

Minutes of the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Implementation Group meeting held at the Council Chambers on 7th May 2024, 6:00pm.

In attendance:

Sevenoaks Town Council – Deputy Mayor	Cllr Libby Ancrum (Vice Chair)
Sevenoaks Town Council	Cllr David Skinner
Sevenoaks Town Council – Mayor	Cllr Claire Shea
Sevenoaks Town Council	Cllr Sally Layne
Sevenoaks Town Council	Cllr Gareth Willis
Sevenoaks Town Council – Town Clerk	Linda Larter MBE
Sevenoaks Town Council – Planning Committee Clerk	Georgie Elliston
Sevenoaks District Council – Public Realm Commissioner	Cllr Roderick Hogarth
Glenn Ball Chartered Architect	Glenn Ball

Prior to the commencement of the meeting and in the absence of the Chair, Cllr Libby Ancrum as Deputy Chair of the Monitoring & Implementation Group was nominated to Chair the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Nick Varley (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Victoria Granville** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Tony Clayton** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Nigel Wightman** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Lionel O’Hara** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Elizabeth Purves** (Sevenoaks District Council), **Charles George** (Sevenoaks Society)

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the previous STNP Monitoring and Implementation Group meeting held on 18th March 2024 were received and agreed.

3. Sevenoaks Town Centre and St Johns Masterplans Update

a) The Town Clerk summarised the progress of the Masterplans, with a separate Stakeholder event having since been held for each of the Masterplans. These were well attended and received lots of positive engagement.

b) Members were appreciative that Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) Officers had attended and engaged at the Town Centre Masterplan Stakeholder workshop, although not the St Johns Masterplan workshop. The Town Council had responded in detail to the District Council’s consultation for Land East of the High Street and it was agreed that such continued positive collaboration efforts would ensure both projects were successful and complementary to each other.

c) Attendees notes that the two below surveys had been launched to gauge current use, strengths and weaknesses of the two Masterplan survey areas:

- Town Centre Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/P9WMYSC>
- St John’s area Survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/DPRP56W>

d) Question was raised as to whether the two surveys had closed in line with the District Council’s own surveys for Land East of High Street, and it was **confirmed that they would remain open** in order to continue to feed into the Masterplans. It was agreed that this

would be made clearer to public who may confuse the two projects and their correlating surveys together.

4. **Theme Four – Work Stream**

a) Actions listed under the Theme Four Work Stream were discussed one by one, with it noted that the current Masterplanning exercises would feed into the majority of the Theme Four actions, being a tourism strategy, expanding market stallholder provision, working with local businesses to identify spatial and land uses that could be improved, and keeping the supporting evidence bases up to date.

b) SDC Cllr Hogarth suggested that SDC would likely welcome the opportunity to work together on a tourism strategy under Action 4.1, and on noting that STC wishes to but is not involved with Visit Kent, offered to facilitate STC dual hatted Cllrs potentially getting involved with SDC's collaboration with them.

c) It was noted that STC was working with stallholders as per Action 4.2 while looking to the future of Sevenoaks as a market town, with worry being expressed by stallholders as to footfall and the nature of new market stall provision.

d) It was also noted that update of the supporting evidence base was starting to be created via the Masterplans which would feed into updating particular aspects of the documents; for instance, the transport aspect of the Masterplans would provide updated evidence to the Transport Strategy, and the spatial considerations for the Town Centre would feed into the Cultural Strategy. Rather than each document being replaced by an updated version therefore, it was considered more likely that the evidence base would grow.

e) Attendees **agreed** that the priority action was to complete the Masterplans, as these would feed into each of Theme Four's proposed projects.

5. **Monitoring**

a) The Planning Committee's update monitoring report, which recorded how the STNP was being applied to planning applications since the last preliminary report, was received and noted.

b) The Planning Committee Clerk summarised the trends and observations provided on pages 14-15 of the Agenda papers. The following points of note were discussed:

- Use of the STNP by SDC Planning Officers in both Officer Reports and Decision Notices continued to be much higher, with only one instance noted where it was not considered at all, and one instance where it hadn't been considered against **all** relevant issues.
- Although not a significant number of cases, it was agreed that the planning weight added by the STNP to the currently out-of-date Local Plan in addition to the need to robustly justify planning decisions was important
- Consideration of the STNP by Planning Inspectors was less consistent, with equal record of three cases where an Inspector had considered the STNP, and three where they had not. This was highlighted by two separate appeals for the same site which had been considered by two different Inspectors; one of whom did consider the STNP and another who did not.

c) Question was raised as to whether STC has a practice to write to Inspectors on notice of Appeals to alert them of the STNP's recent adoption, which it currently does not, although

STC's original recommendation would be reviewed by the Inspector. In addition to considering this, it was agreed that encouraging more use of the STNP in the Town Council's Planning Committee recommendations could help to raise this awareness.

d) It was **agreed** that STC could provide further STNP information to STC Councillors to facilitate further referencing of the STNP in the Planning Committee's recommendations.

e) Members noted that SDC's Development Management Committee (DMC) makes regular and consistent reference to the STNP.

6. Annual Report

a) The Group received and discussed the draft Annual Report, which outlined key use and progress of the STNP during its first year of adoption.

b) The two below summarised comments from Charles George of Sevenoaks Society were received with approval from members, with comments or actions shown in italics:

- **Page 12 on Royal Oak Hotel:** That the aim is not housing provision, but to increase viability and greater respect for the Grade I listed building – *Agreed to amend this*
- **Page 12 on SDC's proposals for areas around Buckhurst Lane and Suffolk Way:** That the proposals are not yet detailed enough to be confirmed as delivering STNP policies, and it is too early to report compliance – *Agreed that these entries would be amended stating that the proposals could support the STNP policies.*

c) The four below summarised comments from Cllr Tony Clayton were received, with comments or actions agreed shown in italics:

- **Page 30 on Theme One Action 1.5:** That design guidance in areas not covered by the Residential Character Area Assessment or Conservation Area plans should be high priority – *A map of the areas not covered by guidance will be created as per the notes for this action, however other projects have taken precedence. This will be investigated on completion of the Masterplans.*
- **Page 30 on Theme One Action 1.6 and Page 34 on Theme Three Action 3.1:** That there needs to be coordination between how cycle routes including the East to West route affect the townscape, pedestrian flow and street furniture – *Agreed to add this comment to the notes of both actions.*
- **Page 36 on Theme Three Action 3.6:** To update the entry regarding 20mph proposals following Kent County Council's decision to proceed in consultation with STC – *Agreed to update the entry*
- Request to include reference to STC's unsuccessful CIL bid for Wayfinding and note it should be prioritised by both SDC's and STC's consultants for their Masterplanning projects – *This is noted on page 21 of the draft report. STC included request for wayfinding in its response to SDC's consultation for Land East of the High Street, and hopes it will be added as an addendum. STC's Masterplanning consultants are also looking into Wayfinding opportunities.*

d) The Planning Committee Clerk suggested that SDC's successful funding application for £1.6 million from the National Lottery Heritage Fund towards major improvements at Bradbourne Lakes be acknowledged. This was agreed to be added to page 16.

e) Cllr David Skinner requested that additional reference to the Sevenoaks Quarry site be added under relevant Themes including Housing, in addition to noting SDC's proposed drive-through at Otford Road and its non-compliance with STNP objectives. This was agreed.

f) It was **agreed** that the Annual Report be amended as per the above comments and the revised Report presented to the Planning Committee for approval.

g) The Planning Committee Clerk was thanked for her considerable efforts in producing the STNP Reviews and Annual Report.

7. **Dates of future meetings**

It was noted that a draft meeting schedule, including those for future STNP Monitoring & Implementation Group meetings had been published in the Annual Council meeting Agenda papers for 13th May 2024. This would be circulated once approved by the Council.

Meeting concluded at 6:45pm.