

1 What is the Supplementary Planning Document?

Places continue to adapt and evolve. Necessary development to provide new homes and businesses for Sevenoaks will continue to come forward. The District Council is looking to ensure that future development in Sevenoaks is suited to the local character.

The 'character of an area' is often mentioned in the context of considering development proposals. What is often missing is a clear identification of, and agreement about, the locally distinctive features of an area that give it character that should be given careful regard in considering proposals for development. For this purpose, the Residential Character Areas Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) sets out to define the character of identifiable local residential areas within the urban area of Sevenoaks excluding the Conservation Areas - for which separate guidance has already been prepared - and non-residential areas (see Map 1). For the purposes of the Local Development Framework, the Sevenoaks urban area is defined as Sevenoaks town, Riverhead, Dunton Green, Bessels Green and Chipstead.

Good design is a key element of sustainable development, so the District Council will promote a high standard of design. A high quality, well designed, development can enhance the sense of place and identity of an area and can bring significant benefits to the local environment and economy.

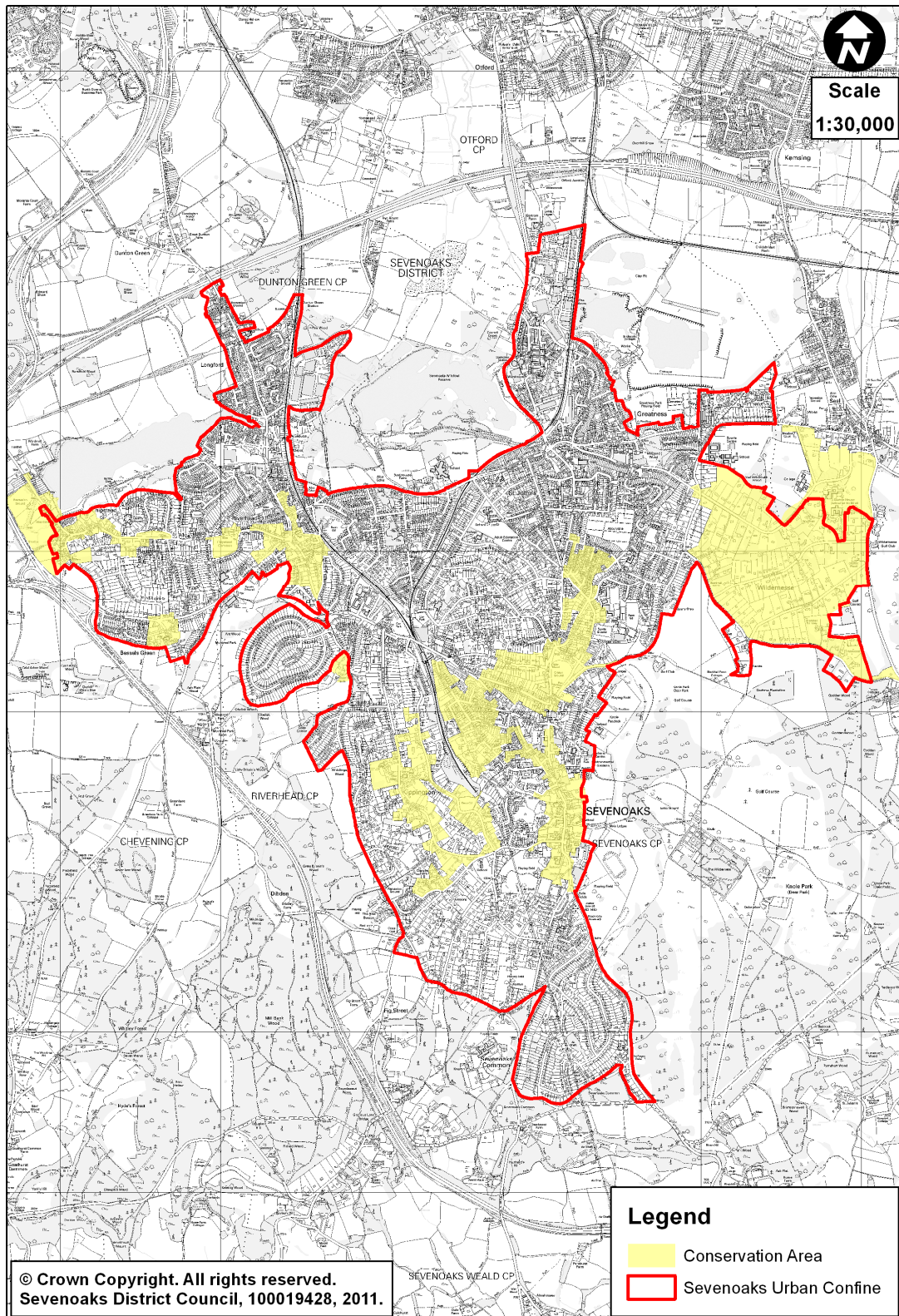
The Adopted Core Strategy states that all new development should be designed to a high quality and should respond to the distinctive local character of the area in which it is situated and that account should be taken of guidance adopted by the Council in the form of local Character Area Assessments. . Government guidance (PPS3) advocates that Local Planning Authorities should develop a shared vision with their local communities of the type(s) of residential environments they wish to see and develop design policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the local area.

This SPD helps identify the local distinctive character and design guidance to assist the Council in making decisions about the appropriateness of development proposals.

Some minor development is permitted, by Parliament, without the need for a planning application (usually known as "permitted development") and, home owners and developers who are considering such alterations are encouraged to refer to the distinctive characteristics of their area as described in this SPD when considering even minor development. The Council's planning staff will also use the SPD as a basis for giving advice to those who intend to exercise permitted development rights. Although the Council will not be in a position to *require* these good design principles in such cases, it will nevertheless encourage their use where possible.

The SPD will be adopted as part of the LDF. Once adopted, it will be a material consideration in determining planning applications in that part of Sevenoaks to which it applies. Developers and householders should refer to the document in formulating proposals.

The document aims to raise the standard of design of new proposals such that they fit well with the locally distinctive character of an area. Design which is considered to be inappropriate in its context is unlikely to be acceptable and efforts will be made to improve the character and quality of an area through the preparation and consideration of development proposals.



Map 1: Sevenoaks Residential Character Areas Assessment SPD boundary

2 Purpose of the Supplementary Planning Document

This SPD aims:

- To supplement adopted design policies for assessing development proposals within an area;
- To identify the locally distinctive features that define the character of those residential areas within Sevenoaks urban area which are not included within the town's Conservation Areas;
- To raise awareness of, and provide guidance on, the appropriateness of the design of development within an area in order to strengthen diversity rather than erode character and local distinctiveness;
- To assist the appraisal of planning and allied applications; and
- To deliver improved designs, in practice, which enhance the character of the area

3 Policy Context

The SPD is consistent with national planning policy and is supplementary to the policies set out in the Development Plan Documents (DPDs) contained in the LDF.

3.1 National Planning Policies

The Draft National Planning Policy Framework (July 2011) states that it is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. The Local Development Framework should develop robust and comprehensive policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the area. Such policies should be based on stated objectives for the future of the area and an understanding and evaluation of its present defining characteristics.

Planning policies should aim to ensure that developments respond to local character and reflect the identity of local surroundings, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation, and are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping. Planning policies should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.

Design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally.

Planning Policy Statement 1 (Delivering Sustainable Development) states that the Government is committed to protecting and enhancing the quality of the natural and historic environment, in both rural and urban areas. Planning policies should seek to protect and enhance the quality, character and amenity value of the countryside and urban areas as a whole.

Planning authorities should seek to maintain and improve the local environment and help to mitigate the effects of declining environmental quality through positive policies on issues such as design, conservation and the provision of public space.

Planning authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces and wider area development schemes. Good design should contribute positively to making places better for people and take the opportunity to improve the character and quality of an area.

Design policies should avoid unnecessary prescription or detail and should concentrate on guiding the overall scale, density, massing, height, landscape, layout and access of new development in relation to neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally. Local planning authorities should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative through unsubstantiated requirements to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is, however, proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness particularly where this is supported by clear plan policies or supplementary planning documents on design.

Planning Policy Statement 3 (Housing) affirms that good design should contribute positively to making places better for people. Design which is inappropriate in its context, or which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions, should not be accepted.

The guidance advocates that Local Planning Authorities should develop a shared vision with their local communities of the type(s) of residential environments they wish to see and develop design policies that set out the quality of development that will be expected for the local area, aimed at:

- Creating places, streets and spaces which meet the needs of people, are visually attractive, safe, accessible, functional, inclusive, have their own distinctive identity and maintain and improve local character.
- Promoting designs and layouts which make efficient and effective use of land, including encouraging innovative approaches to help deliver high quality outcomes.

Good design is fundamental to using land efficiently. Local Planning Authorities should facilitate good design by identifying the distinctive features that define the character of a particular local area.

Careful attention to design is particularly important where the chosen local strategy involves intensification of the existing urban fabric. More intensive development is not always appropriate. However, when well designed and built in the right location, it can enhance the character and quality of an area.

PPS3 states that the density of existing development should not dictate that of new housing by stifling change or requiring replication of existing style or form. If done well, imaginative design