

FROM JOHN MORRISON
Joint Coordinator, Sevenoaks Cycle Forum

Dr Pav Ramewal
Chief Executive
Sevenoaks District Council

23 March 2016

CHIEF EXECUTIVES OFFICE
23 MAR 2016

Dear Dr Ramewal

Thank you for your detailed response to my letter about the Community Plan. I welcome your assurance that the text can be revised to take account of the objections I have raised. I have taken part in the online consultation and filed my response. I hope you do not mind if I elaborate further on one or two points.

On air quality, it is not surprising that health professionals did not cite this as a priority if they were not specifically asked about it and presented with up-to-date information. May I remind you that until very recently SDC has done its best to avoid all public discussion of air quality and the AQMA monitoring records by not publishing them on its website and not discussing them at any council meetings. My interest in air quality issues let me to obtain the most recent figures from Dartford Borough Council on my own initiative and publicise them in the Chronicle. It should not be up to a member of the public to highlight this important public health issue.

It is clear to me that the reason for this omission, and for the failure to draw up an air quality assessment for the Buckhurst 2 car park project planning application in 2014, is that SDC's current policy of building more car parks is incompatible with an aspiration for better air quality through reducing road traffic. Public health gains from cleaner air will only be achieved through a policy of modal shift away from private car travel, as outlined in the district's 2010 transport strategy. I shall be looking very closely at the planning application for the new expanded Bradbourne car park to see if it includes a proper air quality assessment of the effects of the additional vehicle movements through the nearby AQMA. Expanded car parking in Sevenoaks Town Centre should not be in the Community Plan at all, as its likely effect on public health will be negative. It also contradicts KCC's commitment, endorsed by the district council in Growth Without Gridlock, to 'a rebalancing of the transport network in favour of non-car modes'.

I am pleased that you recognise the importance of the 2012 Cycling Strategy, but I would like you to ensure that the commitment is not just to 'promote' it but to support its speedy implementation. Four years after this document was approved, not a single safe route for cycling has been implemented, and this is largely because of a lack of support from SDC. Sevenoaks Cycle Forum is now involved in a working group chaired by Councillor Edwards-Winsor on cycling issues reporting to the Joint Transportation Board. To achieve results from this process, we need support from

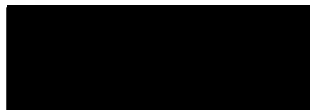
you and from the cabinet. A firm commitment in the Community Plan to early implementation of the Cycling Strategy is essential. Without it, KCC will continue to spend its reduced cycling funding on infrastructure elsewhere in Kent.

I would also like to see stronger wording on road safety and on speed enforcement, while recognising that this is an area where SDC does not have direct responsibility. It is vital that you recognise that pedestrian and cycle safety education in schools is not enough on its own. Surveys over the years have always shown that parents in Sevenoaks see speeding traffic as the biggest threat to their children's safety, and this was reflected in the 2013 Community Plan as 'the most consistently identified priority'. Road safety cannot be achieved merely by educating potential victims. This is also a serious public health issue, as high traffic speeds and the resultant safety concerns make parents reluctant to allow their children to walk to school. The link between the ubiquitous 'car run' in Sevenoaks and the rise in obesity can only be broken by better speed enforcement by Kent Police and by the KMSCP camera partnership. You should include a specific goal in the Community Plan to get more children walking to school.

Until recently I led the Hollybush Residents' Association Community Speed Watch group, which operated with the support of SDC and its Community Safety team. We have however discontinued our activities, having come to the conclusion that we were being used by Kent County Council and Kent Police as an alibi for the general failure to enforce the 30 mph limit in built up areas. If SDC is prepared to advocate enforcement action over dangerous and illegal parking, it is even more important to advocate action over dangerous and illegal speeding.

I look forward to seeing an improved version of the Community Plan, which I hope will not just restore some of the wording of the 2013 version but go further in addressing the transport, safety, environmental and public health issues I have highlighted.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of John Morrison.

John Morrison

Mr J Morrison
Joint Coordinator, Sevenoaks Cycle Forum



Tel No: 01732 227298
Ask for: Pav Ramewal
Email: pav.ramewal@sevenoaks.gov.uk
My Ref:
Your Ref:
Date: 7th April 2016

Dear Mr Morrison,

Thank you for your letter dated 23 March 2016.

In my previous letter dated 17 March 2016, I set out that the Community Plan reflected the priorities expressed by residents, businesses and partners within the Sevenoaks District following an extensive consultation period. The Community Plan is delivered by the Sevenoaks District Local Strategic Partnership. While this is led by Sevenoaks District Council, it involves a wide range of partner agencies including Kent County Council, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, West Kent and Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley Clinical Commissioning Groups, West Kent Extra, West Kent Housing, Moat Housing, Churches Together in Sevenoaks, Imago and Sencio Community Leisure.

I thought that you would be pleased to know that we will be recommending to Members on 21 April that they adopt the Kent Environment Strategy - a strategy for environment, economy and health. One of the key themes of the Kent Environment Strategy is to provide "evidenced understanding of risks and opportunities from environmental change, and the relationship to our communities, health and wellbeing, and economy." Support for delivery of this strategy will be reflected in the Community Plan together with actions previously set out.

With regard to your comments on the Bradbourne car park, you will appreciate that as this is a live planning application, any comments that you wish to make in respect of this application must be formally registered via the Planning Portal on the Council's website:

<http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/services/housing/planning/Comment-on-planning-applications>

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Chief Executive: Dr. Pav Ramewal

Council offices
Argyle Road
Sevenoaks
Kent TN13 1HG

t 01732 227000
e information@sevenoaks.gov.uk
DX30006 Sevenoaks
www.sevenoaks.gov.uk

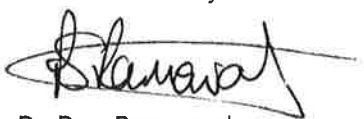
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I am pleased that you welcome the inclusion of the Cycling Strategy in the Community Plan. While the Community Plan does seek to make it easier and safer for people to walk and cycle, it also needs to reflect the importance of the excellent road and rail networks to the creation of a Dynamic and Sustainable Economy. While responsibility for delivering the Cycling Strategy sits with Kent County Council as the lead Transport Authority, the Community Plan is a partnership document and therefore I am happy that the Community Plan can reflect supporting delivery of and promoting the Cycling Strategy.

Tackling speeding vehicles has been included in the Community Plan as we recognise that it remains a concern for local people. As such we have now strengthened this priority to include "working in partnership to improve safety outside schools". This reflects partnership work at an operational level that will be undertaken through the new Community Safety Action Plan (2016-17) by the Sevenoaks District Community Safety Partnership. This prioritises action on speeding and traffic safety around schools. We will continue to support and facilitate further discussions about cycling issues through the Sevenoaks District Cycling Forum.

If you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Dr Pav Ramewal
Chief Executive