



COMMUNITY INVESTMENT PLAN 2023 - 2027

Sevenoaks Town Council

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Sevenoaks Town Council
Community Investment Plan 2023

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1. Summary

In 2014 Sevenoaks Town Council set out its first ambitious £4m Community Investment Plan to restore and improve community facilities. This was followed up with a further Community Investment Plan in 2019 and a Green Community Investment Plan in 2021.

Together these Community Investment Plans have provided the impetus for investing over £6m of community assets and improving the local environment for those who live, work, and visit Sevenoaks town. Copies of all documents are available at www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk or available on request at the Town Council offices.

Building on the success of the past Plans and having a new Council in place following the elections in May, a new Community Investment Plan 2023 has been created. All of Sevenoaks Town Council funds come either via domestic council tax payers or funds it generates via its operations, sports pitches etc.

Sevenoaks Town Council is mindful of the financial resources required to maintain current community facilities and meet the ambitions of its Community Investment Plan and also to be adaptable for future opportunities which benefit residents of the town.

The capital projects are normally delivered 'in house' by professional staff supported by appropriate paid professionals e.g., architects and quantity surveyors. The Town Council staff carry out these roles in addition to their 'day jobs' which is maintaining and administering community facilities and functions. The Town Council has a good record of investing into external grant applications, this can often require considerable resources. Overall, this creates real value for money but does mean the availability of all resources need to be considered when implementing ambitious plans.

2. Community Engagement

Sevenoaks Town Council wants to continue with its good record of involving the community in all aspects of future plans. This is carried out via Working Parties involving local representatives, surveys, public consultation, topic-based groups e.g., Sports Review, Youth Council. Also, by providing information in its quarterly newsletter delivered to all homes and arranging public consultation as appropriate.

3. What are the plans within the third, 2023 Community Investment Plan?

3.1. Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Development Plan (STNP)



The Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan was successfully 'made' at a public referendum in May 2023. The STNP sets out a comprehensive list of policies, projects, proposals and aims to provide a cohesive approach for the development of the Sevenoaks for the wellbeing of its current and future residents.

The STNP will be used to inform the Town Council's priority and organisation, used in the Town Council's planning recommendations when assessing planning applications. Current projects for the next four-year term of the Town Council include:

Masterplan for Town Centre and St Johns Hill

A town centre masterplan for Sevenoaks would ideally follow on from the policies and aims set out in the STNP (see below) and where possible include within its scope progress on tasks / actions identified within the STNP. It will set a future spatial plan for the town centre and also include non-physical interventions that can enhance the vitality and attractiveness of the centre. This spatial plan should be driven from a clear vision for the town centre. This can be fairly quickly evolved from the STNP but should also be agreed with stakeholders.

- Aim C7 - to prepare design guidance for sites not included within the Residential Character Area assessment including around Sevenoaks Station, Buckhurst Lane area and the South Park area (identified in Figure 4.1).

- Policy C10 - to prepare design guidance in relation to gateway and arrival points into the town centre (as identified in Figure 4.3).

- Aim M12 - to prepare a town centre public realm strategy to identify potential enhancements to the public realm.

The masterplan should also indicate:

- Opportunities to enhance the green infrastructure and biodiversity within the centre (Policies L1 and L2)

- Opportunities to encourage more walking and cycling to the centre (Policy M1)

- Opportunity to improve pedestrian and cycle crossings at major junctions (Policy M5)

- Potential to improve public realm at Sevenoaks Station (Policy M7)

- Potential for innovative proposals to improve the pedestrian environment and reduce the impact of traffic in the town centre (Aim M11)

- Opportunities to enhance local tourism (Aim E2) - linking town centre assets and promoting the cultural strategy should form part of this
- Consider replacing some surface car parking with multi storey facilities (e.g., in east of centre) (Policy E3)
- Expand market provision (Policy E4)
- Develop the spatial aspects of the Cultural Strategy through the public realm, space provision and opportunities for events (Objective 13)
- Opportunities / design principles for town centre sites including those identified in the STNP (Policy D1)

It makes sense to bring St John's Hill into the plan and also to think about the linkages between the centres. It will be important to not think of the centre as secondary but to give separate time and consideration to the challenges and opportunities with the area.

Additional Projects

The following additional projects from the STNP will also be progressed.

- New Wayfinding Signage for Town Centre
- Sports Strategy Review
- Feasibility Study for Local Green Link between Dunton Green and Bat & Ball.

3.2. Green Community Investment Plan

Sevenoaks Town Council's Green Community Investment Plan was created following considerable consultation with the local community.

The Green Community Investment Plan has the following aims:

To put in place affordable and practical initiatives with long term green benefits for the local community and to support and encourage residents to pursue individually. Together making changes to reduce Sevenoaks carbon consumption footprint.

STC's Green Community Investment Plan (appendix to STC Community Investment Plan 2019 – 2023) brings together all of its climate change initiatives to publicise to and involve the local community and progress practical delivery under the following five themes:

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|
| Theme 1 | Buildings |
| Theme 2 | Transport & Movement |
| Theme 3 | Making Sevenoaks Greener |
| Theme 4 | Consumption |
| Theme 5 | Information & Access to information |

There are a wide range of projects and aims within the document including:

- Buildings – improving carbon use

- Transport & Movement – including improving cycling and pedestrian facilities
- Making Sevenoaks Greener - including extending tree planting programme and acquiring land for this purpose.
- Reducing Consumption
- Information & Access to information – including liaison with youth groups

3.3. 20 mph Consultation (and potential implementation subject to results of survey)

Sevenoaks Town Council carried out a public consultation exercise between the 1st November and 14th December 2023 relating to the idea of extending the current 20 mph roads within the town. The scheme is a 'Signage Only Scheme' and if implemented would be at a cost of approximately £130,000 which would be paid for by developers contributions via the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Why are 20 mph plans introduced? (source Government Atkins 20mph Study)

Transport	Casualty and injury reduction Reduction of rush hour traffic through residential areas Reduce the negative impact of cars in urban centres
Community	Community concerns about speed, safety, and the quality of the local environment Demand from local groups and individuals in the community Seen as a low-cost initiative, which delivers instant improvements for local residents, schools, and commuters.
Health	Encourage active travelling locally (walking and cycling instead of driving) Improve public health and wellbeing.

3.4. Assets of Community Value

The Right to Bid is a national process that has been introduced through the Government's Localism Act. It came into force on 21 September 2012.

The Right to Bid gives voluntary and community groups, as well as town and parish councils the opportunity to nominate local land and buildings to be included on a list of 'Assets of Community Value', maintained by the District Council.

For an asset to be listed, nominators must demonstrate to the District Council that its main use now, or in the recent past, contributes to the social wellbeing or cultural, recreational, or sporting interests of the local community – and that this use will continue.

Examples could include village shops, pubs, community centres and playing fields. Buildings used as administrative offices and land or property where community use isn't the main function would not be included.

If successfully listed, the sale of the asset is paused for an initial period of six weeks, (a moratorium) during which time any community group with a local connection can submit an Intention to Bid to the District Council via their standard form. If this is submitted, the moratorium extends to six months, giving communities the time to prepare a bid and get a business plan together.

Any sale, after the six-month period, takes place under normal market conditions and the owner is under no obligation to sell to a community group. Equally, community groups which have registered an interest are under no obligation to bid or purchase.

Longspring Wood had been successfully registered by Sevenoaks Town Council – alongside another nearby piece of adjacent woodland – as an Asset of Community Value on 25th September 2023. This was on the grounds that it furthers the social wellbeing and recreational interests of the community, with reasonable expectation for it to continue to do so in the future.

Sevenoaks Town Council was notified that the woodland, was put up for sale at the end of 2023. On 11th December 2023 at its Town Council meeting Councillors resolved to submit an Intention to Bid in order to protect the land as an Asset of Community Value.

What does this mean?

Registering the Council's intention to bid does not constitute an obligation for the Town Council to submit a bid and buy the land, nor does it obligate the landowner from selling to the Town Council. Rather, it extends the period by which the landowner must delay sale on the open market, in order to allow community organisations time to prepare a bid and business plan for how it would purchase and maintain the land.

Sevenoaks Town Council has registered the following as Assets of Community Value to protect them for current and future generations:

- Bradbourne Lakes
- Kaleidoscope
- Longspring Woods (2 areas of land)
- Stag Community Arts Centre
- St John's Public Toilets (in progress)

3.5. Encouraging Cycling and Walking

Sevenoaks Town Council will work with KCC and Sevenoaks District Council to encourage cycling safety and experience by:

- Adding more routes
- E-bike scheme
- Providing secure storage
- Reducing HGV traffic in town

The Town Council is also carrying out a Feasibility Study to provide a Green Link between Bat & Ball Station (Sevenoaks) and Dunton Green Station to enable access to the two stations and travelling between locations without having to use the main A road and related junctions.

3.6. Pedestrian Safety

Sevenoaks Town Council will work with KCC and Sevenoaks District Council to improve pedestrian safety and experience by

- Improving safety around the station
- Improving safety on the High Street
- A crossing at Dartford Road near the Vine
- Crossing at Seal Hollow Road
- Reducing HGV traffic in the town.

3.7. Electrify the No 8 Orbital Bus

The No. 8 bus operates six days per week, Monday to Saturday, linking the two train stations, bus station, residential areas, and the town centre. It operates on a loose figure of eight route – hence its name.

The bus service was an initiative of Sevenoaks Town Council following public consultation and feedback. The Town Council now wants to operate the service using an electric bus.

3.8. Public Realm and Wayfinding

The aim is to provide bespoke Wayfinding signage for the town, starting with the town centre.

The Wayfinding Signage scheme will use clear and concise language and illustrations in an attractive manner to guide the public around the town facilities and at the same time promoting awareness of what Sevenoaks Town has to offer.

Effective Wayfinding Signage can have the following economic benefits: Help visitors and local people find their way throughout the town, boosting economic growth and increasing visitor traffic. Improve customer experience, create a visual story for businesses, reduce confusion, create a space of discovery, and keep businesses relevant.

Effective Wayfinding Signage can have the following social benefits: Make spaces easier to get around, helping people feel more independent and safer. Making visitors and locals to have more knowledge of what the town has to offer – many people do not know there is a museum for example.

Many of the venues in the town have names which are dissociated from their functions. The Wayfinding Signage will help people know that Kaleidoscope = Library, Museum, Art Space, Stag = Theatre and Cinema.

The proposed Wayfinding Signage scheme will also help develop the proposed Cultural Quarter in Sevenoaks.

3.9. Business Improvement District (BID)

Since 2011 the Sevenoaks Town Team (formally known as Sevenoaks Town Partnership) has worked within limited resources to establish Sevenoaks as a prosperous and vibrant place to visit, shop and do business. The aim is to create a Sevenoaks BID which if agreed, will enhance, and improve on this work.



Business Improvement Districts are business led partnerships which are created through a ballot process to deliver additional services to local businesses. They can be a powerful tool for directly involving local businesses in local activities and allow the business community and local authorities to work together to improve the local trading environment.

Currently Sevenoaks local businesses and the local community can be seen to be at a disadvantage to neighbouring business areas e.g., Oxted, Orpington, Tunbridge Wells who do have BIDS and therefore additional funds to invest in events to attract footfall, additional security, and many other projects.

3.10. Markets

Sevenoaks Town Council wants to develop the Markets within Sevenoaks to reflect its Market Town status. The STNP and intended Masterplan for the Town Centre will take this into account.

3.11 Arts & Culture

Within the development of the proposed Cultural Quarter Sevenoaks Town Council will

- Continue to support the Stag Community Arts Centre development as a key part of its proposal Cultural Quarter.
- Support art exhibitions including local initiatives and street performance.
- Support annual Music, Arts and Literature Festivals.

3.12 Youth Provision

Sevenoaks Town Council invests in youth provision within the town via providing a Youth Café open throughout the year, Collaboration with other youth providers, employing Youth Workers – visiting to school, arranging events and outings etc. A Youth Climate Change Forum. Youth Council. Grants to youth organisations. Design a Christmas Light Competition, providing free resources e.g., Skateboard Park, outside table tennis, futsal goals and play equipment.

During the next four years, subject to available resources in addition to the above the Town Council wants to

- extend its youth provision
- consider how to provide Girl Friendly Places
- support School Workshops
- include areas of Natural Play within its Play Policy
- consider and implement outcome of Greatness Recreation Ground consultation

3.13 Education

The Town Council is not a statutory education provider. It is keen to support via its STNP process and planning recommendations the following:

- Addressing the shortage of Children’s Nurseries
- Since the town is a major education hub, consider with other stakeholders whether a Tertiary Facility (e.g., university annex) could be developed.

3.14 Events

Sevenoaks Town Council have a small team of staff who in addition to their ‘day jobs’ assist with the provision of events within the town. These range from small youth and outdoor events to large events such as the Christmas Lights Switch On which can attract up to 10,000 people.

In addition to regular annual events the Town Council would like to

- Hold conversations with Sevenoaks School to reinstate the Town Fireworks if possible
- Hold a town event in May 2024 to commemorate the Sevenoaks Town Council’s 50th anniversary.
- Hold 80th D Day commemoration as per national programme
- Consider a programme of other themed town centre events.

3.15 Sports and Recreation

In 2013 Sevenoaks Town Council commenced consultation with 40 organisations involved in sports within the town with the aim of producing a Sports Strategy. The final document was published in 2015. The Sports Strategy resulted in over £1.2m being invested into sports provision within Sevenoaks town on sports projects. In addition, the new Bat & Ball Centre is used for floor-based sports including martial arts, zumba and dance etc.

Having accomplished much of the first Sevenoaks Town Sports Strategy it is time for it to be reviewed. The Sports Strategy will



- Support the building of the new Greatness Football Pavilion with community provision
 - Undertake an audit of current sports provision and identified future needs
 - Develop a Town sports promotion policy – perhaps a Sport Week
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- consider how to enable new sports and related facilities to be provided within the town.
 - Continue to provide free access to outdoor games e.g., chess, table tennis, skate park.

3.16 Development and Housing

Sevenoaks Town Council will

- Work with Tarmac, KCC and Sevenoaks District Council to maximise the public benefit from the Greatness Quarry redevelopment (including affordable housing, road improvements, the Oast House, schooling and if possible public health).
- Consider long term plan to move Sevenoaks Town Council offices to Sevenoaks District Council site, freeing current site for housing.
- Refurbish St John's public toilets.
- Identify assets and legally list as and Asset of Community Value
- Press for development of derelict or underused sites as identified in the STNP including Farmers, Edwards, BT, and Waterworks.
- Lobby for better provision of public health facilities including better GP coverage and the future of Sevenoaks Hospital
- Only recommend approving developments that include affordable housing.

4 Summary of Community Investment Plan 2023 Projects

Ref	Project	Draft Budget
3.1.	Masterplan for Town Centre & St John's Hill	£65,000
3.1.	Feasibility Study – Green Link	£16,000
3.3.	20 mph Signage Scheme Implementation (subject to public survey)	£130,000
3.6	Pedestrian Crossing @ Dartford Road near Vine	£25,000
3.6.	Pedestrian Crossing @ Seal Hollow Road	£25,000
3.7	Electrifying No 8 Bus	£300,000
3.8	Wayfinding Signage	£170,000
3.9.	Business Improvement District (BID) development	tbc
3.12	Greatness Recreation Ground – consider and implement outcome of consultation	tbc
3.15	Greatness Football Sports Pavilion	£2,000,000
3.16	Refurbish St John's Hill Car Park Public Toilets	£40,000
3.16	Redevelop Oast House for Community Use	tbc
	Total draft Project Budget	£2,771,000

5 Where does the money come from?

Sevenoaks Town Council does not receive any government funding or any income from Business Rates. The Town Council's income is from domestic council rate payers, income it earns through facilities, Community Infrastructure Levy, and external grants when successful.

Sevenoaks Town Council has a policy that wherever possible external funding should be sought initially for Capital Projects. External funding could be from grants, sponsorship, and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).

As previously stated, to obtain significant grant funding there is a need to invest in obtaining professional information to support grant applications and this comes at a cost which needs to be initially resourced.

6 How can I make comment or become involved?

Comments on the Community Investment Plan can be forwarded to the Town Clerk, Sevenoaks Town Council, Bradbourne Vale Road, Sevenoaks, Kent TN133QG. Alternatively emailed to townclerk@sevenoakstown.gov.uk

Sevenoaks Town Council holds weekly meetings at its premises (see above) and each meeting has a time allotted for the public to address Councillors. A schedule of meetings can be obtained at the website www.sevenoakstown.gov.uk or by contacting the Town Council on 01732 459953 or emailing council@sevenoakstown.gov.uk.

Sevenoaks Town Council wherever possible will include public participation in its projects and currently there are opportunities for the public to be involved via the following – please contact the offices if these are of interest to you:

- Neighbourhood Development Plan Monitoring & Implementation Group
- Sports Strategy Review
- Friends of Bat & Ball Station
- Friends of Greatness Cemetery
- Bat & Ball Centre / Station User Group
- Town Team
- Sevenoaks Youth Council (11 – 18 Age)
- Sevenoaks in Bloom