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31 October 2023

TAR002/AO

Dear Policy Team,

**RE: MEDWAY LOCAL PLAN: Regulation 18 Consultation –  
Setting the Direction for Medway 2040**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the emerging Medway Local Plan. The following representations are submitted on behalf of Tarmac Trading Ltd.

**Preamble**

- 1.1 Tarmac supports the Council's endeavour in preparing a new Local Plan for Medway and welcome the additional Regulation 18 consultation now being undertaken. Medway has been a confident and ambitious authority, recognising that growth brings opportunities and that a positive approach to spatial planning allows infrastructure to be planned to effectively support development.
- 1.2 Tarmac, working with Aggregate Industries, are promoting strategic residential-led mixed use development at the site of the permitted Medway Cement Works, Holborough. Part of the site sits within Medway and offers the prospect of either stand-alone development (identified by the Council as Site ID CHR4), or forming part of a larger cross-boundary development. Tarmac, as lead-promoter, has engaged both Medway and Tonbridge and Malling Councils and is actively promoting the opportunity through both emerging local plans.
- 1.3 The Medway Cement Works was granted planning permission on appeal in 2001 and has been implemented,

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meaning that the planning permission remains extant. This alternative development scenario comprising residential-led mixed-use development offers the prospect of up to 1,000 homes together with supporting facilities including schooling and a mixed-use community hub. The wider opportunity, encompassing land within Tonbridge and Malling, offers the opportunity to deliver up to around 4,000 new homes allied to further educational facilities, services and local employment. Both schemes incorporate extensive green space areas.

- 1.5 Our representations follow the structure of the Local Plan consultation document, with specific paragraphs cited where relevant.

## Context

- 1.6 We support the Council's recognition in **paragraphs 2.1 and 2.3** that Medway is a diverse authority, in its population, geography and economy. For that reason, the Local Plan will need to respond positively to housing and infrastructure need across the whole authority area. Whilst the Spatial Strategy categories provide a typology of opportunity sites, it is inevitable that a mix of sites will be needed across the authority area if all communities are to be supported.
- 1.7 We support the Council's ambition to reduce car dependency expressed in **paragraph 2.6**. As is recognised in the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework', September 2023) at paragraph 73, large-scale development offers particular opportunities to reduce the demand for travel by providing services and facilities within the development itself. Proximity to existing or potential public transport is also imperative, including opportunities to access local and regional rail services.
- 1.8 Housing need is a critical issue for the Local Plan, and the Council's recognition at **paragraph 2.7** that this encompasses not only the overall quantum of homes needed, but their quality, choice and mix meeting all community needs are important. Medway's diverse geography underpins the requirement to assess need across all communities in Medway.
- 1.9 We note the Council's position, expressed in **paragraph 2.10** following the loss of HIF monies to support strategic development at Hoo St Werburgh. Whilst the Council will look at alternative means of securing investment, we note that there are risks in relying on the delivery of infrastructure in the absence about its funding and deliverability.

## Vision for Medway

- 1.10 We support the Vision for Medway set out in section 3 of the consultation document. We note the Council's desire to ensure that a positive legacy will be left by mineral supply development in Medway and consider that historic minerals sites offer opportunities for development or for supporting development through complementary leisure, recreation, open space or ecological roles.

## Strategic Objectives

- 1.11 The Strategic Objectives identified by the Council are supported. As we note above, large scale development is able to ensure the co-location of new homes and services such as to reduce the need to travel, supporting the objectives for **a sustainable and green future**. Larger developments also offer increased diversity in the size, type and tenure of new homes, including the delivery of specialist housing. Well-planned strategic development is also better able to deliver local services to support residents, including green infrastructure, thereby **supporting healthy lives and strengthening communities**. We note that in relation to **securing jobs and developing skills for a competitive economy** no reference is made neighbourhood employment opportunities, including the provision of small-scale flexible office accommodation. With radically different working patterns, the role of community hubs is increasingly important. Finally, we support the desire for **quality and resilient development**, recognising that the timely delivery of infrastructure is easiest achieved where simple land control structures exist and where long-term interests exist.

## Delivering a Spatial Strategy

- 1.12 We welcome at **paragraph 5.4** the recognition that a housing crisis exists, and that housing need must lead to the “right homes in the right places”. The Council is right to plan on the basis of existing government policy for assessing need. Medway Council has consistently embraced growth, recognising that opportunity and prosperity for its residents is achieved through growth. It is imperative that the Council does not deviate from that approach since doing so would be to the detriment of those who live and work in Medway or who might choose to live or work there given the opportunity.
- 1.13 We note the Council’s reference at **paragraph 5.6** to the preparation of new evidence to support the Plan. It is important, however, that such evidence is prepared in a way which is robust and reasonable. For example, where specific sites are being proposed, their boundaries should be used to assess suitability, rather than broad-brush analyses taking in wider landholdings or larger tracts of land. This is particularly important in relation to policy designations, landscape or Green Belt matters where the granularity of the assessment can make a significant difference to assessment outcomes.
- 1.14 The Council sets out in **paragraph 5.10** that the impacts of development on the environment must be subject to further consideration with particular regard to designated habitats and landscapes. We support the Council’s approach, and in particular note that the Council recognises that mitigation can be an appropriate way of dealing with impacts. Development can also facilitate enhancements which would otherwise not be achieved, including through management, enhancement or establishing new habitats.
- 1.15 We support the Council’s approach in **paragraph 5.12** which provides flexibility to deal with delayed or under-delivery of identified housing supply sites. It is of course

important that rigorous assessment of the deliverability of sites is made prior to their allocation, where factors such as viability, need for and deliverability of infrastructure, and complexity of land control should all be assessed.

- 1.16 We note the Council's explanation at **paragraph 5.14** of the Land Availability Assessment and note that the relevant part of the Medway Works site (Council reference CHR4) has been taken forward to the Stage 2 assessment. We support that decision, and recommend that in assessing the site, a finer grain analysis is undertaken than has been the case in earlier evidence base documents (for example, the site occupies a small proportion of the Parcel used to assess Green Belt impacts in the 2018 Stage 1 Assessment).
- 1.17 The Council has at **paragraph 5.16** sought to identify categories of locations to be considered in the consultation. Sites forming part of the prospective housing land supply are identified under those categories. Whilst three of the categories are clearly spatial in their definition, the 'Green Belt loss' category is a policy typology, not a spatial typology. We think that the overall categorisation conflates two factors, and that sites with the Green Belt should also be considered in terms of their spatial characteristics. For example, the Medway Works site is subject to Green Belt policy, but might also be considered a rural development opportunity. This duality is critical in considering the Council's own ambitions to respond positively to the diversity expressed at paragraph 2.1, in the Vision, and the Strategic Objectives. We comment further on the four typologies as follows.
- 1.18 **Urban regeneration** sites are rightly described by the Council as important opportunities to make use of previously developed land and offer distinctive characteristics including strong heritage and placemaking dimensions. The Council rightly notes at **paragraph 5.18** and again at **paragraph 5.26** the complexity of the sites and the work needed to deliver them. Viability and deliverability are key factors which should be used to both identify and phase development over the plan period. Reliance on early delivery should be avoided in the Local Plan housing delivery trajectory. We note that **paragraph 5.28** references the need to relocate existing businesses should redevelopment of the Chatham Docks and Medway City Estate be envisaged. Any assessment of suitability of those sites should consider the economic, social and environmental implications of relocation, including the extent to which new employment locations may be less sustainably located or may even be beyond the authority boundary, and therefore represent a loss of employment.
- 1.19 **Suburban extension** sites tend to be located to the east of Medway, and do not therefore, as an individual typology, support needs across Medway. As the Council notes at **paragraph 5.29**, there are local constraints, include sites which form a green lung for existing communities and local highway conditions. Whilst the Council also identifies advantages, such as at **paragraph 5.30** where the ability to deliver development quickly is noted, that characteristic is not unique to this option but instead relates to the characteristics of 'greenfield sites'. Similarly, the advantage of

scale noted at **paragraph 5.31** would apply to any development of scale, assuming that viability and land ownership allowed the effective coordination and delivery of social and other infrastructure. We note concerns expressed at **paragraph 5.34** that existing local services may not offer sufficient capacity to serve development – this is a particular problem where a number of relatively smaller developments piggy-back on existing infrastructure but do not, in themselves, trigger new or improved infrastructure in their locality. Developing at scale avoids that issue.

- 1.20 **Rural development** sites are located predominantly at the Hoo Peninsula. In our view, the Medway Works site can also be categorised under this typology. As with the other spatial options, the relatively narrow geographic spread of sites means that needs across Medway would not be met by this typology.
- 1.21 The Hoo Peninsula is a recognised opportunity which the Council has worked hard to realise. The loss of HIF programme funding does however give rise to uncertainty about deliverability, given the need for infrastructure investment to support and facilitate development and to engender sustainable travel choices (a specific point of concern raised at **paragraph 5.45**). There is also a complex land control situation (acknowledged at **paragraph 5.43**), with inherent risk to coordination, collaboration and delivery of sites and the infrastructure necessary to serve the community. Caution is therefore required over both the certainty and timing of new development.
- 1.22 **Green Belt** sites are a policy typology, although the geographic extent of the Green Belt means that sites are located towards the west of the authority area. The Medway Works site adjoins the Tonbridge and Malling administrative area, with the opportunity for significant cross-boundary development noted by the Council. The Council is already engaged in cross-boundary discussions and so we do not consider this to be an impediment in itself.
- 1.23 The Council draws the distinction at paragraph 5.47 between the policy designation of Green Belt land and the site characteristics of greenfield land. This is an important distinction. A further distinction is also required for particular sites: those which do not fall within the definition of previously developed land as set out in the NPPF Glossary, but which nonetheless have been subject to disturbance through, for example, minerals working -the benefits of bringing back into use degraded or derelict land are identified in paragraph 120 of the Framework. This is relevant to the Medway Works site, but we further consider that the extant planning permission for the cement work is also a relevant consideration.
- 1.24 The Framework is clear on the approach to be taken by planning authorities in respect of Green Belt land. For plan making, exceptional circumstances must apply before boundaries can be altered, with a need to examine reasonable options for meeting identified need, and to be informed by cross-boundary discussions. The Framework recognises at paragraph 142 that promoting sustainable patterns of development should be taken into account in reviewing boundaries. The Framework continues in that paragraph that where it is necessary to release Green Belt land, “plans should

give first consideration to previously developed land and/or is well served by public transport". Compensatory improvements can be taken into account in assessing the appropriateness of Green Belt releases. Given the scale of growth which Medway must accommodate, a Green Belt Review is necessary and must be prepared to inform the next stage of plan making.

1.25 We note that Medway's last Green Belt Review was undertaken in December 2018. It is out of date in terms of the policy context in which it was prepared (Planning Practice Guidance has been since been updated in relation to visual openness) and circumstances have now fundamentally changed in terms of housing need. A full Green Belt Review is therefore necessary.

1.26 In undertaking that review, we would urge the Council to review its previous methodology to improve the robustness of the assessment. Specifically:

- findings in the assessment should explicitly and in detail cross-refer to the pro-forma templates used to assess parcels;
- greater use should be made of Medway's Landscape Character Assessment noting, however, the distinction that the assessment of Green Belt is not an assessment of landscape quality;
- the relevance of cited planning decisions should be described and justified, with regard to the issues arising rather than the number of relevant decisions; and
- finer grain parcel definitions should be used – extensive parcels which include highly variable geography and features are not appropriate. Given the Council's understanding of potential development sites, more detailed site-specific analysis can and should be undertaken.

1.27 An assessment of the impact of the release of the site from the Green Belt has been undertaken by David Jarvis Associates on behalf of Tarmac, using a consistent method of assessment utilising the pro-forma used by the Medway Green Belt Appraisal of 2018. The assessment concluded that the Medway only site:

- Makes a **moderate** contribution to Green Belt Purpose 1 (to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas).
- Makes a **moderate-low** contribution to Green Belt Purpose 2 (to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another).
- Makes a **moderate** contribution to Green Belt Purpose 3 (to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment).

1.28 In the context of development of the larger cross-boundary site, the Medway parcel:

- Makes a **moderate** contribution to Green Belt Purpose 1 (to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas).
- Makes a **moderate-low** contribution to Green Belt Purpose 2 (to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another).
- Makes a **moderate** contribution to Green Belt Purpose 3 (to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment).

1.29 The analysis concluded that:

- Overall Contribution: Moderate - Low. The contribution is not significant.
- Purposes: Out of ten criteria, the Site makes a 'High' score against just one, for Purpose 3; a 'Moderate' score against one criteria for Purposes 2 and 3; a 'Moderate - Low' score against one criteria for Purpose 1, and scores 'Low' against the remaining six criteria spread across the three Purposes. This informs the reasoning for shifting the balance of the overall contribution to Moderate-Low.
- Aims: If the promoted Site is to be inset, the remaining land parcel 5 within the Green Belt will still be able to perform its wider function of remaining permanently open. Neither the main towns or large settlement areas within Medway or cross-border with Snodland in Tonbridge and Malling will merge.
- Permanent Boundaries: The disused quarries around the northern boundary of the Site provide a permanent, recognisable landscape feature along which to re-draw Green Belt boundaries, and to tie in with existing field boundary boundaries. The field boundaries can be reinforced in a manner that is consistent with recommended landscape character assessments.

1.30 The assessment indicates that by considering only the site rather than the extensive parcel in which it sits, a materially lesser impact on the Green Belt occurs.

1.31 The opportunity at the Medway Works is significant and unprecedented. The site, alone or in-combination with the larger cross-boundary opportunity incorporates a number of benefits identified in other spatial typologies, without the issues that many of those options also exhibit. In particular:

1. The site is under coordinated land control comprising two owners who have entered into a collaboration agreement. Although not a developer, Tarmac has experience of promoting and securing proposals for the after-use of minerals sites for mixed use and residential-led development. Both landowners have an ability to understand long-term objectives in development, restoration and environmental management terms. This offers certainty for the ability to coordinate and deliver development without delay.
2. The site comprises land already subject to planning permission and for which infrastructure has already been implemented. A strategic access already exists serving the site from the A228 at Peter's Bridge. That highways access has capacity to serve the site immediately. Secondary highway access(es) are achievable on land within freehold control.
3. The Peter's Bridge roundabout offers a unique opportunity to provide grade-separated priority access for cyclists and pedestrians, and potentially public transport, which can link to Snodland railway station. Snodland benefits from High-Speed 1 rail services, demand for which will increase with new development – benefitting existing and new users. Access to Halling station will also be possible using existing bridges across the A228 and Medway Valley railway. The site offers demonstrable public transport connectivity ensuring that both local



journeys to the Medway Towns, as well as strategic journeys beyond, can be undertaken using sustainable modes.

4. The scale of development means that the benefits of larger sites can be achieved, with capacity for schools, community services and commercial uses within the development, but also, crucially, sufficient critical mass of population to ensure their viability and sustainability. New facilities can relieve pressures on existing facilities, including local schools, whilst conversely an increased local population can beneficially support existing facilities such as community or social uses.
5. The scale of development also ensures a significant contribution to meeting housing need in Medway, delivering a mix of housing types, sizes and tenures, including opportunities for specialist housing provision. Given the scale of the challenge in meeting Medway's housing need and addressing the acknowledged housing crisis, this is a substantive factor in assessing whether Green Belt release is justified.
6. There are significant opportunities for greenspace and ecological enhancement which offer benefits to new and existing residents. We are confident that Biodiversity Net Gain is achievable and deliverable. The wider scheme offers strategic open space offering a new country park to serve the wider area, and able to relieve recreational pressures on sensitive designated habitats and landscapes.
7. The majority of the stand-alone Medway opportunity, although within the cement work permission boundary, is undeveloped and therefore capable of quick delivery without the need for remediation or ground works. Those parts of the site which have previously been worked, such as at Lees Pit, offer the opportunity for new recreational land uses with enhanced ecological management, providing important recreational resources which can relieve pressure on other areas which may be subject to recreational pressures.
8. The wider site is subject to restoration to open water. The alternative mixed-use development would make better use of land, help to meet housing need, and would deliver enhanced and accessible greenspace serving new and existing residents. There is a compelling case that the alternative development scenario provides a better outcome in the context of the current housing crisis.

1.32 In the context of the above, it is our view that the opportunity at the Medway Works site is able to perform a unique role in addressing need in Medway and shares the advantages of other spatial options, without the disbenefits which the Council themselves identify for those options. The site also performs a role in meeting housing need and addressing community needs in parts of Medway that the other spatial options cannot. The site must be subject to detailed consideration as part of the next stage of evidence base preparation. In particular, the required Green Belt Review must be undertaken at an appropriate scale of analysis. Tarmac is committed to supporting the Council in that endeavour and are preparing detailed evidence in relation to transport, landscape, ecology and housing market which can be shared with the Council and its neighbours in due course.



Yours faithfully,



ARWEL OWEN  
PARTNER

Email: 

cc: Tarmac Trading Ltd  
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