

INFRASTRUCTURE

- 10.1 The services and facilities that make up the area's infrastructure provide a vital network supporting economic and community life, and managing impacts on the environment. Medway has a diverse and complex infrastructure network, from strategic energy, communications and transport services, to parks, schools and halls serving local communities. The demands of a growing and changing population, and wider changes in how we live and work, have placed pressures on infrastructure and services. For many local people who responded to earlier rounds of consultation on the emerging plan, planning for infrastructure improvements was the most important issue for the plan to address.
- 10.2 Infrastructure is a vital component of the Local Plan as it is essential for a place to function well. Infrastructure planning is a key requirement of Government planning policy¹¹⁶ and its economic strategy. It encompasses transport, water supply, wastewater, energy, telecommunications, utilities, waste, health, social care, education, flood risk and coastal change management.¹¹⁷ The Industrial Strategy White Paper 2017¹¹⁸, set out the Government's economic vision for boosting the country's productivity and earning power of people throughout the UK. A key aspect of this strategy is a commitment towards increased investment in infrastructure to drive growth across the UK.
- 10.3 To ensure that existing and new residents/businesses benefit from the growth that will be delivered in Medway over the plan period it is important that infrastructure is delivered in support of new developments in a timely fashion and in appropriate locations. This section of the consultation document considers education, communications technology, utilities and open space and sports. Other aspects of infrastructure are covered in other sections of this document.
- 10.4 The council has researched current infrastructure capacity and its ability to meet increased demand in line with the growth proposed in the new Local Plan¹¹⁹. The Council has had discussions with infrastructure providers, such as utilities companies and transport bodies, as part of the plan preparation process. This work has shown that there are infrastructure deficiencies in many areas. The council seeks to use the Local Plan as a means of securing new and improved infrastructure and services, and policy interventions. In assessing the suitability of areas to accommodate growth,

¹¹⁶ Department for Communities and Local Government, '*National Planning Policy Framework*', Paragraph 156, pg.37, 2015 Available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

¹¹⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government, '*National Planning Policy Framework*', Paragraph 162, pg.40, 2015 Available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

¹¹⁸ Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, '*Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future*', 27 November 2017, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-building-a-britain-fit-for-the-future>

¹¹⁹ Medway Council, Local Plan Evidence Base, Available at:

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/planningandbuilding/planningpolicy/localplanevidencebase.aspx>

the council has considered the potential for mitigating impacts on infrastructure, and providing new services.

- 10.5 The Local Plan has particular regard to strategic infrastructure which has impacts over an area greater than Medway, and which may be of national significance. These form part of the council's engagement with other local authorities and key bodies on cross border matters through the Duty to Cooperate. Major development proposals in the wider area, including the Lower Thames Crossing, may have implications for Medway's infrastructure planning.
- 10.6 The council is producing an infrastructure delivery plan to sit alongside the Local Plan. It will identify the key infrastructure interventions needed to meet the required growth over the plan period.¹²⁰ The plan will be published with the draft Local Plan at the next stage of consultation. The draft plan will also include a range of strategic and supporting development management policies that set out the requirements for infrastructure, associated with development.

Policy I1: Infrastructure Planning and Delivery

The council will seek the timely and effective delivery of infrastructure to support the local economy and meet the needs of Medway's communities. It will seek opportunities through working with government agencies, infrastructure bodies, developers and partner organisations to secure improvements to infrastructure in Medway.

It will produce and regularly review an Infrastructure Delivery Plan, identifying the range, cost and scope of infrastructure improvements required in Medway.

Development coming forward in Medway will be expected to contribute to the delivery of new and improved infrastructure, in line with the council's evidence base and policy for infrastructure contributions from developers.

Appropriate conditions will be attached planning permissions in order to make development acceptable and to support the provision of infrastructure.

The council will identify land for safeguarding for the provision of future infrastructure where required to meet specific development needs.

The council will engage with appropriate bodies on strategic infrastructure planning matters, meeting the Duty to Cooperate and where appropriate, and through Statements of Common Ground supporting plan making.

Question I1:

Does the proposed policy for Infrastructure planning and delivery represent the most appropriate approach to planning for infrastructure improvements in Medway?

¹²⁰ Department for Communities and Local Government, 'National Planning Policy Framework', Paragraph 177, pg.42, 2015 Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

What do you consider would represent a sound alternative approach towards planning for infrastructure in the Medway Local Plan?

Developer Contributions

- 10.7 Development will be expected to mitigate its impacts through planning obligations. This is supported by national policy which directs obligations to be 'necessary, directly related and fairly and reasonably related' to the development.¹²¹ Contributions for upgrading services and infrastructure can be requested through different mechanisms including Section 106 agreements or Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) contributions, and conditions. The council currently makes use of S.106 agreements and conditions, and its policy is set out in the Medway Guide to Developer Contributions and Obligations¹²². It will respond to any updated government guidance and legislation on developer contributions, planning conditions and approaches to viability testing. This may involve the possible implementation of a locally adopted CIL or other recognised funding mechanism to provide for contributions for strategic infrastructure supporting the development of the wider area. The cumulative impact of all development and needs for infrastructure provision will be reflected in any resulting tariff attached to such an approach.
- 10.8 The Local Plan needs to be deliverable if it is to achieve the vision and strategic objectives set for Medway's growth. The council aims to achieve quality development that fairly contributes to meeting the needs of residents and avoids or mitigates any negative impacts, but does not place unacceptable demands on developers that can not be delivered.

Policy I2: Developer Contributions

To make development acceptable and enable the granting of planning permission, deficiencies in infrastructure arising from proposed development will be mitigated through developer contributions and conditions.

Where development creates a requirement for new or improved infrastructure beyond existing provision, developers will be expected to provide or contribute towards the additional requirement to an agreed delivery programme. Where demonstrated to be necessary, the council will require that infrastructure is delivered ahead of the development being occupied.

Where developers consider that providing or contributing towards the infrastructure requirement would have serious implications for the viability of a development, the council will require an "open book" approach and, where necessary, will operate the policy flexibly.

204, pg.47, 2015 Available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

¹²² Medway Council, *Guide to Developer Contributions* (2014), Available at:

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/PDF/GUIDE%20TO%20DEVELOPER%20CONTRIBUTIONS%202014.pdf>

Question 12:

Does the proposed policy for developer contributions represent the most appropriate approach?

What do you consider would represent a sound alternative approach for developer contributions in the Medway Local Plan?

Education

- 10.9 Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to ensuring that a sufficient provision and choice of school places is available to meet the needs of communities and authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools to widen choice in education.¹²³
- 10.10 As a unitary authority, Medway Council is a Local Education Authority. Within Medway there are 35 day nurseries, 60 pre-schools, 78 primary schools, 17 secondary schools and one all-through school, as well as further education and university provision. Boosting educational attainment and qualifications and skills levels in Medway is a core priority. This underpins the area's economic performance and opens up greater job and social opportunities for residents. The Local Plan can help in these ambitions, by supporting the provision of nurseries and schools and the development of the higher and further education sector.
- 10.11 A learning quarter of further and higher education has been established in the Chatham Maritime area, with the Universities at Medway, Mid Kent College and the University Technical College. These have a major social and economic impact on the area and are set to expand further over the plan period.
- 10.12 The latest population projections for Medway have indicated that the proportion of young people will be relatively stable over the plan period. In 2014 the number of 0-15 year olds was 20.2% of the population and by 2035 this would be 19.5%.¹²⁴ Planning for school places therefore needs to keep pace with the projected growth in Medway's population.
- 10.13 The latest Medway School Organisation Plan was produced in 2017. Following a recent programme of expansions and new schools, there is generally sufficient capacity in primary education in the early part of the plan period. However additional capacity will be needed after 2021.¹²⁵ There is a similar position within the secondary education, with existing capacity only until 2020.¹²⁶ The Education Planning Team at Medway Council has identified locations where there is sufficient space at existing

¹²³ Department for Communities and Local Government, 'National Planning Policy Framework', Section 8, Paragraph 72, pg.17, 2015 Available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

¹²⁴ Medway Council, 'Medway Authority Monitoring Report 2016-17', Vol. 1, p.28, Available at:

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Vol1AMR2017FINAL.pdf>

¹²⁵ Medway Council, 'Annual Review of the School Organisation Plan (2017)', Available at:

<https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgconvert2pdf.aspx?id=38033>

¹²⁶ *ibid* 125

school sites to allow for expansion, but also areas of Medway where new schools would be needed.

10.14 Schools have associations with other uses, such as sports facilities and community halls. As part of the plan's strategy to create more sustainable places and to make the best use of land and resources, the council will support the co-location of community facilities with education uses, where appropriate.

Policy I3: Education

Early Years & School Provision

As Medway's population grows additional school places will be needed. New residential developments of significant scale will be expected to provide education facilities within their development in order to create sustainable communities. The requirements will be informed by the council's School Organisation Plan and Education Planning team providing an assessment of the capacity and suitability of existing local schools to expand existing school provision.

All proposals for residential developments over 10 homes will be required to contribute to the funding of education services in accordance with the council's policy for infrastructure contributions from developers.

Proposals for the upgrading and expansion of existing schools and development of new schools in locations where additional provision is required will be supported subject to the criteria below. The council may use its Compulsory Purchase powers to facilitate the development of new schools where necessary.

Proposals for new education facilities should:

- have safe access by cycle and walking, public transport and car and incorporate a school travel plan;
- have safe drop-off and pick-up provision;
- provide outdoor facilities for sport and recreation; and
- avoid conflict with adjoining uses.

The Council supports consideration of opportunities for co-location of community services and shared use facilities on school sites. Educational facilities shall be encouraged to diversify to provide a wider range of services to benefit the whole community, such as sports facilities or community centres open to the public.

Further & Higher Education

The development and expansion of the Universities at Medway and Higher and Further Education Colleges will be supported within the 'learning quarter' at Chatham Maritime. Development of supporting uses where there is an identified link to the Universities and other research and development establishments will be supported where appropriate, and does not conflict with other policies in the plan.

Question I3:

Does the proposed policy for Education represent the most appropriate approach for planning for education facilities?

What do you consider would represent a sound alternative approach for planning for education facilities in the Medway Local Plan?

Communications Technology

10.15 Telecommunications are intrinsic to how we now live and work. Access to good broadband and telephone services are essential for business, learning and communities, and provision of high speed broadband services is a key component of a successful economy. The council seeks to establish Medway as a well-connected smart city that offers a competitive base for businesses and excellent telecommunications services for residents.

10.16 National policy supports the development of digital and communications infrastructure in planning for sustainable places.¹²⁷ This form of development should be carefully sited, with regard to local amenity, heritage and landscape, but not discouraged. The mobile phone network and coverage has increased in importance with the reliance on mobile technology to stay in contact and do business through mobile phones and tablets. Medway is generally well served by mobile network coverage. However there are weak spots across the authority area; including: Hoo Peninsula, Hempstead, Rainham and parts of Strood.¹²⁸

10.17 The government has recognised the role of effective high speed broadband in supporting and driving the economy. It has invested in its Broadband Delivery UK (BDUK) programme to extend superfast broadband coverage across the UK, and is introducing a broadband Universal Service Obligation so that by 2020 everyone across the UK will have a clear, enforceable right to request high speed broadband.

10.18 Medway Council is working with Kent County Council on the BDUK programme. 134,000 homes and businesses have been connected to superfast broadband resulting in a total coverage of 95% of properties across Kent and Medway.¹²⁹ However there are still issues within the provision of the broadband across Medway. Ofcom statistics indicate that there are areas of disparity within Medway with a rural urban split.¹³⁰ The rural wards in Medway experience download speeds below the UK average, whilst the urban wards exceed it. In March 2017, the Government

¹²⁷ Department for Communities and Local Government, 'National Planning Policy Framework', Section 5, Paragraph 43, pg.11, 2015 Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

¹²⁸ Think Broadband, <http://maps.thinkbroadband.com/#lat=51.40693073873729&lng=0.5937778239746372&zoom=12&type=terrain&exchanges>

¹²⁹ Kent County Council, 'Making Kent Quicker', Available at: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/broadband/making-kent-quicker>

¹³⁰ House of Commons Library, 'Broadband coverage and speeds: local statistics', 2017 Available at: <http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CBP-8200#fullreport>

released its 5th Generation (5G) Strategy for the UK¹³¹, with the rollout of the next generation of mobile networks expected to commence in 2020. The council anticipates more base and booster stations will be required than for the current 3G and 4G networks across Medway and will aim to work with the telecommunications industry to agree suitable provision and shared guidance.

Policy I4: Communications Technology

In order for Medway to achieve its economic and social potential and maintain its status as a well-connected place to live and work, the Council will seek to develop and enhance the provision of broadband and telecommunications infrastructure coverage across Medway.

When considering proposals for the development of communications installations, regard will be given to:

- operational requirements of the telecommunication networks and the technical limitations of the technology, including any technical constraints on the location of telecommunications apparatus;
- the potential for sharing existing masts, buildings and other structures; and
- the impact of the development on its surroundings with particular regard to the visual amenity, character or appearance of the surrounding area, and the proposed provision of landscaping.

Apparatus and associated structures sited on a building should be sited and designed in order to seek to minimise impact to the external appearance of the host building.

Development should not have an unacceptable effect on conservation areas or buildings of architectural or historic interest or areas of ecological interest or areas of landscape value or sites of archaeological importance.

Telecommunications equipment that has become obsolete or that is no longer in use should be removed as soon as practicable and the site restored to its former condition.

Broadband

Proposals for new major employment and residential developments should include appropriate infrastructure, wired and wireless, to provide high speed internet access as part of the development.

Question I4:

Does the proposed policy for Communications represent the most appropriate approach for the Local Plan?

What do you consider would represent a sound alternative approach for planning for communications infrastructure in the Medway Local Plan?

¹³¹ Department for Culture Media & Sport, 'Next Generation Mobile Technologies: A 5G Strategy for the UK', 2017, Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/597421/07.03.17_5G_strategy_-_for_publication.pdf

Utilities

- 10.19 Utilities such as water, energy and sewage are vital to enable development to be sustainable and function effectively. Planning policy must assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure in considering the needs and impacts of development. Medway is within an area of water stress, and some capacity issues have been identified.¹³² Southern Water is the provider of water and waste water services within Medway and has identified that supply is balanced in the early part of the plan period but there is a need towards the later period.¹³³ Water supply and provision for the treatment of waste water are increasingly seen as key issues in planning for and delivering development. There are pressures on the existing services and in planning for sustainable growth, it is essential that there is greater coordination and investment in key utilities. The council, with other local authorities and the development sector in Kent, supports early engagement with water services providers to plan strategically for growth as set out in Local Plans.
- 10.20 With the level of growth projected in Medway, the capacity in the utilities networks will likely change over time. Capacity will need to either be built in to the system through expansion of facilities or efficiencies made in the system to allow for spare capacity to be developed.
- 10.21 The council will continue to work with utilities providers to share information on planned levels and locations of growth to assess the capacity of systems to meet increased needs, and to identify any upgrades required, or where limits on development need to be considered.

Policy I5: Utilities

Any new development will be supported by the requisite utilities infrastructure.

The council seeks early engagement with utilities providers in planning to meet the strategic growth needs of Medway as set out in the Local Plan, and which supports the timely and sustainable delivery of development.

Significant new development proposals will be assessed to determine the impact on the existing network (water, electricity and gas).

Question I5:

Does the proposed policy for Utilities represent the most appropriate approach for the Local Plan?

What do you consider would represent a sound alternative approach for planning for utilities infrastructure in the Medway Local Plan?

¹³² Environment Agency, 'Water Stressed Areas (2013)', Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-stressed-areas-2013-classification>

¹³³ Southern Water, 'Water Resources Management Plan 2015-40', Available at: <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/media/default/pdfs/WRMP-technical-report.pdf>

Sport and Recreation

- 10.22 Medway is one of the largest conurbations in the South East with a diverse open space estate of 1,900 ha, including country parks, playing fields, play areas, formal parks and gardens and allotments. Residents and businesses have expressed their concern in response to previous consultations about the scale of growth and the impact on Medway's open spaces and facilities for sport and recreation. This will be determined by the type of land available and investment. A recent study found that 28% of the land in Medway is built on, 55% is farmland and 10% 'Natural' land.¹³⁴ 7% of land in Medway is made up of managed greenspaces such as parks, gardens and sports grounds, providing opportunities for sport and recreation. The River Medway, along with the skiing and ice skating facilities, provide for other activities beyond mainstream sports. The new Local Plan will need to protect and enhance existing facilities and provide new facilities to accommodate growth.
- 10.23 The sport and recreation policies have been prepared in accordance with national planning policy, Sport England guidance and the Medway policy framework.¹³⁵ Responses to previous consultations and the emerging evidence base have informed the scope and detail of the policies.
- 10.24 Gillingham Football Club promoted a site for a "state-of-the-art modern stadium, enabling development and other facilities" during the previous consultation. In response, a specific policy is set out below in recognition of the football club's strategic and community role in Medway.

Open Space and Sports Facilities

- 10.25 The plan's vision establishes Medway as an area noted for its revitalised centres and natural assets, while the strategic objectives emphasise the role of infrastructure and quality design to facilitate walking, cycling and recreation. These are also important elements of the Medway policy framework.
- 10.26 National planning policy sets out the government's aspirations and requirements for sport and recreation which can be described as the need to "protect existing facilities,

¹³⁴ Mark Easton, 'How much of your area is built on?', (BBC.CO.UK), November 2017, Available at: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-4190129>

¹³⁵ Medway Council, 'Medway Council Plan (2016-21)', Available at: <http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Council%20Plan%20201617%20Final.pdf>

Medway Council '*Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Medway (2012-17)*', Available at: <http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Joint-Health-and-Well-being-Strategy-for-Medway-2012-2017.pdf>

Thames Gateway Kent, '*Thames Gateway Kent Plan for Growth (2014-20)*', Available at: <http://www.tgkp.org/content/documents/TGKP%20Growth%20Plan%20brochure%20-%20web.pdf>

Medway Council, '*Medway's Cultural Strategy (2014-19): Rich heritage-great future*', Available at: <https://democracy.medway.gov.uk/mgconvert2pdf.aspx?id=25118>

enhance through improving quality and accessibility, and provide for the future through a planned approach, based on robust and up-to-date assessments of need.”¹³⁶ In addition, Sport England’s draft Playing Fields Policy will: “oppose the granting of planning permission for any development which would lead to the loss of, or would prejudice the use of:

- all or any part of a playing field, or
- land which has been used as a playing field and remains undeveloped, or
- land allocated for use as a playing field

unless, in the judgement of Sport England, the development as a whole meets with one or more of five specific exceptions.”¹³⁷

10.27 National planning policy also provides for Local Green Space designations during the preparation or review of Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans. These designations are intended for the special protection of green areas; however this should be “consistent with the local planning of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.”¹³⁸ As part of this consultation, the council is inviting responses concerning potential Local Green Space designations. Responses will be considered in accordance with national planning policy and guidance.

10.28 In response to the last consultation, Sport England stated: “No sites, including playing fields, should be allocated for development if this would include the loss of playing field or prejudice the use of the playing field.” Table 11.1 below shows which potential site allocations would compromise existing greenspaces, derived from the Ordnance Survey Greenspace dataset.¹³⁹

¹³⁶ Sport England, ‘*Planning for Sport : Forward Planning*’, Available at: <https://www.sportengland.org/media/11054/planning-for-sport-forward-planning-guide-july-2014.pdf>

¹³⁷ Sport England, ‘*Playing Fields Policy and Guidance*’, Available at: <https://www.sportengland.org/media/12130/playing-fields-policy-and-guidance-consultation-draft.pdf>

¹³⁸ Department for Communities and Local Government, ‘*National Planning Policy Framework*’, Section 8, Paragraph 76, pg.17, 2015 Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

¹³⁹ Ordnance survey, <https://osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/51.38922,0.52659,13>

| Potential Site Allocation | OS Greenspace Type | Greenspace Name | Explanatory Notes |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 0050 – Lodge Hill | Playing Field | Lodge Hill Recreation Ground | Lodge Hill Recreation Ground forms part of the Homes England site. Any proposal would need to be in line with the development plan. |
| 0090 – Strood Riverside, Canal Road | Play Space | Watermill Gardens | The proposed Strood Waterfront Development Brief (2017) indicates that Watermill Gardens will be retained and substantially improved with new landscaping and facilities to serve the increased population, including new play equipment, a café, public toilets, a drinking water fountain and seating. |
| 1114 - Driving Range, Street End Road | Golf Course | Chatham Driving Range | Subject to current planning application (MC/17/2767). |
| 1121 - Deangate Ridge, Sports Complex | Golf Course | Deangate Ridge, Sports Complex | Considered to be in poor condition, underutilised and financially unviable. If made available, the sites could accommodate a range of uses, including open space and sports facilities. |

10.29 Sport England requires a robust evidence base in order to meet national planning policy. The last open spaces and playing pitch audit, conducted in 2012¹⁴⁰, identified a substantial overall surplus of open space, however this was overwhelmingly attributed to the ‘Natural Greenspace’ of Strood and the Hoo Peninsula. All other types of open space amounted to a shortfall across Medway, save for a parks surplus in Chatham and Rainham. The same audit identified that some pitches have spare capacity, however there was a need for most other types of sports pitch, particularly for youth football and tennis, although the latter will have been addressed in part following the 2017 opening of the Avenue Tennis centre in Gillingham, providing 17 multi-surface courts. The council is commissioning a new Playing Pitch Strategy in accordance with Sport England guidance and this will form a key part of the evidence base.

10.30 A draft Medway Sports Facility Strategy and Action Plan has been produced providing an assessment of need up to 2035 and setting out a phased approach to planning. It sets out opportunities for improvements in a range of sports facilities

¹⁴⁰ Ploszajski Lynch Consulting Ltd, ‘Medway Council (2012) Playing Pitch and Outdoor Sports Facilities Study’, Available at: <http://www.plcleisureconsulting.co.uk/medway-council-outdoor-sports-facilities-study/>

across Medway. It is possible that existing and new school sports facilities could be made available for community use outside of school hours to help meet demand. Moreover, there could be other innovative ways for the wider policy framework to fulfil the multiple elements of the vision and strategic objectives, for example by linking new school provision to an existing open space.

10.31 The findings of the 2012 open spaces and playing pitch audit and the scale of growth to 2035 underline the need for a strong local policy to protect, enhance and provide for sport and recreation. This will be based on a robust and up-to-date evidence base.

10.32 The scale of growth proposed in the emerging plan will require significant investment in open space and sports provision. Strategic allocations will include provision for new parks, green spaces and sports and leisure facilities.

Policy I6: Open Space and Sports Facilities

Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

- an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

Policy I7: New Open Space Provision

Provision for new open space will be in line with specifically identified needs, informed by a robust assessment. Strategic scale development will be required to provide new greenspaces to meet community needs, and contribute to the quality of placemaking,

Policy I8: New Playing Pitches

New pitches will be provided in line with specifically identified needs, informed by a robust assessment.

Any new playing pitches should be constructed in line with Sport England guidance.

Question I6:

Do the proposed policies for open spaces, sports facilities and playing pitches represent the most appropriate approach for the Local Plan?

What do you consider would represent a sound alternative approach for planning for open spaces, sports facilities and playing pitches in the Medway Local Plan?

Gillingham Football Club

- 10.33 The plan's vision and strategic objectives aim to establish a regional profile for successful and ambitious growth, gain competitiveness, attract investment and secure and enhance the diverse business base in accessible locations.
- 10.34 Gillingham Football Club provides an important strategic role in Medway and a focus for the community. Among other factors, notably the close proximity to London and the Universities at Medway, the football club contributes to the competitive profile of the area, enhancing its ability to attract inward investment. Gillingham is the only football league team in Kent.
- 10.35 National planning policy supports the economic¹⁴¹ and community¹⁴² benefits that can derive from a leading sports facility in Medway. Such ambitions accord with the Council Plan (2016-21) and the Thames Gateway Kent Plan for Growth (2014-20). It is recognised that new stadiums for successful football clubs can have a positive impact for their towns and cities, for regeneration, the local economy, and health, as well as boosting a sense of community pride in the area.
- 10.36 Gillingham Football Club has had longstanding ambitions to relocate to a new purpose built stadium. The existing stadium is contained within a tightly knit urban area. This location limits the club's ability to grow. The ground has capacity for just under 11,000 spectators, and as an ambitious football club it is compromised in achieving its aspirations to emulate the likes of clubs such as Brighton and Bournemouth which have successfully expanded. The constrained urban site also limits the club's ability to provide for non-football related activities on site, which would help with its viability. A wider offer could include education facilities, building on the existing work of the club; sports and associated health activities, such as physiotherapy and sports medicine; leisure and community uses; associated hotel and conference facilities; and provide links to the Universities and further employment uses. Such a strategic development opportunity would have an important role in the economy, community, health and prosperity of Medway.
- 10.37 The council will continue to work with the football club to secure its future in Medway and to develop its strategic and community role. Any proposal should be multi-functional to address any sports or other community use shortfalls to be identified in the evidence base.

Policy I9: Gillingham Football Club

The Council recognises the positive benefits of a successful football club to the Medway community and economy and will work positively with the club to find an appropriate site for

¹⁴¹ Department for Communities and Local Government, 'National Planning Policy Framework', Paragraph 17, pg.5, 2015 Available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

¹⁴² Department for Communities and Local Government, 'National Planning Policy Framework', Paragraph 70, pg.17, 2015 Available at:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

the development of a new stadium with associated facilities that should include education, employment, sports and leisure, community use and hotel and conference facilities. Any proposals must demonstrate the sustainability of the site, include an Environmental Impact Assessment and demonstrate the benefit to Medway as a place to live, work, learn and visit.

Question I7:

Do you agree with the proposed policy for Gillingham Football Club?

Do you support the relocation of Gillingham Football Club to a new stadium in Medway?

Where do you consider would be a suitable location for a relocated stadium?

Question I8:

What uses would you expect to see come forward as part of any new stadium proposals?