

By email:
FutureOfTransport@dft.gov.uk

Tel No: 01732 227000
Ask for: Helen French
Email: Netzero2030@sevenoaks.gov.uk
My Ref:
Your
Ref:
Date: 22 November 2021

Dear Sir/Madam

Future of Transport Regulatory Review: Zero Emission Vehicles

Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) support the aspiration to improve the electric vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure and believe that all parties, private and public, national and local, have a part to play in the transition from traditional combustion engines to low emission and electric vehicles. This is set out in the recently adopted Low Emission and Electric Vehicle Strategy https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/3232/low_emission_and_electric_vehicle_strategy.

Whilst we appreciate and understand that Local Authorities need to play a part in this transition, we have concerns with regards to this current consultation. Our concerns relate to the following aspects of the consultation, we have no comments to make on the other aspects:

1. The proposed statutory duty on Local Authorities to plan for sufficient provision of electric vehicle chargepoints
2. The proposed statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide sufficient electric vehicle chargepoints
3. The requirement for landowners to provide a minimum level of chargepoints in non-residential car parks

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

Firstly, the consultation takes no account of two tier authorities such as in Kent where the County Council is the highways authority and there are 12 District and Borough Councils. It is not clear whether the statutory duty suggested in the consultation will be placed on the County Council as the highways authority or the local District or Borough Council, or both. This will need clarification and proper consideration.

1. The proposed statutory duty on Local Authorities to plan for sufficient provision of electric vehicle chargepoints

Local authorities are already required to plan for transport in the local transport plan and this should include provision for electric vehicle charging points alongside other sustainable transport options. In two tier areas, County and District Councils work together to identify the transport provision required to support the local authority area. Local authorities can already choose to proactively identify the most suitable locations for electric vehicle charging points and include them in the local transport plan and associated documents.

In addition, charging infrastructure is already included within local planning policies. We have no objection to the strengthening of national planning policies to support the inclusion of charging points in suitable new development and SDC's adopted and emerging Local Plan includes an electric vehicle charging policy.

Currently, publically accessible chargepoints are being provided on a supply and demand basis primarily by chargepoint operators. It is unclear how placing a statutory duty on local authorities to plan for sufficient provision of electric vehicle chargepoints will significantly aid in the delivery of chargepoints, when consideration is already required through existing policy. A statutory duty imposed on local authorities, may create additional burden for all parties, and in a rapidly changing market, result in plans being rendered out of date almost immediately and allow for limited flexibility.

2. The proposed statutory duty on Local Authorities to provide sufficient electric vehicle chargepoints

The chargepoint operators are the main leaders in providing a range of publically accessible competitive and viable charging options for EV drivers. These are currently provided in a supply and demand scenario with landowners. It is agreed that as landowners, local authorities have a part to play in delivering charging infrastructure, however they are only one piece in a very large and complex puzzle. Landowners, chargepoint operators and energy providers are all essential to successful chargepoint installation and all parties need to work together to deliver the necessary EV charging infrastructure across the country. As a council, our role is to provide strategic oversight and enable ev chargepoints where possible, however, our role and authority would need to change if we are required under a statutory duty to also provide for sufficient chargepoints. This would need new legislation, extensive funding, technical training and currently local authorities do not have the technical expertise, time or financial resources nor the legislative authority to take on this statutory duty. It is unrealistic, overly simplistic and restrictive to expect local authorities to have a legal responsibility to provide such infrastructure.

The delivery of EV charging infrastructure should not be subject to a statutory duty however, if Local Authorities are legally required to provide for charging infrastructure, there will need to be significant funding provided to cover the cost. There is no indication, within the consultation, of any funding being provided to Local Authorities to discharge a duty to plan for or provide chargepoints.

3. The requirement for landowners to provide a minimum level of chargepoints in existing and new non-residential car parks

Sevenoaks District Council are already undertaking projects to install electric vehicles charging infrastructure in car parks, as set out in the Low Emissions and Electric Vehicle Strategy. In addition, we are looking at how we can support the uptake of electric vehicles and increase the charging infrastructure on land where we do not have direct control. There is also a significant role to be played by the energy sector. Often the main issue with installing charging points is insufficient energy infrastructure, particularly in rural areas. A requirement for a minimum level of EV charging infrastructure in all non-residential car parks, as the consultation suggests, must take account of physical limitations, feasibility issues and viability.

In summary, Sevenoaks District Council is supportive of improvements to the electric vehicle charging infrastructure and the uptake of electric and low emission vehicles. However, it is clear that there should not be a legal responsibility for local authorities to plan for and provide the necessary infrastructure. There are many ways in which EV chargepoints can be, and are already being, provided and all methods should be utilised rather than narrowing the focus and responsibilities onto Local Authorities.

I trust the above is clear, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact the Council.

Yours faithfully,

Helen French

Net Zero Project Co-ordinator
Sevenoaks District Council

Response agreed by Cllr M McArthur Cleaner and Greener Portfolio Holder