

LOCAL PLAN UPDATE

Development and Conservation Advisory Committee – 12 December 2023

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

Status: For Information

Key Decision: No

Executive Summary: This report provides an update on the Local Plan Regulation 18 consultation

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 remains a great place to live, work and visit

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Reay

Contact Officer: Hannah Gooden, Ext. 7178

Recommendation to Development and Conservation Advisory Committee:

That the report be noted.

Reason for recommendation: To provide an update on Local Plan activity.

Introduction and Background

- 1 This report provides a short update on the current consultation on Plan 2040 – a new Local Plan for Sevenoaks District. This is known as a Regulation 18 (Part 2) consultation.
- 2 The consultation launched on 23 November and runs until 11 January 2024. This consultation period has been extended to seven weeks to reflect that it includes the Christmas holiday period.

Consultation materials

- 3 All consultation materials, including a video, short summary leaflet, FAQs, full Local Plan document, consultation survey and interactive map are available on our dedicated website: <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/plan2040>
- 4 Hard copies of the Plan were distributed to all Councillors and copies were sent to all town/parish councils and libraries across the District. Email notice was also sent to the Local Plan mailing list (approx. 2000 individuals), including all the above groups, statutory consultees and those who have registered interest. An article has been included within the latest version of InShape, the Council's magazine, and there have been a number of news articles in the Sevenoaks Chronicle, Kent Messenger and on BBC Radio Kent.
- 5 The consultation is also being promoted by social media posts, press releases, public notices, email footers, posters and postcards with QR codes. In relation to hard-to-reach groups (young people, commuters and gypsies and travellers, as identified in our Statement of Community Engagement), specific engagement activities and materials have been organised, including a student consultation event, station advertisement and a gypsy and traveller policy summary leaflet.

Meetings and Events

- 6 We are running 'Pop-up' sessions at the following locations where local people can find out more and comment on Plan 2040:
 - Monday 4 December 2023, 4.30pm to 7.30pm at Sevenoaks District Council's offices, Argyle Road, Sevenoaks, TN13 1HG
 - Wednesday 6 December 2023, 4.30pm to 7.30pm at the Eden Centre, Four Elms Road, Edenbridge, TN8 6BY
 - Monday 11 December 2023, 4.30pm to 7.30pm at White Oak Leisure Centre, Hilda May Avenue, Swanley, BR8 7BT
 - Tuesday 12 December 2023, 4.30pm to 7.30pm at the Village Hall, London Road, West Kingsdown, TN15 6BZ
 - Wednesday 13 December 2023, 4.30pm to 7.30pm at the John Fryth Room, St. Mary the Virgin Church, The Green, Westerham, TN16 1AS
 - Thursday 4 January 2024, 4.30pm to 7.30pm at Farningham Village Hall, High Street, Farningham, DA4 0DH
 - Tuesday 9 January 2024, 4.30pm to 7.30pm at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre, Buckhurst Lane, Sevenoaks, TN13 1LW
- 7 A verbal update on these events will be provided at committee, as they had not commenced at the time of writing.
- 8 Consultation sessions have also taken place with the Town and Parish Council Forum (18 October) and the Local Strategic Partnership (29 November).
- 9 Duty to co-operate meeting have taken place with officers from our 8 adjoining authorities and member-level briefings are being scheduled during the consultation period.

Next Steps

- 10 Once the consultation closes in January, we will fully consider all the responses received and bring an update back to the next DCAC in March 2024. Our Local Development Scheme (LDS, July 2022) outlines the timetable and the next steps for the Local Plan:
 - Reg.19 (Plan publication) – spring/summer 2024
 - Reg.22 (Submission) – summer/autumn 2024
- 11 There may need to be some flexibility or agility in this programme to reflect national planning reforms, as a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is understood to be imminent.
- 12 However, it is important to progress the Local Plan, to address development needs (e.g. for housing, affordable housing, older persons accommodation, strategic infrastructure for education and health). This plan will also allow the Council to be able to co-ordinate future development and shape the future of the District (and resist speculative, un-coordinated development proposals as seen recently at appeal). We also now have an up-to-date evidence base.
- 13 Swanley Neighbourhood Plan has been submitted for examination and referendum and will be considered by a separate report to DCAC.

Other options Considered and/or rejected

- 14 The option not to progress a new Local Plan would leave the Council open to reputational damage and likely Government intervention to produce a Local Plan for the District Council. The Council would also be exposed to speculative, un-coordinated development proposals, and would not be able to shape the future development of the District.

Conclusion

- 15 This report provides an overview of Local Plan consultation activity, for information.

Key Implications

Financial

The production of the Local Plan will be 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.

An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been prepared alongside the Local Plan.

Net Zero Implications

Members are reminded of the Council's stated ambition to be Net Zero with regards to carbon emissions by 2030. The decisions recommended in this paper directly impact on this ambition. The impact has been reviewed and there will be a decrease on carbon emissions produced in the district as a result of this decision. The adoption of the Local Plan, which include policies in relation to climate change and the environment, is likely to have a positive impact to help decrease carbon emissions in the district, and support the resilience of the natural environment.

Appendices

None.

Background Papers

All consultation documents and supporting evidence are available on the dedicated webpage: <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/plan2040>

Richard Morris

Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Officer – Planning & Regulatory Services