

PLAN 2040 REGULATION 18 CONSULTATION UPDATE

Development and Conservation Advisory Committee - 2 March 2023

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

Status: For information

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report provides an overview of the Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Consultation, which ran from 16 November 2022 until 11 January 2023, as well as presenting the findings from initial high-level analysis of the consultation responses.

This report supports the Key Aim of:

Protecting the Green Belt

Supporting and developing the local economy

Supporting the wellbeing of residents, businesses and visitors

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

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Julia Thornton

Contact Officer(s): Emma Coffin ext. 7315 / Elisabeth Holness ext. 7046

Recommendation to Development and Conservation Advisory Committee:

That the Development and Conservation Advisory Committee

(a) Note the content of the report

Reason for recommendation: To provide an update and initial high-level analysis on the Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Consultation, which ran for 8 weeks from 16 November 2022 until 11 January 2023

Introduction and Background

Consultation Overview

- 1 The Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Consultation took place from Wednesday 16 November 2022 and ran for 8 weeks, concluding on Wednesday 11 January 2023.
- 2 The consultation took place in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended) and the Council's Statement of Community Involvement (2020). It is the first of three prescribed consultation processes and will be followed by a second Regulation 18 Consultation in Autumn 2023 and a Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Consultation in Spring 2024.
- 3 The consultation covered 10 key topics and sought views from communities and stakeholders on what the new Local Plan for Sevenoaks District should contain.
- 4 This report includes high-level summaries and statistics of responses received and key themes identified. It does not include full summaries or Council responses. The full response is proposed to be brought to the next Development and Conservation Advisory Committee (DCAC), alongside other recommendations.
- 5 The consultation was publicised in accordance with the above regulations which included making the consultation documents publicly available in hard copy at the Sevenoaks District Council offices and on the website via our online consultation portal, Citizen Space.
- 6 All contacts listed on the Strategic Planning mailing list were directly informed of the Regulation 18 Consultation by email or letter, including a link to the relevant part of the SDC website.
- 7 A copy of the Plan 2040 document was sent to all Town and Parish Councils within the District, as well as a bundle of Plan 2040 Summary pamphlets and postcards, advertising the Drop-in Sessions and setting out the website link and contact details. The same documents were also sent to all Libraries in the District. A link to the printable response forms was also sent by email to Libraries and Town and Parish Councils.
- 8 Officers worked with the Communications Team to put together a Communications Plan, which included promotion of the Plan 2040 Consultation and Video via Social Media.
- 9 Details of the consultation, drop-in sessions and the promotional video were posted online using the Councils Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Targeted posts were also used on social media throughout the consultation period in order to increase publication of the Plan 2040 consultation.
- 10 Social Media posts helped to publicise the consultation, with Facebook posts reaching 34,521 individual accounts and generating 4048 clicks through to the online survey.

- 11 As well as publicising the consultation through social media, members of the Strategic Planning team distributed Plan 2040 Postcards to commuters at the following stations: Sevenoaks, Bat & Ball, Dunton Green, Swanley, Edenbridge and Edenbridge Town. The Postcard set out the dates of the consultation, our website address and contact details, along with details of the four Drop-in Sessions taking place throughout the consultation period.
- 12 Four public drop-in sessions were held across the District for members of the public to discuss the emerging Local Plan with members of the Strategic Planning Team. These were held in Sevenoaks, Swanley and Edenbridge. A follow up session was held online via Zoom towards the end of the consultation period.
- 13 Members of the Strategic Planning Team also visited secondary schools across the District to provide an overview of the Plan 2040 document and to gather comments from students. Invitations were sent to the five public schools across the District, of which two schools responded. Officers visited Orchards Academy, Swanley and Weald of Kent Grammar Annexe, Sevenoaks in early January and met with approximately 300 students.
- 14 The Strategic Planning Team worked with Urban Graphics to produce a promotional video for the Plan 2040 consultation. The video provided a concise overview of the key themes and topics in the Plan, as well as setting out how to comment and providing contact details. The video was played throughout the consultation at Drop-in Sessions, School events and other meetings, as well as being promoted online via SDC Social Media accounts.
- 15 Duty to co-operate meetings were held with the Local Strategic Partnership, the Town and Parish Council Forum, public bodies and adjoining Boroughs/Districts.

Consultation Responses

- 16 A total of 598 responses were received to the Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Consultation. This total includes responses to the full survey, the short survey and responses from Schools.
- 17 This response rate is comparable with that of our Neighbouring Authorities at the same stage, with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council received 551 responses at Regulation 18 and Maidstone Borough Council receiving 550 responses at the same stage of consultation.
- 18 We anticipate a greater response rate to our second Regulation 18 in Autumn 2023, which will consider sites across the District (not limited to our top eight settlements) as well as potential Green Belt sites. As a comparison, despite the similar response rate at their first Regulation 18, Maidstone Borough Council received over 3000 responses at their second Regulation 18 consultation.

19 Below is a breakdown of responses received:

Citizen Space	Short Survey	526
	Full Survey	72

20 Included in the total number of responses, the following responses were received from secondary school students:

Orchards Academy, Swanley	31
Weald of Kent Grammar Annexe, Sevenoaks	278

21 Responses were received from 33 Statutory Consultees, including Thames Water, National Highways and the Environment Agency. A full list of Statutory Consultee responses is set out in **Appendix A** including a summary of the key matters raised. Included in the list of Statutory Consultees, responses were received from 17 of the Districts 31 Town and Parish Councils, and these are also set out at **Appendix A**, along with Neighbouring Authorities.

22 **Appendix B** sets out responses made by other organisations, including a list of landowners and developers.

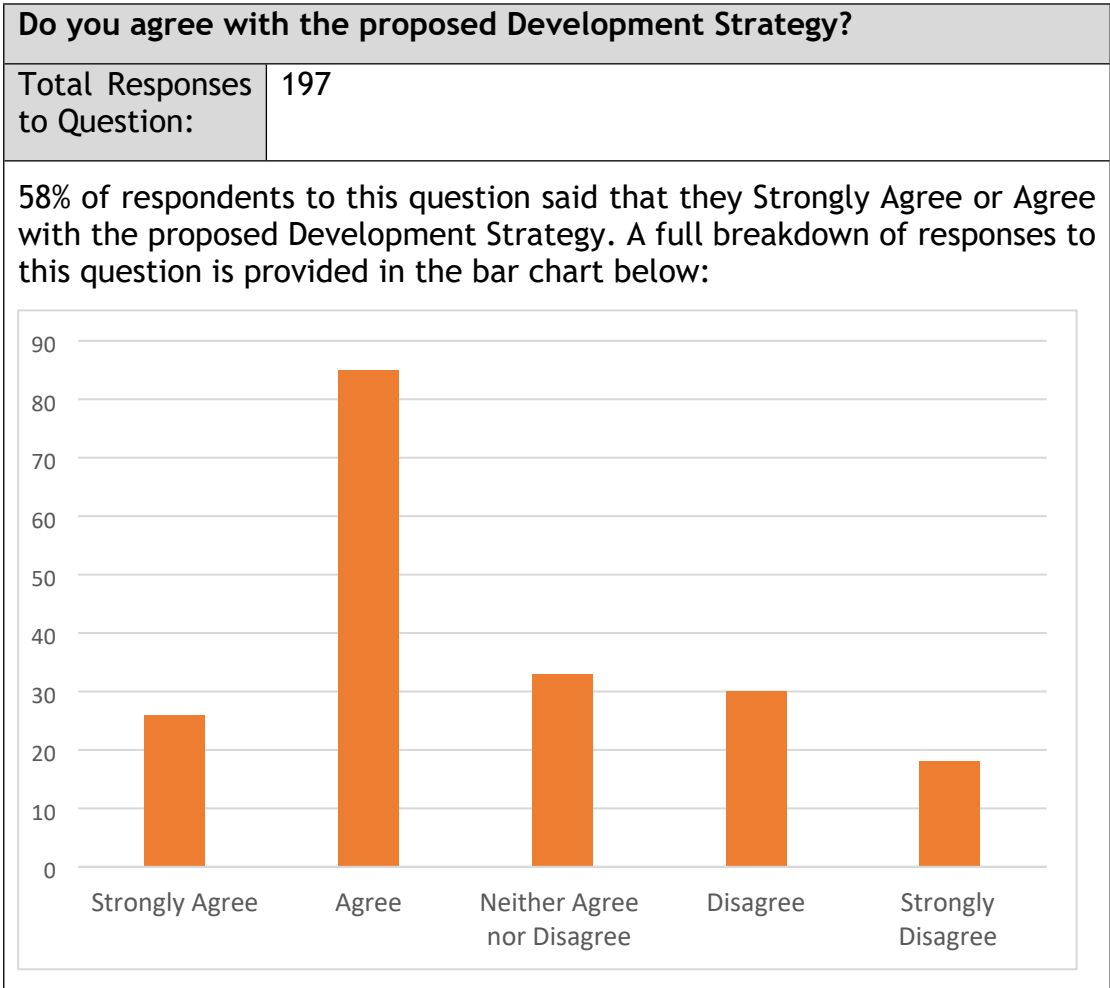
23 Through analysis of the survey responses, we are also able to determine that 63% of respondents live within the District. The remaining 37% mainly consists of students who live outside of the District boundary, as well as developers and other organisations.

Initial Analysis

24 The following tables set out the initial findings of the key quantitative questions included in the short survey. Please note that respondents were not required to answer all questions, and therefore percentages only consider the number of responses to each question.

Have we identified the right strategic issues that will influence the development of the District to 2040?	
Total Responses to Question:	190
83% of respondents to this question said that we had identified the right strategic issues.	

Do you support the Vision and Objectives?	
Total Responses to Question:	176
87% of respondents to this question support the Vision and Objectives.	

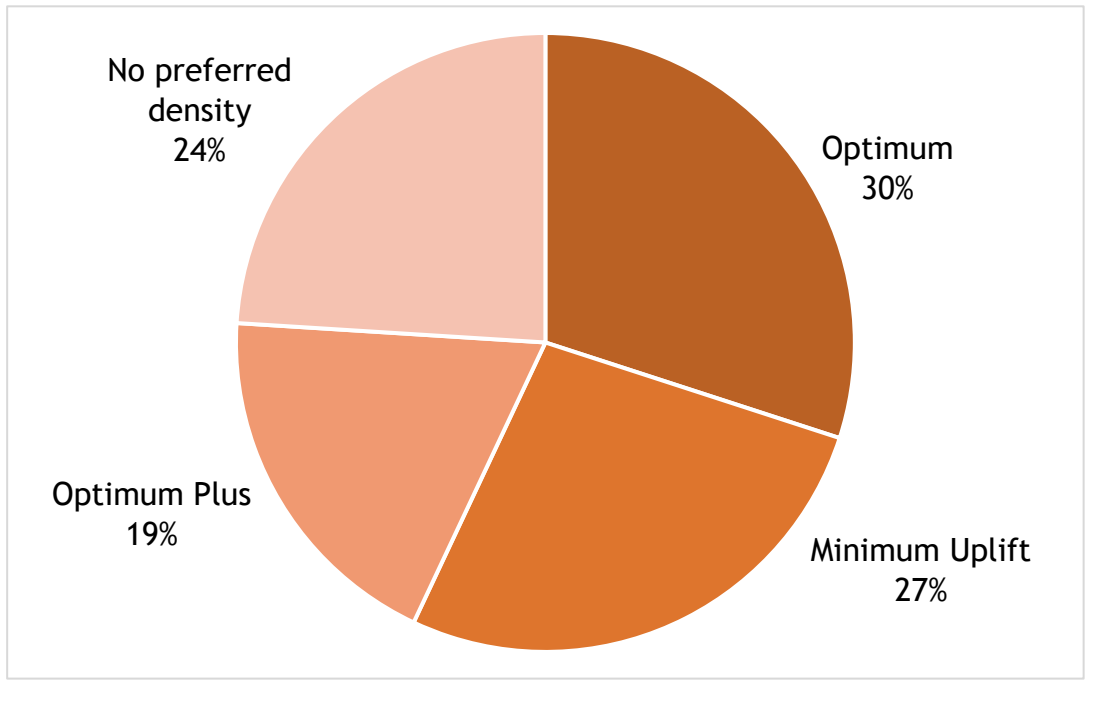


Which is your preferred Density approach?

Total Responses to Question: 184

Of the responses to this question, there was no clear preference for the preferred density approach for the District. The responses show that 'Optimum' is the most popular approach to development. The results are evenly spread with the exception of Optimum plus.

The full results to this question are set out in the pie chart below:



Do you think the proposed affordable housing contributions are reasonable and will help to achieve the aims of Policy H2?

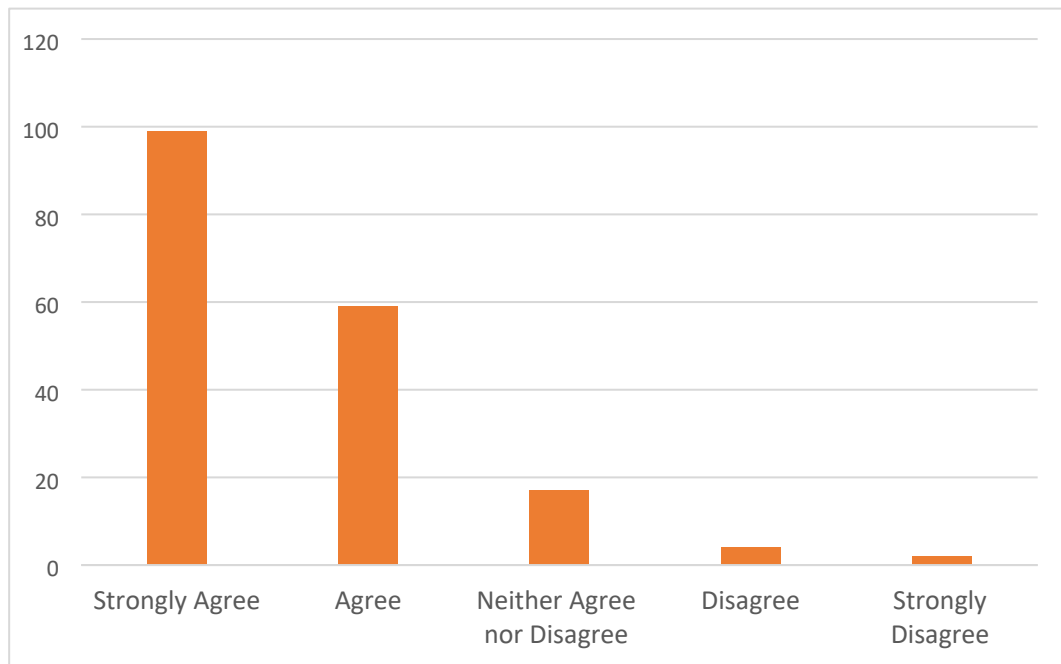
Total Responses to Question: 163

67% of respondents to this question think the proposed affordable housing contributions are reasonable and will help to achieve the aims of Policy H2.

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

Total Responses to Question: 208

76% of respondents to this question said that they Strongly Agree or Agree that the Local Plan should seek to ensure development mitigates and adapts to climate change. A full breakdown of responses to this question is provided in the bar chart below:



Do you think Policy HEN1 meets the strategic objectives for Historic Environment?

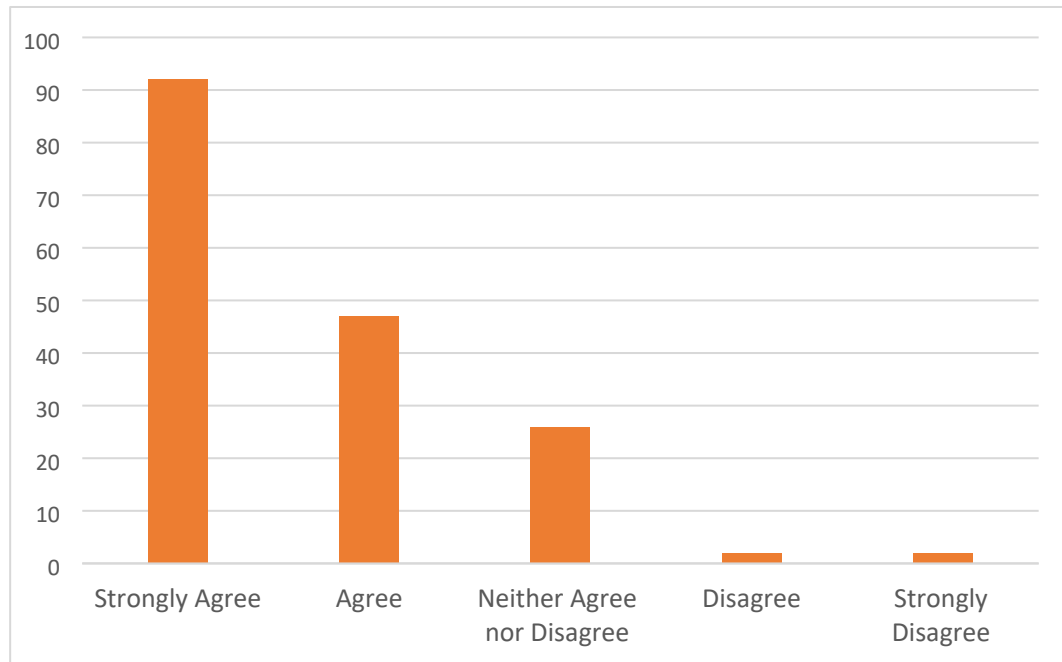
Total Responses to Question: 139

81% of respondents to this question think that Policy HEN1 meets the Strategic Objectives of Historic Environment.

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

Total Responses to Question: 169

82% of respondents to this question said that they Strongly Agree or Agree that locally designated sites should generally be protected from development. A full breakdown of responses to this question is provided in the bar chart below:



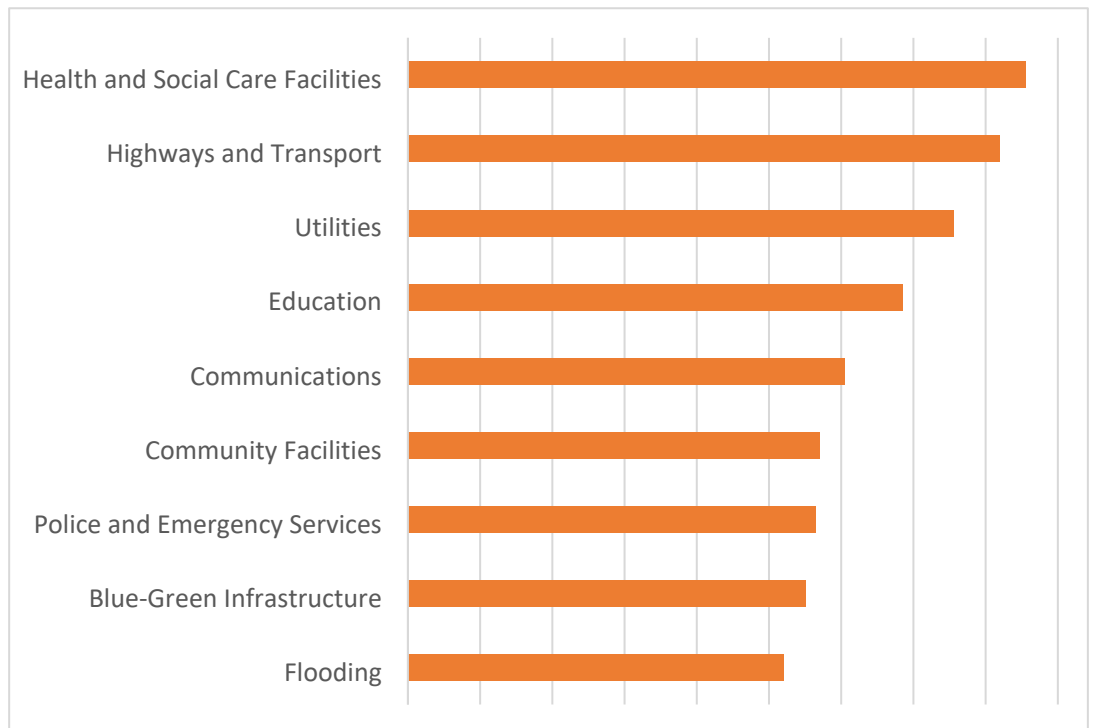
If we are looking to prioritise infrastructure, what do you consider are the most important types to support growth?

Total Responses to Question: 153

The three types of infrastructure that were considered most important, by respondents to this question, in supporting growth were:

- Health and Social Care Facilities e.g. GP surgeries and mental health services
- Highways and Transport e.g. junctions and sustainable transport
- Utilities e.g. gas, water and sewerage

The ranking outcome, considering the 153 responses to this question, is shown in the chart below:



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

Total Responses to Question: 163

62% of respondents to this question do not think we should provide less car parking in developments situated in sustainable locations.

School Responses - Initial Analysis

- 25 As is highlighted above, 309 responses were received from students at Orchards Academy, Swanley and Weald of Kent Grammar Annexe, Sevenoaks. Officers met with students in January 2023 and provided a short overview presentation of Plan 2040.
- 26 Students were then asked to provide their comments in response to the presentation. As well as having access to the short survey, students were asked to consider the following three key questions in relation to where they live:
1. How old will you be in 2040 and what will matter to you?
 2. What do you like about where you live?
 3. What would you change about where you live?
- 27 Where students did not live within the District, they were asked to consider the location that they attend school or areas of the District that they visit regularly.
- 28 Officers have undertaken some initial analysis of the school responses and the most popular topic was the retail provision to meet the needs of the younger generation. Over 50% of school responses made reference to shopping facilities within the district's town centres.
- 29 Public transport and traffic were also popular responses, with 28% of school responses referring to transport within the district, predominantly highlighting the need to for additional services.

GDPR Implications - Regulation 18 Consultation

- 30 Due to the General Data Protection Regulations, it was necessary for Officers to redact the names of students who responded to the consultation, since at the time of the response they were under 18. Comments from students are therefore listed under the students school and year group in order for the comments to remain anonymous.
- 31 All other responses from individuals and organisations have been treated in the same manner as with previous consultations and have been published and attributed by name and organisation only.

Conclusions

- 32 This report provides an update and initial high-level analysis of the Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Consultation, which ran for 8 weeks from 16 November 2022 until 11 January 2023.
- 33 Officers will be happy to take any questions on the content of this report at the meeting.

Key Implications

Financial

The Plan 2040 Regulation 18 Consultation was funded from the Local Plan reserve.

Legal Implications and Risk Assessment Statement.

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

Equality Assessment

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

Net Zero Implications

The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the council's ambition to be Net Zero by 2030. There is no perceived impact regarding either an increase or decrease in carbon emissions in the district, or supporting the resilience of the natural environment.

Safeguarding of Children and Vulnerable adults

As set out above, responses were received from 309 students under the age of 18. Student Names were redacted and not placed in the public domain.

Appendices

Appendix A - Statutory Consultees, Neighbouring Authorities and Town and Parish Councils - Key Matters Raised

Appendix B - List of Landowners, Developers and other organisations who responded to the consultation

Richard Morris

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer - Planning and Regulatory Services