



Statement of Community Involvement

Sevenoaks District Council

July 2026

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1. Introduction

What is a Statement of Community Involvement?

- 1.1. Planning shapes the future of the places in which we live, work, and visit, and it is therefore important that all of our residents and stakeholders have the opportunity to engage with the planning process, through the formulation of local planning policy documents and decisions on planning applications.
- 1.2. Sevenoaks District Council wants to help people to get involved in planning the future of the District, and is driven to improving opportunities for engagement in planning processes.
- 1.3. This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) has been produced to ensure that the Council is able to involve the local community effectively.
- 1.4. This new version of the SCI has been revised to reflect the most up to date legislation and regulations.
- 1.5. The Council understands that in order to try to reach agreement within communities, people need to be involved from the early stages of the planning process. The SCI is therefore a public statement that lets communities and stakeholders know when and how they can be involved.

Why prepare a Statement of Community Involvement?

- 1.6. It is a key objective of the planning system to strengthen community and stakeholder involvement in the planning and development process. Planning affects all communities, so it is important that local people understand the process and are given the opportunity to get involved.
- 1.7. Community participation and empowerment remain a fundamental principle of the planning system. As set out in Section 18 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, all local authorities are required to produce a SCI, which sets out their vision and strategy for effective community participation. The Localism Act 2011 strengthened opportunities for communities to influence planning in their area, including through neighbourhood planning. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that the planning system should provide “a platform for local people to shape their surroundings” (paragraph 15).
- 1.8. Engaging communities early in the plan-making process should ensure that plans reflect the needs and aspirations of local people, and will allow communities to fully understand the process from start to finish.

1.9. Some of the benefits of community involvement include:

- Planning documents and decisions that better reflect local needs and aspirations;
- Improved quality and efficiency of decisions by drawing on local knowledge and minimising conflict;
- Improved communication amongst the community of different sectors' needs and the planning process;
- Promotion of community cohesion – making real connections with and between communities; and
- Enhanced support and a greater sense of ownership for decisions and outcomes.

Our Council Priorities – 'Delivering for residents'

'Our Council Priorities – Delivering for residents' sets out our vision and priorities from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2028 as the District moves towards a new local government structure.

Our priorities are:

Housing, economic growth and infrastructure

Protecting our health, wellbeing and environment

Care and quality at the centre of all we do



Corporate Linkages

- 1.10.** Our Council Priorities – 'Delivering for residents' sets out our vision and priorities from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2028 as the District moves towards a new local government structure (www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/councilplan) states that we are committed to the communities we serve:

"The priorities we have set out within our Council Plan in response will ensure that service quality, dependability and strong value remain central as Sevenoaks District Council transfers to a new unitary authority".

It is important for us to keep our Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) up-to-date and relevant, in order to clarify how people can get involved in shaping local planning policy.

- 1.11.** The Council also has its own policies and aims relating to community engagement and places a great deal of emphasis on ensuring that the community has the opportunity to get involved in all areas of Council work.
- 1.12.** The Sevenoaks District Community Plan 'Better Together' was adopted in 2022 and creates a long-term vision (2022-2032) for the Sevenoaks District. This was based on consultation with local people and our partners.
- 1.13.** This Community Plan is the shared, long-term, partnership vision for Sevenoaks District developed by the Sevenoaks District Local Strategic Partnership. The partnership is made up of private, public, voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations.
- 1.14.** The Community Plan contains a number of themes and priorities that support the delivery of the vision for the District. The Council's planning policy documents will have regard to these priorities where relevant and will help to support the delivery of those objectives that relate to the use and development of land.
- 1.15.** The SCI has been produced in accordance with these corporate policies, and all consultation activities will aim to meet their objectives. The Council will work with other departments to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to consultation on planning policy documents. Where appropriate, public consultations may also be linked with events and activities organised by other council departments and vice versa, to maximise participation and make the best use of resources.

How can I get involved?

1.16. There are three main areas of planning that you can get involved in:

Strategic Planning (Local Plan)	Setting the policy framework against which planning applications will be assessed, including the Local Plan, Neighbourhood Plans, Conservation Areas and Supplementary Plans (SPs).	See Chapter 3 for more information.
Development Management (Planning Applications and Trees)	Some types of development require a planning application to be submitted and approved, and anyone can comment on a planning application. Protecting trees and woodlands that offer amenity value.	See Chapter 6 for more information See Chapter 8 for more information
Enforcement	Investigating alleged breaches of planning control.	See Chapter 7 for more information

1.17. Planning applications are determined in accordance with the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, so it is essential to get involved with strategic planning policy as well as specific planning applications.

2. Community Involvement in Strategic Planning

The Planning System

- 2.1. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies and how these should be applied. The Planning System requires local authorities to produce a Local Plan, which sets out what, where, and when development is expected to occur in the District. This document also sets out policies for further development to be determined against. Once formally adopted, this plan provides the basis on which planning applications are determined.
- 2.2. Planning legislation sets out which policy documents must be produced in addition to the Local Plan and which are discretionary. Regulations also exist to set out which of the documents must be developed with community involvement, and which must then be examined by an independent planning inspector.
- 2.3. The Council may prepare a range of planning policy documents, including Local Plans and Supplementary Plans. Local Plans set out the strategic planning framework and policies for the district, while Supplementary Plans may provide additional planning policy on specific issues, locations or types of development.
- 2.4. Further information regarding the Council's work programme for preparing planning policy documents is contained in the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The LDS is a timetable which lists the planning policy documents that the Council will produce, explaining how they will be prepared and when they will be published. Copies of the LDS are available from the Council's offices and website:
https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/file/790/local_development_scheme
- 2.5. The Statement of Community Involvement will be used by the Council to guide the engagement with the community of planning policy and supporting documents.

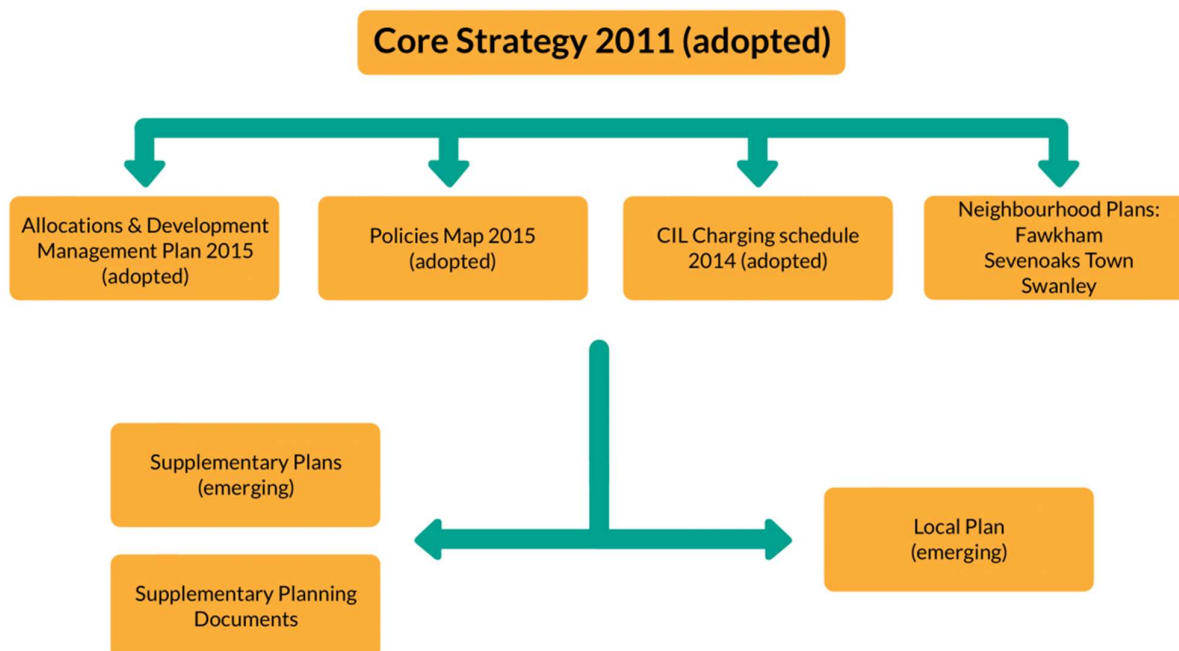
Planning Policy

National	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Sevenoaks District	Local Plan
Town and Parish	Neighbourhood Plans
Supporting Documents	Conservation Area Appraisals Supplementary Plans

- 2.6. Existing Supplementary Planning Documents will remain in place until they are reviewed, replaced, or withdrawn. Consultation on any new Supplementary Plans will be undertaken in accordance with the legislative requirements in place at the time of creation.

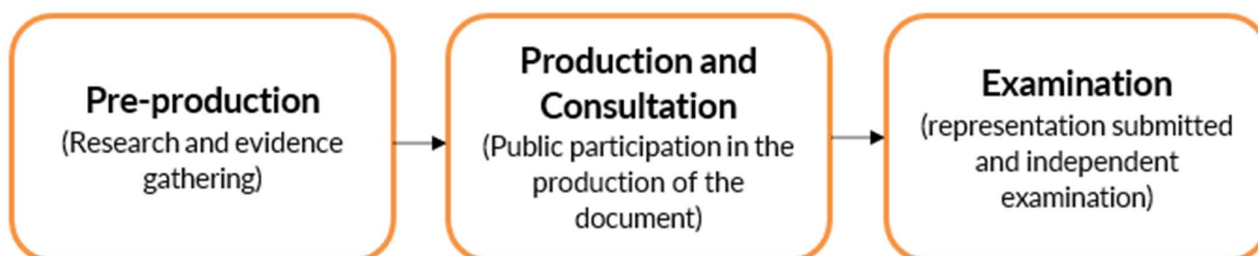
The Local Plan

- 2.7. The below diagram outlines the relationship between planning policy documents which will be, or have already been, produced.



Planning Policy Documents

- 2.8. The community will be involved throughout the different stages of production for each document prior to adoption, which can be summarised as follows:



- 2.9. The regulations require the Council to publicise consultations on the website and to provide documents for inspection at the Council offices, Council website and such other places that we consider appropriate, as well as sending emails and/or letters to statutory, general and other consultees.
- 2.10. The Council recognises the value of including the community in the development process. The documents will more closely reflect local needs and priorities. Therefore, there is a commitment by the Council to the minimum requirements, to ensure active, widespread and effective community engagement in the planning process.

Stages of consultation for Planning Documents

2.11. Local Plans go through a set process of plan making. The below table identifies what the Council will do at each stage, and how the community can get involved.

Stage 1	Evidence Base and policy preparation	The Council collects up to date information on a range of social, economic, and environmental matters. The Council prepares policies and proposed allocations, using the evidence base where required.
Stage 2	Public participation in the preparation of a Local Plan (Regulation 18*)	The results of stage 1 are used to identify the main issues that the plan needs to address and the options that are available. An assessment of the plan's social, economic and environmental impacts is also produced at this point, Sustainability Appraisal (SA). The Council notifies each of the statutory consultees that may have an interest in the proposal, and any appropriate general consultation bodies of the proposed Local Plan, and invites them to make representations. Residents, businesses, and other interested parties may also be informed and invited to make representations. The Council maintains a strategic planning database of interested parties, in line with GDPR. The Council must take into account any representations received as a result of preparing the plan. The Council will undertake a public consultation for a minimum of six weeks. The Council may extend consultation periods where appropriate.
Stage 3	Further Evidence Base and policy preparation	The Council continues to develop the plan and gather further information for the evidence base, where required. This includes considering any comments from Stage 2 and the findings of any new or updated evidence base documents.
Stage 4	Publication of the Local Plan (Regulation 19*)	The Council publishes the final draft of the plan. Updated supporting documents, Sustainability Appraisal (SA), and a draft proposals map showing any changes that would result from the adoption of the plan are also published. The Council will collect representations on the published Local Plan for a minimum of six weeks. The Council notifies each of the statutory consultees that may have an interest in the proposal, and any appropriate general consultation bodies of the proposed Local Plan, and invites them to make representations. Residents, businesses, and other interested parties may also be informed and

		invited to make representations. As this stage of the process there are set questions about whether they consider the Local Plan is Sound, Legally Compliant, if it requires any modification, and if they would like to appear at examination.
Stage 5	Submission (Regulation 22*)	A statement of consultation will be produced, which provides a summary of how the plan was consulted on and of the main issues raised by the representations. The Council will send the plan, any supporting documents, and representations received in the Regulation 19 publication to the Secretary of State to be examined. The Council will make all documents relating to Submission available to the public.
Stage 6	Independent Examination (Regulation 24*)	An inspector appointed by the government will carry out an independent examination of the 'soundness' of the plan. Those who submitted representations to the plan during the Regulation 19 Publication may be allowed to appear in front of the inspector in person, at the discretion of the inspector.
Stage 7	Receipt of inspector's report (Regulation 25*)	The inspector writes a report of the examination which sets out if the plan is sound, if it can be sound subject to main modifications, or if it cannot be made sound. Once the Council receives the inspector's report, the plan may have main modifications in line with the recommendations. Other minor modifications may be made during this stage too.

Stage 8	Adoption of the Local Plan (Regulation 26*)	Following the examination, the Council may adopt the Local Plan. As soon as reasonably practicable after adoption, the Council will make available the adopted Local Plan, the Adoption Statement, the Sustainability Appraisal Report. The adopted Local Plan will form part of the Development Plan for the District and will be used in the determination of planning applications.
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* <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2012/767/contents/made>

Supplementary Plans (SPs)

- 2.12.** Supplementary Plans may be prepared by the council to provide additional guidance on Planning. Existing Supplementary Planning Documents will remain in place until they are reviewed, replaced, or withdrawn. Consultation on any new Supplementary Plans will be undertaken in accordance with the legislative requirements in place at the time of creation.

3. Consultation Methods

- 3.1.** The Council uses a variety of consultation methods to engage with the community. Since the publication of the last Statement of Community Involvement in 2020, the ways in which the Council engages with the community have developed and improved. One of the main changes is the increased use of technology, both for consultation and notification purposes. The council uses digital platforms such as Facebook, X formerly Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram, to communicate with residents. Followers receive regular updates from the Council through these sites.
- 3.2.** A variety of methods will be used at various stages of the planning process to engage community involvement in planning. These methods include, but are not limited to:

Sevenoaks District Council Website	All consultation activities will be publicised through the Council's website, on both the planning policy pages and the news page. The consultation portal will be available for people to read the documents and submit comments online. Where possible The Council will publish interactive forms of consultation, such as Interactive Maps and online questionnaires.
Digital Platforms (such as Facebook, X formerly Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram)	All consultation events will be advertised digitally, this may or may not use the Council's corporate digital platforms. Digital platforms will be used, where possible, to publish photos and videos in relation to planning matters; to keep residents informed and up to date. Digital platform campaigns will be used where possible to inform hard to reach groups such as young people and commuters.
Local newspapers	The Council will endeavour to advertise in the local press. Advertisements will include details on when and where planning documents can be inspected, how copies can be obtained, the closing date for representations and where to send them. In addition, the Council often issues press releases at the time of consultations.
Leaflets	Leaflets, flyers and brochures may be distributed separately, or with other Council correspondence (such as the Council's 'In Shape' magazine), to summarise detailed information. Leaflets will be distributed in various places around the District, such as Libraries, Town and Parish Council Offices and Train Stations, as appropriate.

Emails / letters	Notifications will be sent to statutory bodies, stakeholders, relevant groups and other individuals and organisations on the Council's consultation database, in line with the GDPR. Organisations and individuals interested in becoming more involved in preparation of planning policy documents should contact the Planning Policy team by email to planning.policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk to register on the Strategic Planning database.
Inspection points	Documents will be made available for inspection at the Council's offices, Town and Parish Council offices and local libraries, where appropriate.
Presentations	To groups, organisations and stakeholders as appropriate, to target particular people in the community who may be interested in a specific issue, for example the Development Forum, Interest Groups Forum or the Town and Parish Councils Forum.
Questionnaires / Surveys	Use of questionnaires, surveys and/or focus groups to determine attitudes towards particular issues and options. Such research can target groups and individuals with particular interests or citizens panels with multiple interests.
Public exhibitions / displays / roadshows	For larger consultations, such as at Regulation 18, the Council may promote events at a public exhibition, display or a roadshow. This has the ability to target members of the community who may not get involved through more formal methods. These may include: - Town and Parish Council forums. - Agents/Developers Forum - Interest Group Forums - Family Fun Days - School Presentations - Drop-in Events - Commuter engagement at railway stations
Interactive workshops	Use of interactive workshops may be used, where appropriate, to identify and focus discussion around difficult issues and key themes. These can reach people who might not get involved in more formal groups but who may respond to this kind of contact, for example Placemaking, drop-in Sessions, or an Interest Group Forums
Community / resident meetings and groups	Use of pre-existing community/resident meetings and meetings of community groups may be used, where appropriate, to target people with particular characteristics/interests, for example Drop-in Sessions and Interest Group Forums, in conjunction with the Council's Communities team.

Council meetings

Where appropriate, documents will be taken to relevant council meetings (below) for feedback from District Councillors.

- DIAC – Development and Infrastructure Advisory
- DMC – Development Management Committee
- Cabinet
- Full Council



4. Communicating Effectively

Who the Council consults

- 4.1. The planning regulations require local authorities to meet a minimum level of community involvement and specify a number of organisations which must be consulted if it is considered that they will be affected, known as statutory consultees and general consultation bodies.
- 4.2. In addition to meeting statutory obligations, the Council is committed to ensuring that local groups, organisations and individuals are given the best possible opportunity to become involved in the preparation of planning policy documents.
- 4.3. The Council maintains a Strategic Planning Mailing List database of consultees who have either commented on, or expressed an interest in being involved with, the production of planning policy documents. This database is used to keep registered individuals, organisations and groups informed on the production of any planning policy documents and complies fully with the GDPR. New consultees can be added to the consultation database as requested, organisations and individuals interested in registering on the consultation database should sign up through the website at https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069128/emerging_local_plan or contact the Planning Policy team by phone on 01732 227000 or by email to planning.policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk.
- 4.4. The Council will continue to consult with elected Members of the District Council, as well as, wherever possible, Members of Parliament for the District, and seek their input into the preparation of planning policy documents.
- 4.5. Where possible, the Council will take further action to encourage involvement in the planning process from hard-to-reach groups, such as Young People, the Gypsy and Traveller Community and Commuters.
- 4.6. An example list of statutory consultees, general consultation bodies and other organisations and groups the Council involves in the plan making process are included at Appendix B, C and D.

Sustainability Appraisal

- 4.7. Local planning authorities must undertake a Sustainability Appraisal (SA) for the Local Plan they produce, in accordance with the legislation.
- 4.8. A Sustainability Appraisal aims to ensure that the policies and proposals reflect the principles of sustainable development. A Sustainability Appraisal will be undertaken alongside the preparation of a Local Plan and the SA report will be consulted on through the plan making process, at the same time as the Local Plan itself, in accordance with the legislation.

Feeding information into decisions

- 4.9. The information that the Council obtains through community involvement will be collated and used to inform the decisions made and/or to shape any documents that are produced.
- 4.10. A summary of the responses will be produced, showing how they were used to inform decisions or documents, and providing an indication of the resulting outcomes.
- 4.11. This will be made available on the Council's website

Feeding back

- 4.12. Each planning policy document will require a 'statement of consultation'. This will outline how the Statement of Community Involvement has been followed and how doing so has benefited document production. This will provide some indication of the benefits of involvement.
- 4.13. The Council will make all general feedback and summary outcomes available on the website and from the Council's offices on request.
- 4.14. In addition, the Council aims to provide feedback to those involved in either specific involvement activities such as workshops, or consultation processes associated with planning policy documents, where appropriate and reasonable.

The Council's Feedback Commitment

The Council aims to provide feedback on any involvement activities or consultation processes associated with local plan development.

Representations to the Local Plan are published where required by legislation.

Where appropriate, the Council will:

1. Summarise the key issues raised;
2. Explain how comments have informed the process; and
3. Provide information on any relevant decisions or next steps

Acknowledgments will generally be provided by email and updates will be made available on the Council's website.

5. Community Involvement in Development Management

- 5.1. The Statement of Community Involvement also outlines how the community will be involved in planning applications.
- 5.2. The Council is already required to consult with the community on some applications we receive. We will carry out those consultations in accordance with the statutory requirements to provide you with an opportunity to put forward your views or concerns.

Greater community involvement

- 5.3. Involving people before an application is made allows them to influence developments as they are being designed, helping to deal with issues that may become major issues later.
- 5.4. For some major applications, the Council will encourage developers to carry out consultation with the local community about their proposals before and during the application process.
- 5.5. The NPPF states that “Early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties. Good quality pre-application discussion enables better coordination between public and private resources and improved outcomes for the community” (Paragraph 40).

General advice and assistance

- 5.6. Information on the Council's development management functions including validation requirements can be obtained on the website:
<http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/services/environment-and-planning/planning>
- 5.7. The Planning Portal is an online planning, appeals and building regulations resource for England and Wales and also provides advice and services for the public and professionals: www.planningportal.co.uk.
- 5.8. Additionally, Planning Aid England provides free, independent and professional planning advice to communities and individuals who cannot afford to pay professional fees. This service encourages people to become involved in the planning system: <http://www.rtpi.org.uk/planning-aid-england/>.

Permitted Development

- 5.9.** In certain circumstances you can carry out minor extensions and alterations to your property without the need to apply for planning permission. This is known as permitted development and is derived from a general planning permission granted by Parliament.
- 5.10.** To check if your proposed works are covered by permitted development, the Council encourages applicants to view the interactive house guide, provided by the Planning portal: <https://www.planningportal.co.uk/permission/interactive-guidance>
- 5.11.** Permitted development may also apply to other proposals, such as proposed changes of use and alterations to non-domestic buildings, subject to the criteria set out in legislation. Some proposals for permitted development require an application for prior approval to be submitted and granted, before works can start.
- 5.12.** If you wish the Council to confirm in writing whether or not planning permission is required for your proposals, you should submit an application for a Certificate of Lawful Development (LDC).

Pre-application Advice

- 5.13.** The Council encourages prospective applicants to consult at an early stage on potential developments before details are finalised. Consistent with the NPPF, the Council believes that early engagement with the local community offers potential benefit for all parties.
- 5.14.** Pre-application advice is of benefit to prospective applicants as:
- It gives an opportunity to understand how Council policies will be applied to a development and potential issues can be identified and resolved before an application is submitted.
 - It may lead to a reduction in time spent working up the proposals in more detail; and
 - It can identify at an early stage whether any specialist advice is necessary (e.g. listed buildings, trees, landscape, transport, ecology or archaeology).
- 5.15.** Charges apply to requests for pre-application advice and these seek to cover some of the Council's costs of providing the service.
- 5.16.** When a pre-application enquiry is submitted, the Council will:
- Register the enquiry, allocate a Planning Officer and write to confirm the timescales within five working days;

- Identify the key constraints;
- Identify key planning policies;
- Give a view on the principle of the development;
- Inform the customer of the key issues that will need to be addressed as part of a formal application; and
- Identify key further studies or information that will be required to provide a more detailed pre-application view or that will be required as part of a formal planning application.

5.17. The Council can give advice that can help in the preparation of a better planning application so that it can be processed more quickly and a decision can be made sooner. It is also valuable in assuring the best possible development outcomes for the community. Where relevant the Council can also give advice on effective ways of consulting with the local community, including neighbours who may be affected by development proposals.

5.18. However, it should be noted that any advice given by Council Officers for pre-application enquiries does not constitute a formal response or decision of the Council with regard to a future planning application.

5.19. For further information please see the website:
<http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/services/environment-and-planning/planning>.

5.20. In addition to pre-application advice, the Council encourages prospective applicants to discuss their proposals with the local Town or Parish Council and the local District Councillor in order to ascertain their views at an early stage.



How Planning Applications are decided

- 5.21. Applications submitted to the Council are registered and acknowledged by the Validation team. They aim to complete the process within five working days of receipt.
- 5.22. Once an application is accepted as valid it is recorded on the planning register that the Council is required to maintain and make available for inspection, and is available on the website via the Public Access portal: <https://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk/online-applications/> It is possible to register for updates on the progress of applications, track specific applications and submit comments.
- 5.23. A weekly list of planning applications received is sent electronically to the local press, District Councillors, Town and Parish Councils, amenity societies and anyone else who requests a copy. Requests can be made to: planning.validation@sevenoaks.gov.uk.
- 5.24. Applications are advertised in the local press and on site in accordance with the statutory requirements. This is most likely to apply to applications that are major developments, affect a listed building, a conservation area, are not in accordance with the adopted Local Plan, have a substantial impact on the area or if they affect a public right of way.
- 5.25. Notification letters are sent to immediate neighbours.
- 5.26. The statutory consultation period is normally 21 days but can be less for some types of applications. An application cannot be determined until any statutory consultation period has expired.
- 5.27. The Council aims to determine major planning applications within thirteen weeks and other planning applications within eight weeks unless the timescale for a decision is shorter, in accordance with legislation.
- 5.28. Most planning applications are determined by the Chief Planning Officer under delegated powers. However, any application may be called to the Development Management Committee by a District Councillor if the Officer recommendation is contrary to the view of the Parish Council. District Councillors also have a general power to call an application to Committee before the overall expiration of the date for comments to be submitted. Applications of a significant, controversial, or sensitive nature may also be referred to the Committee by the Chief Planning Officer.
- 5.29. In cases where applications are reported to the Development Management Committee, the Planning Officer prepares a report for the Committee that outlines the proposal, sets out consultation replies, assesses the relevant issues and makes a recommendation regarding whether approval should be given.

5.30. The Council will seek to notify any person who comments on the proposal when an application is to be reported to Committee for determination, and there is an opportunity for an objector and a supporter of the proposal to put their views directly to the Committee. Applicants and objectors will be able to address Councillors for a maximum of three minutes speaking time. The relevant Town or Parish Council and the local District Councillor may also speak.

5.31. For further information please see the leaflet “Speaking on Planning Applications” available on the website:
https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20054/development_management_committee/225/advice_on_speaking_on_planning_applications



5.32. The below table outlines the planning application process stage by stage, from pre-application discussions through to determination.

Pre-Application	The Council will: • Encourage developers to contact the Planning team early on. • Encourage applicants, especially of larger schemes, to engage with the relevant Town/Parish Council, District Councillors, service providers and local groups as early as possible. • For smaller applications, encourage applicants to discuss their plans with neighbours before submitting an application. • Encourage owners of larger sites to prepare management plans for their land and submit them to the Council.
Application	Depending on the type of application submitted, and the development proposed, the nature and timescales for consultation will change. The Council will consult on applications we receive in accordance with the statutory requirements. This may include:

	• Displaying a (orange) site notice. • Writing directly to any adjoining owners or occupiers • Depending on the nature of the application, consult with appropriate statutory consultees, Town/Parish Councils and District Councillors. • Additional requirements may apply to applications involving listed buildings, conservation areas or environmental impact assessments. • Where a mobile number is provided, text message notifications will be sent to the applicant/agent to keep them informed on the progress of the application. For major developments: • In addition to the above, place an advertisement in the local newspaper. You will be able to track the progress of planning applications through Public Access, available on the website.
Decision	• If applications are taken to Committee (which are public meetings, open to all) for decision, opportunity will be given for an applicant and objector to address Councillors (3 minutes speaking time). • Decision notices will be posted on the website. • Any legal (Section 106 or 278 highways) agreement attached to a planning permission will be available for viewing through Public Access, available on the website.



6. Planning Enforcement

6.1. The Enforcement team is responsible for investigation of alleged breaches of planning control, including unauthorised works to listed buildings, unlawful advertisements, works to protected trees and developments carried out without the necessary planning permission.

6.2. The Council's approach to enforcement is based on the following principles:

- Where a new complaint is received, the Council will aim to visit the site in accordance with the timeframe set out within our Enforcement Plan.
- We will prioritise the investigation of complaints based on the degree of harm caused by unauthorised development as categorised within the Enforcement Plan.
- We will seek to achieve solutions that remove harm caused by unauthorised development.
- We will use our statutory powers where necessary and proportionate to remove harmful development.
- Complainants and those who are the subject of complaints will be kept informed of the progress of enforcement investigations and of the outcome.
- The identity of complainants will be kept confidential.

6.3. Further information about Enforcement priorities and principles are provided on the website in our Local Enforcement Plan:

www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/downloads/download/302/planning_enforcement_plan

7. Tree Preservation Orders

- 7.1. Legislation is in place to afford protection to a percentage of those trees and woodlands that offer amenity value. The legislation is in the form of 41 Conservation Areas throughout the District and Tree Preservation Orders, of which there are currently in excess of 1000.
- 7.2. Sevenoaks District has many trees comprising of a range of diverse species and 11% of the District is classified as ancient woodland. The Council continues to assess and protect, where necessary, this rich biological inheritance for the people of the District today and tomorrow.
- 7.3. To help us balance the management of trees, the Council welcomes the help of local residents. This could include suggestions to protect certain important trees that you feel may be under threat or informing the Council about work to a protected tree that may be carried out without consent. For further information see the website: https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20012/conservation_and_trees



8. Overcoming Barriers

8.1. The Council has identified several different, but connected, barriers to involvement. These include:

- Apathy and disinterest;
- Time (of meetings/activities to get involved);
- Mistrust and cynicism that it's worthwhile; and
- Ability to access and understand information.

8.2. The Council's approach to involving people will seek to overcome these barriers by...

...connecting people to planning

8.3. One of the Council's key priorities is to provide everyone with the opportunity to know what is going on and how they can get involved if they want to. To support this, the Council aims to provide information that is local and relevant and use methods of involvement that are accessible, interesting and, where appropriate, fun.

8.4. Alongside the specific involvement activities, the Council is committed to raising awareness of the planning system throughout the community. With this in mind, the Council is committed to placing more emphasis on going out into local communities to discover your needs and aspirations.

...seeking more active involvement

8.5. Although this document sets out the different levels and methods of involvement, it is the Council's aim to involve more people more actively if resources are available.

8.6. The Council will ask the community about their aspirations for the area and expectations for the future. This will help to generate ideas and scope particular documents.

...meeting everyone's needs

8.7. In line with the Equality Act (2010) and the West Kent Equality Partnership aims and commitments, the Council wants to ensure that all communities have the ability to respond to consultations and have their voices heard. The Council aims to pay particular regard to the needs of different ethnicity and disability groups. Documents are produced in different formats (e.g. large print and can be explained in other languages) where a need is identified and access arrangements are considered when organising involvement events.

8.8. Whilst the Council aims to increase participation from all sectors of the community, it is recognised that some groups are harder to engage with than others. These hard to reach groups include rural communities, commuters, Gypsies and Travellers, Young People, and those with literacy or language barriers.

- 8.9. To help improve representation and participation the Council will strengthen relationships with other Council departments, education establishments and community development organisations to learn from their experience, gain a better understanding of the needs of particular groups and ensure that the needs of all sectors of the community are met.

Review

- 8.10. The Council is committed to reviewing and amending the methods and level of engagement with the community in response to ongoing feedback on the effectiveness of the community engagement undertaken.
- 8.11. The Council is actively seeking new and innovative ways to communicate and engage with the community.

9. Appendix A – Implementing Consultation Methods

9.1. The Council recognises that there are different levels of interaction between the Planning team and the community:

- **Notification** – providing information, for example through text messages, leaflets, email and post, advertising and ongoing awareness programmes.
- **Consultation** – consulting you on your views, for example through surveys, interactive maps and portals, exhibitions and formal consultation processes.
- **Participation** – such as in workshops where you would be actively involved in identifying needs and priorities

9.2. The Council recognises the community's expectation that everyone receives information and has an opportunity to participate and comment. However, where documents relate to a specific area or issue – such as a Neighbourhood Plan for a defined parish area – only organisations and individuals with specific relevance to this area or issue would be more actively involved.

9.3. The below table shows how you could be involved, for which documents and when in the process.

Method of Involvement	This is useful for...	Which document	What stage	For which sectors of the community?	Things the Council need to consider	Resource intensity
Electronic resources (internet, email, online consultation, interactive map)	Allowing access to the latest information about progress and opportunities to contribute	All Local Plans/ SPs/ Relevant other Planning Policy documents / planning applications / reporting issues to enforcement	All Stages	All sectors	Electronic resources must be user friendly and intuitive. Items should be placed online in time for people to respond effectively.	Low – initially specialist skills will be required, but posting information online is low/no cost once established

Method of Involvement	This is useful for...	Which document	What stage	For which sectors of the community?	Things the Council need to consider	Resource intensity
Digital Platforms (such as X formerly Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram)	Promoting and informing the community of consultations and opportunity for engagement	All Local Plans/ SPs/ other relevant Planning Policy documents	All Stages	All sectors	Digital Platform posts must be user friendly and intuitive. Items should be placed online in time for people to respond effectively.	Low – use of existing social media channels, posting information online is low/no cost once established.
Local media (newspaper adverts and articles, newsletters, flyers, TV, radio)	Raising levels of awareness and publicising specific opportunities to get involved, reaching a wide audience.	All Local Plans/ SPs/ other relevant Planning Policy documents	All stages	Local communities, developers and landowners, business sector, service providers	Information must be interesting and relevant. The Council needs to allow enough time for publication and set an appropriate timeframe for collecting responses.	Medium – whilst advertising in the local press can be free, broader advertising can be expensive.

Method of Involvement	This is useful for...	Which document	What stage	For which sectors of the community?	Things the Council need to consider	Resource intensity
Publicity in community centres (e.g. libraries, shopping and sports centres)	Going out into the community to provide information and access views, reaching those who would not normally seek to be involved.	All Local Plans/ SPs/ other relevant Planning Policy documents	All stages	Local communities	Information should be accessible to all in terms of mobility, understanding and times available	Medium – production of material can involve Significant costs. Staff time will also be needed.
Letter based consultation to people and organisations listed on the consultation database	Providing information specific to identified organisations and those requesting general updates on the local plan process.	All Local Plans/ SPs/ other relevant Planning Policy documents	All stages	All those requesting to be added to the consultation database and statutory consultees	Must be clear and understandable, although most people on this list will have a good understanding of the planning system.	Low – supplementary to other consultation methods, re-using that information, but postage may be costly.

Method of Involvement	This is useful for...	Which document	What stage	For which sectors of the community?	Things the Council need to consider	Resource intensity
Documents available for inspection at local council offices	Meeting minimum requirements in allowing everyone the opportunity to comment on draft documents	All Local Plans/ SPs/ other relevant Planning Policy documents	All stages	Local communities, developers and landowners, business sector, service providers, additional authorities	It must be clear how and when people should respond. Information should be accessible to all in terms of mobility, understanding and times available.	Low – staff time may be needed to answer questions and collate any responses
Area/town forums and Town/Parish Council meetings	Reaching community groups through existing forums dealing with local issues. Gaining first hand views regarding a specific area.	Local Plans/ other relevant Planning Policy documents	Ongoing	Local communities, developers and landowners, business sector, service providers	The Council must be aware of the audience and any restrictions. The Council should also consider the time available for consultation on the local plan (alongside other agenda items).	Medium – attending existing forums requires staff time to attend meetings and to prepare any material.

Method of Involvement	This is useful for...	Which document	What stage	For which sectors of the community?	Things the Council need to consider	Resource intensity
Qualitative research (e.g. questionnaire surveys)	Determining attitudes and identifying needs for improvement. Gaining views from people who would not otherwise express an opinion	Local Plans/ other relevant Planning Policy documents	Pre-production and production.	All sectors	Surveys can reap a greater number of responses but require significant administration. Focus groups require specialist skills but can be used to target specific groups	Medium/high – specialist skills are required. Depending on scope, costs of venue hire or distributing surveys can be significant.
Public exhibitions	Outlining specific plans and proposals to target audience. Accessible to broad audience.	Local Plans/ other relevant Planning Policy documents	Pre-production and Regulation 18	Local communities, developers and landowners, business sector, service providers, additional authorities	Information should be accessible to all in terms of mobility, understanding and times available.	Medium – preparation costs and time needed can be significant. Additional staff time is needed if manned.

Method of Involvement	This is useful for...	Which document	What stage	For which sectors of the community?	Things the Council need to consider	Resource intensity
Preparation of locally based documents (e.g. neighbourhood plans, Neighbourhood Priorities Statements.)	Locally prepared by the community as their aspirations. Provides the Council with information on what the community wants with the Council playing a supporting role in the process	Neighbourhood plans/ other relevant Planning Policy documents	All stages	Local communities	These outline community priorities and may differ from place to place. The Local Plan needs to be flexible enough to respond to this challenge	Low/medium – the Council offers support for communities developing these documents, which can be intensive, although using the documents for background is low.
Participation workshops	Bringing together representatives from different sectors of the community to be more actively involved in scoping documents and identifying priorities.	Local Plans/ relevant other Planning Policy documents	Pre-production and Regulation 18	All sectors	Events require significant preparation and organisation. However they can be very useful for discussing important and/or difficult issues.	Medium/high – time is needed for preparation, specialist skills may be required. The costs of venue hire can be considerable.

Method of Involvement	This is useful for...	Which document	What stage	For which sectors of the community?	Things the Council need to consider	Resource intensity
Working groups / focus groups / panels	Bringing together representatives to provide ongoing support to local plan development and production	Local Plans/ relevant other Planning Policy documents	Pre-production and Regulation 18	All sectors	Success is dependent on commitment from those involved. Regular or ongoing meetings can also have resource complications	Medium – ongoing support from staff has time implications. There are also costs in organising meetings

10. Appendix B – Development Management Consultation Bodies

10.1. Statutory consultees for planning applications are prescribed in Schedule 4 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

10.2. Depending on the type of application submitted and the nature of the development proposed, the statutory consultee (specific consultation bodies) that the Council may be required to consult include, but are not limited to:

- Kent County Council
- Active Travel England
- The Building Safety Regulator
- The Civil Aviation Authority
- The Environment Agency
- The Forestry Commission
- The Garden Trust
- Highways Authority (Kent County Council)
- Historic England
- Ministry of Defence
- National Highways
- National Rail
- Natural England
- NHS Kent and Medway ICB
- Sport England
- Transport for London
- Utility and infrastructure providers, including:
 - Thames Water
 - South East Water
 - SES Water
 - Southern Water
 - Lullingstone Water Limited
 - UK Power Networks
 - SGN (Scotia Gas Networks)
 - Electronic Communications Code Operators

10.3. The general consultation bodies that the council may consult with, where appropriate, include:

- Adjoining local authorities
- Town and Parish Councils
- Residents and businesses
- Community, resident, voluntary, and interest groups
- Landowners and developers
- Environmental and heritage organisations
- Organisations representing protected and under-represented groups, including people with disabilities, different ethnic and faith communities, older people and young people
- Other organisations with an interest in the proposal

11. Appendix C – Planning Policy Consultation Bodies

11.1. Statutory consultees for Local Plans are prescribed in Regulation 2 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 (as amended)

11.2. The statutory consultee (specific consultation bodies) that the Council may be required to consult on Local Plans and other Planning Policy documents include, but are not limited to:

- Kent County Council
- Town and Parish Councils
- Active Travel England
- The Civil Aviation Authority
- The Environment Agency
- The Forestry Commission
- Highways Authority (Kent County Council)
- Historic England
- Homes England
- National Highways
- Natural England
- Network Rail Infrastructure Limited
- NHS Kent and Medway ICB
- The Office of Rail and Road
- Sport England
- Transport for London
- Utility and infrastructure providers, including:
 - Thames Water
 - South East Water
 - SES Water
 - Southern Water
 - Lullingstone Water Limited
 - UK Power Networks
 - SGN (Scotia Gas Networks)
 - Electronic Communications Code Operators

11.3. The general consultation bodies that the Council may consult with, where appropriate, include:

- Adjoining local authorities
- Town and Parish Councils
- Residents and businesses
- Community, resident, voluntary, and interest groups
- Landowners and developers
- Environmental and heritage organisations
- Organisations representing protected and under-represented groups, including people with disabilities, different ethnic and faith communities, older people and young people
- Other organisations with an interest in the plan, document, or proposal

12. Appendix D – Other Consultees

12.1. The Town and Parish Councils in Sevenoaks District that the regulations require the Council to consult, where appropriate, are:

- Ash-cum-Ridley Parish Council
- Badgers Mount Parish Council
- Brasted Parish Council
- Chevening Parish Council
- Chiddingstone Parish Council
- Cowden Parish Council
- Crockenhill Parish Council
- Dunton Green Parish Council
- Edenbridge Town Council
- Eynsford Parish Council
- Farningham Parish Council
- Fawkham Parish Council
- Halstead Parish Council
- Hartley Parish Council
- Hever Parish Council
- Hextable Parish Council
- Horton Kirby & South Darenth Parish Council
- Kemsing Parish Council
- Knockholt Parish Council
- Leigh Parish Council
- Otford Parish Council
- Penshurst Parish Council
- Riverhead Parish Council
- Seal Parish Council
- Sevenoaks Town Council
- Sevenoaks Weald Parish Council
- Shoreham Parish Council
- Sundridge with Ide Hill Parish Council
- Swanley Town Council
- Westerham Town Council
- West Kingsdown Parish Council

12.2. The Neighbouring Authorities that the regulations require the Council to consult, where appropriate, are:

- Dartford Borough Council
- Gravesham Borough Council
- London Borough of Bexley
- London Borough of Bromley
- Tandridge District Council
- Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council
- Tunbridge Wells Borough Council
- Wealden District Council
- Kent County Council
- Surrey County Council
- East Sussex County Council
- The Greater London Authority