

**REGENERATION, COMMUNITY AND CULTURE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

19 MAY 2009

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK:
ISSUES & OPTIONS REPORT**

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Summary

This report presents a full draft of the Issues and Options report that Cabinet will be asked to approve for public consultation purposes at its meeting on 2 June 2009.

Although only a discussion document, designed to elicit a wide range of views, its publication will be an important milestone in the preparation of the Core Strategy that will frame spatial planning in Medway to 2026.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The report does not propose any policy changes but the subsequent Core Strategy, which it will inform, will be part of the Policy Framework.
- 1.2 The report does not have any budget implications other than costs associated with its publication and subsequent public consultation. These costs can be met from the approved budget.
- 1.3 The report has no impact on any Local Area Agreement targets but the Core Strategy will be a key delivery mechanism when adopted. It will also closely complement the Sustainable Community Strategy that the Local Strategic Partnership is required to produce.

2. Background

- 2.1 The committee will recall that the Council is required to prepare and keep under review a Local Development Framework (LDF) for Medway. This will comprise a portfolio of documents, of which the main one is a Core Strategy. Full details are contained in the Local Development Scheme, which was approved by the Government Office for the South East during 2008.
- 2.2 A Cabinet LDF Advisory Group has been established to guide the preparation of the plan and this meets monthly. A continuous community engagement process began in December 2008 with a re-launch of the website (www.medway.gov.uk/ldf) and a letter to everyone on the LDF database. Early work concentrated on assembling an initial 'evidence base' and publishing a series of 'state of Medway' reports. These established a factual baseline for subsequent work and further studies to supplement the initial evidence base.
- 2.3 The stage has now been reached where it is appropriate to more formally seek the views of the local community and key stakeholders, by presenting them with the issues and options or choices that should be addressed in the Core Strategy.
- 2.4 The latest working draft of the Issues and Options report has been distributed with the agenda. Although complete it has been prepared to a challenging timetable. As such some further editing may occur before Cabinet considers it on 2 June 2009. However no further significant changes are anticipated.

3. Options

- 3.1 As already indicated, the Council must progress with the preparation of a local development framework and publication of the Issue & Options report is an integral part of this process. The report itself considers and evaluates alternative options as to how Medway could develop in the future. However it concludes that the current regeneration based strategy scores best for the period up to 2026 and that it can satisfactorily meet the requirements for house building as required by the South East Plan.

4. Advice and analysis

- 4.1 The Issues & Options report is intended to be self-explanatory and it contains information on how it evolved and was informed by topic workshops with key stakeholders and other activity. It covers a very broad range of issues, grouped under a number of topic headings.
- 4.2 When formally published it will be produced within the Limehouse publication and consultation system. This is an online system specifically designed to complement the production of local development frameworks. It will therefore contain photographs, maps

etc., and allow direct electronic responses to be made to the questions set out in the report, via the website.

- 4.3 Government guidance is clear that this is the stage in the process when all issues, including difficult ones, must be considered. For example where the South East Plan sets a requirement – housing numbers, gypsy and traveller pitches, waste and minerals provision – these need to be highlighted. However decisions on these matters are not required at this stage but when taken later, they will be informed by the views of the community and stakeholders.
- 4.4 The report highlights a very healthy overall housing land position with the total identified supply around 20% more than is required by the South East Plan. This does assume that all the already identified regeneration sites are completed by 2026, along with the bulk of the Lodge Hill, Chattenden new settlement. Further work is required to determine the deliverability and development profile for sites but it does mean that Medway is in the envious position of not having to consider the release of large amounts of fresh land for development.
- 4.5 A parallel report setting out a Sustainability Appraisal of the broad spatial options is also being produced and will be reported to Cabinet on 2 June 2009. A further sustainability appraisal and a Diversity Impact Assessment will accompany the Core Strategy in due course.

5. Risk Management

- 5.1 Preparation of the LDF is a statutory requirement and a failure to achieve satisfactory progress could, in extreme circumstances, lead to a range of consequences. However this assessment is confined to risks associated with the Issues & Options report.

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk
Failure to achieve approval to publish for public consultation	Would put back the agreed programme and could adversely affect CAA and relations with Government	Issues are based on sound evidence and the views of a wide range of stakeholders. Few 'new' issues have been identified

6. Consultation

- 6.1 It is intended that a comprehensive six-week formal consultation exercise will follow formal publication of the Issues & Options report. Substantial local publicity will be sought and the website used to publicise events etc. Copies of the document will be placed in all libraries and access points. It is also intended to hold a series of 'community workshops' based on the main topic headings in the report and officers will present to residents groups, amenity group organisations etc. to maximise awareness and formal responses.

6.2 Responses will then be fully assessed and a report published summarising them and setting out any responses necessary. This will be used to directly input to the drafting of the Core Strategy itself.

7. Financial and legal implications

7.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the report but every effort has been made to fully reflect Government and other guidance in order to limit the risk of any subsequent challenge.

7.2 Costs associated with publication of the document and the public consultation exercise can be met from the approved budget.

8. Recommendations

8.1 The Committee is recommended to review the broad content of the Issue and Options report and formulate any views it wishes the Cabinet to consider at its meeting on 2 June 2009.

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Background papers

These are listed in the accompanying Issues & Options report.