



Issues & Options Report

June 2009

(RCC Overview & Scrutiny Pre-Publication Draft)

Preface

This Issues and Options report is an important step in the preparation of a new Core Strategy for Medway. It is being published for consultation and we would like to hear the views of all with an interest in the future of Medway. You may be a resident, work here or visit the area to enjoy the wealth of assets we have. You may be a current or potential investor, a service provider or voluntary organisation. We would like to hear from you all.

Medway's Core Strategy will be the main part of something called the Local Development Framework. It is of very real importance because it will:

- Establish the pattern of development over the next 17 years
- Provide the basis for all key planning decisions
- Tackle a range of issues that are relevant to local people and with the overall aim of improving our quality of life
- Set out what needs to be done, by whom and how
- Allocate land for 'strategic' developments
- Set out a local environmental agenda
- Provide the basis for significant improvements in our economic performance.

Preparing this new plan for Medway is a considerable undertaking and we are grateful for the help we have already received from many organisations and individuals. We hope all who are interested will respond to this report and continue to contribute to the development of the final plan.

This Issues & Options Report sets out our initial view of what we need to address and the broad options for development in the area. It draws on an enormous amount of work (which will become the 'evidence base' for the plan) and the many constructive discussions we have already had with key stakeholders and others.

As you will see, we set out a series of questions that we would like your response to. I would particularly highlight the following following:

- Have we identified the right issues?
- Are there other options for meeting our development requirements?
- What else would you like to see in our Core Strategy when it is produced later in the year?

This is a great opportunity to think about our long-term future and I look forward to receiving your views.

Cllr. Jane Chitty

1. Introduction

Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 Medway Council is preparing a Local Development Framework or LDF. This will be the key spatial plan for Medway, guiding development over the period to 2026 and addressing issues relevant to the area.
- 1.2 This report explains the work we have done to date and the Issues and Options we have identified as a result of a detailed analysis of a huge range of evidence. It is being published for public consultation in order that:
 - Everyone interested in the future development of Medway is aware of this work and has an opportunity to influence what is done over the coming months
 - To test whether we have identified all the matters that should be addressed in what will be the LDF Core Strategy
 - To explain what broad options there are for the way in which Medway could develop and seek your views on which of those options should be reflected in the Core Strategy.

Structure of the report

- 1.3 Following this introduction, Chapter 2 explains the progress to date and the current position. It describes the approach taken to the gathering of evidence and its publication in a series of State of Medway and other reports. It briefly describes the studies that are currently underway and the outcome of a number of stakeholder workshops we have held to consider various topics.
- 1.4 Chapter 3 then explains the need for the Core Strategy to be consistent with national planning policy and to be in conformity with what is known as the Regional Spatial Strategy. It lists the most relevant planning policy statements and summarises the key policies in the South East Plan (the regional spatial strategy), which must be reflected in the Core Strategy.
- 1.5 Chapter 4 consists of a short summary of the findings of the work undertaken so far in the form of what is sometimes called a spatial portrait. This represents an analysis of the characteristics of the area and reveals the issues, which we think, need to be addressed in the Core Strategy.
- 1.6 Chapter 5 then identifies a number of options that have been formulated to test the most suitable pattern of development for the future. It identifies five alternatives for the future strategic direction of development in Medway.
- 1.7 Finally, Chapter 6 explains what will happen next in preparing the Core Strategy and it contains a timetable for subsequent stages of the process.
- 1.8 An accompanying questionnaire sets out a series of questions arising from the report and on which we would particularly welcome your views.

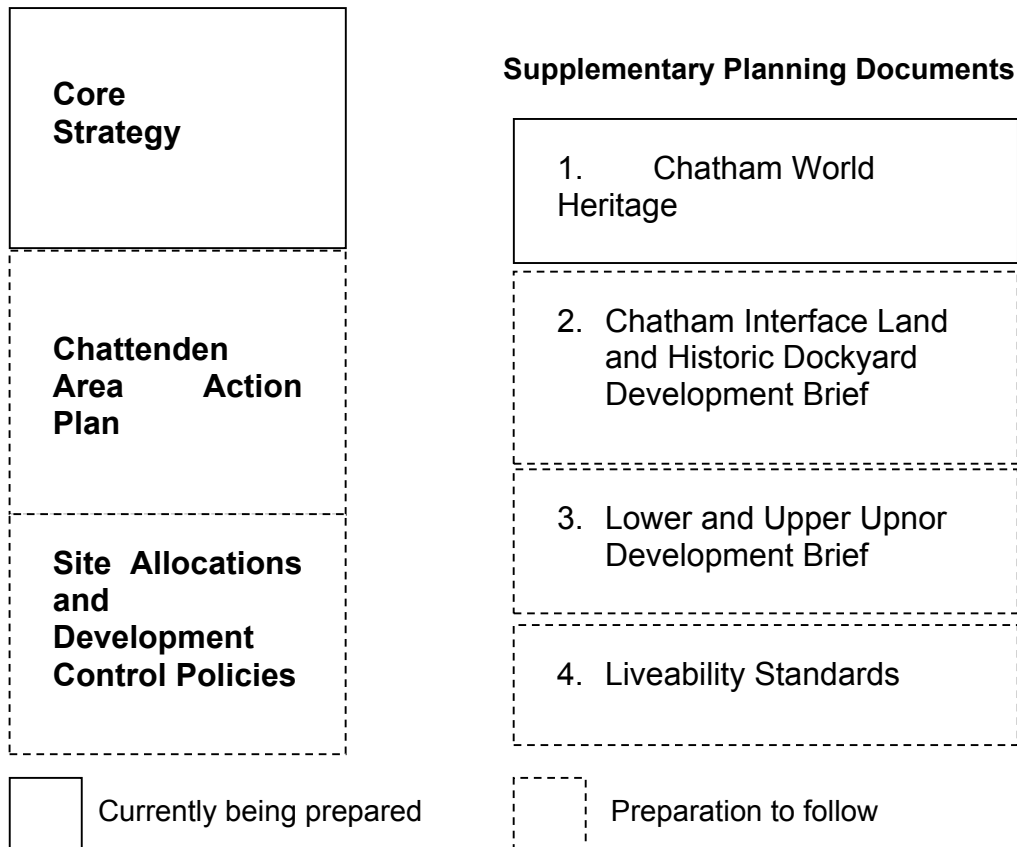
What is the Local Development Framework?

- 1.9 The Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 introduced a new system of development plans that replaced what were known as structure and local plans. Under the new system Regional Spatial Strategies replace regional guidance and structure plans and each local planning authority (or council) is required to prepare a Local Development Framework or LDF. This consists of a portfolio of documents rather than a single plan, enabling it to be kept up to date, as those parts of the plan requiring review or replacement can be changed without the necessity of reviewing the entire plan. The LDF consists of what are called development plan documents, which are subject to public examination by an independent inspector, and supplementary planning documents which are not subject to a formal examination.

DIAGRAM TO BE INSERTED

- 1.10 Medway's LDF will include a Core Strategy, which will be prepared first, followed by an Area Action Plan for the proposed new settlement at Lodge Hill, Chattenden. All other matters will then be covered in a third document. A number of supplementary planning documents will also be produced. Full details can be found in our Local Development Scheme (see www.medway.gov.uk/ldf).
- 1.11 The Core Strategy will contain a 'vision' and 'strategic objectives' for Medway up to 2026. It will provide a comprehensive, strategic framework for the area including proposals for mineral and waste. All other documents in the LDF must be in conformity with the Core Strategy.
- 1.12 The LDF will eventually replace the following local plans, which currently form part of Medway's development plan:
- Medway Local Plan 2003
 - Kent Minerals Local Plan: Brickearth 1986
 - Kent Minerals Local Plan: Construction Aggregates
 - Kent Minerals Local Plan: Chalk and Clay 1997
 - Kent Minerals Local Plan: Oil and Gas 1997
 - Kent Waste Local Plan 1998
- 1.13 In the summer of 2009 the South East Plan will supersede the Kent and Medway Structure Plan 2006, Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9) and the Thames Gateway Planning Framework (RPG9a) and the Core Strategy must be in conformity with it.

Figure 1. Components of the Medway Local Development Framework



Core Strategy Timetable

- 1.14 Preliminary work, initiating surveys and gathering information, began some time ago. Then, last December we began to formally engage with stakeholders and invited the wider public to participate. That has led to the publication of this report.
- 1.15 After the six-week formal consultation period we will carefully evaluate all the responses we receive and begin drafting the Core Strategy itself. It is intended that a final draft will be published for public consultation in January 2010. After any final amendments are made it will then be submitted for its formal examination by an independent inspector.

Statutory Guidance and Requirements

- 1.16 The Council is required to take account of an enormous amount of guidance issued by the Department for Communities and Local Government, other Government departments and a wide range of statutory agencies and advisory bodies. This is explained further in Chapter 3. However, in essence, Government guidance requires core strategies to include:
- An overall **vision** which sets out how the area should develop;
 - **Strategic objectives** for the area focussing on the key issues to be addressed;
 - A **delivery strategy** for achieving the objectives, which sets out how much development is to happen, where, when and by what means it will be delivered;

- Clear arrangements for ***managing and monitoring*** the delivery of the strategy.
- 1.17 The vision should be informed by an analysis of the characteristics of the area and the key issues facing it. The objectives form the link between the high level vision and the detailed strategy. It is considered essential that the core strategy makes clear spatial choices about where development should go in broad terms.
- 1.18 During the preparation of the Core Strategy, the guidance requires local planning authorities to seek out and evaluate reasonable development alternatives promoted by themselves and others. A Sustainability Appraisal should perform a key role in providing a sound evidence base for the plan and form an integrated part of the plan making process. Sustainability assessments should inform the evaluation of alternatives.
- 1.19 The core strategy should be aligned and co-ordinated with the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Council and the Local Strategic Partnership should take a strategic approach to community involvement.
- 1.20 The guidance requires community engagement in the production of the Core Strategy, to be appropriate, continuous throughout the process, transparent and accessible and planned. Medway's Statement of Community Involvement follows these principles.
- 1.21 Finally, local authorities must undertake timely and conclusive discussions with key stakeholders on what options for a core strategy are deliverable.
- 1.18 More details on this guidance and the process can be found using the following links:
- <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/pps12lsp.pdf>
 - http://www.planning-inspectorate.gov.uk/pins/appeals/local_dev/Soundness_of_DPD.htm
 - <http://www.pas.gov.uk/pas/core/page.do?pagelId=51391>

2. The Process to Date and where we are now

Our Approach to 'Regulation 25'

- 2.1 The Town and Country Planning (Local Development)(England) (Amendment) Regulations 2008 sets out, in regulation 25, what the pre-submission consultation requirements are in relation to the production of core strategies. It provides considerable flexibility with regard to the way in which local authorities go about preparing their core strategies up until they publish their draft final documents. A key underlying principle however is that local communities and key stakeholders should be continuously involved throughout the plan preparation process and the Council strongly supports this.
- 2.2 Until the amended regulations were issued in 2008, authorities were required to produce an 'Issues & Options' report, followed by a 'Preferred Option' report before compiling their final core strategy but this is no longer a requirement.
- 2.3 Medway Council has chosen to just produce this Issues & Options document prior to the publication of the Medway Draft Core Strategy at the beginning of 2010. However a number of measures have also been put in place to ensure that continuous engagement takes place and the drafting of the core strategy itself will be done in a very transparent way, allowing the views of all interested parties to be taken into account throughout the process.
- 2.4 In particular drafts of the Core Strategy will be published on our website. The basic sequence will be:
- Vision – what overall vision should we be seeking to achieve for Medway by 2026?
 - Strategic Objectives – what strategic objectives are needed to unlock that vision?
 - Policies – what policies naturally flow from the strategic objectives and what is the best approach to take, reflecting local needs?
 - Detailed drafting – at this stage the detailed text supporting the policies will be developed, along with details of how they are to be implemented and monitored for their effectiveness.
- 2.5 The Core Strategy is also being very closely aligned with the Sustainable Community Strategy, currently being produced by the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). The Core Strategy will reflect the key features of the community strategy and be one of the main delivery mechanisms for it.

State of Medway Report's (SOMs)

- 2.6 The Council has published a number of State of Medway reports, which are factual rather than policy documents. They are intended to set out the current situation/baseline from which we are moving forward. This information enables all stakeholders to have a common understanding of the context in which the local development framework is being prepared as well as enabling any inaccuracies or gaps in the information to be highlighted at an early stage of the core strategy's production.

2.7 The State of Medway reports cover the following topics:

- Built Environment
- Chattenden
- Climate Change, Renewables & Energy
- Demography & Social Trends
- Economy & Employment (including Employment Land)
- Education & Skills
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Minerals
- Natural Assets and Open Space
- Retail, Leisure & Culture
- Policy Framework
- Waste
- Water Supply

The reports can be viewed on the council's website at www.medway.gov.uk/ldf

Evidence Studies

2.8 Significant progress has been made with a range of key evidence studies, including the following:

- **Economic Development Strategy and Employment Land Study:** As well as providing a high level economic strategy this report by ERS Consultants completes the last stages of a major Employment Land Study. The earlier stages of this were undertaken in house and in conjunction with the University of Greenwich and Sue Miller Associates. It recommends a jobs target for the Core Strategy, which, in turn, allows future employment land requirements to be defined.
- **Green Grid Strategy:** This Strategy sets out how Medway's green spaces can be best linked together in order to make the best use of green assets.
- **Infrastructure Plan:** The Local Infrastructure Plan will be part of the evidence base informing the preparation of the Core Strategy. It will play an important role in delivering the vision set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy for Medway. The purpose of the plan is to provide an infrastructure capacity assessment for the Borough so that future needs can be identified and appropriate provision made as new development comes forward.
- **Landscape Character Assessment and Eco-Systems Services:** Recent Government guidance envisages local landscape designations such as ALLIs (Areas of Local Landscape Importance) only being retained in exceptional circumstances. There is also a need to reconsider countryside policies in the light of the forecast effects of climate change. Accordingly an in-house landscape character assessment has been undertaken and a potential national pilot project is being discussed with Natural England. This would feature a modified

approach to the use of a recently developed tool called Eco-Systems Services with the intention of making it best practice nationally and specifically tailored to LDF production. It would also be informed by a range of other local work, including that for Thames Gateway Parklands and Greening the Gateway studies.

- **Minerals Capacity Study:** This has been carried out in-house and has assessed the area's reserves of commercial minerals – essentially chalk, sand and gravels and London Clay. Its findings are set out in the State of Medway Minerals report.
- **Retail Capacity Study:** This technical report by Nathaniel Lichfield & Partners sets out forecasts for growth in retail expenditure and the consequential potential for new retail development in each of Medway's centres. This will inform the development of strategies for each of the centres.
- **Renewable Capacity Assessment:** A high level assessment of Medway's potential to support energy generation from renewable sources is being commissioned in order that we can best assess how we can reduce our carbon footprint and respond to climate change.
- **Rural Housing Needs Assessment:** This Assessment specifically looks at the housing needs of those living in Medway's villages. This will supplement an area wide Housing Needs Study undertaken by David Couttie Associates in 2005.
- **SATURN Transport Model:** This major computerised model has been developed with the endorsement of the Highways Agency. It will allow major development proposals and alternative transport 'packages' to be modelled and will inform the forthcoming third Local Transport Plan as well as the Local Development Framework.
- **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA):** This was commissioned jointly by Medway Renaissance and the Environment Agency some time ago and will be updated later this year when the Government releases new climate change assumptions. It features a full computer model allowing different flooding scenarios to be run. It also informs detailed Flood Risk Assessments that developers are required to submit on development sites susceptible to flooding.
- **Strategic Urban Flood Defence Strategy:** Funding is currently being sought from the new Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) for this and a tender brief has been agreed with the Environment Agency. It will allow a joined up approach to be adopted to flood defences and may provide the basis for forward funding bids, repayable via S.106 planning contributions.
- **Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA):** This study has been jointly commissioned with Gravesham Borough Council (also in liaison with Dartford Borough Council and Swale Borough Council) from a consultancy team made up from Opinion Research Services (ORS) and Three Dragons Consultancy. It provides an overview of the North Kent

sub-regional housing market, and also provides a basis for assessing the viability/deliverability of housing schemes.

- **Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SLAA):** This major piece of work is being largely undertaken in-house. A 'call for sites' was issued in December and a bespoke database has been developed. It will be particularly valuable in identifying developer intentions, including build programmes. It will however take a number of months to complete. It will also need to be regularly updated over time.
- **Waste Capacity Study:** This has been carried out in-house and has assessed the area's capacity in relation to: municipal solid waste, commercial & industrial, construction & demolition, hazardous and agricultural waste. Its findings are set out in the State of Medway Waste report.

'Call for Sites' (Strategic Land Availability Assessment)

- 2.9 In December 2008 we issued a 'Call for Sites', and wrote to inform everyone on our LDF Database. Anyone wishing to promote any site of 5 or more dwellings, or 0.15 hectares or greater in size which could accommodate housing, employment, retail, leisure or tourism uses was asked to fill in a Strategic Land Availability Assessment pro forma and return it with a map of the site. A total of 174 responses were received.

Stakeholder workshops & engagement with key agencies

- 2.10 LDF Stakeholder Workshops were held in March 2009. The workshops covered the following topics:

- Community & Infrastructure Needs
- Economy & Skills
- Education
- Housing
- Leisure, Culture & Tourism
- Retail & Town Centres
- Sustainability
- Transport

Notes from these workshops can be found on the website at www.medway.gov.uk/ldf.

- 2.11 Meetings to identify issues that ought to be addressed in the Core Strategy have taken place with a number of key stakeholders such as:

- English Heritage
- Environment Agency
- Highways Agency
- Homes & Communities Agency
- Natural England
- Regional Agency (formerly SEEDA / SEERA)
- Southern Water

2.12 The results of the discussions held during the Stakeholder Workshops and the meeting referred to above are, where appropriate, reflected within the content of this document.

3. Conformity with National and Regional Policies

Introduction

- 3.1 The core strategy must be consistent with national planning policy and in conformity with the regional spatial strategy – the South East Plan. It should not reiterate those policies nor reformulate them. Instead the Core Strategy should focus on devising a delivery strategy to deal with particular issues that have been identified as being of local importance.
- 3.2 This chapter therefore summarises the main requirements we have to comply with, concentrating on regional policy. It is important to emphasise that these requirements are ‘givens’ and must be reflected in the Core Strategy if it is to be found sound after its independent examination.

National Policy

- 3.3 National planning policy is set out in a series of Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs) and Planning Policy Statements (PPSs). PPSs are gradually replacing PPGs. There are 25 PPSs and PPGs in all and those relevant to the preparation of Medway’s Core Strategy are summarised in the State of Medway Report: Policy Framework. The most significant documents are:
- PPS1: Delivering Sustainable Development
 - Supplement to PPS1: Planning and Climate Change
 - PPS3: Housing
 - PPS4: Planning for Sustainable Economic Development (Draft)
 - PPS6: Planning for Town Centres
 - PPS7: Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
 - PPS9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
 - PPS10: Planning for Sustainable Waste Management
 - PPG17: Planning for Open Space, Sport and Recreation
 - PPS22: Renewable Energy
 - PPS25: Development and Flood Risk
 - MS1: Planning and Minerals.

South East Plan

- 3.4 The Draft South East Plan was submitted in March 2006 and, following an Examination in Public in March 2007, the Government published its response to the Panel’s report in July 2008. The amended Plan sets out a vision for the region through to 2026. Its adoption is expected shortly and without further significant amendments. The policies in the Plan are divided into two sections. Section B includes core regional policies, which apply the strategy to the whole region, whilst section C contains strategies for 10 sub-regions, including Kent Thames Gateway, of which Medway is a major part.
- 3.5 The Policy Framework State of Medway report contains a summary of all the policies that are relevant to the preparation of Medway’s Core Strategy. The key policies are summarised below.

- 3.6 One of the spatial principles upon which the plan is based is to focus new development on a network of regional hubs. The ‘Medway Towns’ are designated as one of those hubs. It is identified as a regeneration opportunity with longer term potential to provide higher order functions and fulfil the role of a regional transport hub.
- 3.7 Policy TC1 identifies a strategic network of town centres comprising three categories: centres for significant change, primary regional centres and secondary regional centres. Chatham is one of the 12 centres for significant change. Town centres in this category will be the focus for significant growth and it states that major retail development and other large-scale town centre uses should be located within them.
- 3.8 Policy NRM14 sets out indicative sub-regional targets for Kent and Medway for land-based renewable energy. These are 111 megawatts by 2010 and 154 megawatts by 2016. Local authorities are required to collaborate and engage with communities, the renewable energy industry and other stakeholders on a sub-regional basis to assist in the achievement of the targets through:
- Undertaking more detailed assessments of local potential
 - Encouraging small scale community based schemes
 - Encouraging development of local supply chains, especially for biomass
 - Raising awareness, ownership and understanding of renewable energy.
- 3.9 The strategy seeks to reduce the amount of waste produced and to re-use, recycle and recover as much waste as possible before final disposal. As a consequence, Kent and Medway together are required to provide for the management of the following quantities of waste between 2006 and 2026:
- 2.46 million tonnes (12.1%) of London’s exported waste; and
 - 4.929 million tonnes of municipal solid waste and 9.549 million tonnes of commercial and industrial waste per year.
- However there is no apportionment between Kent and Medway and this will need to be agreed with Kent County Council.
- 3.10 The strategy aims to meet the need for construction aggregates from a significant increase in supplies of secondary and recycled materials, a reduced contribution from primary land won resources and an increase in imports of marine-dredged materials. Consequently, Medway is required to make provision for 0.2 million tonnes per annum, of recycled and secondary aggregates by 2016. Kent and Medway together are required to maintain a land bank, of at least seven years, for 2.53 million tonnes per annum of land won sand and gravel through the plan period.
- 3.11 A consultation document, a Partial Review of RPG9 and the Draft South East Plan: Review of Sub-Regional Allocation of Land Won Aggregates, May 2008 has now been published. This proposes a reduction in the overall requirement for land won sand and gravel for the region. It contains three options for apportioning this between Kent and Medway as follows:

Demand Option:	Kent 1.90 mtpa	Medway 0.29 mtpa
Environmental Option:	Kent 1.48 mtpa	Medway 0.16 mtpa
Demand and Resources Option:	Kent 1.68 mtpa	Medway 0.19 mtpa

Note: mtpa = million tonnes per annum

- 3.12 Chapter 19 deals with the Kent Thames Gateway sub-region. This was first recognised as a priority area for regeneration in the 1980's and RPG9 and RPGa have subsequently confirmed the area as a national and regional priority for regeneration and growth. From the outset the fundamental theme has been regeneration of large previously developed sites, improvement of poor urban environments and stimulus to the economy. The sub-region comprises the major urban areas of Dartford, Gravesham, Medway and Swale north of the A2/M2.
- 3.13 Comprehensive regeneration of the area is clearly intended rather than just housing growth, although this is an important component.
- 3.14 In Medway, the strategy is to concentrate new housing, employment and services within the urban area at the riverside sites and at Ministry of Defence land at Chattenden (also known as Lodge Hill). Development is to be particularly concentrated near the transport hub of Chatham. Between 2006 and 2026 Medway is required to make provision for the completion of 16,300 dwellings, of which 15,700 will be within the Thames Gateway (that is, north of the M2) and 600 within that part of the "Rest of Kent" which lies within Medway (effectively the parishes of Cuxton and Halling).
- 3.15 Under Policy KTG1, priority is to be given to the use of previously developed land and the benefit of new services and employment will be made available to existing communities and carefully integrated with them. The Green Belt and the North Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) will be protected from development. Coalescence with adjoining settlements to the south, east and west of the Medway urban area and to the west of Sittingbourne is to be avoided.
- 3.16 Within the Thames Gateway, policy KTG4 applies an indicative target of 30% of all new dwellings for affordable housing. However, the target for individual districts is to be determined locally, taking into account strategic housing market assessments, available funding and the circumstances of major development sites. Policy H3 states that, when setting targets, regard should be had to the overall regional target of 25% of all new housing being socially rented accommodation and 10% of other forms of affordable housing. However, indicative targets for sub-regions should take precedence over the regional target.
- 3.17 Policy KTG2 states that the economy will be dynamic and widely based; provision will be made for the expansion of the existing economic functions and for the introduction of new office, manufacturing and services on a large scale, with an emphasis on higher value activity including knowledge industries and research and development.
- 3.18 The role of Medway, as a main economic location, will be promoted. Major sites identified in Medway will be developed to their full potential, building on the existing high technology, aerospace and automotive sectors and attracting new high value activity, or accommodating the expansion of transport, energy, distribution and manufacturing.
- 3.19 Kent Thames Gateway has a relatively high proportion of jobs in manufacturing and distribution and the presence of ports and power generation. These are essential functions for the region, London and the nation and policy KTG2 seeks to ensure that provision is made for their future

capacity and viable operation as well as new types of jobs to diversify the economy.

- 3.20 Priority should be given to the completion of major existing employment sites and new employment locations should be provided in conjunction with new housing land. Chatham Maritime and land adjacent to Rochester Airfield are identified for technology and knowledge based development.
- 3.21 Town centres and inner urban areas will be given greater emphasis as locations for regeneration and employment growth in services and cultural activity. Medway is identified as a major location for the expansion of higher and further education.
- 3.22 Chatham has a key role as a city of learning and culture and will be further developed as a major town centre, providing a concentration of mixed retail, leisure and service uses. Medway will further develop the functions of a city centre within Thames Gateway, providing higher education, retail and other services. Provision will be made for local and district facilities in conjunction with the development of major new neighbourhoods.
- 3.23 The Policy Framework State of Medway report contains summaries of other regional, sub-regional and local planning documents which are all relevant to the planning of Medway and which need to be taken into account in the preparation of the core strategy.

4. Issues and Choices

Introduction

- 4.1 As indicated in the previous chapters, a great deal of work has been undertaken to identify the issues and choices that should be considered in the Core Strategy. More is continuing but the stage has been reached where the baseline analysis allows conclusions to be drawn with confidence and views sought on them.
- 4.2 What follows is a short summary of the main findings from this work. In effect it is what is sometimes termed a 'Spatial Portrait'. In turn this allows key issues to be identified.
- 4.3 The 'portrait' has been arranged under a number of topic headings. Under each of these, sections consider:
- The main findings
 - The issues arising from those findings and any headline options for addressing them
 - Key questions on which we would particularly welcome your views. The questions are repeated in the response form.

Sub-Regional Context

Main Findings

- 4.4 Medway is a distinctive and relatively self-contained area with few significant 'cross border' issues with adjoining areas. Although there are important inter-urban movements there are no major cross border developments underway or planned at present. However it is also an integral part of the Thames Gateway, a national growth area extending from east London along both sides of the Thames Estuary as far as Southend and the Isle of Sheppey. With a population of around 252,000 people Medway contains one of the largest urban conurbations in the South East and it has an extensive rural area and natural assets of considerable national and international significance.
- 4.5 Historically part of Kent, there are comparatively strong employment and other ties with Maidstone, the Medway Gap settlements, Gravesend and Sittingbourne but Medway's railway stations, collectively, send more commuters to London than anywhere else in Kent. The housing market has been defined as a local one¹ but there is a pattern of gradual migration from south and east London along the north Kent coast and so through Medway towards the east.
- 4.6 In a regional, national and international context Medway is important for many reasons, including the following:
- It generates more than 10% of the country's energy needs, the largest contribution of anywhere in the greater south east

¹ Housing Market Assessment, DTZ 2005

- It has the largest natural gas importation and storage point in the country and one of the largest in the world
- It has the fifth largest container port in the country (Thamesport)
- The Medway and Thames Marshes are a crucial part of the Natura 2000 network, making them internationally significant wetlands
- Medway has one of the largest surviving areas of high grade agricultural land in the region with the Hoo Peninsula and north and east Rainham being of particular significance
- Wharves at Thamesport and Cliffe are major importation points for aggregates used in construction and civil engineering across the greater South East
- The M2 traverses the area and is one of two corridors connecting the UK to mainland Europe. The Channel Tunnel Rail Route (High Speed 1) also traverses the area and the Medway Viaduct, between Strood and Cuxton is a defining image for this route
- Medway has no fewer than four universities, forming a cluster that is unique outside London
- The former Chatham naval dockyard and its associated defences is a candidate World Heritage Site
- Due to its size it is one of only a few locations in the region that can offer a full range of city scale services and its economy reflects this scale.

4.7 Since 1995 the development of Medway has been heavily influenced by its position within the Thames Gateway. On the one hand this has set targets for new housing well above purely local needs but it has also placed an overriding emphasis on the regeneration of the main urban area and redevelopment along the waterfront and in and around the town centres in particular. More recently various pieces of work have looked at the 'greening' of the Gateway and its promotion as the UK's first 'eco region'. This, in turn, has highlighted the potential for Medway to lead in this work and Sir Terry Farrell, the Council's design champion, has produced exciting visions for the Hoo Peninsula and the urban conurbation.

4.8 The South East Plan identifies Medway as a 'regional hub' and Chatham as one of twelve centres for 'significant change in the region.'

Issues

4.9 The still awaited Government decision on a replacement coal fired power station at Kingsnorth and an associated Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) competition has highlighted Medway's strategic role in meeting the nation's energy requirements. Further gas generation has also been mooted but, on the other hand, BP has failed to implement a planning consent for a modest wind farm at its storage facility at Grain. The Government is responsible for consenting major generation schemes but the Core Strategy could seek to either limit or promote additional generating capacity given the already very significant contribution that the area makes.

4.10 Ever larger ships are causing consolidation in the ports industry, with fewer, larger facilities in deep-water locations. The London Gateway at Shellhaven in Essex will massively increase capacity in the Greater Thames. Given this trend it is likely that Thamesport will need to expand its berthing capacity, at least, if it is to stay competitive.

- 4.11 Aggregate importation wharves at Thamesport and Cliffe are not currently explicitly safeguarded and they adjoin sensitive nature conservation areas. Yet there will be a need to import increasing quantities of aggregates into the region as land won reserves reduce. If insufficient capacity is not retained it could have serious implications for London and the greater South East region.
- 4.12 The recently published Thames Estuary 2100 Consultation Plan highlights the need for land to be set aside for habitat creation to offset the effects of 'coastal squeeze' along the Thames Estuary. This is a long-term (100 year) requirement but three sites in Medway (along with four in Essex) have already been identified as suitable. An important issue is therefore whether the Core Strategy addresses this issue now or leaves it for a future review.
- 4.13 For some years Government policy has given only very limited protection to high quality agricultural land, yet recent global volatility in food prices has highlighted the importance of domestic production in meeting our needs. With some of the most productive land in the region, it is right to consider whether greater local protection should be given to it.
- 4.14 The development and expansion of the universities in Medway over the last ten years has been one of the most important local changes and a unique higher education 'cluster' has been created. There is scope for further growth and the University for the Creative Arts is considering relocation to a new campus. Given the scale of what has already been created, an opportunity may exist to further develop the cluster as one of regional or even national significance.
- 4.15 The promotion of the Thames Gateway as the UK's first 'eco-region' provides opportunities to more positively promote sustainability and demonstrate how we might best adapt to climate change. To do so would imply that higher standards should be applied to development and the management of land than are currently required through national policy. In some cases it could increase costs in the shorter term and would be challenging to the development industry at a time when the economy is weak. Yet the opportunity is there if sufficient support can be enlisted from both the local community and relevant agencies.

Questions

- Should the Core Strategy seek to influence how Government energy policy is applied within Medway?
- Should further generating capacity be tied to low carbon or carbon neutral solutions?
- Should the expansion of Thamesport be actively promoted given the impending development of the London Gateway project?
- Should aggregate importation terminals at Thamesport and Cliffe be safeguarded for the longer term?
- Should the Core Strategy make explicit provision now for large areas of habitat creation to offset losses caused by coastal squeeze in the Thames Estuary?
- If so, on what scale should this be?
- Should the Core Strategy give formal protection to larger tracts of high quality agricultural land?

- Should Medway's higher education capacity be further promoted with the intention of creating a cluster of regional or national significance?
- Should a site for a new campus for the University for the Creative Arts be formally reserved? If so, where should this be?
- Should Medway be actively promoted as an 'eco quarter' within the Thames Gateway?
- If so, how can this be best achieved?

Population

Main findings

- 4.16 An analysis of population trends, taking account of forecast changes to 2026, indicates the following:
- *Current population:* Medway has a younger population profile than England and the South East. A higher proportion of Medway residents are aged under 19 than regionally and nationally. The average age of the population of Medway is 37.4 years, compared with 39.1 years for England and 38.1 years for the South East.
 - *Life expectancy:* The latest figures show that life expectancy for males in Medway is 76.4 years compared to 76.9 years nationally. Female life expectancy in Medway is 80.4 years compared to 81.1 years nationally. Since 1996 life expectancy has been increasing. Life expectancy is lower in Medway than the South East and England but the gap is narrowing.
 - *Population & growth:* In 2007 the Medway population reached 252,200 increasing by 2,500 since 2001. The population is naturally growing – that is births have exceeded deaths every year since 2001. However significant outward migration has historically offset this growth – with the number of people leaving Medway exceeding those coming in.
 - Over the past five years natural growth was 5,200 but outward migration was 4,000. There is some evidence to suggest that the level of out migration is levelling off and, with new housing requirements set above the level needed to meet purely local requirements, a switch to net in migration can be expected over the coming years.
 - *Future population growth:* Medway's population is likely to reach 264,300 by 2026. This forecast takes into account the planned level of housing referred to above.
 - People over retirement age show the largest projected growth up to 2026, increasing by 10,000 over the next ten years.
 - *Average household size:* The average number of persons per household is decreasing in Medway, as is the case across the rest of Kent. In 2001 the average household size was 2.5 persons, by 2026 this is expected to drop to 2.1. This mirrors a long established national trend but one that will have to bottom out at some stage.
- 4.17 Although significant changes in the size and make up of Medway's population can be expected this needs to be kept in context. We are expected to

continue to have a generally younger age profile than many other parts of the South East. The natural aging of the population will be offset if, as expected, more people move into the area than leave.

Issues

- 4.18 Natural population growth, people living longer and reduced household size are all issues that will put pressure on Medway's existing housing stock by challenging its ability to adapt to the changing needs of existing households and meeting the needs of new ones.
- 4.19 Future development needs to take these changes into account if we are to ensure that an adequate supply of accommodation is available in terms of quantity, type and location to suit the needs of Medway's current and future population.
- 4.20 With an ageing population those providing services to the elderly particularly need to plan for extra capacity, for example supported accommodation and extra care facilities. Higher quality solutions to the needs of increasing numbers of smaller households are also needed.

Questions

- Do you agree with the forecasts for population change as described?
- Are there any other demographic factors that should be taken into account?

Housing

Main findings

New housing requirement

- 4.21 The South East Plan has set a requirement for Medway to make provision for an additional 16,300 dwellings between 2006 and 2026. It identifies the main locations for this development to be within the Medway urban area at riverside sites and on Ministry of Defence land at Chattenden (Lodge Hill). These areas have more than sufficient capacity to meet the requirement – at least 20% more, as illustrated in the table below.

Units completed 2006 to 2008	1,352
Units planned 2009 to 2026	8,424
Regeneration sites	
Star Hill to Sun Pier	350
Strood Riverside	576
Temple Waterfront	600
Gillingham Town Centre	200
Chatham Centre and Waterfront	1,800
Chattenden	4,500
Chatham Maritime - Interface Land	500
Brompton RSME (Kitchener Barracks)	400
The Upnors (RSME)	100

Strood Town Centre	353
Planned development 2009 to 2026	17,803
Total development 2006 to 2026	19,155

- 4.22 This situation contrasts with other designated growth areas and can be attributed to:
- Medway being part of the Thames Gateway, with regeneration proposals being continuously refined since 1995
 - Allocated sites in the Medway Local Plan 2003 still coming forward
 - Sites being identified in a number of development briefs and masterplans, many of which are being promoted and brought forward by Medway Renaissance, the Council's Thames Gateway delivery vehicle
 - Due to the size and nature of the main urban area, large numbers of what are termed 'windfall' sites receiving planning permission
 - The large contribution expected from the new settlement at Lodge Hill, Chattenden and where the release of the necessary land has been anticipated for a number of years.
- 4.23 However some sites have significant constraints, which makes them both complex and expensive to bring forward and this has been exacerbated by recent poor economic conditions. As a result the main issue is one of delivery rather than a need to identify further sites and this was recognised by the Panel that examined the South East Plan.
- 4.24 Successive Structure Plan housing requirements have been set above previous trends in order to reduce out migration from Medway. However, housing completions have consistently failed to reach those targets over many years. The figures for 2001 to 2007 illustrate this pattern with only one exception in 2003/4.
- 4.25 On the other hand, as regeneration efforts bear fruit, record numbers of units have planning permission and the area's potential is being increasingly recognised by the development industry and the investment market.
- 4.26 Along with the increased pace of development and an increased number of flatted developments, have come concerns about cramped internal living spaces and mediocre standards of amenity. The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) has highlighted these as national problems and so they are not unique to Medway but improving design quality in new developments does need to be addressed.
- 4.27 Related challenges are the need to create inclusive mixed communities with a mix of housing types and tenures and, on larger developments, a mix of non-residential uses to improve local access to services and increase vitality.

Other Housing Requirements

- 4.28 In addition to the general housing requirement described above, the Core Strategy must also provide for the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. A study into the needs of these groups has been completed but a partial review of the South East Plan dealing with the issue is still some way from being adopted.

- 4.29 Alternative options in the partial review propose a requirement for Medway of between 14 and 30 new pitches for Gypsies and Travellers, compared to the needs study of between 14. However this is still at a lower level than many other parts of Kent, including adjoining boroughs. The main requirement is for semi-settled families and extended family groups, as opposed to short stay transit sites.
- 4.30 The identified need for travelling showpeople is much smaller – 3 pitches. There is a long established site for this group at Station Road in Strood but the Showmans Guild of Great Britain has indicated interest in relocating to another site.
- 4.31 Housing developments are currently required to provide 25% affordable homes on sites of 25 or more dwellings. The policy basis for this is set out in the Medway Local Plan 2003. A number of authorities are seeking 40% or more and on smaller sites. However Medway has been one of the most successful areas in the country actually delivering completions. The proportion sought on any given site can seriously affect the overall viability of a scheme and many sites have halted for this reason in other areas. Establishing future percentage contributions and thresholds is therefore a matter for careful judgement.
- 4.32 The definition of a 'house' is a unit of self-contained accommodation but by no means all households live in such dwellings. These include students, people sharing accommodation, hostels catering for the needs of various groups and supported accommodation for people with specific needs such as those with disabilities and the frail elderly.
- 4.33 It is important that provision is made for all types of accommodation in order that the needs of the whole population are met. However such provision would be in addition to that identified above. The universities have a considerable stock of residential accommodation for their students but there is an urgent need for units offering extra care for elderly groups with long term health issues.

Existing housing

- 4.34 Medway's existing housing stock has a number of distinct characteristics that pose a number of issues. In summary these are:
- A very high proportion of owner-occupied properties and, as a consequence, fewer rented properties – both private and local authority/housing association – than comparable areas. The number of social rented properties is only 70% of the national average although the number of completions has increased in recent years. As a consequence there is less choice within the Medway housing market than in other areas
 - Medway has a very high proportion of terraced properties but a smaller proportion of flats and apartments than the national and regional averages. It also has a very small proportion of detached properties, substantially less than the national average and only half the regional average. This implies that single person household needs are not necessarily being adequately met and that there is a shortage of 'executive style' accommodation

- In terms of age, the largest proportion of the housing stock dates from the 1945 – 1964 period but there are substantial pockets of pre-1919 housing in Gillingham, Chatham and Strood. In some cases the accommodation is cramped and it can be difficult to bring them up to modern standards of thermal efficiency. Medway's Stock Condition Survey in 2007 highlighted that 12,343 properties had a low energy rating, with their occupants being more vulnerable to fuel poverty. Excess cold is the main reason for homes not being likely to meet the decent homes standard by 2010
- There are fewer long term empty properties than in most comparable areas but there are pockets of empty or under-used upper floors within the town centres
- Medway house prices doubled between 1999 and 2007 but still remained amongst the lowest in the region. However with prices outstripping wages, affordability for locally employed people worsened disproportionately. This underlines the importance of creating and attracting higher value jobs so that local residents can compete effectively in the housing market
- Medway has a relatively small Black and Minority Ethnic population but it suffers higher levels of over-crowding than the population as a whole.

Issues

- 4.35 There is no obvious need to identify additional sites beyond the existing urban boundaries and at Lodge Hill, Chattenden but this is provided that already identified sites can be brought forward in a timely manner. Particularly on sites along the urban waterfront where development costs are exceptional and continued support for Medway Renaissance will be crucial. This will, in turn, require further public funding.
- 4.36 A re-balancing of the strategy, away from urban regeneration as the priority, would simplify delivery but imperil a much needed urban renaissance and be at odds with the longstanding objectives for the Thames Gateway.
- 4.37 As with other areas, there is a need to improve design standards and to create distinctive neighbourhoods that will meet the needs of future generations. The difficulty of achieving this has been compounded by the economic downturn but there are real dangers of creating long-term problems by relaxing standards in responding to short-term difficulties.
- 4.38 Meeting the needs of Gypsy and Traveller groups is always contentious, as their needs do not fit readily within overall housing requirements. There is still uncertainty as to the number of new pitches that will need to be provided but provision must be made in order to conform with the South East Plan.
- 4.39 Medway has a long established Showman's site but some interest has been expressed in relocating it. It would need to be safeguarded until such time as an alternative site was secured.
- 4.40 It will be important to ensure that the needs of non self-contained households are met, recognising that these are over and beyond the housing requirement in the South East Plan. However fully quantifying need is difficult, and effective arrangements with all the relevant agencies and service providers is critical.

- 4.41 Unlike other areas the Medway housing market has not suffered as a result of too many flats outstripping demand but there is strong evidence to suggest that more provision needs to be made for 'executive style' housing.
- 4.42 Certain neighbourhoods have pockets of poor quality owner-occupied older housing that cannot be easily brought up to modern standards. Yet even selective redevelopment could be extremely expensive and disruptive to communities. Identifying effective strategies for dealing with this issue therefore remains a challenge if the stock is to be made fit for purpose in the future.

Questions

- Should the emphasis on urban regeneration be retained in housing provision, given the difficulties of bringing sites forward in an economic downturn?
- Should minimum internal space standards be introduced and an explicit requirement for higher quality design established?
- What types and location of sites should be specified to meet the needs of the gypsy and traveller communities – assuming a requirement of at least 14 pitches?
- What quantity and types of accommodation are likely to be needed to meet the needs of non self-contained households, including those with special needs?
- Other than overcrowding, are there any specific housing needs related to the Black and Minority Ethnic communities that should be addressed in the Core Strategy?
- Should specific provision be made for 'executive style' housing?
- How should the problem of bringing older owner-occupied properties up to modern standards be addressed? Should selective redevelopment be considered as an option?

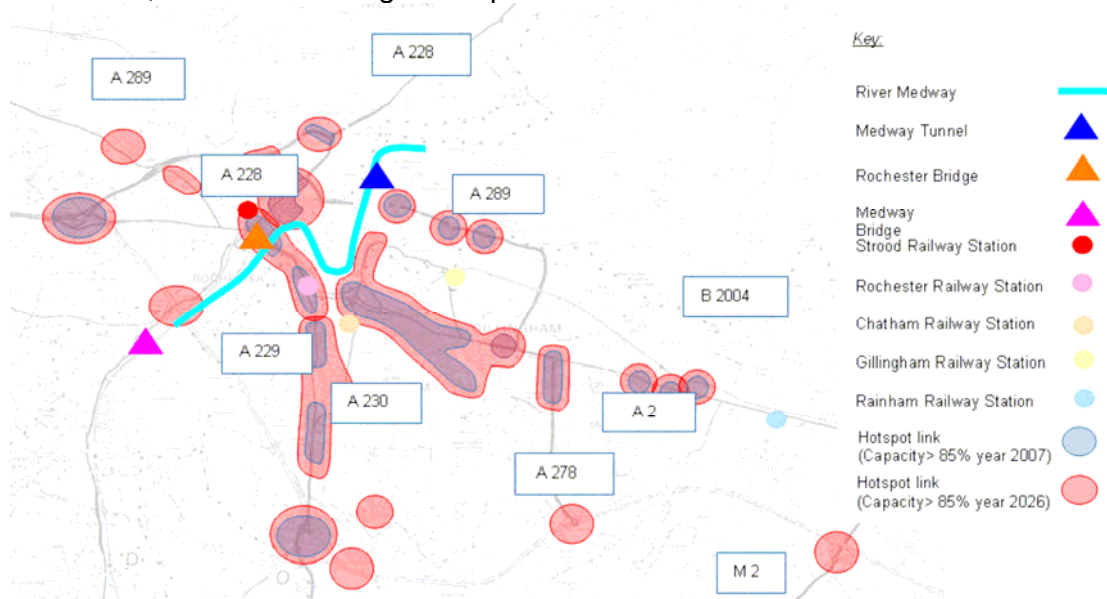
Transport

Main Findings

- 4.43 Existing problems identified can be summarised as follows:
- High levels of car use for the journey to work – leading to peak time road congestion and uncertain journey times for both cars and buses
 - Low levels of bus use, including for the journey to work – making network and service improvements more difficult
 - Associated bus image problems – perceived as expensive, unreliable and restricted with poor ticketing arrangements and physical infrastructure
 - Constraints posed by the limited number of crossings of the River Medway – particularly impacting on pedestrians, cyclists and public transport
 - Significant numbers of journeys between 10 and 20 kilometres, especially to and from work – implying a dispersed travel pattern and a need for better inter urban bus services to a wider variety of destinations
 - High levels of rail commuting to London – leading to heavy demand for access to rail stations and pressure on parking capacity

- Poor quality rail station environments – resulting in poor customer experiences and a limited ability to benefit from the introduction of new services such as High Speed 1
- Mainline and Grain Freight Line capacity limitations – resulting in restricted ability to move freight by rail
- Significant levels of both long and short term parking in town centres – encouraging car trips and acting as a disincentive to use other modes
- Parking charges not acting as a disincentive to long stay parkers – with resulting high numbers of journeys to work in town centres being by car
- Traffic congestion around Medway City Estate, on the A2 and the A229
- Congestion on the M2 at Junction 3 (Chatham) – leading to delays and congestion on the strategic road network
- Relatively high levels of elderly and young families with lower levels of car ownership – resulting in issues around social exclusion
- Poor air quality at specific congestion points – with resulting adverse impacts on human health
- Relatively high levels of obesity and poor levels of health/fitness – with associated lack of exercise through cycling and walking
- Competitiveness of town centres – travel options currently limited and offer poor quality experience, creating an obstacle to new investment.

4.44 The following figure illustrates the main congestion hot spots in 2007 and the forecast position in 2026, without significant intervention and without Lodge Hill, Chattenden being developed.



- 4.45 To address these problems a range of solutions are being progressed:
- Introduction of a comprehensive Urban Traffic Management and Control System (UTMC) to optimise the operation of the road network for all users
 - Development of a network of Park & Ride facilities, linked to quality bus corridors and resulting in a quality bus core network
 - Construction of a new dynamic bus facility in Chatham and improvements to bus stops, interchange points and public transport information along with the introduction of an 'Oyster' style travel card
 - Investigation of a possible further bridge crossing of the Medway to improve pedestrian, cycling and public transport accessibility

- Improvements to inter-urban bus services as part of a transport strategy for North Kent being developed via a Multi Area Agreement (MAA)
- Major improvements to mainline stations, partly in conjunction with the North Kent re-signalling scheme due in 2014
- Capacity improvements at the Rochester Bridge Junction also associated with this re-signalling scheme
- Capacity improvements to the Grain Freight Line
- A review of car parking strategy, examining capacity requirements, charging models etc.,
- The potential for junction improvements at significant congestion points
- Continued development of the cycleway network and public rights of way (PROW) network to make cycling and walking more attractive options
- The potential for a cable car system, despite an initial failure to achieve funding and a difficult legal framework due to the absence of schemes elsewhere in the UK.

4.46 The transport impacts of the Lodge Hill, Chattenden development, and options for addressing these, will be undertaken by the scheme promoters. The Council's SATURN high-level transport model will be used to assist in this process.

Issues

- 4.47 Substantial funding has been achieved to start to develop the quality bus network, some station improvements, the introduction of UTMC and improvements to the pedestrian and cycling networks but significant resource gaps remain.
- 4.48 Air quality is likely to remain an issue unless a significant modal shift can be achieved away from private car use for intra-urban journeys, resulting in reduced congestion at key junctions.
- 4.49 The deregulated nature of the bus industry limits Medway's ability, as a transport authority, to introduce significant changes. Limited revenue resources to support non-commercial services compound this.
- 4.50 Something of a 'catch 22' situation exists in the town centres. Parking and public transport infrastructure is perceived as poor but many improvements need to form part of private sector led regeneration projects. Yet investment is held back by the perceived poor quality and lack of travel options. This will be helped by the funded schemes referred to above but further 'pump-priming' is likely to be required.
- 4.51 Network Rail's investment programme is under considerable pressure and the short-term nature of the passenger service franchises acts as a disincentive to make capital improvements.
- 4.52 The Medway Valley rail line has the potential to act as a prime link between the southern half of the Thames Gateway and Gatwick Airport. However it needs substantial infrastructure investment and alterations around Redhill to bring it up to an appropriate standard.
- 4.53 Use of the River Medway for commercial shipping has been declining for many years but remains important for both the local and regional economies.

A number of local wharves are currently safeguarded but there is some uncertainty over the long-term future of Chatham Docks, due to a trend towards larger ships and the condition of the locks.

- 4.54 A network of piers and jetties exists along the urban stretch of the river but a number need significant improvements/repairs. Despite many efforts, over a number of years, no viable case has been found to introduce a water taxi service, even on a seasonal basis, to link the areas tourist attractions or provide a public transport alternative for the journey to work.
- 4.55 Rochester Airport is an established general aviation facility but it caters primarily for leisure traffic and amateur pilot training. It requires significant investment to bring it up to modern standards. Its location within the defined urban boundary means it also impacts on substantial residential areas to some degree.
- 4.56 There is a small microlight facility at Stoke, close to the large industrial area at Kingsnorth but it is not currently subject to any safeguarding arrangements. Airspace safeguarding could constrain development in the surrounding area, including at Kingsnorth.

Questions

- Have the correct transport issues been addressed? If not which further issues should be considered?
- Should a case be made for the upgrading of the Medway Valley Line as a strategic link to Gatwick?
- Should formal protection be given to local wharves and Chatham Docks over the long term?
- Should formal protection be given to the existing network of piers and jetties along the river, notwithstanding the difficulties of promoting river taxi services?
- Should a formal safeguarding regime be introduced for the microlight facility at Stoke?

Economy

Main Findings

- 4.57 A range of evidence points to a need to strengthen the Medway economy, which currently performs poorly in comparison to other areas. In summary:
- GVA per capita of population is relatively low in Medway at 69% of the UK level. This points to low productivity
 - Medway has a low jobs to workforce ratio of 0.75 jobs per working age resident. This points to too few local jobs being available for the resident workforce. Medway has a higher proportion of population of working age than the South East or Great Britain, which compounds the relative job shortage
 - The unemployment claimant rate in Medway, at 4.2% (Mar 09), is significantly higher than the South East (2.9%) and just above the England & Wales rate (4.0%). Luton & Wayfield and Chatham Central have particularly high rates at 7.6% and 6.7% respectively.
 - Medway is under-represented in the higher end managerial, professional and technical occupations, indicating a lower value employment profile

- There is significant out-commuting for work - around 41% - with a much lower level of in-commuting
 - Average earnings of people working in Medway are lower than the South East. Male earnings are particularly low compared to national average earnings
 - Income deprivation has worsened between the Indices of Deprivation 2004 and 2007, affecting around 6000 extra people. This may not be due to a worsening situation for individuals but it indicates a lower level of improvement than other areas
 - Medway has a high proportion of the population either in work or able to work (economically active). However amongst those claiming key benefits the number of lone parents, carers and the disabled are particularly significant in number compared to the South East and England. These groups make up just over a third of all key benefit claimants. Not surprisingly they tend to be clustered in the more deprived neighbourhoods.
- 4.58 On the other hand the stock of VAT registered businesses in Medway has been growing each year over the past decade. The Annual Business Inquiry also shows an increase in the number of business units of around a fifth in Medway over the past ten years.
- 4.59 There is evidence to suggest that Medway has a large number of 'micro' enterprises (that is, below the VAT registration threshold), including many in the business support sector. Many of these will have good growth potential.
- 4.60 The BAe Systems complex at Rochester Airfield is one of the largest high technology employers in North Kent and is a global leader in its field. It has the potential to 'anchor' a cluster of complementary businesses that could be of regional significance.
- 4.61 Graduates from the universities currently set up relatively few businesses locally. This is due to the universities being located here for only a short period but there is considerable scope to increase business start-ups in the future.
- 4.62 In recent years new industrial and commercial development has been largely offset by losses of older redundant properties, cleared to make way for new mixed-use developments along the urban riverside. Partly as a result of this trend, there is a perceived shortage of high quality development opportunities well related to the urban area for employment generating uses.
- 4.63 Healthy demand has been maintained for smaller workspace units, including serviced ones. However, companies then find it difficult to move on to what is known as 'grow on space' as they expand.
- 4.64 Very large areas of land at Kingsnorth and the Isle of Grain have been allocated for employment use for many years but little floorspace has been developed. A change of ownership at Kingsnorth has resulted in comprehensive proposals for that area but little progress has been made at Grain. This is largely due to its remote location and particular site characteristics. Nevertheless it is one of only very few such large sites in the greater South East and so is of strategic significance.

- 4.65 Both are potentially suitable locations for environmental technology and construction products businesses, which is a growth sector well matched to Medway's strengths and the needs of the Thames Gateway if it is to develop as an eco region.
- 4.66 A number of the established employment areas, including Gillingham Business Park and Medway City Estate, are protected for employment use but need re-investment to take account of changing business needs and improve their appearance and marketability.
- 4.67 Skills development (see Education and Skills section below) is a continuing issue for Medway but there a number of very successful initiatives in place, although with some uncertainty over future funding.
- 4.68 Chatham Town Centre, Chatham Maritime and Gillingham Business Park contain some significant office users, including a number of important 'back office' operations. However Medway is not currently seen as an established office centre within either Kent or the wider region. This will need to change, particularly if Chatham is to develop into a fully functioning city centre.

Issues

- 4.69 It follows from the above that there is a need to provide for future employment needs and to attract, or grow, higher value economic activities that will improve relative economic performance. This is reflected in five strategic priorities, proposed in the recently published draft economic strategy. In summary these are:
- Concentrating on the development of specific sectors: creative industries, environmental technologies and building products/construction plus social enterprise
 - Further upskilling of the workforce through a range of actions
 - Maximising the potential benefits from the development of the higher education sector
 - Improving the availability of employment sites by first reviewing existing mixed use allocations, then assessing the potential to better utilise existing employment areas, then carrying out an audit of other unused sites and, finally, promoting employment development around Rochester Airfield
 - Taking a range of measures to positively improve the image of the area, including developing the evening economy and more creative use of the River.
- 4.70 Further work is in hand to define what quantum and type of employment floorspace should be provided over the period to 2026.
- 4.71 However experience across Kent, over many years, has shown that making sites available for employment does not necessarily lead to appropriate development. The image of the area, workforce skills, supply chains and other factors are of equal or greater importance.
- 4.72 Although many people commute out of Medway to work, they are doing so for higher paid jobs and the London 'pull' will always influence people's employment choices. It is not therefore a given that the quantum of local jobs

should match the resident workforce, although some re-balancing would appear to be justified.

- 4.73 The development of the new settlement at Lodge Hill, Chattenden could become a new focus for economic activity that met more than just the needs of its residents. However this would need to be balanced with other, more established, opportunities in the area if the focus was not to be diverted away from the main urban area.
- 4.74 Medway has a large number of benefits claimants of working age, pointing to difficulties for some in accessing work opportunities. There is too, a strong correlation with lower educational attainment and limited aspirations.
- 4.75 A lack of economic independence can result in a range of other social, health and welfare problems and further sustained effort is required to address the root causes of this.

Questions

- Do you agree with the five strategic priorities proposed in the draft Medway Economic Strategy? If not, what alternatives would you suggest?
- Do you agree that:
 - a) Existing mixed-use allocations should be reviewed with a view to increasing their proposed employment capacity?
 - b) Re-investment in and a more concentrated form of development should be promoted in established employment areas?
 - c) Land around Rochester Airfield should be the focus for higher value economic activities?
- Should the new settlement at Lodge Hill, Chattenden be identified as an employment location meeting more than purely local needs?
- What further efforts could be made to encourage graduate retention in Medway and the development of spin off businesses from the universities?
- Should land at Kingsnorth and Grain be actively promoted as locations for environmental technology and related activities?
- What further strategies might be proposed to bring benefits claimants of working age back into employment?

Education & skills

Key Findings

Attainment

Historically, the Dockyard dominated Medway's economy and the area had no university provision. This created a situation where there was little incentive to achieve high academic standards and the effects of this are still evident today.

Only 12% of Medway residents aged 16-74 have qualifications at degree level or higher. This is much lower than the national average of 19.8% and the even higher regional average at 21.8%.

Just under a third (30%) of residents in Medway have no qualifications. This compares to 24% in the South East and 29% for England. Twydall, and Strood South have the highest percentage of residents with no qualifications at 38%.

Attainment levels at primary and secondary level **(TO BE COMPLETED)**

According to the LSC South East Employers Skill Survey 2007:

- Fifteen percent of employers in Kent and Medway reported a skills gap amongst their current workforce, in line with the rate for the South East and England.
- Approximately 6% of the work force was described as lacking certain skills.
- Employers had more difficulty recruiting to professional positions than machine operatives.
- Employers locally had difficulty recruiting staff with sufficient technical and practical skills, customer handling skills and oral & written communication skills.

Notwithstanding this, real progress has been made in recent years and attainment at all levels is improving more rapidly than the national average. **(CHECK)** Critical to this improvement has been the development of the universities in Medway and focussed investment in primary and secondary provision.

Universities at Medway

'Universities at Medway' is the first of its kind in the country. It is a unique partnership between the University of Greenwich, the University of Kent, Canterbury Christ Church University and Mid Kent College – creating what is in effect a multiversity.

In 2006/2007, there were 8,949 student places (5,016 full time equivalent). The campus is continuing to grow and is well on track to exceed the 2012 target of over 10,000 student places (which will equate to over 6,000 full time equivalent).

On the Medway campus, The University of Greenwich offers courses in 24 different subject areas. The University of Kent offers courses across 21 subject areas and courses offered by Canterbury Christ Church University span 13 subjects. Mid Kent College covers 28 subject areas offering courses at all levels from GCSEs to Honours Degrees as well as many 'Access to Higher Education' courses and 'job-related' courses at NVQ level, GNVQ and BTECs.

The Medway campus has a new engineering research block specialising in bulk solid handling, additional laboratory facilities and a training dispensary for the School of Pharmacy as well as modern workshops including a computer-aided design studio.

One academic speciality is the Medway School of Pharmacy, a collaboration between the University of Greenwich and the University of Kent, which opened in 2004. The School has around 600 students.

The universities are still identifying their future needs for additional teaching and research space and student accommodation. Further work is also needed to identify opportunities for research, collaborations with local companies and the development of spin-off enterprises that would retain graduates within the area.

Mid Kent College is currently based over three sites at Horsted (Chatham), City Way (Rochester) and Oakwood Park in Maidstone. A new campus being constructed at Prince Arthur Road, Gillingham will open in September 2009 and will accommodate 30% more students than the existing two sites in Medway. The Oakwood Park site in Maidstone will remain, alongside the new Medway campus.

The University for the Creative Arts (UCA)

UCA was formed through the union of The Surrey Institute of Art & Design, University College and the Kent Institute of Art & Design. It is one of the UK's leading providers of specialist art and design education, offering courses in 12 subject areas, with strengths in art, design, architecture, media and communication. UCA has five campuses in Kent and Surrey, with the Medway campus at Fort Pitt, Rochester having approximately 1500 students.

The University is actively considering the development of a major new campus and strenuous efforts are being made to have this located in Medway.

Secondary Education

Medway currently has 19 secondary schools, two of which will be lost to make way for three new academies. These are being co-sponsored by the Universities and Medway Council.

Strood Academy (which is a merging of Chapter and Temple schools) will run in name from September 2009 and will be on the Chapter site. It will specialise in Business and Enterprise and include a vocational centre.

Chatham Academy (which is a merger of Medway Community College and Chatham South) will run in name from September 2010 and will be on the MCC site. It will specialise in Maths, ICT and Music.

The third academy will be in Gillingham, on the New Brompton site. It is currently in the public consultation period and, if confirmed, will become effective in September 2010. It is expected it will specialise in Science and the Arts.

The Medway Children and Young People's Plan 2006-09 identifies 'Improving the employability of our young people' as one of 6 key priorities. This takes forward the Government's *Every Child Matters* agenda, and includes Medway's 14-19 Strategy.

A key priority is to reduce the percentage of Young People 'Not in Employment, Education or Training' (NEET) through early intervention to re-engage disaffected pupils and support for young people who are, or are at risk of, becoming NEET. The development of employability skills for these young people is essential to this aim.

Working in close collaboration with schools, Mid Kent College and work based learning providers, Medway Council, the Learning and Skills Council (Kent and Medway) and Connexions have identified a number of strategic priorities, which have been captured within three guiding principles. These are:

- **Participation** – increasing the proportion of 14-19 year-olds engaged in education or training
- **Performance** – improving the standards achieved by 14-19 year-olds in Medway

- **Progression** – ensuring that each young person moves on to the employment, training or higher education that is most appropriate for them at the end of the 14-19 phase

Building Schools for the Future is a national programme intended to renew secondary schools provision across the country. Medway was in the phase planned for 2015 but has recently been promoted and the project locally could start in 2010. This should result in substantial improvements to all non academy secondary schools.

Primary and Early Years Education

There are currently 85 primary and infant schools in Medway. Since 1998, two primary schools have been opened and eight (four infant and four junior schools) have been amalgamated into four.

This reflects a progressive move to what are termed 'all through' primary schools, meeting the needs of pupils from pre-school to age 11 in one location. Coupled with this has been the development of what is termed 'early years provision' concentrating of the needs pre-school and reception children.

Early years provision can take the form of education authority nursery and other facilities being developed on an existing primary schools site, an alliance with private nursery providers or the provision of a 'sure start' centre.

Sure Start Children's Centres coordinate and provide local services for local communities. The idea of a children's centre is that it will become a service hub within the community, offering a core service provision from the antenatal period until children start in reception or Year 1 at primary school. Services on offer will include midwifery appointments, health visitor drop-in sessions, benefits and job seeking advice from Jobcentre Plus and children's and adult's book libraries. As a minimum, each children's centre will have a multi-use space for child and family activities, a small children's library, a designated Community Liaison Officer and high quality education and care for three to five year-olds.

There are now 14 children's centres in Medway, four of which are original Phase One centres and ten are newly developed Phase Two centres, which opened, mid-2008. By Spring 2010 there will be a total of 21 children's centres in Medway, so that a local centre serves every community.

Each will serve a community of approximately 800 children under five years old and their families. With the exception of All Saints Children's Centre, all children's centres will be located on existing infant or primary school sites. The opening of a Sure Start Children's Centre at a school will not affect the number of places a school can provide for pupils.

In order to best deliver the primary curriculum two form entry schools are the preferred model. However these cannot be developed in all locations, pupil rolls being a key determining factor.

Although there has been considerable investment in existing primary schools, a number occupy old buildings and/ or have very cramped sites. The latter limits the opportunities for outdoor education and sport.

Skills Development

The Medway Learning and Skills Plan intends to drive a wholesale improvement in the skills levels of the current and future population of Medway over the coming years.

MLSP sets out to support key national policy agendas, including; increasing economic activity (and increasing employment levels), increasing progression of children, young adults and adults into higher levels of education, and increasing levels of productivity and enterprise.

The purpose of the plan is to bring together, under one strategic framework, measures to address the learning and skills needs of individuals of all ages and the training needs of businesses, tied into the latest thinking on the direction of the Medway economy – in particular, what the future demand for skills will be – and then to ensure that learning providers (from schools to universities) are matching provision accordingly.

The North Kent Construction Skills Project (NoKCS) project was set up by a number of local and regional authorities, employment agencies and employers. With an ambitious programme of development and regeneration planned for the Thames Gateway area of North Kent over the next 20 years, this project aims to tackle the forecast resulting skills gap in the Thames Gateway area.

The project targets existing and potential construction workforce in North Kent, particularly in the Thames gateway area, with a special focus on women, the long-term unemployed, mature but unqualified workers and young people at school.

Inclusion

There are a number of neighbourhoods in Medway, which are particularly educationally deprived. Ten Super Output Areas are ranked in the most deprived 10% nationally for education, skills and training. Gillingham North, Princes Park and Strood South each contain two SOAs in the most deprived 10% nationally, Chatham Central, Peninsula, Twydall and Walderslade each contain one.

Medway has had an established programme of community projects specifically aimed at bringing NEETs back into training and employment. Project SCORE, Project REIGNITE and JOBSMATCH Medway have all achieved notable successes. Collectively the projects have provided employment support to over 1,000 residents, enabled over 230 people into employment and ensured the delivery of over 1,500 entry level, Level 1 and/or Level 2 qualifications. There are however considerable uncertainties over future funding.

Issues

Substantial improvements in educational attainment in Medway have been achieved in recent years but continuing efforts are needed if we are to reach or exceed national and regional levels.

As part of this there is some correlation with the quality and range of education and training facilities and ambitious aspirations for the more socially and economically disadvantaged sections of the community.

The continuing development of the universities, the opening of the new Mid Kent Campus and substantial investment in primary and secondary facilities is having a marked effect. The challenge is to maintain momentum.

It is noteworthy that Medway had no universities only 10 years ago. The scale of change since then has been profound but, as consolidation follows the initial development phase, the challenge will be to capitalise on the many opportunities that have been created. For example:

- A large number of students are bussed in from south London and Dartford
- Pure and applied research capacity is still limited
- There is scope to further develop specific academic specialisms
- Links with local businesses could be further developed
- Nearby town centres have not yet fully responded to the growing student population. Medway is not yet perceived as a student 'destination'.

Mid Kent College is part of a consortium now providing training and support facilities to the Royal School of Engineering, which has its headquarters at Brompton Barracks. Much of this training is construction related and this has long been part of the college's established offer.

With the opening of the new campus are there opportunities to further develop in this area - potentially becoming a skills 'hub' for the construction and allied sectors of regional or even national significance?

Medway has long and proud links with UCA with famous local graduates including Zandra Rhodes and Karen Millen. The Fort Pitt campus has long been part of the local scene.

With its new university charter UCA is looking to develop a major new campus but this need not necessarily be in Medway. Given the established links, stock of student accommodation and a new focus on the local development of cultural and creative industries, losing the university to another area would be a major blow. On the other hand a number of potential sites have been identified, with a particularly interesting candidate being what is known as the 'Interface Land' between Dickens World and the Historic Dockyard.

Continuing investment and re-modelling of our primary and secondary schools may raise issues about the capacity and suitability of sites. In addition there is scope for certain services and facilities to be 'co-located' with schools, creating community clusters or hubs. Ensuring that future requirements are identified is therefore an obvious issue.

Lifelong learning is critical, not only to personal development, but also to the continuing development of workforce skills, more flexible career structures and maintaining competitiveness in a global marketplace. Medway has many examples of excellent practice in this area but projects are often short lived due to funding regimes.

It has also been innovative in tackling problems of exclusion but similar funding issues tend to apply.

Irrespective of resources, an ongoing challenge is more closely matching the skills requirements of employers with academic training.

Questions

- Should Universities at Medway be further promoted to create a higher education centre of regional or national significance?
- Do you agree that a new campus of the University for the Creative Arts should be promoted in Medway? If yes, do you have a preferred location?
- Should Mid Kent College promote its new campus as a regional hub for construction skills?
- Do you support the concept of schools as ‘community hubs’?
- What strategies should be promoted to:
 - Improve the employment prospects of the more socially disadvantaged?
 - Encourage lifelong learning and up skilling in the workplace?
 - More closely match the skill needs of local employers?

Retailing & Town Centres

Key Findings

Many of the findings in this section of the report come from a recent retail capacity study, undertaken for the Council by specialist consultants Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners (NLP).

Medway has a complex retail pattern:

- There are five traditional town centres: Chatham, Strood, Rochester, Gillingham and Rainham.
- A purpose built district shopping centre: Hempstead Valley
- A range of local centres, including Twydall, Walderslade and Lordswood
- A large number of local ‘parades’ of shops

The shopping centres within Medway are all located close to each other particularly Strood, Rochester and Chatham and their primary catchment areas overlap. The main centres collectively provide a reasonably good range of comparison shops (393 units with sales floorspace of 86,396 sq m net), including a range of national multiples and independent specialists. However, the choice of shopping could be improved. Existing provision predominantly caters for the middle and lower end of the market, and caters poorly for the upper end.

Competing centres, particularly sub-regional centres have seen substantial investment in major retail and mixed-use schemes in recent years. However this has not been the case in Medway. Instead retail investment has been concentrated on out of centre retail warehouse parks and stand alone large food stores. In addition, the national decline in independent retailers has reduced the number of units in Medway’s main centres and undermined the viability of local centres and small groups and parades of shops.

As a result there is considerable ‘leakage’ in terms of spending, particularly on comparison goods, to centres outside Medway.

Chatham sits at the top of the local retail hierarchy, performing a sub-regional shopping role and this is recognised in the South East Plan.

The defined District Centres complement Chatham by providing for bulk convenience food shopping and a range of comparison shopping facilities and other services.

Their retail function has consolidated in recent years but they remain important centres, providing a wide range of local services.

Local and Village Centres are important in providing basic food and grocery shopping facilities, supported by a limited choice and range of comparison shops selling lower order comparison goods (bought on a regular basis) and a range of non-retail services and community uses.

The currently defined retail hierarchy is as follows:

Sub Regional Town and City Centres	Chatham
Urban Service Centres	Rochester, Gillingham, Strood, Rainham, Hempstead Valley
Local Centres	These include a range of local centres, including Twydall, Walderslade and Lordswood
Local Parades and shops	Large number as listed in the Medway Local Plan

A large number of local centres and parades have lost retail units, suggesting a need to review their status.

The retail capacity study assessed the strengths and weaknesses of each of the main centres. The summary findings were as follows.

Chatham

Strengths

- Chatham is a sub-regional centre and contains the highest concentration of retail and service units of any defined centre in Medway.
- It contains one large (Tesco) and one medium-sized (Sainsbury's) food store in addition to a variety of other national multiple and independent operators.
- The detailed analysis of comparison unit representation in Chatham revealed that every sub-category of comparison goods is available in the centre. This includes a range of national multiple traders and independents, including the Trafalgar Centre indoor market.
- A range of service uses are on offer, including representation from all the major banks and building societies.
- The centre is easily accessible by a range of modes of transport other than the private car, and movement around the centre on foot is unproblematic.

Weaknesses

- The retail sector is concentrated on the lower end of the market and there is a need to attract more key attractor national multiples serving the upper end of the market. In this regard. The centre lags behind other sub-regional centres in terms of the amount and type of national multiples represented.

- The environmental quality in parts of the centre is variable, and many units appear dated. The street scene in general would benefit from investment and rejuvenation.
- The proportion of vacant units is above the national average and vacancies can be found throughout the centre including in prime retail areas.
- Whilst Chatham does benefit from its high level of independent retailers, the presence of these within the busiest shopping areas, including the Pentagon Centre, does imply that the centre may be suffering from low demand for representation.
- Around the periphery of the centre traffic is frequent and heavy, which does create a barrier to unconstrained pedestrian movement.

Gillingham

Strengths

- Good provision of convenience goods within the centre with a number of medium-sized national multiples including Aldi, Somerfield and Co-op in addition to independents traders and the bi-weekly market.
- A good range of service uses are available, with A1 and A2 services being greater than the national average.
- There has been recent investment in the centre, including Wilkinsons and Sports Direct stores.
- A legible pedestrian environment and accessibility by a choice of means of transport.
- Environmental quality around the centre is generally good.

Weaknesses

- The proportion of comparison retailers in Gillingham is below the national average, although this is not unexpected given the role of the centre in the sub-regional shopping hierarchy.
- The proximity of Gillingham to Chatham may present difficulties in defining the role for the centre and encouraging higher order retailers.
- The proportion of A3 and A5 services in the centre is lower than the national average.
- Vacant units in the centre appear to be above the national average in terms of the proportion of total retail units for which they account.

Hempstead Valley

Strengths

- High representation of national multiples.
- Strong provision in the comparison goods sector.
- Ample free car parking facilities.
- Movement around the shopping centre on foot is easy.
- Good environmental quality.

Weaknesses

- Hempstead Valley does not provide the range of uses normally associated with a district centre. There are no independent traders present, it lacks representation from a range of convenience retailers or service retailers and has limited entertainment and civic functions.
- Although the centre is well served by car parks, accessibility by public transport could be improved.
- The centre is poorly linked to surrounding residential areas.
- Lack of vacant units may prevent new retailers from locating in the centre.
- Functions more like a free-standing retail destination rather than a district centre as defined in PPS6 terms.

Rainham

Strengths

- The proportion of convenience units in Rainham is above the national average, and provision in this sector includes a Tesco Metro and an Iceland.
- The centre contains above average representation of A1 and A2 services, and is considered to adequately perform its role as a district centre.
- Accessibility to the centre is reasonably good, and there is a large surface level car park that is well integrated.
- Movement around the centre on foot is unproblematic.
- There are a low proportion of vacant units in Rainham.

Weaknesses

- The provision of comparison retail units and A3 and A5 services are below the national average, although the centre does contain most key comparison retailers and services in this sector, including three pharmacies.
- Relatively low representation of national multiple comparison traders.
- Dominated by small retail units.
- Environmental quality in the centre is generally adequate in most parts although this does vary along the length of Station Road and is poor in places.
- Rainham may be more affected than most district centres in Medway by increased competition from other centres, given its relatively small retail sector and low proportion of national multiples.

Rochester

Strengths

- Rochester is an historic district centre and attracts tourists from a wide geographical area, which bolsters the retail sector.
- The proportion of units in convenience retail, A1 and A2 service use are above the national average, and it contains a popular weekly market.
- The centre contains a strong independent sector, and is able to provide a unique shopping experience including many specialist traders.

- Environmental quality in the district centre is excellent.
- Rochester has a strong night-time economy including a high number of drinking establishments in addition to a theatre.
- It is easily accessible by private car or by public transport. The centre provides a safe and attractive environment for shoppers.

Weaknesses

- The centre does not contain a small or medium-sized convenience store, which should be a feature of district centres as defined by PPS6. Provision of such a facility would be beneficial to the retail sector and the overall health of the centre.
- The proportion of comparison retail units is below the national average, although we recognise that additional provision in this sector is provided by the weekly market.
- The centre contains very few national multiples.
- Vacant units are above the national average, with these being concentrated on periphery areas.
- Corporation Street is a busy with heavy traffic, which presents a barrier to pedestrian movement and creates associated noise and fume externalities in the vicinity.

Strood

Strengths

- The centre contains a good range of comparison, convenience and service uses and adequately performs its role as a district centre.
- A high number of national multiples are present in the centre, including Tesco, Morrison's, Netto, B&Q and Next, which serve as key attractors.
- A range of unit sizes are present in the centre.
- Recent investment has occurred in the centre including the Netto, Wilkinson's and Matalan units, with an Aldi store currently under development. This reflects positively on the trading prospects of the centre.
- Vacant sites in the centre offer opportunities for the future expansion or consolidation of Strood's retail sector.

Weaknesses

- The proportion of comparison and convenience units in Strood is below the national average, as are the proportion of A3 and A5 units.
- Vacancies appear to be slightly above the national average.
- The presence of several busy roads through the centre creates barriers to pedestrian movement and causes associated externalities of noise, fumes and pollution.
- The centre does feel disjointed and linkages between different areas should be improved.

These retail centres tend to compete with each other, diluting the retail offer within the Medway area.

It is recognised in the Retail Study that Chatham is performing poorly in relation to neighbouring sub regional centres in terms of Comparison retailing.

It suggests that Chatham is the main comparison-shopping destination and should be the main focus for employment, leisure, entertainment and cultural activities. As the main centre, it should compete with other large regional/sub-regional centres such as Maidstone, Bromley and Canterbury. In order to maintain and enhance this role, Chatham should be the focus for major retail developments, large-scale leisure and other uses that attract large numbers of people including major cultural, tourism and community facilities.

The Study concludes that for *Comparison* Retailing (Non-Food Durable Goods) there could be scope, as a minimum, for about 24,000 sq m gross of comparison floorspace within Medway up to 2016, and a further 34,000 sq m gross between 2016 and 2021. This is over and above existing commitments. If Medway can increase its market share of comparison expenditure and higher population projections are achieved then there could be scope for about 55,000 sq m gross of comparison floorspace within Medway up to 2016, and a further 38,000 sq m gross between 2016 to 2021.

The Study states that if Chatham is to be enhanced in order to compete more effectively with Maidstone and Canterbury, then a critical mass of at least 30,000 sq m gross of additional comparison retail floorspace will need to be provided in Chatham.

The Study indicates there is potential for additional *convenience* goods sales floorspace within Medway (food and daily needs). Over and above the current commitments, surplus expenditure at 2016 could support between 4,249 and 5,607 sq m net of large food store sales floorspace and between 2,550 and 3,364 sq m net of small store/shop sales floorspace.

In qualitative terms, there is no obvious locational area of deficiency in food store provision within the main urban area. Some of the capacity could be accommodated within existing vacant premises or small redevelopments within the main centres.

Issues

Town centres are important, not just in economic terms, but in determining local character and identity and pride in place. As the natural focus for most community services and facilities, they also strongly influence sustainability and patterns of movement.

As indicated above, in recent years Medway's centres have not been able to attract investment, compared to other areas. There is a substantial leakage of retail expenditure out of the area and a gradually declining quality of offer to local people.

The lack of private investment has also held back townscape improvements and public spaces have not been upgraded in comparison with other areas.

The need for change is therefore self-evident.

The conclusions of the retail study confirm other analyses but also point to the very considerable potential that exists to support large increases in retail space and so underpin the revitalisation of the centres.

Other than Chatham, none of the centres is large enough to compete with other centres in Kent. Accordingly the case for Chatham to be the main focus for retail investment is very strong but it is also important that the other centres have defined roles.

The continued expansion of the Universities at Medway campus, the imminent opening of the new Mid Kent College campus and the development of the Medway Park sports complex should offer excellent prospects for Gillingham to re-position its existing offer.

Strood has the scope to change quite radically and a comprehensive masterplan for the central area is being developed. Use of the station will increase with the introduction of high-speed services to St. Pancras. It has also seen retail investment, despite the economic downturn.

Rochester functions primarily as a tourist centre and that role will continue. However with the development of Rochester Riverside and significant changes planned for Corporation Street it is will placed to diversify and reinforce its current offer.

Rainham is a successful but relatively low-key centre with a relatively prosperous catchment area.

Chatham, Rochester, Gillingham and Strood also all stand to benefit from substantial residential development over the next few years.

Hempstead Valley does not conform to the usual model of a 'district centre' but it trades well above Medway's other centres and counteracts at least some potential leakage to other areas. It has recently had its 30th anniversary and its owners are considering investment options to refresh its offer and maintain its competitiveness.

The larger local centres have been declining in retail terms but they are the focus of well-defined neighbourhoods, well suited to a clustering of local services, such as healthy living centres, contact points and so on. Increased 'footfall' from such uses can, in turn, underpin their retail function.

Retail facilities within the rural settlements are very limited. Hoo St. Werburgh serves as a rural 'service centre' for the Hoo Peninsula but its offer is still limited.

A new settlement at Lodge Hill, Chattenden will generate its own and entirely new retail requirement. However the phasing and nature of this will need to be carefully managed if it is not to threaten existing provision. In time it may also attract rural shoppers away from Strood.

Questions

- Should a major new retail development of at least 30,000 sq.m be a priority for Chatham?
- Should Chatham also be a priority area for townscape improvements and enhancements to public areas?
- Do you agree with the strategies for the other centres implied in the previous section – specifically in relation to:
 - Strood capitalising on its public transport links and a central area plan to better 'knit' the centre together?

- Rochester retaining and developing its role as a tourist centre but with some new retail development to better meet the day to day needs of a growing local population?
- Gillingham focussing its efforts on meeting the needs of the rapidly growing student population and the development of Medway Park as a regional sports complex?
- Rainham consolidating its existing role and becoming a more obvious focus for local services?
- Hempstead Valley being encouraged to diversify into a more typical district centre with re-investment in its retail function to retain its competitiveness over the longer term?
- Should the current policy that seeks to retain all local groups and parades of shops be reviewed with a new emphasis being placed on the larger local centres, which serve defined neighbourhoods?
- Should explicit protection be afforded to rural shops and associated uses, given the sustainability benefits to the rural area?
- What retail function do you think the new settlement at Lodge Hill, Chattenden should have? Do you agree that its retail development should be carefully phased to limit the impact on nearby rural settlements?

Community & Social Infrastructure (to be completed)

Key Findings

Issues

Questions

Leisure, Culture & Tourism (to be completed)

Key Findings

Issues

Questions

Built Environment (to be completed)

Built Environment State of Medway Report October 2008

Chatham's role as a sub-regional shopping centre has been undermined by out-of-town developments and competition from other towns. It also lacks a number of attributes necessary for a successful shopping centre: the retail environment is poor, there is a lack of good quality public space, it has a narrow and congested High Street and it has few eating and drinking establishments. These factors have led to a poor perception of Chatham as a shopping centre.

The ring road forms a concrete collar around the centre, which creates a hostile environment for pedestrians. It severs the centre from its surroundings, particularly the waterfront, the railway station, the Tesco supermarket and a number of leisure facilities. The ring road effectively curtailed the expansion of the centre.

The riverside is a neglected asset and strategic links between Chatham and its surrounding centres are poor, particularly for pedestrians, cyclists and public transport.

There are no squares or attractive open spaces within the heart of the city and the public realm left over after the construction of the ring road under Sir John Hawkin's Way is mean. There is barren and unattractive architecture adjoining the public realm and few areas of positive landscape character.

The railway station is isolated from the centre in a location dominated by traffic and the direct link to the centre, Railway Street, is narrow and congested. The main hub for buses is the Pentagon Centre, where facilities are poor, with passengers experiencing noise and fumes and, in winter, cold winds

Strood town centre is a focus for three main roads which channel traffic onto Rochester Bridge. Consequently, Strood High Street, the town's traditional shopping street, suffers from substantial traffic congestion and poor environmental conditions. The architecture of central Strood is generally undistinguished, with the notable exception of St. Nicholas Church.

Strood Station serves the North Kent and Medway Valley railway lines which create a barrier to access to the riverside. Access from the west, its main residential catchment area, is poor, consisting of a foot tunnel from Station Road. The station has a poor identity, being tucked away from general view and partially concealed by other development. The physical fabric of the buildings and the landscape quality of the area is poor.

A mixed use industrial area lies to the north east of the station. This area was originally occupied by railway marshalling yards and transport storage depots and more recently by builders merchants and storage operators. The environment is of poor visual and landscape quality and the area is subject to some contamination due to previous industrial activities.

The final part of this riverside area is somewhat detached and can only be accessed by footpath from Canal Road. It is located at the western extremity of the Medway City Estate and vehicular access is gained from Commissioners Road. This area is occupied by scrap yards, motor workshops and a chemical mixing business. It is likely to suffer from contamination has been subject to tipping, creating an ill-defined river edge. It has a poor physical and visual quality.

To the south of the town centre, the riverside is also isolated from its hinterland to the west by the Medway Valley railway line. The area also contains unsightly and un-neighbourly industrial uses.

To the north of Roman Way, part of the former cement works remains. There are no buildings remaining on the site but spoil heaps are still present. North of this site is an industrial area containing skip hire, scrap metal recovery, the open storage and processing of construction materials, a timber storage area and timber works, all of which present a poor environment.

Between the industrial area and the riverside is a large area of little used open space which has poor access and no formal parking. At the southern end of this open space are the remains of a tarmac karting track which is now overgrown by vegetation.

Landscape, Wildlife, Countryside & Open Space (to be edited)

Greenspace Conferences (2003 and 2004)

Greenspace Services organized two conferences in 2003 and 2004 to aid communication and engagement in countryside and open space management. Consistent messages from the two conferences included:

- The need to improve the provision and management of facilities for young people
- The need to ensure that the countryside and open space resource is protected from loss to housing
- The need to encourage new users into allotments and parks
- The need for an over-arching strategy promoting the protection and management of Medway's countryside and open space resource
- The need to tackle the impact of vandalism and anti-social behaviour on open spaces across Medway
- The need to protect and enhance wildlife resource

Playing Pitch Study, 2003

The Playing Pitch study, undertaken in 2003 assessed the quality and accessibility of outdoor pitches and formal sport provision across Medway. It concluded that:

- Outdoor sport provision makes up 330 ha of the open space network (about 20%) and, by 2016, there is likely to be a 112-hectare shortfall in provision
- The quality of outdoor sports provision was "poor" to "very poor" - no pitches were considered to be 'excellent' quality and numerous pavilions were rated as being very poor
- The majority of residents live within the recommended 1.2km from an outdoor sports facility

Play Area User Survey and independent Children's Play and Youth Audit (2005)

Overall the Play Areas User Survey suggested that users feel the variety, quality, condition and cleanliness of play areas and equipment is poor. The only aspect the users felt was generally adequate was the layout of play spaces.

The majority of parents would not let their children play out on their own and the majority of respondents felt that their local play area does not cater well for supervising adults.

The survey suggested that two thirds of the respondents have no problem getting to their local play area due to problems such as busy roads.

All but two respondents felt that there is not enough provision for young people in their local play area.

Citizens Panel (2006)

One of the conclusions from the Citizens' Panel 06 was that visitors enjoyed the country parks, due to the high quality management and permanent ranger service, but thought that the countryside sites and urban parks, which have fewer dedicated visitor facilities, variable management and less evident staff, were less enjoyable. In particular:

- Users are less satisfied with the quality of parks and play areas due to poor maintenance, lack of facilities and a general perception of vandalism and anti-social behaviour
- Of those never going to a countryside site, 17% said they had too little time and 17% said that they had too little information. This illustrates the need to 'sell' the value of these sites to encourage more visits and to improve communication and signing of these sites.

Park Audits (2005)

Quality Audit: This has been designed to evaluate the quality of designated parks and amenity spaces and is intended principally to provide qualitative data. Key findings included the fact that many park facilities are not appropriate to the parks size and location, that park furniture is not considered well designed and that maintenance is generally poor.

Issues and Options: Local Landscape Areas

- 0.1** The Government believes that criteria-based policies, using landscape character assessments, should provide sufficient protection for local landscape areas without the need for rigid designations which might unduly restrict acceptable development. Designations should only be maintained or extended where it can clearly be shown that criteria-based policies cannot provide the necessary protection. (PPS7 Paras 24 and 25) It is therefore necessary to i) identify and describe the characteristics of those local landscape character areas which apply to the rural area of Medway; ii) draw up a number of criteria based policies which will apply to those landscape character areas; iii) consider the likely effectiveness of those policies compared to existing policies which seek to protect designated local landscape areas and iv) consider whether those designated areas should be retained.

Local Landscape Character Areas

- 0.2** In 2004, Kent County Council commissioned a study of landscape character areas throughout Kent, including Medway. For each character area, it provided a description of the landscape and a landscape strategy that directly reflected the condition and sensitivity of the area. Within Medway, it identified nine character areas, some of which were subdivided. A summary of the findings for each area is set out in the Natural Assets and Open Space State of Medway Report, 2008. Work is currently underway to update this study.

Criteria Based Policies

- 0.3** In preparing criteria-based policies, it is necessary to consider which characteristics of existing designated areas require protection, together with those of the countryside as a whole, as this wider area will be included within the landscape character areas.
- 0.4** One of the Government's objectives for the rural area is to continue to protect the open countryside for the benefit of all. Its overall aim is to protect the countryside for the sake of its intrinsic character and beauty, the diversity of its landscapes, heritage and wildlife, and the wealth of its natural resources. (PPS7 para 1(iv)).
- 0.5** The Government recognises that many towns and villages are of considerable architectural and historic value or make an important contribution to local countryside character. It requires local authorities to ensure that development respects and enhances those characteristics and contributes to a sense of local identity (para. 12).
- 0.6** Away from larger urban areas, new development should be focussed in or near to local service centres and new house building should be strictly controlled in the countryside, away from established settlements (paras 3 and 9).
- 0.7** Policy KTG1 of the South East Plan aims to avoid coalescence with adjoining settlements to the south, east and west of the Medway urban area and to the west of Sittingbourne. The Plan also places emphasis on the need to respect and where appropriate, to enhance the character and distinctiveness of settlements and landscapes in policy CC6.
- 0.8** Policy C4 of the South East Plan requires local authorities to encourage and support positive and high quality management of the open countryside outside nationally designated landscapes. In particular, planning authorities should recognise, and aim to protect and enhance, the diversity and local distinctiveness of the region's landscape, informed by landscape character assessments. They are also required to develop criteria-based policies to ensure that all development respects and enhances local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided.
- 0.9** Paragraph 3.4.104 of the Medway Local Plan, 2003, states that there are several areas of landscape that enhance local amenity and environmental quality, providing an attractive setting to the urban area and surrounding villages. These are designated as Areas of Local Landscape Importance (ALLIs), some of which form part of the green hillsides and backdrops of the urban area, which area recognised as being particularly important in the Thames Gateway Planning Framework.
- 0.10** Paragraph 3.4.105 goes on to state that these ALLIs are also significant for other important functions:
- i) As green lungs and buffers, helping to maintain the individual identity of urban neighbourhoods and rural communities;
 - ii) As green corridors (or links) for the community to reach the wider countryside;

- iii) As edge or fringe land, needing protection from the pressures of urban sprawl; and
- iv) As habitats for wildlife and corridors, along which wildlife from the wider countryside can reach the urban environment.

0.11 All these factors, including national, regional and local policies, need to be taken into account in the preparation of criteria based policies. The following draft criteria based policies have been drawn up with the intention of fulfilling the Government's requirements in relation to landscape character areas.

Countryside Development

Development will be permitted in the countryside provided that it supports the rural economy and communities, helps to conserve the countryside and where it:

- is necessary for the purposes of agriculture, farm diversification, forestry, recreation, tourism and other enterprises with an essential requirement to locate in the countryside; or
- provides facilities which are essential to meet the needs of local communities which cannot be accommodated satisfactorily within built up areas; or
- provides for new uses in existing rural buildings consistent with the building's scale, massing, character and location, or;
- provides for the extraction of minerals or the disposal of waste.

Isolated new houses in the countryside will require special justification.

Landscape Character

The landscape character and local distinctiveness of Medway shall be protected, conserved and, where possible, enhanced. Proposals for development shall take into account the local distinctiveness and the sensitivity to change of local landscape character areas.

Development will be permitted provided that it protects, conserves and, where possible, enhances:

- i) the landscape character and local distinctiveness of the area including its historical, biodiversity and cultural character and its tranquillity.
- ii) the distinctive setting of, and relationship between, settlement and buildings and the landscape including important views.
- iii) the type, distribution and nature conservation value of wildlife habitats;
- iv) the pattern and composition of woodland, forests, trees, field boundaries, vegetation and other features.
- v) the drainage pattern and special qualities of rivers, waterways, wetlands and their surroundings.
- vi) the topography of the area including sensitive skylines, hillsides and geological features.
- vii) the pattern and distribution of settlements, roads and rights of way.

Settlement Character

The individual character, identity and amenity of settlements are important in Medway. Development will be permitted provided that it protects, conserves and, where possible, enhances:

- i) the positive character, amenity and individual identity of the settlements; and
- ii) the overall setting of the settlement including important views; and does not lead to a significant erosion of the predominantly open and undeveloped countryside between settlements which could result, cumulatively, in their coalescence.

Effectiveness of Criteria Based Policies

- 0.12** For the purposes of PPS7, local designations include both Areas of Local Landscape Importance and Special Landscape Areas. The existing policies in the Medway Local Plan, 2003, are as follows:

POLICY BNE33: Special Landscape Areas

Development within the North Downs and the North Kent Marshes special landscape areas, as defined on the proposals map, will only be permitted if:

- (i) it conserves and enhances the natural beauty of the area's landscape; or
- (ii) the economic or social benefits are so important that they outweigh the county priority to conserve the natural beauty of the area's landscape.**

POLICY BNE34: Areas of Local Landscape Importance

Within the Areas of Local Landscape Importance defined on the Proposals Map, development will only be permitted if:

- (i) it does not materially harm the landscape character and function of the area; or
- (ii) the economic and social benefits are so important that they outweigh the local priority to conserve the area's landscape.

Development within an Area of Local Landscape importance should be sited, designed and landscaped to minimise harm to the area's landscape character and function.

- 0.13** In policy BNE33, development is permitted providing the natural beauty of the SLA is conserved and enhanced. This approach to countryside protection is now somewhat outdated, concentrating simply on the natural beauty rather than character. Policy BNE34 permits development provided the character and function of the ALLI is not materially harmed. However, it only applies to a limited number of areas, does not identify the elements which contribute to the character of the areas and makes no provision for enhancement. In neither case is the character of the area defined or a reference given to a document which defines it. Consequently, the consideration of whether a proposal would harm the character or beauty of an area is made highly subjective as a result of this omission.

- 0.14** In both SLAs and ALLIs the protection afforded by the policies can be set aside if social or economic benefits are considered to be of sufficient importance to

outweigh the priority to conserve the landscape. It should be noted that the word “priority” is not included in the first part of each policy. In neither case do the policies require social or economic development to conform with the need to protect or enhance the landscape.

0.15 The criteria based policy approach offers a number of advantages over the designation approach:

- It offers protection to and seeks enhancement of the whole of the rural area and not just a limited number of designated areas;
- It reduces subjectivity by being tied to a detailed description of local landscape character areas;
- The policies include a number of individual elements which form a landscape and hence provide a check list when assessing the effects of a development on the landscape;
- It does not allow for the over-riding of landscape protection by important social or economic proposals.

Natural Assets and Open Space State of Medway Report October 2008

The Government has a target of bringing 95% of all SSSIs into favourable condition by 2010. In Medway, five of its SSSIs have already met this target but three have yet to do so.

Medway has eight local nature reserves which all suffer to some degree from one or more of the following: invasion by non-native species; pressure from recreational users: dog attacks; local nutrient enrichment; lack of active management; woodland fragmentation; and poor footpath access.

Only two out of eleven local character areas in Medway are considered to be in good condition, with one categorised as moderate, four as poor and four as very poor.

Natural Resources (to be edited)

Aggregates Minerals Land-Won

Issue

There is an on going need to supply the construction sector with high quality land-won aggregate minerals to ensure local demand is met and Medway meets its South East Region sub-regional apportionment requirements of between 410,000 tonnes and 1.37 million tonnes over the life of the Medway Core Strategy to 2026 in order to the maintain regional and local aggregates supply.

Evidence Base

Aggregate minerals are important to the wider economy. They are extensively used in the construction sector for development and maintenance uses of our society's infrastructure. In 2007 some 274 million tonnes of aggregates of all types were produced in the UK. Of these 190 million tonnes were from land-won resources

while 14 million tonnes were marine dredged imports and some 70 million tonnes was derived from 'secondary' sources, e.g. construction wastes. This demonstrates the current pattern of supply, which is predominantly from land-won materials. Though a finite resource (particularly the superficial sand and gravel reserves) national and regional planning policy reflects this pattern.

Medway is part of the South East Region as defined by the adopted government guidance Regional Planning Guidance 9 (RPG9); the overall amount of mineral supply is set out in the government's National and Regional Aggregates Guidelines 2005-2020 June 2003, currently set at 13.25 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) for sand and gravel. Crushed rock aggregate supplies are limited in the region and the geology of Medway is such that they are not available.

This overall production figure is considered too high given recent trends of reducing quantities of supplied materials. Currently a revised South East Regional figure of 12.01 mtpa out to consultation. Whatever the regional requirement it is the South East England Regional Assembly (to be absorbed into the South East England Development Agency). This body has the role for the sub-regional apportionments to the mineral planning authorities, Medway being one. The relevant policy of the emerging South East Plan, Policy M3, is currently undergoing a public consultation for an early review. The assembly is of the view that as sales of land-won sand and gravel across the region has consistently been below guideline figure. It is contended that a regional requirement of 9.01 mtpa is justifiable. A future sub-regional apportionment of this overall figure is also given. For Medway a figure of 110,000 tonnes per annum is given. This is derived at by a methodology that considers the location of mineral resources (British Geological Survey data), past sales, potential future demand (e.g. Medway's status as a growth area) and environmental constraints. Kent, as an important adjoining mineral planning authority that used to be grouped with Medway regionally is identified as having the potential to supply 1.4 mtpa till 2026.

Current permitted reserves in Medway are in the region of 1.35 million tonnes. The land east of Kingsnorth has 1.2 million tonnes permitted and Perry's Farm at Grain has an estimated 150,000 tonnes of remaining reserves. Therefore Medway has sufficient reserves for 12.3 years of production at a rate of 0.11 mtpa. Starting in 2010 this will take the area up to 2022/3 leaving a requirement of 410,000 tonnes of new reserves to be found until 2026 assuming the emerging policy at the regional level is adopted.

If the current regional 13.25 mtpa requirement remains Medway's reserve deficient figure could be in the order of 1.37 million tonnes between 2016-26. If the regional requirement is reduced to 12.18 mtpa by as indicated by the government's current review this Medway reserve deficient figure would drop to 1.25 million tonnes between 2018 and 2026. This figure assumes that Medway's supply capability remains at 1.3% of the overall regional estimated need, whatever the range of figures.

Options

Medway has significant reserves of sand and gravels laid down as both river terraces and deep buried channel deposits. The quantities in the latter are reasonably well understood, while the deep buried channels are less so though very likely to be extensive, their difficulty and significant environmental impact of extraction renders them unlikely to be a realistic option for mineral supply till at least 2026, thereafter a matter of another round of resources assessment.

Assuming that it is logical, where possible, to identify new reserves at locations where mineral extraction has been shown to be acceptable in the past. Two areas on the peninsula come to light. Both have been the subject of investigation given that they were subject to previous local plan investigation in the 1990's. They are referred to here as Kingsnorth Terraces and Grain Terraces. Both areas could yield sufficient resources to meet the potential requirements that rang from some 410,000 tonnes up to 1.37 million tonnes to 2026.

Option 1: Grain Terraces

Two areas, both are to the west of Grain straddling the B2001 Grain Road. The geological evidence indicates that there is possible but unproven reserves totalling 1.5 million tonnes over an area of 36 ha.

Main advantages

- Close to historical aggregate workings, though recently this has declined, new investment in processing infrastructure could potentially be more easily achieved than at entirely green field sites.
- The area is not covered by significant landscape protection or conservation designations.

Main disadvantages

- ***May be too remote from markets to be viable and the recent decline of the industry in this area may not be reversed with economic cycles.***
- Reserves are unproven this makes deliverability less certain.
- Will affect Grade 2 agricultural land until restoration is affected.

Option 2: Hoo Terraces

Around the main reserve of 1.2 million tonnes permitted to the east of Hoo St. Werburgh there are several areas of sand and gravel reserves that range from proven to unproven to possible with indicative only evidence. Again, assuming that the permitted reserve is implemented logical extensions or nearby areas to these works may be a logical area in which to make future provision till 2026.

The geological evidence indicates that the land east of the settlement and west of the permitted reserve may have a terrace river sand and gravel reserve ranging from 0.86 to 2.06 million tonnes over 52 ha. The geological evidence indicates that other land parcels also have potential reserves towards Kingsnorth Power Station. A proven reserve of 0.4 million tonnes over 15.2 ha exists and could be an eastern extension of the current permitted area. Together these potential extension areas could have reserves ranging from 1.26 to 2.46 million tonnes. Despite the uncertainty of the actual quantity of the mineral reserves in these potential extension areas there are reasonable grounds to be confident that sufficient reserves exist to maintain at least a 7 year land bank of permissions for land-won sands and gravels (as required by regional policy national guidelines) for the duration of the Medway Core Strategy to the end of the 2026 thereby having sufficient contingency for resource variability.

Main advantages

- The area is not covered by significant landscape protection or conservation designations.
- Though the maximum and minimum reserve estimations are broad the overall quantity is likely to be sufficient to meet the identified need and have a buffer to allow for contingencies of lack of economic reserves over the two potential extension areas.
- Relatively close to the anticipated local demand areas that are a consequence of Medway's regeneration sites (e.g. Lodge Hill) and the further development of the employment lands at Kingsnorth.

Main disadvantages

- The permitted 1.2 million tonne in the area reserve has not yet been fully implemented, giving rise to concerns of low economic viability of the mineral reserves in this area.
- The western potential extension area is relatively close to the settlement of Hoo St. Werburgh potentially giving rise to adverse amenity impacts potentially leading to the need to leave buffer areas to extraction with resultant loss of recoverable reserves.
- The western potential extension area is relatively close to the protected undeveloped coast, Medway Estuary Special Protection Area/RAMSAR and classified Sites of Nature Conservation Interest potentially giving rise to adverse ecological impacts potentially leading to the need to leave buffer areas to extraction with resultant loss of recoverable reserves.
- Will affect Grade 1 agricultural land until restoration is affected.

Aggregate Minerals Importation

Issue

Medway's three operational and one unimplemented mineral importation wharves are required to be protected and enhanced to ensure no loss of current and future capacity

Medway has a significant regional role in importation of aggregate minerals. Of the current regional importation of 6 million tonnes Medway's three wharves imported 3 million tonnes. Despite the fact that the Kent and Medway areas combined have significant excess mineral landing capacity (some 14.75 million tonnes in all) over recorded imports Medway's regional and local role in the Kent and Medway area remains significant.

The three operational wharves (Grain, Cliffe and Frindsbury) and the unimplemented mineral wharf at Halling represent Medway's assets in this regard. It is reasonable to assume that land-won reserves will eventually deplete across the region. Importation will correspondingly take on increased importance. Ultimately, importation will displace land-won resources of minerals in meeting the identified need in the region. Though this position is arguably well beyond the Core Strategy 2010-26. Policy M5 of the emerging South East Plan

Option 3: Wharf redevelopment exclusion and extension safeguarding areas to cover Grain Terminal, North Sea Terminal at Cliffe, Euro Wharf at Frindsbury and Halling Wharf at Halling

Main advantages

Main advantages

- Protects the existing provision from redevelopment and loss.

Main disadvantages

- No apparent difficulties or conflicts with evolving regeneration initiatives

Non aggregate Minerals

Clay

The Hoo Peninsula east of Cliffe is an extensively outcrop of the London Clay in Medway. Though abundant in Medway and elsewhere in the region its use is localised and difficult to predict. Medway has one site that is capable of producing clay, though it is time limited (December 2011) and of low operational capacity.

There is a need for sea defence works maintenance and potentially for landfill cell engineering and contaminated land remediation as a capping layer. No specific quantities are required by regional or national planning policy or advice, save for the supply of active cement works. There are no longer any in Medway.

It is anticipated that where specific need arises the quarrying industry will come forward with applications that will be determined on their merits against all material relevant planning considerations as required by MPS1.

The identification of specific clay reserves is not an issue to be addressed by the Core Strategy for Medway till 2026.

Chalk

The main requirement for chalk historically in Medway has been for the cement manufacturing industry (*see som link...*). This industry has all but ceased and no quarrying of chalk or clay to provide raw materials is now occurring. Globalisation of productive capacity has found the UK too expensive it appears. Some chalk, of a high purity nature is required for whitening purposes. Medway has extensive reserves

that are being extracted at a rate that extends the life of the planning permission for many decades. Agriculture lime is another market that historically and currently is not supplied by Medway's chalk geology.

It is anticipated that where a specific need did arise the chalk quarrying industry will come forward with applications that will be determined on their merits, against all material relevant planning considerations as required by MPS1 and MPG10.

The identification of specific chalk reserves is not an issue to be addressed by the Core Strategy for Medway till 2026.

Climate change (to be completed)

Key Findings

Issues

Questions

Lodge Hill, Chattenden

Main Findings

As explained in Chapter 3, a new settlement has been proposed on defence land at Lodge Hill, Chattenden since 1995. Moreover the principle has been upheld ever since and, most recently, in the South East Plan.

For some years there was uncertainty over the release of the land, as the Ministry of Defence was involved in extended negotiations over a major Public Private Partnership (PPP) contract and then determining arrangements for relocating some facilities and training out of Medway.

However last year these issues were finally resolved and MoD appointed a leading development company, Land Securities, as its 'Land Delivery Partner' for the surplus site. Land Securities have assembled a full development team and committed substantial resources to the development of a masterplan for the area, which is being developed with the active involvement of local communities.

The defence estate at Lodge Hill and Chattenden extends to around 400 hectares in all but this includes large woodland areas, agricultural land and other areas that can be categorised as Greenfield. The core barracks and active training areas that fall within the definition of previously developed land amount to around 180 hectares.

It has always been intended that virtually all development would be located on the previously developed areas of the larger site and this assumption was used to determine that it was likely to be able to accommodate around 5,000 homes plus 20 – 25 hectares of employment land, plus all the associated services and facilities that should be expected within a development of this scale. This has been the working assumption relating to the probable scale of the project for some time.

With a housing requirement for Medway, as a whole, set at 16,300 between 2006 and 2026, a contribution of around 5,000 from Lodge Hill is clearly of strategic significance. The Council has supported the principle of development, on this scale and in this location, for the following reasons:

- Development would be on previously developed land – a cornerstone of the development strategy for the Thames Gateway as a whole and Medway in particular
- It would complement rather than compete with the well established regeneration strategy for the main urban area
- It would do so by providing a very different location to the urban waterfront and town centre sites where development is to be concentrated in the main conurbation and, in particular, be more suited to family housing – so providing choice and addressing the housing market as a whole
- By concentrating development on the scale proposed in a single location, there is an opportunity to fashion a development of real note and one with a full range of local services. This would be more difficult to achieve on urban extension sites and where development would impact more significantly on existing communities and more than one location might be needed
- There is no other area of previously developed land on this scale that is suitable for housing in Medway. All other options would therefore involve development on Greenfield land, and at a significant scale
- Although previously developed, the site is relatively free from constraints and so should be capable of being brought forward in a planned way and within a reliable timeframe. This is an important consideration as the strategy underpinning the Core Strategy must be deliverable and meet the requirements in the South East Plan.

At the same time the Council recognises that there are significant issues that must be effectively addressed in the detailed planning of the development. These include:

- Ensuring that appropriate and reliable access to and from the site can be achieved, given well known issues with the A228 and the limited highway based options available
- Actively addressing any likely adverse impacts on existing settlements and Hoo St. Weburgh, Cliffe Woods and High Halstow in particular
- Avoiding coalescence with existing settlements so as to preserve the established character of the Peninsula
- Ensuring that Lodge Hill becomes a destination in its own right and is not seen as a 'residential dormitory'
- Ensuring that it fits into and contributes to the local environment, including by connecting sensitively to nearby settlements, the public rights of way network and the wider countryside.

However, based on the work already undertaken, it is confident that this can be achieved.

Due to the need to relocate two Army units it is not expected that development will begin until 2012. Progress thereafter will depend on many factors, including the health of the housing market but it is currently estimated that it should be possible to achieve around 4,500 completions by 2026.

This estimate will undoubtedly change over time but it is important to make an initial assessment now in order to have confidence that the South East Plan requirements can be met.

Issues

In earlier development plan documents it was expected that development at Lodge Hill would have begun much earlier than 2012. However, after a long period of uncertainty, the position is clear and the decision by the Army to vacate the site has been confirmed in a Parliamentary announcement.

Some scepticism as to the timeframe for the development is therefore understandable and it will be for Land Securities/MoD to demonstrate that they have a realistic and deliverable programme.

Access is a potentially significant constraint and both the Council and the Highways Agency will need to be satisfied that appropriate solutions have been fully tested and can be delivered. Use of the Council's high level SATURN transport model, which has been validated with the Highways Agency, will be an important part of this process.

The development will need to be designed to incorporate the latest design and sustainability standards, including Level 6 of the Sustainable Homes Code, which becomes mandatory in 2016. Equally, investigations have pointed to the potential for a district heating scheme, either using fuel from renewable sources or waste heat from nearby power stations.

Whether or not this is selected as a preferred approach, the development will need to consider a range of sustainability issues to minimise both its local and global impact.

It would be wrong to define a specific economic role for the new settlement at this very early stage but it will be important that a local economic strategy is developed in due course and that it complements that for the area as a whole (see the Economy section above).

In the section dealing with sub-regional issues above, reference is made to an exciting green vision for the Hoo Peninsula. The Lodge Hill development should fully appraise this and develop its own green strategies that link into the larger scale picture for the Peninsula.

Ensuring that the necessary infrastructure and services are provided in a timely manner to match the scale of development will be vital, both to limit impacts on the surrounding area and to ensure that the needs of all new residents are met. A clear delivery plan will therefore be required and this should consider the most appropriate legal and other mechanisms to ensure it is fully delivered.

Questions

- Is the intended development programme for the Lodge Hill development realistic and achievable, bearing in mind its proposed contribution towards meeting the requirements set out in the South East Plan?
- What tests do you consider should be used to assess proposed transport and access solutions for the development?
- What headline sustainability principles should be applied in planning the settlement?
- Do you have any preferences as to the economic role that the new settlement could fulfil?
- Do you agree that the new settlement should contribute towards a wider green vision or strategy for the Hoo Peninsula and the Isle of Grain?

- Have you any suggestions/proposals that should feature in the delivery strategy for the new settlement and that can help achieve the timely provision of necessary infrastructure and services?

5. Spatial Choices or Options

Introduction

In developing the Core Strategy the most appropriate strategy needs to be identified and assessed against any reasonable alternatives.

This section of the report:

- Provides a short summary of the relevant guidance
- Describes the current strategy and how it was developed
- Describes how alternative strategies or 'spatial options' were developed and tested
- Asks a number of key questions to determine views on the options.

Guidance

In summary the relevant guidance states:

"The ability to demonstrate that the plan is the most appropriate when considered against reasonable alternatives delivers confidence in the strategy."²

"Consultees should have sufficient detail about the various options to have a reasonably clear understanding of the different outcomes of those options."³

When the Core Strategy is submitted for independent examination the Council needs to be able to satisfactorily answer the following:

- *"Can it be shown that the LPA's (local planning authority's) chosen approach is the most appropriate given the reasonable alternatives? Have the reasonable alternatives been considered and is there a clear audit trail showing how and why the preferred strategy/approach was arrived at? Where a balance had to be struck in taking decisions between competing alternatives, is it clear how and why these decisions were taken?"*
-
- *Does the sustainability appraisal show how the different options perform and is it clear that sustainability considerations informed the content of the DPD (development plan document) from the start?"⁴*

Current Strategy

The current strategy that guides development in Medway can be traced back to 1995 and the publication of the Thames Gateway Planning Framework (sometimes referred to as RPG9a).

This effectively launched the Thames Gateway as the country's first growth area. It recognised that the area had structural problems but also considerable potential for both new housing and economic growth. In setting out a spatial strategy for the sub-region, and specific areas within it, it stated that it would take 30 years or more to realise.

² PPS12 paragraph 4.38

³ PAS Plan Making Manual – Generation of Options

⁴ Local Development Frameworks

Although many Thames Gateway documents have been issued since then, the original strategy continues to be applied. It has been restated and further refined in every development plan document since then – in the case of Medway in two structure plans, one local plan and the new South East Plan. It can be concluded that it remains very relevant, given that it has half of its projected term still to run.

As far as Medway is concerned, the Framework promoted urban regeneration, particularly along the urban waterfront and in and around the town centres. It also highlighted the potential for a new freestanding settlement on (then) potentially surplus defence land – what is now known as Lodge Hill, Chattenden. It sought to protect valuable countryside and, in particular, the “green hillsides and backdrops” around the main urban area.

The strategy has also resulted in more development capacity that was originally expected.

The South East Plan requires the provision of 16,300 new homes over the period 2006 – 2026 (815 per year). However, based on the position at the end of March 2008, sufficient sites had been identified to accommodate over 19,600. Many sites will have been adversely affected by the current economic downturn and many are subject to planning permission being obtained but a very healthy land supply position is still indicated.

This suggests there is no obvious need to identify an alternative strategy. Nevertheless a range of options has been considered.

Identification of Options

In assembling the evidence base for the Core Strategy a “call for sites” was issued in December 2008. The main purpose of this was to inform a Strategic Land Availability Assessment but the response also highlights the aspirations of landowners and developers and therefore alternative areas they consider suitable for development.

Previous work on the local development framework carried out in 2006/07, responses to the preparation of the Kent & Medway Structure Plan and the South East Plan also indicated similar areas.

Settlement planning normally follows distinct patterns, such as: urban concentration, urban expansion, new settlements, dispersed growth, key settlements and so on. At the same time all areas are subject to various constraints such as national landscape and nature conservation designations and these will strongly influence the options available within a particular area.

Utilising the relevant information for Medway led to the identification of a number of options, each of which is described and evaluated below.

Each option:

- Is of a scale that could re-balance the current pattern of development – they can therefore be described as strategic options
- Is capable of accommodating the full range of uses needed to sustain what would be the equivalent of new neighbourhoods
- Other than the base option each is capable of substituting for the proposed new settlement at Lodge Hill, Chattenden, were that project not be confirmed for any reason.

Option 1: Urban regeneration plus new settlement at Lodge Hill, Chattenden

This can otherwise be described as a baseline or Thames Gateway option for the reasons set out above.

It envisages a continuing emphasis on urban regeneration with new development concentrated along the urban waterfront and in and the established town centres. Chatham town centre is a major focus, allowing it to develop into a city centre for both Medway and the wider Thames Gateway. The new settlement at Lodge Hill, Chattenden would be freestanding and use previously developed land with circa 5,000 homes and a full range of associated services being provided. This option would not require any extension to the existing urban boundaries – other than at Lodge Hill.

Option 2: Greater Hoo

This option would effectively substitute Lodge Hill, Chattenden with further expansion at Hoo St. Werburgh and at the nearby villages of High Halstow and Cliffe Woods. It is based on the assumption that Hoo would provide a much greater range of urban services with the three settlements together forming a village cluster. As with the other options described below around 180 hectares of land would be required to substitute for the 'loss' of Lodge Hill, Chattenden.

Option 3: Capstone Urban Extension

Proposals for a major urban extension into the Capstone Valley between Hempstead and Lordswood have been put forward on a number of occasions in recent years. Two clusters of sites have also been put forward in response to the call for sites (see above).

It should be noted that the administrative boundary with Maidstone Borough cuts across the southern part of the valley and proposals have also been advanced with that authority.

For this options appraisal an area wholly within the Medway boundary has been used, bridging the valley in a 'U' shaped configuration. This would also be to the south of the Capstone Country Park. However, were it to proceed, development would be likely to extend further southwards into Maidstone.

Option 4: East of Rainham Urban Extension

This option would involve development between the existing urban boundary and the administrative boundary with Swale Borough. It envisages the majority of any development area being to the south of the A.2 but with some development, around Moor Street, to the north.

It partly reflects submissions received in response to the call for sites but also land around Siloam Farm that was put forward previously.

This is an extensive area and any actual land take would be determined by the amount of development required.

Option 5: North of Rainham Urban Extension

This option envisages the release of land between the current urban boundary and the B.2004 Lower Rainham Road. It would potentially extend from the Gillingham Link Road in the west to the administrative boundary with Swale in the east.

As with the Capstone and East of Rainham options it reflects call for sites submissions and representations to previous development plan documents, including the Medway Local Plan and the Kent & Medway Structure Plan.

It should be noted that each option has only been defined in general terms and, as such, the boundaries shown on the attached map are in no way definitive. However they are considered sufficient to be able to properly identify alternatives to the current spatial strategy for Medway and allow their potential impacts to be assessed.

Other Options

Two further options were identified but not taken forward to an assessment stage. They were:

- A possible urban extension involving land to the north west of Brompton Farm Road, to the north of Strood. Two adjoining sites were put forward in response to the call for sites. However this area is situated within the Metropolitan Green Belt, which is intended to endure for the long term. Boundaries should only be reviewed if there is an obvious strategic need. Given the healthy land supply position referred to above and the fact that other options are available that are not in the green belt, it was considered that this option should not be progressed.
- A variation to the Greater Hoo option as described above. With a village expansion option a number of variations are possible. For example, in response to the call for sites, a number of sites to the south of the village of Cliffe have been put forward and settlements such as Stoke, Allhallows and Grain are of a similar size and with a generally similar range of services. However it was considered that an option involving any combination of these settlements would result in a very dispersed and inefficient settlement form, have limited scope for a sustainable mix of uses and would have a number of significant adverse impacts. Accordingly it was discarded.

Evaluation of the Options

In order to be able to objectively compare the options and their potential impacts an evaluation template was developed and the detailed results are set out in Appendix 1 of this document.

In addition each was subjected to a formal Sustainability Appraisal incorporating a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA/SA) and the results are set out in a separate companion document ([INSERT TITLE/LINK](#)).

The evaluation template used twelve factors as follows:

1. Integration with existing urban form
2. Impact on natural assets
3. Transport impacts
4. Ability to accommodate sustainable mix of uses
5. Efficient use of existing infrastructure/need for new infrastructure
6. Accessibility to a range of services
7. Conformity with SE Plan

8. Potential contribution to economic strategy
9. Potential for low carbon development
10. Greenfield or previously developed land
11. Impact on existing communities
12. Contribution to urban regeneration strategy/positive impact on image of Medway

(to be completed)

6. What Happens Next

Consultation schedule

The Council is undertaking ongoing discussions with key stakeholders and is continuously updating its evidence base in order to fully justify the content of the Core Strategy when it is subjected to Public Examination towards the end of 2010.

The indicative timetable for producing the Core Strategy is set out below:

Prepare Core Strategy Issues & Options Report	(December 2008 - May 2009)
Public consultation on Core Strategy Issues & Options Report	June - July 2009
Analysis of Responses and Preparation of Draft Submission Core Strategy DPD	August - December 2009
Public consultation on Draft Submission Core Strategy	January - February 2010
Analysis of Responses and production of the Formal Submission Core Strategy	February - July 2010
Pre-Examination Meeting	September 2010
Independent Examination	November 2010
Binding Report	February 2011
Adoption	March/April 2011

Responding to the core strategy

The Council is seeking as large a response as possible. Given that the core strategy will be shaping Medway to 2026 and beyond, it is very important that stakeholders tell us what they think about the issues & options addressed in this document. We also want to know about anything else that you think needs to be considered in our strategy, especially if it might have a spatial dimension.

There are a number of ways in which you can contact us but regularly reviewing the website is the best way to keep up with progress and to access new publications.

- **Telephone: 01634 331629**
(Office hours are 9 am - 5 pm Monday to Thursday and 9 am - 4:30 pm Friday).
- **Email: ldf@medway.gov.uk**
- **Post:**

**Development Plans & Research Team,
Regeneration, Community & Culture,
Medway Council,
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Chatham, Kent ME4 4TR.

- **Website:** www.medway.gov.uk/ldf
(This is our front page and you will find numerous links to published documents, Limehouse etc.).

- **Limehouse:**

This is an online consultation system and we would strongly encourage you to 'register' as a user. If you do you will receive email alerts when new consultations are underway, you can submit your views in a structured way and see our responses to all representations we receive. To register please go to:

<http://medwayconsult.limehouse.co.uk/portal>

What happens after the Issues & Option consultation?

A Report setting out all the responses received with regard to the Issues & Options document will be produced later this year, and contain comments and recommendations in relation to the feedback. Scoping and then drafting of Core Strategy will then follow in order that formal consultation can occur early in 2010.

A key principle that must underpin preparation of the Core Strategy is that of 'continuous engagement'. This formal requirement is very strongly supported by the Council. We want anyone with an interest in the Core Strategy and associated documents to input into the LDF process. In addition we welcome an ongoing dialogue with all interested parties to ensure community and key stakeholder views are fully understood.

You can monitor progress via our website. This includes a LDF blog that is regularly updated.