

A New Approach to Community Infrastructure on the Hoo Peninsula

Draft

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Summary and call-to-action

A new approach to community infrastructure and placemaking on the Hoo Peninsula. Offering a deeper collaborative role for the local community in planning, with a broader definition of the facilities and services which enable a life well lived.

Community Infrastructure is the collective term for the facilities and services which help people live better lives. Over the last decade, as consideration has been given to the evolution of the Hoo Peninsula, investment in community infrastructure has been the subject of much debate.

As Medway Council develops its Local Plan, and thinks about the future of the Hoo Peninsula, there is an opportunity to consider and plan for future quality of life, improved economic prospects and a better response to the climate crisis. There is also recognition that the community themselves can play a fuller role in advocating for a better future.

Despite the previous development of the draft Hoo Development Framework, approaches to community facilities have tended to be reactionary to individual speculative planning applications and have failed to demonstrate that an appropriate response has been taken to properly mitigate the impact of the development and provide the necessary new/improved community facilities in a timely way.

The aim of the Community Infrastructure Framework, therefore, is to provide a more definitive 'pan-peninsula' approach which can enable a more effective and inclusive approach to delivery and management of community infrastructure. It can also act as a precursor to the deeper ongoing involvement of the community and other stakeholders in the future of the area.

This plan has been developed through a process of community co-design via a representative community panel and engagement with over 650 local residents, as well as developers and local businesses. It is intended to be the start of a new way of working for the area.

Vision

The vision was developed by the Hoo Peninsula Community Panel. Having considered several different types of vision and the types of outcomes, the following was selected:



Promote fun, happiness and wellbeing through a better network of community facilities on the Peninsula. Respecting nature and the environment, connect communities and places, improving access to jobs and opportunity. Enable greater local involvement, giving people more of a say in the places that they love.

Local need and aspiration

A detailed review of available statistics provides an indication of potential areas of need. These have been interrogated and considered by local residents and parish councils.

Residents felt that the data was not always directly reflective of the lived experience and that local people were facing more financial challenges than were necessarily reflected in the data. Affordability of housing was recognised as a particular challenge in the area. The following six areas of need were identified as being particularly important:

- Recognising the increasing needs of an ageing population: not just as spaces and formal centres but also as activities and social interaction.
- Supporting a healthier population, with facilities, activities and exercise opportunities for all age groups.
- Encouraging the delivery of an increased supply of affordable housing
- Improving access to employment – especially locally and high value - which supports an increase in average incomes
- Protection of green spaces and natural assets
- Recognition of the social and physical vulnerability of the Hoo Peninsula and embedding an adequate response to the climate emergency, including the need to strengthen social resilience.

Each person who took part in the wider community engagement process (over 650 in total) were invited to outline their priorities for the area.

Commonly repeated themes are set out below:

- Activities / things to do for children and young people.
- Sports and recreation facilities – revamping existing provision.
- Investment in parks and open spaces.
- Better road links*.



- Walking and cycling routes*.
- Accessible green, open and coastal spaces.
- Medical / health hub* including GPs, dentist and pharmacy.
- Community places that bring people together.
- Places to socialise including pubs and restaurants.
- Festivals and events.
- Maintain and celebrate historical features.
- Support for Third sector.
- Supermarket* / accessible and affordable food.
- Community role in facilities management.
- More Community engagement and involvement in decision making.
- Better and reliable public transport.

New ways of working

Evidence and detailed discussion has shown that current limited definitions of community infrastructure and approaches to assessing need and provision, do not work for a location like Hoo Peninsula. The area needs new approaches and as such, the following new behaviours have been identified:

- A 'bigger picture' view of community infrastructure and its importance. This takes into account an impact on local quality of life as well as recognising links to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and responding specifically to the twin societal challenges of climate/ecological crisis and economic inequality
- A 'pan-peninsula' approach which recognises previous working has been too disparate and that there is value in seeing the Peninsula as a single area with shared characteristics and aspirations.
- Recognising the community itself as an asset which can provide insight and proactive support to Medway Council and partners in supporting a better future for the area.
- Working 'Live' constantly reviewing plans and priorities for community infrastructure, recognising rapidly changing context and changes in local need



- Better use of evidence to demonstrate quality of life and experience on the Hoo Peninsula, using good research to support ongoing case making and demonstration of impact
- Higher expectations of developers to work with the community, supporting them with one specific agreed set of priorities

Eight ways we want to work

The Hoo Peninsula Community, with the support of Medway Council and consultants, has been supported to develop eight ways of working which embody their aspirations, frustrations and expectations for the area.



Improve existing facilities and services first



Don't wait for development to improve community facilities



Better communication between community and developers/council



Support the community to do more for themselves



Make the most of investment which is already committed



Ensure that development captures every opportunity to improve the lives of people on the Hoo Peninsula



Encourage larger employers to support community provision where it works for all



Contribute to climate resilience and the Hoo Peninsula's natural capital

- Improve existing facilities and services first
- Don't wait for development to improve community facilities
- Better communication between community and developers/council
- Support the community to do more for themselves
- Make the most of investment which is already committed
- Ensure that development captures every opportunity to improve the lives of people on the Hoo Peninsula
- Encourage larger employers to support community provision where this works for all



- Contribute to climate resilience and to the Hoo Peninsula’s natural capital.

Eight specific investments that are important to the community

The community also worked together to identify areas for action which they see as important at the current time. It has been agreed that these should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis.



Improved transport between villages and facilities as well as off the Hoo Peninsula



Investing in improving existing facilities and bringing these up to modern standards



Prioritise facilities for young people, giving them a role in deciding what is delivered on the Hoo Peninsula



Develop a plan to improve health provision on the Hoo Peninsula



Protect and respect heritage and nature and do more to tell people why it is important



Create a hub for sport and leisure at Deangate, and better connect it to the places where people live



Test the potential of a bigger supermarket. If the big companies don't want to come here, make a plan to deliver a community run facility



Create a plan to link local people to jobs and opportunities

- Improved transport between villages and facilities as well as off the Hoo Peninsula
- Investing in improving existing facilities and bringing these up to modern standards
- Prioritise facilities for young people, giving them a role in deciding what is delivered on the Hoo Peninsula
- Develop a plan to improve health provision on the Hoo Peninsula
- Protect and respect heritage and nature and do more to tell people why it is important.
- Create a hub for sport and leisure at Deangate, and better connect it to the places where people live.



- Test the potential of a bigger supermarket. If the big companies don't want to come here, make a plan to deliver a community-run facility.
- Create a plan to link local people to jobs and opportunities.

Introduction and background

This framework reviews all aspects of community infrastructure, as well as the current and future needs of the population, to provide a clear outline of where investments in community infrastructure are required and how these can be delivered.

The aspiration is for a community-led approach which challenges the 'standard' methodology in considering community assets and facilities, need and planning. This means driving a deeper understanding of existing quality of life and wellbeing and the role that community facilities can play in placemaking and supporting the case for new development.

A fundamental element of this framework is, that it has been developed in close collaboration with local people, reflecting their need and passions. It is built upon the foundations of what makes the area special and different, with new arrangements for ongoing involvement and local leadership.

Background:

Transition from a Housing Infrastructure Fund-led approach

This plan has been developed at a time of strategic transition for the Hoo Peninsula.

Medway Council had previously been successful in accessing £170m of government funding through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF). HIF was allocated to unlock housing in areas with the highest demand, where there were clear barriers to delivery. Medway Council secured this investment based on supporting key road and rail upgrades including a new passenger rail station and providing important ecological mitigation in the form of community parks. Before withdrawal, part of the funding was used to begin the implementation of major green infrastructure improvements to provide recreational spaces for new residents while protecting nearby habitats.



In September 2023 however, the HIF funding was withdrawn by Government, meaning that a new approach was needed. This document is part of this new approach.

Future Hoo Development Framework (draft)

The Draft Hoo Development Framework (HDF) is a strategic and spatial plan which sets out ambitions for potential growth on the Hoo Peninsula to test options to accommodate required growth in Medway. It was published for consultation in November 2022 and has never been adopted as a planning document. It outlined potential for the area to grow by c10,000 homes over the next 30 years and sets out 4 guiding principles for future development:

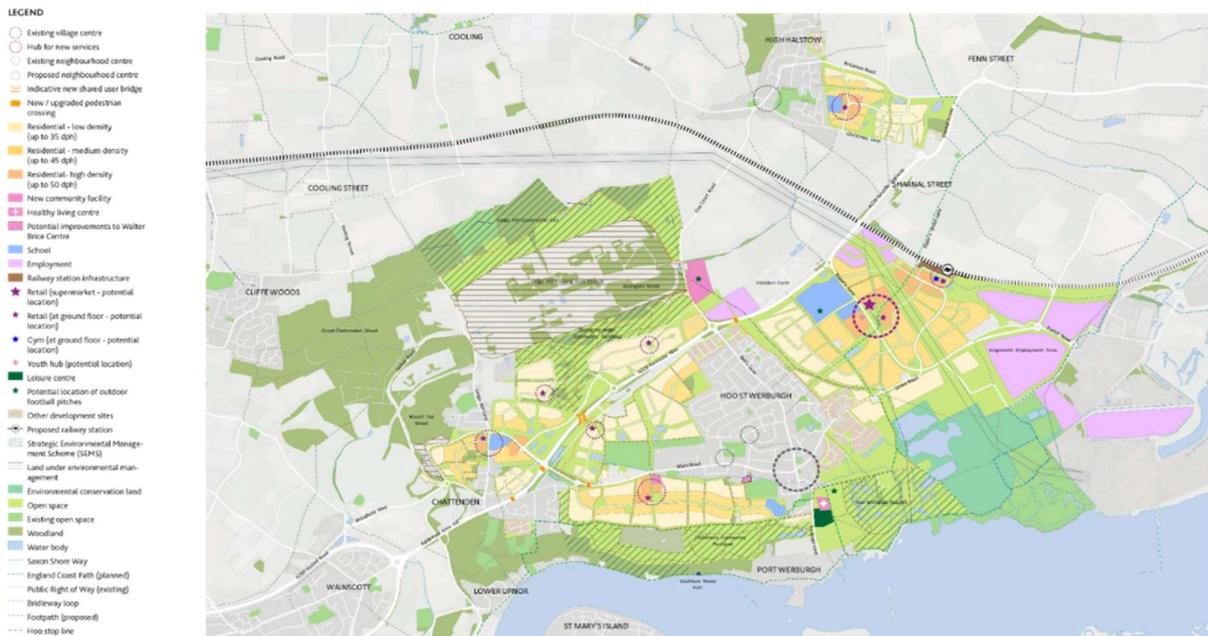
- Principle 1: a landscape led development - respecting the area's environment
- Principle 2: accessible and well-connected communities - ensuring that people can move around easily and healthily
- Principle 3: vibrant and sustainable neighbourhoods - well served by a range of services
- Principle 4: attractive buildings and public places - fit for the future and well designed.

The draft HDF was largely tied to the HIF investment, in that it relied on highway infrastructure upgrades, the creation of a rail line and station to connect the Peninsula to the rest of Medway, Kent and London, and the provision of the ecological mitigation. The draft HDF was met with scepticism about the impact of the scale of development on local identity, about the timing of service delivery (particularly pressures on doctors, dentists and schools) and the lack of investment in the existing community.

Despite this, the HDF still proposed principles, evidence and ideas which are worthy of consideration in the development of a new Community Infrastructure Framework.



Hoo Development Framework: Key principles



For instance, the HDF aimed to enhance the quality of life and experiences of existing and new residents, creating the best start in life for children and young people whilst reflecting the aspirations of the area as a visitor destination and area of employment.

It recognised that physical regeneration proposals will need to demonstrate how they would influence positive change in the social and economic wellbeing of the residents of Hoo and significantly contribute to the success of the Hoo Growth Plan, supporting the integration of the enhanced community infrastructure.

It set out a hierarchy of places for the delivery of new community facilities and infrastructure, championing the idea of Garden Town principles to be applied to the evolution of Hoo St Werburgh. It recognised the lack of medical facilities and that the quantity and quality of leisure provision is not where it needs to be for the current population, let alone for a significant number of new residents.

The HDF recognised the need for new transport infrastructure ranging from new road junctions, bus routes and station facilities to bridleways and walking routes. Heritage and history were given prominence, with the recognition that protected green spaces are precious and a vital part of the area's identity.

Hoo Development Framework: Opportunities summary



The draft HDF is therefore an important part of the story which informs this community infrastructure plan. Notwithstanding the ongoing consideration of the quantum and location of housing, the research and prioritisation of facilities and investments indicated in the HDF is aligned with the aspirations of residents as set out in this report.

Unintended consequences of the draft HDF

Developers in the area are quoting the draft HDF, and the extent of the proposed future neighbourhoods, as evidence that the land they are promoting for development is suitable, even if detached from the current built-up area and poorly served. The HDF, if adopted as policy, would have been accompanied by a phasing sequence and a clear framework for developers' contributions, including for community infrastructure. The current development proposals are instead scattered and negotiated on a site-by-site basis, with no guarantee of future coherence.

Purpose of the Community Infrastructure Framework

Whilst the draft Hoo Development Framework makes recommendations that are broadly in line with the aspirations of residents, there is an appetite for greater involvement and a more agile approach to community infrastructure.

This document makes recommendations not only on the type of infrastructure required (and when this might happen), but also on the processes which will allow local people, community organisations and the existing parish councils to assume greater agency over the future of their local facilities.

The purpose is ultimately to drive a better quality of life for those living on the Hoo Peninsula, whether they are existing or future residents. It seeks to do this by providing the foundations for people to be more actively involved in supporting the places they love.

It recognises that this may be achieved through planning, but could equally be delivered through other funding, partnership-working, volunteering or collaboration.

It looks to unite all places and assets in the Peninsula in a single plan uniting other plans and aspirations to drive a stronger sense of a shared community. The remainder of the report supports this purpose by:

- Providing a definition of Community Infrastructure which is derived locally, but is relevant to the wider challenges of Medway, Kent and the UK
- Outlining the methodology which supports a new approach
- Establishing the evidenced need to support the case for actions
- Sharing the aspirations of local people and gives them prominence in planning for the future
- Providing a new vision, objectives and recommendations to support a better approach to community infrastructure on the Peninsula



What is it like living on the Hoo Peninsula



Over 650 local people participated in events, workshops and community panels. Each was asked to reflect on their daily lives, their perception of place and their interaction with community and community infrastructure. This provides the basis for local definition and the foundation for future prioritisation.

What is important for a good life on the Hoo Peninsula

Local people put value on **living in the countryside** “I don’t live in a town; I don’t live in a city. I live in a country village and that’s important to me.¹” Local people described the importance of living in a scenic and green environment. The natural beauty of the area is celebrated and valued by local people, who would like to see more done to protect these areas.

Community identity is seen as important, and they fear that levels of housing development will link villages together and turn them into towns. The risk is losing that village identity that is important to them.

Family links are seen as important. People talked about spending their entire lives living in the area or moving away only to come back to retain those family links and raise their own families. The idea of the Hoo Peninsula being a good place to grow up, and raise a family was tied into the access to nature and greenspaces, the sense of village identity, the importance of knowing your neighbours and the availability of locally centred community infrastructure including schools, play areas and sports clubs.

The area’s **rich heritage** is also important: this was illustrated in the community’s desire to see existing facilities protected and enhanced, to be retained for future generations. The military heritage and relationship with the water are critical to how people identify the place in which they live.

¹ Community Engagement Participant

Historical sites, including ancient churches, forts and castles, are part of the everyday fabric of the Hoo Peninsula. Local people also value the **organisations and events** that bring people together including youth clubs, older people groups and village fetes. There is a strong sense of community, but a concern among local people that this being diluted by levels of development “everywhere is getting more and more crowded, school, the roads, at the doctors. There’re just more people everywhere.²”

² Young Person Focus Group



The challenges of living on the Hoo Peninsula



Life on the Hoo Peninsula “*is idyllic but not ideal*”³ a particular issue for local people is **how to get around and on / off the Hoo Peninsula**. The impact effects people of all ages from school students “I can’t stay to spend time with my mates after school because I won’t be able to get home. The last bus is too early and they’re unreliable and almost always late.”⁴ To older people “I’m retired I don’t want to drive anymore, but I end up driving all the time because there are no buses.”⁵ To working age people, who in some instances have “had to pass up job opportunities that I couldn’t commit to getting to on time having no car”. The challenge of “only one way in and one way out of the Peninsula, means you could be trapped”⁶ (or similar) was raised consistently in community engagement.

Access to health services is challenging to local people and there is a frustration that services are being removed for the community “we have a doctor’s surgery in Lower Stoke, or rather we have a building with no doctors and no appointments. So now we have to go to Hoo, and we have to compete with people in Hoo to get an appointment.”⁷



³ Community Engagement Participant

⁴ Young Person Focus Group

⁵ Who Cares Coffee Morning

⁶ Young Person Focus Group

⁷ Community Engagement Participant

Residents were concerned about lack of NHS dentist provision, mental health services and limited pharmacy provision, there is a perception that this is because the population is increased but the health provision in the area is remaining stagnant or some cases being reduced – “there are more and more houses, but the resources remain the same and the waiting lists grow⁸”. The GP Patient Survey results for 2024 show that 22% of patients at Elms Medical Centre and 12% at St Werburgh Medical Practice found it easy to get through to this GP practice by phone, compared to a national result of 50%. In addition, 44% of patients at Elms Medical Centre and 24% St Werburgh Medical Practice describe their experience of contacting their GP practice as good compared to 67% nationally. Both Practices perform worse than the national average in relation to choice of appointment location, time and waiting times.

It is also challenging for local people, who cannot drive, to get to the nearest hospital “I’ve had hospital appointments I haven’t been able to get to. The bus services are unreliable, and taxis won’t come onto the Peninsula. There is no way to get there.”⁹

People living on the Hoo Peninsula think it’s **important that jobs, skills and opportunities are created on the Peninsula and benefit local people**. The young people we spoke to in focus groups spoke of having to “leave here to get a good job or be willing to commute to London. What is there here in terms of good jobs?¹⁰” The community panel emphasised the importance of “improving access to jobs and opportunity” and included it in the vision which forms the foundation of this framework.

Participants in the wider community engagement spoke of their **concerns about local employment** “there is no reason to have a house here, there are no jobs here. The people who are buying houses here are commuting to London and using us as somewhere to live because we’re cheaper¹¹” and “I wonder where my son is going to work when he leaves education, I don’t see a job that could become a career for him here.¹²” Discussions with employers, detailed elsewhere in this framework, highlighted that Hoo Peninsula is still an important commercial location. However, recruitment is challenging, particularly for lower-paid shift workers. The **rural economy** is also seen as important to the local area, retaining agricultural land was seen a vital by the community panel and in wider community engagement “if you keep building

⁸ Community Engagement Participant

⁹ Community Engagement Participant

¹⁰ Young Person Focus Group

¹¹ Community Engagement Participant

¹² Community Engagement Participant

houses where are farmers going to farm? We produce the crops that feed this country.¹³”

There is a perception among those living, working and studying on the Hoo Peninsula that the **quality of community facilities is in decline** “our park doesn’t have football nets anymore, there’s more litter and it feels like no one is looking after it¹⁴”, “we used to have the BP club¹⁵, it was a big part of our community and we don’t have anything like that now¹⁶” and “there’s one swimming pool and it’s too small and the changing rooms are always cold.¹⁷” This decline is seen as an example of prioritising “new people, new buildings, new houses and not investing in what’s already here, what we (the community) think is important.¹⁸”

The majority of local residents expressed a concern that **the Peninsula is being forgotten**, “the Hoo Peninsula is special, we’re passionate about the area we live in, but it feels like we’ve been pushed out and left behind.¹⁹” This concern also leads local people to believe that “housing development is being done to us, not with us. I can’t see any benefit for the people who live here.²⁰” There is an underlying perception that housing development is not being used to improve the lives of the residents on the Hoo Peninsula but is actively contributing to make people’s lives worse.

There is also concern that new neighbourhoods being created through development are not creating homes for local people and that the people moving into the area are not becoming part of the community. Those people we spoke to who are new to the area, have struggled to find routes into getting to know the wider community.

There is an **underlying distrust in how housing development is being delivered** across the Hoo Peninsula. This includes a frustration that the Hoo Peninsula is being seen as taking the bulk of the development “what I don’t understand is why it is always us. Why aren’t they building new houses in the town? Why does it all get shoved on the Peninsula?²¹” Specific to community infrastructure, local people spoke about it being harder to get

¹³ Community Engagement Participant

¹⁴ Pupil Focus Group

¹⁵ BP Sports and Social Club, closed 2014

¹⁶ Community Engagement Participant

¹⁷ Pupil Focus Group

¹⁸ Community Engagement Participant

¹⁹ Community Panel Participant

²⁰ Community Panel Participant

²¹ Community Panel Participant



doctors' appointments, the lack of NHS dentists, first choice school places not being available and high levels of traffic on the roads. Issues that they attribute, at least in part, to increased housing development on the Hoo Peninsula.

Local people cannot see any tangible benefit of the development in the area “there’s more houses, which means more people but there’s less of the things we need. We don’t have a bank anymore, there’s no NHS dentists, good luck getting a doctor’s appointment.²²” Alongside this is a perception that the houses that are being built are for people moving into the area and to meet the needs of other local authorities particularly in London. That housing development is not providing homes for “local people trying to get on the housing ladder. Or local people who’ve been waiting and waiting on the housing list of years.²³” However, discussions with developers suggests that the majority of purchasers are coming from the Medway area.

²² Community Engagement Participant

²³ Community Engagement Participant



What is Community Infrastructure

The United Nations defines Community Infrastructure as “basic structures, technical facilities and systems built at the community level that are critical for sustenance of lives and livelihoods of the population living in a community”²⁴. This definition includes not only formal facilities, like schools and medical centres, but also the informal opportunities that build up social cohesion and mutual support, like clubs, parks, gathering places, local shops, etc. These are seen as essential for social and environmental resilience.

The delivery of good community infrastructure is therefore not just about the delivery of the facilities. It is where cohesive communities can emerge, and the public sector can most tangibly influence long term quality of life.

It is also a moment where public policy (and planning specifically), interfaces with the UN Sustainable Development Goals²⁵, an opportunity to align local need and aspirations with wider societal and environmental challenges.

Community infrastructure is fundamental to nurturing a cohesive and balanced future for a place, where existing residents and future ones become neighbours with shared ambitions for their area. The risk of a town planning-led approach is that it can be too narrowly defined, focussing on facilities and buildings at the expense of consideration of actual welcoming services, pride in natural assets, heritage, green and blue infrastructure and creation of strong community resilience.

For the purpose of this strategy, we have taken a deliberately broad view of what community infrastructure is, focussing specifically on the unique assets which impact upon life on the Hoo Peninsula.

Community Infrastructure and the UK Government

The role of Community Infrastructure becomes increasingly important as the Government seeks to increase the rate of housing delivery. On 30th July 2024, Housing Minister and Deputy Prime Minister, Angela Rayner said “Decisions about what to build should reflect local views. But that should be about how to deliver new homes, not whether to” she went on to explain “to deliver all of this we need every local authority to have a development plan in place. Up-to-date local plans are essential to ensuring that communities have a say in how development happens”.

²⁴ PDNA Community Infrastructure_FINAL.pdf (undp.org)

²⁵ UN Sustainability Goals <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

In her letter to Local Authorities the Deputy Prime Minister went on to advocate for community involvement explaining “I believe strongly in the plan making system. It is the right way to plan for growth and environmental enhancement, ensuring local leaders and their communities come together to agree the future of their areas.²⁶” Our Plan to Build Homes²⁷ explains that Local Authorities will “be required to plan for the number of homes their communities need, so local people can engage in how, not if, homes are built.”

This was confirmed in August 2024 by the revised Draft National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which aims to make housing targets easier to calculate and mandatory. Within this context, housing targets for Medway is reconfirmed at around 1,650 per annum, providing refreshed impetus for seeking cohesive and balanced solutions to growth.

Medway Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2022)

Medway Council, in its Infrastructure Delivery Plan, refers to the Planning Act 2008 as a basis to define infrastructure. The definition includes: ‘roads and transport facilities, flood defences, schools and educational facilities, medical facilities, sporting, and recreational facilities and open spaces’. This has been supplemented by the National Planning Policy Framework of the time (para 20 of version 2021) which distinguishes:

- infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management, and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat)
- community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure).

This approach links very closely the provision of infrastructure to what can be achieved through developers’ contributions and therefore new development. Accordingly, the assessment of community infrastructure needs for Hoo included in the Appendix, is exclusively focused on physical provision of community infrastructure, directly linked to new housing growth.

²⁶ Gov UK: [Playing your part in building the homes we need \(30 July 2024\) Letter to Local Authorities from the Deputy Prime Minister](#)

²⁷ Gov UK: [Our plan to build more homes](#)

Establishing aspirations

Understanding current and future need is an important element of planning. To create a plan which better reflects the places which people love, it is also important to capture aspiration and inspiration. This section captures the ambition of local people and stakeholders to ensure that the framework for action reflects what people want as well as what they need (or perceive they need). This considers not only on the aspiration for facilities and improvements, but also on the process and involvement in planning.

What people told us

Residents

The engagement and codesign process has highlighted a range of aspirations, which needs to be considered alongside the more technical assessment of need.

With an underlying lack of trust locally, it is important the Community Infrastructure Framework galvanises mutual understanding, involvement and empathy, alongside supporting the right choices on facilities and access.

For local people it is important that village and community identity is retained; there is also concern that housing development is turning villages into towns, taking away some of what makes the Hoo Peninsula special including distinct communities with their own identity. Respecting the connection and scale which exists in different centres, and maintaining settlement individuality is clearly important to the majority of residents who have been engaged.

The community value and have a relationship with their existing community facilities; village halls, pubs, schools, parks and churches are the fabric of local life. There is an aspiration for investment in and the enhancement of the existing community facilities that are part of people's everyday life on the Hoo Peninsula.

Local people have felt the impact of provision they have lost. The closure and demolition (2016) of the BP Sports and Social Club for example, was identified by many who felt this impacted on community spirit. Residents who remembered the club, recognised that this was not only the loss of an important facility but also a loss of a social connector and a very visible example of existing facilities being lost and not being replaced.

It is important that decisions made about community infrastructure respond to community need and to consider the wider role of community facilities in



bringing people together and developing social cohesion. There is a perception that the provision of community infrastructure is not keeping pace with need, with priorities including provision for children and young people, transportation, facilities for health and wellbeing and protection of and access to green and natural spaces.

Facilities in themselves are not enough; people also need to be able to access and afford them. The community see the Hoo Peninsula as a place where it is vital to have access to a car, people who cannot drive spoke of the impact poor quality public transport is having on their access to employment, health appointments and their ability to move around the area. Those who do drive expressed concern about increasing traffic levels and there is a clear concern about the only one route on and off the Peninsula.

Local people want to understand how and why decisions are made. It is important that there is clear and transparent decision-making. Local people want to know that investment in community facilities is made, and funding is used to its maximum potential.

It is vital that the future of facilities is considered and planned for, and sustainable design and delivery is a local priority. At the heart of the community engagement process was a clear message from local people that development needs to deliver clear and obvious benefits for the whole community, that positively impact on people's lives.

Specific ideas raised by residents included:

- Activities / things to do for children and young people.
- Sports and recreation facilities* – revamping existing provision.
- Investment in parks and open spaces*.
- Better road links*.
- Walking and cycling routes*.
- Accessible green, open and coastal spaces
- Medical / health hub* including GPs, dentist and pharmacy.
- Community places that bring people together.
- Places to socialise including pubs and restaurants.
- Festivals and events.
- Maintain and celebrate historical features.
- Support for third sector.



- Supermarket* / accessible and affordable food.
- Community role in facilities management.
- More Community engagement and involvement in decision making.
- Better and reliable public transport.

* = Ideas which include physical facilities which could be delivered or funded through new development / developers' contributions.

Major employers

Historically, the provision of community infrastructure on the Hoo Peninsula has been closely linked to the presence of significant employers. The previous financial contribution of companies to the social, community and cultural life remains prominent in the memory of many, in particular the BP Sports and Social Club which played such a prominent role in the lives of so many residents.

It is recognised that businesses can play a significant role in the delivery of community infrastructure, even if this is not to the same level of custodianship as in the past, when businesses were more deeply engaged in their relationship with Hoo and its community. Key findings included:

- Hoo Peninsula is still an important commercial location. It remains well situated both for river-bound cargo and connection to London and the South East.
- Recruitment is challenging, particularly for lower-paid shift workers. There is recognition that many jobs on offer require having access to a car, and therefore excludes those who cannot afford one. There is an aspiration for inter-business collaboration on shuttle buses, but this has not been delivered as yet.
- Lack of local amenities in reasonable proximity means businesses are often required to deliver essential provision for workers on-site such as canteens, social clubs and gardens. Improved and accessible community infrastructure, especially food and leisure, would help recruitment and allow investment in the community rather than within individual businesses' red lines.
- Businesses broadly support residential growth as a means of creating a stronger labour market. They also recognise the challenge of transport.
- There is general interest from business being more involved locally and supporting community activity, but this is not currently well coordinated.



Developers

- Developers will play an important role in the delivery of new and improved community facilities. This will be secured through the planning process, which can also be improved and optimised through a process of collaboration and ongoing dialogue.
- Trust between communities and developers is currently low, so it has been important to canvas local developers and investors to ensure that they understand the process and are engaged in the recommendations set out here. Key findings from these discussions included:
- Developers welcome the Community Infrastructure Plan and in-depth engagement. They recognise the emerging themes from those emerging from their own discussions and consultation events. There is agreement that this framework fills a gap and there is commitment to play a role in its delivery.
- Hoo is a very attractive location for developers. It is recognised for its rural setting and community. These are items of value which it is recognised need to be protected.
- They welcome the opportunity to collaborate and coordinate across sites and boundaries, especially where there is a single landowner.
- Developers are open to contributing to 'off-site' improvements if that is clear from outset and there is an appropriate mechanism for supporting this.
- They welcome more community scrutiny on S106 contributions and implementation and recognise the value of this, noting the need for the council to convene and retain legal responsibility over the process.
- Transport improvements are seen as an important part of community benefits. Developers feel this is no longer about big investments in road capacity and their needs to be a more nuanced discussion about active travel.



Exploring need through data

A key element of developing this framework has been establishing local need. This means developing a better empirical view of what the community of the Hoo Peninsula needs right now and what they might need in the future.

This section provides an up-to-date outline of what the data tells us about the life on the Peninsula and where there might be a case for investment. It reflects on Hoo Peninsula's exposure to crises of climate and biodiversity.

It includes the resident response to this evidence and an outline of how there will need to be an ongoing assessment of future needs as development comes forward. The following section then gives reflections on the aspirations of local people, businesses and developers working locally

What The data tells us

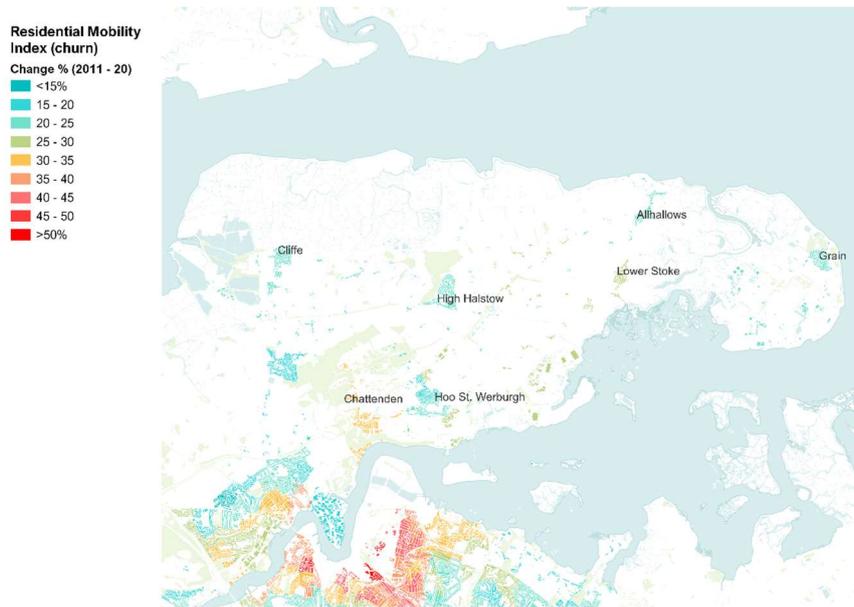
The provision of good community infrastructure is not just about what the community want. It also needs to respond to the prevailing economic and social conditions of a place. This needs to consider not only what happens now, but what could happen the future.

A place where people stay

When people move to the Peninsula, they tend to stay. Residential churn²⁸, which shows the proportion of households that have changed occupancy, has been low on the Hoo Peninsula compared to other areas in Kent and Medway. Between 2011 and 2022, there has been minimal population churn, indicating a stable community. With the exception of Chattenden, churn rates have been below 30 and significantly lower than in other parts of Medway, suggesting a strong attachment to place and community.

²⁸ This index provides an estimate of the "churn" of the residential population in the UK - the proportion of households that have changed between the beginning of 2023 and the end of each of each year going back to 1997 (CDRC).

Figure 1: Residential Mobility Index. Source: Consumer Data Research Centre (CDRC)

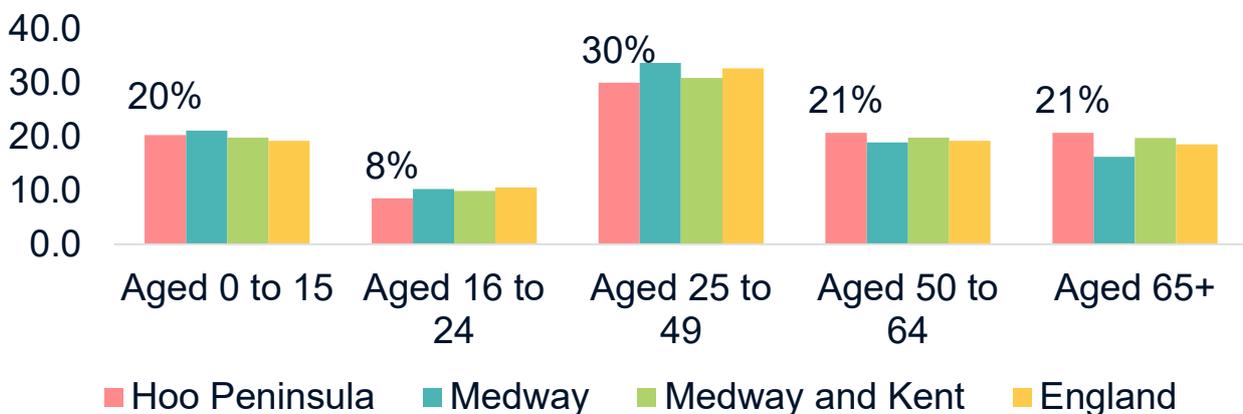


An ageing population

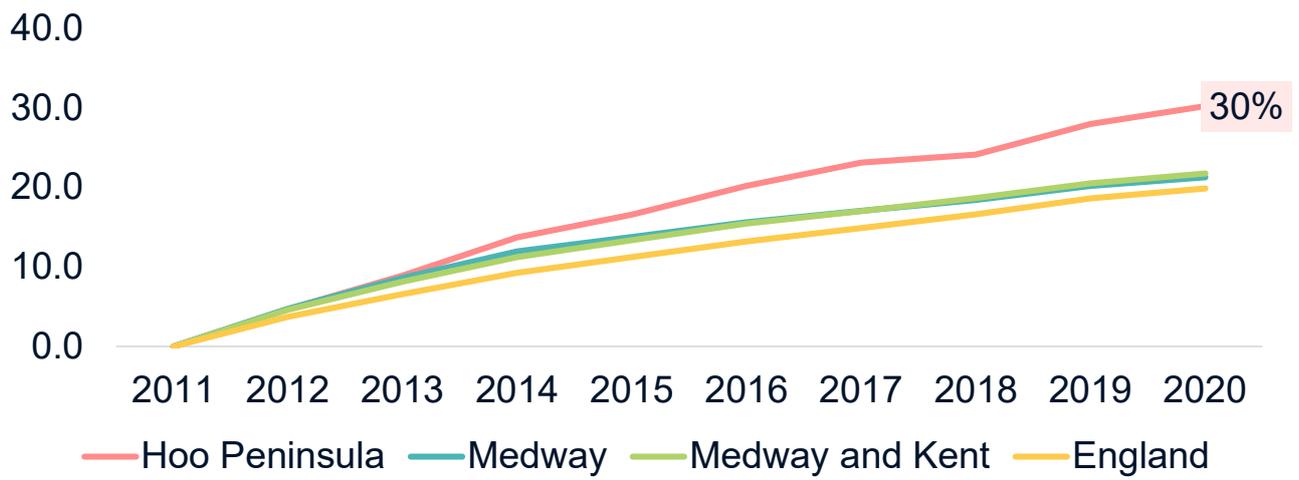
In the past decade, the number of residents on the Peninsula aged 65 and older has increased by 30%, a rate higher than the rest of Medway and Kent. Although 60% of the population is of working age (16-64), a significant proportion of population, around 40%, are over 50 years of age.

There is, however, a growing younger population, with those aged 24 or under increasing by 6.2%, in contrast to broader regional trends. Currently, around 3,500 children under the age of 15 live on the Hoo Peninsula.

Age of population in % (2020)



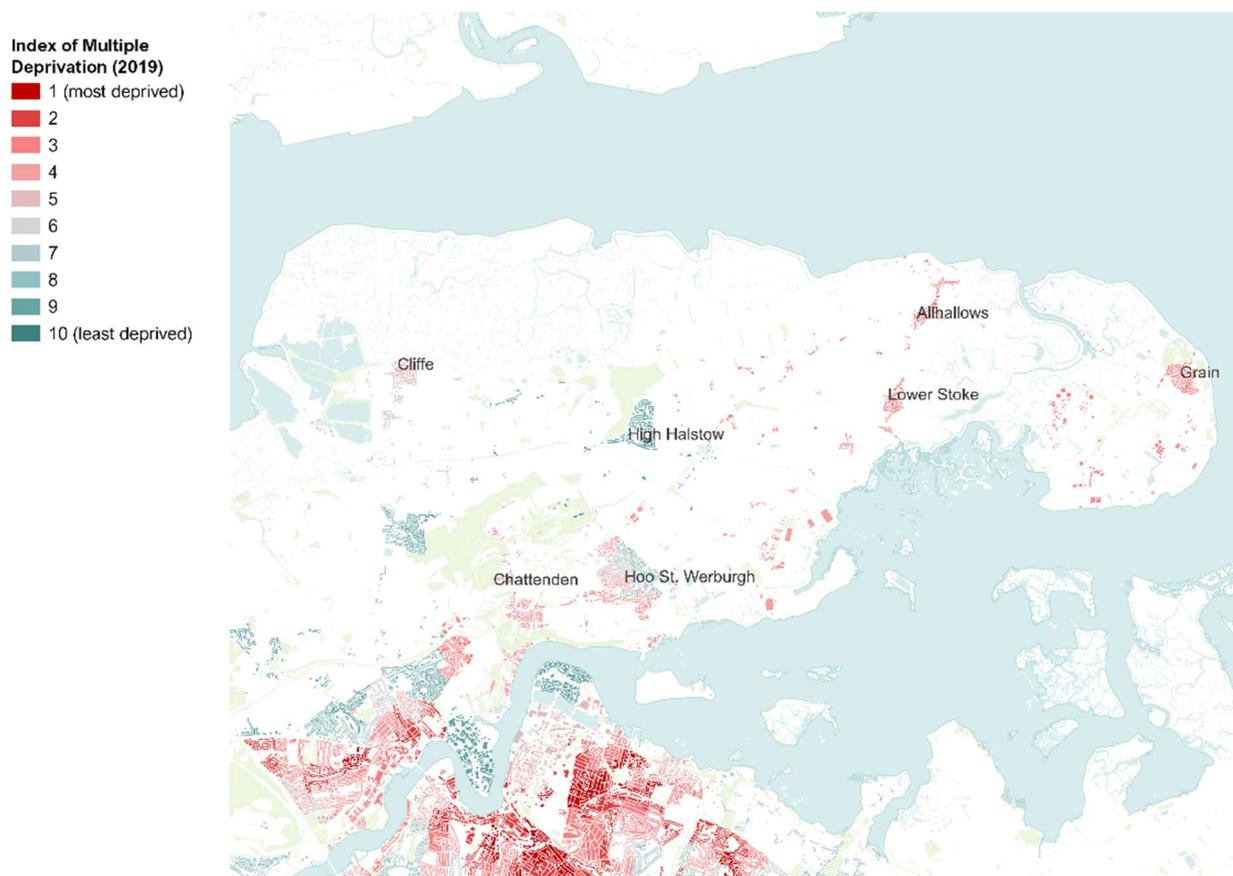
Growth of older population (65+)



Varied socio-economic conditions

While there is deprivation in Hoo, it is not as significant as that in Medway, North Kent and Thames Estuary. Average incomes suggest greater affordability and lower income inequality. That said, 53% of households experience at least one dimension of deprivation, and 20% of children under 16 years of age live in relative low-income families, highlighting pockets of economic hardship.

Figure 3: Index of Multiple Deprivation¹. Source: Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019

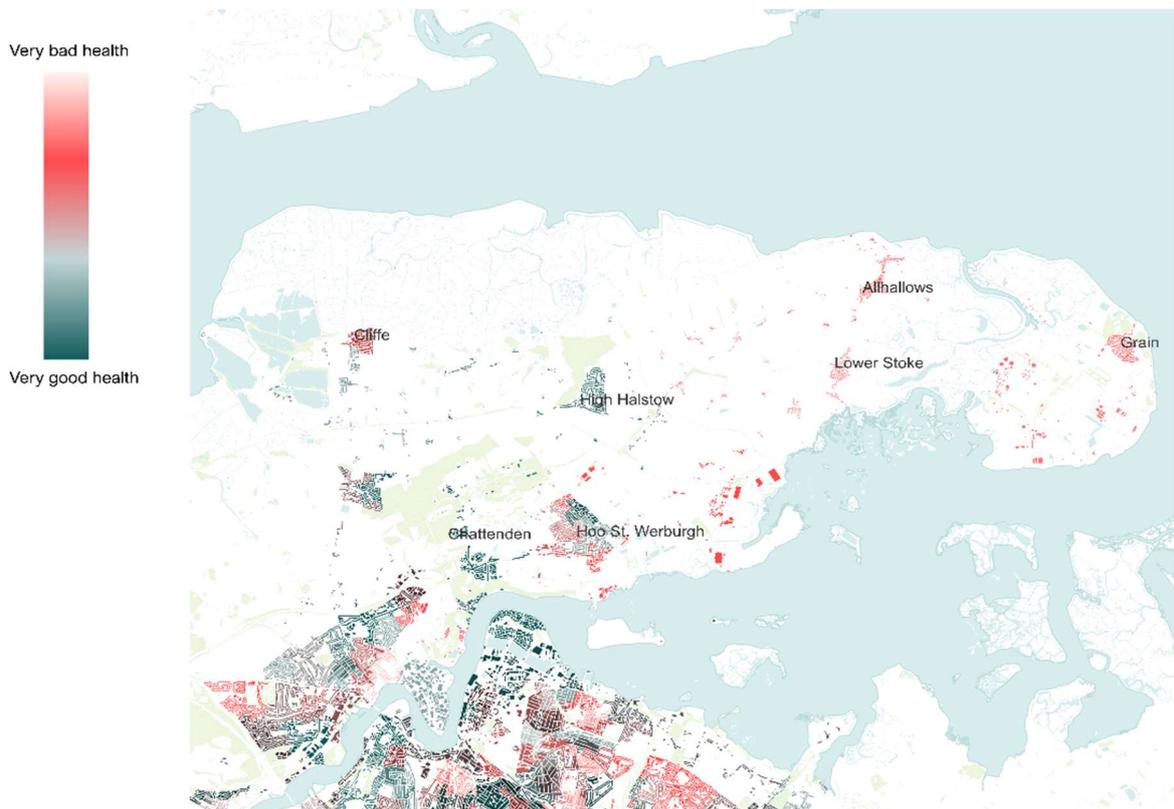


Varied physical and mental health conditions

Health is perhaps the socio-economic domain of greatest concern.

The prevalence of depression is approximately 30% higher than the national average. Diabetes rates are also above the national average. Physical activity levels among adults are significantly lower, with only 60.8% reporting being physically active compared to the national average of 65.94%.

Figure 4: Proportion of 'General Health¹' of Population. Source: Census, 2021



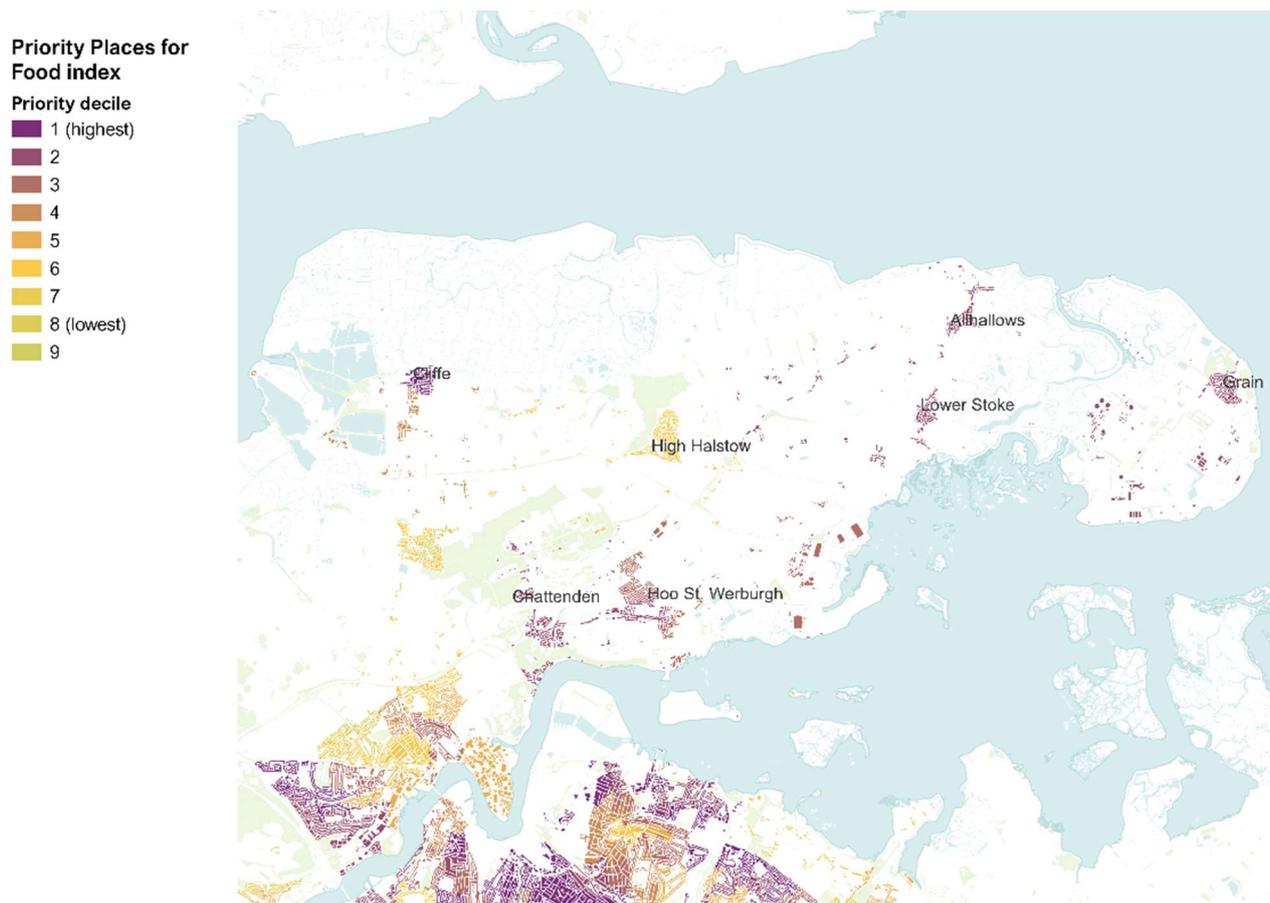
For children and young people, physical activity levels are also below average, with 39.3% in Medway compared to the national figure of 44.63%. Additionally, life satisfaction in Hoo is reported to be below the national average, indicating broader wellbeing issues.



Food Insecurity

The Priority Places for Food Index²⁹ identifies areas most vulnerable to food insecurity, incorporating data on fuel poverty and family food support.

Figure 3: Priority Places for Food Index. Source: Consumer Data Research Centre (CDRC) (Dec 2022)



Note: The highest score, means the highest food vulnerability

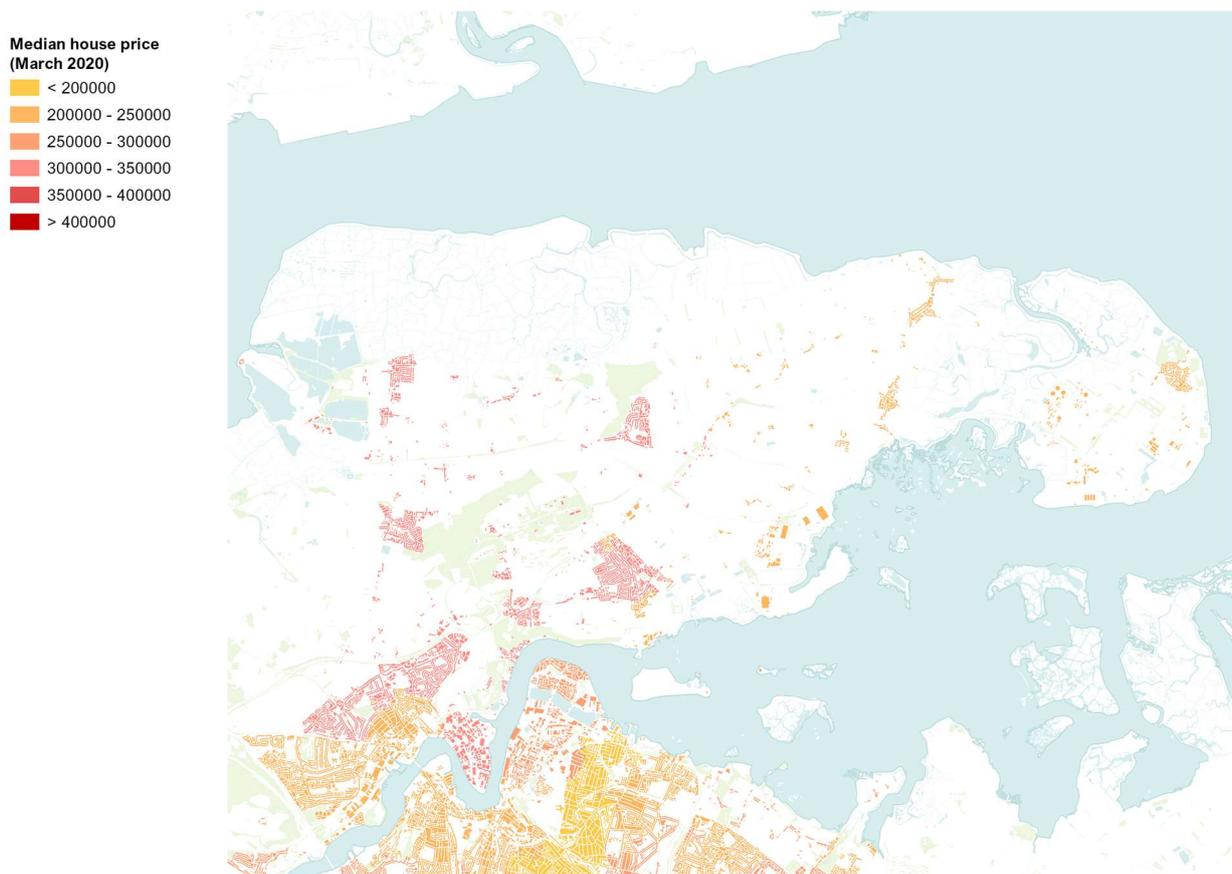
The Hoo Peninsula has several areas with high food insecurity, indicating significant challenges in accessing affordable, healthy, and sustainable food. This issue is compounded by rising living costs, necessitating targeted interventions to improve food accessibility and support for affected families.

²⁹ The Priority Places for Food Index is a composite index formed of data compiled across seven different dimensions relating to food insecurity for the four nations in the UK. It is constructed using open data to capture complex and multidimensional aspects of food insecurity. The index identifies neighbourhoods that are most vulnerable to increases in the cost of living and which have a lack of accessibility to affordable, healthy, and sustainable sources of food.

Housing affordability

Hoo Peninsula is marginally less affordable than Medway and Kent, with a higher proportion of residents who own their home. As of March 2020, the median housing price in Medway was £425,000 while in Hoo Peninsula was £250,000. The gross annual household income by Middle layer Super Output Area (MSOA) in Hoo Peninsula was £39,700 while in Medway was £48,445. In Medway, the median gross annual workplace-based earnings (£) were £32,887 in 2020.

Figure 4: Median House Price in £, March 2020. Source: Office for National Statistics (ONS)



According to ONS, the housing affordability ratio for Hoo is 6.30 compared to 7.75 for Medway in 2020. In Medway it has further increased to 8.6 in 2023, reflecting the financial pressure on residents.



Exposure to Climate and Ecological Crises

Challenges to Ecology, Natural Capital and Biodiversity

The Hoo Peninsula is distinguished by its exceptional natural assets and abundant wildlife. The region is characterised by diverse habitats, including salt marshes, mudflats, and grasslands, which support a wide array of flora and fauna.

The area is also known for several rare bird and animal species making it a distinctive ecosystem, vital for ecosystem conservation and natural beauty. The presence of multiple Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) highlights the ecological importance of the Hoo Peninsula and underscores the need for continuous protection and sustainable management of its natural resources.

However, despite its ecological richness, there is a lack of information regarding the protection of natural assets and the ecological value of the region to its people and economy. There is also a lack of awareness of the uncertainty of climate change and its impacts on the landscapes of the Peninsula. Rising sea levels and changing weather patterns will pose direct threats to the area's fragile ecosystems and its people.

Vulnerability of Hoo's population to climate-related hazards

Parts of the Hoo Peninsula exhibit high flood vulnerability, as indicated by the Neighbourhood Flood Vulnerability Index (NFVI)³⁰. This metric highlights areas at significant risk of flooding, which requires urgent attention and robust flood management strategies to protect lives, property, and the natural environment.

The challenges faced by the local population necessitate targeted support and resilience-building initiatives to better equip the community for coping with and adapting to climate change impacts.

³⁰ The Neighbourhood Flood Vulnerability Index (NFVI) measures propensity of those living in a neighbourhood to suffer a loss of well-being should a flood occur. It is based on indicators such as age, health, income, housing characteristics, and social networks.

Figure 7: Neighbourhood Flood Vulnerability Index. Source: Adapted from 'Sayers, P.B., Horritt, M., Penning Rowsell, E., and Fieth, J. (2017). Present and future flood vulnerability, risk and disadvantage: A UK scale assessment. A report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation published by Sayers and Partners LLP'.



Summarising areas of need

Through the process of engagement, residents, parish councils and the community panel have been given the opportunity to respond to the evidence above.

Residents felt that the data was not always directly reflective of the lived experience and that residents were facing more financial challenges than were necessarily reflected in the data. Affordability of housing was recognised as a particular challenge in the area. With this considered, the following five areas of need were identified as being particularly important:

- Recognising the increasing needs of an ageing population: not just in terms of spaces and formal centres but also activities and social interaction.
- Supporting a healthier population, with facilities, activities and exercise opportunities for all age groups.
- Encouraging the delivery of an increased supply of affordable housing
- Improving access to employment – especially locally - which supports an increase in average incomes
- Protection of green spaces and natural assets
- Recognition of the social and physical vulnerability of the Hoo Peninsula and embedding an adequate response to the climate emergency, including the need to strengthen social resilience.



Planning for future growth

Governments, past and present, have consistently prioritised accelerating housing delivery to address the ongoing housing crisis. Shortly after taking office, the current administration released a draft National Planning Policy Framework, a new method for calculating housing targets, and emphasised the need for concurrent investment in physical and community infrastructure to support housing growth. Initiatives to build new towns are envisioned as long-term solutions, supplementing the proposed housing targets.

While the new planning policy is still in draft, there is no doubt that Medway Council will have to respond to the government expectations and accommodate significant growth, corresponding to around 1,650 new homes per year. This will surely necessitate significant housing development on the Hoo Peninsula, raising the critical challenge of how to deliver growth in a way that creates cohesive and balanced communities over time and benefits the existing community, making sure that they are not 'left behind' and that their voices are heard.

Medway Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation

At the time of writing (Summer 2024), Medway Council are consulting on an options stage in the process of developing a new Local Plan. In this consultation (Reg 18b) it is recognised that the borough still needs to find sites for an additional 22,500 homes across the borough and that it is likely that some of this development will need to take place on the Hoo Peninsula.

The consultation includes specific policies on the provision of cultural and community facilities.

Policy T29: Community and Cultural Facilities

The Council recognises the importance of community and cultural facilities and the need for an appropriate range of facilities as a key component of sustainable development. The Council will seek to protect and enhance existing facilities, services and amenities that contribute to the quality of life of residents and visitors.

The Council will support appropriate development that seeks to enhance community and cultural facilities that do not have a negative impact on the surrounding amenity, historic and natural environment and transport networks.



The Council will require provision to be made for community and cultural facilities in planning for new development. Large scale residential developments will be required to provide community facilities to meet the needs of new residents and integration with existing communities where possible.

New community and cultural facilities should be located within or near the community they are intended to serve and should be appropriately located to support sustainable travel by being accessible to users by walking, cycling and public transport. If the development is smaller scale and community facilities cannot be accommodated on site, a contribution will be sought to upgrade appropriate facilities off site, where it can be demonstrated that they are accessible to residents of the new development and that there is capacity to support the increased population.

All developments for over 10 homes will be required to contribute to upgrading community facilities in line with the Council's policy on infrastructure contributions from developers. There is a presumption against the loss of community facilities in rural and urban areas.

Any proposal which would result in the loss of a community or cultural facility will not be permitted unless:

- An alternative community facility (social infrastructure) which meets similar local needs to at least the same extent is already available.
- It can be shown that the proposal does not constitute the loss of a service of particular value to the local community nor detrimentally affect the character, sustainability and vitality of the area.
- Additional/improved provision including the utilisation of vacant and under-used land for arts, cultural and creative purposes is provided.
- It has been demonstrated that it is no longer economically viable and cannot be made so, unless sufficient marketing evidence has been supplied.
- Proposals for new community facilities should:
 - ❖ Have safe access by cycle and walking within reasonable walking distance, public transport and car and incorporate a travel plan.
 - ❖ Have safe drop-off and pick-up provision.
 - ❖ Avoid conflict with adjoining uses.



- ❖ Healthcare facilities are formally declared surplus to the operational healthcare requirements of the NHS or identified as surplus as part of a published estates strategy or service transformation plan.

The wording of the policy is aligned with the broad aspirations of the population. It is however, (necessarily) general, which means it does not capture the nuance or specific challenges of the Hoo Peninsula or its communities. The Community Infrastructure Framework, therefore, becomes an important tool, acting as a bridge between the Local Plan and planners and developers, supporting them to recognise the unique characteristics and opportunities that existing on the Peninsula.

Aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plans

Hoo Peninsula has four Parish Councils who have developed or are developing their own Neighbourhood Plans. These are vital documents for consideration of any aspect of local planning and are particularly important for the planning of community facilities.

What Is Neighbourhood Planning?

Neighbourhood planning gives communities direct power to develop a shared vision for their neighbourhood and shape the development and growth of their local area. Communities are able to choose where they want new homes, shops and offices to be built (as long as deliverable in planning terms), have their say on what those new buildings should look like and what infrastructure should be prioritised. Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to plan for the types of development to meet their community's needs and where the ambition of the neighbourhood is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area.

Neighbourhood Plans once adopted form part of the Development Plan for the area and have the same status as an up-to-date Local Plan and are key to unify the community in providing consistent and relevant inputs into the determination of planning applications.

The Neighbourhood Plans produced on Hoo Peninsula are for Hoo St Werburgh & Chattenden (Referendum on 7 November 2024); and Cliffe & Cliffe Woods; High Halstow was withdrawn following examination but is moving forward again now. In May 2022, Finsbury Extra was designated as a neighbourhood area to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, at the time of writing Medway Council are supporting the Parish in the next stage. At the time of



writing Stoke had begun the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan. Each has different characteristics, but all are united by some shared aspirations and considerations for development.

A key aspiration of this Community Infrastructure Framework is to identify the potential of common themes between the various Neighbourhood Plans, ensuring the benefits of joint working to support a better solution for the Peninsula as a whole.

Each of the Neighbourhood Plan aspirations for community infrastructure are considered below:

Hoo St Werburgh & Chattenden Neighbourhood Plan (Referendum on 7 November 2024)

The Neighbourhood Plan takes a broad view of community infrastructure including indoor and outdoor facilities, allotments, play facilities, care facilities, pubs and the wider natural environment. It champions the improvement of existing facilities as well as identifying the following:

- New employment uses and other activities (land use classes E and F1) are supported within the village centres.
- New community facilities or improvement and diversification of existing ones will be supported, particularly in existing settlement or in other conveniently accessible locations with good pedestrian and cycle links.
- Facilities should not impact highway capacity and should be accessible by active travel and should complement existing nearby facilities.
- New community facilities should not have an adverse impact in terms of noise and visual intrusion and should not compromise the historic and rural character.
- Loss of existing facilities will only be supported where it is either no longer viable or a similar or better facility is provided within walking distance.

In addition, new development must be designed to provide spaces for social interaction, play and exercise and pedestrian links to surrounding areas. It should also take the opportunity to enhance landscape and biodiversity and include landscape transition zones to the open landscape.

The Neighbourhood Plan indicates as priority the delivery of transport and active travel improvements and the creation of a new clubhouse and facilities at Deangate Track.



Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Neighbourhood Plan (adopted)

The plan recognises the need to have an overall increase in provision due to the limited capacity and flexibility of use of facilities available, noting the need to improve these regardless of new development. Loss of facilities (halls, shops / cafes, schools and outdoor recreation) will be resisted unless there is demonstrable lack of need or if an alternative, possibly with additional benefits, is provided. New facilities should be multi-purpose and sustainable, in character within the parish's villages. The plan also emphasises the role of improved facilities to respond to the challenges presented by climate change and other shocks like the recent pandemic.

The Plan outlines how new facilities should be viable and sustainable and where possible should be flexible enough to accommodate a variety of different uses.

High Halstow Neighbourhood Plan (withdrawn)

The plan responds to a more specific scenario associated with growth to the east of the existing village by highlighting the need to strengthen the existing village centre to retain its historic origin and identity. It recognises the opportunity development provides to deliver new facilities, particularly to complement the existing village centre. It identifies the need to protect and enhance the existing historic heart of the village and the impact that new facilities should have on social inclusion and community cohesion.

The plan identifies ten existing facilities which are deemed to be important. It recognises the need for new health provision, café and an employment hub, with online and video conferencing capabilities, as well as creche and additional primary school places. It also is specific on the need to retain and improve public conveniences near the sports ground and to provide water refill taps.

Common themes

- All Neighbourhood Plans give great importance to community infrastructure as a way to support local identity and promote social resilience, especially in light of climate change challenges and the recent pandemic.
- All plans seek to strengthen existing village centres, by protecting and improving existing facilities in preference to creating new ones.



- Where new facilities are created, these should be easily accessible from the existing settlement area by walking and cycling.
- A network of active travel routes is also important.



The limitations of delivery through planning

The community panel engaged for the Community Infrastructure Framework were able to discuss this topic over a number of sessions and understood the practical challenges, some of which are described below.

Responsibility for the ‘public good’

Since the 1980s, public infrastructure investment by Councils has sharply declined due to reduced public spending and increased reliance on the private sector. This has led to a nationwide decline in facility provision and maintenance. On the Hoo Peninsula, past reliance on military and large employers for community funding mitigated these effects. However, as employment changed funding decreased or stopped and facilities declined or closed.

Housing growth and delivery of community infrastructure

In the English planning system, housing growth is a key mechanism for delivering the ‘public good’ to support new communities, though this is not without limitations. There are two main systems (as of August 2024):

Section 106 (S106) – this refers to the developer’s contributions attached to the release of a planning application. It is a legally binding negotiated agreement between the local planning authority and the applicant for new development, the main drawbacks of this system are:

- S106 contributions cannot legally apply to compensate existing deficits or cover the needs of the existing community.
- The agreement can take a long time to negotiate.
- Developers are asked to engage with the community, and the Local Authority does consult and there is scope for local people to influence ask. However, local people are not involved in the final working of agreements.
- For community infrastructure, contributions may be subject to viability testing, and will only be payable after a certain number of units are sold (trigger points), leading to a temporary worsening of any existing deficits.
- Comprehensive infrastructure is typically achieved only through large-scale developments or pooling of contributions which can itself result in delay in delivery.



Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) – This refers to a tariff approach, which gives certainty to both developers and local authority and short-cuts negotiations. It is also more flexible in the way funds are spent. However, in practice, the shortcomings are significant:

- CIL rates are pre-set in a planning document and are normally not reflective of the real cost of infrastructure.
- Payment is made only after housing sale and therefore occupation, leading to a lengthy period of deficit of infrastructure.
- The local planning authority becomes responsible for land acquisition, design, construction and maintenance of the facilities, with the associated increased risks and costs compared to direct delivery by developers, especially at times of higher inflation.
- The levy is not necessarily spent in the area where development has taken place.

Due to these challenges, Medway Council, like many others, has opted to retain the S106 system.

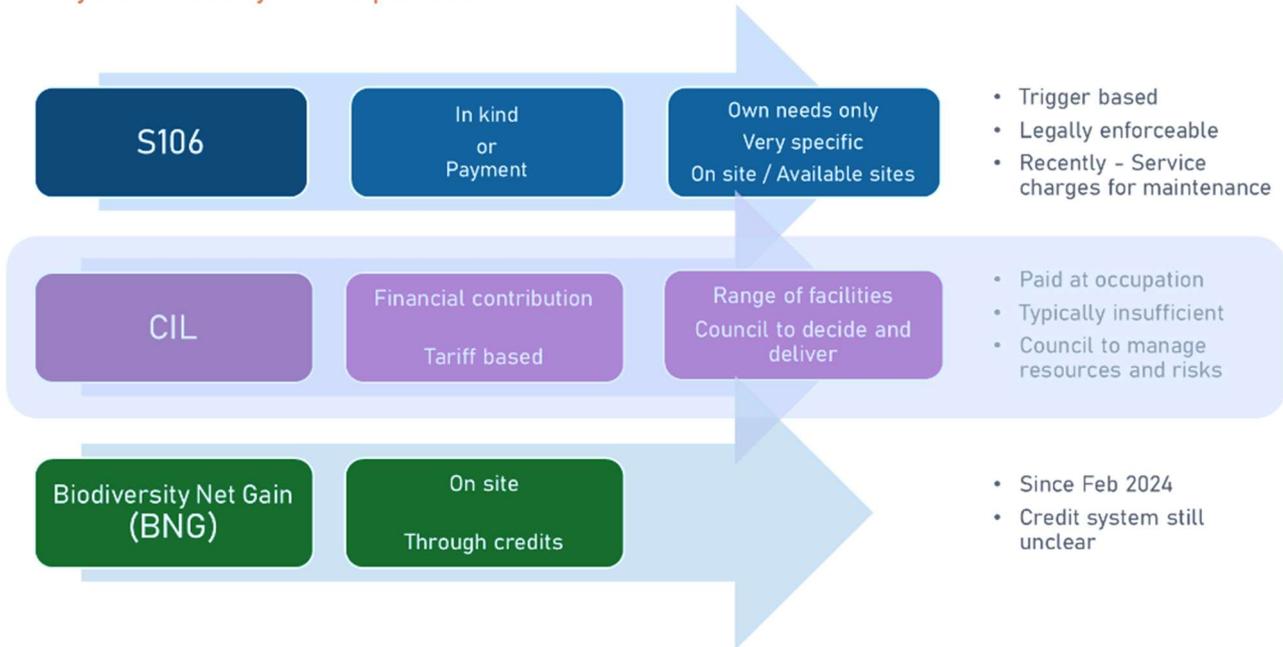
Under the previous government, additional infrastructure funding was available for major developments, leading to the Hoo Development Framework and the potential for Housing Infrastructure Funding (HIF). However, this funding, tied to unrealistic timelines and inadequate in the face of rising construction costs, is no longer available. As of August 2024, no alternative schemes have been introduced by the new Government.

A potential alternative funding source could arise from community-led initiatives selling 'Biodiversity Credits,' as per the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) legislation enacted in April 2024. This could provide financial incentives for communities and landowners to enhance biodiversity by at least 10%, with credits sold to local developers.



The development negotiations

A system nobody thinks perfect



S106

- In kind or payment
- Own needs only
- Very specific
 - On site / Available sites
 - Trigger based
 - Legally enforceable
 - Recently – Service charges for maintenance

CIL

- Financial contribution
- Tariff based
- Range of facilities
- Council to decide and deliver
 - Paid at occupation
 - Typically insufficient
 - Council to manage resources and risks

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

- On site
- Through credits
 - Since Feb 2024

- Credit system still unclear

A planning strategy for Hoo

Medway is required to deliver a substantial number of new homes, with the Hoo Peninsula expected to accommodate a significant portion of this development. The exact scale and timeline will be determined by the Local Plan, currently under preparation. While communities will have the opportunity to comment on how the development unfolds, the overall housing targets will likely be mandated by the Government.

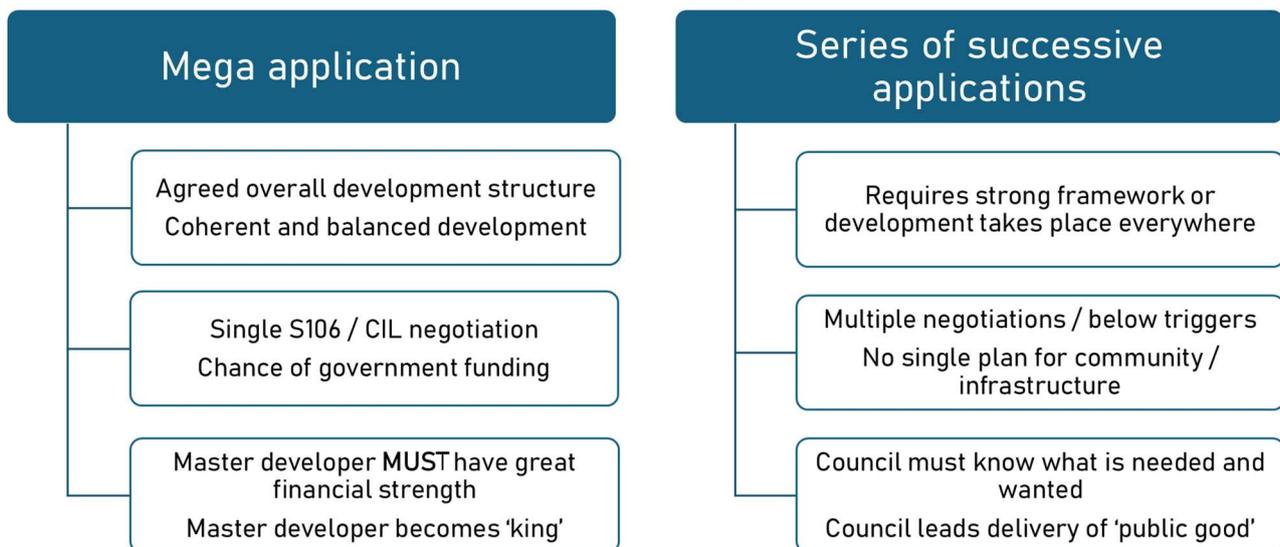
Two alternative planning strategies could be deployed in Hoo:

1. **A Single 'Mega Application':** This approach involves a master developer (public, private, or a partnership) submitting a comprehensive application to meet the total housing requirement. The advantage of this strategy lies in its coherent development framework, with a unified plan for both community and physical infrastructure. It is likely to deliver the most robust package of community infrastructure, potentially upgrading existing facilities as part of a negotiated agreement. However, this approach has significant drawbacks: the S106 agreement would be time-consuming to negotiate. Additionally, the master developer will have considerable negotiating power in terms of the extent of community facilities, timing of delivery and location. If there are a variety of landowners being represented by the master developer, there could be a complex equalisation agreement required.
2. **Successive Smaller Applications:** This strategy involves multiple applications, each with the size of a field or two accommodating around 200-300 units. Here, if the Council and community come together, they could play a critical role in establishing a shared vision and ensuring individual developers align with it. Unless they are working on an allocated site or one that falls within the development framework, individual developers may have less negotiating power, as their applications can be rejected without jeopardising overall housing targets. The best chance of success of this approach is in a strong partnership between local planning authority and community, offering a premium to developers participating in the common vision and making it more difficult to develop outside of it. The great risk is in multiple adversarial applications and mixed messages, resulting in resource



intensive planning processes and eventually incoherent and poorly integrated development. There is also greater complexity in terms of location, delivery and timing of infrastructure.

In the Hoo Peninsula, the revision of the draft Hoo Development Framework and its adoption would strengthen both routes. Deep and meaningful community engagement in its preparation would greatly facilitate development, especially if the second route prevails, as it seems to be the case.



Mega application

- Agreed overall development structure. Coherent and balanced development
- Single S106 / CIL negotiation. Chance of government funding
- Master developer **MUST** have great financial strength. Master developer becomes 'king'

Series of successive applications

- Requires strong framework or development takes place everywhere
- Multiple negotiations / below triggers. No single plan for community / infrastructure
- Council must know what is needed and wanted. Council leads delivery of 'public good'

Focus on health

Health and access to health services, either at a GP or hospital is one of the most significant observed deficits in community infrastructure on the Hoo Peninsula. This may not be too dissimilar to other parts of the country but made more critical because of the difficulty of access to provision in neighbouring areas from the Hoo Peninsula. Recent housing development in Hoo appears to have made the situation worse.

The opportunity to use better data and collaboration between the Integrated Care Board and the local community could potentially deliver a step change in the way investment decisions are made.

The current approach to improving and adding provision is limited to developer's contributions (S106) for the provision of GP premises (as land, buildings or financial contributions for physical provision) to serve the new community. The contributions do not extend to the reversing of pre-existing deficit, provision of acute care (hospital beds) or the securing of actual doctors and medical practitioners, which are funded directly by the government. Anecdotal evidence from elsewhere indicates that the NHS would not normally fund a new GP practice until there are around 15-20,000 new patients, even where developers are available to build a health centre. This leads to the difficulties so often reported by communities, including the people of Hoo.

It is recognised that in the future planning obligations for health (and other investments) needs to focus more on health outcomes and must be more specific to the area. This means looking more closely at wider healthcare services, on Hoo Peninsula, this could include community mental health, given the findings of the data element of this study.

Medway has an advantage over many places, as it has resources to better understand health on the Hoo Peninsula. Health Determinant Research Collaboration (HDRC) funding gives the area an advantage in being able to undertake more significant research and understanding of determinants of public health. This should help to develop a more informed view, which can ensure less reliance on local GP surgeries.

It is therefore recommended that the Integrated Care Board (ICB) works with the Hoo Peninsula community, using the HDRC research, to develop a more thorough strategic assessment of health and wellbeing; this can form the basis to better plan for future need as the population grows and changes. This will enable more direct approach to securing the necessary planning obligations (fully fitted buildings, financial contributions etc.) to support the delivery of appropriate health and care facilities for current and future residents.



Our approach – Why working differently?

Traditional, planning-based community infrastructure approaches have great limitations:

- They use formal processes and assessments, enshrined in planning law and then set in a Local Plan and supplementary guidance which sets out what communities need based on current and future population numbers. Communities will normally be offered the opportunity to participate through the planning process, but this tends to be by way of statutory consultation and objections rather than through genuine engagement and co-design.
- Standard methods are used based on population estimates to make judgements on provision of key community infrastructure (such as schools and health provision), whilst other facilities are dealt with in a discretionary way and subject to viability negotiations.
- Deficiencies in existing settlements, upgrades and repairs of what is already there and non-physical provision (such as the actual running of clubs and societies) are very difficult to secure and fund through the planning system. These are the very community facilities that local people think are the most important as they deliver local identity, social well-being and resilience.

Our approach has been to re-define community infrastructure by offering local people an enhanced role in assessing needs and considering pathways to delivery. The aim was to engage and understand aspirations and build capacity and create better processes for ongoing involvement and influence.

Working with local people

This framework was developed using the principles of co-design to enable local people to take a meaningful role in decision making.

Co-design is by its nature a creative and participatory process which encourages, enables, and empowers people from a diverse range of groups to participate. Co-design requires an ongoing and deliberative conversation with the community and to do this we developed a community panel.

We recruited 50 people from across the Hoo Peninsula, who were chosen to reflect the demographics of the wider community. The panel's expertise is in the members' lived experience of their local area. This group worked together across 5 sessions, they shared their different ideas, perspectives and



local knowledge to develop the vision and recommendations that are at the heart of this framework.

In addition, the work of the panel was complemented by a wider programme of community engagement, drop in events, conversations at local community groups and events, collaborations with local schools and students' surveys were used to capture the opinions of just over 650 local people.

These conversations enabled an understanding of local people's concerns and priorities, with a focus on gaps in provision and aspirations for the future. We also spoke to range of stakeholders including Parish Councils, the NHS, local employers, developers and Homes England to explore what community infrastructure is being planned, and how they could work differently and in collaboration with the community moving forward.

This approach reflects the need to better represent the needs and aspirations of the local community in relation to local facilities and infrastructure.

Residents and businesses are concerned about the scale of growth proposed with the Hoo Development Framework and outlined within the Local Plan Regulation 18 document. An active and ongoing conversation about place provides a greater agency for local people and provides a deeper understanding of the planning system and how people can engage with housing growth in their community.

This approach also provides a more balanced power dynamic, where residents are empowered to work with developers on a more equal basis. This in turn reduces the pressure on local authority planners, who can use the capacity which has been developed within the community to create a smoother and more efficient process.

(Re) Mapping Community Infrastructure

Key to considering the future of community infrastructure on the Hoo Peninsula, is understanding what is already here, not just in terms of 'traditional' community infrastructure provision as defined in the Planning Act and NPPF, but also in terms of other assets which contribute to quality of life on the Peninsula, in line with community's views and the United Nations definition above.

Mirroring the feedback from the community in the events, workshops and community panels, a purposefully broad approach was chosen to consider community assets and facilities. Given how the community understands, engages with and values the varying elements of place, we asked what existing assets increase quality of life and deliver increased civic pride and

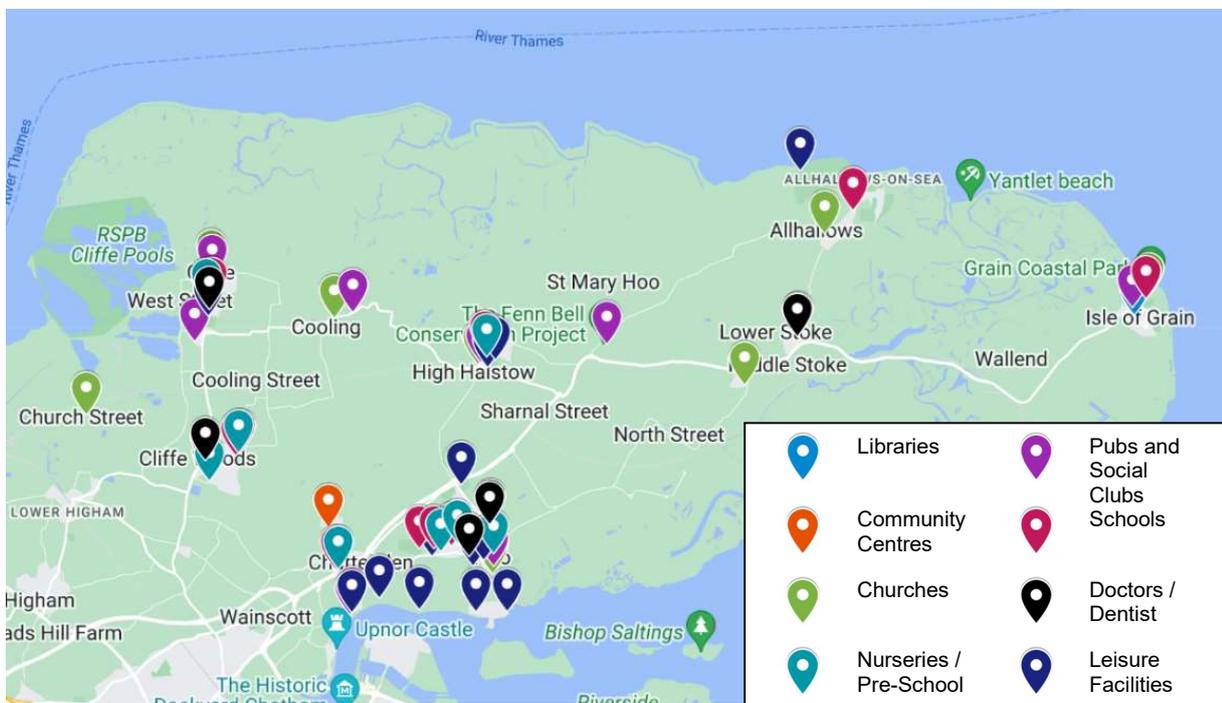


placemaking, or have the opportunity to do so. Then layered those assets to build the fullest possible picture of the current position.

Defining the framework area boundaries

Community feedback, anecdotal evidence through informal interviews, plus analysis of social media, made clear that whilst there are individual place identities formed within villages, there is a strong sense of place and connection with an identity formed from the Hoo Peninsula as a whole (and the Peninsula's was relevant to all) - whether traditional assets, or broader elements which make up the place identity – and so it is vital that the Community Infrastructure Framework considers it as a whole.

Community infrastructure mapping



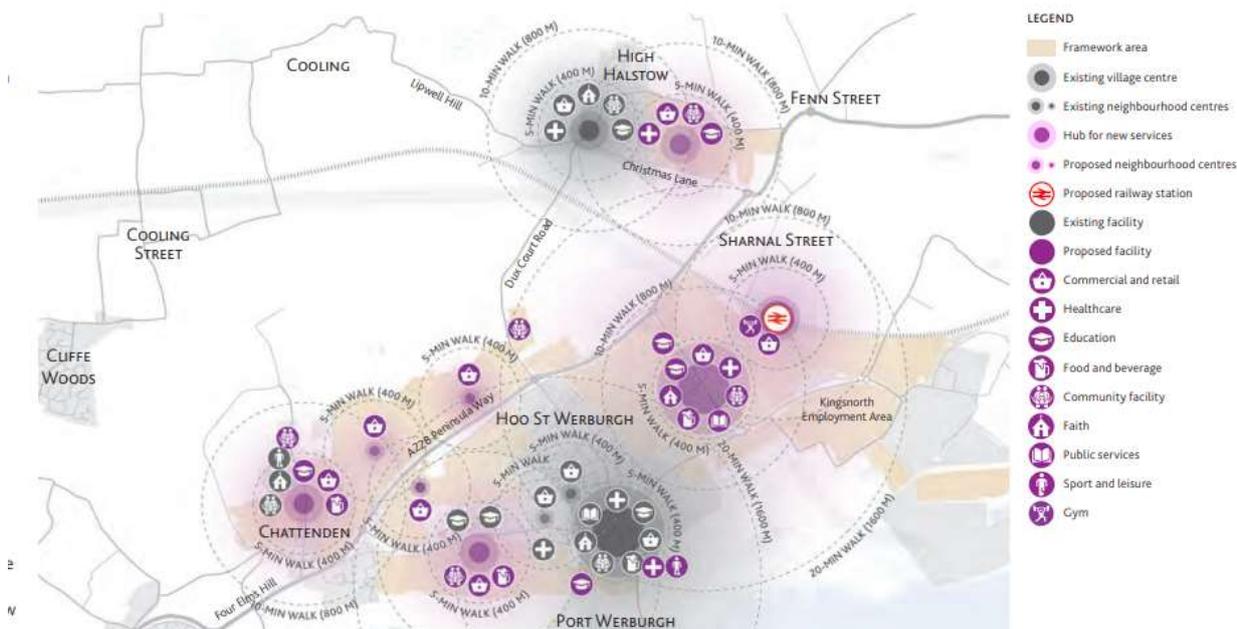
Given most of the urbanised settlements are those within the growth area of the HDF, a geographically broader view didn't hugely affect the scale or breadth of provision, when considering the traditional definitions. The conclusion remains that the Peninsula is reasonably served in terms of quantity, given its population, but that the quality of the provision isn't high, with some typologies underserved, and not all easily and sustainably



accessible. This picture is certainly not fit for the envisaged population growth.

Broader than traditionally defined community infrastructure

Hoo Development Framework: Existing and Proposed Community Facilities



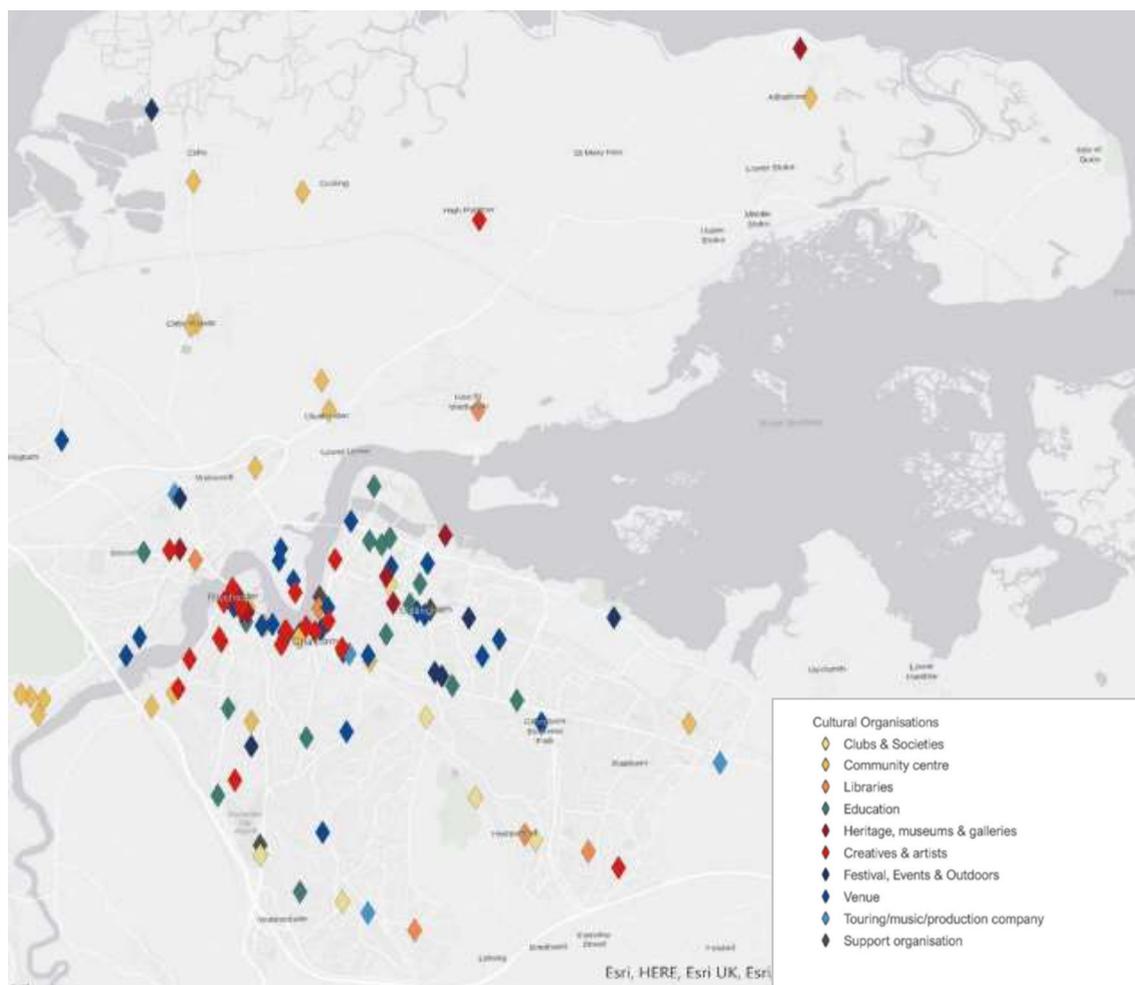
Considering the findings of data gathered for the Hoo Development Framework and the Medway Infrastructure Development Plan (2022), the villages of the Hoo Peninsula might appear well endowed with facilities. This is not validated through discussion with the community.

Whilst within the usual confines of physical community infrastructure as defined in planning, it would appear that existing communities already enjoy a provision in all the main settlement areas of Hoo St Werburgh and Chattenden, as well as in the surrounding High Halstow and Cliffe Woods. The approach taken in making this conclusion is not sound. This quantitative and limited approach ignores fundamental challenges:

- The condition of the physical infrastructure (buildings and public realm) is often poor and funding for management and maintenance unavailable.

- The provision is often special-interest or targeted at a particular demographic and not universally accessible.
- The Hoo Peninsula is relatively isolated and normal equations of population numbers and sqm of facilities are inadequate when other choices are not so easily accessible as they involve long journeys by car.
- Retail appears popular and sustainable, but it is limited, and some village shops play a critical role, even if marginally viable only.
- Availability of employment and workspace for new activities is low, forcing people to find work elsewhere with consequences of increased traffic and more transient community life.
- Civic and cultural organisations are limited, especially when contrasted with nearby Rochester.

Cultural Organisations



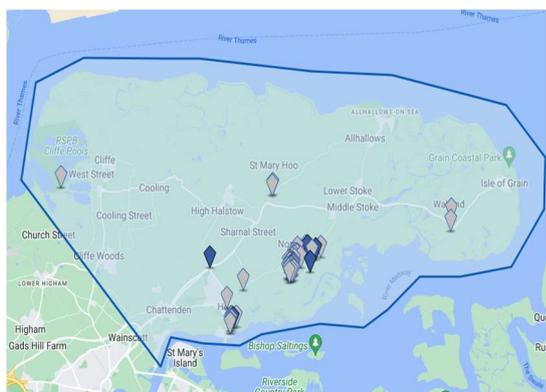
Let us consider cultural venues, for instance. Taking the Arts Council's recommended amount of space for culture per/ head of population, the Hoo's 10,000 residents should enjoy around 1000 sqm of cultural space. This would indicate a massive deficit as this isn't provided by the two libraries on the Peninsula. However, the multitude of programming in community spaces and pubs, may well suggest that an acceptable range of cultural activities is available.

More importantly, the broadening of the focus area to cover the full extent of the Peninsula, cements a clear sense that the traditional social infrastructure definitions don't provide us with the required comprehensive understanding of the place.



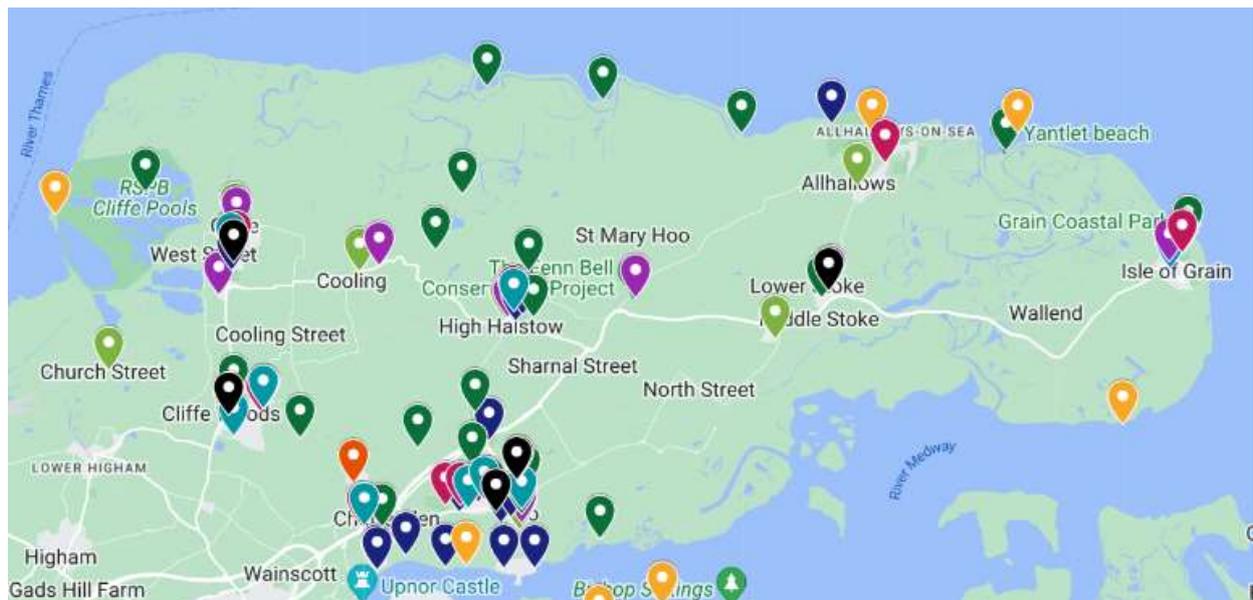
Cultural identity

The events, workshops and community panels, alongside conversations, literature, social media and overheard discussions, made clear it is not the traditional social infrastructure that dominates the cultural identity of the Peninsula. It is, the natural, industrial, and nautical assets that not only defines Hoo, but that people consider the primary local community infrastructure.



Open space, in local mindset, it's not just formal and accessible parks, play areas and designated active travel routes. It is mainly made of the ways and the trails, the scrub and the wild areas, the beaches and the riverside; the river itself, the extraordinary views and heritage – not only the physical remnants of industrial, nautical and military history – but the knowledge and understanding of the place's history and importance.

Community infrastructure mapping



	Libraries		Pubs and Social Clubs
	Community Centres		Schools
	Churches		Doctors / Dentist
	Nurseries / Pre-School		Leisure Facilities and Sports Clubs
	Military Industrial Heritage		Wild and Accessible green spaces

Arts Council: Recommended provision

Type of Facility	Sqm / 1,000 people
Public library	30
Public archive	6
Art space: multi-use arts venues & theatres, production, rehearsal & education space	45
Museums	28
Total	109

This doesn't deny the importance of traditional community infrastructure, but it broadens its scope and relevance, and the approach to delivery.

Alongside improvements to or creation of new physical assets or offers, it may be worth considering improved access to and management of natural assets, opportunities to engage and interact with the water, or the harnessing and celebration of heritage. Adopting this broader definition is key if the community infrastructure and so the place identity, is to be authentic and in evolution, driven by and taking with the growing community.

Employment and retail space

It is not only the existing local retail space that provides for the needs and jobs for the population. There is considerable industrial space on the Peninsula occupying 1,600,000 sqft of floorspace National Grid, BP and Amazon all have holdings, amongst a range of other national and international companies.

Given the significance of this industrial and employment space and its importance to the local and regional economies, it is clear that it has a social dimension and contributes to local identity and quality of life.

We need to consider how these major employers' interface and could potentially better support the current and the future expanded population. This could include encouraging local access to local jobs through training and collaborations, investment in infrastructure and facilities with the community in mind (supporting shared bus routes, or staff recreational facilities) and any other option that can offer opportunities for all. Employers should be good neighbours – integrated with its expanding neighbourhood, agriculture and



natural environment. They also could play a role in accessing and enhancing natural and heritage infrastructure.

Not only engagement with these key employers can assist the delivery of greater access to social infrastructure and potentially contribute to local community offers, but it is also likely that there are spatial opportunities which could be exploited with strengthened partnerships.

Demonstrating the importance of networks and relationships

There are a wealth of community organisations working across the Hoo Peninsula, providing access to facilities and support. These include the network of active Parish Councils, which are advocates for their communities; organisation such as Hoo Cares, which supports vulnerable residents, particularly the elderly and those with disabilities; and Medway Youth Services, which provides programmes and activities for young people aged 8-19, and up to 25 with additional needs. There is a vibrant network of community facilities including village halls, churches, libraries and parks.

There is a desire within the community for the villages, across the Hoo Peninsula, to remain distinct and retain their individuality. However, there is acknowledgement of the value of networks and communities working together across the Hoo Peninsula to meet the needs of local people and tackle local challenges. The community panel spoke of the importance of *“villages and communities doing events, activities and work together.”³¹*

Community engagement showed an aspiration for *“development to improve the lives of people on the Hoo Peninsula”³²*; for this objective to be achieved it is vital to create networks and relationships that share knowledge and power. This includes finding ways for the community to work with and be heard by the network of Parish Councils across the Hoo Peninsula, Medway Council, Developers and other key stakeholders.

What does this mean for the Community Infrastructure Framework?

From a technical point of view, Hoo Peninsula only has a small deficit in community infrastructure when considered in quantitative and traditional terms. The deficit increases when considering breadth, quality, proximity and accessibility. The Peninsula does, however, have a host of assets and activities which are of value to the community and support a sense of civic pride and have the potential to drive a higher quality of life locally.

³¹ Community Panel Participant

³² Community Panel Objectives, Strategy and Tactics Activity

Better reflecting this in the Community Infrastructure Framework, will help form closer links between the future of Hoo and the needs of the community. Projects such as the Community Parks will help to do this, but it is also important to celebrate what already exists and connect people to it. Key to this, has been establishing what is already considered precious, especially through the work with the Community Panel, and so ensuring that this is enhanced through the process.



Actioning a broad approach to Community Infrastructure

New and improved community infrastructure can sometimes be seen as only linked to new development and as something that exists in the future.

In reality, the delivery of better facilities is an ongoing process which will evolve with the population regardless of whether or not the population grows. It is important that processes are in place which capitalise upon the ongoing momentum and evolution in places and communities.

Previous planning for community infrastructure has been delivered in isolation, in specific locations, sometimes linked to specific developments. A new approach needs to support a more holistic view which unities the places, communities and partnerships which exist across the Hoo Peninsula. The first part of this, is understanding the scale of existing commitment and delivery.

Focus on the here & now: Existing projects and momentum

There are a number of committed projects and investments which will support the aspirations set out within this process, delivering new, or improving existing community infrastructure:

- The **Strategic Environmental Management Scheme** will deliver a network of new public open spaces, designed to provide recreational space for local residents and reduce pressure on more sensitive existing habitats around the Hoo Peninsula. This network will include Lodge Hill, Cockham Community Parkland, Deangate Community Parkland and the creation of wet meadow in the Hoo Flats.
- **Deangate Community Parkland** will transform a site currently not in use into a new parkland that can be enjoyed by local wildlife around the area including nightingales and provide a space for families to enjoy. The landscape strategy for the park will improve the interconnectivity between the woodlands, introduce new areas of habitat and manage how people move through the site. There are also aspirations to improve the visitors experience including café and toilet facilities.
- **The Deangate Play Zone will** use investment from Sport England to support activities including basketball, netball, rugby, hockey and cricket.
- A £1 million investment in **Hoo Sports Centre** will improve energy efficiency and customer facilities. The investment will include solar panels,



boiler replacement and the redesign and installation of new changing rooms. The improvements are funding by Sport England and Section 106 contributions.

Planned community facilities investment



Whose Hoo is a heritage funded, landscape scale project focussing on the remarkable Hoo Peninsula. Through engaging activities, educational programs, and community involvement, the Whose Hoo project aims to highlight the hidden treasures of the Hoo Peninsula, creating a stronger bond between people and their local environment.



Section 106 investment on the Hoo Peninsula

Medway Council has been successful in negotiating investment from Section 106 agreements which supports the objectives of this framework. These are set out in the table below:

The area has benefited from and continues to benefit from Section 106 investment including:

Type of Community Infrastructure	Investment
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hundred of Hoo Primary Academy expansion to two form entry - £2.779m of S106 contributions • Hundred of Hoo Secondary Academy kitchen/dining and changing facilities - £1.25m of S106 contributions • Hundred of Hoo Secondary Academy 6th form block - £691,000 of S106 contributions • These projects are in addition to S106 spent in the past to expand Hundred of Hoo Academy, additionally supported by basic need grant. • Currently c£1m in the education pot from developments on the Peninsula still to be allocated and spent.
Open Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kingshill Recreation Ground - £200,000 • Pottery Road Recreation Ground – nearly £50,000 • Christmas Lane footpath improvements - £60,000 • £13,000 transferred in 2020 to Cliffe and Cliffe Woods Parish Council for improvements to the recreation ground. A further c£36,000 spent by the open space team. • Currently c£2.2m in the open space pot from developments on the Peninsula.
Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New community centre Hoo - £1.58m • Community facilities in Chattenden - £258,000 • Community Centre Cliffe Woods - £24,000 • Provision / expansion of Frindsbury Extra community hall (Liberty Park) • Extra community hall Hearing loop in High Halstow village hall



Type of Community Infrastructure	Investment
Highways & Travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A228 Peninsula Way junction with Main Rd Hoo • Highway work/improvements to junctions • Pedestrian access improvements to local primary school and High Halstow • Pedestrian infrastructure to provide safer routes to school • Pedestrian facilities Elm Ave/Broadwood Rd and Main Rd to improve link to Hoo school • Bus shelter in High Halstow (Walnut Tree Farm) • Improved bus service and bus shelter (west of Town Rd) + bus shelter (Town Road)
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently there is approximately £700,000 received for health which is unspent. • The vast majority of developments contribute to health. • All contributions are ringfenced to the service/wording in the agreements – health contributions are held on behalf of the NHS and can only be spent when the NHS propose an appropriate scheme which must be agreed by Medway Council. • Once agreed NHS England submit an invoice for payment.
Other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to the burial ground in Hoo • Improvements at Upnor Castle • Improvements/maintenance to heritage assets and/or provision of local public facilities • PROW contributions from various developments in Hoo cover additional/improvements to signage



Planning to deliver better

Maximising opportunities through planning

The Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans and the planning process have limitations, but they also play a critical role in maximising local benefits associated with development. A dedicated Hoo Peninsula strategic approach is needed, so that housing delivery is clearly associated with a broader range of planning values:

- The Council and communities should come together and agree how to jointly lead development on the Peninsula.
- A renewed version of the Hoo Development Framework should be co-designed with the local communities, local employers, landowners and developers to identify an ambitious, realistic and acceptable vision for growth in Hoo. This new version should be adopted as soon as possible and include a detailed implementation strategy and infrastructure delivery plan and firmly guide all planning applications.
- Assessment of vulnerability (in terms of risk of loss of livelihoods and well-being as well as physical damage) to the impacts of climate extreme events should help drive development and improvement of existing settlements.
- An interim Hoo Community Infrastructure Delivery Plan, based on this framework and modifying the Medway Guidance to Development Contributions for the Peninsula, should be developed and agreed in the shortest period of time to influence pending applications.
- Quantitative assessment of community infrastructure needs for the Hoo Peninsula should also consider the relative isolation of the area and aim to reduce the need to travel: investment in local jobs, schools and other facilities could be cheaper and far more sustainable than upgrading transport infrastructure.
- Planning policy (including the Neighbourhood Plans) already encourages investment and improvement of existing village centres and community infrastructure ahead of delivery of new facilities. This approach delivers benefits in terms of local identity, social cohesion and carbon reduction.
- Any new facilities, as suggested by local Neighbourhood Plans, should be located in an accessible position from the original settlements and easy to reach by walking and cycling.



Direct community management and delivery

The process of developing this framework for action has been through close collaboration with local residents. The community itself is recognised as a resource in this process; they have the insight, experience and capabilities which is meaningful and real and there is value in using the resource more effectively.

With the collective will that has been developed through this process, it is important to provide a more effective platform for local people to have a more significant say on decisions which impact on the experience of living on Hoo Peninsula. This has to be built upon a wider geography which brings together a wider group of partners with different skills and objectives on a 'Pan Peninsula' basis.

It is likely that in the first instance this would be brought forward informally, building further capacity and structure for involvement, but could evolve to include:

- **Formal Community Involvement in Development** – A more formal role for the community in supporting developers to come up with better solutions for community infrastructure and facilities.
- **Operating community infrastructure businesses** - These are established and run by the community which seek to address gaps in local provision. Community businesses are often community pub, supermarkets and childcare facilities operating in spaces where the market cannot necessarily operate with sufficient margins.
- **Community Ownership** – Owning and making good use of sites and buildings which might not otherwise be put to good use.
- **Community Shaping of Public Services** – Going beyond facilities and buildings, providing insights on the services provided by public sector partners ensuring that these are aligned with the evolving needs of the Hoo Peninsula.

Funding outside of the planning process

The expectation is that improvements in community infrastructure will largely be delivered through the planning system. For residents and local partners however, it is not acceptable to wait for development to deliver the improvements considered within this framework. It will therefore be important that partners are proactive in identifying other resources which could play an important role. These could include:



- **Possible Government Funding:** The government has been clear that there is little discretionary funding available. That said, there will be opportunities to secure government investment and partners must be ready for this. Based on the pre-election manifesto commitments, priorities of the new government could include public health, climate & net zero and community power.
- **Creative Use of Existing Local Funds:** Whilst public sector funding is constrained there is an opportunity to ensure that what money is available is used as well as possible. The Community Panel and Parish Councils can advise on how spending can have a more significant local impact. This is particularly true of maintenance of existing facilities.
- **In Kind and Property:** Investment in community infrastructure need not come in the form of cash. In kind contributions of people's time or provision of facilities at zero or discounted rent can also deliver against the objectives of this framework.
- **Philanthropic Business Investment:** Hoo Peninsula has a history of philanthropic investment. Although it is unlikely that the businesses will invest in facilities at the scale that BP and BAE have in the past, companies are interested in supporting community infrastructure, particularly where this benefits their workforce.
- **Foundations and Think Tanks:** There are a range of organisations who provide funding. There are scores of organisations who focus on themes which are relevant to Hoo Peninsula. These include Power to Change (community business), Esmee Fairburn (participation and community power), Laudes Foundation (Environment), Kings Fund (Health), Joseph Rowntree Foundation (Poverty)
- **National Lottery:** The Hoo Peninsula Community already benefits from lottery funding, with Heritage Lottery funding for the 'Whose Hoo' programme. National Lottery Communities Fund, places emphasis on participation which could also provide potential to build capacity of the emerging partnership
- **National Bodies:** Sport England are already investing in facilities at Deangate and could do more with the local partnership to create new facilities. In addition, Arts Council England and Natural England all have funding priorities which align with the ideas in this framework.



Learning from others: Inspiration from elsewhere

Delivering Community Transport, Hartley Wintney Parish Council in Hampshire³³ - Enhanced public transport

When the County Council withdrew funding for the regular bus service, residents in Hartley Wintney were left without any service to Winchfield rail station and lost direct routes to services and jobs in Basingstoke and Oldham. The Parish Council were asked to create a proposal for a community bus. Following a business plan and feasibility process the Parish Council became an approved transport provider. The cost of the scheme was estimated at £325,000 of which £246,000 would come from section 106 funding, with the shortfall made up from fare income.

Traditionally community transport models are operated by volunteers and provide a door to door or call and go service. This model has paid for staff and provides a timetable route around the town, including serving nearby settlements.

Sustaining Village Life Through Community Action, Dunsfold in Surrey³⁴ - Affordable housing

The community of Dunsfold has decided to focus on affordable housing and championing community ownership. The village's is proactively committed to providing affordable homes, meeting local needs, fostering a diverse and vibrant community.

A collaboration between the Parish Council, Waverley Borough Council and English Rural housing association brought about the delivery of eight energy efficient affordable homes on a Rural Exception Site. Adopted planning restrictions ensure that these homes will remain affordable and will prioritise people with connections to Dunsfold.

Community ownership goes beyond housing in Dunsfold. The Community Shop Association was formed to save the local shop from closure. The Associations raised funds through community shares, grants and loans. It is now a key part of village life providing employment, training and essential goods.

³³ Source National Association of Local Councils

³⁴ Source: National Housing Federation

Supporting Solutions to The Crisis in Social Care, Community Catalysts³⁵ - Health and social care

Community Catalysts is a social enterprise, which works with people across the UK to ensure people have access to the help and care they need in their communities in a way that works for them. They maintain the care workforce but support local people to use their energy and talents to establish their own small enterprises to deliver sustainable health and social care services in their community. Closing the local social gap, this approach creates employment and volunteering opportunities.

Ideas Exchange Panel, Cambridge³⁶ - More voice to the community

Hartree is a joint TOWN and LandsecU+I which is creating a new urban quarter in Cambridge, which will include approximately 5,600 homes, shops, workplaces, education, community and leisure facilities, and open spaces across 48 hectares of brownfield land.

The Ideas Exchange was a mechanism for working with the local community and giving them a meaningful role in shaping development. The 18 members of the panel were chosen based on a demographics criteria and are essentially a microcosm of north Cambridgeshire.

It has enabled the Hartree team to have early and long-term conversations with a group who do not have built-environment experiences or need to voice the perspective of an organisation or stakeholder group. The panels expertise is their lived experience of their local area. The work of the panel has shaped the project vision, landscape design, sustainability strategy, transport and mobility proposals. The group meet seventeen times in 2022, both in person and online, providing meaningful feedback on the proposals throughout the year, while the design is still evolving.

Community Asset Transfer and Localism, Cornwall³⁷ - Direct community management

Community Asset Transfer is an established mechanism used to enable the community ownership and management of publicly owned land and buildings. Cornwall has the highest volume of asset transfers in the country, with over 100 projects being completed, including many land and building

³⁵ Rural Services Network

³⁶ [Community Review Panels: The Ideas Exchange](#)

³⁷ [Lessons From the Past Five Years of Community Asset Transfer](#)

assets, the majority of which have been transferred to Town and Parish Councils. This is in addition to earlier projects which transferred 200+ public toilets and work which has seen over 20 libraries being transferred to communities to run in partnership with Cornwall Council.

Cornwall Council has put an emphasis on culture change, in the context of their localism agenda. There has previously been criticism that their approach has been ‘top down’, passing on responsibilities and liabilities rather than working collaboratively. The Council have worked to improve dialogue and find ‘bottom up’ solutions or place-base asset management. This includes updating their localism strategy in partnership with residents, community organisations and town and parish councils.

LLDC Community Review Panels

The London Legacy Development Corporation (LLDC) wanted to give a voice to local people in the design of proposed developments, public spaces and infrastructure in their area. In January 2023 it launched a new Community Review Panel (CRP).

The Community Review Panel plays an independent, advisory role in LLDC’s planning work, discussing issues including housing, transport, public and green spaces, and the environment. This helps to ensure that new development is of the highest possible design quality, meeting the needs of people living, working, visiting and studying in the area, now and in the future. Panel feedback is also to be sought on draft planning policy and guidance, in addition to the formal consultations that already take place. Members of the panel have a diverse range of experience and local knowledge.

The panel generally meets about once a month, sometimes twice, to discuss development proposals (and sometimes emerging policy and guidance) and give its views. These discussions are turned into a formal report that feeds into planning decisions made by the LLDC. The panel’s comments are taken into consideration as a formal part of the planning decision making process.

The CRP has commented on nine publicly significant schemes to date, ranging from residential buildings to pedestrian and cycle bridges, hotels to industrial workspaces. The panel will continue to support the LLDC to deliver high quality design in the area.



Number Seven Citizen's Supermarket, Birkenhead

In 2022 the affordable food club served a membership of 1,200 households, of whom 700 visit at least once a week, with members saving a collective total of £500,000 on food and other essentials. The project also utilised 30,000kg of food of food waste.

The project is part of a wider network of social supermarkets operating across the Feeding Birkenhead Supporting Wirral programme, acting as prevention service it has helped reduce the need for food banks and other forms of crisis prevention. In its first four years Number Seven created 45 employment and volunteering opportunities and helped eight people move from long-term unemployment into a permanent job.

Community Right to Buy (Scotland)

The Community Right to buy, allows communities across Scotland to apply to register a community interest in land or buildings, giving them first right of refusal should the landowner decide to put the land up for sale. It gives local people, who have identified a need in their community for an area of land or building, to have the first option to buy that asset.

An application to register a community interest in land must show sustainable development benefits for the land and for the community. A successfully registered community interest in land will remain in place for five years. During this period, the owner of the land is prohibited from transferring the land for value. The landowner can develop or lease the land during the five-year period.



Framework for delivery and next steps

The process set out within this document works towards clear advice and guidance on both priorities and process for the delivery of Community Infrastructure on the Hoo Peninsula. This is intended to galvanise closer working between existing partners and to provide guidance for new partners (including developers) as they come to the area.

The Community Panel, Parish Councils and Medway Council have come together to identify eight ways of working which can inform future process, alongside eight priorities for action. These are set out below alongside an outline of the first year of activity.

The overriding principle that sits above these processes and areas for action is that this is a 'pan Hoo Peninsula'. Focusing on the whole place rather than specific places.

Vision: Fun, Happiness, Wellbeing and Local Involvement

The Hoo Peninsula community has developed its own vision which not only reflects what they want to happen, but also the conditions they want to create to work differently, as well as reflecting the love they have of their local area.

Their vision for community infrastructure on the Hoo Peninsula is:

Promote fun, happiness and wellbeing through a better network of community facilities on the Peninsula. Respecting nature and the environment, connect communities and places, improving access to jobs and opportunity. Enable greater local involvement, giving people more of a say in the places that they love.

Process: Eight ways of working

Developing better processes and ways of working, is a key overarching aspiration of the local community. This has led to the identification of the following eight ways of working to better deliver community infrastructure:





Improve existing facilities and services first

Partners should support existing facilities on the Hoo Peninsula, developing and expanding these and only replacing these where this is the only option.

Additional work should be undertaken with the community to identify which existing facilities can be improved and which ones should be prioritised. The community and council should collectively publish a prioritised list for investment each year, this should include natural and heritage assets, services, community capacity, events, programmes and culture as well as specific community spaces.



This approach is in line with the policies of the Neighbourhood Plans and therefore funding for buildings and physical facilities could come from S106 contributions. Additional funding, including for activities, clubs, events and culture, could come from institutional grants and philanthropic business donations.

Don't wait for development to improve community facilities

The process of delivery should not have to wait for new development.

All priority facilities should have a funding and investment strategy which seeks to support their operation and maintenance, regardless of whether there is new development on the Peninsula.

If community infrastructure is to be funded, delivered, operated and programmed through collaborative partnerships between the community Parish Councils, Medway Council and other public, private and community sector providers, opportunities can be explored for community-led operation and maintenance of some facilities: heritage assets, open spaces, clubs and so on.

Once opportunities are identified, it would be possible to explore community capacity to deliver improvements and management in kind, for example through asset transfer or permissive use of private facilities. In time, service charges associated with new development could be allocated to support maintenance.





Better communication between community and developers/council

A new standard should be established for community engagement. This should drive greater consistency in process across all planning applications and processes in all communities on the Peninsula. The justification for housing development and community infrastructure projects should be clearly explained and openly presented.

This should apply to Medway Council as well as to developers.

Open and constructive long-term dialogue would be greatly facilitated by the formal establishment of a permanent Community Advisory Panel (with rotating members) and a clear role for Parish Councils with more information provided to improve understanding of the planning system.³⁸.



Support the community to do more for themselves

There should be more opportunities for all communities to have more control over their facilities, services and events. There should be ongoing investment in building the capacity and skills to support neighbourhood planning across the Hoo Peninsula ensuring that all areas have plans and that these are linked centrally.

The principle of community rights (to buy, operate and shape) should be embedded into the delivery of new facilities, supporting communities to take control through mechanisms such as community asset transfer and stewardship agreements.

³⁸ For example, through Planning Aid England [RTPI | Planning Advice](#)



Make the most of investment which is already committed

Commit to better communication of existing investments across communities in the wider Peninsula. Consider the adoption of a Hoo Community brand which can unite all partners and provide a more holistic view of the investment, making it visible to all members of the community.

Expand the coherence of existing investments by developing a single approach to demonstrating impact and measuring success (see below) as well as developing focused transport strategies to ensure they have the most significant reach possible.

In the immediate future, all investments (some of which are ad-hoc) should become part of a cohesive and integrated plan to maximise synergies and provide clarity to the community. Unspent funding and pending S106 agreements should integrate and optimise coherent community infrastructure delivery.



Ensure that development captures every opportunity to improve the lives of people on the Hoo Peninsula

Development is not only about delivery of housing targets. There should be a clear effort to ensure development (and linked investment in community facilities) contributes to improvement in quality of life on the Hoo Peninsula. There should be a clear analysis of future needs linked to population growth, with thresholds which will enable new facilities to be delivered at the time of need, i.e. without putting current community infrastructure under additional pressure.

The process of developing plans should be linked more closely to the community, with more consistent approaches to working with residents to help them understand the benefits of each proposal.

Developers should demonstrate how their development proposals positively respond to local aspirations, the policies and priorities of the



Neighbourhood Plans and to the needs and priorities outlined in this framework.



Encourage larger employers to support community provision where this works for all

Businesses and developers should be encouraged to play a role in the delivery of services and facilities where this can support their operations and workforce. This should include the testing of the potential for community/business collaboration on the delivery of new bus services.

Existing businesses and developers should be approached to consider opportunities for philanthropic investment in facilities that benefit their own operation and support the community at the same time.

Investments could consider engaging community groups for aspects of operation and maintenance.



Contribute to climate resilience and to the Hoo Peninsula's natural landscape.

The natural environment is a fundamental part of the Hoo Peninsula's identity and community infrastructure.

Any activity must consider ways to increase climate resilience and should support local people in their ambition to play a more significant role in tackling climate and ecological crisis.

Priorities: Eight target investments

The current targets for improvement are set out below. It is recognised that these may change in time and there is a need for an ongoing review of provision and need.





Improved transport between villages and facilities as well as off the Hoo Peninsula

Lack of facilities at some locations on the Peninsula is exacerbated by poor provision of transport. There is a need to invest in new forms of transport to meet the needs of local people wanting to access services, employment or enjoyment.

There is a need to pilot new approaches to community transport, partnerships between local businesses, the Council and the community, as well as better cycling and walking wayfinding. Road capacity to the Peninsula and its facilities needs to be kept under review as the population evolves.



Investing in improving existing facilities and bringing these up to modern standards

The maintenance, renewal and upgrade of existing community infrastructure is prioritised above the delivery of new facilities. Therefore, maintenance and expansion plans should be created for all current facilities.

Consideration needs to be given to the ongoing funding, management and maintenance and where there are opportunities for the community to play a more significant role in facilities use and programming.



Prioritise facilities for young people, giving them a role in deciding what is delivered on the Hoo Peninsula

Undertake more specific mapping of provision for young people and identify gaps in provision, particularly where this impacts upon access to education and employment.

Work with schools and youth services to create a young person's community panel, which can be accessed by young people from across the Hoo Peninsula. Give young people some autonomy (and budget) to activate facilities and programming within their area.





Develop a plan to improve health provision on the Hoo Peninsula

Make the Hoo Peninsula an exemplar for rural health provision in the South East of England, capitalizing upon the new practice of the Integrated Care Board.

Develop a closer working relationship between the community, parish councils and NHS/ICB. Work together with local GPs and community groups to better understand health issues on the Peninsula, developing new approaches to directly tackle these.

Test the feasibility of a new health hub for the Peninsula, working the community to demonstrate what might be possible and when. Use this as a precursor for development more localised approaches to healthcare and prevention using existing community facilities.



Protect and respect heritage and nature and do more to tell people why it is important.

Recognise nature and biodiversity as part of community infrastructure, vital to quality of life and tackling climate crisis. Ensure that developers provide evidence of how they will improve nature and biodiversity on Hoo Peninsula.

Develop a more 'pan-peninsula' approach to nature and wildlife, celebrating (and protecting) the role of Hoo Peninsula as a habitat and carbon sink. Support local people and partners (including developers) to understand and celebrate this function.



Create a hub for sport and leisure at Deangate, and better connect it to the places where people live.

Continue to create a hub for health and wellbeing at Deangate, focussing on delivering more facilities which make it more of a focal point not only for Hoo Peninsula, but also for Medway as a whole. Ensure that facilities are well connected and promoted to all communities on the Peninsula.





Test the potential of a bigger supermarket. If the big companies don't want to come here, make a plan to deliver a community-run facility.

Undertake further dialogue with food stores to establish clear conditions for them to locate on the Peninsula. Ensure that this is included within plans for new housing locally. In the meantime, consider options to deliver a more focused food store offer as a community run business.



Create a plan to link local people to jobs and opportunities.

Access to work is a key concern and challenge for many residents (particularly young people). Work with local employers and those accessible from the local area to understand their needs, building locally specific processes to link people's work.

Continuing momentum: The first year

The short-term aspiration and priority for the community, is enabling greater local involvement, giving people more of a say in the places that they love. To do this there is an aspiration to retain and develop the community panel, creating a mechanism that enables developers, stakeholders and other decision makers to work collaboratively with local people.

- **Formalise Hoo Peninsula Community Panel:** A pan-peninsula group representing the communities for the area, can be a powerful voice to influence development and create a more coherent lobby to engage with developers. This needs to unite the Parish Councils and the Community Panel established for this work with a clear term of reference and plan for resourcing and capacity building. This should be accompanied by a commitment from Medway Council to communicate with the panel and encourage developers to use it as well.
- **Define more clearly how planning can contribute to community infrastructure for the Hoo Peninsula:** In advance of the Local Plan adoption, define interim guidance for how new development can contribute to cohesive and coherent community infrastructure. Neighbourhood Plan



policies can effectively direct contributions towards existing centres and appropriate types of facilities. Peninsula specific trigger points and thresholds could also be considered in the interim.

- **Develop protocols for developer engagement:** Working with the Community Panel and Parish Councils, Medway should develop guidance for how developers engage with the community. This process should test the feasibility of Community Review Panel model where developers pay to engage with the panel and seek support and approval for ideas linked to community infrastructure.
- **Develop Community Charter:** Community Charters are rights-based documents which set out things in a local area which residents have agreed to be fundamental to the present and future health of their community, and related rights and responsibilities. For the Hoo Peninsula, a charter could more formally enshrine the outcomes of this framework, providing the basis for stronger representation from local residents, businesses and community groups.
- **Develop a Hoo Peninsula Community Brand:** A community brand can play a role in uniting partnerships, facilities and assets under a single identity, which celebrates what is great about the Hoo Peninsula. As an early exercise, this can further galvanise community spirit and collective identity.
- **Showcase Key Projects to Drive Involvement - Hoo Community Centre and Former Clubhouse Building at Deangate:** Promote plans for a new community centre in Hoo St Werburgh and for the former clubhouse building at Deangate. Provide opportunities for residents to participate in the design process as well as in the development of plans for the programming of the spaces.
- **Review of Youth Provision:** Undertake a review of provision specific for young people. Understand what is currently available and what younger people want. Consider the potential of developing a Hoo Youth Board to bring people together and indeed, drive the review itself. Identify spaces which could provide 'Youth Café' type facilities where young people could have more ownership and autonomy over their facilities.
- **Focus on Health:** Work with Integrated Care Board and local GPs to establish a clearer baseline for health and wellbeing on the Peninsula, using this to develop a clearer case for the type of health provision which might be needed in the future.



- **Climate and Nature Plan:** Task the Community Panel with the development of a community led plan for nature and environment. Following a similar process to the development of the Community Infrastructure Framework, provide capacity building and engagement to develop a specific plan for ongoing understanding and project development on projects related to nature and climate crisis.

Review and generation of better evidence

This framework aims to ensure that community infrastructure planning, across the Hoo Peninsula, is strategic, integrated with other processes (i.e. not just planning) and understandable to residents.

It cannot be a static process, the framework needs to respond to changes in community need, we will therefore publish an annual community infrastructure action plan. This action plan will be developed with the community, explain the decision-making process and showcase the key investment priorities for the year ahead.

This will require an ongoing collection of evidence using both primary and secondary sources to create a more accurate picture of life on the Hoo Peninsula. In particular, this should focus on the following four themes:

- **Happiness and Wellbeing** – This Community Infrastructure Framework is based around improved happiness and wellbeing and a better quality of life for those on Hoo Peninsula. Improved evidence to provide a barometer of quality of life requires more research. HDRC funding can help to set this baseline and then develop new ideas on both interventions and forms of measurement which can help better define the fundamental measure of success.
- **Local Involvement** – This plan should be the foundation for more local people being involved in the ongoing discussion on community facilities and programming. It is important that there is better tracking of those who engage to provide a baseline for more significant and more representative participation in the future.
- **Nature and Environment** – measuring stocks of natural capital and biodiversity is an increasingly developed area of research. Methodologies such as ENCA (Enhanced Natural Capital Accounting)³⁹ or the Statutory Biodiversity Metric⁴⁰ can be used to advocate for the protection of nature on the Peninsula as well providing better data on the enhancement of

³⁹ [Enabling a Natural Capital Approach \(ENCA\) - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/enabling-a-natural-capital-approach)

⁴⁰ [Calculate biodiversity value with the statutory biodiversity metric - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/calculate-biodiversity-value-with-the-statutory-biodiversity-metric)

ecology and biodiversity to further support improvements to community infrastructure.

- **Young People** – The Hoo Peninsula’s younger population have been identified by all participants as being particularly important beneficiaries of this work. As well as carrying out deeper engagement with young people, it will be important to track their engagement as well as sentiment to inform the evolution of community infrastructure planning.

The process of collecting information, evidence and reflection to support the evolution of community provision can be part of wider approach to participation and engagement. Applying citizen science methodologies can support local people to be employed as researchers, collecting and analysing data, supporting more locally derived consideration of what provision will make the most difference to the Hoo Peninsula.



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