

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING and TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD

14 June 2007

**Report of the Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure
and the Cabinet Member for Planning and Transportation**

Part 1- Public

**Matters for Recommendation to Cabinet - Non-Key Decision (Decision may be taken
by the Cabinet Member)**

1 MEDWAY ESTUARY AND SWALE SHORELINE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Summary

This report advises members of the development of policies affecting the management of flood defences along the banks of the tidal Medway in this borough and details the arrangements for the current public consultation.

1.1 Introduction to Shoreline Management Plans

1.1.1 A Shoreline Management Plan (SMP) is a high-level, non-statutory, policy document planning the future management of the coastline and coastal defences over the very long term. It promotes management policies into the 22nd century that achieve long-term objectives without committing future generations to unsustainable practices.

1.1.2 The South East Coastal Group, consisting of the maritime local authorities and county councils of Kent & East Sussex, the Environment Agency, English Nature, Network Rail and Dover Port, have been developing two Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) that cover the shorelines and estuaries of North and East Kent:

1.1.3 Of these two plans, the Medway Estuary and Swale SMP is the one of interest to this borough as it covers the future management of the tidal Medway river defences in Snodland, Larkfield, Aylesford, Burham and Wouldham as far as Allington Lock in Maidstone Borough.

1.1.4 The stated objectives of the SMP are:

- to define, in general terms, the risks to people and the developed, natural and historic environment within the SMP area over the next century;
- to identify the preferred policies for managing those risks;
- to identify the consequences of implementing the preferred policies;

- to set out procedures for monitoring the effectiveness of the SMP policies;
- to inform planners, developers and others of the risks identified within the SMP and preferred SMP policies when considering future land use change and development of the shoreline;
- to comply with international and national nature conservation legislation and biodiversity obligations; and,
- to highlight areas where knowledge gaps exist.

1.2 The need for a Shoreline Management Plan

- 1.2.1 The coastline and estuary are undergoing constant change from the natural processes of waves, tides and winds. The amount of change depends on the driving forces, such as storms and sea level rise, and constraints imposed by geology and degree of human intervention.
- 1.2.2 Whilst these changes continue, social, economic and environmental pressures are increasing in coastal areas. Development on the coast and within estuaries drives a need for protection against coastal flooding and erosion. Building coastal defences is increasingly expensive and places stress on coastal recreation features and natural habitats that are often nationally or internationally important.

1.3 Climate Change and Sea Level Rise

- 1.3.1 Much of the present shoreline of the English Channel has been shaped by sea level rise following the last ice age. Approximately c.10,000 years ago flooding of the English Channel started as sea levels rose. At that time the channel was only a river but, within 2000 years, the entire English Channel had become a sea. For the last 8000 years sea level rise has continued, but at a much slower pace. However, recent studies show that sea level rise is now more rapidly increasing again due to climate change. This could result in significant changes to the coast, such as:

- Greater frequency of storms
- Increased wave heights
- Increased erosion
- Increasing rainfall
- Increasing fluvial flows

- 1.3.2 Increasing sea levels mean that coastal and river defences have to be larger, costing more money to maintain and making the consequence of a failure of defences more catastrophic to the people and places they protect. The coastline

is changing and it will not stay as it is. If we continue to defend into the future as we have done in the past, the result may be:

- Hard defended areas becoming headlands;
- Loss of intertidal areas and beaches in front of defences;
- Increased stress on the shoreline, where beaches are lost and the coastline is more exposed to storms;
- Increased flooding and erosion hazards; and,
- The need for more substantial and even more expensive defences.

1.3.3 The SMP aims to provide a plan for addressing these changes in the best way possible for all interests. It will identify how the coastline could be best managed over time in order to prevent the loss of beaches and river banks and to best protect the people and other assets in coastal and riverside communities.

1.4 Development of the SMP

1.4.1 Development of the SMP has been led by a Client Steering Group comprising relevant members of the South East Coastal Group, technical officers and representatives from Local Authorities, the Environment Agency, Natural England and English Heritage. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council were able to join the Client Steering Group in the latter stages of the plan development.

1.4.2 SMP development has also been assisted by regular involvement of members representing each of the operating authorities (the councils and the Environment Agency), through an Elected Members Forum (EMF). This group comprises elected members from each of the councils, including this Council's Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation, as well as a representative from the Regional Flood Defence Committee. The EMF members have attended meetings with a remit to 'inform and comment on' the developing stages of the SMP thereby already providing some degree of input into policy development by those organisations which will ultimately be adopting the policies. The EMF has met at key stages, providing a review and informal approval of development and outputs.

1.4.3 The SMP process has also involved approximately 60 stakeholder organisations at key decision points, through the formation of a Key Stakeholder Forum (KSF). Meetings of the KSF have been held to help identify and understand the issues, to review the objectives and set direction for appropriate management scenarios.

1.4.4 The SMP has been subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment but not a full Sustainability Appraisal. Information on the Appropriate Assessment will not feature until the Plan is finalised and this assessment is complete.

1.5 Shoreline Management Policies

1.5.1 The Plan will set the policy for managing the coast. There are four main policies available:

- **Hold the Line (HTL)** – Maintain the existing defence line
- **Advance the Line (ATL)** – Build new defences seaward of the existing defence line
- **Managed Realignment (MR)** – Allow the shoreline to change with management to control or limit movement
- **No Active Intervention (NAI)** – A decision not to invest in providing or maintaining defences.

1.5.2 The coastline of the SMP has been broken up into geographical areas, called 'Policy Units,' based on assessments of coastal processes and socio-economic issues. Four policy units cover the extent of both banks of the tidal Medway within this borough:

- E4 08 North Halling to Snodland
- E4 09 Snodland to Allington Lock
- E4 10 Allington Lock to North Wouldham
- E4 11 Wouldham Marshes

1.5.3 The plan works over three different time periods 0-20 years, 20-50 years and 50-100 years and assesses the best policies for each unit for each time period. The Plan makes sure that the policies are coordinated and complementary over the whole coastline to avoid negative effects (increased erosion and flooding affecting people, property and the coastal environment) and maximise the beneficial affects (better beaches, better habitats, flood and coastal protection) of coastal management.

1.5.4 In summary, the proposed policies for each of the TMBC units are set out in the table on the next page.

Policy Unit	0- 20 years	20-50 years	50-100 years
E4 08 North Halling to Snodland	MR with localised HTL	MR with localised HTL	MR with localised HTL
E4 09 Snodland to Allington Lock	HTL	MR with localised HTL	MR with localised HTL
E4 10 Allington Lock to North Wouldham	HTL	MR with localised HTL	MR with localised HTL
E4 11 Wouldham Marshes	MR	MR	MR

MR = Managed realignment

HTL = Hold the Line

1.6 Implementation

- 1.6.1 No clear implementation strategy is identified and there is uncertainty over the deliverability of the policies. The report states: '*...whilst selection of the preferred plan has considered the affordability of each policy, its adoption by the authorities involved does not represent a commitment to fund its implementation. Ultimately, the economic worth of policy implementation must be considered in the context of budgetary constraints (whether private or government funding), and it cannot be guaranteed that budgets will be available for all policies*' (1.1.1. 'Guiding Principles', p.2).

1.7 Implications for Tonbridge and Malling

- 1.7.1 The policies identified in the Plan for the stretch of the Medway running through the Borough do not appear to conflict with the spatial strategy identified in the Council's emerging Local Development Framework. However, the policies of 'Managed Realignment' could potentially result in the loss of agricultural land (low grade) and the re-routing of footpaths.
- 1.7.2 The SMP recommends that local development planning needs to consider the risks identified in the SMP and avoid approving development in areas at risk of flooding and erosion. This is in line with PPS25 and the Council's Core Strategy.

1.8 Public Consultation

- 1.8.1 The consultation period for the SMP started on the 21st May and will close on the 7th September. Consultation documents are available to view or download on the South East Coastal Group website www.se-coastalgroup.org.uk and hard copies of the full SMP are on deposit at the offices of the Environment Agency, Kent County Council, Swale, Medway and Tonbridge & Malling Councils. Links are being provided from District Council websites to the above. In addition, local councils have been provided with a limited number of CDs for distribution to libraries, parish councils etc. Publicity is via Environment Agency press releases, letters to stakeholders, poster and leaflet distribution.
- 1.8.2 Plans of the policy units will be available for members to view at the meeting and there will be leaflets to take away.

1.9 Legal Implications

- 1.9.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

1.10 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

- 1.10.1 There are none directly arising from this report.

1.11 Risk Assessment

- 1.11.1 The implementation of the proposed policies could potentially result in the loss of agricultural land, although it must be stressed that this would be of low grade. Some footpaths running along the River Medway may need to be re-routed if the policies are implemented.

1.12 Recommendations

- 1.12.1 The Council **ENDORSES** the Medway Estuary and Swale Shoreline Management Plan.
- 1.12.2 The SMP forms part of the evidence base for the formulation of the 'Management of Development and the Environment ' Development Plan Document' to be prepared as part of the Borough Council's Local Development Framework and for future reviews of the Core Strategy.

The Director of Planning, Transport and Leisure confirms that the proposals contained in the recommendation(s), if approved, will fall within the Council's Budget and Policy Framework.

Background papers:

contact: Steve Medlock
Nigel DeWit

Medway Estuary and Swale Shoreline Management
Plan 2007

Steve Humphrey
Director of Planning, Transport & Leisure

Matthew Balfour
Cabinet Member for Planning & Transportation