



MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD

Section 2

Vision and

Strategic

Objectives for

Medway 2035



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Medway 2035 - Vision and Strategic Objectives for the Local Plan

Context

- 2.1 Medway sits at the mouth of its great river on the north Kent estuarine coast, bordered by the Thames to the north and the Kent Downs to the south. The five historic towns linked by the A2 form a complex urban conurbation, which retains the distinct identities of the individual towns and suburbs. Sitting close to the countryside, the urban area is surrounded by a network of villages on the Hoo Peninsula and the Medway Valley, alongside marshes and mudflats, wooded hills, productive farmland and strategic energy and minerals operations built up around the wharves. Much of the countryside and estuary is of international importance for its environmental qualities.
- 2.2 Medway is one of the largest urban areas in the south east, and has been growing rapidly in recent years to a population of 276,492 by 2015. The population has a slighter younger age profile than the Kent and England averages, and linked to national trends has an increasing number of people over 65 years. This has implications for planning services such as health and education, and ensuring ease of access to local services and facilities. In common with other areas, particularly in the South East, Medway has seen steady growth in recent years, and this is projected to continue over the life of the local plan, to expand the area's population by circa 20%. This growth is projected to reach a population of 330,200 people in 2035. In contrast to other areas in Kent, much of Medway's growth is from natural change, with births outnumbering deaths. This shows through in demand for health and education services.
- 2.3 Medway is similar in size to cities such as Brighton & Hove and Plymouth. However Medway does not enjoy either the recognition, or the range of services and facilities that of a city of this scale warrants.
- 2.4 Medway benefits from a stunning landscape setting, rich heritage, high speed train links, universities, a strategic location in the Thames Gateway, and a diverse offer of services and businesses. However there are areas which need addressing. Medway's economy and skills levels are weaker than competing areas. There are marked inequalities in health, with life expectancy shorter for our residents. Medway is often unfairly associated with negative perceptions. The town centres are not always seen as attractive destinations and vibrant hubs for community activities. In particular Chatham does not provide the scale of retail and leisure facilities that would be expected for a city of its size, and as the centre for wider Medway. Our ambitions should seek to realise the added economic value that a city should provide.
- 2.5 Medway's economy lags behind both the county and national averages. Productivity runs at two thirds of the national performance, and skills levels are notably lower in



Medway. Medway's productivity measured by GVA (Gross Value Added) is the lowest in the South East region. Despite being the largest city in Kent and one of the largest in the South East region, Medway fails to punch at its weight.

- 2.6 Medway's economy is recovering from the closure of the Dockyard in the 1980s, which dealt a severe blow to the local area. There is a well-established urban regeneration programme that has brought universities to Medway, with over 10,000 students, infrastructure investments in HS1, road schemes and railway stations, and new residential, commercial and leisure areas. The council is committed to the continuation of the regeneration programme and this will be at the core of the strategy for the new Local Plan.
- 2.7 The scale of growth Medway is experiencing is challenging. The population has increased by over 10,000 people in the last 3 years. Local people are experiencing the impacts of growth, and are concerned that further increases will result in a deterioration of the quality of life in Medway, placing pressures on infrastructure and services, leading to increasing delays in moving around Medway, longer waits for health services, more competition in getting school places, loss of green spaces and the views that people currently enjoy, and new houses going to people moving into Medway.
- 2.8 A key task for the Local Plan is to manage growth to achieve a more successful, attractive Medway with healthier communities that share in the benefits of development. Development should be seen to deliver benefits – better housing for local people, higher quality jobs, new services and facilities such as schools and parks. Growth can boost the economy, improve our town centres, turn derelict and underused land into attractive modern places to live, work and visit, and achieve the city scale facilities that Medway warrants.
- 2.9 Growth does not mean losing the character of the area. Medway's history, countryside and the river provide the context for future development. The natural and built environment defines Medway, and will be at the core of the Local Plan. The development strategy must show how we can provide land for housing, jobs, infrastructure and services, whilst protecting important environmental and heritage assets, retaining and strengthening the green infrastructure links for people and wildlife.

Strategic Context

- 2.10 The emerging Local Plan fits into the context of a series of strategies, documents and plans that map out ambitions for Medway to achieve its potential as a successful vibrant modern city, that celebrates its heritage and close links to the river and countryside. A number that provide direction for the vision and strategic objectives for the Local Plan are noted below.

Medway Council Plan, 2016-2021

- 2.11 The Medway council plan sets out three key priorities for the area:

- A place to be proud of



- Maximising regeneration and economic growth
 - Supporting Medway's people to realise their potential
- 2.12 The council plan promotes Medway as a great place to work, live, learn and visit, supported by strategies for culture, tourism and regeneration. The council priorities provide a strong basis for the Local Plan in planning positively for Medway's needs, boosting the economy, improving access, delivering new homes, improving residents' health and wellbeing, and caring for the environment. The council aims to boost economic performance through supporting local businesses and attracting inward investment, and targeting the creation of high skilled jobs. Allied to this are aims to raise skills levels and open up employment opportunities for young people. The council plan specifically supports the preparation of the Local Plan to progress the delivery of the regeneration programme and providing homes to meet the need of Medway's residents.

Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Medway, 2012-2017

- 2.13 The five key themes are working together to:
- Give every child a good start in life;
 - Enable our older population to live independently and well;
 - Prevent early death and increase years of healthy life;
 - Improve physical and mental health and wellbeing;
 - Reduce health inequalities.
- 2.14 This Strategy seeks to improve the health of Medway's communities, particularly as many residents experience poorer standards of health than national, regional and Kent averages. Promoting healthy eating and physical activity are central to improving health. Planning can help contribute to healthier food environments, such as managing the availability of fast food outlets, and can support increased access to opportunities for physical activity, including formal provision of sports facilities and parks, and making it easier and more enjoyable to walk and cycle as part of daily routines. In the Strategy, Medway aims to be a dementia-friendly community. Planning has a role to play in making it easier for people to move around and to access local services and facilities. Actions to address disadvantage across Medway, through better housing, raising education and skills levels, and employment will contribute to reduction of health inequalities.
- 2.15 A Kent and Medway Health and Social Care Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) is in development that will set out the framework for the integration and planning of health and social care services and facilities.

Strategic Regeneration and Growth

- 2.16 Medway participates in the Thames Gateway regeneration programme, which is a key component of wider regional development and investment planning through the South East Local Enterprise Partnership, and its supporting partnerships. Core ambitions relevant to the Medway Local Plan are set out below.



South East Local Enterprise Partnership – Kent and Medway Growth Deal 2014

2.17 This delivers investment as part of the Strategic Economic Plan to unlock economic potential to:

- Substantially increase the delivery of housing and commercial developments;
- Delivering transport and broadband infrastructure to unlock growth;
- Backing business expansion through better access to finance and support, and
- Delivering the skills that the local economy needs.

Thames Gateway Kent Plan for Growth, 2014-2020

2.18 This establishes a vision for North Kent as:

- An area of exciting towns and cities complemented by an outstanding natural environment, providing an exemplar of urban regeneration.
- A thriving business centre attracting leading investors and businesses through its diverse and skilled workforce, high-quality commercial sites and local services, and accessibility to transport links and strategic routes to UK and continental markets.
- An area of strong, integrated communities with harmony between new and existing businesses and residents – where the benefits of development and investment are shared by the whole community.
- A vibrant cultural hub with a thriving social scene and civic pride – attracting a growing student population, bringing youth and vigour to the community.

Medway Regeneration Strategy

2.19 Medway has a long standing commitment to regeneration, and a number of strategies, development briefs and masterplans have informed the transformation of the waterfront and urban areas over recent decades. As the regeneration programme continues, strategies and plans need to be refreshed. A new Regeneration Strategy is being drafted for publication in 2017, and this shares the emerging evidence base and strategic objectives for the Local Plan. It will promote and support the realisation of the ambitions set for Medway's successful growth by 2035.

Medway's Cultural Strategy 2014-2019

2.20 This sets out four strategic priorities:

- Stewardship – preserve, interpret and enhance Medway's heritage, green spaces and public realm for the enjoyment and benefit of current and future generations
- Engagement – increase active engagement and satisfaction with cultural activities to improve quality of life, providing the essential place-making for the significant regeneration that is taking place in Medway
- Prosperity – harness and foster the creative talent within Medway and maximise the opportunities the universities and further education, tourism, creative sector and cultural offer create for Medway's economy.



- Wellbeing – increase active participation to address obesity, mental and spiritual health, promoting active minds, bodies and lifestyles and seeking to address social isolation.
- 2.21 The Cultural Strategy highlights that cultural activities in Medway can offer economic opportunities, contribute to transforming perceptions of the area, and promote healthy and cohesive communities. It recognises the value of celebrating the best of Medway’s past and natural heritage whilst nurturing new activities and outlooks.

Strategic Issues

- 2.22 Medway’s location in the Thames Estuary raises significant cross boundary strategic considerations. Medway is part of the Thames Gateway regeneration programme that seeks to raise economic success and boost the delivery of infrastructure and housing. Proposals for a Lower Thames Crossing, and major developments at Ebbsfleet Garden City and the London Paramount entertainment resort have implications for Medway. There are commuting links to surrounding areas, such as Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling, and to London.
- 2.23 Although two-thirds of house moves in Medway come from existing residents, there are also moves in and out of Medway. Apart from the influence of the London housing market, people moving into the area generally come from places close by, such as parts of Gravesham, Swale and Maidstone. Similarly people moving out of Medway tend to look to neighbouring areas, such as Swale, Maidstone and Tonbridge and Malling.
- 2.24 Bluewater has a sub-regional shopping role, and has a major impact on retail patterns across the area, drawing 26% of all comparison spend from Medway. The expansion of the leisure offer at Bluewater could have further implications for Medway’s town centres.
- 2.25 The council works in partnership to secure the natural environmental features of the estuarine landscapes of the north Kent coast, and the Kent Downs. Medway is of regional and national importance in the importation of aggregates and the energy industry. Planning for hospital services in Medway includes residents in parts of Swale.
- 2.26 Further details on the range of strategic matters that the Local Plan must consider are set out in a Duty to Cooperate Scoping Report available on the council’s website.
- 2.27 The council received a broad range of responses to questions on strategic matters in the Issues and Options consultation. The matters raised reflected the diverse interests of residents, statutory organisations, community groups and developers. It was noted that Medway had important relationships with the wider area, and joint working with relevant authorities and organisations was essential to effective planning and development.



Duty to Cooperate

- 2.28 Medway Council has been preparing its new Local Plan with regard to the Duty to Cooperate on cross boundary strategic issues.
- 2.29 The Duty to Cooperate, introduced in the Localism Act 2011, places a legal duty on local planning authorities to co-operate with one another and with county councils and other prescribed bodies. This is to maximise the effectiveness within which 'activities, such as preparation of development plans, are undertaken as far as they relate to strategic matters. Government policy as set out in the NPPF directs 'local planning authorities to work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly coordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans'. These strategic priorities are wide ranging and include:
- the homes and jobs needed in the area;
 - the provision of retail, leisure and other commercial development;
 - the provision of infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
 - the provision of health, security, community and cultural infrastructure and other local facilities; and
 - climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, including landscape.
- 2.30 To effectively coordinate actions on strategic matters in the new Local Plan, the council has made use of established partnerships and collaborative working structures to share information, raise issues and where appropriate develop joint evidence base documents, plans and actions. This includes work on regeneration, economic development, infrastructure planning, and environmental management.
- 2.30 The council has also undertaken specific work in connection with the preparation of the Local Plan to ensure that the Duty to Cooperate is met. This has included a Duty to Cooperate stakeholder event held during the Issues and Options consultation and 1:1 meetings with local planning authorities, statutory organisations and other Duty to Cooperate bodies. Further details on these activities are set out in the Issues and Options consultation report and the Authority Monitoring Report, 2016. Both are available on the council's website at www.medway.gov.uk/futuremedway.



Developing a vision for 2035

By 2035 Medway will be a leading waterfront University city of 330,200 people, noted for its revitalised urban centres, its stunning natural and historic assets and countryside.

Medway will have secured the best of its intrinsic heritage and landscapes alongside high quality development to strengthen the area's distinctive character. The urban waterfront and neighbouring centres will have been transformed into attractive locations for homes, jobs, leisure and cultural activities. The river will be celebrated as the defining feature linking historic and new development, and extended riverside access will connect communities and destinations.

Medway will have established a regional profile for successful and ambitious growth and accrued benefits from wider strategic developments. New development in Medway's towns and villages will have responded positively to the character of the surrounding environment and needs of existing communities.

Planned growth will have delivered a city that its residents have pride in, providing homes for all sectors of the community, supported by infrastructure to deliver education, transport, health and community services. Vibrant and complementary town, local and village centres will provide a focus for community life.

The distinct towns and villages that make up Medway will be connected through effective transport networks, and green infrastructure links supporting nature and healthy communities. The quality of design and public realm will have delivered an accessible city where all can move around safely.

Inequalities in health, education, economic and social opportunities will be reduced.

Medway will have successfully grown its economy, capitalising on its learning quarter of higher and further education providers to raise skills levels; gaining competitiveness from its strategic location, delivering high speed broadband services to businesses and communities; securing and developing its diverse business base and attracting inward investment in a range of quality employment sites.

Medway will be defined by development that respects the character, functions and qualities of the natural and historic environments, in order to reduce the risk of flooding, to manage finite natural resources, and to ensure that important wildlife and heritage assets are protected and opportunities are realised to enhance their condition and connectivity. Medway's growth will promote a low carbon economy, seeking to address and mitigate climate change. Development will be managed to facilitate the sustainable supply of minerals and management of waste.

- 2.31 The Local Plan is an opportunity to establish a positive strategy to guide Medway's development over the next 18 years.
- 2.32 Regeneration is at the core of Medway's growth plans and its vision for how the area should look and function by 2035. The council is committed to promoting and



realising the opportunities for investing in a renewed urban area with high quality development along the waterfront and in town centres that brings homes, jobs, services and new riverside and city links for Medway's communities.

- 2.33 The regeneration of Chatham is central to the success of Medway's development. The town centre and adjacent waterfront will be a focus for community life. In line with wider trends seen in retail, the role of the town centre is anticipated to evolve in response to changes in shopping habits, and strengthen as a revitalised hub for community activities. This will be achieved through investing in quality, extending access, and broadening the offer, particularly in leisure, culture and community activities. There is potential to bring more homes into the central area, boosting potential footfall for local services and businesses, and increasing vibrancy.
- 2.34 Medway has a complex urban conurbation made up of five distinct towns with their wider neighbourhoods. The Local Plan will promote opportunities to secure the functions of the individual towns, responding to their specific characteristics and offers. Rochester Riverside will provide a quality waterfront location for homes, leisure, jobs and services, complementing, and respecting, the unique historic High Street. The Local Plan will support the regeneration of Strood to capitalise on its stunning location overlooking Rochester Castle and Cathedral, its accessibility to high speed rail and motorway links and the availability of redevelopment sites. Gillingham will consolidate its links with the Universities at Medway and its student populations, as well as the wider community. Rainham will retain its attractiveness as a popular place to live, and strengthen its role as a service centre.
- 2.35 Medway's growth over the next 18 years will take place across the borough, and some areas will see significant change. The Local Plan will seek to direct growth to the most sustainable locations that have potential to expand, to secure investment in infrastructure and services, and to respect the character of the local environment. This will help to deliver development that strengthens, rather than detracts from, Medway.
- 2.36 A quality environment can help boost the economy. Businesses are attracted to places that present a good image. In order to achieve the economic ambitions set out in our vision for Medway by 2035, there is a need to address the unfair perception of the area as an uninspiring post-industrial urban conglomeration. The Local Plan has a role in challenging these perceptions, establishing Medway as an attractive city, with an excellent public realm supporting a vibrant cultural life; new development designed to help people walk and cycle to local services safely and easily; and the surrounding rural and water landscapes recognised as part of Medway's character and offer.
- 2.37 The natural and historic environment will continue to inform how Medway looks and functions. The river and estuary of the Medway have defined the history of its urban and rural areas. They are also central to the vision for Medway's future growth. The waterfront regeneration sites have the potential to provide much needed homes, jobs, community and cultural facilities, and turn around negative perceptions of the area. A riverside path or boardwalk linking the towns and out to the villages in the Medway Valley and the Hoo Peninsula would be a conduit for community and commercial



activities, and establish new infrastructure that inspires place-making and how people move around the area. A defined riverside route would be a draw for residents and visitors, linking key heritage sites, stations with town centres, the Universities and work places, supporting healthier lifestyles and cultural activities. It would be a focus for the public realm in shaping the modern waterfront city, associated with vibrant urban life within easy reach of the countryside. This would raise the profile of Medway's links with its countryside and open spaces, and complement the wide network of protected and community green spaces.

- 2.38 Development will deliver investment and open up opportunities for Medway's residents for better homes, jobs and services, and to lead healthier lives.

Strategic Objectives

- 2.39 The role of the Medway Local Plan is to plan positively for the development and infrastructure that the area needs, whilst protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment. The objectives for the plan are:

A place that works well

- To boost the performance of the local economy by supporting local businesses to grow and attracting inward investment through the provision of good quality employment land that meets the needs of businesses, and to secure and extend higher value employment opportunities;
- To significantly improve the skills of the local workforce;
- To ensure Medway's recognition as a University city and realise economic and place-making opportunities associated with the learning cluster of higher and further education providers in Medway;
- To deliver the infrastructure needed for business growth, to provide accessible employment locations, and excellent high speed broadband services;
- To strengthen the transport network providing safe and effective choices for travel, including management of the highways network, enhanced public transport systems, and improved opportunities for walking and cycling.

A riverside city connected to its natural surroundings

- To secure a strong green infrastructure network that protects the assets of the natural and historic environments in urban and rural Medway, and informs the design and sustainability of new development.
- To address the challenges of climate change, seeking opportunities to promote carbon reduction and mitigation measures, and reduce the risk of flooding;
- To ensure the effective management of natural resources, including the sustainable supply of minerals and appropriate management of waste.

Medway recognised for its quality of life

- To reduce inequalities in health by promoting opportunities for increasing physical activity, through walking, cycling, parks and other recreation facilities, and improving



access to healthy food choices; and to reduce social isolation by supporting retention and development of local services and dementia friendly environments;

- To provide for the housing needs of Medway's communities, that meets the range of size, type and affordability the area needs;
- To strengthen the role of Medway's town, neighbourhood and village centres, securing a range of accessible services and facilities for local communities, and opportunities for homes and jobs.

Ambitious in attracting investment and successful in place-making

- To deliver sustainable development, meeting the needs of Medway's communities, respecting the natural and historic environment, and directing growth to the most suitable locations that can enhance Medway's economic, social and environmental characteristics;
- To secure the ongoing benefits of Medway's regeneration, making the best use of brownfield land, and bringing forward the transformation of the waterfront and town centre sites for quality mixed use development, a focus for cultural activities;
- To establish quality design in all new development, respecting the character of the local environment and seeking opportunities to boost quality and improve the accessibility and design of the public realm;
- To ensure that development is supported by the timely provision of good quality effective infrastructure, so that the needs of Medway's growing and changing communities are well served.

