

EXAMINATION OF THE MEDWAY COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN 2041

HEARING STATEMENT

THE INDEPENDENT GROUP (TIG) ON MEDWAY COUNCIL

MATTER

Matter 4 - Built Environment

ISSUE

Whether the Plan and its policies on the built environment are clear, positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

Representor	The Independent Group (TIG) on Medway Council
Representor ID	E.37
Relevant MIQs	4.2, 4.4 (first question - design coherence), 4.9, 4.34, 4.35, 4.36, 4.39, 4.47, 4.48, 4.51, 4.53, 4.54 and 4.57
Hearing session	17 September 2026 - AM session (10.00 am - 1.00 pm) and PM session (2.00 pm - 5.00 pm)
Statement date	27 August 2026
Word count	2,793 substantive words

Submitted on behalf of The Independent Group (TIG) on Medway Council
Councillor Michael Pearce, Planning Spokesman

1. PURPOSE AND STATUS OF THIS STATEMENT

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement is submitted by The Independent Group (TIG) in relation to Matter 4 - Built Environment. It addresses only the Inspectors' Matters, Issues and Questions (MIQs) identified below and should be read alongside TIG's Regulation 19 representations listed in section 6.
- 1.2 This statement does not introduce new evidence or a new objection. It focuses and clarifies TIG's Regulation 19 concerns that strategic development on the Hoo Peninsula would irreversibly harm the peninsula's historic character and the settings of listed buildings and Conservation Areas, including effects upon archaeology, historic farmsteads, military heritage and cumulative historic landscape character.
- 1.3 TIG does not contend that the Plan contains no heritage safeguards. Policies S8, DM9, DM10 and DM11 contain important protective wording, while Policy SA8 requires landscape-led development, a strategic masterplan and reference to Historic England's Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project. TIG's concern is whether reliance on those later safeguards demonstrates that the scale and distribution of growth already selected can be accommodated consistently with the significance and settings of affected heritage assets and national policy.

2. TIG'S POSITION AT A GLANCE

Overall answer to the Matter / Issue

- 2.1 TIG considers that the Plan has not yet been demonstrated to be justified or effective in relation to the historic-environment consequences of strategic growth on the Hoo Peninsula. The Council's own evidence identifies a distinctive historic landscape and specific relationships between proposed strategic sites and important heritage assets, yet the SA then treats site-level heritage effects as negligible after mitigation largely by relying upon generic and development-management policies.

Soundness / legal test engaged

- 2.2 Justified; effective; consistent with national policy on conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Main Modification / action sought

- 2.3 Require a strategic Hoo Peninsula heritage assessment, integrated with the SA8 masterplanning process, before the development parameters for the strategic allocations are fixed. It should address designated and non-designated assets, archaeological potential, historic landscape character, settlement form, farmsteads, military heritage, settings and cumulative/in-combination effects, and translate the findings into binding development envelopes, buffers, heights, view corridors, open-space relationships and phasing requirements.
- 2.4 Where that work demonstrates that an allocation, or part of an allocation, cannot be accommodated without heritage harm that is justified in accordance with national policy, the Plan should reduce, reconfigure or remove the affected development. If the necessary changes would materially recast the submitted spatial strategy, the Plan should not be adopted in its present form and should be withdrawn and re-prepared.

3. RESPONSES TO THE INSPECTORS' MIQs

- 3.0 The changes identified below are without prejudice to TIG's position at paragraphs 4.2-4.3. If any defect cannot be remedied by limited further work and Main Modifications without materially recasting the submitted Plan, TIG seeks non-adoption, withdrawal and re-preparation.

3.1 MIQ 4.2 - Character assessments and place-making evidence

TIG's answer: The evidence identifies Hoo's distinct historic character, but its implications are not fully translated into the strategic scale and form of growth.

Reasoning...

- 3.1.1 B9 identifies the Hoo Peninsula as a well-defined area of distinctive historic landscape with a strong character boundary. Its summary of Historic England's Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project describes settlement patterns as reflecting topography, routeways, river access, military establishments and proximity to the Medway Towns and London. It records historic field patterns, farmsteads, military defences and a landscape whose cultural development remains legible.
- 3.1.2 B9's discussion of the future landscape is particularly relevant to Policy T1. It explains that historic character resides not only in individual nationally important sites but more widely in the typical Hoo landscape, and describes the peninsula as far from a 'cultural blank canvas'. The Plan responds positively in part: T1 requires edge-of-settlement development to respect field patterns, settlement separation and rural transition, while SA8 requires development to refer to the Historic England project.
- 3.1.3 The remaining soundness question is whether those design principles were used to determine an appropriate development quantum and development envelope before the strategic growth was selected. A requirement to design sensitively around a fixed quantum is not the same as demonstrating that the quantum itself respects the character evidence.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, Chapter 6; E.37 / SDLP 109-111 and 115.

Change necessary: Make the Hoo historic-landscape evidence a binding input to the SA8 strategic masterplan and development parameters. See MM-TIG-M4-01 and 02.

3.2 MIQ 4.4 (first question - design coherence) - Strategic allocations and major sites

TIG's answer: The masterplan mechanism is positive, but it does not yet ensure that heritage constraints determine the coherent form and extent of strategic development.

Reasoning...

- 3.2.1 Policy SA8 criterion 5 requires a strategic masterplan for Hoo and Chattenden covering design, landscape, green infrastructure and heritage. Criteria 16-18 require

landscape-led development, a green infrastructure strategy, reference to the Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project, interpretation of WWII sites and recognition of the Hoo Stop Line. These are worthwhile provisions.

- 3.2.2 However, they are predominantly requirements for how allocated growth is subsequently masterplanned. The heritage baseline should also perform a prior constraining function: identifying which areas can accommodate built development, which must remain open to preserve setting and historic landscape relationships, and where height, density or built form must be limited. Without that step, there remains a risk of individual parcels being designed acceptably while the cumulative strategic transformation is not.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, sections 6.4-6.7; E.37 / SDLP 109-111.

Change necessary: Require the strategic heritage assessment before approval of the SA8 masterplan and before dependent phases proceed. See MM-TIG-M4-01 and 02.

3.3 MIQ 4.9 - Masterplans, design codes and mechanisms

TIG's answer: Additional heritage-led parameters are required for the Hoo strategic growth area.

Reasoning...

- 3.3.1 T1 and SA8 provide a framework for masterplanning, but the effectiveness of that framework depends on objective parameters capable of surviving changes in land ownership, phasing and detailed design. For Hoo, those parameters should be derived from the historic landscape and heritage evidence, not left solely to case-by-case Heritage Statements at planning-application stage.
- 3.3.2 The resulting framework should identify development envelopes, important views and visual relationships, settlement-separation functions, heritage-sensitive open space, treatment of the Hoo Stop Line and other military remains, and requirements for monitoring and review as successive phases come forward.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, Chapter 6.

Change necessary: Add binding heritage-led parameters to the SA8 masterplanning framework. See MM-TIG-M4-01 and 02.

3.4 MIQ 4.34 - Policy DM9: Heritage Assets

TIG's answer: DM9 contains generally appropriate development-management safeguards, but those safeguards do not by themselves establish the soundness of strategic allocations.

Reasoning...

- 3.4.1 DM9 requires high-quality design, preservation and enhancement of significance and setting, proportionate Heritage Statements and, where applicable, archaeological assessment. TIG supports those principles. Its objection is to using such application-stage controls as the principal reason for treating strategic site effects as resolved.

- 3.4.2 A3.3 Appendix I is important. After identifying adverse heritage effects at reasonable alternative sites, it states that policies including S8, DM9, DM10, DM11 and T1 are expected to mitigate those effects and therefore assigns negligible impacts to all reasonable alternative sites. The same passage acknowledges that site-specific characteristics and the nature/significance of local heritage assets will not be known in detail until planning-application stage. TIG considers that assumption too broad for strategic allocations where known heritage relationships already exist.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, sections 6.4 and 6.7; E.37 / SDLP 109.

Change necessary: Retain DM9 but do not rely upon it as a substitute for strategic assessment of the Hoo allocations. See EX-TIG-M4-04.

3.5 MIQ 4.35 - Heritage evidence informing the Plan

TIG's answer: A substantial evidence base exists, but the Plan does not yet demonstrate how all material Hoo heritage evidence constrained the chosen development pattern.

Reasoning...

- 3.5.1 B9 is wide-ranging and expressly incorporates the Historic England Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project. It identifies the peninsula's distinctive historic landscape, military defence history, farming and settlement patterns and significant archaeological potential. This is precisely the type of evidence capable of informing strategic choices.
- 3.5.2 The issue is therefore not an absence of heritage evidence. It is the decision trail from evidence to allocation. The Council should demonstrate where the historic-landscape evidence altered site boundaries, capacities, heights, open-space requirements or phasing, and where it concluded that identified harm was acceptable. If that cannot be shown, the strategic masterplan should be preceded by the assessment sought by TIG.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, sections 6.2-6.7.

Change necessary: Provide the missing strategic heritage decision trail and modify SA8 accordingly. See MM-TIG-M4-01.

3.6 MIQ 4.36 - Significance and setting when accommodating the scale of growth

TIG's answer: Not adequately demonstrated for the Hoo Peninsula.

Reasoning...

- 3.6.1 The Council's SA identifies specific known relationships. A3.3 Appendix F records HHH12 at approximately 90 metres from the Grade I listed St Werburgh Church and adjacent to Cockham Wood Fort Scheduled Monument. It records HHH22 and the combined HHH22/HHH31 site adjacent to the Grade II listed Four Pillarboxes. These are not speculative concerns raised only by TIG; they are recognised in the Council's own appraisal.
- 3.6.2 A3.2 states more generally that adverse heritage impacts can include effects on setting, local character and views and are expected to be long-term and irreversible. Its

cultural-heritage baseline identifies the threat of the Medway Towns rich heritage being compromised to meet housing demand. Nevertheless, Table 10.1 anticipates a negligible overall effect on designated heritage assets after policy mitigation; A3.3 Appendix I similarly assigns negligible impacts to all reasonable alternative sites after mitigation; and A3.3 paragraph K.2.8.7 concludes that Policy SA8 will have a negligible impact on cultural heritage. TIG considers that chain of reasoning insufficiently site- and scale-specific given the known heritage relationships identified in Appendix F.

- 3.6.3 TIG considers that the scale question in MIQ 4.36 requires more. The Plan should demonstrate, before adoption, that the overall form and quantum of Hoo growth can preserve the significance and setting of affected assets and the historic landscape relationships of which they form part. Where that cannot be demonstrated, the relevant development quantum or envelope should change.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, sections 6.4-6.9; E.37 / SDLP 109-111.

Change necessary: Strategic Hoo heritage assessment and consequential reduction/reconfiguration where required. See MM-TIG-M4-01 and 02.

3.7 MIQ 4.39 - Whether DM9 is the most appropriate strategy

TIG's answer: DM9 is a necessary policy, but it is not sufficient as the principal strategy for managing the heritage effects of strategic Hoo growth.

Reasoning...

- 3.7.1 A development-management policy can control individual applications, but the soundness of a Local Plan allocation depends on whether the site and scale are appropriate in the first place. TIG's Regulation 19 case is that rural setting, historic settlement pattern and cumulative change are themselves components of significance which cannot always be recreated or fully mitigated through detailed design.
- 3.7.2 The Plan should therefore retain DM9 while strengthening SA8 so that heritage operates as a strategic masterplanning constraint. That approach complements, rather than weakens, DM9.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, sections 6.5-6.7.

Change necessary: Amend SA8 as set out in MM-TIG-M4-01 and 02.

3.8 MIQ 4.47 - Conservation Area evidence

TIG's answer: The evidence base is incomplete for a number of Conservation Areas. Where relevant strategic growth may affect an area without an up-to-date appraisal, equivalent evidence should be available.

Reasoning...

- 3.8.1 B9 records that only a minority of Medway Council's Conservation Areas had published appraisals, with further appraisals in preparation. Its table records Cliffe as underway and St Mary Hoo as not started. DM10 itself recognises the importance of setting, open spaces and views and requires regard to Conservation Area Appraisals where available.

- 3.8.2 TIG does not suggest that the absence of an appraisal removes statutory protection. The point is evidential: where strategic or major development may affect a Conservation Area or its setting and no up-to-date appraisal exists, a proportionate character/significance and setting assessment should be required before development parameters are fixed.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, sections 6.3-6.7; E.37 / SDLP 109.

Change necessary: Ensure equivalent appraisal evidence is produced where an adopted Conservation Area Appraisal is absent. See MM-TIG-M4-03.

3.9 MIQ 4.48 and 4.51 - Scale of development and effectiveness of DM10

TIG's answer: DM10 is a useful development-management policy, but its effectiveness depends on adequate evidence of significance and setting before strategic development is fixed.

Reasoning...

- 3.9.1 TIG does not assert that every SA8 allocation directly affects a Conservation Area. Its Regulation 19 concern is the wider historic setting and cumulative transformation of the peninsula. Where a Conservation Area is affected, the Plan must demonstrate that the scale and form of development can be accommodated consistently with its significance, character and appearance and with national policy, rather than assume that application-stage design will necessarily resolve the issue.
- 3.9.2 For the purposes of TIG's Regulation 19 objection, where strategic Hoo Peninsula development may affect a Conservation Area or its setting and an appraisal is absent or outdated, the policy framework should require a proportionate evidence base so that significance, setting and vulnerability to change are understood before development parameters are fixed.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, Chapter 6; E.37 / SDLP 109.

Change necessary: Strengthen the evidence requirement where Conservation Area Appraisals are unavailable. See MM-TIG-M4-03.

3.10 MIQ 4.53 - Archaeological evidence and the spatial strategy/site allocations

TIG's answer: The archaeological resource is recognised, but its influence on the strategic Hoo allocations is not sufficiently demonstrated.

Reasoning...

- 3.10.1 B9 describes the Medway Council area as archaeologically rich and records extensive Palaeolithic deposits on the Hoo Peninsula, later prehistoric activity, salt-working and buried remains. It notes that recent investigations at Chattenden demonstrate the potential for significant new discoveries. The peninsula therefore contains both known archaeology and substantial potential for currently unidentified remains.

3.10.2 DM11 requires desk-based assessment and, where appropriate, field evaluation when development may affect archaeological interests. That is appropriate for applications, but MIQ 4.53 asks how archaeology informed the spatial strategy and allocations. For a strategic growth area of the scale proposed at Hoo, TIG considers a strategic archaeological framework necessary before masterplan layouts and development envelopes are fixed, with proportionate early evaluation where the evidence indicates that it is required.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, sections 6.3.2, 6.3.3 and 6.7.

Change necessary: Require strategic archaeological assessment/evaluation within the SA8 masterplanning process. See MM-TIG-M4-03.

3.11 MIQ 4.54 - Scheduled Monuments and major development nearby

TIG's answer: The policy protection is clear, but known relationships require site-specific strategic treatment before development parameters are fixed.

Reasoning...

3.11.1 A3.3 Appendix F identifies HHH12 as adjacent to Cockham Wood Fort Scheduled Monument and assesses potential adverse effects on its character or setting. Policy DM11 states that development adversely affecting Scheduled Monuments or their settings will not be permitted. SA8 also contains positive recognition of the Hoo Stop Line and WWII heritage.

3.11.2 Those provisions should be reconciled at plan/masterplan level. The strategic heritage assessment should define the setting and development relationship required for Cockham Wood Fort and other military assets, rather than leave the fundamental extent of acceptable development to a later application.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, sections 6.3.3-6.7; E.37 / SDLP 109.

Change necessary: Translate Scheduled Monument setting requirements into the SA8 development framework. See MM-TIG-M4-01 to 03.

3.12 MIQ 4.57 - Whether DM11 is the most appropriate approach

TIG's answer: DM11 is appropriate as a development-management policy, but archaeology must also operate at strategic allocation and masterplanning stage.

Reasoning...

3.12.1 The policy's presumption against adverse effects on Scheduled Monuments and preference for preservation in situ are appropriate. The deficiency is not the principle of DM11; it is the risk that important strategic choices are fixed before sufficient archaeological and setting information is available.

- 3.12.2 For SA8, early assessment should be capable of changing the development envelope, density, layout or phasing. If significant archaeological interests cannot be accommodated within the proposed quantum, the quantum must yield to the evidence rather than the assessment being treated only as a mitigation exercise.

Regulation 19 basis: TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation, Chapter 6.

Change necessary: Amend SA8 to require the strategic archaeological framework set out in MM-TIG-M4-03.

4. OVERALL CONCLUSION ON THIS MATTER

- 4.1 TIG acknowledges that the submitted Plan contains substantial and generally positive heritage policy wording. The Council also has a valuable evidence base, particularly B9 and the Historic England Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project. The central deficiency is the gap between that evidence and the strategic conclusion that approximately 5,300 homes at Hoo and Chattenden can be accommodated with heritage effects treated as effectively mitigated through later policies and masterplanning.
- 4.2 TIG considers that the Plan cannot presently be found sound on the relevant Matter 4 issues unless the Council demonstrates, through proportionate strategic heritage work, that the Hoo Peninsula growth strategy can conserve the significance and settings of affected assets and the peninsula's historic landscape as a whole. If that can be achieved through limited further work and Main Modifications, TIG accepts that route may be available.
- 4.3 If, however, the required heritage assessment shows that material reductions, removals or redistribution of strategic development are necessary, and those changes would amount to a fundamentally recast spatial strategy, the Plan should not be adopted in its present form and should be withdrawn and re-prepared.

5. MAIN MODIFICATIONS / CHANGES SOUGHT

- 5.1 These changes are without prejudice to TIG's position at paragraphs 4.2-4.3 and apply only if the defects can be remedied without materially recasting the submitted Plan. For the purposes of this table, 'EX' denotes an examination action sought rather than proposed Main Modification wording.

Ref	Plan policy / text	Defect identified	Modification / change sought	Why necessary
MM-TIG-M4-01	Policy SA8 criteria 5 and 16-18	The strategic masterplanning policy refers to heritage but does not require a Hoo-wide assessment to establish heritage constraints before development parameters are fixed.	Require, before approval of the strategic masterplan, a proportionate Hoo Peninsula Heritage Impact Assessment covering designated and non-designated assets, settings, historic landscape character, settlement pattern, farmsteads, military heritage, archaeology and cumulative/in-combination effects.	Necessary to ensure heritage evidence constrains, rather than merely mitigates, strategic development.
MM-TIG-M4-02	Policy SA8 and associated strategic development framework	The Plan does not specify how strategic heritage findings will alter the extent, height, density, open space or phasing of development.	Require the assessment findings to define binding development envelopes, key views, buffers/open-space relationships, settlement separation, height and density parameters, heritage interpretation and phasing. Reduce or reconfigure affected development where necessary to avoid or minimise harm and ensure any residual harm is justified in accordance with national policy.	Justified, effective and consistent with the conservation of heritage significance and setting.
MM-TIG-M4-03	Policy SA8 / DM10 / DM11	Conservation-area and archaeological evidence may be incomplete or deferred until planning-application stage.	Where an up-to-date Conservation Area Appraisal is absent, require a proportionate character/significance and setting assessment. For SA8, require a strategic archaeological framework before masterplan layouts and development envelopes are fixed, with proportionate early evaluation where necessary.	Necessary to ensure that historic character and archaeological interests inform strategic decisions at the appropriate stage.

Ref	Plan policy / text	Defect identified	Modification / change sought	Why necessary
EX-TIG-M4-04	A3.2 / A3.3 heritage assessment	The SA converts identified site-level heritage effects to negligible after policy mitigation, while acknowledging that site-specific heritage details may not be known until application stage.	Require the Council to demonstrate, and if necessary revisit, the heritage residual and cumulative assessment of the Hoo strategic growth area in light of the strategic work required by MM-TIG-M4-01 to 03.	Necessary to demonstrate that the chosen scale and form of growth are justified by proportionate evidence.

6. TIG REGULATION 19 REPRESENTATIONS AND EXAMINATION DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO

Reference	Document	Where relevant
TIG Reg 19 E.37 / SDLP 109-111, 115	TIG Regulation 19 representation entries	Historic character, listed buildings/Conservation Areas, Hoo allocations, redistribution and neighbourhood-plan concerns.
TIG Reg 19 E.37	TIG NPPF paragraph 11(b) Representation	Chapter 6: Landscape and Cultural Heritage Harm.
A1	Submission Medway Council Local Plan 2041	Sections 5.1-5.11; Policies T1, S8, DM9, DM10 and DM11; section 14.9 and Policy SA8.
A3.2	Sustainability Appraisal - Volume 2 of 3 - Regulation 19 Report	Chapter 10, Table 10.1 and cumulative-effects assessment.
A3.3	Sustainability Appraisal - Volume 3 of 3 - Appendices	Appendix F section F.10; Appendix I section I.3.20 and Table I.4.1; Appendix K section K.2.8, particularly K.2.8.7.
B9	Heritage Asset Review	Conservation Areas; Historic Landscape Character Assessment; Hoo Peninsula Historic Landscape Project; Archaeology.
MLP/ED3	Regulation 19 representations in Representor ID number order	E.37 / SDLP 109-115.
MLP/ED14	Draft Hearing Programme v1	Matter 4 hearing session, 17 September 2026.
MLP/ED15	Phase 1 Matters, Issues and Questions	Matter 4, questions 4.1-4.57.

7. APPENDIX

7.1 No appendix is proposed.

**SUBMITTED ON BEHALF OF THE INDEPENDENT GROUP (TIG)
ON MEDWAY COUNCIL**

Councillor Michael Pearce

**Councillor Michael Pearce
Planning Spokesman
27 August 2026**

**For the avoidance of any doubt, Councillor Michael Pearce is an Independent Councillor representing Hoo & High Halstow Ward on Medway Council, which is also the Local Planning Authority (LPA). He serves as the Leader and Planning Spokesman for The Independent Group (TIG) on Medway Council - an unwhipped group of Independent councillors representing the Hoo Peninsula (Strood Rural Ward, Hoo & High Halstow Ward, All Saints Ward), formed for administrative purposes and committee entitlement. While Councillor Pearce is a Medway Councillor and member of the LPA's Planning Committee, he does not speak or act on behalf of Medway Council or the LPA, either generally or at formal planning inquiries.*