

Cabinet

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Publication of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Neighbourhood Plan

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Simon Curry, Portfolio Holder for Climate Change and Strategic Regeneration

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Summary

A draft neighbourhood plan for Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden has been submitted to Medway Council. The Council must now publish the plan at 'Regulation 16' to gather comments, in advance of arranging an examination. The report outlines the process and issues for the Council. Approval is sought to publish the draft plans for representations.

1. Recommendation

1.1. Cabinet is requested to approve the publication of the draft Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Neighbourhood Plan, as set out at Appendix 1, for representations.

2. Suggested reasons for decision

2.1. To meet the legal requirements for the publication of draft Neighbourhood Plans at Regulation 16.

3. Budget and policy framework

3.1. Neighbourhood Plans were introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Once adopted, or 'made', the Neighbourhood Plan, alongside the Medway Local Plan, forms part of the Development Plan for the local planning authority. The Development Plan forms part of the Council's policy framework.

3.2. The Council has the responsibility of publishing the draft Neighbourhood Plan for representations and arranging an independent examination. The Council has claimed a £5,000 Neighbourhood Planning grant following the designation of the Neighbourhood Area for Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden. Local planning authorities can claim a £20,000 grant from when they issue a

decision statement detailing their intention to send the plan to referendum. The wider work of the local planning authority in relation to supporting neighbourhood planning is met within the Planning Service budget.

4. Background

4.1. Neighbourhood plans form part of the statutory development plan process. One Neighbourhood Plan has been 'made' in Medway – the Cliffe and Cliffe Woods plan was adopted by Council in May 2023. There are a further four neighbourhood plans in preparation in Medway. Earlier in 2023, draft plans for Arches (Chatham) and High Halstow were submitted to Examination, following publication for representations at 'Regulation 16'. Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Parish Council submitted its draft plan to Medway Council in October 2023. The Council must now follow the process for publishing the plans at 'Regulation 16' for comments. Following this, the Council must then organise an independent examination of the plan. A referendum is held before the plan is approved as planning policy.

4.2. The Council has liaised with the neighbourhood planning group in the preparation of the plan and has provided comments in the development of the plan and at the formal Regulation 14 consultation stage.

4.3. The vision of the Neighbourhood Plan is:

To support sustainable growth and development to meet diverse local needs, addressing Climate Change, and preserving or enhancing the distinctive character and local facilities of the parish, the village of Hoo St Werburgh and hamlet of Chattenden and their rural landscape settings.

4.4. There are a number of key planning aims that inform the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan:

- A. To ensure that development in the parish and in Hoo St Werburgh village and the hamlet of Chattenden is sustainable and retains their distinctive identities and separation.
- B. To ensure that development takes account of climate change and biodiversity.
- C. To maintain or expand the range of community facilities and employment, to create more sustainable work/life patterns and meet the diverse needs of the community.
- D. To ensure that housing development is well-designed, sustainable and meets a range of local needs.
- E. To preserve or enhance the natural and historic environments of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Parish.
- F. To promote sustainable forms of transport and active travel, including cycling and walking.

4.5. The policies cover many aspects of planning – employment and community facilities; housing; place and heritage; landscape and natural environment; travel infrastructure; and infrastructure. It does not allocate development sites,

and it is supported by a Design Guide and designates two areas as Local Green Spaces.

5. Options

- 5.1. The Parish Council has submitted the required information to the Council with its draft plan. The Council must now publish the draft plan for consultation comments at 'Regulation 16' for a minimum of six weeks. As this is a statutory process, it is not feasible to consider other options.

6. Advice and analysis

- 6.1. The preparation of the Hoo and Chattenden Neighbourhood Plan has clearly reflected local concerns for the retention of the rural nature of the parish and its distinct settlements. There are notable themes of heritage and local environment in the plan. The plan states that it seeks sustainable development.
- 6.2. This is a large parish. It recorded a population of 13,782 people in the 2021 Census. Hoo St Werburgh has a role as a service centre for the wider peninsula, but some services have eroded in recent decades. The plan could be seen to understate the scale of the main village of Hoo, and is largely silent on the potential for significant levels of growth, that may come with allocations in the new Medway Local Plan. In the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared in the context of the current 2003 Local Plan. However, it should also consider evidence base work for the emerging plan, which includes a significant level of housing need to be delivered across Medway.
- 6.3. The Council made comments on the consultation draft Neighbourhood Plan at Regulation 14 in summer 2023. These reflected comments from services across the Council and some amendments were made in the updated draft submitted in October 2023. The Council has raised concerns about restrictive policy significantly limiting the opportunities for development in the parish outside of the existing built-up area.
- 6.4. The draft Neighbourhood Plan seeks to promote the sustainable development of the parish. Policies seek to improve community well-being and protect and enhance the environment. A Diversity Impact Assessment has been prepared for the draft plan. The assessment is set out at Appendix 2.

7. Risk management

- 7.1. The potential risks relate to costs, not meeting procedural requirements and conflict with the emerging Medway Local Plan. In the absence of an up-to-date Medway Local Plan, there are challenges in providing a definitive assessment of compliance with the Council's strategic policies. Therefore, there is a potential risk that Neighbourhood Plan policy does not clearly align with the Council's aims for sustainable development.

7.2. The main areas of potential risk are outlined below:

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Delay in publishing draft plans creates reputational damage.	If Regulation 16 delayed, local communities critical of council.	Proceed with publishing draft plans and arrange examination.	DIII
Cost of preparation of Neighbourhood Plan creates budget pressure on Council.	Costs exceed agreed service budgets, placing pressure on Council resources.	Secure government funding through Neighbourhood Planning grant, and manage resources in Planning Service.	BIII
Neighbourhood Plan conflicts with Medway Local Plan.	Neighbourhood Plan policies do not align with Council's emerging policies and assessments for sustainable development.	Engagement with NP group, and provide robust consultation comments, consideration of Basic Conditions Statement, and Examiner's report	CIII

For risk rating, please refer to the following table (please **retain** table in final report):

Likelihood	Impact:
A Very likely	I Catastrophic
B Likely	II Major
C Unlikely	III Moderate
D Rare	IV Minor

8. Consultation

- 8.1. The draft Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted to the Council to publish for consultation representations. The plan has already been subject to consultation carried out by the local Neighbourhood Plan group. This included early consultation with local communities to identify the key issues and aims for the plan. The Parish Council published the draft plan for consultation at 'Regulation 14' in June and July 2023. The group has considered comments made, and made any amendments to the plan that it viewed were appropriate. Details of the consultation carried out and comments received at 'Regulation 14' are set out in the Consultation Statement submitted to the Council with the draft plan.
- 8.2. The Council must now publish the draft Neighbourhood Plan and supporting information for representations at 'Regulation 16' for a minimum period of six weeks. It is proposed that the Council publishes the draft plan for representations from Monday 8 January to Monday 19 February 2024. The

Council will publicise this through a Public Notice in the Kent Messenger and direct mailings to contacts on the Planning Policy mailing database. The Planning Service will work with the Council's Communications team to publicise the consultation more widely, such as through use of social media channels.

- 8.3. There will be a dedicated webpage for the consultation on the Council's website, where the draft plan and supporting materials will be available to view. Printed copies of documents will be available in selected public libraries, the Council's offices at Gun Wharf, and other accessible locations, as appropriate, in agreement with the Neighbourhood Planning group. The Council has offered the group the opportunity to present the content of the draft plans to members, to raise awareness and understanding.
- 8.4. Following the close of the consultation, the Council will collate the comments and forward, together with the submission documents, to an independent examiner who will carry out an examination of the plans. All written comments received will be published, with redaction of sensitive personal information, on the Council's website as part of the examination process.

9. Climate change implications

- 9.1. The draft plan promotes sustainable development and is intended to be compliant with national and local planning policy. The plan positively seeks to achieve environmental objectives, including addressing climate change. These ambitions inform a number of policies in the plan.
- 9.2. Addressing climate change is a key aspect of the plan's vision and several policies seek mitigation and adaptation through new development, including sustainable transport, environmental protection and design features to reduce carbon use and support sustainable drainage.

10. Financial implications

- 10.1. The Council must publish the draft Neighbourhood Plan and supporting information for representations at 'Regulation 16', prior to arranging an independent examination of the plans. The Council has claimed a £5000 Neighbourhood Planning grant following the designation of the Neighbourhood Area for Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden. Local planning authorities can claim a £20,000 grant from when they issue a decision statement detailing their intention to send the plan to referendum. Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden is a large parish, and it is currently unclear if the referendum could be organised to coincide with pre-planned election, which could provide cost savings. There is a risk that the additional funding available will not be sufficient to cover the full costs of the examination and referendum and this could create a budget pressure on the Council.
- 10.2. The wider work of the local planning authority in relation to supporting neighbourhood planning is met within the Planning Service budget. The costs

of the Regulation 16 consultation will be met within the Planning Service budget.

11. Legal implications

11.1. The proposals to publish the draft Neighbourhood Plan as set out in this report meet the requirements of Neighbourhood Planning process as set out in legislation, in particular, the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004, and the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, as amended.

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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Neighbourhood Plan, Submission Draft 2023

Appendix 2 - Diversity Impact Assessment Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Draft Neighbourhood Plan

Background papers

None