



Medway Village Infrastructure Audit

June 2025

[Medway.gov.uk/FutureMedway](https://www.medway.gov.uk/FutureMedway)



Executive Summary

Medway Village Infrastructure Audit 2025 assesses the availability, condition, and community aspirations for local services and infrastructure across Medway's villages. Data was gathered through parish council surveys, site visits by planning officers, Office for National Statistics data, and council mapping records. The audit covers social, economic, environmental, and transport facilities.

Key Findings:

- **Social and community facilities:** Most villages have essential social facilities such as community and/or village halls, places of worship, pubs, cafés, pre-schools, and primary schools. However, higher-level services like libraries, dentists, secondary schools, and further education are scarce, reflecting the rural context. Larger villages, notably Hoo St Werburgh, offer a wider range of services, while smaller settlements such as Cooling, Lower Rainham, and Upper/Lower Upnor have more limited provision. The 2025 audit included an expanded review of community assets such as bins, benches, post boxes, notice boards, and public toilets. These were generally well maintained and accessible. Village halls remain important community hubs, regularly used for various social and recreational activities, though some require maintenance or upgrades.
- **Transport:** Traffic congestion is a common concern, particularly around key junctions like Four Elms Roundabout and during school peak times. Public transport remains limited, with bus services connecting villages primarily to Medway Towns. Rail access is available in Cuxton and Halling via the Medway Valley Line.
- **Employment and Economic Activity:** Views on expanding local employment were mixed. Where supported, priorities included small-scale offices, opportunities linked to holiday parks, green tourism and notably, facilities to support home and remote working—reflecting post-pandemic work patterns. Parcel pick-up/drop-off points have increased significantly since the 2010s, improving rural access to delivery services.
- **Environment:** The survey found that green space facilities across the area generally were considered to be of average to good quality. While some parishes highlighted a need for additional allotments, the prevailing view was that priority should be given to maintaining and enhancing existing open spaces.
- **Needs and Aspirations:** There is a demand for enhanced community facilities. Concerns about healthcare accessibility were frequently raised, mirroring wider stakeholder feedback during the 2024 Regulation 18 Local Plan consultation. There is also demand for enhanced public transportation options.

The audit highlights the correlation between settlement size and service provision, with larger villages better equipped to meet residents' needs. While many facilities are in average to good condition, ongoing challenges remain regarding facility accessibility, namely healthcare access, transport connectivity and to a lesser extent employment opportunities. The findings provide a robust evidence base to inform Medway's Local Plan and support targeted investment to enhance rural infrastructure and community wellbeing.

Contents

Introduction	4
Policy Context	5
National Policy	5
Local Policy	6
Local Plan Evidence base	7
Methodology	9
Infrastructure Audit	14
Population Context	14
Social Facilities	16
Facilities & Condition	16
Needs & Aspirations	17
Economic Facilities	18
Context	18
Facilities & Condition	18
Needs & Aspirations	20
Transport	20
Context	20
Facilities & Condition	22
Needs & Aspirations	23
Environmental Facilities	24
Context	24
Facilities & Condition	25
Needs & Aspirations	26
Conclusion	27
Social	27
Economic	27
Transport	27
Environment	27
Appendix A – Facilities Data	29
Appendix B – Village Infrastructure Audit Survey Form	41

Introduction

Medway Council is preparing a new Local Plan to set a framework for the area's development over the next 16 years. The plan has to achieve the right balance between, meeting the needs for housing, jobs, shops, services and infrastructure for Medway's growing communities and protecting the quality of the natural and historic environment and its distinctive character.

Medway is a diverse area, including one of the largest urban areas in the south east, built up between the Kent Downs and the river Medway, with extensive countryside on the Hoo Peninsula to the north, and villages along the Medway Valley to the south. The rural area is also complex, with strategic energy and infrastructure installations sitting next to internationally important marshland and estuarine habitats, wildlife sites, productive agricultural land and the designated downland landscapes of outstanding natural beauty. Added to this is a pattern of dispersed villages, home to over 10% of Medway's population. Planning for rural Medway must take account of the special characteristics of the area and ensure that the needs of village communities are addressed in preparing the Medway Local Plan.

One of the concerns in planning for sustainable villages is that people can access a range of services and facilities that provide the basis for much community and social life – such as schools, surgeries, shops, village halls, buses, and parks. The remoteness of rural areas often means that people have to rely more on local services, or travel into nearby towns, which is not always an easy option for many.

In December 2024, the council contacted parish councils throughout Medway to find out about the range and condition of community facilities in local villages. This village infrastructure audit (VIA) is an update of earlier work, with the previous VIA published in 2017. The current audit will form part of the evidence base for the new Medway Local Plan. The information is being used alongside other analytical and evidence base work to help develop planning policies for the rural area and to help assess what infrastructure investments may be needed in villages. Later in the report, we will comment on any trends or changes observed since the earlier VIA.

This report presents the findings of the VIA conducted in 2024-2025, highlighting key characteristics of Medway's rural communities.

The audit is part of the council's wider work in infrastructure planning and preparation, aimed at informing the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and Medway Local Plan 2041.

Policy Context

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework¹ (NPPF) states that ‘planning policies should identify opportunities for villages to grow and thrive’² as a core planning principle. Supporting a prosperous rural economy is one of the key strands of delivering sustainable development, and the NPPF states at paragraph 88:

‘Planning policies and decisions should enable:...

- the retention and development of accessible local services and community facilities, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship.’*

The NPPF further recognises that the planning system can play an important role in promoting healthy communities. Paragraph 96 states:

Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:

- promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;*
- Are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas;*
- Enable and support healthy lives, through both promoting good health and preventing ill-health, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs and reduce health inequalities between the most and least deprived communities – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.*

Paragraph 98 states:

¹ Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

² National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 83

‘To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;*
- Guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs;’*

The council is working to embed these key principles in planning for rural communities in the new Medway Local Plan. The VIA inputs into the evidence base that will inform the development of the Local Plan.

Local Policy

The emerging Medway Local Plan 2041 emphasises the importance of rural infrastructure in supporting sustainable development across Medway. The plan outlines several strategies for enhancing rural areas, including the development of rural sites and improving connectivity between villages and urban centres. It highlights the need for prioritising transportation, utilities, and community facilities to ensure that rural communities can thrive within an ever-growing Medway.

A number of key policies related to the protection and enhancement of rural infrastructure include:

Policy T14: Rural Economy - This policy focuses on supporting and enhancing the rural economy by promoting sustainable agricultural practices, encouraging rural tourism, and facilitating the growth of rural businesses

Policy DM12: Local and Rural Centres - This policy aims to strengthen the role of local and rural centres by improving access to essential services, supporting local businesses, and enhancing the overall quality of life in these areas

Policy T29: Community and Cultural Facilities - This policy emphasises the importance of providing and maintaining community and cultural facilities (in rural areas) to ensure that residents have access to these facilities and recreational opportunities

Policy S24: Infrastructure Delivery - This policy outlines the framework for

delivering the necessary infrastructure to support sustainable development, including transportation, utilities, and community facilities

By aligning the findings of the VIA with the aims of the Local Plan, it can provide a detailed roadmap for upgrading transportation networks, enhancing utility services, and developing community amenities. This will ensure that rural areas are well equipped to support themselves and contribute to the overall sustainability of Medway.

Communities in Medway have shown increased interest in addressing their respective concerns through the neighbourhood planning process. This process is a community led, guiding future development in a local area and provides the opportunity for the local area residents to define how they wish to see their neighbourhood grow and change in the future.

Medway have adopted neighbourhood plans for Hoo St Werburgh, Cliffe and Cliffe Woods and High Halstow. Each of these plans highlighted concerns related to the importance of local infrastructure and investment in services that make up the fabric of a thriving community.

As part of the neighbourhood planning process, the parish areas conducted surveys and held various consultation events for the local residents to feedback on what they wish to see come forward within the area and this feedback became the foundations of the policies within their plan.

The consultations highlighted concerns regarding healthcare facilities, educational institutions, and public transport options. The lack of infrastructure in these areas has been a recurring theme, emphasising the need for strategic investments to support the growing population and ensure sustainable development.

These neighbourhood plans have sought to address need for services through community facilities policies, seeking to protect against the loss of facilities such as shops, restaurants, financial services, allotments. Additionally they include policies which enable the development of new or underused facilities (subject to criteria), in sustainable and accessible locations.

Local Plan Evidence base

The Hoo Community Infrastructure Framework (CIF) Draft (February 2025) sets out a 'pan-peninsula' approach to planning, delivering and sustaining essential community infrastructure across the Hoo peninsula. The CIF aims to coordinate investment in infrastructure such as health and social care, education, community centres, green spaces, digital connectivity, and sustainable

transport. It seeks to address current deficits, anticipate future growth, and ensure infrastructure delivery keeps pace with development, particularly on the peninsula.

The community also worked together to identify areas for action which they see as important at the current time:

- Healthcare: Develop a plan to improve health provision on the peninsula.
- Young People: Prioritise facilities for young people, giving them a role in deciding what is delivered on the Hoo Peninsula
- Existing facilities: Investing in improving existing facilities and bringing these up to modern standards.
- Green and Blue Infrastructure: Protect and respect heritage and nature and do more to tell people why it is important.
- Transport: Improving public transport links between villages and facilities as well as off the peninsula.
- Sporting facilities: Create a hub for sport and leisure at Deangate and better connect it to the places where people live
- Supermarket: Test the potential of a bigger supermarket.
- Jobs: create a plan to link local people to jobs and opportunities.

It is recognised that these may change in time and there is a need for an ongoing review of provision and need.

A Retail and Town Centres Study has been prepared for Medway Council, as part of the emerging Local Plan's evidence base. The study provides a review of the background and context to the main town centres and retailing issues in Medway, a review of retail and town centre trends and provide recommendations for the retail and town centres elements of the new Local Plan.

The CIF and the Retail and Town Centres Study's emphasis on equitable access to services and facilities and futureproofing closely aligns with the needs and aspirations expressed by Medway's rural parishes. By integrating the Retail and Town Centres Study and CIF's recommendations, the VIA can help ensure that rural communities are not left behind as Medway grows and evolves.

Methodology

Area covered by Village Infrastructure Audit

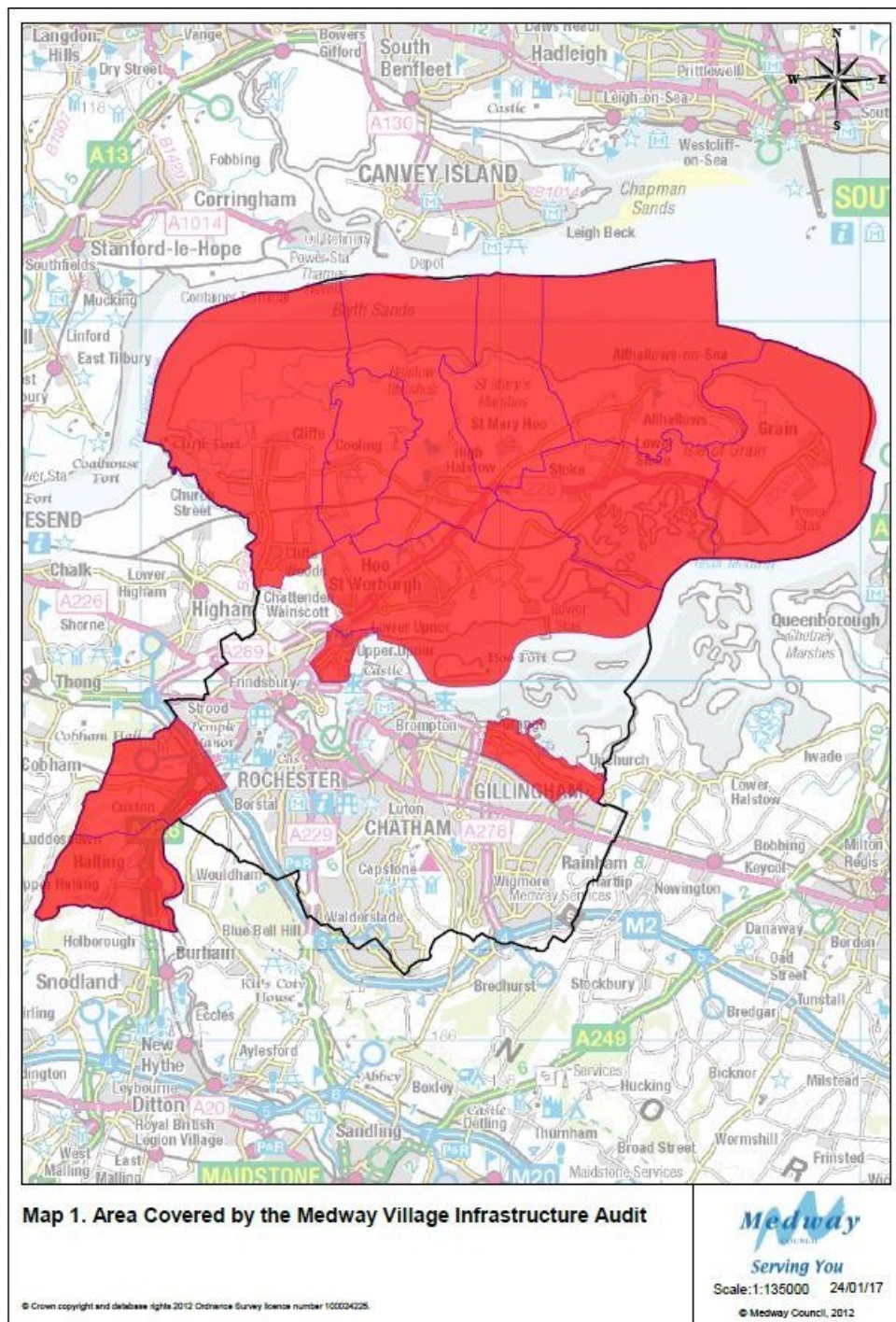
The purpose of this work was to review the distribution and condition of community facilities in rural Medway. In defining the survey area, the work was directed to small rural settlements. Much of the area fell within the parished parts of Medway on the Hoo Peninsula and Medway Valley, the survey area also included Lower and Upper Upnor which form part of Frindsbury Extra Parish Council and included the non-parished community at Lower Rainham. It is noted that there are other un-developed areas of countryside in Medway that were not included in the VIA, as they did not have defined villages or rural settlements. The survey also excluded the small parish, St Mary Hoo and hamlets, as defined settlements for the purposes of this survey.

The villages assessed were those with a defined village boundary within the 2003 Medway Local Plan. This was chosen as the base criteria as they were felt to be large enough to support infrastructure and are considered rural service centres currently.

The villages assessed are listed below:

- Upper Halling
- Lower Halling
- Cuxton
- Lower Rainham (no Parish Council, but a village boundary)
- Upper Upnor
- Lower Upnor
- Chattenden
- Hoo St Werburgh
- Cliffe
- Cliffe Woods
- Cooling
- High Halstow
- Stoke
- Lower Stoke
- Allhallows
- Grain

The coverage of the survey area is set out below in Map 1. Further details on the characteristics of the villages as a part of their respective parishes (Upper and Lower Upnor and Lower Rainham have been recorded independent of their respective parishes) are set out in Appendix A.



Defining scope of study

As per paragraph 8b of the NPPF and in accordance with local and neighbourhood planning policy, access to a range of services and facilities is fundamental to a good quality of life and is a core principle of sustainable development.

In light of this policy directive, the council has identified a range of services

and facilities that constitute local infrastructure in villages. These have been categorised into environmental, social, economic, and transport sectors, as outlined in the NPPF³:

Environmental facilities (Green Spaces and Sports)

- Allotments
- Children's play areas
- Public Park
- Sports facilities
- Village Green

Social facilities (Health and Social community facilities and facilities supporting community function)

- Village/community hall
- Library
- Educational facility (pre-school, primary school, secondary school & higher/further education)
- Dentist
- GP surgery
- Pharmacy
- Place of worship
- Burial grounds
- Public house
- Café
- Restaurant
- Hot Food take away
- Facilities supporting community function
- Bins
- Benches
- Post boxes
- Community notice boards
- Public toilets
- Other

Economic facilities (local services and businesses)

- Food store/village shop
- Newsagents
- Post Office
- Garage/petrol station
- ATMs/banks
- Parcel Pick up/drop off
- Broadband and mobile phones

Transport

³ National Planning Policy Framework – Paragraphs 96 & 98

- Traffic congestion
- Parking
- Public transport accessibility
- Transport routes.

Data collection

To support the development of a new local plan, the scope of the village infrastructure audit included:

- Providing an assessment of the current state of infrastructure in rural villages in Medway.
- Reporting aspirations and evidence on the need for improvements to local infrastructure.

Information was obtained from the following sources:

- Surveys were sent to the Parish Councils of Cuxton, Frindsbury Extra, Halling, Hoo St Werburgh, Cliffe and Cliffe Woods, Cooling, High Halstow, Stoke, Allhallows, and Grain, focusing on the availability and condition of local services.
- The Office for National Statistics⁴ (ONS) website was used to provide relevant statistics on the demographics and characteristics of Medway's villages.
- The Council compiled information from its own records, evidence base, supporting documents and consultation responses, mapping the locations of services and facilities such as shops, schools, healthcare facilities, and parks.
- Site visits to the villages were conducted by Planning Officers from the Medway Planning Policy Team to verify the location of services and facilities.

It should be noted that surveys for the settlement of Lower Rainham were completed by Planning Officers, as this area is unparished. The Council received responses to all but two of the surveys sent out.

The village surveys consisted of three parts:

- An assessment of the current level of service provision and their condition, divided into four categories: environmental, economic, social, and

⁴ [Office for National Statistics](#)

transport.

- An evaluation of community needs and aspirations for local infrastructure, as presented by the Parish Councils.
- A request for information regarding village hall usage.

A sample survey form is provided in Appendix B.

Infrastructure Audit

The report below is categorised into social, economic, environmental and transport facilities and services to align with the survey form. Initially laying out some demographic context, the rest of the sections present the findings of the responses to the village infrastructure audit, community needs and aspirations for investments in local services and facilities.

This information will support the Council in making informed decisions as to the level of infrastructure required in the future based on the capacity and condition of existing provision, and the potential need for additional services in planning for Medway's villages in the new Local Plan.

Population Context

According to the 2021 Census, the total population of the villages covered by the Medway Village Infrastructure Assessment (VIA) stands at 32,857 accommodated within 12,499 households. This represents a significant increase from the 2011 population figure of 28,400 for the same rural area, as recorded in the previous VIA. Over the past decade, the villages have experienced a population growth of 15.7% (an increase of 4,457 residents), outpacing the growth rate observed between 2001 and 2011, which was 8%.

In comparison, the total population of Medway as a whole in 2021 is 279,773. The villages now account for approximately 11.7% of Medway's total population, a slight increase from the 11% share recorded in 2011. This suggests that the villages continue to grow at a faster rate than Medway as a whole with the largest village being Hoo St Werburgh, along with Cliffe, Cliffe Woods, Cuxton, and Halling, these villages continue to account for a significant proportion of the rural population, maintaining their status as key population centres within the rural area.

The number of households has increased to 12,499 in line with the population, reflecting ongoing residential development and demographic changes. Unemployment figures available show 10,530 individuals recorded as unemployed across the villages.

The rural villages' population growth of 15.7% from 2011 to 2021 exceeds the growth rate recorded for Medway as a whole (6% between 2011 and 2021). The villages' share of Medway's total population has also increased slightly, reflecting the continued attractiveness of rural living and the impact of new housing developments.

The age profile of the villages demonstrates an older population compared to Medway as a whole. Residents aged 65 and over comprise 19% of the village population, significantly higher than the 16.4% observed across Medway.

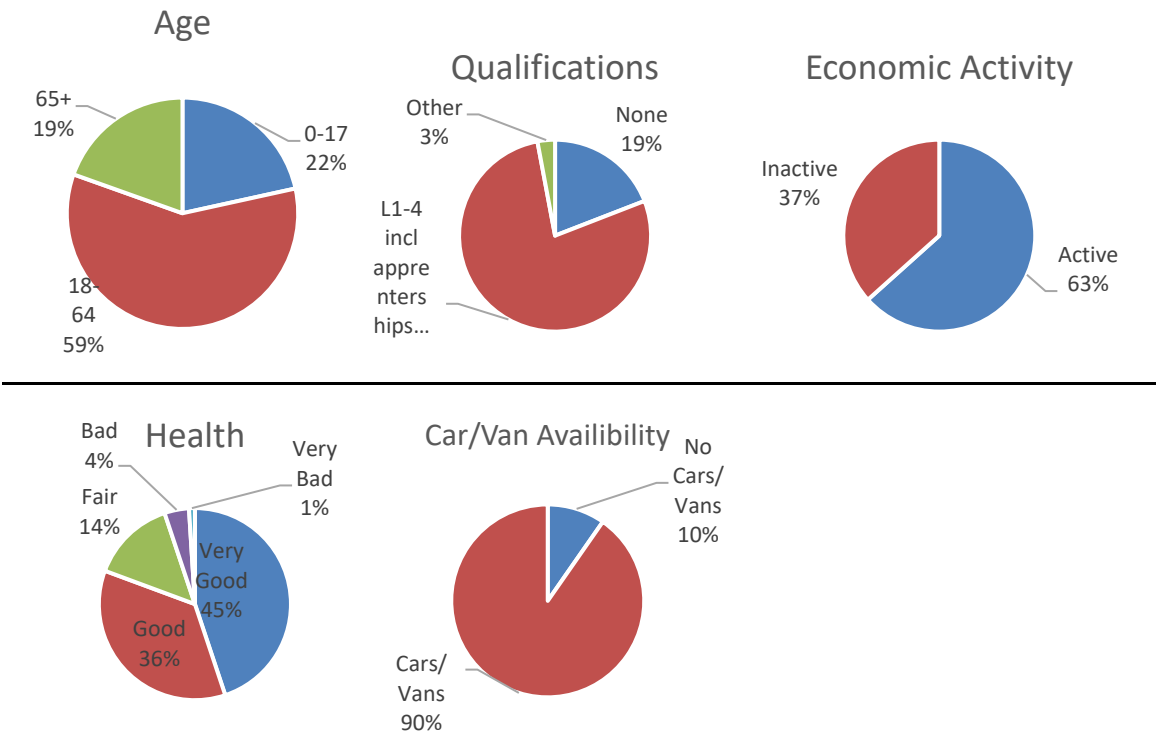
Those aged 0–17 years account for 22% in the villages, compared to 22.8% in Medway, while those aged 18–64 years are also proportionally smaller in the villages (59% vs. 60.8%). This ageing demographic has important implications for local service provision, particularly in health and social care.

Educational attainment in the villages is generally on par the Medway average. Only 19% of adults in the villages have no formal qualifications, compared to 19.4% in Medway, while 78% hold Level 1-4 qualifications (including apprenticeships), on par with the 77.4% seen across the authority. This suggests a relatively skilled population base in the rural and urban areas.

Regarding economic activity rates, 62% of village residents are economically active, compared to 62.7% in Medway overall. The villages report health outcomes on par with Medway as a whole; 81% of residents describe their health as good or very good, compared to 82% in Medway, and 5% rate their health as bad or very bad the same as the Medway-wide figure of 5%.

Car ownership is substantially higher in the villages, with just 9% of households lacking access to a car or van, compared to 18% in Medway. This reflects the rural context and limited public transport options.

In summary, the 2021 data confirms that Medway’s villages are characterised by an older, with higher car ownership. These patterns reinforce the distinct demographic and socio-economic profile of the rural area, underscoring the need for tailored infrastructure and services to support its evolving communities.



Social Facilities

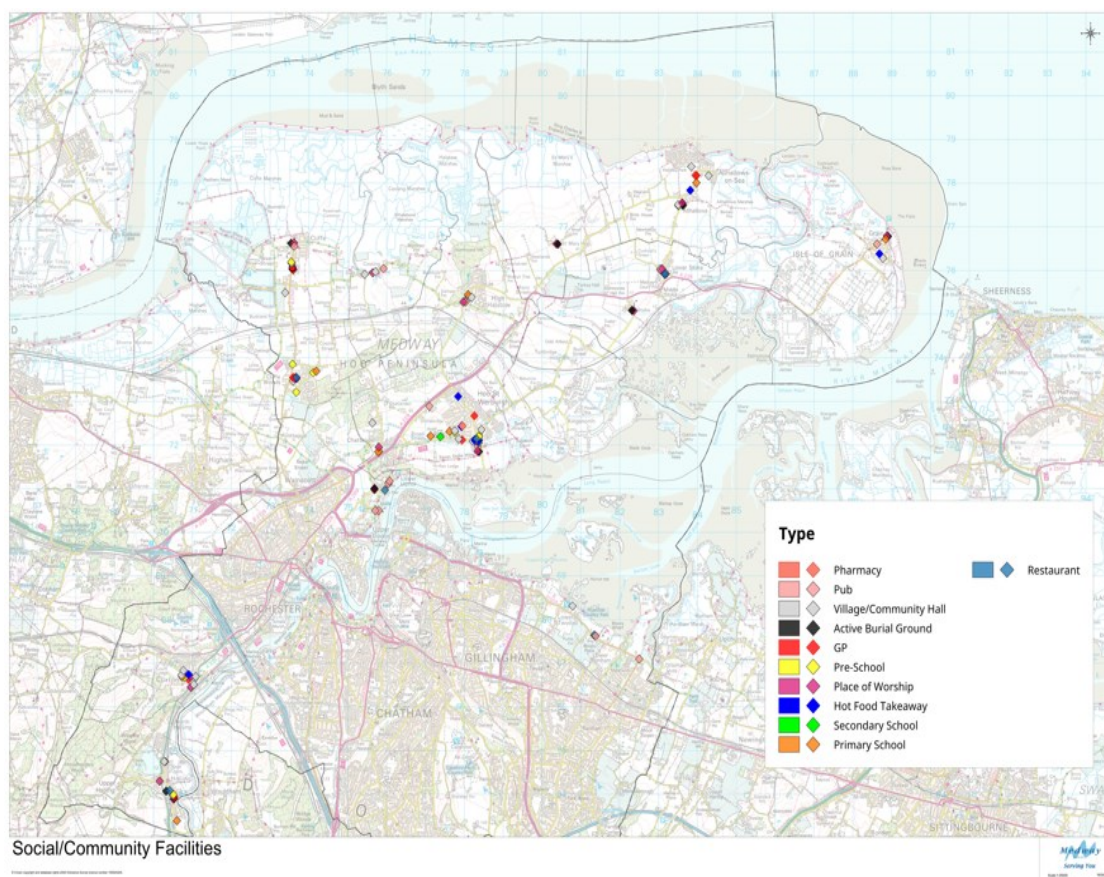
Facilities & Condition

The social facilities assessed in the villages included key amenities such as village/community halls, GP surgeries, pharmacies, places of worship, burial grounds, libraries, public houses, cafés, restaurants, dentists, pre-schools, primary schools, secondary schools, and further education facilities. These were selected to align with the NPPF criteria for evaluating the social aspects of sustainable development.

The 2025 audit expanded its scope to include smaller but essential facilities supporting community functions. These encompassed bins, benches, postboxes, community notice boards, public toilets and other similar amenities. Furthermore a 'Part Three' was added to the survey, providing more detailed analysis of village hall provision and usage.

Nearly all settlements, except the very smallest, had a village hall. Most villages reported having a place of worship, a pub, a café/restaurant/takeaway, a pre-school, and a primary school. However, higher-tier services such as libraries, dentists, secondary schools, and further education facilities were less common, which is to be expected given the rural nature of the area. Overall the condition of the facilities that were present were judged by the parishes to be generally average to good. This is consistent with the previous iteration of the VIA.

The level of facilities generally reflected the size of the respective settlements and populations of the parishes. Hoo St Werburgh, the largest village with a population exceeding 9,000 residents, had the most extensive range of services. Conversely, smaller villages such as Cooling, Lower Rainham, and Upper/Lower Upnor had the fewest facilities. Notably, Cooling and Lower Rainham showed no change in service provision since the last audit, mirroring earlier VIA results.



As mentioned, the 2025 VIA included facilities supporting community functions. Following responses from parish councils and site visits by Planning Officers, these provisions were generally assessed to be sufficient and of good standard across the surveyed villages.

Part three covered detailed use/provision of community halls. Most villages reported having a community and/or village hall, many of which are available for private hire, including evenings and weekends. These halls were regularly used for a variety of activities such as parent-and-baby groups, fitness classes, hobby clubs, and social groups. While several parishes acknowledged the need for maintenance or upgrades, overall the halls remained functional and well-utilised.

Needs & Aspirations

The needs and aspirations section of the survey considered both community and medical facilities. Regarding the demand for new community facilities, responses were largely consistent with the majority of responding parishes indicating a requirement for additional community facilities. The communities expressing this need included Allhallows, Cliffe, Cliffe Woods, Cuxton, Frindsbury Extra (which would include Upper and Lower Upnor), and Halling.

A range of facilities were sought by these communities, including improved healthcare provision and enhanced community centres consistent with the previous VIA but also newer aspirations raised such as well as IT support and training services.

In contrast, the survey revealed generally mixed to adverse experiences relating to medical facilities. Several villages reported issues with healthcare accessibility and expressed aspirations for improved services. These concerns align with feedback received during the CIF and Local Plan Regulation 18 consultations, where a number of stakeholders highlighted inadequate healthcare access and facilities (in rural areas).

Economic Facilities

Context

Medway's rural area includes several large employment areas (such as Hoo Marina, Kingsnorth and the Isle of Grain). In recent years the study area has undergone several changes. Employment areas established in the 2003 Local Plan, at Kingsnorth and Grain have seen large changes. Both Grain and Kingsnorth Power Stations have closed however Grain Power station has since reopened as a part of Uniper's UK portfolio with the current power station replacing Grain-A, an oil-fired station, commissioned in the 1970s. Haven operates a holiday resort at Allhallows, and there are a number of small employment areas in the rural areas. Much of the land area of rural Medway is farmed or forested. However the agricultural sector forms only a small proportion of the overall employment base in these locations.

Facilities & Condition

The survey looked at key service businesses and also telecommunications in the rural area. The key businesses included: village shop, newsagents, post office, garage/petrol station and ATM/ bank. The 2025 VIA expanded its scope to include parcel drop off/pick up locations. The telecommunications section covered internet connectivity and mobile phone coverage.

All but the smallest villages surveyed contained a village shop, demonstrating the continued importance of these local retail hubs. Over half of the settlements also contained essential services such as a post office, garage or petrol station and ATMs or banking facilities. However, the adequacy of these provisions varied significantly between locations, with some villages reporting limited infrastructure.

Reflecting its larger population and central role in the area, Hoo St Werburgh again offered the most comprehensive range of commercial facilities. In contrast, the smaller villages of Upper and Lower Upnor, Lower Rainham, and Cooling had the most limited provision, further highlighting the correlation between settlement size and service availability. Again, these findings are consistent with the previous iteration of the VIA. This disparity shown underscores the challenges faced by more remote communities in accessing everyday amenities.

It is worth noting while the previous published VIA did not capture data on parcel drop off/collection points, their expansion has been significant both within Medway's rural and urban areas reflecting wider national trends aligning with the increased popularity of ecommerce. Several villages benefit from parcel collection points. The availability of these services within Medway's rural communities help to mitigate access challenges, ensuring residents can send and receive parcels without needing to travel to larger urban centres.

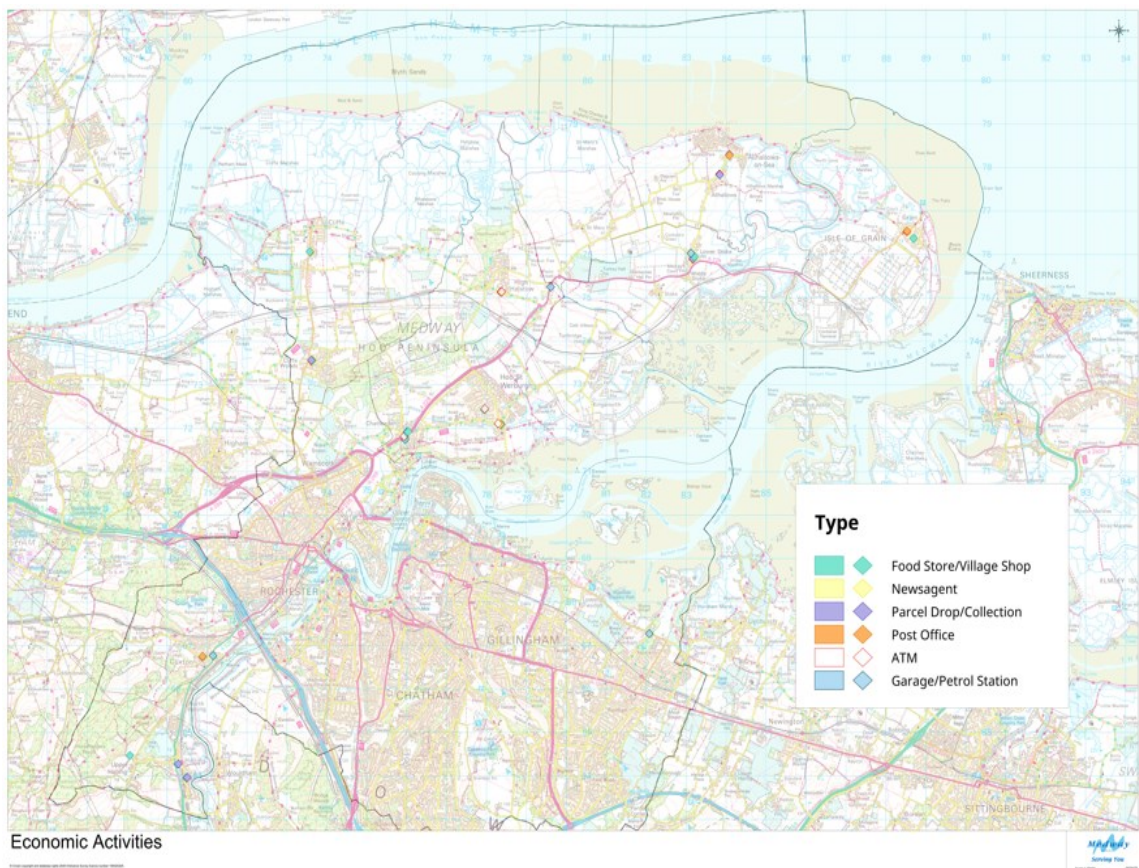
Parish Councils were asked about the standard of broadband and mobile phone connectivity. Overall high-speed broadband was deemed to be accessible across most parishes. 3G/4G/5G Mobile Internet accessibility was deemed to be accessible as well across the parishes although speed/connectivity did vary in some locations. The responses received generally tend to be an improvement from the previous iteration of the VIA where parish councils reported more of a mixed response to mobile phone/internet connectivity.

There have been recent investments in improving broadband infrastructure across the rural area. This is being delivered as part of the Broadband Development UK (BDUK) programme, supported by government to boost the quality of broadband services. BDUK announced on the 6th of February 2024 that they have awarded a £112.3 million contract to City Fibre to deliver gigabit-capable connections to parts of Kent and Medway that are not expected to benefit from telecom providers' upgrade programmes with an estimate that the Kent and Medway project will cover around 122,000 properties.

Data on mobile coverage is reported to Ofcom from the major telecommunication providers (O2, EE, Vodafone and Three).⁵ This data split mobile coverage for 3G and 4G into outdoor and indoor reception levels. It was reported that there was good outdoor coverage across Medway's rural area, but poor indoor coverage in Medway Villages, corresponding with the parish responses and the map data available.

⁵ Ofcom Mobile Coverage and Fixed Broadband Checker (last updated December 2024) - <https://checker.ofcom.org.uk/en-gb>

Regarding 5G coverage, the map data was broken down into confidence levels ranging between Very High, High and no coverage- with this result varying between and within the villages.



Needs & Aspirations

A mixed response was received related to where villages wanted to see more employment provision in their areas. Where the response was a yes, the nature of employment provision included small scale offices, opportunities at the Haven holiday park, green tourism and health opportunities. A recurring and emerging topic was provision for home working and co-working spaces, to facilitate those who work remotely with one parish referring to the need for these spaces as a legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Transport

Context

Transport is a key issue for rural communities. The smaller villages often have a limited range of services and facilities, meaning that people have to travel to nearby towns. Public transport options are also more limited, increasing dependency on private cars. For those living in villages, without access to a car, there can be a risk of being cut off from services, and opportunities for work,

study and leisure. The number of households within the parishes surveyed without access to a car or van was totalled at least 1282 with at least 11,954 having access to a car or van. The percentage of households with access to a car or van generally tended to be constant amongst the villages at around 88% to 91% however notably in Cooling 99% of homes had access to a car or van.

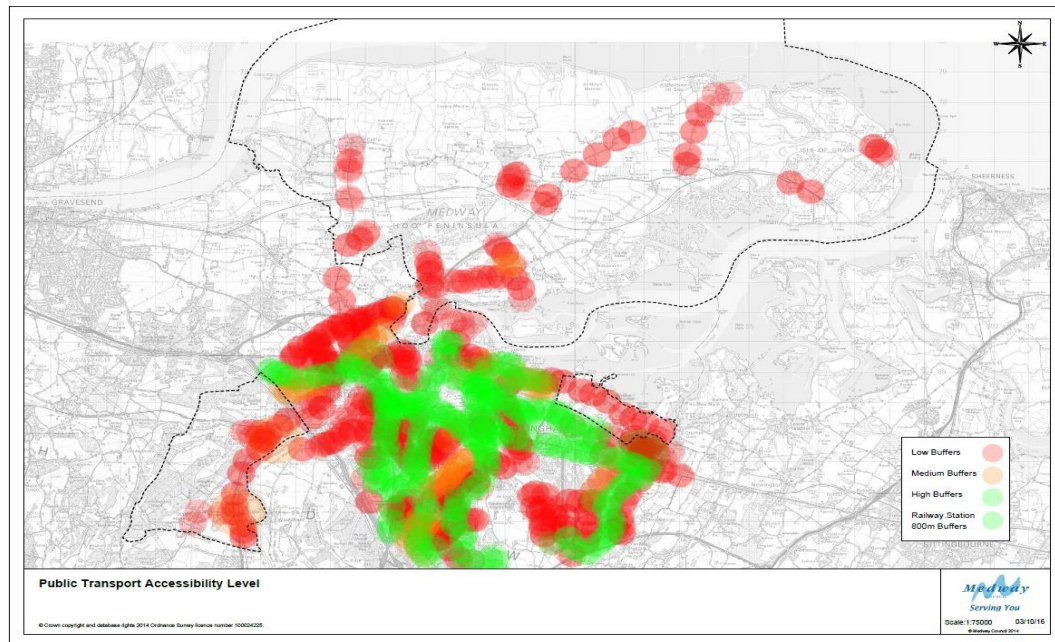
Medway's rural areas exhibit uneven access to the strategic road network. The Hoo Peninsula and Medway Valley benefit from relatively good connectivity via the A228, which links to the M2 motorway. However, other parts remain remote, with limited routes creating vulnerabilities to congestion and access blockages. This is particularly evident at the Four Elms Roundabout and along the A228, a critical route for the Hoo Peninsula's rural population to reach more central Medway and surrounding areas.

Key junctions with the strategic road network face recurrent congestion, notably:

- A228/M2 Junction 2 (near Cuxton)
- A228/A289 (Four Elms Roundabout) on the Hoo peninsula's southwestern edge.

Bus services dominate rural public transport, but coverage is sparse. A 2015 Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) assessment by Medway Council (as a part of wider work on the preparation of the Medway Local Plan highlighted that there was a low level of accessibility to public transport on the Hoo Peninsula and along Lower Rainham Road. Cuxton and Halling had moderate access to public transport due to the provision of railway stations in these villages, although bus services were more limited in this area compared to some villages on the Hoo Peninsula.

The rail service in Cuxton and Halling is provided by the Medway Valley Line, which connects these villages to Strood, Maidstone, Tonbridge, and onward to London via the HS1 line at Strood. Meanwhile, the Hoo Peninsula is served by a freight-only railway line that operates to and from Thamesport at Grain; this line does not provide passenger services



Facilities & Condition

The following aspects of transport in the rural area were considered in the survey:

- Traffic congestion
- Parking
- Public transport accessibility
- Transport routes.

All responding Parish Councils identified traffic congestion as a significant issue in their villages. Key problem areas included:

- Four Elms Roundabout, Sans Pareil Roundabout, and Medway City Estate Roundabout
- Frindsbury Hill (A228), Cooling Road, and Wainscott Bypass
- View Road/Town Road and Hollywood Lane

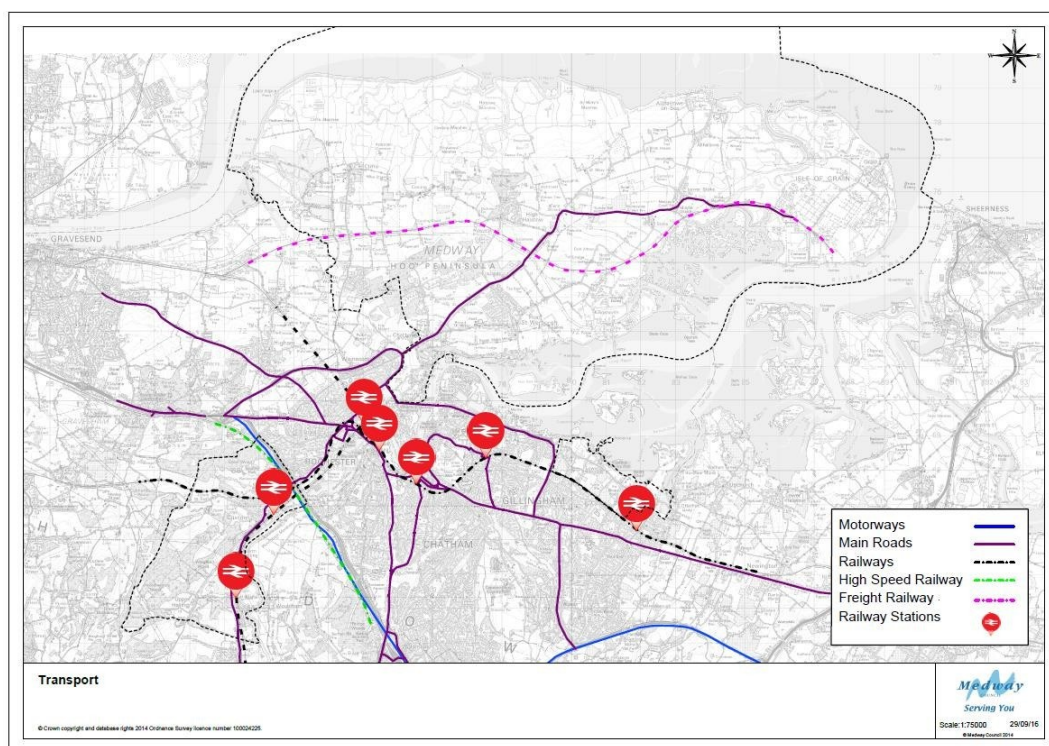
Some parishes specifically noted worsening congestion during school drop-off/pick-up times.

The majority of parishes reported parking shortages, with recurring themes; limited parking capacity, on-street parking overflow, School-related parking issues.

Regarding the main public transport routes, the Medway Valley train line was noted for Cuxton and Halling as the main route. A number of bus routes were also noted, typically connecting the villages with the larger Medway Towns particularly Strood/Rochester.

Responding Parish Councils identified Strood, Chatham and Rochester as the greatest draw within Medway for access to other services and then outside of Medway; Gravesend, Bluewater and Maidstone.

This is also covered in the CIF and the Medway Retail Town Centre Study. It was noted in the CIF that residents felt that the data was not always directly reflective of the lived experience. While Hoo may be the largest village and the village with the most services within it, Hoo (peninsula) is still characterised by a low level of retail and main town centre land use provision, leading to a situation where a large majority of shopping trips, and trips to other main town centre land uses, were being directed to other nearby areas. As covered in the Medway Retail Town Centre Study, based upon current level of potential residential development across the peninsula, it remains the case that a food store of circa 2,000sq m gross remains an appropriate part of the town centres strategy.



Needs & Aspirations

As noted previously Medway's rural area has limited access to public transport, and in some instances households lack private transport. This was reflected in the survey. When asked: *'Do existing public transport services meet the needs of the local community?'*, the vast majority of respondents felt the service did not meet the needs of local community.

The main reasons the parishes felt that public transport services were lacking included: limited evening services and a low frequency of service. The Council's own previous analysis of the frequency of public transport (bus and rail) in rural Medway confirmed this pattern. For example⁶, some of the key bus routes on the peninsula such as the 191 (Chatham to Grain) and 133 (Cliffe to Chatham) operating limited evening services most notably on a Sunday with no evening services at all.

Environmental Facilities

Context

The rural area of Medway covers 16,966ha or 63% of Medway's total land area. It also encompasses a wide variety of protected areas including:

- National Landscape
- SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Ramsars: Ramsar Convention on Wetlands
- SACs: Special Areas of Conservation
- SPAs: Special Protection Areas

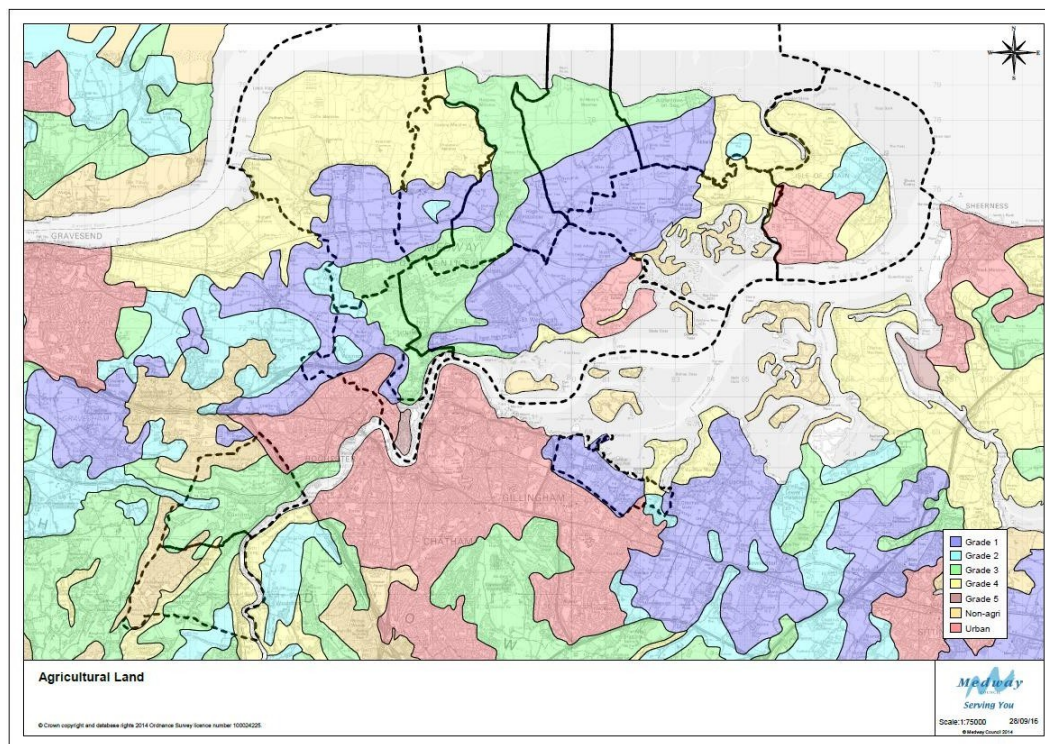
These designations vary in size and overlap in certain areas, but generally they cover, individually, the following percentage of the audit area (including the administrative area in the estuary):

- Kent Downs National Landscape – 6%
- Ramsar – 33%
- Special Protection Area – 31%
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest – 37%

In addition to the protected areas a high proportion of the area is agricultural land. This is graded from 1-5 with the best and most versatile land falling within grades 1-3a as defined by the NPPF.

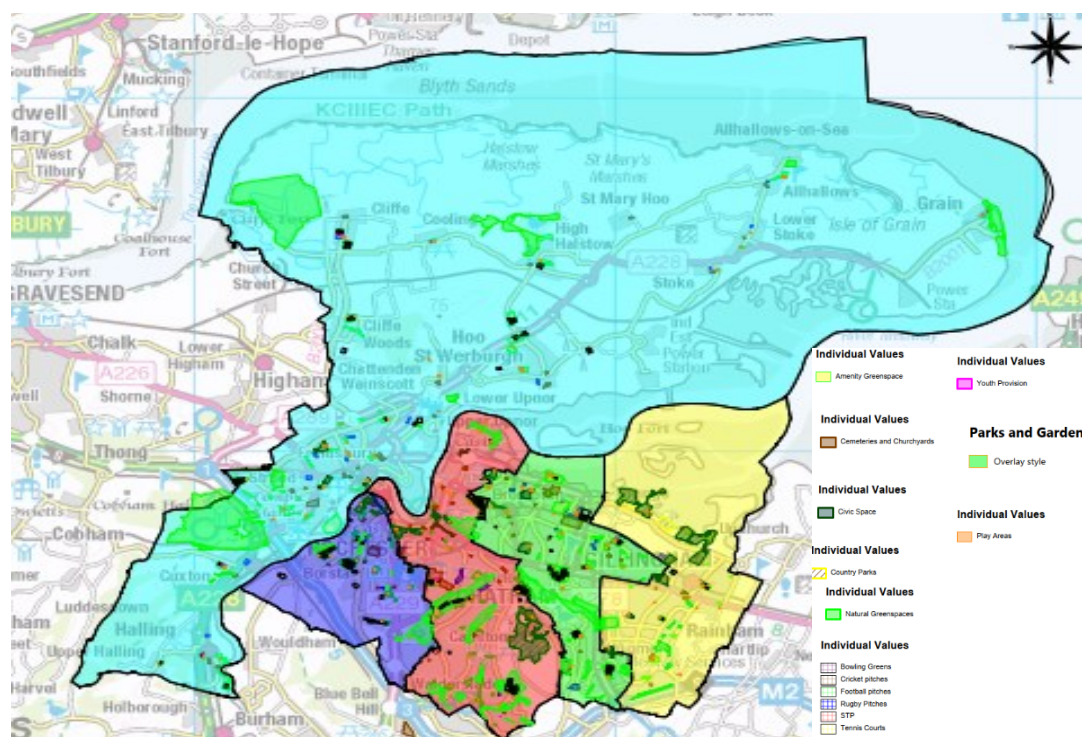
A total of 57% of Medway's agricultural land falls within grades 1-3. The data available does not differentiate between 3a or 3b, so this can only provide an indication of importance. However it does indicate the importance of agricultural land to this area of Medway, as this is a higher percentage of the most productive farmland than the national average.

⁶ https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200161/travel/516/bus_timetables/2



Facilities & Condition

The environmental facilities audit considered formal open space and leisure provision in the villages. This included: public parks, allotments, sports facilities, village greens and children's play areas. Overall, the majority of villages had a selection of open space and leisure opportunities.



Generally the level of provision of green space facilities audited were considered to be rated at least fair quality. Public parks were perceived to be of the best quality. The lowest scoring provision was that of sports facilities. These were felt generally to be average for the number of facilities audited against the general perception of the score. Other concerns raised around greenspaces were regarding access to these spaces as well as maintenance.

Needs & Aspirations

Within part two of the environmental sections of the survey three questions were asked:

- *'Is more open space provision required?'*
- *'If yes what type?'*
- *'Is there a requirement for more allotments?'*

The results of the survey indicated a mixed response to further open space. The response to the question on the type of open space required varied between villages, and included: allotments, maintenance works but notably improved access to existing open spaces.

There was a specific question on needs for further allotments. The Council's research has previously identified a deficiency in allotment space across the rural area however the surveys recorded varied demand for allotment space in different villages.

Conclusion

The following provide preliminary conclusions based on the data gathered in the VIA. It should be noted that these findings reflect the current state of the villages and do not take into account the possible effects of future growth or development allocations that could result from planning permissions or the local plan. The findings provide a robust evidence base which will inform the Infrastructure Delivery Plan, Medway's Local Plan policies and support targeted investment and to enhance rural infrastructure.

Social

The villages are experiencing a growing and ageing population. The proportion of residents aged over 65 is higher than the Medway average, a trend that may impact the provision of and access to local services

While there is a basic level of social facility coverage throughout the VIA area, this distribution is uneven. There highest concentrations of facilities as anticipated are in larger settlements such as Hoo St Werburgh and a notable lack of facilities in areas such as Lower and Upper Upnor, Cooling and Lower Rainham. Even in the larger rural areas there is a lack of facilities particularly related to healthcare provision.

Economic

Economic facilities were limited outside of the major population centres and Hoo St Werburgh offered the widest range. Most notably there was an increase in the number of parcel pick up/drop off points. This also corresponded to the level of broadband communication available in the VIA area.

Transport

Regarding transport, a number of key issues emerge from the survey findings. Firstly, there is a noticeable reliance on private modes of transport, while public transport options remain more limited. Secondly, several areas experience issues with congestion and parking constraints. Finally, the larger Medway towns, as well as Gravesend and Bluewater, serve as significant destinations for trips to access services and facilities.

Environment

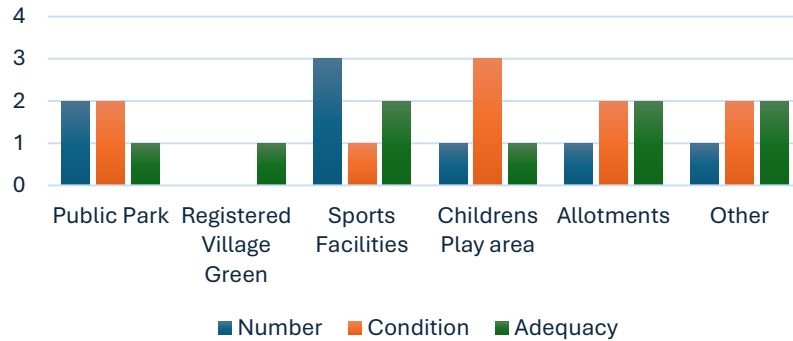
Overall, the green space facilities in the survey area generally met the quantitative standards and were reported to be of average to good quality. Outside of some parishes reporting a need for allotments, there was a view that

rather than increase in open space existing open should be maintained and have improved access to these open spaces.

Appendix A – Facilities Data

Allhallows

Environmental Facilities



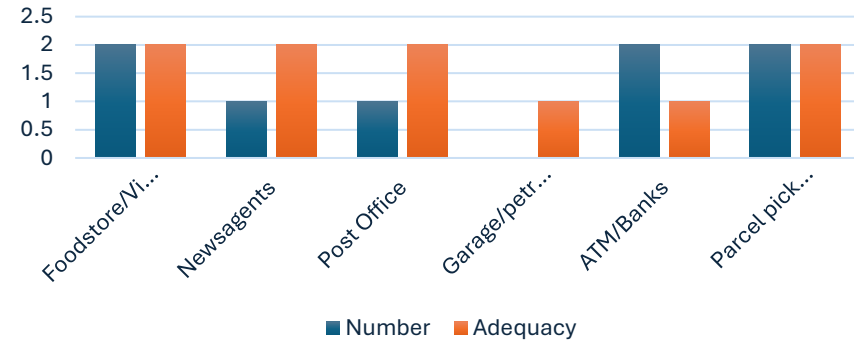
*Condition

(1 – poor in need of repair, 2 - fair 3- good condition)

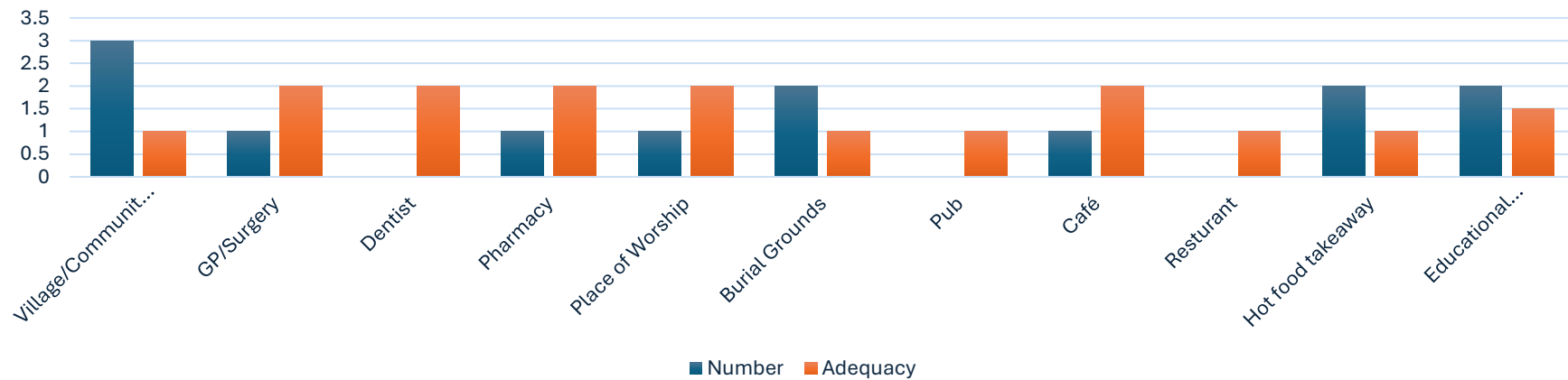
*Adequacy

(in terms of availability 1 Adequate
2 Inadequate)

Economic Facilities

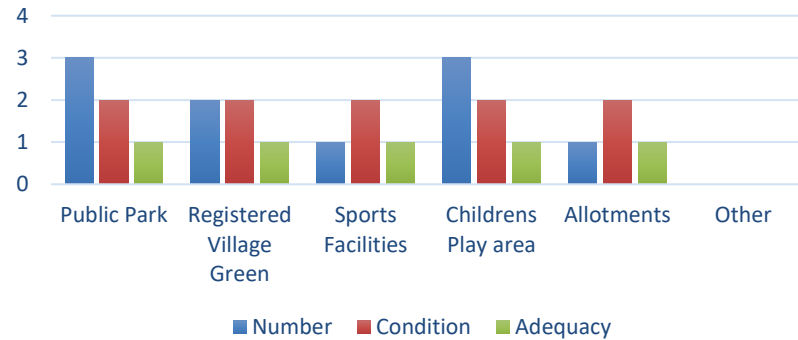


Social facilities

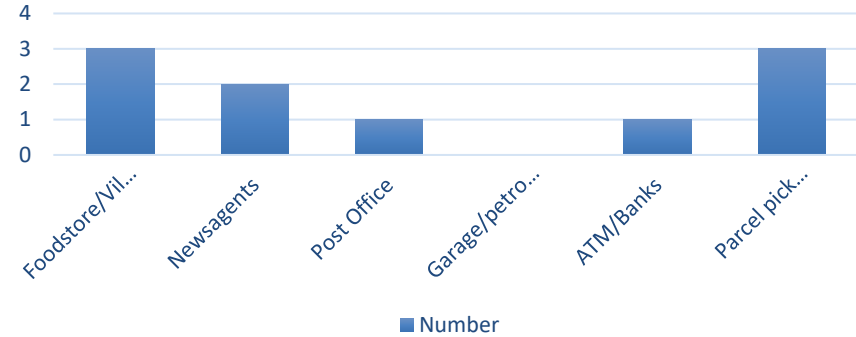


Cliff and Cliffe Woods

Environmental Facilities



Economic Facilities



*Condition

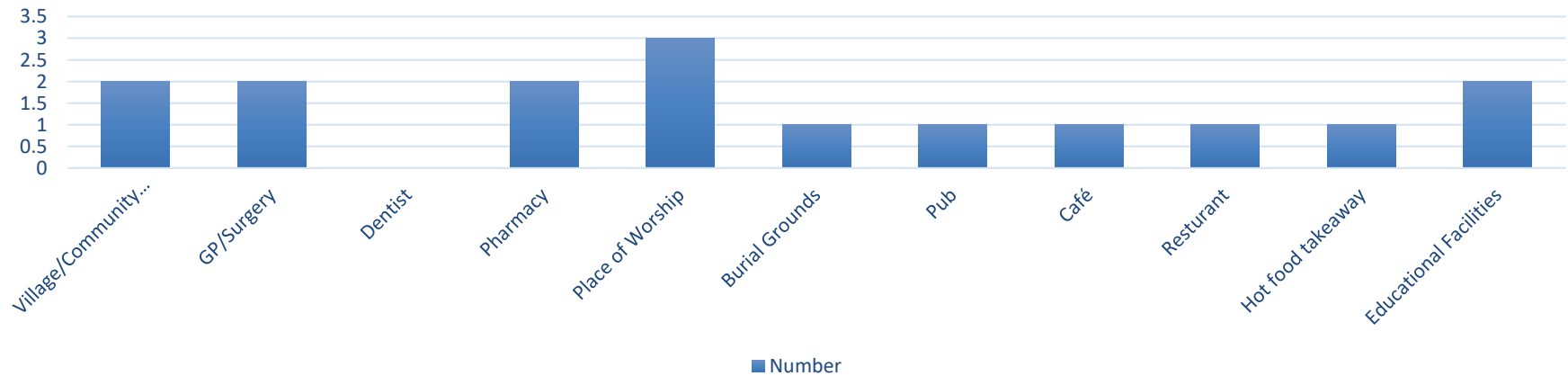
(1 – poor in need of repair, 2 - fair 3- good condition)

*Adequacy

(in terms of availability 1 Adequate

2 Inadequate)

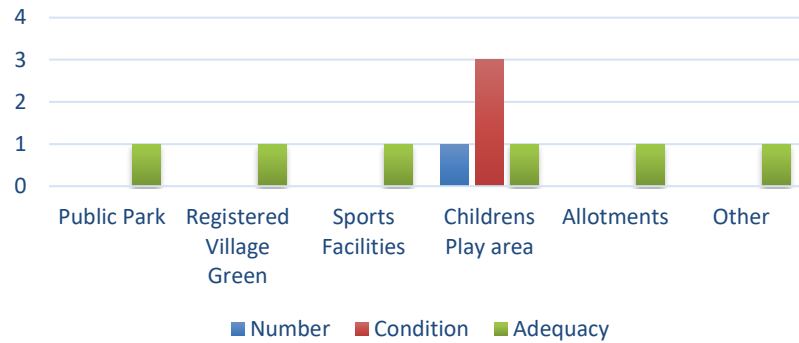
Social facilities



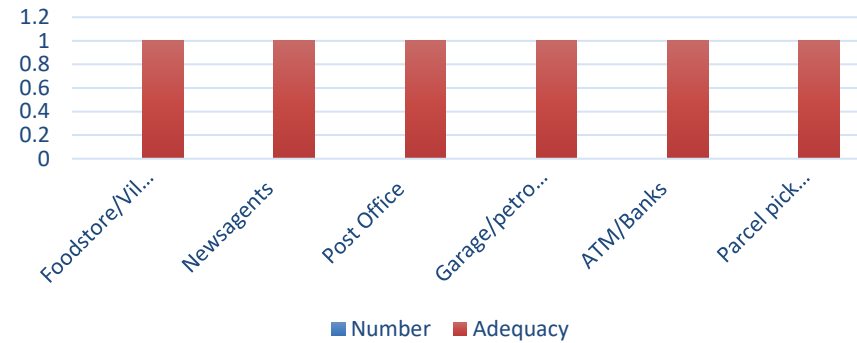
Medway Village Infrastructure Audit April 2025

Cooling

Environmental Facilities



Economic Facilities



*Condition
(1 – poor in need of repair, 2 - fair 3- good condition)
*Adequacy
(in terms of availability 1 Adequate
2 Inadequate)

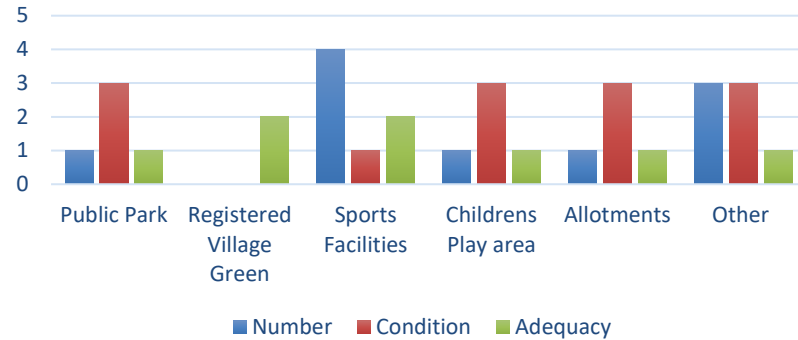
Social facilities



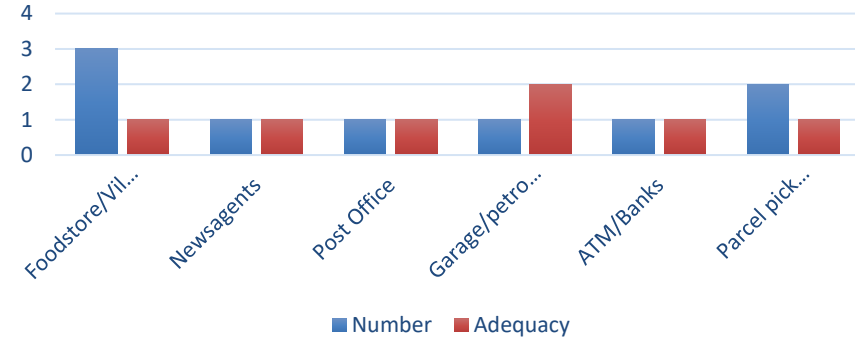
Medway Village Infrastructure Audit
April 2025

Cuxton

Environmental Facilities



Economic Facilities



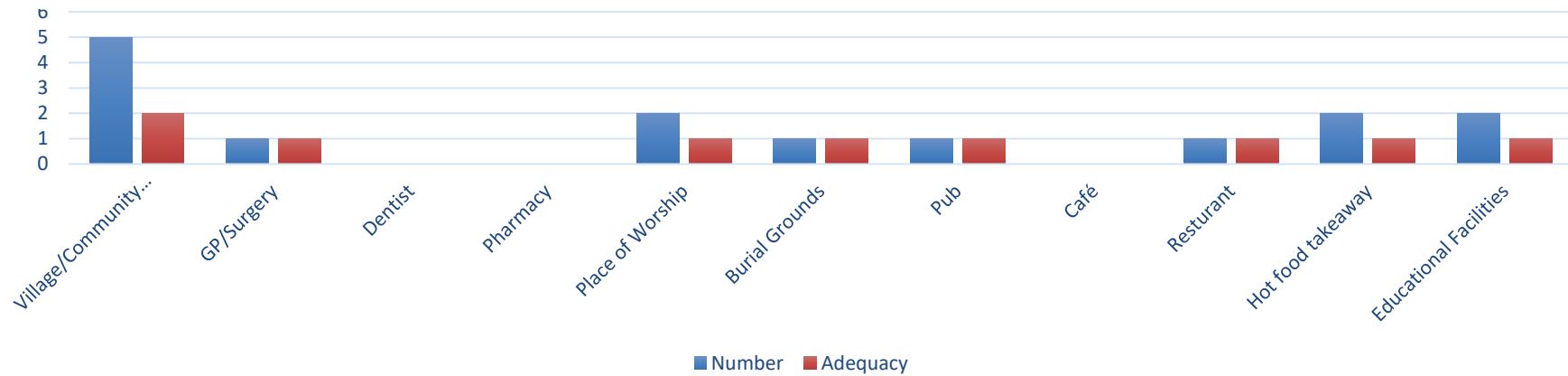
*Condition

(1 – poor in need of repair, 2 - fair 3- good condition)

*Adequacy

(in terms of availability 1 Adequate
2 Inadequate)

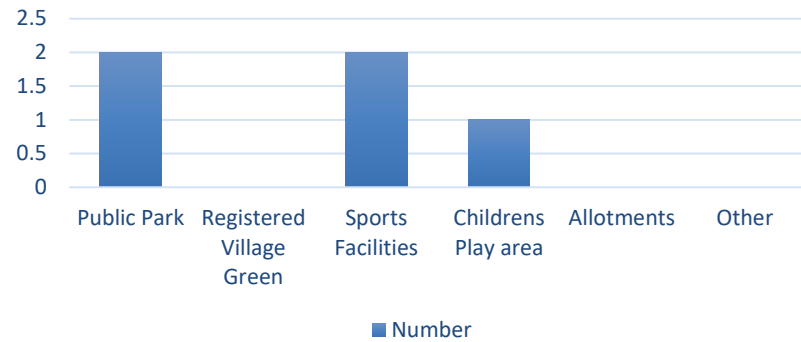
Social facilities



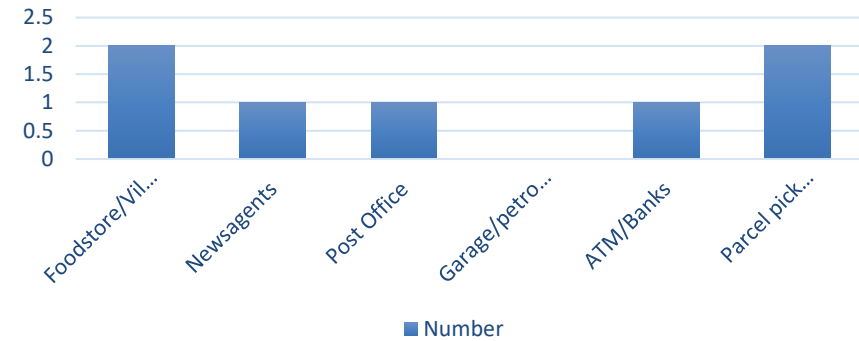
Medway Village Infrastructure Audit
April 2025

Grain

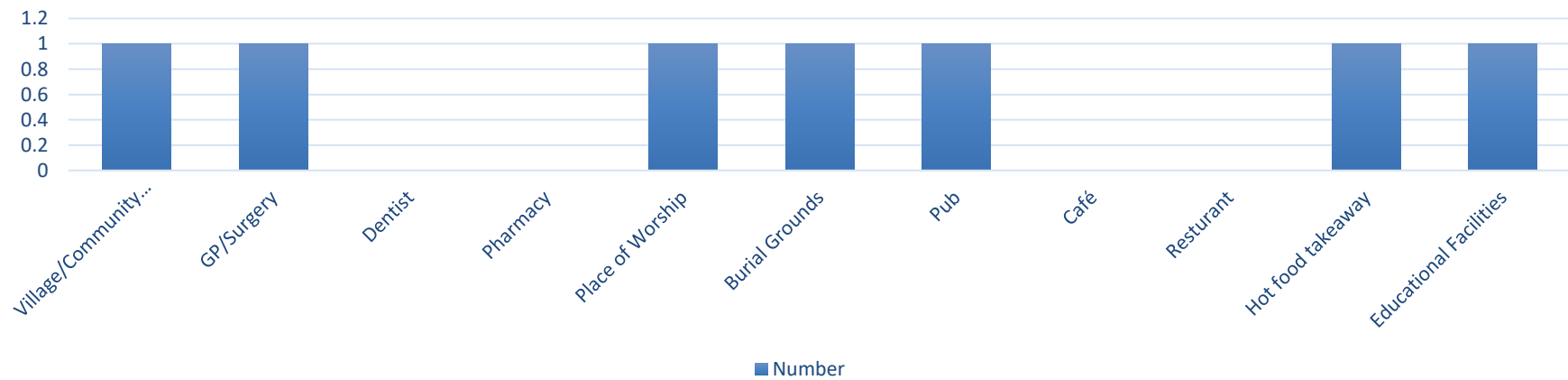
Environmental Facilities



Economic Facilities



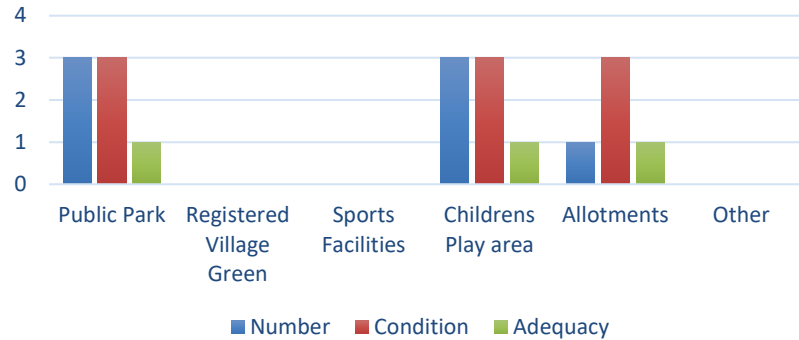
Social facilities



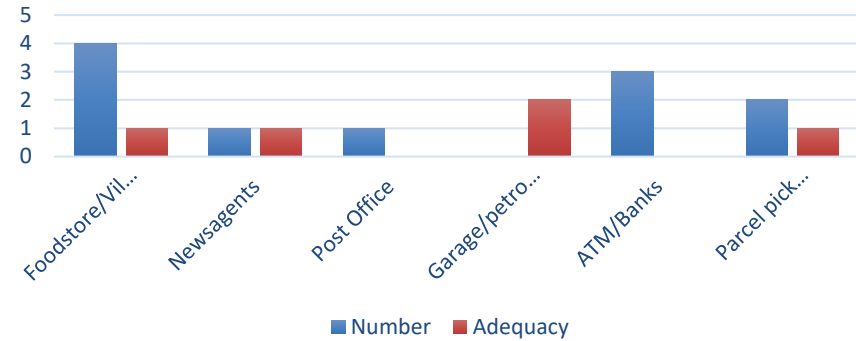
Medway Village Infrastructure Audit
April 2025

Halling

Environmental Facilities

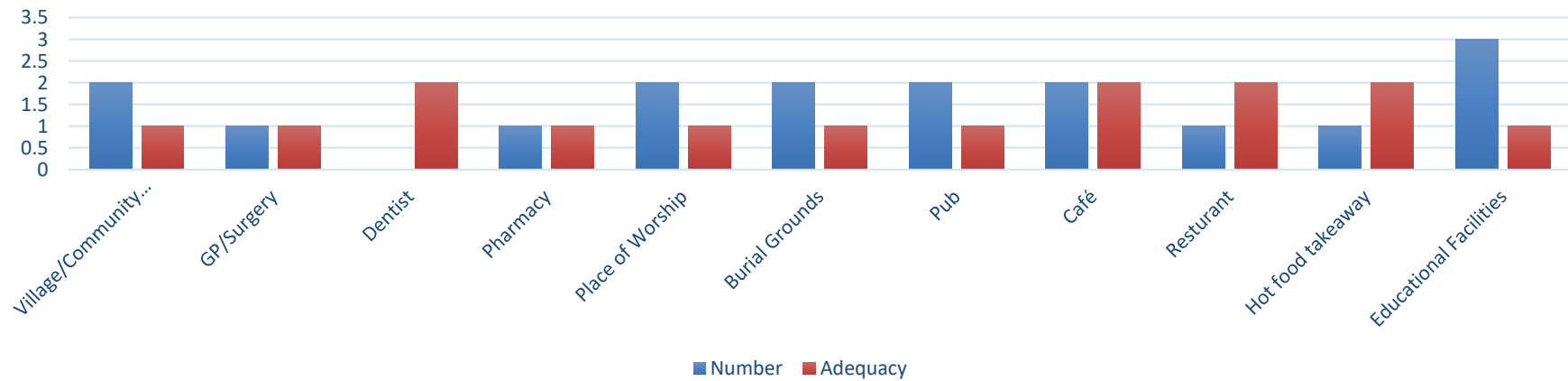


Economic Facilities



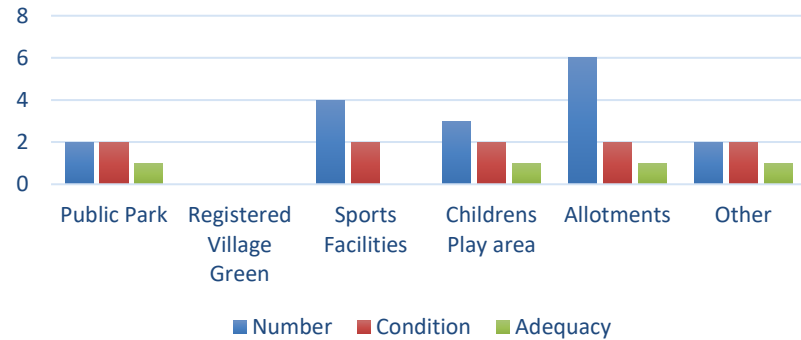
*Condition
(1 – poor in need of repair, 2 - fair 3- good condition)
*Adequacy
(in terms of availability 1 Adequate
2 Inadequate)

Social facilities



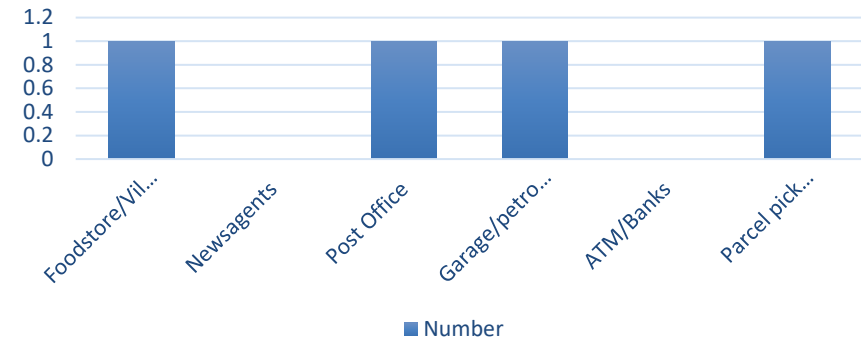
High Halstow

Environmental Facilities

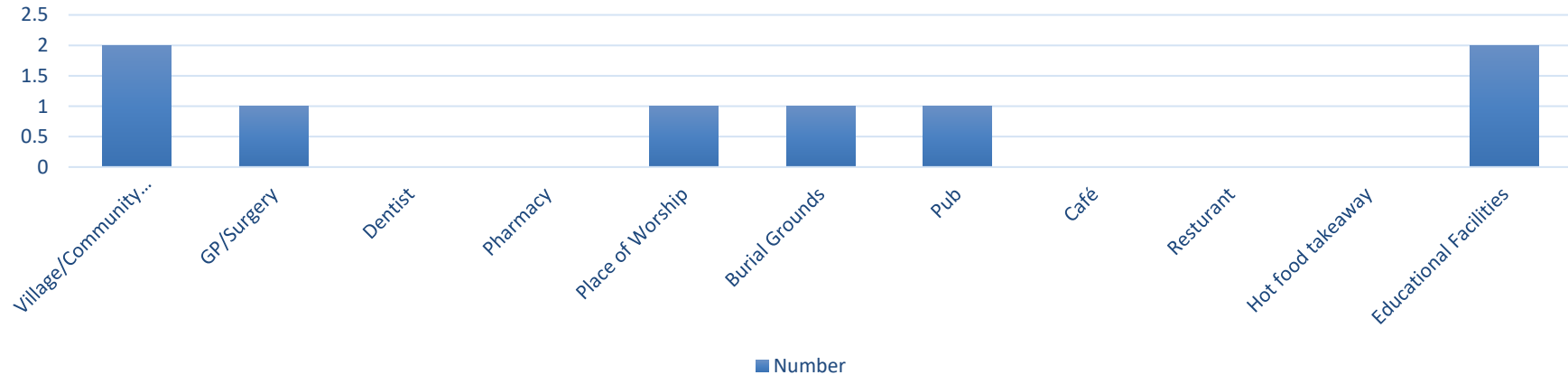


*Condition
(1 – poor in need of repair, 2 - fair 3- good condition)
*Adequacy
(in terms of availability 1 Adequate
2 Inadequate)

Economic Facilities

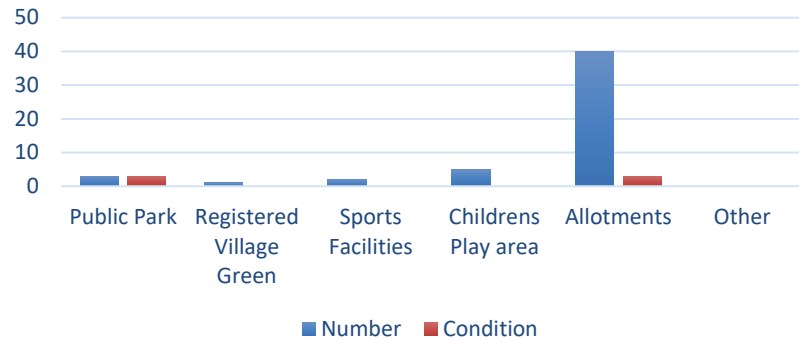


Social facilities



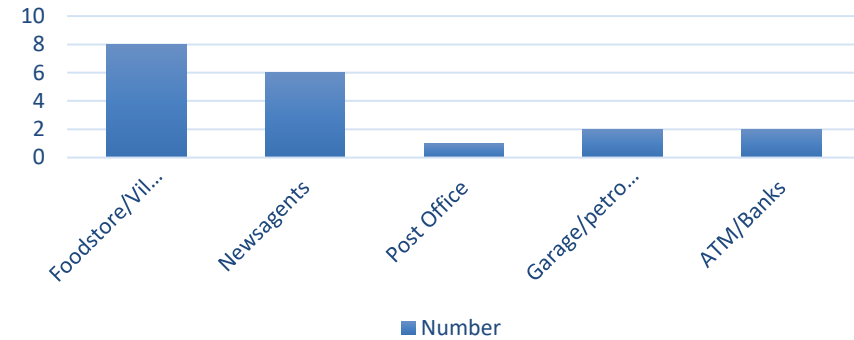
Hoo St Werburgh

Environmental Facilities

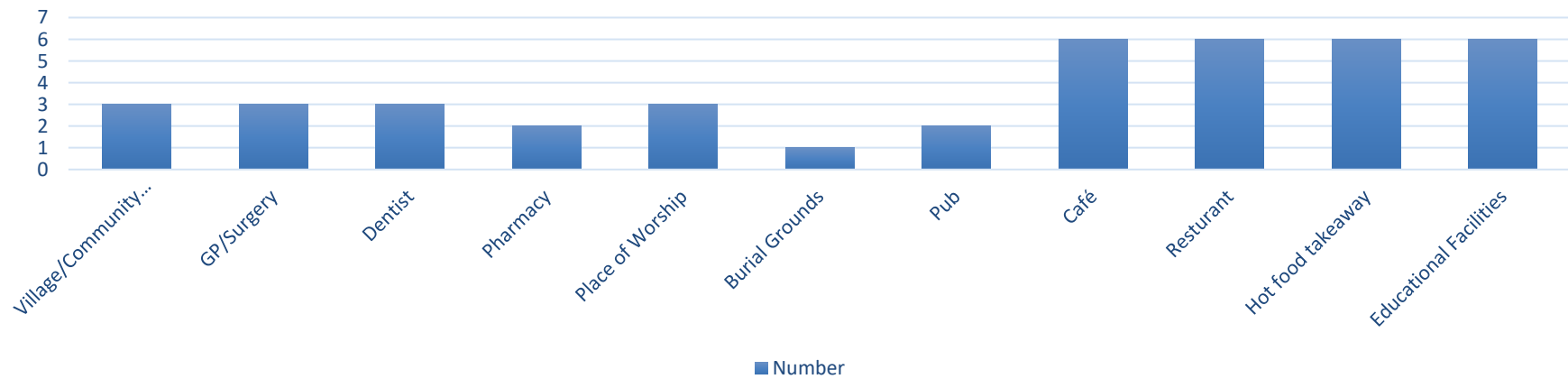


*Condition
(1 – poor in need of repair, 2 - fair 3- good condition)

Economic Facilities

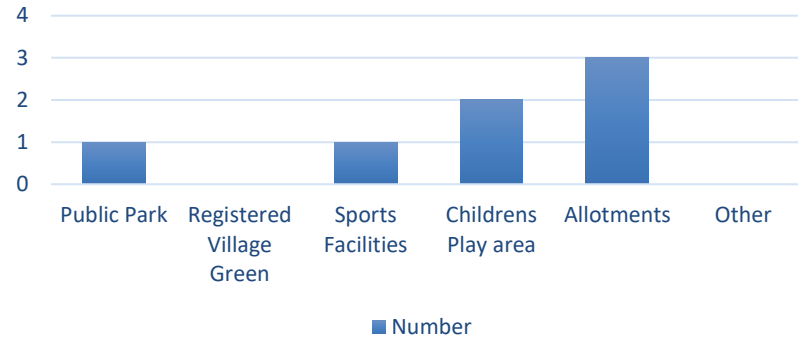


Social facilities

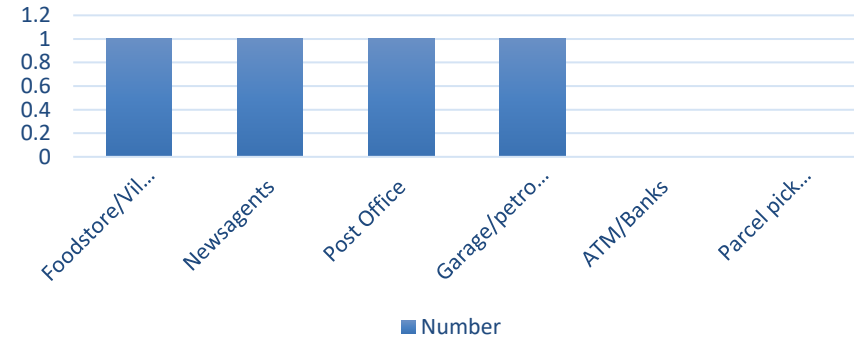


Lower Rainham

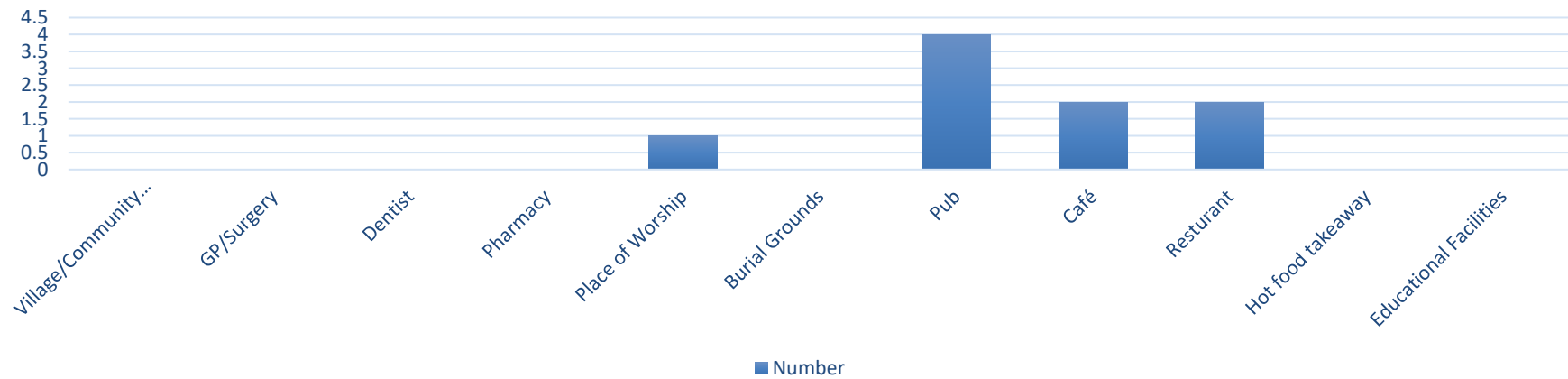
Environmental Facilities



Economic Facilities



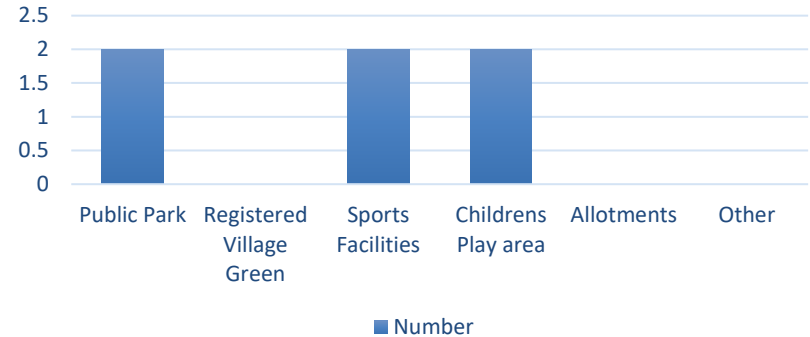
Social facilities



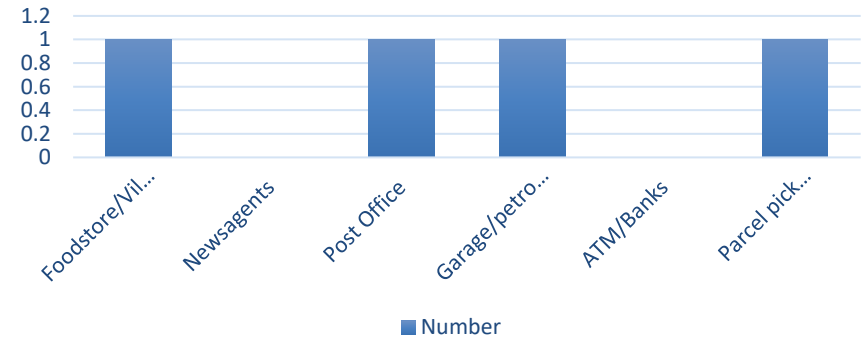
Medway Village Infrastructure Audit
April 2025

Stoke

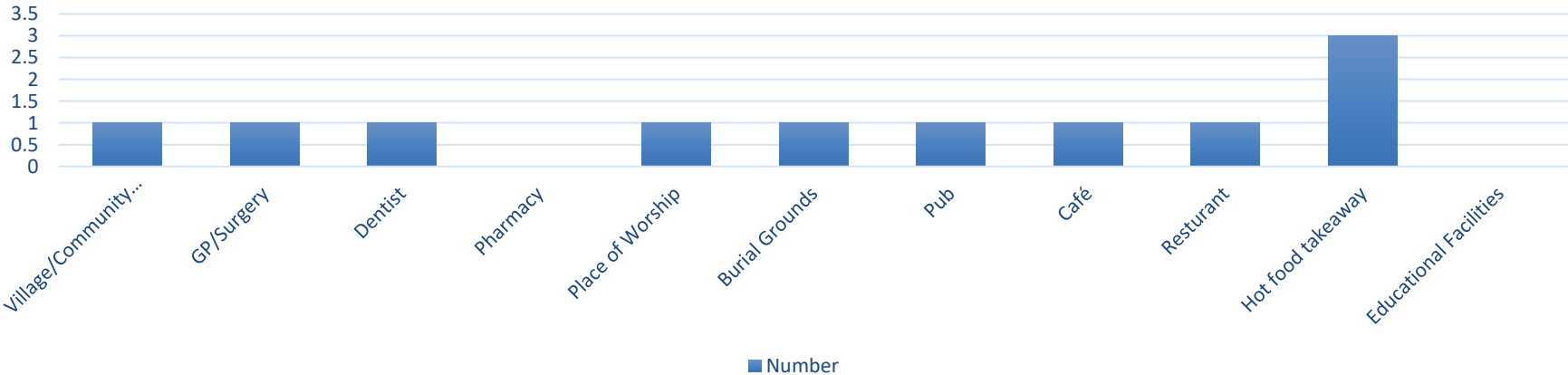
Environmental Facilities



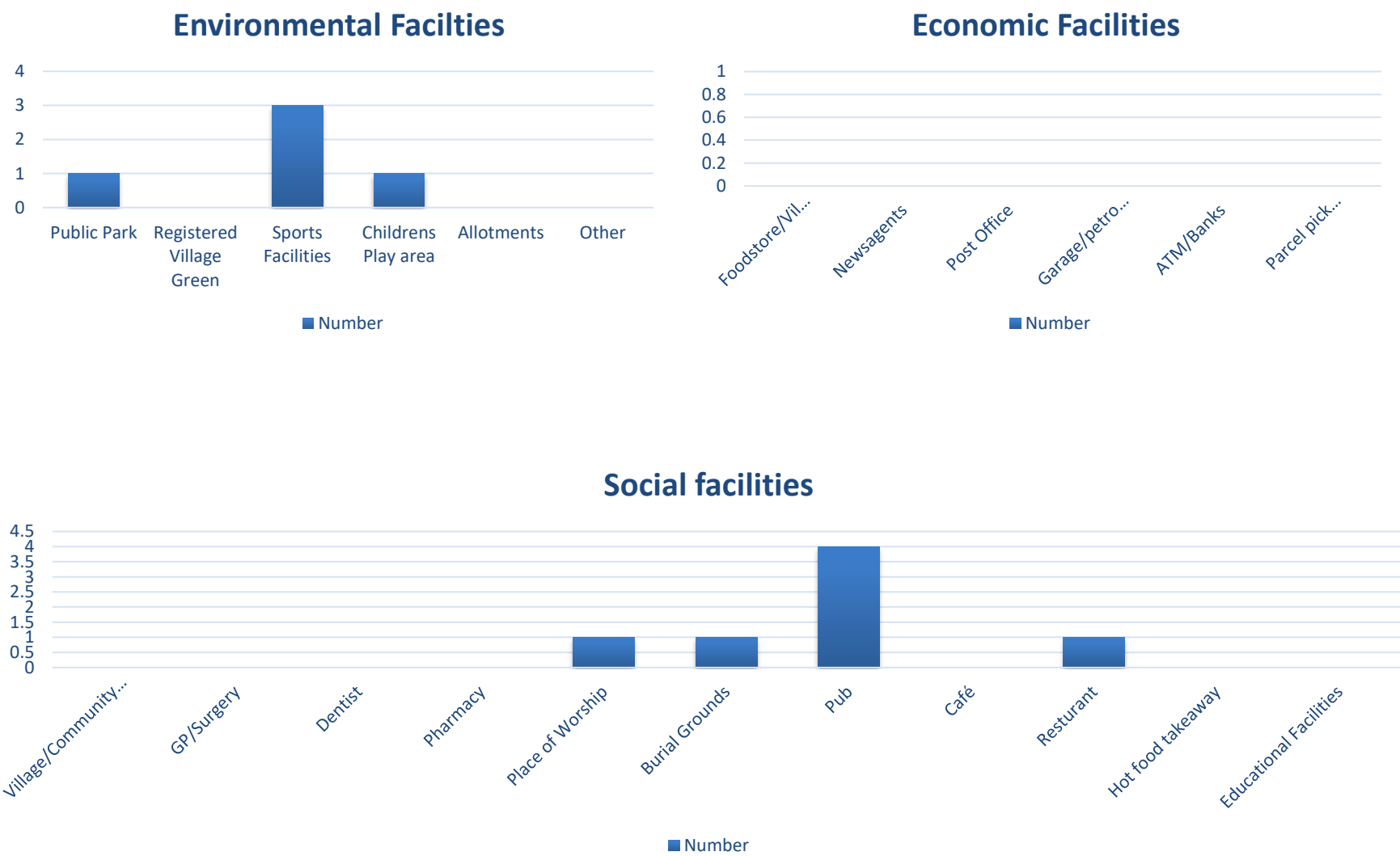
Economic Facilities



Social facilities



Upper and Lower Upnor



Appendix B – Village Infrastructure Audit Survey Form

PART 1 – EXISTING FACILITIES AUDIT

Medway Council - Village Infrastructure Audit 2025

INSTRUCTIONS

Medway Council is preparing a new Local Plan which will set out a framework for development over the plan period (2024-2041). The ambition of the plan is to ensure that there is a balance between meeting housing need, employment, and ensuring the right services and infrastructure are in place to meet Medway's growing communities, whilst protecting the quality of the natural and historic environment.

The Village infrastructure Audit (VIA) is aligned to wider work on infrastructure planning being carried out by the council to inform the Local Plan, Infrastructure Development Plan and the delivery of successful and sustainable growth in Medway.

A large part of meeting the ambitions for Medway is ensuring planning for sustainable villages, ensuring communities have the right access to facilities such as schools, health care, shops and parks for recreation. In rural areas people often must travel to local towns to access facilities.

In order to plan for infrastructure, it is important to understand what exists, its condition, accessibility and improvements required. This village infrastructure audit will form part of the evidence base for the new Medway Local Plan.

Completing the Form:

- The Council has studied responses from previous surveys and undertaken a desktop study to assess the number, condition and adequacy of existing community facilities in order to aid the assessment. Please suggest corrections to the assessment and make relevant notes in boxes at the bottom of each page if you determine the Council's figures or assessment incorrect.
- Your previous survey response is attached as appendix A which can be used as a reference.
- The survey is divided into three parts: 'Existing Facilities', 'Needs/Aspirations' and a final part seeking detailed information about village/community halls.

Individual completed Forms will be used to inform the VIA but will not be published.

Statement on Data Protection Policy – The link below to the Planning Service data protection policy details how the information provided to the service will be used, and what will be published:

https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200133/planning/714/planning_service_privacy_statement

PART 1 – EXISTING FACILITIES AUDIT

Green Spaces

Facility	Number	Condition (1 – poor in need of repair, 2 - fair 3- good condition)	Adequacy (in terms of availability 1 Adequate 2 Inadequate)
Public Park			
Registered Village Green			
Children's Play Areas			
Sports Facilities ⁷			
Allotments			
Other - please provide details, e.g. nature reserve, and Local Green Space			

Condition/adequacy: if any of the environmental facilities above are in poor condition or do not meet the needs of the local community please provide further details. Are these spaces safely accessed, i.e. safe walkways, crossings etc. Do these spaces feel safe?

⁷ Including facilities provided in public parks i.e tennis courts

Medway Village Infrastructure Audit
January 2017

Community Facilities and Service

Facility		Number	Adequacy	Safely accessible i.e crossings
Village/Community Hall ⁸				
GP Surgery				
Dentist				
Pharmacy				
Place of Worship				
Burial Grounds				
Pub#				
Café				
Restaurant				
Hot Food Takeaway				
Food store/village shop				
Newsagents				
Post Office				
Parcel drop/collection facilities				
Garage/Petrol Station				
ATMs				
Education	Pre-School:			
	Primary School:			
	Secondary School:			
	Higher/Further Education:			

If the community facilities do not meet the needs of the local community please provide details.

Do any pubs within the parish have facilities such as space that can be used for community uses i.e. function rooms, children's play areas and outdoor space for other activities?

Facilities and services supporting community function

<i>Facility</i>	<i>Provision</i>	<i>Adequate facilities</i>	<i>Notes</i>
<i>Bins</i>			
<i>Benches</i>			

⁸ Condition of community facilities in terms of village/community halls is covered in more detail in part three.

Medway Village Infrastructure Audit
January 2017

<i>Post boxes</i>			
<i>Community notice boards</i>			
<i>Public toilets</i>			
<i>Other</i>			

Broadband and Mobile Phones

		Accessible via All/most/some/none of the parish?
Internet Connectivity and download speeds	High Speed Broadband	All, most, some, none
Mobile phone service and reception	3G/4G Mobile Internet	All, most, some, none

Comments on adequacy of broadband availability/mobile reception from both a residents and business perspective:

Transport Facilities

Transport Facilities/Accessibility					
Which villages or towns outside of the village do people use most to access other services?					
Is traffic congestion a problem in your village? Please state where?	Yes			No	
Is parking a problem in your village? Please state where.	Yes			No	
Which are the main public transport routes from the village?					
Do existing public transport services meet the needs of the local community?	Yes	No – too infrequent	No – evening services	No – weekend services	
	No – other (please state)				
Walking/Cycling	What are the main challenges faced within the walking and cycling network and what improvements and changes are needed?				

PART 2 – NEEDS & ASPIRATIONS SURVEY

Needs & Aspirations				
Environmental				
Is more open space provision required? For example: parks, sports grounds and play and sports facilities.	Yes		No	
If yes, what type? Is there evidence to support this?				
Would the Parish be interested in Local Green Space designations? ⁹				
Is there a requirement for more allotments?	Yes		No	
Community Services and Facilities				
Would you like to see more community facilities and services in the village?	Yes		No	
If yes, what type				
Employment				
Would you like to see more employment in the village?	Yes		No	
Please provide further information: Is there any particular type of employment you would you like to see in the village? What evidence suggests there is a need?				
Could there be opportunities to support more home working within the parish? Please provide details:				

Part 3 – Community halls section

In relation to facilities in your village for community use, please answer the following questions in respect to a Village Hall/Community Centre. (IF YOU DO NOT HAVE A COMMUNITY FACILITY SUCH AS A HALL OR A CENTRE WITHIN YOUR PARISH PLEASE LEAVE THIS SECTION BLANK).

⁹ Local Green Space designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities. Further information is available here:
<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space#Local-Green-Space-designation>

Medway Village Infrastructure Audit
January 2017

Q. 3.1) Is there a building(s) within your parish for community use?		
<i>Please tick:</i>		<i>Comments:</i>
Yes		
No		
Details - Please provide name/address of building that answers in this section relate to:		

Q. 3.2) Are buildings available for community uses open to all members of the community or are there restrictions in any way as to who can use these buildings? If so, please list buildings		
<i>Please tick:</i>		<i>Comments:</i>
Yes		
No		

Q.3.3) Is this building(s) available for private hire?		
<i>Please tick:</i>		<i>Comments:</i>
Yes		
No		

<i>Please tick:</i>			<i>Restrictions/comments:</i>
Mon- Fri	Mornings		
	Afternoons		
	Evenings		

Medway Village Infrastructure Audit
January 2017

Weekends		
----------	--	--

Q. 3.5) Approximately how many groups regularly use these facilities? Is there a maximum capacity?

<i>Please specify:</i>		<i>Comments:</i>
No of groups		
Max capacity		

Q. 3.6) What type of groups use these facilities?

<i>Please tick:</i>		<i>Comments: other groups?</i>
Parent and baby		
Pre-school		
Youth groups		
Older peoples groups		
Scouts/Guides/Brownies/Cubs		
Sport/exercise/fitness e.g.		
Drama/music/dance		
Other hobby related e.g. bingo, whist, chess.		
Health (medical)		

Q. 3.7) Do these facilities have a user catchment or is its use also appropriate for users further afield?

<i>Please tick:</i>		<i>Comments:</i>
No		
Yes <i>(indicate below)</i>		

Medway Village Infrastructure Audit
January 2017

Extent		
Medway and beyond		
Within Medway		
Neighbourhood		
Village/Town		
Other		

Q. 3.8) Is this facility well located for users in terms of walking, or access to public transport?		
<i>Please tick:</i>		<i>Comments:</i>
Yes		
No		

Medway Village Infrastructure Audit
January 2017

Q. 3.9) How would you rate the general condition of the building(s)?		
<i>Please tick:</i>		<i>Comments:</i>
Good		
Fair		
Poor		

Q. 3.10) do you expect any changes in the demand for the hall over the next 5-10 years?		
<i>Please tick:</i>		<i>Comments:</i>
Greater demand		
Lesser demand		

Q. 3.11) Would the village like community facilities/village halls to provide more to the community? What improvements would be needed for this?		
<i>Please tick:</i>		<i>Please provide details of any planned projects – for example new boiler, extension etc. and any rough estimates of cost and planned timescales for completion.</i>
Yes		
No		



Medway.gov.uk/FutureMedway

