

New Towns Taskforce  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

*please reply to:*

70 Dynevor Road  
Stoke Newington  
London  
N16 0DX

[NewTownsEvidence@communities.gov.uk](mailto:NewTownsEvidence@communities.gov.uk)

[roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk)

2024-12-13

Dear MHCLG,

## **New Towns Taskforce call for evidence to explore opportunities for large developments**

Railfuture is Britain's leading and longest-established independent national voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passengers, and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities. We seek to influence decision makers at national, regional and local levels to implement pro-rail policies in development and transport planning.

### **1. Please give information describing the location including (where known):**

#### a. Working contact name, job title, and contact details of submission author.

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS - Vice-Chair, London & South East regional branch and Director for Infrastructure & Networks, national Board, Railfuture.  
[roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk)

#### b. Name of organisation this submission is from and its type (e.g. combined authority / local authority / property developer / landowner).

Railfuture Ltd, a not for profit Company Limited by Guarantee registered in England & Wales No. 05011634.

#### c. Location details, including (if possible) postcode and National Grid coordinates of the location: [Ordnance survey guidance on National Grid coordinates.](#)

Ringmer / Broyle Side, Lewes, East Sussex, BN8 5

#### d. Details of local authority / ties in this location (indicating whether the development crosses local authority boundaries) and the level of formal or informal local support for this development, if known.

Lewes District Council, outside adjacent South Downs National Park Authority area. No formal support as new Lewes Local Plan still in development, informal local support through off-the-record one-to-one conversations with elected representatives who should remain anonymous who see the logic of growth agglomeration to support vital infrastructure yet acknowledge the scale of local resistance (mostly from the already comfortably-housed).

[www.railfuture.org.uk](http://www.railfuture.org.uk) [www.railfuturescotland.org.uk](http://www.railfuturescotland.org.uk) [www.railfuturewales.org.uk](http://www.railfuturewales.org.uk)  
[www.railwatch.org.uk](http://www.railwatch.org.uk)

e. Details of the land ownership and development promotion arrangements.

Not known.

f. Stage of planning process (if commenced) and stage of master-planning process (if commenced).

First of two-phase next Regulation 18 consultation to start w/c 6 January 2025, item 38 in <https://democracy.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=417&MId=4025&Ver=4>

g. Potential start date (if known).

Not known.

## **2. How does this location meet the Taskforce's research remit as set out in Section A?**

If known, your answer could include:

a. Proposed number of homes and jobs, including opportunities for expansion / densification.

Bearing in mind adjacent Brighton & Hove's physical inability to meet its long-term housing needs through its location sandwiched between the South Downs and the English Channel (current City Plan 2041 consultation <https://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/planning/city-plan-2041>), and the desirability both of minimising pressure on other parts of an essentially rural district away from the coastal strip and of agglomerating new development to provide the necessary critical mass required to support provision at scale of vital community infrastructure of all sorts, the number of new homes planned across the next quarter-century could well exceed the minimum 10,000. Even that minimum scale of population growth added to the existing population of c.4,000 for the built-up areas of Ringmer / Broyle Side would exceed a Network Rail working threshold of 25,000 to warrant consideration of a rail station on an existing or new line. See <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/article1737>

b. Type of development (greenfield / urban extension / urban regeneration), confirming that homes proposed form a single/contiguous development.

Greenfield / urban extension, forming a single / contiguous development.

## **3. What would be the barriers to creating a new town in this location and what would be needed to overcome them (if known)?**

Examples of barriers include infrastructure delivery, land assembly, local planning authority capacity, viability, planning status, affordable housing provision.

Railfuture from its decade-plus of local engagement sees the over-riding barrier as political; if that can be surmounted ways can and will be found to address those practical barriers. Nobody does not want a new Lewes-Uckfield rail link – very few accept that a new route to serve agglomerated housing growth at scale based on Ringmer would be a good justification for it, with Land Value Capture able to make a significant contribution to its financing.

## **4. Has this prospective development previously received government support (if known)?**

If yes, please give brief details of the programme and the support received.

No.

**New Towns Taskforce call for evidence to explore opportunities for large developments**

## 1. Please give information describing the location including (where known):

### a. Working contact name, job title, and contact details of submission author.

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS - Vice-Chair, London & South East regional branch and Director for Infrastructure & Networks, national Board, Railfuture.

[roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:roger.blake@railfuture.org.uk)

### b. Name of organisation this submission is from and its type (e.g. combined authority / local authority / property developer / landowner).

Railfuture Ltd, a not for profit Company Limited by Guarantee registered in England & Wales No. 05011634.

### c. Location details, including (if possible) postcode and National Grid coordinates of the location: [Ordnance survey guidance on National Grid coordinates.](#)

Hoo peninsula, Medway, Kent, ME3 8 and ME3 9.

### d. Details of local authority / ties in this location (indicating whether the development crosses local authority boundaries) and the level of formal or informal local support for this development, if known.

Medway Council; liaison with Kent County / Gravesham District required for that part of the Hoo peninsula rail infrastructure within their boundaries. Medway Council through its draft Local Plan is formally committed to at-scale housing and employment growth on the Hoo peninsula, but its attitude to a New Town is unknown. It has to deal with some councillors representing the local area who have been elected on a platform of opposition to such growth. Formal support for the post-HIF revival of a passenger railway services to support that growth, with or without a New Town per se, comes from Network Rail's North & East Kent Connectivity Study and from Transport for the South East's Strategic Investment Plan and Delivery Plan. Informal support comes from Southeastern currently procuring a new fleet of trains including a battery capability sufficient to serve the line to and from the new Hoo St. Werburgh station should line electrification not be possible for whatever reason, and also comes from the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership.

### e. Details of the land ownership and development promotion arrangements.

Not known.

### f. Stage of planning process (if commenced) and stage of master-planning process (if commenced).

Medway Local Plan 2041 expectation for Regulation 19 consultation fourth quarter 2024-25. See [https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200542/medway\\_local\\_plan\\_2041](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200542/medway_local_plan_2041)

### g. Potential start date (if known).

Not known.

**2. How does this location meet the Taskforce’s research remit as set out in Section A?**

If known, your answer could include:

- a. Proposed number of homes and jobs, including opportunities for expansion / densification.

Drafts of Local Plan have anticipated potential for anything up to c.15,000 new homes on the Hoo peninsula together with significant jobs growth associated with Isle of Grain.

- b. Type of development (greenfield / urban extension / urban regeneration), confirming that homes proposed form a single/contiguous development.

Greenfield / urban extension, forming a single / contiguous development.

**3. What would be the barriers to creating a new town in this location and what would be needed to overcome them (if known)?**

Examples of barriers include infrastructure delivery, land assembly, local planning authority capacity, viability, planning status, affordable housing provision.

An adopted Local Plan 2041 should help provide the framework within which those exemplified barriers can be overcome. The concern is that, for delivery of public transport infrastructure of the scale required to support housing and jobs growth of the scale anticipated, a golden opportunity to pursue an integrated ‘transport-oriented development’ / transport development area approach presents itself and should not be missed. Restoration of passenger rail services on part of the currently freight-only Hoo Peninsula Railway, as far as a new station at Hoo St. Werburgh to serve the planned growth in housing, has been a recognised part of draft Local Plans to date. Officer-level conversations have been brokered about the significant potential of Land Value Capture to co-finance the railway upgrade, similar in many respects to its contribution to the Northumberland Line (opened officially yesterday) where the model has been pioneered.

**4. Has this prospective development previously received government support (if known)?**

If yes, please give brief details of the programme and the support received.

Yes – Housing Infrastructure Fund of £170m from MHCLG awarded in November 2019, extended in September 2021 but cancelled in July 2023.

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS  
Railfuture  
Director for Infrastructure & Networks, national Board  
Vice-Chair, London & South East regional branch