

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The council is preparing a new Local Plan for Medway to provide direction on the future growth of the area. It seeks to manage change in ways that benefit Medway's people and its environment. The aim of the Local Plan is to ensure that Medway grows sustainably, and to provide land for the homes, jobs and services that people need, whilst protecting and enhancing the qualities of the area's environment and heritage. The Local Plan looks forward to 2035, considering which areas are most suitable for development, and which places need protecting. The plan, once adopted will replace the 'saved' policies in the 2003 Medway Local Plan and the Kent Waste and Minerals Local Plans. It will be used as the basis for making decisions on planning applications.
- 1.2 Government considers that development is best managed where there is an up-to-date Local Plan in place to set out a framework for growth and policies for managing development. The Local Plan is prepared by the council, in consultation with local people, businesses, groups and organisations that have an interest in the area. Medway Council believes the new Local Plan will provide a strong basis for promoting better opportunities for local people, and securing a successful future for the area.
- 1.3 In preparing the Local Plan, the council needs to meet requirements set by Government on how the plan is produced, and what issues it must consider. The National Planning Policy Framework¹ (NPPF) represents the Government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. The Government makes clear that the purpose of planning is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The planning system performs three key roles in delivering sustainable development:
- An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy;
 - A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, including the provision of a supply of housing required to meet the needs of current and future generations;
 - An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.
- 1.4 The NPPF establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan making this means:

¹ Department for Communities and Local Government, 'National Planning Policy Framework', 2015 Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

- Local planning authorities should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area;
 - Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs, with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change, unless:
 - any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole; or
 - specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted (such as Special Protection Areas and Special Areas of Conservation, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, land designated as Green Belt, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, designated heritage assets and locations at risk of flooding).
- 1.5 The council is adhering to Government policy in preparing a new Local Plan for Medway, in planning positively for the development and infrastructure required in the area in line with the objectives, principles and policies of the NPPF.

Preparing the new Local Plan

- 1.6 The council has set out its timetable for preparing the new Medway Local Plan in the Local Development Scheme, 2018². This aims to produce a plan that can be submitted for independent examination in 2019.

Key milestones for Medway Local Plan

Stage	Date
Regulation 18 – Issues and Options consultation	Jan-Feb 2016
Regulation 18 – Development Options consultation	Jan-May 2017
Regulation 18 – Development Strategy consultation	March-May 2018
Regulation 19 – Publication of draft plan	Winter 2018
Submission of plan for Examination	March 2019
Adoption (determined on outcome of Examination)	2020

- 1.7 This consultation document represents work on the emerging Local Plan for Medway. It builds on the work carried out at earlier stages of consultation and an evidence base of technical documents assessing key matters and informing the direction of the plan.
- 1.8 The comprehensive evidence base includes research and assessment work specifically commissioned for the preparation of the plan, together with strategic documents and plans that are integral to defining the key issues to be addressed in

² Medway Council, 'Local Plan Development Scheme 2018-2020', Jan 2018, Available at: <http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Medway%20LDS%20Jan%202018.pdf>

the Local Plan. Details of the supporting evidence base documents prepared for the Medway Local Plan are available on the council's website³.

- 1.9 Work is continuing in collating and strengthening the evidence base, so that it is up-to-date and provides a robust basis for the publication of the draft Local Plan.

Issues and Options Consultation

1.10 In December 2015, the council published an 'Issues and Options'⁴ technical consultation document as the first formal stage in preparing a new Local Plan. Consultation was carried out in January and February 2016. The council contacted over 1000 people and groups directly through its Local Plan consultation database, as well as using wider council and partner organisations to raise awareness of the consultation document and encourage people to respond. A number of thematic stakeholder events were organised, including discussion of environmental, health, housing, economic and strategic issues. The council also held meetings and exhibitions in villages and towns across Medway, and attended partnership meetings to discuss the emerging Local Plan.

1.11 Over 200 written responses were received from a wide range of local residents, statutory organisations, businesses, interest and community groups, land owners and developers. The representations made reflected the interests of the diverse stakeholders, and there were differing views on the scale of development needed in the area, and how the Local Plan should respond. However there was some shared understanding that development was needed to provide for homes, jobs, services and facilities in the area. Concerns were largely expressed about the impact of potential development on existing transport networks, services and facilities, and the local environment. There were strong views that housing growth could not be seen separately to delivery of infrastructure, such as transport, healthcare, schools and parks.

1.12 Information provided in the responses received on the 'Issues and Options' document is available to view on the council's website.⁵ An overview of this initial consultation stage is set out in a report⁶ also available on the Local Plan pages of the website.

Development Options Consultation

1.13 In January 2017, the council published a 'Development Options'⁷ technical document for consultation as the next stage in the preparation of the Local Plan. It provided an

³ Medway Council, 'Local Plan Evidence Base', Available at:
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningpolicy/localplanevidencebase.aspx>

⁴ Medway Council, 'Medway Council Local Plan- Issues and Options 2012-2035', Available at:
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/PDF/Final%20Issues%20and%20Options%20Public%20Consultation%20Copy.pdf>

⁵ Medway Council, 'Issues and Options', Available at:
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningpolicy/localplan-futuremedway/issuesandoptions.aspx>

⁶ Medway Council, 'Issues and Options Consultation- Summary Report', March 2017, Available at:
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Issues%20&%20Options%20Consultation%20Responses%20Report%20-%20March%202017.pdf>

⁷ *ibid* 6

assessment of the current context for Medway's economic, social and environmental conditions and the key issues that need to be addressed in planning positively for the area's future over the lifetime of the Local Plan.

1.14 The document set out a draft vision and strategic objectives that should underpin the approaches to managing Medway's sustainable growth. It set out the council's ambitions for accommodating development of housing, jobs, shops, services and infrastructure, whilst strengthening the natural networks of the river, countryside and parks, and celebrating the area's history. It included emerging approaches to policies to address the key issues facing Medway's communities, economy, and environment. It presented four scenarios providing alternative approaches to meeting Medway's growth needs over the plan period. These high level options were:

- Maximising the potential of urban regeneration
- Suburban expansion
- Hoo Peninsula focus
- Urban regeneration and a rural town

1.15 The scenarios attracted the main focus of representations to the consultation. Over 330 written responses were received to the consultation, outside of over 11,000 made in specific reference to a campaign promoted by RSPB against development at Lodge Hill, and the relocation of Gillingham Football Club. Over 650 people attended the exhibitions organised across Medway by the Planning Service.

1.16 There was general support for regeneration to bring investment into town centres and the urban waterfront. However there were mixed views on the ability to concentrate much of the growth on regeneration sites, due to concerns with viability, delivery of infrastructure, transport provision and impacts on the natural and historic environments. The reaction to the potential for development on 'greenfield' sites in suburban and rural locations varied significantly. A number of developers and agents actively promoted sites in these locations through the plan consultation. Local people and community groups frequently raised much concern about development in such locations, particularly in relation to the scale of growth and the impact on infrastructure and the environment.

1.17 The responses were collated and analysed and specific matters identified. Copies of the responses received to the Development Options consultation have been published on the Local Plan webpage of the council's website⁸, together with a report⁹ outlining the main issues raised during the consultation.

⁸ Medway Council, 'Development Options', Available at:
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningpolicy/localplan-futuremedway/developmentoptions.aspx>

⁹ Medway Council, 'Medway Local Plan 2012-2035: Report on Development Options Consultation 2017', Available at:
<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Local%20Plan%20Development%20Options%20summary%20report.pdf>

- 1.18 All development scenarios made reference to Lodge Hill as a potential development site, subject to the outcome of a Public Inquiry that was planned for 2018. The potential development of land at Lodge Hill shown in the consultation materials would involve a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. Through the consultation, strong representations were made by a number of bodies, including Natural England and RSPB, that the inclusion of Lodge Hill in all options failed to demonstrate that the council had given due consideration to all 'reasonable alternatives'. The council has responded by carrying out an additional stage of consultation prior to the publication of the council's preferred development strategy in the draft plan. This 'Development Strategy' consultation represents this approach.

Development Strategy Consultation

- 1.19 The council has reviewed the comments received to earlier rounds of consultation and used its updated evidence base and further technical assessments to prepare this Development Strategy document for consultation. The Development Strategy document carries forward the draft vision and strategic objectives presented at the Development Options stage, as these received general support through the consultation.
- 1.20 This document evolves the assessment of potential approaches to delivering development in Medway. It provides further direction on a growth strategy that responds to the vision and strategic objectives set for the plan. It takes a sequential approach to identifying the most sustainable locations for development, identifying sites and broad locations for potential allocations in the Local Plan. Four scenarios are set out for consultation, representing variations on how growth could be delivered in line with the overarching development strategy. The document also includes the further refinement of draft policies for the Local Plan, and invites consideration of alternative approaches, before policies are presented in the next stage of the draft plan. Further detailed development management policies will be presented in the draft plan.
- 1.21 The Development Options consultation document is informed by a Habitats Regulation Assessment and Sustainability Appraisal. These documents consider the potential impacts of the proposed development allocations and draft policies on the environment, and social and economic conditions. The reports are published alongside the Development Strategy document for consultation. Further iterations of these assessments will be produced for the draft Local Plan.

How to get involved in the preparation of the Local Plan

- 1.22 The council welcomes views on this Development Strategy document. It has produced a form to provide guidance on how to make your comments. This is available online on the council's website, and at public libraries and the council's offices at Gun Wharf. Consultation responses will be taken into account in setting out a preferred development strategy, site allocations and supporting policies for the new Local Plan. There will be a further opportunity to comment when the council publishes its draft plan.
- 1.23 The consultation will run from **Friday 16 March to 5pm on Friday 11 May 2018.**

All comments must be submitted in writing to the council by 5pm on Friday 11 May 2018, so that they can be considered as part of this formal consultation stage.

You can submit comments in the following ways:

By post:

Planning Policy
Regeneration, Culture, Environment & Transformation
Medway Council, Gun Wharf
Dock Road, Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR

By email:

futuremedway@medway.gov.uk

Copies of this consultation document are available to view at public libraries across Medway, at the reception desk at the council offices at Gun Wharf, during opening hours, and online at: www.medway.gov.uk/futuremedway

You can find details of the opening hours of the council offices and libraries at: www.medway.gov.uk or by telephoning 01634 333333.

This information can be made available in other formats from 01634 333333

If you have any questions about this document and you want to speak to someone in your own language please ring 01634 335577

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