

Hearing Statement

Matter 2 - Vision, Spatial Development Strategy and Strategic Objectives

Issues

- Whether the Plan identifies a clear Vision and Spatial Development Strategy for Medway that are positively prepared, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.
- Whether the Strategic Objectives are clear, positively prepared, justified, effective and in accordance with national policy.

Questions

The Vision of the Plan

- 2.1 How does the Vision for the Plan express the long-term ambitions for Medway up to 2041?
- 2.1.1 Section 2.1 of the MLP (ref: A1) provides a positive overarching 'Vision for Medway in 2041', as per paragraph 15 of the NPPF. The Vision states that "Housing and economic development needs have been met in full, supported by appropriately phased infrastructure." It presents a future in which growth is not simply about accommodating more homes and jobs. It sets out a positive statement on the character of Medway at the end of the plan period to achieve the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development, in line with paragraph 8 of the NPPF.
- 2.2 In what ways does the Vision take account of identified local needs, opportunities and constraints?
- 2.2.1 The first Regulation 18 consultation focussed on the vision for Medway in 2041. The Regulation 18 consultation document provided contextual information about Medway's opportunities and constraints. The Vision evolved in the preparation of the MLP (ref: A1). Appendix 2 (pages 29-42 of the electronic file) and Appendix 4 (pages 48-56 of the electronic file) of the Consultation Statement (ref: A10.1) provide details of how the Council considered any representations made to them in response to the invitations following Regulation 18 consultation stages in 2023 and 2024 respectively.
- 2.2.2 The Vision demonstrates a strong relationship between Medway's identified needs, opportunities and constraints. It seeks to meet housing, employment and infrastructure needs; capitalise on and enhance its waterfront setting,

countryside connections and economic strengths; and deliver sustainable development that respects natural and heritage assets.

- 2.2.3 The MLP's (ref: A1) overarching 'Vision for Medway in 2041' states that "Housing and economic development needs have been met in full, supported by appropriately phased infrastructure."
- 2.2.4 The MLP's (ref: A1) Vision for Medway in 2041 states that the "urban waterfront is animated and accessible. Continuous riverside paths provide attractive and healthy connections, a draw for visitors and residents."
- 2.2.5 The MLP's (ref: A1) Vision for Medway in 2041 states that "Medway has conserved and enhanced its intrinsic cultural and natural heritage and landscapes alongside high quality development to strengthen the area's distinctive character", "derelict sites at Grain and Kingsnorth on the Hoo Peninsula have been transformed into thriving business hubs."
- 2.3 Does the Vision align with other local, regional and national strategies and plans that are active in Medway? If so, what and how?
- 2.3.1 The MLP's (Ref: A1) overarching 'Vision for Medway in 2041' is a comprehensive statement relating to the economic, social and environmental objectives of sustainable development set out in paragraph 8 of the NPPF. The Vision aligns with the Council's wider policy framework, including the:
- One Medway Council Plan (2024-28)¹
 - Medway Climate Change Action Plan (2025-28)²
 - Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2023-28)³
 - Child Friendly Medway Action Plan⁴
 - Medway Cultural Strategy⁵
 - Medway Housing Strategy to 2030⁶
 - Emerging Heritage Strategy

¹ Medway Council (2024) One Medway Council Plan. Available at: https://www.medway.gov.uk/downloads/file/8705/one_medway_council_plan [Last accessed 25 August 2026]

² Medway Council (2025) Climate Change Action Plan. Available at: <https://www.medway.gov.uk/climatechangeplan> [Last accessed 25 August 2026]

³ Medway Council (2023) Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy. Available at: https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200591/medways_joint_strategic_needs_assessment_jsna/1571/joint_local_health_and_wellbeing_strategy [Last accessed 25 August 2026]

⁴ Medway Council (2024) Child Friendly Medway Action Plan. Available at: <https://www.medway.gov.uk/childfriendly> [Last accessed 25 August 2026]

⁵ Medway Council (2020) Medway Cultural Strategy. Available at: https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200182/culture_and_heritage/1596/medway_cultural_strategy [Last accessed 25 August 2026]

⁶ Medway Council. Medway Housing Strategy to 2030. Available at: https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200134/housing/1899/housing_strategy_to_2030 [Last accessed 25 August 2026]

- 2.3.2 For example, a priority concerning resource efficiency in the Medway Climate Change Action Plan's (2025-28), specifically "Medway can handle the effects of climate change and remains a good place to live/has a liveable urban environment" is reflected in Policy S1 (Planning for Climate Change).
- 2.3.3 The Vision aligns with the ten ambitions for nature recovery in the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (2025).⁷
- 2.3.4 The Vision aligns with the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) and national policy statements relevant to energy, transport, water, waste water and waste.^{8,9}
- 2.3.5 The Vision effectively translates national objectives into a place-based vision for Medway. It reflects the EIP's objectives for nature recovery, climate resilience, environmental quality and resource efficiency. The Vision aligns with national policy statements for energy, transport, water and waste by emphasising reduced carbon emissions and local energy infrastructure; active travel and reduced car dependency; drought adaptation and protection of water environments; and the application of the waste hierarchy and commitment to a circular economy.

Spatial Development Strategy

- 2.4 What are the key factors that informed and shaped the selection of the spatial development strategy of the Plan over other reasonable approaches?
- 2.4.1 The second Regulation 18 consultation document presented three reasonable alternative 'Spatial Growth Options', namely 'Urban Focus', 'Dispersed Growth' and 'Blended Strategy'. The three options, which comprised different configurations of 12 broad locations for growth, were derived from the Interim Sustainability Appraisal (refs: C.2.4.1 and C.2.4.2). The Blended Strategy was identified as the Council's preferred option in the second Regulation 18 consultation document. The Interim Sustainability Appraisal (refs: C.2.4.1 and C.2.4.2) found that Urban Focus performed best in terms of promoting sustainable travel and efficient use of natural resources, however Blended Strategy provided the most sustainable balance by combining urban regeneration with suburban and rural development, seeking to ensure a diverse range of housing types and tenures can be supported across Medway. Following the second Regulation 18 consultation, the Blended Strategy evolved into the Spatial Development Strategy. Page 33 of the Sustainability Appraisal - Volume 2

⁷ Kent County Council (2025) Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Available at: <https://naturerecoverykent.org.uk/local-nature-recovery-strategy-document-and-mapping/the-kent-and-medway-local-nature-recovery-strategy-published-document/> [Last accessed 25 August 2026]

⁸ Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2025) Environmental Improvement Plan. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan-2025/environmental-improvement-plan-eip-2025> [Last accessed 25 August 2026]

⁹ National Policy Statements. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/nationally-significant-infrastructure-projects-national-policy-statements> [Last accessed 25 August 2026]

of 3 – Regulation 19 Report (ref: A3.2) sets out the factors that informed and shaped the selection of the spatial development strategy.

2.5 How does the Plan set out the reasons and justification for selecting the preferred spatial development strategy?

- 2.5.1 The MLP (ref: A1) explains the spatial development strategy at 3.1 and in the Key Diagram at Figure 1. The Green Belt Review (ref: B8) and cooperation with Gravesham Borough Council are noted at paragraphs 3.1.5 and 3.1.9 respectively.
 - 2.5.2 Page 33 of the Sustainability Appraisal - Volume 2 of 3 - Regulation 19 Report (ref: A3.2) sets out the reasons and justification for selecting the preferred spatial development strategy.
 - 2.5.3 The second Regulation 18 consultation document presented three reasonable alternative ‘Spatial Growth Options’, namely ‘Urban Focus’, ‘Dispersed Growth’ and ‘Blended Strategy’. The three options, which comprised different configurations of 12 broad locations for growth, were derived from the Interim Sustainability Appraisal (refs: C.2.4.1 and C.2.4.2). The Blended Strategy was identified as the Council’s preferred option in the second Regulation 18 consultation document.
 - 2.5.4 The Spatial Development Strategy, presented over pages 25, 26 and 27 of the MLP (ref: A1), states that it was informed by the Chatham Design Code and work towards the ‘Chatham Intra Heritage Action Zone development framework’, which was subsequently adopted in the Star Hill to Sun Pier Supplementary Planning Document (2024).
 - 2.5.5 Paragraphs 4.36, 4.61 and 8.4 of the Employment Land Needs Assessment (ref: B12) recommended the Council considers the long-term future of the Medway City Estate, subject to alternative sites becoming available for relocation. A response on behalf of Veetee - one of the largest businesses at the Medway City Estate - to the Council’s Regulation 19 consultation, along with a conceptual work commissioned by the Council in 2010, informed the spatial development strategy.
- 2.6 How does the spatial development strategy respond to the key constraints and opportunities across Medway and how is this reflected in policy requirements?**
- 2.6.1 At the start of the local plan-making process, the SA Scoping Report identified constraints and opportunities across 10 themes.¹⁰ For example, the SA Scoping Report identified “Balancing access to the countryside with conservation objectives” as a key issue. An important aspect of the spatial development

¹⁰ Lepus Consulting (2023) Sustainability Appraisal of the Medway Local Plan: Scoping Report. Available at: <http://tinyurl.com/5a5e2wbx> [Last accessed 20 August 2026]

strategy is to direct investment to urban waterfront areas. However, improved waterfront access could lead to recreational pressure.

- 2.6.2 Mitigation to ensure no adverse effects occur at any European site as a result of improved waterfront access is provided through Policy S3 (North Kent Estuary and Marshes Designated Sites) and also within Policy T20 (Riverside Path), which states that “Opportunities to provide linkages with other path networks should be explored where these are compatible with other policies and do not result in impacts on coastal designated sites.” Policy S2 sets out details regarding the Hoo Peninsula Strategic Environmental Programme to address recreational impacts associated with allocations close to the North Kent Marshes; however, the Council is proposing revised wording to Policy S2 (see 1.5). The Hoo Peninsula Strategic Environmental Programme is also covered in Policy SA8, i.e. the site allocation policy for Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden.

Strategic Objectives

2.7 How have the strategic objectives been developed and what evidence has informed them?

- 2.7.1 The first Regulation 18 consultation presented strategic objectives. The Regulation 18 consultation document provided contextual information about Medway’s opportunities and constraints. The strategic objectives evolved from the second Regulation 18 consultation, which included stakeholder engagement through workshops, and were finalised at Regulation 19 stage. Appendix 4 of the Consultation Statement (ref: A10.1) provides details of how the Council considered any representations made to them in response to the invitations following the Regulation 18 consultation stage in 2024 and the Regulation 19 consultation document, which was submitted as the MLP (ref: A1).
- 2.7.2 The MLP’s (ref: A1) presents four comprehensive strategic objectives: 1) Prepared for a sustainable and green future, 2) Supporting people to lead healthy lives and strengthening our communities, 3) Securing jobs and developing skills for a competitive economy, and 4) Boost pride in Medway through quality and resilient development.
- 2.7.3 The strategic objectives were informed by, and broadly reflect, the SA Objectives, which are presented in Table 4.1 of the Sustainability Appraisal - Volume 2 of 3 - Regulation 19 Report’ (ref: A3.2).
- 2.7.4 The strategic objectives were initially informed by the evidence base intended to support a previous iteration of the MLP, which could not progress to its Regulation 19 consultation stage; the relevant agenda item was withdrawn from a Full Council meeting agenda in October 2021. The strategic objectives evolved based on responses to the second Regulation 18 consultation and new evidence.

2.8 How do the strategic objectives support the spatial development strategy and the policies set out in the Plan?

- 2.8.1 The first Regulation 18 consultation presented strategic objectives. Under ‘Supporting people to lead healthy lives and strengthening our communities’, the strategic objective to ‘... meet the housing needs of Medway’s communities, reflecting the range of sizes, types and affordability the area needs.’ informed the Council’s preferred spatial development strategy. Having taken account of the responses to the first Regulation 18 consultation, this strategic objective was refined before the second Regulation 18 consultation and maintained through to the Regulation 19 consultation document, which was submitted as the MLP (ref: A1).
- 2.8.2 The Blended Strategy was identified as the Council’s preference in the second Regulation 18 consultation document. The Interim Sustainability Appraisal (refs: C.2.4.1 and C.2.4.2) found that the Blended Strategy provided the most sustainable balance by combining urban regeneration with suburban and rural development, seeking to ensure a diverse range of housing types and tenures, including affordable housing, can be supported across Medway. This demonstrates a clear link between the strategic objectives and the spatial development strategy.
- 2.8.3 Paragraph 2.2.1 of the MLP (ref: A1) states that the strategic objectives feed into the wording of policies. There are numerous references to the strategic objectives throughout text in the MLP (ref: A1) to introduce and justify policies.

2.9 How does the Plan ensure that the strategic objectives are capable of being delivered within the Plan period?

- 2.9.1 The Council submitted a Monitoring Framework (ref: A14) to enable accurate reporting on the performance of the MLP. The Council will use new data sources as they become available and, where appropriate, update indicators throughout the MLP’s duration to support continuous improvement. The indicators will be presented in the Authority Monitoring Report annually.
- 2.9.2 The Council submitted an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) (ref: B2). As a ‘live’ document, the IDP will support the implementation of the MLP. The IDP will be continuously monitored as infrastructure projects progress, funding changes or new evidence emerges. It will be linked to the continuous monitoring of planning permissions, developer contributions and wider investment plans.
- 2.9.3 A Medway-wide transport Monitor and Manage Mitigation Strategy is noted at 9.2 of the MLP (ref: A1) due to: future uncertainty in travel patterns; the potential for the highway mitigations to create induced demand and reinforce car dependency; the need to take account of refined trip generation assumptions, etc. This will help to enable the Council ‘To strengthen and develop transport networks providing safe and effective choices for sustainable travel.’

- 2.9.4 The delivery of some aspects of the strategic objectives will depend on external agencies. The Council has provided statements of common ground to demonstrate commitments to delivery.
- 2.10 The Plan sets out that the spatial distribution of new development within Medway is circa. 40% urban regeneration; circa 30% suburban and circa 30% rural (mainly on the Hoo Peninsula). Please could the Council explain, with reference to the evidence submitted, how and why this spatial distribution is the most sustainable, deliverable and therefore appropriate approach to the delivery of new development during the Plan period.
- 2.10.1 Chapter 5 of the Local Housing Needs Assessment (ref: B10) considered the type and tenure of future housing needed. Figure 5.1 indicates that the largest increase will be in one person and 'other' households. Table 5.5. indicates relatively large increases in the number of homes required with one, two and four or more bedrooms compared to three bedrooms for new owner-occupied housing. Table 5.9 indicates nearly twice as many homes will be required with four or more bedrooms for social rented or affordable rented housing. Figure 5.2 indicates that over 70% of new housing in Medway will be market housing, including both owner-occupied and private rented housing. Figure 5.2 also indicates that over 18% of new housing in Medway will be social rented or affordable rented.
- 2.10.2 The Interim Sustainability Appraisal (refs: C.2.4.1 and C.2.4.2) found that the Blended Strategy provided the most sustainable balance by combining urban regeneration with suburban and rural development, seeking to ensure a diverse range of housing types and tenures can be supported across Medway. Suburban and rural sites provide greater viability than brownfield locations and therefore can support the delivery of a wider range of housing types. In meeting the scale of growth needs over the Plan period, the Council considered the contribution from strategic scale development, where mixed housing growth is delivered with planned upgrades to infrastructure and services, such as schools. This demonstrates a clear link between the strategic objectives and the spatial development strategy.
- 2.10.3 The Site Selection Topic Paper (ref: B22.1), at 1.2, describes the relationship between the Land Availability Assessment, SA and the site selection process. Having identified a spatial development strategy, the 'Policy-on' stage of the site selection/rejection process considered whether a site would contribute to the vision, spatial development strategy and strategic objectives. Taken together, the site allocations in the MLP (ref: A1) represent the most sustainable, deliverable and therefore appropriate approach to the delivery of new development during the Plan period.

2.11 In what way were reasonable alternative development strategies considered and assessed during the plan-making process?

2.11.1 As in the Council's response to initial query no.5 in MLP/ED6, the relevant submission document is the 'Sustainability Appraisal - Volume 1 of 3 – Non technical Summary' (ref: A3.1). This document set out how the reasonable alternatives were identified and appraised. More specifically, paragraphs N48 to N52 set out three reasonable alternative 'spatial growth options', along with commentary from the Council to explain why the preferred strategy was selected. The Council consulted on an 'Interim Sustainability Appraisal - Volume 1 of 2 - Main Report' (ref: C2.4.1) and an 'Interim Sustainability Appraisal - Volume 2 of 2 – Appendices' (ref: C2.4.2) at its second Regulation 18 stage in 2024. The Council consulted on the SA (refs: A3.1 to A3.3) at Regulation 19 stage in 2025.

2.12 How does the spatial development strategy address the requirements of different parts of Medway such as the Hoo Peninsula as well as the more urban areas?

2.12.1 The Council recognises the distinctive characteristics of different parts of Medway. These include addressing the needs of small rural communities with limited access to services; a large proportion of the borough being covered by designations of national and international environmental importance; a concentration of important heritage assets; high levels of deprivation and inequality, particularly in inner urban areas; and large suburban areas that have grown up around the five main towns in Medway.

2.12.2 The spatial development strategy addresses Medway's different needs by pursuing urban regeneration in the existing urban area, while supporting carefully planned strategic growth on the Hoo Peninsula, supported by investment in infrastructure and protection of environmental assets.

2.12.3 The spatial development strategy treats the Hoo Peninsula differently because of its rural character, environmental sensitivity and long-term growth potential. The requirements of different parts of Medway were informed by the evidence base available at each stage of the plan-making process.

2.12.4 Hoo Development Framework was published for consultation in 2022.¹¹ The context analysis in Chapter 2 explored the current settings of Hoo St Werburgh, Chattenden, High Halstow and adjacent areas, and set out the constraints and opportunities of this emerging location for large-scale growth. The 'Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden Concept Plan' at Figure 14 (page 279) of the MLP (ref: A1) is based on the Hoo Development Framework.

¹¹ Medway Council (2022) Hoo Development Framework. Available at: <https://medway.oc2.uk/document/2> [Last accessed 25 August 2026]

- 2.12.5 As a location for large-scale growth, in addition to accommodating more homes, the spatial development strategy aims for greater self-containment on the Hoo Peninsula, thereby reducing the need to travel and car-dependency, along with employment growth at Kingsnorth and the Isle of Grain. The Key Diagram, shown in Figure 1 of the MLP (ref: A1) indicates a transport corridor serving the Hoo Peninsula, which will require improved connectivity. The spatial development strategy emphasises the need to strengthen blue and green infrastructure networks; this will help to protect nationally and internationally important environmental assets and landscape character on the Hoo Peninsula.
- 2.12.6 The spatial development strategy prioritises regeneration of urban areas, with a particular focus on Chatham as the primary centre for Medway. The spatial development strategy seeks to provide for new homes, workspaces, retail, leisure and community facilities. Detail in strategic site allocation policies delivering on the strategy provides appropriate guidance to secure mitigations, such as heritage, biodiversity, and transport, reflecting the requirements of different parts of Medway, and secure investment in homes, jobs and services.