

Minutes of the Sevenoaks Town Neighbourhood Plan / Masterplan Working Group meeting held at the Council Chambers on 27th August 2024, 6:00pm.

In attendance – Quorum minimum of 3 elected members

Sevenoaks Town Council – Elected member	Cllr Nigel Wightman
Sevenoaks Town Council – Elected member	Cllr Lise Michaelides
Sevenoaks Town Council – Chair & Elected member, arrived 6:13pm	Cllr Tony Clayton
Sevenoaks Town Council	Cllr Dr Marilyn Canet
Sevenoaks Town Council – Responsible Finance Officer / Deputy Town Clerk	Georgina Jackson
Sevenoaks Town Council – Planning Committee Clerk	Georgie Elliston
Sevenoaks District Council – Leader	Cllr Roderick Hogarth
Sevenoaks Society	Charles George

Prior to the commencement of the meeting and in the absence of the Chair or Vice Chair, Cllr Nigel Wightman as Leader of the Town Council was nominated to Chair the meeting.

140 Apologies for absence

Cllr David Skinner (Vice Chair, Sevenoaks Town Council), **Liz Dolding** (Warners Solicitors), **Cllr Elizabeth Purves** (Sevenoaks District Council)

141 Minutes

The Minutes of the previous STNP Monitoring and Implementation Group meeting held on 1st July 2024 were received and agreed, with note that Cllr Hogarth's position at the District Council had been corrected from "Leader & Public Realm Commissioner" to "Leader".

142 Theme Seven – Work Stream

a) It was noted that review of actions under Theme Six of the STNP would be deferred until completion of the second Sevenoaks Town Sports Strategy which is currently being progressed by a dedicated Working Group.

b) The STNP / Masterplan Working Group received and noted a list of projects identified in the STNP under Theme Seven: Development and Housing. It was noted that the recently proposed revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework, as well as the impact of this on the emerging draft Local Plan required clarity before prioritisation of actions under Theme Seven could be considered.

c) Cllr Hogarth, in his capacity of Leader of the District Council, advised that:

- The implications for the Local Plan are not yet clear, however the reintroduction and increase of mandatory housing numbers could provide more flexibility on identifying potential housing sites, and may change proposed densities.
- The District Council's view is that, rather than a blanket average density requirement for all sites dependent on size, locations which could accommodate higher densities without harm to their character should be targeted for higher densities in order to help "average out" locations whose character would be negatively impacted by high average densities.
- The District Council disagrees with the revised NPPF's removal of character protections where it would be impacted by higher densities. This sentiment was shared by other attendees, with members also raising concern that the

Residential Character Area Assessments could lose its material weight following this loss.

- Cllr Hogarth could invite one of SDC's Planning Officers to attend a future STNP / Masterplan meeting, when more is known about the upcoming changes to the national and local planning system.

d) On request from Cllr Hogarth, the Planning Committee Clerk confirmed that the Town Council's official response to the NPPF consultation would be discussed and published via Planning & Environment Committee papers, and it was **agreed** to forward copy of the comments once agreed. On request from Cllr Hogarth of STC's thoughts on infrastructure, it was **agreed** that STC should make particular consideration on this point in order to be able to inform and support the District Council's own response.

143 **Monitoring**

a) The updated monitoring report, which records how the STNP has been being applied to planning applications since the last preliminary report, was received and noted.

b) The Planning Committee Clerk summarised the main trends that she had observed from the update, which included a perceived increase in application of Policy L1 (Biodiversity Net Gain, as well as ecological enhancements where the 10% requirement was exempt) and Policy L2 (Sustainable Urban Drainage). Cllr Clayton also noted that Policy L4 (replacement of trees) appeared to have increased in use, all of which were gladly received.

144 **Royal Town Planning Institute Award Results**

The Working Group received notice that the STNP had come second place in the Royal Town Planning Institute's South-East Awards for Planning Excellence, under the category of Best Plan.

145 **Update on Masterplans including parking and beat survey**

a) The Working Group noted that the second Stakeholder events for the Town Centre and St John's Area Masterplans had been scheduled for the following dates:

- **Town Centre Stakeholder Engagement session: Monday 4th November 2024, 3pm-5:30pm at The Stag Theatre Footlights Bar**
- **St Johns Area Stakeholder Engagement session: Thursday 14th November 2024, 4pm-7:30pm in the Chamber at the Town Council Offices**

b) The following updated delivery timetable for the Masterplans was received, with note that it had been delayed in order to accommodate a parking and beat survey to be undertaken in St John's Area which would inform recommendations in the Masterplan:

Activity	Date
First Stakeholder Workshops	April 2024
St John's Car Parking Survey	Second week September 2024
Second Stakeholder Workshops on initial ideas	Early November 2024
Preparation of draft Masterplans	November 2024
Public consultation	November 2024
Preparation of final Masterplans	December 2024

c) The Planning Committee Clerk clarified that the parking and beat surveys had been commissioned in order to investigate potential improvements to the parking provision at

St John's, which the Town Council frequently receives complaints about. The timing coincided favourably with the preparation of the Masterplans and would inform the spatial vision for the future of the area.

146 Current and Completed Matters

The first Current and Completed Matters reports were noted. The Planning Committee Clerk clarified that the purpose of these was to track actions and progress on key projects of the STNP / Masterplan Working Group.

147 Dates of future meetings

The following future meeting dates were noted, with note that the previously publicised date of 21st October 2024 had been amended to 7th October 2024.

7 th October 2024 – 6pm	16 th December 2024 – 6pm	10 th February 2025 – 6pm
7 th April 2025 – 6pm	2 nd June 2025 – 6pm	

Meeting concluded at 6:25pm.