

Statement of Common Ground

Between: Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) and the Environment Agency (EA)

Relating to: Flood risk management, water environment protection, and environmental infrastructure to support the Sevenoaks District Local Plan and supporting Infrastructure Delivery Plan

1. Purpose of this Statement

- 1.1 This Statement of Common Ground records the shared understanding between Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) and the Environment Agency (EA) regarding the flood risk management, water environment protection, and environmental infrastructure required to support the level and distribution of growth proposed in the Sevenoaks District Local Plan. It provides evidence of ongoing engagement and collaboration and supports the Infrastructure Delivery Plan by confirming areas of agreement and identifying any matters where further work is required.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

- 2.1 SDC is responsible for preparing the Local Plan and Infrastructure Delivery Plan, identifying infrastructure needs arising from growth, and securing delivery through planning policy and developer contributions.
- 2.2 The EA is a non-departmental public body responsible for protecting and improving the environment in England. It is a statutory consultee in the planning system, with responsibilities including the management of flood risk, regulation of environmental impacts, and oversight of water resources. The Agency plays a key role in advising on the suitability of development, safeguarding water quality, and supporting the sustainable management of natural assets in the context of plan-making and infrastructure delivery.

3. Evidence Considered

- 3.1 Both parties have considered the following evidence in forming this Statement:
 - The scale and distribution of growth set out in the Sevenoaks District Local Plan;
 - The Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2026;
 - The level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), including supporting modelling and mapping, the application of the Sequential Test and, where necessary, the Exception Test, informed by the findings of the SFRA;
 - National and local policy and guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), and Environment Agency guidance; and

- Information on flood risk and water environment constraints, including Environment Agency datasets and guidance.

4. Areas of Agreement

4.1 SDC and the EA agree that:

1. Proportionate engagement has taken place between SDC and the EA in the preparation of the Sevenoaks District Local Plan, particularly the proposed level of growth and its implications for flood risk and the water environment.
2. The methodology and approach to the preparation of the Level 2 Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) are reasonable and sound. Any development should take account of the latest climate change allowances to ensure that flood risk is appropriately considered over the lifetime of development.
3. Both parties recognise that Natural Flood Management and catchment-based approaches can contribute to flood risk management whilst delivering wider environmental benefits, including improvements to biodiversity, water quality and ecosystem resilience.
4. A number of projects listed in the 2019 Infrastructure Delivery Plan should be removed, including the Upper Darent Flood Alleviation Scheme and Brasted Floodplain Storage, owing to limited flood risk benefit, lack of technical or economic viability, and the absence of confirmed funding.
5. The identification and development of water environment and environmental infrastructure requirements within the Infrastructure Delivery Plan have been informed by available evidence, datasets, and relevant technical guidance.
6. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan correctly identifies where additional capacity may be required, including:
 - Measures to manage and mitigate the impacts of water resource demand, including those associated with abstraction;
 - River and habitat enhancement, including improvements to chalk streams and aquatic environments;
 - Landscape-scale environmental interventions, including nature recovery and green infrastructure; and
 - Wider measures to support water quality, biodiversity, and climate resilience.
7. Both authorities are committed to ongoing engagement throughout the plan period, including regular review and updating of the Infrastructure

Delivery Plan to ensure it remains accurate, up to date and reflective of emerging evidence.

8. The projects identified are deliverable in principle, subject to further development and refinement, including the availability of funding and coordination with relevant third-party organisations and infrastructure providers.
9. SDC and the EA will continue to work collaboratively on planning applications to secure appropriate developer contributions and ensure timely delivery of required water environment and environmental infrastructure.

5. Areas of Ongoing Work / Matters Not Yet Agreed

5.1 The following matters require further work or clarification:

1. Further development of the Infrastructure Delivery Plan in relation to water environment and environmental infrastructure requirements, including greater detail on the scope, timing, delivery mechanisms, and indicative costs of potential interventions.
2. Ongoing refinement of infrastructure requirements as further evidence becomes available and as delivery programmes and funding streams are confirmed.

5.2 Both parties are committed to resolving these matters through continued engagement.

6. Delivery and Phasing

6.1 SDC and the EA acknowledge that the delivery of water environment and environmental infrastructure requirements will depend on:

- The timing and phasing of development;
- Availability of funding, including developer contributions where applicable;
- The progression and refinement of infrastructure requirements to provide greater clarity on scope, timing, delivery mechanisms, and indicative costs; and
- Coordination with relevant third-party organisations and infrastructure providers.

6.2 Indicative delivery timescales are set out in the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and will be refined as further information becomes available in due course.

7. Signatures

Signed on behalf of Sevenoaks District Council	
Name:	
Role:	
Date:	

Signed on behalf of the Environment Agency	
Name:	
Role:	
Date:	