

DEVELOPMENT & CONSERVATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2023 commencing at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr. Williams (Chairman)

Cllr. Reay (Vice Chairman)

Cllrs. Barker, Barnett, P. Darrington, Malone, Purves, Roy, Varley,
Waterton and White

Cllr. Gustard was also present.

1. Appointment of Chairman

Resolved: That Cllr Williams be appointed Chairman of the Advisory Committee for 2023/24.

(Cllr Williams in the Chair)

2. Appointment of Vice Chairman

3. Minutes

Resolved: That the minutes of the meeting held 2 March 2023, be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

4. Declarations of interest

There were none.

5. Actions from previous meeting

There were none.

6. Update from Portfolio Holder

The Portfolio Holder gave an update on the services within their portfolio. 10% more applications had been determined by the Development Management team since 1 April this year compared with the same period last year. 100% of major, 92% of minor, and 96% of all other applications were determined. When challenged at appeal, 73% were dismissed. This included the appeal regarding Brittain's Lane, which was dismissed following a public inquiry.

Development & Conservation Advisory Committee - 11 July 2023

A recruitment process was underway for the role of Planning Enforcement Manager, following their recent departure. Temporary cover had been arranged, to ensure customers continued to be served in the interim.

Building Control continued to operate at a high level, and maintained over 70% of market share for its services. Recruitment was ongoing within the team, and an update would be brought to the Committee at the next meeting.

7. Referral from Cabinet or the Audit Committee

There were none.

8. Role of the Advisory Committee and Key Challenges

The Chief Officer /for Planning & Regulatory Services gave a presentation on the services within the Committee's portfolio and their key challenges for the future. He explained the measures undertaken to address these challenges. These included building agility into the Council's development process, to ensure it could be changed should national planning reforms require it, and upskilling and grading initiatives to promote recruitment and maintain the high standards of service to meet demand and remain competitive within the market.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

9. Conservation Area Appraisal Updates

The Design & Conservation Team Leader and the Senior Conservation Officer outlined the report, which set out the updated appraisals for the Eynsford, Farningham, and Kemsing Conservation Areas. These areas had been selected for appraisal due to the time since their last review, and the number of applications received in recent years.

The Officers gave a [presentation](#) on the appraisals. They had been updated to the Council's new format, developed in 2019, to be more accessible and concise. They included management recommendations, to support the Council, residents, and local stakeholders, as well as Open Space Assessments, to highlight the contribution of open spaces both within, and in the setting of, conservation areas. A large number of responses were received from the public consultation that ran from mid-January to early March 2023. This feedback and local knowledge was incorporated into the appraisals and proposed changes for the three areas.

The Committee heard a detailed breakdown of the outcome of the appraisals. All three areas were of special interest, and merited their conservation area status. Limited changes were proposed to each of the boundaries. In places small amendments were proposed to follow physical land boundaries, as in several areas they cut through structures and plots of land. The Officers described the principal boundary changes in each area. In Eynsford, two principal extensions were proposed. In Farningham, a plot of land would be removed, as it had been developed since the last appraisal, and there were two principal additions to the conservation area. In

Development & Conservation Advisory Committee - 11 July 2023

Kemsing, two principal additions were proposed, one of which was of historic value and was important to the setting of the church. There was an example of land that was agricultural and did not follow the historic settlement pattern, and thus would be removed from the conservation area, though other protections would still apply. An additional important view would be added to the Kemsing View Map. An Article 4 direction was proposed for Kemsing to prevent the erosion of the front boundary treatments and front gardens that made a strong contribution to the character and appearance of the area.

In response to questions, the Officers explained that there needed to be strong justification for the application of an Article 4 direction, and thus it couldn't be applied unilaterally across all of the district's conservation areas. Officers had been devising a way to expand the local list to the entire district, and this was a project that would be forthcoming. Further clarification was given on the requirements of the Article 4 direction. It would be specific and applied only to certain properties, and would require residents to submit an application for work to front boundaries, to ensure that development preserved or enhanced the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Members noted that consideration had been given to impacts under the Public Sector Equality Duty.

Resolved: That it be recommended to Cabinet that it be recommended to Council, that Council:

- a) Adopts the three updated conservation area appraisals for Eynsford, Farningham and Kemsing;
- b) Designates the proposed boundary amendments to each of the above conservation areas; and,
- c) Agrees to the making of a focused Article 4 direction to remove limited permitted development rights that protects boundary treatments and front gardens in the Kemsing Conservation Area.

10. Local Plan Reg. 18 Consultation Update

The Senior Planning Officer presented the report, which contained the full analysis of the Regulation 18 consultation for the Local Plan 2040, which ran from 16 November 2022 to 11 January 2023. 598 responses were received across the two surveys, which was in line with the response rate neighbouring authorities received at the same stage. More than 50% of responses came from students across the district, which was a typically overlooked demographic.

Members heard a breakdown of the analysis. The largest proportion of responses from district residents were regarding Sevenoaks town, followed by Swanley and

Development & Conservation Advisory Committee - 11 July 2023

Otford. 37% of respondents did not live within the district. These were primarily students that travelled into the district, as well as organisations and developers. Members further heard a breakdown of the most commented-on chapters, policies, and topic areas within the free-text response section of the survey. These comments would be considered and integrated into further development of the Plan's policies, ahead of the second Regulation 18 consultation in autumn 2023.

In response to questions, the Officer explained that all state secondary schools within the District were approached for responses. Responses primarily came from consultation events at two schools: Orchards Academy and the Weald of Kent Grammar School's Sevenoaks Site. All submissions were publically available on the Council's consultation portal. All town and parish councils had been contacted for responses, and the Strategic Planning team attended a Town and Parish Council Forum meeting during the consultation to encourage responses. It was considered that councils that did not reply to this consultation would likely respond to the next, as it would consider a wider range of sites across the district.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

11. Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan Update

The Planning Policy Team Leader presented the report, which updated the Committee on neighbourhood planning, national planning reforms, the Local Plan, and the Council's Active Travel scheme.

The Officer provided an update on neighbourhood planning. She outlined the support the Council provided for town and parish councils throughout the process, including feedback on drafts, providing evidence, organising mapping and printing, and eventually publication and referendum. Sevenoaks Town's neighbourhood plan had been adopted at Annual Council on 23 May 2023. Enhancing gateway points, new open spaces and community facilities, and active travel were priorities of the plan. No land was allocated for development, but offered support for 13 sites, including the Sevenoaks Quarry site that had since received outline planning permission. Neighbourhood plans for Swanley and Fawkham were at the community consultation stage. Six other plans were at the policy-writing stage of development, and five others had been designated, but not yet advanced further.

The consultation on reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) closed in March 2023. The government had received roughly 26,000 responses, and it was uncertain when their response to the consultation would be published.

The Local Plan continued to follow its timetable - the Local Development Scheme - and was preparing for its next Regulation 18 consultation in autumn 2023. Progress on the plan, despite the risk of national planning reforms, was important, due to the pressing need for homes and infrastructure within the district, and the need to protect the Green Belt from speculative development. A stage two Green Belt assessment had been undertaken in preparation for the consultation. This would identify sites at the edge of high-tier settlements that were weakly performing (from a Green Belt purposes-perspective), to help address the district's housing need. The Plan would continue to protect strongly performing Green Belt.

Development & Conservation Advisory Committee - 11 July 2023

Members heard an update on the progress of the Local Plan's evidence base. Modelling work to assess the impact of proposed development on the strategic road network and junctions was ongoing. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment was being updated. The Council was out to tender for work to update its evidence on recreation and leisure facilities. A Biodiversity Net Gain policy was being created, with support from Kent County Council's Ecological Advice Service, to ensure proposed developments were compliant with the new policy requirement that would take effect in November for major schemes and in spring 2024 for all other development. Infrastructure providers were providing feedback on the implications of proposed developments on infrastructure, which would feed into the development of the Infrastructure Development Plan.

The public consultation on the Sevenoaks Town East-West walking, wheeling, and cycling route would close on 14 July. A final public event would be held on 12 July. The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) for Swanley was being developed.

In response to questions, the Officer explained that local Members would be notified of proposed site allocations in their wards, for information. A Playing Pitch Strategy would be developed, along with an indoor sports facilities review, as part of the evidence base on recreation and leisure facilities. Members further discussed the need for informal recreational spaces within the district.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

12. Work plan

The Work Plan was noted, with the following additions:

31 October 2023

- Development & Conservation Update
- National Planning Update

12 December 2023

- CIL Governance Review
- Service Planning & Budget Setting

THE MEETING WAS CONCLUDED AT 8:08PM

CHAIRMAN

