



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Section 3
Delivering
Sustainable
Development -
Options



Delivering Sustainable Development – Options

- 3.1 Government policy requires Local Plans to plan positively for the development and infrastructure needed in the area to meet the objectives, principles and policies of the NPPF. This includes making land available for housing, jobs, shops and infrastructure. The council jointly commissioned a North Kent Strategic Housing and Economic Needs Assessment, with Gravesham Borough Council, to provide an evidence base for housing, employment and retail needs in Medway over the plan period. This research showed a need over the plan period for:
- 29,463 homes
 - 49,943 m² of B1 office space; 155,748 m² of B2 industrial land; and 164,263 m² of B8 warehousing land.
 - 34,900 m² of comparison retail space and 10,500 m² of convenience (groceries etc.) retail space up to 2031.
- 3.2 The council is undertaking ongoing work in identifying infrastructure needs.
- 3.3 This scale of growth is challenging. It calls for careful consideration of how Medway's environment and infrastructure can accommodate development that is sustainable, and what forms of development will be most successful in meeting communities' needs and strengthening the local economy. Meeting this challenge and achieving successful growth in Medway is the central purpose of the Local Plan.
- 3.4 This consultation stage seeks to provide comprehensive options for how Medway could accommodate this scale of growth in the Local Plan. The council welcomes views on what are the most sustainable choices for meeting Medway's development needs. Further work will be carried out to assess the ability to deliver growth, taking account of detailed infrastructure planning, viability testing and environmental and economic considerations. This will be informed by the representations made in the consultation on this document and development options.

Approach to sustainable development

- 3.5 The starting point for the development strategy in the Medway Local Plan is making the most effective use of land that can deliver the strategic objectives set out for Medway's growth.
- 3.6 Regeneration is at the core of the development strategy. The council is following Government policy to promote the use of brownfield land, in preference to releasing greenfield sites. Medway has been successful in transforming many former industrial sites to attractive mixed use developments, such as seen at Chatham Maritime and Victory Pier. This regeneration programme continues and much of the land in the 'development pipeline' planned for Medway is in the urban centres and waterfront areas.



Residential Development Pipeline

- 3.7 The table below summarises development monitoring information collated by the council to provide an overview of the current supply of development land, and the need to identify further sites to meet Medway's growth needs over the plan period. More detailed information is set out in the Authority Monitoring Report, Volume 2, which is available on the council's website at: <http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningpolicy/authoritymonitoringreport.aspx>

Status	Number of dwellings
Completions 2012-2016	2180
Sites with planning permission	6251
Medway Local Plan 2003 Allocations	356
SLAA* Pipeline sites	8813
Windfalls (Years 3-5 only)	606
Total	18,206

(*Strategic Land Availability Assessment)

- 3.8 The pilot Brownfield Land Register that Medway published in 2016, shows 35 of the 42 sites on the list already have the benefit of planning permission, or the support of a development brief. This well-established regeneration programme means there is limited capacity to realise additional development from these areas without more radical approaches.
- 3.9 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 suburban and rural areas may have to form a part of Medway's development strategy for the new Local Plan. The council's approach seeks to make use of greenfield land that is free from environmental constraints, of lesser value for landscape and agricultural purposes, and well related to services and infrastructure.
- 3.10 Medway's residents value local parks and green spaces as important resources for community life and wellbeing, which add to the character of the towns. The council recognises the importance of these open spaces for residents, and considers that developing on the current range of parks would damage the quality of urban areas, and impact on corporate 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 is not considered an appropriate part of the approach to planning for Medway's growth over the plan period.
- 3.11 A particular characteristic of Medway is the high proportion of land covered by environmental designations where development should be restricted. This includes wide swathes of the Hoo Peninsula, covered by Ramsar, Special Protection Area and Site of Special Scientific Interest designations. Land in the Medway Valley and to the south of the urban area is in the Kent Downs Area of Natural Beauty where any development must be in accordance with the need to conserve and enhance the intrinsic qualities of this landscape. Part of the eastern most reach of the London metropolitan Green Belt in Kent is in Medway, covering land in the Medway Valley and to the west of Strood. This designation aims to prevent urban sprawl by keeping



land permanently open, which has significance in preventing the coalescence of development between Strood and Gravesend.

- 3.12 In addition to these protected areas, much land on the Hoo Peninsula, and bordering the urban areas of Strood and Rainham is of the highest grades of best and most versatile agricultural land. Government policy is that local planning authorities should take account of the economic and other benefits of this land. National planning policy does not preclude development on such areas of farmland, but directs that local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.
- 3.13 Undeveloped land in Medway of lesser agricultural value tends to correspond to areas of higher landscape and ecological value, such as the North Kent marshes, the woodland and chalk grassland of the Kent Downs and its outliers in the valleys and ridges that form Medway's distinct character.
- 3.14 Some sites are also subject to the most severe risks of flooding, where inappropriate development should be avoided.
- 3.15 The scale of growth projected for Medway also indicates that the council needs to look more widely than just considering incremental growth around the edges of towns and villages in appropriate locations. Thought must be given to larger planned settlements that can deliver a mixed development of homes, services, infrastructure, green spaces, shops and jobs. As Medway's population grows and ages, it is important that development meets the needs of different groups in society, providing safe and accessible homes for older people and people with disabilities, good quality housing for families, couples, single people and students.
- 3.16 The choices for meeting Medway's development needs are therefore complex and need careful consideration in order to secure sustainable growth that respects the different aspects of the area's environment, and offers access to the services and facilities that underpin a good quality of life.
- 3.17 This complex geography demands that any development that comes forward in greenfield areas must be of high quality and sensitive to the natural environment, as well as addressing needs for services and infrastructure. In planning for Medway's future development, the council wants to safeguard and establish strategic green spaces and corridors, to protect wildlife features and provide healthy and attractive places for people to live and work.
- 3.18 Given the scale of development needed in Medway, the council has had to look widely at a broad range of locations and sites that may be able to deliver sustainable development. An important part of the process in preparing a Local Plan involves identifying land that may be available for development, and assessing its suitability and viability. This work forms a Strategic Land Availability Assessment, that is updated by the council to provide a basis for plan making. The map set out at Appendix 1A shows the land that has been identified as having potential for development. These sites include land allocated in the 2003 Medway Local Plan, those included in development briefs and masterplans, and areas put forward by land owners and developers through 'Call for Sites' to include in the Medway Strategic



Land Availability Assessment. The map should not be interpreted as site allocations for the new Local Plan. Not all sites would deliver sustainable development, due to constraints and conflicts with designations. Also the entirety of the sites shown would represent substantial over-development, and not provide sustainable growth. This is rather a starting point for the consideration of the development strategy and allocations for the new Local Plan, providing a basis for a considered assessment of which sites and broad locations would represent the most sustainable areas for growth, and achieve the ambitions set in the Local Plan. This also informs the consultation process, allowing residents and wider stakeholders to make effective representations on the options for Medway's growth.

- 3.19 A range of alternative scenarios have been considered for potential development patterns that could present a development strategy for Medway's planned growth. The regeneration of Medway's waterfront and town centre sites from Strood to Gillingham is central to all scenarios. This commitment to making the best use of previously developed land is consistent with national planning policy and was supported by a wide range of residents and interests in the Issues and Options consultation. Vacant or underused brownfield sites that are suitable for sustainable development should be considered preferable to building on greenfield sites. However consideration has also to be given to how the wider area could contribute to the development needed, without undermining the regeneration strategy that is central to Medway's success.
- 3.20 The scenarios are presented for consultation and assessment of which approach could deliver the most sustainable development pattern for Medway, meeting the aspirations set out in the vision and the strategic objectives in the Local Plan. This consultation seeks additional information on the potential contributions that locations could offer for Medway's successful growth, as well as constraints and negative impacts that need consideration and may restrict development.

Scenario 1: 'Maximising the potential of urban regeneration'

See strategic diagram set out at Appendix 1B.

- 3.21 This seeks to establish a major transformation in the urban centre. It would continue the regeneration of waterfront sites that has been taking place in Medway over recent decades, but also bring in new areas and contemporary approaches to development, akin to a city environment. The council has considered the potential to increase the rate of development in these urban areas. The options include building at higher densities in appropriate locations, seeking opportunities for land consolidation to bring forward bigger development sites, and bringing mixed development into retail and employment areas.
- 3.22 This option could extend regeneration to peripheral town centre areas, particularly where opportunities exist in Chatham and Strood. It would use land more intensively, building at high densities, concentrating the retail hubs in town centres, allied to investment in quality, with redevelopment on the edge of centres bringing forward



land for housing and a wider range of jobs. The high density development would define a new character for some of our town centres, but care needs to be taken with the potential impact on Medway's important historic features and their setting. More housing in urban centres and accessible waterfront areas would boost the local population using services, leisure and cultural facilities in the town centres, helping to address the challenges many face in competition from other areas and online shopping.

- 3.23 In this scenario, consideration is given to the redevelopment of Medway City Estate, and further land at Chatham Docks. This would bring forward mixed development and realise the potential for landmark development creating new urban quarters, defined by the river and creating new links across the river to the historic town centres on the opposite bank. The regeneration vision prepared for the council by Farrells in 2010 is set out in Appendix 1F. A modern employment park would be developed around an extended Kingsnorth on the Hoo Peninsula to provide accessible, quality land for businesses that would need to relocate.
- 3.24 The regeneration area would extend beyond Gillingham to include a modern football stadium for Gillingham Football Club at Mill Hill, supported by a mixed development of apartments, shops and wider leisure facilities. An iconic building would establish the new character of this area and mark the extent of the regeneration zone.
- 3.25 Such an approach would deliver much of the housing in apartments, and may not meet the needs of all the different sectors of the population looking for homes in Medway. Therefore there would still need to be consideration of suburban and rural areas as potential locations for new development, in order to achieve a balanced development strategy.
- 3.26 The council acknowledges that there are a number of risks in such an approach, including the ability to deliver within the plan period, potential loss of overall employment land supply, securing infrastructure and services to support growth at this scale, viability of building at high heights, and difficulties in providing the full range of housing that the market requires.

Scenario 2: Suburban expansion

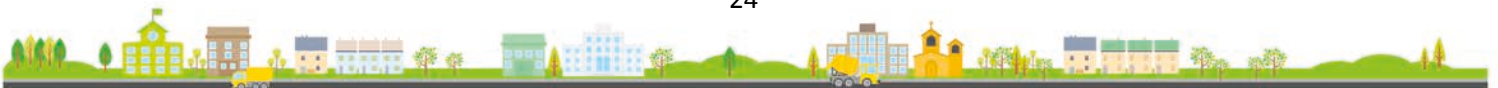
See strategic diagram set out at Appendix 1C.

- 3.27 This scenario retains a core component of urban regeneration as part of a balanced development strategy. The council recognises that the success of Medway depends on a revitalised and strengthened urban core, providing the community, cultural and commercial energy and focus to raise the performance and perceptions of Medway. However in this scenario, greater consideration is given to the potential of the suburban areas to meet the shortfall between development needs and the identified pipeline of sites.
- 3.28 Much of the land bordering Medway's urban area and a number of the villages has been identified by landowners as potentially available for development through the



Call for Sites that informed the Strategic Land Availability Assessment. Many of these sites are subject to environmental constraints or lack the infrastructure and access to services that would be required for sustainable development. However in looking at the development needed over the period of the Local Plan, consideration has been given to the potential for expanding and creating new suburbs at a scale to deliver mixed use development, with housing supported by new services, shops, infrastructure and jobs, and green spaces and linkages. Planned growth could deliver a balanced development, setting quality standards for sustainable suburban living that promote healthy lifestyles and offer real alternatives to car based travel with excellent links to services and greenspaces.

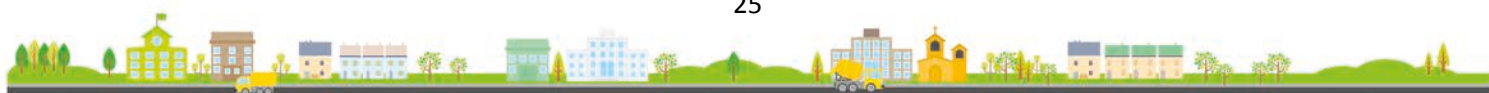
- 3.29 In this scenario, consideration would be given to the development of sustainable urban extensions around Rainham, Capstone and Strood to complement the urban regeneration taking place in central Medway. Development could be located in areas that are already attractive to residents, and on greenfield sites that may be quicker to develop than large brownfield sites. However consideration of infrastructure planning and the natural environment is needed to determine the capacity of these areas to accommodate growth. Initial assessment has highlighted stress in the highways network at a number of key junctions and routes that would need to be addressed in order to accommodate growth. Further testing of the capacity of the transport network is being carried out, with an assessment of the potential to invest in transport improvements. The potential scale of pressure on the highway network may require new transport schemes that cannot be supported on environmental or viability grounds, and this may constrain the scale of development capacity in these areas. The council also recognises the challenge to be addressed in ensuring that this development pattern does not escalate unsustainable travel.
- 3.30 This scenario considers potential development in the Green Belt to the west of Strood. This has been included to allow debate and due consideration of the issues associated with the Green Belt, to determine if such a significant policy change is required to meet the development needs over the plan period, and to determine if exceptional circumstances exist that would require the Green Belt boundary to be reviewed. This consideration and information collected from the consultation will be accompanied by a technical assessment of the function of the Green Belt designation.
- 3.31 Given the proximity of Medway's borough boundaries and important landscape features, there is limited capacity for suburban expansion, and it is likely that a proportion of development would also need to be accommodated in the rural areas of the Hoo Peninsula. This includes incremental growth in a number of villages and expansion around the large village of Hoo St Werburgh. Development close to the borough boundaries could have implications for neighbouring towns and villages and countryside, and the council will need to have regard to discussions with adjacent authorities in Kent, Gravesham, Tonbridge and Malling, Maidstone and Swale.



Scenario 3: Hoo Peninsula focus

See strategic diagram set out at Appendix 1D.

- 3.32 This scenario again commits to the continuation of the urban regeneration of waterfront and town centre sites as a core component of the spatial strategy, and then looks at how the balance of development needs can be made up across the wider area.
- 3.33 In this scenario, the Hoo Peninsula is considered as a potential location for growth. A key strand of this scenario is the expansion of the large village of Hoo St Werburgh into a small rural town. This would involve development in neighbourhoods around the wider area, including Chattenden, Deangate and Lodge Hill. As a large village in a rural area, both Hoo St Werburgh and the wider Hoo Peninsula have limited services in comparison with the Medway towns. The focus is on developing a sustainable rural town, and concentrating development around larger villages to avoid sprawl into the wider countryside. A level of development would also take place in suburban areas to support the delivery of a range of housing types.
- 3.34 A key component of this scenario is the provision of new services and infrastructure to support a small rural town and the wider rural hinterland. This could provide investment in education, health and leisure facilities, as well as delivering homes, jobs and shops to meet community needs. Planned growth, integrated with the provision of infrastructure and services could deliver benefits for local residents on the peninsula and support the wider network of villages. Growth at this scale would inevitably change the character of Hoo and its surroundings. The greatest care would be needed to deliver balanced development, with a defined employment offer and a small town centre offer to help serve the wider rural area.
- 3.35 Such scale of growth would inevitably have an impact on the environment and the countryside character that borders the villages on the peninsula. Particular attention needs to be given to the planning of development so that it respects the key landscape features, retains separation between urban and rural Medway, and establishes a character of new development that is distinctive and in keeping with the rural location. The effective planning of green infrastructure is critical to this scenario, providing links for people and wildlife, and green spaces and country parks to retain openness and provide a quality development that respects and enhances the rural setting.
- 3.36 This scenario also considers the expansion of a number of villages that are considered to have a range of services and facilities that could support an increased population. Planned development in villages would be expected to demonstrate sensitivity to the rural location and provide enhanced services and infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing population.
- 3.37 A fundamental consideration in this scenario is the capacity of infrastructure to support potential levels of growth, and in particular the road network. There is a limited highways network on the Hoo Peninsula and the majority of traffic passes through the Four Elms Roundabout. This has already been identified as a



congestion hot spot and work is progressing to increase capacity in this area. However it is likely that the current scheme would not provide sufficient capacity to meet the needs of a larger development on the Hoo Peninsula, and that further infrastructure investments would be required before development could rise above a specific level. Attention also needs to be given to providing an excellent public transport offer that gives a realistic alternative to car based travel and opens up opportunities for rural residents. Further assessments of the strategic transport networks and potential for upgrades are being tested.

- 3.38 There are opportunities to consider the use of land for self-build and custom housebuilding to meet needs and add positively to the character and life of villages.
- 3.39 The council supports the development of Lodge Hill as a planned new settlement, delivering a balance of homes, infrastructure, jobs, services and open spaces on a redundant military site on the Hoo Peninsula. However the planning status of land at Lodge Hill is uncertain, and dependent upon the outcome of a Public Inquiry scheduled for Spring 2018. In preparing this stage of the Local Plan, the council is considering the inclusion of Lodge Hill as an option that could contribute to the development needed over the plan period. However to address risk, development is phased in the second half of the plan period, after 2025, to allow consideration of the outcome of the Public Inquiry and to plan for alternative sources of land supply if required in the Local Plan. It is considered in context of coordination with a wider development around Hoo St Werburgh.
- 3.40 This scenario would involve significant change for the Hoo Peninsula, and requires careful consideration of the capacity of the area's environment and infrastructure to accommodate development. Attention must be given to retaining and securing a distinct rural character that distinguishes development in this area from the urban areas of Medway.

Scenario 4: Urban Regeneration and a Rural Town

See strategic diagram set out at Appendix 1E.

- 3.41 This brings together components of the urban regeneration, suburban expansion and rural development scenarios set out above. It includes elements of developing at higher densities in waterfront and urban centre sites in Chatham and Strood, and seeking opportunities to consolidate development sites in these urban areas. There is caution in identifying land at Medway City Estate and Chatham Docks for comprehensive renewal that could deliver significant residential areas in the plan period, due to the complexity of these sites.
- 3.42 Suburban expansion is supported to a level that could deliver sustainable and healthy urban extensions, but restricted in scale to prevent the potential of urban sprawl and unsustainable travel patterns. The Green Belt land to the west of Strood is not released, with preference given to using land in other locations.



3.43 Aspects of the rural focus scenario are supported, for their potential to deliver planned development that could enhance the provision of services and jobs on the Hoo Peninsula, and strengthen the role of Hoo St Werburgh. There are opportunities to enhance the setting of Hoo with planned green infrastructure and increased public open space, together with improved services and a mix of high quality housing to address the growing needs of residents and improve their health and wellbeing.

