

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
MINUTES**

**Date: Thursday, 14 October 2021**

**Time: 2.30pm**

**Place: Virtual (via Zoom)**

**Present:** Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)  
Matt Partridge (Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council)  
Councillor Sharon Taylor (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Councillor John Gardner (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Clare Fletcher (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Chris Barnes (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Lucy King (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Warren Myles (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Gemma Hannant (Stevenage Borough Council)  
County Councillor Richard Roberts (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)  
Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire LEP)  
Briege Leahy (Herts Chamber of Commerce)  
Charlotte Blizzard-Welch (Stevenage Citizens Advice Bureau)  
Ed Jordan (WENTA)  
Claire Dicks (MBDA)  
Kit Davies (North Hertfordshire College)  
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)  
Sian Carter (Homes England)  
Karen Hillen (BEIS)  
Kevin Cowin (MACE)  
James Latham (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)  
Mary Hartley (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust)  
Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire)  
Richard Whitehead (Aecom)

**Also in attendance:**

Piers Slater (Reef)  
Adam Molyneux (WSP UK Ltd) – **for Item 8 only**  
Giles Perkins (WSP UK Ltd) – **for Item 8 only**  
Andrew Highfield (Hertfordshire County Council) – **for Item 8 only**

**Start / End** Start Time: 2.30pm  
**Time:** End Time: 4.36pm

## **1 WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. He briefly reflected on the work on the Board since its inception 18 months or so ago, including the excellent work carried out in the preparation of the Town Investment Plan (TIP) and the subsequent Government award of £37.5M of Town Deal funding to Stevenage. He thanked and congratulated Board Members for their contributions and support over the past 18 months.

The Chair stated that, later in the meeting, the Board would be considering the first two of the nine Business Cases for the projects contained in the TIP. It was envisaged that this and the next three Board meetings would consider 2/3 Business Cases, leading up to the Government's final submission deadline date in March 2022.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The Board was advised that apologies for absence had been received from the following:

Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)  
Sarah McLaughlin (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Stephen Ward (Catapult)  
Kasia Averall (Catapult)  
Greg Westover (Legal & General)  
Charles Amies (Homes England)  
Keith Ellis (Airbus)  
Hetty Thornton (Historic England)  
Duncan Parsley (GlaxoSmithKline)

## **3 MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 29 JULY 2021**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 29 July 2021 be approved as a correct record.

## **4 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENNESS**

The Board received the latest conflicts of interest list.

## **5 DEVELOPMENT PROGRESS UPDATES**

### **(1) Reef update**

The Board Chair welcomed Piers Slater from Reef and invited him to give a presentation on the work of Reef in Stevenage.

Piers advised that Reef had been active in Stevenage for four years, developing the Queensway North scheme. Nationally, Reef had provided £3Bn investment in development schemes, many of them working in partnership with local authorities.

Piers referred to Reef\_KN, a knowledge fund set up with UBS to create links between people, skills, places and knowledge, particularly in the life sciences and digital sectors. He then referred to Digital Reef, set up with partners ukcloud, to provide advice and support on digital requirements and solutions for the life sciences sector, particularly in the field of manufacturing. He commented that Stevenage was perfectly located in the centre of the Cambridge-Oxford-London “Golden Triangle” for life sciences.

Piers drew attention to the activities of Reef in Stevenage, working closely with a variety of partners, including the Borough Council, LEP, North Herts College, Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst, Catapult Cell & Gene Therapy, STEM Discovery Centre, University of Hertfordshire and Autolus.

Piers summarised the Queensway North project, which had provided new office, residential, gym and retail units in the town centre. He also introduced plans for the Innovation Centre (one of the Town Investment Plan projects) and the Marshgate Bioscience building being developed for Autolus (another of the TIP projects). In the future there was further scope for the potential development of other town centre sites for further life sciences facilities and offers such as office/collaborative buildings.

Matt Partridge (Chief Executive: Stevenage Borough Council) commented that it had been a pleasure to work with Piers and his Reef colleagues over the past few years, and that he was looking forward to continuing what had been a fruitful partnership. Those sentiments were echoed by Borough Councillors Sharon Taylor and John Gardner, and they were pleased to note that a focus on climate change/carbon zero would be built into future developments.

Karen Hillen (BEIS) asked if a Government Ministerial visit could be arranged in connection with the Autolus building. It was noted that the Chief Executive of Autolus was visiting the site in November 2021 to “launch” the building project. The Board Chair stated that the site was currently a car park, and he felt that it might perhaps be more meaningful if the Ministerial visit coincided with the formal opening of the building once constructed.

The Chair thanked Piers for an excellent presentation.

(2) Mace update

The Board Chair invited Kevin Cowan (Mace) to give a presentation on the work of Mace on the SG1 regeneration project in the town centre.

Kevin advised that the SG1 scheme was endeavouring to develop an attractive evening economy for the town centre, including an enhanced food and beverage offer, community space, office space and green areas, as well as high quality new build homes. The intention would be for most of those occupying the residential units to work and socialise in the town. SG1 was also being designed to feed into adjoining areas of the town.

Kevin described the 4 main phases of the SG1 project, which encompassed 10 plots

of land. In terms of a general update, he confirmed that planning permission had been granted; the Section 106 Agreement had been largely completed; legal conditions were in place to commence demolition for Phase 1; detailed design and supply chain procurement was being secured; and an accelerated programme had been agreed in principle (the Garden Square and Civic Hub elements were intended to be moved from Phase 3 into Phase 2).

Kevin stated that Mace was an accredited net zero carbon business, and he provided some examples of the zero carbon materials and processes used in their construction schemes. Mace was also supporting local businesses in the supply chain, and recognised social value in terms of local jobs and apprenticeships for local people. He also referred to some local voluntary work undertaken by Mace in respect of maintenance and improvements to the Pin Green Play Centre.

Borough Councillor John Gardner stated that Mace had brought a high standard of construction development to the SG1 scheme, and he looked forward to this continuing in Phase 2 and beyond, including the Civic Hub, which would benefit a variety of partner organisation as well as the Borough Council. He naturally welcomed the focus on carbon neutral construction methods.

Charlotte Blizzard-Welch (Stevenage Citizens Advice Bureau) was pleased that the plans for the Civic Hub had been accelerated in the overall SG1 programme. Kevin thanked Charlotte for her offer of providing advice to Mace regarding the needs of the community/third sector in the facilities to be provided in the Hub.

Tom Pike (Strategic Director: Stevenage Borough Council) and Borough Councillor Sharon Taylor paid tribute to Kevin and Mace and looked forward to continuing to work in partnership to expedite the most significant town centre transformation since Stevenage New Town was established in 1946.

The Board Chair thanked Kevin for an interesting and informative presentation.

## **6 TOWN DEAL BUSINESS CASES TRANCHE 1**

Chris Barnes (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) advised the Board of the review process for Town deal Business Cases. He commented that a full draft of each Business Case would be subject to an officer sift before being considered by an Assurance Panel, involving some Board Members. The next stage would be submission to the Board and, subject to Board endorsement, the final stage would be approval by the Accountable Body (SBC). Thereafter, the Business Case(s) would be submitted to the Government.

Chris stated that two summary Business Cases were before the Board for consideration. Full versions of each Business Case were available on request.

### **(1) Gunnels Wood Road Infrastructure Project**

Chris commented that the Business Case was fully consistent with the initial proposal set out in the Stevenage Town Investment Plan (TIP).

Chris advised that the Business Case proposed the use of £1M of Towns Fund money to part-fund the delivery of stage 1 of the Gunnels Wood Road infrastructure project, the design and enabling works required as part of the gyratory roundabout works. The project aligned with the ethos of the TIP, by utilising public funding to leverage private investment to make Stevenage Even Better, and importantly enhance the opportunities for local residents and businesses.

Chris explained that the works themselves related to an infrastructure project, land for redevelopment, delivering local economic growth and high-value jobs, and harnessing the opportunity to enhance skills, training and employment opportunities for the people of Stevenage. The development of a life science park, as detailed at previous Board meetings and in the national press, would continue to solidify Stevenage as a leading centre for life sciences, as well as enabling other growth opportunities in the area. This could only be achieved if the highway capacity and infrastructure challenges for Gunnels Wood Road were addressed.

Chris stated that the lead delivery partner for the project would be Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), supported by Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Stevenage Borough Council. There was also a key role for GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) in relation to unlocking the outcomes of this project, and the assurance panel which had reviewed this business case, including the Chair and Chief Officers from the accountable body, HCC and the LEP, had recommended a condition to ensure secure allocation of the land prior to significant funding being spent.

Chris mentioned that there were some challenges around the insecurity of stage 2 funding - whilst it had been positive to see some positive partnership working between the Development Board, LEP, HCC and the Borough Council in relation to the Levelling-up fund, this money had not yet been secured. However, part of the reason for including the project in the TIP, and funding stage 1, was that it would provide the strongest possible platform to subsequently secure the additional funding. Notwithstanding this, the Business Case was strongly supported by the assurance panel, with a recommendation that the Development Board endorse the project.

The Board noted an issue raised by James Latham (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst) concerning the transfer of GSK owned land to allow the development to take place. There was the possibility that the sale of the GSK freehold land required would be to a developer, in which case the developer would be a further party to the necessary agreement. The Board considered that it would be important to engage with GSK as soon as possible and get their sign off before design work commenced.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Gunnels Wood Road Infrastructure Project Business Case be endorsed, and recommended to the Accountable Body (Stevenage Borough Council ) for approval.

## (2) Marshgate Biotech Centre Project

Chris commented that the Business Case was fully consistent with the initial proposal set out in the Stevenage Town Investment Plan (TIP), with the exception of

the key worker housing element, which the Board had previously agreed to vary in response to the challenge of receiving £37.5M Town Deal funding (as opposed to the £50M bid contained in the TIP).

Chris advised that the Business Case proposed the use of £1.75M of Towns Fund money to deliver a new life science centre on Marshgate car park, including laboratory and office space, as a European HQ for Autolus, who currently have a Research & Development presence in Stevenage.

Chris explained that the funding would be used to deliver the public elements of the scheme, delivering a new public parking offer, and improvements to the public realm connections to and from the site. This dovetailed nicely with the nearby Park Place and Queensway North developments, which had been completed or were close to completion.

Chris stated that the outputs that this project delivered would provide a significant economic boost to the town as part of the Covid-recovery. This was an opportunity to provide high-quality life science development in the town centre, with job roles at accessible skills levels for a wide range of local people, and really did get to the heart of the TIP. It would be especially positive for many Board Members, who had seen Government and LEP investment in life sciences in the town, together with Borough Council investment in the town centre regeneration, to see the results of both combining to deliver jobs, economic growth, and provide stimulus to the town centre.

Chris considered that the project would create a significant opportunity to harness the spending power and footfall the development would generate; to support existing businesses and attract new ones as part of the transformation of our town; and to start to strengthen those links between residents, businesses, and the quality of the town's amenities and infrastructure.

Chris advised that the lead delivery partner for this project would be Reef, supported by Stevenage Borough Council. An Accountable Body Agreement would be in place to ensure that the funds were managed and used appropriately, and the programme delivered the outputs expected. The assurance panel again provided strong support for this Business Case, and the chance to deliver a project such as this early in the programme would set a really positive statement to the Government.

The following points were made by Board Members:

- In response to a query, Chris explained that the removal of the key worker housing element had been removed from the project in agreement with BEIS, on the basis that such housing (if required) could be provided on sites such as Queensway North, which already had a set of eligibility criteria regarding the occupation of such units. He undertook to ensure that any remaining references to key worker housing were removed from the Business Case;
- In reply to a further query, Chris confirmed that the size of the proposed building reflected Autolus's stated requirements and was fit for purpose; whilst the TIP contained no specific requirements for carbon zero design, it was expected that the planning process would scrutinise sustainability and design issues. Piers

Slater (Reef) added that his company's in-house design team took zero carbon issues very seriously. The building would be of modular design and would be future-proofed. An area of land adjacent to the site had been reserved by SBC should Autolus wish to expand the premises any time in the future;

- In terms of an issue regarding loss of car parking due to the development, Chris stated that this should be offset by the car parking to be provided in the new Multi-Storey Car Park proposed on the Railway Station North Car Park, which was part of the Station Gateway project. There was also underused parking space in the St. George's Way Multi-Storey Car Park; and
- Chris confirmed that the intention was to submit Business Cases to the Government as soon as they were approved, rather than all at once in March 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Marshgate Biotech Centre Project Business Case be endorsed, and recommended to the Accountable Body (Stevenage Borough Council) for approval.

## **7 REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

The Chair announced that consideration of this update item would be deferred to the next Board meeting.

## **8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### **(1) Zero Emission Bus Regional Areas (ZEBRA) Scheme**

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Giles Perkins and Adam Molyneux from WSP UK Limited and Andrew Highfield (Hertfordshire County Council), who had been invited to the meeting to outline the ZEBRA Scheme.

Giles advised that WSP was working in association with HCC to submit a bid to the Department of Transport under the ZEBRA Scheme for the implementation of a zero emission (ie. electric) bus fleet for Stevenage. This would be one of 18 such bids being submitted nationally.

Giles explained that he was keen for as many partners as possible to endorse the Stevenage bid. If successful, the Government would fund 75% of the difference of the cost of replacing diesel buses with electric buses. The remaining 25% would require funding from other sources.

Giles stated that an outline business case and bid was being developed for submission to the Government in November 2021. The final submission was due for submission in January 2022. He invited the Board and/or some of its constituent partners to support the bid. Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) commented that the Borough Council had provided a letter of support to the bid at the Expressions of Interest Stage.

Giles undertook to provide further details of the proposed business case/bid to the Board Chair, who would circulate it to Board Members.

Borough Councillors Sharon Taylor and John Gardner were both delighted with the potential for an electric bus fleet in the town, which tied in perfectly with the Council's Climate Change Strategy and aspirations.

The Board Chair took the opportunity to express his gratitude to Councillor Taylor for her support and foresight in progressing the multitude of schemes and projects happening around the town, which was an exciting place for ideas to form and develop. He gave a big thank you to Councillor Taylor and the SBC Team in working towards a Stevenage Even Better.

(2) National Infrastructure Commission Report

Kevin Cowan (Mace) was pleased to advise the Board that Stevenage had been recognised in the National Infrastructure Commission Report.

**9 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was noted that future Board meetings would take place on the following dates:

- Thursday, 2nd December 2021: 10.00am - 12.00pm
- Thursday, 20th January 2022: 10.00am – 12.00pm
- Thursday, 24th February 2022: 10.00am – 12.00pm

The Board Chair asked supporting officers to book a venue so that the next meeting in 2 December 2021 could be held as an in-person meeting.