

GEDCCC District Visits Programme

Highlights of the visit to Sevenoaks District on 20 May 2022.

These were also outlined in a slide presentation which is available from the author of the report to GEDCCC if requested.

1. Introduction

Overview

- Population 121,400 projected to rise to 137,200 by 2031
- 47,020 households
- 84,100 economically active residents projected to rise to 99,000 in 2037
- 30.4% with qualifications to level 4 or equivalent and above
- 71.5% of 16 to 64-year-olds are in employment
- Median weekly earnings: £574 for District residents £555 for employees in District businesses
- 93% of the District is designated as Green Belt and 60% in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Connectivity

- 28 minutes to London, 2hrs to Europe
- Gatwick within 45 minutes, Heathrow within 75 minutes, Biggin Hill within 30 minutes
- Dover within 75 minutes

Local Economy

- 6,610 enterprises registered for VAT (2019)
- £4066 million GVA
- Visitor Economy worth £138million and 5,032 jobs supported
- 52.5% of those in employment drive to work
- 90.5% of businesses have less than 10 employees

Local Plan Priorities

- Maximum use of sites within existing settlements and previously developed land
- Provide housing choices
- Infrastructure to support growth
- Designing and protecting attractive places
- Sustainability, carbon zero and healthy living
- Creating local jobs and better town centre

Housing Market

- House prices are 40% higher than the county average
- Entry level housing price is 11.8 times average earnings National average is 6.5 times average earnings

- Affordability pressure; weekly median earnings £708
- Average new build completions 279 p.a. since 2010 455 new build completions in 2019
- OAN identifies need to provide 700-800 homes annually to 2033
- Significant housing shortage exacerbated by:
 - Limited number of new development opportunities
 - 93% of district Metro Green Belt
 - 60% AONB
- Lower than average level of private rented accommodation - approximately 13% of residents live in the Private Rented Sector (PRS)
- Above average level of older people in District and set to grow significantly, particularly amongst 85+ group (over 65's to increase from 26,500 in 2021 to 33,750 in 2043).
- Housing associations struggle to compete for land with private developers and most affordable housing consequently delivered via S106 agreements; very few land-led schemes
- Have to cap Affordable Rents to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) levels to ensure affordability; housing associations aren't able to maximise revenue to forward-fund developments
- Housing Need:
 - 604 affordable housing units needed (60% intermediate; 40% social housing)
 - 795 applications on Housing Register seeking 1 and 2 bed units primarily
 - Average 82 households in nightly paid accommodation costing approximately £1,300,000 per annum
 - 169 applications on the self-build register.

2. Key issues for the District

- Areas of high levels of multiple deprivation
- Unemployment rate
- Health indicators
- Aging population
- Planning constraints
- Lack of employment use land
- Diversifying the rural economy
- Physical and digital connectivity
- Funding challenge

3. The main projects and activities in the district

An investment pipeline 2020 to 2030 including:

Public Realm Commission, established in 2020 to:

- Identify what new developments are planned and has the public realm been considered, designed or planned
- Understand what makes good public space
- Ensure public art celebrates the particular story of a place and engages with the community in its making

Trading Companies

- Quercus 7 – commercial investments - £10m spent on six investments to date (excluding Burlington Mews)
- Quercus Housing – delivery of affordable housing in the district

Sevenoaks Town Centre

- Town Centre Regeneration
- Burlington Mews

Edenbridge

- Farmstead Drive
- Stangrove Estate

Swanley Town Centre

- High Street Regeneration
- Bevan Place
- New White Oak Leisure Centre and Prospective Residential Phase

Economic Development Activities

- Place Campaign
- Economic Development Strategy
- Tourism website
- Team around your business
- West Kent Partnership
- Career Enterprise Network
- Kickstart
- Business Support

Additional Information

- Partnership to augment capacity to facilitate delivery
- Funding to assist with viability and infrastructure provision to obtain more affordable housing and improve connectivity
- Utilising public assets to catalyse regeneration and enhance services to local residents
- Unlocking development potential of new Garden
- Settlements at (Pedham, Fort Halstead, Greatness) and assist Council to take a more proactive role as a “promoter”
- Accelerate roll-out of broadband to rural areas
- Rural diversification and “grey land”
- Retro-fit and net zero carbon ambition