



## **District-wide Characterisation Study (DWCS) Brief**

### **1. Introduction and Purpose**

1.1 Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) proposes to undertake a District-wide Character Study (DWCS). The aim of this work is to understand the key characteristics across the District which, when read alongside other evidence base documents, will inform a context-led approach to growth and change. The work should explain:

- Past influences and growth: both historical and more recent factors that have shaped growth in Sevenoaks District
- The present state: a snapshot of the current social, economic and physical character of our places; and
- Future trends: the factors that will influence growth and change over the period of the emerging Local Plan (2015- 2035) and the sensitivity of places to these changes.

1.2 It is anticipated that the DWCS will perform a number of different functions, including; an evidence base document for the emerging Local Plan, a framework for locally specific guidance, such as neighborhood plans and local design frameworks and a material consideration in planning decisions.

### **2. Key Objectives**

2.1 Key objectives for the DWCS are:

- To provide an assessment of the significant character elements of the District in line with best practice, to form part of the emerging Local Plan evidence base.
- To provide study outputs in the form of a written report and GIS files.
- To support plan making, and decision-taking, by determining the existing characteristics of place in Sevenoaks District to encourage context-led development.
- To provide a study that can inform locally specific design guidance.

### 3. Background / Context

3.1 Sevenoaks District is located in West Kent, with the edge of Greater London to the northwest, Surrey to the west and East Sussex to the south. The District covers almost 143 square miles; 93% is designated Green Belt and 60% AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty). Approximately half of the 118,409 residents live in the the main settlements of Sevenoaks, Swanley, Edenbridge and Westerham. In addition, there are over 30 villages and smaller settlements, of which the largest is New Ash Green. See paragraph 12 for a map of the District.

3.2 The historic environment is a valuable asset, with many historic settlements, conservation areas, listed buildings and nationally recognised historic estates. The District-wide population is expected to increase by more than 20,000 people over the period 2015-35 (ONS) and baseline data and analysis from this study will be used to deliver sustainable growth, that respect the unique character of the District.

3.3 The Government's focus on how to promote and increase the use of high-quality design for new build homes and neighbourhoods has been stated through reports such as Living with Beauty, from the Building Better, Building Beautiful Commission, the National Design Guide (2019) and the emerging National Model Design Code (2021). This study will form part of the analysis that will underpin further design guidance.

3.4 The study also relates to the circumstances of the emerging Local Plan, the Government's Planning White Paper issued last year and the unprecedented social and economic changes occurring as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic.

#### The Emerging Local Plan

3.5 The production of the DWCS is central to the next steps in the production of the Council's emerging Local Plan. It will inform the extent to which housing and economic growth can be accommodated in existing settlements and the discussions about change in these areas. The content of the DWCS will also be referred to in the criteria of emerging development management policies, such as those related to taller buildings and detailed design matters.

3.6 A copy of the emerging Local Plan and the current evidence base can be found on the Council's website at:

[https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069131/emerging\\_local\\_plan/463/local\\_plan\\_examination\\_library\\_index\\_including\\_evidence\\_base\\_documents](https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069131/emerging_local_plan/463/local_plan_examination_library_index_including_evidence_base_documents).

#### Planning for the Future – The Planning White Paper

3.7 The Government's White Paper published last year suggested wide-ranging reforms for the UK planning system, including fundamental changes to the plan making process, increased importance for design to plan for beautiful places and new procedures to

encourage infrastructure delivery. The DWCS will inform the Council's activities in relation to all of these themes going forwards.

## COVID-19

3.8 The White Paper was prepared prior to the onset of the global pandemic and does not reflect the significant societal changes that have taken place over the last 12 months. Whilst these changes continue to emerge, the Council is keen for the DWCS to capture the current living and working patterns in the District, to inform the approach to the built form in the emerging Local Plan.

## **4. Scope**

4.1 Evaluating the character of place is the first step to establish a context-led approach for the District's capacity for change and growth. As noted in the Introduction to this brief, the DWCS should cover:

- Past influences and growth: both historical and more recent factors that have shaped growth in Sevenoaks District
- The present state: a snapshot of the current social, economic and physical character of our places; and
- Future trends: the factors that will influence growth and change over the period of the emerging Local Plan and the sensitivity of places to these changes.

4.2 The scope for the study is the whole District. However, more analyses may be required for the key towns and settlements including Sevenoaks, Swanley, Edenbridge, Westerham, New Ash Green, Otford and Hartley.

4.3 The study output will consist of a written report and GIS base that can be incorporated into the Council's existing mapping system. The study will be largely desk-based and supplemented with site visits to support the analysis of certain characteristics. However, the Council also understands the importance of how places are perceived, experienced and valued. In this regard, we would welcome views on how best to involve the widest range of stakeholders in the work.

## **Baseline Analysis**

### Existing evidence and policy

4.4 Undertake a review of the exiting evidence base and policy requirements. This should include:

- Sevenoaks District Council Core Strategy (2011) and the Allocations and Development Management Policies document (2015)

- National planning policy and guidance including the NPPF, NPPG and National Design Code.
- Local policy, including evidence submitted as part of the emerging Local Plan – the SHELAA, Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, Open Space Study, Historic Environment Review and Conservation Area Appraisals.
- Other policy and evidence identified by the consultant as being relevant.

## Data

### *Physical – natural and built*

4.5 Compile and assess all relevant physical elements of character including, but not limited to; topographical, ecology, river and waterways, key views, open space and green infrastructure, heritage assets (including conservation areas), land use, economic uses, morphology, built form, density, building heights, community infrastructure and schools, public transport accessibility and road/street hierarchy and historical evolution.

### *Social and socio-economic*

4.6 Compile and assess demographic and socio-economic information on Sevenoaks District's population and how people use the District, particularly in respect of living, working, leisure and tourism and how these activities are distributed throughout the District. This includes, but is not limited to; population density, retired population, deprivation, qualifications, housing tenure, health (i.e. general and long term health problems/disabilities), social infrastructure and sites of tourism significance.

4.7 The Council is keen to understand how these trends have shaped the places in our District and will continue to shape it going forwards. We see demographic trends and the social and economic changes that have occurred as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic as being particularly significant in this regard.

### *Focus on change*

4.8 As noted above, the study should consider changes that are likely to influence place shaping in Sevenoaks District, as set out in the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan. These include demographic pressures, such as migration away from London, changes to travel and working patterns, physical alterations to the transport network, development of strategic sites and climatic effects (i.e. flooding and air quality). Particular consideration should be given to the sensitivity of places to change - the extent to which character and culture provides the scope for a response to longer-term social and economic trends.

## Analysis

### *Area types/typologies*

4.9 The output from the analysis, will identify area types across the District. The area types will be accompanied by mapped, visual and written descriptions. These area types will

be used to set common parameters for emerging design guidance in supplementary planning guidance, development briefs and design codes

#### *Further recommendations*

4.10 These are conclusions or recommendations on how character is relevant to planning and development today, the pressures that may be experienced, sensitivity to change and key lessons which might inform future thinking to support emerging design guidance. This could be through establishing principles to reinforce, re-examine and reimagine.

## **5. Deliverables**

### GIS base

5.1 All project mapping and data to be prepared as GIS layers that can be incorporated into the Council's mapping system (ESRI compatible). This will be agreed at the Inception Meeting.

### Report

5.2 A visually led report which includes:

- written analysis of the identified character elements;
- comprehensive presentation maps; and
- photographs (where appropriate).

5.3 Alongside the baseline analysis, we require:

- identification of area types throughout the District; and any further recommendations that come out of the analysis, which could include how character is relevant to planning and development today, the pressures that may be experienced and key lessons which might inform future thinking to support design guidelines.

## **6. Presentation of Findings**

6.1 The Council will require an electronic copy of the report, in both Microsoft Word and PDF formats.

6.2 The Council will require five hard copies of the report.

### Innovation

6.3 Sevenoaks District Council's work and service are underpinned by providing excellence, innovation and value for money. We encourage innovative approaches in finding even better ways to deliver services. As part of this proposal we encourage the project team

to consider how the study outputs could be delivered in an innovative way. This could, for example, be a web based platform to show the findings.

## **7. Information to be Submitted with the Quotation**

7.1 Written proposals for the work of no more than 20 A4 sized pages (10 doubled sheets) should be submitted to the Council in electronic format by **17:00 Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2021**, via the following email address: [planning.policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk](mailto:planning.policy@sevenoaks.gov.uk).

The consultant is expected to submit the following information with the quotation:

- The proposed methodology for the work, including proposals for effective stakeholder engagement as outlined in paragraph 4.3 and innovative approaches to the study outputs in paragraph 6.3.
- Confirmation of how the assessment will meet the requirements of national guidance, policy and best practice.
- A proposed work programme and timetable for carrying out the work, including number of meetings with project working group.
- Details of the project team including a named Project Director and Project Manager.
- Profiles of each team member, including hourly/day rates and relevant experience.
- Contingency arrangements, should a member of the team no longer be available to work on the project.
- A breakdown of time spent by the team on each element of the project and its associated cost, this includes costing of complementary approaches to stakeholder engagement (para. 4.3) and innovative ways to showcase the study outputs (para. 6.3)
- Project experience and referees for two relevant projects completed by the organisation.
- Details of internal quality systems that will be used for this project.
- If the Consultant is unable to provide all of the works themselves they must specify and give details of any sub-contractors.
- Written confirmation that, if requested, evidence can be given at the subsequent Local Plan examination on behalf of the District Council.

## **8. Timeline**

8.1 SDC would like to appoint a consultant at the earliest opportunity. The below timetable sets out the key dates for undertaking the assessment.

Milestone	Date	Actions
Publish brief	Friday 18 <sup>th</sup> June 2021	
Deadline for submission	Friday 9 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	
Interviews	Friday 23 <sup>rd</sup> July 2021	This will be held online or at SDC offices depending on restrictions.
Appointment of consultant	w/c 26 <sup>th</sup> July 2021	
Project inception and meeting	w/c 9 <sup>th</sup> August 2021	Project working group inception meeting to clarify scope with appointed consultant, and confirm deliverables, reporting arrangements.
Deliver draft report	+ 3 months (Nov 2021)	Consultant to complete draft study for review by project working group.
Deliver final report	+ 2 months (Jan 2021)	Consultant to prepare final report and associated deliverables.
Deliver briefing/ workshop event with SDC officers and members	+ 1 month (Feb 2022)	Consultant to work with SDC to deliver briefing/workshop event on interpretation and application of character assessment

## 9. Terms of Business

9.1 The consultant will be expected to enter into SDC's standard terms of business. Any contract needs to be compliant with SDC's Contract Procedure Rules and in particular SDC's standard contract clauses. For further details, refer to the Draft Standard Contract.

## 10. Evaluation Criteria

10.1 Proposals will be evaluated taking into account quality and not just the lowest price, based on 70% Quality and 30% Cost.

10.2 The response to the brief to determine quality will be assessed against the approach and methodology, proposed team and experience, the resource plan and costs submitted by

the Consultant. A scoring matrix between 0 and 5 will be used to assess the submitted brief. The scoring matrix is stated below. This will be weighted accordingly as stated under paragraph 10.4.

### 10.3 Scoring matrix for the quality criteria:

0	Completely fails to meet required standard or does not provide a proposal.
1	Proposal significantly fails to meet the standards required, contains significant shortcomings or is inconsistent with other proposals.
2	Proposal falls short of achieving expected standard in a number of identifiable respects.
3	Proposal meets the required standard in most material respects, but is lacking or inconsistent in others.
4	Proposal meets the required standard in all material respects.
5	Proposal meets the required standard in all material respects and exceeds some or all of the major requirements.

### 10.4 Tender Evaluation Model showing the evaluation criteria and weighting:

<b>Evaluation Criteria and Sub- criteria</b>	<b>Expected Content</b>	<b>Weighting (%)</b>
Approach and methodology	Provide a clear methodology for delivering the project.  Confirmation of how the assessment will meet the requirements of national guidance, policy and best practice.	20
Programme	A proposed work programme and timetable for carrying out the work, including number of meetings with project working group.  How the project timeline will be met.	20

Evaluation Criteria and Sub- criteria	Expected Content	Weighting (%)
	<p>Contingency arrangements, should a member of the team no longer be available to work on the project or how you would respond to potential Covid-19 restrictions</p> <p>Details of internal quality systems that will be used for this project.</p> <p>If the Consultant is unable to provide all of the works themselves they must specify and give details of any sub-contractors.</p>	
Proposed team	<p>Details of the project team including a named Project Director and Project Manager.</p> <p>Profiles of each team member, including hourly/day rates and relevant experience.</p> <p>A breakdown of time spent by the team on each element of the project and its associated cost.</p> <p>Project experience and referees for two relevant projects completed by the organisation.</p>	20

<b>Evaluation Criteria and Sub- criteria</b>	<b>Expected Content</b>	<b>Weighting (%)</b>
Stakeholder engagement approach	Propose an approach to involve the widest range of stakeholders to feed into the study's research and/or the findings	5
Innovative approach	Propose an approach that could deliver the research or findings of this study in an innovative way.	5
<b>Total Marks Available</b>		<b>70%</b>

### Pricing Evaluation

10.4 The evaluation process will be made on a parity of tenders. The tenders must be fully fixed with no provisional items (other than those included by SDC under para. 4.3 and para. 6.3) or excluded items.

10.5 Bid prices will be scored on a comparative basis with the bid providing the greatest return to the Council receiving 100% of the available marks (30% following weighting). All other bids will be compared against that bid.

10.6 For tender evaluation purposes: all items that the Consultant deems as "Provisional" despite not being labelled as such in the tender documents will be given a conservative value by SDC.

10.7 In the event of an equality of marks between tenderers, following any clarifications which may have been sought, the Authority reserves its right at its absolute discretion to determine the party to whom the contract should be awarded based upon the views of the panel.

## **11. Contact Details**

11.1 Any queries about the project should be directed to:

Name: Amanda Gregor  
 Position: Urban Design Officer  
 Email: amanda.gregor@sevenoaks.gov.uk  
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## 12. Map of District

