

## **Cuxton Parish Council**

### **Response to Medway Council Local Plan: Development Options**

Cuxton Parish Council has provided a specific response to the consultation document as it applies to Cuxton. Areas have been considered in order of relevance to Cuxton rather than as laid out in the consultation document.

#### General remarks

The lack of any clear strategic plan to manage the growing traffic congestion is of particular concern to Cuxton Parish Council and its residents. The A228 through Cuxton is already over capacity, and it is difficult to see how any further housing developments along the A228 can be considered if there are no proposals to improve the road infrastructure. Plans for managing traffic from the proposed Lower Thames River Crossing, St Andrews and Temple Marsh development and St Peter's village **must** be in place and funded before any decisions on further housing development are considered. Bus lanes and cycle routes should form part of this plan along with a clear map indicating where the riverside public access will link, so that it is not just a piecemeal plan, that is available to residents of new developments, but does not work for the wider community. This work should be the foundation on which the Medway Council plan is built.

In addition there is specific concern about the lack of planned school places and health facilities such as GPs and pharmacies to support any small, medium or large scale housing development along the section of the A228 between Strood and the M20. Without such essential facilities the community cannot function successfully.

### **Vision and Strategic Objectives**

*Medway City? - Gillingham, Rainham, Chatham, Strood.*

If there is an intention to create a Medway City this needs to be more explicit, and the costs and benefits of such an ambition clearly stated.

#### *Effective transport networks*

Cuxton Parish Council feels that this area of the plan fails to address the current and potential road infrastructure problems.

#### *Duty to co-operate*

There seems to have been very limited engagement with Tonbridge and Malling Council regarding the building of St Peter's Village. Opportunities to obtain some financial compensation for villages like Cuxton and Halling do not appear to have been taken. Given the scale of this development we believe there will be an increased flow of traffic from St Peter's Village to the M2 through Cuxton for which we should be compensated.

#### *Development that reduces flooding*

Given the threat from global warming and associated increased risk of flooding, Cuxton Parish Council would oppose any development on the land identified as Cuxton Gate. It forms part of the flood plain that protects Bush Road from flooding and a development of that site would place this area at increased risk. It is for this reason that previous planning applications for this site were refused.

### *Riverside walks*

This is an ambition Cuxton Parish Council would support as it provides areas for walking and cycling along relatively flat terrain. This has obvious benefits for health as well as the potential for reducing car usage. However, there needs to be a plan that identifies gaps in the continuity of riverside walkways and identifies ways of joining sections together to make the walk and cycle ways more appealing and useful.

### *Maintain distinction between towns and villages*

Cuxton Parish Council wants to see the green spaces between Cuxton and Strood and Cuxton and Halling maintained. We do not wish to be absorbed in to an urban sprawl.

## **Delivering Sustainable Development**

### *Options*

- *Maximising potential for urban regeneration: high density*  
It is the view of Cuxton Parish Council that high density development within the urban areas is a useful way of providing affordable accommodation that is attractive to first time buyers and to the elderly wishing to downsize nearer to services and amenities.
- *Suburban expansion - greenfield sites Strood and Rainham*  
Cuxton Parish Council would not support the use of green field sites at this stage.
- *Hoo peninsula focus- includes Lodge Hill*  
If this development is approved there must be preceded by improvement to the capacity of the A228.
- *Urban regeneration and Rural Town*

## **Housing**

The housing need projections seem very large and it is not clear how they are calculated.

The dilemma for Cuxton is that as smaller houses come on to the market they are bought and developed in to larger family homes. This also makes it more difficult for local young people to get on to the housing market. There is also a perceived need for more accommodation suitable for the elderly enabling them to downsize. If there is nowhere for young adults and older people to move into, the process draws to a halt and the developers move in.

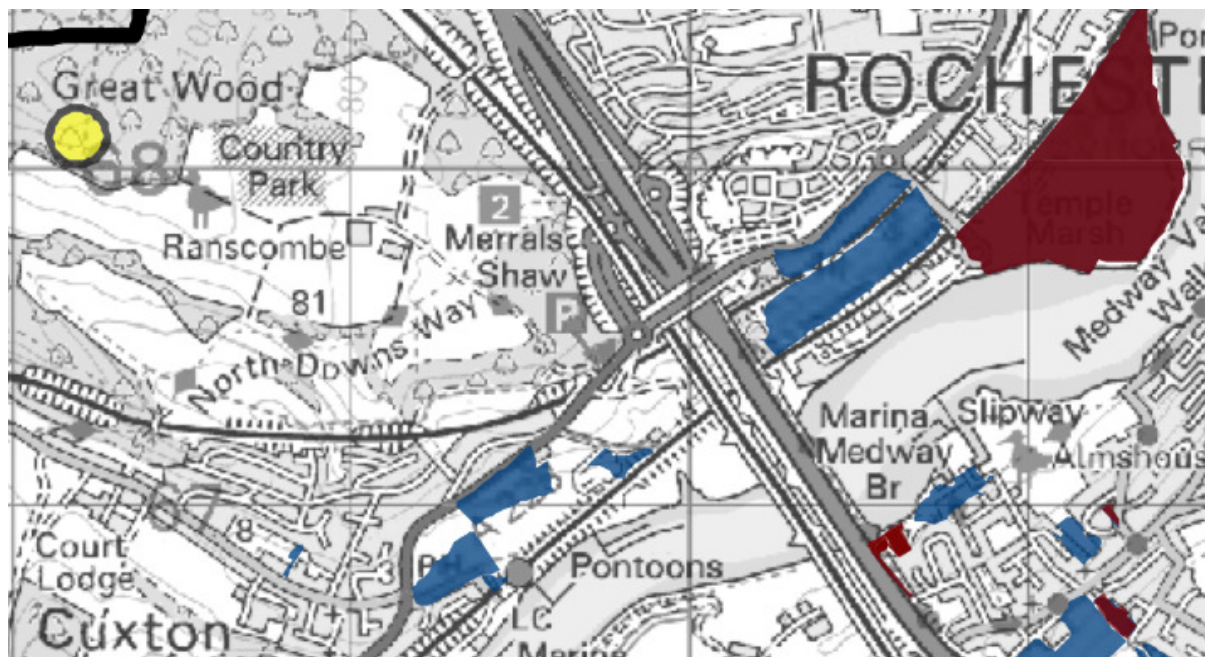
Affordable homes for young and old are not attractive to developers, but are needed if residents who have been born in Cuxton or lived here for many years can stay in the village. Some form of social housing may be the answer. However, Councillors and residents have commented that Housing Association criteria do not seem to favour local people and that this perpetuates the problems for local people looking for homes.

Recent planning applications have illustrated that some residents are applying to build separate homes on their land to accommodate adult children. This may be an answer for some but increases the density of housing in our rural community.

Other residents have proposed Medway Council consider developing a 'Retirement Village' with suitable medical and social support systems that might provide a healthy and secure environment for older people, such as provided by ExtraCare Charitable Trust. The Centenary Garden in Gillingham has also been highlighted as a way of providing the opportunity to downsize for those who wish to do so.

### *Potential Development Sites*

The consultation document identifies three areas for potential housing development within Cuxton. Cuxton Parish Council would like to make the following comments on the area identified.



0782: Cuxton Gate, Station Road, Cuxton

This area forms part of the flood plain protecting Bush Road Cuxton, and so could be considered unsuitable for housing. It also forms part of the border with Strood and previous outline applications for development were rejected because it was essential green space separating Cuxton from Strood.

0676: Cuxton Station, Station Road, Cuxton

This small area does have potential for development and also contains a station house that has historic interest and could be restored. It could be the site for some small development of affordable smaller homes/flats. The land assessment states that the land 'has poor access to public transport' yet is adjacent to Cuxton station, and so could be said to have excellent access to public transport.

*1068: South of Sundridge Hill, Cuxton*

This area is adjacent to A228, and given the high volume of traffic on A228 at peak times, it is difficult to see how residents exiting any development here will be able to turn right during

peak hours. The proposal for a mini roundabout here seems unrealistic as such a proposal was dismissed for the Bush Road / A228 junction.

*1015: Off Sundridge Hill*

This location does not appear to be an attractive area to be developed for housing. It also has the same challenges for access to the A228 as the site 1068.

*0722: 90-94, Bush Road*

Cuxton Parish Council does not consider this a suitable site for development.

*0705: Pit 2, Roman Road, Strood and 0686: Digger Land, Roman Way, Strood*

Cuxton Parish Council consider that these two sites should not be considered for development until the traffic congestion issues on the A228 are addressed. The impact of the current Temple Marsh development on the already congested A228 is unknown. To consider two more large developments totalling a potential 309 houses in this location would seem unwise.

Of concern to Cuxton Parish Council and residents is that we already have over 80 children from Medway Gate and the Earl Estate attending Cuxton Academy of Schools. Additional children travelling from any new development in Strood to school in Cuxton would further impact on the severe traffic congestion that residents currently experience in Bush Road, during school start and finish time.

## **Infrastructure**

Cuxton Parish Council would support a blanket ban on any development along the A228 until such time as a strategic plan has been developed that addresses the problem of over capacity of the A228 between M20 and M2, and rising school and health care needs. Any plan will also need to include the impact of the Lower Thames Crossing.

### Developer Contributions p92

In the past Cuxton residents have seen no benefit from housing developments at Medway Gate and more recently, the waterfront development at Temple Marsh, Strood.

The Developers Contribution from St Andrews Place for traffic lights at the Bush Road/A228 junction may be insufficient to cover the costs. Therefore, it is highly important to Cuxton Parish Council that if any of the proposed development sites that impact on Cuxton and the A228 are agreed, Medway Council ensure that Section 106 agreements are in place so that Cuxton residents are in some way compensated.

There are some significant needs in Cuxton that require funding, and which Cuxton Parish Council needs Medway Council to include in future S106 agreements.

1. Funding a village hall; Cuxton has no village/community hall.
2. Funding for development of the recreation ground (MUGA & parking)
3. Funding to support Riverside walk along diverted RS 206
4. Funding for school bus from Medway Gate and Earl Estate to Cuxton School.

## **Sustainable Transport**

Comments relating to transport plan, strategic road network and connectivity issues are included in the general comments at the beginning of this response.

Residents have expressed concern regarding the impact of the proposed Lower Thames Crossing, Option C on traffic using the A228 through Cuxton. Some have suggested continuing the new crossing to the north of Cuxton (avoiding Cobham), and joining the A228 at the roundabout close to Peters Bridge between Halling and Snodland. This would pass through highly sensitive green, but largely publicly owned land, which would prove unpopular with some. However, it would provide a quicker and less polluting route to the M20 than doing nothing to relieve the inevitable increased congestion on the A228.

### Cuxton Riverside Footpath

This item has been on the agenda of Cuxton Parish Council and Cuxton Countryside Group for a number of years now and appeared to be progressing with the application for the diversion of footpath RS206.

In 2012, a public path diversion order was made to transfer the footpath from the southern, riverside of the railway to the northern side. This did not progress, for some unknown reason connected with Network Rail. Port Medway Marina are keen to see this diversion take place, as it will increase the security of their site.

Port Medway Marina are also keen to see a combined foot/cycle path established on their land and have submitted a planning application for an easement from the railway underpass to the M2/CTRL bridge, under the registration MC/12/0468. There are security-fencing financial issues to be dealt with, together with legal fees in developing the path.

Sustrans, the national cycle association, have expressed strong interest in helping with the development of a combined foot/cycle path from Cuxton station into Strood, via the riverside.

Cuxton Parish Council has been involved with the Medway Community Rail Partnership in developing the use of the railway and has established a good contact within Network Rail, who are actively checking the reasons for the non-advancement of the diversion. This partnership is very active and will prove beneficial to our cause.

2017 now appears to be a good year to drive the development of the riverside path forward.

The proposed footpath will, at present, stop at the junction of Port Medway Marina land and the Leisure Centre, underneath the M2/CRTL Bridge. The owners of the Leisure Centre land are not keen to allow a footpath linkage, however, the fact those involved in establishing a path link from Cuxton all the way through to Strood, might encourage them to change their mind.

## **Natural Environment and Green Belt**

### Green belt

Maintaining the Green Belt is important to Cuxton Parish Council and its residents

### Flood risk

It is important to note that the flood risk to Cuxton will be increased by any housing development approved for 0782: Cuxton Gate, Station Road, Cuxton.

## **Built Environment**

Both residents and Cuxton Parish Council would like to see a diversity of dwellings. There should be more conversion of redundant shops and offices in the town centres to residential accommodation. High rise development in the urban areas should include provision of health and social care facilities, as well as accessible dwellings with adequate lifts and security features that would attract elderly residents and those living alone. There should also be sufficient car parking space for residents and their visitors.

Developers should be encouraged to provide more bungalows with interior accommodation suitable for the elderly and disabled. There should be more affordable housing with selection criteria weighted in favour of local people.

Some have suggested planning restrictions should be imposed on loft conversion on bungalows to be prohibited their development in to family homes and retain the current stock of small bungalows.

## **Conclusion**

Cuxton Parish Council and residents consider overwhelmingly that all infrastructure must be in place before any development starts and that developer contributions for infrastructure must be paid over in advance of the start of any development to enable this to happen. This should extend to developments outside Medway that will impact on the A228. Infrastructure includes highways; education; medical facilities, public transport. The money should be spent within the village or area affected and not elsewhere in Medway.

There should be a real diversity of housing, with more affordable homes.

Building should be on brownfield sites wherever possible.

Villages must be separated from towns and other villages by green spaces.

The Metropolitan Green Belt must be protected.

Roxana Brammer  
Parish Clerk,  
On behalf of Cuxton Parish Council