

Minutes of the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Implementation Group meeting held at the Council Chambers on 22nd January 2024, 6:00pm.

In attendance:

Sevenoaks Town Council – Vice Chair of Planning Committee	Cllr Nick Varley – (Chair)
Sevenoaks Town Council – Leader of the Town Council	Cllr Tony Clayton
Sevenoaks Town Council	Cllr Lionel O’Hara
Sevenoaks Town Council – Town Clerk	Linda Larter MBE
Sevenoaks Town Council – Planning Committee Clerk	Georgie Elliston
Glenn Ball Chartered Architect	Glenn Ball
Sevenoaks Society	Simon Raikes
Warners Solicitors	Liz Dolding

1. Declarations of Interest

None.

2. Apologies for absence

Cllr Libby Ancrum (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr David Skinner** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Nigel Wightman** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Sally Layne** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Claire Shea** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Paul Baker** (Wealden Properties), **Cllr Elizabeth Purves** (Sevenoaks District Council).

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the previous STNP Monitoring and Implementation Group meeting held on 4th December 2023 were received and agreed.

4. Theme Two – Work Stream

a) Actions listed under the Theme Two Work Stream were discussed one by one, with comments or updates added to each item. (Updated document attached)

b) The following points of note were discussed:

- Action 2.1 – It was noted that STC had listed two significant parcels of ancient woodland located in Kippington as Assets of Community Value, and had since submitted an Intention to Bid on one of them following its registration on the market.
- It was observed that the Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment identified various locations where trees and hedgerows contributed significantly to the local character, and agreed that these instances would be extracted and collated in order to provide a cohesive register. This would be provided to the Planning Committee members to use in their planning application recommendations in order to encourage application of Policy L4 in the assessment, as well as creation of planning applications.*
- Action 2.2 – It was noted that update on this action was awaited from Tarmac via the imminently anticipated submission of Reserved Matters planning applications.
- Action 2.3 – It was agreed that STC would reach out to Kent Wildlife Trust to pursue discussions on improving access to the Wildlife Reserve via Sevenoaks Station in order to encourage use of public transport as opposed to cars.*

- Action 2.4 – Update was awaited on a potential HLF funding bid for the restoration of Bradbourne Lakes which was believed to be in progress.
- Action 2.5 – It was noted that the new allotment land proposed in the STNP had not been re-proposed by the District Council for allocation in its Local Plan. STC would prioritise progressing an application to register the land as an Asset of Community Value.*
- Action 2.6 – It was agreed that more information and research was required to inform this action.
- Action 2.7 – It was agreed that Policy L1 should be separated into two policies when the STNP is reviewed in 5 years; one Policy to require 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, and a separate Policy to require both Full *and* Householder applications to support local wildlife and biodiversity, where possible and relevant. For instance, by providing hedgehog holes in proposals for new fences.*
- Action 2.8 – It was agreed that Policy L7 should be amended to include support of improvement and restoration proposals for Millpond.*
- Action 0.1 – The Planning Committee Clerk clarified that the Action for reviewing and updating existing evidence base documents is titled 0.1 due to its applicability to multiple STNP Themes. All actions under this item would be collated into one Action for a definitive list of evidence base documents requiring update.

*All decisions must be approved by Sevenoaks Town Council’s Planning Committee before they may be actioned, as per the Terms of Reference. All recommendations will be presented to the Committee for approval on 5th February 2024.

c) RECOMMENDATIONS TO PLANNING COMMITTEE:

- i) To note Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment locations where trees and hedgerows contribute significantly in the Planning Committee’s responses to planning applications.
- ii) Liaise with Kent Wildlife Trust regarding STNP objectives.
- iii) Community Asset nomination for the land proposed for future allotments to be prioritised.
- iv) Biodiversity policy L1 to be strengthened as indicated.
- v) Policy L7 to include reference to Millpond.

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 reported that, although the conditions enforced via Decision Notices published by the District Council are not legally obligated to cite planning policies for their justification, the District Council’s Planning Officers had agreed to include the STNP policies alongside the Local Plan’s. This new practice could be observed in the update report, and was considered a constructive step both in encouraging the STNP’s successful application, as well as its positive influence on planning applications.

c) It was queried whether the STNP had been observed as influencing decisions on planning applications on its own merits, or whether it mainly supported the influence of other existing policies. The Planning Committee Clerk reported an increase in the former, in particular via Policies L1 and L4, with conditions having been observed requiring the

retaining of natural features, and grants of approval being conditioned on provision of Biodiversity Management Plans. The Town Clerk agreed that the STNP was having an increasingly positive and significant influence on planning applications received within the Town.

6. Dates of future meetings

a) It was agreed that the next meeting of the Monitoring and Implementation Group would be held at 6pm on 18th March 2024, prior to the Planning Committee meeting scheduled for 7pm. This meeting would focus on Theme Three of the STNP – Movement and Public Realm.

b) It was also noted that a 2024 meeting schedule would be produced, with STNP Group meetings to take place every 8 weeks thereafter.

Meeting concluded at 6:45pm.

Theme Two: Landscape and Blue and Green Infrastructure Work Stream

	Proposed Project/Action	Notes	Identified by:	For actioning of:
2.1	The Town Council will identify areas where trees and hedgerows make a significant contribution to local character and biodiversity.	Ongoing project, with STC having listed two parcels of ancient woodland as Assets of Community Value and registered an Intention to Bid on one of them in December 2023.	STNP – Aim L3	STC STC Action: STC to use the Sevenoaks Residential Character Area Assessment to extract and collate all instances where trees or hedgerows are acknowledged for their contribution to the character. This to be provided to the Planning Committee members to encourage application of Policy L4 in the assessment, as well as initial creation of, planning applications.
2.2	The Neighbourhood Plan supports the development of new public open space and leisure opportunities in the town. This includes new public open space, community use and leisure opportunities at Sevenoaks Quarry (the Tarmac Site) in Greatness when sand extraction has been completed. The timetable for the delivery of this open space must be agreed by the local planning authority (as the decision-making authority) in conjunction with STC, prior to residential development commencing on this site, and subsequently conditioned in any Grant of Planning Permission	Further update is awaited via submission of Full planning applications for the Sevenoaks Quarry site, providing detail on the previously Reserved Matters.	STNP – Policy L5 – Open space delivery timetables	STC Collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sevenoaks District Council
2.3	The Town Council will work with and support Kent Wildlife Trust to enhance access to the Sevenoaks Wildlife Reserve and improve 'on-site' facilities		STNP – Aim L6	STC Collaboration with: Kent Wildlife Trust

	Proposed Project/Action	Notes	Identified by:	For actioning of:
				STC Action: To pursue discussions with Kent Wildlife Trust following change of administration, in particular about providing access via Otford Road to encourage greener modes of transport and access via Sevenoaks Station, as well as STNP related matters.
2.4	The Town Council will support improvement and restoration proposals for Bradbourne Lakes developed in consultation with the local community	This is registered as an Asset of Community Value. Update is awaited on a HLF funding bid which is understood by STC to be in the process of production.	STNP – Aim L7	Collaboration with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local community
2.5	The Town Council will develop new allotment provision adjacent to their site on Bradbourne Vale Road		STNP – Supporting text of Policy L8	STC STC action: STC to pursue registration of the land as an Asset of Community Value.
2.6	Preparation of policy guidance on planning applications for private water supply via boreholes	For 5 year REVIEW stage: A recent planning application for a borehole to supply private water to a golf course highlighted the potential future need for planning considerations on this as the effects of climate change and droughts worsen.	Town Clerk/Town Council Officers	STC STC Action: To keep this item under review and conduct further research: - STC to investigate viability of a policy on this via the STNP. - STC to contact the Environment Agency to enquire as to the implication of private supply

	Proposed Project/Action	Notes	Identified by:	For actioning of:
				boreholes, as well as the current state of the water table.
2.7	<p>Separation of Policy L1 (Biodiversity Net Gain, see below full policy) from advice on ecological networks via new Policy.</p> <p>Policy L1: Proposals for new development should whenever possible deliver a 10% net gain in biodiversity retaining natural features that support wildlife, establishing ecological networks and including new habitats that respond to the local context and the character of the site. [...]</p>	<p>For 5 year REVIEW stage:</p> <p>Policy L1 so far has been especially unsuccessful. It has been recommended a number of times by the Planning Committee on planning applications that propose new fencing, and rejected in the Case Officer’s report. SDC Development Manager, Aaron Hill has noted that the wording of Policy L1 does not require features such as ecological networks, rather, provides examples of how 10% BNG can be achieved with hedgehog holes as one of these examples. Separating it into a new policy and strengthening it by requiring any new fencing to be permeable to wildlife could help to achieve the intention with which the policy was set in the first place. BNG is also not applicable to Householder applications, as they are exempt under Biodiversity Net gain</p>	Town Clerk/Town Council Officers	<p>STC</p> <p>Separation of Policy L1 into two separate policies approved by STNP M&I Group 22-01-2024. Pending ratification by Planning Committee.</p>

	Proposed Project/Action	Notes	Identified by:	For actioning of:
		legislation and national guidance, so separating the two could allow for policy requirement of biodiversity-friendly features, without requiring net gain.		
2.8	<p>Amend Aim L7 (below) to include additional sites, or add an additional Policy to include support for improvement or restoration proposals to Millpond, as well as Bradbourne Lakes.</p> <p>Current Aim: Aim L7: The Town Council will support improvement and restoration proposals for Bradbourne Lakes developed in consultation with the local community.</p>	<p>For 5 year REVIEW stage:</p> <p>The Independent Examiner in his procedural matters letter, drew attention to a local resident’s concerns with whether Millpond was adequately protected. At the time of its response, STC was satisfied that Millpond, as a public open space, was adequately protected, however since then the status and health of the pond has deteriorated. STC was unable to amend its aims or policies to include Millpond explicitly, as the Independent Examiner did not recommend it, however did amend Objective 4, which previously only related to protecting and enhancing green infrastructure, to protecting</p>	Town Clerk/Town Council Officers	<p>STC</p> <p>Addition of Millpond approved by STNP M&I Group 22-01-2024. Pending ratification by Planning Committee.</p>

	Proposed Project/Action	Notes	Identified by:	For actioning of:
		<p>green and blue infrastructure. This was considered minor enough to be permissible.</p> <p>Protection of Millpond and similar sites could be added either via a new aim/policy, or by amending Aim L7 which currently only supports improvement and restoration proposals at Bradbourne Lakes, to include other such sites.</p>		
0.1	<p>Review and potential updating of existing evidence base to ensure that the information is satisfactorily accurate enough to inform the Plan’s policies.</p> <p>Existing evidence base:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sevenoaks Town Portrait • Sevenoaks Transport Strategy • Sevenoaks Cultural Strategy • Sevenoaks Town Sports Strategy • Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan 	<p>Evidence base documents relevant to Theme Two are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sevenoaks Town Portrait • Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan <p>Whether update of the Northern Sevenoaks Masterplan is necessary and to be pursued in the future is to be confirmed.</p> <p>It was noted that work undertaken on the Masterplan had been incorporated into the STNP.</p>	<p>Examination Process – Independent Examiner</p> <p>The function of the Appendices are to “inform the policies within the Plan”, and on this basis the Independent Examiner confirmed that he was satisfied for the appendices to be retained.</p> <p>He noted however that evidence may change over the life of the STNP, and advised</p>	STC

	Proposed Project/Action	Notes	Identified by:	For actioning of:
			therefore that it be reviewed.	