

26 March 2024 at 7.00 pm

Council Chamber, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks

Published: 15.03.24

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https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIT1f_F5OfvTzxjZk6Zqn6g



Development & Conservation Advisory Committee

Membership:

Chairman, Cllr. Williams; Vice-Chairman, Cllr. Reay

Cllrs. Barker, Barnett, Camp, P. Darrington, Malone, Purves, Reay, Roy, Varley,
Waterton, White and Williams

Agenda

There are no fire drills planned. If the fire alarm is activated, which is a continuous siren with a flashing red light, please leave the building immediately, following the fire exit signs.

	Pages	Contact
Apologies for Absence		
1. Minutes	(Pages 1 - 6)	
To agree the minutes of the meeting of the Development & Conservation Advisory Committee held on 12 December 2023, as a correct record.		
2. Declarations of interest		
Any interests not already registered.		
3. Actions from previous meeting (if any)		
4. Update from Portfolio Holder		
5. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee (if any)		
6. Local Plan Update	(Pages 7 - 26)	Hannah Gooden Tel: 01732 227178
7. Adoption of High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029	(Pages 27 - 34)	Vivienne Riddle Tel: 01732 227375
8. Report Of The Chairman Of The Community Infrastructure Levy (Cil) Spending Board -	(Pages 35 - 36)	Emma Henshall, Tel: 01732227358,

9. **Work plan** (Pages 37 - 38)

EXEMPT INFORMATION

At the time of preparing this agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public.

If you wish to obtain further factual information on any of the agenda items listed above, please contact the named officer prior to the day of the meeting.

Should you need this agenda or any of the reports in a different format, or have any other queries concerning this agenda or the meeting please contact Democratic Services on 01732 227000 or democratic.services@sevenoaks.gov.uk.

Development & Conservation Advisory Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Williams (Chairman)

Cllr. Reay (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Camp, P. Darrington, Malone, Purves, Reay, Roy, White and Williams

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Barker, Varley and Waterton

21. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held 31st October 2023 be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

22. Declarations of interest

Councillor P. Darrington declared for Minute 27 – Swanley Neighbourhood Plan that he was a member of the Swanley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, but that he remained open minded.

23. Actions from previous meeting

There were none.

24. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder gave an update on the services within their portfolio. The second Regulation 18 Consultation on the Local Plan was ongoing, and had received a large number of responses so far. The consultation would close on 11 January 2024.

The Development Management Team had determined 100% of major applications, and 97% of other applications, within their target times, which situated them as one of the best performing teams nationally.

Planning Enforcement was now fully staffed and was performing well. An update on the service going forward would be brought to the committee.

All six projects that had been presented to the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Spending Board were recommended to Cabinet for approval, with £1.3million of the £1.6million available being spent. In response to questions, Members were advised that the remaining £300,000 would remain available in the pot, and could be spent at the next CIL Spending Board.

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Development & Conservation Advisory Committee - 12 December 2023

25. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

26. Local Plan Update

The Planning Policy Team Leader presented the report, which updated councillors on the progress of the ongoing Regulation 18 Consultation for the Local Plan. The consultation began on 23 November and would run until 11 January. Members watched the [consultation information video](#), and were advised that all the consultation materials were available on the Council's website. Hard copies were also available at all libraries and parish councils in the district. Specific, targeted materials were also prepared for hard-to-reach demographics; a student consultation event was held, consultation materials were freely available at certain railway and bus stations, and a specific gypsy and traveller leaflet had been prepared.

The officer broke down the responses to the consultation received thus far. There had been 533 responses at the time of the meeting. The most commented on sites were at Brittain's Lane, Pedham Place, Seal Hollow Road, and Lullingstone Avenue. Only 16 comments had been received on the policies within the consultation. Of the broad development options within the consultation, the most popular was Option 2, which involved the baseline sites and a standalone settlement at Pedham Place. Option 1 (the baseline and multiple sites on the edge of higher tier settlements, in both the AONB and Green Belt) was the second most popular; Option 3 (the baseline, sites on the edge of higher tier settlements, and a standalone settlement) was the least. 56 responses had been received from respondents under the age of 35; 100 responses each from the 35 – 45, 45 – 55, and 55 – 65 demographics; and 118 responses from those 65 years old or greater.

Consultation events had been held across the district, and were well attended. They focused on local sites, and their infrastructure impacts, as well as wider discussions around Green Belt release and affordable housing. Officers were engaging with the Town & Parish Forum to further inform clerks about the consultation. The Portfolio Holder for Development & Conservation was also meeting with their equivalents in neighbouring authorities to discuss the duty to cooperate.

In response to questions, the officer emphasised that the feedback from the consultation would not be considered solely in terms of volume of responses. The number of responses to a particular site indicated strength of feeling, but the primary data examined would be the quality of the issues raised; uncovering valid planning reasons for or against a site. Sites that were on the edge of a higher tier settlement, and in the Green Belt (but not in the AONB), were included in the site baseline. Petham Court Farm was included in the consultation as part of the Wasps Rugby Club proposal as an 'adjoining opportunity area', and the council wanted to investigate residents' views regarding this site.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

27. Swanley Neighbourhood Plan

The Senior Planning Officer presented the report, which updated the committee on the progress of the Swanley Neighbourhood Plan, and set out Council's proposed response to the ongoing Regulation 16 Consultation. The consultation began on 30 November and would run until 11 January. The Council's comments reflected the need for the Neighbourhood Plan to be aligned with the council's existing policies, and the emerging Local Plan.

The officer set out the process by which the Council's response would be finalised. The approach had been changed since the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan to allow for greater member input. The draft response did not yet include comments from officers across the council; these would be agreed with the Portfolio Holder, along with any feedback from the committee process.

Members discussed the report. It was noted that the leader of the Swanley Town Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was happy with the feedback and comments in the draft response.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty

Resolved: That the Swanley Neighbourhood Plan Regulation 16 Consultation be noted, and SDC's proposed representation be supported.

28. Infrastructure Funding Statement - Priorities

The Infrastructure Delivery Officer presented the report, which set out the priorities within the annual Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS), and updated the committee on how recent developer contributions had been spent. The IFS was an annual requirement within CIL legislation, requiring the Council to set out the income and expenditure from CIL and s106 over the last financial year, and the types of infrastructure the Council intended to fund in the coming year.

The officer outlined the evidence base considered in the formation of the proposed priorities. The emerging Local Plan was an important consideration, to ensure that growth was supported and the impact of new developments was considered. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) was also an important consideration. Statements based on ongoing engagement with infrastructure providers, as part of the Local Plan process, were produced in 2022 and 2023.

The proposed priorities for the coming year were largely unchanged, with some refinements based on ongoing engagement with infrastructure providers. These included more specific education and health & social care provisions, needed to support growth within the Local Plan. Members were reminded that the priorities within the IFS were not binding, but provided transparency to developers and communities regarding infrastructure-funding intentions.

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In response to questions, officers explained that Vacant Building Credit was part of national CIL legislation and could not be modified. The Credit was intended to improve the viability of certain brownfield sites, which would be unviable with an additional CIL payment, which could have knock-on effects on other policy priorities.

Members discussed the increased capacity of Otford Health Services as a priority. It was noted that the number of doctors available was a constraining factor on the delivery of this. Officers explained that Council worked in partnership with healthcare providers to ensure they were ready to fill these spaces once available. The Council had a requirement to ensure the land-use element of the infrastructure was prepared, even if the personnel element was not.

Members were advised that the junction improvements at Bat & Ball were tied to the development at Sevenoaks Quarry. Details regarding the provision of these improvements would be contained in the S106 agreement for the site, when it was finalised. Data from the transport modelling work undertaken for the Local Plan would feed into further improvements. The review of the CIL Charging Schedule was ongoing, and would be brought to the committee next year.

Members discussed the future of the Community Infrastructure Levy, and potential replacements for larger sites. One suggestion was that CIL be reserved for minor sites, of fewer than 10 units. Larger sites would instead use tailored s106 agreements, which would provide more certainty on when and where the money could be spent.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty

Resolved: That the recommendations to Cabinet, as below, be supported:

- (a) That the criteria for prioritising infrastructure projects as set out in paragraph 6 should remain.
- (b) That the specific projects and types of infrastructure recommended in paragraphs 21-33 of this report are identified in the IFS as having a priority for full or partial funding.

29. Building Control Update

The Building Control Manager gave a [presentation](#) on Building Control, outlining the impacts of recent legislation on the service and customers. The Building Safety Act and associated secondary legislation redefined the responsibilities of Building Control, and limited the advice that could be provided to owners and builders. This had an impact on staffing; as many surveyors across the country were retiring or reskilling as the role had changed so significantly. The officer further detailed the impacts of the legislation and the council's plans for the future.

In response to questions, the officer clarified some of the changes in the responsibilities under the new legislation. Owners were now responsible for ensuring their contractors were undertaking legal work, and had to make their best efforts to determine this. The council would make raising awareness of this a priority, as surveyors were no longer able to advise on designs; instead, they could only determine whether they were legal or not, and enforce this. It was a priority of the service to raise awareness of this.

The Chief Officer – Planning & Regulatory Services elaborated on the impact these changes had on staffing. Building Control had a team of five full-time equivalents, with 2.6 FTE vacancies currently. There were no credible applicants for the two Building Control Officer roles that were recently out for advert. A contractor had been hired temporarily to address this issue. An apprentice model was being investigated as a solution, but it was noted that this required existing team members to have capacity to train them. The team were also upskilling existing officers through further accreditations.

In response to further questions, the Building Control Manager outlined the role Building Control would take in electrical, gas, oil, and water installations. When required, electricity, oil, and gas installations would be checked fully by Building Control. However, they were only responsible for confirming that all water was potable; all other checks were done by the water board.

The officer outlined the competition within the Building Control market. Private inspectors were popular with large commercial developments, as they were able to work over a larger geographical area than local authorities. Members were advised however that the team provided high-quality service and maintained roughly 70% market share; many other local authorities in Kent were at roughly 50%.

Resolved: That the changes to the Building Control service be noted.

30. Work plan

The Work Plan was noted, with the following additions:

26 March 2024

- Planning Enforcement Update

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8:20PM

CHAIRMAN

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LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Development and Conservation Advisory Committee – 26 March 2024

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive, Chief Officer - Planning & Regulatory Services

Status: For Consideration

Also considered by:

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report provides an update on the recent Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation, national planning policy changes and next steps.

This report supports the Key Aim of:

Protecting the Green Belt

Supporting and developing the local economy

Supporting the wellbeing of residents, businesses and visitors

Ensuring that Sevenoaks remains a great place to live, work and visit

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Reay

Contact Officer: Hannah Gooden, Ext. 7178

Recommendation to Development and Conservation Advisory Committee:

Notes the report.

Reason for recommendation: To provide an update on the Local Plan.

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Introduction and Background

- 1 This report provides an update on the recent Regulation 18 (Part 2) consultation on Plan 2040 – a new Local Plan for Sevenoaks District.
- 2 The consultation launched on 23 November 2023 and ran until 11 January 2024. This consultation period was extended to seven weeks to reflect that it included the Christmas holiday period.

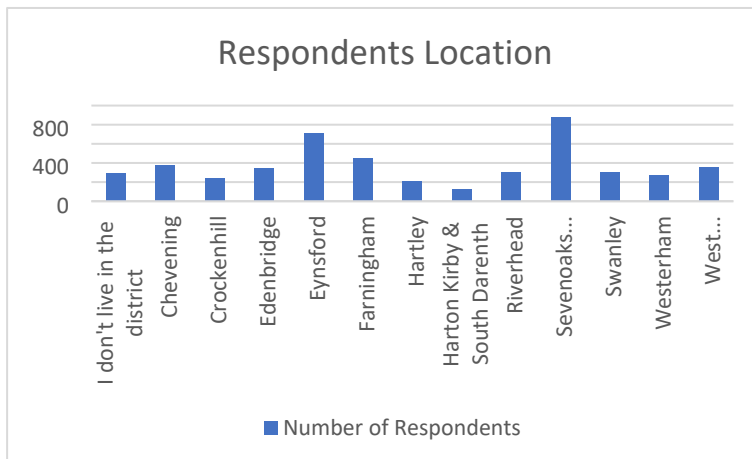
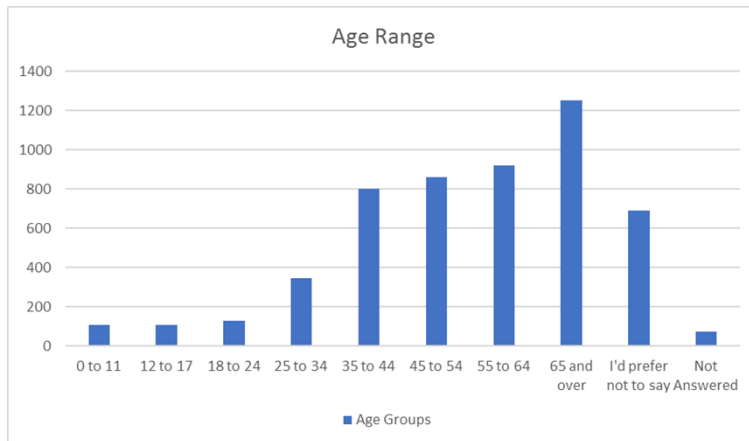
Consultation Overview

- 3 The consultation was promoted through various channels. All consultation materials, including a video, short summary leaflet, Local Plan document, consultation survey and interactive map were provided on a dedicated website <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/plan2040>. Hard copies of the Plan were distributed to all Councillors and copies were sent to all town/parish councils and libraries across the District. Email notice was also sent to the Local Plan mailing list (approx. 2000 individuals and organisations). The consultation was also promoted by social media posts, within In Shape (council magazine), press releases, public notices, email footers, posters and postcards with QR codes. Hard-to-reach groups (young people, commuters and gypsies and travellers, as identified in our Statement of Community Engagement), were targeted using specific engagement activities and materials.
- 4 We also hosted seven well-attended ‘Pop-up’ public consultation sessions across the District, to assist the public with their understanding of the Plan and to encourage responses. Consultation sessions also took place with the Town and Parish Council Forum, the Local Strategic Partnership and neighbouring authorities, under the ‘duty to co-operate’.

Initial Consultation Feedback

- 5 Approximately 5,300 respondents provided c.11,000 comments on the consultation. Comments focused on the 54 sites and development strategy options (c.10,200 comments), with far fewer comments on the 55 proposed policies (c.800 comments).
- 6 Although it is useful to see the number of responses on different sites and options, as an indication of the level of support or objection to a site, it is the key issues, themes and topics raised which are more important to our analysis. So therefore smaller communities are not penalised due to their size, as it is not a ‘numbers game’.
- 7 The charts below outline the age-profile of the respondents and the locations of the respondents. As usual, more responses were received from older respondents – c.2000+ from those aged 55 and above, whereas c.300 for those aged under 25. In terms of geography, responses were received from every town/parish area, and there were 13 areas where

more than 100 responses were received, focused on the 4 towns and surrounding villages.



8 The 'top 5' commented on sites were:

- MX15 - Pedham Place - 1394 responses
- HO29 - Brittains Lane - 626 responses
- HO28 - Land at Back Lane/A21 Bessels Green- 309 responses
- MX13 - Land at Homedean Road, Chipstead - 223 responses
- HO27 - London Road, West Kingsdown - 200 responses

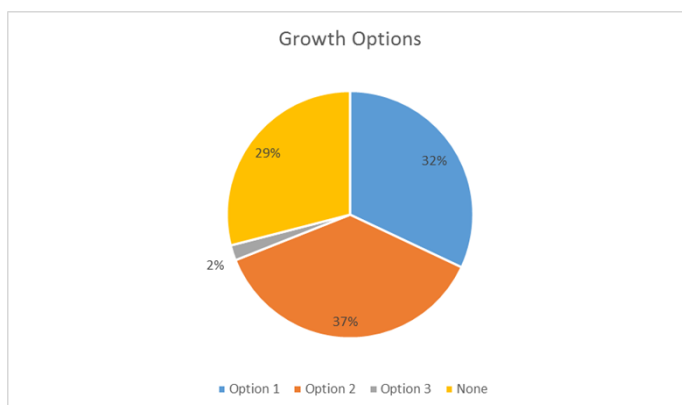


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9 The top four sites listed above are in both the Green Belt and AONB/National Landscape (option 1 and 2 sites), which has led to a considerable level of response.

10 In relation to the proposed growth options, the responses were:

Growth Option	Responses	%
• Option 1 (Multiple Sites)	1544	32%
• Option 2 (Pedham)	1822	37%
• Option 3 (Combined)	121	2%
• None of the above	1400	29%



11 The results demonstrate an approximately equal split between option 1 and option 2 and 'none of the above'.

12 As a reminder, although the number of responses on different sites and options is a useful indication of the level of support or objection to a site, it is primarily the themes and topics raised which inform our analysis of the results. The key issues which have been raised on strategy options are set out at Appendix A.

13 A summary of the key issues which have been raised in relation to the proposed sites and policies, together with list of key actions, by chapter, as we look to amend the plan and prepare a final draft of the Local Plan for Regulation 19 publication, are available on the Plan2040 web-page. Responses have been received from a number of key organisations, including statutory consultees, neighbouring authorities and other public bodies, which have also been summarised.

14 These consultation responses on growth options, sites and policies will help to inform the final draft of the Local Plan, which is being prepared for Regulation 19 publication, prior to submission for examination.

Evidence Base Updates

- 15 We are finalising supporting evidence-base studies, including in relation to:
- 16 **Transport** – this work assesses the cumulative impact of proposed development on key roads and junctions, including the Strategic Road Network, as managed by Highways England. The Stage 1 baseline work established the current state of congestion on the highways network, and the state of congestion at 2040 with existing growth. The model has now been used to test the three potential growth options, to understand their impact on the road network. The model has been developed by Jacobs, who have produced a county-wide model for KCC, and the results have recently been discussed and shared with National Highways for comment. This work will inform the development of the final draft (Regulation 19) of the Plan.
- 17 **Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA)** – The SFRA considers the impacts of climate change and assesses the impact that land use changes and development in the area will have on flood risk. The Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) is progressing and will consider any flood related implications of the proposed site allocations. Once completed, this will be integral in the site allocation selection process for the Regulation 19 consultation. The Level 1 SFRA is being updated to reflect changes following a change in Planning Practice Guidance in August 2022.
- 18 **Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA)** - Ahead of Regulation 19, an update to the SHELAA site assessments will be undertaken which will incorporate responses to the Regulation 18 consultation, including key comments from statutory consultees and key consultation bodies. SDC will hold a workshop with Kent County Council highways to discuss all sites ahead of preparing the Regulation 19 Plan. Final evidence base documents, such as the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment, will also be taken into account as part of this update.
- 19 **Sports Facility/Leisure Strategy** – KKP (Knight Kavanagh & Page) have been appointed to produce an updated Playing Pitch and Sports Facilities Strategy. The update of the council's Playing Pitch (outdoor) and Built Facilities (indoor) strategies are well underway. They will form a key piece of evidence to support the emerging local plan. They will analyse the current supply, demand and quality of the sport and leisure provision within the district, identify areas of quantitative and qualitative deficit and establish clear, prioritised and achievable recommendations for future provision in the district. They will form key pieces of evidence to support the emerging local plan so that we can ensure that any relevant planning applications will deliver the facilities we need and that any applicable funding requirements can be directed to the right places. To date, the audits of existing provision and the assessment of need have been carried out for the indoor facilities. For outdoor facilities, the audits of existing

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provision and the assessment of need have been carried out for the winter sports outdoor facilities (hockey, rugby and football), with the summer sport assessments to begin over the coming months. The draft need assessments are in the process of being reviewed by officers. The final strategies are due to be complete in the summer, and this timeline has been supported by Sport England.

- 20 **Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)** – The requirement to provide BNG came into force for all major developments on Monday 12 February. For small-sites (non-majors), it is coming into force on Tuesday 02 April. Some development is exempt e.g. householder applications and this is set out in secondary legislation. A range of secondary legislation has come into force and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on biodiversity net gain was published on 14 February. This now sets out that authorities should not seek a higher percentage of BNG from developers than the statutory ten per cent objective “unless justified”. Plan 2040 currently includes a policy option to seek 20% BNG, based on local evidence from KCC and the Kent Nature Partnership – this will be reviewed before the plan is finalised, including the impact on development viability. Grant funding has been provided to help prepare for implementation and the Government has confirmed grant funding at the same level for 24/25.
- 21 We have also purchased BNG software (Mycelia) which enables us to:
- Validate BNG submission in a matter of seconds
 - Assesses the BNG submission, flags potential issues and will also be utilised from KCC Ecology in their detailed analysis of the BNG
 - Monitoring – set up to enable the tracking of BNG provision for the required 30 year period
 - Reporting – will enable us to clearly provide detailed annual reports, on the levels of BNG and uplifts
- 22 **Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP)** – The Infrastructure Delivery Plan is a live document and will continue to develop in conjunction with the emerging Local Plan in consultation with infrastructure providers to identify the strategic infrastructure requirements, to support planned growth. We are continuing to engage with infrastructure providers to understand the extent of infrastructure improvements needed to support growth. The final version of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan will contain more detailed information on projects such as time horizons and indicative costs.
- 23 **Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)** - Sevenoaks District Council is a CIL charging authority. This enables us to secure funding by requiring developers to pay a standard charge per square metre of qualifying new development. The current CIL Charging Schedule was adopted in 2014. A review of the CIL Charging Schedule will take place alongside the production of the emerging Local Plan.

- 24 **Supporting studies** – a number of supporting studies including a Sustainability Assessment (SA), Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA), Viability Assessment, Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) and Health Impact Assessment (HIA) are underway to support the development of the Plan.
- 25 **Development briefs** - we have been reviewing the consultation responses on the Development Briefs for the urban sites and updating where necessary. We are also starting work on the Development Briefs for the green belt sites and taking into account the consultation responses on these sites to inform the design guidance.

Duty to Co-operate

- 26 We regularly meet with our eight neighbouring authorities, Kent County Council, and other consultation bodies, in relation to the Duty to Co-operate and to assist the development of the Local Plan.
- 27 Meetings have taken place with officers from our adjoining authorities and member-level briefings were arranged during the consultation period. All eight authorities responded in writing to the Regulation 18 consultation.
- 28 **West Kent (Tunbridge Wells BC and Tonbridge and Malling BC)** – we have met with officers and members from both TMBC and TWBC to discuss development strategies, needs and plan progress. TWBC have recently consulted on a revised development strategy, which responds to the inspector’s initial findings on their Local Plan and removes the strategic allocation at Tudeley. This would reduce their plan period to 10 years, and therefore TWBC is not in a position to assist with any unmet need from SDC, due to difficulties meeting TWBCs own housing need.
- 29 TMBC are preparing a new Local Plan along similar timescales at SDC and TMBC intends to publish a second consultation (Regulation 18B) in mid-2024. They are working jointly with us on a number of evidence-bases, including transport. TMBC indicated that it was unable to assist SDC in meeting any unmet needs and TMBC is currently in the process of developing its own spatial growth strategy.
- 30 **Wealden DC and Tandridge DC** – meetings were held in October and November 2023. Wealden indicated an aim to go out to a Regulation 18 consultation in early 2024, whilst Tandridge was waiting on the full Inspector’s report outlining why their emerging Local Plan (Local Plan 2033) could not be found sound. The final report was received on 14 February 2024 and their examination has now concluded.
- 31 **Dartford BC and Gravesham BC** – Gravesham BC are at an earlier stage in the plan-making process, with a lot of their resources currently being

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focused on the Lower Thames Crossing. Through their response to the recent consultation however, it was made clear that they are unlikely to be able to assist with any unmet need from Sevenoaks District, due to their own highly constrained nature. Dartford BC's Local Plan was found sound in February 2024 with steps now being taken towards adoption. A small surplus of housing provision (approximately 600 units) has been identified and it is possible that some of this could be used to meet some unmet need in Sevenoaks District. It is clear from the examination that, for this to happen, there would need to be robust evidence demonstrating functional links between housing market areas, as well as a thorough demonstration that SDC has maximised its urban capacity, to determine how much surplus may be sought and when. Officers will continue to work with Dartford BC to further investigate and progress this as we work towards the Regulation 19 stage.

- 32 **LB Bromley and LB Bexley** – SDC held a Duty to Cooperate meeting with London Boroughs of Bexley and Bromley in January 2024. SDC gave an update on the Regulation 18 consultation on Plan 2040, which was ongoing at the time. Bromley provided an update on their emerging Plan, with a second Regulation 18 consultation likely to be held in Spring 2024. Bexley are currently working on wider Planning Policy projects, including Article 4 directions, having adopted their Local Plan in April 2023.
- 33 **Department for Levelling-Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC)** - We met with DLUHC in October and again in February. The purpose of the meetings is to enable Government to be kept up to speed on plan making and to provide support and guidance to the Council. We ran through our recent consultation and growth strategy options and discussed recent planning reforms in relation to the new NPPF and supporting guidance. DLUHC suggested a Planning Inspectorate (PINS) Advisory Visit in advance of Plan submission.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – December 2023

- 34 The new NPPF was published on 19th December 2023. It was accompanied by a raft of additional guidance and statements:
- Response to the planning reforms consultation
 - Changes to Practice Guidance on Green Belt and Gypsies and Travellers
 - Housing Delivery Test: 2022 measurement (51% for SDC)
 - Other statements related to London, Direction to West Berkshire (to stop Plan withdrawal, intervention letters to 7 LPAs (Amber Valley, Ashfield, Basildon, Castle Point, Medway, St Albans and Uttlesford))
- 35 In summary, it is suggested that although the new NPPF introduces some amendments, we are able to continue plan-making on the existing timetable, as many of the changes are quite limited, amounting to more of a

change in emphasis, rather than in policy. In terms of key Issues for Sevenoaks:

- 36 **Standard method** for calculating housing need (NPPF para.61) – the NPPF clarifies that this is an advisory starting point, but this has always been the case. The NPPF states:

To determine the minimum number of homes needed, strategic policies should be informed by a local housing need assessment, conducted using the standard method in national planning guidance. The outcome of the standard method is an advisory starting-point for establishing a housing requirement for the area. There may be exceptional circumstances, including relating to the particular demographic characteristics of an area which justify an alternative approach to assessing housing need; in which case the alternative approach should also reflect current and future demographic trends and market signals.

- 37 In relation to ‘particular demographic characteristics’ which may justify a departure from using the standard method, footnote 25 gives an example of ‘*areas that are islands with no land bridge that have a significant proportion of elderly residents*’. It remains to be seen what other instances might be considered acceptable to an examining Inspector to deviate from the standard method, but the intention appears for the standard method to be used other than in very unique demographic circumstances.

- 38 **Green Belt** (para.145) - authorities may choose to review and alter Green Belt boundaries where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified. The Council has already undertaken a Green Belt assessment. The new NPPF states:

Once established, there is no requirement for Green Belt boundaries to be reviewed or changed when plans are being prepared or updated. Authorities may choose to review and alter Green Belt boundaries where exceptional circumstances are fully evidenced and justified, in which case proposals for changes should be made only through the plan-making process.

- 39 The evidence has already been produced as to how well the Green Belt performs in the District against the stated purposes, and it was published in advance of the NPPF changes. This evidence should be taken into account in the plan-making process.

- 40 **Exceptional Circumstances** – as well as knowing where Green Belt performs less strongly, it is generally accepted that there is an acute need for housing, especially affordable housing and older persons housing, and that there is significant unaffordability in the District. The combination of less-well performing green belt, in sustainable locations, on the edge of existing higher-tier settlements, that could be put to more beneficial use to

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deliver much needed housing and infrastructure and protect the remainder of our Green Belt is likely to be considered compelling.

- 41 **Housing Land Supply** – Para. 226 sets out that authorities only need to demonstrate a 4 years' worth of housing supply (with a buffer, if applicable) if they have *'an emerging local plan that has either been submitted for examination or has reached Regulation 18 or Regulation 19, including both a policies map and proposed allocations towards meeting housing need'*. Because we have progressed our Plan through consultation, we now only need to demonstrate 4 (rather than 5) years housing land supply. However, because there has been under delivery of housing in Sevenoaks (due to the Green Belt), a buffer of 20% is required, so SDC will have to demonstrate 4 years plus 20% supply.
- 42 **Housing Delivery Test measurement** - Our housing delivery over years 2019-20 – 2021-22 has been 51% compared to demand, so that Sevenoaks remains a “presumption” authority when we are applying the housing supply and delivery policies of the NPPF to housing applications. Many of the presumption authorities have a significant percentage of Green Belt within their boundaries. Once we have adopted a Plan, housing delivery should improve, and SDC should move out of the presumption and buffer requirements.
- 43 **Density/Design/'Beauty'** - Para. 130 now advises that *“significant uplifts in the average density of residential development may be inappropriate if the resulting built form would be wholly out of character with the existing area. Such circumstances should be evidenced through an authority-wide design code which is adopted or will be adopted as part of the development plan.”* Density was clearly a focus of the previous Regulation.18 consultation and the development briefs will help ensure that appropriate densities are considered for each site, together with the district-wide design code.
- 44 We will continue to review national policy, and any further changes in policy and guidance, throughout the plan-making process. There is a current government consultation on the use of brownfield land and extended permitted development rights.

Next Steps

- 45 Our Local Development Scheme (LDS, July 2022) outlines the timetable and the next steps for the Local Plan:
- Reg.19 (Plan publication) – spring/summer 2024
 - Reg.22 (Submission) – summer/autumn 2024

- Examination - 2024/2025

- 46 It is our intention to bring the Regulation 19 consultation draft back to the next DCAC in the summer. The Plan will then be submitted for public examination, by a government-appointed Planning Inspector. Member comments and debate are invited throughout the plan-making process, including via advisory committee, and ward members will be briefed on sites within their wards, in advance of committee.
- 47 There may need to be some flexibility or agility in this programme to reflect national planning reforms, resultant from the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in December, as outlined above.
- 48 However, it is important to progress the Local Plan, to address development needs (e.g. for housing, affordable housing, older persons accommodation, strategic infrastructure for education and health). This plan will also allow the Council to be able to co-ordinate future development and shape the future of the District (and resist speculative, un-coordinated development proposals as seen recently at appeal). We also now have an up-to-date evidence base.

Other updates

- 49 **Swanley Neighbourhood Plan** - Following its Regulation 16 consultation (30 November 2023 and 11 January 2024), the Swanley Neighbourhood Plan was sent for examination by David Hogger of Intelligent Plans and Examinations Ltd (IPE), whose appointment was mutually agreed with Swanley Town Council. It was received by IPE on 30 January 2024.
- 50 On 08 February the Examiner sent a letter outlining procedural matters and a list of questions for us and Swanley Town Council to respond to by 08 March 2024, requesting a joint response to three of those questions. A joint response has been sent. In relation to procedural matters he has indicated that, at this stage, he is expecting it to be conducted by the written representations procedure but reserves the option of holding a hearing should it be necessary.
- 51 He also noted that the intention is to provide a draft report (for 'fact checking') within 6 weeks of submission but the need to provide the opportunity for full and considered responses, means that this may need to be extended. A verbal update will be provided to DCAC if applicable.
- 52 **Active travel/ LCWIP** - A Local Walking and Cycling Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) has been completed for Swanley Town and surrounding areas. LCWIPs are a strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking improvements needed at the local level. It is anticipated this will encourage sustainable movement in the area and form a basis for any future funding bids. The plan identifies six cycle routes and four walking routes linking the centre of Swanley to Crockenhill and Hextable. A core walking zone is identified in Swanley town centre.

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- 53 We are working on progressing three walking, wheeling and cycling routes identified in the Sevenoaks Urban Area LCWIP. Funding has been secured to construct route 3 which links the east and west of Sevenoaks Town connecting the six schools together to provide a safe route. This is being progressed in conjunction with Kent County Council with funding from Active Travel England. A public consultation took place for the route in Summer 2023 and a further consultation for an alternative section of the route will be taking place in the coming months. The construction of the route will commence in Spring 2024.
- 54 Feasibility studies are being completed for route 1 which links Otford to Bat and Ball and route 6 which links Otford to Sevenoaks town centre via Seal. Stakeholder engagement has been carried out for both routes to understand local resident's experiences and barriers of movement. The feasibility studies will set out what interventions could be implemented. Route 1 will progress to outline design which will set out further designs for the route.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

- 55 The option not to progress a new Local Plan would leave the Council open to reputational damage and likely Government intervention to produce a Local Plan for the District Council. The Council would also be exposed to speculative, un-coordinated development proposals, and would not be able to shape the future development of the District.

Conclusion

- 56 This report provides an overview of the Local Plan consultation, for information.

Key Implications

Financial

The production of the Local Plan will be funded from the Local Plan reserve.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

Preparation of a Local Plan is a statutory requirement. There are defined legal requirements that must be met in plan making, which are considered when the Plan is examined by a Government Planning Inspector. Risks associated with the Local Plan are set out in the Local Development Scheme.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users. An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been prepared alongside the Local Plan.

Climate Change Implications

The decisions recommended in this paper directly impact our climate change ambition. The impact has been reviewed and there will be a decrease on carbon emissions produced in the district as a result of this decision. The adoption of the Local Plan, which includes policies in relation to climate change and the environment, is likely to have a positive impact to help decrease carbon emissions in the district, and support the resilience of the natural environment.

Appendices

Appendix A – Summary of responses on development strategy options

Background Papers

All consultation documents, supporting evidence and response summaries are available on the dedicated webpage: <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/plan2040>

Richard Morris

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Planning & Regulatory Services

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Appendix A – Key Issues Raised on Growth Strategy Options

Response Analysis – Option 1 (Multiple Sites)*

Theme	Description	Count	Percent
Infrastructure and transportation concerns	There is a significant emphasis on the strain on existing infrastructure and transportation networks due to new developments, with particular focus on the potential for increased traffic congestion, inadequacies in parking facilities, and the inability of current road systems to handle additional volume. Concerns extend to the impact on public transport provisions, highlighting the limited capacity of local train stations and the need for expansion in services to accommodate the additional residents.	871	66%
Environmental and ecological impact	Concern around the repercussions of developing on designated Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)/National Landscape. This encompasses the negative effects on local biodiversity, including the potential loss of habitats for protected species, increased air, light, and noise pollution, and the detrimental impact on the natural landscape. Concerns about the legal and ethical implications of encroaching on protected land are also raised, underlining the importance of preserving these areas for future generations.	823	62%
Housing needs and development strategies	The discussion highlights a divide between the demand for housing and the methods of achieving it. While there is an acknowledgment of the need for additional housing, there is strong opposition to large-scale developments, particularly on Green Belt land. The preference leans towards smaller, more dispersed housing projects that integrate into existing communities without significant environmental or infrastructural impact. Need to find a balance between meeting housing needs and preserving the character and sustainability of local areas.	787	60%
Legal and policy framework	Within the discussions, there's a critique of the planning policies and decisions, questioning their alignment with national guidelines and the local community's interests. Issues of transparency, engagement, and the interpretation of 'exceptional circumstances' required for Green Belt release are brought into focus. The narrative underscores a demand for adherence to policies that protect Green Belts and AONB, urging a reconsideration of development plans that contravene these principles.	354	27%
Community and healthcare services	The potential overburdening of local healthcare facilities and the need for more robust community services in light of new developments are key issues. The communities express apprehension over the adequacy of existing medical services to cater to the increased population, as well as the challenges in staffing new healthcare facilities. There's a desire for more comprehensive planning to ensure the provision of essential services, including schools/shops, to support community needs.	287	22%
Social and cultural preservation	There is a concern for maintaining the social fabric and cultural identity of existing communities amidst the pressure to develop. The fear of local villages losing their distinctiveness and merging into urban sprawl is evident, with residents calling for development that respects the historical and cultural significance of the areas. The potential loss of recreational facilities and green spaces, which contribute to the community's quality of life, is also highlighted as a critical issue.	213	16%
Flooding / climate considerations	A portion of the response is dedicated to concerns over potential flooding, exacerbated by construction on natural absorption areas and the impact on water drainage systems. The dialogue extends to broader climate considerations, including the role of green spaces in carbon sequestration and air purification, emphasizing the need for environmentally conscious development plans that consider the implications of climate change.	53	4%

Response Analysis – Option 2 (Pedham Place)*

Theme	Description	Count	Percent
Infrastructure and services enhancement	Critical need for wider development that encompasses not just housing but also the expansion and improvement of supporting infrastructure and services. This includes roads, public transport, schools, medical facilities, and leisure amenities. Many express concerns about current infrastructure inadequacies and the potential exacerbation of these issues with additional houses. This option is also perceived as facilitating simultaneous infrastructure development, which could mitigate strains on existing systems and support new communities effectively.	1166	75%
Balancing development with preservation	Accommodate housing needs while simultaneously ensuring the preservation of the natural environment, including Green Belts and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)/National Landscape. This reflects an understanding of the importance of safeguarding natural landscapes for future generations, set against the necessity of meeting housing demands. Development must strike this balance, minimizing environmental impact while addressing the acute need for more homes.	987	64%
Traffic management / congestion concerns	Traffic and transportation issues form a substantial part of the discussion, with many residents worried about the impact of new developments on already congested roads and insufficient public transport links. Concerns include safety, pollution, and the general quality of life for existing and future residents. A strong inclination towards development options that consider / plan for effective traffic management, enhance public transportation, and incorporate pedestrian and cycling infrastructure	671	43%
Sustainable / integrated community development	Enthusiasm for development proposals that offer a comprehensive approach to building new communities. This includes an emphasis on sustainability, including EV charging hubs and green spaces, alongside provisions for schools, healthcare, retail, and employment opportunities within the development site. This theme underscores an aspiration for self-sufficient, integrated communities that reduce reliance on overstretched existing facilities and contribute positively to local economies and lifestyles.	470	30%
Environmental sustainability / biodiversity	Environmental concerns extend beyond the preservation of the Green Belt and AONB, with discussions on biodiversity, pollution, and the potential for planned developments to adopt green and sustainable practices. There's a strong sentiment in favour of developments that minimize environmental impact, promote eco-friendly transport and lifestyle choices, and consider ecology.	335	22%
Protecting community character and wellbeing	Residents express a strong connection to the character and ambiance of their towns and villages, with many highlighting concerns about large-scale developments potentially undermining these qualities. Issues such as overcrowded schools, strained local healthcare services, and loss of green spaces are mentioned as detrimental to community wellbeing. There's an evident desire for development plans that respect and integrate with the existing local character, fostering environments that support both physical and mental wellbeing.	335	22%
Economic implications / employment opportunities	The potential for new developments to create job opportunities and stimulate local economies is both a concern and an aspiration. There's a recognition of the need for such developments to include commercial spaces, leisure facilities, and other amenities that could provide employment. Moreover, there's an awareness of the need to plan these aspects alongside residential construction to ensure balanced community growth and economic vitality.	94	6%

Response Analysis – Option 3 (Combined)*

Theme	Description	Count	Percent
Housing demand and distribution	The need for affordable and sufficient housing is a common concern, with many advocating for a balanced distribution of developments to meet the growing demand. Responses suggest different scales and locations for housing, highlighting the necessity for strategic planning that accommodates both immediate and future needs. However, there's apprehension regarding the impact on local services, infrastructure, and the environment.	64	61%
Local services and amenities	Concerns about the capacity of existing amenities, such as schools, GP surgeries, and local shops to support an increased population. The anticipation of more developments leads to calls for a proportional expansion of local services to ensure they can accommodate growing communities without compromising on access or quality.	41	39%
Community impact and social infrastructure	The potential for new housing to affect local communities, including issues related to health, education, and general welfare, is noted. Discussions around the advantages of new developments bringing job opportunities and enhancing local economies are counterbalanced by worries about social cohesion, mental health, and the adequacy of social infrastructure to support new residents.	38	36%
Traffic and transport infrastructure	Increased traffic congestion and insufficient public transport services are highlighted as major concerns associated with new developments. While some see the expansion of housing as an opportunity to improve road infrastructure and public transport options, others worry about the exacerbation of current traffic issues and the sustainability of travel patterns.	28	27%
Strategic planning and consultation	The need for a comprehensive and transparent planning process is underscored, with suggestions for a hybrid approach that considers community feedback, environmental assessments, and long-term implications. There's a call for more involvement from local councils in the early stages of planning to ensure developments meet the broader objectives of community welfare and environmental sustainability.	27	26%
Green Belt considerations	There's a strong sentiment towards preserving Green Belt lands and also the natural beauty of the area, with some advocating for development on previously used sites like disused golf courses. The debate around this topic revolves around balancing the urgent need for housing with the long-term benefits of maintaining green spaces and environmental quality.	26	25%
Sustainability and future-proofing	The emphasis on sustainability in future developments suggests a desire for housing that is not only environmentally friendly but also adaptable to the changing needs of residents. This includes the integration of green technology, efficient public transport, and community spaces that encourage a lower carbon footprint.	10	10%

Response Analysis – ‘None of the above’*

Theme	Description	Count	Percent
Environmental impact and preservation of green spaces	Communities are worried about potential harm to natural environments due to development strategies, including destruction of wildlife habitats, pollution increase, and irreversible local landscape changes. On the other hand, planned development could introduce sustainable living options and promote environmental awareness.	752	62%
Infrastructure and public service strain	There are anxieties over inadequate infrastructure and public services to support new developments, possibility of increased congestion, pollution, and strain on essential services. However, development could allow for infrastructure improvements and modernization.	735	61%
Traffic and transportation concerns	There are worries about increased traffic congestion and pressure on public transportation systems, safety hazards, and inadequate road facilities. Development, however, could lead to improvements in local transport networks.	651	54%
Housing needs vs. community character	A conflict exists between the need for housing and the desire to preserve local community character. Some people fear development may lead to overcrowded conditions and loss of community identity, others see it as necessary to meet housing demand. Well planned development could respect local communities while integrating new homes.	616	51%
Access to essential services	Concerns are raised by potential inability to access essentials like healthcare, education, and recreational facilities due to population rise. Development could significantly improve and expand local services, addressing long-standing deficits.	347	29%
Economic implications	The economic motivations behind development plans are questioned, with worries that profit may be prioritized over community benefits such as affordable housing and sustainable growth. Development could stimulate economic growth, create jobs, and enhance local amenities and services.	123	10%
Environmental sustainability and climate impact	Development should not contribute to climate change or compromise environmental sustainability. Development presents an opportunity to adopt green building practices, enhance local biodiversity, and promote climate resilience.	117	10%

*Please note where respondents did not provide a reason for their option choice, these results could not be included in the above theme analysis.

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Adoption of High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029

Development and Conservation Advisory Committee – 26 March 2024

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Planning & Regulatory Services

Status: For Decision

Also considered by:

- Cabinet – 18 April 2024
- Council – 23 April 2024

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: Sevenoaks District Council is legally required to prepare and publish a management plan for the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In the High Weald this requirement is delivered through the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee. A draft management plan has been prepared, after public consultation and with input from the Council, setting out key character components of the High Weald's natural beauty. It is an important guidance document for functions affecting the AONB and its setting.

This report supports the Key Aim of: ensuring that Sevenoaks District remains a great place to live, work and visit.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Reay

Contact Officer: Vivienne Riddle, Ext. 7357

Recommendation to Development and Conservation Advisory Committee:

That, subject to its approval by the High Weald JAC on 27 March 2024, it be recommended to Cabinet to recommend to Council to adopt the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

Recommendation to Cabinet:

To recommend to Council adopt the High Weald AONB Management Plan.

Reason for recommendation: To fulfil the statutory duty arising from the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to prepare a management plan for the High Weald AONB.

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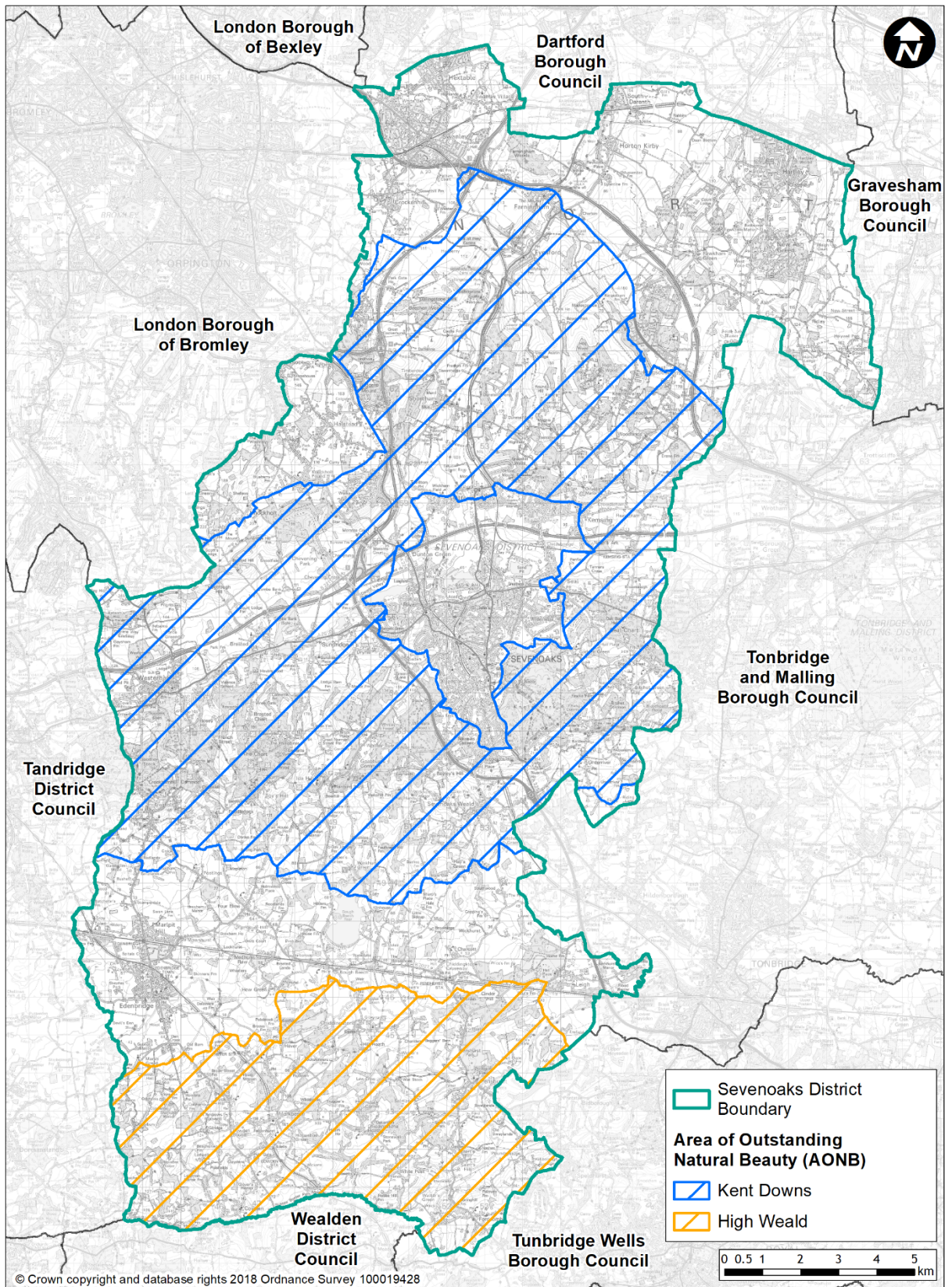
Introduction and Background

- 1 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are national designations established by Natural England. The main purpose of an AONB designation is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the landscape. The legal status and importance of AONBs is on a par with National Parks although they do not have the same administrative arrangements.
- 2 On 22 November 2023 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty were renamed as National Landscapes, to highlight their national importance and to elevate them alongside National Parks. Despite the renaming, they remain known as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and within the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. Accordingly, the High Weald AONB Management Plan refers to it as such and for the sake consistency and clarity they have also been referred to as AONBs throughout this report.
- 3 Under the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000, Section 89(2), local authorities with land in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are legally obliged to prepare and publish an AONB management plan which 'formulates their policy for the management of the area of outstanding natural beauty and for the carrying out of their functions in relation to it', and to review this plan every five years. Where an AONB crosses administrative boundaries local authorities are required to act jointly to produce the plan (Section 89(11)(b)).
- 4 Sevenoaks District has two AONBs as shown in Map 1, the Kent Downs AONB across the centre and north of the District and the High Weald AONB across the southern part of the District. A management plan is required for each; however, this report relates to the management plan for the High Weald only, as the Kent Downs AONB management plan covers the period 2021-2026 and the review process has yet to commence. The management plan is required to be adopted by Full Council.
- 5 Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) has a statutory responsibility with regards to the management of the AONBs. This duty has recently been strengthened through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023, which has inserted an amendment into section 85 of the CRoW Act 2000. The amended duty came into force on 26 December 2023 and is as follows:

'In exercising or performing any functions in relation to, or so as to affect, land in an area of outstanding natural beauty in England, a relevant authority ... must seek to further the purpose of conserving and enhancing the natural beauty of the area of outstanding natural beauty.'

The CRoW Act also reaffirms the original purposes of designation and confirms the powers of local authorities to take appropriate action to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of AONBs.

Map 1. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty in Sevenoaks District



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- 6 The National Planning Policy Framework places great weight on conserving landscape and scenic beauty in AONBs, giving them the highest status of protection in relation to these issues (paragraph 182, NPPF 2023). It also states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment, which this document will assist us in.
- 7 The guidance provided in the AONB management plan is supported by the Council's Core Strategy (2011) under Policy SP1 and in paragraph 2.33 of the Allocations and Development Management Plan. It is also supported in Policy NE1 of the emerging Local Plan (Plan 2040), as well as being referenced within other policies e.g. our proposed policy on design quality. More widely, the use of the management plans can assist the Council in delivering the greener aims contained within the SDC Community Plan.

The High Weald AONB Management Plan

- 8 The High Weald AONB was designated in 1983. It is the fourth largest, covering areas of Surrey, Kent, East Sussex and West Sussex. Sevenoaks District Council is a member of the High Weald Joint Advisory Committee (JAC), a partnership of the 4 county and 11 district authorities that cover the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and who each, according to their relative interest, jointly fund the JAC. Cllr Williams currently represents SDC on the JAC and Vivienne Riddle attends the Officer Steering Group meetings.
- 9 The High Weald AONB Management Plan can be used to guide environmental land management and assess the impact of development or other changes on the AONB. It has the potential to improve the quality of life for residents of Sevenoaks District living and working in and around the AONB through the conservation and enhancement of their landscape and supporting the social and economic wellbeing of communities.
- 10 The management plan contains various sections, including a Statement of Significance and 8 components of character which together combine to create its distinct and recognisable landscape, comprising physical components and perceptual and aesthetic qualities and cultural associations. Each component is described in detail, including key characteristics, the top 5 issues and objectives and actions recommended to guide the activities of partners and stakeholders. This helps local authorities, and also developers, to identify what contributes to the natural beauty of the landscape, how development can be in keeping with the existing identified characteristics and what issues need to be addressed by any new development within it.
- 11 The character components of the High Weald have been identified as:
 - Natural Systems (Geology, soils, water and climate)
 - Settlement
 - Routeways

- Woodland
- Fieldscape and Heath
- Dark Skies
- Perceptual and Aesthetic qualities
- Land-based economy and related rural living

12 It also includes the following cross cutting themes, including programmes, principles for action and investment strategy:

- Restoring soil health and regenerative land management
- Nature recovery and biodiversity
- The climate crisis; achieving net zero
- People and access
- Planning and development in the High Weald AONB

Summary of Review Process

13 In 2004 a statutory plan for the High Weald was produced as a rolling 20-year strategy to be reviewed every 5 years. The approach taken was designed to be robust and future-proofed, resulting in an objective led plan rooted in an understanding of landscape pattern, and structured around AONB purpose and character. To allow for cost-effective review, the published plan was kept concise with supporting evidence, data and guidance available online. This approach allowed for 'light touch' reviews in 2009, 2014 and 2019.

14 A new management plan is now required to be published in 2024. This is the first edition of a new 20-year strategy, covering the period 2024-2029, and includes a 5-year implementation plan. The review has taken account of the current and future major challenges/issues of biodiversity crisis, climate change, fairer access to nature, and development pressure. The plan also needs to be cognisant of the National Guidance for AONB Management Plans, currently in preparation, which is anticipated to require plans to address these issues. Therefore, while the character components and management policy objectives (the most important aspects of the HWMP) remain broadly appropriate, the range of character components has broadened, and other aspects of the plan have needed a more substantive re-consideration, including the inclusion of cross cutting themes: programmes, principles for action and investment strategy 2024-2029, to reflect the afore-mentioned challenges/issues.

15 The High Weald Joint Advisory Committee launched the current review in 2022 to cover the period 2024-2029. The draft management plan has gone through an extensive process of consultation with the Officer Steering Group

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in 2022 and 2023, evolving as a result of reviewing the feedback received during that process. Public consultation on the management plan and its supporting documents ran from 05 September 2023 to 05 November 2023, over a 6 week period, to which we responded. Our response touched on and made suggestions and recommendations regarding a number of aspects, including highlighting the backdrop of a Government target for housing of 300,000 per year, a high local housing need and a highly constrained context.

- 16 The draft management plan is also supported by a Consultation Statement, a Strategic Environmental Assessment, a Habitat Regulations Assessment and an Equality Impact Assessment.
- 17 The next step is for the management plan to be considered by the JAC, who, if they approve it, recommend individual local authorities to adopt it. In this instance, the Joint Advisory Committee of the AONB will be considering the draft management plan on 27 March 2024, the day after DCAC, as such the recommendation to adopt the management plan, is subject to its approval at the High Weald's JAC. The timing of this report is to support the High Weald with their aim of submitting the management plan to the Secretary of State by the end of May.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

The Council could consider not adopting the AONB Management Plan however the CRoW Act 2000 requires local authorities with land in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) to prepare and publish an AONB Management Plan.

Key Implications

Financial

Any cost will be met out of the existing budget.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

The Council has a statutory duty to prepare and review a management plan for any areas within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. By not adopting the plan the council is in breach of the CRoW Act 2000.

Equality Assessment

The High Weald AONB Management Plan has been subject to an EQIA which concludes that the management plan complies with the equalities legislation.

Climate Change Implications and Environmental Impact

The management plan will assist in identifying potential opportunities to reduce carbon emissions within the AONB. SDC will continue to work with the AONB Units

to identify, develop and support projects which enhance the landscape, reduce carbon emissions and adapt to the inevitable changes in climate.

Conclusions

The Council is legally required to have an AONB management plan in place and to keep this under review. Together with the relevant local authorities, the Council has worked with the AONB Unit to review the plan. The review has been carried out within the relevant guidance and statutory requirements and reflects the Council's aims and objectives and it is considered appropriate for the Council to adopt it.

Appendices

Appendix A – High Weald AONB Management Plan 2024-2029

[Link](#)

Background Papers

Consultation Statement

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA)

Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA)

[Available at LINK](#)

Richard Morris

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Planning and Regulatory Services

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**REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY
(CIL) SPENDING BOARD - PROJECTS UPDATE**

Development and Conservation Advisory Committee – 26 March 2024

Report of: Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Planning & Regulatory Services

Status: For consideration

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report showcases the infrastructure projects that have benefitted from CIL funding, awarded by the CIL Spending Board.

This report supports the Key Aim of: Ensuring that Sevenoaks District remains a great place to live, work and visit.

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Reay

Contact Officer(s): Emma Henshall Ext. 7358; Carlyn Kan Ext. 7264

Recommendation to the Development and Conservation Advisory Committee: That the Board notes the infrastructure projects that the CIL Spending Board has supported through the awarding of CIL funding.

Reason for recommendation: To demonstrate that CIL funding has been fully utilised towards the provision of and improvement to infrastructure to support development.

Introduction and Background

- 1 The District Council adopted its Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule in 2014 and has been charging on all qualifying development since.
- 2 As of February 2024 the total amount of money collected from qualifying development was £15.7 million, to be spent on infrastructure to support development. Whilst there are a number of draws on the money, the largest proportion (70%) is made available to the CIL Spending Board to allocate to infrastructure projects.
- 3 The CIL Spending Board meets approximately once a year. Since its first meeting in 2018 the Board has awarded over £9.2 million to infrastructure projects across the District.
- 4 Many of these projects have social, economic and/or environmental benefits that have significantly benefited our local communities. To showcase some of

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these projects that have benefitted from CIL funding awarded by the CIL Spending Board, a presentation will be given to this committee by the Chairman of the Board.

Key Implications

Financial

The funding allocated by the CIL Spending Board has been levied from qualifying development. There are no financial implications for the Council with regards to this report.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

The Council has a duty as the charging authority, to ensure that the allocation and spending of CIL is in line with the CIL Regulations 2010 (and subsequent amendments). In addition, the CIL Spending Board operates in line with the Council's CIL Governance arrangements.

Equality Assessment

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users.

Climate Change Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to tackle climate change. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

Richard Morris

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer for Planning & Regulatory Services

Development and Conservation Advisory Committee Work Plan

Summer 2024

- Planning Enforcement Update
- Local Plan Update

Autumn 2024

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