

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 3 September 2020

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)
Matt Partridge (Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council)
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership)
Councillor Sharon Taylor (Stevenage Borough Council)
Councillor John Gardner (Stevenage Borough Council)
Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership)
Kevin Cowin (Mace Developments)
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)
Chris Barnes (Stevenage Borough Council)
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)
Annie Piper (Stevenage Borough Council)
Lucy King (Stevenage Borough Council)
Sarah McLaughlin (Hertfordshire County Council)
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)
Kit Davies (North Hertfordshire College)
Charlotte Blizzard Welch (Stevenage Citizens Advice Bureau)
Ed Jordan (WENTA)
Mary Hartley (East & North Herts NHS Trust)
Sally Ann Forsyth (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)
Zahid Latif (Catapult)
Briege Leahy (Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce)
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)
Karen Hillen (BEIS)
Hetty Thornton (Historic England)
Simon Russian (Montagu Evans LLP)
Andrew Fisher (Barton Wilmore)
Graeme Collinge (Genecon)

Start / End Start Time: 2.00pm
Time: End Time: 4.09pm

1 WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, including a number of new Board members and first-time attendees.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Board was advised that apologies for absence had been received from County Councillor David Williams (Hertfordshire County Council), Stephen Ward (Catapult), Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire LEP), Neville Reyner (Groundwork East), Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council), Charles Amies (Homes England), Sarah Brierley (East & North Herts NHS Trust), Duncan Forbes (East & North Herts NHS Trust), Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire) and Greg Westover (Legal & General).

3 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENNESS

The Board received the latest conflicts of interest list.

4 MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 29 JULY 2020 / MATTERS ARISING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 29 July 2020 be approved as a correct record.

5 TOWN INVESTMENT PLAN - PROJECT SHAPING

Andy Fisher (Barton Willmore), assisted by Graeme Collinge (Genecon), provided details of the project proformas prepared for each of the projects identified at the previous Board meeting as potential schemes for inclusion in a Town Investment Plan submission. He commented that the feedback received at the previous meeting had been incorporated into the ongoing work on the projects. Further work had been carried out to develop the east-west axis across the town, particularly in relation to the Gunnels Wood Road area.

1. Stevenage Technology and Innovation Centre

This would be a new building, to be run by North Herts College, in association with local businesses, and would incorporate:

- Clean Laboratory space;
- Flexible teaching facilities and spaces;
- Virtual ready facilities and technology;
- Engineering space, including practical training space for key trades;
- Café and Student refectory, including kitchens;
- Conference space(s), events space and meeting rooms;
- Practical training space for advanced construction skills; and
- Employer Spaces.

The benefits of the project, how it fitted in with Theme Objectives, and a deliverability assessment were all outlined in the proforma document.

In terms of the estimated cost of £10M, £5M would form part of the Town Deal bid, £3M would be provided by the Herts LEP, with the remaining £2M from the Private Sector.

In response to a number of questions, Kit Davies (North Herts College) explained that this project recognised the importance of science/technology partners in the Borough. A key component, accepted by the College and these partners, was to recruit local Level 3 to 5 qualified individuals, and then to further develop/train them with aspirations/opportunities for promotion into higher level jobs. The existing engineering/technology facilities at the College were no longer fit for purpose. The central location of the Centre would positively contribute to the vitality of the town centre.

The Chair commented that the University of Hertfordshire was looking to create an Institute of Technology (IoT) partnership, and that the Centre would be an ideal element to assist in reaching this goal.

The importance on a robust business case for the Centre was emphasised in terms of running costs based on numbers of students. The Bradford Centre was based on a combination of funding streams and employer contributions through a local levy, but also offered commercial training and development courses.

2. National New Town Heritage Centre

It was proposed that this would now be integrated into the new Civic Hub, which had reduced the cost of the project. It fitted in with the Leisure & Heritage theme and would comprise:

- A retail and circulation space;
- A Café;
- Light-filled learning and circulation spaces;
- Learning space to include built-in storage for handling collections and workshop materials;
- Galleries (permanent and temporary);
- Built-in Ethernet and wi-fi connectivity;
- A strong online presence;
- Collections storage;
- Study Room linked to the Hub Library;
- Workshop with air extraction; and
- Loading bay for incoming exhibitions.

The benefits of the project, how it fitted in with Theme Objectives, and a deliverability assessment were all outlined in the proforma document.

In terms of the estimated cost of £5M, £4M would form part of the Town Deal bid, with the remaining £1M being provided by SBC.

The following points were raised in debate:

- Admission to the Heritage Centre would be free for visitors, although there would be charges for use of the conference/meeting facilities;
- This was an important link with the SBC Cultural Strategy and, as well as

celebrating Stevenage's New Town history, should also respond to the renewed wider interest in post-war urban development;

- A slight concern was raised about the sufficiency of the storage space included in the scheme; and
- Further investigation would be carried out into additional funding support streams (eg. Heritage Lottery Fund, Arts Council, etc.);

3. Stevenage Sport and Leisure Hub

The intention was for this to be located on the existing Stevenage Swimming Pool site. It fitted in with the Health & Wellbeing theme, and would include:

- A Sports Hall with flexibility for a wide range of sporting activities;
- A modern 175 station fitness gym and 3 exercise studios;
- A 25m x 10m swimming pool, plus teaching pool and leisure water zone;
- 180 space decked car park, with electric charging points, and secure e-bike, scooter and cycle parking;
- New cycling and pedestrian links to the town centre; and
- A public café overlooking the lake and adjacent to a crèche with a soft play area.

The benefits of the project, how it fitted in with Theme Objectives, and a deliverability assessment were all outlined in the proforma document.

In terms of the estimated cost of £32M, £10M would form part of the Town Deal bid, £20M would be provided by SBC, with the remaining £2M from the Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy monies.

It was confirmed that this proposal related to the re-location of the town's major sports/leisure facility. The Gordon Craig Theatre would remain on its existing site until further funding becomes available for its relocation.

As with the Heritage Centre proposal, the Project Team was requested to investigate additional funding streams, such as the National Lottery and Sport England.

4. Stevenage Enterprise Centre

This would form part of the wider regeneration of Queensway North, currently being undertaken by Reef, and would include:

- Smart information screens;
- E-bikes, scooters and cycle parking;
- Lockers;
- Active street frontage;
- Co-working space;
- Small drinks bar;
- Central atrium;
- Reception;
- Offices of varying scale;

- Terrace;
- Urban Farm; and
- Sustainable Design.

The benefits of the project, how it fitted in with Theme Objectives, and a deliverability assessment were all outlined in the proforma document.

In terms of the estimated cost of £9M, £4M would form part of the Town Deal bid, £3M would be provided by SBC, with the remaining £2M through private/developer finance.

The following points were raised:

- This project appeared to satisfy the requirements of meeting tangible outputs/outcomes;
- The deliverability assessment was high, due to the status of the current Queensway North scheme; and
- Careful drafting of legal documents pertaining to developer finance would be required.

5. Marshgate Biotech Office & Keyworker Housing

This would comprise a new mixed use development in a key Town Centre location to enable the continued growth of the Stevenage bioscience cluster, whilst also meeting the need for keyworker accommodation. It would include:

- Office / Technical Lab (GIA): 76,437sq ft;
- Hotel: 90 rooms;
- Residential apartments: 69; and
- Car Parking Spaces: 44.

The benefits of the project, how it fitted in with Theme Objectives, and a deliverability assessment were all outlined in the proforma document.

In terms of the estimated cost of £40M, £10M would form part of the Town Deal bid, £7M would be provided by SBC, with the remaining £23M through private sector investment.

The following points were raised:

- It would be key to find an anchor tenant for the project. To this end, Reef were in advanced discussions with a potential tenant;
- Sally Ann Forsyth (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst) offered to assist in the work of attracting potential occupants, as there was a waiting list of biotech companies wishing to locate in Stevenage;
- The capital cost of the project was high, and it was acknowledged that a number of different components would need to come together for the project to succeed;
- The possibility of contingency plans being formulated to address increased

- home/flexible working would be considered as the project developed; and
- It was important that the 70 apartments for Key Workers would be affordably priced.

6. Station Gateway enabling and Rail Station – Pre-Development concept

It was intended that the site would be transformed into a Gateway area that connected the town's residents and businesses and acted as a focal point for investment proposals. Key deliverables would include:

- Release of over 9ha of car park and roadway for regeneration;
- The potential for the delivery of over 1,500 high quality homes and 600,000ft² of commercial space;
- Enabling and land assembly/site acquisition work;
- Delivery of a new Multi-Storey Car Park and Cycle Hub;
- Co-investment in skills, culture and leisure facilities;
- Address climate change through a carbon neutral gateway; and
- Help underpin the business case for follow-on investment in an improved Stevenage Railway Station that was fit for purpose.

The benefits of the project, how it fitted in with Theme Objectives, and a deliverability assessment were all outlined in the proforma document.

In terms of the estimated cost of £25M, £13M would form part of the Town Deal bid, £9M would be provided by SBC, £1M by HCC, £1M by the Herts LEP, and the remaining £1M from Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy monies.

The following points were raised:

- This project would be crucial for the town, both its residents and businesses, and it was important that improvements occurred on both sides of the railway line;
- Legal & General were pleased to see the proposals, and would be willing to look at bringing forward various improvement options in association with other stakeholders; and
- The Herts Growth Board prospectus referred to a multi-Million pound investment in Stevenage Railway Station. This prospectus had been submitted to the Government with a funding bid, and so this should be cross-referenced in the Town Investment Plan bid.

7. Gunnels Wood Road Infrastructure Improvements

This project was aimed at improving the capacity of the road network, especially the Gunnels Wood Road/A602 Roundabout. It would include:

- Part 1 – a project reviewing the need for the roundabout scheme post Covid-19, including a demand assessment for current employment levels and future anticipated growth and a review of sustainable improvements;
- Subject to the outcome of the review, the next elements of Part 1 would be

- acquiring additional land from GSK, detailed design and traffic modelling, and securing planning permission; and
- Phase 2 – would only progress if there was a proven need for the scheme. If it progressed it would involve procuring contractors and carrying out construction works to incorporate enhanced public transport and cycling connections.

The benefits of the project, how it fitted in with Theme Objectives, and a deliverability assessment were all outlined in the proforma document.

In terms of the estimated cost of £10M, £1M would form part of the Town Deal bid (to assist in Part 1), with other funding sources being required to finance the remaining £9M, should Part 2 of the project be given approval to proceed.

It was reported that the A1(M) SMART Motorway project had been delayed for 5 years. County Councillor David Williams was in discussion with Highways England about the possibility of advancing the Gunnels Wood Road Infrastructure improvement scheme.

Sally Ann Forsyth (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst) was pleased to hear the above news, and commented that there was a four year window for the project. The County Council had just completed a Covid-19 Transport Survey for the area. It was expected that there would be little or no reduction in office space, indeed there was a continued demand for bioscience work space..

The Chair considered that the TIP submission should be clear in what could be lost (in terms of enhanced bioscience facilities) should the desired Gunnels Wood Road infrastructure improvements not proceed.

8. Pedestrian & Cycling Connectivity and Arts & Heritage Trail

This would be a connectivity project, comprising five phases, aimed at improving linkages across the town, and would include:

- Phase 1 – Town Centre (largely underway through redevelopment work);
- Phase 2 – improved linkages between the Town Centre and Gunnels Wood Road;
- Phase 3 – Gunnels Wood Road employment area;
- Phase 4 – improved linkages between the Town Centre and areas to the north, east and south;
- Phase 5 – improved linkages with adjoining towns (likely to be a future project); and
- Arts & Heritage Trail elements – delivery to be managed by SBC.

The benefits of the project, how it fitted in with Theme Objectives, and a deliverability assessment were all outlined in the proforma document.

In terms of the estimated cost of £5M, £4M would form part of the Town Deal bid, £0.5M would be provided by SBC, and £0.5M from Section 106/Community Infrastructure Levy monies.

It was considered that this project would align perfectly with the Health & Wellbeing and Sustainability (Green Growth) Core Values.

The following points were raised:

- The improved cycling connectivity should include provision for e-bikes and e-scooters; and
- The importance of digital connectivity between the Heritage Trail element of this proposal and the Heritage Centre should be emphasised.

General

Karen Hillen (BEIS) stated that it was important that the outcomes and outputs of each of the projects should align with the types of interventions that the Government was prepared to fund, as set out in its revised guidance on the Town Fund.

The various proposed TIP projects involved considerable investment from SBC, but very limited investment from HCC. The Chair and Project Team undertook to request HCC to invest in a number of the projects (especially the sustainable transport and connectivity-related schemes).

Andy Fisher raised the issue of capacity. There was a considerable amount of project activity throughout the overall programme. The Board would need to address this issue, in order to earmark/allocate appropriate resources and capacity to ensure deliverability.

In terms of next steps, Andy Fisher advised that, subject to further discussions, there was the possibility for a draft TIP to be considered by the Government's Check and Challenge process in early October 2020, with the final version being submitted to the Government in late October 2020.

6 BEYOND THE TOWN DEAL

Chris Barnes (Assistant Director of Regeneration, SBC) provided an update on Stevenage Regeneration schemes, including Queensway North, SG1, Bus Station, Town Square/North Block, the Matalan site and Railway Station Multi-Storey Car Park.

Chris advised that work was progressing steadily on the schemes on site, demonstrated by the presentation of a number of photographs. Footfall in the Town Centre remained at about 70% of pre-Covid levels.

Chris that an online Stevenage Visitor Centre experience had been developed to allow the Regeneration proposals to be viewed electronically.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business discussed.

8 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chair advised that, although the next Board meeting had been provisionally scheduled for 23 September 2020, there was a possibility that this might change, with the date being pushed back into October. He undertook to ensure that all Board Members were informed either way within the next week or so.