

Council Meeting	
Meeting Date	12 October 2022
Report Title	Sittingbourne Town Centre, Supplementary Planning Document, Statement of Consultation Report, June 2022. Sittingbourne Town Centre, Final Supplementary Planning Document, July 2022.
EMT Lead	Emma Wiggins, Director of Regeneration and Neighbourhoods
Head of Service	Flo Churchill, Interim Head of Planning
Lead Officer	Alison Peters, Principal Urban Design and Landscape Officer
Classification	Open
Recommendations	1. Approve the revisions to the SPD due to feedback from the consultation. 2. Adoption to Full Council.

1 Purpose of Report and Executive Summary

- 1.1 With a view to scope the approaches for the future of Sittingbourne town centre in 2020 the Council held a workshop for Councillors. The findings formed the basis of a long-term strategic vision for Sittingbourne that meets the needs and aspirations of a broad range of users and stakeholders to achieve the ambition to shape a place where people want to live, work and spend their leisure time within an active high street.
- 1.2 The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was developed over 2021 and summarises the drivers for change as the follows:
- Residential - more residents in and around the Town Centre,
 - Creative, cultural, social – historic environment, more culture, arts, creativity, health and education,
 - Employment – employment creation and retention, and
 - Events and activities – events, activities, family use, temporary pop-ups.
- 1.3 The aim was for a highly graphic explanatory document that should excite the community, provide guidance and certainty for the stakeholders such as landowners and set a steer with regards planning and design policy for the Council's Development Management role.

2 Background

- 2.1 It is known that our town centres are changing - the way in which we shop, move, socialise and interact has changed and will continue to change even more in the wake of Covid-19. Town centres therefore need to adapt and reposition themselves in order that they continue to thrive and meet the needs of their local communities. Sittingbourne town centre requires refurbishment, regeneration and public realm investment. Like many smaller towns it has struggled in the recessionary period, suffering declining sales, footfall and closures. The Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is a proactive plan to transform the place, looking not only to future retail and development, but to other uses and activities, that may draw people, enhance prosperity and improve the look, role and general feel of the town centre including the needs of businesses, landowners, traders and the community.

3 Proposals

- 3.1 Feedback from the statutory consultation of the SPD was received both electronically from members of the community as well as statutory consultees. There were twenty-four respondents in total of which three used the portal. The full list of consultees and their detailed comments are available to view on the Council's website. A summary of the main points of the consultation can be found in Appendix I.

4 Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

- 4.1 The alternative, having in place no SPD for Sittingbourne Town Centre, was considered. This alternative was rejected for the following reasons:
- a. The aim is to achieve up to 850 dwellings in the town centre, therefore the document will be used by Development Management to assess planning applications and pre-applications providing 'material weight' for planning application assessments,
 - b. Having no SPD in place is likely to result in more time taken to assess each planning application as well as inconsistency between assessments depending on individual officers' assessment,
 - c. The SPD provides clarity of the objectives and physical form expected in the town centre with a clear long-term vision and is therefore beneficial to the future of the borough

5 Consultation Undertaken or Proposed

- 5.1 In some circumstances an SPD may require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to assess whether there are likely to be any significant environmental effects. The Council has carried out a 'screening' of the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD to determine whether a SEA and an assessment under the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is required. Following consultation with the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England

the Council have determined that the SPD does not require a SEA or Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations. The final version of the SEA/HRA Screening Report can be found in Appendix II.

5.2 A Supplementary Planning Document has is a formal consultation process as set out in the Statement of Community Involvement as follows:

Supplementary Planning Documents

Document and Stage	What Will We Do	Who Will We Consult	How Will We Consult
Supplementary Planning Documents			
<p>Stage 1: Prepare Supplementary Document (SPD)</p> <p>Evidence and Ideas are gathered, and alternative approaches are considered</p>		<p>We will consult with those Individuals and bodies who are relevant to the successful implementation of the SPD.</p> <p>We may consult more widely if it is considered relevant and appropriate to do so.</p>	<p>This will depend on the type of SPD. The council will consider using one or more of the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correspondence by letter or email • Workshops or focus groups • Meetings • Drop in events
<p>Stage 2: Publish draft Supplementary Planning Document</p> <p>The council is required to consult on the SPD. Publishing a draft provides opportunity to get comments on the document before it is finalised.</p>	<p>As a minimum, the council will comply with the relevant planning regulations</p> <p>We will consult for at least 6 weeks and make copies of the draft SPD available for inspection on the website and at the council's main office and other locations as appropriate to the type of SPD</p> <p>We will make all the comments received publicly available</p> <p>We will consider all representations received.</p>	<p>We will consult the specific, general and other bodies who are relevant to the topic of the SP being prepared</p> <p>We will consult residents or persons carrying on business in the area where it is appropriate to</p>	<p>This will depend on the type of SPD. The council will consider using one or more of the following methods:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making documents available on the council's website and at inspection points • Workshops or drop in events • Correspondence through letters or emails • Leaflets/Newsletters • Targeted measures for hard to reach groups relevant to the topic of the SPD
<p>Stage 3: Adoption</p> <p>Once the council has taken into account</p>	<p>We will prepare a consultation statement</p>	<p>We will send a copy of the adoption statement</p>	

<p>comments and made any changes to the document, it will be adopted by the council's Cabinet. An Independent examination is not required.</p>	<p>We will adopt the SPD</p> <p>We will publish the SPD, consultation statement and an adoption statement on the website</p> <p>These documents will also be available for inspection at the council offices and other locations as appropriate to the type of SPD</p>	<p>to any person who has asked to be notified of the adoption.</p>	
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5.3 The consultation that took place for the STC included the following:

Statutory Consultation

- Online Questionnaire– 6 weeks.
- Hard copies of questionnaire made available at Libraries (subject to public health guidelines).
- Specifically contact Statutory Consultees, persons carrying out business and activity in the area and residents of the town centre – 800 letters were issued advising of the consultation.
- Contact with journalists and the press.
- Alert the community that consultation is taking place through SBC’s website, social media and letter drops.

Informal Consultation

- In 2021 meetings were held with landowners with sites of significant opportunity.
- 7th February to 21st March 2022 unmanned exhibition through-out the consultation period with a series of exhibition boards held in three town centre location including The Forum, Sittingbourne Library and Swallows Leisure centre before returning to The Forum again.
- Comments could be made on the council website, by email to Lpcomments@swale.gov.uk or by post to Planning Policy Team at Swale House.
- Due to deadlines, any feedback from the Planning and Transportation Policy Working Group will be tabled at the Policy and Resources Committee.

6 Implications

Issue	Implications
Corporate Plan	This Local Plan supports the priority of the Council to build the right homes in the right places and supporting quality jobs for all.
Financial, Resource and Property	The costs for the production of the SPD can be met from existing budgets.
Legal, Statutory and Procurement	A Council minute confirming the adoption of the SPD will be required in order to ratify the document.
Crime and Disorder	Improvements to Sittingbourne Town Centre, including new residential development and new employment opportunities, facilitate more people within the town centre which assists with crime prevention.
Environment and Climate/Ecological Emergency	The Council has carried out a 'screening' of the Sittingbourne Town Centre SPD to determine whether a SEA and an assessment under the Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) is required. Following consultation with the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England the Council have determined that the SPD does not require a SEA or Appropriate Assessment under the Habitats Regulations. Planning applications will require their own environmental assessments on application.
Health and Wellbeing	None identified at this stage
Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults	None identified at this stage
Risk Management and Health and Safety	None identified at this stage
Equality and Diversity	None identified at this stage
Privacy and Data Protection	None identified at this stage

7 Appendices

7.1 The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Sittingbourne Town Centre, Supplementary Planning Document - Statement of Consultation Report, June 2022.

- Appendix II: Sittingbourne Town Centre, Supplementary Planning Document - Strategic Environmental Assessment & Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening Report, December 2021.
- Appendix III: Sittingbourne Town Centre, Final Supplementary Planning Document, July 2022.

8 Background Papers

None