

3 March 2026

Dear Kevin and Nigel,

The results of the public consultation on the draft Sevenoaks Local Plan have now been published. They are deeply worrying.

The current Plan does not command public support. Our residents have said in clear terms that they oppose every significant development proposal put forward by the Council.

This calls for a change of approach.

I am therefore writing to you – and other Group Leaders – to urge you to change course.

Our priority should be to build both public consent across the District and political support within the Council for a much-improved Local Plan. The alternative is either that this process will fail entirely, leaving Sevenoaks without a Local Plan once again, or that an unpopular and divisive Plan will be imposed by Cabinet diktat.

I believe a new consensus is achievable, based on four principles:

- 1. Sevenoaks needs a new Local Plan.** We have suffered too long without one. To enter a new era of unitary Local Government without a Local Plan would place our District and residents at a severe disadvantage.
- 2. Sevenoaks needs new housing,** particularly affordable housing and housing for social rent. We are currently paying a heavy price for long-term failure to keep up with housing needs. Changing this will be key to the future vibrancy of our local economy, public services and communities.
- 3. Proposals for new housing must be accompanied by parallel and detailed commitments to the infrastructure that we need** to support them – and to improve what already exists. Sevenoaks District needs a radical overhaul of its thinking on transport, roads, water management, health and education.
- 4. Residents should be proud of where they live** – and we must ensure that our precious environment is respected and sustained. The Local Plan must enable us to create great places through good design and planning that fits these human needs. Sevenoaks District must remain a wonderful place for future generations to enjoy and cherish.

Forging a new consensus will not be easy. It will require the Council proactively to engage all political groups and our local communities. It will require dialogue, compromise, detailed negotiation and strong leadership.

Unfortunately, the Council currently lacks formal structures to do this.

Our Committee structure is constrained and intermittent. As a minority Administration, the Council's Cabinet lacks the breadth of support to undertake this task on its own.

We need to create new machinery urgently. This is an urgent priority. I hope that we can move fast.

As a first step, I suggest that the political groups meet to test whether this is achievable.

Because of the high level of public interest in this topic, this letter will be shared via press release and social media.

All good wishes

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alan Leaman". The signature is written in a cursive style. Below the signature is a horizontal line.

Alan Leaman,
Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on Sevenoaks District Council.