

Appendix 1

Plan 2040 – A new Local Plan for Sevenoaks District

Plain Text Version

Foreword from Councillor Julia Thornton

Development and Conservation Portfolio Holder, November 2022

I am pleased to be able to introduce this new public consultation document for the emerging Sevenoaks District Local Plan. Once adopted, this Plan will provide the framework for managing development in the local area and addressing the key planning issues within the District.

Planning for the next 15 years is not a simple task, particularly in light of the fundamental social, economic and to some extent environmental challenges we have all experienced over the past few years, since our last consultation on the Local Plan. All of these factors influence land use planning and we need to plan for change and have sufficient flexibility to respond to the unexpected.

We need your help to ensure that we have identified the right priorities and approaches for managing development and the sustainable and inclusive growth of the District. Sevenoaks faces a number of competing challenges, not least providing the affordable homes that our children and ageing relatives need whilst protecting the green spaces that our communities cherish.

This Plan contains policies to deliver new homes, vibrant high streets, the right type of employment spaces to ensure a healthy economy and new infrastructure to support growth, whilst protecting the natural environment and heritage buildings. It focuses on a number of key themes, to ensure that new development:

1. Promotes good mental and physical **health**,
2. Helps to deliver on our **Net Zero 2030** commitment to tackle climate change, including through low carbon development, and
3. Supports high quality **design**, to create places and spaces that respect local character.

This Plan will replace the existing Core Strategy (2011) and the Allocations and Development Management Plan (2015). It is also the first of several public consultations that we anticipate being undertaken, so there will be plenty of opportunity to make your views known and help frame what we intend to be an ambitious and appropriate plan for the District.

The document is based on a comprehensive and up to date evidence base for the local area. We are working with an extensive range of partners and stakeholders, including those responsible for health, education, transport and water, and our neighbouring authorities, to ensure that this Plan fully addresses all needs and challenges. It takes, as its starting point, the current state of the District and suggests a vision for 2040 that aims to protect and enhance the existing qualities of our area, whilst creating new places to help meet future needs.

We will particularly welcome contributions that help to achieve a genuinely shared and visionary plan with a focus on meeting the needs of all who live and work in the district.

Please let us know your views.

Contents

	Chapter	Page
	Introduction	1
1	Development Strategy	11
2	Housing Choice for All	21
3	Employment and Economy	39
4	Climate Change	55
5	Design	63
6	Health and Wellbeing	67
7	Historic Environment	73
8	Natural Environment	79
9	Infrastructure and Community	89
10	Transport	101

List of Policies

Policy	Title	Strategic	Page
Policy ST1	A Balanced Strategy for Growth	Y	17
Policy H1	Housing Mix	Y	24
Policy H2	Provision of Affordable Housing	Y	25
Policy H3	Housing in Rural Areas		27
Policy H4	Housing for Older People		30
Policy H5	Build to Rent		31
Policy H6	Smaller Sites		33
Policy H7	Housing Density and Intensification		36
Policy GT1	Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations	Y	37
Policy GT2	Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation		37
Policy EMP1	Delivering Economic Success	Y	40
Policy EMP2	Allocated Sites to meet Economic Needs	Y	41
Policy EMP3	Employment Uses		41
Policy EMP4	Flexible Workspace, Affordable Workspace, Flexible Office Space and Co-Location		43
Policy EMP5	Rural Economy		44
Policy TLC1	Town and Local Centres	Y	46
Policy SEV1	Sevenoaks Town Centre		46
Policy SWN1	Swanley Town Centre		47
Policy EDN1	Edenbridge Town Centre		48
Policy WST1	Westerham Town Centre		48
Policy NAG1	New Ash Green Village Centre		49
Policy TLC2	Town Centre Development Management		51
Policy TO1	Tourism and the Visitor Economy		52
Policy CC1	Climate Change	Y	57
Policy CC2	Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Development		58
Policy CC3	Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Generation		59
Policy W1	Flood Risk in Sevenoaks District		60
Policy W2	Sustainable Drainage		61
Policy W3	Water Management, Stress and Efficiency		62
Policy DE1	Design Review Panel		64
Policy DE2	Outline Planning Applications		64
Policy DE3	Ensuring Design Quality		64
Policy DE4	Design Codes		65
Policy HW1	Health and Wellbeing		68
Policy AQ1	Air Quality		70
Policy HW2	Noise		71
Policy HEN1	Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment	Y	74
Policy HEN2	Sensitively Managing Change in the Historic Environment		75
Policy HEN3	Archaeology		76

Policy	Title	Strategic	Page
Policy HEN4	Locally Listed Buildings		76
Policy HEN5	Responding to Climate Change in the Historic Environment		77
Policy HEN6	Shopfronts and Signage		77
Policy HEN7	Historic Parks and Gardens		78
Policy NE1	Landscape and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	Y	80
Policy BW1	Safeguarding Places for Wildlife and Nature		83
Policy AF1	Ashdown Forest		84
Policy BW2	Biodiversity in New Development		86
Policy IN1	Infrastructure Delivery	Y	90
Policy OS1	Open Space and Recreation		92
Policy OS2	Children and Young People Play Space		93
Policy ED1	Education		94
Policy SL1	Sport and Leisure Facilities		96
Policy COM1	Protection of Community Uses		98
Policy IN2	Water Infrastructure		99
Policy T1	Sustainable Movement Network	Y	102
Policy T2	Cycling and Walking		103
Policy T3	Vehicle Parking		104
Policy T4	Electric Vehicle Charging Points		106

Introduction

Overarching Statement

This Local Plan explains how the Council intends to meet development needs and protect the environment in Sevenoaks District between 2022 and 2040. The document focuses on the opportunities for new homes, employment spaces and infrastructure provision in existing settlements. A further document, covering all other parts of the District, will be issued next year. We are keen to receive your views on the proposed policies and allocations and hope that you will take the opportunity to submit your views.

Opening Chapter Statement

This Local Plan is issued for consultation under Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

The Purpose of the Consultation

The Regulations ask for comments on ***what the plan ought to contain***. We are inviting comments accordingly, and in particular we are seeking responses to the specific questions contained within the document.

The consultation questions are targeted, but there is an opportunity to provide additional information or comments at the end of the consultation.

This version of the Local Plan focuses on making best and efficient use of land in towns and settlements across the District, reflecting the strategy for meeting development needs, as explained in Chapter 1.

A further Regulation 18 document, covering land outside of these settlements, will be published next year. The final plan will cover land across the District as a whole, both inside and outside of settlements.

The document includes both strategic and non-strategic policies, as is indicated on the list of policies.

Subsection 1 – What is the District like?

Opening Chapter Statement
Sevenoaks District is located in West Kent, with the edge of Greater London to the north-west, Surrey to the west and East Sussex to the south.

The District has eight Neighbouring Authorities; London Borough of Bexley, London Borough of Bromley, Dartford, Gravesham, Tandridge, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Wealden. Sevenoaks District covers approximately 143 square miles and has a population of 120,500 (2021 Census Data).

There are a total of 56 settlements in Sevenoaks District, as set out in the District's Settlement Hierarchy (July 2022).

This includes the Principal Town of Sevenoaks Urban Area, the Towns of Swanley, Edenbridge and Westerham and many smaller settlements, the largest of which are the Local Service Centres of New Ash Green and Otford.

Demographics

The population of the District is expected to grow, and the structure of the population expected to change, over the plan period, due to an ageing population, an increase in birth rate and internal migration patterns (largely due to people moving out of London into Sevenoaks). 22% of the District's population are currently aged 65 or over, and this figure is expected to grow to 24% over the plan period. This growing population and changing age structure presents a key challenge for the District.

There are areas of affluence in the District, as well as pockets of deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the official measure of relative deprivation for small areas in England. The IMD uses information about income, employment, health, education, crime and living environment to rank every small area in England from 1 (most deprived) to 32,844 (least deprived). According to the IMD, Sevenoaks District is the second least deprived local authority in Kent, behind Tunbridge Wells Borough, although there are areas that are within the 30% most deprived in the country, namely Swanley St Mary's and Swanley White Oak.

Sevenoaks District has generally high house prices. In 2020, the median house price in the District was £425,000, the highest in Kent, and house prices were 12.6 times annual earning. This makes it very difficult for first time buyers and young families to remain in the District. There is a requirement to provide 13,566 new homes over the plan period, including a buffer for flexibility in delivery, in order to meet the needs of the growing population. This includes a high proportion of affordable homes and specialist accommodation for older people.

The District has the lowest level of unemployment in Kent. The residents of the District are generally well qualified with only 8% of the population having no academic qualifications. There are a number of employment areas within the District, including at Vestry Estate in Northern

Sevenoaks and in Swanley. The majority of residents work in the West Kent area, with more than 40% working in Greater London. The District also has a strong rural economy, and many residents work from home, but issues with connectivity and broadband are common.

Landscape and Setting

The District has a high quality landscape with a mostly rural character. 60% of the District lies within the Kent Downs or High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There are many areas of woodland, much of which is designated as Ancient Woodland. Parts of the District afford impressive views over Kent and the South East, particularly from the North Downs and the Greensand Ridge. The District is also rich in biodiversity with many Wildlife Reserves, designated areas as well as the Rivers Darent, Eden and Medway.

There are many historic settlements in the District, as is reflected in the high number of Conservation Areas and listed buildings. The District boasts many nationally recognised heritage assets including the historic estates of:

1. Knole;
2. Chartwell;
3. Hever Castle;
4. Penshurst Place; and
5. Lullingstone Castle.

Other places of interest include the National Trust village at Chiddingstone, Eynsford Castle ruin, Lullingstone Roman Villa, Otford Palace and Toys Hill (the birthplace of the National Trust).

Connectivity

Sevenoaks District is a popular place to live, partly because of its proximity to London and accessibility to Europe. Strong road connections are provided by the strategic road network providing good links to the wider region.

There are 14 train stations within the District, as well as others located just beyond the District border, many of which provide services into Central London in under an hour. The District is also well located for Gatwick and Heathrow airports, as well as the Channel Ports, Ashford and Ebbsfleet International stations.

Healthcare, Education and Retail

We want to ensure that the District is a safe place for all to live, work and travel, while encouraging healthy lifestyles and providing people with access to good quality healthcare. There are two minor injury hospitals: Sevenoaks Hospital and Edenbridge & District War Memorial Hospital, as well as 21 Doctors Surgeries.

There are no major medical facilities within the District for residents, who have to travel out of District to Tunbridge Wells Hospital, the Princess Royal University Hospital (PRUH) (Orpington), Queen Mary's Hospital (Sidcup), Darent Valley Hospital (Dartford), Maidstone Hospital and London hospitals.

Education within the District is varied with a mixture of state and private, primary and secondary provision. Whilst there are 42 primary schools, there are only five state secondary schools within the District:

1. Knole Academy;
2. Orchards Academy;
3. Trinity School;
4. Weald of Kent Grammar School Sevenoaks Annex; and
5. Tunbridge Wells Boys Grammar School Sevenoaks Annex.

Many children are being sent outside of the District, or privately, for their secondary education.

The District has vibrant town centres with many independent shops and a good retail offering. There is, however, some strong competition from nearby areas including Tunbridge Wells, Bromley and Bluewater. Some areas are in need of regeneration, including Swanley Town Centre and New Ash Green Village Centre. Areas outside of the towns are served by local services and facilities within villages. These services are of great value to local communities and contribute to the District's rural economy.

Subsection 2 – Strategic Issues

Opening Chapter Statement

The Council thinks that the following issues and considerations will be influential in shaping spatial development in Sevenoaks District over the period of the plan. They have informed the development of the Spatial Vision that underpins the objectives and all strategic policies.

I1. Delivering on Net Zero:

The impact of climate change will be a significant and pressing challenge for all of us over the period of this Local Plan. The objectives and strategic policies support the Council’s wider net zero agenda, to reduce carbon emissions.

I2. Healthy Communities:

The global pandemic has reinforced the importance of spatial planning in maintaining public health. Policies should provide scope to deliver health infrastructure and promote positive physical and mental health outcomes.

I3. Promoting Design Excellence:

High quality design is central to the delivery of the strategic objectives in this plan. It lies at the heart of maintaining local character and more fundamentally, delivering places and spaces that function in a manner that is consistent with our planning policies.

I4. Homes to meet Local Needs:

Sevenoaks District remains an expensive place to live and many residents continue to struggle to find a home to meet their needs. Delivering genuinely affordable homes remains a key priority for the Council.

I5. Agile Economy and Resilient Town Centres:

The global pandemic has accelerated many of the existing trends, such as online shopping and home working, that have started to shape our local economy over recent years. Policies in the plan must provide a response to these issues alongside other Council strategies, to ensure our economy remains strong and resilient to change.

I6. Infrastructure to Support Planned Growth:

The Local Plan must provide mechanisms to deliver the necessary infrastructure to support planned growth.

I7. Protecting the Natural and Built Environment:

Natural resources and heritage assets remain key aspects of the District-wide character and continue to be valued by local residents. The emerging Local Plan will pursue a character-led approach to growth that protects these aspects.

18. Resilience to Change:

Emerging evidence highlights the economic trends and demographic changes that will shape our District over the plan period. The plan must also incorporate flexibility to unexpected social, economic and environmental events.

Question
Are there additional issues that are likely to influence spatial development in the District over the plan period?

Subsection 3 – Vision and Objectives

Opening Chapter Statement

The Spatial Vision is vitally important in that it is both a starting point for all aspects of the Plan and a statement of how the District will look at the end of the Local Plan period, if strategic objectives are successfully delivered. The Vision has been informed by evidence that supports this Local Plan and also reflects the Council's wider objectives on matters such as Net Zero and health and wellbeing.

Key aspects of the Spatial Vision will be:

V1. Achievement of the Council's Net Zero aspirations - Significantly reducing carbon emissions and adapting to a changing climate.

V2. Delivery of sustainable and equitable infrastructure - To meet the needs of all residents, regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, disability or social group. In transport terms, we want to encourage sustainable transport choices, as long as the approach does not alienate particular groups – for example, an active travel strategy that provides genuine choices for an aging population.

Community infrastructure should be provided to meet the needs arising from planned growth, particularly in relation to health and education.

V3. Healthy places and spaces, promotion of mental and physical health - Incorporating green space and healthy design principles, to encourage good physical and mental health. Recognition of health as a principle that cuts across all policies in the plan.

V4. V4 Homes to meet identified needs – Boosting the supply of homes including much needed affordable homes across the District:

V5. Greater economic competitiveness - Through vital and viable, unique and flexible town centres, capitalising on the strategic location of the District and its functional economic links. Ensuring the delivery of the right type of employment space and supporting the rural economy are equally important in encouraging economic competitiveness.

V6. Continued protection of natural resources - Our district's valuable natural and historic built environment makes an important contribution to the quality of life of our residents and all who visit.

V7. Embracing emerging trends, such as smart technology - Future proofing and allowing flexibility, promoting innovation.

V8. Responding to demographic change - Addressing migration trends and demographic pressures, such as the aging population.

V9. Continued engagement with neighbouring authorities - Including London Boroughs.

V10. Meeting development needs in a way that respects local character and promotes design excellence - Encouraging high quality design for new development, delivering enjoyable and attractive places to live, work and relax, that respect local character and provide innovative ways to support mental and physical well-being.

Vision and Objectives	
Vision	Objectives
<p>V1. Healthy places and spaces, promotion of mental and physical health - Incorporating green space and healthy design principles, to encourage good physical and mental health. Recognition of health as a principle that cuts across all policies in the plan.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p><i>OB1: Recognise the link between the places and spaces that we live in and the quality of residents' mental and physical health.</i></p> <p><i>OB2: Work closely with healthcare providers to develop policies that promote good physical and mental health as an outcome.</i></p>
<p>V2. Achievement of the Council's Net Zero aspirations - Significantly reducing carbon emissions and adapting to a changing climate.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p><i>OB3: Ensure the Council's net zero objectives influence all development taking place in the District.</i></p> <p><i>OB4: Provide sufficient flexibility in policies to enforce changing national standards, best practice and evidence base updates that will enviably occur over the plan period.</i></p> <p><i>OB5: Allow residents to make lifestyle choices that make a positive contribution to net zero objectives.</i></p>
<p>V3. Delivering design excellence in our built environment that responds to our distinctive local character and creates the heritage of the future - Demanding well-designed spaces that deliver exceptional places to live, work and relax, provide innovative ways to support mental and physical well-being.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p><i>OB6: Deliver a character-led-approach to development that demonstrates the Government's priorities for well-designed places. (National Design Guide, 2021: The Ten Characteristics of Place)</i></p> <p><i>OB7: Require the production of design codes for new development that meet the provisions of national planning guidance</i></p>
<p>V4 Homes to meet identified needs - Boosting the supply of homes including much needed affordable homes across the District:</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p><i>OB8: Deliver market and affordable homes to reflect the latest information on housing needs.</i></p>

Vision and Objectives	
	<p><i>OB9: Optimise the supply of new homes in existing settlements.</i></p> <p><i>OB10: Ensure new housing development makes best and most efficient use of land.</i></p>
<p>V5. Greater economic competitiveness - Through vital and viable, unique and flexible town centres, capitalising on the strategic location of the District and its functional economic links. Ensuring the delivery of the right type of employment space and supporting the rural economy are equally important in encouraging economic competitiveness.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p><i>OB11: Promote resilient and agile town centres that are able to respond to change</i></p> <p><i>OB12: Encourage the delivery of workspace to meet occupier demands.</i></p> <p><i>OB13: Safeguard land to meet employment needs over the plan period.</i></p>
<p>V6. Continued protection of natural resources - Our district's valuable natural and historic built environment makes an important contribution to the quality of life of our residents and all who visit.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p><i>OB14: Ensure the District retains a high quality natural environment over the period of the Local Plan including delivering bio-diversity net gain on new development.</i></p> <p><i>OB15: Continue to support development that protects and enhances the District's historic environment and ensures that it can be enjoyed by future generations.</i></p>
<p>V7. Delivery of sustainable and equitable infrastructure - To meet the needs of all residents, regardless of ethnicity, gender, age, disability or social group. In transport terms, we want to encourage sustainable transport choices, as long as the approach does not alienate particular groups – for example, an active travel strategy that provides genuine choices for an aging population.</p> <p>Community infrastructure should be provided to meet the needs arising from planned growth, particularly in relation to health and education.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p><i>OB16: Work with stakeholders to address barriers that prevent residents from making sustainable transport choices.</i></p> <p><i>OB17: Support equal access to public transport services for all residents.</i></p> <p><i>OB18: Co-ordinate the delivery of necessary infrastructure to support planned growth.</i></p>
<p>V8. Embracing emerging trends, such as smart technology - Future proofing and allowing flexibility, promoting innovation.</p>	<p>We will:</p>

Vision and Objectives	
	<p><i>OB19: Acknowledge smart technology as an emerging trend that is likely shape development in the District.</i></p> <p><i>OB20: Champion the use of smart technology, where it is able to address the key issues facing the District over the period of the plan.</i></p>
<p>V9. Responding to demographic change - Addressing migration trends and demographic pressures.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p><i>OB21: Bring forward policies with sufficient flexibility to respond to future demographic changes that will shape the District over the plan period.</i></p> <p><i>OB22: Ensure demographic shifts form the starting point for future evidence base and discussions with neighbouring authorities.</i></p>
<p>V10. Continued engagement with neighbouring authorities - Including London Boroughs.</p>	<p>We will:</p> <p><i>OB23: Continue to work with neighbouring authorities to respond to strategic matters.</i></p>

Question
Do you support the identified strategic Vision and Objectives?

Chapter 1 – Development Strategy

Overarching Statement

This Plan will deliver the new homes that our communities need, the right type of employment spaces and vibrant high streets to ensure a healthy economy and new infrastructure to support growth, whilst protecting the natural environment and our built heritage. This development strategy seeks to achieve these goals.

Opening Chapter Statement

Sevenoaks District is subject to numerous social, economic and environmental pressures that define our complex and often competing development needs. New homes are required for a growing population and new employment space must be delivered if the District is to remain economically competitive. Supporting infrastructure is essential, if planned growth is to be truly sustainable. The need to protect our green and natural spaces for current and future populations, has also never been greater. The proposed development strategy within this chapter provides a framework to meet these needs.

1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) set outs key national priorities to ensure that the planning system delivers sustainable development. This development strategy and the plan as a whole responds to and aligns with national policy in the NPPF, promoting the sustainable development of the District. This includes three dimensions; economic, environmental and social. In accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development (NPPF para. 11 a-b), this local plan aims to positively plan for the development needs of the area, including housing, infrastructure, employment and retail, it aims to protect and improve the environment and respond to climate change. The plan has been prepared in accordance with NPPF Chapter 3 (Plan-making), to provide a clear, deliverable, evidenced-based plan, as a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.

1.2 This Local Plan focuses on delivering the Council’s Spatial Vision for 2040. The Plan covers the period 2022 to 2040, which fully complies with the NPPF requirement that plans should cover at least a 15-year timeframe from adoption. It is informed by an up-to-date evidence base which outlines development needs up to 2040. The Plan focuses on meeting the overarching objective of national planning guidance to bring forward sustainable development. It is prepared at a time of uncertainty across the three pillars of sustainability resulting from the societal changes that are emerging from the Coronavirus pandemic, economic instability and environmental impact of climate changes. The future direction of national policy also remains unclear and it is important that the Plan incorporates sufficient flexibility to respond, as these matters are resolved.

1.3 In addition to meeting District-wide development needs, the Local Plan will plan positively for new development and once adopted, will have primacy in planning decisions. This means the Council will be required to determine planning applications in accordance with policies, unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise. The Council expects new development proposals to reflect the conclusions of relevant evidence base documents that have informed the production of policies in this document.

1.4 The Local Plan must be positive in planning for new homes to meet our pressing needs and some difficult choices will need to be made in seeking the right balance between providing new homes supported by infrastructure, protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment, and supporting the urban and rural economies. It is vital that new development makes best and most efficient use of land in sustainable locations whilst ensuring that new development is designed to the highest quality and helps to meet our net zero 2030 commitment.

Strategic Objectives
OB3 Ensure the Council's net zero objectives influence all development taking place in the District.
OB10 Ensuring new housing development makes best and most efficient use of land
OB18 Co-ordinate the delivery of necessary infrastructure to support planned growth.
OB23 Continue to work with neighbouring authorities to respond to strategic matters.

Subsection 1 – Summary of Development Needs

1.5 This Local Plan considers how best to meet identified development needs, as far as possible, given wider objectives. The headline needs for this District are:

Homes	714 units per annum (a figure provided by central government)
Employment land	5.7 hectares
Gypsy and Traveller pitches	43
Retail floorspace	Maintaining existing provision

1.6 The government provides a standardised assessment methodology for assessing housing need, which is based on household projections produced by the ONS that are adjusted to take account of affordability. For Sevenoaks, this means the provision of 714 homes per year. To put this figure in context, this would triple the approximately 250 homes which have been delivered each year over the past 10 years. Rolled forward, the Council's housing need for the entire Plan period (2022-2040) is 12,852 homes. Due to difficulties in supply over recent years, our housing requirement will also require a buffer of one year (714) to provide flexibility in delivery which results in an overall housing need of 13,566.

1.7 Meeting development needs, particularly housing needs, within a constrained environment is clearly a defining factor for this Plan. But just as important is the need to place a high value on the varied and distinctive places and communities that make up Sevenoaks District and ensure that any new development respects these differences and is designed to respond to **local character**. We want to create healthy **communities**, not just houses, and these places need to be supported by services and infrastructure to promote **well-being**, so that people and future generations will choose to live and work in these sustainable locations. We will promote low carbon development to help honour our **Net Zero 2030** commitment.

1.8 We are working closely with our town and parish councils whom are preparing Neighbourhood Plans for their areas. Where site allocations are proposed in areas that are developing a Neighbourhood Plan, the Local Plan will set the high-level strategic aims in terms of land-use and the approximate quantum of development and the Neighbourhood Plan can provide more detail in terms of design, infrastructure and local character and distinctiveness.

Place-making priorities

Sevenoaks Urban Area Principal town, intensification of urban area, sustainable growth at station gateway and Tarmac quarry, supporting economic vitality of high street and local businesses.	Swanley Second town, regeneration priority focusing on the town centre offer. Opportunities for sustainable intensification and infrastructure improvements, capitalising on connections with London.
Edenbridge Infrastructure improvements, regeneration of High Street, growth of town (residential and economic) to support the provision and retention of facilities and services.	Westerham Growth in tourism and rural economy sector, connectivity improvements, and respect of sensitive AONB location.

Development Strategy – Existing Settlements

1.9 The Council's strategy is to fully explore opportunities to accommodate its strategic development needs in existing settlements. Green Belt land will only be released where there are exceptional circumstances for doing so and all reasonable alternatives have been explored, including opportunities in neighbouring authorities.

1.10 This version of the Plan is central to the Council's development strategy because it focuses on the potential that exists in settlements across the District, particularly in relation to new homes, and explores the opportunities to make the most of land in these areas. Taking account of all strategic objectives and policy requirements the Plan seeks to:

1. Promote a character driven approach to meeting development needs;
2. Proactively identify suitable and achievable development potential in existing settlements;
3. Identify and provide development aspirations and criteria for key development opportunities;
4. Encourage proposals that make best and most efficient use of land, including the delivery of development at sustainable densities;
5. Support the delivery of new homes on small sites up to 1 hectare in size;
6. Actively encourage the exploration of other mechanisms to deliver new homes, such as the intensification of under used land in existing settlements.

1.11 This initial consultation focuses on optimising development within existing settlements, within the boundaries of the District's towns and villages, where inset from the Green Belt. These are the most sustainable locations in the District, well served by public transport and with good access to services and facilities. Focusing development in these areas, in accordance

with national policy, will promote sustainable transport choices which are key to achieving the Council’s net zero 2030 commitment.

1.12 We have considered sites in existing settlements submitted under the call for sites, but have also proactively identified development opportunities, through the Settlement Capacity Study (2022). We have used the brownfield register and other tools to maximise the contribution from previously developed land and have sought to optimise density on these urban sites, using the District-wide character study (DWCS), to guide the form of development, including gentle densification in existing lower density areas, and optimising densities in highly sustainable locations. This plan also explores options for the best use of land, through co-location and mixed-use development, to combine different land uses to ensure the most efficient development scenarios. Further work will be undertaken on all of these aspects as the Plan progresses, to consider whether there is any additional potential available from further increased densities and intensification, informed by the DWCS. This includes opportunities to explore the development potential of land at and surrounding Sevenoaks Station.

1.13 This consultation considers three density scenarios for the settlements, as defined below – Minimum Uplift, Optimum and Optimum Plus and comments are welcome on these options:

Settlement Density Options

Option 1 Minimum uplift	Option 2 Optimum	Option 3 Optimum Plus
Modest density increase across all sites.	Optimising density on sites, whilst respecting local character, with higher densities in sustainable locations (focusing on towns, as defined through the settlement hierarchy).	Maximum change - opportunities to maximise densities, particularly in town centres and close to transport hubs.

Settlement Density Scenarios

	Minimum uplift (dph)	Optimum (dph)*	Optimum Plus (dph)
Town centre locations and close to transport nodes	150	150+	150+
Built up areas	50	100	150
Edge of built up areas	40	50	60

**Mid-point, to be further informed by character based approach
Further details on how these density levels have been set are included within the Housing chapter.*

1.14 The minimum uplift scenario will result in greater unmet need which will need to be accommodated in neighbouring areas or in the Green Belt. The minimum uplift scenario results in the provision of approx. 7,500 homes which leaves a shortfall of approx. 6,000 units over the plan period. This level of unmet need will be discussed with neighbouring authorities through the Duty to Co-operate.

Breakdown of Housing Supply

	Option 1 Minimum uplift	Option 2 Optimum	Option 3 Optimum Plus
Sites with planning permission at April 2022	2,800 (TBC)	2,800 (TBC)	2,800 (TBC)
Sites within existing settlements proposed for allocation	1,250 (TBC)	1,750 (TBC)	2,150 (TBC)
Windfall / small sites allowance	1,000 (TBC)	1,000 (TBC)	1,000 (TBC)
Future potential identified in Settlement Capacity Study	650 (TBC)	1,050 (TBC)	1,450 (TBC)
Sites with planning applications under consideration at April 2022	1,855	1,855	1,855
Potential identified through discussions with neighbouring authorities	TBC	TBC	TBC
TOTAL	7,555	8,465	9,255

1.15 This initial 'settlement focus' starting point is advanced as the 'base' building block for the new Local Plan strategy. By clearly establishing what level of development can be achieved in our settlements, this will inform ongoing discussions with neighbouring authorities, under the Duty to Co-operate, as to whether they are able to assist with accommodating any unmet need. The NPPF (para.141) makes it very clear that before considering Green Belt release, all other reasonable options for meeting development needs should be fully examined. It directs authorities to develop a strategy which first:

1. Makes as much use as possible of suitable brownfield sites/underutilised land
2. Optimises density of development, particularly in town centres and locations well served by public transport

3. Is informed by discussions with neighbouring authorities as to whether they could accommodate need

1.16 However, there are numerous barriers which may prevent neighbouring authorities from assisting with any unmet needs, including Green Belt, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Flood Zones and internationally-designated wildlife sites. These authorities are also required to meet their own challenging needs, in addition to potentially meeting the unmet needs of authorities other than Sevenoaks. The challenges of reaching any agreement via bilateral discussions are not insignificant, particularly in the absence of a sub-regional strategy.

1.17 Clearly there will be a balance between how much can be achieved within the highly constrained settlements within Sevenoaks District, which make up 7% of the District, what might be achieved elsewhere in neighbouring authorities through the Duty to Cooperate, and what might be achieved through potential Green Belt release.

Policy ST1 - A Balanced Strategy for Growth

It is suggested that the overarching strategic development strategy for the District focuses on the following priorities:

1. The balanced strategy for growth over the period 2022-2040, as outlined on the Key Diagram, aims to ensure that a minimum of 714 dwellings pa, together with 5.7 ha of employment land are developed, supported by strategic infrastructure and services;
2. Development should be focused within the boundaries of existing settlements, including building at higher density and optimising the use of previously developed 'brownfield land'. There will be a particular focus on sites that are close to services and facilities and/or well-connected by public transport, walking and cycling. Major schemes will be required to demonstrate they have made best and most efficient use of land, taking account of all relevant evidence base documents;
3. The four towns within the District - Sevenoaks, Swanley, Edenbridge and Westerham, will sequentially be the focus for development, with more moderate development within the Local Service Centres and Service Villages; and
4. Development proposals for the four towns will be expected to comply with the place-making proposals and priorities listed in the supporting text and emerging Neighbourhood Plans.

We will promote sustainable patterns of development by amending Green Belt boundaries only in 'exceptional circumstances', where there is a clear need, where sites have good access to services and facilities and their release has limited impact on the purposes of the Green Belt.

Green Belt release will be required if we are unable to meet needs within existing settlements or via the Duty to Co-operate with neighbouring authorities (and this will be subject to the subsequent Local Plan (Reg. 18) consultation in 2023).

Questions

Our proposed development strategy is summarised below:

1. Step 1: Focus on optimising density and utilising brownfield land in existing settlements (the focus of this Regulation 18 consultation)
2. Step 2: Robust Duty to Co-operate discussions with neighbouring authorities, informed by step 1 and the constraints of the District.
3. Step 3: Green Belt release, where required, in Exceptional Circumstances (to be covered within the subsequent Regulation 18 consultation)

Do you agree with this proposed development strategy?

We are considering density within existing settlements at different levels – Minimum Uplift, Optimum and Optimum + - which is your preferred approach? (select one of 3 or 'none of the above')

Are you aware of any additional sites in existing settlements which we have not yet considered?

Subsection 2 – Sevenoaks Railway Station

1.18 The Council recognises the development potential of land at and surrounding Sevenoaks Railway Station. There are opportunities to improve the public realm, enhance the arrival experience, complement the nearby town centre and make a meaningful contribution towards District-wide development needs. Development around the station that meets other policies in the Local Plan, supports the Council's wider objective to make best and most efficient use of land in existing settlements, before releasing Green Belt land.

1.19 The Station Area is one of the most accessible locations in Sevenoaks District, with fast and frequent train services to London, the south coast and across the wider county of Kent. Located approximately 750 metres to the north-west of the main retail and commercial core of Sevenoaks town, the station itself comprises a modern glass box style ticket hall to the west of London Road and a surface car park of 517 parking spaces to the east.

1.20 The station buildings are surrounded by an eclectic selection of land uses and under utilised sites, which give a unique but somewhat uncoordinated appearance. Overall, the area would benefit from a clearer sense of identity and cohesion that reinforces its relationship to Sevenoaks town centre, and other nearby development opportunities.

1.21 Working with local stakeholders, the Council will explore the preparation of a development strategy for the Station Area that provides a clear spatial vision, and considers factors such as the quantum and type of uses, scale and massing, development phasing and how these aspirations could be delivered. This work will build on existing evidence and Plans, such as the Town Centre Strategy, District Wide Characterisation Study, Settlement Capacity Study and the Draft Neighbourhood Plan for Sevenoaks Town.

1.22 Other objectives of the strategy could be to:

1. Ensure development is co-ordinated to create a clear identity for the area;
2. Bring forward a range of active uses and a vibrant new neighbourhood, which respects existing uses, residents and local character;
3. Re-enforce the relationship between the station, the town centre and the wider District;
4. Coordinate the proposals with other development opportunities, including Sevenoaks Quarry and Land East of the High Street, to deliver a coherent offer for the town;
5. Make the most of the existing public transport accessibility and explore the potential to create a more formalised public transport hub;
6. Deliver an enjoyable and attractive environment for local residents and the many thousands of people that pass through the station each year;
7. Respond to new ways of living and working that are emerging from the pandemic; and

8. Create a new destination for Sevenoaks town around the station that adds value and variety and brings prosperity to the wider District.

1.23 In addition to new residential development, it is considered that the area has the potential to support other uses, including flexible workspaces, a retail offer that complements the nearby town, cultural and community uses and improvements to the public realm. All of these aspects would be considered in an emerging development strategy.

Questions
What would you like to see in a development brief for the Station Area?
Do you have a view on the area of land that the brief should cover and sites that could be included?

Chapter 2 – Housing Choice for All

Overarching Statement

Everyone deserves to have access to a high quality home that meets their needs, in an area they wish to live and that they can afford. This is fundamental to happy, healthy, successful residents and thriving communities. The policies in this chapter ensure that the right types of homes are built to meet the needs of our current and future residents, including the Gypsy & Traveller community.

Opening Chapter Statement

Sevenoaks District is a very popular and well-connected place to live, but this also makes it expensive. Boosting the supply of market and affordable housing and ensuring the right types of homes are built in the right places will create a more dynamic housing market with more movement and where more people can find a suitable home that meets their needs.

2.1 The District is facing some significant challenges in relation to housing:

1. A growing and ageing population

The population of the District is expected to grow by 6% over the plan period 2022-2040. But more significantly, the proportion of people aged over 65 is expected to grow by 24% over the same period and by 2040 it is expected that there will be an additional 6,394 residents aged 65 and over, making up 26% of the total population¹. Accommodating the changing needs of households will be key in order to provide greater choice for existing and future generations and to promote healthy and sustainable communities.

2. A need for new housing

Using the government's standard methodology for calculating housing need, there is a need for 714 new homes per year over the plan period 2022-2040, including a high proportion of new affordable homes and homes suitable for older people, presenting a major step change in the number of new homes needed compared with the previous Local Plan.

3. Affordability of housing

Median house prices in the District are almost £100,000 higher than in the South East making it very difficult for first time buyers and young families to remain in the District. Delivering new housing that is genuinely affordable in an area where land prices are ever-increasing presents a major challenge.

4. Challenges to the supply of housing

The District is significantly constrained by Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Not only does this put the larger built up areas under pressure to

¹ 2018-based population projections, ONS

deliver new housing development at higher densities without compromising character, it also impacts our rural communities, where generally there are fewer housing choices for those in need.

5. Ensuring choice in the housing market

The structure of the District's population is expected to change and new housing development must meet the needs of our current and future residents in order to create a dynamic and balanced housing market.

2.2 The policies within this chapter aim to address these challenges, not just by boosting the delivery of market and affordable housing, but by ensuring that the right types of homes are built to meet the needs of our changing population.

Strategic Objectives
OB8 Deliver market and affordable homes to reflect the latest information on housing needs
OB9 Optimising the supply of new homes in existing settlements
OB10 Ensuring new housing development makes best and most efficient use of land

Subsection 1 – Housing Mix

2.3 A mix of homes of different sizes and types to meet the needs of the current and future population is essential to help create inclusive, healthy and mixed communities. The District is home to a variety of household types including families, singles, older people, people with a range of disabilities and people wishing to build their own homes.

2.4 The Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs 2022 (TRLHN), our key evidence on housing needs, tells us that the structure of the population is expected to change over the plan period. The delivery of new housing development should reflect the changing needs of households in order to provide greater choice for existing and future generations and to promote healthy and sustainable communities.

Size of homes

2.5 The District has a high proportion of larger homes, with 3, 4 and 5 bedroom homes making up 68% of the total housing stock. An ageing population means that household sizes are expected to fall over the plan period. By building more housing, with a focus on smaller and family homes, this will increase the proportion of lower cost housing available to buy so that first time buyers and young families have greater choice in the market, as well as enabling older people to downsize or 'rightsize', which will then have the knock-on effect of freeing up additional family housing.

Types of homes

2.6 The housing stock needs to adapt to meet the requirements of an ageing population, and to provide choices for older people who may be thinking of moving or who may need to move as their current home no longer matches their needs. A growing older population is also expected to result in a substantial growth in people with dementia and mobility problems, and some of these households will require adaptations to properties to meet their changing needs whilst others may require more specialist accommodation or support. This can be achieved through the design features of the optional technical standards set out in the Building Regulations under M4(2), accessible and adaptable dwellings, and M4(3), wheelchair user dwellings.

People wishing to build their own homes

2.7 Self and custom build housing can offer benefits over developer-built housing and people may choose this option for various reasons e.g. their current and/or future needs aren't being met through volume housebuilding, it may allow a more bespoke or flexible design, and in some cases it may present a more affordable housing option. The Council maintains and publicises a self build register to monitor demand, and where appropriate, match people and available plots. The Local Plan supports the provision of self-build plots to meet demand and to meet the Council's 'duty to grant planning permission' as required by the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015, provided they are located in sustainable locations, close to public transport, walking and cycling routes, local services and community facilities.

Policy H1 – Housing Mix

This policy will ensure that a variety of house sizes and types are delivered across the District to meet the needs of the current and future population. Proposals for new housing development, including housing for local essential workers and people wishing to build their own homes, will be required to meet the following technical and design criteria:

1. Proposals should be informed by the dwelling mix profiles set out in the latest housing needs evidence (Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs 2022) where appropriate, unless it can be demonstrated that an alternative mix meets an identified need;
2. For new build housing development, commit to delivering all homes to meet the M4(2) standard for accessible and adaptable homes;
3. For new build schemes of 20 units or more, commit to delivering at least 5% of homes to meet the M4(3)b standard for wheelchair user dwellings, to be delivered as affordable housing for rent;
4. Provide homes built to high sustainability standards with built-in resilience to climate change and fuel poverty, which contributes towards the Council's Net Zero 2030 commitment for the District to become Net Zero; and
5. Proposals should meet the minimum nationally described space standards.

Questions

Do you think the proposed technical and design criteria are reasonable and will help to achieve the aims of the policy?

Subsection 2 – Provision of Affordable Housing

2.8 Affordable housing is provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. It is a key issue in the District given the high house prices relative to incomes. In 2020 the median house price in the District was £425,000, the highest in Kent, and house prices were 12.6 times annual earnings, compared with 7.8 times across England. This means that many people are unable to afford their own home on the open market without assistance. High housing costs have led to an increase in the number of households privately renting, rather than buying, and the out-migration of younger and economically active groups in search of cheaper housing elsewhere, including local essential workers.

2.9 The TRLHN identifies a net annual need of 423 households that require financial support to meet their housing needs. Building new affordable homes will help ensure that those requiring assistance receive it, and the increase in the supply of affordable housing will help to slow down the rise in housing costs, allowing those who aspire to own their own home the ability to get onto the housing ladder. In view of the scale of need, and subject to viability testing, it is considered that a target of 30% affordable housing on brownfield sites and 40% affordable housing on greenfield sites is realistic and achievable in light of the evidence, and will go some way in meeting the identified affordable housing need.

2.10 The TRLHN recommends a tenure split of 65% social housing (social and affordable rented) and 35% intermediate housing (homes for discounted home ownership and rent including First Homes) in order to meet needs. The vast majority of social housing delivered in the District in recent years has been affordable rented. Our experience however is that social rented housing generally provides the most affordable option and is affordable to a greater number of households.

Policy H2 – Provision of Affordable Housing

This policy will boost the delivery of affordable housing from developments with market housing, ensuring that overall viability is not prejudiced and that a mix of tenures is provided that meet the needs of the current and future population.

Proposals for new housing development will be required to contribute to the provision of affordable housing as follows:

Affordable Housing Requirements

Number of new homes proposed (net)	% affordable housing required	Type of affordable housing to be provided
0-5	0	N/A
6-9 (in Designated Rural Areas only)	20%	Financial contribution
10+ or >0.5 Ha (on brownfield land)	30%	

Policy H2 – Provision of Affordable Housing

10+ or >0.5Ha (on greenfield land)	40%	On-site (unless the Council advises that a financial contribution is more appropriate)
------------------------------------	-----	--

Where the provision of on-site affordable housing applies, the recommended tenure split should reflect the latest housing needs evidence (Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs 2022) – 58% social rented, 7% affordable rented, 25% First Homes and 10% other intermediate tenures. First Homes should be offered at a discount of 50% of open market value.

On the occasion that it is demonstrated that this is not viable due to site specific circumstances, whether this relates to the proposal as a whole or an element, an alternative tenure split is to be agreed with the Council.

Where it is demonstrated that the required on-site provision is not viable or does not best meet identified housing needs and the Council agrees, one of the following options is to be agreed with the Council:

1. The provision of a reduced level of on-site affordable housing plus a financial contribution in lieu of the shortfall;
2. The provision of a reduced level of on-site affordable housing that meets a specific localised need e.g. a greater number of wheelchair accessible homes; or
3. The payment of a financial contribution in lieu of the provision of any on-site affordable housing.

On the occasion it can be demonstrated that the full affordable housing requirement is not viable and the Council agrees, a viability review is required upon first occupation or an alternative trigger point as agreed. This is to ensure that any uplift in the development value of the scheme is shared and contributes to the affordable housing provision, whether this be on site or as an off-site financial contribution.

All affordable housing delivered should not generate housing costs of more than 35% of gross household income.

Applicants are required to enter into discussions with the Council's Housing team, in consultation with registered providers, at the earliest stage of the application process where the provision of on-site affordable housing applies.

Questions

Do you think the proposed affordable housing contributions are reasonable and will help to achieve the aims of the policy?

Subsection 3 – Housing in Rural Areas

2.11 Opportunities to provide housing (especially homes suitable for older people) in rural areas of the District are much more limited than in the built up areas because of the Green Belt. Less scope for development in rural areas generally means fewer housing choices for those in need.

2.12 However, rural exception housing can provide homes to meet local housing needs as an exception to other Local Plan policies. It means that sites that would not normally be suitable for development, because of planning policy constraints, can be developed solely for housing to serve rural communities. Given the extensive network of rural settlements in the District, rural exception housing is a really important part of the housing stock. The Local Housing Needs Study (2017) confirms an increased level of demand for housing in rural areas.

2.13 All parishes are undergoing a five year rolling programme of local housing needs surveys, carried out in partnership with Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK). Where a survey shows evidence of need, we will work with the local community and preferred affordable housing provider to identify and assist in delivering suitable sites.

2.14 We will also work with landowners of rural estates and Community Land Trusts to bring forward suitable rural exception housing to meet identified needs. This may be through an affordable housing provider or directly through the landowner where the Council's eligibility criteria for new affordable housing development partners can be met. The planning agreement attached to such development sites will ensure any landowner-led housing is delivered at the same cost to the tenant and held in perpetuity to meet identified housing needs.

Policy H3 – Housing in Rural Areas

This policy will ensure a sufficient supply of rural housing specifically for those who live in or have a connection to the rural areas of the District. Proposals for new housing development in rural areas that meet a specific local need will be required to meet the following criteria to be permitted as an exception to other Local Plan policies:

1. The local need has been identified in an up to date local housing needs survey;
2. The local need identified cannot be met by any other means through the development of non-Green Belt sites within the parish or, where appropriate, in the adjacent parish; and
3. A thorough site options appraisal has been carried out.

The Council expects rural exception housing schemes to provide 100% local needs housing to meet identified needs. However, on the occasion it can be demonstrated that a wholly local needs housing scheme is not viable or deliverable, and the Council agrees, it is expected that the market housing for sale will be used, in the first instance, to meet identified needs including housing for local essential workers, older people, plots for self build and co-housing.

Questions

Do you think the proposed criteria are reasonable and will help to achieve the aims of the policy?

Subsection 4 – Housing for Older People

2.15 Sevenoaks District has an ageing population. Those aged over 65 make up nearly 22% of the District's population and this number is expected to increase by 24% over the plan period. By 2040 it is expected that there will be an additional 6,394 residents aged 65 and over².

2.16 We need to respond to the changing population structure to ensure the housing offer across the District meets the needs of our older people, who are a vital and integral part of any local community. This can be done by delivering a broader housing offer for older people across the District and we are keen to diversify the range of more modern and appealing housing options available.

2.17 The TRLHN identifies a need for 1,044 additional units of specialist older persons accommodation over the plan period 2022-2040, of which 720 units should be provided as retirement housing (e.g. sheltered and extra care housing) and 324 units to be provided in the form of bedspaces in registered care homes. The characteristics of different types of specialist accommodation is set out in the table below. We will work with partners, including KCC Adult Social Care and other infrastructure providers, to deliver the right types of older persons accommodation in the right places.

Characteristics of Different Types of Specialist Accommodation

Type of specialist accommodation	What we expect to see in a proposal / how this is characterised
Retirement housing e.g. sheltered and extra care (generally C3 use class)	<p>Purpose-designed self-contained living units (e.g. apartments) containing at least one bedroom often with a mini-kitchen with washing machine and living room, although in some cases these facilities may be shared/communal.</p> <p>The nature of this type of accommodation is akin to a small dwelling capable of accommodating a small household rather than a single occupant occupying a single room.</p> <p>Access to 24 hour care and support from support staff, warden or alarm system.</p>
Specialist nursing / residential care (C2 use class)	<p>Single bedrooms within a purpose-designed residential setting with communal kitchens, living rooms, quiet/family rooms, IT rooms and staff breakout rooms.</p> <p>Provision of personal and nursing care and support 24 hours a day with dedicated on-site nurse.</p>

² 2018-based population projections, ONS

2.18 We must also ensure that these homes are accessible, adaptable and technology enabled, as well as being safe and warm and in established and vibrant neighbourhoods, recognising the importance of attachment to place, social connections and access to services and facilities. Getting this right has a significant impact on people's health and wellbeing. Good quality housing where people can maintain their independence helps prevent physical frailty, supports positive mental health and reduces hospital admissions.

2.19 Loneliness amongst older people is a growing issue and housing options that will help to reduce this are encouraged. In many cases family support networks are essential in providing informal care and combating loneliness and isolation. This means housing options need to be provided in all settlements, including rural villages, to ensure older people may remain within their existing communities. This could be provided as co-housing schemes.

Policy H4 - Housing for Older People

This policy will ensure a sufficient supply and range of housing and accommodation suitable for older people, both market and affordable, in order to meet the specific needs of this group and to assist in the creation of mixed, balanced and inclusive communities.

Proposals for new retirement housing will be required to meet the following technical and design criteria, in addition to the criteria set out in the Housing Mix policy:

1. Proposals should reflect the latest evidence on older persons housing needs set out in the latest housing needs evidence (Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs 2022). Alternative methods of assessment will not be considered appropriate;
2. Be within sustainably located and well-connected areas of the District, where there is easy access to shops, community facilities including healthcare, public transport and other services appropriate to the needs of the future occupiers;
3. Be located in rural villages where an up to date local housing needs survey identifies a local need for older persons accommodation;
4. Incorporate the latest HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation) design principles, where possible, in order to offer attractive alternatives to the current home;
5. Incorporate an accessible lift in flatted developments of 2 or more storeys;
6. Provide access to private and/or communal outdoor space; and
7. Provide high quality homes built to high sustainability standards with built-in resilience to climate change and fuel poverty, which contributes towards the Council's Net Zero 2030 commitment for the District to become Net Zero.

Questions

Do you think the proposed technical and design criteria are reasonable and will help to achieve the aims of the policy?

Subsection 5 – Build to Rent

2.20 Increasing housing supply is challenging in a District that is so constrained, but it is clear that we need to find new ways of delivering new homes so that we can create a more dynamic housing market with more movement and where more people can find a suitable home that meets their needs.

2.21 One way to do this is to build high quality purpose built homes for private rent that are professionally managed and provide shared spaces and services, known as 'build to rent'. The build to rent sector can play an important role in meeting our identified housing needs, by boosting the number of smaller and more affordable units and delivering homes that can house people across a range of income levels, ages and household types. Whilst build to rent is well suited to house mobile professionals, it can also provide homes for local essential workers, for families and for older people.

2.22 The TRLHN sets out that, in Sevenoaks District, the private rented sector accommodates around 12% of households. 50% of these are located in Sevenoaks built up area with limited choice in the remainder of the District. Looking forward, the TRLHN identifies a need for 350 build to rent units over the plan period. Whilst this number is not particularly high we know that the current private rental market is buoyant in Sevenoaks, with upward rent pressure and fast lets, which are indications that the market is popular and demand may increase over the plan period. We are keen to engage with build to rent providers on the options available to meet this need.

2.23 Build to rent schemes are most appropriate in the built up areas of Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge, reflecting the most sustainable and well-connected areas of the District where there is easy access to shops, community facilities and public transport. This will help to promote health and wellbeing, support the local economy, reduce carbon emissions and promote environmental sustainability. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate how they have taken this into account in finalising their proposals.

Policy H5 – Build to Rent

This policy will boost the number of smaller and more affordable units through the delivery of private rented homes that can house people across a range of income levels, ages and household types. Proposals for build to rent schemes will be required to meet the following technical and design criteria, in addition to the criteria set out in the Housing Mix policy:

1. Be within the built up areas of Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge. These are sustainably located and well-connected areas of the District where there is easy access to shops, community facilities and public transport;
2. Meet the definition of build to rent as set out in the glossary;
3. Provide 20% on-site affordable housing in the form of one and two bedroom affordable private rented homes with rents capped at 80% of the open market value including any service charges;

Policy H5 - Build to Rent

4. Provide high quality homes built to high sustainability standards with built-in resilience to climate change and fuel poverty, which contributes towards the Council's Net Zero 2030 commitment for the District to become Net Zero; and
5. Wherever possible incorporate public realm improvements to the benefit of the wider community.

Questions

Do you think the proposed technical and design criteria are reasonable and will help to achieve the aims of the policy?

Build to rent schemes often require a minimum number of units to be deliverable. What should that be in Sevenoaks District?

Subsection 6 – Smaller Sites

2.24 The NPPF requires us to identify land to accommodate at least 10% of our housing requirement on sites no larger than 1 hectare. Sevenoaks District needs to build approximately 13,566 new homes over the next 18 years, with 1,356 of these coming from sites no larger than 1 hectare (generally referred to as smaller sites).

2.25 Historically small sites have been crucial to housing delivery in Sevenoaks District and they continue to offer opportunities to grow the housing stock. Over the last 5 years small sites in our built up areas have provided over 20% of built homes district-wide.

2.26 The Settlement Capacity Study 2022 (SCS) identifies the potential for approximately 1,000 units to come forward in our existing built up areas, if we were to continue building at current densities. However, this potential is expected to rise significantly if all opportunities are fully explored and optimum densities are achieved in the most sustainable locations. Whilst these sites vary in character, ownership and existing usage, they are all considered to be suitable and achievable. Encouraging these sites to be developed to provide new homes, in a way that is consistent with other policies in this Plan, is vital to meeting the NPPF requirements.

2.27 This policy aims to encourage these sites to come forward and assist in demonstrating their deliverability/developability over the plan period. This approach also supports our development strategy by increasing densities and making effective use of land in our existing built up areas.

Policy H6 – Smaller Sites

This policy will support the provision of well-designed new places on smaller sites (no larger than 1 hectare) in existing built up areas through both planning decisions and Local Plan allocations. Proposals for new housing development on qualifying sites will be required to meet the following technical and design criteria:

1. The proposal demonstrates that it makes the best and most efficient use of land, utilising higher densities where appropriate, whilst also contributing to the creation of healthy spaces with improved connectivity;
2. The proposal meets identified development needs and contributes towards the delivery of different types and sizes of new homes;
3. Any loss of use is robustly evidenced and reprovided where required; and
4. Provides high quality homes built to high sustainability standards with built-in resilience to climate change and fuel poverty, which contributes towards the Council's Net Zero 2030 commitment for the District to become Net Zero.

Questions

Do you think the proposed technical and design criteria are reasonable and will help to achieve the aims of the policy?

Questions
What else can we do to encourage the delivery of suitable smaller sites in existing built up areas?
Is there anything else that we should include, or an alternative approach we should consider?

Subsection 7 – Housing Density and Intensification

2.28 This Plan sets a clear expectation for new residential development to make the best and most efficient use of land and respect local character. Homes across the District have traditionally been built at a relatively low density and proposals continue to come forward at densities below 35 units per hectare, which is now considered an inefficient use of land. There is scope to make better use of land, particularly on sites that are within settlements or close to public transport hubs.

2.29 The Council recognises that it is not necessary for new development to match the density of surrounding land uses. Well-designed higher density schemes can add variety and vitality to our places and spaces. Increasing the density of development in sustainable locations can help to ensure that land is used in the most efficient way, and that less land overall is developed. In Sevenoaks District, there are competing demands for use. The need for new homes is high, but the Green Belt covers the vast majority of the District. It is therefore crucial that the limited amount of land within settlement boundaries is used efficiently when considering proposals for new development. The Development Strategy chapter sets out the three growth options that can be achieved through utilising different density levels, all of which aim to make the best and most efficient use of land whilst respecting character.

2.30 Optimum densities should enhance the function of our places and meet the provisions of other policies in this Plan. Whilst there are some locations across the District that are suited to taller buildings there are other mechanisms for delivering higher density in a sustainable way, such as intensification of under-developed locations in existing settlements and the development of two storey terraced housing or townhouses to make better use of land.

2.31 The District Wide Character Study (DWCS) identifies six types of areas that are suited to higher density development:

1. Towns and local centres – these are described as having the best access to services and therefore are the most sustainable and suitable for denser forms of development;
2. Walking distance to towns and local centres – these areas encapsulate the 15 minute neighbourhood concept and advocate neighbourhoods in which those who live there can find everything they need in terms of work, retail, and leisure within 15 minutes of their home, via sustainable transport modes;
3. Train stations – areas within a 10 minute walk of train stations are recognised;
4. Bus stops – areas within a 5 minute walk of bus stops are recognised;
5. Bus service zones – reflects the areas covered by a regular bus service; and
6. High frequency transit spots – ranks train stations and bus stops based on their frequency and service with Swanley and parts of Sevenoaks ranked the highest.

2.32 Proposals for new residential development should reflect the conclusions of the Council's DWCS, respecting the sensitivity of places to change. Applicants will be required to

demonstrate how these considerations have been taken into account and be prepared to discuss development options at the pre-application stage.

Policy H7 – Housing Density and Intensification

This policy will ensure that new housing development makes the most efficient use of land. Proposals for new housing development should explore the opportunities to achieve higher densities. Further work will be undertaken to determine appropriate densities but the following guidelines are proposed, where they can be achieved without a detrimental impact on local character or amenity:

1. In highly sustainable locations including town centre locations and close to transport hubs, densities in excess of 150 dwellings per hectare should be achieved;
2. In existing built up areas, densities of 50-150 dwellings per hectare should be achieved; and
3. At the edge of the built up areas, densities of 40-60 dwellings per hectare should be achieved.

Questions

Do you think the proposed density guidelines are reasonable and will help to achieve the aims of the policy?

What do you think are appropriate locations for taller buildings / denser development?

Is there anything else that we should include, or an alternative approach we should consider, for any of the proposed housing policies?

Subsection 8 – Gypsies and Travellers

2.33 Gypsy and Travellers are an important part of the Sevenoaks District community and national policy states that we must plan for their housing needs in the same way as for the settled community. The Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) identified the need for 43 additional pitches up to 2040 including those members of the community who do not meet the Planning Policy for Traveller Sites definition. This need has been reduced to 37 due to the granting of planning permission since the GTAA was completed in April 2022.

2.34 We are developing a strategy to identify locations for additional permanent pitches, subject to site sustainability, suitability and impact on local character.

Policy GT1 – Gypsy and Traveller Site Allocations

Consideration will be given to whether a site:

1. Is sustainable, prioritising those close to existing services and facilities;
2. Has existing pitches, and whether those are permanent, temporary or unauthorised;
3. Has impact on local character, prioritising those lying outside of the AONB and with existing built form;
4. Has impact on protected areas such as Local Wildlife Sites, Ancient Woodland, SSSI; and
5. Will provide an acceptable living environment for future occupants in terms of size, noise and air quality and is not located within an area likely to flood.

Questions

Do you agree with the proposed strategy for identifying new Gypsy and Traveller pitch allocations in the most sustainable locations?

Is there anything else we should consider?

Do you have any sites for new Gypsy and Traveller pitches?

2.35 Not all Gypsy and Traveller pitches will be delivered through Local Plan site allocations. Proposals for new permanent gypsy and traveller pitches as well as transit pitches are likely to come forward and therefore for development management purposes we are proposing the following policy.

Policy GT2 – Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

Accommodation for Gypsy and Travellers and transit pitches must take account of the policies within the Local Plan and should take account of the following criteria:

1. The site should be located close to services and facilities and access to public transport;

Policy GT2 – Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation

2. The site will provide an acceptable living environment for future occupants in terms of size, noise and air quality and is not located within an area likely to flood;
3. Safe and convenient vehicular, pedestrian and cycle access can be provided to the site;
4. The development will minimise the potential impacts on the surrounding character, landscape, including in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and biodiversity; and
5. Associated buildings, including amenity blocks, must be proportionate in scale and bulk to the pitches proposed.

Question

Do you agree with the development management policy?

Chapter 3 – Employment and Economy

Overarching Statement

Maintaining a vibrant and flexible local economy is essential to the delivery of sustainable development and the wider vision of this Plan.

Opening Chapter Statement

Sevenoaks District has a vibrant local economy and is well located to service the economy needs of London and wider south east region. The policies in this chapter seek to build on these locational advantages and supports the Council's wider strategy of ensuring the local economy remains resilient to change. Reflecting the evidence, key aims over the plan period are to deliver the right type of employment space, maintain vibrant town centres and support our thriving tourism sector.

3.1 In addition to identifying sufficient land to meet employment needs, policies seek to maximise the District's proximity to economic markets, delivering affordable and flexible floorspace that responds to occupier requirements. Ensuring a healthy rural economy is central to the District's economic success, alongside resilient town centres and a strong visitor economy.

Strategic Objectives

OB11 Promote resilient and agile town centres that are able to respond to change.

OB12 Encourage the delivery of workspace to meet occupier demands.

OB13 Safeguard land to meet employment needs over the plan period.

Subsection 1 – Economy

Delivering Economic Success

3.2 Identifying how much land is needed for office and industrial uses to meet employment needs is a key aspect of the Council’s development strategy.

3.3 Specific sites will be identified for this purpose, alongside criteria based policies to determine planning applications for employment uses. This chapter will also provide a spatial response to longer-term economic challenges, to ensure the District remains economically competitive.

3.4 Matters such as the type of office space needed and maintaining a vibrant rural economy and tourist sector are also important. Officers have worked closely with colleagues from the Council’s Economic Development team, to ensure these proposals are consistent with the corporate Economic Development Strategy.

Policy EMP1 – Delivering Economic Success

This policy will set out the key criteria for economic success, including:

1. Delivery of 5.7 hectares of land to meet employment needs; and
2. Enhancing the local economy and ensuring this success is shared amongst all residents, by:
 - i. Promoting locational strengths, including the proximity to London;
 - ii. Working in partnership with other strategies that contribute to economic success;
 - iii. Making best use of public transport links and seeking to improve those links where possible;
 - iv. Developing walking and cycling networks and other mechanisms for sustainable travel;
 - v. Recognising the contribution of the rural economy to economic success;
 - vi. Cultivating resilience in our town centres;
 - vii. Ensuring the local economy is able to diversify in response to emerging trends;
 - viii. Supporting the delivery of appropriate and affordable forms of work space to meet current and future working patterns; and
 - ix. Promoting the benefits of a transition to a low carbon circular economy to strengthen economic success.
3. Delivering the wider objectives of this plan.

Questions

What are the factors that make Sevenoaks District a successful place for businesses to locate?

Questions
What steps could be taken to improve economic competitiveness across the District?
Are there further measures of economic success that should be considered over the plan period?
How should the Council encourage the development of the circular economy, which aims to reduce wastage, in the emerging plan?

Meeting Employment Needs

3.5 The amount of land required for employment purposes is identified in the latest Economic Needs Study (ENS). The Council will support proposals that reflect this document, including employment-generating uses that encourage occupiers to 'future proof' proposals through the delivery of flexible workspace that responds to longer term economic trends.

Policy EMP2 - Allocated Sites to meet Economic Needs
This policy will identify specific site allocations to deliver the quantum of employment land as listed in Policy EMP1 (5.7ha). Planning applications for development on these sites will be assessed against the policies in the plan.
In accordance with the latest Economic Needs Study, the Council will seek the delivery of 4.1 ha of land for office uses and 1.6 ha for industrial activity.

Employment Uses

3.6 The Council is generally supportive of development that provides employment floorspace to meet future economic needs. This includes lower cost premises for small and start-up businesses, flexible office space and premises for industrial and warehousing operations.

3.7 Proposals resulting in the net loss of employment or premises will require appropriate marketing evidence, to explain the efforts made to retain the existing use. The content of this material should be discussed and agreed at the pre-application stage, but the applicant will need to demonstrate that the price, uses and terms at which the land or premises were, or will be, marketed are reasonable. The information listed in the policy is a minimum requirements and should form a starting point for discussion.

Policy EMP3 - Employment Floorspace
<i>New Employment Uses</i>
A criteria-based policy is proposed to assess proposals for new employment space and the loss of existing space. Key principles may include:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Development proposals for new employment floor space on sites currently in employment use will be supported; and

Policy EMP3 – Employment Floorspace

2. Development proposals for employment floor space on sites currently used for non-employment purposes will be considered on their merits. Where benefits arising from the proposed use would exceed the benefit of retaining the existing use, the development proposal will be supported.

Existing Employment Uses

Where a change is proposed from an economic use to another use, the Council is likely to require credible and robust evidence:

1. of an appropriate period of marketing for economic use; and
2. that the proposals would not cause unacceptable harm to the local economy.

Marketing evidence should prove that both the land and the premises have been widely advertised and marketed for a wide range of economic uses for at least one continuous year, immediately prior to submission of a relevant planning application.

The Council will expect the content of marketing evidence to form a key part of pre-application proposals. The evidence will be assessed in the context of:

1. the overall quality of the site as an employment location;
2. the level of occupation/vacancy of the site;
3. consideration of the suitability of conversion for start-up and micro businesses;
4. whether the existing employment use generates any adverse impacts on the adjoining area;
5. possible benefits from relocating the economic use;
6. possible benefits from using the site for alternative uses; and
7. the achievement of other plan objectives.

Marketing evidence will need to address the demand from both the freehold and leasehold markets, reflecting that the dynamics of the two markets may differ.

Question

Is there additional information that should be included in the marketing evidence to support the loss of employment uses?

Flexible and Affordable Workspace

3.8 The Council will support the provision of space that is sufficiently affordable to encourage start up business and sufficiently flexible to respond to changing occupier requirements. Overall, proposals for new economic floorspace are expected to be consistent with the latest

evidence on economic needs and applicants are encouraged to demonstrate this at the pre-application stage.

3.9 Landowners and developers should explore the potential to intensify activities on industrial land and consider whether some types of industrial activities (particularly light industrial) could be co-located or mixed with residential. Proposals will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, but will be supported in principle where there is no net loss of employment floorspace.

3.10 In addition to the other policies in this plan, proposals for the co-location of uses should take account of the following principles, which should be discussed at the pre-application stage:

1. Safety and security – the co-located scheme should be delivered in a way that does not adversely impact occupiers of employment or residential uses;
2. Layout, orientation, access, servicing and delivery arrangements of the uses in order to minimise conflict – areas of potential conflict between co-located uses should be highlighted at the earliest possible stage;
3. Design quality, public realm, visual impact and amenity for residents – proposed schemes should seek to deliver design excellence;
4. Housing quality and standards – ensuring that units delivered meet the requirements of all other policies in this plan; and
5. Air quality, including dust, noise, odour and emissions - co-located schemes may not be suitable where employment uses have localised environment impacts.

Policy EMP4 – Flexible Workspace, Affordable Workspace, Flexible Office Space and Co-location
<p>This policy will set out the key criteria for economic success, including:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Delivery of 5.7 hectares of land to meet employment needs; and2. Enhancing the local economy and ensuring this success is shared amongst all residents, by:<ol style="list-style-type: none">i. Promoting locational strengths, including the proximity to London;ii. Working in partnership with other strategies that contribute to economic success;iii. Making best use of public transport links and seeking to improve those links where possible;iv. Developing walking and cycling networks and other mechanisms for sustainable travel;v. Recognising the contribution of the rural economy to economic success;vi. Cultivating resilience in our town centres;vii. Ensuring the local economy is able to diversify in response to emerging trends;

Policy EMP4 – Flexible Workspace, Affordable Workspace, Flexible Office Space and Co-location

- viii. Supporting the delivery of appropriate and affordable forms of work space to meet current and future working patterns;
 - ix. Promoting the benefits of a transition to a low carbon circular economy to strengthen economic success; and
3. Delivering the wider objectives of this plan.

Questions

What type of employment space is needed to support changing working patterns and practices across Sevenoaks District over the period of the Local Plan?

How should healthy workspaces be promoted in the plan?

What measures can the Council take to encourage sustainable employment space that contributes to its net zero objectives?

Economic Development in Rural Areas

3.11 The majority of land in Sevenoaks District is rural in character and the rural economy remains a key contributor to economic growth. Rural economic issues incorporate the agricultural sector, but extend far beyond this to a wide range of business activities. The expansion of home working and the ‘work anywhere’ philosophy has greatly expanded rural economic opportunity and a capable broadband network is essential to support this. The Council will support rural economic activities that are consistent with the provisions of the latest evidence on economic needs.

Policy EMP5 – Rural Economy

Support will be given to suitably located proposals which improve the balance of jobs in rural areas and diversify the rural economy, including:

1. Development that meets the essential needs of agriculture or forestry interests;
2. Appropriate and proportionate expansion of existing employment sites to enable the retention and growth of local employers;
3. the reuse of suitable buildings for employment purposes;
4. Business start-ups, home working, small scale employment and the development and expansion of small business in rural areas; and
5. Proposals that improve internet connectivity for rural communities.

Question

Are there additional matters that should be included to support the rural economy?

Subsection 2 – Resilient Town and Local Centres

3.14 We want to ensure that the town centres within Sevenoaks District continue to thrive and remain at the heart of our local communities as a place for socialising, shopping, leisure and a wide variety of other activities. Our high streets will support the economic competitiveness of the District, to ensure our places remain vibrant and resilient.

3.15 The ‘high street’ has undergone rapid structural change in recent years, with the continued trend towards online shopping, click and collect and other forms of less place-based retail, which has no doubt been accelerated by the pandemic. However, other trends, including increased ‘working from home’ and the emergence of more independent retail, have also shaped our high streets. We need to support our high streets by allowing them the flexibility to manage and respond to change, to adapt and diversify and by promoting their individual, unique characters, as places where people continue to desire to visit.

3.16 The 2022 Town Centres Strategy recommends planning for stability (rather than expansion or contraction) in terms of the retail floorspace within our centres, supporting and improving the quality of existing retail and town centre offer and environment. Our evidence base assessment shows that there is no overriding need for an increase in either convenience (food) or comparison (non-food) floorspace in the District. It is acknowledged that high streets are changing, and Use Class E (commercial, business and services use) now allows for change of use between shops, offices, cafes and restaurants. The uses which attract people to different centres are widening and therefore a flexible approach is supported, to ensure that the high street meets a variety of needs and permits linked trips to a sustainable location.

3.17 There are four defined town centres within the District – Sevenoaks, Swanley, Edenbridge and Westerham. They each have a different role, character and catchment, and therefore have individual policies below, but together they form a network of small-scale centres which provide for the retail, leisure, employment and community needs of the District.

3.18 There are four service settlements – New Ash Green and Otford are defined as Local Service Centres and Hartley and West Kingsdown are defined as Service Villages within the Settlement Hierarchy 2022. Within the defined local centre boundaries, small-scale town centre uses, which meet the needs of the centre they serve, will be encouraged and should contribute to improving the quality of the local centre environment. Similarly, within defined village and neighbourhood centres a range of shops and facilities will be maintained to meet the day-to-day retail needs of the communities which they serve.

3.19 We are proposing tailored policies for each of our four town centres, and for the local centre in New Ash Green, which remains a focus for regeneration. These policies build on the recommendations from the Town Centres Strategy and developers are expected to demonstrate how it has been taken into account.

Policy TLC1 – Town and Local Centres (Strategic Policy)

This policy will:

1. Promote the unique characteristics of each of the town centres to allow them to thrive and form a network of complementary centres, which provide for the needs of the District;
2. Ensure town centres remain the focus for retail, leisure and other town centre activities, bringing people together in accessible locations to meet their needs. We continue to support a ‘town centres first’ approach, to ensure town centre uses are conveniently clustered together within defined town centre boundaries, and retail provision is maintained within the primary shopping areas;
3. Support town centre developments which include a residential element, to provide customer footfall within the town centre, provided that the residential element is not proposed at ground floor level (within the primary shopping area), other than that which falls under permitted development;
4. Consider an Article 4 Direction for Sevenoaks town centre primary shopping area, to restrict the Permitted Development change of use (Class MA) from Class E to residential;
5. Support local centres to provide for the day-to-day needs of the communities which they serve and resist the loss of shops and services where they are serving a local need, particularly where they are considered ‘key’ sustainable services in the Settlement Hierarchy;
6. Where strategic sites are proposed (i.e. approximately 100 units or more), it is expected that new small-scale convenience retail will be included within the site, to promote sustainable services which can be easily accessed on foot or cycle;
7. Town centre development, particularly where it includes work within the public realm, will be expected to meet the following criteria, where appropriate:
 - i. Focus on quality, inclusive design
 - ii. Development should be accessible, promoting walking/cycling and public transport use, with adequate parking, EV and cycling infrastructure and car clubs
 - iii. Development should promote health and well-being, including community space/green space
8. Development should help to deliver the Council’s Net Zero 2030 commitment.

Policy SEV1 – Sevenoaks Town Centre

The vision for Sevenoaks Town Centre in 2040 focuses on:

1. Raising the profile of its best assets - its historic town centre, array of independent shops and the impressive Knole;

Policy SEV1 – Sevenoaks Town Centre

2. Expansion of its cultural scene and diversifying the town’s offer to match other prominent towns, including more things to do in the evening; and
3. An inclusive town centre - widening the leisure offer and providing new homes that support different income levels and life stages.

The following potential projects and development opportunities have been identified to help realise the future vision for Sevenoaks Town Centre. For further details of each of these projects, including delivery considerations, please see the Town Centres Strategy.

1. Strengthening connections to Knole Park;
2. Relocating the market;
3. Eastern town centre revitalisation;
4. Western town centre sites;
5. High streets streetscape enhancement;
6. Improving station arrival; and
7. Programme of events.

Policy SWN1 – Swanley Town Centre

The vision for Swanley town centre in 2040 focuses on:

1. A sustainable and welcoming market town that draws in residents and people from surrounding areas to come together and spend time;
2. An expanded retail offer with an emphasis on independents, food and drink, alongside an expanded community, leisure and civic offer;
3. A space for small businesses and co-working, and new homes of different types and tenures; and
4. High quality buildings and spaces that embrace and enhance Swanley’s character.

The following potential projects and development opportunities have been identified to help realise the future vision for Swanley Town Centre. For further details of each of these projects, including delivery considerations, please see the Town Centres Strategy.

1. Improving the arrival experience of the Town Centre;
2. Transforming town square and Asda Walk;
3. Rebalancing space for pedestrians;
4. New and enhanced station connections;
5. Town Centre redevelopment – gradual; and

Policy SWN1 – Swanley Town Centre

6. Adjacent civic and community uses opportunity.

Policy EDN1 – Edenbridge Town Centre

The vision for Edenbridge Town Centre in 2040 focuses on:

1. A flourishing town centre that celebrates its history through investment and renewal of its handsome and historic High Street;
2. A transformed Leathermarket area as a focus for markets, events and activity in the heart of the town;
3. An aspirational place where people stay when visiting the District's attractions, with a variety of accommodation and a stronger food, drink, cultural and leisure offer; and
4. Enhancing connections to the river Eden with new activity alongside.

The following potential projects and development opportunities have been identified to help realise the future vision for Edenbridge Town Centre. For further details of each of these projects, including delivery considerations, please see the Town Centres Strategy.

1. Prioritising pedestrians on the High Street;
2. Improved access into the town centre;
3. Enhanced river connections;
4. Redeveloping the Leathermarket and backland sites;
5. Relocating the market; and
6. Shopfront renewal.

Policy WST1 – Westerham Town Centre

The vision for Westerham Town Centre in 2040 focuses on:

1. Being a charming rural town that celebrates its history and that remains a desirable place to live, work and visit;
2. A broadened offer for all age groups and families;
3. Connections to the wider Darent Valley, and improved public realm to reduce car dominance and create enjoyable streets and spaces; and
4. Meaningful alternatives to car-based travel.

The following potential projects and development opportunities have been identified to help realise the future vision for Westerham Town Centre. For further details of each of these projects, including delivery considerations, please see the Town Centres Strategy.

Policy WST1 – Westerham Town Centre

1. High Street streetscape;
2. Improving connections to the countryside;
3. London Road traffic filter;
4. London Road development opportunity;
5. Enhancing sustainable transport connections; and
6. A better visitor economy.

Policy NAG1 – New Ash Green Village Centre

The vision for New Ash Green Village Centre in 2040 focuses on:

1. A vibrant heart to a thriving village community, with shops and businesses supported by a refreshed and well-maintained shopping centre;
2. Flexible space for small and creative businesses bringing more footfall to the centre, as well as new homes of different types, sizes and tenures;
3. A renewed public realm with new focal points for events and pop-up activity;
4. Improving the edges of the shopping centre to open it up and draw people in, including new buildings which turn to face outwards; and
5. Celebrating the centre's one-of-a-kind character and modernist SPAN architectural style.

The following potential projects and development opportunities have been identified to help realise the future vision for New Ash Green Village Centre. For further details of each of these projects, including delivery considerations, please see the Town Centres Strategy.

1. Shopping centre edges;
2. Shopping centre public realm;
3. Upper storey improvements;
4. Connection to Longfield Station; and
5. Footpaths and arrival experience.

The projects identified are intended as flexible interventions that allow for further development opportunities to be explored in the future, if desired. This includes better integration with uses just outside of the village centre. Any proposal for the centre should consider its unique history and built character, continuity for existing businesses and the community significance of the local centre.

Questions
Do you agree with the approach of supporting and retaining the existing high streets rather than identifying areas for expansion or contraction?
Do you support or have any comments on the specific proposals for the five highlighted centres (please state which centre)?
Do you agree with the proposal to restrict the conversion of shops (class E) to houses at ground floor level in primary shopping areas?

Town Centre Development Management

3.20 Town centre boundaries and primary shopping areas will be defined for each town centre. A small-scale boundary change is being proposed in Sevenoaks Town – the local centre around the station is to be re-classified as part of the town centre. Both the existing primary and secondary retail frontages become the new ‘primary shopping area’ and this is extended to incorporate Blighs Meadow.

3.21 The national default threshold of 2,500sqm for undertaking an impact assessment of any proposed retail and leisure development outside of defined town centre boundaries, is considered too high in the Sevenoaks context. The default position comprises a significant proportion of existing floorspace, and therefore a lower threshold of 500sqm gross is recommended by our evidence base.

3.22 To promote health and wellbeing within our town centres, it is proposed to introduce criteria to manage planning applications which have an element of fast food. This will promote healthier food environments and control the concentration and clustering of Hot Food Takeaways. Applications for new hot food takeaways should not lead to an overconcentration of hot food takeaway use within any one individual locality by overly dominating the street scene or have an adverse impact on the standard of amenity. It is also appropriate to control the number of outlets where there are concerns regarding levels of obesity or where it exceeds average densities. Applications for hot food takeaway should include the provision of bins in the immediate vicinity to reduce littering in the public realm.

3.23 Evening economy uses can contribute positively to the vitality and vibrancy of town centres. However, if not properly managed, such uses can result in adverse amenity impacts for local residents and businesses (both individual and cumulative impacts) generated from anti-social behaviour, litter, noise and disturbance. To achieve a balance and protect local amenity, evening economy uses will be directed to town centre locations. Uses will be expected to support the broad objectives of the Council’s Town Centre Strategy. The evening economy is inherently linked to the Council’s Licensing and Environmental Health functions. Applicants are encouraged to liaise with colleagues in these teams prior to the submission of a planning application.

Policy TLC2 – Town Centre Development Management

This policy will:

1. Expect developers to demonstrate compliance with the Town Centres Strategy;
2. Ensure new development for town centre uses is located within defined town centre boundaries, and retail provision is maintained within the primary shopping areas;
3. Assess any development outside of the defined town centre boundaries, in accordance with the NPPF sequential test, to ensure all sequentially preferable locations are assessed in terms of their suitability and availability;
4. Propose an impact assessment for any retail and leisure development with a floorspace of 500sqm gross or above outside of defined town centre boundaries; and
5. Seek to limit the extent of hot food takeaway, where the number of approved establishments within a ward, equals or exceeds the UK national average, per 100,000 population. The details of numbers and location of existing outlets can be assessed using FEAT (Food Environment Assessment Tool); and
6. Proposals related to the evening economy should:
 - I. Be consistent with the Council’s Town Centre Strategy;
 - II. Complement existing uses in the surrounding area and mitigate/prevent any adverse impacts on the amenity and continued operation of these uses;
 - III. Demonstrate there would not be a significant adverse effect on amenity or function, particularly impacts on residential uses;
 - IV. Promote access via sustainable modes of transport and avoid reliance on private vehicular transport, including private hire vehicles; and
 - V. Investigate the potential for allowing daytime uses to activate the space, including on a meanwhile basis, where the use is only intended to operate during evening/night-time hours.

Questions

Does the proposed amendment to Sevenoaks Town Centre boundary look appropriate?

Do you support a lower Retail Impact Assessment threshold?

Do you agree with the proposals to manage hot foot takeaway applications?

What additional support do you think could the plan could provide for the evening economy in Sevenoaks District?

Subsection 3 – Tourism

3.23 Sevenoaks District is already a popular tourist destination. It benefits from an attractive natural environment, with more than 60% of the District covered by the High Weald and Kent Downs Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Sevenoaks District is home to many historic towns and villages, as well as nationally recognised historic estates. The District boasts a number of key heritage assets, including Knole House, Chartwell, Hever Castle and Penshurst Place.

1.24 Nationally, the tourism sector was one of the hardest hit by the Covid-19 restrictions, as identified in the national tourism strategy, the Tourism Recovery Plan 2021. In Kent, an estimated 89% of tourism and hospitality facilities closed either temporarily or indefinitely – more than any other sector. This is certainly true for tourist attractions and accommodation throughout the District. However, as identified above, Sevenoaks benefits from an attractive natural environment and throughout the Covid-19 pandemic there was an increase in demand for outdoor attractions such as Knole Park, National Trust gardens and the District’s extensive Public Right of Way (PROW) network.

1.25 Tourism has the potential to have a positive impact on the economy and character of the District. The main priorities are therefore the need to protect the existing tourism uses and accommodation, to encourage (where appropriate) an increase in the amount and quality of tourist accommodation and facilities, as well as balancing this need against the priority to protect the rural district and its heritage and landscape. The NPPF supports building a strong and competitive economy, including encouraging sustainable tourism that both benefits businesses, in urban and rural areas, and protects the countryside.

Policy TO1 – Tourism and the Visitor Economy

It is expected that development proposals will support, strengthen and protect the existing accommodation and attractions.

It is suggested that the loss of tourist attractions and accommodation will be resisted where possible. Exceptions will be made where equivalent facilities, which are equally accessible to the population, are provided. Alternatively, it should be demonstrated through evidence submitted, that the continued operation of the tourist attraction or accommodation is no longer needed or is financially unviable.

Proposals to provide new sustainable tourism development, including hotels, guesthouses, bed and breakfasts, outdoor accommodation, self-catering accommodation and new visitor attractions, will be supported after consideration of the following criteria:

1. Whether the location is readily accessible, by a range of means of transport including walking, cycling and by public transport;
2. The anticipated traffic generation by the proposal;
3. The impact of the proposal on local and landscape character and amenity;

Policy TO1 - Tourism and the Visitor Economy

4. The relationship to existing tourism development and whether the proposal is for the upgrading of those facilities; and
5. Whether the proposal will contribute to the diversification of tourist attractions in the District.

Questions

Do you agree that we should protect, support and encourage tourism businesses, visitor accommodation and visitor attractions, including heritage assets?

Do you agree that the loss of tourist attractions and accommodation should only be permitted where a clear justification for their loss is provided?

Chapter 4 – Climate Change

Overarching Statement

Addressing climate change is a pressing global and local concern. The measures to help tackle this significant issue, and the inevitable impacts, include energy efficiency and generation, sustainable transport and active travel, air quality, health and wellbeing, habitats and biodiversity, flooding, water supply and consumption and more.

Opening Chapter Statement

The need to address climate change mitigation and adaptation is found throughout this Local Plan and is central to our Spatial Vision. It is not only limited to built development, but also incorporates aspects of design, flood risk and water management, transport, open space and biodiversity.

Climate Change

4.1 The Council has made a commitment to work towards achieving net zero carbon emissions for the Council and its assets by 2030 (Council emissions). This is alongside an ambition to assist the District in becoming net zero, by working closely with local communities (District emissions) and to improve the resilience of the District to a changing climate (Climate resilience). This is collectively known as the Net Zero 2030 commitment. More information can be found at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/netzero.

4.2 The Local Plan is a key driver in achieving the Net Zero 2030 commitment, through helping to reduce carbon emissions within the District and by ensuring resilient development. This is reflected in the overarching themes for the Local Plan.

Strategic Objectives

OB3: Ensure the Council's net zero objectives influence all development taking place in the District.

OB4: Provide sufficient flexibility in policies to enforce changing national standards, best practice and evidence base updates that will inevitably occur over the plan period.

OB5: Allow residents to make lifestyle choices that make a positive contribution to net zero objectives.

Subsection 1 – Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation

4.3 We are living in a changing climate. The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment (CCRA) 2022 stated that an increase in temperature will lead to future increased risks to human health and wellbeing, agricultural food productivity, public water supply and natural assets, as well as intensifying flooding up to 2050 and beyond.

4.4 The Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment for Kent and Medway 2020 sets out that the key climate risks with the greatest potential impact on Kent are:

1. Increase in average temperature;
2. Heatwaves;
3. Drought;
4. Sea-level rise;
5. Heavy rainfall;
6. Flooding; and
7. Soil destabilisation and landslides.

4.5 Carbon emissions are a key driver of climate change. Sevenoaks District produces more than 450ktonnes of Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) each year. This is approximately 4ktonnes of CO₂ per person with the majority of emissions resulting from domestic energy use and transport as shown in Figure 4.1.

4.6 The Local Plan will include policies to ensure development has a minimal impact on the climate through:

- High quality and careful design;
- Reducing the need to travel;
- Promoting walking, cycling and public transport opportunities;
- Allocating development in sustainable locations;
- Supporting and promoting low carbon technologies; and
- Protecting and enhancing blue green infrastructure.

4.7 These measures also contribute to improvements in community health and wellbeing and air quality.

4.8 New development must be designed to be as low carbon as possible incorporating renewable energy resources and be resilient for the changing climate. There are already a number of well-established sustainability standards for buildings such as Passivhaus and the Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM). These

standards have been widely used for many years to ensure new development meets higher standards of sustainability.

Policy CC1 – Climate Change (Strategic Policy)

This policy will seek to:

1. Ensure all developments recognise and support the Council's Net Zero 2030 commitment for the District;
2. Minimise carbon emissions where possible through effective spatial planning by promoting sustainable development, supporting local services and facilities, and sustainable movement;
3. Ensure developments incorporate measures to mitigate the causes of climate change and reduce emissions;
4. Support the delivery of appropriate renewable and low carbon energy schemes;
5. Ensure developments implement measures to support climate resilience and adaptation including supporting the natural environment, increasing water efficiency, incorporating sustainable drainage systems and avoiding areas at risk of flooding; and
6. Maximise opportunities for carbon storage and sequestration.

Questions

Do you agree that the Local Plan should seek to ensure development mitigates and adapts to climate change?

Are there any other ways the Local Plan can address climate change?

Subsection 2 – Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Development

4.9 Strategic Policy CC1 will be supported by development management policies and a climate change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to provide further detail on the implementation of the policies.

4.10 The majority of the carbon emissions from the District are from domestic properties, this is the third highest level in Kent. To reduce carbon emissions, developments must be built to a higher standard and reduce carbon emissions as much as possible.

Policy CC2 – Low Carbon and Climate Resilient Development

This policy will seek to ensure development is built to significantly reduce carbon emissions and to be resilient to a changing climate. It will include:

1. Scheme layout and design requirements to reduce energy use, make the most of natural heating and cooling and encourage active and low carbon movement;
2. Encouragement to use national recognised eco building standards such as Passivhaus and BREEAM and to meet the Future Homes standard as a minimum;
3. Requirements for low carbon and renewable energy technologies to be included in all new developments to reduce energy use;
4. Requirements for adaptation measures to be incorporated into schemes including green spaces, trees, porous surfaces, living roofs and walls, and water harvesting; and
5. Climate Impact Assessments to be required for all developments to set out how they are achieving the lowest possible carbon rating, incorporating renewable energy measures and ensuring climate resilience.

Questions

Do you agree with the use of climate impact assessments as a way to ensure developments significantly reduce carbon emissions?

Are there any other ways the local plan can ensure low carbon developments?

Subsection 3 – Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Generation

4.11 Low carbon and renewable energy technologies have an important role to play in transitioning to a low carbon economy and energy sector. The District is highly constrained, however there is still opportunity for low carbon and renewable energy technology.

4.12 The local plan will support schemes which support climate change mitigation whilst ensuring the character of the District is conserved.

Policy CC3 – Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Generation
--

This policy will seek to increase the use of low carbon and renewable energy generation.
--

Appropriate proposals for low carbon and renewable technology schemes will be supported.
--

Schemes will need to ensure that the character of the District and landscape is conserved and, where possible, enhanced.
--

Question

Do you agree with our approach to low carbon and renewable energy generation?

Subsection 4 – Flooding

4.13 Wetter winters as a result of climate change are likely to increase fluvial flood risk, which is flooding from rivers and areas of open water. A greater severity and frequency of storms is also likely to increase surface water flooding.

4.14 Figure 4.2 shows the areas of the District which are most at risk from fluvial flooding. The flood zones represent different severities of flood risk, from Flood Zone 1 having the lowest risk of flooding (shown as 'clear' on the Flood Map – all land outside Zones 2 and 3) to Zone 3b as a functional floodplain.

4.15 There is already significant national and local guidance in place to manage flood risk, in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and local guidance provided by the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA). The Council Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for Sevenoaks District, carried out in 2022, identifies current sources of flooding and also takes into account the impact of climate change.

Policy W1 – Flood Risk in Sevenoaks District

This policy will require:

1. No development in areas at risk of flooding and no development taking place in Flood Zones 2 and 3, without agreement from the Environment Agency;
2. Any areas in new development schemes, that are created specifically to deal with flooding, to be designed to maximize wildlife and habitat opportunities;
3. Development on sites larger than 1ha in Flood Zone 1 to be subject to a Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) in accordance with the Council's SFRA, National and Local guidance and the LLFA drainage guidance and policy statements;
4. That each FRA should include the requirement for any mitigation measures and, where relevant, the assessment should also address the risk of flooding from surface water, groundwater and ordinary watercourses. Where there is evidence that water from these sources ponds or flows over the proposed site, the assessment should state how this will be managed and what the impact on neighbouring sites will be; and
5. That measures identified to mitigate the effects of flooding shall be installed and maintained at the applicants' own expense, or put into a management company to ensure their long term retention, maintenance and management.

Question

Do you agree with our approach to flood risk?

Subsection 5 – Sustainable Drainage

4.16 Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) can make a real difference to reducing flood risk by managing the quantity of surface water run-off from development, as well as moderate flow rates and prevent sudden water level rises following heavy rain. They can also significantly reduce harm to valuable water resources by retaining water within the local hydrological system, as well as protecting water resources from pollution by filtering run-off.

4.17 Soft and hard landscaping should integrate SuDS and consideration should be given to how they can contribute to the quality of green space for the benefit of amenity, in terms of the visual features and attractiveness of a place, as well as recreation and wildlife.

4.18 The cumulative impact of small sites can have a significant impact on flood risk, and therefore, the inclusion of SuDS is essential on both smaller and larger developments.

Policy W2 – Sustainable Drainage

This policy will require that:

1. All developments must incorporate natural flood alleviation measures and sustainable drainage provision which mimics natural flows and drainage pathways and ensures that surface water run-off is managed as close to its source as possible.
2. Any drainage scheme must manage all sources of surface water, including exceedance flows and surface flows from off-site, provide for emergency ingress and egress and ensure adequate drainage connectivity. It will not be acceptable for surface water run-off to enter the foul water system.
3. Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) or other appropriate measures must also:
 - i. Maintain public safety;
 - ii. Provide sufficient attenuation to surface water flows as appropriate;
 - iii. Ensure that there is adequate treatment of surface water flows, such that there is no diminution in quality of any receiving watercourse;
 - iv. Ensure protection of groundwater; and
 - v. Provide or enhance wetland habitat and biodiversity where possible.
4. Approval of the design, phasing, long term management and maintenance of SuDS must be agreed prior to the development commencing.

Questions

Do you agree with our approach to sustainable drainage?

Is there anything else that should be incorporated into the policy to support sustainable drainage?

Subsection 6 – Water Management, Stress and Efficiency

4.19 Sevenoaks lies in an area of water stress and this will only become further exacerbated by climate change, as shown during summer 2022. Developments will need to incorporate water efficiency measures, including water harvesting, such as rainwater harvesting (including small scale water butts) and greywater harvesting.

4.20 Source Protection Zones (SPZ) for groundwater provides a third of drinking water in England and it is crucial that these zones are looked after to ensure that water is completely safe to drink. Developments should include robust protection measures, and consideration of drainage design and ground disturbance, to minimise potential impacts on groundwater quality and reduction in the availability of groundwater sources.

Policy W3 – Water Management, Stress and Efficiency

The policy will require that:

1. All new schemes will demonstrate that they are designed to promote water efficiency and achieve a mains water consumption target of 110 litres per head, per day or less;
2. Schemes should include appropriate water harvesting measures;
3. Development proposals must have regard to the Water Framework Directive, the Thames River Basin Management Plan and management plans for the River Darent and Eden;
4. New development must not deteriorate any existing watercourses and should actively enhance the natural function and habitats of watercourses wherever feasible;
5. Any necessary crossing points over rivers and watercourses should utilise clear spanning bridges, where possible, to allow natural river processes and wildlife to continue to utilise the river corridor; and
6. Major development schemes will undertake a Water Framework Directive Assessment setting out the existing ground and surface water baseline and the potential impact of the new development.

Question

Do you agree with our approach to water management including water efficiency measures?

Chapter 5 – Design

Overarching Statement

Design is so much more than what a place looks like, it is how it functions and how it is experienced. A well-designed space can have a huge impact on people’s lives, affecting health and wellbeing, our sense of security and belonging. Fundamentally a well-designed space is key to the successful delivery of the strategic objectives of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan.

Opening Chapter Statement

The government has put design at the forefront of national planning policy and our local policies are being updated to reflect this. We will be ambitious in ensuring that all elements of the Local Plan will be successfully achieved through good quality design.

5.1 The government has put design at the forefront of national planning policy and our local policies are being updated to reflect this. We will be ambitious in ensuring that all elements of the Local Plan will be successfully achieved through good quality design. We are proposing that each chapter of the document will contain a design policy, where appropriate, which will set out how development can demonstrate that it complies with the policy. The aim is to make this a clear and user friendly document in order to support successful delivery.

5.2 This overarching Design chapter sets out how we can ensure that the standards of good design are incorporated into the District’s new development.

Strategic Policy

All new development will create well-designed places that promote sustainable and healthy communities.

Strategic Objectives

OB6 Deliver a character-led-approach to development that demonstrates the Government’s priorities for well-designed places. (National Design Guide, 2021: The Ten Characteristics of Place)

OB7 Require the production of design codes for new development that meet the provisions of national planning guidance.

Question

What Design Policies do you think would support the successful delivery of the Strategic Objectives?

Policy DE1 – Design Review Panel

A Design Review Panel is a panel of experienced design professionals from a range of disciplines, (for example: architecture, infrastructure, master-planning, sustainability) who meet to assess the quality of a proposed development. Following the presentation they produce a report based upon their findings. They are commonly used by local authorities to provide specific expert advice to support the determination of an application and are usually part of the pre-application process. Design South East is the local body that manages these for Local Planning Authorities.

This policy will set out the criteria for selecting development proposals to be presented to the Design Review Panel and will likely include:

1. Size of development;
2. Location; and
3. Site constraints and sensitivity to change.

There will be an accompanying SPD to provide guidance.

Question

Do you think this approach will support the delivery of new well-designed spaces within the District?

What criteria do you think should be used for presenting schemes to the Design Review Panel?

Policy DE2 – Outline Planning Applications

This Plan sets an expectation for new development, to make the best and most efficient use of land and respect local character (Policy H7). The aim of this policy is to ensure that a proposed density of development, within an Outline Planning Application, will be deliverable in accordance with wider national and local planning policies. In establishing the principle of development, at Outline Planning Application stage, this policy will set out the submission requirements.

Question

Do you agree that this will help to make optimal use of the potential of a site?

What documents should be required to be submitted at outline application stage to establish that the proposed development will be policy compliant?

Policy DE3 – Ensuring Design Quality

Government design guidance, the National Design Guide (2019) uses the 10 Characteristics of Well-Designed Places as a framework for assessing development. These are:

1. Context – enhances the surroundings;

Policy DE3 – Ensuring Design Quality

2. Identity – attractive and distinctive;
3. Built form – a coherent pattern of development;
4. Movement – accessible and easy to move around;
5. Nature – enhanced and optimised;
6. Public spaces – safe, social and inclusive;
7. Uses – mixed and integrated;
8. Homes and buildings – functional, healthy and sustainable;
9. Resources – efficient and resilient; and
10. Lifespan – made to last.

To support the understanding of the District’s character, the Council commissioned a district-wide character study. The Sevenoaks District Character Study (DWCS) 2022 tells the story of the District by exploring its past and how it has evolved into what it is today. It identifies important themes and recent trends that are shaping the District as a whole, including how people live, work and spend time in the District. It identifies the different areas that make up the District and explores what makes each place special.

This policy will seek to require large sites to demonstrate that their development meets these 10 characteristics of place, utilising the DWCS.

Questions

Will this policy help to secure well-designed places?

Will this policy help new development respect local character?

What size of site should this policy apply to?

Policy DE4 – Design Codes

A design code is a set of simple, concise and illustrated design requirements, that are visual and numerical wherever possible, to provide specific and detailed parameters for the physical development of a site or area.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that design policies should be developed with local communities so they reflect local aspirations, and are grounded in an understanding and evaluation of each area’s defining characteristics. Design codes and guides should provide a framework for creating high-quality places.

This policy will require developers to engage with the local community and stakeholders to deliver a design code for new development sites in accordance with the government’s guidance on Design Codes.

Question

Do you think this policy will support the aim of national planning policy in delivering development that responds to local character and engages with the local community?

Chapter 6 – Health and Wellbeing

Overarching Statement

The Local Plan promotes the health and wellbeing of residents, workers and visitors to the District, through its role in shaping the built and natural environment. Through collaboration with partners and the design, construction and management of spaces and places, planning plays a key role in alleviating some of the District's most pressing health challenges.

Opening Chapter Statement

The quality of the built and natural environment can directly influence healthy behaviours and have positive impacts on reducing health inequalities.

6.1 It is important that provision is made to ensure all residents have the opportunity to improve their wellbeing, reduce social exclusion and isolation, stay physically active and live healthier lives. The importance of this has been particularly emphasised by the recent Covid-19 pandemic.

6.2 Good quality housing in a sustainable location, with access to green open space, can positively benefit social networks and opportunities for active travel.

Strategic Objectives

OB1 Recognise the link between the places and spaces that we live in and the quality of residents' mental and physical health.

OB2 Work closely with healthcare providers to develop policies that promote good physical and mental health as an outcome.

Subsection 1 – Health, Wellbeing and Safety

6.3 There are areas of affluence in Sevenoaks District, as well as pockets of deprivation. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is the official measure of deprivation for small areas in England. According to the IMD, Sevenoaks District is the second least deprived local authority in Kent, although it should be noted that there are areas within the District that fall within the 30% most deprived in the country, namely Swanley St Mary's and Swanley White Oak. Opportunities to improve the wellbeing of the more vulnerable aspects of the community, and reduce social exclusion, will be sought and proposals supported.

6.4 Current population data shows that 22% of the District's population is aged 65 and over, and this proportion is expected to increase to 24% over the plan period. There is an increasing need to identify opportunities to improve the health and wellbeing of the older population, through medical infrastructure, social, community and recreational opportunities.

6.5 Public safety is of paramount importance and everyone has the right to feel safe in the places they live, work and relax at all times of the day. We will work closely with the Health and Safety Executive, The Environment Agency and Kent Police to establish whether additional measures should be included in the Local Plan to identify hazardous establishments, ensure risks to public safety are minimised and to take reasonable measures to prevent major incidents.

6.6 A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a useful tool in determining planning applications where there are expected to be significant or adverse impacts on health and wellbeing. HIAs help to achieve sustainable development by finding ways to create healthy and active communities, which can be shaped by the built environments which we live in.

6.7 Many factors combine to affect the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities, and the context of people's lives determine their health. To a large extent, factors such as where we live, the state of our environment, genetics, our income and education level, and our relationships with friends and family all have considerable impacts on health, whereas the more commonly considered factors such as access and use of health care services often have less of an impact.

6.8 The determinants of health include:

1. The social and economic environment;
2. The physical environment; and
3. The person's individual characteristics and behaviours.

Policy HW1 – Health and Wellbeing

This policy will seek to support healthy living opportunities, promote social inclusion and improve community cohesion To support healthy and safe communities new development should:

Policy HW1 – Health and Wellbeing

1. Be located within easy access to services and facilities;
2. Create opportunities for better active travel to including provision for safe cycle and pedestrian routes;
3. Be designed to minimise threats and improve public safety; and
4. Be designed to improve mental health and reduce loneliness and isolation.

Developments that reduce health inequalities and social exclusion will be supported.

The policy will set out requirements for HIAs to be submitted on the following new developments, which are expected to have significant impacts:

1. All major housing developments over 10 units;
2. For non-residential developments containing any of the following uses:
 - i. Education facilities;
 - ii. Health facilities;
 - iii. Leisure or community facilities;
 - iv. Betting shops;
 - v. Hot food takeaways; and
 - vi. Restaurants;
3. and for any other uses that could be considered to have a detrimental impact on physical or mental health (e.g. payday loan shops/vapour parlours/nightclubs)

Where unavoidable negative impacts on health, wellbeing and safety are identified, mitigation measures must be incorporated into the proposal.

Proposals will be encouraged to include green and community spaces to support social prescribing for both mental and physical wellbeing.

Questions

Do you agree that health impact assessments should be included for certain new developments?

How else can the Local Plan support healthy, inclusive and safe communities?

Subsection 2 – Air Quality

6.9 Vehicle exhaust is the main contributor to poor air quality in the District and there is a high dependency on private vehicles to make journeys to key locations within, and outside of, the District (e.g. stations, shops and community facilities). This has led to a number of hot spots in Sevenoaks, Swanley and in several smaller settlements along the A25, where air quality is particularly poor. In addition, three major motorways run through the District, which carry a considerable flow of HGVs using the port at Dover and the Channel Tunnel.

6.10 The District currently has 4 Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs), all of which have been declared in relation to traffic emissions.

6.11 Measures to improve air quality include reducing the need to travel, providing electric vehicle charging points and promoting alternative modes of transport, including cycling. Secondary effects of these measures can also improve general health and wellbeing.

6.12 The Council will prepare a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to guide how developments will be expected to meet national and local air quality policies. This will set out how both onsite and offsite mitigation should be incorporated into schemes.

Policy AQ1 – Air Quality

This policy will seek to:

1. Ensure that new development does not have an unacceptable impact on air quality for new residents, the existing surrounding area and other areas connected to the development;
2. Ensure that onsite and offsite air quality issues are included when assessing the environmental impact of proposals;
3. Ensure that development which may have an adverse impact on air quality will be required to incorporate measures to reduce the impact to an acceptable level;
4. Ensure that suitable onsite and offsite mitigation measures should be incorporated into the scheme, including a financial contribution to strategic air quality improvement measures, if appropriate, such that future air quality is either improved or sustained at a level that would be achieved without the development; and
5. Require the design and location of new development to take account of the need to improve air quality, in accordance with the District's Air Quality Action Plan.

Questions

Do you agree that all new developments should have a neutral or positive impact on air quality?

What other measures could be included to improve air quality in the District?

Subsection 3 – Noise

6.13 All development should provide an acceptable standard of amenity for its occupants and should not result in significant harmful effects to surrounding uses. These harmful effects can include overlooking, loss of privacy or light, noise and pollution.

6.14 The Noise Policy Statement for England (DEFRA, March 2010) seeks to promote good health and a good quality of life through the effective management of noise within the context of Government policy on sustainable development.

6.15 Noise sensitive developments should be located away from existing sources of significant noise, and potentially noisy developments should be located in areas where noise will not be such an important consideration or where its impact can be minimised. Acceptable noise levels will be based on acoustic assessments by accredited professionals.

Policy HW2 - Noise

This policy will seek to:

1. Ensure that new development provides adequate residential amenity for existing and future occupiers of the development with regards to noise;
2. Safeguard the amenities of existing and future occupants of nearby properties by ensuring that development does not contribute to, and avoids areas where occupiers of the development would be subject to, excessive noise and vibration; and
3. Ensure that development would not result in unacceptable noise levels from existing noise sources, which cannot be adequately mitigated.

Question

Do you agree with the policy approach to noise in new developments?

Chapter 7 – Historic Environment

Overarching Statement

Sevenoaks District is home to a wealth of heritage assets, including around 1,700 listed buildings. This rich and diverse built heritage is set within a stunning medieval natural landscape of ancient woodland and farmland. A large proportion of the District lies within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the southern tip lies within the High Weald AONB. Other areas lie within the distinctive historical Low Weald and North Kent Plains rural character areas, which sit within the Green Belt. The myriad of historic parks and gardens encompass aesthetic, botanic, scientific and social heritage and form an important part of the areas landscape heritage character.

Opening Chapter Statement

The historic environment is a valuable asset which can contribute to creating a sense of place and the wider strategic objectives of the District. These include economic development, urban regeneration, high quality urban design, placemaking and planning, the vitality and viability of our centres and rural economy, tourism, leisure, education and sustainability. It is important that planning decisions consider heritage assets in the District, alongside wider objectives as set out in this Plan.

Strategic Objectives

OB15 Continue to support development that protects and enhances the District's historic environment and ensures that it can be enjoyed by future generations.

Subsection 1 – Historic Environment

7.1 The policies in this Plan seek to draw together a comprehensive approach to conserving and enhancing the District's historic environment.

7.2 Heritage assets are identified in national planning policy as either designated or non-designated heritage assets.

7.3 Designated heritage assets are those with a statutory designation, such as:

1. Listed buildings;
2. Scheduled monuments;
3. Conservation areas; and
4. Registered parks and gardens.

7.4 Non-designated heritage assets do not have a statutory designation, but are still of local heritage significance. These include:

1. Locally listed buildings, structures and places;
2. Buildings and structures identified as making a positive contribution to the character of a conservation area; and
3. Buildings, monuments, sites, places, areas or landscapes identified as having a degree of significance meriting consideration in planning decisions because of their heritage interest.

7.5 The Council commissioned a Historic Environment Review (2017) to help us understand the District's historic environment as a whole. It considers the historic environment and designated and non-designated heritage assets, whilst also recognising that the landscape and local character are intrinsically linked to the setting of heritage assets and historic settlements, the pattern of development and land uses. As well as focusing on specific assets, it is important to consider the main themes and characteristics which help to form the District's local distinctiveness and which make a significant contribution to its heritage.

7.6 The Council wants to achieve development which is compatible with its local character and to protect and positively respond to heritage assets and their setting, as required by national planning policy.

Policy HEN1 – Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment

This policy will seek to protect and enhance our historic environment with development proposals required to respond sensitively to affected heritage assets and their setting, taking into account the following guidance:

1. Local Plan policies relating to design, heritage assets and landscape character;

Policy HEN1 – Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment

2. Relevant research to understand the significance of the historic environment and specific assets it contains, including the Kent Historic Environment Record (HER) as a minimum;
3. Current best practice guidance produced by Historic England; and
4. Other principles set out in relevant local guidance, including the Kent Design SPD, Local List SPD, Sevenoaks District Historic Environment Review, Conservation Area Appraisals and Design Guidance, Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment, or any subsequent versions, and any historic environment guidance adopted by the Council.

Questions

Do you think this policy will support development that protects and enhances the historic environment?

Are there any additional policies that would protect and enhance the historic environment in new development?

7.7 National planning policy requires applicants to describe the significance of heritage assets affected by proposals, including any contribution made by their setting. Understanding the significance of heritage assets, and the contribution of their setting, is fundamental to the positive management and protection of the historic environment. All new development should demonstrate how it has understood and responded positively to the historic environment by making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness and, where possible, better revealing and enhancing the historic environment of the District.

Policy HEN2 – Sensitively Managing Change in the Historic Environment

This policy will require Planning Statements, Design and Access Statements and/or Heritage Statements to demonstrate:

1. That new development responds positively to local historic character;
2. An identification and assessment of heritage assets, including their significance, vulnerabilities and opportunities and the contribution of their setting; and
3. How this information has been used to inform proposals that sustain and enhance the historic environment and, where relevant, minimise and mitigate harm.

Questions

Do you think that this policy will support sensitively managed change within in the historic environment?

Are there any additional policies that would support sensitively managed change in the historic environment?

7.8 Most archaeological sites are not scheduled monuments, but nonetheless play an important role in the historic environment. They contribute to a sense of place and provide people with a direct physical link to the past, as well as bringing to life stories and events occurring at an international, national, regional and local level. The known sites and areas of archaeological interest within the District are included within the Historic Environment Record as Areas of Archaeological Potential. Sevenoaks District Council will follow Kent County Council's guidance on 'Areas of Archaeological Potential'. They are considered to be heritage assets.

Policy HEN3 – Archaeology

This policy will seek to identify, protect and record the archaeology of a development site where appropriate and, where practicable, opportunities should be taken for the enhancement and interpretation of archaeological remains.

Questions

Do you consider that this policy will adequately support the protection of non-designated archaeological sites?

Are there any additional policies that would support the protection of non-designated archaeological sites?

7.9 The Council, working in partnership with key stakeholders, produced a Local List of buildings, structures and open spaces which are of local architectural and historic interest or that made significant contribution to local distinctiveness. The historic assets on this list are considered non-designated heritage assets. The buildings on the Local List are all located in Sevenoaks town.

Policy HEN4 – Locally Listed Buildings

This policy will seek to reaffirm the Council's recognition of the contribution the Local List makes in valuing and defining local distinctiveness and their status as non-designated heritage assets as a material planning consideration. It will also consider the expansion of the Local List to the wider District.

Question

Do you think the Local List should be expanded to the wider District?

7.10 The retention and reuse of our historic building stock can help reduce climate change by avoiding the higher carbon footprint associated with new construction. The inherent embodied energy of historic buildings means that their retention and care is consistent with modern concepts of sustainability and with the ambitions to reduce carbon emissions.

7.11 Heritage assets also need to adapt to meet changing needs by understanding and exploring opportunities to improve the energy efficiency of historic buildings. There will also

almost always be scope to find sensitive solutions to improve access to the historic environment and upgrade facilities and environmental performance.

Policy HEN5 – Responding to Climate Change in the Historic Environment

This policy will seek to ensure a sensitive and tailored approach to the design and specification of energy conservation measures is taken which recognises modern and historic buildings function differently. The Council will encourage creative design approaches to the upgrading of historic buildings where they enhance their significance. The ‘whole building approach’ will be promoted which seeks to save energy, sustain heritage significance, and maintain a healthy indoor environment through understanding the building in its context.

Questions

Do you think this policy will support a sensitive and successful approach to responding to climate change and energy efficiency in the historic environment?

Are there any additional policies that would support a sensitive and successful approach to responding to climate change and energy efficiency in the historic environment?

7.12 Shopfronts and signage form an important element in the street scene, both individually and in terms of the wider street setting. They can not only enhance the vitality of a place, but also contribute to the local distinctiveness and character of the townscape.

7.13 Retaining historic shopfronts makes a positive contribution to the historic character of a place. When a replacement shopfront is necessary it can be successfully integrated into their setting through the use of quality materials and by respecting the proportions of the building and character of the street scene.

Policy HEN6 – Shopfronts and Signage

This policy will seek to promote the retention of historic shopfronts and the enhancement of unsympathetic shopfronts within conservation areas. Applications for new shopfronts or alteration to existing shopfronts, and other forms of advertisement affecting heritage assets will be supported where the design, detailing, positioning, materials, colour, proportion and illumination respond positively to the character and design of the existing building and surroundings. This is both for the replacement of historic shopfronts and the enhancement of unsympathetic shopfronts and signage where they are to be replaced for historic buildings and areas.

Questions

Do you think this policy will recognise the value of historic shopfronts and ensure appropriate replacement in historic contexts?

Listed buildings with shopfronts already have statutory protection. Do you think this policy should apply outside conservation areas? And if so where?

7.14 Historic parks and gardens are an important part of the historic and natural environment of the District. Some of these historic parks and gardens are designated, and others are non-designated assets and are identified in the Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens and on the Sevenoaks Local List. There are likely to be others that are yet to be formally identified.

7.15 These contain a variety of features, such as: historic association with places, events and people, the open space itself, views in and out, the planting, water features, built features and archaeological remains. They often also play an important role in the setting of listed buildings and structures, to which they are intrinsically linked. There is a need to protect such sites and their settings from new development that may have a detrimental impact on the historic interest.

Policy HEN7 – Historic Parks and Gardens

This policy will seek to conserve and enhance the significance of historic parks and gardens by giving specific guidance on how applications will be assessed.
--

Questions

Do you think that this policy will support the conservation and enhancement of historic parks and gardens in new development?

Are there any additional policies that would support the conservation and enhancement of historic parks and gardens in development proposals?

Chapter 8 – Natural Environment

Overarching Statement

Sevenoaks District has a high quality and beautiful natural environment with a predominantly rural character. The sweeping landscape incorporates the chalk hills of the North Downs, stretches of enchanting woodland, historic parkland and areas rich in biodiversity.

Opening Chapter Statement

Sevenoaks District is an attractive place to live and work. The natural environment is a key character component of the District and should be conserved and enhanced for current and future generations.

8.1 More than 60% of the District lies within the Kent Downs or High Weald Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and 11% of the District is covered in irreplaceable Ancient Woodland (compared with the UK average of 2%).

8.2 The District is rich in biodiversity and has a range of habitats varying from chalk grasslands, acid grassland, woodlands, rivers and open water and heathland.

Strategic Objectives

OB14: Ensure the District retains a high quality natural environment over the period of the Local Plan including delivering bio-diversity net gain on new development.

Subsection 1 – Landscape and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

8.3 The Landscape Character Assessment 2016 provides a detailed review of the entire District, including the AONBs. National policy and legislation already sets out how the different designated areas should be managed and protected.

8.4 Developments in AONBs are expected to be modest and in line with the NPPF. They should conserve and enhance the District character of the AONB. Proposals should take account of the relevant Management Plan and associated guidance to produce sensitive and carefully designed schemes.

8.5 New developments should enhance the character of the AONB and the Management Plans can help to guide how a scheme may achieve this. Enhancements may include:

1. Improvement of scenic beauty, such as the removal or improvement of currently detrimental buildings or features, or by obscuring or distracting from negative features such as pylons, substations and major roads;
2. Supporting climate mitigation and resilience;
3. Restoring historic features and replacing existing materials with more appropriate and local materials;
4. Supporting the local economy by using local materials, including features reliant on local materials, such as wood for biomass boilers, supporting new rural business etc.;
5. Restoring historic settlement patterns, historic field patterns or historic routeways;
6. Allowing new appropriate public access;
7. Restoring native planting and natural features including trees, hedgerows, meadows and grassland; and
8. Improving tranquillity and reducing the existing impact of noise and lighting.

Policy NE1 – Landscape and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (Strategic Policy)

This policy will set out local requirements to:

1. Conserve and enhance the distinctive features that contribute to the special character of the District in line with the Landscape Character Assessment, AONB Management Plans and associated documents;
2. Guide development in the AONB in line with the NPPF including managing major development;
3. Ensure developments within the AONB reflect the distinctive high quality area by identifying specific design criteria;
4. Require Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments for larger development proposals.

Questions
What do you think should be included in the policy and design criteria for developments in the AONB?
Do you agree that an assessment of landscape and visual impacts (LVIA) should be required for all new large developments?

Partnership Working in the Natural Environment

8.6 Projects which provide improvements to the natural environment, increase public enjoyment, promote climate resilience and provide health benefits both at the landscape scale, such as the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme and the Sevenoaks Greensands Commons Project, and at the local scale, such as woodland management projects, will be supported by the Council.

8.7 There are emerging proposals around the Bough Beech reservoir and Bore Place sites (see Figure 8.2), for potentially opening up Bough Beech reservoir to be more of a community resource. We will continue to work closely with both Bore Place and Sutton and East Surrey Water Services, to enhance the linked sites for people and nature.

8.8 This exciting project will play a part in delivering health and wellbeing (both physical and mental) over the plan period which is a central theme in this Plan. Nature and biodiversity and resilient employment are also local priorities, and this is likely to align well with many of the economic and environmental policies of the Council. Further information on this important site, which represents an significant opportunity for the District, will be included in subsequent versions of plan as it progresses towards adoption.

Subsection 2 – Biodiversity and Ecosystems

8.9 Sevenoaks District has a wide range of habitats and protected areas, including 42 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, 63 Local Wildlife Sites and 19 nature reserves.

8.10 The District is home to a number of nationally designated sites which will be highlighted on the policies map. There are a number of locally designated sites including Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Roadside Nature Reserves, Kent Wildlife Trust Reserves. These are protected for their biodiversity and ecological value.

8.11 The various ecological and habitat components across the District, alongside other areas of open space, are collectively known as the blue green infrastructure network. The network consists of the following sites and is shown as an [interactive map](#):

Land of biodiversity value, including:

1. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs);
2. Registered Historic Parks and Gardens;
3. Land designated under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) including Common Land and Public Rights of Way;
4. Local Wildlife Sites;
5. Nature Reserves;
6. Woodland and Ancient Woodland;
7. Country parks;
8. Trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders;
9. River corridors and open bodies of water;
10. Cycle routes;
11. Sites identified in the Kent Compendium of Historic Parks and Gardens; and
12. Sites designated as Open Space including:
 - Amenity Greenspace
 - Natural and Semi-natural Greenspace
 - Provision for Children and Young People
 - Outdoor Sports facilities, playing pitches and playing fields
 - Allotments and community gardens
 - Green corridors
 - Cemeteries and Churchyards

Policy BW1 – Safeguarding Places for Wildlife and Nature (Strategic Policy)

This policy will seek to:

1. Protect the blue green infrastructure network;
2. Designate biodiversity areas that are not already protected through legislation such as Local Wildlife Sites; and
3. Support schemes and projects to enhance the blue green infrastructure network.

Questions

Is there anything else that should be identified as part of the District’s natural landscape (blue green infrastructure network)?

Do you agree that locally designated sites should generally be protected from development?

Subsection 3 – Ashdown Forest

8.12 There are four internationally important sites within 10km of the boundary of the District, the most significant of which is Ashdown Forest which lies approximately 6km south of the District boundary. It is internationally important for nature conservation, reflected in its designation as a Special Protection Area (SPA), due to the presence of breeding Nightjars and Dartford Warblers and as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC), primarily due to heathland habitats. The European designations cover around 3,000ha.

8.13 The District's nearest settlement to Ashdown Forest is Edenbridge, which is approximately 12km from the site and a 2021 visitor's survey found that less than 2% of visitors to the Forest are from within Sevenoaks District.

8.14 We are members of the Ashdown Forest Officer Working Group and have signed a Statement of Common Ground to demonstrate our ongoing commitment to joint working on this important issue. Once adopted the Local Plan will be accompanied by a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to assess whether there are any adverse effect on the integrity of the European sites, as a result of development provided by the Plan, even in combination with other plans and projects. We will continue to work proactively with Natural England, neighbouring authorities and any other relevant bodies to understand the impact of the Local Plan on the Ashdown Forest.

8.15 To date, neighbouring authorities have sought modest developer contributions towards mitigating the impact of recreational pressure from new development, within a 7km zone of the forest. This zone just reaches into the District (a very small area around Fordcombe and Cowden as shown in Figure 8.3), but there currently is no development proposed in these areas as it is entirely washed over by the Green Belt. However, due to the possibility of windfall development, Natural England has recommended that Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMMs) contributions are sought, to allow any windfall development within the 7km zone to proceed, whilst addressing their impact on the forest.

8.16 As there currently are no proposed site allocations within the 7km zone in the District, a strategic Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) is unlikely to be feasible but we will explore options for alternative provision. Tariff guidance is set out in the following document and is currently set at £1,170 per new residential unit www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/1140/ashdown_forest_special_protection_spa_strategy_tariff_guidance.

Policy AF1 – Ashdown Forest

This policy will require:

1. Any residential development in the 7km zone to provide a strategic access management and monitoring (SAMMs) contribution to address visitor impact on Ashdown Forest, in line with the SAMM strategy; and

Policy AF1 – Ashdown Forest

2. Major development within or adjacent to the 7km boundary to be assessed on a case by case basis to determine any additional mitigation measures.

Question

Do you agree with the approach to protecting the Ashdown Forest?

Subsection 4 – Biodiversity in Development

8.17 Biodiversity is found throughout the rural and urban areas of the District. All development can have a positive impact on biodiversity and should provide a measurable net gain.

8.18 Access to the natural environment and areas of high biodiversity value supports our spatial vision. It can also have a positive impact on health and wellbeing and can help reduce social and health inequalities. We are supportive of countryside projects such as community-led habitat management, health walks and wildlife/nature experiences especially those which encourage children and young people to engage with the natural environment.

8.19 Blue green infrastructure is essential to mitigating and adapting to climate change, ensuring that future generations can enjoy a healthy and thriving environment for years to come. The Council has committed to helping the District reduce carbon emissions and become more resilient to a changing climate through its Net Zero 2030 commitment.

8.20 The Council will continue to work with partners to develop projects to strengthen the blue green infrastructure network and improve access to, and understanding of, the natural environment. Partners include:

1. The North West Kent Countryside Partnership;
2. Kent Wildlife Trust;
3. Kent Downs and High Weald AONB units;
4. Town and Parish Councils.

8.21 Working with local authorities across Kent and Kent County Council, the Kent Nature Partnership, has concluded that a 20% target for biodiversity net gain for new development should be included in Local Plans. This is supported by a Kent wide viability study. A 20% target for Sevenoaks District is under consideration, and will be tested in the forthcoming viability assessment.

8.22 A Supplementary Planning Document covering biodiversity net gain will be prepared to set out the detailed requirements for biodiversity net gain, and will include both on-site and off-site net gain provision.

Policy BW2 – Biodiversity in New Development
The policy will seek to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Achieve 20% biodiversity net gain from new development; and2. Ensure proposals incorporate natural environment measures that help to support biodiversity, mitigate climate change and integrate climate resilience.

Question

Is the 20% biodiversity net gain target appropriate for Sevenoaks District?

Chapter 9 – Infrastructure and Community

Overarching Statement

Infrastructure underpins the successful operation and connectivity of a place. The existing and future provision of infrastructure is needed in the right place, at the right time to support the District's growth and development.

Opening Chapter Statement

This Plan supports the delivery of necessary infrastructure to meet the needs arising from new development. The timely provision of suitable and appropriate infrastructure to support growth, alongside the maintenance of existing infrastructure, is crucial to the well-being of residents, those who visit, provide services, invest and work in the District.

10.1 The delivery of housing and employment needs relies on the right infrastructure being in place to support planned growth. Suitable provision can include new facilities and services or upgrading existing infrastructure.

10.2 It is fundamental that places and communities are well connected with each other to access day-to-day services and facilities for future generations. The definition of infrastructure is wide and includes a range of services and facilities provided by both public and private bodies. This includes:

1. **Transport infrastructure:** Local and major transport, junctions, sustainable transport, parking;
2. **Green/Blue infrastructure:** Public open space, play space, Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), Public Rights of Way (PRoW), protected landscapes;
3. **Social infrastructure:** Education, health, sports and leisure facilities, emergency services, libraries and community centres; and
4. **Utilities and hard infrastructure:** Electricity, gas, water, sewerage, waste, telecommunications and broadband, flood defences.

Strategic Objectives

OB18 Co-ordinate the delivery of necessary infrastructure to support planned growth

Subsection 1 – Infrastructure Delivery

10.3 The extent to which infrastructure needs are met is variable across the District. Existing settlements are generally better served by public transport and medical and community facilities, although many of these services are operating near capacity. The rural areas can be more isolated with less access to, and provision of, infrastructure.

10.4 The Council will develop an understanding of the infrastructure needed to support growth through the production of our Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), drafted with input from our main infrastructure providers. The IDP's priorities will help to inform the Council's annual Infrastructure Funding Statement. This document reports on the Council's infrastructure projects or types of infrastructure which will be prioritised for Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding in the next financial year.

10.5 Successful infrastructure delivery is dependent on partnership working with infrastructure providers and developers, to ensure the services and facilities needed to support development are delivered in a timely manner. In some cases, it may be necessary for infrastructure to be provided in advance of development commencement. The Council will work with providers to ensure appropriate phasing.

Policy IN1 – Infrastructure Delivery

This policy will seek to:

1. Co-ordinate the appropriate delivery of new infrastructure to support development and growth within our District, in accordance with the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which will be a material consideration in planning decisions. We will work with providers to retain, improve and provide new infrastructure to support development and help to ensure a high quality of life for residents of all ages.
2. Ensure that new development makes a contribution towards infrastructure needs arising from development, facilitating necessary infrastructure on or off site or where necessary retaining land for essential educational, community, health, movement, flood defences and Blue/Green Infrastructure to support the development.
3. Work with stakeholders to address barriers that prevent infrastructure from being provided including funding.

Questions

Should we consider anything else to deliver infrastructure?

We are considering identifying what specific infrastructure will be needed to support large developments. This may also prioritise infrastructure types. Do you think this is the right approach?

If we are looking to prioritise infrastructure, what do you consider are the most important types to support growth?

Blue/Green Infrastructure

10.6 Blue/Green infrastructure is an important aspect of the character and function of the District. The Natural Environment Chapter 8 sets out the extent of the existing blue/green infrastructure network and policies for its conservation and enhancement.

Transport

10.7 A well maintained transport network is a vital part of sustainable development. The Council's Movement Strategy proactively explains the key issues and priorities for sustainable movement and transport for the District. This includes reducing the need to travel, promoting active travel and smart technology, improving the cycling and walking network, encouraging the use of low emission vehicles and making it easier to access and use public transport.

10.8 The Local Plan supports the aims of the Movement Strategy and this is covered in the Transport Chapter 10.

Subsection 2 – Open Space

10.9 The Open Space, Sport and Leisure Study included a quantity and quality audit of the existing open spaces within the District under the following categories:

1. Amenity Greenspace;
2. Natural and Semi-natural Greenspace;
3. Provision for Children and Young People;
4. Outdoor Sports facilities;
5. Allotments and community gardens;
6. Green corridors; and
7. Cemeteries and Churchyards.

10.10 The study found that although the District has an adequate supply of most types of open space, the quality of the spaces could be improved. We will work with partners to identify opportunities to redevelop areas which are currently not fit for purpose or where improvements can be made.

10.11 The open spaces identified through the study will be protected through policy against inappropriate development. These spaces can be viewed on the interactive map.

Policy OS1 – Open Space and Recreation

This policy will encourage:

1. The retention of the District's designated open spaces shown for the current use and open space type unless it can be demonstrated that the tests set out in National Policy have been met;
2. The retention of all other open spaces of value to the local community, either because of use or contribution to local character. Local Green Spaces as defined by the National Planning Policy Framework will be designated through Neighbourhood Plans; and
3. The inclusion of Open Space in new development from the earliest design stage alongside onsite blue green infrastructure and biodiversity features. All new open space must include arrangements for long term maintenance and management.

Questions

Do you agree that new developments should include open spaces?

What else can we include to improve open space and recreation in the District?

Subsection 3 – Children and Young People Play Space

10.12 Play space for children and young people is a necessity in the creation of a new community.

10.13 The Open Space, Sport and Leisure Study identified an existing undersupply of fitness provision and children and young people's play areas across the District. Fields in Trust have produced recommended standards for the type and amount of play space that should be provided in new developments. We will adopt these standards as a minimum.

Policy OS2 – Children and Young People Play Space

This policy will encourage:

1. Housing developments to include children and young people's play space and apply, as a minimum, the following Fields in Trust requirements for the inclusion of equipped play space:

Fields in Trust Children and Play Space Standards

Size of Development	Local Area for Play (LAP)	Locally Equipped Area for Play (LEAP)	Neighbourhood Equipped Area for Play (NEAP)
5- 10 dwellings	Include	N/A	N/A
11-200 dwellings	Include	Include	N/A
201- 500 dwellings	Include	Include	Considered
500+ dwellings	Include	Include	Include

2. Where it has been clearly demonstrated that this is not feasible or viable, a lower level of provision must be provided as agreed by the Council;
3. New and high quality children's and young people play space including multiple pieces of attractive and engaging equipment, suitable to the location and serve the local community;
4. The creation of new children's and young people play space with accessible and inclusive equipment so that children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities can also use the space; and
5. The improvement and expansion of existing facilities directly adjacent or very close to a smaller development site if they cannot be delivered onsite. This will be considered on a case-by-case basis for smaller developments at the Council's discretion.

Questions

Do you agree with our approach to Children and Young People Play Space?

Are there any other criteria we should include for Children and Young People Play Spaces?

Subsection 4 – Education

10.14 The District’s education facilities are vital to the continuing success of our residents and communities. Educational facilities are fundamental for supporting children and young people gain the necessary work and life skills and improve life opportunities.

10.15 We are in regular contact with Kent County Council as the education authority. There are 34 state primary schools in the District but only three secondary schools – Knole Academy and Trinity in Sevenoaks and Orchards Academy in Swanley (and two grammar satellite premises). Kent County Council has raised the existing three secondary schools are at capacity with no scope to expand.

10.16 There is an identified need for a new secondary school in the District during the plan period. Land for this will need to be identified, potentially in conjunction with a strategic development site. There is safeguarded land for a secondary school within Edenbridge up until 2040, subject to a legal agreement. There is also need for additional Special Educational Needs provision in the North of the District. These matters will be addressed as part of our subsequent Regulation 18 consultation in 2023 to respond to the latest available evidence on school place requirements.

Policy ED1 – Education

This policy will seek to:

1. Secure the provision of children’s school places in existing, expanded or new primary and secondary schools. Where appropriate, this may include developer contributions (via S106 and/or CIL) and identifying new land opportunities. We will work in conjunction with Kent County Council to determine any new provision.

Questions

Do you agree with our approach to enhancing and increasing education provisions?

Are there any other priorities we should include in this policy?

Subsection 5 – Sports and Leisure Facilities

10.17 The Open Space, Sport and Leisure Study 2017 assessed the level of open space, sport and leisure provision within the District. The study found that the District is generally well served by leisure provision with sufficient indoor sports facilities, affording residents a range of activities including badminton, swimming, and fitness suites. Much of this provision is within local authority owned formal sports centres, informal village halls or within educational establishments. However, there is a shortage of formal community use agreements for educational establishments.

10.18 We intend on updating the Sports Facility Strategy during 2023 to take account of recent changes to White Oak Leisure Centre in Swanley and other facilities across the District.

10.19 The Playing Pitch Strategy 2018 assessed the quality and quantity of playing pitches across the District. It recommends all pitches should be retained, quality improved and provision for new facilities sought and supported. The strategy projected the impact of the level of demand in relation to the available facilities by 2035. The study identifies the following demand:

Playing Pitch Strategy 2018 Sports Demand

Sport	Demand Impact and Location
Football	<p>The level of football provision demand is projected to grow by over 25% over the study period, with the greatest amount of growth attributed to Sevenoaks and Surrounds sub-area.</p> <p>The requirement for youth and mini pitches is likely to increase significantly. This growth is concentrated, but not limited to, the Sevenoaks and Surrounds and Upper Darent Corridor sub-areas.</p>
Cricket	<p>The future demand for cricket is projected to increase across the District, with an additional 104 matches to be played in 2035, taking the total demand for cricket pitches beyond 1,000 match equivalents for the season.</p> <p>The largest growth for cricket in the District is in Darent Valley sub-area which is projected to have an additional 42 matches played in 2035.</p>
Rugby	<p>The future demand for rugby is projected to increase across the District. This projected growth will further exacerbate the shortage of rugby pitch provision unless the issues with pitch quality are addressed.</p> <p>The maintenance regime for sites across Sevenoaks is not adequate to ensure that pitches are fit for purpose and able to withstand the high levels of demand for rugby, especially at the New Ash Green Sports Pavilion.</p>

Sport	Demand Impact and Location
	There is projected growth of supply in the Sevenoaks and Surrounds subarea. There are the beginnings of plans to bring a WR22 AGP provision (capable of being used for contact rugby) in the area but these are at the very early stages. This should be encouraged as it appears to be the only feasible method of addressing the shortage of capacity for Sevenoaks and Surrounds.
Hockey	Projected growth indicates that unless the current situation changes, there is going to be a significant under supply of pitches particularly in Sevenoaks and Surrounds.
Tennis	To meet future demand of non-member play, it is imperative to invest in community accessible tennis courts particularly in the major population centres and growing urban areas within the District.

Policy SL1 – Sports and Leisure Facilities

This policy will encourage:

1. The retention of the existing sport and leisure provision within the District unless it can be re-provided, taking account of local needs and improvement to quality. This includes:
 - i. All indoor sports facilities including swimming pools;
 - ii. All sports pitches identified in the Playing Pitch Strategy;
 - iii. Golf courses;
 - iv. Multi-use games areas;
 - v. Outdoor gyms; and
 - vi. Playing fields and sites on education establishments.
2. Any redevelopment of sports and leisure provision to prioritise other sport and leisure uses first, then other non-residential employment generating uses before a wholly residential scheme;
3. Proposals to improve the quality of the District's existing leisure provision to provide facilities and access for all;
4. New playing pitches to be full size, be appropriately surfaced and capable of competition use unless not technically feasible;
5. Proposals increasing pay and play provision and/or community access;
6. New educational establishments to include community use facilities and be subject to formal community use agreements;
7. Proposals increasing the number of indoor or outdoor fitness stations;
8. Proposals for new playing pitches consistent with the Playing Pitch Strategy recommendations; and

Policy SL1 – Sports and Leisure Facilities

9. The ancillary use of sport or recreational facilities in developments where appropriate.

Questions

Do you agree with our approach to Sports and Leisure Facilities?
--

What else should we include to encourage sports and leisure facilities in the District?

Subsection 6 – Community Facilities and Services

10.20 Community facilities and services provide for the health and wellbeing, social, educational, spiritual, recreational, leisure and cultural needs of the community. The provision of local community facilities such as post offices, banks, public houses, schools (and redundant school buildings), surgeries, churches, community facilities, and public transport, help to build sustainable communities by supporting the local economy and/or providing day-to-day facilities minimising the need to drive.

10.21 This Local Plan seeks to retain local services and facilities in appropriate locations, to maintain the sustainability of our towns, local and neighbourhood centres, and ensures that communities continue to maintain access to day-to-day services and facilities. The policy should be applied to retail units considered to be addressing a need outside of established town and neighbourhood centres.

10.22 Community Right to Bid and Assets of Community Value, which were introduced in the Localism Act 2011, give communities powers to help them buy local facilities threatened with closure, which might offer communities an alternative option to retain community facilities.

Policy COM1 – Protection of Community Uses

This policy will seek to:

1. Protect the loss of local services and facilities where they are serving a local need. Exceptions will be made where equivalent replacement facilities equally accessible to the population served are provided, or where it is demonstrated, through evidence submitted that the continued operation of the service or facility is no longer needed or financially viable; and
2. Prioritise the reuse of redundant school and community buildings, where there is no requirement for an alternative educational use or the existing community use, to address local need for community facilities. Proposals for change of use or redevelopment for alternative non-community uses will only be considered if it is demonstrated by the applicant that there is no identified community need that can be facilitated through the site, or that community facilities that meet the identified need are incorporated into a wider mixed-use scheme.

Questions

Do you agree with our approach to protecting community uses?

What else can we include to protect community uses?

Subsection 7 – Water Infrastructure

10.23 The impact of climate change is evident in hotter drier summers and less predictable rainfall. This and population growth contribute to water stress and shortages. This issue is particularly important as the District falls within an area of serious water stress. There is a pressing need to use water more sustainably and manage its demand.

10.24 To ensure new development does not have a negative impact on the water supply and existing households are not negatively affected, we will continue to work and engage with stakeholders to address these issues.

10.25 Thames Water have consulted us on their draft Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan. The Long Reach catchment plan proposes a new sewerage treatment works (STW) site in Sevenoaks District to help manage future pressures on the existing STW. This needs further investigation and we will engage with Thames Water and Kent County Council as this develops.

Policy IN2 – Water Infrastructure

This policy will:

1. Require developers to ensure any necessary water or wastewater upgrades are in place before a development's occupation in order to avoid adverse impacts such as sewer flooding, pollution or issues of low/no water pressure. This can be addressed through the use of planning conditions;
2. Encourage the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDs) in development. This can have multiple benefits including assisting the prevention of water pollution, decreasing surface water run-off, reducing risk of flooding and creating green spaces; and
3. Support the inclusion of positive pumped devices in any basement development that is connected to the drainage network in order to protect the development from risks of sewer flooding.

Questions

Are there other areas of the District which have water capacity issues?

Do you agree with our approach to water infrastructure?

What else can we include to successfully manage the District's water infrastructure?

Chapter 10 – Transport

Overarching Statement

Transport connects people, goods and services between places. It is a necessity to access employment, housing, leisure, education and other elements of daily life. Transport is an integral consideration for the Local Plan's aspirations for Sevenoaks District to be a place to live, work and thrive.

Opening Chapter Statement

Residents and visitors need to travel to work, shops, schools and other services across the District. This Plan supports the delivery of sustainable transport choices helping all people to move conveniently and safely.

10.1 Sevenoaks District has good access to London and other parts of Kent by rail and is a popular place to visit. There is a high level of car ownership but limited public transport links to employment, education and tourism destinations.

10.2 The rural nature of the District can isolate residents contributing to loneliness and making it difficult for some people to access services. Some rural areas lack public transport increasing reliance on private vehicles. This creates barriers to social connections and services for older, younger and those on low incomes.

Strategic Objectives

OB16 Work with stakeholders to address barriers that prevent residents from making sustainable transport choices.

OB17 Support equal access to public transport services for all residents.

Subsection 1 – Sustainable Movement Network

10.3 Land use patterns and the rural nature of the District encourages the use of private vehicles as the primary mode of transport, and present particular challenges for sustainable transport options. The overreliance on public transport can however, result in congestion, air pollution and noise and can have negative health implications.

10.4 The Council's Initial Baseline Transport Assessment will determine the baseline transport data identifying any challenges and opportunities. It has identified congestion hot spots shown on Figure 10.2 below, and centre on M25 junction 3, Swanley Town Centre, Sevenoaks Town Centre, the A25 and the Edenbridge by-pass.

10.5 The Council's Movement Strategy explains our key priorities to encourage sustainable movement and transport across the District and beyond. This includes reducing the need to travel, promoting active travel, and improvements to the electric charging point networks and public transport services. To facilitate a sustainable movement network across the District, a balance must be struck between society's desire for convenient, private transport modes and their environmental impact. The priorities of the Movement Strategy are reflected in this Plan.

Policy T1 – Sustainable Movement Network

This policy will:

1. Ensure that new development is located near public transport infrastructure, services and facilities to enhance sustainable places;
2. Support the incorporation, enhancement and creation of cycling and walking routes and provisions within a new development that is connected to the wider transport network;
3. Create and strengthen interchanges between different transport modes (such as rail, bus, walking, cycling) to improve access and support first and last mile journeys by active travel;
4. Place cycling parking facilities at transport interchanges; and
5. Support the improvement of the public electric vehicle-charging network in accessible and strategic locations to encourage the uptake of electric vehicles.

Questions

Do you agree with our approach to a sustainable movement network?

Is there anything else to facilitate the sustainable movement network we should include in this policy?

Subsection 2 – Cycling and Walking

10.6 The Sevenoaks District Transport Assessment (December 2018) highlights the limited opportunities for walking and cycling within Sevenoaks District noting it has some of the lowest percentages of population walking to/cycling to work and education within Kent. These modes are not always an appealing alternative to the car and there is little infrastructure within the District to support cycling.

10.7 We aim to improve the infrastructure and environment to encourage people to walk and/or cycle as an alternative to car where appropriate. Developers will be expected to consider pedestrians and cyclists needs and the connection to the wider existing network from new developments initial stages.

Policy T2 – Cycling and Walking

This policy will:

1. Encourage new, safe and appealing cycling and walking routes to key locations and transport interchanges;
2. Enhance the existing cycling and walking routes, including Public Rights of Way (PRoW) routes, and improve the existing cycle and walking network within the development's vicinity, particularly leading towards services and facilities;
3. Support an adequate amount of cycle storage that is accessible, secure and weatherproof within new development;
4. Integrate new pedestrian and cycle routes with the PRoW and wider travel network;
5. Support the implementation of identified routes in the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans;
6. Create safe and continuous routes for pedestrians and cyclists that align with desire lines and integrate into the wider network;
7. Prioritise pedestrians and cyclists needs within the development's design through traffic calming measures, limiting traffic speeds, appropriate materials and landscaping; and
8. Create new routes to fill existing gaps thereby enhancing the Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network connectivity.

Questions

Is it appropriate for walking and cycling to be in the same policy or should they be in separate policies?

Do you agree with our approach to cycling and walking?

Should we consider anything further to encourage cycling and walking?

Subsection 3 – Vehicle Parking

10.8 Car parking standards are required to ensure new developments provide an adequate level of off-street parking to meet the needs they generate and are not detrimental to the surrounding areas. New developments will need to provide car parking spaces complying with the relevant standards. Generally, development will only be permitted where it complies with Kent County Council's (KCC) current Parking Standards in KCC's Interim Guidance Note 3 (IGN3) to the Kent Design Guide or any superseding standards.

10.9 A flexible approach is required to reflect the availability of non-car alternatives and the proximity of key services, shops and jobs. The provision of car clubs on new developments can allow flexibility in car parking standards. We encourage new major developments in the District's towns to include car club spaces where feasible.

Policy T3 – Vehicle Parking

This policy will encourage:

1. Compliance with the current KCC vehicle parking standards in Interim Guidance Note 3 to the Kent Design Guide (or any subsequent replacement);
2. Vehicle parking to be conveniently located to and overseen by the development;
3. Developments to be well screened and integrate soft landscaping improving visual amenity;
4. For residential developments with unallocated parking spaces, sufficient space provided for electric vehicle charging points;
5. For non-residential developments, sufficient space within the site for the parking, unloading, loading of goods and manoeuvring of vehicles delivering and collecting goods; and
6. Bicycle parking to meet minimum standards with greater provision where feasible.

Notwithstanding the above, the Council may depart from the established maxima or minima standards in order to:

1. Consider specific local circumstances including the development's accessibility to public transport, shops and services, highway safety concerns and local on-street parking problems;
2. Ensure the successful restoration, refurbishment and re-use of listed buildings or buildings affecting the character of a Conservation Area;
3. Allow the appropriate re-use of the upper floors of buildings in town centres or above shop units;
4. Consider the existing parking provision (whether on or off-site) for the building's existing use for redevelopment or change of use proposals and for the use of existing

Policy T3 – Vehicle Parking

public car parks outside of normal working/trading hours by restaurants and leisure uses; and

5. Consider a proposal's inventive parking design justifying less than the minimum provision.

Questions

Should we provide less car parking in developments situated in sustainable locations, for example, town centres?

Do you agree with our approach to vehicle parking?

Should we consider anything further to manage vehicle parking?

Subsection 4 – Electric Vehicle Charging Points

10.10 As part of our Net Zero by 2030 commitment, we will support electric and low emission vehicles and promote the necessary infrastructure. The Movement Strategy and the Low Emission and Electric Vehicle Strategy identify the need for more readily available and faster charging options both at home and out and about to support and increase electric vehicles use. We will be undertaking an Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Study to identify needs, barriers and opportunities for electric vehicle charging across the District including considering the best types and locations of new chargers.

Policy T4 – Electric Vehicle Charging Points

This policy will require:

1. All non-residential developments with car parking to include electric vehicle charging points for employees or customers use. All proposals should include publically accessible rapid electric vehicle charging points where possible and appropriate. The number of points will be at the discretion of the Council and will be determined by:
 - i. The size and type of the new development
 - ii. The number of expected employees, customers or car parking spaces
 - iii. The accessibility of the location
 - iv. The expected length of stay
2. Within new residential developments, all new houses with a garage or off street parking must include an external electrical socket with suitable voltage and wiring for the safe charging of electrical vehicles;
3. Schemes for new apartments and houses with separate parking areas must include a scheme for communal charging points. The number of housing units will determine the number of points provided; and
4. All new developments must have sufficient infrastructure to provide additional charging points to meet future demand.

Management arrangements should be in place for all publically available or communal electric vehicle charging points to ensure charging points are working and readily available. This may include:

1. Regular maintenance to ensure points are not faulty;
2. Ensuring any faulty points are fixed quickly; and
3. Maximum charge times and sanctions for users who block access to a point for other users.

Questions

Do you agree with our approach to electric charging vehicle points?

Questions

Are there any other priorities we should include in this policy?