

MEDWAY INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY PLAN – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1. Infrastructure is a major consideration in planning, and often a key ground for objections to development proposals. The creation of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan and Schedule is a requirement of national planning policy. In planning for growth, the council must show that the impacts on services can be mitigated, providing for sustainable development. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is part of the emerging evidence base for the Medway Local Plan. The IDP provides an overview of the current condition and capacity of infrastructure across a range of services, and sets out where further investment may be needed, and will be needed to keep pace with Medway's growing and changing communities. This is an iterative document and government expects councils to keep the IDP under regular review.
2. The Council has collected information from service providers and has consulted on future infrastructure needs aligned with the scale of Medway's Local Housing Need over the plan period. This has helped to identify where existing capacity is not sufficient to meet future needs, and the locations and services where new and upgraded infrastructure will be needed. As the Plan moves into a further Regulation 18 stage, this work will need to continue to consider the infrastructure requirements that may be needed for the different spatial strategy options that are considered. Ultimately, the infrastructure requirements will be set by Local Plan policy which will refer back to the further developed version of this IDP.
3. Indicative costs are included, where available. This information will feed into further planning work and discussions with developers and stakeholders, including Viability Assessment and inform the updated policies on infrastructure and developer contributions. The council has a strong track record in drawing in both external funds and S106 monies to support infrastructure needs across Medway. The National Planning Policy Framework is explicit that there is no expectation that an IDP/S will be fully funded.

FOCUS ON HOO PENINSULA

4. Although the IDP is a Medway wide document, it specifically considers the infrastructure that would be needed if the Hoo Peninsula were a major growth area over the next 25 years. This recognises the scale of potential change. Alongside the transport improvements and environmental measures being delivered by the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) programme, the area would need significant investment in new services. In planning for potential growth, the IDP assesses the need for additional infrastructure. This includes a new secondary school and six expanded/relocated primary schools and two new primary schools across the peninsula. Many new facilities would be needed in Hoo, including a new sports centre, health centre, parks, playing fields and open spaces, and upgrades to community buildings such as libraries and village halls. These initial views on the potential infrastructure have been developed in line with the context for Medway as a whole discussed below.

INFRASTRUCTURE CATEGORIES

Transport

5. This considers both the strategic and local road network, and public transport services by rail and bus. Current pressures on the networks are noted, and the wider strategic context. Work on strategic transport evidence base for the new local plan is referenced to indicate where new transport schemes would be needed on highways, public transport and walking and cycling measures in line with proposed growth.
6. This work will develop further as the Council's strategic transport modelling, the HIF programme, the Lower Thames Crossing and the Council's work on the Transport Strategy for Hoo takes shape. This will help shape the full understanding of the designed mitigations required and the costs associated with them.

Education and Early Years

7. This section reviews provision from early years to further and higher education. As schools are critical infrastructure, upgrades and new schools are planned to keep pace with growth in the school age population. The report notes areas of under-capacity and the need to renovate some school buildings. Further and higher education is key to Medway's economic ambitions, and there are opportunities for further development in this sector.
8. The IDP outlines the locations across Medway where new or expanded schools may be needed over the next 15 years, using information provided by the Council's Schools Service on current capacities and taking account of demographic trends. The costs of such facilities will be based on complex calculations relating to floor space and pupil numbers and the physical requirements of different demographics; and the Council will continue to work closely with developers and other stakeholders to consider how these costs requirements will be met.

Utilities and Waste

9. This section covers energy, water, waste and smart infrastructure, including communications technology and EV charging points. Medway's strategic role in relation to energy is noted, and potential opportunities for further growth in new technology.
10. Upgrades to the gas, electricity and water infrastructure are identified as critical and the Council has consulted with utility providers in planning for growth across Medway and how these needs are addressed in their strategic development plans.
11. It is particularly noted that many utility providers have statutory duties (and thus a requirement to cover the costs) to provide infrastructure to support new population growth. Furthermore, on-going changes in technology means that many infrastructure requirements in this topic will need to be adaptable and prescriptive as the Local Plan policy on these matters develop. The estimate of costs for such matters is therefore fluid at this point in time.

Health and Social Care

12. It is noted that there are concerns about the existing capacity of health and social care services in Medway, including the above average patient to GP ratio locally. This is a complex area of infrastructure planning, involving a number of organisations, different funding streams and an array of matters that will impact upon estimated costs, given the technical requirements of health and social care facilities. The IDP helps to identify future needs and provides a basis for engagement with health services and commissioners. It identifies new healthy living centres in Chatham, Strood and the Hoo Peninsula and new/improved GP premises in wider Medway. It also notes needs for increasing capacity in hospital services. However, the hospital trust has not identified the need for a new site.

Community and Cultural Facilities

13. These services provide for the wider health and well-being of Medway's communities and include theatres, libraries, sport centres, village halls and visitor attractions. The IDP notes the context of Medway's cultural strategy. Many facilities are in need of ongoing investment to retain the quality of the offer, and some new facilities are specifically identified for Hoo, should it grow significantly in coming years. The 'requirements' for this category of infrastructure flows predominantly from policy decisions to be made by the Council. As such, whilst this IDP sets out some initial thoughts on the types of provision that could be provided, this (and their associated costs) will develop in further iterations of this document.

Green and Blue Infrastructure

14. This section considers a range of open spaces, such as parks, play areas, outdoor sport facilities, footpaths, allotments, and flood risk management measures. The need has been identified through evidence base work such as the Medway Playing Pitch Strategy and the Environment Agency's Medway Estuary and Swale Strategy, and the Medway Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, and reference to the Council's open space standards used by Greenspaces as well as discussions with stakeholders. Details of potential projects include new play, football and cricket facilities, as well as strategic investments in flood risk management schemes.
15. This infrastructure will be a mix of ensuring that the environmental impacts of housing development are accounted for; as well as ensuring sustainable development across Medway in general terms. As such, both elements will partly flow from decisions made on spatial strategy and allocations as the Local Plan develops. As such, the requirements (and associated costs) will develop alongside the rest of the Local Plan evidence base.

DELIVERY STRATEGY

16. The project schedule in the IDP provides an indication of the types of infrastructure investment needed in Medway. As the IDP looks forward over 15 years, it is acknowledged that many projects (both their existence and their extent), and their costings, can only be indicative at an early stage in the planning and development process. This can be seen in both local and national examples of IDPs. Elected members will decide on policy, funding, infrastructure, and delivery methods as they affect service delivery over the years ahead.
17. Furthermore, given the wider context set out in this Executive Summary for each category, for many aspects of the infrastructure, it would not be appropriate for a cost estimate to be made at this time.
18. It is also not expected to have all funding sources secured at this stage, so it is usual that IDPs show 'gaps' between the costs of identified projects and the confirmed funding sources.
19. The document will provide an evidence base for the update of the council's developer contributions policy. It is also useful in supporting bids for external funding. The council has a strong track record of securing wider investment from government programmes, that has been used to improve transport, economic development, housing, health, environmental and education services in Medway.
20. Over the coming years members will need to determine the appropriate spatial strategy, allocation policies, funding and infrastructure requirements for development in Medway and on the Hoo Peninsula. The version of the IDP published after discussions at Cabinet in July 2022 is set out in the Updated Appendix 5 within Supplementary Agenda No.4 of this report.