

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 27 October 2020

Time: 10.00am

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)
Matt Partridge (Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council)
Councillor Sharon Taylor (Stevenage Borough Council)
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)
Councillor John Gardner (Stevenage Borough Council)
Chris Barnes (Stevenage Borough Council)
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)
Annie Piper (Stevenage Borough Council)
Lucy King (Stevenage Borough Council)
Councillor David Williams (Hertfordshire County Council)
Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council)
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)
Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire LEP)
Briege Leahy (Herts Chamber of Commerce)
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)
Charlotte Blizzard Welch (Citizens Advice Bureau)
Ed Jordan (WENTA)
Zahid Latif (Catapult)
Claire Dicks (MBDA)
Kit Davies (North Herts College)
Kevin Cowin (MACE)
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)
Karen Hillen (BEIS)
Malcolm Everly (Airbus)
James Latham (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)
Sarah Brierley (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust)
Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire)
Andrew Fisher (Barton Willmore)
Graeme Collinge (Genecon)

Start / End Start Time: 10.00am
Time: End Time: 11.10am

1 WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the main item of business was to formally sign off the Town Investment Plan prior to submission to the Government.

The Chair then updated the Board on the current position with regard to the recently approved SG1 Planning Application. He advised members that Stephen McPartland MP had written to the Secretary of State for Housing Communities and Local Government to request that the Application be called in for a number of reasons including on the grounds of a lack of affordable housing. At present, the Secretary of State has issued a holding order to allow time for the Department to decide if the application needs to be formally called in. It is hoped that the holding order would be determined in the next 6-8 weeks.

All Members of the Board agreed the importance for the request to be assessed and released by the Secretary of State in a timely manner.

Kevin Cowin (MACE) commented on the eventful week for Stevenage which had culminated in 2 years of hard work and commitment to the SG1 Application. He thanked all Members for their overwhelming level of support and although frustrated with the actions of the MP advised that MACE had made strong representations to the Government this week in response.

Mace were also now looking at options to accelerate the site clearance but would be in the hands of the Government and their response to the call-in request.

Councillor David Williams, Herts County Council advised that he would be writing to the Secretary of State in his role as Chair of the Herts Growth Board and would share a copy of the letter with the Board Members.

Councillor Sharon Taylor, Stevenage Borough Council, expressed her frustration regarding the lack of engagement from the MP from the very start of the planning process as well as his refusal to engage with the work of the Development Board, despite having a standing invitation to all meetings.

The Chair and Councillor Taylor also expressed their thanks to MACE and the SBC Regeneration and Planning Teams for the enormous amount of hard work and commitment to this application and being able to draw together all the complexities of the Plan to reach this stage.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Board was advised that apologies for absence had received from Stephen Ward (Catapult), Duncan Forbes (East & North Herts NHS Trust), Simon Russian (Montagu Evans LLP), Greg Westover (Legal and General), Charles Amies (Homes England) and Sally Ann Forsyth (Stevenage Catalyst).

3 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENNESS

The Board received the latest conflict of interests list.

4 **MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 3 SEPTEMBER 2020 / MATTERS ARISING**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 3 September 2020 be approved as a correct record.

5 **REGENERATION UPDATE**

Chris Barnes (Assistant Director of Regeneration, SBC), gave a presentation and provided an update to the Board on:

- Town Square/North Block transitioning into the final stages with workspace for 200 jobs as well as a ground floor restaurant with completion hoped for in November 2020;
- The bus interchange enabling works which were underway; contractors were now on site and an appointment would be made very soon to the main contract;
- The fact that there had been good commercial interest despite challenging circumstances;
- The milestone of the SG1 planning application approval;
- Update on the work to the Town Centre public realm.

Chris advised it should be borne in mind that there had been a clear increase in costs of works due to uncertainties as a result of the Covid Pandemic as well as the potential for a no-deal Brexit.

The Board was pleased to note that, as a result of the works around Queensway North, constructive discussions had been held with other Town Centre landlords around the regeneration of their buildings.

In relation to the Matalan site, progress was being made including a virtual consultation which had recently been undertaken by the developers.

The Chair thanked Chris for his updates.

6 **TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN**

The Draft Stevenage Town Investment Plan (TIP) had been circulated to all Members of the Board for final comment prior to the Board meeting. The draft had been considered by the Government's Check and Challenge process in early October and the feedback received had been incorporated within the plan. The feedback included:

- The Plan told an impactful story;
- Showed a professionalism;
- Refinements were suggested to the narrative;
- Powerful and concise.

Overall, the feedback was that the Plan showed the improvements in the Town and the future plans for the benefit of Stevenage. It was a challenge to attract people to

the town but projects such as the heritage centre and museum and the focus on the cultural and community aspects would go a long way to achieving this.

Comments made by the Board members included:

- The TIP unlocked the wider strategy for the longer term aspirations of all sectors in Stevenage;
- It was really transformative for the town, for example, in terms of health care delivery;
- It was evidence of the community working together across all sectors including in response to the Covid pandemic. The Plan could be used not only for Stevenage but could contribute to aspirations across the whole of the UK;
- Partnership working at its best;
- Historic England praised the strength of the document which would support an amazing opportunity to learn about the heritage of Stevenage alongside the New Town movement;
- Thanks were given to the LEP and HCC for their support in pulling together the Plan.

The Board was pleased to note that the quote from Mark Bretton (Herts LEP) would be finalised and included in the document, alongside those of Councillor Sharon Taylor (SBC) and Councillor David Williams (HCC).

Kevin Cowin (MACE) commented on the strength of the TIP which would have a huge impact on the Town. He advised that he had consulted with the CE of MACE and Sir Howard Bernstein who had both made positive comments on the document.

Tom Pike, Strategic Director SBC, thanked all colleagues for their work on the Plan.

It was agreed that if there were any final tweaks or comments that any Board Member wished to make before the Plan's submission to the Government at the end of the week, they would need to make them by the end of the day to ensure consideration and if appropriate inclusion in the document.

In response to a question, Karen Hillen (BEIS) advised that the process once the Government had received the Plan was for an initial assessment to be undertaken followed by a check/challenge session hopefully in mid-December.

Final thanks were then given to the Chair for his leadership and energy and his moving introduction at the start of the Plan.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Stevenage Town Centre Investment Plan be adopted by the Board, subject to any minor changes that the Chair and development team make to the document and be submitted to the Government.

7 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Councillor David Williams reported that the County Council had included a scheme addressing the gap in the cycle route provision between Stevenage Old Town and

the Lister Hospital in a bid for Government Funding from the Emergency Active Travel Fund. This was currently awaiting DfT approval and he would report back as soon as the outcome was known.

Cllr Williams advised that he would send details of the bid to Sarah Brierley (East & North Herts NHSTrust).

8 **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

To be confirmed.