



Medway Core Strategy Examination 2012

Background Paper

Spatial Strategy



SPATIAL STRATEGY

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is one of a short series of background papers prepared by Medway Council to inform the independent examination into the Medway Core Strategy 2012.
- 1.2 The papers simply draw together elements of the 'evidence base' so that information about a topic can be seen in one place. They do not contain any new information but it is hoped that they will assist all participants during the examination. Where appropriate, links are provided to source documents.
- 1.3 The series of papers cover the following topics:
 - Conformity
 - Cross Boundary Issues
 - The Thames Gateway
 - Spatial Strategy
 - The Plan Preparation Process
 - Deliverability
 - The Basis for Housing and Employment Growth Targets
 - Land Allocations and Development Management DPD.
- 1.4 The purpose of this paper is to explain the geographical basis for the spatial strategy that is promoted in the Core Strategy, and show how it is a sound response to the characteristics, needs and opportunities of the local area.

2. Background

- 2.1 Medway's spatial strategy is grounded in realising the opportunities for regenerating exceptional urban waterfront sites, and the conservation of the area's important environmental and heritage assets. The council's approach to developing Medway strongly reflects the aspirations of the Thames Gateway, promoting urban regeneration within a high quality environment. Medway has actively participated in the planning of the Thames Gateway and has attracted over £210m of public funding in the last 7 years to help achieve this vision. Further detail on the Thames Gateway context is given in a separate background paper.
- 2.2 Medway has a distinctive character; rich in both natural and built heritage, with a large urban conurbation surrounded by the dramatic landscapes of the Kent Downs and north Kent marshes. It is the largest urban area in the south east outside of London, but yet retains a strong local identity of historic towns and villages. The large urban area is contrasted by the open countryside and rural settlements on the Hoo

Peninsula and in the Medway Valley. This distinct and contrasting character is considered in the Area policies chapter of the Core Strategy.

- 2.3 The developed area is largely focused on the five towns of Strood, Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham and Rainham, which have a close inter-relationship to form the urban part of Medway. The towns extend into a number of suburban communities, particularly to the south of Medway, leading up to the boundary with the M2. Green valleys connect the landscape of the Downs with the open spaces in the towns, and form important breaks between the separate towns, most notably at Capstone.
- 2.4 Medway benefits from the availability of waterfront sites close to the urban centres that offer excellent opportunities for development. Much progress has been made in these areas over the last ten years, notably at Chatham Maritime. There is a strong focus on continuing with the development of these key sites, making best use of brownfield land, and supporting the growth of Medway. These sites are well connected to transport infrastructure, and the neighbouring town centres. Chatham has been identified as the city centre for Medway, and the focus of work to expand the retail offer, employment and leisure provision.
- 2.5 Medway is unusual in being an urban authority with a large rural area. The Hoo Peninsula extends to the north of Medway, lying between the Thames and Medway estuaries. The area is of great strategic importance for both its environmental assets and economic role. Much of the marshland and mudflats adjoining the estuaries are designated as Special Protection Areas and Ramsar sites, of international importance for wildlife. The rural area is valued for food production, with significant tracts of Grade 1 agricultural land across the peninsula. It is also the location for mineral deposits, particularly sand and gravel, and for the importation of aggregates through local wharves. There are a number of villages on the Hoo Peninsula, with Hoo St Werburgh acting as a service centre for smaller settlements.
- 2.6 The estuary location and relative remoteness from large settlements have favoured the development of major infrastructure installations, and the peninsula has a particular significance for energy and ports, notably at Kingsnorth and Grain. There are also strategic employment areas at these key locations. Significant progress has been made in bringing forward these sites, with investment in upgrading access, and securing planning permission for employment uses. The Hoo Peninsula is also the location of the only new strategic development allocation in the Core Strategy, at Lodge Hill, Chattenden. This is a military site, which has been declared surplus to operational requirements by the Ministry of Defence. It is the proposed location for a new mixed use settlement of up to 5000 homes and 43,000 m² of employment land. The principle of development at this site has been established for some

time, with its inclusion in the RPG9a Thames Gateway Planning Framework (1995)¹. This complements the regeneration focus on the waterfront sites to provide a sufficient supply of development land in Medway to meet the needs for growth locally.

- 2.7 The rural area to the south of Medway is smaller in scale, and of a markedly different character to the Hoo Peninsula. The area is largely within the designation of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. This places significant restrictions on development, and a duty of regard on the council for the conservation and enhancement of this landscape of international importance.
- 2.8 There are a number of strategic constraints on development that reinforce the focus on the urban regeneration opportunities. In addition to the Special Protection Areas and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty designations, the metropolitan green belt comes into the western part of the borough, and there are strategic gap policies to retain the open character and prevent coalescence of Medway with urban areas to the south and east.

3. Spatial Strategy Drivers

Waterfront Regeneration

- 3.1 Medway fully supports the aspirations for the regeneration of the Thames Gateway. Regenerating Medway is the key priority for the Core Strategy. This places a focus on redeveloping derelict and underused land, particularly on the urban riverside and town centres. This is a key element of the Core Strategy's Strategic Vision, set out in Policy CS1: Regenerating Medway, and is a common theme reflected in many of the policies throughout the plan. There are a number of large sites available for redevelopment, on both the east and west banks of the Medway, largely benefitting from good access to public transport and being close to established town centres. These are:

West Bank

- Temple Waterfront Situated to south of Strood town centre. Previously cement works and large waste tip. Planning permission for major mixed use development, including improvements to waterfront open space. 3 way development agreement between landowners
- Former Civic Centre site On waterfront adjoining Strood town centre. Civic centre was a converted factory building but the site has been largely cleared. Major site constraint is flood risk
- Strood Riverside Situated north of Strood town centre and

¹ See evidence base document RD12

includes Strood station. Previously railfreight depot and location for scrap yards and polluting engineering plants. Site assembled through CPO and adopted development brief. Site constraints include flooding and land contamination. Further site clearance required

East Bank

- Rochester Riverside
Adjoining historic Rochester. Previously mixed industries, open storage and local wharves. Now assembled through CPO, land raised and brought up to Greenfield condition with Government funding. Planning permission and adopted development brief for major mixed use development. Phase 1A under construction
- Star Hill to Sun Pier
Situated between Rochester and Chatham town centres. Successful Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI) area with many listed buildings. Complex waterfront and large areas liable to flood. Planning Framework in place
- Chatham Waterfront
Potentially striking location on bend in river and adjoining Chatham town centre. Large open space but of poor quality and a number of buildings requiring redevelopment to exploit the site's potential. Development brief and masterplan in place
- Chatham Historic Dockyard
A 'living/working museum' and most intact Georgian dockyard in the world. Large number of Scheduled Ancient Monuments and key part of candidate world heritage site. However some unused/underused buildings and location for a large number of commercial businesses. WHS management plan² in place
- Interface Land
So called due to its location between the Historic Dockyard and Chatham Maritime. Site largely cleared and adopted development brief in place. Ownership split between Dockyard Trust and HCA
- Chatham Maritime
Forms major part of former modern dockyard and Medway's first major regeneration site. Now largely developed but with last phases of new residential community on St. Mary's Island still to be completed. Pembroke part of site location of the Universities at Medway campus
- Gillingham
Former large chemical works adjoining

² See evidence base document EB17

Waterfront	Gillingham Pier. Development brief in place and redevelopment approximately half completed. Large element of student accommodation, local retail, riverside apartments and extra case scheme. Permission for hotel on part of site.
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3.2 As indicated in this list, the council has established a comprehensive planning framework for waterfront regeneration promoted through the Medway Waterfront Renaissance Strategy (2004)³ and Medway Regeneration Framework (2006)⁴. Development briefs have also been produced to provide more planning certainty for key sites along the waterfront from Strood to Gillingham, and town centres:

- Rochester Riverside Development Brief (2004)⁵
- Chatham Centre and Waterfront Development Brief (2008)⁶
- Star Hill to Sun Pier Planning and Design Strategy (2004)⁷
- Gillingham Waterfront Development Brief (2004)⁸
- Pentagon Development Brief (2006)⁹
- Temple Waterfront Development Brief (2006)¹⁰
- Strood Riverside Development Brief (2006)¹¹
- Gillingham Town Centre Planning Framework (2007)¹²
- Corporation Street Development Framework (2008)¹³
- Gun Wharf Masterplan (2010)¹⁴
- Best Street/High Street Chatham Masterplan (2010)¹⁵
- Interface Land Development Brief (2010)¹⁶
- Strood Town Centre Masterplan (2009)¹⁷
- Amherst Hill Design Brief (2010)¹⁸

3.3 There has been substantial investment in infrastructure and enabling works to bring forward these sites. Much of the public funding attracted through regeneration programmes has been invested in these areas. Medway has been successful in bringing forward development at sites,

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<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Medway%20Waterfront%20Renaissance%20Strategy%202004.pdf>

⁴ See evidence base document EB66

⁵ See evidence base document EB99

⁶ See evidence base document EB16

⁷ See evidence base document EB103

⁸ See evidence base document EB29

⁹ See evidence base document EB19

¹⁰ See evidence base document EB138

¹¹ See evidence base document EB135

¹² See evidence base document EB28

¹³ See evidence base document EB22

¹⁴ See evidence base document EB33

¹⁵ See evidence base document EB18

¹⁶ See evidence base document EB145

¹⁷ See evidence base document EB137

¹⁸ See evidence base document EB04

such as Chatham Maritime and Gillingham Waterfront. The Core Strategy therefore seeks to continue to build on this effective approach.

Town Centres

- 3.4 The coalescence of 5 once freestanding towns into a single large urban conurbation has left a legacy of 5 town centres in close proximity to each other and of varying character and potential, as illustrated in the following table.

Chatham	The natural main centre with the largest quantum of retail floorspace but performing significantly below its potential. With its large catchment population should be of clear sub-regional if not regional significance. Underdeveloped office market and very weak evening economy. Poor quality townscape and number of redevelopment sites, some of which are currently temporary surface car parks. Poor links to rail station and fails to exploit its waterfront. As the main centre has a strong influence on the overall image of the area, making its regeneration of vital importance.
Gillingham	Centred on a traditional High Street and with the centre and adjoining areas having a very tight urban grain, limiting development opportunities. Has a generally average to poor quality townscape. Once competed strongly with Chatham as the main centre but has consolidated into a district centre. Its proximity to the universities, the new Mid Kent College campus and Medway Park have provided new opportunities but selective redevelopment is still required to fulfil its potential.
Strood	A district level centre doing surprisingly well economically but with a very poor townscape and little connection to what should be a striking waterfront. Constrained by heavy traffic congestion and rail lines. Significant potential to use redevelopment to bring greater coherence to its urban form and establish much needed character
Rainham	A smaller district level centre but performing quite well economically. Of variable townscape quality. Has developed a niche evening economy and has an extensive local catchment. The rail station is some way from the main retail focus. Subject to high traffic volumes on the A2.
Rochester	Classified as a district level centre but combines this role with that of a tourist centre due to its striking heritage character and the proximity of the castle and cathedral. Retail diversification to support its district centre role is required but highly sensitive to physical change
Hempstead Valley	A purpose built indoor shopping centre built in the late 1970's to serve new suburban neighbourhoods to the south of the urban area. Has seen gradual reinvestment and competes strongly with Chatham and Gillingham but also draws trade from outside Medway. Dominated by national

retailers and needs to diversify if to function more effectively as a district centre.

- 3.5 Chatham is promoted as the city centre for Medway, and the Core Strategy seeks to strengthen its role to meet its potential for retail, leisure and employment that the scale of the surrounding population demands. Policy CS19 identifies Chatham as the preferred location for major retail development. The smaller town centres at Strood, Rochester and Gillingham have significant complementary roles. The development briefs produced for Chatham, Strood and Gillingham all support the role of these centres and opportunities for improvements.

Other Urban Regeneration Sites

- 3.6 The very extensive scale and varying age of the urban area is such that there are numerous additional opportunities for site redevelopment, most commonly for housing. They result from a wide range of factors but including:
- Redundant or obsolete stand alone factory premises
 - Redundant institutions
 - Site consolidation – for example houses in large gardens
 - Selective redevelopment of properties of various types that have fallen into decay.
- 3.7 The incidence of such sites is highlighted in the Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA)¹⁹.

Major Employment Areas

- 3.8 Medway has 33 established employment areas that are well distributed across the area. Four locations were the subject of enterprise zone schemes in the mid 1980's – Gillingham Business Park, Chatham Maritime, Medway City Estate and Knight Road, Strood. This reflected the dire economic conditions that followed closure of the naval dockyard and its many supporting businesses. These employment areas are of variable quality and a challenge is to agree reinvestment strategies with site owners and occupiers.
- 3.9 The area has two very large scale and regionally important employment sites at Kingsnorth and Grain. The former results from a very large area of ground being raised through the depositing of fuel ash from the adjoining coal powered power station and the latter from the rough clearance of the former giant BP oil refinery.
- 3.10 As brownfield sites relatively distant from the Medway urban area and other urban centres they are unsuited to residential or mixed use

¹⁹ See evidence base document EB84

redevelopment but are capable of accommodating a range of land hungry employment activities that find it increasingly difficult to find locations elsewhere in the region. Recent investment in the A228 and A289 has also improved their accessibility.

- 3.11 Land at Rochester Airfield provides an excellent location for a high quality technology and knowledge based business cluster, exploiting its good accessibility and proximity to the successful Medway Innovation Centre and BAE Systems complex.

Lodge Hill

- 3.12 This is the only strategic allocation included in the Core Strategy. The military land at Chattenden is proposed for the development of a new freestanding mixed use settlement, providing up to 5000 homes and 5000 jobs.
- 3.13 Land Securities was selected as the Land Sales Delivery Partner for Defence Estates (now Defence Infrastructure Organisation, or DIO) in 2008, following declaration that the Lodge Hill, Chattenden site was surplus to operational requirements. Many activities have already been transferred from the site to other parts of Medway and further afield, and the transfer of the remaining activities is expected to be complete by 2013.
- 3.14 Land Securities has carried out substantial survey and planning work to assess the development options and produced a masterplan for the site. The background work is set out in the evidence base documents supporting the Core Strategy strategic allocation²⁰. Further information on the planning rationale underpinning the allocation is set out in the Lodge Hill, Chattenden State of Medway report²¹.
- 3.15 In December 2011, the council approved a development brief for the site. Land Securities has submitted an outline planning application for the development proposed at Lodge Hill, which is currently being considered by the council.
- 3.16 Lodge Hill was first identified as a development opportunity in the Thames Gateway Planning Framework in 1995 and has featured in all development capacity assessments and development plan documents since then.

Nationally Significant Infrastructure

- 3.17 Due to the concentration of nationally significant infrastructure on the Hoo Peninsula and the Isle of Grain, Medway is vital to the safe

²⁰ Site specific evidence available at:
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/environmentandplanning/developmentplan/localdevelopmentframework/ldfevidencebase/lodgehill.aspx>

²¹ See evidence base document EB107

functioning of London and the wider South East. In summary this comprises:

- Two power stations at Kingsnorth – one coal and one gas, with the latter having approval for the tripling of its output
- Three power stations at Grain – two gas and one oil
- LNG storage at Grain – supplying 25% of England's storage capacity and one of the largest facilities of its type in the world
- BRITNED – a newly installed two way electrical interconnector at Grain linking the UK grid with that in the Netherlands and mainland Europe more widely
- Aviation fuel storage – again at Grain and supplying Gatwick and Heathrow airports by pipeline
- Thamesport – the fifth largest container port in the UK and the first fully to be mechanised.

- 3.18 In terms of electricity generation the Medway facilities provide over 15% of the nation's needs.
- 3.19 There are also regionally significant aggregate importation facilities adjoining Thamesport and at Cliffe that feed the London market and the wider region.
- 3.20 Although not of national significance, other marine facilities also serve regional markets. These include Chatham Docks and major wharves on the Frindsbury Peninsula (Medway City Estate).

Minerals

- 3.21 The incidence of commercial minerals is detailed in the Minerals State of Medway report and so is not detailed here. However the geographical location of workable deposits is a further spatial driver.

Economic Performance

- 3.22 For over 200 years the Medway economy was dominated by the presence of the naval dockyard and associated support industries. As a result the area was, to a degree, immune from the normal economic cycle. During the 20th Century other major drivers were cement, paper and aircraft manufacture. These declined prior to the closure of the Dockyard in 1984 but collectively the result was extremely serious. Unemployment peaked at nearly 16% in the 1980's, community confidence dived and deprivation reached levels unheard of in the South East outside London.
- 3.23 Since then there has been a striking economic recovery but, because it has come from such a low base, much still needs to be done if the area is to compete anywhere close to the regional average.
- 3.24 Much positive change has occurred – the local economy is now much more diverse and therefore resilient and the introduction of no less than

four universities provides a sound foundation for the future. However a sustained effort is still required and made even more challenging by the current global downturn.

Deprivation

- 3.25 An inevitable consequence of the economic haemorrhage the area experienced during the 1980's was the rise in levels of multiple deprivation, resulting in not just reduced living standards but also social exclusion, increased health issues, greater dependency and loss of confidence. However the effects were by no means uniform across the area but instead were concentrated in the inner areas of Chatham, Gillingham and Strood and areas immediately to the south.
- 3.26 Much has been done to tackle this complex issue but, again, there is much still to do. In relative terms Medway slipped down the national league table measured against the 2004 and 2007 based IMD rankings²².

4. Conclusions

- 4.1 Taking account of these key drivers the Core Strategy promotes a spatial strategy for Medway that responds to the context summarised in this paper. In doing so it seeks to balance the clear case for regeneration with the protection of valued environments and in ways that are fully compatible with the objectives of the Thames Gateway.
- 4.2 The strategy is grounded in the confidence that Medway can continue to build on its successes. That is by regenerating its key waterfront sites, making best use of previously developed land, and promoting a high quality environment.
- 4.3 The council does not accept there is a need to release additional sites for development on greenfield land. The combination of land at Lodge Hill and on urban waterfront sites, and strategic employment sites across Medway provides sufficient capacity for development, and a broad mix to satisfy different needs and markets. Release of additional land on greenfield sites could weaken the ability to achieve the regeneration objectives that have been set and fail to fulfil the greater potential of the area.
- 4.3 The council therefore believes that its strategy is appropriate and effective; it continues to build on a successful approach to regeneration, and provides the right framework for Medway's future.

²² See evidence base document EB36