

SEVENOAKS DISTRICT

SENIORS ACTION FORUM

Working together in the interests of people aged 50 plus

Newsletter 33

August/September 2018

WELCOME

We've been active since our last Newsletter and will be reporting soon in a separate newsletter on developments in health, transport and other areas of concern.

This interim newsletter focuses on three issues that we would encourage you to respond to:

1. **The Local Plan** – during August we obtained and studied the 123–page draft local plan for Sevenoaks District 2015 to 2035. Alan Dixon, our Action Group Leader, has reviewed the consultation document and calls you to act before 10th September.
2. **Celebration of The International Day of Older Persons on 1st October** – this will be the 8th anniversary of the founding of the Forum in 2010 and we will be having a fun and informative coffee morning at the Stag in Sevenoaks. Do come along and maybe bring with you someone who would appreciate an outing
3. **Stronger Together** – We have the opportunity to work with other forums across Kent and have been asked to collect your views as to which projects might be best suited to joint working. Please see the brief questionnaire below and send a quick email to roger.bryan@me.com saying which are your top three.

Some of you will be aware that our website has not been available recently. A new improved site is under preparation. In the meantime, you can visit our temporary site www.sdsaf.org.uk

1. REVIEW OF THE SDC LOCAL PLAN 2015 to 2035

An invitation to comment on the draft SDC local plan was included in the summer edition of “In Shape” which was delivered to all homes in the area at the end of July. This draft document comprises of 123 pages. You can access this on–line at www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/draftlocalplan. Or you can view it at the council’s offices in Argyle Road, Sevenoaks TN13 1HG. There is a copy and literature available at Sevenoaks Library, if you want to buy a copy it will cost you £20. Any comments you want to make must be by the 10th of September. You are encouraged to do this on–line, but you can send written comments to “Planning Policy” at the council offices.

This consultation document provides considerable data on the council’s plans to allow the building of 14,000 new homes in the district between 2015 and 2035. So, they were already 3 years into the plan before this consultation was issued. The reason is that this consultation document has evolved over time, in particular with The Strategic Housing Market Assessment study for both Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells of Sept 2015. To get some scale of these latest plans you should know that there were 48,000 homes in the district in the year 2015, the target to build 14,000 new homes is a whopping big 30% increase

These proposals include a target of 35/40% Affordable Housing. There is no set cost for this, but in Sevenoaks it could mean properties up to £400,000. Some of these will probably be sold on the open market and some to housing associations for people to rent. Some is called Affordable rented housing that could be let at up to 80% of market rates, but tend to be capped at a lower level. Then there is Social rented housing that is set at 50–60% of market rents, but only to those who have been accepted onto the Sevenoaks District Housing Register.

Regarding provision for older people (mainly Pages 60–2 of the document), we are given “options for the elderly, vulnerable and homes for life”. The plan acknowledges that by 2035, our over 65s, will be at least 25% of our ever-growing population. The document gives very fine words about aspirations for elderly housing, for example.

“New housing development specifically designed for older people, including specialist accommodation and registered care homes (particularly dementia specialist) both market and affordable, will be supported where they are in sustainable locations close to services, facilities and transport links. Flatted developments must incorporate an accessible lift. Proposals for retirement villages will be supported where they meet an identified need.”

However, we do not see any detailed targets or passionate commitment to providing suitable, much needed housing for our age group in a plan that is already nearly four years in the making.

There is recognition that Transport and Infrastructure must be improved. Much of this is the responsibility of central and local government, but we could have benefited from more joined up thinking and planning. For example, there are no details of proposed road improvements, just a lot of intentions. With this plan being so far down the line with details on where houses are to be built, we believe they should have prepared and published more plans in conjunction with other government Departments. For example, no mention is made of the possibility of a new access junction to the M26 motorway, which is still in contention between KCC and the Highways Agency. Yet they go into some detail on the need for Electric Vehicle Charging. Then there’s Health and Wellbeing:– the need for change and development is recognized. However, the development of local care hubs is not mentioned, probably because it’s down to the NHS. Surely a local plan this long in getting to publication should have obtained and published far more detailed information on the infrastructure for the district.

Much of the detailed housing proposals are based on the requirement that 14,000 new homes is an acceptable target over 20 years for Sevenoaks. The draft proposal hints that the council think it’s too high, but if they challenge it, they are likely to have it imposed upon them. Whatever happened to democracy! We believe the council have a responsibility to the public to explain how these targets were set and agreed. Apparently, they are based on the latest published household projections produced by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) So we had a look at the July 2016 ONS website also KCC’s housing led forecasts(Sept 2017) and they show for the SDC area:

	2015	2035	Increase	
ONS	49,000	59,000	+10,000	20%
KCC	48,000	55,000	+7,000	14.6%
Draft plan	48,000?	62,000	+14,000	30%

However, we forgot to mention that this local plan must take account of new methodology and then be adjusted to take account of affordability issues. Well we just don’t understand this phraseology ! The increases shown in the draft plan well exceed these other recent forecasts and suggest that the council should give further explanation.

It is understood that forecasts can and will change, but we wonder if the people setting the targets really took into account that Sevenoaks is the most rural district in Kent and that it is largely Green Belt (93% by area) and AONB (60%). This means the district faces a very congested and dense urban future, with most of the proposed building being squeezed into a fairly small land area.

What next? The public’s responses to this consultation are to be considered by the Planning Policy Team who are to make changes to the plan and a final version of the draft will be published later this year. There will be future opportunities for the public to raise further comments and then a final plan will be submitted to the Government and considered at a public examination in 2019. If approved, it will be adopted and used by SDC later in 2019.

More than seventy comments on this draft local plan have been posted on the council’s website. Many of these reflect the comments made here. If you have a point of view, don’t delay, act today, before this part of the Garden of England becomes London’s backyard.

Alan Dixon

2. COFFEE MORNING – MONDAY, 1st OCTOBER 2018

We are very pleased to welcome Chris Stewart as a new committee member. Chris has already arranged a special event at the Stag on Monday, 1st October to celebrate the International day of older persons and has written the following message.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OLDER PERSON

'The best days of my life were spent in the arms of another man's wife. . . . ' the Bishop paused for breath,' . . . my mother!' I guess this is true for most of us and it was in my mother's last two or three years that I fell in love with her all over again. She had become quite ill and somewhat helpless and I assisted her in a way that I would not have dreamed of. After all the years, our roles had been reversed. But it led me to a deeper closeness and love for her.

I learned a lot from my mother's old age. I saw her vulnerability and fragility and became more understanding, protective and caring as she got weaker and less able to cope. Not just physically but also mentally.

My mother, who had been my mentor, adviser, teacher, carer, nurse, cook, cleaner, bed-maker, washerwoman are all that a mother gives without being asked. Yet expects nothing in return. She had done her duty in the Wrens and endured being split from the man she loved for three long years during the war. Walked or cycled with us children to save money and used buses only as a last but necessary resort. Yes, I saw her shop in Tesco's in Sevenoaks town when it first opened to make savings on her housekeeping money and walk all the way home with the heavy shopping bags.

Despite all the hardships she gave so much to so many and with a smile and twinkle in her eye. Hardly a complaint came from her lips and she showed a discretion and sense that I would be proud to emulate. She was a Sunday School teacher for most of her adult life: helped start and run a lunch club at her church, eventually becoming a recipient herself, provided hundreds if not thousands of teas over the years for children, was leader of a Women's fellowship and cooked many dinners and shared her home with lonely folk.

My mother is one reason among millions of people why The International Day of Older Persons is well worth celebrating. And so, The Sevenoaks District Seniors Action Forum have decided to make it a special day for the older folk of Sevenoaks District. A coffee morning is being held at The Stag on Monday, 1st October 2018 between 10 am and 1.30 pm but with a twist.

Older People Can is the theme and we are expecting a lot of Sevenoaks clubs, societies, groups and associations to come and share their activities. This may be an opportunity for our older people to find out about just how many activities Sevenoaks has which are suitable for them to join. It could be passive with just meeting for a coffee, lunch or listen to a talk. It could be active such as a sport, gardening, beekeeping, volunteering or committee work.

The abundance of people working to provide social connections and outlets in the Sevenoaks area is astounding. Many of them are retired themselves and their dedication and enthusiasm is probably not appreciated enough. So too we must appreciate older people who over the years of hard work have given a lifetime to make the country what it is today. We all enjoy those benefits so let us support them now in any way we can.

Older People Can Because Older People Do

Chris Stewart

**Come for Coffee, Come with Friends on Monday, 1st October 2018
at The Stag, Sevenoaks – 10.00 am to 1.30 pm.**

3. STRONGER TOGETHER – ALL OF KENT FORUMS QUESTIONNAIRE

The Healthwatch Kent questionnaire – Please choose your three priority areas for joint action and send your replies to reach roger.bryan@me.com by Monday, 17th September.



Stronger Together

Older Peoples’ Forums across Kent have agreed that on some issues they will come together to work on topics that affect older people across the county.

The Forums have produced a list of issues that affect them all. They are now asking all members of Older Peoples’ Forums to vote for their top three issues.

The top three from all the votes will then be worked on by all of the Older Peoples’ Forums together.

Please tick three of the following topics that are important to you

Care Provision	
Public Toilets	
Pensions	
Social Housing	
Homelessness	
Bus services	
Changes to the NHS & Social Care (Sustainability & Transformation Plan or STP)	

Add any other items you consider appropriate:

Please return your vote to Roger Bryan by Monday, 17th September.

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