



Future Hoo Consultation Executive Summary

MEDWAY
medway.gov.uk/regeneration

Medway
COUNCIL
Serving You





Background

The results of the first phase of public consultation regarding the proposed £170 million investment by the government's Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) in environmental improvements and upgraded transport infrastructure on the Hoo Peninsula have now been published.

Medway Council leafleted 24,500 local households on and around the peninsula to ask for their views on the proposals with 552 valid responses received. The consultation ran from January to April 2021 and was supported by social and digital media campaign and online meetings with community groups.

The consultation focused on three key areas:

- highways improvements including a new relief road to access the peninsula as well as work to help traffic flow better on the A228 and A229;
- a new train station and reinstated passenger service on the Grain branch line; and
- environmental enhancements including opening up privately owned farmland to become publicly accessible parkland with widespread planting, habitat creation and access work as part of a Strategic Environmental Management Scheme (SEMS).

Highways feedback

£86 million of the government's £170m funding will be used for road improvements to both ease existing congestion and help accommodate any future housing on the Hoo Peninsula.

The work would involve upgrades to the existing road network, as well as the provision of new infrastructure including new slip roads, junctions and interchanges on the A228 and A289, a relief road via Woodfield Way – i.e. a second road access to the peninsula – and wider highway improvements.

The importance of improving road links was supported by 44 per cent of respondents – rising to 57 per cent in the over 65 age group – while 41 per cent disagreed and 15 per cent did not voice an opinion.

The most common benefits cited by residents for the overall package were to:

- reduce reliance on a single main road on and off the Hoo Peninsula (36 per cent);
- ensure the local area is well connected and accessible (30 per cent); and
- improve air quality by reducing bottlenecks on Four Elms Hill/Four Elms Roundabout (29 per cent).

The three greatest concerns were:

- loss of a rural feeling (81 per cent);
- increased traffic (78 per cent); and
- the environmental impact of improving the road links (76 per cent).

It was promising that a number of respondents put forward various alternative suggestions, which we are now considering ahead of the next consultation in autumn 2021.

Feedback on proposed new railway

With regards to the proposed £63m investment in the railway network, 37 per cent of respondents agreed that the reintroduction of passenger rail services was important for the area compared with 36 per cent disagreeing.

The most frequently cited benefit was to 'ensure the local area is well connected and accessible' (39 per cent), followed by 'reduce reliance on cars' (36 per cent) and 'improve local public transport' (36 per cent). The most common concern (57 per cent) was that better rail services might lead to 'increased traffic travelling to the station' followed by 'the environmental impact of re-introducing services' (51 per cent) and the 'cost of the services' (50 per cent).

Asked about the proposed new station, more than half of respondents (59 per cent) felt it was important it is landscaped to blend in with the local environment; 57 per cent said it was important there is car parking and drop off available on site; and 56 per cent wanted to see good connections to local bus services, although only 16 per cent said they would consider travelling to the station by bus.

SEMS feedback

The survey showed respondents were largely in agreement with the aims of the SEMS.

The environmental enhancements would see more than £14 million of the HIF funding being used to create a network of wildlife friendly habitats and community parklands covering 51ha (127 acres). These will support new meadows, hedges, marshes and woodlands and – where appropriate – will feature new footpaths and cycleways providing safe recreational opportunities.

For example, more than three quarters (77 per cent) said the enhancement and protection of green spaces on the Hoo Peninsula is important to them and to the local area. A similar percentage (76 per cent) agreed any new green spaces should help to protect existing ecologically sensitive sites and 73 per cent felt new green spaces should include a variety of habitats e.g. wildflower meadows, hedgerows, marshland, etc.

Thank you for your feedback

Alan Jarrett, Leader of Medway Council, said: “The consultation has given us a useful insight into the views of a section of the community on the Hoo Peninsula, and provided valuable feedback on the outline proposals that we presented.

“No-one is happy about the housing quota that has been imposed on us by the government. However, making use of the HIF funding that Medway Council has been awarded allows us to accommodate new homes in a way that is clearly thought through, takes care to look after the environment and provides excellent community facilities.”

“There is concern about the impact extra development would have on existing residents as well as the environment.”

“There is also an underlying understanding of the benefits that the £170m investment could bring. As we refine our plans further and add more detail, I am sure these benefits will become clearer and will help to allay any concerns.”

The HIF funding is an important opportunity for Hoo and for Medway. We will continue to engage with the community and work closely with partners.

A full copy of the 200-page consultation report can be found at:
medway.gov.uk/futurehoo

A second round of consultation on revised proposals will begin in the autumn 2021.



Method:

Details of process

The survey was sent to 24,500 households in and around the Hoo Peninsula..

A total of 557 surveys were submitted, with five questionnaires not completed. Therefore, overall a total of 552 surveys were included in this consultation.

Response and statistical reliability

A total of 552 surveys were completed (excluding five respondents who submitted the survey but did not give permission to take part). It should be that this survey is based on a sample, not the entire population. In consequence, all results are subject to sampling tolerances, which means that not all differences are statistically significant. When interpreting results, it is important to note that a sample of 552 carries a margin of error of +/- 4.2 per cent at the 95 per cent confidence level. This means that we can be 95 per cent certain that had every resident been surveyed, the overall results would be 4.2 per cent above or below the figures that were reported (e.g. a 50 per cent agreement rate could in reality lie within the range of 45.85 to 54.2 per cent).

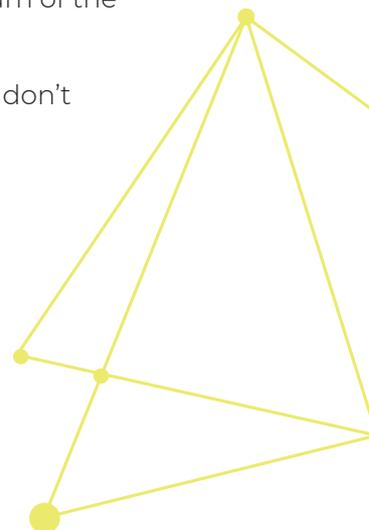
However, where base sizes are smaller, for example in sub group analysis i.e. by gender, etc, the confidence interval would be wider and so results would be treated with greater caution. For this analysis, a statistical difference of +/- 7 per cent was used for gender, +/- 10 per cent for age group and +/- 12 per cent for disability.

Notes on reporting

Where there is a statistically significant difference between groups, this has been noted in the report and is referred to as a 'significant difference'. However, a significant difference may not always mean that the difference is 'important'. It will also need to be considered in practical terms i.e. does the difference matter? For example, whilst there may be a significant difference, it may not matter because the response is still very positive for both groups.

Owing to the rounding of numbers, percentages displayed visually on graphs in the report may not always add up to 100 per cent and where categories are combined the total rounded value may be higher or lower than the sum of the individually rounded categories.

For the open-ended questions, quotes have been included (including don't know responses) for illustrative purposes only.





Headline results

Highways:

General

- Respondents were more likely to agree that improving road links was important for the area but disagree that it was important to them.
- Over a third of respondents were most likely to say that there were no benefits to improving road links on the Hoo Peninsula.
- Where benefits of improving road links on the Hoo Peninsula were selected, the most common were: reducing reliance on a single main road on and off the Hoo Peninsula, ensuring the local area is well connected and accessible and improving air quality by reducing bottlenecks on Four Elms Hill/Four Elms Roundabout
- The greatest concern of respondents regarding improving road links on the Hoo Peninsula is the 'loss of a rural feeling' to the area, with other considerations being concerns about increased traffic and the environmental impacts of improving links.
- Respondents raised, in their comments, considerations about their concerns about: over / further development on the Hoo Peninsula, the impact on the environment and with Phase 1 of the proposal specifically.

Highways phases

- There was a similar response for each phase of the highways section of the proposal, with respondents disagreeing that any of the proposed phases will improve access to the Hoo Peninsula, reduce congestion in the local area or improve access for other users. Respondents also disagreed that the proposed layout and design of each phase will minimise impacts on the local area or minimise disruptions during construction.

• Comments about each of the road phases showed:

- For Phase 1, the greatest concern of respondents were the negative issues arising from the Phase 1 design, with other considerations being the impact Phase 1 will have on pollution and on existing residents in general.
- Respondents felt that consideration should be given to the impact of Phase 2 on the environment, with other concerns being issues with Phase 2 designs specifically and the impact of different types of pollution.
- For respondents, the greatest concern about the Phase 3 proposals was the over / further development in the area, with other considerations being issues with the Phase 3 designs specifically and the view that Phase 3 was not required / not the answer to the current issues.
- Again, the greatest concern of respondents regarding Phase 4 was the over / further development of the Hoo Peninsula, with other considerations including negative comments about the station or railway and the environmental impact on the area.
- When asked for other considerations about the Phase 5 proposal the three most likely responses involved positive comments about the phase design, negative comments about the phase design and the impact of different types of pollution caused by the Phase 5 proposal.
- The greatest concern for respondents regarding the Phase 6 proposal was the increased traffic / congestion, other issues respondents felt should be considered were negative comments about the phase design and the impact of different types of pollution.

Railways:

General:

- Respondents were more likely to agree that the re-introduction of passenger rail services was important for the area, than agree it was important to them; with more than half of respondents unlikely/wouldn't use the passenger rail service to travel to both London stations or stations on the Kent network, such as Gravesend.
- The most frequently cited benefit of re-introducing passenger rail services was 'ensure the local area is well connected and accessible'; with the greatest concern being the 'increased traffic travelling to the station'.
- When asked about the re-introduction of a passenger rail service on the Hoo Peninsula, the greatest concern of respondents was that it was 'not necessary / a waste of money / would not be used'; with other considerations being issues with the train service (timetable, routes, destination) and the impact on the environment. Several respondents did provide alternative suggestions they felt would improve the proposal.



Station design:

- Regarding the design of the new railway station, respondents felt it was important for the appearance of the station to reflect the character, identity and heritage of the area and that the station is landscaped to blend in with the local environment. It was felt that 'farming/agricultural heritage' is the theme that best reflects the local character of the area.
- However, respondents felt it was not important that the station is provided with a public open space to create a 'station place' or plaza.
- Regarding access, respondents felt it was important that there is car parking and drop off available on site, secure cycle parking on site, good connections to local bus services, good links to local cycle paths and to local footpaths. When asked how they would travel to the station, the most frequently cited form of transport was 'car'.
- When asked for further considerations regarding the proposed station, the most frequently cited comment was 'do not build a new station / will not use a new station'; with parking issues and the environmental impact also raised by respondents.

Passing loops:

- The greatest concern of respondents regarding the construction of the proposed passing loops is 'the environmental impact of construction' on the area. Other considerations were the impact on existing residents and an objection to the railway in general.

Crossings:

- Two thirds of respondents 'don't use any of these crossings'; with only 4 per cent of respondents wanting to make any further comments about crossings.
- The suggested consideration most likely to be raised by respondents regarding changes to the crossings was the environmental impact on the area.



Managing effects of railway proposal:

- Over a third of respondents disagree that the proposals to manage construction works help to minimise the impact on local residents, the environment and on users of public rights of way.
- When asked for further considerations regarding managing the potential effects of the railway proposals, the most frequently cited comment was 'do not build a new station / will not use a new station'; other considerations were parking issues and the environmental impact.
- The main consideration raised by respondents about managing the potential effects of the railway proposals was concern about over / further development on the Hoo Peninsula, other issues raised were the impact on both existing residents and the environment.

SEMS (Environment):

General:

- Respondents agree that the enhancement and protection of green spaces on the Hoo Peninsula is important to them and to the local area and that any development should minimise the impact to the environment on the Hoo Peninsula.
- Respondents also agree that any new green spaces should help to protect existing ecologically sensitive sites on the Hoo Peninsula, include a variety of habitats, link with existing natural spaces and that there should be clear boundaries between green spaces using fencing and hedgerows to provide definition.
- When asked how proposed green spaces could enhance and protect the natural environment the most frequently cited comment was to 'protect the existing green spaces / no new green spaces', followed by concerns about over / further development and the environmental impact on the area.

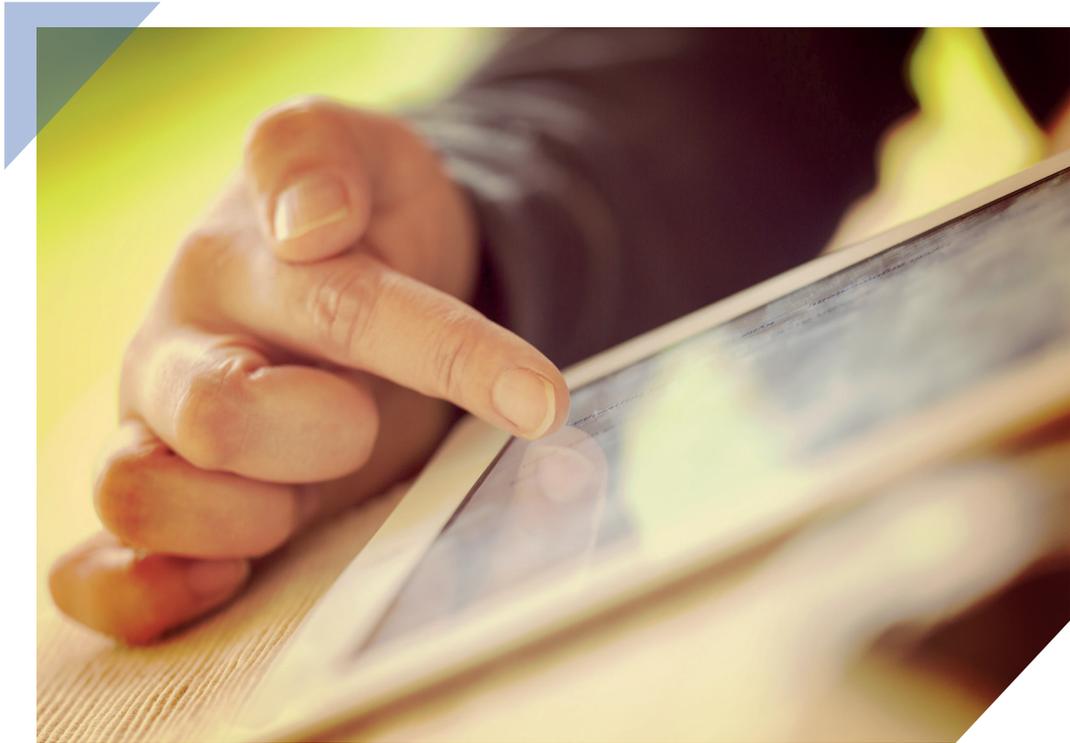
The development of green spaces:

- Respondents agree that there should be areas of green space close to Hoo which encourage wildlife, that people can freely enjoy without disturbing wildlife and that green spaces should be connected to help people and wildlife move safely around and allow them to meet others from the local community.
- It was also agreed that there should be planned paths to allow different types of users to enjoy the green space, information boards and signage and visitor facilities.
- Respondents felt that the protection of existing green spaces was of most importance, with other concerns including the over / further development of the Hoo Peninsula and the protection / enhancement of Deangate.
- Regarding the location and type of new access routes and paths that could be developed on the Hoo Peninsula, maintaining existing paths and the different path surfaces were mentioned most frequently. However, concerns about over / further development were also raised.
- Again, when asked about any further considerations about the green spaces on the Hoo Peninsula, respondents raised concerns about over / further development in the area alongside the protection of existing green spaces and the protection of Deangate.

The proposal overall:

- In general, the feedback to the proposal overall including the road, rail and environment proposals was concern about over / further development, the impact on existing residents and the environmental impact.





The full consultation results can be viewed at:
medway.gov.uk/futurehoo