

The Port of Sheerness Regeneration Area

The Port of Sheerness is a significant feature of the Isle of Sheppey's economy, and in handling nearly 1.5 million tonnes of cargo per annum is classified by the Department for Transport as a “major” port. It is one of the largest foreign car importers in the UK and handles thousands of tonnes of forest products and steel from all over Europe. The Port has good infrastructure, including access to the wider road and rail networks.

The role of the Port of Sheerness will be maintained and enhanced as a deep water gateway port to Europe. The priority will be to safeguard this port function. Future expansion is likely to involve intensification of port use both within the existing port confines and via expansion onto appropriate nearby land. In the longer term, the regeneration of the Port of Sheerness could have far reaching consequences for the Borough and represent a major opportunity for Sheerness and the communities on western Sheppey, many of whom currently experience high levels of social and economic deprivation.

Following consultation, the owners of the Port are currently finalising the Sheerness Port Master Plan - A 20 year Strategy for Growth. The Master Plan is part of the strategic plan to develop and grow the Port of Sheerness over the next 20 years, reflecting the owner's long-term ambition to remain a key employer and driver for sustainable growth in the Swale and wider Kent region. The draft Master Plan identifies options for the physical strategy for expansion and development of the Port of Sheerness, based upon growth forecasts. The options considered include both expansion within the operational area and major land reclamation intended to facilitate new port operations and regeneration of the older historical parts of the dockyard with additional potential for housing and other mixed use development.

Heritage is a key issue, both in terms of its potential to act as a catalyst for change, but also in terms of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets. The Dockyard conservation area includes the most important part of Rennie's original plan and the heritage and cultural significance of the former Royal Naval Dockyard is now widely recognised and accepted as being of international importance. Adjacent to the Port is Bluetown, a community of small businesses and homes with considerable heritage and development potential located in the shadow of the historic dockyard wall.

Alongside heritage, there are also biodiversity, coastal and infrastructure considerations that will need to be addressed to bring these wider proposals for regeneration forward over the longer term. However, if realised, these areas would represent the single largest potential regeneration in Swale and one of the largest across North Kent.

Adjacent the current port operational area is the former Thamesteel site, which is in need of regeneration. In the short-term the site could provide opportunities to expand operational land for the ports activities, having regard to improving the amenities of adjacent residential areas whose quality of life was impacted by the previous steel mill activities. Given the scale of the site and its access to the rail network, if Port activities are to be extended onto the site, the Council will expect schemes to explore the use of existing rail infrastructure on the site.

Longer term options within the emerging Port Master Plan, such as potential land reclamation, could play a significant role in the wider regeneration of Sheerness. These will be matters for a review of the Local Plan to consider, having regard to such further evidence that has been prepared and a further future review and consultation on the Port of Sheerness Master Plan which can provide a framework for work to inform both a Local Plan review and development projects through the statutory consenting process.

Policy Regen X: The Port of Sheerness

A regeneration area for the Port of Sheerness is shown on the Proposals Map. Within this area proposals which support the objective of maintaining and enhancing the Port of Sheerness as a deep water gateway port to Europe will be supported. The priority will be to safeguard the port function and to encourage investment in infrastructure that supports water and rail freight connections.

Expansion involving the intensification of port use within existing port confines and/or expansion onto appropriate land within the area defined on the Proposals Map will be supported provided that:

1. any measures required by the development to improve local access by road and rail are brought forward as part of the proposals;
2. the proposals increase the potential for the movement of freight by rail;
3. the proposals are of a scale, use and external appearance that would not detract from the visual appearance or residential amenity of the locality;
4. the significance of heritage assets are sustained and enhanced with viable uses consistent with their conservation with new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness; and
5. there are no other significant adverse social or environmental impacts arising as a result of the project.

Potential longer term options will be considered via a review of the Local Plan. All proposals intended to secure the regeneration of the area for mixed uses will be considered in terms of their social, economic and environmental implications and their ability to secure the wider possible benefits for the sustainable regeneration of Sheerness and Bluetown.

Area subject to proposed draft Port of Sheerness Regeneration Policy

