

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
MINUTES**

**Date: Thursday, 16 November 2023**

**Time: 10.00am**

**Place: Virtual (via Zoom)**

**Present:** Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)  
Councillor Jeannette Thomas (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Clare Fletcher (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Annie Piper (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Lucy King (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Gemma Hannant (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Natasha Lee (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Ishbel Brierley (Stevenage Borough Council)  
County Councillor Stephen Boulton (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Forogh Ramani (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)  
Julian Carter (Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce)  
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)  
Jennifer Condon (WENTA)  
Stephen Ward (Catapult)  
Claire Dicks (MBDA)  
Sian Carter (Homes England)  
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)  
Greg Westover (Legal and General)  
Keith Ellis (Airbus)  
Karen Burness (Airbus)  
Dave Mudd (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)  
John Lewis (Aecom)  
Colin Haigh (Hertfordshire County Councillor)  
Duncan Parsley (GlaxoSmithKline)  
Gary Chamberlain (Morgan Sindall)  
Mairi Watson (University of Hertfordshire)  
Andrew Gardner (Airbus)  
Chris Scott (Muse)  
Chris Le May (Mane Developments)

**Start / End** Start Time: 10.00am  
**Time:** End Time: 12.04pm

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

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially those attending for the first time.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted by the following:

Councillor Richard Henry (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Matt Partridge (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Councillor Richard Roberts (Hertfordshire County Council) – Councillor Stephen Boulton substituting  
Ed Jordan (WENTA) – Jennifer Condon substituting  
Sally Bedwell (Morgan Sindall) – Gary Chamberlain substituting  
Tamim Choudhury (DLUHC)  
Kit Davies (North Herts College)  
Charlotte Blizzard Welch – Citizens Advice Bureau  
Ian Langley – Viavi Solutions  
Will Rohleder – REEF Group

## **3 MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 14 SEPTEMBER 2023**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 14 September 2023 be approved as a correct record.

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

The Board received the latest conflicts of interest list.

## **5 AIRBUS - DEVELOPING SPACE AND COMMUNICATIONS**

The Chair took the opportunity to thank Airbus for their excellent hosting of the recent Mission 44 event.

Andrew Gardner (Airbus) introduced the Community for Space Prosperity (CUSP) initiative, which was aimed at supporting the UK Government's ambitions in Space. The challenge was to continue to grow the UK Space Ecosystem, by nurturing talent in the Space industry workforce; enabling access to finance; developing the whole UK Ecosystem; and growing the UK as a Science Superpower.

Andrew stated that Airbus had 11,500 employees, 3,500 of whom were employed in Defence and Space, supported by 79,000 jobs in the wider supply chain. £277Million was spent each year on Research and Development, including funding for 34 Space-related PHDs. £3.9Billion had been spent with UK suppliers, with £300Million direct to the UK Space industry.

Andrew commented that the ambition of CUSP would be reached by Airbus:

- acting as a keen, proactive and experienced facilitator and convener of the UK's Space Ecosystem;
- publicising supply chain opportunities across European Space Agency (ESA), Commercial and Military Space opportunities;
- running open events which brought the UK Space ecosystem together; and
- working together with industry bodies and other initiatives.

Andrew advised that CUSP had been developed to be open and inclusive – there was no requirement to become a member to join events or become part of the supply chain. CUSP would bring together the supply chain, research base and future generations of Space professionals, enabling an enhanced and active Space ecosystem in the UK.

In terms of nurturing talent, Andrew hoped that CUSP would help to provide early careers opportunities for graduates and apprentices, including events to inspire the next generation and to share knowledge about how to get into the Space industry. There would also be opportunities for work experience, as well as visitor and open days to get a closer look at the Space industry.

In response to a question regarding funding, Andrew stated that there was some central Airbus funding, but other sources could include the UK Space Agency and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

In reply to a question concerning European Space initiatives, Andrew explained that 50% of Airbus activity was for UK customers (Defence, Civil Government, Commercial) and 50% was for international customers. He added that the UK Space ecosystem was lagging behind continental competitors with, for example, the UK spending a tenth of what France spent on its Space ecosystem.

To address a question concerning young people's access to careers in the Space industry, Andrew commented that these would be encouraged through skills outreach work, including related supply chain jobs. This would include those looking to enter a second/third career. Work would also continue in conjunction with the STEM Centre's "We Build Better" scheme.

## **6 STATION GATEWAY**

Utilising his long service knowledge with the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership's past activities in relation to Stevenage, the Chair had made contact with the Network Rail MD to establish their thoughts on construction on and over the railway line today, as this was refused 8 years ago, and from the positive message both he and Tom Pike received they then reached out to MUSE for meetings with the SBC Regeneration Team, where both Tom Pike and the Chair held initial discussions with regard to the development plans for the "Station Gateway".

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) introduced the item by providing some background to the overall Regeneration plans for Stevenage, including the Towns Fund projects. In respect of the Station Gateway project, Tom stated that a land ownership survey had determined that the Borough Council, Network Rail, Homes England and Legal & General all had ownership interests in the Station Gateway area. The Council would be working with these stakeholders in developing a Masterplan for the Station Gateway.

Chris Scott (Muse) referred to the English Cities Fund, an equity fund between Muse, Homes England and Legal & General, which had provided institutional investment in Regeneration since 2006. The fund of £200Million was about to be doubled to £400Million, and had been extended to 2036.

Chris provided summaries of some of the other projects supported by the English Cities Fund, including Salford Central, a 50 acre £1 Billion mixed use development in partnership with Salford City Council, comprising 2.2 million sq ft of commercial space, 261,000 sq ft of retail space, over 1,200 car parking spaces, 849 new homes and 90 hotel bedrooms. It included Eden, a Grade A office block designed to be net zero in operation and meeting national and international standards for sustainability and biodiversity net gain, which was due for completion in Quarter 4 of 2023.

Chris also referred to a Muse project called the Stockport Exchange, which provided sustainable public realm and transport improvements to the Stockport Railway Station and surrounding area, including new office space, retail space, multi-storey car park and hotel accommodation.

Chris indicated that the English Cities Fund were interested in the Stevenage Gateway project as Stevenage was highly ambitious, well-informed and had a clear vision; there was the ability to access infrastructure funding; it was located within the life sciences/bio-medical “Golden Triangle”; there was opportunity to deliver a project within pockets of deprivation, but one with significant potential; the potential for job creation, as Stevenage was home to the headquarters of nationally important industries, with a strong outlook for growth; and the opportunity to provide high quality homes and Grade A office stock in the town centre, building on recent developments.

Chris drew attention to the improvements to Railway Station areas in nearby cities, and in the “Golden Triangle” area and which had secured or could secure external funding, including the Cambridge Station (redevelopment well underway); Peterborough Station (£50 Million funding secured); Milton Keynes (Development Framework emerging).

Chris advised that the next steps would be for SBC and the English Cities Fund to initiate a visioning and masterplanning process with local partners and engagement with the community and businesses. The whole process was expected to take 9 months, with progress reports to the Stevenage Development Board.

## **7 SG1 PLOT A UPDATE - MACE**

Chris Le May (Mace Developments) gave an update on Plot A of the SG1 Development Scheme (Swingate). He reminded the Board that the site would provide 261 new apartments, together with some retail space, and would form part of a new Stevenage “arrival space”, in conjunction with the ambitions for a new Station Gateway area.

Chris advised that the requirements of the new Building Safety Act and Fire Safety Act had been taken on board, and that detailed design of the Plot A scheme was progressing. The diversion of utility connections was 99% complete, and the scheme was on target for the commencement of enabling works in Quarter 4 of 2023.

Chris explained that legal conditions for the drawing down of funding for the Plot A project, and work was progressing on the construction supply chain contracts. It

was anticipated that the award of the main contract would be made in Quarter 1 of 2024. Mace would continue to support SBC in the accelerated delivery of the new Civic Hub project.

In view of the number of vacant retail units in the town, a Board Member asked about the retail/commercial element of the Plot A scheme. Chris confirmed that there would be 140sq m of floorspace, suitable for use as a small café/coffee shop.

In response to a question regarding the possibility of the provisions of additional hotel accommodation in the town, Chris confirmed that there was no provision for this in the Plot A and Plot K schemes, but that there would be an opportunity to revisit this as part of the wider SG1 project.

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) commented that the accelerated Civic Hub proposal remained an SBC priority, and work was commencing on funding requests to relevant Government bodies. An update would be provided in the early part of 2024.

## **8 REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

### Project Update – Cycling and Pedestrian Connectivity (incl. Arts & Heritage)

Ishbel Brierley (SBC Regeneration Officer) showed photographs of the underpass improvements on Broadhall Way, including the murals based on the three themes of nature/active travel; STEM activities; and Stevenage Football Club and Foundation. She then showed images of the Stevenage Heritage Trail and Cycling route, which commenced in Fairlands Valley Park. She highlighted the fact that many areas of the Heritage Bike route needed some conservation (eg. cycleway resurfacing and graffiti removal).

Ishbel drew attention to the proposed Public Realm improvements across the town, including the Indoor Market Service Road (with links to Autolus, Park Place, the Museum, St. George's Way Multi-Storey Car Park and new Leisure Hub); from Tesco to Westgate (with links to Swingate Plot A, Westgate, The Forum and Market Place); and Queensway South (with links to Southgate Plot K, Town Square and Market Place). The Regeneration Team was working with BDP Landscape Architects on initial designs, which when completed would be shared with Board Members.

A number of Board Members commented on the poor state of the cycleways, underpasses and lighting in many areas of the town. The indifferent quality of lighting on cycleways was raised in terms of safety, especially during the darker evenings in winter months. It was often the case that overgrown vegetation reduced the effectiveness of the existing lighting, which exacerbated the issue.

A Board Member raised the possibility of the introduction of a mobile warden service to patrol the cycleways for safety issues. Another Board Member asked if a scheme similar to the sponsorship of roundabouts could be created for the sponsorship of underpasses. Dave Wells (SBC Assistant Director – Regeneration) thought this was a good idea, and agreed to take the matter forward with colleagues from the County Council.

It was acknowledged that the responsibility for cycleway maintenance rested with Hertfordshire County Council (as Highway Authority). The Board felt that a wholesale review of cycleways was required, but accepted that funding to improve the whole Stevenage network was unlikely to be forthcoming. However, it was hoped that improvement works could be targeted and prioritised to the areas in most need of attention.

### Communications and Marketing Update

Natasha Lee (SBC Regeneration Marketing & Communications Manager) advised that public consultation on the proposed new Sport and Leisure Hub had commenced in early November 2023, through media outlets, social media and via a video. To date, there had been over 300 responses to the consultation, which was a high level, pre-design stage exercise, asking for the views on a combined wet/dry activities facility; continuing uses; possible new uses; and health and wellbeing provision. The consultation exercise would finish on 24 November 2023, and full details could be found on the SBC website.

Natasha referred to a similar consultation exercise carried out for the re-location of Stevenage Museum into the proposed new Civic Hub. There had been 300 responses to this exercise and respondees would be provided with feedback on their comments/views. She also referred to the increased national media and trade press coverage Stevenage, including recent articles on life science clusters.

Natasha drew attention to upcoming events, including the wrap up of the public consultation on the Sports and Leisure Hub; improvements to the Stevenage Even Better website; a Christmas Advent calendar; and continued opportunities for putting projects forward for Civic Design awards.

## **9 TOWNS FUND PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT UPDATE**

Annie Piper (SBC Regeneration Manager) advised that SBC Executive, at its meeting held in October 2023, had noted the progress made and early-stage consultation regarding the New Towns Heritage Centre/Museum; had delegated authority to continue exploring Station Gateway Masterplan opportunities; and had noted amendments to the 2023/24 Towns Fund spend profile. The Executive had also approved recommendations regarding the proposed New Sports and Leisure Hub, including progression to design stage, as well as a consultation strategy for the project.

Annie commented that the Towns Fund Monitoring report for April to September 2023 was due for submission to the DLUHC by 4 December 2023, which would include programme progress; spend profile; outputs/outcomes; and the risk register. The full report would be circulated to Board Members for comment prior to submission.

## **10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

### Hertfordshire County Council re-location

Colin Haigh (HCC Director of Growth & Place) advised that, in 2024, staff in County Hall will be decanting en masse to Farnham House and Robertson House in Stevenage. This was to reflect the hybrid working status of staff since the Covid pandemic, and also for budgetary and sustainability reasons. As well as hot desking spaces, Farnham House and Robertson House would consist of a number of collaboration areas and meeting rooms.

Colin explained that the front area of County Hall (ie. Council Chamber and Meeting Rooms) would be retained for Civic use, but would also be available for hire for private events. The remainder of County Hall site would be marketed as a development site.

### Chair's Christmas Dinner

The Chair invited Board Members to a two-course Christmas Dinner he was hosting at 11.30am on Thursday, 30 November 2023 to celebrate the work of the Board over the past year. He asked Board Members to e-mail him if they were interested in attending.

## **11 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

To be determined.