

FROM JOHN MORRISON
Joint Coordinator, Sevenoaks Cycle Forum

1 March 2016

Dr Pav Ramewal
Chief Executive
Sevenoaks District Council

Dear Dr Ramewal

I have been astonished this week to read the latest version of SDC's Community Plan, which abandons past commitments to improving air quality, cutting carbon emissions and reducing energy consumption. It also scraps promises in the 2013 plan to promote non-car travel, encourage cycling and walking and implement the 2012 district cycling strategy, on which you will recall our exchange of letters last year. I am surprised to see the difference between your assurances of support for cycling and the new plan.

I am very concerned at the environmental and health implications of this deeply flawed policy document. Are you aware that Public Health England estimates that poor air quality is causing an additional 57 adult deaths a year in Sevenoaks district? And that the levels of obesity and diabetes are rising? Most local authorities now recognise the need to redouble their efforts to improve air quality and active travel by promoting non-car modes of transport. Sevenoaks seems to be doing the opposite.

Instead, we have a promise to increase car parking in Sevenoaks town centre. It is clear to me that neither councillors nor SDC officers have learned the lessons of the failed Buckhurst 2 scheme, which was blocked by KCC on traffic grounds. New car parks are universally understood by transport planners to be 'trip generators' which, far from curing congestion, increase it. Congestion in Sevenoaks is already severe, with maximum NO2 emissions levels being exceeded on every main road. The idea that bringing more cars into the town while discouraging cycling and walking will make it more 'vibrant' is mistaken; all evidence shows that town centres flourish best when they discourage car use and encourage walking and cycling and other modes of transport. I would like you to explain to me how you think your policy, which is the opposite of that pursued by most local authorities, will improve the environment and public health for people in Sevenoaks. I cannot believe this will be supported by local GPs or by the NHS, or that it will be consistent with KCC's new Active Travel policy.

Yours sincerely

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: 17 March 2016

Dear Mr Morrison

Public consultation draft of the Sevenoaks District Community Plan 2016-19

Thank you for your letter dated 1 March 2016.

The Sevenoaks District Community Plan is currently within the public consultation stage which runs until 31 March 2016. I am sorry to hear that you feel we have not considered some very important issues which you have referred to in your letter within the consultation draft. We will ensure that these are tabled with other comments received during the consultation period.

I would like to reassure you that the public consultation draft seeks to respond to the priority concerns and issues raised by residents, businesses and partners.

I am pleased that you have taken the time to read the draft plan and note the concerns that you have raised relate to the following thematic areas:

- Air Quality, cutting carbon emissions and reducing energy consumption
- Improving the environment
- Promoting non-car travel, encouraging cycling and walking and implement 2012 District Cycling Strategy
- Improving public health
- Making town centres more vibrant

I have included a matrix (attached as Appendix A) which I hope you find useful, mapping the issues you raise against the themes and priorities that relate to them in the Community Plan.



I thought it may be of further help to answer some of your specific concerns addressed to me in your letter:

Environment and Public Health

These are central concerns within the Community Plan draft document and in particular the Green Environment and Healthy Environment themes. I refer you to these themes in the document which set out how these issues are addressed and linked to the priority concerns raised during the consultation. This includes concerns and issues raised by health and social care professionals. I also refer you to Appendix A which sets out the wider context of environment and public health issues within the plan.

It should be noted that individual components of both the Sevenoaks Climate Local Action Plan and Sevenoaks District Cycling Strategy are reflected in some of the actions within the plan, for example promotion of safe cycling and continuing health activities which benefit health such as promotion of cycling, retrofitting homes and encouraging renewable energy.

I am happy to suggest that we strengthen the draft plan to include actions to support delivery of the Climate Local Action Plan with the Green Environment theme and the promotion of the Cycling Strategy within the Sustainable Economy themes.

Active travel

We recognise the importance of actions we can take to reduce congestion, improving the air we all breathe and enabling people to choose journeys via methods other than by car and supporting increase in levels of physical activity.

Across various themes the Community Plan includes actions to:

Safe Communities - Priority 5 “Tackle speeding vehicles and improve road safety for all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists”. Actions include:

- Deliver pedestrian and cycle safety education in schools
- Take enforcement action on dangerous and illegal parking
- Make roads/pavements safer for vulnerable people KCC

Green Environment - Priority 1 “Retain the Green Belt and conserve and enhance the value of our countryside and green spaces, particularly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)”. Action:

- Review and update planning policies and manage development in accordance with them

Healthy Environment - Priority 1 “Reduce health inequalities and improve health and wellbeing for all”. Actions include:

- Target support and deliver activities for adults to increase physical activity and reduce obesity
- Complete an Open Space, Sports and Leisure study and deliver a Leisure Strategy

- Support and extend community transport schemes

Dynamic Economy - Priority 1 “Identify a supply of employment land and premises to promote economic growth”. Action:

- Develop a masterplan for Swanley as a catalyst for regeneration and increase rented accommodation for young people wishing to access employment and address transport connectivity

Dynamic Economy - Priority 2 “Improve skills for employment”. Action:

- Retain the Young Person’s Travel Pass and explore other schemes and support the integration of public transport

Sustainable Economy - Priority 1 “Reduce the need to travel, promote and improve access to key local services and to public and community transport”. Actions include:

- Use development and regeneration opportunities to promote improvements in transport accessibility and connectivity
- Work in partnership to address gaps in infrastructure
- Support the Greater London Authority rail devolution of metro services and the extension of Oyster to Swanley and lobby for the extension of Oyster to Dunton Green and Sevenoaks Town
- Lobby to represent District transport concerns to the Local Transport Authority as part of the Kent Route Strategy
- Promote the number 8 bus route in Sevenoaks and look at the feasibility of using the model elsewhere in the District

Vibrant Town Centre and parking

I would like to address your concerns relating to the plan’s ambition to create vibrant town centres. This relates to priority 3 within the Dynamic Economy theme as **“Retain existing businesses, encourage new businesses and promote tourism”**.

There are many actions throughout the plan which directly or indirectly influence promotion of vibrant town centres. These relate to crime reduction, skills for young people, particular sector skills e.g. the rural economy, regeneration schemes, inward investment, business support and retention strategies.

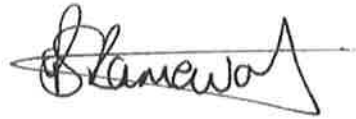
I refer to your explicit concern related to the action in this theme to increasing car parking capacity in the Sevenoaks Town. The current plans to increasing car parking at the Bradbourne and Sennocke car parks relates to wider plans to provide a new 80 bedroom hotel. They are intended to support the local economy, in particular the tourism sector, while easing pressure on residential roads where commuters park. Action linked to this in the Community Plan can also be found within Safe Communities which seeks to address concerns from local people about poor or illegal parking within the District and its impact.

Involvement of partners

In response to your concerns relating to partner responses, I would like to add that the draft plan was recently presented to a range of statutory, voluntary and community sector partners at the Local Strategic Partnership where it received a positive response. A wide range of health professionals were consulted about their priorities for action and have been offered the opportunity to comment on the draft plan together with all residents in the District.

I have tried to ensure I have provided you with a comprehensive response given the concerns you raise, however if I can be of further help and assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dr Pav Ramewal', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Pav Ramewal
Chief Executive

Appendix A - Matrix of concerns related to Community Plan themes

Community Plan Theme	Community Plan Draft Priorities	Air Quality, cutting carbon emissions and reducing energy consumption & Improving the environment	Promoting non-car travel, encouraging cycling and walking	Improving public health	Making town centres more vibrant
Safe Communities	1 - Make the work of the Police and partners more visible in communities				
	2- Work to keep crime at a low level and respond to perception of crime			X	X
	3 - Support vulnerable and repeat victims of crime and anti-social behaviour			X	
	4 - Tackle anti-social behaviour			X	
	5 - Tackle speeding	X	X	X	

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



Community Plan Theme	Community Plan Draft Priorities	Air Quality, cutting carbon emissions and reducing energy consumption & Improving the environment	Promoting non-car travel, encouraging cycling and walking	Improving public health	Making town centres more vibrant
	vehicles and improve road safety for all road users, including pedestrians and cyclists				
Caring Communities	1 -Provide the right support at the right time 2 -Improve outcomes for children and young people 3 - Reduce poverty and social exclusion	X		X X X	
Green Environment	1 - Retain the Green Belt and conserve and enhance the value of our countryside and green spaces, particularly Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) 2 - Maintain a clean local environment 3 - Ensure new development is designed to a high quality and takes into account local character and the impact on the	X X X	X	X	

Community Plan Theme	Community Plan Draft Priorities	Air Quality, cutting carbon emissions and reducing energy consumption & Improving the environment	Promoting non-car travel, encouraging cycling and walking	Improving public health	Making town centres more vibrant
Healthy Environment	environment				
	1 - Reduce health inequalities and improve health and wellbeing for all			X	
	2 -Reduce risk taking behaviour that affects health and wellbeing			X	
Dynamic Economy	3 -Encourage access to health services for all		X	X	X
	1 -Identify a supply of employment land and premises to promote economic growth	X	X		
	2 -Improve skills for employment	X	X		
Sustainable Economy	3 -Retain existing businesses, encourage new businesses and promote tourism				X
	4 -Improve broadband connectivity and promote digital inclusion			X	
	1 -Reduce the need to travel, promote and improve access to key local	X	X	X	X

Community Plan Theme	Community Plan Draft Priorities	Air Quality, cutting carbon emissions and reducing energy consumption & Improving the environment	Promoting non-car travel, encouraging cycling and walking	Improving public health	Making town centres more vibrant
	services and to public and community transport				
	2 -Provide additional housing development including the right mix, types and tenures and to meet the needs of older people		X	X	
	3 -Work with local people to deliver strong, active and sustainable communities		X	X	X