

Setting the Direction for Medway 2040

Report of Regulation 18 Consultation Autumn 2023

July 2024



Executive Summary

This report summarises the outcomes of the Regulation 18 consultation on the preparation of the Medway Local Plan, which took place from 18th September to 31st October 2023. The consultation sought to gather public feedback on the proposed vision and objectives that will shape the area's development over the plan period.

Representations were received from 396 organisations and individuals. Some of the main issues raised during the consultation were:

- Housing: concerns about the size and location of potential developments, with a focus on affordable housing provision and infrastructure capacity.
- Environment: strong support for policies protecting green spaces, the green belt and enhancing biodiversity, with calls for more ambitious climate change mitigation measures.
- Transport: mixed views on transport, with general support for sustainable travel options but concerns about increased congestion.
- Employment: broad agreement on the need for economic growth, with a campaign showing strong support for the safeguarding of Chatham Docks.
- Regeneration: support for urban regeneration, alongside calls for protecting Medway's heritage.

More details of the matters raised in the responses is set out in this report. The full comments are published on the Council's website with wider information about the new Local Plan.

The report also outlines the consultation programme, and the activities and events organised, which included:

- Seven public exhibitions attended by 240 residents.
- Six thematic meetings and workshops.

The feedback received has informed the next stage of the Local Plan's development, including drafting of policies and identifying site allocations. The next step in the Local Plan process is a further Regulation 18 consultation in Summer 2024, prior to finalising the content of the Draft Plan for publication in 2025.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Medway Council is preparing a new Local Plan which covers the period to 2041 and upon adoption, will replace the existing 2003 Medway Local Plan. The Local Plan aims to deliver the sustainable growth of the Medway area, providing a healthy balance of homes, jobs, services whilst maintaining and enhancing the natural and historic environment. The Council is working to a plan preparation programme that will see the draft plan submitted to the Secretary of State in 2025 for independent Examination. Work to date has involved the collation of a broad evidence base, including but not limited to the assessments of development needs for housing, employment and retail uses, land availability and a strategic transport assessment.
- 1.2 This report provides a record of the Regulation 18 consultation 'Setting the Direction for Medway 2040' undertaken from 18th September to 31st October 2023. It outlines the consultation process and highlights the main themes emerging from the responses. The Council has considered the comments made in preparing the next stage of the Local Plan. Full copies of all written responses to the consultation have been published on the Council's [Medway Local Plan 2041](#) webpage.
- 1.3 The Regulation 18 document was focussed on the proposed vision, strategic objectives and setting out the proposed broad locations for future growth within the Medway area.
- 1.4 The consultation was largely managed through online resources, using the OpusConsult platform via the Council's website. Planning officers also arranged consultation events to support further discussions on key issues and wider participation in the development of the new Medway Local Plan. Further details of the consultation programme are set out in section 3 of this report.
- 1.5 The Council received individual comments from just under 400 respondents. During the consultation, the Council engaged with various stakeholders, including statutory bodies and local communities, to gather feedback on the draft Vision and Objectives outlined in the summary document.
- 1.6 The information and comments provided at the Regulation 18 stage of the preparation of the Medway Local Plan have been taken into account in drafting the next Regulation 18 Consultation document, published for consultation in July 2024.

2. COMPLIANCE WITH THE STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- 2.1 The consultation carried out by the Council has complied with the statutory requirements of the plan making process – under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The legislation defines ‘specific’ consultation bodies that are statutory consultees, and ‘general’ consultation bodies that cover wider stakeholders and residents. The consultation design was therefore mindful of the legal requirements that it needs to satisfy.
- 2.2 Medway Council updated its Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) in October 2022. This statutory document sets out the approaches and standards to be followed in carrying out consultation on planning matters. The SCI provides a basis for how the Council will involve the community in the preparation of planning policy documents, such as the Local Plan, and how it consults on planning applications. The document covers consultation and engagement methods, who will be consulted and the role of elected Councillors.
- 2.3 A wide range of engagement methods, compliant with the adopted 2022 SCI, were used to promote the ‘Local Plan - Setting the Direction for Medway 2040’ consultation in order to make contact with a cross-section of stakeholders, this included:
- Online resources
 - Direct e-mail correspondence
 - Press and social media
 - Stakeholder engagement meetings/thematic workshops
 - Public exhibition events
 - Materials available for viewing at libraries
- 2.4 Stakeholders could respond to the consultation in different ways. Written comments could be made via the bespoke online consultation platform – OpusConsult -, email or postal letter. Local people were most likely to use Opus or post. Statutory and voluntary organisations, developers and planning agents were most likely to submit their responses by Opus and email. Many of the written responses received were in relation to Chatham Docks.

Use of information gathered

- 2.5 All written comments, information and personal contact details, submitted as part of the Regulation 18 consultation were recorded as formal responses to this stage of preparation of the emerging Local Plan. The information was

added to the consultation recording system for both documentation and analysis purposes.

- 2.6 Respondents' contact details are held by the Council in accordance with data privacy requirements in the Local Plan consultation database (where consented) for the sole purpose of planning policy work and will not be shared with any other Council services or used for purposes other than Planning Policy.
- 2.7 The written representations, excluding sensitive personal contact details, have been published on the Council's website on the Planning Policy pages, as part of a formal record of plan preparation. Information will be held until an appropriate period after the adoption of the Local Plan. Further details are available on the Council's [Planning Service privacy notice](#).

3. CONSULTATION PROGRAMME

- 3.1 The Council wishes to reach a broad range and cross section of organisations, businesses, and residents, and others with an interest in Medway, in preparing the content and direction of the Local Plan to ensure that it effectively considers wider views of how Medway should develop. This section outlines how the Council carried out consultation on the 2023 Regulation 18 document and the different interests contacted.

Consultation database

- 3.2 A key tool in managing consultation on planning policy documents in Medway is the Medway Local Plan consultation database. This includes contact details of a wide range of organisations and people with an interest in Medway's development, and those who have responded to earlier consultations and agreed for the Council to notify them of further planning policy consultations. These contacts include statutory organisations, voluntary and community groups; individuals, many of whom live in Medway; businesses, developers, landowners, planning consultants and representatives of partnerships. The OpusConsult consultation platform is the primary resource for contacts. Additional contacts have been gathered from people who have signed up to the Council's updates on planning and regeneration matters.
- 3.3 The Council used the database to send notification of the start of the Regulation 18 consultation directly by email or letter to over 1,000 organisations and people registered for updates. In addition to use of the Local Plan database, the Council organised targeted emails to partnerships and stakeholder groups, provided through corporate services and external partners. The Planning Service has worked with colleagues to speak directly to different groups through agenda slots on pre-arranged meetings, such as organising thematic based consultation events.

Audiences/stakeholders

- 3.4 The various interests in the preparation of the Medway Local Plan can be considered under a number of broad categories:
- MPs, Members and Parish Councils
 - Statutory Body (defined in planning legislation)
 - Developer/agent for developer
 - Interest, voluntary and community organisations
 - Members of the public
 - Business
 - Other
- 3.5 Elected Member engagement is critical to ensure the democratic basis of the plan, and to input members' views and knowledge into the new Local Plan.

The plan needs civic leadership and wide ownership for the vision and development strategy being promoted. Engagement was undertaken through:

- Formal decision making – Cabinet approval for the ‘Setting the Direction for Medway 2040’ consultation document
- Briefings for members prior to the start of the consultation programme
- Invites for members to attend public exhibitions, particularly those organised in their local wards
- Updated briefings during the consultation on emerging issues.

- 3.6 Statutory consultees are organisations defined in legislation. The government requires certain organisations, such as Natural England and the Environment Agency, to be consulted during the preparation of planning policy. This is a technical audience that will seek opportunities to influence policy formulation in key thematic areas and ensure that the local plan is consistent with national policy. The Council sought the views of these organisations on the ‘Setting the Direction for Medway 2040’ consultation document. Specific meetings were set up for ‘Duty to Cooperate’ discussions with neighbouring local planning authorities, and key consultees. Further details on this specific legal requirement of plan preparation is set out in section 4. This work built on ongoing liaison with these organisations throughout the plan preparation work, and this will continue in the refinement of development allocations and policies.
- 3.7 The Council must also work with Neighbourhood Planning Groups active in the area, to ensure coordination between the two tiers of plan making.
- 3.8 Developers are a key sector to engage in the preparation of the Local Plan. Details of developers and planning agents with an interest in Medway are held on the Local Plan consultation database. The government seeks for Councils to work constructively with the development industry to identify potential sites and input to the preparation of policies. Developers and landowners were asked to submit details of sites that they wish to promote for development. Planning officers carried out an assessment of these sites and presented the information in a Land Availability Assessment (LAA), published alongside the ‘Setting the Direction for Medway 2040’ consultation document.
- 3.9 Interest and Community Groups form a core set of the ‘general consultation bodies’ that Councils must involve in the plan preparation process. The Local Plan consultation database includes a number of these groups with interests in Medway. The main areas of representation cover:
- Interest groups – these include environmental and amenity groups, arts and heritage groups, and social welfare organisations; and

organisations with specific interests – eg, housing associations, services and facilities.

- Community sectors – eg, young people, older people, faith communities, people with disabilities, minority ethnic communities.

3.10 Medway's residents are directly affected by Planning and the approach taken to development in the Local Plan. The Local Plan database contains contact details for a number of residents who have asked to be kept updated on planning policy issues, and they have been directly invited to respond to the Regulation 18 consultation. However, this represents only a very small number of the local population. Strategic planning over a wide area, extended timeframe and the technical requirements of the local plan process can also present potential barriers to wider engagement in consultation. The Council therefore sought to promote work on the consultation broadly and the public exhibitions were particularly aimed at local people.

3.11 The wider business community is important to a strong local economy, which is a key objective for the Local Plan. The Planning Service has contact details for many local and sectoral businesses, they were directly invited to respond to the consultation. In addition, specific consultation events were arranged on employment issues.

Communications and Notification

3.12 The consultation was largely managed through online resources and email in line with corporate communications protocol, and the digitalisation agenda for Planning. The consultation document was available to view on the Council's website and responses could be made via email, letter response and on the bespoke consultation platform OpusConsult. There was a strong presence on the Council's website, with information on the front page of the website. A programme of workshops and events were held during the consultation to further encourage participation, especially of local people.

3.13 A Public Notice was placed in the Kent Messenger to alert people to the consultation. The Council contacted stakeholders on its Local Plan consultation database. The Planning Service placed copies of the consultation document in public libraries and community hubs across Medway. Copies of the document were also sent to all Medway Parish Councils.

Engagement

- 3.14 Seven public exhibitions were organised as part of the consultation to broaden engagement in the Local Plan preparation work and provide residents with an opportunity to directly discuss the proposals with a Planning officer. These events were held at varying times of the week, including weekday daytimes and evenings and Saturday mornings to accommodate people's availability to attend. Further events were held on specific themes and under the specific 'Duty to Cooperate' requirements on cross border strategic matters. The events included:
- Staffed public exhibitions across the authority in community venues
 - Thematic workshops & meetings with invited technical audiences
 - Duty to cooperate meetings with neighbouring Local Authorities and statutory organisations.
- 3.15 A schedule of the public exhibition events held during the consultation is set out in Appendix 1. These events were held in order to share information from the consultation document, to promote discussion and gather comments on how the new Local Plan should address the area's economic, social and environmental needs, and to seek opinion on the document and identify areas for improvement.
- 3.16 Planning officers staffed exhibitions in community venues, including leisure centres, shopping centres, country parks and community centres across Medway, where people were able to find out more about the Local Plan and speak to officers. The Council also organised a number of meetings focusing on specific themes within the consultation. These themes included issues of housing, health and wellbeing, employment, and the environment. These workshops provided opportunities to discuss thematic and technical issues in more detail. Further information is provided in section 5 of this report.
- 3.17 Briefings were held for Medway Councillors in advance of and during the consultation. A briefing session was also held for Parish Councils in Medway during the consultation, through the Rural Liaison Committee.
- 3.18 These various methods of publicising the consultation enabled a range of people to express their views and opinions on development options within Medway. Local community-based publicity for workshops and exhibitions proved useful in increasing attendance.

4. DUTY TO COOPERATE

- 4.1 The emerging Medway Local Plan is being prepared within the context of the National Planning Policy Framework, the Localism Act 2011 and other relevant legislation. In support of the preparation of the new Medway Local Plan, the Council is committed to 'engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis' with other Local Planning Authorities and public bodies and services to address 'strategic matters'. This legal obligation is known as the 'Duty to Cooperate'. In particular, the Duty to Cooperate requires the Council to work with neighbouring authorities, including Kent County Council, to discuss strategic issues that 'cross administrative boundaries' for example the provision of infrastructure or meeting housing needs.
- 4.2 The Duty to Cooperate on cross boundary strategic issues is embedded in Medway's plan making process and this duty has informed preparation of the 'Setting the Direction for Medway 2040' consultation document as well as the requirement for further evidence base work.
- 4.3 Medway Council has engaged with relevant Local Authorities in collaborative evidence preparation and sharing baseline and analytical work on development needs.

Consulting on Setting the Direction for Medway 2040 document

- 4.4 The Council contacted all statutory consultees who represent interests on cross border strategic matters as part of the consultation on the 'Setting the Direction for Medway 2040' document, seeking their comments to inform the development of the emerging Local Plan.
- 4.5 Specific meetings were held with:
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
 - Swale Borough Council
 - Gravesham Borough Council
 - Maidstone Borough Council
- 4.6 These meetings were held to understand progress on strategic plans and evidence gathering as well as to discuss issues arising from the Setting the Direction for Medway 2040 document.
- 4.7 Other key matters included the accommodation of unmet housing needs, higher levels of housing need, employment land, demands on existing infrastructure arising from the impacts of development, and the need for further critical transport infrastructure. In addition, the following were identified as common issues for neighbouring authorities:

- Where opportunities existed for the provision of additional housing land –noting constraints within the respective authority boundaries and beginning discussions where options may need to be explored.
- Transport infrastructure requirements and capacity.
- The importance of addressing air quality.
- The Lower Thames Crossing and its impact on local authorities directly and indirectly affected and connections into the wider road network.
- The consideration and implication of Green Belt review.
- Impacts of developments in proximity to borough boundaries.

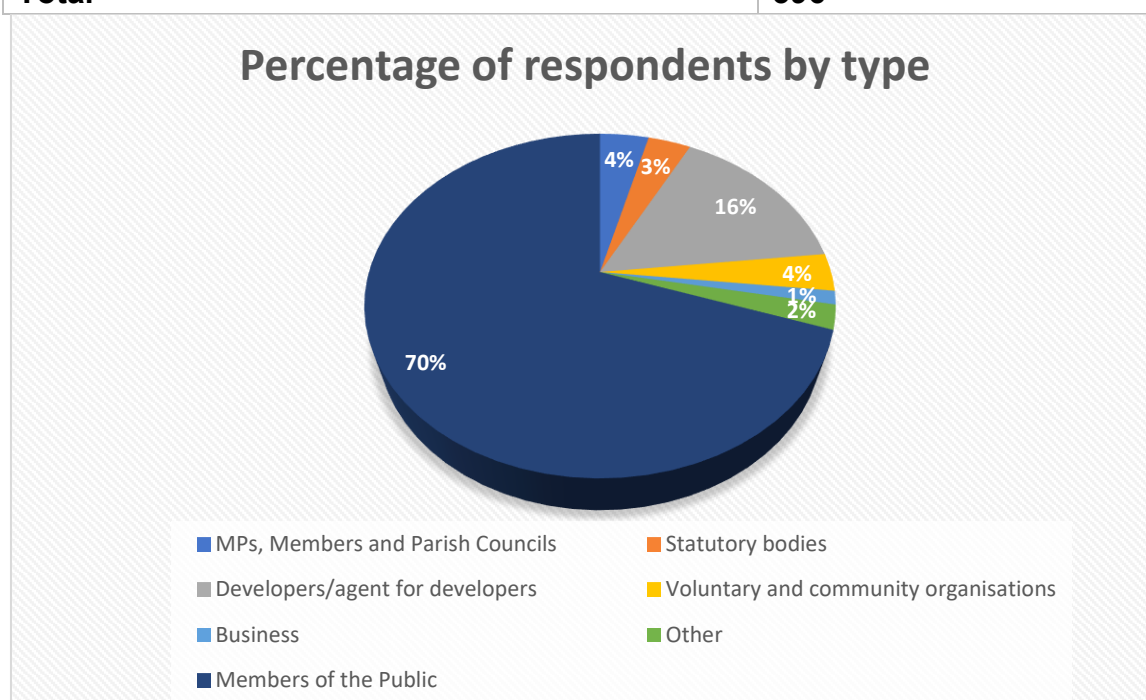
4.8 The Council is continuing to engage with Duty to Cooperate bodies as an integral part of the preparation of the new Local Plan. Further specific engagement activities will be held in conjunction with the further Regulation 18 consultation in summer 2024.

5. RESPONSE ANALYSIS

Overview of responses

- 5.1 The Council invited comments on the matters set out in the 'Setting the Direction for Medway 2040' document. Views were sought on a vision, objectives and development scenarios for growth. Many respondents focused on specific areas of interest, rather than commenting on all themes.
- 5.2 The respondents fell into a number of broad categories of stakeholders listed in the table and pie chart below with the largest proportion of responses coming from the public at 74% followed by developers 16%.

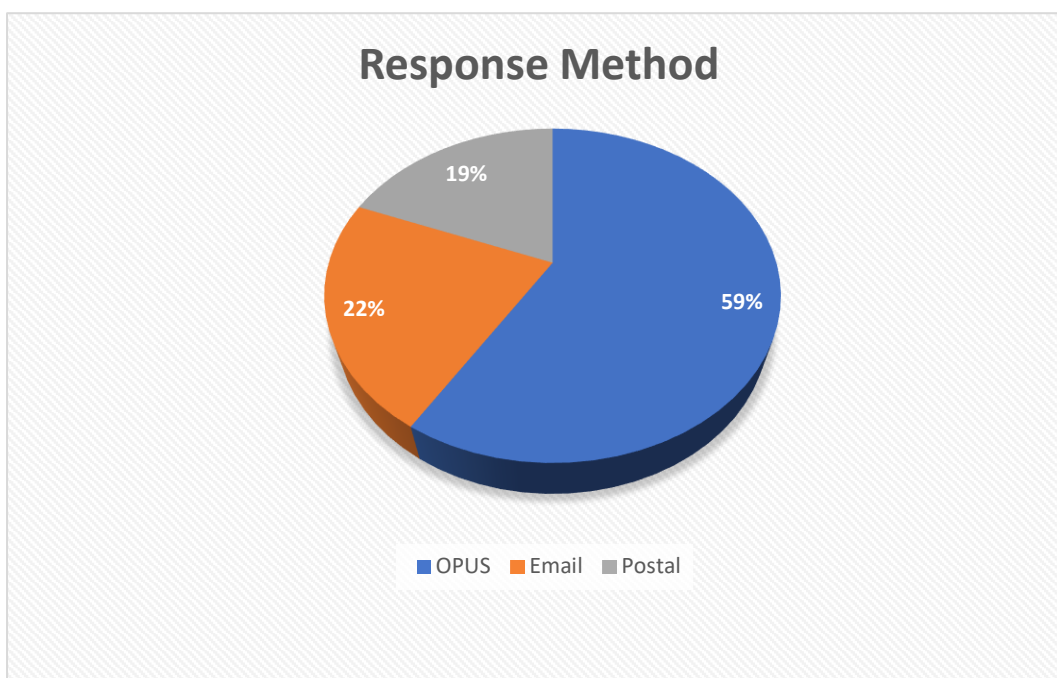
Category	Number of responses
Member of the public	276
Statutory bodies	14
MPs, Members and Parish Councils	16
Voluntary	14
Developers	62
Other	9
Business	5
Total	396



- 5.3 The responses were submitted through OpusConsult and by email/letter to the Council. The OpusConsult portal was most frequently used by members of the public (as seen in the table and pie chart below). Developers and statutory consultees generally submitted responses by email but also a combination of email and OpusConsult, focusing on specific matters of interest.

Category	Number of responses
OPUS	233
Email	88
Postal	75
Total	396

*35 respondents submitted representations via email and Opus



5.4 The responses were also categorised under 'Document Content', these categories correspond with the various sections of the 'Setting the Direction for Medway 2040' document. The table below shows the matters that were frequently commented on.

Respondent type	Key Matters	Number of times raised
Members of the public	Safeguard or against residential development at Chatham Docks	96
	Support for the vision	23
	Support for the protection of green spaces	20
	Support for urban regeneration	20
	Improve transport, cycling and public transport	18
Developers	Green Belt release	9
	Chatham Docks	5
	Housing supply	12

Statutory Bodies	Infrastructure	11
	Heritage	13
	Transport	3
	Green Belt	3
Voluntary and Community	Vision	3
	Economy	3
	Infrastructure	8
	Climate	4
Members, MPs and Parish Councils	Climate	5
	Housing	26
	Chatham Docks	9
Other	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	4
	Housing	3
	Flooding	2

*All business representations referred to safeguarding Chatham Docks

Summary of Main Matters

- 5.5 The Regulation 18 consultation for the Medway Local Plan generated a wide range of responses from various stakeholders, including developers, agents, members of the public, community and voluntary organisations, businesses, elected members, MPs, parish councils, and statutory bodies. This section provides an analysis and summary of the key issues raised during the consultation.
- 5.6 Housing was most raised issue by members of the public followed by concerns over infrastructure delivery.
- 5.7 For statutory bodies, strategic objectives attracted the most comments followed by environmental observations.
- 5.8 Businesses made comments about issues relating to employment, then infrastructure.
- 5.9 The main matters raised across all respondent types can be summarised as follows:
- Housing supply and delivery: concerns about the feasibility of housing targets, the need for affordable housing, and the balance between brownfield and greenfield development.
 - Environmental protection: strong emphasis on preserving green spaces, protecting biodiversity, agricultural land and addressing climate change concerns.

- Infrastructure and services: widespread calls for improved infrastructure to support new development, particularly in terms of transport, healthcare, and education.
- Employment and economy: debates over the future of key employment sites such as Chatham Docks and Medway City Estate and calls for a sustainable economic strategy. A number of responses were also received regarding the protection of Chatham Docks. Some of the key concerns are as follows, with Chatham Docks being a primary focus of about 124 representations, reflecting a local campaign on this matter:
 - The economic, social and environmental implications of relocation of business away from Chatham Docks, including the extent to which new employment locations may be less sustainably located or may even be beyond the authority boundary and therefore represent a loss of employment.
 - Loss of Chatham Docks employment impacting waste management cycle in the area.
 - Chatham Docks should be on the employment sites map.
- Development strategy: discussions about the spatial distribution of development, particularly regarding urban regeneration and rural protection.
- Evidence base: requests for updated assessments and additional studies to support the plan's proposals.

5.10 These main matters are explored in more detail in the following sections, which break down the responses by stakeholder group.

Summary of responses by respondent type

Developers and agents for developers

- 5.11 Developers raised several points regarding the Local Plan's approach and evidence base. There were suggestions to extend the plan period, which was considered tight by some respondents. Concerns were expressed about the potential loss of Green Belt, with calls for a full, up-to-date Green Belt review to justify any potential release. Many emphasised that Green Belt release should be a last resort.
- 5.12 Several developers advocated that any assessment reviewing the relocation of businesses from Chatham Docks and Medway City Estate should carefully consider the economic, social, and environmental implications of such relocation. Developers felt that employment locations in less accessible areas or outside the authority boundary may represent a loss of local employment opportunities.
- 5.13 Regarding housing supply and delivery, there were recommendations for a larger buffer in housing supply (5-10% instead of 2-3%). Questions were raised about the reliability of windfall projections and pipeline figures, and concerns were expressed about the feasibility of delivering a third of growth through regeneration. Several respondents requested updates to the Local Housing Needs Assessment and Land Availability Assessment.
- 5.14 Some comments were raised about the concentration of employment opportunities north of the river and the potential redevelopment of Chatham Docks and Medway City Estate, and there were calls for a robust and sustainable employment strategy. Queries were raised about the highway capacity of M2 Junction 1. A number of responses stated that the protection of Chatham Docks should be considered. Some responses sought an update to the Employment Land Needs Assessment (ELNA) as part of the plan's evidence base.
- 5.15 Many of the developer comments reflected their interests in particular site promotions. Some developers advocated for the Capstone area, as an area that presents an opportunity for comprehensive master planning, incorporating new permissions and the Lidsing development in Maidstone borough. They felt the master planning approach would ensure that infrastructure is in place to support growth in a coordinated manner, rather than piecemeal development. A concern raised is the potential exacerbation of ribbon development from Lidsing, which could lead to an undesirable pattern of sprawl.
- 5.16 There were concerns raised regarding the viability of regeneration sites in town centres due to significant costs, infrastructure requirements, and the potential impact on the delivery of affordable housing. These factors were

considered by developers to possibly render town centre regeneration projects unviable and a basis for them to promote development on greenfield sites.

Members of the public

- 5.17 Public responses covered a wide range of topics, with some clear themes emerging. Employment considerations included safeguarding Chatham Docks and Medway City Estate from residential development, locating distribution facilities near motorway junctions rather than the Hoo Peninsula and ensuring employment sites are suitably located.
- 5.18 Many expressed concerns about Green Belt release and loss of agricultural land, with calls to protect green spaces, including Capstone and the Hoo Peninsula. A number of comments were received supporting the vision. Concerns have been raised about the potential conflict between city status and the impact on the area's historic character.
- 5.19 Infrastructure and services were a major concern for the public. There were widespread concerns about infrastructure capacity, particularly in rural areas, and calls for improved public transport, cycling facilities, and sustainable travel options. Many requested better health infrastructure to support new development.
- 5.20 Views on housing and employment were mixed. While some supported more homes, others opposed large-scale developments. There were calls for affordable housing that meets local needs. Many expressed support for developing green technologies and sustainable industries.
- 5.21 Environmental and sustainability issues were prominent in public responses. There was a strong emphasis on protecting wildlife, biodiversity, and environmental designations. Many supported energy-efficient homes and sustainable development practices, while expressing concerns about air quality and pollution from increased development.

Statutory Bodies

- 5.22 Statutory bodies provided comprehensive commentary on various aspects of the consultation document. The Council also wrote to statutory consultees to request comments on scoping reports for the Sustainability Appraisal and the Habitats Regulations Assessment in support of the Local Plan.
- 5.23 There were calls for additional content to be included, such as Sport England's 10 Active Design principles and a range of reasonable strategy options or a preferred option with details on delivery.

- 5.24 There were requests from the Environment Agency for greater emphasis on blue-green infrastructure, waste management, and surface water systems. Statutory bodies recommended a more robust approach to sustainability, including a thorough screening of sites using comprehensive indicators and consideration of mitigation for sites along waterways.
- 5.25 Support for protecting Medway's heritage was a significant focus, with calls for a clear commitment to protecting and enhancing Medway's heritage. Suggestions included incorporating heritage into the plan's objectives, using historic landscape characterisation research, and considering the impact of development on designated heritage assets.
- 5.26 Transport was another key area, with emphasis on the importance of existing strategic transport corridors and the need for enhanced passenger links, particularly if large-scale housing is proposed on the Hoo Peninsula. There were also calls for higher residential densities close to stations and support for the rail network to reduce larger vehicle movements.
- 5.27 Several statutory bodies highlighted the need for updated evidence, including a playing pitch strategy, sports facility strategy, and conservation area appraisals. There were also requests for a cultural strategy and an updated Tall Buildings strategy.
- 5.28 Cross-border issues were raised, including Gravesham's unmet housing need request under the Duty to Cooperate and the need for stronger joint working on air quality issues. Support was expressed for cross-border cooperation on strategic infrastructure issues with neighbouring authorities.

Voluntary and community organisations

- 5.29 Community and voluntary organisations provided detailed feedback on various aspects of the plan. Regarding the vision and strategy, there were calls for more detailed actions, goals, and strategies in the vision, and support for a 'brownfield first' approach to development.
- 5.30 On environment and sustainability, these groups recommended stronger policies on climate change and carbon neutrality. There were suggestions for enhanced protection and expansion of green and blue infrastructure and calls for comprehensive biodiversity net gain policies as well as support for a greater emphasis on public transport and protecting agricultural land.
- 5.31 In terms of economy and culture, there was support for policies promoting the green economy and cultural infrastructure and green tourism. Recommendations were made for employment policies that do not impact on biodiversity.

- 5.32 Several organisations suggested additions to the evidence base, including an Ancient Tree Inventory. There were also calls to update the Local Housing Needs Assessment and Employment Land Needs Assessment.

Business

- 5.33 Responses in this section were largely reflecting the issues on the potential redevelopment of Chatham Docks and support for the existing land uses.

Members, MPs, and Parish Councils

- 5.34 This group raised several points about housing and development. There was an emphasis on meeting local housing needs before accommodating migration from London, and objections to assisting Gravesham in meeting its housing needs. Concerns were raised about the cost and viability of development on the Hoo Peninsula.
- 5.35 Environment and infrastructure were key concerns for this group. There were calls for protection of specific areas from excessive development and emphasis on providing appropriate infrastructure alongside new development. Recommendations were made for environmental protections, particularly for the Hoo Peninsula as well as the safeguarding of Chatham Docks, Medway City Estate and agricultural land.
- 5.36 Several queries were raised about the consultation process. There were objections to the spatial strategy from some parish councils and calls for clarification on how previous consultations relate to the current process.

Other

- 5.37 A range of additional comments and recommendations were received from various stakeholders that fell into the 'other' category. The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) was a focus for some representations, with suggestions to consider it as a constraint in assessing strategic scale development. Flooding was addressed, with suggestions to consider alternative ways of seeking betterment that offer multiple benefits.
- 5.38 On employment matters, concerns were expressed over business relocation and compensation. Some respondents highlighted the need for more industrial employment land, largely but not exclusively for logistics.
- 5.39 There was support for more emphasis on affordable housing in the plan, including encouragement for retrofitting and town centre living, not just riverside locations. The concept of 15-minute neighbourhoods received support from some respondents.

6. NEXT STEPS

- 6.1 The Council has collated the responses received and identified the specific matters raised. The representations have been published on the Council's website for wider review. The matters raised have been assessed and the Council has taken these into account in preparing for the next stage of plan preparation. This includes the further development of the evidence base for the Local Plan.
- 6.2 The Council is consulting in summer 2024 (a further regulation 18 stage). The consultation programme will build on the work carried out to date, and the Council will continue to engage with neighbouring local authorities and statutory consultees on cross border strategic matters as part of the Duty to Cooperate.
- 6.3 Outcomes of the next consultation stage will be published with the Draft Local Plan in early 2025, with further work on the Council's new Local Plan for Medway.

CONSULTATION EVENTS PROGRAMME

Overview

- 1.1 The Council held 'drop in' style exhibitions on the 'Setting the Direction for Medway 2040' document in community venues across Medway, open to all to attend. It also organised a series of thematic workshops to consider key issues in more detail.

Exhibitions

- 1.2 The Council organised 7 events at community venues across urban and rural Medway. These attracted 240 people. A briefing was arranged for parish councillors in advance of the community events. The table below shows the level of attendance to the exhibitions, with the highest attendance in Chatham at 51 people.

Date	Time	Area	Venue	Attendance numbers
Tuesday 3 October	15:30 - 18:00	Strood	Strood Library	17
Thursday 5 October	16:30 - 19:00	Rochester	Corn Exchange	32
Tuesday 10 October	15:30 - 18:00	Gillingham	Medway Park	38
Thursday 12 October	11:00 - 13:30	Rainham	Riverside Country Park	27
Saturday 14 October	9:30 - 12:00	Chatham	Pentagon Centre (unit to left of Wilkos, Ground Floor)	51
Tuesday 17 October	16:30 - 19:00	Hempstead/Capstone	Lordswood Leisure Centre	30
Thursday 19 October	17:30 - 20:00	Hoo Peninsula	Hundred of Hoo Secondary School	45

- 1.3 Key matters arising from the exhibition events include the need for improved infrastructure, concerns over the impact on the environment, and the view that

the housing needs formula does not adequately account for the characteristics of the local area. Clarity was sought over the housing numbers, and people wanted to see that increased homebuilding would be accompanied by further provision for social infrastructure. The plan should encourage a safe High Street and improvements to parks. Specific housing provision for older people, families, and younger people was recommended. An improved evening and night-time economy was desired. A new footpath/cycle route following the old railway line from Gillingham to Strood Castle was proposed. There were concerns over the lack of support for businesses and the potential loss of green space. Strong support was expressed for the protection of the Green Belt. Overall, there is a desire for an improved perception of Medway through the Local Plan.

Thematic meetings/workshops

- 1.4 The Planning Service organised a number of thematic workshops, with an invited range of stakeholders, which also helped to engage a range of organisations, community groups and businesses in the development of the Local Plan. These included events on the topics of the Environment, Housing and Employment.
- 1.5 The meetings took the format of a short presentation on the Direction for Medway 2040 document, followed by a discussion on key issues to be considered. The thematic based events were useful in gathering detailed information, to determine components of the plan's vision and objectives and support the development of policies. A schedule of meetings held during the consultation is set out in the table below.

Date	Time	Theme
Wednesday 20 September	19:00 - 21:00	Rural Liaison Committee
Monday 16 October	18:00 - 19:00	Medway Council member briefing
Tuesday 17 October	9:30-12:30	Health & Wellbeing workshop
Monday 16 October PM	14:00 - 16:15	Housing workshop
Monday 30 October PM	14:00 - 16:15	Employment workshop
Thursday 26 October PM	14:00 - 16:15	Environment workshop

- 1.6 Key themes emerging from the stakeholder engagement workshops included discussions around housing targets and the need for Medway to assess all options to meet these targets within constraints. The protection of greenfield sites was highlighted as a priority, alongside the challenges and potential of brownfield sites for development. Protecting and expanding industrial land, particularly with existing resources, and although potential was seen as highly important there were calls to preserve Medway's industrial heritage while accommodating modern manufacturing.
- 1.7 The increasing pressure on services due to more residential development and addressing the inadequacies of public transport on the Peninsula is crucial. Encouraging sustainable transportation options, reducing reliance on cars, and improving public transport infrastructure can enhance accessibility.
- 1.8 Additionally, there is a strong focus on environmental considerations such as tree preservation, biodiversity, sustainable locations, and climate resilience. The integration of green infrastructure, wildlife habitats, and biodiversity into planning is seen as crucial for fostering pride, tourism, and community well-being.
- 1.9 Opinions that touched upon social aspects like community engagement, inclusivity, and public health considerations were raised. Suggestions for creating dementia-friendly spaces, enhancing community connections through green spaces and allotments, and promoting local businesses' integration within communities were mentioned. The importance of reducing carbon emissions, tackling loneliness, fostering a sense of pride, and recognising the existing history across different areas for community well-being are also discussed.
- 1.10 Overall, the themes focused on balancing development needs with environmental conservation, community well-being, and inclusive planning to create sustainable and thriving spaces in Medway.