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Sevenoaks Town Council Town Clerk / Chief Executive

Presentation to NALC 31<sup>st</sup> October 2017

Examples of Economic Development  
by Sevenoaks Town Council

# Sevenoaks Town Council Details

Population	20,000
Electorate	13,000
Turnover	£1,500,000
Precept	£1,029,625
Band D	£111

## **Two Practical Examples**

Completed and ongoing project – Stag Theatre & Cinema

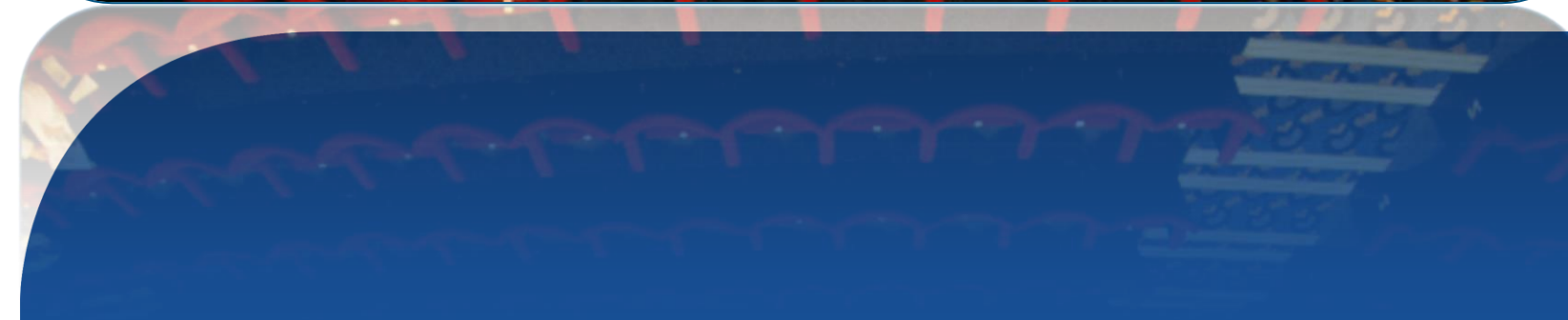
Current project – Bat & Ball Station Building refurbishment

**Followed by a summary of Sevenoaks 7 Top Tips**



# Stag Theatre & Cinema

- Owned by the District Council
- Bankrupt twice
- Last time in 2008
- Owing huge debts both nationally and to local voluntary organisations.
- Venue has 450 seater auditorium, 2 cinemas, function suite, café and other rooms.





In 2008 Sevenoaks Town took the decision to bid to manage the facility on a long term peppercorn lease for the following reasons:

Assisting the sustainability of the local economy of the town, particularly the night time economy and tourism economy.

Retaining the valuable social and leisure facility for both performers and audiences.

Enabling the development of youth services both in performing arts and youth outreach services.

Retaining an iconic building in the town and preserving the street scene.

# BUSINESS PLAN

The key elements of the Business Plan

Keep it simple

Not artistically speculate (e.g. no box office split) – risk moved to performers.

Use of volunteers to support paid staff

In 2010 created a charitable trust for the Stag and it operates legally independently.

The Trustees are elected Town Councillors.

# Costs to the Tax Payer

Sevenoaks Town Council provides an annual revenue grant of £27,000

Sevenoaks Town Council has assisted with grants for new capital equipment from its capital receipts.

The Stag is part of the Sevenoaks Fund (a crowdfunding platform raising £1m for four local charities).



## 2017 Independent Economic Impact Assessment of the Stag

- The Stag attracts approx. 250,000 – 300,000 visits per annum
- 50% from outside the town
- Total visitor spend is estimated at £9.2m per annum
- Supports 20 permanent FTE jobs at the venue
- £7.6 m of the visitor spend is in wider local economy, supporting approx. 140 FTE jobs
- Supporting a further 18 jobs through its purchasing power
- Equates to approximately £7m of GVA contribution to the local economy.
- 6,000 hours of volunteer opportunities for the people of Sevenoaks with associated benefits
- Adds cultural value to Sevenoaks as a place to live and visit.





# Refurbishment of Grade II Listed Bat & Ball Station Building





**BAT & BALL:** The area suffers in comparison with Sevenoaks but things are set

# ‘Councillors do want to put their money where their mouth is here’

AMBITIOUS plans to transform Bat and Ball from a perceived night-time no-go area into a thriving community hub are firmly under way.

The Bat & Ball Friends Group, supported by Sevenoaks Town and District Councils, wants to regenerate an area in the shadow of the town.

Plans include modernising the rundown station, building a new community centre and tackling preconceptions people have about Bat & Ball.

A report which went in front of the town council's finances and general purposes committee on Monday said: "Sevenoaks has a reputation of being an affluent town and indeed in areas that is the case.

## Servicing

"There are, however, areas of deprivation in the town and the facilities servicing and located in these areas are aligned to these polarised communities.

"The regeneration of the Bat & Ball area is seeking to provide equal, good quality facilities for the local community investing in the social capital for the future and regenerating the area."

It is anticipated more than £2.2million will be spent on regen-

## REGENERATION:

The overlooked younger sibling to Sevenoaks' star pupil, Bat & Ball has suffered neglect for decades. But now the area has found a group of friends intent on turning round its fortunes and bringing some community spirit to the locality. **Sean-Paul Doran** reports...

traffic junction and better signage at the station.

Bat & Ball forms a key part of Sevenoaks Town Council's planned £4million spending spree, which should mean the authority moves into a new two-storey community/conference centre behind the existing facility in Cramptons Road.

A planning application for the

could begin in autumn before the centre, designed to hold events for up to 250 people, is open for business in 2016.

Improvements to the neglected train station, which is unmanned, has windows boarded up and does not have refreshments or taxis available, are also integral.

Town clerk Linda Larter said: "There is a perception within the community that the station is unsafe, especially in the dark evenings and at night.

"It is not based on any particular incidents, but it's definitely a feeling some people in Sevenoaks have.

## Project

"The town councillors want to put their money where their mouth is with this project.

"We have been working on plans to regenerate the whole Bat & Ball area for most of 2014.

"The station has been on the market for quite a while and the council is pursuing it. I don't know why it has been left to deteriorate, but it needs work done.

"The Friends of Bat & Ball Group had its first meeting in November, with the second meeting planned for January.

"There has been a lot of interest



## HISTORY OF STATION FROM EARLY DAYS

Bat & Ball station dates back as far as June 1862 and was originally known as Sevenoaks Bat and Ball.

Before then, those who had wanted to travel to London took the pair-horse omnibus from the Royal Oak Hotel to Tonbridge station and made the journey from there to London Bridge, via Redhill.

On June 2 1862, the first train journey was made to Bat & Ball station from London Victoria.

Present on the train was Thomas Crampton, the engineer and railway contractor known today for designing the Crampton locomotive.



**RAIL PIONEER:** Thomas Crampton had land in the area with brick fields, gas works, a brewery and working-class

historian and Chronicle columnist Bob Ogley gave a detailed talk on the history of the area.

He told the group how the station was lit by gas until 1967, one of the last stations to do so.

The signal box shut in November 1981 and today the footbridge no longer has a roof, while the old station master's house is now a private residence.

He added: "Today the old station looks forlorn and neglected.

"It has suffered repeatedly from vandalism and it is not manned any longer.

# Why did we start the Project?

Sevenoaks Town Council has a commitment to the regeneration of the Bat & Ball area, the most deprived part of the town.

The Town Council undertook an Asset Management Exercise which resulted in a plan to develop the current community hall into a new Bat & Ball Centre.



# Bat & Ball Station

The Bat & Ball Station was of considerable concern both to the Town Council and the local community.

Anti-social behaviour in the vicinity



Deterioration of Grade II Listed Building



Lack of facilities for commuters – including many school children



...and the wider negative impact on the community







## What did we do next?

Friends of Bat & Ball Station created – with objectives including restoration of station building.

Sevenoaks Town Council produced its Community Investment Plan outlining its planned investment particularly within Bat & Ball area.

Sevenoaks Town Council held a RIBA design competition for a new centre to include Bat & Ball Station building – even though only aspirational at that stage.

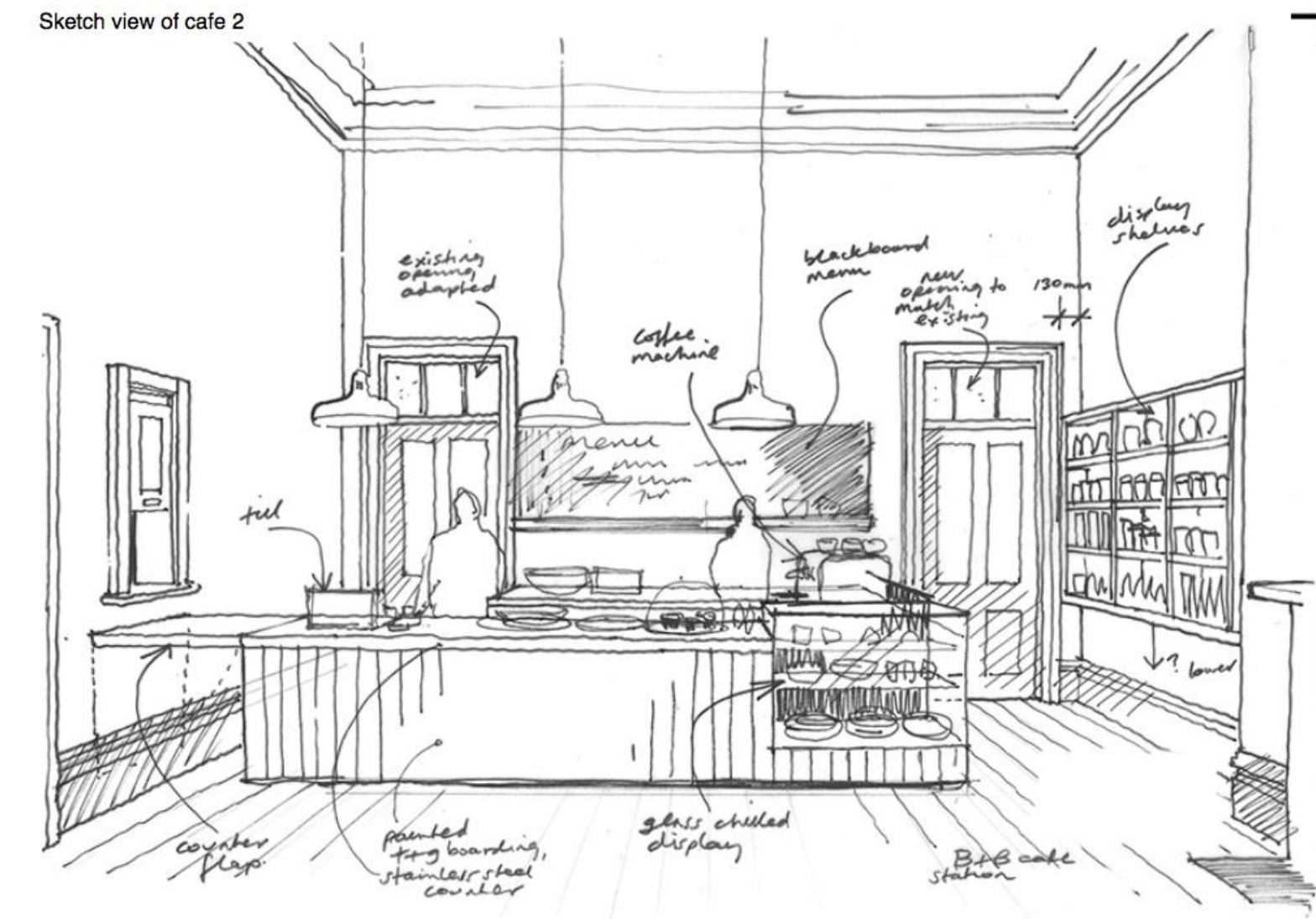
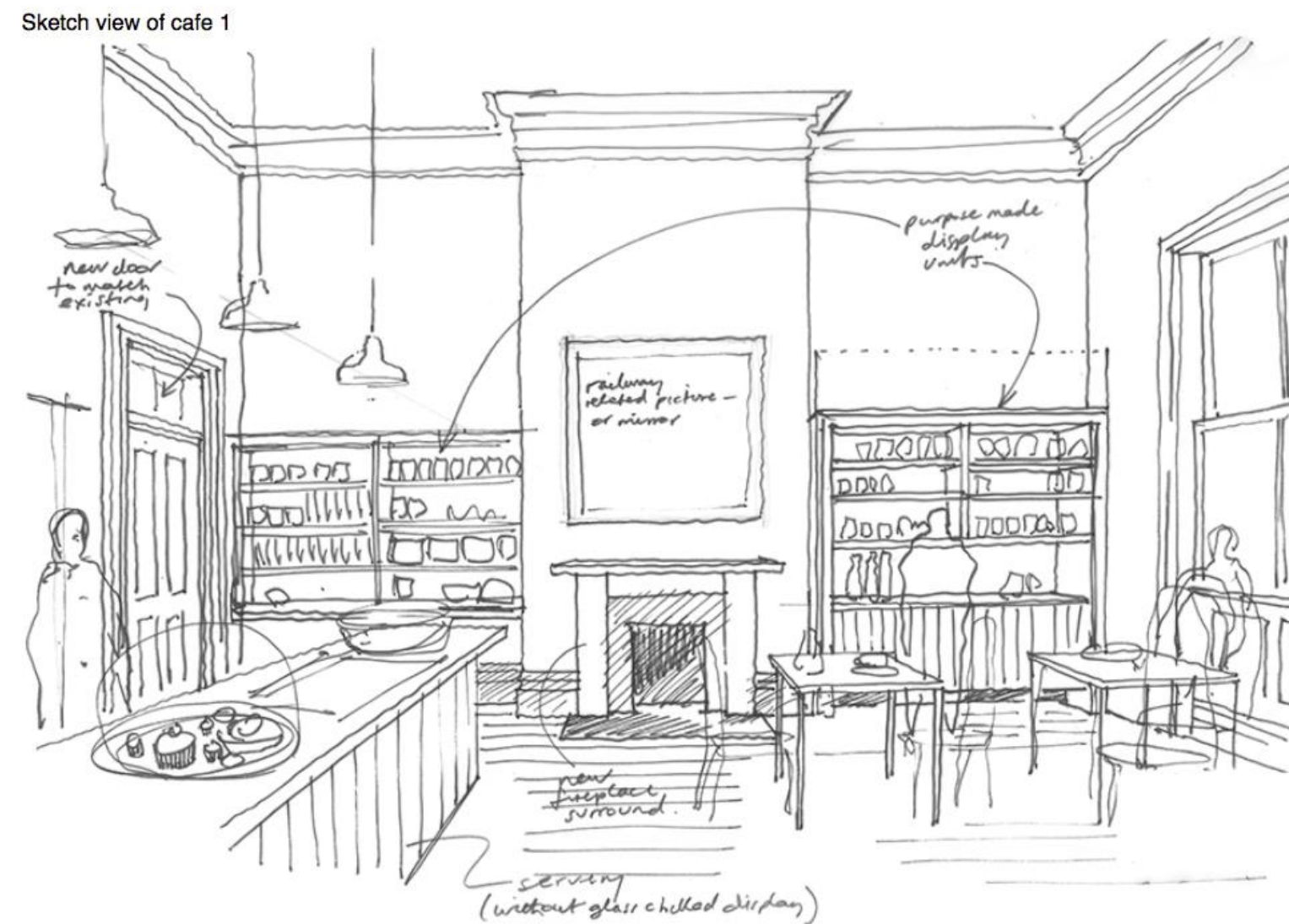
Researched similar projects – Etchingam Station of considerable interest.



# Preferred Option

A full Option Appraisal was undertaken and report prepared.

The preferred option was to restore the Grade II Listed building into a sustainable community use, incorporating the feedback from public consultation.





New access to the London bound platform

Before



After












# Summary of the project

- Bring a boarded up Grade II Listed building back into community use.
- Encouraged people to learn about the heritage of the building.
- Act as a catalyst for further investment and regeneration into the Bat & Ball area (recognised area of deprivation)
- Economic Development: Net job creation of 25 FTE. Permanent economic impact of £1.2m of GVA per annum to the local economy.
- Addressed anti-social issues in the station by providing an onsite presence and creating a community hub
- Provided community facilities normally associated with a station – external lighting, café, public toilets, street furniture, bicycle racks, information and community rooms.
- Encourage more people to use the station building.

# Summary of Sevenoaks 7 Top Tips

-  **Have a plan** – know what you want to achieve.
-  **Communicate this clearly** – could be a one page leaflet or complicated Business Plan – dependent on the project. This keeps everyone to same message (helps prevent rumours) – often attracts support from unlikely sources.
-  **Know the costs** – the first question from anyone interested in being involved.
-  **Do your research** – Make sure you're aware of the planning and legal implications of your project, and tackle these hurdles early on.
-  **Use what you know** - The Stag Theatre and Cinema a £2.5 million turnover - Business Plan operates as per a Village Hall, albeit on grander scale.
-  **Don't be afraid to ask for help and advice**, particularly outside normal circle e.g. businesses.
-  **Overcome and learn from your mistakes** – No matter how much you prepare there will always be unforeseen hurdles; remember the core reasons for embarking on the project and stay positive. There are very few hurdles which can't be overcome with some creative thinking.