

Hoo Development Framework Consultation Report January 2023

HOO DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK
PUBLIC CONSULTATION
23 SEPTEMBER - 25 NOVEMBER 2022



HOO DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



1. Introduction

- 1.1 As part of its work on planning for Medway's growth and the new Local Plan, the council has been considering the option of strategic scale growth on the Hoo Peninsula. It commissioned landscape and urban design consultants to prepare a Hoo Development Framework to consider some of the planning and design issues associated with strategic scale growth.
- 1.2 There has been ongoing work on the Hoo Development Framework for some years. This has included workshops and meetings with services, community representatives and stakeholders over the past few years, and consultation on a high level version of the framework in 2020.
- 1.3 During more recent consultation on the transport and environmental projects in the Future Hoo Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) programme, residents asked for information about the potential development plans for the Hoo Peninsula and further detail on the Hoo Development Framework. The council decided to publish the draft framework for consultation, in advance of the next stage of work on the Local Plan, to support further engagement and gather information that could feed into the preparation of the Local Plan.
- 1.4 The draft Hoo Development Framework was published in September 2022. It set out an indicative masterplan diagram of a potential approach to development around the villages of Hoo, Chattenden and High Halstow. It also outlined key principles for sustainable development, including landscape led development, connectivity and travel, vibrant neighbourhoods and services and good design.

2. How we consulted

- 2.1 Following approval by members, the consultation took place over nine weeks between 23 September and 25 November 2022. A consultation and engagement plan was drawn up by council officers in the Communications and Planning services.
- 2.2 The consultation was largely managed through online resources on the council's website. This included use of a bespoke consultation platform – OpusConsult – to host the draft framework document and an online survey form. The schedule of the survey questions is set out below in this report. The framework document was available in an accessible format. The website also provided details about the purpose of the consultation and consultation events.
- 2.3 Printed copies of the framework document were available to view in public libraries and community hubs across Medway, and at Chattenden Community Centre. Copies were also sent to parish councils on the Hoo Peninsula.
- 2.4 In early October a short leaflet outlining the scope of the Hoo Development Framework and the purpose of the consultation was distributed to each household on the Hoo Peninsula and the adjacent area. The leaflet provided details on how to take part in the consultation along with information on the public engagement events that were taking place. This approach reached nearly 24,000 households in the following post codes:

ME2 3

ME2 4

ME3 0

ME3 7
ME3 8
ME3 9

- 2.5 The consultation was broadly publicised, using direct mailings to stakeholders on planning policy matters and social media. This included an article in the council's Medway Matters magazine, several organic social media posts on the council's Instagram, Facebook and Twitter pages, and a Future Hoo stakeholder e-bulletin. A press release informed content in local newspapers and community magazines, such as Village Voices in Hoo St Werburgh carried articles.
- 2.6 The council also issued a range of targeted communications to over 50 businesses across the Hoo Peninsula and council services across Medway, such as libraries. This approach included posters and letters providing further information.
- 2.7 Officers from the Planning Service presented to parish councillors and Medway Council members at a meeting of the Rural Liaison Committee on 28 September 2022, to raise awareness of the consultation and answer questions.
- 2.8 The council organised three drop-in exhibitions during the consultation where people had the chance to view materials from the framework document and speak to officers. These were held at:
- | | |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| High Halstow Memorial Hall | Wednesday 2 November 2022 (2:30 - 6:30pm) |
| Hundred of Hoo Secondary Hoo Hall, Hoo | Saturday 5 November 2022 (9am – 12pm) |
| Chattenden Community Centre | Wednesday 9 November 2022 (3pm – 8pm) |
- 2.9 Over 130 people attended the events, and the Hoo event was the best attended with 55 people visiting.
- 2.10 The sessions were promoted through various pre-awareness multichannel communications including social media and updates via the Future Hoo e-bulletin. At the events, a range of social media activity took place including live stories via the council's Facebook and Instagram pages. One of these generated nearly 400 views. Pre and post-event social media also took place on each event day to help encourage residents to come along.
- 2.11 Further signposting sessions were arranged in urban Medway in the week starting 14 November 2022, to raise awareness of the consultation. These involved a panel alerting people to the consultation and staff were available to hand out a summary leaflet (as distributed to all households on the Hoo Peninsula) and advise people where they could find out more information. These two-hour sessions were held in the main shopping areas at the Pentagon Centre in Chatham and Hempstead Valley Shopping Centre, and at Lordswood Library. There was limited interest shown at these signposting sessions.

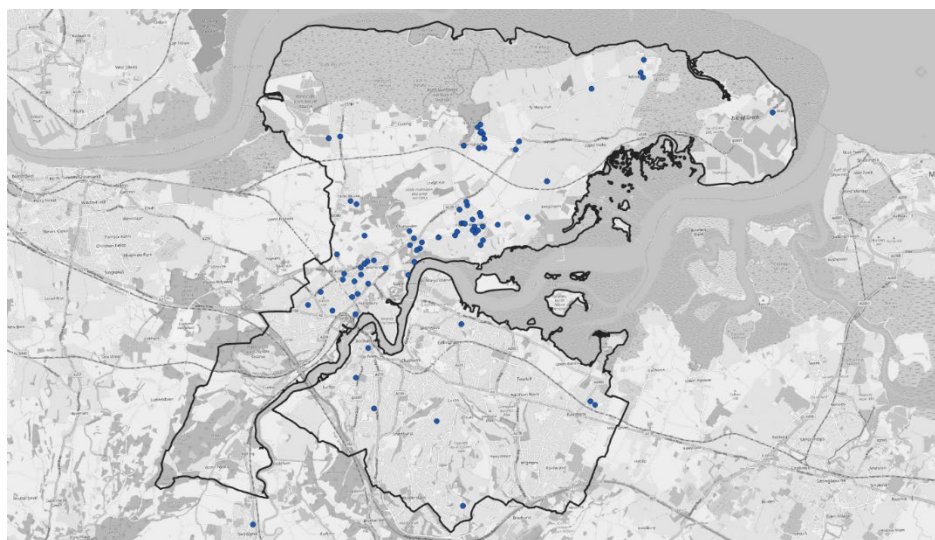
3. Who responded

- 3.1 A total of 147 responses were received to the consultation. 103 responses were received through the OpusConsult online portal, 38 via email, 4 were handed in at exhibitions and 2 were posted or handed directly to officers.
- 3.2 Comments from local residents were largely submitted through the online OpusConsult platform. A small number of people reported some difficulties in using the consultation platform, and this was followed up by officers.
- 3.3 A high proportion of responses came from members of the public, with over two-thirds of responses being submitted by residents.

Respondent group	Proportion (%) of responses
Member of the public	69.4
Developer/Consultant	11.6
Councillor/MP/Parish Council	8.2
Government Department/Public Bodies	3.4
Community/Charity/Faith Group	4.8
Local Authority	1.4
Other	1.4

Respondent location

- 3.4 Where people provided their postcode details, the council was able to analyse the geographical pattern of responses. The majority of respondents submitting representations as *'members of the public'* had contact details indicating that they were Hoo Peninsula residents as marked on the map below.
- 3.5 More specifically, 61 responses were submitted from Hoo Peninsula residents, 29 were from other parts of Medway, such as Strood and Wainscott, while 2 were from outside Medway.



Location of responses from members of the public

'© OpenStreetMap contributors'

4. Consultation comments

- 4.1 The following questions were asked on the online survey, and replicated in hard copies of the survey form, which was available at the consultation events. The questions were broadly framed to allow for a wide range of comments.

Question
Q1a. To what extent do you agree / disagree with the proposed vision?
Q1b. Please explain your answer to Q1a:
Q2. Please tell us what you think about any aspect of the proposed key principles.
Q3a. To what extent do you agree / disagree with the Overall Framework Plan?
Q3b. Please explain your answer to Q3a:
Q4. Please tell us what you think about any aspect of the proposed neighbourhoods.
Q5. Do you have any other comments?

- 4.2 Although the email responses were guided by the structure of the survey form and the content of the consultation document, a number of responses did not choose to answer specific questions, such as Question 1. However, the degree of support, or concerns, for the vision and key principles in the draft framework could be inferred from the general comments made in other sections of responses.

To what extent do you agree / disagree with the proposed vision?

- 4.3 A draft vision was set out in the consultation document:

By 2055, Hoo St Werburgh will be a thriving rural town, sensitively integrated into the landscape and heritage of the Hoo Peninsula. A valued place providing homes, jobs and services for vibrant communities. A small town with an attractive choice of travel connections. A place built for the future, and respecting the past.

- 4.4 There was a clear pattern of responses from local residents indicating disagreement with the vision in the draft framework that promoted significant growth over coming decades. Given the high proportion of responses submitted by local people, the majority of total comments were not supportive. Members of the public made up over four-fifths of those opposed to the framework. For those comments made by wider stakeholders, statutory consultees, charities, businesses and developers, there was a greater spread of views. A number supported the key principles and the potential for future growth but raised particular issues for further work. Just over 70% of responses opposed the draft framework, 11% were in support, and almost 19% were neutral.
- 4.5 The comments made largely concerned aspects of sustainable development. For those disagreeing with the draft framework document, concerns centred on the impacts of potential development. There were in principle objections to large scale housing development on the Hoo Peninsula, and local people wished to see the rural character and productive farmland protected. Most objections specified impacts on

the environment and services and infrastructure as key matters. Many respondents did not agree with the level of housing needed and challenged the government's formula for calculating housing need. Some comments queried the extent to which new development would meet housing needs for Medway's residents, rather than wider areas, such as attracting people from London. Representations also referred to the local plan process needing to consider wider options for growth locations across Medway.

- 4.6 A recurrent theme was the need to secure sufficient infrastructure to support further development. Many people commented on current issues of stretched capacity in services, such as health facilities, education, transport, leisure and sport, and water. The current experiences that people reported in accessing services and travelling raised concerns about how and when infrastructure capacity would be improved to meet the needs of a growing population. There were requests to upgrade infrastructure in advance of further housing development. Frequently raised matters included roads, and wider transport capacity, access to GP services and schools. Broader commercial facilities, such as supermarkets, were also mentioned. Many of the comments reflect aspects of the proposed vision, but respondents disagreed that such ambitions could be achieved if the scale of development considered in the draft framework took place.
- 4.7 For those responses that were more supportive of the vision, comments noted the opportunities to plan for sustainable growth.

Key Principles

Please tell us what you think about any aspect of the proposed key principles

- 4.8 The draft document presented four key principles for sustainable growth:
- *A landscape led development*
 - *Access and movement*
 - *Vibrant and sustainable neighbourhoods*
 - *An attractive and tailored built form*
- 4.9 Responses to this question were very broad ranging, with many submissions not referencing a specific principle. Sustainability and vibrant communities attracted the most responses, as these themes related to the concerns regarding infrastructure and environmental impacts. Many comments referred to the accessibility and landscape themes.
- 4.10 Again, housing and infrastructure matters were the most frequent comments. Local residents expressed their views that villages were already vibrant, and development would damage the local environment and rural character, and lead to urbanisation of the peninsula.
- 4.11 Transport was widely recognised as a critical issue, with reference made to limited public transport services currently in the rural area, congestion and associated air quality concerns. The issue of current poor accessibility particularly in the more rural parts of the Hoo Peninsula was raised. These comments highlighted the need for improved public transport for existing residents to access services. Responses generally accepted that further development required improvements to transport services and choice.

- 4.12 Employment opportunities and access to green infrastructure were considered integral to balanced sustainable development. Specific comments were made to provide a stronger economic theme in the framework, and opportunities were identified to promote the Kingsnorth employment area.
- 4.13 Some of the comments made referred to aspects of the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) programme. 12 responses specifically made representations on a proposal relating to a footpath in proximity to Wainscott Primary School raising safety concerns. Other comments were made on the rail proposals for a new station and passenger train services. There were a number of concerns regarding the certainty on delivering the HIF rail project, and representations cited costs, levels of patronage, and the lack of direct connections, particularly to Strood. Respondents suggested that an improved bus service could offer a more viable, economical and deliverable approach to public transport enhancements, and could benefit existing residents in the shorter term, and provide better links to urban Medway. Electric buses, or other new technologies could be used to address air quality issues.
- 4.14 In terms of landscape a number of responses raised the issue of the importance of wildlife protection and the need to respect the environmental designations on the Hoo Peninsula. Specific comments were made in relation to the Lodge Hill and Chattenden Woods SSSI, and the potential for direct and indirect impacts from development to cause damage. Wider strategic green infrastructure such as the estuaries and marshes were noted as cross border matters by Gravesham Borough Council and Kent County Council.
- 4.15 The heritage of the Hoo Peninsula was mentioned in some responses, broadly seeking a higher recognition of the area's past and its historic environment.

Overall Framework Plan

Q3a. To what extent do you agree / disagree with the Overall Framework Plan?

- 4.16 The consultation document showed a draft indicative masterplan with potential land uses, including housing, services, employment land and open spaces.
- 4.17 The responses to this question reflected the broader reaction to the consultation document. Representations that disagreed with the proposed vision generally continued to object with the content in later sections of the document. As many local people did not support the vision for large scale growth, they strongly disagreed with the indicative masterplan. More support for the masterplan was shown from developers, businesses and other stakeholders, but a common theme was the need to provide flexibility to respond to changing circumstances and the availability of more detailed information in future years.
- 4.18 The issues that were most frequently noted in response to this question were housing, infrastructure and transport. In relation to housing, concerns were raised over the scale of housing, the mix and the impact in terms of infrastructure needed, and the transport impact from the potential development as well as the scale of public transport needed. Affordable housing for Medway residents was sought. An issue of the Hoo Peninsula's importance in connection to employment and energy production was raised. It was viewed that economic development should have a much higher profile in the framework, acknowledging the strategic opportunities of the area, and the need for balanced sustainable development.

Neighbourhoods

4.19 The consultation document set out more detailed considerations at a neighbourhood level for areas of potential change at:

- Chattenden
- Deangate Ridge
- High Halstow
- East of Hoo St Werburgh
- West of Hoo St Werburgh

Please tell us what you think about any aspect of the proposed neighbourhoods.

4.20 The majority of responses did not specifically refer to a particular neighbourhood, rather they made general comments about new neighbourhoods. Negative comments considered the proposals too urbanising in the indicative character areas. Others stated they would prefer improvements to the existing neighbourhoods first. There were concerns about the coalescence of settlements and historic villages being merged as part of a wider urban area. A number of respondents were concerned about housing density and requested only two storey properties.

4.21 The Chattenden neighbourhood area received the most responses. A number of points were raised including concern over the proposed design of houses as well the impact of residential development in close proximity to the SSSI. This comment was also in relation to the Deangate Ridge area.

4.22 Some more detailed comments were received on masterplanning and design issues, including density and the mix and location of different land uses, eg, schools. There were a limited number of comments made that suggested specific amendments to the draft framework.

Do you have any other comments?

4.23 A wide range of 'other issues' were raised under this question. Many related to housing, with respondents querying the level of housing needed and the use of 'the standard method' for calculating the level of housing need. The need for affordable housing was raised and access to market housing. A number of respondents were concerned about the potential loss of rural character within the existing settlements as a result of the scale of housing delivery.

4.24 After housing issues, supporting infrastructure and the road network were the most frequently raised comments – similar to the pattern of responses to earlier questions.

4.25 Many responses queried the status of the Hoo Development Framework, and the timing of the consultation in advance of further certainty on the new Medway Local Plan. Some responses were critical of the approach taken to the consultation, and some stakeholders did not consider it appropriate to make comments on the content of the consultation document, as it was premature to further work on the Local Plan. Concerns were raised that the content of the draft framework pre-empted work on the Local Plan in determining the spatial strategy for Medway's growth. Respondents pointed to the need to demonstrate consideration of alternative development locations through the iterative Sustainability Appraisal, and publish key evidence base documents, particularly on transport and ecology, to justify policies and proposals.

5. Exhibition comments

- 5.1 Staff members on hand at the exhibitions held at High Halstow, Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden recorded details of issues raised verbally by visitors to the events. They are summarised as follows:
- 5.2 Transport was a commonly raised topic. Some comments related to issues around public transport, particularly bus services, while others commented on the proposals for rail through the HIF programme. Some consultees had questions around the details of the services, how these would be run off peak for example, as well as whether the station would have sufficient patronage to be viable. Points were raised about congestion on the peninsula roads and the number of HGVs serving the Kingsnorth sites.
- 5.3 Infrastructure was raised frequently with consultees concerned about the scale of infrastructure delivery needed in relation to the scale of proposed housing growth. The need for health services was a specific concern, as well as the number of school places proposed. Points were also raised in relation to water management, including supporting infrastructure for waste-water management. Means of dealing with flooding was also raised.
- 5.4 A number of people had queries with the presentation of the HDF materials and understanding the content. Some did not understand the progression between the stages within the maps while others did not understand the content in a number of the maps/diagrams. These could be addressed at the staffed exhibitions.
- 5.5 Environmental considerations were raised at the exhibitions with people highlighting the importance of respecting environmental designations, such as the SSSI at Lodge Hill and the estuaries and marshes. The importance of walking routes also came up several times with consultees supporting the importance of a walking network to avoid reliance on cars.
- 5.6 A number of consultees raised a concern around the loss of agricultural land as a result of new development and issues around food supply security.
- 5.7 Points were also raised about the links between the Hoo Development Framework and the Local Plan and the timing of the consultation in advance of further certainty on the local plan spatial strategy. Queries were also raised on the relationship with the HIF programme.