

RESPONSES FROM SEVENOAKS DISTRICT COUNCIL TO THE PLANNING WHITE PAPER

PILLAR 2- PLANNING FOR BEAUTIFUL AND SUSTAINABLE PLACES

15. What do you think about the design of new development in your area?

Making well designed buildings and places a priority within the planning system and giving LPAs the opportunity to be proactive is welcomed. Development in Sevenoaks reflects the reactive nature of development within LPAs and developers' priorities. Elevating the expectation of well-designed buildings and spaces within the system and supporting this through policy will give Developers and communities more certainty about the quality of development that should be delivered.

16. Sustainability is at the heart of our proposals. What is your priority for sustainability in your area?

Sustainability is commonly understood to be made up of three elements, economic, social and environmental. Our local polices reflect all three of these but the White Paper only focuses on the environmental factors. We are very supportive of conserving and enhancing our high quality natural environment, and tackling the causes and effects of climate change, but the sustainability of the District also includes economic viability and strong, vibrant communities. It is important that Government policy reflects all three of these elements as well.

17. Do you agree with our proposals for improving the production and use of design guides and codes?

Front loading the development process so that the priorities and standards of development is established and published should make it clearer and easier for all stakeholders. However, we would not want to see innovation stifled, both in terms of technical advances and evolving tastes. Design Guides and Codes would need to be updated on a relatively regular basis and further information and timeframes on this should be provided.

In a District with a wide range of urban and rural characters and 41 conservation areas we would not want this to be lost or diluted with the potential uniformity of the requirements of a Local Design Code. Local design details are extensive and varied in the district and this must be remain the highest priority. We would still expect applications to demonstrate a rigorous attention to the immediate context.

Further information on the content and extent of the proposed Design Guides is required.

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18. Do you agree we should establish a new body to support design coding and building better places, and that each authority should have a Chief Officer for design and place-making?

Yes, it is appropriate to support the development of design codes to ensure consistency of quality of content nationwide and that good practice and innovation is shared and disseminated.

A national specialist organization would do this best, rather than a new part of Homes England or within Design South East because it has a new radical agenda. Extensive design guidance and code production needs senior management support and responsibility

19. Do you agree with our proposal to consider how design might be given greater emphasis in the strategic objectives for Homes England?

Yes. It is important that all stakeholders involved in delivering development have the same objectives to ensure clarity and avoid conflict within the process that can cause delay (which is contrary to the purpose of the White Paper)

20. Do you agree with our proposals for implementing a fast-track for beauty?

The word 'beauty' could be misleading and doesn't easily represent all the elements that contribute to well-designed buildings and spaces.

The principle of a fast-track system where the local planning authority is pro-active in setting out development and design principles that have been developed with community engagement could make the Development Management process clearer. However, widening permitted development to create 'pattern book' development could see a uniformity of design and stifling of innovation, unlike the proposed intention.

Design encompasses more than just aesthetics but supports other agendas (like health for example) New policy must ensure that these elements are acknowledged.

Proposal 17 - Conserving and enhancing our historic buildings and areas in the 21st century

There is concern over the determination of listed building consent outside of the LPA. The specific proposal outlined is the 'earned autonomy' from listed building consents for suitably experienced architectural specialist for 'routine' listed building consent. Clarity would be needed as to what 'routine' means because the NPPF directs local planning authorities to make decisions based on the special

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interest of each building. A small 'routine' replacement in one building could, in a different building result in serious harm.