

# Medway Core Strategy Examination 2012

## Background Paper

## Cross Boundary Issues



## CROSS BOUNDARY ISSUES

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This is one of a short series of background papers prepared by Medway Council to inform the independent examination into the Medway Core Strategy 2012.
- 1.2 The papers simply draw together elements of the 'evidence base' so that information about a topic can be seen in one place. They do not contain any new information but it is hoped that they will assist all participants during the examination. Where appropriate, links are provided to source documents.
- 1.3 The series of papers cover the following topics:
- Conformity
  - Cross Boundary Issues
  - The Thames Gateway
  - Spatial Strategy
  - Deliverability
  - The Plan Preparation Process
  - The Basis for Housing and Employment Growth Targets
  - Land Allocations and Development Management DPD.
- 1.4 The purpose of this paper is to explain how the council has taken account of strategic planning issues that impact across the boundaries of local authorities, and how it has fulfilled its duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities.

### 2. Background

- 2.1 Medway Council has prepared the Core Strategy by working collaboratively with neighbouring local planning authorities to ensure effective coordination of strategic planning issues that cross administrative boundaries. It has had full regard to the requirements on local planning authorities to cooperate in the plan preparation process on such issues.
- 2.2 The council acknowledges its duty as a local planning authority to cooperate in relation to planning of sustainable development, as contained within the Localism Act 2011<sup>1</sup> (section 110). The specified activities within the Act include the preparation of development plan documents. The Act requires the council to engage *constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis* in this work. The Act defines a "strategic matter" as:

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/pdfs/ukpga\\_20110020\\_en.pdf](http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2011/20/pdfs/ukpga_20110020_en.pdf)

- (a) *sustainable development or use of land that has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas, including (in particular) sustainable development or use of land for or in connection with infrastructure that is strategic and has or would have a significant impact on at least two planning areas, and*
- (b) *sustainable development or use of land in a two-tier area if the development or use*
  - (i) *is a county matter, or*
  - (ii) *has or would have a significant impact on a county matter.*

2.3 Point (a) is of most relevance as Medway Council is a unitary authority.

2.4 The Core Strategy has, in any event, been produced in line with PPS12 “Creating strong safe and prosperous communities through Local Spatial Planning” (2008)<sup>2</sup>. Paragraph 1.5 states:

*The new spatial planning system exists to deliver positive social, economic and environmental outcomes, and requires planners to collaborate actively with the wide range of stakeholders and agencies that help to shape local areas and deliver local services.*

2.5 Paragraphs 4.16 to 4.18 make specific reference to joint working between local authorities on spatial planning: ‘*Local authorities should explore and exploit opportunities for joint working on core strategies*’. PPS 12 notes that ‘*critical discussions on infrastructure capacity and planning may be more effectively and efficiently carried out over a larger area than a single local authority area*’. Medway Council has addressed this consideration through joint working in evidence gathering on particular topics, such as the local housing market, and the estuarine environments located across north Kent that are designated of international importance for wildlife. It has also actively participated in the production of a Transport Strategy for North Kent.

2.6 The government’s emerging approach to strategic planning across local boundaries is set out in paragraphs 44 to 47 in the draft National Planning Policy Framework, 2011<sup>3</sup>.

*‘Public bodies have a duty to cooperate on planning issues that cross administrative boundaries...*

*Local planning authorities should work collaboratively with other bodies to ensure that strategic priorities across local boundaries are properly co-ordinated and clearly reflected in individual Local Plans.... Local planning authorities should work collaboratively on strategic planning priorities to enable delivery of sustainable economic growth in consultation with Local Enterprise Partnerships.*

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<sup>2</sup> [Hhttp://communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/pps12lsp.pdf](http://communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/pps12lsp.pdf)H

<sup>3</sup> [Hhttp://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1951811.pdf](http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/planningandbuilding/pdf/1951811.pdf)H

*Local planning authorities will be expected to demonstrate evidence of having successfully cooperated to plan for issues with cross-boundary impacts when their Local Plans are submitted for examination.*

### **3. Collaboration in Practice**

- 3.1 Much of the plan preparation process preceded the assent of the Localism Act. However the Council has a long history of collaboration in strategic planning. For example it prepared a joint structure plan with Kent County Council (adopted in 2007) and, as a 'principal authority' cooperated very closely with the County Council and regional assembly (SEERA) over the preparation of the South East Plan.
- 3.2 The council greatly values collaborative working and has longstanding liaison with planning authorities across Kent, through the Kent Planning Officers Group and Planning Policy Forum.
- 3.3 The council was active in exploring opportunities for joint working in the plan preparation process, and identified benefits in jointly commissioning research to inform the evidence base for the Core Strategy. The council jointly commissioned a North Kent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2010)<sup>4</sup> in association with Gravesham Borough Council. In 2011, Medway Council, together with adjoining north Kent councils, supported research commissioned through the North Kent Environmental Planning Group into the impacts of recreational pressures on the Special Protection Areas of the Thames and Medway estuaries<sup>5</sup>. It also project managed the North Kent Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA), 2006<sup>6</sup> on behalf of neighbouring authorities and subsequent Kent wide coordination work to inform the partial review of the South East Plan.
- 3.4 In addition to specific work in relation to the Core Strategy, Medway Council, as the only unitary authority within Kent, has had a strong commitment to collaborative working at sub-regional and regional levels since its formation in 1998. For example it is a member of regional waste and minerals working parties.
- 3.5 In particular, Medway has well embedded practice in working at the Thames Gateway level in north Kent. The council works closely with Kent County Council, Swale Borough Council, Gravesham Borough Council and Dartford Borough Council in coordinating activities to progress the delivery of the Thames Gateway regeneration ambitions for north Kent. This is primarily through the Kent Thames Gateway Strategic Partnership. This has been of critical importance in promoting sustainable growth for the area, seeking increases in homes and jobs,

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<sup>4</sup> See evidence base document EB94

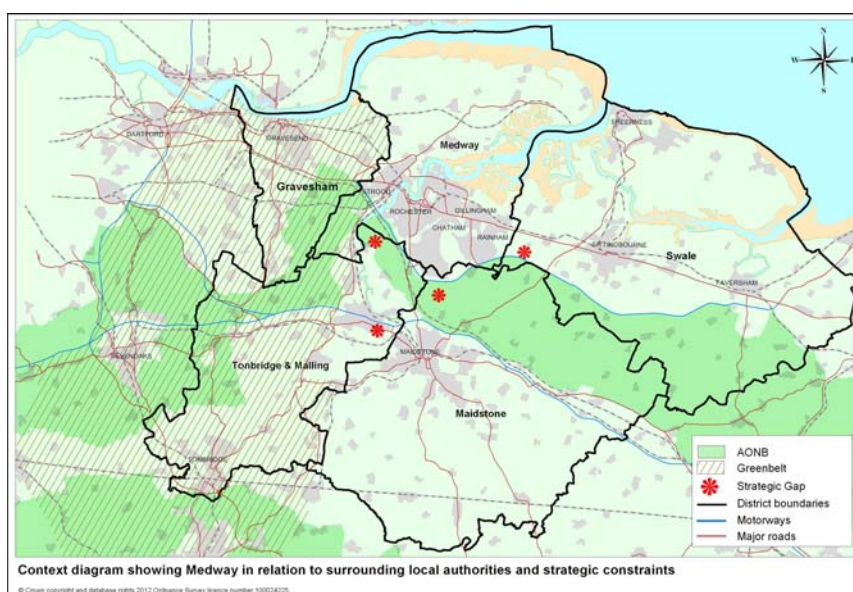
<sup>5</sup> See evidence base documents EB161 and EB162

<sup>6</sup> See evidence base document EB92

improved skills levels, enhanced infrastructure and environments. This has been evidenced through a number of policies and delivery programmes, including the North Kent Multi Area Agreement 2009<sup>7</sup>.

- 3.6 Further detail of Thames Gateway arrangements is set out in a separate background paper.
- 3.7 Medway is a member of the Local Enterprise Partnership covering East Sussex, Essex, Southend, Thurrock and Kent and Medway. To date this LEP has not taken a major role in coordination of work to support councils' duty to cooperate on strategic planning issues but there is every intention to fully support future initiatives.
- 3.8 The Council would have welcomed further opportunities to collaborate with neighbouring authorities but this was constrained, to a degree, by the fact that each authority has been following different plan preparation programmes for their LDFs.
- 3.9 With this in mind, the council believes that the process it has followed in the preparation of the Core Strategy fully meets legislative requirements and the expectations set out in the draft NPPF.
- 3.10 The council has consulted with the neighbouring local planning authorities at each stage of the plan making process. (This is detailed in the background paper setting out the plan preparation process, and in the Regulation 30(d) statement). It has also held meetings on an individual basis with these councils to discuss cross boundary issues in more detail.

#### 4. Geographical Context



<sup>7</sup> See evidence base document EB93

- 4.1 Medway's location in north Kent is defined by its setting on the river Medway, stretching between the Thames Estuary and the Kent Downs. There are strong east-west transport corridors, notably the M2, A2 and North Kent Rail Line. Key routes running north – south include the A249, A229, A228 and Medway Valley Line.
- 4.2 Medway adjoins Gravesham borough at its western boundary, to the south lie the boroughs of Tonbridge and Malling, and Maidstone; and Swale is to the east. Much of the northern part of the borough's boundary adjoins the Thames Estuary. The Hoo Peninsula extends northwards into the river Thames, and is bounded to the south by the Medway estuary.
- 4.3 There are a number of strategic constraints controlling development in areas around the edges of the borough. The metropolitan Green Belt comes into Medway and covers much of the area between Medway and urban Gravesham.
- 4.4 The wooded slopes of the Kent Downs run from Medway's south-western boundary and extend through the Medway Valley. This forms a backdrop to the south of Medway from the boundary with Tonbridge and Malling to where it adjoins Maidstone and Swale. The Kent Downs are designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, thus placing significant restrictions on development.
- 4.5 Medway Council works with neighbouring authorities and the Kent Downs AONB Management Unit in meeting its duty of regard to the conservation and enhancement of this protected landscape.
- 4.6 The areas to the south and east of urban Medway are currently defined as 'strategic gaps', and subject to planning controls to prevent coalescence with neighbouring villages and towns. These cover the Medway Gap – the area sandwiched between the M2 and urban areas of Medway to the north, and the M20 and the development of Maidstone and Malling settlements to the south; and the Medway Towns/Sittingbourne strategic gap designated to keep the open character between Sittingbourne and neighbouring villages and Rainham.
- 4.7 With a number of strategic constraints limiting development around the boundaries of Medway, much of the focus of cross boundary spatial planning activity has been focused on green infrastructure planning. This is to ensure that work is coordinated to support landscape enhancement, facilitate wildlife corridors, build resilience to climate change in habitats, and improve access to the countryside.
- 4.8 To the south and west, a key focus to this work has been provided by the Valley of Visions landscape partnership<sup>8</sup>. Medway Council is a

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<sup>8</sup> See evidence base link EB152

member of the partnership. The Living Landscapes initiative<sup>9</sup> led by Kent Wildlife Trust seeks to implement an integrated land management approach to chalk grassland within an area called the Medway Smile to the south of urban Medway.

- 4.9 In the northern part of Medway, green infrastructure planning has been championed and developed as an intrinsic element of the Thames Gateway plan by Greening the Gateway Kent and Medway (GGKM)<sup>10</sup>. GGKM has led the development of strategic visioning for managing the landscapes surrounding the urban areas in north Kent, through a programme of Green Cluster studies<sup>11</sup>. In Medway, these address cross boundary issues to the south in the Capstone to Bredhurst study; the western links are considered in the studies covering the Shorne to Shore area, Thames and Medway Canal, and Hoo Peninsula.
- 4.10 GGKM has coordinated green infrastructure planning across north Kent and established strong links between the green grid corridors in Medway and the neighbouring areas in Swale and Gravesham. Medway Council is a partner on GGKM's steering group, and works closely with the organisation in the planning and delivery of green infrastructure.
- 4.11 The North Kent Environmental Planning Group has a specific remit to help coordinate strategic planning for environmental issues in north Kent. Again, Medway Council is an active member of the group, and provides the current Chair. This is a collaboration between the local planning authorities, Natural England, the Environment Agency and a range of conservation bodies.
- 4.12 Much of the land adjoining the river and estuaries is designated of strategic environmental importance, with SSSI, SPA and Ramsar status designations. Part of the Medway estuary is recommended as a designated Marine Conservation Zone.

## **5. Consideration of Issues With Cross Boundary Impacts for Neighbouring Authorities**

### ***Gravesham***

- 5.1 The boundary to the west of Medway adjoins Gravesham, extending from the Shorne marshes on the Thames, linked to the Hoo Peninsula, southwards to the wooded slopes of the Kent Downs that separate Halling from Luddesdown.
- 5.2 The green belt and the AONB designations are significant constraints on development all along the boundary. As a consequence the major focus of cross boundary working on planning issues is to enhance and

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<sup>9</sup> See evidence base document EB79

<sup>10</sup> [www.gtqkm.org.uk](http://www.gtqkm.org.uk)

<sup>11</sup> See evidence base documents EB15, EB102, EB139, EB35



extend green infrastructure. GGKM and the Kent Downs AONB unit have roles in helping to coordinate work between the two local planning authorities.

- 5.3 The northern part of the boundary adjoins the Hoo Peninsula and there are established links from Medway's villages towards Gravesham and Gravesend in particular. This has been considered within the context of the green infrastructure planning links, particularly through the GGKM Shorne to Shore Green Cluster study<sup>12</sup>. Consideration has also been given to the potential impact of the development of Lodge Hill on the eastern parts of Gravesham, including liaison with Higham parish council.
- 5.4 The council has recognised the significance of the green infrastructure networks between the two areas, and has addressed this in the Core Strategy policies: CS6, Preservation and Enhancement of Natural Assets; CS7, Countryside and Landscape; CS8, Open Space, Green Grid and Public Realm; CS31, Hoo Peninsula and Isle of Grain; CS32, Medway Valley; and CS33, Lodge Hill.

### ***Tonbridge and Malling***

- 5.5 Medway adjoins the borough of Tonbridge and Malling in the Medway Valley area, both to the west and east of the river. This includes the suburb of Walderslade that straddles the boundary north of the M2. The parish of Halling lies close to the neighbouring borough. This is in a particularly sensitive area, with land in the Kent Downs AONB and the metropolitan green belt. Due to the number of strategic constraints on development, collaborative working has largely focused on green infrastructure planning, notably as promoted through the work of Valley of Visions.
- 5.6 Walderslade is effectively fully developed and so does not present issues requiring a strategic planning response. However Junction 3 of the M2 lies at its western extremity and the Council is working closely with Kent County Council in looking at capacity issues around this strategic junction.
- 5.7 Due to the historic nature of the administrative boundary a portion of Rochester Airfield and the adjoining industrial estate lies within Tonbridge and Malling. The Council is liaising closely with the borough council over the current masterplanning of this area.
- 5.8 The other transport corridors running through and adjacent to this area are significant, and the council has worked with Tonbridge and Malling, and Kent County Council to consider and plan for the impact of combined growth on the M20 junction 4, M2 junction 2, and the A228.

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<sup>12</sup> See evidence base document EB102



This has included cross border developer contributions, utilised for enhancements to Junction 4 and education provision in Snodland.

- 5.9 It is recognised that the residents of Halling and Cuxton look outside of Medway to access some services, such as secondary education, in the Tonbridge and Malling area.
- 5.10 These issues have been identified and addressed in the Core Strategy, as set out in the following policies: CS6, Preservation and Enhancement of Natural Assets; CS7, Countryside and Landscape; CS8, Open Space, Green Grid and Public Realm, CS24 Transport and Movement; and in particular through the spatial area policy CS32, Medway Valley.

### **Maidstone**

- 5.11 The boundary of Maidstone borough extends partially north of the M2 into parts of Walderslade and Lordswood, and as a result of the barrier formed by the motorway, these communities relate much more closely to Medway than Maidstone. As within the Tonbridge and Malling part of Walderslade, these two suburban neighbourhoods are well established and so do not present any current strategic planning issues. The Kent Downs and the M2 otherwise define the boundary between the two boroughs. The A229 provides a key road connection between Chatham and Maidstone.
- 5.12 The focus of strategic planning in this area is on the protection of the natural environment, and the retention of the open character between the two major urban areas by avoiding coalescence. The Capstone-Bredhurst Green Cluster study<sup>13</sup> has developed visioning work to promote green infrastructure in this sensitive area.
- 5.13 These issues have been identified and addressed in the Core Strategy, as set out in the following policies: CS6, Preservation and Enhancement of Natural Assets; CS7, Countryside and Landscape; and CS8, Open Space, Green Grid and Public Realm.

### **Swale**

- 5.14 Medway's eastern boundary adjoins Swale's rural area with a number of small villages lying between Rainham and Sittingbourne. This area is subject to urban fringe pressures and suburbanising development. The rural area forms a significant part of the North Kent Horticultural Fruit Belt and it contains significant tracts of Grade 1 agricultural land. The strategic gap policy that currently applies seeks to control development and avoid coalescence between the larger urban areas.

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<sup>13</sup> See evidence base document EB15

- 5.15 Medway Council has worked closely with Swale Borough Council on green infrastructure planning, supported by GGKM, to coordinate policy work in this area. Both councils also support the Medway Swale Estuary Partnership<sup>14</sup> to bring a common focus on the neighbouring marine and coastal areas, and inland landscapes.
- 5.16 These objectives are recognised in the Core Strategy policies CS6, Preservation and Enhancement of Natural Assets; CS7, Countryside and Landscape, and CS8, Open Space, Green Grid and Public Realm; and in the area policy for Rainham, CS 30, which seeks to actively manage the rural/urban fringe areas.

### ***Thurrock and Southend-on-Sea***

- 5.17 The Thames Estuary widens significantly as it passes between Medway's northern boundary and the Essex unitary areas of Thurrock and Southend on the northern bank. As a consequence of this geographical separation those strategic planning issues that arise are generally dealt with on an ad hoc basis. None has, so far, required a policy response through the LDF process.
- 5.18 Examples of cross border cooperation have included mitigation areas for the London Gateway development on St. Mary's Marsh near Allhallows and Medway Council support for expansion at Southend Airport.
- 5.19 Issues on the horizon include proposals for a possible Lower Thames Crossing and various hub airport proposals in or on the banks of the estuary. However Government has endorsed neither of these and they are likely to take many years to come forward – if at all. Were they to do so they would require fundamental reviews of all core strategies by a number of local planning authorities.

## **6. Conclusions**

- 6.1 The council has given full consideration to strategic planning issues that have cross boundary implications and has been active in consulting and collaborating with neighbouring local planning authorities in developing the policies of the Core Strategy and its associated evidence base.
- 6.2 As explained above, the strategic spatial planning issues are limited in their extent. It is therefore considered that the council has made a proper and proportionate response and the issues arising have been made fully addressed in the Core Strategy.

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<sup>14</sup> <http://www.msep.org.uk/H>