

**Minutes of the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring and Implementation
Group meeting held at the Council Chambers on 18th March 2024, 6:00pm.**

In attendance:

Sevenoaks Town Council – Leader of the Town Council	Cllr Tony Clayton
Sevenoaks Town Council – Deputy Leader of the Town Council	Cllr Nigel Wightman
Sevenoaks Town Council – Mayor	Cllr Claire Shea
Sevenoaks Town Council	Cllr Marilyn Canet
Sevenoaks Town Council – Town Clerk	Linda Larter MBE
Sevenoaks Town Council – Planning Committee Clerk	Georgie Elliston
Sevenoaks District Council	Cllr Elizabeth Purves
Glenn Ball Chartered Architect	Glenn Ball
Sevenoaks Society	John Stambollouian
Helen Bowles	Member of Public

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Cllr Tony Clayton as Leader of the Town Council was nominated as Chair, in the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair of the STNP Monitoring & Implementation Group.

1. Apologies for absence

Liz Dolding (Warners Solicitors), **Paul Baker** (Wealden Properties), **Cllr Libby Ancrum** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Nick Varley** (Sevenoaks Town Council), **Cllr Victoria Granville** (Sevenoaks Town Council).

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the previous STNP Monitoring and Implementation Group meeting held on 22nd January 2024 were received and agreed.

3. Kent County Council Results of its draft Emerging Local Transport Plan Consultation

The Group noted that Kent County Council (KCC) had published the responses received to its draft Emerging Local Transport Plan consultation.

4. Sevenoaks Town Centre and St Johns Masterplans

a) The Town Clerk summarised the progress and purpose of the above two projects, with a briefing document having been provided by the STNP's consultant, which sets out timelines and anticipated processes in producing the two Masterplans.

b) The following items of note were discussed:

- Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) is producing its own Masterplans for the Town, and although they have not yet reciprocated in providing specification details of their project, it is hoped that they will complement each other. The Town Council's Masterplans will build from the objectives of the already voted upon and adopted STNP.
- The main difference between the two Councils' Masterplans is expected to be in approach; SDC would approach the process as a significant landowner and likely find a developer to execute the Masterplan on its behalf, whereas the Town Council's will provide guidance and an action plan on the details of the policies and aims within the adopted STNP.

- Public engagement is highly encouraged, as the public consultation exercises provide opportunity to gauge level of public support for potential future developments in the Town, and to amend plans at their earliest development stages into a scheme which would be supported by local residents and businesses.
- It is estimated that the Masterplans will be completed by Autumn 2024, with hopes that they will input into the emerging Local Plan.
- The priority of the Masterplans is to facilitate growth of the Town, improving its attractiveness while maintaining its character, and above all improving the pedestrian and visitor experience.
- Sevenoaks Society representative John Stambollouian recommended that transport consultants be commissioned to consider the possibility of a one-way traffic scheme be included, in tandem with widening of footpaths. This was confirmed as part of the scope of the Masterplans, with a traffic consultant having been engaged, and input from Sevenoaks Society and other stakeholders welcomed.
- In addition, east-west pedestrian connections were recommended to be investigated, to support emerging developments on both sides of the Town.
- One of the main focuses of the Masterplans will be to create a Cultural Quarter, as aspired in the STNP. This will include the Library, Leisure Centre and surrounding area, as this will form the heart of the Cultural Quarter.
- STC would keep Group members aware of updates and relevant dates for the project. The first stage will be pursuing public opinions and ideas.

5. **20mph Public Consultation Results and Town Council Report**

Cllr Clayton summarised the results of the recent consultation held by STC on the revised 20mph plans for the Town. This had been created by a Working Group of the Sevenoaks Joint Transportation Board (JTB), following previous consultation on a wider scheme consulted on in 2023 by KCC:

- Over 2,500 responses were received, of which around 1,600 were from residents within the Town
- The concept of 20mph speed limits near schools and residential roads, as supported by the STNP Aim M4 had received 74% support from local residents, and 66% from all respondents including those outside the Town. This was noted as in line with the STNP Referendum results (73% in favour).
- The scheme as produced by the JTB was supported by 61% of local residents, and 53% of all respondents.
- STC will be deciding its stance and recommendation on the scheme at the Planning Committee to be held at 7pm 18th March 2024
- KCC Officers had confirmed that the scheme could be implemented without humps and chicanes, with the scheme to be signage only
- Seal Hollow Road was not included in its entirety, due to KCC Officers having concluded that a 20mph speed limit could not be achieved without further traffic calming, such as speed bumps
- Response data supports addition of Ash Platt Road and Pinewood Avenue to the scheme
- KCC is the decision maker, with the Portfolio Holder due to make the final decision following recommendation by the JTB
- The JTB, due to discuss the scheme on 20th March 2024, had been presented with two potential recommendations via its Agenda papers. These were to either implement the scheme as proposed, or to implement a reduced scheme with Dartford Road, St Botolphs Road, Hitchen Hatch Lane and Mount Harry Road removed.

- The zebra crossing at Dartford Road, previously consulted on by KCC in the last consultation, was heavily supported and STC confirmed it would support KCC in the delivery of it, regardless of the KCC Portfolio Holder's decision on the 20mph scheme.
- The scheme, delivered in tandem with the zebra crossing should make the Town and school routes safer and more walkable for residents and students.

6. Theme Three – Work Stream

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

b) The following points of note were discussed:

- Action 3.1: The pedestrian bridge connecting the Tarmac site and Sainsburys Supermarket does not appear to form part of Tarmac's intentions for the site, despite its disrepair and KCC's initial insistence at early planning stages that its repair be included in any subsequent proposals for the site.
- Agreed that STC would remind KCC about this, and keep proposals for the bridge under review, to ensure it is resolved – whether by Tarmac, or potentially from contribution from the Town Council using CIL monies it receives from the development.
- It was also noted that the bridge forms part of one of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) routes.
- Actions 3.3 and 3.5: Noted that the Bat & Ball Station to Dunton Green Station Green route, proposed in the STNP is undergoing Feasibility Study. This would provide a safer alternative route for walkers and cyclists to Dunton Green, as opposed to via Riverhead and two major junctions.
- Action 3.8: Noted that the Bat & Ball Station refurbishment and station access improvements have been completed
- Action 3.9: Members were notified that the Town Council will be launching a Car Club from the Bat & Ball Centre very soon
- Action 3.11: See Minute Number 4 for discussions on the Town Centre and St Johns Masterplans.

7. 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 34-35. The following points of note were discussed:

- Decision notices for approval were citing STNP policies more regularly, which had resulted in an increase of Policy L1 (Biodiversity Net Gain) being applied/conditioned.
- Vulnerabilities to Policy L1 had been identified via Case Officer Reports, including flexibility in whether a Case Officer can decide to enforce it, and inability to deliver Biodiversity Net Gain via Policy L1, in cases where the site has a 0% existing delivery.
- Policies L1 and L2 (Flood mitigation) were being applied more regularly, however not consistently despite the Case Officer having considered the issues which they relate to.

- Contrary to previous reports, there were no cases where a planning application had not been considered against STNP Policies. It was noted however, that decisions had still been made contrary to STNP Policy, due to the tilted balance.
- The Town Clerk clarified that the tilted balance still applies to Sevenoaks, as the STNP does not allocate housing sites. This would have required additional studies to prove feasibility and deliverability of the sites for housing. Sevenoaks Town is still better protected against prospective development than other parishes and towns inside the District however, due to the STNP's adoption, and Planning Officers at SDC had recently noted the value of this.
- The applicability of Policy L2 to smaller developments was questioned. The Planning Committee Clerk clarified that the supporting text sets out ways in which smaller developments can minimise surface water run off, via permeable paving and planting. It was agreed that the constraints and applicability of the Policy would be added to the recommendations to Planning Committee, for requesting additional information on from SDC.

c) It was agreed that the following recommendations would be made to the Planning Committee for further actioning:

- To bring to SDC's attention to and seek clarification on why Policy L2 (drainage) appears to be inconsistently applied – using 9 Crownfields (23/02649/FUL and 23/03428/HOUSE) as a case study.
- To seek clarification on when Policy L2 can be applied with regards to smaller developments and Householder applications – e.g. extensions.
- To request similarly clarification on why Policy L1 is inconsistently applied, and enquire whether it will become stronger following April 2024 when smaller developments are required to deliver BNG.
- For a case to be made to the Examiner at the 5 year review stage, for Policy L1 to be strengthened to eliminate potential for interpretation. To include in the Annual Report examples of when it has been unsuccessfully applied, or considered unnecessary by the Case Officer.

*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 2nd April 2024.

8. **Dates of future meetings**

a) It was noted that the next meeting of the Monitoring and Implementation Group would be held at 6pm on Tuesday 7th May 2024, prior to the Planning Committee meeting scheduled for 7pm. This meeting would review the first Annual Report for the STNP, with the Theme of discussion due to be Theme Four of the STNP – Local Economy.

Meeting concluded at 6:50pm.