

HEALTH AND WELLBEING BOARD

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MEDWAY LOCAL PLAN DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

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Summary

This report provides an update on work in preparing a new Local Plan for Medway. The Local Plan will set out a framework for managing the area's development over the next 20 years.

The Planning Service has been working closely with Public Health to embed ambitions to improve the health of Medway's communities in the development plan, and this will be reflected in new policies.

The report outlines joint working carried out in the early stages of the preparation of the Local Plan.

1. Budget and Policy Framework

- 1.1 The Development Plan forms part of the Council's policy framework. The Medway Local Plan 2003 provides the basis of the authority's planning policy, establishing a spatial strategy for Medway to meet the economic, social and environmental needs of the area, which is used to determine applications for development. It is supported by a number of supplementary planning documents that provide additional guidance to the Local Plan policies.
- 1.2 The Council is working on a new Local Plan to replace the Medway Local Plan 2003. When adopted this will replace the saved policies of the 2003 Medway Local Plan. The preparation of the replacement plan is therefore a matter to be considered within the Council's policy framework.
- 1.3 The costs of the preparation of the Local Plan and supporting evidence base are met through the Planning Service budget.

2. Background

- 2.1 Planning is a function that seeks to manage space and change within an area through engagement with local communities, developers and businesses.
- 2.2 The Local Plan is a statutory document that seeks to set a vision and framework for growth of an area. It achieves this by setting overall levels of growth in relation to housing, business, infrastructure and retail, as well as policies that will protect the environment and heritage, and allocate land for development of all types and manage development in the built environment through design.
- 2.3 Planning and health have always been historically linked, improvements to public health being one of the first reasons for the creation of modern planning. Recently this relationship has become more prominent with national Government planning policy as outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 (NPPF) emphasising the links.
- 2.4 Planning needs to have regard to health in Local Plans. Paragraph 156 of the NPPF states that local plans should outline the 'strategic priorities' of an area and that it should include health. Paragraph 162 suggests that health plays an important role in the infrastructure needs of an area and Paragraph 171 states: *'Local planning authorities should work with public health leads and health organisations to understand and take account of the health status and needs of the local population (such as for sports, recreation and places of worship), including expected future changes, and any information about relevant barriers to improving health and well-being.'*
- 2.5 The current Medway Local Plan was adopted in 2003 and needs to be updated in line with new national Government policy and legislation. In 2014 the Council embarked upon the development of a new Local Plan for Medway to cover the period from 2012 to 2035. A key consideration for the Local Plan is Medway's growing population, projected to increase from 276,500 people in 2015 by c 20% over the next 20 years.
- 2.6 At the present time work has been undertaken on the evidence base for the Local Plan. This is the supporting material that will justify the plan's aims, strategy and policies. As part of this process an analysis of the level of growth within Medway has been carried out. This work concluded that there is a need for 29,400 new homes in Medway by 2035 to meet the population growth.
- 2.7 The projected increase is mainly derived from natural change (births over deaths). It is also indicated that the fastest growing group within Medway over the plan period will be those aged over 65. However Medway's population will continue to be comparatively younger than the surrounding areas over the same period.
- 2.8 The Planning Service has been working with Public Health to inform the evidence base for the new Local Plan and embed ambitions to improve the health and wellbeing of Medway's communities in the development strategy and its supporting policies. There are opportunities to promote healthier environments and support healthier choices that can help to address the significant health inequalities seen across Medway. In particular, planning to help reduce obesity is being considered in the emerging plan. Planners have

also been working corporately to assess how the Local Plan can contribute to ambitions to achieve a more dementia friendly Medway. Planning policies and development proposals can help to encourage choice of walking and cycling, secure open spaces and parks, accessible community and leisure facilities and seek to manage a balanced range of services to avoid concentrations of unhealthy food outlets. The Local Plan will consider how these objectives for a healthier Medway can be designed into the principles of new developments and shape our existing centres, villages and neighbourhoods.

2.9 This context formed part of the consultation in January and February of 2016 as a part of the Council's Issues and Options for the Local Plan. This was a high level strategic document to ascertain areas of concern that residents and stakeholders had in Medway. A section on health was included under infrastructure and services. The majority of comments came from local residents and focused on:

- Better infrastructure, especially sustainable travel options (walking and cycling), and;
- More localised healthcare.

2.10 The next stage of the Local Plan work will be a further consultation document to be presented to the Council's Cabinet in December 2016. This will set out a range of spatial options for the area's growth that could inform the development strategy for the Local Plan. It will also consider the policy approaches that can be set out in the plan to deliver sustainable growth to address Medway's needs. Subject to approval by Cabinet, it is intended to consult on the next iteration of the Local Plan in January and February 2017. The information gathered through this consultation will be used to help identify preferred locations for development and refine draft policies.

2.11 The results of the Issues and Options consultation informed the draft Health Strategic Aim for the new Local Plan. Please see Appendix 1.

3. Options

3.1 In preparing a Local Plan, the Council is required to consider a range of options for how and where development could be delivered in the area. The next stage of the draft plan consultation will set out a series of potential spatial options for development. These will be assessed through a Sustainability Appraisal that will be published alongside the consultation document. A fuller options analysis will therefore be set out as part of the supporting work for the Cabinet paper in December 2016.

4. Advice and analysis

4.1 The responses to the Issues and Options consultation showed concern about the provision of health infrastructure and aspirations for healthier lifestyles in Medway. There was support for better walking and cycling facilities, improved leisure and sporting provision and better access to healthier eating, including allotments and local produce. Planning officers are working with Public Health to develop policy responses that can deliver a healthier environment and support healthier lifestyles, as part of wider coordinated programmes for reducing health inequalities in Medway. The further work will also consider

how best to plan for health services in the context of identifying and delivering infrastructure needs, in conjunction with development coming forward. This will assess the need to review the current system for developer contributions, in conjunction with anticipated further government guidance on revisions to the regulations for a Community Infrastructure Levy, which is currently the government's preferred mechanism for collecting and managing contributions arising from development.

- 4.2 Sustainable development is the fundamental to the Local Plan. The Council needs to demonstrate that the development strategy and associated policies can deliver sustainable development. To evidence this, the Council must produce a Sustainability Appraisal to accompany each formal stage of the plan making process. The Sustainability Appraisal assesses the economic, environmental and social impacts of the draft policies and development strategy. Health impacts will be included as part of this assessment.
- 4.3 The report to Cabinet in December 2016 will be accompanied by a Diversity Impact Assessment.

5. Engagement activity

- 5.1 As an initial stage in producing the new Local Plan, the Council published an 'Issues and Options' report, as a basis for early consultation. Formal consultation was carried out in January and February 2016. It sought views from residents, members, developers, neighbouring local authorities, organisations and community groups to inform the direction to be taken in the new Local Plan. 231 written responses were received to the consultation.
- 5.2 The consultation was largely managed through online resources, email and social media, in line with corporate communications protocol. The consultation document was available to view on the Council's website and responses could be made via an online questionnaire. There was a strong presence on the Council's website and use of the Medway Council social media accounts to alert people to the consultation, specific consultation events, and to encourage their participation.
- 5.3 The Planning Service recognised that the consultation process needed to be broader than the online materials and process. Paper copies of the consultation document were available at all public libraries and Medway Council community hubs across Medway. Copies of the document were also sent to all Medway Parish Councils. The Council contacted over 1000 people on its Local Plan consultation database, which included letters to a number of residents who had indicated that they want to be kept informed of progress on planning policy matters. A Public Notice was placed in the Kent Messenger to alert people to the consultation.
- 5.4 A number of events were organised as part of the consultation to broaden engagement in the Local Plan preparation work. These included:
- Consultation workshops and presentations in local areas
 - Staffed exhibitions in community venues
 - Thematic based events

5.5 The responses fell into a number of broad categories of stakeholders:

- Residents
- Developers and Planning Agents
- Local Authorities and statutory organisations
- Community and charitable organisations, political parties and local businesses

5.6 Planning officers worked with the Public Health service to ensure that health and wellbeing matters were embedded in the preparation of the Local Plan and the associated consultation. This included workshops with an informal meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board, the Public Health directorate, a health topic focus group and drop in sessions during the consultation period. Public Health officers helped to promote the consultation and participated in engagement events

6. Risk management

6.1 The preparation of the new Local Plan is critical to the council's function as a Local Planning authority, and in managing the development of Medway over the next 20 years. The process is complex and subject to external risks, such as national policy changes and economic conditions, that are difficult to control. Project and risk management processes are built in the work programme for the plan preparation, and will be regularly monitored.

| Risk | Description | Action to avoid or mitigate risk | Risk rating |
|----------------------------|--|---|--------------------|
| Lack of updated Local Plan | Risk of government intervention in Medway planning. Vulnerable position in resisting development proposals in inappropriate locations. | Engagement with DCLG, members, PAS and PINS on emerging Local Plan work and timetable to build confidence that the council is progressing as quickly as due process allows in positively preparing a new plan | C2 |

7. Consultation

7.1 The Issues and Options consultation document included a section on Health and raised a series of questions to seek views and information on how to improve the health of local communities. These included measures to promote greater physical activity, encourage access to healthy food options, what changes to the built environment could facilitate healthier communities and views on the siting for healthcare facilities. Health issues were raised in response to other sections of the consultation document, particularly with regard to infrastructure and the strategic issues that the plan needs to address.

7.2 Responses considered that better facilities for walking and cycling, together with improved leisure facilities, parks and open spaces were important in how the built environment could facilitate healthier communities and greater physical activity. Allotments, education initiatives, support for local produce and agriculture, along with regulation of Hot Food Takeaways were favoured as measures to encourage healthier eating. There was support for more locally based healthcare facilities and improvements to, or a new site for the Medway hospital.

8. Financial implications

8.1 The Council is required to produce an updated Medway Local Plan, and this is a key function of the planning service. The Planning Service budget meets the costs of the preparation of the Local Plan. This includes the production of an effective evidence base and meeting the fees of the Planning Inspectorate for the independent Examination process.

9. Legal implications

9.1 The preparation of the new Medway Local Plan is being undertaken in conformity with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Recent government announcements have confirmed the importance of Local Planning authorities having an up-to-date Local Plan in place.

10. Recommendations

10.1. That Board members note the content of the report on the Issues and Options consultation they participated in.

10.2. That Board members inform the development of the new Local Plan through identification of priorities that could effectively address health needs in the development strategy for Medway.

10.3. That Board members advise how strategic links can be strengthened to the Local Plan, through engagement of key organisations and alignment of strategies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Public Health Strategic Aim for the Local Plan 2012 - 2035(draft)

Background papers

Medway Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation Document, January 2016

<http://www.medway.gov.uk/pdf/Final%20Issues%20and%20Options%20Public%20Consultation%20Copy.pdf>

PUBLIC HEALTH STRATEGIC AIM FOR THE LOCAL PLAN 2012 - 2035**REDUCING OUR HEALTH INEQUALITIES**

The success of Medway's economy¹ is not equitable across the area. One of our biggest aspirations is to enable all of Medway's people, both residents and people who work here, to enjoy an outstanding quality of life, including happy, healthy, safe and fulfilled lives. Quality of life is essential to health and wellbeing and relates to every facet of life. Challenges to this aim may include the lack of skills² needed to secure productive employment; an unfit and poorly insulated home³; poor access to public open space⁴; not having access to affordable healthy food⁵; reduced opportunities to be physical active⁶ as part of our routine lives, having limited opportunities for food growing⁷, lack of access to health care⁸, fear of crime, or a lack of social interaction⁹ and sense of community¹⁰. These can all contribute to problems with physical and mental health and dysfunction in families and communities, resulting in significant disparities in health and wellbeing between neighbourhoods and high levels of child poverty across Medway¹¹.

A key priority of the Council is to improve health and wellbeing in Medway overall and to reduce health inequalities in particular. This is a key outcome of the agenda for creating sustainable healthy communities¹². Such communities are places where basic needs of good housing and employment are met, and where the social and physical environment enables children to get the best start in life and older people's needs are met. This drives change and supports high levels of aspiration amongst children and adults alike, whilst advocating a positive sense of community and social interaction. Facilitating mental wellbeing, resilience and improved quality of life occurs through improving access to mental health, early intervention and by creating Dementia Friendly Communities¹³. We aim to reduce alcohol and substance misuse¹⁴ related harm in Medway by providing support for children, young people, families and individuals who need it, and reducing the access and availability of alcohol¹⁵ to those most vulnerable.

Every opportunity should be taken to promote healthy weight and ensuring effective prevention, identification, early intervention and management of obesity in children and adults. A key factor in managing obesity is to increase everyday activity and participation of all sectors of the community in active lifestyles.

¹ Economic Development policy

² Education provision and access to education

³ Housing Policy(standards)

⁴ Landscape and GI policy

⁵ HFT policy within Retail/TC policy

⁶ Health Section HP1 & Sports provision/GI policies

⁷ Health Section HP2 & GI policy

⁸ Health Section HP3 and Infrastructure Policy

⁹ Health section HP3

¹⁰ Health Section HP3

¹¹ Health Section HP3

¹² Health Section HP3

¹³ Health Section HP3

¹⁴ Enforcement with Trading Standards

¹⁵ Retail and TC policies