

Appendix 3 - Chatham Design Code – Summary of Consultation Responses

The Chatham Centre Design Code online consultation ran from 3 November 2023 to 3 January 2024. There were 72 online submitted responses, 1 from an elected member, 3 from an organisation, Medway Council's Climate Change Team, Southern Water and Kent Wildlife Trust and 68 from individuals of which 96% live in Medway. A further 5 responses were received by email.

Online Responses

Key Issue/Theme	Response
<p>Vision: Overall respondents were supportive of the vision of the code. There was a clear pattern of responses supporting Medway's heritage by celebrating the river Medway and its naval legacy. However, 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 care facilities, education, transport, leisure, and water.</p>	<p>Within the design code, there is a priority in demonstrating how urban intensification can increase housing numbers. However, through the Chatham Cross, Streets and Spaces, Waterfront and Urban Avenues area types, mixed uses are encouraged or mandated in these areas for ground floor uses.</p> <p>As part of proactive Policy and DM processes, subsequent work should align with the emerging local plan to identify mixed-use/ services that will be required and can be hard-wired into larger sites to add capacity for services that complement existing plans to extend and enhance local services within the town centre.</p>
<p>City Status: Whilst there was overall support for the questions asked across the engagement section, those that disagreed were able to identify their concerns, and a key concern where people did disagree with the vision focused on referring to Chatham as a city centre.</p>	<p>Within the National Model Design Code guidance document from DLUHC, the vision should be grounded in existing policy. The existing Local Plan describes Chatham as a city centre.</p> <p>In the design code, the vision clarifies that Chatham will become Medway's city centre for Medway by 2050 by remaining a low- to mid-rise centre that delivers on the following five key themes: Healthy & connected city, Heritage maritime city, Green sustainable city, Vibrant city of culture, and City to learn and grow. Therefore, the 'city status' is dependent on growing the existing place according to the key themes identified, which were consulted upon during the Analysis stage of the design code, and has wider support than those who have stated to oppose this approach.</p>

Key Issue/Theme	Response
<p>Health and Connected City: There are concerns that the measures to encourage sustainable modes of transport will adversely affect those who use private vehicles. It was also widely recognised public transport services are a critical issue with comments highlighting the need for improved affordable and reliable public transport. Concerns were also raised about the accessibility of the High Street especially for people with health conditions or impairments.</p>	<p>There was overall support for achieving ‘Better streets and spaces for people’ (where 74% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed), ‘Safe cycling and wheeling (where 57% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed), and ‘An integrated Medway-wide public transport network centred on Chatham’ (where 72% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed). Furthermore, there was 57% support for ‘Vehicle use and car parking to complement active and public transport’. Therefore, a considered approach to movement is required that balances the needs and outcomes for active and sustainable transport with vehicle movements. Whilst it is likely that the current balance may favour more private vehicles than will be possible with the transformation and intensification of the town centre, a higher quality provision of future car parking and local access for private vehicles will need to complement the enhancement of active and public transport modes whilst ensuring High Street and other local destinations remain accessible (and should offer enhancements) for those with health conditions or impairments.</p>
<p>City to learn and grow: There was an emphasis on strong links with universities and innovation and support for local businesses to grow. However, there were concerns about the number of empty buildings and how support can be provided to new and small businesses.</p>	<p>The design code identifies areas for intensification through identifying where develop might be possible considering existing empty and underutilised sites and buildings. This will increase the residential population within Chatham, which should provide additional demand for existing and future mixed uses within the town centre, addressing existing empty shops.</p> <p>Furthermore, the design code introduces the concept of ‘lotting’ whereby different ground floor mixed-uses aim to cater to different occupiers, such as small/micro floorplates within the Streets and Spaces area type to the potential for larger ground floor floorplates along High Street. This approach aims to hardwire smaller/ more affordable spaces into the town centre, which can cater to more create/ younger entrepreneur that could be linked to university students.</p>

Key Issue/Theme	Response
	<p>Relevant Council strategies should be developed in due course to support the need for small businesses and their potential to grow with the delivery of new development within Chatham centre.</p>
<p>Movement: Overall respondents were supportive of an integrated Medway-wide public transport network centred on Chatham. However, concerns were raised about the current affordability and reliability of public transport. There were also concerns about safe cycling and wheeling, many felt they didn't currently feel safe riding their bikes on the roads, while others did not feel safe when bikes and scooters used the High Street. Several respondents perceived the Design Code to have an anti-car agenda and unfairly penalising motorists.</p>	<p>Additional work will be required to ensure by 2050 that there is an enhanced, reliable and affordable 'Medway-wide public transport network centred on Chatham', however the design code sets this aspiration.</p> <p>Enhancing the cycle offer is embedded within the design code to lead towards safer cycling and wheeling, which will need to be delivered as part of reprofiling streets between now and 2050.</p> <p>As per the above response under Healthy and Connected City, the design code supports a higher quality provision of future car parking and local access for private vehicles will need to complement the enhancement of active and public transport modes.</p>
<p>Public Space and Nature: Overall respondents were supportive of the proposed vision for Public Space and Nature, particularly bringing in nature and promoting sustainability, and engaging with River Medway. However, there are concerns about building new housing developments on our few, precious greenspaces and coalescence between the towns.</p>	<p>The design code promotes a strong greening of Chatham Centre, including the creation of new green public squares, linear green landscapes with integrated SuDS, tree-lined streets and introduction of green and brown roofs, whilst also better connecting and engaging with the River Medway.</p> <p>Within the design code, existing open spaces will remain and be enhanced; no residential development is proposed on existing greenspaces. As for coalescence between the towns, the design code for Chatham centre aims to enhance connections to adjacent open spaces and neighbourhoods, however proposed development will not encourage coalescence between towns.</p>
<p>Built Form: Overall respondents were supportive of the proposed vision for Built Form, particularly buildings</p>	<p>Within the area-wide guidance, focused under built form, one key theme is to 'Celebrate landmarks and views'. Within this section, four existing Chatham Strategic Views are</p>

Key Issue/Theme	Response
<p>being sustainable and built to last, and celebrating landmarks and views. There is concern however about the impact of new development on these views and a strong desire to retain and enhance historical buildings and features for all to enjoy.</p>	<p>referenced from the 'Medway, A building height policy for Medway 2006'. Additional work initiated through the design code process has led to the development of initial 'Local Chatham Views' that nominate a range of emerging low, middle and high-level views. The design code references this work and states that any challenges to heights will need to undergo an 'exemplary design process' to demonstrate proposals are in-keeping with the Strategic Views and enhance or promote Chatham Local Views.</p> <p>Overall heights have been determined to align with the community's preference for a low-rise place, with specific heights relating to context and street sections, whereby new development will range from 2 to 6 stories. These heights will relate to existing designated and non-designated heritage assets, whilst enhanced public realm is promoted in the design code to create a more appropriate place setting for existing designated heritage buildings, including St. John's Chatham, the Old Brook Pumping Station and the Emmaus Church Centre (formerly the Ebenezer Congregational Church).</p>
<p>Uses: Overall, there was most support for homes for all which is reflected in the responses where housing affordability is a key issue, and development needs to consider families and the wider community. There is also concern that requiring new developments to reflect historic elements could stifle innovation. Increasing building heights is also seen by some as an opportunity and could create interest and break monotony.</p>	<p>Delivery of affordable housing will be aligned to existing policy for Chatham as will housing mix. However, a range of typologies is encouraged through the design code to support a diverse range of housing types that can cater to a wider demographic range (for example by encouraging ground floor maisonettes along the northern frontage of The Brook to address residential quality on the ground floor).</p> <p>Reflection of historic elements relates to proportions, heights, building widths and other elements to ensure new development is more contextual to existing context and to one another. Historic references, albeit in any form that includes contemporary interpretation, is encouraged through the themes to support the Vision for Chatham 2050 are supported by celebrating the River Medway and naval legacy, although this will be up to applicant</p>

Key Issue/Theme	Response
	<p>team's interpretation rather than copying existing built form in detail.</p> <p>Low to mid-rise development is limited throughout Chatham centre by height restrictions. However, applicants can challenge these heights to provide more variation, however, an exemplary design process must be followed to demonstrate exemplary design to justify additional heights (as well as consideration of existing and emerging views).</p>

Responses, received via email.

Organisation	Response
Historic England	<p>Historic England suggests that the code could have a stronger emphasis with more details highlighted about the historical aspects of Chatham. This work was completed during the Analysis stage of the design code, and it will now be included as an appendix to be used by applicants, helping them refer to the local character analysis to inform their design submissions. Additional comments relate to viewpoints and corridors that relate to the historic townscape. Text and images related to this section will be updated accordingly and refer to ongoing/ future work that will be undertaken by the Council.</p>
Medway Council's Development Management Team	<p>Officers have identified various Council documents that can be referenced within to the design code, ranging from the Local Plan to Council strategies on walking and cycling. Where suitable, references will be incorporated by amending the wording and associated diagrams. Further, refinement and justification of the Exemplary Design Process was suggested. This will be updated with further input on Design Review from Design South East. Additional recommendations focused on clarity which will be resolved as appropriate.</p>

<p>Medway Council's Planning Policy Team</p>	<p>The Policy team identified several points to ensure the design code does not supersede Policy documents or introduce contradictory/ confusing information. These areas will be clarified/ adjusted accordingly in the code. Specific points raised include defining Chatham as a city centre, which references the 2003 Local Plan, however the wording in the design code balances this within a longer-term timeframe; various movement strategies and connections with the wider context, and these comments will be addressed; and a few references where coding and associated text has not been fully/ sufficiently evidenced – the policy team will look at how to develop certain gaps in evidence as part of the local plan process.</p>
<p>Medway Council's Planning Specialist Team</p>	<p>The Specialist Team focused on the Public Space and Nature areas of the design code. They welcome the ambition, vision and objectives set out for area types across Chatham. The coding of the public realm provides the opportunity for creating a common thread from which the identity of Chatham can be established and experienced.</p> <p>However, they suggest reducing repetition and clarifying coding in these sections for each area type aid developers and for officers determining applications – which has been incorporated into the code.</p>
<p>Tetlow King – On behalf of Arpenteur Nightingale Ltd.</p>	<p>Arpenteur Nightingale responded with a formal letter, acting on behalf of the owner of the Go Outdoors site who is currently developing proposals for the site. A number of comments focused on specific wording, which in many instances, where appropriate, will be clarified within the design code. Another area highlighted is the proposed height strategy. However, this strategy has been carefully considered through</p>

	<p>analysis of Chatham's unique bowl-like topography and through the use of Area Types (as part of the design code process prescribed in the National Model Design Code), and therefore will remain. Lastly, the design review process and procedures for 'code breaking' has been questioned. This text will be strengthened and clarified; however, Medway Council will remain the organisation to determine when a scheme design is successful, and thus allowing the design code to be strategically challenged through high quality design.</p>
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