

06 MAR 2017



Hoo Saint Werburgh Parish Council

(Chairman: Cllr John Tildesley)

Te

Planning Policy Regeneration,

Culture, Environment and Transformation

Medway Council,

Civic Headquarters,

Gun Wharf,

Dock Road,

Chatham,

Kent,

ME4 4TR

Date: Feb 2017

Ref: New Local Plan Consultation Document

Hoo Parish Council.

Comments on the Medway Council

Draft Local Plan 2012-2035

Vision

The document mentions establishing a vision to drive economic success at the same time as addressing inequalities. Whilst not denying that careful planning may have to be sought to achieve that vision however accommodating sustainability of the Hoo Peninsula for example must avoid harm to its natural environment of which folk are attracted. It has to be acknowledged that protecting the best of Medway's heritage and its natural environment is of paramount importance to the people it attracts. The Peninsula is not such that major change can take place without some consequence for its historic character and the way that character benefits the folk it accommodates.

Strategic Issues

The expansion of the Medway Towns to meet the Employment and Housing targets set out in the Government Objectives cannot be reached, or not even started, no matter which of the set out four scenario's is finally adopted, unless there are major and immediate consideration, planning and implementation of improvements to the transportation links and health services across the whole area.

The roads are gridlocked, the train services are overloaded and erratic, GP's surgeries are overflowing and the major hospital in the area is struggling to meet the needs of an expanding population, which exceeds by hundreds of thousands the number it was designed for. Each improvement made is just papering over the cracks for the short term gain.

Scenario 3: A Rural Focus.

The scenario, if approved would permanently destroy an area of valuable countryside. The scenario identifies Hoo St Werburgh as a focus for growth, expanding the village into a rural town. Principle expansion would be set outside the existing village envelope of Hoo village, but is within the parish of Hoo St Werburgh, and would join together the settlements of Hoo, Chattenden, Deangate and Lodge Hill, and reducing the green belt buffer zone between the peninsula and the spiralling developments of Strood and Wainscott , damaging the character of each of these local communities and riding roughshod over the

wishes of significant numbers of taxpayers/local residents who wish to protect the countryside and the semi-rural environment.

The application, if approved, would signify a serious and continued over-development of the village of Hoo, and the wider Hoo St Werburgh Parish. Following mass over-development on land located East of Bells Lane, where no additional infrastructure was or has been provided, which has seriously impacted on the villagers as a whole, these further developments would be a development too far.

With regard to accommodating a level of future growth making Hoo into more of a 'Market Town' rather than a village may be a step too far. Again it is mentioned that a larger scale of planned growth would come with improvements to existing facilities and provision of new – that did not really happen during the old plan and our members are sceptical with the suggestion that it will happen within the new plan. There is also much concern where it is mentioned 'there is scope for freestanding settlements on the Hoo Peninsula'.

This application, if approved, would add a greater burden of road traffic on the already busy Four Elms Hill, Main Road and other approach roads. The roads in this area have long been unable to cope with traffic levels at certain times. In particular there have been numerous near misses in Main road in the vicinity of the Secondary school and this will be exacerbated by the on-going development of the new Primary School on the site, which is already needed to cope with the increased population.

If successful the application would result in thousands of additional car journeys each day, including the current and projected commercial vehicle movements from industrial areas at the Isle of Grain, Kingsnorth, and the numerous farming and storage outlets across the Hoo peninsula. Four Elms hill is the only main access route for residents in the villages of Chattenden, Hoo, High Halstow, Stoke, St Mary Hoo, Allhallows and the Isle of Grain.

The only access and egress to the Hoo Peninsula the **A228 at Four Elms Hill** which has not seen any improvement since it was duelled, even though many hundreds of dwellings have been allowed to develop over the last few years on the Peninsula and especially in Hoo. Even the 'Sharnal Street Bypass' was privately funded by business. **Four Elms Hill is the gateway to the Peninsula** and when it is closed (which is quite often) the Peninsula is closed to the outside

world. With regard to accommodating a level of future growth making Hoo into more of a 'Market Town' rather than a village may be a step too far. There is also much concern where it is mentioned 'there is scope for freestanding settlements on the Hoo Peninsula'. Further along its length, the A228 Peninsula Way reverts to a single carriageway road, which is a source of a considerable number of serious road traffic accidents, and the plans to create employment opportunities at Grain and at the Kingsnorth Power Station sites will increase the amount of road traffic, especially HGV movements on this road.

The proposed development scenario will destroy valuable agricultural land, with the uncertain future facing the proposed farming community and the country's population following the Brexit vote, and the demise of the Common Agriculture Policy, if it becomes necessary for the country to produce more food, this land becomes increasingly important, as once built upon it cannot be recovered.

Over-development of the Hoo Village in recent years has resulted in capacity problems at the local primary school, GP provision, (one of the two GP surgeries in the village has recently closed registration to new patients), dentistry services, general community facilities and local roads. The utility services are stretched to breaking point and beyond, on occasions with sewage removal being a particular problem at times, resulting in difficult problems for some residents which the Water Company have failed to solve. The existing Ancient Watercourse, (known as the Brook), which runs through the village is running at higher levels due to increasing rainwater run-off, as a result of development with inadequate drainage provision, this has resulted in occasional flooding at periods of continuous/heavy rainfall. The increased flow is resulting in serious erosion of the river banks, which the Parish Council is having to resolve with expensive repairs.

Finally, I would urge that the desire of the villagers to remain separate from the main conurbations of the Medway Towns should be respected and the creeping urbanisation halted.

Signed.


John Tildesley.

Chair Hoo St Werburgh Parish Council