

Reference Update on the Neighbourhood Development Plan from Hugo Nowell
(Presentation No. 1 and Agenda Item No. 8)

In August 2021 AECOM were appointed to prepare a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) on the draft Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Plan. This was required following concerns raised by Historic England (as part of the consultation on the SEA screening carried out by SDC) on Policy D1 relating to development sites in the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

AECOM prepared an SEA Scoping report in September and consultation with Historic England, the Environment Agency and Natural England followed.

As part of the SEA process AECOM carried out a high-level appraisal of the Neighbourhood Plan (March 2021 version) and found that the policies and aims performed favourably in sustainability terms. AECOM made a number of recommendations on how policies in the plan relating to biodiversity, climate change, the historic environment and surface water management could be strengthened

AECOM also suggested updated wording for the Neighbourhood Plan policies on development. This followed clarification from the District Council that it would not be possible to allocate sites in the Neighbourhood Plan without significant further work to test deliverability and a further Regulation 14 consultation. This would significantly delay the submission of the plan for independent examination and referendum.

AECOM's recommended changes included rewording policies to make it clearer that the Neighbourhood Plan was not allocating sites and removing reference to development quantum under policies D1 (sites) and D2 (the Tarmac site). Importantly the design principles relating to each site were retained. A further draft of the Plan was circulated in December 2021 incorporating these suggested amendments.

The District Council will only accept the Plan and progress towards independent examination if statutory authorities are supportive and we therefore shared the updated version of the Neighbourhood Plan with Historic England in December. They confirmed that whilst they are supportive of the plan they were still not happy with the wording of policy D1 and recommended an alternative policy wording that would make it clearer that the sites are not allocated in the plan whilst also emphasising the benefits of development.

The revised wording of policy D1 and D2 is included on the pages that follow. This brings the benefits that should be secured on sites into the policy wording whilst making it clear that allocation would be a matter for the Local Plan.

It is recommended that these changes be supported in the Neighbourhood Plan and that the Plan is then finalised and submitted alongside a consultation statement and basic conditions statement (demonstrating that the plan is in general conformity with policy) to SDC for independent examination and referendum.

AECOM are in the process of completing the SEA Environmental Report and this will also be provided to SDC as part of the submission and will add greater robustness to the Plan.

THEME SEVEN: DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

Objective Fifteen: To promote high quality development that enhances the town and consolidates vacant or under-utilised land

Policy D1: The Neighbourhood Plan recognises that there are sites that may come forward for development, either as windfall or through allocation in the Local Plan, that have potential to deliver benefits that should be secured through the design, layout and use of each site. Planning applications on the following vacant and under-utilised sites within the Neighbourhood Plan area should demonstrate that they will deliver the relevant benefits set out below, in addition to other requirements set out in the Local Plan:

1. Bat and Ball Centre, Bat and Ball*

- Mixed-use development accommodating community use, office use and residential dwellings within buildings of up to four storey;
- A southern access and entrance to Bat and Ball station; and
- A building layout that would facilitate enhanced access to Bat and Ball station and provide an arrival space in front of the new southern entrance to the station.

2. Travis Perkins, Bat and Ball

- A longer term opportunity to relocate light industrial uses northwards to Vestry Industrial Estate / Otford (outside of the Neighbourhood Plan area) and redevelop the site with mixed-use development within compact blocks of up to four storey height;
- Removal of the conflict between the light industrial employment uses and residential accommodation within the Bat and Ball area; and
- Improved access towards Bat and Ball station and better animation of the streets in the area.

3. Cramptons Road, Water Works

- Potential for residential development close to Bat and Ball station. With its proximity to shops and facilities it could be a suitable site for a co-housing project;
- Layout must retain access to the water treatment works to the north of the site. The layout of development should facilitate a potential future pedestrian connection through Sevenoaks Business Centre to Bat and Ball station; and
- The scale and massing of development should respond to the lower scale properties to the west of the site.

4. Carpetright / Wickes, Otford Road

- Relocate existing uses northwards to the Vestry Industrial Estate where they are more appropriate;
- Strengthen the residential character of the area and remove the conflict between the big box retail uses and existing homes;
- Deliver buildings that create a positive frontage to Cramptons Road (houses) and Otford Road (apartments); and
- Respond positively with proposals for the adjacent gasholder station site (Site 5).

5. Sevenoaks Gasholder Station

- Residential development close to Bat and Ball station that supports the regeneration of Northern Sevenoaks;
- A development layout that provides positive frontages to streets and retains, fronts onto and overlooks the pedestrian path (a public right of way) that connects Cramptons Road with Otford Road through the site; and
- A scale and massing that responds to the context (i.e. two storey buildings on Cramptons Road but with potential for four storeys on Otford Road).

6. Bat and Ball Enterprise Centre

- Longer term opportunity to change this area close to Bat and Ball station to mixed-use;
- Strengthen the residential character of the area and improve access to the station for people living in Greatness through pedestrian routes (from Queens Drive) that are overlooked by new development;
- Deliver apartment buildings (with ground floor employment) that create a positive frontage to Bat and Ball Road; and
- Buildings could be up to four storeys in this location.

* Represents a site where further studies / actions may be pursued by the Town Council over the life of the Plan

THEME SEVEN: DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING (CONTINUED)

7. Sevenoaks station and surrounding area

- Significant opportunity for development that will transform the sense of arrival into Sevenoaks and could establish a new urban quarter for the town;
- There are notable views down London Road towards the Kent Downs AONB to the north and any development should respond sensitively to this setting;
- Scale of buildings to be typically four to six storeys. There may be potential for a taller building to mark the station; and
- Opportunity to reconsider transport interchange and public realm treatment at the station.

8. Edwards Electrical, High Street

- Development proposals to respond to heritage sensitivities (the site is located immediately to the south of, and adjacent to, the Vine Conservation Area);
- Development should respond to the character of the existing streetscape both in terms of materials, design language and height and massing — two / three storeys is appropriate;
- Development should provide a positive and active frontage to the High Street that is aligned to frontages on adjacent plots and is sympathetic to adjacent built form; and
- Potential for mews houses to the rear of the site.

9. Buckhurst Lane (Suffolk Way) sites

- Development proposals to respond to heritage sensitivities (the site is located on the edge of the Sevenoaks High Street Conservation Area) and development will need to respond to the historic development pattern, materials and character of the area;
- Access will need to be maintained to service yards of properties on High Street;
- Potential to provide development that provides a positive frontage to Suffolk Way and Buckhurst Lane;
- Scale and massing of development to respond to the existing context with potential for three storey buildings plus an additional set back storey;
- Development should front streets whilst concealing existing service yards from public view; and
- Pedestrian connections through the area to be retained and any trees that are removed to be replaced.

10. Post Office / BT Exchange

- Development proposals to respond to heritage sensitivities (the site is located adjacent to the Sevenoaks High Street Conservation Area and the locally listed Stag Theatre);
- The site is located on elevated ground with land dropping away to the south and development is likely to be highly visible from a number of locations. The height and massing needs to be carefully considered and modelled;
- Potential to re-establish the primacy of London Road through development providing active ground floor uses onto London Road with apartments above. Total building height three storeys plus an additional set back storey;
- Frontage onto London Road should be set back to create a public space that serves the adjacent theatre and provides a setting for the new ground floor uses;
- Development should provide a positive frontage to the lane connecting the car park to the rear of The Stag Theatre with London Road;
- Potential for public realm enhancement to South Park; and
- A comprehensive scheme should be prepared but could be delivered as two independent phases (Post Office and BT Building).


THEME SEVEN: DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING (CONTINUED)

11. Town Council offices, Bradbourne Vale Road*

- Residential development in the form of apartments that provide a frontage to Bradbourne Vale Road with other dwellings to the rear;
- Development up to three storeys; and
- Potential to relocate existing office space to the Community Centre site at Bat and Ball station.


12. Adult Education site, Bradbourne Road

- Potential for sensitive residential conversion of the locally listed college building which maintains the integrity of the existing building;
- Potential for a new build residential annex; this must be subservient to main college building in respect of its design and scale and massing; and
- Existing mature trees and quality of landscape setting to be retained.


Developers will be encouraged to develop buildings constructed to the highest environmental standards to reduce carbon emissions through construction and later life 


Policy D2: Should the Tarmac Ltd. Site at Greatness be brought forward for development, either as windfall or through allocation in the Local Plan, this should be guided by an agreed masterplan that indicates how development would be laid out to respond to, and provide a significant landscape resource for Sevenoaks, how it will be phased and the supporting infrastructure that would be delivered as part of the development.

Development of the site should also deliver the following benefits for the area:


- Community infrastructure including the potential provision of a primary school and medical facilities;
- Green infrastructure including the provision of a new lake and centre for sport, recreation and leisure, a network of walking and cycling routes and play space;
- Transport infrastructure and in particular proposals must demonstrate how vehicular access will be achieved and how any transport impacts will be mitigated, including but not limited to improvements to Bat and Ball junction;
- Re-use of historic buildings - the former oast house should be refurbished, integrated into the development and re-used for community use; and
- A mix of new homes that supports local needs and including affordable homes to meet the requirements of the Local Plan. 


Objective Sixteen: To deliver a range of new homes to meet local needs

Policy D3: Where practicable larger residential developments will be expected to provide a range of homes. New housing should contribute to meeting the identified local need. Affordable housing provision will be required as part of all eligible developments 

Policy D4: The development of on-site key worker housing will be encouraged as part of larger infrastructure developments and subject to a condition preventing sale or rent on the open market 

Objective Seventeen: To provide homes that are energy efficient and minimise environmental impact

Policy D5: The Neighbourhood Plan promotes the delivery of new homes that are energy efficient, that are constructed using materials that reduce the impact on the environment and that are designed to maximise daylight and sun penetration whilst also avoiding overheating 

Policy D6: The Neighbourhood Plan promotes the retrofitting of existing homes to increase their energy efficiency 

* Represents a site where further studies / actions may be pursued by the Town Council over the life of the Plan