Frequently Asked Questions about Sevenoaks Town Council's Town Centre and St John's Hill Area Masterplans:

What is a Masterplan, and what is its purpose?

The Two Masterplans have been produced to support both the District Council's Local Plan as well as associated future housing developments which are required to meet the District's housing numbers. The aim is to ensure that the new housing is accompanied by appropriate and responsive local infrastructure which will enhance the two prominent neighbourhood and economic centres, and reflect local needs, values, and aspirations.

When developments are proposed on a "piecemeal" basis and without collaboration between developers of nearby sites, opportunities to deliver enhanced community benefits such as provision of valuable public spaces, cohesive and linked active-travel paths, access to nearby local services, and larger infrastructure improvements can be missed. By looking at the two study areas from a broader and more spatial perspective, those improvements which could not be delivered either at all, or to their full potential by one lone development could be secured either in the design stage, or later during developer-contribution negotiations held with the Local Planning Authority.

Why are the Masterplans necessary if residents are happy with the areas as they are?

Sevenoaks District Council has been tasked with the significant responsibility of identifying land for 1,145 new houses *per year,* and 17,175 houses by 2042. Although the housing numbers are referred to as a "target", this is a mandatory number which has been set by central Government and which incurs risk to valued Green Belt land if it cannot be met.

This means that development and change – especially in these two key locations where a significant portion of the future development is likely to be focused – is inevitable. The value of the Masterplans is that they take into account the existing landscape, its character, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and most importantly – the values of its residents – and produces guidelines and a spatial vision as to how this necessary development could be accommodated while also delivering locally-supported improvements, making the most efficient use of the space, and achieving the best possible outcome for existing and future residents alike.

How was the content of both Masterplans decided?

- **A Use and Satisfaction Survey** for each of the study areas remained open throughout the Masterplans' production periods, gathering local feedback on strengths and potential improvement opportunities for both locations.

- **1:1 Key Stakeholder meetings** were arranged between the Town Council's consultants and various key influential bodies including representatives from The Stag Theatre, Sevenoaks Society, Knole Estate and National Trust, Kent County Council, Sevenoaks District Council, and Sevenoaks Town Team.

- **Stakeholder Workshops** were also held, both at the initial stage of production as well as on receipt of the first draft of both masterplans, to discuss their direction and proposals and ensure that they reflected local Stakeholder aspirations and values.

- **A Public Consultation** which included a survey, drop-in information sessions and consultation boards was held for each of the draft Masterplans in order to gather residents' feedback and weigh support for the various proposals.

A Consultation Report was produced for both Masterplans, with the main reports having been amended to reflect feedback received in relation to their contents.

What are the key proposals in the Masterplans?

The Masterplans explore a range of spatial improvements, from potential uses of underutilised spaces, enhancements to traffic and pedestrian movements, and design guidance for sites which are likely to come up for future development.

A number of potential new public spaces are proposed, and a number of traffic and pedestrian movement options were *explored* by transport specialist consultants, Urban Movement. It is important to note that any future introduction of the options explored within the Masterplans (such as around the Town Centre triangle) will need detailed modelling, impact assessment, and public consultation. Sevenoaks Town Council is not proposing to introduce these itself, nor to promote their delivery without much more comprehensive investigation.

How will these be delivered?

- Sevenoaks District Council's agreement to embed the Masterplans within Policy SEV1 of its emerging Local Plan puts the Masterplans in a strong position **to influence development proposals at the earliest stage of their design**. This Policy, consulted upon amongst many proposed housing sites and other local policies in the Local Plan's Regulation 18 and 19 consultations, recognises the role that the Masterplans will play in helping to "guide future development proposals and drive improvements to the experience and offering of these centres".

- It is hoped that the District Council's Planning Officers will also refer to the Masterplans in their decision-making process when **evaluating prospective planning applications**, due to their having been embedded into Local Plan Policy.

- The Masterplans will also become an **evidence base to the Town Council's Neighbourhood Development Plan**, which is due to be reviewed in May 2028. Planning Policies will be reviewed for potential update and amended accordingly to reflect changing circumstances, updated evidence bases, and to improve the applicability of Policies not currently performing to their full intended purpose. This will **further embed the Masterplans into material planning policy and the local planning policy framework**.

- If not incorporated into initial designs for future development, other avenues for securing larger infrastructure improvements from developers such as junction and crossing improvements includes **Section 106 agreements** – which secure the funding and / or delivery of necessary infrastructure and public realm improvements to support the increased population, **or Community Infrastructure Levy** – which is a levy charged to developers by the District Council to more flexibly fund infrastructure improvements. The Town Council receives a portion of monies collected via CIL (25%), and also has the opportunity to bid for further amounts from the District Council's portion (75%) via its CIL Board.

- **Smaller interventions** proposed within the Masterplans, including joining-up of active travel routes, greening the neighbourhood and town centres, enhancing the cultural offer, making use of space to host events, and improving wayfinding **could be delivered by the Town Council or other organisations**. The Masterplans will also provide a valuable evidence-base for **supporting external grant applications**.