

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the Sevenoaks Local Plan

Scoping Report

October 2022

Quality information

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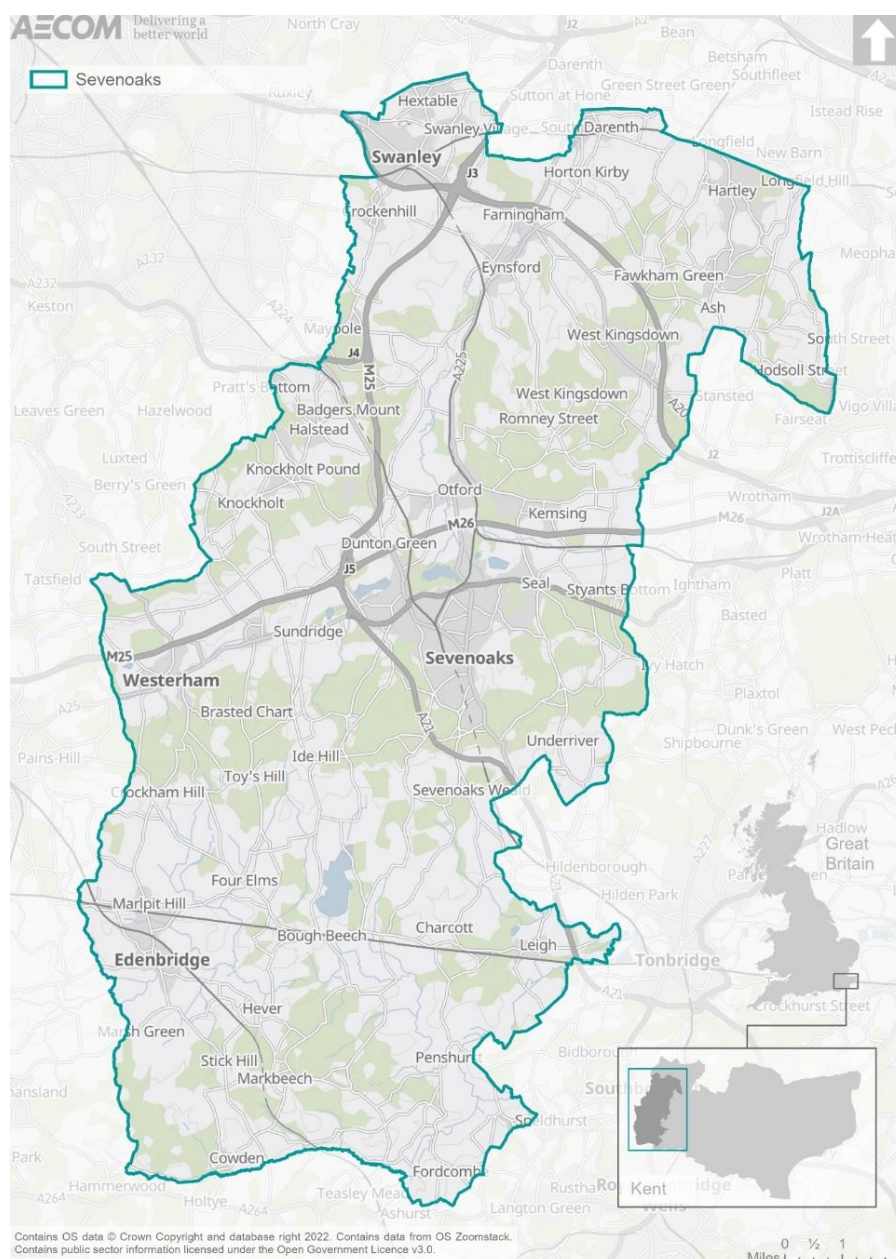
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1. Introduction

Sevenoaks District

- 1.1 Covering an area of approximately 370km², Sevenoaks is a local government district with district status in Kent. Sevenoaks has a population of approximately 121,387 residents according to 2020 estimates. The District is located within the London Metropolitan Green Belt, and a large proportion of the District is constrained by two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) – the Kent Downs in the north and the High Weald in the south. Sevenoaks is the main town, located in the centre of the District, well linked to London and Kent by road and rail, including the M25 and M26. Swanley, in the north, is the second largest settlement, and is closely linked to Dartford and the outer London suburbs. The south of the District is then associated with a rail corridor between the two AONBs, including the town of Edenbridge.

Figure 1.1 Area covered by the new Local Plan



Local Plan Context

- 1.2 Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) is currently preparing a new Local Plan (hereafter referred to as “the new Local Plan”). The new Local Plan will replace the current Local Plan, which includes the following key documents:
- Core Strategy Development Plan (2011)
 - Allocations and Development Management Plan (2015)
- 1.3 Once in place, the new Local Plan will establish a strategy for growth and change over the plan period (a period of at least 15 years, in-line with NPPF paragraph 22), allocate sites to deliver the strategy and establish the policies against which planning applications will be determined.
- 1.4 The plan is being prepared under the Town and Country (Local Planning) Regulations 2012, must reflect current Government policy as set out in the NPPF (2021) and must also be prepared in accordance with Government’s online Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). In particular, the NPPF requires local authorities to take a positive approach to development, with an up-to-date local plan that meets objectively assessed needs, including local housing needs (LHN), as far as is consistent with sustainable development.

Sustainability Appraisal (SA) explained

- 1.5 AECOM has been commissioned to undertake an independent Sustainability Appraisal (SA) in support of the new Local Plan on behalf of SDC.
- 1.6 SA is a mechanism for considering and communicating the effects of an emerging plan, and ‘reasonable alternatives’, with a view to minimising adverse effects and maximising the positives. SA is required for Local Plans.

This Scoping Report

- 1.7 The first stage in the SA process involves establishing the ‘scope’ of sustainability issues and objectives that must be considered when appraising the emerging plan and alternatives.
- 1.8 The Regulations require that: *“When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the Environmental Report [i.e., the IIA Report], the responsible authority shall consult the consultation bodies”*. In England, the consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England.¹
- 1.9 As such, this draft Scoping Report was published for consultation with the consultation bodies listed above, as well as select other organisations. The consultation period has now come to a close, and a summary of the responses and how they were addressed can be read in [Appendix A](#).

Structure of this report

- 1.10 A review of evidence and key issues / opportunities is presented under 12 thematic topic headings – see Table 2.1. The review leads to a concise list of

¹ In-line with Article 6(3) of the SEA Directive, these bodies were selected because ‘by reason of their specific environmental responsibilities, [they] are likely to be concerned by the environmental effects of implementing plans and programmes.’

key issues/objectives that can serve as a ‘framework’ for subsequent appraisal work. Section 14 presents the proposed SA framework in full.

Table 1.2 SA topics

SA topic	Elements covered by topic
Air quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air pollution sources • Air quality hotspots • Air quality management
Biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • International, national, and local biodiversity designations • Key habitats • Key species • Ecological networks • Geological sites
Climate change adaptation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flood risk • Climate change resilience
Climate change mitigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greenhouse gas emissions • Climate change projections
Communities and health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population and age structure • Deprivation • Housing quality, mix and affordability • Community facilities • Influences on health and wellbeing
Economy and employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current and emerging economic sectors • Employment, education, and skills • Productivity and growth
Historic environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated and non-designated heritage assets • Setting, special qualities and significance of heritage assets • Locally important heritage assets • Archaeology • Historic character
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local housing needs • Affordable housing • Specialist and localised needs
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designated and non-designated sites and areas • Landscape, townscape and villagescape character • Visual amenity
Land and soils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil quality • Agricultural land • Minerals resources
Transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation infrastructure • Traffic flows and congestion • Accessibility and connectivity • Public rights of way
Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water availability and quality • Wastewater treatment

2. Air quality

Focus of topic

- Air pollution sources
- Air quality hotspots
- Air quality management

Policy context

2.1 **Table 2.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the new Local Plan. The key messages emerging from the review are then summarised after the table.

Table 2.1 Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
International	
<u>Directive 2010/75/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on industrial emissions (integrated pollution prevention and control)</u>	2010
National	
<u>National Planning Policy Framework</u>	2021
<u>Environment Act</u>	2021
<u>The Clean Air Strategy</u>	2019
<u>A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment</u>	2018
<u>UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide concentrations</u>	2017
Local	
<u>Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy</u>	2020
<u>Kent Local Transport Plan 4</u>	2016
<u>Sevenoaks District Council Air Quality Action Plan</u>	2022
<u>The Sevenoaks District Strategy For Transport 2010-2026</u>	2010
<u>Sevenoaks District Town Centres Strategy</u>	2022
<u>Sevenoaks District Council Air Quality Annual Status Report</u>	2021
<u>Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan</u>	2015
<u>Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy</u>	2011

2.2 The Directive on industrial emissions sets out rules on the prevention and control of pollution caused by industrial activities. It also details the rules designed to prevent or reduce emissions into the air, water, and land. Furthermore, it outlines ways to avert waste generation to achieve a high level of environmental protection.

2.3 Air quality features in Chapter 9 and Chapter 15 of the NPPF. The NPPF states the following:

- Chapter 9: significant development should be focused on locations which are currently, or can be made to be, sustainable. Through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes, congestion and emissions can be decreased and air quality improved.
- Chapter 15: new and existing developments should be prevented from contributing to, being at risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of air pollution.
- Chapter 15: planning policies and decisions should comply with relevant limit values or national objectives for pollutants, appropriately considering the presence of Air Quality Management Areas, Clean Air Zones, and the cumulative impacts of individual sites. Opportunities to improve air quality or mitigate impacts should be identified, like traffic and travel management and the creation or enhancement of green infrastructure. These opportunities should be considered at the plan-making stage to ensure a strategic approach is adopted and there is an effective limitation of issues. Local air quality action plans should also be considered and adhered to.

2.4 The Environment Act 2021 introduces the need for the Secretary of State to set an annual mean particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) level target. It is expected that the limit set for the UK will be lower than the current EU threshold. The limit must be laid before parliament by the 31st October 2022.

2.5 The Clean Air Strategy identifies how the Government will tackle all sources of air pollution. The strategy proposes goals to cut public exposure to particulate matter pollution and outlines required action to meet these goals. The proposed measures include new legislation and local powers to act in areas with air pollution issues.

2.6 The 25-year Environment Plan discusses air quality; stating that the Government will take action to expand net gain approaches to include air quality improvements, as well as planting more trees in urban areas to improve air quality and changing fuel supplies to reduce air pollution.

2.7 The UK plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide is an air quality plan focused on bringing nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) within statutory limits in the quickest time possible. The plan identifies that improving air quality and reducing carbon emissions is also important and wants to position the UK at the forefront of vehicle innovation by making motoring cleaner.

2.8 The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy sets out the Councils' response to the climate emergency and promotes clean, resilient economic recovery across Kent and Medway. It identifies pathways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and eliminate poor air quality. The Strategy identifies pollution from road vehicles as the main cause of poor air quality along the County's major roads network.

2.9 The Kent Local Transport Plan 4 (LPT4) sets out a set of policies aiming to deliver strategic outcomes for transport with an overall all objective of achieving '*Growth without Gridlock*'. The target outcomes include economic growth and minimised congestion, affordable/ accessible journeys, safer travel, enhanced environment and better health and wellbeing.

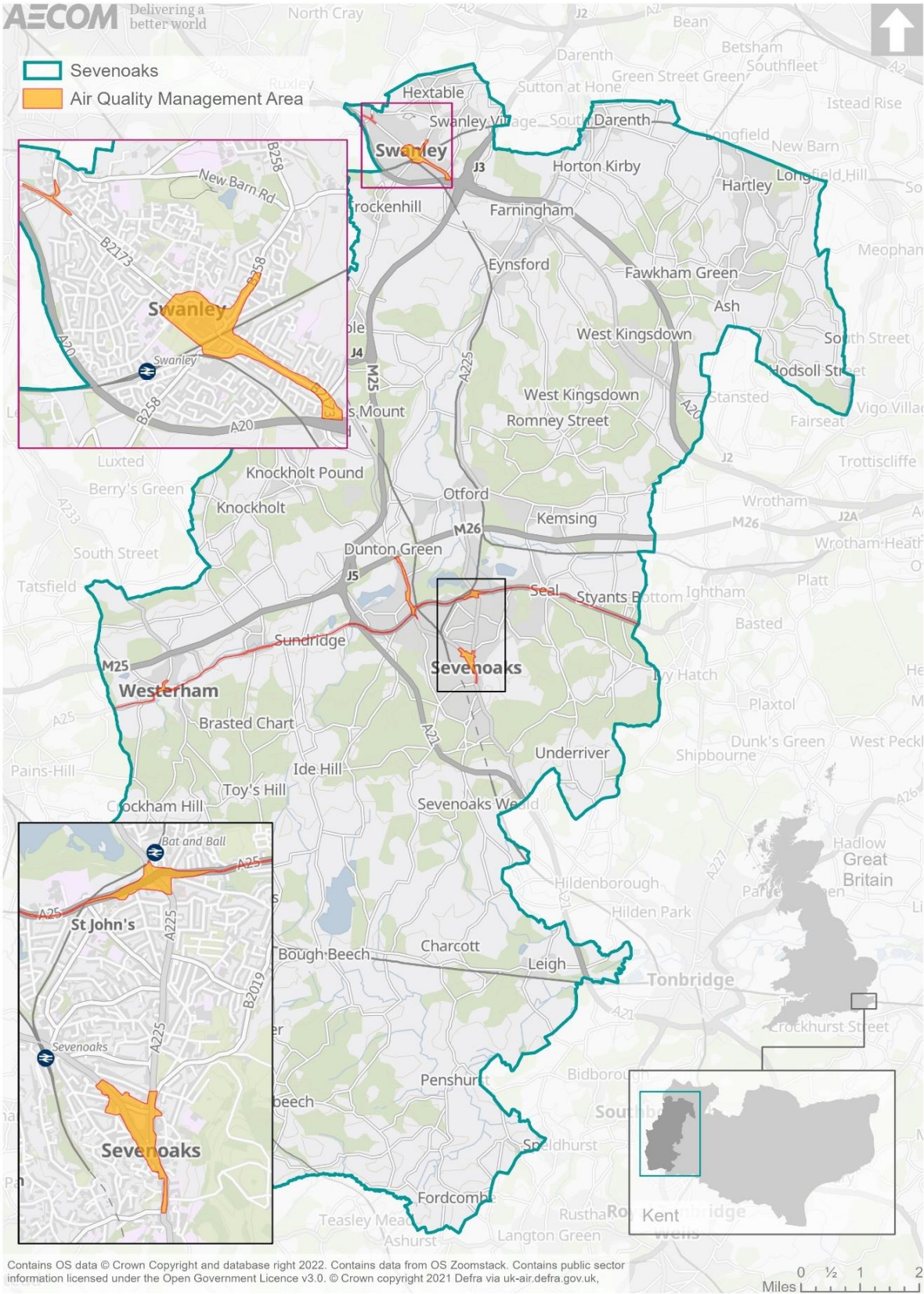
- 2.10 Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) Air Quality Action Plan outlines the actions the council intends to take to improve air quality between 2022 and 2027. The plan identifies 4 AQMAs declared for (Nos 8,10,13 & 14) exceedance of the NO₂ annual mean objective. The Plan aims to tackle the main causes of poor air quality including emissions from combustion engines, particularly diesel vehicles, and emissions from domestic combustion sources.
- 2.11 The Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport (SDST) addresses existing and future transport challenges and recommends that investment in transport should be focused in areas where future growth is concentrated. It sets out to reduce congestion, pollution, accessibility, road safety and improving air quality.
- 2.12 Sevenoaks District Town Centres Strategy sets a vision and roadmap for five centres in the district (Sevenoaks Town, Swanley, Edenbridge, Westerham and New Ash Green). The strategy seeks to improve access to, and connectivity of, town centres, improved space for pedestrians and explores alternatives to car-based travel through enhanced sustainable transport connections.
- 2.13 SDC's 2021 Air Quality Annual Status Report (ASR) states that NO₂ and particulates from road traffic are the primary sources of air pollution in the district. The report lists 9 AQMAs in the district and states that exceedance of NO₂ objective was observed at only one AQMA. Following this report, Cabinet agreed to seek the withdrawal of 5 AQMAs in September 2021 (M25 x2, M26, M20 & A20)
- 2.14 The Allocations and Development Management Plan (ADMP) described how the Council plans to implement the strategic vision of the Core Strategy. It includes site specific allocations for open space, residential, employment and mixed use as well as policies for managing development across the district.
- 2.15 The Core Strategy seeks to locate development in sustainable locations, accessible by a range of transport modes. It also seeks to place new development such that it contributes to an improvement in the district's air quality and states that future development should avoid adverse impacts on air quality particularly in AQMAs. Specifically, Policy SP2 Sustainable Development states that the design and location of new development will take account of the need to improve air quality in accordance with the district's Air Quality Action Plan.

Summary of current baseline

- 2.16 Councils are obligated to review and assess air quality in their region on a regular basis under the Local Air Quality Management (LAQM) process, set out in Section 82 of the Environment Act (1995).
- 2.17 The main source of pollution in the district is road transport. Three major motorways run through the district which carry a considerable flow of HGVs using the port at Dover and the Channel Tunnel. Additionally, local journeys, and connections with London contribute significantly to a few hot spots in Sevenoaks, Swanley and in several small towns along the A25.

- 2.18 The district currently has 4 AQMAs (**Figure 2.1**), all of which have been declared in relation to traffic emissions; these have been designated for exceedances of the NO₂ annual mean objective
- 2.19 Monitoring across all AQMAs in 2020 showed significant reductions with no breaches of the NO₂ hourly mean or PM₁₀ daily mean objectives.
- 2.20 Following a recent review of the AQMAs by Bureau Veritas the Council has agreed to revoke 5 of the current AQMAs (AQMA1,2,3,4 & 6)
- 2.21 The ASR points out that the reductions in pollution levels observed in 2020 are partly due to the Covid-19 restrictions but considers it likely that compliance with air quality objectives will continue to be achieved in future years adding that the Council's new air quality action plan will seek to reduce pollution levels beyond the objective levels.
- 2.22 The Air Quality Action Plan 2022 identifies priorities to help achieve the aim of tackling the main causes of poor air quality within the Sevenoaks District. These include:
- Reducing the need to travel
 - Active travel, public transport, and low emission vehicles
 - Public information and behavioural change
 - Local planning policy and development management
 - SDC Vehicle Fleet changes
 - Transport Planning and Traffic Management

Figure 2.1 Sevenoaks Air Quality Management Areas



- 2.23 Congestion in Sevenoaks district is concentrated around Sevenoaks town and Swanley. Congestion on the M25 and/or M26 can lead to inappropriate use of local roads, such as the A25 leading to the villages along the route experiencing congestion with associated air pollution concerns. The district is dependent on rail for commuting into London with often leading to parking issues.
- 2.24 The LTP4 highlights a high reliance on the private car in Sevenoaks noting that providing frequent and commercially viable bus services is challenging and that rural towns and villages in the district, including Westerham, Edenbridge, New Ash Green, and Otford, amongst others, would benefit from improved connectivity. The LTP adds that where public transport services are challenging to sustain, improved walking and cycle routes may provide important links.

Summary of future baseline

- 2.25 New housing and employment provision proposed in the new Local Plan has the potential to engender adverse effects on air quality through increased vehicular traffic and associated emissions. Although air quality in Sevenoaks is improving, there is a risk that further development could lead to exceedances at the AQMAs, or the creation of new AQMAs in future.
- 2.26 Positive planning could be beneficial for air quality through opportunities to improve accessibility, particularly in terms of active travel and encouraging more local walkable journeys and sustainable connections. In doing so, it may be possible to reduce levels of NO₂ in the AQMAs.

Key sustainability issues

- 2.27 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to air quality:
- There are 4 AQMAs within the Sevenoaks District, all of which have been declared in relation to traffic emissions which is the main source of pollution in the district. Monitoring in 2020 across these AQMAS demonstrated there have been significant reductions in pollutants of concern.
 - With regards to improvements to air quality, the new Local Plan presents opportunities to improve accessibility and support more local and sustainable journeys / connections. These opportunities will be explored in the Communities and Health and Transport SA topics in **Chapters 6 and 12** respectively.
 - Designated biodiversity and geodiversity sites within and in proximity to the Sevenoaks District are potentially sensitive to air pollution issues. The effects of the Local Plan in relation to these concerns will be explored in the 'Biodiversity' SA theme in **Chapter 3**.

SA objective and appraisal questions

2.28 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 2.2**.

Table 2.2 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objective
Air quality	Ensure that improvements to air quality are sought and delivered.

2.29 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Reduce emissions of pollutants of concern from transport (NO₂ and PM₁₀), especially in AQMAs and alternative areas of concern?
- Promote the use of technology, like low emission vehicles, to help reduce emissions further?
- Promote enhancements in sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport?
- Promote enhancements to green infrastructure networks to facilitate increased absorption and dissipation of pollutants?

3. Biodiversity

Focus of topic

- International, national, and local biodiversity designations
- Key habitats
- Key species
- Ecological networks
- Geological sites

Policy context

3.1 **Table 3.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the new Local Plan. The key messages emerging from the review are then summarised after the table.

Table 3.1 Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
International	
The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations	2017
The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands	1971
National	
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Environment Act 2021	2021
Defra Policy Paper: Changes to the Habitat Regulations 2017	2021
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services	2011
The Natural Choice: securing the value of nature	2011
UK Biodiversity Action Plan	2007
Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006	2006
Countryside and Rights of Way Act	2000
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981	1981
Local	
Kent Biodiversity Strategy	2020
Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy	2011
Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan	2015

- 3.2 The new Local Plan will need to have regard to the NPPF, which states that opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity. This includes utilising a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure at the wider catchment or landscape scale.
- 3.3 Support is given through the Framework to establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures. Trees notably make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, and that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards).
- 3.4 The Environment Act includes further provisions in relation to biodiversity, including parameters for biodiversity gain as a condition of planning permission, as well as biodiversity gain site registers and biodiversity credits. Consultation on the Biodiversity Net Gain Regulations is currently in progress. The consultation sets out proposals, and seeks views, on how biodiversity net gain will work in practice, and closed in April 2022. Biodiversity net gain is not only a consideration at the scale of individual development sites, but also at wider functional scales, such as landscape character areas, mindful of development sites impacting in combination.
- 3.5 The Environment Act also identifies a general duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity, including through biodiversity reports and local nature recovery strategies. Local nature recovery strategies will identify biodiversity priorities for the strategy area as well as a local habitat map. Furthermore, habitat maps are expected to include recovery and enhancement areas which are or could become of importance for biodiversity.
- 3.6 The recently published 25 Year Environment Plan sets out the Government's environmental plan of action over the next quarter century. The Plan aims to tackle the growing problems of waste and soil degradation, improving social justice through tackling pollution and promoting the mental and physical health benefits of the natural world. It also sets out how the Government will address the effects of climate change. These aims are supported by a range of policies and initiatives (such as mandatory biodiversity and environmental net gains, and the implementation of a Nature Recovery Network and Local Nature Recovery Strategies) which are focused on the following six key areas:
- Using and managing land sustainably.
 - Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes.
 - Connecting people with the environment to improve health and wellbeing.
 - Increasing resource efficiency and reducing pollution and waste.
 - Securing clean, productive, and biologically diverse seas and oceans; and
 - Protecting and improving the global environment.
- 3.7 In this context, Goal 3 'Thriving plants and wildlife' and the policies contained within Chapter 2 'Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes'

and Chapter 5 ‘Securing clean, productive, and biologically diverse seas and oceans’ directly relate to the biodiversity topic.

- 3.8 The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) identifies priority species and habitats requiring conservation action. Although the UK BAP has been superseded, BAP priority species and habitats have been used to draw up statutory lists of priority species and habitats in England.
- 3.9 The UK Government has placed regulations on Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) to lead in responding to biodiversity losses by adopting clear environmental and planning policy requirements to encourage developers to take account of biodiversity impacts.
- 3.10 The Kent Biodiversity Strategy aims to deliver, over a 25-year period, the maintenance, restoration, and creation of habitats and ensure that the county’s terrestrial, freshwater, intertidal and marine environments regain and retain good health. The Strategy looks to protect and recover threatened species and enhance the wildlife habitats that Kent is particularly important for including 17 priority habitats and 13 priority species. In addition, the Strategy considers further work addressing overarching considerations affecting biodiversity recovery, including wilding, climate change, natural solutions, soil health and invasive species.
- 3.11 At the local level, and in relation to the biodiversity SA topic, SDC’s Core Strategy includes the following policies:
 - Policy SP11 – Biodiversity
 - Policy SP10 – Green Infrastructure, Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision
- 3.12 Additionally, the SDC Allocations and Development Management Plan includes the following policies in relation to the biodiversity SA topic:
 - Policy GI1 – Green Infrastructure and New Development

Summary of current baseline

Internationally designated sites

- 3.13 To ensure the European Directives were operable in the UK after the end of the EU transition period, changes were made by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. In this respect, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) in the UK no longer form part of the EU Natura 2000 ecological network. Instead, the 2019 Regulations propose the creation of a national site network within the UK territory². The network comprises the designated sites already designated under the Nature Directives (i.e., 79/409/EEC and 92/43/EEC), along with any additional sites which are designated under the 2019 Regulations. The national site network continues to operate in parallel with other designations and contributes towards the UK’s international commitments for protected areas. There are no internationally designated

² DEFRA (2021): Policy Paper: Changes to the Habitats Regulations 2017, [online] available to access [here](#)

biodiversity sites within the LP area but there are several within 10km of the District's boundary.

- 3.14 The Thames Estuary and Marshes Ramsar** site is located outside the Plan area, around 7km from the north eastern boundary of the District in Gravesend. It comprises a complex of brackish, floodplain grazing marsh ditches, saline lagoons and intertidal saltmarsh and mudflat along the River Thames between Gravesend and Sheerness in Essex and Kent. The habitats support internationally important numbers of wintering waterfowl, and the saltmarsh and grazing marsh are of international importance for their diverse assemblages of wetland plants and invertebrates. The site performs important hydrological functions, including shoreline stabilization, sediment trapping, flood water storage and desynchronization of flood peaks, and maintenance of water quality by removal of nutrients.³ The location is also utilised by visitors for yachting, angling, wildfowling (seasonal), jet skiing, water-skiing, and birdwatching; disturbance from some of these is a current issue but is being addressed through awareness-raising.
- 3.15 Ashdown Forest SAC** is located approximately 6 kilometres south of the Local Plan area in Wealden. It contains one of the largest single continuous blocks of lowland heath in south-east England. The site supports beetles, dragonflies, damselflies, and butterflies, including the nationally rare silver-studded blue *Plebejus argus*⁴. It also supports birds of European importance, such as European nightjar *Caprimulgus europaeus*, Dartford warbler *Sylvia undata* and Eurasian hobby *Falco subbuteo*⁵. It is also a habitat for the Great crested newt (the qualifying species).
- 3.16 North Downs woodlands SAC** is located around 4 kilometres from the north eastern boundary of the LP area. The site is considered one of the best areas in the United Kingdom for *Asperulo-Fagetum* beech forests and one of the best areas in the British Isles for *Taxus baccata* (Yew) woods. The geological interest within the site occurs in the Upper and Lower Culand Pits. The sequence of Chalk in these pits has yielded rich and diverse collections of fossil fishes which complement those from Lewes in Sussex⁶. The site also comprises semi-natural dry grasslands and scrubland. The SAC is susceptible to public access/ disturbance pressures, invasive species and air pollution, particularly atmospheric nitrogen deposition.
- 3.17 Peters Pit SAC** lies just over 8 kilometres from west of the District. Covering a total area of 28.91 hectares, Peter's Pit is an old chalk quarry situated in the North Downs, with large ponds situated amongst grassland, scrub, and woodland. The ponds have widely fluctuating water levels and large great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* populations have been recorded breeding here. Threats to the site include supporting habitat fragmentation, air pollution, changes in soil nutrients/ pH level and changes in water quality and surface areas of the ponds.

³ [Ramsar Sites Information Service: Thames Estuary and Marshes](#)

⁴ <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk>

⁵ [Joint Nature Conservation Committee](#)

⁶ [Natural England Supplementary advice on conserving and restoring site features](#)

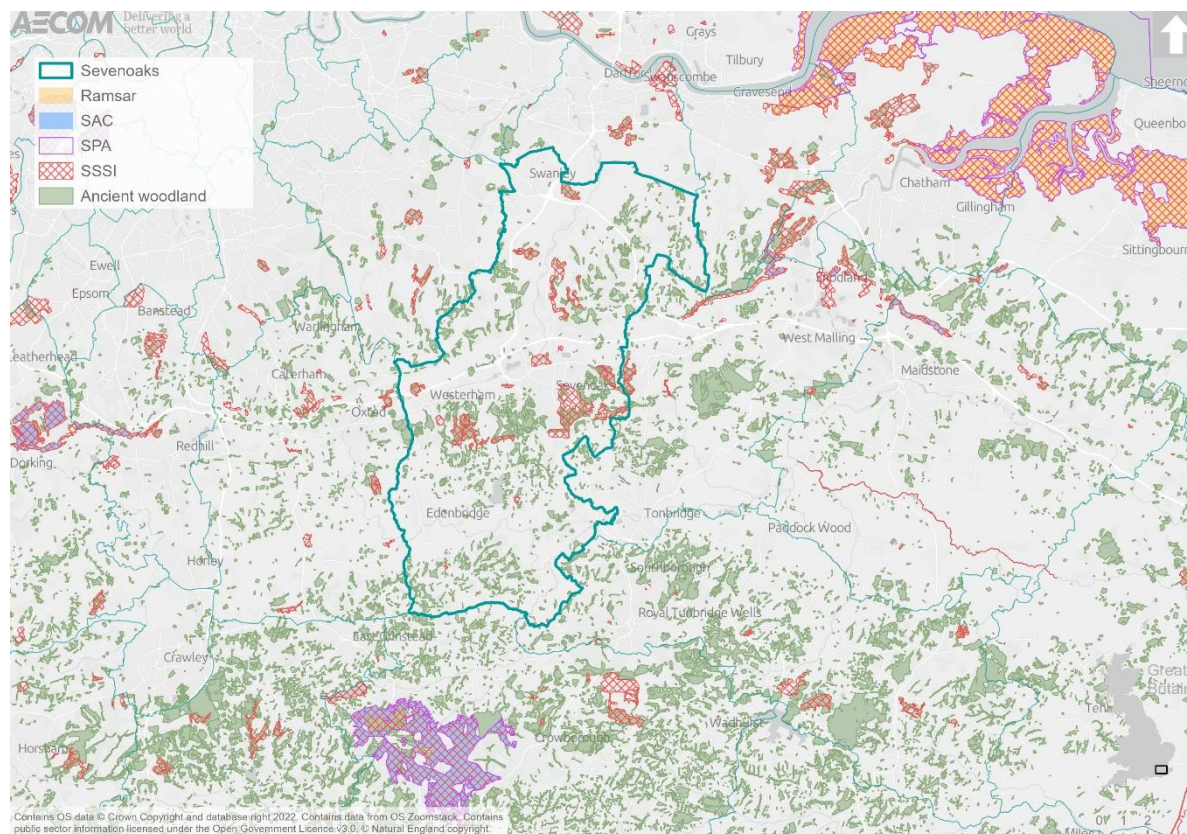
Nationally designated sites

- 3.18 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are protected by law to conserve their wildlife or geology. Natural England is a statutory consultee on development proposals that might impact on SSSIs. Several SSSIs fall within or near Sevenoaks District (**Figure 3.1**), these are:
- Darenth Wood SSSI – located 1.2 Kilometres from the northern boundary of the District.
 - Farningham Wood SSSI – located to the north of District.
 - Lullingstone Park SSSI – located north west of the District.
 - Otford to Shoreham Downs SSSI – located in the northern part of the district between Kemsing and Eynsford.
 - Magpie Bottom SSSI – located north of Sevenoaks
 - Halling to Trottiscliffe Escarpment SSSI – is located 3.4 kilometres from the north western boundary of the District in Trottiscliffe.
 - Greatness Brickworks SSSI – located north of Sevenoaks Town in Greatness, a Geological Conservation Review site.
 - Sevenoaks Gravel Pits SSSI – located on northern outskirts of Sevenoaks Town.
 - Oldbury and Seal Chart SSSI – falls partially within the District east of Sevenoaks Town.
 - Dryhill SSSI – located in Dryhill about 2 miles north west of Sevenoaks.
 - Knole Park SSSI – located in Sevenoaks Town within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).
 - One Tree Hill and Bitchet Common SSS – situated south east of Sevenoaks Town.
 - Hubbard's Hill SSSI – a Geological Conservation Review site south of Sevenoaks Town.
 - Scord's Wood and Brockhoult Mount SSSI – located west of Sevenoaks Town.
 - Westerham Mines SSSI – located south of Westerham, a former mine site used by several species of bats for hibernation.
 - Westerham Wood SSSI – located north of Westerham
 - Titsey Wood SSSI – located 400 meters from the boundary of the District, north-west of Oxted in Surrey
 - Polebrook Farm SSSI – located south of Sevenoaks Town.
 - Staffhurst Wood SSSI – located around 600 meters from the south western boundary of the District south of Oxley in Surrey.
 - Cowden Pound Pastures SSSI – located south west of the District north of Cowden.
 - Lingfield Cerns SSSI – located around 700 meters from the south western boundary of the District, east of Lingfield in Surrey.

- Cowden Meadow SSSI – located south of the district, east of Cowden.

3.19 SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) are a GIS tool / dataset which maps zones around each SSSI according to the sensitivities of the features for which it is notified. They specify the types of development that have the potential to have adverse impacts at a given location. The entire Local Plan area is covered by several IRZs, forming a buffer around the SSSIs found both within and near Sevenoaks. Therefore, residential development in some areas of the district are likely to require consultation with Natural England to address potential impacts on SSSIs.

Figure 3.1: International and national designations, plus ancient woodland



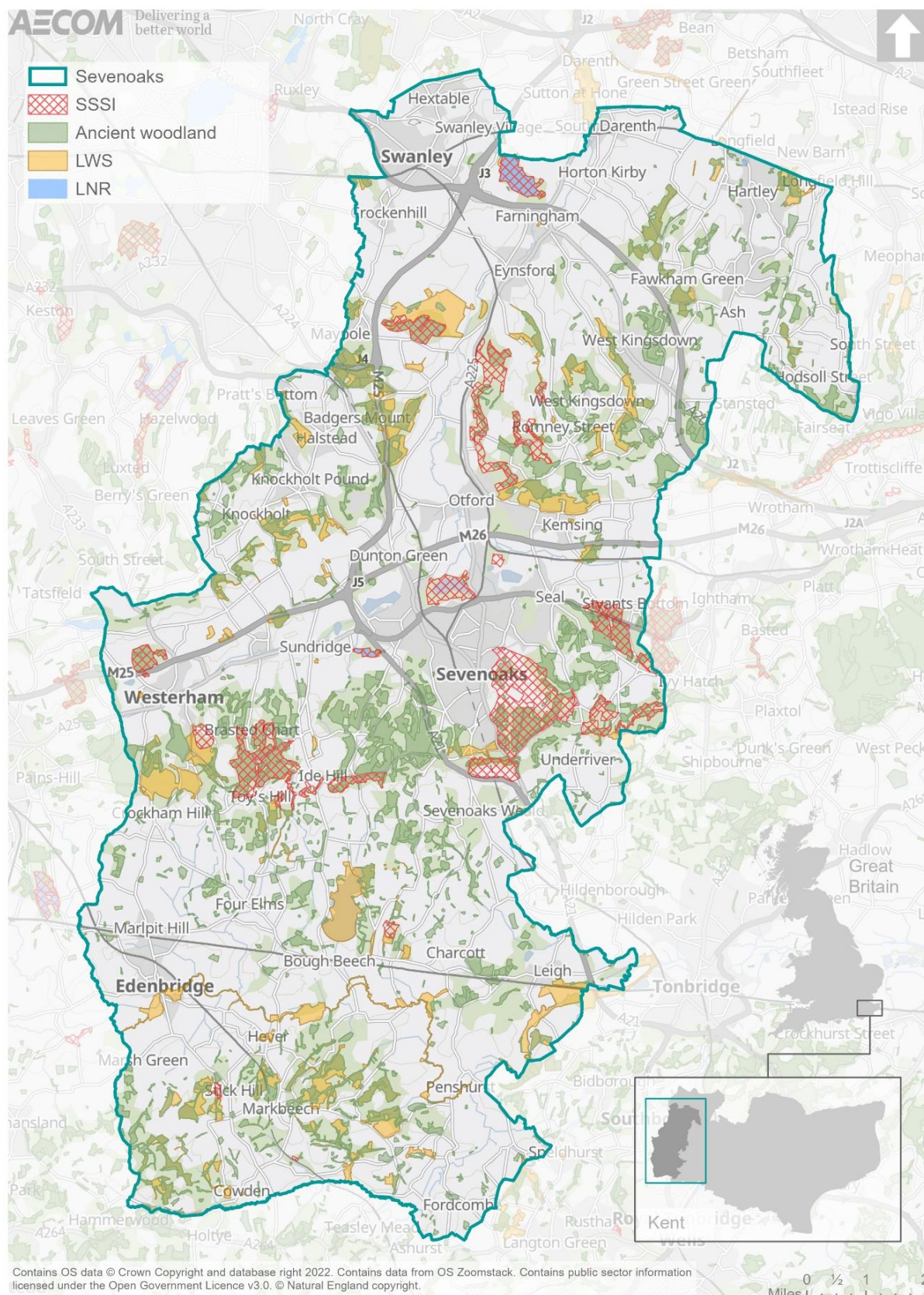
Locally important sites

- 3.20 There are numerous locally designated sites, known as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). The majority of these are not publicly accessible (or may be accessible only along public rights of way), but a number are accessible, as explained by the Kent Wildlife Trust Here: www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/what-we-do/protecting-wild-spaces/local-wildlife-sites.
- 3.21 In addition to LWS, Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) are a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by principal local authorities. They are places managed for access, and many will also be a LWS. Several LNRs are located within or near Sevenoaks, (see **Figure 3.2**) as follows:
- Rectory Meadow LNR – located northeast of the District along the boundary with Dartford District.

- Farningham LNR –located north of the District adjacent to the boundary with Dartford District.
 - Dryhill LNR – located at the centre of the District, west of Sevenoaks.
 - Hill Park Tatsfield LNR – located just outside the LP area, adjacent to its western border.
 - Staffhurst Wood LNR – located around 600 meters west of the District’s boundary in Lingfield, Surrey.
- 3.22 Alongside LWSs and LNRs, there are a variety of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats within Sevenoaks, including:
- Areas of deciduous woodland spread throughout the LP area .
 - Good quality semi-improved grassland.
 - Lowland calcareous grassland concentrated between the M26 and Eynsford.
 - Lowland dry acid grassland.
 - Lowland meadows.
 - Traditional orchard.
 - Coastal and flood plain grazing marsh.
 - Wood pasture and parkland, including a relatively large area (c.490 ha) south east of Sevenoaks.
- 3.23 The District contains examples of chalk streams associated with River Darent. These constitute globally rare habitat with only 250 in the world, of which, 160 are in England. Kent’s Chalk streams are impacted by ground water abstraction for drinking water supply, due to high population densities in the South East.
- 3.24 There are also numerous areas of ancient woodland in the District, as well as National Forest Inventory woodland including broadleaved, young trees, conifer, felled and mixed mainly broadleaved.
- 3.25 Two priority species for Countryside Stewardship (CS) targeting can be found within the District, namely **Lapwing** and **Corn Bunting**.
- 3.26 In addition to this, ecological features of interest which might have the potential to be impacted by new development areas include trees, hedgerows, watercourses, road verges, and rail sidings. As these features play an important role in providing connectivity corridors and refugia for migrating and foraging species, it will be important for the new Local Plan to consider the potential implications on such features within the plan making process.
- 3.27 The Kent Nature Partnership Biodiversity Strategy 2020-2045 (KNPBS) sets out the contribution the county of Kent, and the Kent Nature Partnership, can make to the Government’s aspirations set out in its 25 Year Environment Plan “A Green Future”. It looks to protect and recover threatened species and enhance the wildlife habitats that Kent is particularly important for. The Strategy identified 17 priority habitats and 13 priority species that Kent can play a significant part in restoring. It has also identified a handful of species that can act as indicators of the health of local ecosystems. In this respect, the

designated sites for biodiversity and BAP Priority Habitats within and near
Sevenoaks District are likely to support populations of protected species.

Figure 3.2: Biodiversity designations



Summary of future baseline

- 3.28 Habitats and species will potentially face increasing pressures from future development within Sevenoaks, with the potential for negative impacts on the wider ecological network. This may include a loss of habitats and impacts on biodiversity networks, which may be exacerbated by the effects of climate change. This has the potential to lead to changes in the distribution and abundance of species and changes to the composition of habitats.
- 3.29 Internationally and nationally designated sites are particularly sensitive to air quality issues and recreational pressures. Regarding air quality, exceeding critical values for air pollutants may result in changes to the chemical status of habitat substrate, accelerating or damaging plant growth, altering vegetation structure and composition and thereby affecting the quality and availability of nesting, feeding or roosting habitats. Additionally, the nature, scale, timing, and duration of some human activities can result in the disturbance of birds at a level that may affect their behaviour, and consequently affect the long-term viability of their populations.
- 3.30 The new Local Plan presents an opportunity to maximise benefits for biodiversity by including consideration of important habitats, species, and designated sites at an early stage of planning for future growth. To maintain and improve the condition of biodiversity in the future, it will be important to not only protect and enhance important habitats but the connections between them, in addition to delivering net gains through new development areas.
- 3.31 To maintain and improve the condition of biodiversity in the future, it will be crucial to effectively coordinate the delivery of housing, employment, and infrastructure to ensure that opportunities to improve green infrastructure and ecological corridors are maximised within the District and in the surrounding areas. This is likely to be further enhanced through collaboration and partnership working, including potentially through initiatives which come forward in response to the requirements of key policy and legislative drivers (e.g., nature recovery networks, and local nature recovery strategies).

Key sustainability issues

- 3.32 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to biodiversity:
- There is a network of protected and non-protected habitats within and surrounding the Sevenoaks District, including a Ramsar, SACs, SSSIs, LNRs, ancient woodland and BAP Priority habitats. Planning should seek to avoid direct impacts for habitats, such as habitat loss or fragmentation. Planning should also seek to avoid direct impacts for the designated features within and surrounding the Sevenoaks District.
 - There are opportunities for Sevenoaks District to restore the natural habitat of the area through the identified network enhancement zones, the network expansion zones, areas of restorable habitat and fragmentation action zones.
 - Development in the District will likely be required to consult with Natural England regarding impacts arising for nearby SSSIs, as indicated by the SSSI IRZs.

SA objective and appraisal questions

3.33 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 3.2** below.

Table 3.2 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objective
Biodiversity	Support, protect, and enhance biodiversity within and surrounding the district.
	Reverse the ecological decline by engaging with biodiversity net gain initiatives, wider environmental gain projects and local nature recovery strategies (including habitat creation and restoration).

3.34 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Avoid or, if not possible, minimise impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity, including nationally designated sites, and provide net gains? This must include watercourses and their associated biodiversity.
- Support and protect the integrity of the designated sites located within proximity to the Sevenoaks District?
- Manage pressures on locally designated sites for biodiversity and geodiversity?
- Protect and enhance priority habitats, semi-natural habitats, species, and the ecological network connecting them?
- Expand biodiversity networks and increase their connectivity?
- Support the national habitat network, particularly Network Enhancement Zone 1 and identified restorable habitat?
- Maximise biodiversity net gains and wider environmental net gains through supporting the delivery of ecosystem services and multifunctional green infrastructure services to the benefit of people, nature and places?
- Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?
- Support, promote and encourage access to and interpretation and understanding of biodiversity and geodiversity?

4. Climate change adaptation

Focus of topic

- Fluvial flood risk
- Surface water flood risk
- Climate change resilience

Policy context

4.1 **Table 4.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the new Local Plan. The key messages emerging from the review are then summarised after the table.

Table 4.1 Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
National	
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
National Infrastructure Assessment	2021
The National Adaptation Programme and the Third Strategy for Climate Adaptation Reporting	2018
UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017	2017
Flood and Water Management Act 2010	2010
The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan: Strategy for climate and energy	2009
Local	
Sevenoaks District Council Net Zero 2030 - Actions 2022/23	2022
Kent Local Flood Risk Management Strategy 2017-2023	2017
Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy	2011
Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan	2015
Kent County Council Flood Risk to Communities Sevenoaks	2017
Sevenoaks District Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment	2017

- 4.2 Chapter 14 of the NPPF is dedicated to meeting the challenges associated with climate change including flooding, and states the following regarding climate change adaptation:
- Plans should take a proactive approach to adapting to climate change, considering the long-term implications of flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures.
- 4.3 The 25 Year Environment Plan seeks to manage land resources sustainably, recover and reinstate nature, protect soils and habitats, increase resource efficiency, improve water quality, and connect people with the environment.

- 4.4 The National Infrastructure Assessment is published every five years and analyses the UK's long-term economic infrastructure needs to create a strategic vision and recommendations. The baseline report focuses on three key strategic outcomes: reaching net zero, reducing environmental impacts, and adapting to a changing climate and supporting levelling up. The baseline report states that climate change will increase pressures on all sectors, including economic infrastructure. Chapter 3 of the report highlights that infrastructure needs to adapt to the growing risks of extreme weather.
- 4.5 The National Adaptation Programme outlines the Government's response to the second Climate Change Risk Assessment, demonstrating the actions the government is currently taking and actions it will be taking in the future. It highlights the high-risk flooding and coastal change poses to communities, businesses and infrastructure, the high risk an increase in temperature poses to health, wellbeing, and productivity, as well as the impacts climate change could have on water and energy supply shortage, natural capital, food production and trade and pests, diseases, and invasive non-native species.
- 4.6 The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment is published every five years as dictated by the Climate Change Act 2008. It is an assessment of the risks to the UK arising from climate change and the subsequent adaptation programme to address said risks in combination with delivering climate change resilience. The 2017 assessment identified six priority risk areas:
- Flooding and coastal change risks to communities, businesses, and infrastructure.
 - Risks to health, well-being, and productivity from high temperatures.
 - Risk of shortages in the public water supply, and for agriculture, energy generation and industry.
 - Risks to natural capital, including terrestrial, coastal, marine, and freshwater ecosystems, soils, and biodiversity.
 - Risks to domestic and international food production and trade; and
 - New and emerging pests and diseases, and invasive non-native species, affecting people, plants, and animals.
- 4.7 The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 provides for better and more comprehensive management of flood risk for people, homes, and businesses, in addition to aiding in safeguarding safeguard community groups from unaffordable rises in surface water drainage charges and protecting consumer water supplies.
- 4.8 The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan: National strategy for climate and energy outlines a five-point plan to tackle climate change, with the following points being of relevance to climate change adaptation:
- Protecting the public from immediate risk; spending money on flood protection, implementing a heat wave plan in the NHS and aiding communities affected by coastal erosion.
 - Preparing for the future; factoring climate risk into the decision-making process, changing infrastructure methods, managing water, and adjusting farming practices.

- Supporting individuals, communities, and businesses to play their part, raising awareness, and providing a variety of support for individuals, communities, and businesses.
- 4.9 The plan outlines working towards these five points through several chapters: transforming our power sector, transforming our homes and communities, transforming our workplaces and jobs, transforming transport, and transforming farming and managing our land sustainably.
- 4.10 The Sevenoaks District Council Net Zero 2030 Actions 2022-23 outlines the council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emission by 2030. This includes the following actions around seven themes:
1. SDC Building Emissions
 - Reduce carbon emissions in Council buildings resulting from energy use
 - Work with partners and leaseholders to reduce emissions from Council (built) assets
 - Water efficiency measures in Council buildings
 2. Movement and Green Travel
 - Promote low carbon travel and sustainable movement
 - Improve the electric vehicle charging network across the District
 - Work with schools, local communities, and groups to encourage low carbon travel such as car clubs, travel plans, cycling and walking routes
 - Continue the transition to a zero-carbon emissions vehicle fleet wherever practicable
 3. Green Spaces and the Natural Environment
 - Contribute to offsetting carbon emissions through new planting including new trees
 - Improve areas for biodiversity and create new habitats
 - Practice natural flood management
 4. Working with Landowners, Partners and Businesses
 - Ensure the Net Zero 2030 commitment is incorporated into the Council's procurement process
 - Report and promote our actions towards Net Zero and share best practice with partners
 - Encourage, and support our partners, including landowners, residents, businesses, and visitors to our District to reduce carbon emissions
 - Work with the local government family within Kent to deliver Net Zero across all our communities
 5. Community engagement and Leadership
 - Maintain a dedicated 'Net Zero' and 'Climate Change' webpage

- Promote events to support wildlife awareness and opportunities to improve biodiversity
- Promote events to support 'green' and low carbon initiatives such as energy and water saving, reducing waste, green travel, and energy efficiency
- Encourage communities to develop and implement their own carbon emission reduction plans and initiatives
- Help householders and businesses improve energy efficiency by providing free advice and support for energy improvements and energy saving

6. Council Plans and Strategies

- Embed the findings and recommendations of the Carbon Reduction Plan into Council plans and strategies
- Ensure all Council plans, strategies and decisions support the Net Zero 2030 commitment where possible
- Embed positive behaviour change to reduce carbon emissions in all Council service areas
- Where everything possible has been done to achieve net zero carbon but there is still a shortfall, take action through offsetting carbon dioxide emissions where necessary
- Audit the current and levels of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions on an annual basis in order to track progress

7. Sustainable Development and Renewable Energy

- Support and promote sustainable building practices and sustainable development
- Ensure the Net Zero 2030 commitment is reflected in all new SDC and SDC owned company developments
- Explore the potential for developing renewable energy generation within the District

4.11 Kent County Council's (KCC) Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2017 to 2023) has been produced to inform individuals, communities, and businesses of the steps KCC and its partners are taking to manage the impact of flooding in Kent. The Strategy has the following 4 main objectives:

- Understanding risk – Risk management authorities have a clear understanding of flood risk.
- Reducing the risk of flooding – People and businesses are protected from flooding.
- Resilient planning – Development planning in Kent contributes to effective flood risk management.
- Resilient communities – Communities are supported to be resilient and empowered to take a proactive role in their flood risk management.

4.12 The following are the key Core Strategy objectives in respect of Climate Change:

- To ensure that new development takes account of the need to mitigate and adapt to climate change including principles of sustainable development, such as locating development to minimise energy use, promoting travel patterns that reduce the need to travel by car, and encouraging sustainable construction including measures to reduce energy consumption and promote the use of renewable energy.
- To ensure new development takes place in a way that contributes to an improvement in the District's air quality.

4.13 The Allocations and Development Management Policies Document also identifies several policies relevant to the climate change adaptation SA topic:

- GI1 – Green Infrastructure and new development

4.14 KCC's Flood Risk to Communities Sevenoaks provides information on the nature and magnitude of the flood risk across the district and outlines the existing and proposed approaches to manage the risk identified. The document identifies:

- Main flood risks to the area,
- Key flood risk management assets/structures and
- Flood risk management plans/ strategies in place

4.15 The Sevenoaks Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA 2017) provides supporting evidence (to the Local Plan) pertaining to flood risk within the District. The SFRA informs decision-making regarding the location of new development and the preparation of sustainable policies for the long-term management of flood risk. Its key objectives are:

- Take into account the latest flood risk information and available data since the previous SFRA.
- To provide initial flood risk analysis information to support understanding of risk in the district and at sites identified by the Council as part of their Local Plan preparation.
- To provide a comprehensive set of maps presenting flood risk from all sources that can be used as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan.

Summary of current baseline

Flood risk

- 4.16 As shown in **Figure 4.1** overleaf, key area of concern regarding climate change adaptation in Sevenoaks is flood risk. In terms of fluvial flood risk zones, the majority of Sevenoaks District is in Flood Zone 1. However, there are some isolated areas of the District within Flood Zones 2 and 3, which are largely associated with the River Darent and the River Eden. Areas commonly affected by flooding from the Darent include: Eynsford, Shoreham, Chipstead, Farningham, Otford, Sundridge, Brasted and Westerham⁷.
- 4.17 The main areas at risk of flooding due to the River Eden (a tributary of the River Medway) are concentrated at: Edenbridge and the areas surrounding the river's confluence with the River Medway (e.g. Penshurst)⁸.
- 4.18 Fluvial flood risk also arises from the River Medway in the south of the district and its confluence with the River Eden near Penshurst, as well as the Hilden Brook which joins the River Medway outside the district boundary.⁹
- 4.19 Surface water (pluvial) flood risk (**Figure 4.2**) can also occur at some parts of the District. There is a high number of ordinary watercourses in Sevenoaks, concentrated in the mid and southern regions of the District and a severe rainfall event can lead to flooding on a number of such watercourses simultaneously¹⁰. The Sevenoaks SWMP states that surface water flooding is often attributable to heavy rainfall overloading carriageways and drains/gullies. Surface water flooding is particularly common north-west of Knole Park in Sevenoaks. Examples of where high-water levels in local watercourses have affected highway drainage include Hartfield Road in Edenbridge and Coppings Road near Leigh.

⁷ [Sevenoaks District Council Level 1 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment](#)

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ [Sevenoaks Stage 1 Surface Water Management Plan \(2013\)](#)

Figure 4.1 Fluvial flood risk map

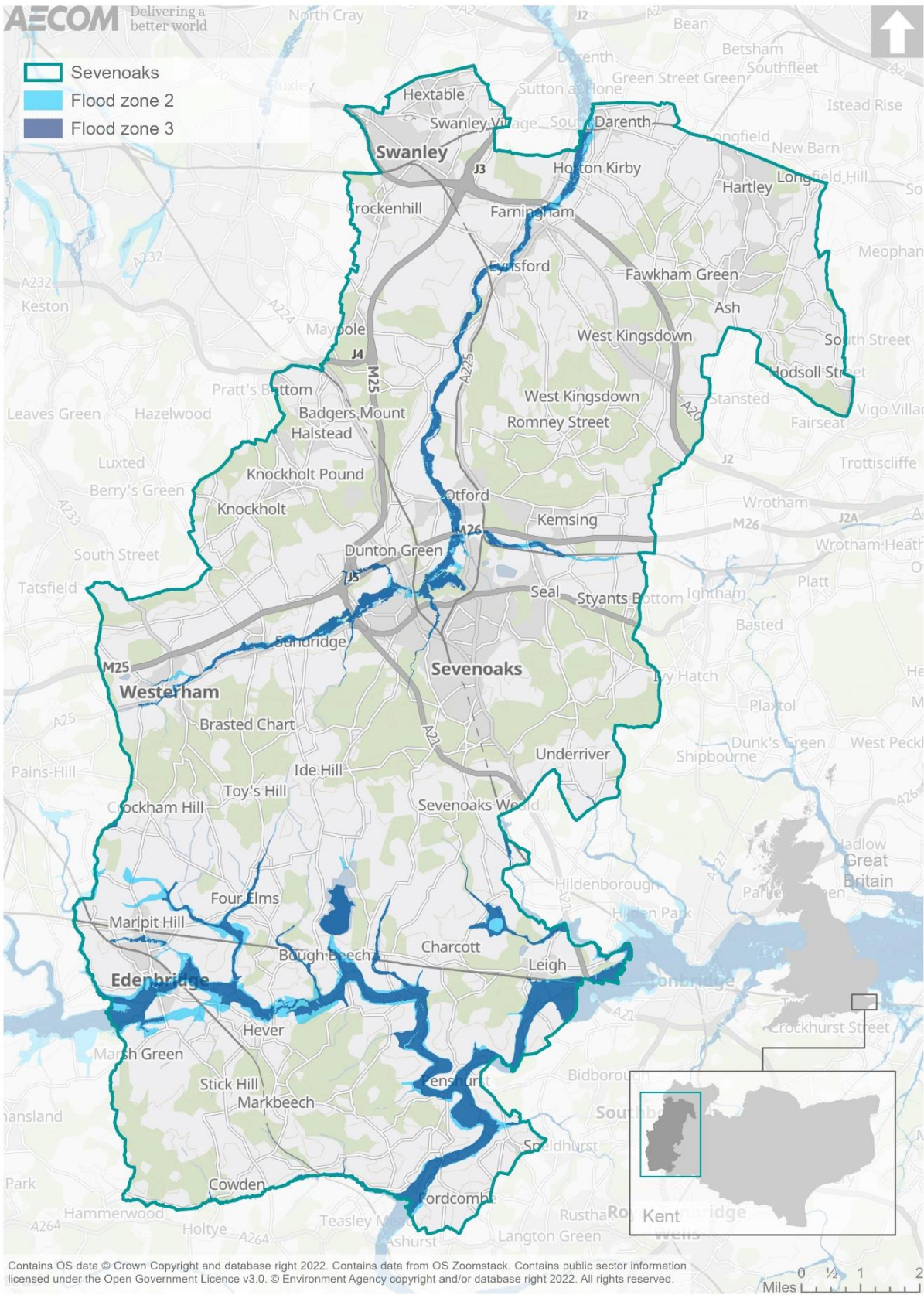
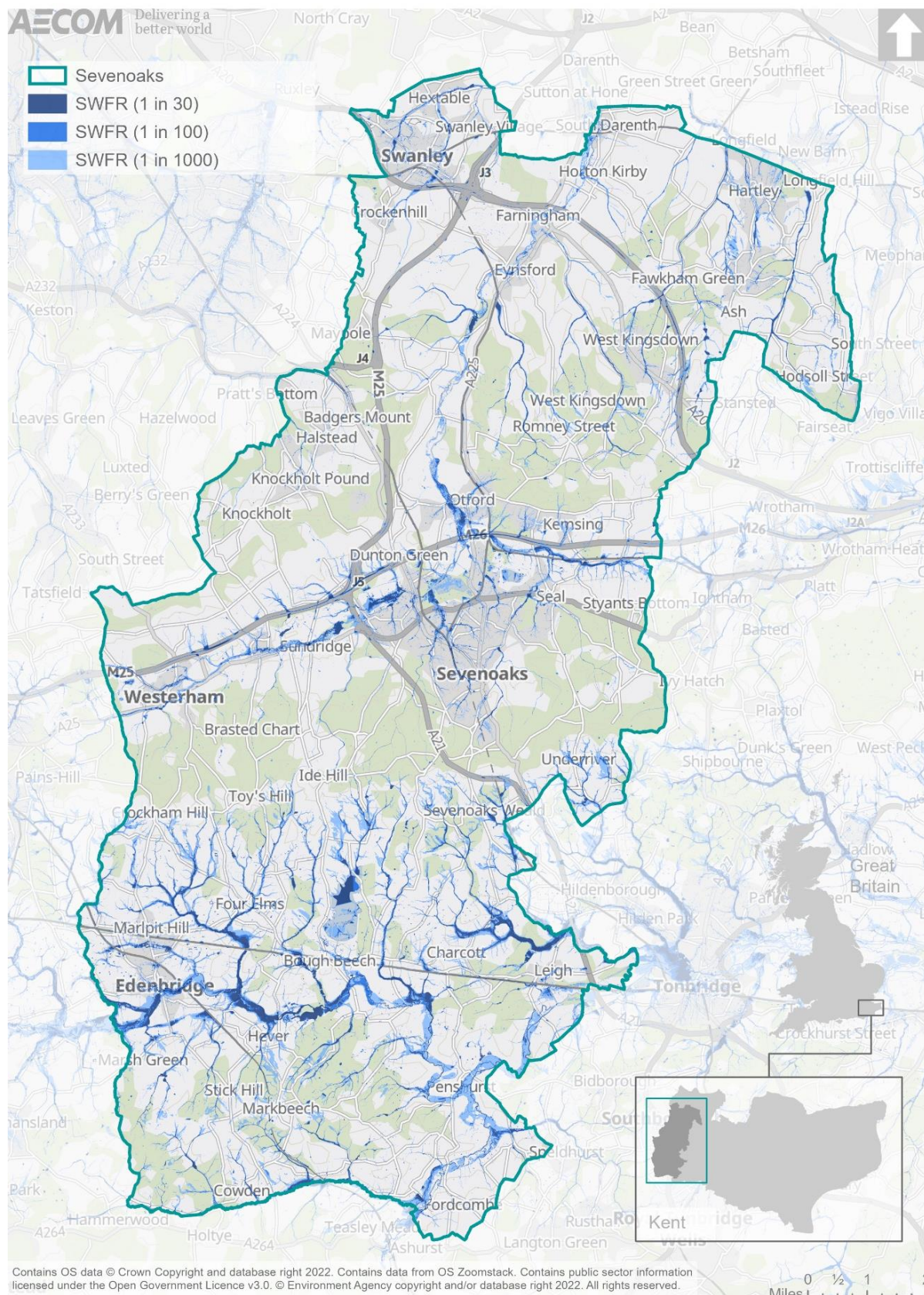


Figure 4.2 Surface water flood risk map



Summary of future baseline

- 4.20 Climate change has the potential to increase the occurrence of extreme weather events in Sevenoaks District. This is likely to increase the risks associated with climate change, with an increased need for resilience and adaptation. Specifically, new development areas have the potential to increase flood risk through factors such as changing surface and groundwater flows, overloading existing inputs to the drainage and wastewater networks and / or increasing the number of residents exposed to areas of existing flood risk.
- 4.21 In terms of climate change adaptation, it is anticipated that flood risk concerns can be mitigated in part by the inclusion of sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) and high-quality design within new development areas which incorporates permeable areas and materials. Moreover, KCC's Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and the Sevenoaks SFRA are useful evidence sources that can be used to inform policy development.

Key sustainability issues

- 4.22 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to climate change adaptation:
- The majority of Sevenoaks District is within Flood Zone 1, however there are some isolated areas of the District within Flood Zones 2 and 3, which are largely associated with the River Darent and the River Eden. It will be vital that the Local Plan guides development away from these areas at increased risk or ensures SuDS and other design measures are considered in development proposals.
 - A risk from surface water flooding also exists particularly at areas where there is a high concentration of ordinary watercourses such as north-west of Knole Park and on highways such as Hartfield Road in Edenbridge and Coppings Road near Leigh.

SA objective and appraisal questions

- 4.23 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 4.2**.

Table 4.2 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objective
Climate change adaptation	Support the resilience of Sevenoaks District and neighbouring local authority areas to the effects of climate change, including flooding.

- 4.24 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):
- Ensure that inappropriate development does not take place in areas at higher risk of flooding, considering the likely future effects of climate change?
 - Ensure that development does not cause an increased risk of flooding in neighbouring local authority areas?

- Improve and extend green infrastructure networks to support adaptation to the potential effects of climate change?
- Sustainably manage water run-off, reducing runoff where possible?
- Ensure plan options will deliver Natural Flood Management schemes, SuDS and flood resilient design as far as possible where they would add value?
- Increase the resilience of biodiversity in the area to the effects of climate change, including through enhancements to ecological networks?
- Ensure the potential risks associated with climate change are considered through new development areas?
- Enable biodiversity to adapt and be resilient to climate change by considering restoring natural processes and avoiding action that degrades or constrains the natural environment's ability to respond to climate change?

5. Climate change mitigation

Focus of topic

- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Climate change projections

Policy context

5.1 **Table 5.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the Local Plan. The key messages emerging from the review are then summarised after the table.

Table 5.1 Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
International	
UN Paris Agreement	2016
National	
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
The Clean Growth Strategy	2017
The Clean Air Strategy 2019	2019
Net Zero Strategy: Build Back Greener	2021
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
National Infrastructure Assessment	2021
The UK Sixth Carbon Budget	2020
The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan: National strategy for climate and energy	2009
Climate Change Act 2008	2008
Blueprint for a resilient economy	2019
Local	
Sevenoaks District Council Movement Strategy 2022	2022
Sevenoaks District Council Net Zero 2030 - Actions 2022/23	2022
Energy South 2 East Local Energy Strategy	2019
Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy	2020
Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy	2011
Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan	2015
Sevenoaks District Town Centres Strategy	2022
Sevenoaks District Council Net Zero 2030 Commitment	2019

- 5.2 The UN Paris Agreement is an international treaty on climate change with the aim to limit global warming to below 2 degrees Celsius, preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels. To achieve this, the planet should be climate neutral by the mid-century.
- 5.3 Chapter 14 of the NPPF is dedicated to meeting the challenge of climate change, and states the following regarding climate change mitigation:
- The planning system should shape places to contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience, encourage the reuse of existing resources, and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.
- 5.4 The Clean Growth Strategy, Clean Air Strategy and the Net Zero Strategy are a collection of documents seeking to progress the Government's commitment to becoming net zero by 2050 under the UK Climate Change Act 2008. The documents outline how the Government will tackle air pollution sources whilst maintaining an affordable energy supply and increasing economic growth. This parallels with the 25 Year Environment Plan, which seeks to manage land resources sustainably, recover and reinstate nature, protect soils and habitats, increase resource efficiency, improve water quality, and connect people with the environment. The documents interlink with the Government's commitment to decarbonising transport, which recognises the need to undertake action to adapt the transport sector and increase resilience to climate change risks.
- 5.5 The National Infrastructure Assessment is published every five years and analyses the UK's long-term economic infrastructure needs to create a strategic vision and recommendations. The baseline report focuses on three key strategic outcomes: reaching net zero, reducing environmental impacts, and adapting to a changing climate and supporting levelling up. The baseline report states that climate change will increase pressures on all sectors, including economic infrastructure.
- 5.6 The Sixth Carbon Budget is the legal limit of UK net greenhouse gas emissions and requires the country to reduce emissions by 78% by 2035 relative to 1990 levels. This puts the country on track to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050 at the latest. The first five carbon budgets have already been put into legislation and run up to the year 2032.
- 5.7 The UK Low Carbon Transition Plan: National strategy for climate and energy outlines a five-point plan to tackle climate change, with the following points being of relevance to climate change mitigation:
- Limiting the severity of future climate change through a new international climate agreement; leading international efforts.
 - Building a low carbon UK; cutting emissions and investing in energy efficiency and clean energy technologies.
 - Supporting individuals, communities, and businesses to play their part, raising awareness, and providing a variety of support for individuals, communities, and businesses.

- 5.8 The plan outlines working towards these five points through several chapters: transforming our power sector, transforming our homes and communities, transforming our workplaces and jobs, transforming transport, and transforming farming and managing our land sustainably.
- 5.9 The UK Climate Change Act 2008 established a framework to develop an economically viable emissions reduction path. The Climate Change Act 2008 (2050 Target Amendment) Order of 2019 put in place the legally binding target of achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. The Climate Change Act includes the following:
- The UK Government must reduce greenhouse gas emissions by a minimum of 100% of 1990 levels by 2050.
 - The Act requires the Government to produce legally binding carbon budgets – a cap on the amount of greenhouse gases emitted in the UK over a five-year period.
 - The Committee on Climate Change was set up to advise the Government on emissions targets and report any progress to parliament.
 - The Act requires the Government to assess and prepare for the risks and opportunities linked to climate change for the UK. The Committee on Climate Change's Adaptation Sub-Committee advises on these risks.
- 5.10 In May 2019, the UK Parliament declared a climate emergency, with a view to explicitly acknowledging that human activities are significantly affecting the climate, and actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change should be paramount. This declaration has been mirrored by several local planning authorities across the country. Further context is provided by the recent commitment by environmental law firm Client Earth to request that all local authorities with emerging local plans to *“explain how they will set evidence-based carbon reduction targets and ensure these targets are then central to their new planning policy”*¹¹. Additionally, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Green Alliance's 'Blueprint for a Resilient Economy' report outlines the following five essential building blocks to support new long-term employment opportunities, thriving businesses and a healthier, fairer society, whilst protecting against the potentially devastating future impacts of climate change and nature's decline:
- Invest in net zero infrastructure.
 - Restore nature.
 - Stop wasting valuable resources.
 - Ensure clean air and healthy places; and
 - Make the recovery fair.
- 5.11 The Sevenoaks District Council Movement Strategy 2022 outlines the vision of making movement. It demonstrates the priorities and aims of the council under four themes:
1. Health and wellbeing – support movement that improves the health and wellbeing of communities

¹¹ Client Earth (2019) Lawyers put local authorities on notice over climate inaction [online] available to access [here](#)

2. Cycling and walking – committed to improving the cycling and walking network in the Sevenoaks District
 3. Public transport – work with partners to deliver a high quality, innovative and connected public transport system
 4. Sustainable movement – support the need to reduce travel, embrace new technology and encourage sustainable movement
- 5.12 The Sevenoaks District Council Net Zero 2030 Actions 2022-23 outlines the council's commitment to achieving net zero carbon emission by 2030. This includes the following actions around seven themes:
1. SDC Building Emissions
 - Reduce carbon emissions in Council buildings resulting from energy use
 - Work with partners and leaseholders to reduce emissions from Council (built) assets
 - Water efficiency measures in Council buildings
 2. Movement and Green Travel
 - Promote low carbon travel and sustainable movement
 - Improve the electric vehicle charging network across the District
 - Work with schools, local communities, and groups to encourage low carbon travel such as car clubs, travel plans, cycling and walking routes
 - Continue the transition to a zero-carbon emissions vehicle fleet wherever practicable
 3. Green Spaces and the Natural Environment
 - Contribute to offsetting carbon emissions through new planting including new trees
 - Improve areas for biodiversity and create new habitats
 - Practice natural flood management
 4. Working with Landowners, Partners and Businesses
 - Ensure the Net Zero 2030 commitment is incorporated into the Council's procurement process
 - Report and promote our actions towards Net Zero and share best practice with partners
 - Encourage, and support our partners, including landowners, residents, businesses, and visitors to our District to reduce carbon emissions
 - Work with the local government family within Kent to deliver Net Zero across all our communities
 5. Community engagement and Leadership
 - Maintain a dedicated 'Net Zero' and 'Climate Change' webpage
 - Promote events to support wildlife awareness and opportunities to improve biodiversity

- Promote events to support 'green' and low carbon initiatives such as energy and water saving, reducing waste, green travel, and energy efficiency
- Encourage communities to develop and implement their own carbon emission reduction plans and initiatives
- Help householders and businesses improve energy efficiency by providing free advice and support for energy improvements and energy saving

6. Council Plans and Strategies

- Embed the findings and recommendations of the Carbon Reduction Plan into Council plans and strategies
- Ensure all Council plans, strategies and decisions support the Net Zero 2030 commitment where possible
- Embed positive behaviour change to reduce carbon emissions in all Council service areas
- Where everything possible has been done to achieve net zero carbon but there is still a shortfall, take action through offsetting carbon dioxide emissions where necessary
- Audit the current and levels of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions on an annual basis in order to track progress

7. Sustainable Development and Renewable Energy

- Support and promote sustainable building practices and sustainable development
- Ensure the Net Zero 2030 commitment is reflected in all new SDC and SDC owned company developments
- Explore the potential for developing renewable energy generation within the District

5.13 The Energy South 2 East Local Energy Strategy has been developed to enable the Coast to Capital, Enterprise M3 and South East Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) of England to achieve clean growth from now until 2050 in energy across power, heat, and transport sectors. The shared vision for energy in the region is *"to become a leader for sustainable energy production within the UK, powering innovative, decarbonised and clean economic growth"*.

5.14 The Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (ELES) sets out how KCC, in partnership with Medway Council and the Kent district councils, will respond to the UK climate emergency. The ELES includes strategies and actions to eliminate poor air quality, reduce fuel poverty and deliver a clean energy supply. The following priority themes are identified:

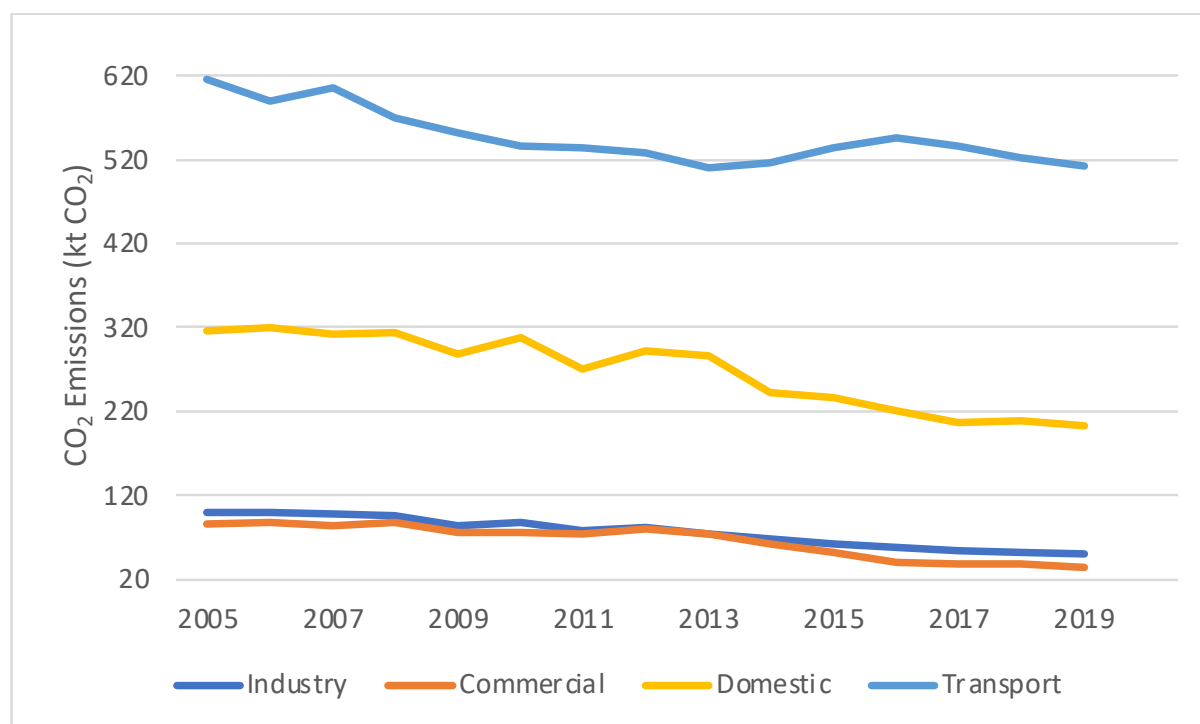
- Low carbon heating (district heating, off-gas grid homes, hydrogen)
- Energy saving/ efficiency (off-gas grid homes, energy efficient homes)
- Renewable generation (wind, solar, biomass, biofuel)

- Smart energy systems (solar microgrids, EV charging, hydrogen fuel infrastructure, CO2 Capture)
 - Transport evolution (EV charging, hydrogen infrastructure)
- 5.15 At the local level, and in relation to the climate change mitigation SA topic, the SDC's Core Strategy includes the following policies:
- Policy SP – Sustainable Development -Sustainable Construction and Low-Carbon Energy Generation
- 5.16 The Allocations and Development Management Plan the following policies that are particularly relevant to this SA topic"
- Policy T1 – Mitigating Travel Impact
 - Policy T3 – Provision of Electrical Vehicle Charging Points
- 5.17 The Sevenoaks Town Centres Strategy 2022 identifies a number of opportunities which are common to town and local centres across the district including the following.
- Address gaps in retail and service provision within each centre so that each town or village can operate as a '10 minute town'.
 - Strengthen local supply chains to reduce transport-related emissions.
 - Encourage walking, cycling and public transport.
 - Plant more trees in centres for shade, water attenuation, air quality and biodiversity including the use of street planting, Sustainable Urban Drainage (SuDS).
 - Build new homes in sustainable locations.
 - Design new buildings to be highly energy efficient.
- 5.18 In 2019 SDC committed to working towards achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. The pledge primarily relates to the Council's own carbon emissions but also encompasses an ambition to assist the District to become net zero and to improve the resilience of the District to a changing climate. This is collectively known as SDC's Net Zero 2030 commitment which will include projects to mitigate the causes of climate change through reducing carbon emissions.

Summary of current baseline

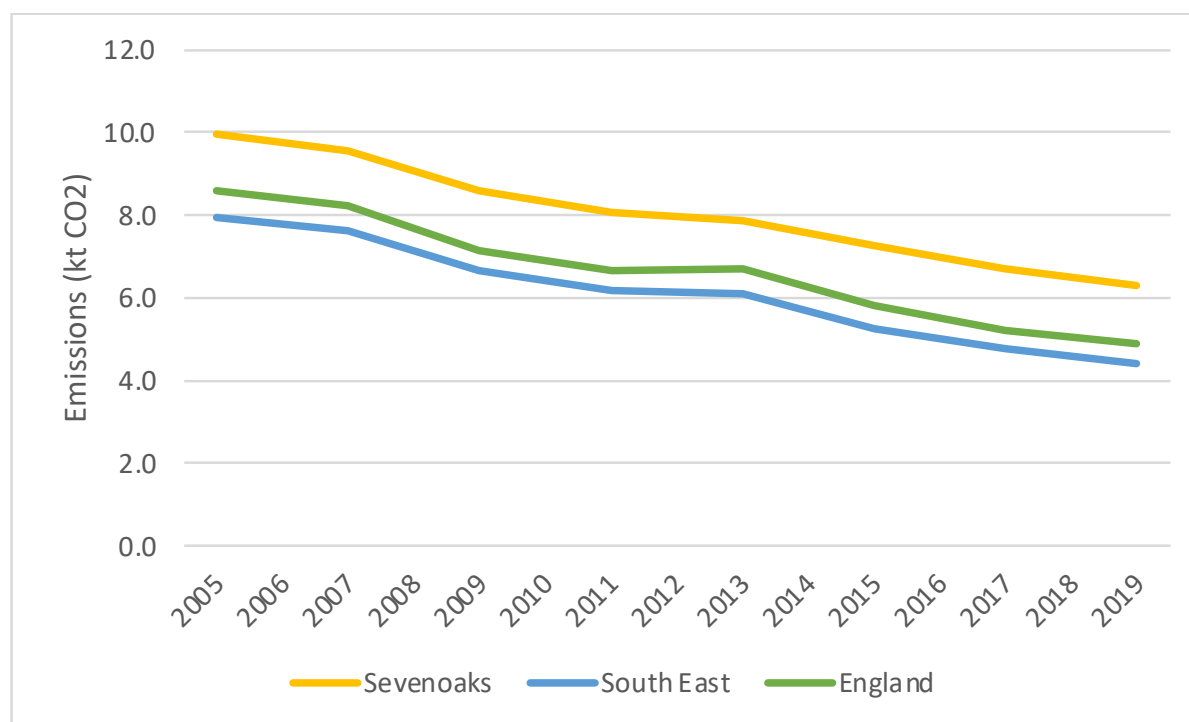
Contribution to climate change

- 5.19 As shown in **Figure 5.1**, the largest contributing sector to CO₂ emissions in Sevenoaks District is the transport sector. Although this sector has experienced a 104 kt CO₂ decrease in emissions representing a 17% decrease. This is relatively low when compared to declines seen across the industrial (-49%), commercial (-60%) and domestic (-36%) sectors.

Figure 5.1 Trend in CO₂ emissions by sector in Sevenoaks District

- 5.20 The transport sector is the largest emitting sector in the UK, producing 27% of total emissions in 2019¹². Of this, 91% came from road transport vehicles (111 MtCO₂e). The biggest contributors to this were cars and taxis, which made up 61% of the emissions from road transport (68 MtCO₂e).
- 5.21 The uptake of Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEVs) will contribute positively towards the reduction of road transport related emissions. In line with assumptions made by the Department for Transport's 'Road to Zero' report (2018), it is assumed that ULEV uptake will increase rapidly in the coming decade and therefore aside from HGVs, all vehicles could be ultra-low emission (powered either by hydrogen or electricity) by 2030.
- 5.22 **Figure 5.2** shows that CO₂ emissions per capita (t) in Sevenoaks have remained significantly higher than the wider region and England during the period 2005 to 2019. The District has also experienced a smaller decrease in CO₂ emission, at 37%, than both the South East (45%) and England (43%) during this time period.

¹² YK Gov (2021): 'Transport and environmental statistics: Autumn 2021', [online] available to access via [this link](#)

Figure 5.2 Trend in per capita emissions by sector in Sevenoaks District

Climate projections

- 5.23 The UK Climate Projections (UKCP18) programme is a climate analysis tool that provides the most up-to-date assessment on potential future climatic changes in the UK based on climate model simulations¹³. Projections can be downscaled to a regional level across the UK, allowing for specific evaluations of a selected area.
- 5.24 As highlighted by the research, the effects of climate change (under medium emissions scenarios 50th percentile) for the South East during the period 2020 to 2039 compared to the period 1981 to 2000 are likely to be as follows¹⁴:
- A central estimate of increase in annual mean temperatures of between 0.3°C and 1.5°C; and
 - A central estimate of change in annual mean precipitation of 0 to +8% in winter and 0 to -5% in summer.
- 5.25 As a result of these changes, Sevenoaks may face increasing risks related to climate change, including:
- Effects on water resources from climate change.
 - Reduction in availability of groundwater for extraction.
 - Adverse effect on water quality from low stream levels and turbulent stream flow after heavy rain.
 - Increased risk of flooding, including increased vulnerability to 1:100-year floods.

¹³ Information about UKCP18 and key data can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁴ Met Office (2018): 'Land Projection Maps: Probabilistic Projections' can be accessed [here](#).

- A need to increase the capacity of wastewater treatment plants and sewers.
- A need to upgrade flood defences.
- Soil erosion due to flash flooding.
- Loss of species that are at the edge of their southerly distribution.
- Spread of species at the northern edge of their distribution.
- Increased demand for air-conditioning.
- Increased drought and flood related problems such as soil shrinkages and subsidence.
- Risk of road surfaces melting more frequently due to increased temperature; and
- Flooding of roads.

Summary of future baseline

- 5.26 CO₂ emissions per capita in Sevenoaks may continue to decrease with the adoption of further energy efficiency measures, renewable energy production and new technologies such as Electric Vehicles (EVs). Nevertheless, increases in population could contribute to increases in the absolute levels of CO₂ emissions.

Key sustainability issues

- 5.27 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to climate change mitigation:
- The transport sector is a key challenge in terms of reducing CO₂ emissions, and therefore the new Local Plan should guide development towards the most accessible locations in Sevenoaks, encourage active transport infrastructure improvements where possible and encourage sustainable transport technologies. Opportunities to influence per capita emissions could be sought through the Sevenoaks District Local Plan process, particularly by planning for integrated and connected development.
 - There is also a clear role for the Local Plan to play in respect of minimising per built environment emissions, including by directing growth to those locations associated with the greatest opportunity, and setting standards through development management policy that go over-and-above the requirements set out in Building Regulations, subject to viability. As part of this, consideration should be given to methods of onsite renewable heat and power generation, as well as strategic ('district') solutions, notably heat networks. The local plan also has a role to play in respect of strategic planning for larger scale renewable power generation, e.g. solar farms.

SA objective and appraisal questions

5.28 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 5.2**.

Table 5.2 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objective
Climate change mitigation	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within Sevenoaks District.

5.29 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Reduce the number of journeys made and reduce the need to travel?
- Promote the use of more sustainable modes of transport, including walking, cycling, public transport, and EV infrastructure?
- Increase the number of new developments meeting or exceeding sustainable design criteria?
- Generate energy from low or zero carbon sources, or reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?
- Reduce energy consumption from non-renewable resources?
- Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction?

6. Communities and health

Focus of topic

- Population and age structure.
- Deprivation.
- Community facilities; and
- Influences on health and wellbeing

Policy context

6.1 **Table 6.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the new Local Plan. The key messages emerging from the review are then summarised after the table.

Table 6.1: Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
National	
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Health Equity in England: The Marmot Review 10 Years On	2020
Healthy and Safe Communities Planning practice guidance	2019
Planning for Sport Guidance	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Public Health England: Healthy High Streets	2018
Space for people: Targeting action for woodland access	2017
Public Health England: Spatial Planning for Health	2017
Healthy Lives, Healthy People: Our strategy for public health in England	2010
Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE)	2010
Equalities Act 2010	2010
Green Infrastructure Guidance	2009
Green Infrastructure and the Urban Fringe: Learning lessons from the Countryside in and Around Towns programme	2007
Local	
Sevenoaks District Town Centres Strategy	2022
Sevenoaks District Council Mental Health Strategy	2021
Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities 2019-2022	2019
Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan 2015-2035: Settlement Hierarchy	2018
Sevenoaks District Council Open Space Study	2018
Sevenoaks District Council Playing Pitch Strategy	2018
Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation	2017
Sevenoaks District Council Sports Facility Strategy	2017

Document title	Year of publication
Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan	2015
Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy	2011
6.2	The new Local Plan will need to consider the principles outlined in the NPPF, which seek to retain and enhance access to community services and facilities. The NPPF recognises the benefits of having a range of local provision to support community needs. In addition, the NPPF recognises the benefits of creating cohesive communities in safe environments where the fear of crime (and crime itself) does not undermine resident quality of life.
6.3	The NPPF recognises the role of development plans in helping to deliver access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity, therefore contributing to the health and wellbeing of communities. The health benefits of access to nature, green spaces and green infrastructure are further reiterated in the 25 Year Environment Plan. Additional guidance is available through the Healthy and Safe Communities Planning practice guidance.
6.4	The 2020 Health Equity in England Report identifies a health gap between less and more deprived areas, which has grown in the last decade. This means an increased amount of people can expect to spend more of their lives in poor health with a stalled, or even declining, life expectancy. The report highlights: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People can expect to spend more of their lives in poor health. • Improvements to life expectancy have stalled, and declined for the poorest 10% of women; and • The health gap has grown between wealthy and deprived areas.
6.5	Healthy and Safe Communities Planning practice guidance sets out a range of goals linked to healthy and inclusive communities, including delivering sufficient school places and the benefits of estate regeneration.
6.6	The Planning for Sport Guidance seeks to help the planning system provide formal and informal opportunities for everyone to take part in sport and be physically active, setting out twelve principles.
6.7	The 25 Year Environment Plan highlights the health impacts of protecting and enhancing the natural environment. Aims of the document include to help communities improve their health and wellbeing through the use of green spaces and to encourage communities, especially children, to be closer to nature, with a specific focus on disadvantaged areas. The strategy highlights spatial planning approaches that can help deliver these aims, including planting one million trees in England's towns and cities by 2022 and delivering additional green infrastructure.
6.8	The Healthy High Streets is a collection of review documents that synthesise the most recent and relevant evidence for implementing street design principles that work to benefit health and wellbeing. The review highlights that a greater understanding of place and people and how they interact with each other can help to realise the potential of our high streets and further contribute to health and economic gains.

- 6.9 The Space for People document provides details on access to woodland areas in the UK, provided by the Woodland Trust. It also highlights the Woodland Trust's vision for increasing this.
- 6.10 The 'Spatial Planning for Health: An evidence resource for planning and designing healthier places' document provides guidance on the role of both the built and natural environment in shaping health and wellbeing. The review explores the impacts of the built and natural environment on public health.
- 6.11 The 'Healthy Lives, Healthy People' White Paper outlines a radical shift in the way the government plans to tackle public health challenges. The document puts local communities at the heart of public health, ending central control and giving local government the freedom, responsibility, and funding to innovate and develop their own strategies to improve public health.
- 6.12 The Noise Policy Statement for England states the implementation of transport planning systems aids in reducing environmental noise which can cause an increased risk of health effects when left unmanaged.
- 6.13 The Equality Act provides the framework to protect the rights of individuals against unlawful discrimination and advances equal opportunities for all. Section 149 introduces the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which local authorities should carry out in all its roles. In this respect, local authorities must have regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.14 Natural England's Green Infrastructure Guidance provides advice on green infrastructure planning and delivery, which is recognised as an essential part of sustainable spatial planning.
- 6.15 Green Infrastructure and the Urban Fringe highlights the 'Countryside In and Around Towns' programme's achievements in demonstrating a vision for the urban fringe through engaging and influencing others to effect change and maximise the potential of this resource.
- 6.16 The Sevenoaks District Town Centres Strategy sets out a vision and roadmap for the five centres in the district, identifying projects and opportunities for these locations up to 2040. These include supporting business and creating a resilient economy which includes the following:
- Supporting town and village centres to respond to changing shopping habits with a greater mix of cultural, community, workspace, and residential uses.
 - Broadening leisure offer to attract people.
 - Increasing provision of space for SMEs / flexible working spaces.
 - Enhancing the public realm.

- Identifying and addressing gaps in shops/ services so each village/ town can operate as '10-minute town'
 - Calendar events, festivals, pop ups focusing on food, music, and art.
 - Creating a more resilient local economy
 - Finding niche areas for enhanced/ distinct offering for centres.
- 6.17 The Sevenoaks District Council Mental Health Strategy has been developed to implement a specific focus on mental health and wellbeing and outlines the commitment to improve mental health. This includes:
- More people will have good mental health.
 - More people with mental health problems will have good physical health.
 - More people will have a positive experience of care and support.
 - Fewer people will suffer avoidable harm; and
 - Fewer people will experience stigma and discrimination.
- 6.18 The Settlement Hierarchy for Sevenoaks District is a key piece of documentation – defining the role and function of each settlement within the District and helps inform the profile of the settlements and their capacity to accommodate future development.
- 6.19 The Sevenoaks District Council Open Space Study assesses the existing and future needs of the community for a variety of open spaces. The assessment comes to several conclusions, including that there is a need for provision of small multi-purpose parks in urban and suburban locations, there is a need for teenage and youth facilities and the rich heritage and history of the district should be interpreted in a variety of open space types across the District.
- 6.20 The Sevenoaks District Playing Pitch Strategy provides strategic recommendations for outdoor pitch sports played in the District. The recommendations include increasing the number of pitches, upgrading pitch surfaces and flood lights for hockey facilities, refurbishing the Edenbridge Leisure Centre, improving field drainage, investing in grass pitches, and ensuring no loss of playing pitch or outdoor sports facility is lost to redevelopment.
- 6.21 The Sevenoaks District Community Plan Priorities 2019-2022 outlines the long-term vision for the District and sets out priorities for action. This includes ensuring safe communities and caring communities are promoted.
- 6.22 The Sevenoaks District Council Issues and Options Consultation document explores the context for the upcoming version of the Local Plan. The Sevenoaks Vision 2015-2035 states all of the District's historic and heritage assets will continue to be conserved and enhanced in a way which protects local identity and distinctiveness. This is reiterated in Objective 5 – Promote healthy living opportunities.
- 6.23 The Sports Facility Report forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan and plans for future sports facility provision in order to accommodate current and future need, population growth and increased participation.

- 6.24 The Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan acts as a tool to implement and build on the strategic vision of the Core Strategy. In particular, the following policies are relevant to the communities and health theme:
- Policy GI1 – Green Infrastructure and New Development.
 - Policy GI2 – Loss of Open Space.
 - Policy CF1 – Re-Use of Redundant School Buildings; and
 - Policy CF2 – Loss of Neighbourhood Services and Facilities.
- 6.25 The Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy is the plan for future development in the District. Policy SP10 – Green Infrastructure, Open Space, Sport and Recreation Provision states open spaces will be maintained and linked. Additionally, the policy states open space, sport and recreation facilities will be retained and development should make provision for the maintenance of these features. Furthermore, Policy LO7 seeks to retain services and facilities in rural areas in order to increase people's access to and awareness of services.

Summary of current baseline

Population and age structure

- 6.26 According to the 2011 Census data, the Sevenoaks District had a total 115,351 residents. According to the mid-year ward-level population estimates available on the Office for National Statistics website¹⁵, the population of the Sevenoaks District was estimated to be 121,387 in 2020.
- 6.27 In terms of age structure, it is estimated that in 2020 22.6% (27,388) of residents in Sevenoaks District were between 0-17 years old, 55.8% (67,723) were between the working ages of 18-64 and the remaining 21.6% (26,276) were above the age of 65. However, approximately 17,559 residents are estimated to be between the ages of 50 and 59 – suggested Sevenoaks is experiencing an ageing population, with many more residents to hit retirement age during the new Local Plan period. This has the potential to place extra pressure on existing care facilities and health services.

Index of Multiple Deprivation

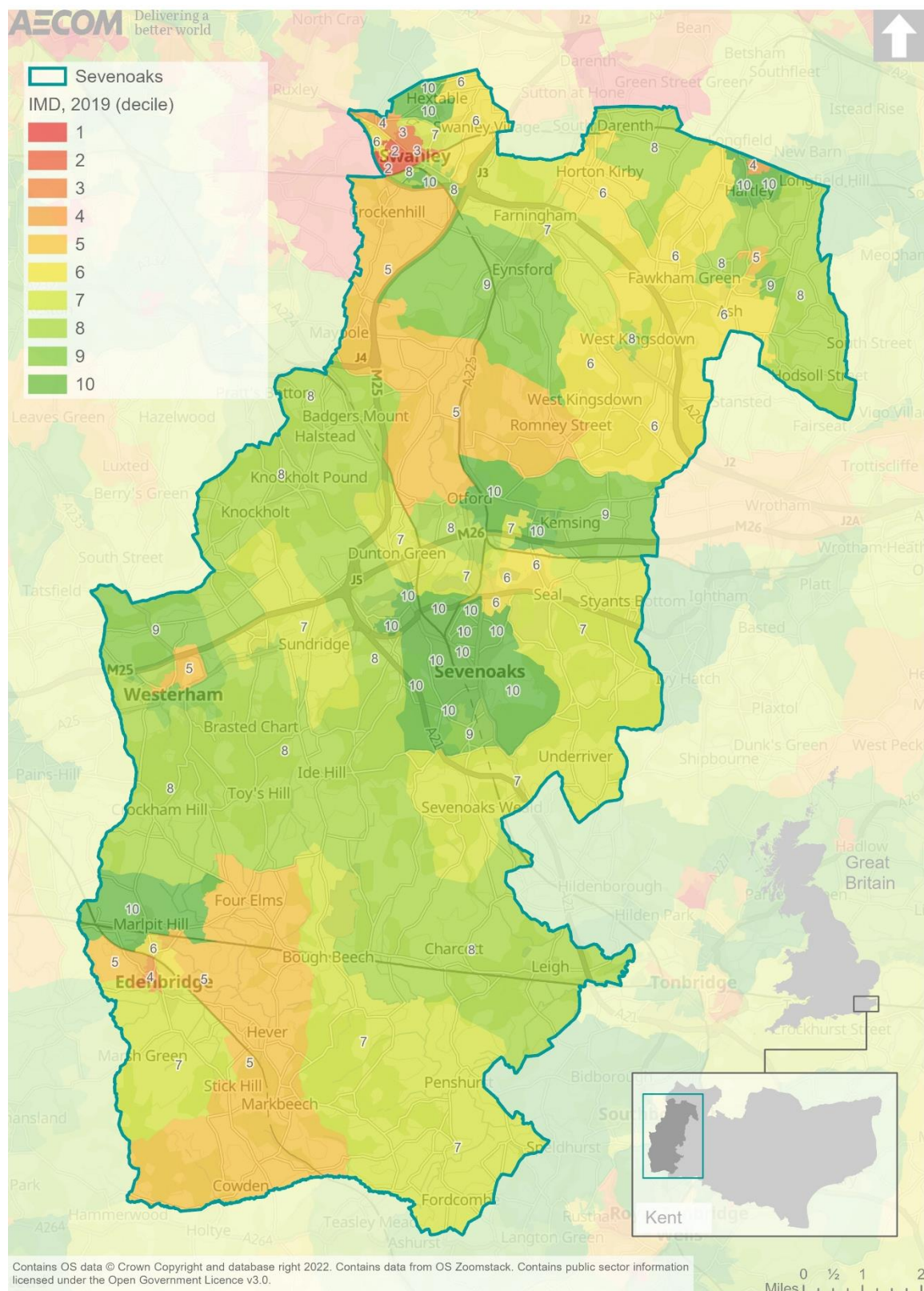
- 6.28 The Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD) is an overall relative measure of deprivation and is the combination of seven different domains as described below. The seven deprivation domains are as follows:
- Income: the proportion of the population experiencing a deprivation relating to low income. There are a further two subsets of this measure:
 - Income deprivation affecting children: the proportion of children aged 0-15 living in income deprived families; and
 - Income deprivation affecting older people: the proportion of all adults aged 60 and above that experience income deprivation.

¹⁵ Office for National Statistics (2021) 'Ward-level population estimates (Experimental Statistics)' can be accessed [here](#).

- Employment: the proportion of the working-age population involuntarily excluded from the labour market, including those who want to work but cannot.
 - Education, skills, and training: the lack of attainment and skills in the population.
 - Health deprivation and disability: this risk of premature death and the impairment of quality of life through poor physical or mental health.
 - Crime: the risk of personal and material victimisation at the local level.
 - Barriers to housing and services: the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services, split into 'geographical barriers' linked to the physical proximity and 'wider barriers' linked to access to housing.
 - Living environment: the quality of the local environment, categorised into 'indoors living environment' to measure the quality of housing and 'outdoors living environment' to measure indicators like air quality and road traffic accidents.
- 6.29 Lower super output areas (LSOAs)¹⁶ are designed to improve the reporting of small area statistics in England and Wales. They are standardized geographies intended to be as consistent as possible, with each LSOA containing approximately 1,000 to 1,500 people. In relation to the IMD 2019, LSOAs are ranked out of the 32,844 in England and Wales, with 1 being the most deprived.
- 6.30 In this respect, the Sevenoaks District has 74 LSOAs and overall the District was ranked 253 out of 317 local authorities in 2019, with the first being the most deprived. This indicates that Sevenoaks is within the 30% least deprived local authority districts (see **Figure 6.1**).
- 6.31 The IMD indicates that deprivation is experienced variably across the District. The IMD indicates that 14 of the 74 LSOAs are within the 10-50% most deprived neighbourhood groups – these areas are in and around Swanley, Fawkham, Westerham and New Ash Green.
- 6.32 In terms of the other indices, 26 of the 74 Sevenoaks LSOAs are within the 20-50% most deprived neighbourhoods for education, skills, and training, 44 LSOAs are within the 10-50% most deprived neighbourhoods for barriers to housing and services, and 23 LSOAs are within the 10-50% most deprived neighbourhoods for living environment.

¹⁶ The Indices of Deprivation Explorer can be accessed [here](#).

Figure 6.1: IMD



Services and facilities

6.33 Sevenoaks has a range of community facilities, including^{17,18}:

- Three leisure centres, golf courses and outdoor sports facilities.
- Multiple open spaces, including Bradbourne Lakes, Shoreham Woods and Hosey and Crockham Hill Commons, Lullingstone Country Park, Toys Hill, and Ide Hill.
- Many castles and historic houses, like Chartwell, Penshurst Place and Hever Castle.
- Museums and Heritage Sites, like Eden Valley Museum and Archbishop's Place.
- Individual shops, vineyards, breweries, farm shops and food producers.
- National trails like Greensand Way.

6.34 Based on a further review of the District using the settlement hierarchy, it is evident there are multiple accessible schools in the area, as well as chemists and medical facilities, though these are mostly around Sevenoaks town.

Green and blue infrastructure networks

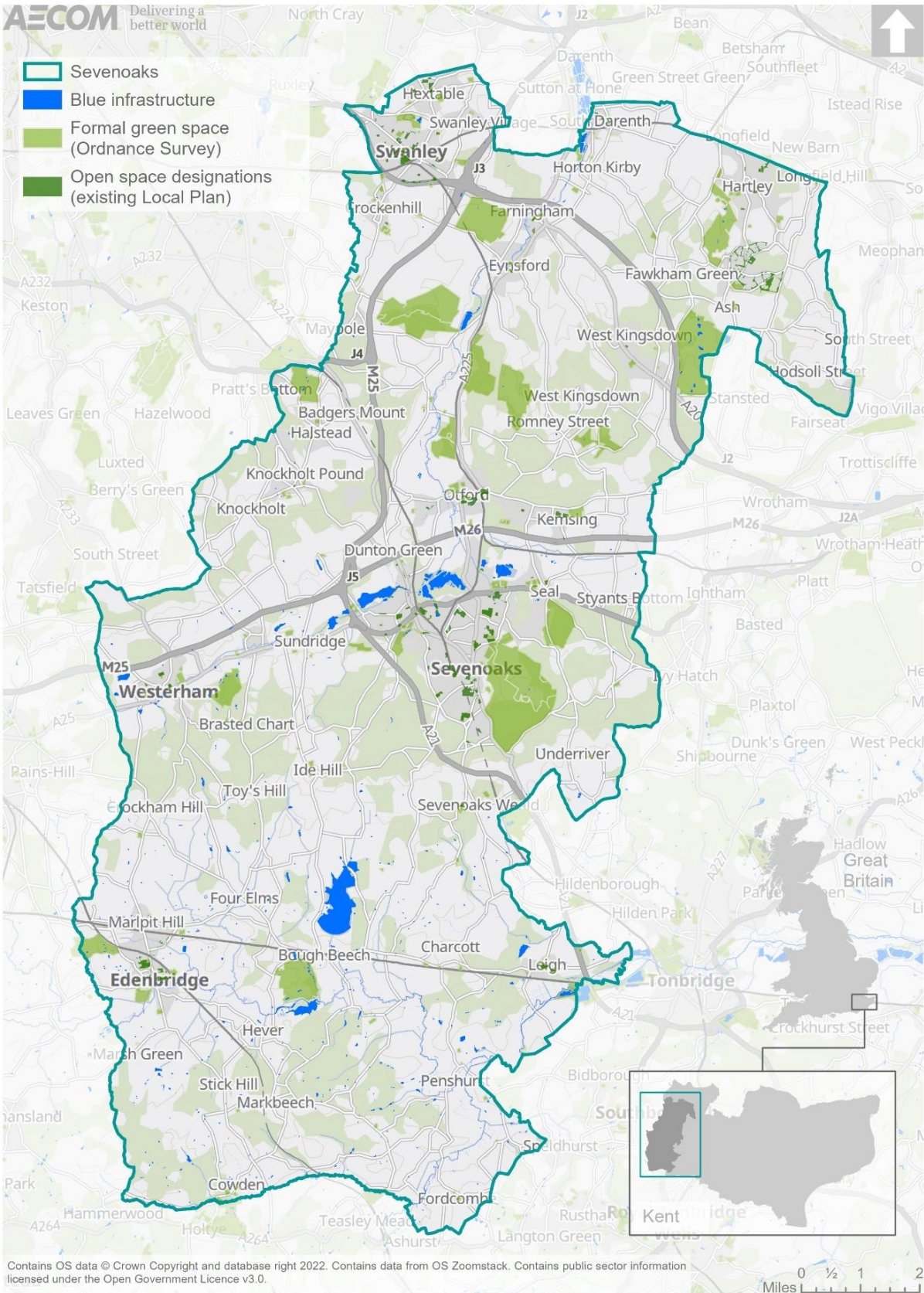
6.35 Green and blue infrastructure provides space for recreation and relaxation, and access to nature has been evidenced to improve people's health and wellbeing, through encouraging healthy outdoor recreation and relaxation. In Sevenoaks District, there is a multitude of green and blue infrastructure. Notable green spaces include gardens and parks like Riverhill Himalayan Gardens and Knole Park; open spaces like Ide Hill and Haysden Country Park, the River Darent, River Eden and River Medway and the Kent Downs AONB and High Weald AONB according to the map of amenities provided by Visit Sevenoaks¹⁹.

¹⁷ Visit Sevenoaks (no date) 'Map of amenities' can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁸ Sevenoaks District Council (2022) 'Your environment and community' can be accessed [here](#).

¹⁹ Ibid.

Figure 6.2 Green space in Sevenoaks



Public health profile

6.36 Prepared by Public Health England, the Public Health Profiles are designed to act as a 'conversation starter', to help local government and health services understand their community's needs, so that they can work together to improve people's health and reduce health inequalities. The latest summary report for Sevenoaks District is for 2019/20 and key trends include:

- Sevenoaks is one of the lesser deprived unitary authorities in England, however about 6% of children are in low income families.
- Life expectancy for both men and women is higher than the average for England, but the life expectancy for men is higher than women.
- In Year 6, 10.4% of children are classified as obese, better than the average for England.
- The under 75 mortality rate from all causes, as well as the under 75 mortality rates from cardiovascular diseases and from cancer are better than the England averages.

Summary of future baseline

6.37 As the population of Sevenoaks District continues to increase and age, there is likely to be increasing pressure on services. This highlights the need to support the retention of existing services in the area, including open green space, which has been increasingly used and valued through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. These factors are more likely to be appropriately considered and addressed through planned development rather than unplanned development.

6.38 The COVID-19 pandemic has also changed the way people work and shop. For many people, working from home is likely to continue to form part of a more flexible approach. The effects of increased levels of home working are further discussed under the 'transportation and movement' SA theme in **Chapter 12**.

Key issues

6.39 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to community wellbeing:

- The population is increasing, and there is a need to identify a land supply for future housing growth as part of planned and coordinated development. Planning policies can also support development that delivers a range of housing types, tenures, and sizes, to meet the varying needs of residents.
- With a range of existing services and facilities within the Sevenoaks District area, there should be good opportunity to deliver connected development which reduces the need to travel.

SA objective and appraisal questions

6.40 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 6.2** below.

Table 6.2 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objective
Communities and health	Ensure growth in the district is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, reducing deprivation, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.

6.41 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Meet the needs of all sectors of the community?
- Improve the availability and accessibility of key local facilities, including specialist services for disabled and older people?
- Encourage and promote social cohesion and active involvement of local people in community activities?
- Facilitate green infrastructure enhancements?
- Maintain or enhance the quality of life of existing residents?

7. Economy and employment

Focus of topic

- Current and emerging economic sectors
- Employment, education, and skills
- Productivity and growth

Policy context

7.1 **Table 7.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the new Local Plan. The key messages emerging from the review are then summarised after the table.

Table 7.1 Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
National	
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Local	
Working Together For A Faster, Smarter And More Sustainable Economic Recovery	2021
Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells Economic Needs Study	2016
SDC Economic Development Strategy 2018-2021	2018
Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy	2011
Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan	2015
Sevenoaks District Town Centres Strategy	2022
Sevenoaks urban area economic study – Part 1	2019
Sevenoaks urban area economic study – Part 2	2019

7.2 Key messages from the NPPF include:

- Planning policies should help build a strong, responsive, and competitive economy by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation, and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
- Local Plans should:
 - Encourage sustainable economic growth within their clear economic vision and strategy.
 - Set criteria and identify sites for local investment to match the community needs.
 - Address investment barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, services/housing or poor environment.

- Incorporate flexibility to account for unanticipated circumstances, allow new working practices and enable rapid responses to economic changes; and
- Ensure that there is a ‘sufficient choice of school places’ and taking a ‘proactive, positive and collaborative approach’ to bringing forward ‘development that will widen choice in education’.

7.3 ‘Working together for a faster, smarter and more sustainable economic recovery’ is the South East Local Enterprise Partnership’s (SELEP) Economic Recovery and Renewal Strategy. It sets out how SELEP will support local businesses to a post Covid, post Brexit, economic recovery/ renewal. The strategy is guided by the need to deliver clean growth, close the digital divide, develop the skills of the workforce and residents and address inequalities. The strategy sets out priorities:

- Business resilience and growth
- UK’s Global Gateway
- Communities for the future
- Coastal catalyst

7.4 The priorities set out above are underpinned by the following key objectives:

- Support business growth and innovation
- Drive trade and growth
- Deliver a skilled workforce
- Improve digital/ physical connectivity
- Put clean growth at ‘the heart of what we do’
- Support equality, and
- Promote greater resilience ‘in our places’

7.5 The Sevenoaks and Turnbridge Wells Economic Needs Study provides an assessment of the need for employment land over the period to 2033/35 to inform the Local Plan. The assessment examines the existing stock of employment floor space and analyses future supply and demand and makes policy recommendations.

7.6 SDC’s Economic development Strategy 2018-2021 sets out the following five themes for economic development in District:

- Growth and investment including regeneration of key market towns and enabling vibrant town centres.
- Improving infrastructure including broadband, mobile, road, rail and air links, health, and education.
- Supporting the visitor economy sector.
- Supporting young people into learning/ training and employment.
- Working with businesses to ensure the district continues to be a place where businesses can prosper.

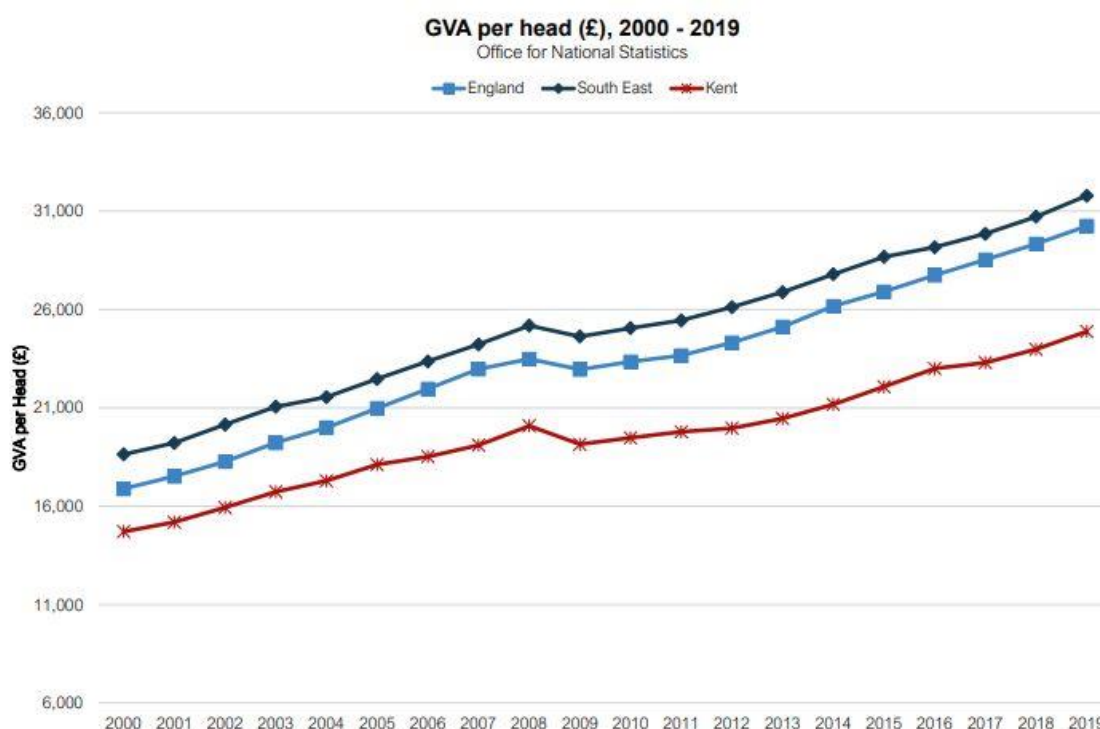
- 7.7 In relation to the economy and employment SA topic, SDC's Core Strategy includes the following policies:
- SP8 – Economic Development and Land for Business
- 7.8 The Allocations and Development Management Plan includes the following policies pertaining to the economy and employment topic:
- EMP1 – Land for Business
 - EMP2 – major Developed Employment Sites in the Green Belt
 - EMP3 – Redevelopment of Fort Halstead
 - EMP4 – Business Allocations at Broom Hill, Swanley
 - EMP5 – Non-allocated employment Sites
- 7.9 The Sevenoaks District Town Centres Strategy sets out a vision and roadmap for the five centres in the district, identifying projects and opportunities for these locations up to 2040. These include supporting business and creating a resilient economy which includes the following:
- Supporting town and village centres to respond to changing shopping habits with a greater mix of cultural, community, workspace, and residential uses.
 - Broadening leisure offer to attract people.
 - Increasing provision of space for SMEs / flexible working spaces.
 - Enhancing the public realm.
 - Identifying and addressing gaps in shops/ services so each village/ town can operate as '10-minute town'
 - Calendar events, festivals, pop ups focusing on food, music, and art.
 - Creating a more resilient local economy
 - Finding niche areas for enhanced/ distinct offering for centres.
- 7.10 SDC commissioned Urban Initiatives and Hatch Regeneris to undertake the Sevenoaks Urban Area Economic Study (Parts 1 and 2). The study focuses on the key employment locations of Sevenoaks Town and the surrounding settlements of Dunton Green, Riverhead, Chipstead and Bessels Green. The study comprises the following three parts:
- A review of current socio-economic profile of the area
 - A capacity assessment of key development sites
 - An assessment of the socio-economic contribution of these employment schemes.

Summary of current baseline

Employment and economy

- 7.11 Gross Value Added (GVA) is used to measure economic output or the value of goods and services produced in the economy. Kent's total GVA is estimated at £39,344m²⁰ and the GVA per head is estimated at £24,877 (as of 2019) which is below the national (£30,239) and regional average (£31,783 for the south east). Sevenoaks District GVA was estimated to be £3,204m²¹ which represents around 8% of the total output for Kent.
- 7.12 In terms of productivity data (GVA per hour worked and GVA per filled job), data is available for Kent and Medway with GVA per hour around £33.95 and GVA per job filled is around £53,610. Both of these values are below national and regional averages²². The distribution sector was the biggest contributor to GVA in Kent (£8,343m).
- 7.13 Kent's GVA per head has steadily increased between 2000 and 2019 (**Figure 7.1**), closely following the trend observed at regional and national levels.

Figure 7.1: GVA per head (£) 2000-2019



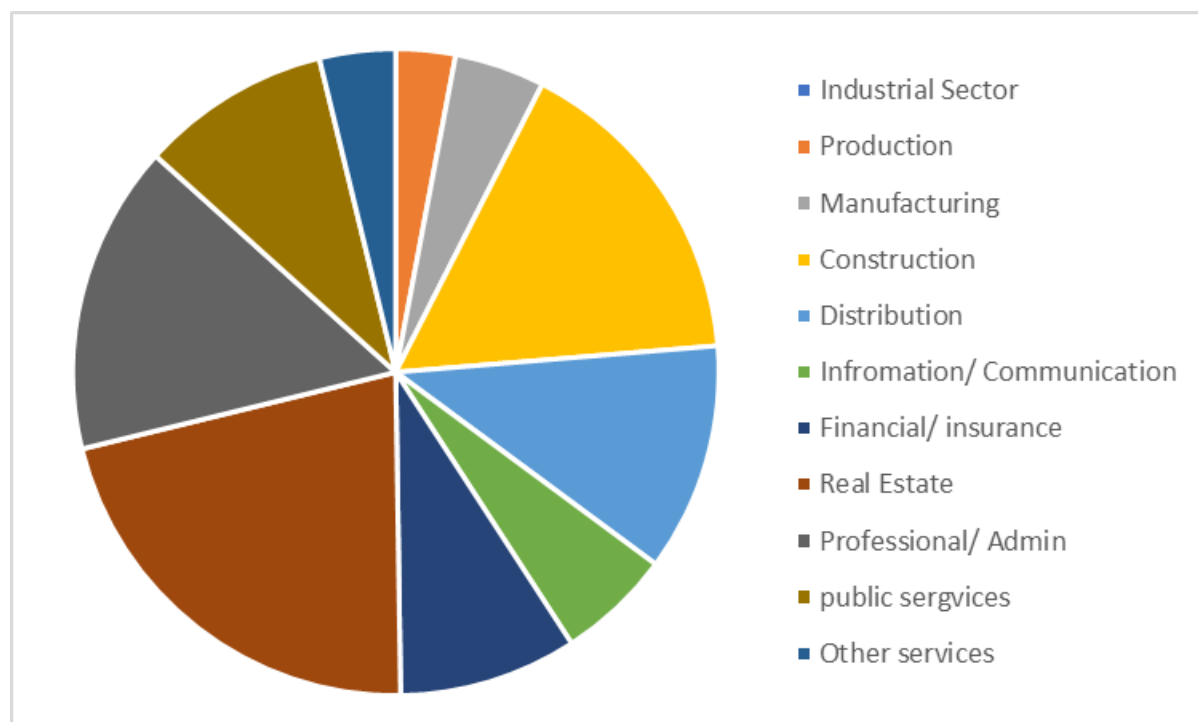
- 7.14 Five Kent local authorities had higher GVA/ hour worked (considered a better measure of productivity) figures than the national average for England (£35.69), with the highest being Sevenoaks (£43.01 per hour).
- 7.15 The real estate activities sector was the highest generator of GVA in 2019 in the district (**Figure 7.2**), followed by the construction and the professional/ administrative services sectors.

²⁰ Source: [Kent Analytics Statistical Bulletin \(Oct. 2021\)](#)

²¹ Source: SDC Economic Development Strategy (2018-2021)

²² Kent Analytics Statistical Bulletin (Oct. 2021)

Figure 7.2 GVA by Industrial Sector in Sevenoaks District



7.16 The SDC Economic Development Strategy identified the following threats/weaknesses faced in the District in relation to achieving economic growth:

- Pressure on employment sites for housing / shortage of commercial development sites.
- Ageing population and failure to retain younger workforce
- Poor public transport links to employment, education, and tourism
- Changes in retail impacting high street
- Variable broadband / mobile network quality
- Employ changes in the rural economy as a result of technology and workspace availability
- Affordability of housing affecting recruitment of workforce

7.17 The necessity for a large proportion of the population to work remotely during the Covid-19 pandemic has the potential to drive a considerable acceleration in the trend in flexible working practices. For Sevenoaks, this could mean higher levels of inward migration from London.

7.18 Median weekly earnings for District residents (£580) are higher than median earnings for employees in District (£543) businesses potentially indicating residents might earn more if they commute to work outside the District²³.

7.19 The main centres of employment in Sevenoaks District are concentrated around the largest settlements. There are also some significant major developed sites in the Green Belt such as Fort Halstead, North Downs Business Park and Chaucer Business Park.

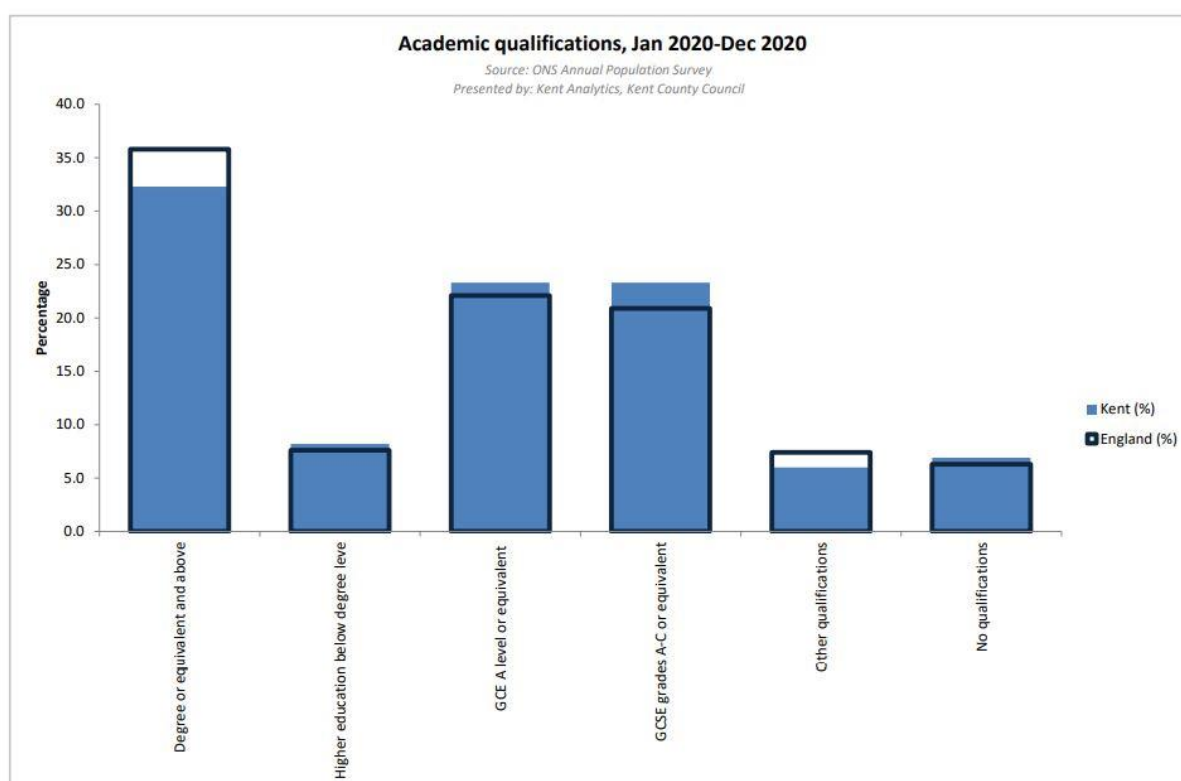
²³ Source: SDC Economic Development Strategy (2018-2021)

- 7.20 There are five main centres in the District: Sevenoaks Town, Swanley, Edenbridge, Westerham and New Ash Green (village local centre).
- 7.21 The number of economically active people aged 16-64 in Kent is 774,100 (81.8%)²⁴. Employment rates are 83.9% for males and 73.8% for females, both being higher than the corresponding figures for England which are 79.1% for males and 72.3% for females.
- 7.22 13.2% of people aged 16-64 in Kent are self-employed.
- 7.23 The unemployment rate in Kent (3.6%) is below the national rate (4.8%)

Education and skills

- 7.24 There are 53 educational establishments in the District²⁵, including: 48 primary, 15 Secondary and 10 16-18 Schools/ colleges.
- 7.25 **Figure 7.3** shows the academic qualifications of people in Kent compared to those in England as a whole (Jan 2020-Dec 2020 ONS annual population survey). The chart shows Kent has a lower proportion of residents with degree level qualification or above than the national average. The County has slightly higher proportion of residents educated to GCE A level and GCSE grades A-C (or equivalent) than the national average. Within Sevenoaks District itself 30.4% of residents have qualifications to level 4 or equivalent and above²⁶.

Figure 7.3: Academic qualifications



²⁴ Source: www.kent.gov.uk/Labour_force_profile

²⁵ Source: GOV.UK/All_schools_and_colleges_in_Sevenoaks

²⁶ Source: SDC Economic development Strategy 2018-2021

Summary of future baseline

- 7.26 As the requirements of the working population continue to change, particularly in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, there is likely to be a requirement for adaptable dwellings which can accommodate flexible working practices. This was discussed within the Government's [Planning for the Future White Paper](#)).
- 7.27 The regeneration of redundant or underutilised brownfield land across the District (including the densification of existing areas) will help to support local employment opportunities and reduce the need to commute to London.
- 7.28 A greater focus on the functionality and purpose of local centres is likely to be required in response to the changing habits of consumers as they continue to shop online. Maintaining the quality and supporting the retail offer within local centres is key, alongside encouraging opportunities for diversification.

Key sustainability issues

- 7.29 The following key issues have been identified:
- The five big challenges for Kent's economy are the consequences of innovation, demographic change, improving connectivity, economic disparities and opportunities for all, and environmental resilience.
 - The Local Plan should seek to protect strategic employment sites due to their strong economic contribution to the District.
 - The local centres are well served, although there is potential for greater connectivity and diversification to local centre uses, retail and service offering. The new Local Plan should support the Sevenoaks District Town Centres Strategy. A greater focus on the functionality and purpose of town and local centres will also likely be required in response to national trends.
 - A slightly lower proportion of Kent's workforce hold a degree level qualification or above compared to the national average.

SA objective and appraisal questions

- 7.30 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 7.2** below.

Table 7.2 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objectives
Economy and employment	Support and promote sustainable economic development.

- 7.31 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Meet local employment land requirements?
- Support traditional and emerging sectors of Sevenoaks' economy?
- Enhance the vitality of Sevenoaks' local centres?
- Improve accessibility to employment opportunities?
- Enhance training and educational opportunities?

8. Historic environment

Focus of topic

- Designated and non-designated heritage assets.
- Setting, special qualities and significance of heritage assets; and
- Historic character of Sevenoaks

Policy context

8.1 **Table 8.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the new Local Plan. The key messages emerging from the review are then summarised after the table.

Table 8.1: Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
National	
Historic England: Heritage and Climate Change	2022
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
National Model Design Code	2021
The National Design Guide	2019
Planning Practice Guidance	2019
Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Areas	2019
Historic England Advice Note 12: Significance in Heritage Assets	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning: Setting of Assets	2017
Historic England Advice Note 8: SA and SEA	2016
Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning: Local Plans	2015
Historic England Advice Note 3: Site Allocations in Local Plans	2015
Historic England: Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance	2008
Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act	1990
Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act	1979
Local	
Historic Environment Review	2017
Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation	2017
Allocations and Development Management Plan	2015
Core Strategy	2011
Local List SPD and Conservation Area Appraisals	Various

- 8.2 Understanding the significance of a place is the crucial element that supports the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment. Significance is the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. The interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic, or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.
- 8.3 The new Local Plan will need to consider the principles set out in the NPPF, which seek to conserve and enhance historic environment assets in a way that compliments and works with their significance. As such, there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The NPPF pursues planning policies and decisions that are understanding to local character and history without preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation and change. The NPPF supports the use of area-based character assessments, design guides and codes, and masterplans to help ensure that land is used efficiently while also creating beautiful and sustainable places.
- 8.4 The NPPF indicates proposed plans should ensure the design of streets, parking areas and other transport elements reflect current national guidance including the National Design Guide and the National Model Design Code. Design codes can set out a necessary level of detail in sensitive locations. In the case of the historic environment, they can indicate specific ways to maintain local character. The National Model Design Code states that schemes should respect the historic assets of a site and its surroundings and make use of existing structures where possible.
- 8.5 The messages in the NPPF are supported by the National Planning Practice Guidance. The key point made in this document is that local planning authorities should set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment in their local plans.
- 8.6 Historic England is the statutory body that helps people care for, enjoy, and celebrate England's spectacular historic environment. Documentation created and distributed by Historic England provides essential information for local planning authorities, neighbourhood groups, developers, consultants, landowners, and other interested parties on historic environment considerations, and are reviewed and updated regularly to reflect changes in legislation. The following documentation is particularly relevant:
- Historic England's Heritage and Climate Change strategy document details the impacts climate change could have on heritage in the future and highlights the role of heritage in climate action. The vision of the document is to ensure the role of heritage in the global fight to limit climate change and its impact on people and places by 2040 – working to mitigate, manage risk and adapt.
 - Historic England Advice Note 1: Conservation Area Appraisal, Designation and Management highlights various methods to manage change whilst allowing for the conservation and enhancement of historic areas. The document emphasises the importance of understanding the various types of interest that underpins designations and recognises the importance of putting in place a variety of controls to ensure positive contributions to the significance and value of conservation areas.

- Historic England Advice Note 12: Statements of Heritage Significance offers guidance on effectively describing heritage significance to aid local planning authorities in reaching a conclusion on potential impacts of proposals on heritage assets. Understanding the significance of heritage assets enables landowners and development applicants to receive effective, consistent, and timely decisions.
 - Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 The Setting of Heritage Assets offers advice on understanding setting, how it contributes to the significance of heritage assets and how to appreciate that significance. It also highlights the importance of different views and interpretations that contribute to heritage asset settings. The document outlines a five stage approach to conducting an assessment of setting.
 - Historic England Advice Note 8: Sustainability Appraisal (SA) and Strategic Environment Assessment (SEA) provides support to all stakeholders involved in assessing the effects of certain plans on the historic environment. It offers guidance on how to appropriately consider heritage during every individual stage of the SA/SEA process and establishes the basis for fully comprehensive evaluations.
 - Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning 1: The Historic Environment in Local Plans assists local authorities, planning and other consultants, owners, applicants, and other interested stakeholders and groups to implement the historic environment policies contained within the NPPF.
 - Historic England Advice Note 3: The Historic Environment and Site Allocations in Local Plans offers advice for the identification of potential sites for development, ensuring the historic environment plays a positive role in allocation and evidence collection. Moreover, the document details a number of steps to ensure that heritage considerations are fully integrated into any site selection methodology.
 - Historic England: Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance ensures Historic England takes a consistent approach when enacting its governmental statutory advisor role. It highlights the challenges of modernising heritage protection and proposes an integrated approach to making decisions to help combat this challenge.
- 8.7 The 25 Year Environment Plan and the National Design Guide recognise and reiterate the role of the historic environment in supporting healthy and thriving ecosystems, landscapes, and cultural values. Of note in the 25 Year Environment Plan is 'Goal 6: Enhanced beauty, heritage, and engagement with the natural environment'.
- 8.8 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act changed laws relating to the granting of planning permission for building works, with a particular focus on listed buildings and conservation areas. It protects listed buildings and conservation areas by creating created special controls for the demolition, alteration or extension of buildings, objects, or structures.
- 8.9 The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act provides protection to ancient monuments through a schedule designation and allows the Secretary of State to designate areas of archaeological importance. Moreover, the Act makes provision for the investigation, presentation and recording of matters of

archaeological or historical interest and regulates operations or activities that have the potential to affect monuments and archaeological areas.

- 8.10 The Sevenoaks District Historic Environment Review sets out a comprehensive and integrated evidence base for the Sevenoaks District Council, forming the basis for conservation and heritage in local planning in the District and provides guidance for the future.
- 8.11 The Sevenoaks District Council Issues and Options Consultation document explores the context for the upcoming version of the Local Plan. The Sevenoaks Vision 2015-2035 states all of the District's historic and heritage assets will continue to be conserved and enhanced in a way which protects local identity and distinctiveness. This is reiterated in Objective 2 – Promote well designed, safe places and safeguard and enhance the District's distinctive high quality natural and built environments.
- 8.12 The Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan acts as a tool to implement and build on the strategic vision of the Core Strategy. In particular, Policy EN1 – Design Principles protects the historic character of the area by ensuring buildings that contribute are not lost; Policy EN3 – Demolition in Conservation Areas states proposals involving the destruction of non-listed buildings in conservation areas will be properly assessed against the contribution to the interest of the area for that building; and Policy EN4 – Heritage Assets draws together a comprehensive approach to conserving and enhancing the District's heritage assets.
- 8.13 The Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy is the plan for future development in the District. Policy SP1 – Design of New Development and Conservation states heritage assets and their settings will be protected and enhanced.

Summary of current baseline

- 8.14 The historic environment is protected through the planning system. Historic England is the statutory consultee for listed building consent and scheduled monument consent. As shown in **Figure 8.1**, Sevenoaks has numerous designated heritage assets and features, including listed buildings, scheduled monuments, registered parks and gardens, and conservation areas.

Historic background of Sevenoaks

- 8.15 Sevenoaks is home to a wealth of heritage assets, including the well-known Grade I listed Knole House which has been owned by monarchs and archbishops²⁷. The rich built heritage of Sevenoaks is set within a medieval natural landscape of ancient woodland and farmland; the network of historic parks and gardens are important for aesthetic, botanic, scientific, and social heritage and are an invaluable part of the area's landscape heritage character.

²⁷ Britannica (no date) 'Sevenoaks' can be accessed [here](#).

Listed buildings

- 8.16 Listed buildings are nationally designated buildings that are protected through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. A structure can be awarded a listed designation for its architectural and/or historical interest. Heritage and historic environment assets can be presented with a listed designation to ensure its preservation; for its architectural and/or historic contribution, for a specific feature on the structure, or for the land contained within the structure or beneath it.
- 8.17 According to the National Heritage List for England managed by Historic England²⁸, there are 1,653 listed buildings in the Sevenoaks area: 31 Grade I, 92 Grade II* and 1,530 Grade II.

Scheduled monuments

- 8.18 The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act allows for the investigation, presentation, and recording of matters of archaeological or historical interest, making provision for the regulation of operations or activities that could affect ancient monuments and archaeological areas. Scheduled monuments are nationally designated sites which are protected under this legislation. According to the National Heritage List for England, there are 26 scheduled monuments in the Sevenoaks area.

Registered parks and gardens

- 8.19 Historic England's 'Register of Parks and Gardens of Special Historic Interest in England', established in 1983, identifies over 1,600 sites considered to be of significance. There are 17 registered parks and gardens within the Sevenoaks area; three Grade I, six Grade II* and eight Grade II.

Conservation areas

- 8.20 Conservation areas are designated due to their special architectural and historic interest. Conservation area appraisals are a tool to demonstrate an area's special interest, detailing the reasons for the designation and providing a greater understanding and articulation of the area's character. Ideally, appraisals should be regularly reviewed as part of the management of the conservation area and can form a management plan.
- 8.21 Within Sevenoaks District there are 41 conservation areas; they all vary in size and type, ranging from town centres to villages and hamlets. According to the Sevenoaks website²⁹, the conservation areas are often centred on groups of listed buildings, but other features like open spaces, trees, historic street patterns or items of historic or archaeological interest may also warrant the protection given by the conservation area designation. All 41 conservation areas have an associated appraisal, all have design guidance and most have management plans.

²⁸ Historic England (no date) 'National Heritage List for England – Search the List – Advanced Search' can be accessed [here](#). Select which heritage categories you'd like to view and enter 'Sevenoaks' into the 'District/Unitary Authority/Borough' box and press the search button at the bottom of the page.

²⁹

Locally important non-designated heritage features

- 8.22 It is noted that not all of an area's historic environment features are subject to statutory designations and non-designated features contribute a large part of what people come into contact with on a day to day basis. Although not designated, many buildings and areas are of historic interest and are important to local communities.
- 8.23 The Kent Historic Environmental Records (HER) identifies important and distinctive structures or features that positively contribute to the local sense of place and distinctiveness of the county. Following a high-level review of these HER via the Heritage Gateway³⁰, it is concluded that there are 4,470 local records within the Sevenoaks area, covering a range of built and archaeological assets spanning a range of periods. During the next stages of the SA process and subject to the availability of information, the Kent HER will be reviewed in greater detail to determine the potential impacts to non-designated heritage features resulting from the provisions within the new Local Plan.

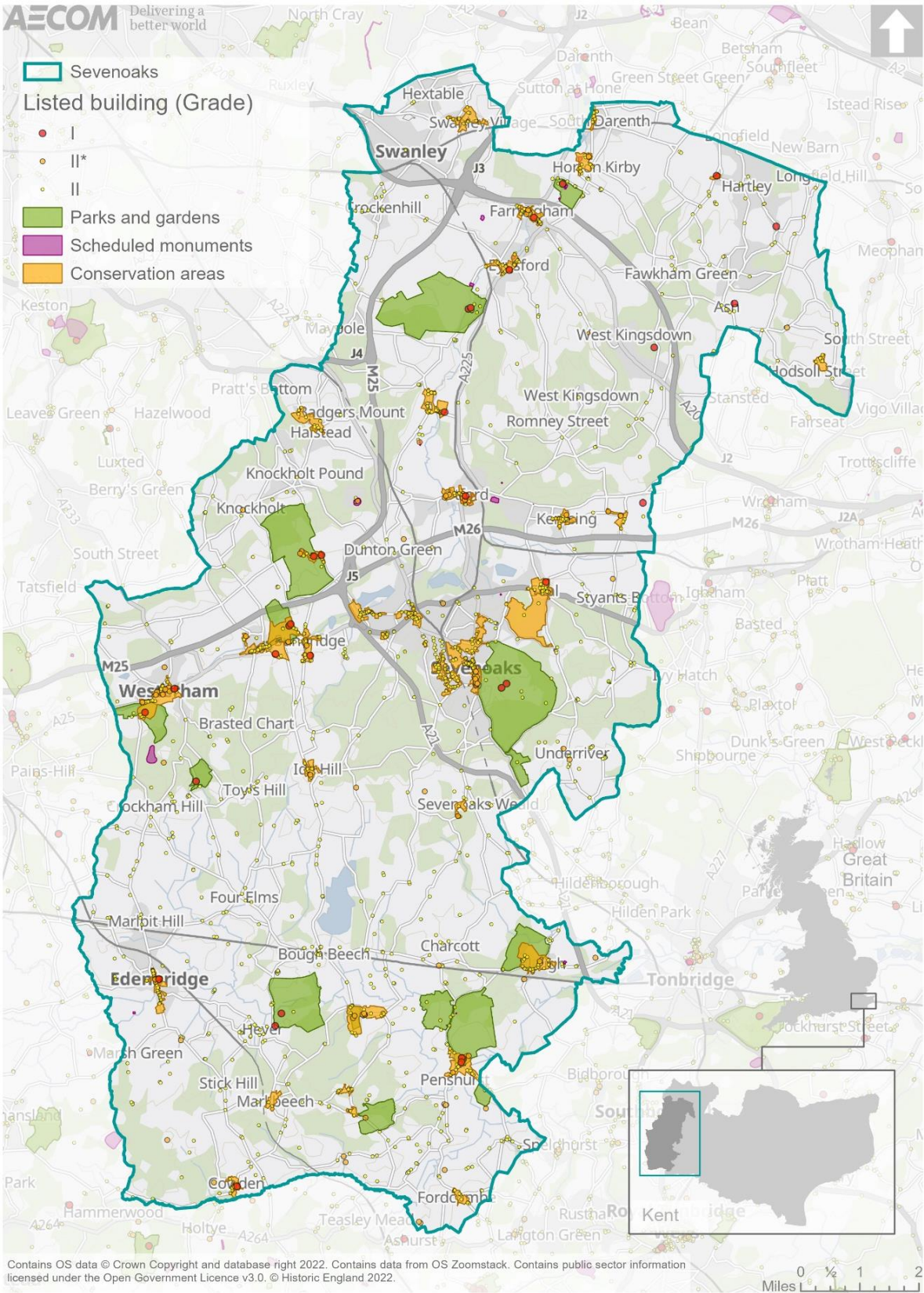
Heritage at Risk

- 8.24 Since 2008, Historic England has produced an annual Heritage at Risk Register, which highlights historic environment assets that are seen to be 'at risk'. According to the 2021 Heritage at Risk Register for the South East³¹, there are three heritage assets within the district that are considered to be at risk: Otford Palace (Historic England List Number: [1005197](#)), Chapel, Maplescombe (Historic England List Number: [1005134](#)) and Combe Park (Historic England List Number: [1000365](#)). Additionally, the Swaylands designation (Historic England List Number: [1001280](#)) is also on the Heritage at Risk register – located in Sevenoaks/Tunbridge Wells.
- 8.25 However, it is important to recognise that Heritage at Risk registers for areas outside of London do not contain information about the status of Grade II listed buildings. As such, it is currently not possible to determine whether any of the Grade II within the district which are at risk. During the next stages of the SA process, the Register shall be reviewed in greater detail to determine whether any heritage features which are currently at risk are likely to be impacted by the proposals within the new Local Plan.

³⁰ Heritage Gateway (2021) 'More Detailed Search' can be accessed [here](#). Open the link, change the tab from 'map' to 'admin location', type 'Sevenoaks' into the administrative location search bar and press the search button at the bottom of the page.

³¹ Historic England (2021) 'Heritage at Risk Register: South East' can be accessed [here](#).

Figure 8.1: Designated heritage assets



Summary of future baseline

- 8.26 New development within Sevenoaks has the potential to impact on the fabric and setting of heritage assets, for example through unsympathetic development that does not fully consider the contribution of assets (designated or non-designated) to the historic character of the District. Existing historic environment designations, implemented through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979, offer a level of protection to designated heritage assets and their settings.
- 8.27 New development could present the opportunity to enhance the historic landscape in Sevenoaks District through improving the historic setting of heritage assets, contributing to the understanding and interpretation of assets through working to reveal their significance, helping to produce management plans for heritage assets viewed as 'at risk' and updating evidence bases to compliment information and data. This should be achieved through implementing proposals that consider the historic environment in their design.

Key sustainability issues

- 8.28 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to historic environment:
- With a wealth of both designated and non-designated heritage assets within Sevenoaks District, development of the new Local Plan provides an opportunity to deliver a spatial strategy that avoids or minimises impacts for the historic environment. It is important to ensure that development considered the fabric and the setting of heritage assets equally.
 - Development of the new Local Plan provides an opportunity to develop the existing evidence base in relation to the historic environment, especially in terms of considering new evidence emerging or changes that have occurred since the designation of the multiple conservation areas. Developing the evidence base will allow for a raised awareness and understanding of the heritage and historic environment in Sevenoaks, for the benefit of residents and visitors alike.
 - During the subsequent stages of the SA process, the National Heritage List for England, and the Kent HER will need to be reviewed in greater detail to determine the potential impacts of the new Local Plan on both designated and non-designated historic environment features. This includes 1,653 listed buildings, 26 scheduled monuments, 17 registered parks and gardens, 41 conservation areas, four heritage assets on the Heritage at Risk register and 4,470 locally important historic environment features.
 - Any opportunity to restore or support appropriate management plans for the conservation of the four heritage assets on the Heritage at Risk register should be explored. Further opportunities to improve the public realm and green infrastructure, to the indirect benefit of heritage settings, should also be recognised and promoted.

SA objective and appraisal questions

8.29 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 8.1** below.

Table 8.1 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objective
Heritage and historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the district.

8.30 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Conserve and/ or enhance the significance of buildings and structures of architectural and/or historic interest, both designated and non-designated, and their setting?
- Restore and/ or conserve the identified heritage asset 'at risk'? And/ or identify whether any Grade II listed buildings within the District are deemed at risk, and address this appropriately?
- Conserve and enhance the special interest, character, and appearance of the conservation areas and their setting?
- Conserve and enhance local diversity and character, archaeology, and historic landscapes?
- Support access to and the interpretation and understanding of the historic environment?
- Support the undertaking of archaeological investigations and, where appropriate, recommend mitigation strategies?

9. Housing

Focus of topic

- Housing quality
- Housing mix
- Housing affordability

Policy context

9.1 **Table 9.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the new Local Plan. The key messages emerging from the review are then summarised after the table.

Table 9.1 Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
National	
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Fixing our broken housing market	2017
Local	
Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy	2011
Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan	2015
Sevenoaks & Tunbridge Wells strategic Housing Market Assessment	2015
SDC Targeted Review of Local Housing Need	2022
Housing Delivery Test Action Plan	2021
Older Person's Housing Study	2022

9.2 Chapter 5 of the NPPF focuses on the delivery of a sufficient supply of homes, and states that:

“To support the government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay”.

9.3 In relation to the delivery of affordable housing, the NPPF states that:

- “...the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies (including, but not limited to, those who require affordable housing, families with children, older people, students, people with disabilities, service families, travellers, people who rent their homes and people wishing to commission or build their own homes)”.
- The ‘Fixing our broken housing market’ White Paper sets out how the Government intends to boost housing supply and, over the long term, create a more efficient housing market whose outcomes more closely

match the needs and aspirations of all households, and which support wider economic prosperity.

9.4 At the local level, and in relation to the housing SA topic, SDC's Core Strategy includes the following policies:

- Policy LO1 – Distribution of Development
- Policy LO2 – Development in Sevenoaks Urban Area
- Policy LO4 – Development in Swanley
- Policy LO6 – Development in Edenbridge
- Policy LO7 – Development in Rural Settlements
- Policy SP2 – Sustainable Development
- Policy SP3 – Provision of Affordable Housing
- Policy SP4 – Provision of Affordable Housing in Rural Areas
- Policy SP5 – Housing Size and Type
- Policy SP6 – Provision for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople
- Policy SP7 – Density of Housing Development

9.5 The Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan also includes the following relevant policies:

- Policy H1 – Residential Development Allocations
- Policy H2 – Mixed Use Development Allocations
- Policy H4 – Reuse and Protection of Existing Housing Stock

9.6 The 2015 Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) considered housing need in Sevenoaks District and Tunbridge Wells Borough. It assessed overall housing need, the type and size of homes needed.

9.7 The Sevenoaks 2022 Targeted Review of Local Housing Needs was prepared to update the evidence on housing needs and sets out an updated need for affordable homes, tenure requirements, and the level of discount required for first homes. The review was prepared in accordance with the July 2021 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

9.8 SDC's Housing Delivery Test Action Plan (2021) identifies the position with regards to housing delivery in District and sets key actions in response to the findings with the aim of improving housing delivery.

Summary of current baseline

9.9 Property prices are substantially higher in Sevenoaks District than the national average for England. With entry level homes³² costing £317,500 and median price properties costing £425,000 compared to £164,000 and £249,000,

³² Lower quartile price in 2020. Source:

respectively, for England. However, it is important to note there are areas with low house prices, like Swanley.

- 9.10 The median property price has increased by 197% over the period 2000 to 2020 whilst the entry level price (lower quartile) increased more than 3 fold in the same period.
- 9.11 The ratio of median house price to median gross annual workplace-based earnings in Sevenoaks in 2020 was 12.6, which is higher than that for the South East (9.9) and England as a whole (7.8). This means that in 2020, full-time employees could typically expect to spend around 12.6 times their workplace-based annual earnings on purchasing a home.
- 9.12 Sevenoaks is one of the least affordable districts compared to the rest of Kent, the wider region (South East) and England. However, the District is relatively more affordable than Bromley and Tandridge.
- 9.13 SDC's Targeted Review of Local Housing Need (TRLHN) uses the government's standard method for calculating housing need to produce a figure of 714 dwellings per annum in Sevenoaks District.
- 9.14 In terms of affordable housing need the TRLHN identified a need for 423 affordable dwellings per annum. These are mainly required in the form of social rents (58%) with the remaining to be provided as affordable rents (7%), First Homes (25%) and affordable home ownership tenures (10%).
- 9.15 The 2020 Housing Delivery Test (HDT)³³ for Sevenoaks was 70% indicating an under delivery of housing in the District. This means an action plan must be produced applying the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the addition of a 20% buffer in the 5 year housing land supply. SDC Core Strategy and Allocation and Development Management Plan (ADMP) set a target to deliver 3,300 dwellings over the period 2006 to 2026 or 165 per annum. Housing delivery over the 3 year period; 2017 to 2020, is shown in Table 9.2.

Table 9.2 Housing Delivery in Sevenoaks District 2017-2019

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
Number of homes required	503	708	647
Number of homes delivered	388	500	414

- 9.16 The District's 5 year housing requirement is 4,284 dwellings (includes 20% buffer) but the Council's five year housing land supply (September 2021) showed that it has the capacity to deliver 2,479 units over the next 5 years (from 2021) which equates to only 2.9 years of the 5 year supply requirement.

³³ An annual measurement of housing delivery in each local planning area which measures net homes delivered against the homes required over the previous three years, using national statistics and local planning authority data.

Therefore, SDC cannot demonstrate 5 years' worth of deliverable housing supply.

- 9.17 SDC's— Older Persons Housing Study (2022) considered future need for specialist older person accommodation and residential care provision in the District. It concluded that the need for specialist older person accommodation is expected to increase due to the ageing population and estimated an additional need for 1,345 additional units of specialist older persons' accommodation by 2043. The total C3 (dwelling) need is 928 or 40 each year and C2 (residential) need is 418 or 18 each year to 2043.

Summary of future baseline

- 9.18 The suitability (e.g., size and design) and affordability of housing for local requirements depends on the implementation of appropriate housing policies through the new Local Plan. Unplanned development may have wider implications in terms of transport and access to infrastructure, or the natural environment.
- 9.19 The longer-term impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic are currently unclear. However, in the context of Sevenoaks District, it is likely to impact (positively and negatively) on the vitality and viability of town centres, contribute to changes in demand for housing, employment land and retail, and on community provision in smaller centres.
- 9.20 The trend of increasing property prices and declining affordability ratios is likely to continue.
- 9.21 The ageing of the population will lead to increased need for specialist older persons accommodation.

Key sustainability issues

- 9.22 The following key issues have been identified through the baseline review for this theme:
- Property prices in Sevenoaks District are significantly higher than the national average making housing affordability a key concern.
 - Sevenoaks District Council have over-delivered against the Core Strategy target of 165 homes per year. However, there has been an under delivery against the standard method since its introduction. and the Council cannot currently demonstrate a 5 year housing supply.
 - The government's standard method for housing needs calculates the need for 714 dwellings per annum in Sevenoaks District.
 - There is a substantial need for affordable housing in the District (423 per annum).
 - There is also significant need for specialist older persons' accommodation by 2043.

SA objective and appraisal questions

9.23 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 9.3** below.

Table 9.3 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objective
Housing	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing.

9.24 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Support the timely delivery of an appropriate mix of housing types and tenures?
- Ensure delivery of high-quality, affordable and specialist housing that meets the needs of all residents?
- Provide quality and flexible homes that meet people's needs?
- Promote the use of sustainable building techniques, including use of sustainable building materials in construction?
- Provide housing in sustainable locations that allow easy access to a range of local services and facilities?

10. Landscape

Focus of topic

- Designated and non-designated sites and areas.
- Landscape, townscape and villagescape character; and
- Visual amenity.

Policy context

10.1 **Table 10.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the new Local Plan. The key messages emerging from the review are then summarised after the table.

Table 10.1: Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
International	
The European Landscape Convention	2000
National	
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
National Model Design Code	2021
Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2021-2026	2021
Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2020-2025	2020
The National Design Guide	2019
High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Plan 2019-2024	2019
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
National Character Area Profiles	Various
Countryside and Rights of Way Act	2000
Local	
Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation	2017
Sevenoaks District Council Landscape Character Assessment	2017
Sevenoaks District Green Belt Assessment Report	2017
Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan	2015
Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy	2011

10.2 The European Landscape Convention promotes the protection, management and planning of the landscapes and organises international co-operation on landscape issues.

10.3 The new Local Plan should consider the principles outlined in the NPPF, which gives great weight to conserving and enhancing protected landscapes, landscape character, and scenic beauty. The scale and extent of

development within these areas should be limited and development within their setting should be mindfully located and designed to avoid/minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas. The NPPF also recognises the role of green infrastructure in landscape settings, as well as the positive contribution that land remediation can have on despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated, and unstable land.

- 10.4 The National Model Design Code states that all design codes should include a landscape and open space strategy that incorporates the existing natural features and new structural elements. It recognises that landscapes can be major drivers in the design process.
- 10.5 The 25 Year Environment Plan and National Design Guide outline the same aims as one another, focusing on creating a cleaner, greener country that puts the environment first and celebrates the variety of natural landscapes and habitats present in the UK. Design is focused on creating beautiful, enduring, and successful places, which respond to local character and provide a network of high quality and green open spaces. Of note is 'Chapter 2: Recovering nature and enhancing the beauty of landscapes' and 'Goal 6: Enhanced beauty, heritage and engagement with the natural environment'.
- 10.6 The Sevenoaks District overlaps with sections of the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the High Weald AONB and is adjacent to the Surrey Hills AONB to the west. In line with the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, these three AONBs publish management plans every five years to detail how the special components, characteristics and qualities will be maintained and enhanced. Additionally, these management plans outline the management strategy for the plan periods and highlight key opportunities and issues.
- 10.7 National Character Area (NCA) Profiles have been created and published by Natural England. The NCAs divide England into 159 distinct natural areas based on their landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, historic, cultural, and economic characteristics, following the natural features in a landscape and not administrative boundaries. Each NCA profile describes the features which shape each of these landscapes and outlines opportunities for conservation and enhancement.
- 10.8 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act allows for greater freedom for people to explore the countryside, gives greater protection to natural features and provides the management and protection of Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It sets out the roles and responsibilities on AONBs and requires the preparation and publication of a management plan for every AONB every five years.
- 10.9 The Sevenoaks Vision 2015-2035 within the Sevenoaks District Council Issues and Options Consultation document states all of the District's landscapes, including the two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, will continue to be conserved and enhanced in a way which protects local identity and distinctiveness. This is reiterated in Objective 2 – Promote well designed, safe places and safeguard and enhance the District's distinctive high quality natural and built environments. Additionally, Chapter 7 in the document discusses green belt land, highlighting the importance to this resource for health and recreation, the natural environment and agriculture. Evidence

suggests that 31 sub-areas of the green belt within Sevenoaks is performing weakly and may require further investigation but are still protected.

- 10.10 The Sevenoaks District Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) identifies the key characteristics of the area's landscapes, which contribute to the sense of place felt by residents and visitors alike. The document performs as an aid in decision making the future management of the Sevenoaks landscape. The report identifies 13 character types and 31 area profiles. It also performs a evidence role for the emerging Local Plan.
- 10.11 The Sevenoaks District Green Belt Study assesses the performance of land designated as green belt land within the District against requirements of the NPPF and local considerations, considers constraints and identifies parcels which are potentially suitable for release from the designation. This document forms part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan.
- 10.12 The Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan acts as a tool to implement and build on the strategic vision of the Core Strategy. In particular, Policy EN1 – Design Principles protects the historic character of the area by ensuring buildings that contribute are not lost; Policy EN3 – Demolition in Conservation Areas states proposals involving the destruction of non-listed buildings in conservation areas will be properly assessed against the contribution to the interest of the area for that building; and Policy EN4 – Heritage Assets draws together a comprehensive approach to conserving and enhancing the District's heritage assets.
- 10.13 Policy LO8 – The Countryside and Rural Economy within the Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy states the extent of the green belt will be maintained, the countryside will be conserved and the distinctive features that contribute to the special character of its landscape will be protected and enhanced. Additionally, the distinctive character of the two AONBs will be conserved and enhanced. Policy SP6 – Provision for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople details that land will not be allocated if it will have a significant adverse effect on the landscape.

Summary of current baseline

Nationally protected landscapes

- 10.14 Sevenoaks District is within two AONBS – High Weald AONB is located in the south of the District, south of Edenbridge, and the Kent Downs AONB is located to the north; starting in the area around Winkhurst Green and ending around Farningham. Additionally, the District is located adjacent to the Surrey Hills AONB to the west in the neighbouring district of Tandridge.
- 10.15 The High Weald AONB designation encompasses 1,461km² of the landscape, has approximately 127,000 people living within the landscape and over one million people live within 5km of it. Five key components make up the character of the area:
- Geology, landform, and water systems – the landscape is incised, ridged, and faulted and underlain with clays and sandstone;
 - Settlement, which is dispersed with isolated farmsteads and Medieval villages;

- Routeways, which are characterised as a dense network of historic routeways that now make up numerous roads, tracks, and paths;
- Woodland – an large amount of ancient woodland is within the AONB landscape; and
- Field and Heath – small, irregular, and productive fields bounded by hedgerows and woods with distinctive zones of lowland heaths are found across the AONB.

10.16 The Kent Downs AONB designation encompasses 878km² of land across Kent³⁴, and there are more than one million people living within one kilometre of the area. Key components of the landscape include:

- Dramatic landforms and views – south-facing scarps of chalk and greensand, dry valleys, plateaux, steep river valleys and the iconic white cliffs to name a few. These landforms offer long-distance panoramas as well as enclosed vistas;
- Biodiversity-rich habitats – including those that are locally, nationally, and internationally important, and even some species that are largely or wholly confined to the Kent Downs in Britain;
- Farmed landscape – farming covers around 64% of the AONB landscape and the pastoral scenery is a particularly valued part of the landscape;
- Woodland and trees - the Kent Downs is one of Britain's most wooded landscapes, with broadleaf and mixed woodland covering approximately 23% of the designation. Almost 70% of the woodlands are ancient woodland, supporting nationally important woodland plant and animal species;
- A rich legacy of historic and cultural heritage - millennia of human activity have created an outstanding cultural inheritance and strong 'time depth' to the Kent Downs. There is evidence of Neolithic megalithic monuments, Bronze Age barrows, Iron Age hill-forts, Roman villas, roads and towns, medieval villages and hamlets, post-medieval stately homes, and historic defence structures from Norman times to the twentieth century. Additionally the Kent Downs AONB landscape has long been an inspiration to artists, scientists, and leaders, including Shakespeare, Darwin, Churchill, and Turner;
- The Heritage Coasts - the Heritage Coasts either side of Dover, including the shoreline, marine flora and fauna cliffs, heritage features and adjacent downland;
- Geology and natural resources – including the soils and water resources influenced by chalk and aquifers; and
- Tranquillity and remoteness – remote countryside that offers dark night skies, space, beauty, and peace.

10.17 The Surrey Hills AONB designation encompasses 8422km² of land. Key components of the designation include:

³⁴ Essential Travel Guide (2022) 'Kent Downs AONB' can be accessed [here](#).

- Agriculture – the AONB has been shaped and maintained by farmers, landowners, and estate managers over the centuries, creating a landscape mosaic of fields of various sizes, copses, and farm buildings;
- Woodland, hedgerows, and veteran trees – the designation has an approximately woodland cover of 40%, comprised of patchwork irregular wooded areas, old coppices, plantations, and ancient woodland;
- Biodiversity and water resources – the AONB has rich and diverse wildlife populations due to its varied geology, landform, and traditional land management;
- Cultural heritage – the historic buildings, settlements, country lanes, hedgerows, parkland, common and heath and downland, provide evidence of a rich historic and cultural past that have inspired artists, writers, designers, and architects;
- Recreation, health, and wellbeing – the AONB extensive rights of way, open commons, easy access trails and picnic sites to allow locals and visitors to enjoy the outdoors; and
- Transport and traffic - the designation is well served by rail, road and an extensive network of footpaths and bridleways.

10.18 According to the Sevenoaks District Green Belt Assessment, 93% of the District (approximately 34,400ha) is designated as green belt land. The green belt land plays an important role in preventing the outward sprawl of Greater London and other large built-up areas within, and adjacent to, the District. It also maintains the District's settlement pattern through ensuring continued openness to the countryside and protecting the rural setting of historic towns.

National Character Areas

10.19 National Character Areas (NCAs) are areas that share similar landscape characteristics, and which follow natural lines in the landscape rather than administrative boundaries. This makes them valuable in creating decision-making frameworks for the natural environment. The Sevenoaks District has five different NCAs (see **Figure 10.1**): NCA113 North Kent Plain in the area around Farningham to the north, NCA119 North Downs from the M25/M26 at Dunton Green to Farningham, NCA120 Wealden Greensand from Sevenoaks Weald to the M25/M26 at Dunton Green, NCA121 Low Weald from Hever to Sevenoaks Weald and NCA122 High Weald from the southern District boundary to Hever. The profiles for these NCAs describe the following statements of environmental opportunities (SEO).

10.20 The NCA113 North Kent Plain³⁵ has the following SEOs:

- **SEO 1:** Maintain the historic character and long tradition of a farmed landscape, creating habitats to establish more resilient and coherent ecological networks within the farmed and peri-urban areas, benefitting biodiversity and geodiversity, and helping to regulate water and soil quality. Protect traditional practices including the longstanding associations of the fruit belt, maintaining a strong sense of place, and reinforcing Kent's reputation as the Garden of England.

³⁵ Natural England (2015) 'NCA Profile: 113 North Kent Plain (NE357)' can be accessed [here](#).

- **SEO 2:** Plan for and manage the effects of coastal change, by allowing the operation of natural coastal processes and improving the sustainability of current management practices, to maintain and enhance the local landscape character and the area's biodiversity assets. This can lead to habitat creation, flood-risk reduction to built-up areas, and opportunities for recreational activity.
- **SEO 3:** Protect the distinct wooded areas of the landscape, particularly through the management of nationally important, ancient semi-natural woodlands, increasing the area of broadleaved woodland where appropriate, while increasing the connectivity of the mosaic of associated habitats; notably wooded heath and semi-improved grasslands and enhancing the recreational resource.
- **SEO 4:** Protect and enhance the strong character and heritage of the urban areas. Plan for the creation of significant new areas of green space and green corridors to provide a framework for new and existing development in urban areas and along major transport routes.

10.21 The NCA119 North Downs³⁶ has the following SEOs:

- **SEO 1:** Manage, conserve, and enhance the distinctive rural character and historic environment of the North Downs, including the long-established settlement pattern, ancient routeways and traditional buildings. Protect the tranquillity of the landscape and sensitively manage, promote, and celebrate the area's rich cultural and natural heritage, famous landmarks, and views for future generations.
- **SEO 2:** Protect, enhance, and restore active management to the diverse range of woodlands and trees of the North Downs, for their internationally and nationally important habitats and species, cultural heritage, and recreational value and to help to deliver climate change mitigation and adaptation. Seek opportunities to establish local markets for timber and biomass to support the active management of local woods, while recognising the contribution to sense of place, sense of history and tranquillity.
- **SEO 3:** Manage and enhance the productive mixed farming landscape of the North Downs and the mosaic of semi-natural habitats including the internationally important chalk grassland. Promote sustainable agricultural practices to benefit soils, water resources, climate regulation, biodiversity, geodiversity, and landscape character while maintaining food provision.
- **SEO 4:** Plan to deliver integrated, well-managed multi-functional green space in existing and developing urban areas, providing social, economic, and environmental benefits, and reinforcing landscape character and local distinctiveness, particularly on or alongside the boundaries of the designated landscapes within the North Downs.

10.22 The NCA120 Wealden Greensand³⁷ has the following SEOs:

- **SEO 1:** Protect and manage the nationally recognised and distinctive character of the landscape, conserving and enhancing historic landscape character, tranquillity, sense of place, and the rich historical and geological

³⁶ Natural England (2013) 'NCA Profile: 119 North Downs (NE431)' can be accessed [here](#).

³⁷ Natural England (2013) 'NCA Profile: 120 Wealden Greensand (NE465)' can be accessed [here](#).

heritage of the Wealden Greensand. Enhance access provision where appropriate, to maintain public benefit from and enjoyment of the area.

- **SEO 2:** Protect, manage, and significantly enhance the mosaic and connectivity of semi-natural habitats within the mixed farmed landscape – particularly the internationally important woodland and heathland habitats – for the benefit of biodiversity, pollination, soil and water regulation, landscape character and enhanced adaptation to climate change.
- **SEO 3:** Manage and significantly enhance the quality of the characteristic wetland and water environment of the Greensand. This will contribute to sustainable flood risk management, will benefit the regulation of water quality and water availability, as well as enhancing the sense of place, biodiversity, recreation, and wetland habitat adaptation to climate change.
- **SEO 4:** Plan to deliver a network of integrated, well managed green spaces in existing and developing urban areas, providing social, economic, and environmental benefits, and reinforcing landscape character and local distinctiveness – particularly on or alongside the boundaries of the designated landscapes within the Wealden Greensand.

10.23 The NCA121 Low Weald³⁸ has the following SEOs:

- **SEO 1:** Protect, manage, and significantly enhance the area's intricate and characteristic mix of semi-natural ancient woodlands, gill woodland, shaws, small field copses, hedgerows, and individual trees to reduce habitat fragmentation and benefit biodiversity, while seeking to improve and encourage access for health and wellbeing and reinforce sense of local identity.
- **SEO 2:** Conserve and enhance the distinctive historical aspects of the Low Weald landscape, including its important geological features and sites of heritage interest, particularly those associated with Wealden iron industry, enabling access, continued research, interpretation, understanding and enjoyment of the extensive and nationally significant resources.
- **SEO 3:** Work at a landscape scale to improve the quality, state and structure of all Wealden rivers, streams and standing waterbodies and their appropriate flood plains, taking account of water quality, water flow and hydraulic connection with the flood plain, while seeking to enhance biodiversity, historic features and recreation opportunities and reinforcing sense of place.
- **SEO 4:** Maintain the sustainable but productive pastoral landscape of the Low Weald, while expanding and connecting semi-natural habitats to benefit biodiversity, regulating soil and water quality by promoting good agricultural practice, and maintaining the extent and quality of unimproved permanent grassland and meadows. Restore degraded neutral grasslands to buffer sites and encourage pollinators and predators for pest regulation.

10.24 The NCA122 High Weald³⁹ has the following SEOs:

- **SEO1:** Maintain and enhance the existing woodland and pasture components of the landscape, including the historic field pattern bounded

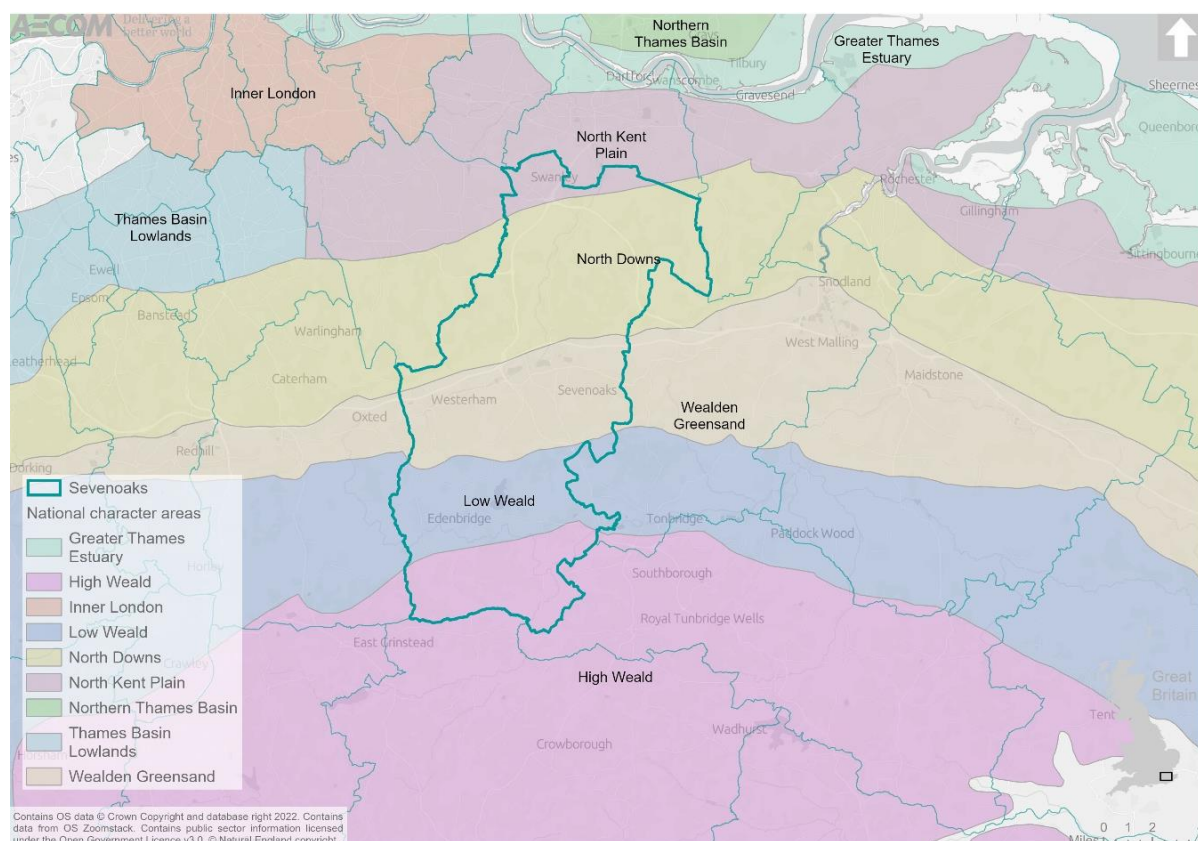
³⁸ Natural England (2015) 'NCA Profile: 121 Low Weald (NE450)' can be accessed [here](#).

³⁹ Natural England (2015) 'NCA Profile: 122 High Weald (NE508)' can be accessed [here](#).

by shaws, hedgerows and farm woods, to improve ecological function at a landscape scale for the benefit of biodiversity, soils and water, sense of place and climate regulation, safeguard ancient woodlands and encourage sustainably produced timber to support local markets and contribute to biomass production.

- **SEO 2:** Maintain and restore the natural function of river catchments at a landscape scale, promoting benefits for water quality and water flow within all Wealden rivers, streams, and flood plains by encouraging sustainable land management and best agricultural practices to maintain good soil quality, reduce soil erosion, increase biodiversity, and enhance sense of place. Maintain and enhance the geodiversity and especially the exposed sandrock.
- **SEO 3:** Maintain and enhance the distinctive dispersed settlement pattern, parkland and historic pattern and features of the routeways of the High Weald, encouraging the use of locally characteristic materials and Wealden practices to ensure that any development recognises and retains the distinctiveness, biodiversity, geodiversity and heritage assets present, reaffirm sense of place and enhance the ecological function of routeways to improve the connectivity of habitats and provide wildlife corridors.
- **SEO 4:** Manage and enhance recreational opportunities, public understanding and enjoyment integrated with the conservation and enhancement of the natural and historic environment, a productive landscape and tranquillity, in accordance with the purpose of the High Weald AONB designation.

Figure 10.1 National Character Areas



Landscape, townscape, and villagescape character

- 10.25 Landscape, townscape, and villagescape character play an important role in understanding the relationship between people and place and identifying recognisable and distinct patterns in the landscape which make one area different from another. Landscape, townscape and villagescape character assessments can both help identify the value of landscapes and townscapes, in terms of visual and amenity value.
- 10.26 Completed in 2017, the Sevenoaks District Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) classifies 13 Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) across the District, which are:
- Type 1 – Settled Downs;
 - Type 2 – Downs;
 - Type 3 – Wooded Downs;
 - Type 4 – Settled Farmland;
 - Type 5 – Scarp Landscapes;
 - Type 6 – Scarp Foot Farmland;
 - Type 7 – Chalk Valleys;
 - Type 8 – Clay Valleys;
 - Type 9 – Greensand Parks and Farmland;
 - Type 10 – Cherts;
 - Type 11 – Low Weald;
 - Type 12 – Wealden River Valleys; and
 - Type 13 – High Weald.
- 10.27 The LCA also provides guidance for the management of the LCAs in response to new development, detailing how development can adversely impact on each unique LCA. In this respect, this evidence base can be used to enable informed decisions to be made about the future protection, management and sustainable development of Sevenoaks' landscapes, townscapes and villagescapes, and can be complemented by more detailed local studies.

Ancient woodland and Tree Preservation Orders

- 10.28 11% of the District is ancient woodland, and has already been discussed above, under the Biodiversity heading.
- 10.29 Implemented by local planning authorities, Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) are designated to protect specific trees, groups of trees or woodlands in the interests of their amenity value. When considering 'amenity'; the local planning authority will likely take into consideration the following criteria⁴⁰:
- Visibility: the extent to which the trees or woodlands can be seen by the public; and

⁴⁰ GOV.UK (2014): 'Tree Preservation Orders – General', [online] available to access [here](#)

- Individual, collective, and wider impact: considering the importance of the trees or woodlands in relation to their cultural or historic value, contribution to and relationship with the landscape and/or their contribution to the character or appearance of a conservation area.

10.30 Sevenoaks District Council have numerous designated TPOs, which can be viewed via a map online⁴¹.

Visual Amenity

10.31 It is useful to note that views of and across areas are also an important factor to consider in the planning process, as the scale, height, and mass of development can ultimately impact on important views without appropriate assessment. Changes like development and landscape change can see these important views and vistas degraded overtime.

Summary of future baseline

10.32 New development has the potential to lead to small, incremental, but cumulative changes in landscape, townscape and villagescape character and quality within the Sevenoaks District area. This includes the loss or damage of features and areas with an important visual amenity value. Development proposals should guide growth so that it does not negatively impact upon the landscape, townscape and villagescape features which contribute to the distinctive character of the area.

10.33 It should be noted that the planning system has tools in place to offer a degree of protection to the landscape; therefore, new development will not necessarily result in harm. Furthermore, locally distinctive landscape and townscape features, characteristics and special qualities can be protected, managed, and enhanced through appropriate planning policies. It is further recognised that new development that is appropriately designed and landscape led could support the area's intrinsic landscape character and quality. This could include regeneration that improves the village setting, delivering green infrastructure improvements and/ or new recreational opportunities and the identification and/ or enhanced framing of key views.

Key sustainability issues

10.34 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to landscape:

- There are a range of landscape features present within the district, including two AONBs, within the Sevenoaks District area which contribute to the character and quality of the landscape. These features should be protected and enhanced where possible through the plan process, including the identification of an appropriate, low-impact spatial strategy.

⁴¹ Sevenoaks District Council (2022) 'Locate or obtain a copy of a tree preservation order' can be accessed [here](#).

SA objective and appraisal questions

10.35 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 10.2** below.

Table 10.2 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objective
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape and townscape.

10.36 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Protect and enhance the local landscape, townscape and villagescape character, key sensitivities and features and quality of place?
- Conserve and enhance local identity, diversity, and settlement character?
- Protect visual amenity and locally important views in the Sevenoaks District area?
- Conserve and enhance the Surrey Hills, Kent Downs, and High Weald AONB landscapes? This includes the designated areas themselves and their setting, which also contain special characteristics and qualities that contribute to these landscapes.
- Consider the contribution development could have to landscape character and green infrastructure provision in line with the AONB management plans?
- Support the integrity of the landscape in the District area in accordance with the Sevenoaks Landscape Character Assessment?
- Support the integrity of the landscape in the District area in accordance with the Sevenoaks Green Belt Assessment Report?

11. Land and soils

Focus of topic

- Soil quality;
- Agricultural land; and
- Minerals resources.

Policy context

11.1 **Table 11.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the SA.

Table 11.1: Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
National	
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
National Planning Policy for Waste	2014
Waste Management Plan for England	2013
Safeguarding our Soils: A Strategy for England	2009
Local	
Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30	2020
Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan	2015
Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy	2011

- 11.2 The new Local Plan will need to consider the principles outlined in the NPPF which pursue the protection of high-quality soil resources. It recognises the wider benefits of natural capital and the need to consider the long-term implications of climate change and ways in which to build resilience in this respect. The NPPF encourages efficient land use, utilising brownfield land opportunities and land remediation schemes where appropriate and delivering environmental gains.
- 11.3 The 25 Year Environment Plan discusses measures to improve soil quality, restore and protect peatlands, reduce pollution, maximise resource efficiency and minimise environmental impacts. Of note is 'Chapter 1: Using and managing land sustainably', 'Chapter 4: Increasing resource efficiency, and reducing pollution and waste', 'Goal 5: Using resources from nature more sustainably and efficiently' and 'Goal 8: Minimising waste'.
- 11.4 The National Planning Policy for Waste outlines the UK Government's goal of a more sustainable and efficient approach to resource use and management. It states that local planning authorities should ensure sufficient opportunities are taken to meet the identified needs for the management of waste streams and that provision for waste management is considered appropriately.

- 11.5 The Waste Management Plan for England identifies measures being taken to move towards a zero-waste economy, including a national waste plan which seeks to identify measures to move towards a circular economy in which resources are kept in use for longer.
- 11.6 The Safeguarding our Soils: A Strategy for England policy paper seeks to ensure that all soils in England will be managed sustainably, and degradation threats minimised successfully by 2030. This policy paper also seeks to secure sustainable and resilient water resources in addition to the improvement in waterbody quality. The Waste Management Plan for England identifies measures being taken to move towards a zero-waste economy, which includes national waste plan which seeks to identify measures being taken to move towards a circular economy in which resources are kept in use for longer. To do this, there needs to be a maximisation in the value of resources used and a minimisation in the waste created.
- 11.7 The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan delivers strategic policies for the period 2013-2030. The Strategy includes policies dealing with development management, waste, and minerals. As such, the guidance and policies in this document will need to be adhered to when considering proposals.
- 11.8 The Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan acts as a tool to implement and build on the strategic vision of the Core Strategy. In particular, Policy SC1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development ensures the protection of soil when it comes to flood and drainage infrastructure.
- 11.9 The Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy is the plan for future development in the District. Policy SP11 – Biodiversity ensures that the protection of soil resources when it comes to land management practices, be it flood, forestry, defence, or another type.

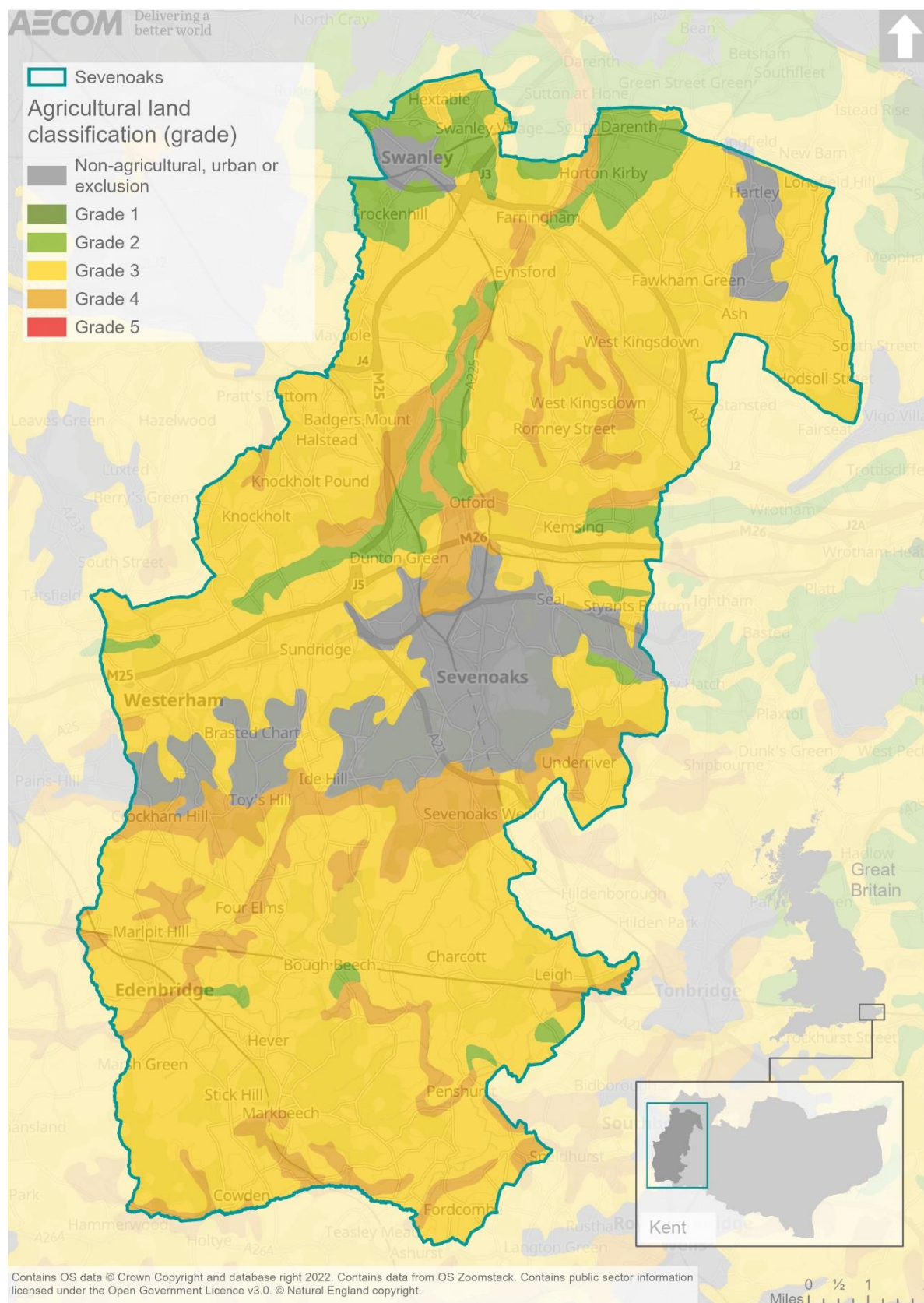
Summary of current baseline

Soil resources

- 11.10 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) classifies land into six grades (plus 'non-agricultural land' and 'urban'), where Grades 1 to 3a are recognised as being the 'best and most versatile' (BMV) land and Grades 3b to 5 of poorer quality. In this context, there is a need to avoid loss of higher quality BMV agricultural land.
- 11.11 The provisional ALC dataset provided by Natural England⁴² (see **Figure 11.1**) demonstrates that the majority of the Sevenoaks District area is underlain with Grade 3 'Good to Moderate' agricultural land, with pockets of Grade 4 'Poor' land and areas of urban land and land in non-agricultural use around Sevenoaks town itself. Nevertheless, in the absence of a detailed ALC assessment for the whole of Sevenoaks, it currently cannot be determined whether this Grade 3 land is Grade 3a (i.e., BMV land) or Grade 3b (i.e., not BMV land).

⁴² Natural England (2010) 'Agricultural Land Classification map London and the South East (ALC007)' can be accessed [here](#).

Figure 11.1: Agricultural Land Classification



- 11.12 The 'Predictive Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Land Assessment' for London and the South East provided by Natural England⁴³ indicates the Sevenoaks District as having significant areas of low (<20%) and moderate (20-60%) likelihood of BMV land, with areas of high (>60%) likelihood to the north. It also demonstrates there are areas of urban/industrial land use and land in non-agricultural use, which matches with the corresponding ALC.

Mineral resources

- 11.13 Mineral resources are defined as natural concentrations of minerals or bodies of rock that have the potential to be of economic interest in the present or the future due to their inherent properties. As minerals are a non-renewable resource, minerals safeguarding is deployed as the process through which it is ensured that non-minerals development does not needlessly prevent the future extraction of mineral resources⁴⁴.
- 11.14 According to the Sevenoaks mineral safeguarding map⁴⁵, Sevenoaks has a multitude of mineral types. This includes river terrace deposits, sub-alluvial river terrace deposits, silica sand/construction sand (Sandstone: Folkestone Formation), limestone Hythe Formation (Kentish Ragstone), sandstone (Cuckfield Stone Bed, Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation), sandstone (Upper Tunbridge Wells Sand Formation), sandstone (Ashdown Formation) and sandstone (Ardingly Sandstone).
- 11.15 The Limestone Hythe Formation runs is located in the middle of the Sevenoaks District around Sevenoaks town, and the sandstone from the Ashdown Formation, Cuckfield Stone Bed and Ardingly deposit are located within the southern part of the District. North of Sevenoaks town has very little minerals, with areas of river terrace and sub-alluvial river terrace deposits being the main minerals.

Summary of future baseline

- 11.16 New development in the Sevenoaks District has the potential to impact areas of BMV agricultural land. In this context there could potentially be opportunities to avoid developing Grade 3a agricultural land by directing development toward areas of Grade 3b land where this is available.
- 11.17 Due to the presence of Grade 3 ALC land, and the presence of mineral resources within Sevenoaks District, new developments that are located outside of the settlement boundaries have the potential to lead to losses of higher quality agricultural land and could result in the sterilization of mineral resources.

⁴³ Natural England (2017) 'Likelihood of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) Agricultural Land – Strategic scale map London and the South East (ALC019)' can be accessed [here](#).

⁴⁴ UK Government (2014) 'Guidance: Minerals' can be accessed [here](#).

⁴⁵ Kent County Council (2016) 'Sevenoaks District Council – Mineral Safeguarding Areas' can be accessed [here](#).

Key sustainability issues

11.18 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to land and soil resources:

- The provisional ALC data indicates the Sevenoaks District is underlain with areas of Grade 3 and Grade 4 agricultural land as well as urban land and land in non-agricultural use. However, the data does not differentiate between Grade 3a and Grade 3b land. As a finite resource, Grade 3a (best and most versatile) should be protected where possible. Opportunities to investigate and identify more precise ALC data should be sought where possible.
- The emerging Local Plan should seek an appropriate spatial strategy which avoids conflict with the mineral safeguarding areas, especially in the southern part of the District and around Sevenoaks town and ensures that development does not hinder any potential future abstraction in this location.

SA objective and appraisal questions

11.19 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 11.2** below:

Table 11.2 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objective
Land and soils	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance soil and mineral resources

11.20 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Promote the use of previously developed land?
- Consider the value of previously development land, especially where it contains or contributes to open mosaic habitats?
- Identify and avoid the development of the best and most versatile agricultural land?
- Support the remediation of contaminated land?
- Protect the integrity of mineral resources?
- Support the minimisation, reuse, and recycling of waste?

12. Transportation and movement

Focus of topic

- Transportation infrastructure;
- Traffic flows and congestion;
- Accessibility and connectivity; and
- Public rights of way.

Policy context

12.1 **Table 12.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the new Local Plan. The key messages emerging from the review are then summarised after the table.

Table 12.1: Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
International	
Directive 2002/49/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise	2002
National	
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain	2021
National Infrastructure Strategy	2020
Planning Practice Guidance	2019
Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy	2019
Transport Investment Strategy	2017
Noise Policy Statement for England (NPSE)	2010
The Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006	2006
Local	
Sevenoaks District Council Movement Strategy 2022	2022
Transport Strategy for the South East	2020
Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation	2017
Local Transport Plan 4: Delivering Growth without Gridlock 2016-2031	2016
Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan	2015
Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy	2011
Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport 2010-2026	2010

- 12.2 Directive 2002/49/EC aims to provides a common basis for combating the harmful effects of exposure to environmental noise. It seeks to control noise in built-up areas, in public parks and other quiet areas in urban settings, in quiet areas in open country and near to schools, hospitals and other noise-sensitive buildings.
- 12.3 The Local Plan will need to consider the principles outlined in the NPPF, which influence plans and development proposals to ensure they consider transport issues from the earliest stages, address any known issues, and maximise opportunities to increase accessibility to sustainable transport. Larger developments are expected to limit the need to travel and offer a genuine choice of transport modes. However, it is recognised that sustainable transport solutions will vary between urban and rural environments.
- 12.4 Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain sets out how the UK government will deliver emission reductions and associated benefits in the country; presenting the path to net-zero transport in the UK and the commitments and actions necessary to make progress on this path.
- 12.5 The National Infrastructure Strategy states that transport networks are vital for jobs, businesses, and economic growth. As such, the government will continue its efforts with decarbonising the transport sector to meet the net zero emissions target by 2050.
- 12.6 National Planning Practice Guidance identifies the importance of local planning authorities when undertaking an assessment of the implications of transport when developing or reviewing their local plan. This allows local authorities to ensure a strong transport evidence base is developed, which can support the preparation and/or review of the local plan.
- 12.7 The Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy details the national approach to maximising transport innovation in cities and towns, focussing on sustainable and accessible modes of transport, like walking and cycling.
- 12.8 The Transport Investment Strategy sets out investment priorities to improve the connectivity, effectiveness and reliability of transport network whilst simultaneously reducing impacts on the natural environment. Furthermore, the document places great emphasis on making cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of longer journeys.
- 12.9 The Noise Policy Statement for England states that transport planning systems should make provision for reducing environmental noise, which can cause and increased risk of health effects when left unmanaged.
- 12.10 The Environmental Noise (England) Regulations 2006 apply to environmental noise, which includes noise from transportation. The regulations require consistent noise mapping and action planning for road, rail, and aviation noise, in addition to large urban areas. Furthermore, the regulations necessitate the production of noise action plans based on the noise maps, allowing for the identification of areas that are exposed to the highest levels of noise. The action plans also provide suggestions to reduce the levels in these areas.

- 12.11 The Sevenoaks District Council Movement Strategy 2022 outlines the vision of making movement. It demonstrates the priorities and aims of the council under four themes:
8. Health and wellbeing – support movement that improves the health and wellbeing of communities
 9. Cycling and walking – committed to improving the cycling and walking network in the Sevenoaks District
 10. Public transport – work with partners to deliver a high quality, innovative and connected public transport system
 11. Sustainable movement – support the need to reduce travel, embrace new technology and encourage sustainable movement
- 12.12 The Transport Strategy for the South East uses transport models to understand how and when the transport network will see and experience future strain. The document highlights strategies that can be introduced to alleviate congestion, including the adoption of emerging transport technologies.
- 12.13 The Sevenoaks District Council Issues and Options Consultation document includes rivers and areas of open water under Objective 1 – Promote housing choice for all. Objective 4 – Support lively communities with well performing town and village centres which provide a range of services, facilities and infrastructure also highlights the need for transport infrastructure.
- 12.14 The Sevenoaks District falls under the Kent County Council Local Transport Plan. The plan outlines five outcomes that are crucial to improving transport in the District:
- Outcome 1: Economic growth and minimised congestion;
 - Outcome 2: Affordable and accessible door-to-door journeys;
 - Outcome 3: Safer travel;
 - Outcome 4: Enhanced environment; and
 - Outcome 5: Better health and wellbeing.
- 12.15 The Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan acts as a tool to implement and build on the strategic vision of the Core Strategy. In particular, Chapter 10 Travel and Transport outlines three policies for transport: Policy T1 – Mitigating Travel Impact, Policy T2 – Vehicle Parking and Policy T3 – Provision of Electrical Vehicle Charging Points.
- 12.16 The Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy outlines the strategy for transport, including improving accessibility, tackling congestion, providing safer roads, and improving air quality. In addition transport is a focus of Policy LO4 – Development in Swanley, Policy LO7 – Development in Rural Settlements, Policy SP2 – Sustainable Development, Policy SP4 – Affordable Housing in Rural Areas and Policy SP6 – Provision for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.
- 12.17 The Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport sets out to reduce congestion and pollution and tackle problems of accessibility and road safety within the District. There are four priority objectives:

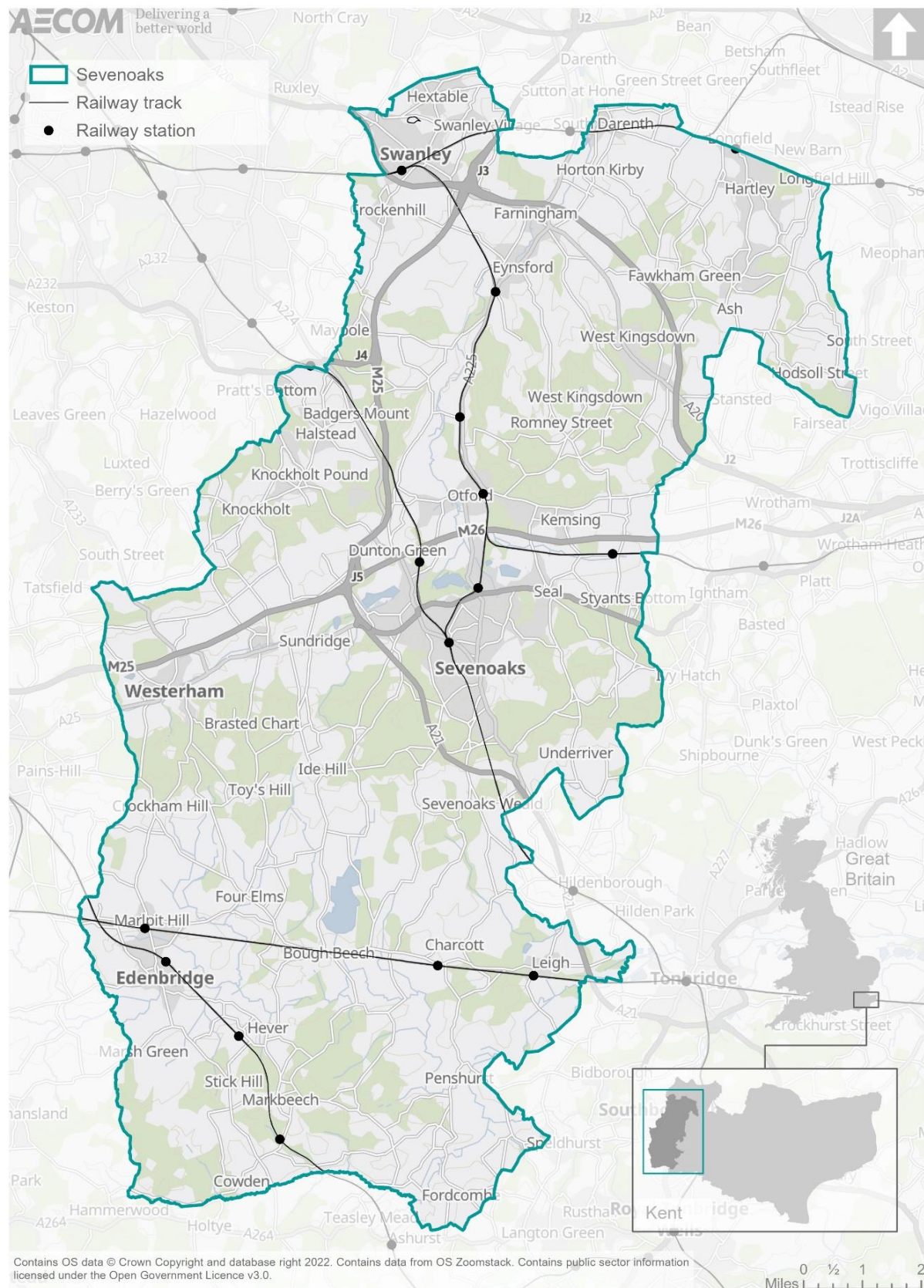
- Improving accessibility;
- Tackling congestion;
- Providing safer roads; and
- Improving air quality.

Summary of current baseline

Rail network

- 12.18 The Sevenoaks District is served by 14 railway stations (see **Figure 12.1**) on the Thameslink, Oxted, South Eastern Main, Redhill to Tonbridge, Maidstone East, Hastings, and Chatham Main lines. These lines offer regular services to destinations in London, Kent, Surrey, and Sussex, including: Sevenoaks, London Blackfriars, Uckfield, London Bridge, London Charing Cross, Redhill, Tonbridge, Ramsgate, London Victoria, Ashford International, Hastings, Sandwich, Welwyn Garden City and Gillingham. London is accessible via a 90 minute train journey from the Sevenoaks District.
- 12.19 According to 2011 Census estimates, approximately 10,847 workers in Sevenoaks District used the rail network to travel and a further 238 used the underground, metro, tram or lightly used the rail network to get to work.

Figure 12.1: Rail network in Sevenoaks



Bus network

12.20 According to the Bustimes website⁴⁶, the Sevenoaks District is served by 18 bus services. **Table 12.2** contains these services.

12.21 The Bustimes website indicates there are no bus services in Ash, Bayleys Hill, Childsbridge, Goathurst Common, Heaverham, Hodsoll Street, Romney Street and Stick Hill.

12.22 Additionally, Badgers Mount, Bitchet Green, Chiddingstone, Chiddingstone Hoath, Cowden, Fawke Common, Finch Green, Godden Green, Hever, How Green, Ide Hill, Knockholt Kent Station, Knockholt Pound, Markbeece, Stone Street, Troy Town are only served by school bus routes.

Table 12.2: Bus services operating in Sevenoaks, excluding school buses

Route Number	Provider	Destination
1	Go-Coach Coach Hire	Sevenoaks to Westerham
2	Go-Coach Coach Hire	Sevenoaks to Swanley
5	Go-Coach Coach Hire	Sevenoaks to Tonbridge
6	Go-Coach Coach Hire	Sevenoaks to Kemsing
8	Go-Coach Coach Hire	Sevenoaks Town Circular
E1	Go-Coach Coach Hire	Edenbridge Town Service
429	Go-Coach Coach Hire	West Kingsdown to Dartford
306/308	Redroute	Bluewater-Gravesend-Meopham-Borough Green-Sevenoaks
402/402A/402B/402W	Arriva Kent and Surrey	Sevenoaks to Tunbridge Wells
423	Arriva Kent and Surrey	New Ash Green to Dartford
433	Arriva Kent and Surrey	New Ash Green to Bluewater
414/414A/414B	Arriva Thameside	South Darenth to Dartford
477	Arriva Thameside	Bluewater to Orpington
789	Centaur	Tonbridge and Hildenborough
231	Metrobus	Edenbridge-Tunbridge Wells
233	Metrobus	Edenbridge-Tunbridge Wells
236	Southdown Buses	Oxted to East Grinstead
594	Southdown Buses	Chalkpit Wood to Westerham

12.23 According to 2011 Census estimates, approximately 854 workers in Sevenoaks used the bus network to travel to work.

⁴⁶ Bustimes (no date) 'Sevenoaks' can be accessed [here](#).

Road network and congestion

- 12.24 Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport identifies the M20, M25, M26, A20, A21, A25, A225, B2042 and B2026 as the main transport corridors in the district. The strategic road network is defined as the M20, M25, M26 and the A20 – allowing for the majority of the Sevenoaks District to be accessed. Good access to the M25, M20, A20, A21 and A25 has promoted increased levels on inward and outward community. The strategic road network allows residents access to Gatwick and Heathrow airports, the Channel ports, and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link.
- 12.25 Increasing car ownership and usage in line with national trends has led to a high dependency on private car use, resulting in increased traffic volumes and road congestion. The M25 is subject to approximately 200,000 vehicle movements a day and experiences extreme congestion between junctions 5 and 7. Additionally, the A25 experiences congestion at peak times. The main areas of concern for congestion in the Sevenoaks District is around the Sevenoaks urban centre and Swanley – especially on the A25, A224 and the B2173.
- 12.26 According to 2011 Census estimates, approximately 32,085 workers used the road network in Sevenoaks to travel to work.

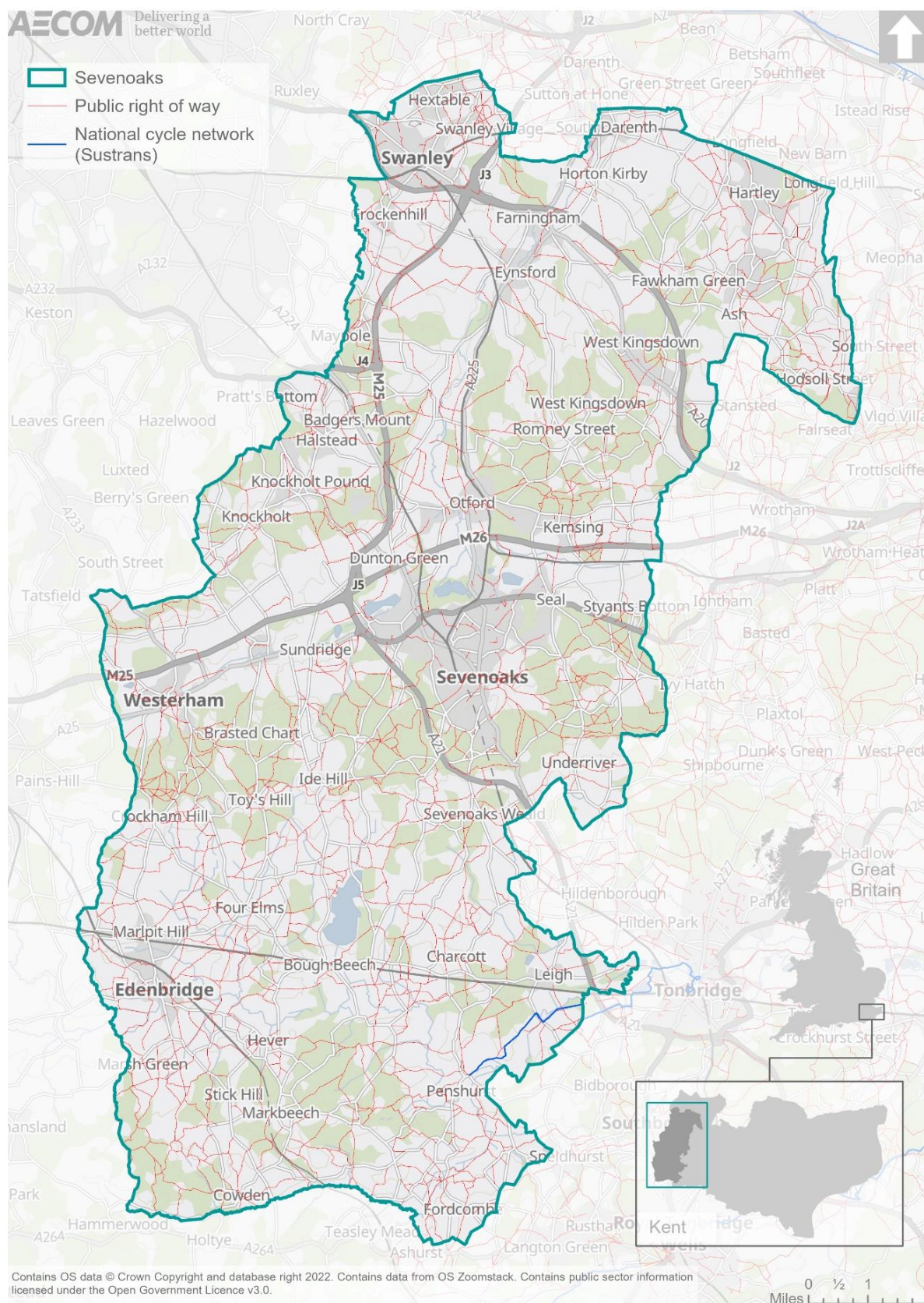
Public Rights of Way

- 12.27 Sevenoaks District has a total of 1044 Public Rights of Way (PRoW) totalling 753.3km, which includes restricted and open byways, public bridleways, and public footpaths. According to a PRoW Report written for Kent Council, around 6 in 10 people use a PRoW at least every 6 months across the county, and a third of the interviewers indicated they use public footpaths at least once a week⁴⁷. A map showing the PRoW in Sevenoaks is provided by Open Street Map⁴⁸, see also **Figure 12.2**.

⁴⁷ Kent County Council and Lake Market Research (2017) 'Kent County Council Public Rights of Way Written Report' can be accessed [here](#).

⁴⁸ OSM (no date) 'Rights of Way in Sevenoaks, Kent' can be accessed [here](#).

Figure 12.2 Public Rights of Way



Summary of future baseline

- 12.28 The cumulative impacts of new development have the potential to increase traffic and contribute to already-experienced congestion, as well as create new problem areas. This is likely to be more pronounced during peak times like the current baseline. However, development within Sevenoaks has the potential to lead to enhancements in the strategic transport network and promote sustainable travel.
- 12.29 It is important to recognise the impact of COVID-19 may have on future transport movements. Travel decreased during the lockdowns implemented by the government, and many workplaces have become more flexible when it comes to where you work. As such, sustainable travel may become more popular in the future and less people may travel to work.
- 12.30 There are opportunities to improve public transport networks within Sevenoaks District in accordance with the Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport and the Kent County Council Local Plan. Similarly, the provision of infrastructure to promote at home (i.e., remote) working is likely to positively contribute towards these aims.
- 12.31 Whilst the negative effects of new development on the transport network are likely to be mitigated in part by new infrastructure, there will be a continuing need for development to be situated in accessible locations.

Key sustainability issues

- 12.32 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to transportation and movement:
- There are many train stations within the Sevenoaks District that allow for travel within and outside of the District area. There are multiple bus services, however some areas of the District are not served by buses at all, or are only served with buses that run during school term times. These bus services allow for access within and outside of Sevenoaks.
 - There are extensive PRow in the District. Development should seek to connect with and where possible extend PRow and maximise opportunities for active travel.
 - The recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has the potential to change travel patterns in the short, medium, and longer term. Development should seek to enhance local connections in response to changing local demands.

SA objective and appraisal questions

12.33 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 12.2** below.

Table 12.2 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objective
Transportation and movement	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.

12.34 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Support the objectives within the Kent County Council Local Transport Plan, the Sevenoaks District Strategy for Transport, and the Sevenoaks Movement Strategy 2022 to encourage more sustainable transport?
- Encourage a shift to more sustainable forms of travel and enable sustainable transport infrastructure enhancements?
- Improve local connectivity and pedestrian and cyclist movement?
- Facilitate working from home to reduce the use of private vehicles to access workplaces?
- Increase and improve accessibility and support local connectivity and movement?
- Reduce the impact of the transport sector on climate change?
- Improve road safety?
- Reduce the impact on residents from the road network?

13. Water

Focus of topic

- Water resources and quality
- Wastewater treatment

Policy context

13.1 **Table 13.1** below presents the most relevant documents identified in the policy review for the purposes of the new Local Plan. They key messages emerging from the review are then summarised after the table.

Table 13.1: Plans, policies, and strategies

Document title	Year of publication
International	
The Water Environment Regulations	2017
National	
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)	2021
A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment	2018
The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England and Wales) Regulations	2017
Future Water: The Government's water strategy for England	2011
Water for Life	2011
Local	
Thames Water Water Resources Management Plan 2020 to 2100	2020
South East Water Water Resources Management Plan	2019
Sutton and East Surrey Water Water Resources Management Plan	2019
Sevenoaks District Council Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation	2017
Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan	2015
Thames River Basin District River Basin Management Plan	2015
Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy	2011

- 13.2 The Water Environment Regulations (2017) applies to surface water and groundwater. It details the need to prevent further deterioration in aquatic ecosystems as well as ensuring the protection, enhancement and restoration of water bodies is a key consideration in development proposals.
- 13.3 The new Local Plan should consider the principles outlined in the NPPF, which states that new and existing development should be prevented from contributing to, being at risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of water pollution.

- 13.4 The Water Framework Directive (WFD) encourages a catchment-based approach for water management for the 100 water catchments in England and Wales. The main objectives of the WFD are:
- To enhance the status of aquatic ecosystems and associated wetlands and prevent further deterioration to them.
 - To promote the sustainable use of water.
 - To reduce the pollution of water, especially by 'priority' and 'priority hazardous' substances; and
 - To ensure the progressive reduction of groundwater pollution.
- 13.5 The 25 Year Environment Plan discusses measures to restore and protect peatlands and use water more sustainably. Of note is 'Goal 2: Clean and plentiful water'.
- 13.6 Future Water: The Government's water strategy for England sets out how the water sector will look by 2030 for both people and wildlife. The vision also includes valuing and protecting water resources and delivering water to customers in a fair, affordable, and cost-reflective manner. Water for Life highlights the Government's vision for a more resilient water sector. It details the measures that will be deployed to tackle issues such as poorly performing ecosystems, and the combined impacts of climate change and population growth on stressed water resources.
- 13.7 Water for Life highlights the government's vision for a more resilient water sector. It highlights the impact of climate change and population growth on our water sources, which are already stressed and expected to become more so. It also highlights current and future issues associated with the water sector, like poorly performing ecosystems, and how these will be remedied.
- 13.8 Sevenoaks District is served by Thames Water, South East Water and Sutton and East Surrey Water. The associated Water Resources Management Plans (WRMPs) set out the actions these water utility companies will take to provide a secure and sustainable supply of water for their customers within Sevenoaks and beyond.
- 13.9 The Sevenoaks District Council Issues and Options Consultation document includes rivers and areas of open water under Objective 2 – Promote well designed, safe places and safeguard and enhance the District's distinctive high quality natural and built environment. Objective 6 – Promote a greener future also highlights the need to promote sustainable water use and discuss flood risk appropriately.
- 13.10 The Sevenoaks District Council Allocations and Development Management Plan acts as a tool to implement and build on the strategic vision of the Core Strategy. Policy SC1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development aims to ensure developers consider possible sources of water pollution, flood risk and the wider water environment during proposals.
- 13.11 The Thames River Basin District River Basin Management Plan provides a framework for protecting and enhancing the benefits provided by the water environment. The Plan informs decisions on land-use planning and contains four sets of information:

- Baseline classification of water bodies.
- Statutory objectives for protected areas.
- Statutory objectives for water bodies; and
- Summary programme of measures to achieve statutory objectives.

13.12 Policy SP2 – Sustainable Development within the Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy states the District will contribute to improving water efficiency in all new development.

Summary of current baseline

Water resources and quality

13.13 Sevenoaks District is located within the Thames River Basin District⁴⁹ and is within two management catchments – Darent and Cray and Medway. Within the Darent and Cray management catchment, the District sits within the Darent operational catchment⁵⁰, which has two waterbodies – one has a ‘poor’ ecological status, the other has a ‘moderate’ ecological status, but both have a failed chemical status. Within the Medway management catchment, Sevenoaks sits within two operational catchments – Eden and Middle Medway. Eden has 11 waterbodies⁵¹ – one has a ‘poor’ ecological status, two have a ‘poor’ ecological status and eight have a ‘moderate’ ecological status; all 11 have a failed chemical status. The Middle Medway⁵² has 13 waterbodies – one has a ‘bad’ ecological status, two have a ‘poor’ ecological status and ten have a ‘moderate’ ecological status – again, all 13 have a failed chemical status (see **Figure 13.1**).

13.14 The Thames River Basin District River Basin Management Plan outlines the priority river basin management issues that need tackling in the Darent and Cray Operational Catchment and the Medway Operational Catchment.

13.15 For the Darent and Cray Management Catchment, these are:

- Diffuse pollution.
- The improvement of modified physical habitats; and
- Invasive non-native species (INNS).

13.16 However, the following work has been underway to address these issues:

- The Thames21 River Keeper team have provided community engagement and educational activities, which have helped to raise awareness of the importance of the Cray, its habitats and ecology. They have delivered, and will continue to deliver, habitat improvements within the river. Thames21 provides over £30,000 to the catchment per year.
- NWKCP and SERT have worked together on a £41,000 project to improve fish passage on the upper Darent. The creation of a bypass channel

⁴⁹ Environment Agency (2022) ‘Thames River Basin District’, can be accessed [here](#).

⁵⁰ Environment Agency (2022) ‘Classifications data for Darent Operational Catchment’ can be accessed [here](#).

⁵¹ Environmental Agency (2022) ‘Classifications data for Eden Operational Catchment’ can be accessed [here](#).

⁵² Environment Agency (2022) ‘Classifications data for Medway Middle Operational Catchment’ can be accessed [here](#).

around a large structure will reconnect over 1.5km of the river near Sundridge.

- Angling clubs have provided, and will continue to provide, habitat improvements to the river and lakes. Projects include reduction of shading, creation of low flow channels, pool and riffle features, artificial margins, and monitoring of invertebrates and water levels within the river. This voluntary work contributes over £20,000 to the catchment each year.

13.17 For the Medway Management Catchment, the priority river basin management issues are:

- Physical modifications to the river.
- Water quality; and
- Water flows and availability.

13.18 However, the following work has been underway to address these issues:

- The partnership has been implementing, and will continue to implement, a project to make Harper's Weir fish passable, improving fish passage in the Lesser Teise by linking 3.5km of the river which was previously disconnected.
- The Kent Wildlife Trust has secured funding to carry out restoration and creation of wetland habitats and provide landowner advice for the Eden operational catchment.
- Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP) has established an invasive non-native plant species (INNS) control and management programme across the Medway catchment.
- MVCP is leading a project to provide 2km of riparian habitat improvements to restore fish habitat and river function on the Hammer Stream in the Beult operational catchment.
- 4 schemes are proposed to remove artificial structures in the Eden, Teise and Beult operational catchments. These are barriers to fish movement and are contributing to problems with flow dynamics, resulting in a build-up of fine sediment, pollutants, and an impoverished habitat for aquatic life.

13.19 Additionally, housing and employment development should positively contribute to improving river waterbodies where possible.

Wastewater treatment

13.20 The River Basin Management Plan indicates that pollution from wastewater affects 45% of water bodies in the Thames River Basin District. The following measures can address this issue:

- Mitigate / remediate point source impacts on receptor.
- Reduce point source pollution at source.
- Reduce diffuse pollution at source; and
- Reduce point source pathways (i.e., control entry to water environment).

13.21 Thames Water is currently creating its first Drainage and Wastewater Management Plan (DWMP), which will set out the future challenges for

Thames Water's drainage and wastewater systems and the actions needed to manage them over a 25-year period⁵³.

- 13.22 The scope of the SA must consider the reality of where waste water and additional water sources must come from to accommodate new homes and businesses. This is to ensure they will not risk deterioration of waterbodies such as the River Darent.

Nitrate vulnerable zones

- 13.23 Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZs) represent areas at risk from agricultural nitrate pollution, identifying rules in relation to the use of fertilisers and manures as well as the requirement to prevent water pollution from farming areas⁵⁴. According to the interactive map⁵⁵ the Sevenoaks District area is within the Surface Water SWSGZ4007 safeguard area, the Surface Water SWSGZ4223 safeguard zone, the Groundwater G65 – North Kent NVZ and the Groundwater GWSGZ0135 safeguard zone (see **Figure 13.1**).

Source protection zones

- 13.24 Groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZs) have been defined by the Environment Agency in England and Wales to protect groundwater sources such as wells, boreholes, and springs that are used for public drinking water supply⁵⁶. The northern area of the District is within Zone overlaps with Zone III – Total Catchment, Zone 11 – Outer Protection and Zone I – Inner Protection zones. Additionally, the area directly south of the M25 is within these zones and within Zone I and Zone II Subsurface Activity zones. The area between Poundsbridge and Chiddingstone Hoath in the south of the district is within Zones I and II for Subsurface Activity, Zone 1 – Inner Protection Zone and Zone III – Total Catchment (see **Figure 13.1**).

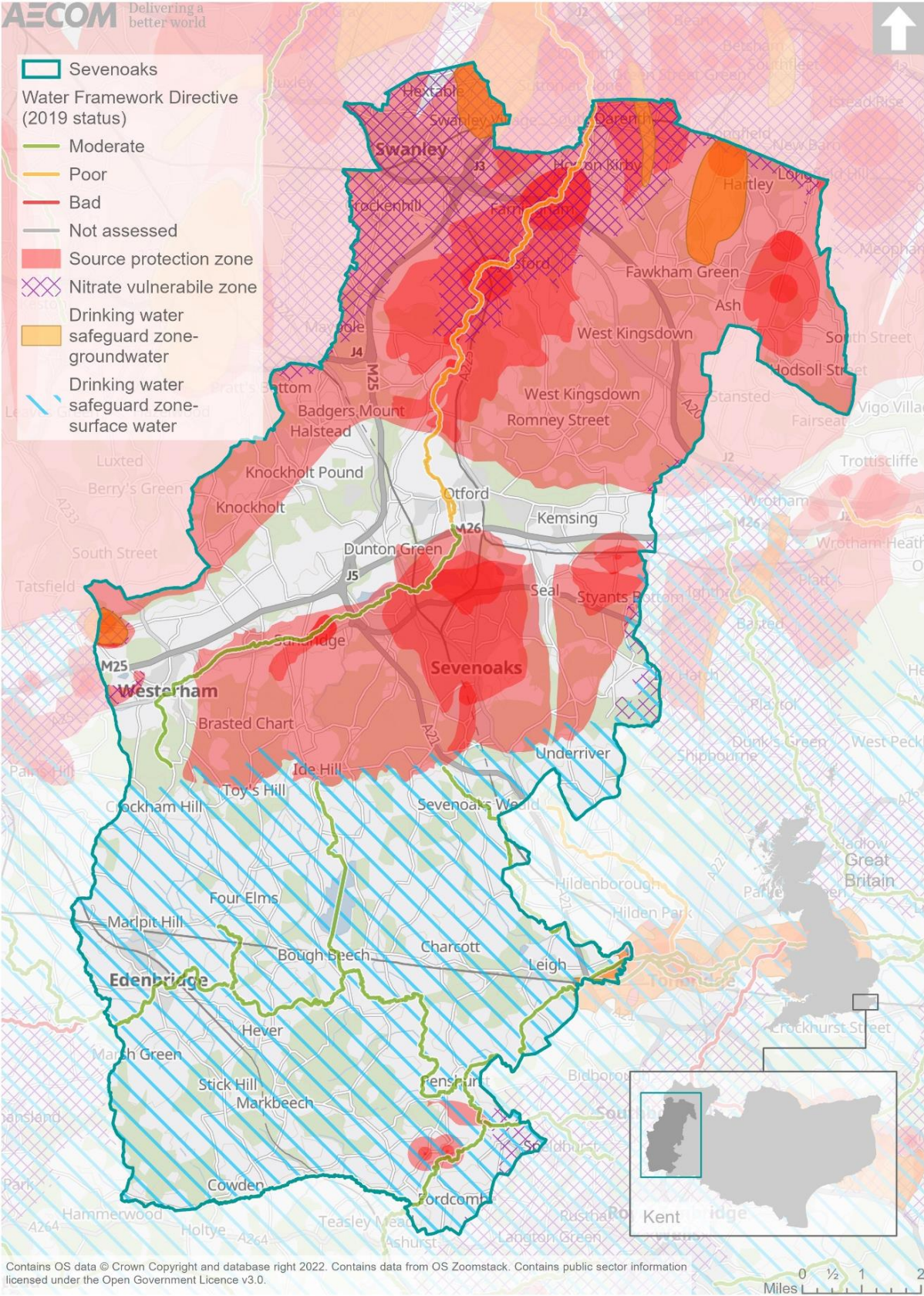
⁵³ Thames Water (2022) 'Drainage and wastewater management plan' can be accessed [here](#).

⁵⁴ UK Government (2018) Nitrate vulnerable zones can be accessed [here](#).

⁵⁵ UK Government (2021) Nitrate vulnerable zone designations and appeals 2021 to 2024 can be accessed [here](#).

⁵⁶ UK Government (2017) 'Groundwater Protection' can be accessed [here](#).

Figure 13.1: Water resources and quality



Summary of future baseline

13.25 Future development has the potential to affect water quality and availability through increased consumption and pollution, wastewater discharges, water runoff and modification. Thames Water, South East Water and Sutton and East Surrey Water are likely to maintain adequate water services over the plan period; therefore, it will be important for new development to avoid negative impacts on water quality, and instead contribute to reducing consumption and improving efficiency.

Key sustainability issues

13.26 Considering the baseline information and policy context review, the following key issues are identified in relation to water:

- The Sevenoaks District is situated within three operational catchments – all waterbodies within these three operational catchments have varying ecological statuses and failed chemical statuses. Development should avoid impacts to the water quality of these water bodies.
- The Sevenoaks District overlaps with multiple NVZs and SPZs. Inappropriate development types or large scale development should be focused away from these areas where possible to ensure negative impacts are minimised.

SA objective and appraisal questions

13.27 Based on the key issues discussed above, it is proposed that the SA should include the objective in **Table 13.2** below.

Table 13.2 Proposed SA objective

SA topic	SA objective
Water	Ensure the efficient and effective use of water in addition to protecting and enhancing water quality.

13.28 Supporting appraisal questions include (will the option/proposal...):

- Avoid any negative impacts on water quality and support improvements to water quality?
- Ensure appropriate drainage and mitigation is delivered alongside proposed development?
- Protect waterbodies from pollution?
- Maximise water efficiency and opportunities for water harvesting and/or water recycling?
- Protect SPZs and NVZs in the district?
- Consider the use of SuDS and water saving measures in development, such as improved water efficiency and water saving technologies like greywater / rainwater harvesting?
- Use SuDS and appropriate drainage methods to ensure the protection of groundwater from mobilisation of contaminants with the land and soils?

14. Proposed SA framework

14.1 **Table 14.1** provides a summary framework of the proposed SA objectives (referred to as the SA framework), established through **Chapters 2 to 13**.

Table 14.1 Proposed SA framework

SA topic	SA objective
Air quality	Ensure that improvements to air quality are sought and delivered.
Biodiversity	Support, protect, and enhance biodiversity within and surrounding the district.
Climate change adaptation	Support the resilience of Sevenoaks to the effects of climate change, including flooding.
Climate change mitigation	Reduce the contribution to climate change made by activities within Sevenoaks District.
Communities and health	Ensure growth in the district is aligned with the needs of all residents, improving accessibility, anticipating future needs and specialist requirements, reducing deprivation, and supporting cohesive and inclusive communities.
Economy and employment	Support sustainable economic development in Sevenoaks.
Heritage and historic environment	Protect, conserve, and enhance the historic environment within and surrounding the district.
Housing	Provide everyone with the opportunity to live in good quality, affordable housing.
Landscape	Protect and enhance the character and quality of the immediate and surrounding landscape and townscape.
Land and soils	Ensure the efficient and effective use of land, and protect and enhance soil and mineral resources
Transportation and movement	Promote sustainable transport use and active travel opportunities and reduce the need to travel.
Water	Ensure the efficient and effective use of water in addition to protecting and enhancing water quality.

15. Next Steps

Subsequent stages for the new Local Plan and SA

- 15.1 **Figure 1.1** in Section 1 highlights the stages of the SA process in conjunction with the development of the new Local Plan. In association with these stages, several SA reports will be released for consultation alongside the new Local Plan at key stages of plan development. These are anticipated to include as set out in **Table 14.1** below.

Table 14.1 Key outputs for the new Local Plan and SA

Key new Local Plan output	SA output
Regulation 18 consultation on the draft version of the new Local Plan	SA report to accompany Regulation 18 consultation on the draft plan
Regulation 19 consultation on the proposed submission version of the new Local Plan	SA report to accompany Regulation 19 consultation on the proposed submission version of the new Local Plan
Submission version of the new Local Plan	SA report to accompany the submission version of the new Local Plan
The new Local Plan as modified following examination	SA report addendum
Adopted version of the new Local Plan	SA adoption statement

- 15.2 The next stage following this scoping stage will involve developing and appraising reasonable alternatives for the new Local Plan. This will consider alternative policy approaches for the plan, including relating to alternative development strategies. The findings of the appraisal of these alternatives will inform the ongoing development of the new Local Plan.

Consultation on the Scoping Report

- 15.3 Public involvement through consultation is a key element of the SA process. At this scoping stage, the SEA Regulations require consultation with statutory consultation bodies but not full consultation with the public. The statutory consultation bodies are the Environment Agency, Historic England, and Natural England. The Scoping Report has been released to these three statutory consultees.
- 15.4 Consultees are invited to comment on the content of this Scoping Report, in particular the evidence base for the SA, the identified key issues, and the proposed SA framework of objectives and appraisal questions.
- 15.5 All comments received on the Scoping Report have been reviewed and the Scoping Report has been updated to reflect consultee comments. These comments will influence the development of the future SA stages where appropriate, and can be found in Appendix A overleaf.

Appendix A – Consultation responses

Consultee	Response	How this was addressed
Dartford Borough Council	Asked for an updated Figure 3.1 to reflect the correct designation boundaries, and asked for the SA objective and appraisal questions for the Climate Change Adaptation chapter to recognise the increased risk of flooding in the Dartford area as a result of development in parts of Sevenoaks	Figure 3.1 was updated to illustrate the true biodiversity designation boundaries, and the SA objective and appraisal questions were changed to reflect the risk posed to Dartford
Kent Downs AONB	Asked for a language change in the appraisal questions for the Landscape chapter to reflect the legal and policy requirements of AONBs	Language was changed to reflect the importance of AONBs under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the NPPF
Historic England	Provided generic guidance with regards to the role Historic England plays in the SA and Local Plan process	Guidance is noted and will be used in the future stages of the SA
Natural England	In depth comments linked to the Biodiversity, Climate Change Adaptation, Communities and Health, Landscape, Land and Soils and Water chapters, and how the SA could go further to promote connectivity with nature	The individual comments have been noted and updates have been made which will help strengthen the SA, and objectives around access to and connectivity with nature will be a focus in the future stages of the SA

