the impacts will be mitigated.

Deliverability

6.124 Central to the Local Plan is a sound and effective delivery strategy to ensure that the development plan can meet the objectives set for the area's sustainable development.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	
Charity/Community/Faith Group	52
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	16
Developer/Consultant	7
Government/Public Body	9
Member of the public	32
Other	6

Q.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?*

Q.77 *Should we consider setting different rates of affordable housing and CIL contributions to take account of differing viability between areas of Medway?*

Q.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?*

Q.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?*

6.125 Respondents supported dialogue with communities in seeking deliverable policies. Regular review and attention to viability, risk management, and phasing of development were also mentioned.

6.126 The majority of respondents supported the consideration of different rates of affordable housing and development contributions to take account of varying levels of viability across Medway.

6.127 The greatest support was for the timely delivery of infrastructure alongside development. Key areas for infrastructure investment were identified as sustainable transport, health services, but a range of other sectors, including employment and the environment were also mentioned.

6.128 Again dialogue with local communities was most frequently cited in ensuring that quality of development was not compromised in seeking more speedy processes to delivery. A number of respondents supported the use of planning tools, such as Permission in Principle and development briefs to bring forward development.

Consideration of comments

6.129 The emerging policy approach in the Development Options document acknowledges the consideration of viability, monitoring and the importance of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan to coordinate the delivery of infrastructure with development.

Development Strategy

6.130 The council sought views on how the Local Plan should seek to meet Medway's development needs.

Responses from Sector	Number of Responses
Business	4
Charity/Community/Faith Group	54
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	42
Developer/Consultant	55
Government/Public Body	23
Member of the public	84
Other	16

Q.80 Are the development principles right? Should other guiding principles be introduced?

Q.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?

Q.82 Which development type (or combination of types) do you think best meets the identified growth requirements for Medway?

Q.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?

Q.84 Should the green belt boundary be reviewed?

Q.85 What provision should be made for mixed use in residential developments, both high density and lower density?

Q.86 What approach should be taken to future development opportunities and mix of uses in Chatham town centre and Waterfront?

Q.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?

6.131 The majority of respondents were in support of the development principles. Generally responses supported stronger carefully worded policies that secured good design and quality development in Medway, including renewable energy. Some specific components mentioned were protection of the Kent Downs AONB, the natural, historic and built environments and green infrastructure. Many supported the retention of Strategic Gaps and securing access to open and green spaces for walking and cycling. Communities should be involved early on in the process for significant new proposals.

- 6.132 Many responses sought the improvement of run down properties, and asked the council to also address aging housing stock. There was some support for high density and high rise new development, but it was considered that such a form of development was only appropriate in certain locations. New development should be sustainable in its design and construction. Representations supported the provision of affordable property and noted that a range of house types need to be delivered.
- 6.133 In presenting views on preferred development options, many respondents referred to specific sites and locations, that either they were seeking to promote for development, or to protect from development. Incremental development was seen to bring forward development more quickly, but larger scale planned development was favoured by others as delivering coordinated infrastructure. The majority of responses accepted that the scale of development projected meant that more radical approaches to development should be considered. The most popular development approach was for town centre growth and riverside development, supported by appropriate funding. There was also support for freestanding settlements, and incremental suburban growth. Self-build/custom-build housebuilding was noted by some as an option, but acknowledged that it would only serve a small proportion of needs. There was some expressed support for development at Lodge Hill, when seen in a wider context of development needs and options across Medway.
- 6.134 In considering development in central urban areas some comments made specific reference to the need to address air pollution, together with transport infrastructure. There was support to make better use of the river and improve public transport links. The council was advised to take account of proposals outside Medway, such as the implications of the proposed Lower Thames Crossing.
- 6.135 There were mixed views on the possible review of the Green Belt boundary. Many supported its current designation, whilst others felt it should be reviewed. It was acknowledged by some that a Green Belt review may be necessary, in exceptional circumstances.
- 6.136 People viewed that Medway needed a civic heart, and accepted some diversification in the High Streets and the creation of evening economies. However it was considered that a better retail offer was needed and parking provision and costs should be addressed to attract more visits to the town centres. There was recognition of the distinct character and role of the villages and towns across Medway, and these should be retained. The
- 6.137 Comments called for careful consideration of the potential loss of employment to new development, such as Medway City Estate and Chatham Docks. It was necessary to identify attractive locations for SME's and to recognise the strategic importance of the power generation sector on the Hoo Peninsula.
- 6.138 There was support for effective monitoring to inform strategic planning and effective working between private and public sectors and neighbouring authorities in order to deliver a successful plan for Medway's growth.

Consideration of comments

6.139 All of the themes referenced are key aspects of the draft spatial strategy for Medway. These are components of the draft vision, strategic objectives, development options and policy approaches in the Development Options consultation document.

Appendices

- 1: Copy of Issues and Options questionnaire
- 2: Issues and Options consultation programme
- 3: Copy of promotional material for Issues and Options consultation

Medway Local Plan Issues and Options consultation form

How to respond to the consultation

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.

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:

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy>

Comments must be received by 5pm on Monday 29 February 2016.

This interactive form has been developed to correspond to the Issues and Options document and needs to be used in conjunction with that document.

The questions are divided into 9 broad topics that can be accessed by clicking the links below.

Please select the number of points you would like to answer or select all the points if you would like to answer the full document:

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Developing a vision | <input type="checkbox"/> Infrastructure and Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic Issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Natural Resources |

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustainability and Climate Change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economy | <input type="checkbox"/> Deliverability |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environment | |

Developing a vision for Medway in 2035

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

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?

3.a Any other comments regarding Strategic Issues?

Housing

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?

14.a Any other comments regarding Housing?

Economy

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?

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?

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?

29.a Any Other comments regarding Economy?

Environment

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?

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?

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?

42.a Any other comments regarding the Environment?

Infrastructure and Services

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 health care facilities should be considered in the Local Plan? Are there opportunities to provide new sites, and/or to integrate health services in local communities?

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?

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?

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?

56.a Any other comments regarding Infrastructure and Services?

Natural Resources

57. 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?

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

59. What approach should be taken to planning for land won minerals in Medway?

60. What are the requirements for wharves and their supporting land-side infrastructure in Medway over the plan period?

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

61.a Any other comments regarding Natural Resources?

Sustainability and Climate Change

62. What should sustainable development look like for Medway? What plans and policies should we put into place to achieve this?

63. How can Medway ensure that all communities share in the benefits of growth, in order to reduce the significant inequalities across the area?

64. What measures should new development take to mitigate and adapt to the risks posed by climate change?

65. How can existing development and communities mitigate and adapt to the risks posed by climate change?

66. Should Medway adopt the optional national standards for water efficiency? What local evidence would we need to underpin this?

67. How should flood risk and SuDs be taken into account in planning for growth in Medway?

68. What safeguards should be put in place to ensure future requirements for improved flood defences are not compromised?

69. Should we allocate sites or zones for wind energy development?

70. What policies should we set for other forms of energy development?

71. How should we take advantage of opportunities for use of waste heat from the large-scale energy generation on the Peninsula?

72. What infrastructure is required to support Medway's growth over the plan period?

73. What measures should be considered to increase public transport usage and rates of walking and cycling in Medway?

74. What provision should be made for car parking?

75. 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?

76. How should the aviation facilities at Rochester Airport and Stoke be considered in the Local Plan?

76.a Any Other Comments regarding Sustainability and Climate change?

Deliverability

77. 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?

78. Should we consider setting different rates of affordable housing and CIL contributions to take account of differing viability between areas of Medway?

79. 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?

80. 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?

81. Are the development principles right? Should other guiding principles be introduced?

82. Do you agree with the assessment of advantages and disadvantages of the various development type options set out? Are there other advantages and disadvantages that should be considered?

83. Which development type (or combination of types) do you think best meets the identified growth requirements for Medway?

84. 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?

85. Should the green belt boundary be reviewed?

86. What provision should be made for mixed use in residential developments, both high density and lower density?

87. What approach should be taken to future development opportunities and mix of uses in Chatham town centre and Waterfront?

88. 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?

88.a Any other comments regarding Deliverability?

Demographic Information

We collect this information to help us better understand the communities that we serve so that services and policies can be delivered to meet the needs of everybody. Please feel free to leave questions that you do not wish to answer. All of the information gathered in this questionnaire is confidential.

Age and Gender

89. Are you? Please tick the appropriate box

- Male* *Female* *I prefer not to say*

90. How old are you? (Please tick the appropriate box)

- Under 16* *35 - 44* *65 to 74*
 16 - 24 *45 - 54* *75 and over*
 25 - 34 *55 - 64* *I prefer not to say*

Disability

91. Do you have any long-standing health problem or disability? Long-standing means anything that has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months. (Please tick the appropriate box:
 Yes No I prefer not to say

92. If yes, what is the nature of your health problem or disability? Please tick the appropriate box
 Health Diagnosis Mental Health I prefer not to say
 Hearing impairment Physical Impairment
 Learning Disability Sight Impairment
Other _____
please state _____

93. Does your health problem or disability limit your activities in any way? Please tick the appropriate box
 Yes, limited a little Yes, limited a lot No I prefer not to say

Ethnicity

What is your ethnic group? Please tick the appropriate box

94. **White**
 English/ Welsh/ Scottish/ Northern Irish/ British Irish Gypsy or Irish Traveler
Any other White background, please specify: _____

95. **Mixed**
 White and Black Caribbean White and Black African White and Asian
Any other Mixed/multiple ethnic background, please specify: _____

96. **Black/Black British**
 African Caribbean
Any other Black/ African/ Caribbean background, please specify: _____

97. **Asian/ Asian British**
 Indian Pakistani Bangladeshi Chinese

Any other Asian background, please specify

98.

Other

Arab

I prefer not to say

Any other ethnic group, please specify:

99.

What is your current working status? (Please tick one box only)

Employee in full-time job (30 hours plus per week)

Full-time education at school, college or university

Looking after the home

Employee in part-time job (under 30 hours per week)

Unemployed and available for work

I prefer not to say

Self employed full or part-time

Permanently sick/disabled

On a government sponsored training scheme

Wholly retired from work

Doing something else, please state

100.

In which area do you live? (Please tick one box only)

Chatham

Strood

Outside the Medway area

Rochester

Rainham

I prefer not to answer

Gillingham

Rural areas of Medway

Please provide your postcode

Contact Details

101.

Full Name

102.

Organisation

103.

Address

104. Email Address

105. Type of Consultee (Please select one of the below option)

<input type="checkbox"/> Member of the public	<input type="checkbox"/> Government Department/ Public Bodies
<input type="checkbox"/> Developer/C consultant	<input type="checkbox"/> Charity/Community/Faith Group
<input type="checkbox"/> Councillor/MP/Parish Council	<input type="checkbox"/> Business

Local Authority Other

106. Would you like to be Included on our Local Plan Database to receive future updates?

Yes No

Thank you for taking part in the consultation on the Medway Local Plan (2012-2035) Issues and Options document. 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.

Please note that all comments received will be publicly available and will be included on the council’s website.

The responses will be kept as part of the formal record of the preparation of the Local Plan.

We will use your contact details to keep you informed of progress on the local plan. In collecting your contact details, this allows us to understand which sectors of the community and business are responding to the consultation.

If you would like to receive this information in another format or language please contact Customer Contact on 01634 333333.

Issues and Options Consultation Events

The council has organised some events and exhibitions as part of the Issues and Options consultation. If you would like to speak to a Planning Officer, please call in to the one of exhibitions listed below.

Staffed Exhibitions are taking place on the following dates:

Venue	Date
Smoke-Free Advice Centre, Railway Street, Chatham	Wednesday 10 February – 10.30am – 1pm
Hoo Swimming Pool	Friday 12 February 11am – 2pm
Medway Park, Gillingham	Tuesday 16 February, 10am – 12pm
Riverside Country Park	Thursday 18 February 11am – 2pm
Capstone Country Park	Friday 19 February 11am – 2pm
Rochester Farmers Market	Sunday 21 February 10am-12pm
Medway Innovation Centre	Tuesday 23 February 10am – 12pm
Strood Leisure Centre	Wednesday 24 February 2-4pm
Halling Community Centre	Thursday 25 February 2-4pm
Pilkington Building, Universities @ Medway	Friday 26 February 11.30am-2pm

There are also some area based events that will be looking at local issues in more detail:

Area & Venue	Date
Joint Cliffe & Cliffe Woods Neighbourhood Plan & Local Plan event Cliffe Memorial Hall	Saturday 13 February 10am-12pm
Hoo Peninsula Workshop	Monday 15 February 6.30pm – 8.30 pm
Joint Cliffe & Cliffe Woods Neighbourhood Plan & Local Plan event Cliffe Woods Community Centre	Saturday 20 February 10am – 12pm
Strood Event Former Strood Library Hall, Bryant Road, Strood	Wednesday 24 February 6.30pm – 8.30pm
Rainham Event Riverside Country Park	Saturday 27 February 10am – 2pm

To book a place in advance please email: planning.policy@medway.gov.uk or telephone **01634 331629**

MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD



Help us to plan for Medway's future

Medway Local Plan 2012- 2035

Medway Council is preparing a new local plan to shape development in the area over the next 20 years and we'd like your views on the issues most important to you.

www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy



Serving You



Medway Local Plan 2012- 2035

Medway is growing, and the plan needs to provide land for the homes, jobs, services and infrastructure that existing and new communities need.

The council is consulting on the first stage of the plan from 4 January to 29 February 2016. It wants to hear from residents, groups, businesses and others with an interest in the area.

The plan will set out a vision for the type of place Medway should be in 2035, and seek to achieve these aspirations through decisions on land uses and policies.

Key issues for the plan include:

- Where are the best locations for new housing in Medway?
- Protecting and enhancing the environment
- Role of our town centres
- What type and scale of land is needed for employment?
- Providing for services and infrastructure

Further information and an online questionnaire is available at:
www.medway.gov.uk/planningpolicy

You can also view copies of the 'Issues and Options' report at public libraries and Community Hubs across Medway where staff can help you submit your views. You do not have to respond to all questions in the consultation document – just tell us your views on the issues most important to you.

