

EDENBRIDGE CHARACTER AREA ASSESSMENT

Development and Conservation Advisory Committee - 4 March 2021

Report of: Chief Officer Planning and Regulatory Services

Status: For Decision

Also considered by:

- Cabinet - 18 March 2021

Key Decision: Yes

Executive Summary: This report recommends the adoption of the Edenbridge Character Area Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This report provides the background to the Edenbridge Character Area Assessment SPD and summarises the outcome of the public consultation for this SPD.

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

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Julia Thornton

Contact Officers: Amanda Gregor, Ext.7154 - Urban Design Officer/ Rebecca Lamb, Ext 7334 - Conservation and Design Team Leader

Recommendation to Development and Conservation Advisory Committee: that the recommendation to Cabinet is endorsed.

Recommendation to Cabinet: that Cabinets adopts the Edenbridge Character Area Assessment Supplementary Planning Document

Reason for recommendation: To build upon and provide guidance on Policy SP1 of the Core Strategy: 'all new development should be designed to a high quality and should respond to distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated'

Introduction and Background

- 1 In conjunction with Edenbridge Town Council, the Conservation and Design team have drafted the Edenbridge Character Area Assessment (ECAA) SPD. This follows a similar format to the Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment SPD.
- 2 It is required by national and local policy that all new development should be designed to a high quality and should respond to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated. The ECCA outlines the

characteristics which make Edenbridge distinctive. By understanding the existing characteristics, this document can be used as a tool to enhance and promote positive development, which is responsive and suited to the local character. If adopted, the ECAA will be a material planning consideration.

- 3 There has been close stakeholder involvement in preparing the draft SPD in order to develop a shared vision with the local community. A team of volunteers, the Edenbridge Neighbourhood Plan (ENP) Steering Group and Members of Edenbridge Ward and Town Council undertook an initial appraisal. Following completion of the draft document, further briefings were held for Edenbridge Town Councillors, and the ENP Steering Group and Task Group members. The working document was reviewed, collated and updated in the summer of 2019 to incorporate mapping, include any further development that had occurred since the original survey and bring in more references related to the streets and public realm that contribute to the character of Edenbridge. The working document was circulated to Ward and Town Councillors and a meeting to discuss the updated document was held in September 2019. Feedback from the public consultation has been incorporated into the final version of this document.
- 4 Alongside the Edenbridge Character Area Assessment SPD, an interactive map has been created to improve usability and encourage a digital approach to the Edenbridge Character Area Assessment.
- 5 The aims of the Edenbridge Character Area Assessment SPD are:
 - identify the locally distinctive features that contribute to the character within the Edenbridge town confines;
 - support development that encourages rather than erodes character and local distinctiveness;
 - provide guidance to enhance the character of the public realm as well as buildings;
 - inform the development management process in support of national and local policies;
 - raise awareness of the importance and value of local context and character.

Consultation Process and Outcomes

- 6 The draft Edenbridge Character Area Assessment SPD was published for consultation for six weeks from 12th August 2020 to 23rd September 2020.
- 7 In line with the Sevenoaks District Council's Statement of Community Involvement (Covid-19 review - June 2020) the following consultation took place, with a focus on online engagement through the use of an interactive map and online drop-in sessions:
 - published the draft Edenbridge Character Area Assessment SPD on the Sevenoaks District Council website;

- made the draft SPD available for inspection at the Council’s main office in Sevenoaks, Edenbridge Town Council offices (by appointment only) and Bridges Community Centre;
 - advertised the document and consultation event on the Council’s corporate Facebook page;
 - sent leaflets and posters to Edenbridge Town Council and Bridges Community Centre to publicise the consultation around Edenbridge;
 - emails and letters were sent to statutory bodies and to people on Sevenoaks District Council database who had indicated an interest in hearing more information about Edenbridge in line with GDPR;
 - held four interactive drop-in sessions over Zoom on 9th September 2020;
 - planning officers were contactable by phone and email throughout the consultation period to discuss in more detail;
- 8 Following the public consultation, the representations have been reviewed by Officers. A Consultation Statement (Appendix B) has been prepared setting out the consultees, a summary of the main issues raised by those persons and how those issues have been addressed in the supplementary planning document.
- 9 There were 23 respondents with a total of 35 comments from local residents and businesses alongside local and national stakeholders.
- 10 Comments received were generally supportive of the aims of the document and the content. A summary of the key issues raised and how these have been addressed:
- some minor updates which include up-to date photographs, mapping layouts and amendments related to wording to provide more clarity
 - representations were made to include the Town Station Cottages as their own character area. These have been surveyed and have been included in this assessment, because they border the town boundary with no extended separation to the existing built up area of Edenbridge and would not be considered a separate settlement.
 - a number of objections were raised regarding the industrial estate. Concerns were raised in regards to planning burdens that this document might cause with a cost to the business owners, a focus on the economic viability of the area and some concerns over gentrification. The purpose of this document is not to make additional requirements or demands to business owners. The economic requirements of businesses in Edenbridge are supported in Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy. The supplementary planning document aims to determine what the characteristics are that contribute towards making Edenbridge distinctive. To address this, a small residential area from the industrial character area has been removed and re-characterised within a more appropriate grouping. The design guidance has been amended to provide clarity and reassurance.

- representations were made to include Marsh Green within the assessment. Marsh Green is a separate settlement within the settlement hierarchy and lies outside the town confines of Edenbridge, which is the focus of this document. However, Marsh Green is within Green Belt land and is protected by national and local policy. Marsh Green will not be included in this assessment.
- representations were made within the Ashcombe Drive character area regarding connectivity and proposed development. To address this concern and provide clarity, a statement has been removed from the design guidance.

Conclusion and Next Steps

- 11 Subject to Cabinet approval, the Edenbridge Character Area Assessment SPD and Adoption Statement will be made available for inspection at the Sevenoaks District Council and Edenbridge Town Council offices and published on the Sevenoaks District Council's website, in line with the Town and Country Planning Regulations (2012), Part 5, Regulation 14.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

The Council does not adopt the Edenbridge Character Area Assessment SPD. The SPD would not be used as a tool to enhance and promote positive development, which is responsive and suited to local character.

Key Implications

Financial

No additional costs to the Council arise from the Edenbridge Character Area Assessment SPD.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement

None - the Edenbridge Character Area Assessment SPD has been prepared in line with national planning policy and guidance and supports SP1 of the Core Strategy, which is our adopted development plan.

Equality Assessment (Compulsory heading - do not delete)

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.

Conclusions

Officers will be happy to take any questions on the content of this report at the meeting.

Appendices

Appendix A - Edenbridge Character Area Assessment SPD

Appendix B - Edenbridge Character Area Assessment Consultation Statement

Appendix C - Map of Edenbridge Character Area

Appendix D - [Link to Edenbridge Character Area Interactive Map](https://maps.sevenoaks.gov.uk/edenbridgecaa/)
<https://maps.sevenoaks.gov.uk/edenbridgecaa/>

Background Papers

[National Planning Policy Framework, 2019](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2) -
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

[Core Strategy Development Plan, 2011](https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069129/current_local_plan/249/core_strategy_development_plan) -
https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069129/current_local_plan/249/core_strategy_development_plan

[Statement of Community Involvement \(SCI, 2020 - June COVID-19 Review\)](https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069129/current_local_plan/258/statement_of_community_involvement) -
https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069129/current_local_plan/258/statement_of_community_involvement

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