

Chatham Town Centre Masterplan
Written comments received during
consultation held on draft masterplan
16 August – 30 September 2019

Chatham Town Centre masterplan - summary of comments made to consultation

1. Resident

- Need for a street, lights and drains maintenance schedule
- Need to maintain existing stocks of both urban and rural trees
- Ensuring the high street is full pedestrianised to avoid cars wearing down the pavements.
- Need for affordable housing for existing Medway residents – concern that Chatham residents won't be able to partake in the change simply because they cannot afford it
- Debenhams site could be turned into an innovations and starter business centre in the heart of Medway.

2. Barton Wilmore on behalf of Richard Watts

Retail

- Retail sector in general decline so it is important to ensure a flexible approach to the occupation of floorspace is taken, for retail and commercial uses is therefore imperative to ensure maximum take up.
- Proposed redevelopment of Sites for mixed uses, including residential will be essential to securing the redevelopment of sites, since non-residential land values will be insufficient to fund comprehensive redevelopment on its own.

Support

- Views the masterplan as an opportunity to enhance the attractiveness of the Town Centre and strengthen the local economy
- Agreed that comprehensive redevelopment of Sites within Chatham Town Centre provides the opportunity to deliver more modern and attractive floorspace
- Support higher density residential development on the Site
- Support inclusion of the Site within the "Chatham Waterfront" development area and support provision of residential development on the Site.

Reservations

- Support retail frontage on the ground floor on the eastern parcel on the high street – but must adopt flexible approach to the occupation of the retail floorspace due to current climate.
- Site is identified as being in a secondary location and with an already primary high street frontage so floorspace may be difficult to fill in this location.
- Building heights- concerns about proposed heights ranging from 11-15 storeys – may not be commercially attractive or viable and therefore may act as a deterrent for future redevelopment

Objections

- Object to the Coombes forecourt (western parcel) being identified as greenspace as this comprises active commercial floorspace and would not be commercially viable for this to be made over to public space – masterplan should therefore be amended in this regard and the area shown for development, since the current proposal would not be deliverable.
- Plan under no 4 incorrectly identified the northern extent of the western parcel as backland/parking. This area includes Coombe of Medway and its associated sales forecourt.

Suggestions

- The final arrangement of buildings must be informed by detailed analysis of individual sites, taking into account a more thorough understanding of the Site's opportunities and constraints- water main running through the Site which may not be possible to build on, the arrangement of the buildings on the masterplan can therefore not be considered definitive.
 - Should not be a foregone conclusion that the existing buildings cannot be refurbished or substantially altered/added to, to achieve the aspirations of the masterplan.
 - Considering the costs of demolition and redevelopment, particularly in constrained environments, this may be the most practicable and viable option and cannot be ruled out.
 - Masterplan must be relabelled as 'indicative'
- Residential development on the western parcel, with some potential for commercial floorspace on the ground floor
- Proposed storey heights should be amended to read as 'indicative'
- Western land parcel to be included in the masterplan with storey heights on this part of the Site ranging from 1-5 storeys.
- Urge that figures identified are expressed as 'indicative' and do not pose absolute constraints on development which may deter or prevent development coming forward or releasing full development potential

3. MHS Homes group

- How would place making and improvement of journeys to the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists be extended to peripheral town centre estates to allow for more engagement with the centre?
- Considerations for active building frontage on New Road, should be consulted with MHS and considered in tandem with MHS future potential proposals
- Lack of crossings on New Road is highlighted as a constraint, and the existing subway identified as a 'park route' isn't substantial enough as there is no additional crossing, and so just an improvement of what exists.
- Height and density in periphery estates/areas should be encouraged
- MHS should be consulted on public realm improvements, especially area identified adjacent to the 'key cycle/pedestrian route'
- Height along the Brook on an enhanced pedestrian route to the Great lines may stymie potential regeneration
- More partnership working with MHS to benefit the wider regeneration of areas and existing investment proposed.

- Support an addendum to this masterplan to include periphery estates to the current boundary that the Chatham masterplan addresses

4. Barton Wilmore on behalf of Lightstone Chatham

- Chatham Town Centre Masterplan should not fix the type and scale of development that is deemed acceptable on the Site.
- Figures in preliminary economic impact assessment- these figures should be considered conservative, given the significant development needs facing Medway Council over the plan period.
 - Areas like the Brook have sufficient capacity to deliver a much greater number of units than the 193 proposed in the draft masterplan. Figures therefore should not be viewed as an absolute requirement or function as a constraint on both residential and non-residential development.
- There should be flexibility regarding the indicative phasing strategy – indicative development phases shown must not limit schemes that are ready to come forward at an earlier stage than suggested.
- Phasing strategy should not delay development that will enable early improvements to the public domain.
- Need for early development to enhance permeability of the Site and allow for landscape improvements
- Proposed land uses and activity programming should be viewed indicatively and should take a flexible approach, accounting for factors such as viability and local interest.
- Diversification of non-residential uses within the Town Centre is supported however the type of provided should be responsive to local need and site-specific circumstances
- Existing car park located within the Site, could be reconfigured and enhanced aesthetically as part of emerging development proposals to provide the number of public spaces that the strategy determines appropriate and the balance could be dedicated to the new residential units.
 - Public car parking could be located closer to the high street to prevent focus being drawn from the river Medway edge and Chatham Waterfront regeneration area

5. Synergy Planning and Property consultants on behalf of Sun Pier (Trustees of the Gransden Pension Trust)

- Include site for residential or mixed use – next to Sun Pier
- Pier susceptible to vandalism or water gypsies – breaking into electricity supply.
- Support the water taxi idea – sun pier would be a prime transport node
- Ground floor – kiosk, restaurant, possibly small offices – upper floors as waterside apartments
- Limited demand for offices
- Sun Pier House and Riverside House – art gallery, café, music functions and art exhibitions
- Remove Sun Pier as creative hub – no long-term ambitions for this to retain the art function
- Include as site allocation in SLAA

6. KCC – sports

- Signposted to various links
- More people in Medway are inactive compared to the national average. Any development therefore needs to consider this and seek to provide a mix of formal and informal areas/spaces (indoor and out) where people can be active, including walking and cycling routes, open spaces, water based activity etc.

7. Diocese of Rochester

- Welcome the focus on reinvigorating and repopulating the town centre
- Happy with the emphasis the church is given in the masterplan
- Encourage a good mix of housing to create a thriving community
- Emphasize church site as an opportunity site – church/community/town centre hub
- Include as opportunity site on page 118
- Not included in protected views

8. KCC archaeology

- Look for opportunities to reveal and enhance Chatham's heritage assets so that their positive benefits can be maximised
- Support the quarter's concept – is sound and identification of opportunity sites.
- Concerns for prescribing building heights – it introduces expectations that have not adequately been tested and assessed and as such could cause harm to heritage assets and may not be deliverable. Can also undermine negotiations with developers
- The cumulative impact of all the suggested taller buildings can also cause significant harm to the historic environment and townscape of Chatham – harm to setting of Fort Amherst and Fort Pitt as well as views between
- Multiple taller buildings will present an impenetrable visual barrier obscuring the green ridge
- Post war buildings acknowledge as not representative of historic fabric. Newer proposals/development should not replicate this.
- Masterplan should acknowledge that 'well designed taller buildings might be appropriate in the right place and if integrated into local character and context, but more detailed assessments will be required before decisions on location and number of storeys are made.
- Mid-scale may also be seen as tall if next to other existing buildings of two or three storeys in height.
- Update 2006 Building heights policy. Take account of Historic England Advice Note 4 on Tall Buildings, the 2015 Chatham Dockyard and its Defences Planning Policy Document (views identified), the 2017 Heritage Asset Review and Draft Medway Heritage Strategy
- Value of undesignated heritage assets and ability to contribute to place making agenda is underplayed. Would be good to set out an approach to identify and then sustain or enhance assets where feasible. Place making project understands the wealth of heritage assets.
- Acknowledge better the undesignated assets and the contribution they make to local character, interest and distinctiveness.
- Look at townscape enhancements
- Greater consideration of existing buildings and the value they can add to the townscape.
- Review conservation area appraisals for those that fall within and in close proximity to the town centre.

- Little consideration given to how the waterfront development interfaces with the surrounding area.
- Sign post Victoria Gardens better.
- Other green spaces have historic origins – link provided with further information (Kent Gardens Trust)
- How will green spaces be integrated in town centre – especially to address the barrier created by the Brook and aspirations to link to the Great Lines?
- Make more of the Command of the Heights project, i.e. linkages, greenery, cultural and heritage opportunities
- Consideration of an archaeological assessment will be needed as part of any proposal in Chatham due to high likelihood of presence of remains
- Develop an overarching archaeological framework strategy for waterfront development along Medway – KCC willing to discuss further

9. Resident

- No mention/clear consideration for people with disabilities.
- Ensure full DDA's are being conducted during delivery – widening pavements, pavement parking enforcement, dropped kerbs

10. Southern Water

- No comment

11. Historic England

- Concerns about scale and being represented through imagery which can be misleading to developers as a desirable end result. Is it practical to include 3D models if it is not what is desired?
 - Set design principles, rooted in the historic environment and other factors
- Identify where higher buildings are appropriate
- Where and how should the higher development be focused to ensure a coherent vision
- Take account of historic sensitivities
- Review views analysis
- Historic character assessment of the townscape
- Use a digital model of Chatham and surrounds – to understand topography but also cumulative impact of planning applications
- Make reference to NPPF, including section 19 (conserving and enhancing the historic environment, section 12 (achieving well-designed places), paragraph 192 (c), paragraph 127 (a-f), MC heritage strategy 2018
- Also consider archaeological remains
- Support:
 - Aspirations to improve public realm
 - Celebration of undesignated heritage
 - Support character areas – logical and representative of Chatham's varied character

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- Areas – serious reservations:
 - along the Brook: 5 storeys is acceptable
 - around St John the Divine: new development around the church should be restricted to no higher than the nave – tall bldgs. Strategy – part 2, pg 25. 4 storeys is appropriate.
 - increased height on Mountbatten House and new higher buildings beside this: existing presence has an impact on views. 15 storeys has the potential to cause additional harm to nearby heritage and erode an understanding of Chatham’s historic identity.
 - Richard Watts site: 15 storeys excessive. Seek to sustain key views to and from designated heritage assets.

12. National Grid

- No comment
- Update contact details

13. Resident

- Support masterplans and Chatham the most important shopping centre and support its status
- Fails to deal with traffic volume and air quality issues along the Brook
- Concerns regarding viability and land value in relation to achieving the ambitions
- Suffers from the backs of buildings fronting onto the street and visible from the highway
- Proposes a water powered funicular railway that connects the Great Lines/Naval Memorial with King Street or the Town Hall gardens

14. Natural England

- Supports the inclusion of areas of green space in the masterplans
- Design greenspace in a way that contributes toward the Green Infrastructure vision

15. Theatres Trust

- Main issues identified: Do not agree that capacity is limited in theatres
- Night time economy strategy: Make reference to Spotlites Theatre (just outside of the town centre boundary – appears to be on the back of Gala Bingo).
Agree that night time economy and cultural uses essential for vitality and viability of the town centre.
- Commercial quarter & Potential and Committed Opportunity sites – Opportunity Site Q: expansion of the central theatre – discuss with Theatre Trust

16. Kelly Tolhurst

- Support plans to increase accessibility for walking and cycling
- Concern for loss of parking = page 63 – loss of 906 spaces. Clarify retention of parking.
- Ensure infrastructure upgrades accompany residential development
- Percentage of affordable units?
- How will ambitions for Chatham TC be funded?

17. Resident

- Open character of the waterfront preserved
- Need for parking spaces and better public transport in the evenings to encourage use of evening economy and night culture
- Concern with building heights – no higher than 6 storeys particularly around the railway station
- Building more than 6 storeys high would create a wind funnelling effect in the Town Centre
- Cycling bridge could prevent ships entering the Medway
- Unsure whether a tidal energy plant would be of benefit but in favour of solar panels on roofs and charging points
- Agree with concept of green walls and wall tree planting in the Brook, as well as the creation of an urban forest and cycle lanes.
- Need for more disabled access particularly at Railway Street and Military Road. More discussion should be had about making this area wheelchair and scooter friendly and more consideration should be given to disabled access to the Town Centre in general.
- Debenhams building could be turned into a mixture of small shopping units on the ground floor with the upper floors turned into maisonettes using the back access from Rhodes Street as the main access.

18. Kent Police

As with the Strood Town Centre Workshop, when considering the any Masterplan or Local Plans we utilise:

1. The Kent Design For Crime Prevention – please see electronic copy and protocol attached for your information.
2. The PCPI (Police Crime Prevention Initiatives) www.policecpi.com which includes:
 - a. Secured By Design (SBD) www.securedbydesign.com for layout, design, environment and physical security specifications for residential, schools and commercial developments and for crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).
 - b. Park Mark Safer Parking Scheme www.parkmark.co.uk/ for the layout and site security specifications for car parking.
3. The NPPF Paragraph 127 (f) for CPTED.
4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.
5. We note the reference to 'potential security and crime issues' on page 37 of the draft masterplan.

We kindly request that the Kent Police DOCO (Designing Out Crime Officer) Team be consulted and involved at the earliest possible planning stages. It is obviously easier for any recommendations or observations to be changed on paper at this stage.

6. The Medway Council formal CCTV network will need to be extended in order in the interests of safety and security and to deter ASB (anti-social behaviour). E.g. Main streets, public open areas, riverside, routes to/from the Great Lines.
7. Parking. Undercroft parking can attract all kinds of crime and ASB. Undercroft parking should be gated and secured. Rear parking courts are discouraged as they are not generally overlooked from active rooms.
8. Permeability will need to be carefully designed. Paths should be wide and clear with direct lines of site.
9. High level residential apartments should incorporate SBD security measures, such as security compartmentalisation of all floors for blocks of 25 units or more. Full audio visual access control systems will be required. High level developments should incorporate appropriate security and fire prevention measures.
10. Careful consideration needs to be given to the mix and location of residential properties in regard to NTE (Night Time Economy) developments, e.g. pubs, clubs late night food outlets. We understand that student accommodation is proposed nearer the NTE, security of the student accommodation should conform to SBD Homes 2019 guidance.

19. Party representing Debenhams

- Proposal for Debenhams site looks likely to be residential with active ground floor use.

20. Medway Council officer comments

- page 111, the bus bid was not successful. – Text deleted
- On p13 of the Chatham master plan, some of the Medway 2035 references are out of date. Following consultation input from Medway's Cultural Partnership we dropped references to the Creative Quarter, and this objective reads instead: "We will continue support for enhanced creative industries presence in and around the town centre, and throughout Medway as a whole". We also dropped specific reference to the food market. – amended text
- Just a few typos I noticed too - there is a surplus 'the' in the quotes on both pages 45 and 47, and 'Amhurst' is misspelled on p56. – amended text

21. Comments from stakeholder workshop held in October 2019

- Large amounts of development – concern of land use clashes which need to be carefully thought out
- More attraction to town centre will cause transporting issues- need to think about sustainability of transport
- Park and ride services- example site being dockside outlet for pick up and drop off
- Elderly population need to be part of the community
- Noise policing needs to be considered

- Scale of development being issues of policing to mind
- Refuge and bins/rubbish
- Street drinking and rough sleep
- Housing numbers – 193 sites on Brook doesn't seem viable- need to have enough to revitalise – need to explore what type of units could be provided in order to not encourage blocky aesthetic
- Creating a green lung within the town that leads to the great lines to have natural permeability and attraction to Great Lines
- Aerial lift and gondola- creating a pedestrian bridge connecting the roof of the pentagon to the great lines, to allow mobility- as a USP
- Shares space along the Brooke- Raised green walkways – thinking about ways to soften traffic and allowing it to be defined as more of a pedestrian space
- Signposting for routes we want people to take
- Low emissions zone with time restrictions, accompanied with park and ride services, better transport and better uses-future proofing
- Electric vehicle charging infrastructure
- Mount Batton - Landmark building because of quality, not height
- How plans can support community cohesion, keeping attraction in Chatham rather than going to other areas – having a wide varied offering
- Pocket park in High Street, Trafalgar Square
- Need for active frontage as indication of a shopping complex
- Section 215- improvements of pedestrian walkway
- Need for more lighting in Chatham to increase night time economy