

Public Document Pack



CABINET

Date: Wednesday, 4 June 2025
Time: 2.00pm,
Location: Council Chamber
Contact: Lisa Jerome (01438) 242203
committees@stevenage.gov.uk

Members: Councillors: R Henry (Chair), J Thomas (Vice-Chair), M Arceno, R Broom, C DeFreitas, J Hollywell, T Plater, L Rossati, S Speller and N Williams

AGENDA

PART 1

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2. MINUTES - CABINET 12 MARCH 2025

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 12 March 2025 for signature by the Chair.

Pages 3 – 10

3. MINUTES OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY AND SELECT COMMITTEES

To note the following minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny and Select Committees:

Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 21 January, 18 February and 18 March 2025;
Environment and Economy Select Committee – 27 February, 11 March and 20 March 2025;
Community Select Committee – 26 March and 8 April

Pages 11 – 54

4. GREEN SPACES STRATEGY AND TREE AND WOODLAND STRATEGY

To consider a report seeking approval of the Green Spaces Strategy 2025-2035 and Tree & Woodland Strategy 2025-2035 for Stevenage.

Pages 55 – 184

5. PLANNING POLICY UPDATE INCLUDING REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME AND REVISED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

To consider a report updating Cabinet on changes in national planning policy and

guidance announced by Government and the implications for plan making in Stevenage.
Pages 185 – 252

6. TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES 2024/25

To receive a report highlighting the Council's performance against the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) for 2024/25, when compared to the results from 2023/24.

Pages 253 – 264

7. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

To consider any Part 1 business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

8. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

To consider the following motions –

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.

2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

9. PART II MINUTES - EXECUTIVE - 12 MARCH 2025

To approve as a correct record the Part II section of the Minutes of the meeting of the Executive held on 12 March 2025.

Pages 265 - 268

10. PIONEERING YOUNG STEM FUTURES

To consider a report relating to Mission44, a charitable foundation established by Sir Lewis Hamilton and the subsequent Pioneering Young STEM Futures programme.

Pages 269 – 354

11. PROJECT DELIVERY AND PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR APPOINTMENT: THE OVAL

To consider a report seeking confirmation for the appointment of a contractor for The Oval development to begin delivering on the neighbourhood regeneration scheme following the conclusion of the tender process.

Pages 355 – 428

12. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

To consider any Part II business accepted by the Chair as urgent.

Agenda Published 27 May 2025

This page is intentionally left blank

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MINUTES

Date: Wednesday, 12 March 2025

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Richard Henry (Chair), Jeannette Thomas (Vice Chair), Lloyd Briscoe, Jackie Hollywell, Conor McGrath, Loraine Rossati and Simon Speller

Start / End Time: Start Time: 2.00pm
End Time: 3.30pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Sandra Barr. On behalf of the Cabinet, Councillor Richard Henry, Leader of the Council wished Councillor Barr well with her recovery from illness.

There were no declarations of interest.

A this juncture, the Leader informed the Cabinet that the Manager of Hertfordshire Climate Change and Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP), Helen Burrridge, had advised that the organisation had been presented with a gold award in the category of Green Public Space at the national IESE Awards event and a specific mention had been given to both Councillor Simon Speller, Chair of the HCCSP and the Chief Executive, Matt Partridge who is the lead Hertfordshire Chief Executive.

2 MINUTES - CABINET 12 FEBRUARY 2025

3 MINUTES - SCRUTINY SELECT COMMITTEES

Cabinet were advised that the recent work of the Community Select Committee had included:

- gathering information from guest contributors relating to the Equality Act 2010, in particular Age and Disability, by receiving evidence from guests and community members. The meeting also covered transport accessibility challenges for visually impaired individuals;
- a presentation from the Aids and Adaptations Project Manager outlining the scope of adaptations for tenants with health conditions. The Committee addressed eligibility, types of adaptations, reasons for refusal and the need for transparency.

Councillor Conor McGrath thanked the Committee for its work and said that he would be following up some of the issues raised in his role as the Portfolio Holder for Stronger Communities.

It was **RESOLVED** that the following Minutes of meetings Select Committees be noted –

Community Select Committee – 29 January and 5 February 2025.

4 **CORPORATE CO-OPERATIVE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY REVIEW**

The Cabinet received a report regarding a new Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 which would help to support delivery of the Making Stevenage Better Corporate Plan, alongside addressing legal changes set in the new national Procurement Act 2023.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation advised that the Strategy included principles relating to community wealth building, social value as well as commercial and insourcing which would allow the Council to look at bringing services in house where it made sense to do so and where the best procurement results would be secured.

It was **RESOLVED** that delegated authority be granted to the Strategic Director (S151) after consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation to sign off the Co-operative Procurement Strategy 2025-2028 following further consultation with the community and stakeholders.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

5 **CONFIRMATION OF AMENDMENT TO TWO ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS TO REQUIRE CHANGES OF USE FROM CLASS E (G) (I) (OFFICES) AND CLASS (E) (G) (III) (LIGHT INDUSTRIAL) TO CLASS C3 (RESIDENTIAL) TO OBTAIN PLANNING PERMISSION**

Cabinet received a report providing a summary of responses received following consultation relating to the use of an Article 4 Direction covering the Gunnels Wood area and Pin Green employment areas.

The Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance reminded members that the Article 4 Direction enabled local authorities to bring a level of control to certain types of development or changes of use, which would normally be 'permitted development'.

The Leader welcomed Alex Robinson, Assistant Director Planning and Regulation to his first meeting of Cabinet since joining the authority.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the responses from consultation, 22 January to 18 February 2025, on the serving of the notice of the revised Article 4 Directions be noted.
2. That the confirmation of the revised Article 4 Directions under Article 4 (I) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended), to remove permitted development rights in relation to changes of use from Use Class E(g)(i) and E(g)(iii) to Use Class C3 (as defined in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)) be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

6 **CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 3 2024/25**

Cabinet received a report and presentation on the Corporate Performance for Quarter 3.

The Leader of the Council thanked the Chief Executive and the Strategic Leadership Team for their work with Cabinet Members across the Council more broadly in ensuring that continuous improvements were being made in relation to the Council's performance.

In relation to the Chief Executive's presentation, the following comments were made:

- It was noted that the difficulty of accessing properties affected the indicator relating to the percentage of dwellings with a valid Electrical Certification, however, the Council was still performing well compared with other Councils;
- In relation to the performance figure for garage voids, it was noted that ongoing work was taking place in this area including the implementation of a proactive marketing strategy and on-line garage booking service;
- In relation to Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) the Portfolio Holder for Housing was pleased to see the improved performance but assured Members and tenants that the Council was continuously working to improve the figures across the service;
- The Leader paid tribute to the Portfolio Holders and Officers involved in the Arts and Heritage Trail along with the artwork on the communication boxes in the Town. All Members were encouraged to identify cabinets in their area which could benefit with potential use of Local Community Budgets;
- It was noted that the next phase of the underpass scheme would shortly be underway with the Regeneration Team and the Portfolio Holder for Culture and Leisure judging potential images;
- The success of the Beryl Bikes scheme around the town was welcomed.

It was **RESOLVED:**

1. That the service performance against 52 corporate performance measures and delivery of key milestones in Quarter 3 2024/25 through the Making Stevenage Even Better Programme (Appendix A) be noted.
2. That the current status of Electrical Certification be noted (section 4.3.2).
3. That the issues with Garage Voids and planned improvements be noted (section 4.34).
4. That the Regulator of Social Housing Provider Improvement Plan be noted (section 4.6).
5. That the strategic risk updates (section 4.8) be noted.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

7 THIRD QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25 (INCLUDING THIRD QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25)

Cabinet received a report setting out the third quarter monitoring for the 2024/25 General Fund, Housing Revenue Account and Capital and seeking approval for changes to 2024/25 working budgets.

The Portfolio Holder for Resources and Transformation reported the current position in respect of:

- General Fund – a net decrease made up of a number of variances but predominantly an increase in investment interest, an increase in audit fees and a reduction in planning income;
- Housing Revenue Account – a net increase predominantly relating to a reduction in transformation improvements costs due to resources required to facilitate last year's Housing Regulator Inspection. The increase was, however, offset by tenants' payments for compensation, relocation incentive payments and decant costs;
- Capital – members were requested to approve the re-phasing of £5m of General Fund and £1m of HRA capital budgets from 2024/25 into future years.

It was **RESOLVED**:

General Fund

1. That the 2024/25 third quarter projected net decrease in General Fund expenditure of £32,480 be approved.
2. That Members note the proposed movement on reserves as detailed in paragraph 4.2.1
3. That the UK Shared Prosperity Funding (UKSPF) use of £327K is approved as detailed in section 4.4.

Housing Revenue Account

4. That the 2024/25 third quarter net increase in HRA expenditure of £26,270 be approved.
5. That a permanent virement of £76,940 is approved for 2025/26 from the repairs and maintenance subcontractor budgets to the salary budgets to enable the audit of payments and ensure the accuracy of contractor claims, as detailed in 4.6.12.

Capital Programme

6. That the General Fund capital budget re-phasing of £5Million from 2024/25 to future years be approved.

7. That the Housing Revenue Account capital budget re-phasing of £1Million from 2024/25 to future years be approved.
8. That net changes to budgets fully grant funded of (£186K) in paragraph 4.8.8 be noted.
9. That the budget changes of £86k in paragraph 4.7.10 be approved.
10. That the addition of £60,400 UK Shared Prosperity Funded capital budget 2025/26 in paragraph 4.7.11 be noted.
11. That General Fund and HRA virements in section 4.8 be approved.
12. That the proposed changes to the funding of the General Fund and HRA capital budgets in section 4.10 be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

8 VOIDS POLICY AND LETTABLE STANDARDS

Cabinet received a report requesting approval for a new Void Management Policy and a revised Lettable Standard.

Members were advised that the key objective of the policy was to outline how the Council managed properties within the housing stock when they became vacant and the Lettable Standard would help provide consistency in the standard of properties when they were relet.

It was **RESOLVED** that the new Void Management Policy (Appendix A) and revised Lettable Standard (Appendix B) be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

9 AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY

Cabinet received a report relating to approval of the revised Aids and Adaptations Policy.

The Portfolio Holder for Housing advised that the Council had a legal duty to provide reasonable adaptations to support residents to live independently within their homes.

Members were advised that no significant changes were proposed but there were revisions relating to legal requirements, improving transparency on decision making and expected timescales.

It was **RESOLVED**:

- 1 That the outcomes from the consultation with tenants on the Aids and Adaptations Policy and how these have been reflected in the final version attached at **Appendix 1** be noted.
- 2 That it be noted that the Policy will become effective from 1 April 2025 and

will be publicised on the Council's website. This policy will replace the previous version from 2020.

- 3 That the updated Aids and Adaptations Policy be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

10 HIGH STREET RENTAL AUCTIONS

Cabinet received a report proposing designation of the Town Centre and Old Town High Street as areas for High Street Rental Auctions.

Members were advised that the Government had introduced new legislation handing powers to local authorities to breathe new life back into high streets and transform long-term empty shops.

Officers advised that this was a relatively new tool which would be considered as a last resort for persistent vacant properties, as the Council would continue to strive to work with owners and landlords before having to make use of the powers.

Members requested that officers ensure that the consultation on the designated areas for High Street Rental Auctions should include the Old Town and Bedwell Ward Councillors. Consultation on designated areas in Stevenage would be for a minimum of 28 days, in accordance with Regulations.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the content and detail relating to High Street Rental Auctions and how they would be applied in Stevenage be noted.
2. That a future consultation on designated areas for High Street Rental Auctions in Stevenage, for a minimum of 28 days in accordance with Regulations be authorised.
3. That the support from the Planning & Development Committee for the report was noted.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

11 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION – INTERIM PLAN SUBMISSION

The Leader of the Council, Councillor Richard Henry advised that he would be accepting an urgent item of business relating to the Interim Plan Submission on the Government's plans for Local Government Reorganisation. The Leader advised that as Chair of the meeting he was of the opinion that the report was urgent as there was a requirement for local authorities to submit an interim plan to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by 21 March 2025.

The Leader advised that the report included a number of proposals from 1 through to 4 unitary councils which had been worked through with all districts and boroughs in Hertfordshire, although this would not prevent further options being developed or explored ahead of the final November deadline.

Cabinet noted that to support the process, a Cabinet Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution and Officer Working Groups had been established which was currently meeting on a weekly basis.

Members thanked the officers involved for the amount of work undertaken in preparing the submission and looking ahead, what would be required to meet the November deadline. It was agreed that the Council would be working towards what was best for the residents and businesses of the Town.

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That the Government's devolution and local government reorganisation requirements and the progress being made to develop options for Hertfordshire be noted.
2. That delegated authority be given to the Leader of the Council to submit an interim plan for Local Government Reorganisation in Hertfordshire, to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government by 21 March 2025.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

12 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

13 **PROVISION OF AGENCY WORKERS**

The Cabinet considered a Part II report in respect of the provision of Agency Workers.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

14 **SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE - DESIGN AND PLANNING SUBMISSION**

The Cabinet considered a Part II report in respect of the Design and Planning Submission for the Sports and Leisure Centre

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

15 **SBC LAND AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (LOCALITY REVIEW UPDATE)**

The Cabinet considered a Part II report in respect of SBC Land and Development Programme (Locality Review Update)

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

16 **MAJOR PROJECT BRAGBURY END**

The Cabinet considered a Part II report in respect of the major Project Bragbury End.

It was **RESOLVED** that the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Reason for Decision: As contained in the report.

Other Options considered: As contained in the report.

17 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MINUTES

Date: Tuesday, 21 January 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair) (Chair), (Vice Chair), Myla Arceno, Stephen Booth, Rob Broom, Forhad Chowdhury, Peter Clark, Andy McGuinness, Sarah Mead, Tom Plater, Ceara Roopchand, Anne Wells and Nigel Williams

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.02pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Lynda Guy.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 December 2024 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

The Committee considered the following Part I Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 15 January 2025:

2. MINUTES - CABINET - 11 DECEMBER 2024

The Committee noted the Minutes of the Cabinet meeting held on 11 December 2024.

3. GARAGES ASSET MANAGEMENT REPORT

The Committee considered the Council's Garages Asset Management Report. The Assistant Director (Stevenage Direct Services) advised the Committee that the purpose of the report was to outline plans for managing garage stock, focussed on repairs, contracts, and budgets. The Committee heard that the Cabinet had held discussions that highlighted the need for ongoing member involvement in monitoring progress.

Cabinet had agreed all recommendations set out in the report.

Members commented regarding the reduction in scope and budgeted spend compared to the previous garage asset management strategy. The shift from whole place renewal of garage sites to a more targeted approach was discussed. The Chief Financial Officer explained this change was largely due to financial constraints, with a focus on addressing key issues such as roof replacements and asbestos management while maintaining functionality. In addition, voids have significantly reduced since the approval of the first garage programme which had used projected increased income to fund borrowing by reducing void garage levels.

Members commented that the current strategy may serve as a "sticking plaster" rather than addressing long-term maintenance needs. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that the strategy included funding for targeted repairs and other garage components but acknowledged the programme will need a refresh in a few years at a suitable time to assess future needs.

Members queried the management of asbestos works and suggested the use of a nominated subcontractor under the main contractor's supervision to reduce Council management requirements. The Chief Financial Officer clarified that the current approach was based on advice from the Council's property surveyor team.

Members raised questions about the projected cumulative income losses due to disrepair, as outlined in the report. The Chief Financial Officer explained that the figures represented estimates of potential losses if no investment was made, in this scenario income losses would increase annually as more garages would fall into disrepair.

4. COMMUNITY SAFETY STRATEGY 2025 – 28

The Head of Community Advice and Support informed Members that the report on the Community Safety Strategy 2025-28, which outlined the emerging priorities of the SoSafe Partnership for the next three years, had been considered by Cabinet without further amendments and was scheduled for review by full Council.

Cabinet had agreed all recommendations set out in the report.

5. LICENSING ACT 2003 - REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF LICENSING POLICY

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation) informed the Committee that the review, required every five years, outlined the Council's regulatory role and approach as the Licensing Authority. A new recommendation, introduced at the General Purposes Committee (4th December 2024), was included in the Cabinet report.

The Committee heard that the introduction of the Council as a "responsible authority" for enforcement was well received by Cabinet members.

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning & Regulation) advised Members of the need to amend the constitution to grant the Head of Environmental Health and Licensing the necessary delegation for the responsible authority role.

Cabinet had agreed all recommendations set out in the report.

A Member questioned the use of rateable value for licence fee determination. The Head of Environmental Health & Licensing clarified that fees were set by regulations (unchanged since 2005) and could not reflect full cost recovery.

6. GAMBLING ACT 2005 - REVIEW OF STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) advised the Committee that this statutory review, required every three years, focused on how the Council regulated gambling premises. The policy aimed to protect the most vulnerable in the community, ensuring robust measures are in place to address gambling harms and received support at the General Purposes Committee and Cabinet meetings.

Cabinet had agreed all recommendations set out in the report.

A Member highlighted unclear wording in section 3.13 of the report, suggesting redrafting for clarity.

Members questioned assumptions linking gambling harm with income levels. Officers clarified that the local area profile helped identify potential risks, with no specific evidence of significant gambling harms in Stevenage.

Members commented about gambling addiction observed in the community. Officers assured collaboration with the Gambling Harms Alliance and ongoing efforts to address harms through a new Gambling Harms Strategy introduced in January 2025.

7. CONSULTATION ON AN AMENDMENT TO TWO ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS TO REQUIRE CHANGES OF USE FROM CLASS E(G)(I) (OFFICES AND CLASS E(G)(III) (LIGHT INDUSTRIAL) TO CLASS C3 (RESIDENTIAL) TO OBTAIN PLANNING PERMISSION

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) advised the Committee that Article 4 directions were used to remove permitted development rights, requiring developers to submit full planning applications rather than relying on prior approval processes. This ensured the Council could protect key employment areas, aligning with local policies, particularly as prior approvals did not account for those policies.

The Committee heard that the amendments aimed to align the Council's Article 4 directions with updated central government regulations and ensure they remained enforceable. This process required consultation and engagement with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) advised the Committee that Cabinet members had recognised the importance of mitigating the impact of developments on employment areas and supported the amendments.

Cabinet had agreed all recommendations set out in the report.

Members queried whether the amendments represented new powers for the Council. Officers clarified that the powers had existed for several years but required updates to reflect legislative changes, ensuring they remained enforceable, and the Council retained control over certain developments.

Members raised questions about potential Class E premises that could be converted to residential use. Officers noted that Class E was broad, covering shops, restaurants, and offices, with central government promoting deregulation to deliver more homes. However, implementing Article 4 directions required robust evidence, and many councils had faced challenges when attempting to apply those in town centres.

The Head of Planning Policy explained the robust evidence submitted in 2022 to justify the existing Article 4 directions, which had been reviewed and remained relevant. They confirmed that amendments were consistent with the latest regulations and that the Council was confident in its approach.

8. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL): DRAFT CHARGING SCHEDULE – PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) provided an overview of the update to the Council's CIL Charging Schedule. The update aligns charges with inflation and new policies, including those related to climate change. Extensive viability testing has been conducted to ensure charges are reasonable and do not undermine the Local Plan. The second round of statutory consultation is set to commence, with the aim of submitting the schedule for examination alongside the Local Plan.

Cabinet had agreed all recommendations set out in the report.

Members queried whether considerations for setting the CIL rate were purely economic or incorporated other factors, such as climate change. Officers explained that viability testing accounted for development costs, including sustainability requirements, and balanced charges to avoid discouraging development. The process involved consultancy support and public documentation of findings.

Members commented about CIL income distribution, specifically the allocation of 15% to communities. The Chief Financial Officer confirmed that these allocations had happened and offered to circulate further information.

Members questioned the exclusion of specific premises from the town centre zone on the map. Officers clarified that the map aligned with the current Local Plan, which defined these areas as edge-of-centre, based on evidence from earlier consultations.

Members asked whether CIL charges varied by development size. Officers confirmed that charges were based on gross floor area, with thresholds for exemptions (e.g., affordable housing). They confirmed that developers were legally

required to pay.

Members queried the differing rates for sheltered housing versus extra care housing. Officers explained that rates were set following viability testing and population forecasts. It was determined that the rates would not hinder future development.

Members further explored how increased affordable housing provision impacted CIL income. Officers acknowledged the logical connection but emphasised the Council's commitment to delivering affordable housing.

Members questioned how the public consultation would be conducted. Officers outlined the approach, including notifications to stakeholders, social media announcements, and hard copies of documents being made available. They confirmed that the methods mirrored those used in the first consultation round, adhering to the Council's Statement of Community Involvement.

9. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) - FINAL BUDGET AND RENT SETTING 2025/26

The Chief Financial Officer introduced the updated HRA report, noting updates based on scrutiny comments and pressure on repairs quantified for 2024/25 and 2025/26.

The Committee heard that, to address increased costs, borrowing had been utilised instead of a £5 million revenue contribution to capital, adding an annual cost of approximately £280,000.

The Chief Financial Officer advised the Committee that the report included a statement acknowledging risks to the HRA.

Cabinet had agreed all recommendations set out in the report.

10. DRAFT GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2025/26

The Chief Financial Officer presented the draft report, updating members on budget shortfalls.

The Committee heard that the report proposed a council tax increase of 2.99% and that the updated budget avoided service cuts for 2025/26.

Cabinet had agreed all recommendations set out in the report.

Members commented about council tax reductions for disabled groups asking questions relating to:

- Application deadlines relative to the start of the council tax year.
- Eligibility requirements for disability-related discounts.
- Backdating of discounts for late applications.

The Chief Financial Officer clarified that discounts were generally backdated based on proven financial circumstances and offered to provide a detailed note from the

Revenues and Benefits team. They also highlighted support available for vulnerable residents to complete applications.

Members asked about the proposed council tax increase of 2.99% versus the MTFS assumption of 1.99%. The Chief Financial Officer explained that the additional 1% made a contribution to the General Fund's savings target and this helped avoiding service reductions. The CFO also identified that in previous year's increases had been below inflation rises. The CFO acknowledged that savings were required for 2026/27 onwards and plans for potential savings were under review for future years but emphasised the importance of balancing the medium-term financial position.

Members praised the reintroduction of the Graduate and Apprenticeship Scheme. The Chief Financial Officer explained its funding through business rate gains, addressing recruitment challenges for hard-to-fill roles.

Members enquired about preceptors' council tax increases. The Chief Financial Officer noted that preceptors had not yet finalised their precepts but provided preliminary figures, including a likely £14 increase on a Band D property for the Police and Crime Commissioner and for the County Council 5%.

11. DRAFT CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25-2029/30

The Assistant Director (Finance) presented the draft Capital Strategy.

The Committee heard that the proposed 2025/26 capital programme for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and General Fund was based on the draft budget report from December.

The Committee were informed that updates would be incorporated into the final capital programme for February, reflecting changes presented earlier in the meeting.

The Assistant Director (Finance) informed the Committee that, for the General Fund, £2.6 million in new proposed schemes had been reviewed by officers and members and would be recommended for Council approval in February.

12. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

The Committee noted that there had been no Urgent Part I Business.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part I Decisions of the Cabinet be noted.

4 URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There were no Urgent Part I Decisions Authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED** that:

1. That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 – 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act as amended by Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006.
2. That Members consider the reasons for the following reports being in Part II and determine whether or not maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighs the public interest in disclosure.

7 **PART II MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Part II Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 17 December be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET**

The Committee noted that the only Part II Business at the Cabinet meeting held on 15 January 2025 was the minutes of the previous Cabinet meeting.

9 **URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

There were no Urgent Part II Decisions Authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

10 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

CHAIR

This page is intentionally left blank

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 18 February 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice-Chair), Myla Arceno, Philip Bibby CC, Stephen Booth, Rob Broom, Forhad Chowdhury, Peter Clark, Lynda Guy and Sarah Mead

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 6.19pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tom Plater, Ceara Roopchand, Anne Wells and Nigel Williams.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 21 January 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

The Committee considered the following Part I Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 12 February 2025:

2. MINUTES - CABINET 15 JANUARY 2025

Noted

3. MINUTES OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY AND SELECT COMMITTEES

Noted

4. FINAL SOSAFE COMMUNITY STRATEGY

The Head of Community Advice and Support introduced the report. The Committee heard that Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

5. FINAL GENERAL FUND AND COUNCIL TAX SETTING 2025/26

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report. The Committee heard that the report had been updated to include the business rate gains. Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

Responding to a question regarding the graduate scheme, the Chief Finance Officer advised the Committee that the report included two growth items, graffiti removal and the graduate scheme, which would be part funded from the business rates gains.

6. FINAL CAPITAL STRATEGY 2024/25 - 2029/30

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report. The Committee heard that the report had been updated to include the garage improvement programme. Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

7. ANNUAL TREASURY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY INCLUDING PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS 2025/26

The Chief Finance Officer introduced the report. The Committee heard that Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

Responding to a question regarding borrowing limits imposed by the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) beyond the council's own prudential indicators, the Chief Finance Officer confirmed that borrowing for commercial investment was not permitted, and borrowing could only be undertaken when needed. When applying for PWLB loans, the council must confirm compliance with those rules. The Committee heard that the Council benefited from two discounts: a 20-basis-point "certainty discount" and a further 40-basis-point reduction for housing-related borrowing. Most borrowing was through the PWLB, except for approximately £7 million in interest-free Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) loans.

8. ADOPTION OF THREE REVISED SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS

The Interim Assistant Director (Planning and Regulation) introduced the report. Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

A Member sought clarification on the delegated powers granted to the Interim Assistant Director for Planning and Regulation regarding minor amendments to the SPD documents. Officers confirmed that such amendments would be limited to grammatical, typographical, and minor clarification changes, ensuring alignment with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) policies. Any substantive policy changes would require re-consultation.

A Member queried the alignment of the SPD with Hertfordshire County Council's Place for Movement Design Guide to avoid conflicts in development requirements. Officers explained that the Borough Council's guidance referred to the County Council's highways guidance, which was issued in March 2024, to prevent duplication and ensure consistency. The County team had reviewed the documents

and provided feedback to mitigate any potential conflicts.

Comments were made regarding the transparency of Section 106 and CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) contributions. Officers advised that CIL payments were reported in the Capital Strategy and referenced in the Capital Monitoring Statement. It was noted that any CIL expenditure exceeding £75,000 must be reported to Members, typically through Cabinet. Additionally, an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement was published, detailing accrued funds and spending, including significant allocations such as the £5 million ringfenced for the leisure centre project. Members emphasised the importance of ensuring such financial information was easily accessible for public transparency and accountability.

A Member requested clarification on parking provisions within new developments and whether a fixed percentage was required. Officers explained that parking provision was determined using a formula based on census data, with requirements increasing according to the number of bedrooms per dwelling. The calculation took into account the housing mix and accessibility zones, with developments in sustainable locations, such as town centres, potentially having reduced or zero parking requirements.

Regarding developer contributions, it was confirmed that these were not set as a percentage but rather financial contributions tied to specific initiatives, such as the Stevenage Works Initiative. This scheme supported employment and apprenticeships, requiring major developers to contribute. If developers failed to meet their obligations, a financial penalty was imposed, which was allocated to a training fund to support apprenticeships.

9. VULNERABILITY POLICY

The Head of Community Advice and Support introduced the report. The Committee heard that Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

Responding to a question regarding the suspension of the Stevenage connection in relation to the policy. Officers confirmed that this matter would require further investigation and that a response would be provided in due course.

10. URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

It was noted that there had been no Urgent Part I Business at the Cabinet meeting.

4 URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

It was **RESOLVED** that the Urgent Part I Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted.

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

6 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.
2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

7 **PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET**

The Committee considered the following Part II Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 12 February 2025:

12. PROCUREMENT OF SUPPORT CONTRACTORS FOR THE REPAIRS AND VOIDS SERVICE

The Assistant Director (Building Safety and Housing Property Services) introduced the report.

A Member asked a question that was responded to by Officers.

13. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

The Committee noted there had been no Urgent Part II Business at the Cabinet Meeting.

8 **URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

The Committee noted that there had been no Urgent Part II Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

9 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 18 March 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Lin Martin-Haugh (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice Chair), Myla Arceno, Stephen Booth, Rob Broom, Forhad Chowdhury, Peter Clark, Lynda Guy, Tom Plater, Nigel Williams, Anne Wells.

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 6.58pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ceara Roopchand and Sarah Mead.

Councillor Tom Plater declared that within his current occupation he worked for the MP of Stevenage, Kevin Bonavia.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting held on 18 February 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 PART I DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

The Committee considered the following Part I Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 12 March 2025:

4. CORPORATE CO-OPERATIVE PROCUREMENT STRATEGY REVIEW

The Corporate Procurement Manager introduced the report, which supported the delivery of the Making Stevenage Even Better plan and addressed the legal changes from the Procurement Act 2023. The Committee was informed that Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

In response to a question regarding the reason for the delegated authority, it was advised that due to the tight timescales, the strategy needed to be approved by Cabinet in March 2025.

A member sought clarification on whether the strategy would impact the procurement of agency worker contracts. It was clarified that the strategy set out how the Council procured services, with a focus on social value, insourcing and

cooperative principles within the legal framework.

A further question was raised about the climate policies and emission considerations in the Council's supplier contracts. Officers explained that pre-market engagement and selection questionnaires allowed the council to assess supplier sustainability and incorporated social value into the procurement process. The council would also seek to embed these priorities throughout the contract lifecycle.

5.. CONFIRMATION OF AMENDMENT TO TWO ARTICLE 4 DIRECTIONS TO REQUIRE CHANGES OF USE FROM CLASS E (G) (I) (OFFICES) AND CLASS (E) (G) (III) (LIGHT INDUSTRIAL) TO CLASS C3 (RESIDENTIAL) TO OBTAIN PLANNING PERMISSION

The Assistant Director for Planning and Regulatory Services introduced the report, which ensured that from January 2026, planning permission would be required for changes from light industrial/office use to residential plans. Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

A member requested clarification if this item was driving further training for elected members of the Planning and Development Committee. It was noted that it was a separate matter, but further details on the required training were to be provided, and National Planning Policy updates were expected to be brought to cabinet in June for further clarification.

A question was raised about whether any specific buildings had been identified in relation to the report. The Assistant Director for Planning and Regulatory Services explained that the published Article 4 Directions included a map showing the specific protected buildings across the town.

6. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE QUARTER 3 2024/25

The Strategic Director introduced the report, providing an update on the Council's performance suite. Cabinet was asked to note the improvement plan with the regulator for Social Housing following the previous year's housing inspection.

At this juncture, it was noted that there has been a slight increase in the garage void rate, however renewed efforts were underway to improve occupancy through proactive marketing. The Strategic Director outlined the commended work on the Arts and Heritage Trail, particularly the artwork on utility boxes and encouraged members to identify other suitable boxes for similar projects.

A question was raised regarding the reason behind garage voids across the town. It was explained that the increase had been triggered by several factors, including rent prices, specific location preferences and repair issues. It was noted that works were taking place to make garages more lettable, and that the Council was in the process of procuring a new garage maintenance contract. Officers also explained that void levels were low compared to other authorities.

A member asked whether issues such as lighting and conditions of the units were

being considered, and it was noted that these factors were under review. Officers also tracked reasons for termination.

7. THIRD QUARTER REVENUE BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25 (INCLUDING THIRD QUARTER CAPITAL BUDGET MONITORING 2024/25) .

The Assistant Director for Finance introduced the report and provided an update on the Council's financial position for 2024/25. The Committee was informed that Cabinet had agreed the recommendations set out in the report.

8. VOIDS POLICY AND LETTABLE STANDARDS

The Assistant Director for Building Safety and Housing Property Services introduced the report on the new Void Management Policy and revised Lettable Standard which had been submitted to the Cabinet for approval. The policy outlined how the Council managed properties when they became vacant, while the Lettable Standard aimed to manage future tenant's expectations and ensure consistency in property standards upon re-letting.

9. AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY

The Assistant Director for Building Safety and Housing Property Services provided an update on the policy review, which aimed to support tenants and ensure the Council was fulfilling its legal and regulatory obligations.

At this juncture, a question was raised regarding the revisions being made to reflect legal requirements and to improve transparency on decision making. Officers confirmed that the updates aimed to align with best practices and new consumer standards, including the requirement to offer an adaptations service.

10. HIGH STREET RENTAL AUCTIONS

The Head of Planning Policy provided an overview of the process, which came into effect in December 2024. Local authorities in England were granted powers to hold High Street Rental Auctions for vacant town centre properties, aiming to revitalise high streets and bring long-term vacant properties back into use. It was noted that the Council had proposed designating the Town Centre and Old Town High Street, in line with the local plan policies, as potential High Street Rental Auction areas.

A question was raised about whether pieces of land would be included in the process, and officers confirmed that further clarification would be sought due to the new legislation.

A further question was raised about working with uncooperative landlords, to which officers explained that the legislation included a 22-week process with several opportunities for the property owner to appeal. The Council could require the

freeholder to enter a lease but would not take ownership of the property. It was noted that the legislation had not yet been tested in practice, with around 11 pilot areas expected to provide insights into potential legal challenges from freeholders. Further clarification on the process when available.

Members raised a question regarding the Council's responsibilities as commercial landlords to fill vacant plots under the new legislation. Officers clarified that the legislation primarily targeted private landowners and was intended as a last resort.

Officers also explained that the Council's estate management had an occupancy rate of around 95%, with some properties being held on short-term lets due to regeneration plans. The process could only be initiated after a property had been vacant for 366 days, and several conditions would need to be met. The guidance for the legislation, which included an appeal process, was provided in the report for reference.

11. URGENT PART I DECISIONS

An update was provided on an urgent report presented to the Cabinet, which delegated permission to the Leader of the Council to make an interim submission to the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government regarding Hertfordshire's proposals for local government reorganisation and devolution. The Cabinet considered the short urgent report and delegated the responsibility to the Leader for the interim non-binding decision.

Members asked a series of questions and commented on the potential merits of various options being put forward by the 10 district and borough Council's and the County Council to MHCLG.

Members thanked the officers involved including the Chief Executive and Strategic Directors for the urgent work undertaken with this matter since the invitation from MHCLG for a submission from authorities in a very short timeframe and for the content in the report.

4 URGENT PART I DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

There was no Urgent Part 1 Decisions authorised by the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5 URGENT PART I BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

6 EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

It was **RESOLVED**:

1. That, under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and

public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as described in paragraphs 1 to 7 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by SI 2006 No. 88.

2. That having considered the reasons for the following item being in Part II, it be determined that maintaining the exemption from disclosure of the information contained therein outweighed the public interest in disclosure.

7 PART II DECISIONS OF THE CABINET

The Committee considered the following Part II Decisions of the Cabinet taken on 12 March 2025:

12. PROVISION OF AGENCY WORKERS

The HR Manager updated the Committee on the procurement process for the supply of the Council's agency workers. The Committee asked a number of questions regarding this item, which were answered by the HR Manager.

13. SPORTS AND LEISURE CENTRE – DESIGN AND PLANNING SUBMISSION

The Regeneration Manager updated the Committee on the design and development of the Sports and Leisure Centre. The Committee asked a number of questions regarding this item, which were answered by the Regeneration Manager.

14. SBC LAND AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (LOCALITY REVIEW UPDATE)

The Assistant Director for Housing Development updated the Committee on the Council's Land and Development Programme as part of the locality review update.

The Committee noted the decision of the Cabinet.

15. MAJOR PROJECT – BRAGBURY END

The Assistant Director for Housing Development introduced the report on the Development project at Bradbury End. A number of questions were asked regarding this item, which were answered by the Assistant Director for Housing.

16. URGENT PART II BUSINESS

The Committee noted there had been no Urgent Part II Business at the Cabinet Meeting.

8 URGENT PART II DECISIONS AUTHORISED BY THE CHAIR OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

The Committee noted that there had been no Urgent Part II Decisions authorised by

the Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

9 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 27 February 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Forhad Chowdhury, Alistair Gordon, Claire Parris, Ellie Plater CC, Nigel Williams and Jade Woods

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.42pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Leanne Brady and Sarah Mead.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES - 14 JANUARY 2025

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Environment and Economy Select Committee be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 WASTE & RECYCLING PRESENTATION

The Chair introduced the Officers in attendance and provided an overview of Stevenage Borough Council's waste and recycling services, highlighting the team's dedication, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Chair informed the Committee that the purpose of the presentation was to introduce waste and recycling, setting the stage for future scrutiny sessions.

Key Points from the Presentation:

Roles and Responsibilities: The Council served as the Waste Collection Authority, while Hertfordshire County Council oversaw waste disposal.

Statistics:

- 38,000 properties served, including 8,500 flats.
- 43 staff members (15 HGV drivers, 28 operatives).
- 495 trade customers.
- £807,000 income in 2023/24, with a net profit of £199,000.
- Staffing costs: £1.7 million.
- Net cost per property per week: £1.07.

Collection Arrangements:

- Gradual replacement of 240-litre refuse bins with 180-litre bins.
- Multiple recycling containers available upon request.
- Garden and food waste collected together in 240-litre brown bins.

Waste Processing:

- 75% of general waste sent to energy-from-waste plants.
- Recycling sent to paper mills and material recovery facilities.
- Over 30,000 tonnes of material processed in 2023/24.

Legislative Changes and Future Plans:

Simpler Recycling: Standardisation of recycling processes nationwide, aiming for a 65% recycling target by 2035.

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR): Producers to fund packaging waste disposal, with councils receiving payments.

Deposit Return Scheme: Single-use plastic bottles and cans to carry a deposit charge from 2027.

Food Waste Project:**Implementation:**

- New service to be rolled out to trade customers in 2025 and households in 2026.
- Weekly food waste collections to be introduced.
- DEFRA funding allocated in three stages: Capital, Transitional, and Resource Funding.

Challenges and Solutions:

- Addressing odour control and pest issues in flats.
- Ensuring compliance with food waste storage regulations.
- Developing a comprehensive communications plan.

Members asked questions covering a wide range of topics, as set out below, along with the Officer responses:

Waste Travel Distance and Environmental Impact: Officers clarified that waste was sent to sites outside Hertfordshire due to the lack of local facilities. The County Council managed waste disposal contracts, and while new local facilities had been considered, none were currently planned.

Multiple Waste Destinations: Capacity limitations at different facilities necessitated multiple contracts for waste disposal across several locations.

Weekly Food Waste Collections: Officers explained that weekly collections aimed to minimise waste and prevent odour issues. DEFRA funding was available, but its

long-term sustainability remained uncertain.

Food Waste Recycling Rate: Officers did not have an exact figure as food waste was collected with garden waste. Previous analysis showed that only 64% of residents used their brown bin and approximately 35% of residual waste was food.

Garden Waste Disposal Methods: In-vessel composting (IVC) and windrow composting were used to process food and garden waste.

Environmental Impact of Kitchen Caddies: Officers confirmed that residents could use their existing containers to reduce unnecessary waste.

Public Street Bins for Food Waste: Officers acknowledged the potential benefits but stated it was not currently feasible due to resource constraints.

Contaminants in Recycling: The most common contaminant was food waste, followed by plastic bags. PET1 plastics were generally recyclable. Bin stickers were used to notify residents of contamination issues.

Retailer Role in Reducing Contamination: Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) legislation aimed to improve packaging recyclability and implement a universal labelling system.

Residual Waste Figures: Figures represented total residual waste divided by the number of households.

Comparison with North Hertfordshire: North Hertfordshire's food waste collections and smaller refuse bins likely contributed to higher recycling rates.

Financial Implications: Stevenage generated income from recycling due to its separated collection system, whereas North Hertfordshire incurred additional costs for mixed recycling processing.

Contaminated Paper and Cardboard: Wet paper was dried and reprocessed at the Council's transfer station.

Neighbourhood Recycling Bring Banks: Enhancements funded by UK Shared Prosperity Fund and Climate Change Community Fund grants aimed to reduce contamination and improve recycling rates.

Engagement with Younger Generation: School visits, assemblies, and re-establishing the Stevenage Green Network were planned to encourage sustainability.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their presentation and invited Members to discuss areas for detailed scrutiny. Members suggested flat blocks, bring banks, communications, and recycling rates.

A site visit to the Cavendish Road depot and observations of waste collections were suggested.

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 11 March 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber

Present: Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren, Leanne Brady, Forhad Chowdhury, Alistair Gordon, Sarah Mead, Claire Parris, Nigel Williams and Jade Woods

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.10pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy McGuinness and Ellie Plater.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 CLIMATE CHANGE - SOCIAL HOUSING RETROFIT DECARBONISATION PROGRAMME

The Chair introduced the item by highlighting the purpose of the session, which was to provide an overview of the ongoing retrofit work being carried out by the Council on its housing stock. The Chair emphasised the dual benefits of this work, noting that it contributed to reducing carbon emissions while simultaneously lowering tenants' heating bills and improving the overall quality of housing. This was described as a "win-win" approach, beneficial both environmentally and financially for residents.

The discussion followed a recent site visit attended by the Chair, Councillors Woods and Gordon, and Council Officers, where they viewed renovated flat blocks in Bedwell. The Chair praised the extent and quality of the improvements and expressed hope that similar work could be continued, subject to identifying further funding opportunities. The retrofitted flats were presented as a strong example of what could be achieved in providing high-quality council housing.

The Chair advised that the evening's presentation would outline progress made to date on the retrofit programme and expressed the intention that the Committee's discussion would lead to constructive recommendations to support this ongoing work.

The Chair informed the Committee that Councillor Hollywell was in attendance in her capacity as Portfolio Holder for Housing and Housing Development, and Councillor Speller was also in attendance in his capacity as Portfolio Holder for Environment

and Performance.

The Chair invited officers to begin the presentation.

Officers delivered a presentation outlining the Council's work on improving the energy efficiency of its housing stock as part of its decarbonisation strategy. The presentation was structured around key topics as outlined below:

Energy Efficiency Goals:

Target: The Council aimed to achieve Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) Band C for all social homes by 2030. This was in line with the government's expected consultation on requiring all social homes to reach EPC Band C by 2030.

Current Status: While a significant proportion of the Council's properties were already EPC Band C or above, over 2,000 homes were still rated EPC Band D or lower. These homes were the primary focus of current and future retrofit work.

Average SAP Rating: The average SAP (Standard Assessment Procedure) rating across the housing stock stood at 69, which was slightly above the estimated UK average of 66.

Annual Carbon Emissions: The total annual carbon emissions from the housing stock were approximately 20,733 tonnes.

Data Management:

Systems Used: The Council employed Sava Intelligent Energy, integrated with the Keystone asset management system, to manage and model energy performance data.

Data Collection: Energy Performance Certificates (EPCs) were gathered routinely through stock condition surveys and at the point of re-letting properties. Where EPCs were unavailable, data from completed improvement works, such as installations of new boilers, windows, and doors, was used to estimate energy performance.

Retrofit Strategy:

Approach: The Council followed a fabric-first approach, prioritising improvements such as loft and wall insulation, upgraded ventilation, and installation of efficient windows and doors. Floor insulation was not currently pursued due to its disruptive nature and cost-inefficiency in achieving EPC Band C.

Rationale: Improving the building fabric was essential to reducing heat loss and must be completed before other measures, such as renewable technologies, were considered. This approach aligned with national funding criteria, including the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF).

Improvement Plans:

EPC Band C Plan: The plan included all properties except 32 homes, which required further assessment to determine feasible improvement options.

Net Zero Plan: The estimated total cost to reach net zero carbon emissions was £168 million, in addition to the costs required to achieve EPC Band C.

Funding and Costs:

Estimated Cost: The broad estimate for achieving EPC Band C was approximately £20 million across 2,500 properties, equating to around £8,000 per property on average. Properties with lower starting EPC ratings typically incurred higher upgrade costs.

Funding Sources: Funding for achieving EPC Band C was included in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan. However, funding to reach net zero carbon was not currently included in the HRA Business Plan.

Completed and Ongoing Work:

Funding Secured: Over the past four years, the Council had secured £5.5 million in external grant funding, used to upgrade 359 homes under Local Authority Delivery LAD1B and Wave 1 of SHDF. These properties had now reached EPC Band C.

Current Projects: The current Wave 2 SHDF project was targeting 237 homes, including both flat blocks and street properties. All homes within this project would reach EPC Band C or higher, and in some cases, Band B.

Environmental Monitoring:

Technology: A small number of properties (approximately 40) were equipped with real-time environmental sensors. These devices monitored humidity, temperature, and heat loss, supporting early identification and intervention in damp and mould cases.

Benefits: The resident-facing version of the monitoring system included a smartphone app to help residents better manage ventilation and heating.

Resident Feedback:

Positive Response: Feedback collection was ongoing and had been overwhelmingly positive. Formal tracking would continue throughout the following year, particularly through the winter months, to assess the full impact on residents' comfort and energy use.

Support: Energy advice officers, trained through a specialised retrofit academy, assisted residents during and after the works, helping them understand and manage their upgraded systems.

Future Plans:

Wave 3 Funding: The Council had secured £3.8 million in funding for Wave 3, which included a focus on installing air source heat pumps in 10% of identified homes. This funding was part of a broader strategy to move towards full decarbonisation.

Challenges: Inflation, market fluctuations, and future funding availability were highlighted as significant challenges in completing all outstanding works by 2030.

Private Housing and Leaseholders:

Warm Homes Local Grant: The grant had secured £1.5 million to retrofit around 100 private properties over the next three years. This was a significant step forward in terms of progress compared to previous schemes.

Mixed-Tenure Properties: Addressing funding and participation challenges for leaseholders in mixed-tenure properties remained a challenge.

Throughout the presentation, Members asked questions covering a wide range of topics, as set out below, along with the Officer responses:

Average cost per property to achieve EPC Band C:

The estimated cost to achieve EPC Band C across 2,500 properties was approximately £20 million, equating to around £8,000 per property on average. However, the actual cost per property varied significantly depending on existing conditions and required measures. Properties with lower starting EPC ratings (e.g., EPC E) typically incurred higher upgrade costs, while those closer to the target (e.g., EPC D at 68 points) might only require minor, lower-cost interventions such as loft insulation.

Impact of retrofit work on biodiversity:

Concerns about the impact of retrofitting on wildlife, such as birds and bats living in older properties, were raised. This issue was suggested to be addressed outside the meeting, to explore potential solutions and mitigation strategies.

Adaptation of properties to summer heat:

Strategies for protecting properties against higher temperatures, wind, and rain were discussed. These included measures to improve insulation and ventilation, which not only enhanced energy efficiency but also helped maintain comfortable indoor temperatures during extreme weather conditions.

Challenges with mixed-tenure properties:

The funding framework was not designed to accommodate leaseholders, which presented challenges for mixed-tenure properties. Previous work allowed charging leaseholders for retrofitting due to prior Section 20 consultations. However, the next round of funding (Wave 3) would focus only on street properties, not flats, making it difficult to integrate private properties into the same project.

Skills shortage in retrofitting workforce:

Upskilling local workers and promoting green apprenticeships were critical steps to

address the potential skill shortages in the workforce for retrofitting projects. The Council was training its own workers, such as retrofitting advisors and coordinators, to reduce costs and ensure sufficient capacity for future work. Encouraging women and young people to enter the construction and retrofit industries was also highlighted as a priority.

Encouraging private developers to meet energy efficiency standards:

The Warm Homes Local Grant had secured £1.5 million for retrofitting around 100 private properties over the next three years. New climate policies under review included operationally net-zero or whole-life carbon net-zero targets for developers, depending on the scale of development. These policies were expected to be adopted by the end of the calendar year.

Impact of retrofitting on leaseholders:

Previous work allowed charging leaseholders for retrofitting due to prior Section 20 consultations. However, the funding framework is not initially designed to accommodate leaseholders, which remains a challenge, particularly for flats. The next round of funding (Wave 3) will focus only on street properties, not flats.

Low uptake of Home Upgrade Scheme:

The low uptake of the Home Upgrade Scheme was due to its stringent requirements. However, new funding options and expanded eligibility were expected to increase interest. Landlords could now receive full funding for the first property and partial funding for additional properties. The scheme now included three eligibility pathways, which should encourage greater participation from residents.

Support for tenants with heating issues:

Emphasis was placed on preventing issues like damp and mould through additional funding options. The Council was helping homes that weren't heated properly by suggesting additional funding options to prevent such issues. Real-time environmental sensors in properties helped identify and address heating issues early on.

3 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

4 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

5 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

This page is intentionally left blank

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**ENVIRONMENT & ECONOMY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 20 March 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Rob Broom (Chair), Andy McGuinness (Vice Chair),
Julie Ashley-Wren, Leanne Brady, Forhad Chowdhury,
Alistair Gordon, Claire Parris, Ellie Plater CC,
Nigel Williams and Jade Woods

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 7.45pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sarah Mead.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 UPDATE ON THE TREE & WOODLAND STRATEGY AND THE GREEN SPACE STRATEGY

The Chair introduced the item by providing an overview of the evening's topics, focusing on updates to the Tree & Woodland Strategy and the Green Spaces Strategy. They emphasised the importance of green spaces, not only for their aesthetic value but also for their crucial role in supporting physical and mental health, biodiversity, and carbon capture in urban environments.

The Chair framed the session as a discussion about the management of woodlands and green spaces, with an emphasis on community engagement and collaboration with stakeholders to enhance and maintain these areas, underscoring the importance of involving the community in the planning and management of green spaces and highlighting the benefits of collaborative efforts in achieving sustainable and effective outcomes.

The Chair invited officers to present to the Committee.

The Environmental Policy and Development Manager advised the Committee public engagement had included online consultations and in-person sessions, receiving around 400 responses. The strategies would undergo revisions in April and May 2025, aiming for Cabinet approval in June 2025, with final publication in Summer 2025.

The Arboriculture and Conservation Manager outlined the draft 10-year plan for the Tree & Woodland Strategy, reflecting best practices and stakeholder consultations.

Key highlights of the presentation included:

Benefits of trees:

Wildlife, climate change mitigation, health.

Success story:

Creation of three micro woodlands with a £36,000 grant from Defra.

Miyawaki Woodland Project:

High initial survival rate of trees, with natural die-off over time.

Strategy themes: expanding canopy cover, volunteer programs, management plans, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

Historic Environment and Tree Preservation:

Importance of protecting old trees, especially oak and ash.

Replacement policy for tree removal: 3:1 ratio, potentially increasing to 21:1 for significant trees.

Tree Selection and Maintenance:

Careful selection of tree species to avoid infrastructure damage.

Review process: 10-year strategy reviewed every five years, with interim updates every two years.

Members asked a number of questions, covering a number of topics, which were answered by Officers as set out below:

Resource Constraints:

Officers acknowledged historical budget cuts but noted recent funding successes and hopes for future funding.

Tree interception rates and their impact on the urban water cycle:

Officers advised they would follow up on the technical question.

Tree Planting in Streets:

Officers advised of careful planning and species selection to minimise issues.

Balancing Tree Planting and Park Space:

Officers emphasised the need to balance tree planting with future park space demands for sports, noting the importance of shaded spaces in parks.

Tree Removal for Energy Generation:

Officers reassured that trees were not removed solely for energy generation and emphasised planting fast-growing species for biomass.

Tree Replacement in Developments:

Officers explained the replacement policy and ongoing challenges with developers.

Wildfire Risk:

A Member commented about increasing wildfire risk and the need for specific action plans. Officers acknowledged the need for future planning and collaboration with the county council.

Community Projects with Felled Trees:

A Member inquired about reusing felled tree material for community projects. Officers mentioned providing wood chip or logs to schools and community groups.

Ecological Value of Trees:

Members emphasised considering the ecological value of trees when planting new ones.

Officers discussed diversifying tree species to enhance ecological benefits.

The Chair thanked the Arboriculture and Conservation Manager for their presentation and invited the Environmental Policy and Development Manager to address the Committee.

The Environmental Policy and Development Manager presented an overview of the draft Green Spaces Strategy, which outlined a 10-year plan for the development, management, and enhancement of Stevenage's green spaces. The presentation reflected the outcomes of the Winter 2023 public consultation and aligned with the approach taken in the Tree and Woodland Strategy. Key highlights of the presentation included:

Consultation Insights:

81% of respondents rated Stevenage's green spaces as good or excellent, though this dropped to 55% among younger people.

Top valued features included trees, cleanliness, and wildlife-friendly areas.

Concerns raised included safety at night, loss of green space to development, and the importance of maintaining any new facilities.

Strategic Themes and Actions:

Our Community: Focused on accessibility, improved communication and signage, stakeholder consultation, and developing a suite of safety measures in partnership with relevant agencies.

Our Environment: Aimed to enhance biodiversity, protect habitats, and work with partners to improve waterways and nature areas.

Our Spaces: Emphasised inclusive play, health and well-being through varied physical activity opportunities, maintenance standards, and increased partnership working to expand provision and usage.

Future Opportunities:

Proposals included exploring a multi-use wheeled sports facility and supporting inclusive design for children and young people with disabilities.

The “Share with Care” principle was noted as a possible solution for shared pedestrian and cyclist routes, albeit with recognition of potential conflicts.

Implementation Considerations:

While 63% of consultation respondents supported the proposed actions, some requested shorter timescales. The strategy remains ambitious yet realistic, taking into account available resources.

The Environmental Policy and Development Manager concluded with a commitment to regular review and adaptation of the strategy to reflect evolving community needs and funding availability.

Members asked a number of questions, covering a number of topics, which were answered by Officers as set out below:

Resident Engagement and Communication:

It was acknowledged that community engagement in parks required improvement, particularly in reaching disengaged or hard-to-reach groups.

Suggestions included making better use of community centres, partnerships with the voluntary sector, and refining social media targeting.

Officers emphasised that current engagement methods (e.g. in-person events, online surveys, children's artwork) had some success but further work was needed.

Members commented about fragmented communication and the need for consistent updates on what actions have resulted from resident feedback.

Officers agreed on the need to develop a more robust and inclusive communication strategy going forward.

Green Space Development and Facilities:

Members praised the potential of Stevenage parks and suggested incorporating maps and visuals in final documents to showcase facilities and improve public awareness.

Specific reference was made to Chells Park, where Members commented on a lack of pathways limits usability. Officers confirmed that circular and accessible walkways were being explored.

Funding and Commercial Opportunities:

The Committee discussed exploring diverse funding avenues:

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) was highlighted, with Stevenage noted as the first authority in Hertfordshire to receive and implement BNG funding.

Additional funding was expected from West of Stevenage development (approx. £2.5 million).

External bids and partnerships (e.g. franchising mobile cafes) were also noted as promising routes.

Monetisation ideas such as naming rights for parks or commercial activities were raised. Officers advised that these required careful balance to protect public interests.

Members commented on inequity in enforcement of commercial licensing (e.g. outdoor fitness groups). Officers acknowledged the need to distinguish between small local operators and larger commercial entities and agreed to review the current licensing framework.

Toilets and Amenities

Access to toilet facilities was cited as a key factor in encouraging longer and more inclusive use of parks.

Officers recognised the issue and agreed it should be a priority, noting both cost and antisocial behaviour as challenges.

Alternative models were discussed, including shared-use commercial facilities (e.g. café with public toilets) as seen in other authorities.

Future Opportunities for Scrutiny

The Committee proposed a future review topic focused on enhancing park facilities through commercial partnerships and infrastructure development, using examples such as Stanborough Lakes for comparison.

It was suggested that Select Committee scrutiny could support strategic planning and public value enhancement.

The Chair thanked the Environmental Policy and Development Manager for their presentation.

3 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

4 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Not required.

5 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

This page is intentionally left blank

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Wednesday, 26 March 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Shimkent Room - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren (Vice-Chair), Stephen Booth, Kamal Choudhury, Akin Elekolusi, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy and Mason Humberstone

Start / End Time: Start Time: 6.00pm
End Time: 7.03pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Committee Members, Councillor Leanne Brady and Jade Woods.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Community Select Committee held on 5 February 2025 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 CRIME & DISORDER COMMITTEE

The Chair welcomed Inspector Will Rogers-Overy from the Stevenage Neighbourhood Police Team, who presented the Committee with Crime and Disorder Data for the past 12 months.

It was noted that the Hertfordshire Constabulary underwent a Police Efficiency, Effectiveness, and Legitimacy (PEEL) inspection between 2023-2025, during which only 82.6% of reported crime was recorded. In response to the PEEL inspection there had been a renewed effort locally to improve their performance of recording crime, this will in turn result in higher crime figures across all metrics.

Key Crime Statistics for Stevenage (in the last 12 months):

- 7,233 crimes were recorded, representing an 8.7% increase from the previous year.
- Reductions were seen in specific crime categories including:
 - o Shopping-related crime: 8% decrease
 - o Residential burglary: 11.2% decrease
 - o Vehicle crime: 36.9% decrease

- Violence Against the Person (including stalking and harassment) increased by 20%.
- Public Order Offences rose by 38.3%.
- Eight Criminal Behaviour Orders (CBOs) were issued.

A question was raised regarding the age profile of offenders, and the Inspector confirmed that this information would be sought and provided to the Committee at a later date.

Further questions were raised about the high levels of domestic abuse. The increase in reported incidents was considered a positive outcome of efforts to raise awareness and encourage victims to come forward. Police officers had received specialist training to recognise signs of domestic violence. The Head of Community Advice and Support noted that incidents of domestic abuse had not decreased since the COVID-19 lockdown and highlighted the expansion of Safe Spaces from two to 38 locations, all operating at full capacity.

In response to a question regarding accurate reporting, the Committee and public were encouraged to report incidents to facilitate data collection. It was agreed that further clarification would be sought regarding the percentage of unreported crimes.

The Committee was informed about Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) levels from January 2024 to March 2025. A total of 1,908 incidents were recorded, representing a 15% decrease compared to the previous year. It was noted that these figures only accounted for formally reported incidents, and public perceptions of ASB could differ.

Peak reporting times for ASB were identified as:

- Monday to Friday: 2 – 6pm
- Saturday: 4 – 11pm
- Sunday: 6 – 9pm

The Herts Connected System was highlighted as an essential community engagement platform that provided crime prevention advice and gathered input from the community. It was noted that 2,648 users, including businesses and schools, were registered.

The Committee raised concerns about nuisance driving in Stevenage, such as loud exhausts, speeding and heavily tinted windows. Residents often expressed frustration over the lack of visible policing. It was explained that Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras were used to monitor vehicles, however enforcement required officers to be present at the time of the offenses.

The Committee was presented with the Neighbourhood Policing Team's community engagement initiatives which included:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| - Ward Surgeries | - Street Meets |
| - Door to Door Engagements | - Community Involvement Day |
| - Coffee with a Cop | - Crucial Crew |
| - Mini Police | - Sporting Events |

A question was raised regarding the nature of community engagements and the types of interactions involved. It was noted that demographic data was collected to understand which parts of the community were being reached and to identify areas requiring additional engagement.

The Neighbourhood Policing Team conducted 73 school engagements over the past year, covering topics such as ASB, E-Scooter use and road safety.

At this juncture, an explanation of Cuckooing was provided, highlighting indicators such as increased vehicle activity, particularly involving taxis or hire cars, and signs of drug use. Four tagged cuckooing investigations were identified in Stevenage in the past year, and it was suggested that taxi drivers could receive additional training to recognise and report these signs.

Further discussion focused on drug possession and trafficking, with 186 reports of drug possession and 39 reports of drug trafficking over the past year.

The Committee commented on the positive impact of the Police reports shared on social media.

The Committee were updated on the progress from the Build a Better Bedwell Project:

- 53 arrests were made.
- Nine local drug lines were disrupted.
- One organised crime group dismantled.
- £30,000 was seized.
- Seven machetes were seized.
- A total of 41 years in sentencing.
- Two house closures were completed.
- Violent crime in Quarter 3 2023/24 decreased by 47% (alcohol/weapons related).
- A multi-agency delivery group and enhanced partnership working group were established.
- Target hardening was implemented on tower blocks, including door entry and CCTV.

It was noted that funding for the project had been secured through the Safer Streets Fund, enabling additional wardens and external partners to operate outside of standard hours. Clear Hold Build training was provided to staff, equipping them with the skills needed to support the scheme.

The Committee received an overview of the Stevenage Neighbourhood Policing Team's structure, which consisted of an Inspector, three Sergeants (North/Central/South), 14 Constables, and nine PCSOs. The team also included a Community Safety Unit Sergeant, an ASB officer, a Licencing Officer and a Hate Crime Officer.

Inspector Will Rogers-Overy stated that the Police very much appreciated the support from SBC Members and from officers and the joint working they carried out together.

On behalf of the Committee, the Chair thanked the Inspector and Officers for their contributions to the meeting.

4 **URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part I Business.

5 **EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS**

Not required.

6 **URGENT PART II BUSINESS**

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

CHAIR

CommitteeName



Minutes

MeetingDateLegal

Attendees: MembersPresentRows

OfficersPresentRows

Apologies: MembersApologiesRows

ACTION

The meeting started at___MeetingActualStartTime___and finished at
MeetingActualFinishTime.

This page is intentionally left blank

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL

**COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

Date: Tuesday, 8 April 2025

Time: 6.00pm

Place: Council Chamber - Daneshill House, Danestrete

Present: Councillors: Sarah Mead (Chair), Julie Ashley-Wren (Vice Chair),
Leanne Brady, Kamal Choudhury, Alistair Gordon, Lynda Guy and
Jade Woods

Start / End Start Time: 6.00pm
Time: End Time: 6:56pm

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Apologies for absence were received from Committee Members, Councillor Stephen Booth, Akin Elekolusi and Mason Humberstone.

There were no declarations of interest.

2 COMMUNITY SELECT COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME – 2025/2026

The Chair invited the Scrutiny Officer to provide detail on the 2024/25 work programme and the emerging work programme options for 2025-26.

One key area of focus for the Committee was the Equalities and Diversity Review. The next steps involved presenting a draft report to the Committee, providing members with the opportunity to give feedback ahead of the final version. Both versions of the report were scheduled to be brought forward in the next municipal year.

The Committee had received updates on the one-off reviews of the Housing Allocations Policy, Housing Investment – Asset Management, and Damp and Mould, with further discussions noted for the future. A one-off scrutiny review of the Neighbourhood Wardens was also undertaken, during which officers outlined their roles and recent work across the town. Additionally, the Committee reviewed the new Leisure Contract and the Crime and Disorder item.

The Committee reviewed the suggested items for the Work Programme 2025-26:

(1) Progress Report on Housing Allocations

The Scrutiny Officer provided an overview of the new Housing Allocations Policy, and members discussed the ongoing challenges in managing expectations related to the housing waiting list. It was noted that the Committee would revisit the policy in

Autumn 2025, one year after its implementation, ahead of a scheduled update to Cabinet.

(2) Damp and Mould

The Chair advised that it would be beneficial to develop a written process to support both Members and Tenants in understanding the Council's approach to managing Damp and Mould cases. It was noted that the use of flowcharts to illustrate these processes would be a useful tool for improving understanding and accountability.

The Committee discussed the ongoing challenges posed by Damp and Mould and the importance of tracking repeat cases. Officers explained that emergency removal was carried out as an immediate response, followed by necessary remedial works, including improvements to ventilation and heating systems. While relevant information was available, the need for face-to-face engagement by surveyors and repairs teams was emphasised as key to reinforcing important messages.

Members were informed that a new Head of Repairs had been appointed who would lead on Damp and Mold issues, with the expectation of improved performance and greater consistency. It was also noted that Awaab's Law would come into legislation in October 2025.

Officers proposed that the Damp and Mould programme be brought back to Committee in the autumn, with Members invited to submit specific questions in advance to ensure key concerns were fully addressed.

(3) Tenant Enforcement and Audits

Officers explained that the programme item would cover trends identified in enforcement actions taken against tenants. Audits were highlighted as a valuable tool for improving the Council's understanding of its housing stock and occupancy levels.

The Committee discussed the need for continued improvement in data accuracy and consistency and Officers confirmed that steps were being taken to refine the audit policy and ensure outcomes were clearly communicated.

It was noted that the Tenancy Audit procedure had been reviewed, it had identified that a formal policy for staff with a clear accessible Tenancy Audit Policy and associated guide for tenants was needed.

(4) Public Health

It was also noted that Public Health remained a priority and the Chair suggested inviting a representative from the Hertfordshire Health Scrutiny to speak to the Committee about health and wellbeing statistics specific to Stevenage.

In addition, officers confirmed they would invite the Director of Public Health at Hertfordshire County Council to attend a future meeting to further explore this topic. The importance of promoting health and wellbeing awareness across Stevenage was emphasised, and the Chair highlighted that increasing awareness could support residents in making more informed decisions about their health.

(5) Older People

The Chair outlined the challenges faced by older people in relation to digital exclusion. It was noted that there would be a focus on improving community transport, alongside greater consideration for individuals who are partially sighted or have sensory needs. It was suggested that the original Cultural Strategy could be revisited, with a renewed emphasis on diversity and inclusivity.

(6) Scrutiny of ASB

Officers explained that the new policy had been approved, but the Committee had the option to revisit the policy in one years' time for a review.

(7) Community Centres

The Assistant Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods would liaise with the Section 151 Officer regarding the status of the policy and would provide feedback to members.

Members also requested an update on the future of Community Centres, specifically regarding the Play Centre and Pavilion at St Nicholas Park.

(8) Pre-Scrutiny of HRA Business Plan

The Assistant Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods explained that a formalised HRA Business Plan was required by July 2025 and confirmed it would be brought to the Committee if feasible.

(9) Resident Engagement

The Assistant Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods confirmed that an update on the Resident Engagement Strategy would be provided.

(10) Community Cohesion

The Assistant Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods advised that a briefing note would be circulated to Members, outlining the Council's Resettlement Strategy.

At this juncture, it was noted that this item could be referred to a future meeting of the Modern Member Programme (MMP) for further discussion.

A question was raised regarding the role of the police in addressing social media issues affecting community cohesion. The Assistant Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods confirmed that this matter would be raised at the upcoming multi-agency resettlement meeting.

The Chair invited Members to provide any further items for future work plan programme. Members expressed concern over the number of flats being developed and their suitability for older and disabled residents. Specific concerns were raised about the adequacy of evacuation plans for vulnerable residents, and it was noted that the Council's policy on this matter would be reviewed.

Members also raised concerns of accessibility at the Stevenage Train Station, particularly with the lift, and it was noted that this issue was being addressed by the Environment and Economy Committee.

3 URGENT PART 1 BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part I Business

4 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

Not required.

5 URGENT PART II BUSINESS

There was no Urgent Part II Business.

Part I – Release to Press



Agenda item: **##**

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Environment & Climate Change
Date 4 June 2025



GREEN SPACES STRATEGY AND TREE & WOODLAND STRATEGY

KEY DECISION

1 PURPOSE

1.1 In recent years the Council has successfully delivered several exciting green space initiatives to improve the local environment and to provide enhanced opportunities for Stevenage residents. These initiatives include:

- Community engagement and improvements through an active programme with Green Space Volunteers
- Significant capital investment in equipped play spaces for children and young people, and provision of spaces for imaginative play.
- Provision of an aqua parc at Fairlands Valley Park
- Delivery of the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan & Biodiversity Net Gain improvements
- Community tree planting – community orchards, community woodlands, micro-woods
- Following receipt of a petition for lighting at Fairlands Valley Park a bat survey has been commissioned which will help inform the potential for a future lighting scheme.



- 1.2 The draft Green Spaces Strategy and Tree & Woodland Strategy have been developed, following consultation with colleagues and residents, to support future delivery of further improvements over the next ten years in order to ensure that these assets continue to meet the needs of people and wildlife in the future.
- 1.3 Officers present this report to seek approval of the Green Spaces Strategy 2025-2035 and Tree & Woodland Strategy 2025-2035 for Stevenage.
- 1.4 The team responsible for the delivery of the majority of the Green Spaces Strategy, including the action plans for the principal parks, currently comprises four officer roles. One of these is currently permanent. The other three range from 0.2 -0.8 FTE on fixed term contracts, with two terminating in September 2025 and the third in September 2026.
- 1.5 In this context, the report highlights the proposal for identifying additional revenue funding over the course of the next 18 months to create a permanent green space officer role to support the successful delivery of the Green Spaces Strategy, and the community engagement associated with many of the actions in both strategy documents.
- 1.6 Officers will explore options to fund this post through planning gain funds, or other suitable funding streams.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Green Spaces Strategy and Tree & Woodland Strategy 2025 – 2035 be approved.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The strategy documents support, and are supported by, other local policy documents including the Biodiversity Action Plan, Climate Change Strategy, Health & Wellbeing Strategy, the Local Plan and the Corporate Plan: Make Stevenage Even Better.

3.2 Green Spaces Strategy 2025 - 2035

- 3.1.1 For this strategy, green spaces consist of:

- Allotments
- Cemeteries and churchyards

- Commons
- Open spaces
- Parks and public gardens
- Play areas
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Woodlands

3.1.2 Good quality green spaces are increasingly recognised as an essential quality of life resource as they:

- help to mitigate the impact of climate change,
- act as green corridors for wildlife,
- provide an affordable way to get people active – boosting mental wellbeing and physical health,
- Increase property values and attract inward investment,
- Encourage people and communities to come together,

3.1.3 Fields in Trust developed a minimum standard of green space provision, identifying that at least 24m² of green space per individual is needed to enable everyone to participate in recreation, sport, play and reap the well-being benefits. Their Green Space Index, 2024, identifies that there is 22.52m² of green space provision per individual in Stevenage, which falls slightly below the minimum standard identified.

Whilst it may not be practical or possible to create new green spaces within the borough boundary, it does highlight the need to protect and improve what already exists and seek to maximise opportunities for additional green spaces through planning gain.

3.1.4 Despite the slight shortfall in green space provision quantity standards the Fields in Trust Green Space Index, 2024, does identify that 97.75% of Stevenage residents live within a 10-minute walk of a green space:



3.1.5 This strategy sets out objectives for the way in which green spaces in Stevenage are maintained, managed, and improved to ensure that they are

safe, accessible, sustainable and meet the needs of our communities and the environment today and in the future.

- 3.1.6 64% of residents who responded to the consultation reported that they did feel safe when using green spaces in Stevenage. However, concerns about personal safety at night was a common theme.

The perception of personal safety is a concern across the UK with 82% of women and 42% of men feeling very or fairly unsafe walking alone after dark in parks or open spaces (Office for National Statistics: Perceptions of personal safety and experiences of harassment). The perception of the fear of crime generally exceeds actual crime, however. the Green Space Strategy identifies the need to work with partners to consider a range of measures to help improve the perception of personal safety in Stevenage parks and green spaces for all residents.

3.2 New Green Spaces

- 3.2.1 There has not been any significant new green space in Stevenage since Chells Park in the 1980/90's, and yet with the growth of the Town there is a need for additional green space to meet the needs of the increasing population.
- 3.2.2 In September 2022 the Council granted planning permission for a residential development to the North of Stevenage. Alongside the provision of homes and school etc this development will also deliver a new country park. The park will provide 38 hectares of informal open space available for use by everyone, including pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. It is anticipated that much of the park will be restored, and managed, as hay meadow, but will also include reinstatement of hedgerow field boundaries, tree and copse planting along with the creation of a community orchard.
- 3.2.3 The park will be created by the developers and adopted by the Council for future maintenance and management. The developers will also provide funds to support the management and maintenance of this significant new green infrastructure. (Artist's impression of the country park below).



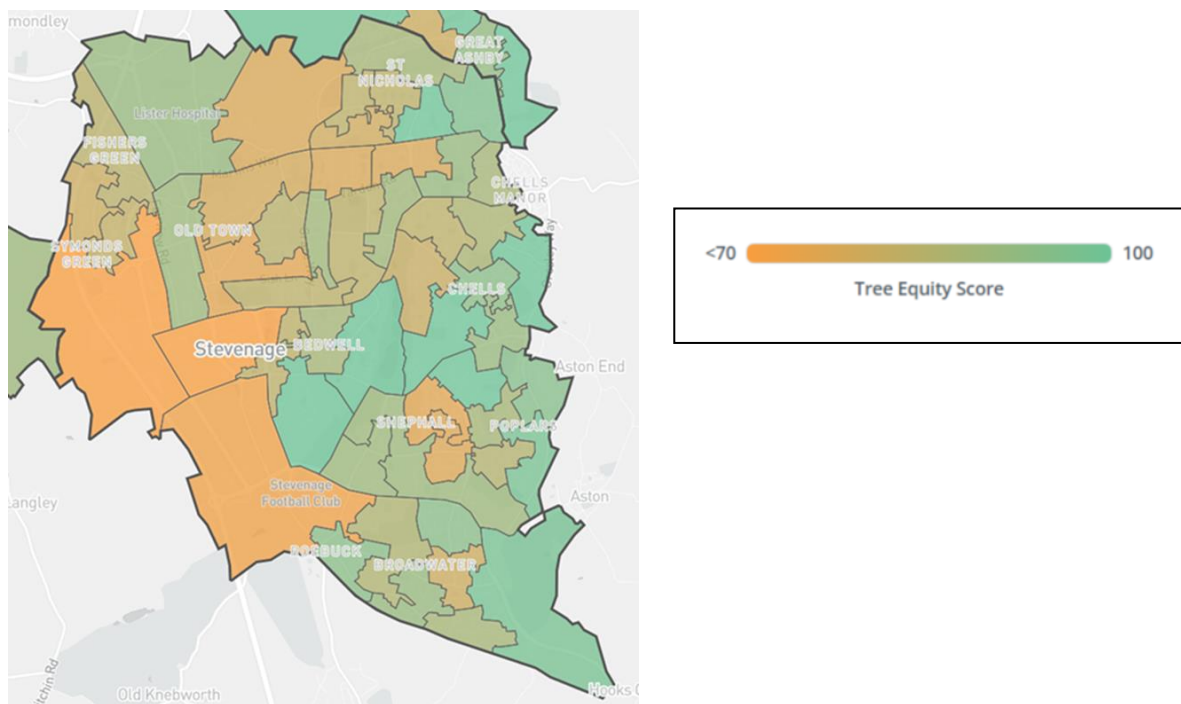


Visuals supplied by Nicholas Pearson Associates.

- 3.2.4 During 2026/27, Phase 1 of the park will be made available for adoption by the Council, with Phase 2 anticipated in 2029/30.
- 3.2.5 In addition, planning permission for the West of Stevenage development was granted in autumn 2024. Alongside the provision of homes and school etc this development is proposed to deliver a new playing field and associated sports facilities.

3.3 Tree & Woodland Strategy 2025 – 2035

- 3.3.1 As Britain's first new town, Stevenage was designed with a great deal of emphasis on green space and its importance in helping to create a thriving community. Existing features such as hedgerows and lanes, woodlands and veteran trees were retained and used to create open space, wildlife corridors and an immediate sense of place and many of these features still exist today.
- 3.3.2 The Stevenage Amenity Tree Management Policy was approved by Executive in February 2021, and this strategy has subsequently developed to support the ongoing delivery of a good quality tree stock for future generations to benefit from.
- 3.3.3 Trees, like much of our landscape, are facing unprecedented environmental challenges including climate change, financial constraints, land-use pressures etc.
- 3.3.4 The Tree Equity Score UK combines information (tree canopy, income, health, employment, age, heat, air pollution) from a variety of sources to create a single measure from 0 to 100, the lower the score, the greater the need for tree planting investment.



This data will help identify priorities for future tree planting within Stevenage.

- 3.2.5 The Woodland Trust’s Woodland Access Standard aspires that no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size, and there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km of people’s homes. However, it does acknowledge that in urban areas the 4km threshold should be the minimum provided.

Their 2017 publication Space for People, Targeting Action for Woodland Access provides the following data for Hertfordshire:

	% of population with access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m	% of population with access to a 20ha+ wood within 4km
Broxbourne	19.2	100.0
Dacorum	33.5	72.1
East Hertfordshire	8.8	67.5
Hertsmere	15.4	95.3
North Hertfordshire	9.4	10.9
St Albans	24.4	71.9
Stevenage	45.8	100.0
Three Rivers	43.9	99.3
Watford	3.1	100.0
Welwyn Hatfield	30.3	100.0

- 3.2.6 A recommendation of the Emergency Tree Plan for the UK (Woodland Trust, 2020) is to provide a minimum of 19% tree cover to support the UK being carbon neutral by 2050. In 2024 it was calculated that Stevenage has a tree canopy cover, including woodlands, of 22%.
- 3.2.7 Whilst the 22% tree canopy coverage for Stevenage is positive, approximately 7,500 amenity trees have been lost over the past twenty years. There are currently approximately 32,500 amenity (non-woodland) trees in Stevenage and it's therefore important that the tree stock is monitored and maintained.
- 3.2.8 This strategy sets out objectives for the way in which the Town's tree stock, including amenity trees, woodlands and ancient hedgerows, are managed and developed to ensure that they continue to contribute to an attractive and healthy environment for people and wildlife now and in the future.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 During 2021/22 and 2022/23, 3,500 responses were received to resident surveys. As part of the survey's residents were asked to identify their top local priority. "*More / better parks and green spaces*" was in the top 10 of priorities for each Ward, and collectively was identified as the top priority town wide. "*Tree / shrubs / grass maintenance*" was in the top 10 of priorities for each Ward, and collectively was identified as the 6th highest priority town wide.
- 4.2 The development of the two strategies has been driven by Councillor Simon Speller, the former Portfolio Holder for Environment and Performance.
- 4.3 The strategies have been informed by phases of public consultation:

When	Purpose	No. of Responses
Winter 2023/24	To understand what residents thought of the green spaces / tree stock, why green spaces / trees are important, etc.	490
July – Sept 2024	To inform action plans for principal parks – as part of the Green Spaces Strategy	474
Jan – Feb 2025	To seek feedback on the draft strategies	53

- 4.4 Colleagues in Environmental Operations, Leisure, Planning Policy, Climate Action, Development Control, Insurance, Housing, Co-operative Neighbourhoods, and Engineers were also invited to provide feedback to the draft strategy.

- 4.5 The Woodland Trust have also reviewed the Tree & Woodland Strategy and support it and what it seeks to achieve.
- 4.6 A presentation on both strategies was provided to the Economy and Environment Select Committee in March 2025.
- 4.7 All comments and feedback from the consultations have been considered and the draft policies amended where appropriate. The actions within both strategy documents seek to deliver works identified through the consultation. Some actions are more aspirational than others as financial constraints may limit the resource capacity (funding and / or officer time) to deliver some activity identified.
- 4.8 Within both strategies indicative timescales for delivery have been provided for each action, i.e. short term: 1-3 years, medium term: 3-7 years, or long term: 7:10 years.
- 4.9 Feedback from the consultation has established a series of key topics for green spaces and green infrastructure in Stevenage. These have informed the 71 actions within the Green Spaces Strategy:

Subject	Theme	No. of Actions
Our Community	Access & Provision	10
	Communication	5
	Engagement	5
	Community Safety	5
Our Environment	Nature & Wildlife	7
	Sustainability	11
Our Spaces	Health & Wellbeing	5
	Maintenance	4
	Development	9
	Management	11

- 4.10 Green Spaces Strategy actions include:
- Review and revise our park byelaws (short)
 - Develop a policy to inform future sponsorship, memorial and dedication opportunities (medium term)
 - Develop partnership arrangements to extend the range of facilities available, increase capacity and secure external funding (ongoing)
 - Ensure future burial provision (long term)
 - Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access (long term)
 - Support and promote group activities within the parks to increase presence levels for longer periods (ongoing)
- 4.11 In addition to the more generic green space actions identified within the Green Spaces Strategy, resident feedback has also informed the development of individual action plans for each of the 11 principal parks.

- 4.12 Feedback from the consultation has established a series of key issues for trees, woodlands and ancient hedgerows in Stevenage. These have informed the 59 actions within the Tree & Woodland Strategy:

Theme	No. of Actions
Tree Canopy Cover	7
Engagement & Collaboration	9
Woodland Management	9
Nature Connectivity	5
Climate Change	4
Age Diversity	4
Species Diversity	4
Tree Health & Resilience	8
Risk Management	6
Protecting & Enhancing the Historic Environment	3

- 4.13 Actions within the Tree & Woodland Strategy include:

- Identify low canopy coverage areas and prioritise tree planting in these areas (short term)
- Consult with local stakeholders on any significant developments and changes to the treescape in their street (ongoing)
- Survey trees in tenanted gardens to identify risk and propose mitigation actions (short term)

- 4.14 To improve the structural diversity of at least 10% of current woodland area by 2035 (long term). Within both strategies the actions have an indication of timescale for delivery. When identifying timescales officers considered the resources required to deliver the action and the capacity of the necessary resource.

Officers will seek opportunities to deliver any actions sooner than indicated within the strategy as capacity allows and supported by external funding opportunities where possible.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are time limited posts within the current structure supporting the work on the Green Space Strategy. In order to continue the work contained with this report Officers are looking at identifying funding to employ a Grade 7 green spaces officer at an estimated cost of £55,240 per annum.
- 5.2 External funding has previously supported green spaces projects (including tree planting, sports pitch improvements, lake improvements etc) and officers

will seek to make applications, where we are able to meet the criteria, to support the delivery of the more capital elements of the action plans.

- 5.3 It is also anticipated that Section 106 agreements, commuted sums, Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) or Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) contributions and planning gain will also support the delivery of some actions.
- 5.4 Local Community Budgets and Climate Change Community Fund are internal sources of funding available via Ward Councillors working with their local community.
- 5.5 As previously stated, in the context of the pressures on local government finance, it may not be possible to deliver all the actions within the strategies, however progress and updates will be monitored.

Legal Implications

- 5.6 The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974 places a clear duty of care to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health and safety of those who use the facility.
- 5.7 The Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1992 require that a 'suitable and sufficient assessment of risks' to the health and safety of anyone using the green space is carried out.
- 5.8 The Occupiers' Liability Act 1957 (revised 1984) provides a common duty of care to all visitors, taking into account current developments and good practice rather than relying on what has been acceptable in the past. It states that greater care is required where children are concerned, as 'an occupier must be prepared for children to be less careful than adults.'
- 5.9 The Equalities Act 2010 prohibits discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership (in employment only), pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 5.10 The Town and Country Planning (Tree Preservation) (England) Regulations 2012, administered by Local Planning Authorities (LPA) may be made to protect trees that bring significant amenity benefit to the local area. All types of trees can be protected, and a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) can protect anything from a single tree to all trees within a defined area or woodland.
- 5.11 The Occupiers Liability Acts places a legal obligation to maintain trees to ensure the safety of the public, and to consider as part of that obligation for any surrounding buildings.
- 5.12 Legislation including, but not exclusive to, s1 Localism Act 2011 and section 111 Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to seek compensation for damage or loss of a Council owned tree when that damage is caused by a wilful or negligent actions.

Risk Implications

- 5.13 Financial constraints limit resource capacity to deliver the strategies. It is therefore anticipated that risks for non-delivery of some elements of the strategies are medium / high risk.

Policy Implications

- 5.14 This policy supports other local policy documents including the Biodiversity Action Plan, Climate Change Strategy and Local Plan.

Planning Implications

- 5.15 The development of the new town incorporated emphasis on green space, in all its forms.
- 5.16 Principal green spaces, woodlands, green corridors etc are afforded protection within the Local Plan.
- 5.17 Applications for development within other green spaces are considered on the basis of quality, quantity and community needs.
- 5.18 To ensure provision of adequate green space, including woodlands, for future will require the protection of green space and the provision of new, good quality green spaces within future developments.
- 5.19 While the overarching goal is to protect green spaces, there are instances where strategically disposing of smaller, lower-value spaces can be beneficial, however this will only be considered if there is adequate access to suitable other green spaces. This approach allows for the reallocation of resources to enhance and maintain higher-quality green spaces that better serve the community's needs.

Environmental Implications

- 5.20 The provision of “*more / better parks and green spaces*” was identified as the top priority for Stevenage residents.
- 5.21 The provision of “*tree / shrub / grass maintenance*” was identified as being in the top ten of priorities for Stevenage residents in 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- 5.22 Public awareness of the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss has increased, and there is growing pressure to do more to support wildlife locally.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.23 Urban green spaces offer great opportunities for positive change and the sustainable development of our cities.
- 5.24 The Green Spaces Strategy identifies a range of actions that will support corporate efforts to mitigate some of the effects of climate change for people and wildlife.
- 5.25 Trees help the response to the climate crises by capturing unavoidable emissions, improving air quality, absorbing pollutants, and helping to mitigate surface water flooding.
- 5.26 One of the best ways of making our towns and cities more hospitable in the coming decades is to protect / increase the number, and size, of trees in our urban areas.

Staffing and Accommodation Implications

- 5.27 A permanent, Green Spaces Projects Manager post is required to support the successful delivery of strategy, and the community engagement associated with many of the actions.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.28 The strategy seeks to improve physical access to green spaces, access to information about the facilities and opportunities associated with green spaces, and to improve the perception of personal safety whilst using green spaces in Stevenage.

Service Delivery Implications

- 5.29 Recruitment to a Green Spaces Development Officer post will support the successful delivery of strategy, and the community engagement associated with many of the actions.

Background documents

- 1.1 **All documents that have been used in compiling this report, that may be available to the public, i.e. they do not contain exempt information, should be listed here:**

- BD1 Green Spaces Strategy 2025 – 2035
BD2 Tree & Woodland Strategy 2025 - 2035
BD2 Responses to Resident Consultation 2023
BD3 Resident Consultation Responses to original draft document

APPENDICES

- A: Executive Summaries
B: Draft Green Spaces Strategy 2025 – 2035
C: Draft Tree & Woodland Strategy 2025 - 2035
C: Equality Impact Assessments

Stevenage Green Spaces Strategy 2025 - 2035

Summary



Scope

- Allotments
- Commons
- Parks & Public Gardens
- Local Wildlife Sites
- Cemeteries & Churchyards
- Open Spaces
- Play Areas
- Woodlands

Consultation to Date

- Residents in winter 2023/24 for general information / views
- Residents in summer 2024 to inform action plans for principal parks.
- Internal Stakeholders: Environmental Operations, Leisure, Planning Policy, Climate Action, Development Control, Engineers and Co-operative Neighbourhoods.
- Residents in January / February 2025 on draft strategy.

Aims & Objectives

- To provide clear objectives, and priorities, for the provision and management of green space.
- To protect and enhance green space in Stevenage.
- To ensure the towns green spaces meet the needs of the whole community.
- To ensure green space enhances the quality of the local environment for residents, visitors and wildlife.
- To involve the community in future maintenance and development.

Themes & Actions

72 actions across 10 key themes:

- Access & Provision
- Communication
- Engagement
- Community Safety
- Nature & Wildlife
- Sustainability
- Health & Wellbeing
- Maintenance
- Development
- Management

This page is intentionally left blank

Stevenage Tree & Woodland Strategy 2025 - 2035

Summary



Scope

- Amenity Trees - streets & parks
- Woodlands
- Ancient Hedgerows



Vision

Through partnership with local residents and other stakeholders we will create a bigger, well managed, more sustainable treescape; connecting trees, woodlands and hedgerows to benefit the environment, people, and wildlife now and in the future.



Consultation to Date

- Residents in winter 2023/24 for general information / views
- Internal Stakeholders: Environmental Operations, Planning Policy, Climate Action, Development Control, Insurance, Housing, Engineers and Commercial
- Residents in January / February 2025 on draft strategy
- External Stakeholder: The Woodland Trust

Themes & Actions

59 actions across 10 key themes:

- Tree Canopy Cover
- Engagement & Collaboration
- Woodland Management
- Nature Connectivity
- Climate Change
- Tree Age Diversity
- Tree Species Diversity
- Tree Health & Resilience
- Risk Management
- Protecting & Enhancing the Historic Environment



This page is intentionally left blank

Green Spaces Strategy

2025 - 2035

Contents

		Page
1	Purpose	1
2	Introduction	
	2.1 Importance of green space	3
	2.2 Challenges	5
	2.3 New green spaces	6
3	Context	7
4	Funding	9
5	Consultation	11
6	Aims & Objectives	13
7	Priorities & Actions	14
	7.1 Our Community	15
	7.2 Our Environment	19
	7.3 Our Spaces	23

		Page
8	Monitoring & Review	28
9	References	29
10	Appendices	
	A: Key Green Spaces	31
	B: Canterbury Way Playing Field Action Plan	34
	C: Chells Park Action Plan	35
	D: Fairlands Valley Park Action Plan	36
	E: Hampson Park Action Plan	38
	F: King George V Playing Fields Action Plan	39
	G: Meadway Playing Fields Action Plan	40
	H: Peartree Park Action Plan	41
	I: Ridlins End Playing Fields Action Plan	42
	J: Shephalbury Park Action Plan	43
	K: St Nicholas Park Action Plan	44
	L: Town Centre Gardens Action Plan	45

1. Purpose

Stevenage was designated Britain's first New Town on 11th November 1946. The Town was designed with a great deal of emphasis on green space and its importance in helping to create a thriving community. The Town continues to benefit from the foresight of the original architects who retained and protected many of the existing landscape features, such as hedgerows and lanes, ponds, woodlands and veteran trees, to create the open spaces, wildlife corridors and sense of identity that residents and visitors enjoy today.

Good quality green space significantly contributes to the health, wellbeing, environmental resilience, image and identity of a town.

This strategy sets out objectives for the way in which green spaces in Stevenage are maintained, managed and improved to ensure that they are safe, accessible and sustainable, meeting the needs of our communities and the environment today and in the future.

For the purpose of this document green spaces focusses on:

Allotments	We manage 16 sites across the town, providing around 900 plots, for residents to grow their own fruit, vegetables and flowers. We are supported by a number of Volunteer Site Agents and work closely with the Stevenage Gardens & Allotments Association.
Cemeteries and churchyards	Cemeteries at Almonds Lane and Weston Road are managed and maintained by the council, and we also maintain the grounds at St Nicholas Church and St Mary's Church.
Commons	Common land is protected under several acts of Parliament. We manage five common land sites across the town - Fishers Green Common, Letchmore Common, Norton Green Common, Six Hills Common and Symonds Green Common.
Open spaces	In addition to the principal parks in the town residents also benefit from small open spaces within residential areas and larger, local, open spaces such as those at York Road, Campshill Park, Donkey Park and Blenheim Way.
Parks & public gardens	There are eleven principal parks and gardens throughout Stevenage. Many provide a range of opportunities including, sports pitches, outdoor gym / fitness equipment, spaces for quiet contemplation, children's equipped play areas, access to nature, whilst some also provide tennis courts, multi-use games areas, wheeled sports facilities, parkour, community events, lakes / ponds etc.

	The largest park in Stevenage is Fairlands Valley Park at 120 acres. This site is unique in Stevenage also providing a splash park, aqua park, water sports, model boating, and cycle hub.
Play areas	We currently manage and maintain over 50 equipped play spaces. Those in the principal parks provide equipment suitable for toddlers through to teenagers, while smaller, more local sites focus more on younger children. However, we also recognise the benefits that informal, imaginative play can provide to child development so will continue to provide open spaces in residential areas for all ages, 8 – 108 years, to enjoy.
Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)	LWS are identified and selected locally using robust, scientifically determined criteria and detailed ecological surveys managed by The Wildlife Trusts. Most of the designated LWS in Stevenage are managed by the Council. They largely comprise of woodlands, but there are also grassland and wetland sites. We work closely with the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust in the management and improvement of LWS and other habitat sites for wildlife.
Woodlands	There are approximately 240 acres of woodland managed by the council throughout Stevenage. Many of these woodland areas are designated as ancient woodland sites, which is a nationally agreed designation and means that the land that they occupy has been wooded since at least 1600 AD.

2. Introduction

This strategy sets out a vision for Stevenage Borough Council's green spaces, and the actions that we will undertake to deliver that vision over the next 10 years. It focusses on how local public green spaces such as parks, woodlands, cemeteries, wildlife sites, sports facilities will be managed going forward.

Stevenage residents have long valued the green spaces within the town.

A parliamentary inquiry into public parks in 2017 concluded that: 'Parks and green spaces are treasured assets and are often central to the lives of their communities. They provide opportunities for leisure, relaxation and exercise, but are also fundamental to community cohesion, physical and mental health and wellbeing, biodiversity, climate change mitigation and local economic growth'.

We want to ensure that public green spaces in Stevenage continue to deliver such benefits for our local communities and this strategy will help achieve that.

Page 77

2.1 Importance of Green Spaces

Green open space is a vital component in creating and maintaining a balanced urban environment and is increasingly recognised as an essential 'quality of life' resource. A report¹ in 2020 showed that nearly two-thirds of people have appreciated local green spaces more due to Covid and that they want them to be a higher priority for the government.

Good quality green spaces mitigate the impact of air pollution and climate change, act as green corridors for wildlife, provide refuges for pollinators, provide an affordable and cost-effective way to get people active, reduce obesity, and boost mental wellbeing. They can support and improve the local quality of life for residents and visitors by providing social, recreational, environmental, educational and economic opportunities - Figure 1.

Figure 1: Summary of benefits provided by green spaces.

Social Cohesion	Climate	Health & Wellbeing	Economic
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage people of all ages, cultural, ethnic and social backgrounds to come together. • Provide free / affordable access. • Provide a sense of local identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce urban heat through provision of shade. • Capture, and store, carbon • Reduce pollution. • Store and filter water reducing the risk of flooding and improving water quality in streams and rivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an attractive environment in which to exercise or play. • Promotes healthy behaviours. • Promote good mental health. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract inward investment. • Increase property values. • Activate town centres. • Attractive to visitors, workers and businesses boosting the local economy and providing jobs⁴
Over two thirds of people think that parks are the most important public space in their community ²	The value of carbon removal by trees in public parks in England is estimated at £9 million per year ³	Activities in natural environments can be more beneficial to health than those undertaken in other locations ⁴	Urban green spaces raise nearby house prices by an average of £2,500 ⁵
Biodiversity	Education	Culture	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban parks are among the most species rich types of urban green spaces for all species types. • For many, spending time in urban green spaces is their only regular opportunity to be close to nature. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aid the promotion and understanding of the natural environment. • Demonstrate the virtues of sustainable development. • Stimulate and enhance child development through play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflects the history of the local area. • Provides an attractive, accessible space for the arts and events 	
The UK's 1,500 species of pollinators provide an estimated £680 million annual value to the UK economy ⁶			

2.2 Challenges

Stevenage green spaces face challenges due to:

Budget Constraints:	Public services, including local government, have experienced, and continue to experience, financial challenges as a result of financial austerity which has resulted in Stevenage Borough Council experiencing a reduction of £3.74 million of funding between 2010/11 – 2024/25. This means that Councils have had to review what services can be funded, and at what level, with the reduced resources available. This has impacted all services including green spaces, but there is an opportunity to think more commercially about our parks as destinations, to help reduce the costs of operation, supported by external funding opportunities where possible.
Biosecurity:	The health of our plants, and therefore our wider landscape, is increasingly under threat from pests and diseases. In order to preserve the landscape within our green spaces and streetscape it is essential that we implement precautions aimed at preventing the introduction and spread of harmful organisms. Measures might include activity to control the spread of non-native species in our woods and water ways, designing out a monoculture of tree species, and procurement of trees, shrubs and other plants from bio-secure nurseries within the UK.
Climate Change:	The impact of climate change is increasingly evident, however green spaces can play a major role in mitigating these impacts as well as supporting our community's adaptation to climate change effects. There is a lot of emphasis placed on tree planting in response to climate change, but it is important that we retain open green spaces for people to enjoy and to provide a matrix of habitats to ensure protection of wildlife.
Population Growth:	The population of Stevenage has increased by around 7% since 2011 and is set to grow by a further 13% in the next 20 years. The greatest anticipated growth is in the number of people aged 60 years and above. This growth will place additional pressure on our existing green spaces in terms of greater numbers using these spaces.
Urban Development:	Increasing populations may place further pressure on land for providing both additional homes and spaces for parking.

2.3 New Green Spaces

There has not been a significant new green space in Stevenage since Chells Park during the 1980/90's, and yet with the growth of the town there is a need for additional green space to meet the needs of the increasing population.

In September 2022 the Council granted planning permission for a residential development to the North of Stevenage. Alongside the provision of homes and school etc this development will also deliver a new country park. The park will provide 38 hectares of informal open space available for use by everyone, including pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders. It is anticipated that much of the park will be restored, and managed, as hay meadow, but will also include reinstatement of hedgerow field boundaries, tree and copse planting along with the creation of a community orchard.

The park will be created by the developers and adopted by Stevenage Borough Council for future management. The developers will also provide funds to support the management and maintenance of this significant new green infrastructure. An action plan for this park will be reviewed as part of this, and/or a future, Green Space Strategy depending on the timescales for adoption.

Planning permission for the West of Stevenage development was granted in autumn 2024. Alongside the provision of homes and a school etc this development is proposed to deliver a new playing field and associated sports facilities.

3. Context

The New Town pioneers of Stevenage had a clear vision of a town that would offer a better quality of life to people moving out of a London ravaged by war. Stevenage is regarded as one of the most outstanding achievements in town planning and development in the 20th century.

As Britain's first New Town, Stevenage was designed with a great deal of emphasis on green space and its importance in helping to create a thriving community. Existing features such as hedgerows and lanes, ponds, woodlands and veteran trees were retained and used to create open space, wildlife corridors and an immediate sense of place and many of these features still exist today.

The Town was originally designed around six similarly sized neighbourhoods. These neighbourhoods were designed to be relatively self-contained - each with its own schools, health facilities, local shops, community centres, places of worship and parks. The neighbourhood centres, community facilities and green spaces are all linked by wide roads and a network of pedestrian and cycle routes.

Local Strategic Context:

- Amenity Tree Management Policy
- Arts & Heritage (Cultural) Strategy
- Biodiversity Action Plan
- Cemetery Policy
- Climate Change Risk Assessment
- Climate Change Strategy
- Community Strategy
- Corporate Plan
- Future Town, Future Transport Strategy
- Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Local Football Facility Plans
- Local Plan
- Playing Pitch & Outdoor Sports Strategy
- Trees & Woodlands Strategy



Stevenage Green Spaces Strategy



National & Regional Influence:

- Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership Strategic Plan for Biodiversity
- National Planning Policy Framework
Highlights the role of planning in promoting green spaces and protecting the natural environment.
- Environmental Improvement Plan 2023 (formerly known as the 25 Year Environment Plan)
Outlines the comprehensive plan to maintain and enhance England's Natural Environment.
- Make Space for Girls
Campaign for parks and public spaces to be designed for girls and young women, not just boys and young men.
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment - Accessible Green Spaces
Identifies the health and wellbeing impacts of using Accessible Green Spaces in Hertfordshire and sets out recommendations to improve health outcomes.
- The Green Infrastructure Framework (GIF)
Developed by Natural England this is aimed at developers and planners, to provide a system to analyse where green spaces are needed the most in urban settings.
- The Safer Parks Guidance, 2023
Developed in partnership between the Mayor of York, University of Leeds, Make Space for Girls and Keep Britain Tidy, it focuses on helping stakeholders understand gender-sensitive principles of safety and implement changes to make parks and public spaces safer and more accessible for women and girls.

4. Funding

As set out in section 2.2 local authorities like Stevenage Borough Council have experienced reduced funding and faces an annual challenge to bridge the gap between the increased cost of delivering services and the reduction in funding received to enable us to do so. We have worked hard to find ways to continue to deliver vital front-line services whilst maintaining financial security with minimal negative impact for our residents.

Regular funding for green spaces in Stevenage is achieved through a variety of methods including:

Revenue Expenditure:	The Councils' budget, to support over 100 services, is funded by government (5%), business rates (32%) and Council tax (63%).
External Grants:	<p>In the past we have had success in bidding for funding from third parties including Heritage Lottery Fund, Football Foundation, Environment Agency, Coronation Living Heritage Fund.</p> <p>These funding streams usually have very specific eligibility criteria and competition for the grants has increased significantly so securing funding is not always possible.</p>
Developer Contributions:	<p>Developers are usually required to provide funds to mitigate the impact of the new development. Depending on the size of the development, developers are required to provide or contribute to a wide range of community facilities including schools, GP surgeries, highway improvements, parks etc. Developers contribute to the maintenance and improvements of open spaces through Section 106 agreements, commuted sums, Community Infrastructure Levy or Biodiversity Net Gain.</p> <p>In terms of Stevenage green spaces funds have been received to enable delivery of outdoor gym equipment, provide new allotments, improvements to play areas, and creation of new / improved wildlife habitats.</p>
Fees & Charges:	The Council works hard to protect the services that it provides for the benefit of our residents. However, we have introduced charges for some discretionary services that we provide and have also reviewed existing charges.

In some cases, the increased charges help to protect those service areas from budget cuts. The allotment service in Stevenage was historically heavily subsidised by residents through their Council Tax. However, recent increases now mean that the allotments are cost neutral. Not all of these charges are aimed at Stevenage residents. For example, in recent years the Council has promoted Stevenage as a filming location and have charged companies wishing to use any of our sites. Whomerley Wood was used as a filming location by a Bollywood film production company in 2023.

We need to continue to be creative in finding ways of doing more with less. Examples of this may include:

- Environmental Volunteers: Stevenage has a terrific network of environmental volunteers across the town who help to pick litter, manage woodlands, plant trees, maintain planting etc. These volunteers choose to give up their valuable time to help keep Stevenage looking clean and green and add value to what the Council is able to do rather than replace them.
- Advertising: Advertising spaces are sold on the roundabouts, and other locations, throughout the town. The income that is generated from the advertising helps to support the costs of maintaining the landscape provided on and adjacent to the roundabouts.
- Concessions: In some instances we already have contracts in place with third parties who provide facilities or activities that increase the service offer within our green spaces, but also benefits the Council through payment of an agreed sum that helps contribute to the running cost of the green space.
- Sponsorship: At present, residents & community groups already have the opportunity to sponsor a memorial tree or bench. The sponsorship sum paid could help cover the cost of the initial provision and the ongoing future maintenance. The Council is already looking to extend the current offer, but also to develop a range of additional opportunities that are affordable for all sectors of our local community.

5. Consultation

The Council has a long-standing commitment to work with the local community to help shape their local areas and the services that they use.

Green spaces are a priority for our residents, with surveys undertaken between 2021-2023 identifying that across a range of Council services the top priority for residents was more / better parks and green spaces.

During winter 2023 we directly contacted 1,500 community groups and 36 schools and reached out to all residents to let us know what they thought about the trees and green spaces in Stevenage. Around 490 people responded, collectively providing nearly 700 comments. Headlines included:

- 81% felt that, overall, green spaces in Stevenage were good or excellent, but this dropped to 55% for young people.
- Provision of trees, cleanliness and provision of wildlife friendly areas were the top 3 features identified as important for green spaces.
- 32% of young people said their favourite outdoor space was a park, closely followed by 27% who voted for woodlands as their favourite.
- 63% felt safe when visiting a Stevenage green space.
- 70% would like to be involved in some form of environmental volunteering.

The priorities set out in this document have emerged from a combination of consultation with residents and staff, national and local research and other local plans and strategies. It aims to retain our green space to ensure that they meet the needs of the whole community now and in the future.

A series of focus groups were held during summer 2024 which provided local residents with an opportunity to have their say about their local green spaces and how they might be improved. The feedback from these sessions have informed the site-specific action plans included in the appendices of this strategy.

Whilst some feedback was site specific there were some common themes across most / all sites. The top ten requests for improvements were:

- Improvements / maintenance of equipped play areas
- Provision of toilets and changing facilities
- Provision of café facilities
- Additional benches and / or picnic benches
- Additional litter bins and / or litter picking activity
- Lighting
- Wheeled sports facilities
- Improved maintenance of grass / shrubs / hedges / trees
- Improvements to footpath networks, including cleansing and surfacing
- More for wildlife

These themes have helped shape the priorities and actions identified below.

Consultation on the draft strategy document was undertaken in early 2025.

6. Aims & Objectives

The principal aims and objectives of the Green Space Strategy are:

- To provide clear objectives, and priorities, for the provision and management of green space.
- To protect and enhance green space in Stevenage.
- To ensure the towns green spaces meet the needs of the whole community.
- To ensure green space enhances the quality of the local environment for residents, visitors and wildlife.
- To involve the community in future maintenance and development.

7. Priorities & Actions

Consultation has established a series of key issues for green spaces and green infrastructure in Stevenage, including:

- Concern about protecting our green spaces from development.
- Provision of safe, clean, attractive green spaces.
- Consultation and involvement in decision making.
- Opportunities for people to help look after green spaces.
- A need for improved provision for children and young people.
- Provision of a range of health & wellbeing opportunities
- Meeting demand for allotments.
- A desire to see more delivered to support local wildlife.
- Future burial provision
- Meeting the demands for green infrastructure created by new development.
- A need to preserve, and enhance, open spaces that contribute tackling the climate emergency.
- Improved information and communication about green spaces

These issues have formed the basis of this strategy within three main themes:

- Our Community
- Our Environment
- Our Spaces

9.1 Our Community

Access & Provision

We aim to provide green spaces that are welcoming, easy to visit and with something for everyone.

Communication

We aim to provide clear, concise and easy to access information to keep residents advised about green spaces, events, opportunities and activities.

Engagement

We aim to work collaboratively with local communities to deliver a network of well-maintained and well used green spaces.

Community Safety

We aim to provide green spaces that are safe for everyone within our community to use and enjoy.

Our Community: What We Know

	What you told us	What wider research told us
Access & Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 83% of you visit a green space at least once a week and 30% of you visit a green space every day. 63% of you walk to a green space. More wheelchair access for woodlands. Open access and free to enter. Leave large spaces open for activities like flying a kite. Lack of toilet provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With a few exceptions a majority of households in Stevenage are within a 10-minute walking distance of a green space⁷ Studies have identified that a lack of information about accessibility, and physical constraints relating to paths, obstacles, parking and toilets, can all act as barriers to accessing green spaces⁸
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over 60% didn't feel that the Council kept them well informed about local green spaces. Multiple ways of communicating should be used. Information in shops, GP surgeries, churches would be helpful More information needed about events. Not enough information on how accessible our sites are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clear wayfinding information helps visitors navigate their way. More information needed about how residents can get involved. Improved information about accessibility to and within green spaces is required
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63% of respondents were interested in environmental volunteering opportunities. Not enough community managed spaces Too much red tape to get involved. Want to be able to look after trees or shrub beds near home 	
Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 64% of residents who responded to the consultation reported that they did feel safe when using green spaces in Stevenage. Concerns about personal safety at night was a common theme. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the UK, 4 out of 5 women (82%) feel very or fairly unsafe walking alone after dark in parks or open spaces, compared with 2 out of 5 men (42%)⁹

Our Community: What We Have Already Done

Access & Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved signage and information provision at the entrances to our main parks • Delivered a cycle hire scheme with hubs in some parks. • Provided cycle parking provision to some parks • Extended the opening days of the Splash Park at Fairlands Valley Park.
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided notice boards to the main parks. • Used social media and the Council's web pages to promote events and activities. • Promoted events and opportunities through Chronicle, social media and other local publications.
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provided and supported a varied programme of environmental volunteering activity. • Developed guidance and lend out equipment to support for community litter pick initiatives. • Developed a Licence to Occupy scheme to enable residents to maintain Council land adjacent to their homes. • Developed a package of guidance to support partner organisations in delivering events within green spaces and across the town. • Consulted with children and young people to inform the design of improvements to their local play area
Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed the Stevenage Community Safety Strategy • Monitored of crime levels across Stevenage • Addressed perception of crime through the Community Safety Partnership • Improved access to water rescue equipment • Installed CCTV to key locations

Our Community: What We Will Do

Theme	Action	Timescale	Additional Resources Required
Access & Provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with partners to promote green travel opportunities, including the cycle hire scheme, to principal parks 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect green space from inappropriate development. 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to ensure that green spaces are accessible to all and provide accessibility information for key sites 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review number of parking bays for people with disabilities 	Short	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the current provision of benches and picnic tables, and identify new opportunities 	Short	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate opportunities for mobile refreshment franchises at key parks 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities for toilet / changing facilities to key park locations 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access 	Long	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve provision of accessible and inclusive equipped play spaces 	Long	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider suitable measures to protect key green spaces from unauthorised access 	Medium	Yes
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote green spaces, and the facilities and opportunities that they provide for the whole community 	Short	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear signage and information within key green spaces. 	Medium	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to work with other community providers to share information about green space opportunities. 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide correct, up to date and easy to understand information about our green spaces online 	Short	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clear information about facilities for families, children and teenagers within our green spaces. 	Short	No
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase environmental volunteer engagement opportunities. 	Medium	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to develop a range of appropriate events and activities across our green spaces. 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the Licence to Occupy scheme. 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult with local stakeholders on any significant developments and potential changes to green spaces. 	Short	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regularly measure customer satisfaction with principle green spaces in Stevenage 	Short	No

Community Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to develop a suite of measures that ensure that our green spaces remain safe. 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a programme to review the design, location and maintenance of vegetation to improve sight lines and remove discrete hiding places. 	Short	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and promote group activities within the parks to increase presence levels for longer periods. 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborate with partners to understand how safety and accessibility might be improved. 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement a programme of regular technical inspection of green space infrastructure 	Ongoing	No

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

9.2 Our Environment

Nature

We aim to provide a network of connected green spaces that collectively provide a matrix of wildlife habitats to support a wide range of wildlife.

Sustainability

We aim to provide green spaces that will support wider mitigation measures to help reduce climate change and its impacts.

Our Environment: What We Know

	What you told us	What wider research told us
Nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The most important function of green spaces identified by you was for nature and wildlife. There needs to be more education on the importance of the fauna and flora 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the last 50 years 76 species became extinct in Hertfordshire¹⁰ 1,446 species are currently threatened with extinction in Hertfordshire¹¹
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 63% of people walk to their local green space. Great cycle path network throughout the town The five most popular things to make green spaces more environmentally friendly were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce more wildlife friendly planting. Plant more trees. Create more meadows. Rainwater harvesting Water refill points More communication with partner wildlife organisations and to support education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stevenage has over 45km of cycleways, which are segregated from the town's roads. The amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere has increased by more than 40% since humans began industrialising, resulting in a continuous gradual warming of the planet over the past century¹². The proportion of impermeable surfacing in towns and cities has risen by 22% since 2001¹³ In urban areas, the impermeable materials used for roads and pavements mean that rain is not absorbed and remains on the surface¹⁴. During periods of heavy rainfall this water accumulates and when the drainage capacity of the area is exceeded, flooding will occur. High levels of surface water run-off mean that rainwater washes pollutants away from the surfaces it falls onto, transporting them into water courses¹⁵, which can be detrimental to water quality in streams, rivers and lakes. In the UK, climate change is likely to lead to wetter winters¹⁶ which would exacerbate existing flooding and water quality issues.

Our Environment: What We Have Already Done

Nature & Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivered a Biodiversity Action Plan for Stevenage • The Stevenage Borough Local Plan includes policies to protect, enhance and manage green infrastructure, natural environment and landscape of the town. • Secured Biodiversity Net Gain funding. • Worked in partnership with local wildlife groups to help inform future management of our wildlife sites
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed the Stevenage Cycling Strategy • Promoted the towns cycle network as an opportunity to travel to green spaces. • Provided secure facilities for temporary storage of bicycles within some parks and green spaces. • Developed a Climate Change Strategy • The Stevenage Borough Local Plan includes policies to limit, mitigate and adapt to the negative impacts of climate change, flood risk and all forms of pollution. • Members of the Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership, helping to develop a county-wide Strategic Action Plan for Biodiversity • Eliminated seasonal planting displays from roundabouts and replaced it with more sustainable planting. • Investigated effective alternatives to the use of chemical weed control. • Re-used and/or recycled green waste generated within the parks and green spaces. • Required sustainable drainage solutions to reduce the risk of flooding in new developments. Required allotment plot holders with sheds to collect rainwater from their structure. • Work with partners to support measures which can increase water flow and quality in the River Beane and its tributaries

Our Environment: What We Will Do

Theme	Action	Timescale	Additional Resources Required
Nature & Wildlife	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase biodiversity in line with the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire 	Ongoing	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve access to wildlife sites whilst affording protection to habitats and species 	Long	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruit to a new post of Nature Recovery Officer 	Short	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek Biodiversity Net Gain solutions for delivery within the Stevenage boundary 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require new buildings to include appropriate provision to support wildlife. 	Long	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve existing, and create new, green corridors for people and wildlife 	Ongoing	Yes
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Climate Change policies within the Local Plan to ensure sustainability is at the heart of development 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a Full Review of the Local Plan, with an opportunity to embed sustainability into future development through parks and green spaces 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote 'active travel' to get to and from our green spaces. 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promotion of the towns cycle network as an opportunity to travel to green spaces 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide secure facilities for temporary storage of bicycles with the main parks and green spaces 	Medium	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop environmentally sustainable practices 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to improve local water ways for wildlife and for people 	Ongoing	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with local partners to develop and promote a network of water refill points around the town 	Long	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to explore sustainable alternatives to chemical weed control 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect existing flood storage reservoirs from inappropriate development 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to understand opportunities to improve water flow and water quality within Stevenage Brook 	Ongoing	No
	Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years		

9.3 Our Spaces

Health & Wellbeing

We aim to provide good quality parks and green spaces that incorporate a wide range of opportunities for people to be active and spend time outdoors.

Maintenance

We aim to provide high quality parks and green spaces.

Development

We aim for our parks and green spaces to provide great places for people to come together, and that meet the needs of those communities, and the environment, today and in the future.

Management

We aim to deliver the actions within this strategy, ensuring that our green spaces are protected and sustainable for future generations to enjoy.

Our Spaces: What We Know

	What you told us	What wider research told us
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough variety of sports activities in parks • Charging for sports facilities makes them hard to access. • Need better promotion of local sports clubs. • Provision of adapted/supported cycles to allow access for elderly or disabled visitors. • More / better basketball courts. • Residents enjoy the peace and tranquillity that parks provide. • More / better wheeled sport provision is required. 	<p>Green spaces are estimated to save the NHS around £111 million per year in GP visits alone¹⁷.</p> <p>Urban green spaces provide pleasant areas to relax and socialise, promoting greater levels of social activity and stronger neighbourhood relationships¹⁸.</p>
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 81% said that their overall impression of green spaces was good or excellent. • More regular litter picking in the woods. • Needs to be enforcement for littering. • Maintenance of playgrounds could be better. • Play equipment is out of use for too long. • More management of the woodland to keep them healthy 	<p>It is estimated over £190 million pounds was lost from local authority parks budgets between 2016-2021, and that local authorities are now receiving increased complaints about the quality of local parks¹⁹.</p>
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop selling off / building on the small green spaces in residential areas 	
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More investment is required to make play spaces more inclusive. • Toilet facilities are required to enable people to spend longer in our parks. 	<p>Local authorities have a statutory duty imposed by the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 to provide allotments to its residents when there is a demand</p>

Our Spaces: What We Have Already Done

Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with Sports England to encourage Active Design within new developments. • Focussed on health improvement, protection, promotion and tackling health inequalities through the Healthy Stevenage Partnership. • Worked closely with our leisure provider Everyone Active to provide a dynamic and vibrant programme of activities within our community settings. • Developed a partnership with the National Tennis Association in the management and operation of Shephalbury Park tennis courts. • Supported a programme of health walks within Stevenage. • Bid for funding for the provision of a PlayZone (multi-sports, all-weather floodlit games area) facility to King George V Playing Fields.
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implemented a programme scheduled of maintenance to all green spaces. • Implemented annual independent play inspections of all equipped play spaces. • Regularly reviewed working practices to ensure that we comply with new legislation and industry guidelines. • Increased staff levels to support increased woodland maintenance. • Procured machinery to enable increased delivery standard and frequency for grass cutting.
Development	<p>Have policies to protect sites important to wildlife.</p> <p>Secure new green space facilities to meet the needs of the growing population.</p>
Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed an Amenity Tree Management Policy. • Developed a Cemetery Policy. • Involved children in the design regeneration of existing play areas. • Delivered a £1.5million programme of improvements to equipped spaces for children and young people, making provision for inclusive play. • Require all new play spaces to have a RoSPA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents) standard post-installation inspection.

Our Spaces: What We Will Do

Theme	Action	Timescale	Additional Resources Required
Health & Wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase awareness of the benefits of spending time in green spaces for health and encourage people to use them for that purpose. 	Short	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a range of opportunities for people to be physically active in green spaces, so everyone can enjoy being active outdoors, regardless of their interests or level of ability. 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek funding opportunities for the provision of artificial all-weather pitch facilities within Council spaces 	Short	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities to fund and develop a combined (non-motorised) wheeled sport facility 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor and review arrangements for outdoor fitness classes 	Short	No
Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review maintenance regimes to ensure the highest possible standards and best practice are achieved 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek to increase the diversity of the workforce within the environmental operations team at every level of the service. 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify developments within machinery advancements to ensure appropriate, efficient and green machinery is procured to deliver maintenance programmes 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a programme to respond to issues of vermin 	Short	Yes
Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure provision of new, good quality green spaces to meet the needs of the growing population 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider ways to improve the design of existing parks to make them more welcoming to all 	Medium	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a range of good quality play opportunities for children of all ages and abilities 	Ongoing	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and revise our park byelaws 	Short	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop partnership arrangements to extend the range of facilities available, increase capacity, share resources and secure external funding. 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a Tree & Woodland Strategy for Stevenage 	Short	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure green spaces, including new green space, are connected in line with Active Travel principles and connectivity 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a policy to inform future sponsorship, memorial and dedication opportunities 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a suite of seats, bins and signage for use in all green spaces 	Medium	Yes

Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with local communities to develop action plans to support the development of community parks 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require sustainable solutions to reduce the risk of flooding in new developments 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a local quality standard for green spaces in Stevenage 	Long	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure external funding to enable capital and revenue improvements to our green spaces. 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek to increase inclusive provision within parks and green spaces 	Ongoing	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a strategy for outdoor, unsupervised play spaces in Stevenage 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manage all woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard 	Long	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop an Allotments Policy / Strategy following consultation with plot holders and Stevenage Gardens & Allotments Association 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure future burial provision 	Long	Yes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop partnership arrangements to extend the range of facilities available, increase capacity, share resources and secure external funding. 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preserve, promote and provide information about features of cultural interest within our green spaces 	Medium	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Balance our budget whilst achieving the aims of the strategy over the next 10 years 	Ongoing	No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop action plans for new parks following adoption by the Council 	Ongoing	No

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

10. Monitoring & Review

We will focus on the actions set out above over the next 10 years. These will be considered alongside the action plans for each of our principal parks.

There will be an annual review on progress of the strategy, and this will be reported to the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee and published on the Councils web pages.

A more detailed review, to check the priorities and actions are still relevant, will be undertaken in 5 years' time.

11. References

1	Levelling up and building back better through urban green infrastructure: An investment options appraisal	Vivid Economics and Barton Willmore, 2020
2	Endangered Spaces Report	Co-Op, 2019
3	Making Parks Count	The Parks Alliance,
4	Health and the natural environment: A review of evidence, policy, practice and opportunities for the future.	European Centre for Environment and Human Health University of Exeter Medical School, 2018
5	Making Parks Count	The Parks Alliance,
6	Spring statement 2019, Philip Hammond Speech	Office for National Statistics
7	Green Spaces Index 2023	Fields in Trust
8	Out of Bounds Equity in Access to Urban Nature	Holland, F, 2021
9	Perceptions of personal safety and experiences of harassment, Great Britain: 16 February to 13 March 2022	Office for National Statistics
10	Presentation to Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee	Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, 2024
11	Presentation to Environment & Economy Scrutiny Committee	Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust, 2024
12	Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2013
13	Making Parks Count	The Parks Alliance,
14	Assessing the environmental performance of land cover types for urban planning	Pauleit, S and Duhme, 2000
15	Urban runoff quality in the UK: problems, prospects and procedures	Ellis, B 1991
16	UK Climate Projections: Briefing Report	Jenkins, G.J, 2009
17	Revaluing Parks and Green Spaces	Fields in Trust, 2018
18	Environment & Behaviour	Sullivan, W.C, et al, 2004
19	State of UK Public Parks 2021	Association of Public Service Excellence

12. Appendices

		Page
Appendix A	Key Green Spaces in Stevenage	31
Appendix B	Canterbury Way Playing Fields Action Plan	34
Appendix C	Chells Park Action Plan	35
Appendix D	Fairlands Valley Park Action Plan	36
Appendix E	Hampson Park Action Plan	38
Appendix F	King George V Playing Fields Action Plan	39
Appendix G	Meadway Playing Fields Action Plan	40
Appendix H	Peartree Park Action Plan	41
Appendix I	Ridlins End Playing Fields Action Plan	42
Appendix J	Shephalbury Park Action Plan	43
Appendix K	St Nicholas Park Action Plan	44
Appendix L	Town Centre Gardens Action Plan	45

Appendix A: Key Green Spaces in Stevenage as identified in the Stevenage Local Plan

1	18-hole Golf Course: also including a 9-hole course, putting green, driving range, clubhouse and other ancillary facilities.			
4	Cemeteries / Churchyards			
	Almonds Lane Cemetery	St Mary’s Churchyard	St Nicholas Churchyard	Weston Road Cemetery
5	Commons			
	Fishers Green Common	Letchmore Green Common	Norton Green Common	Six Hills Common
	Symonds Green Common			
Page 106	Principal Parks: These are destination parks and may include play facilities for toddlers, juniors and teenagers, car parking, sports facilities, outdoor fitness equipment			
	Canterbury Way Playing Fields	Chells Park	Fairlands Valley Park	Hampson Park
	King George V Playing Fields	Meadway Park	Peartree Park	Ridlins End Playing Fields
	Shephalbury Park	St Nicholas Park	Town Centre Gardens	
16	Allotments			
	Almond Hill	Ashdown Road	Bandley Hill	Broxdell
	Colestrete	Edmonds Drive	Eliot Road	Fairview Road
	Greydells	Hertford Road	Lawrence Avenue	Martins Wood
	Monks Wood	Oaks Cross	The Muntings	Walkern Road
17	Community Parks: these serve the wider community and generally have play facilities for toddlers and juniors			
	Archer Road Open Space	Bedwell Park	Blenheim Way Open Space	Campshill Park

	Chepstow Close Open Space	Clovelly Way Open Space	Donkey Park	Emperors Gate Open Space
	Holly Leys Open Space	Parishes Mead Open Space	Paul Mallaghan Playing Fields	Raleigh Crescent Open Space
	Riccat Lane Open Space	The Avenue Open Space	The Noke Open Space	Whitesmead Rec.
	York Road Open Space			
26	Green Corridors			
	Aston Lane	Botany Bay Lane	Bragbury Lane	Broadwater Lane
	Broadhall Way	Chells Lane	Dene Lane	Fairlands Way
	Fishers Green Lane	Grace Way	Gresley Way	Gunnels Wood Road
	Lanterns Lane	Martins Way	Meadway	Monkswood Way
	Narrowbox Lane	Old Walkern Road	Sheafgreen Lane	Shephall Lane
	Shephall Green Lane	Shephards Lane	Six Hills Way	The Avenue
	Watton Lane	Weston Lane		
41	Woodlands			
	Abbotts Grove	Almond Spring	Ashtree Woods	Bandley Hill
	Blacknells Spring	Broadwater Arboretum	Chells Wood	Collensleg Wood
	Cuckoo Wood	Duckdell Plantation	Elm Green Wood	
	Fairlane Wood	Fishers Green Wood	Great Collenswood	Gresley Way Plantation
	Gunnels Wood	Hanginghill Wood	Hertford Road Woodland	Lady's Wood
	Lantern Lane Wood	Loves Wood	Martin's Wood	Marymead Spring
	Millennium Wood	Mobbsbury Wood	Monks Wood	Peartree Spring

	Pestcotts Spring	Ridlins Wood	Roebuck Woods	Shackleton Springs
	Shephalbury Woodland	Siansean	Sinks Spring	Sishes Wood
	Six Acre Wood	Wellfield Wood	Whitney Wood	Whomerley Wood
	Wiltshire Spring			

46

Equipped Play Spaces

Page 108

Archer Road	Balmoral Close	Bedwell Park	Blenheim Way
Burymead	Campshill Park	Canterbury Way	Canterbury Way Playing Fields
Chancellors Road	Chells District Park	Chepstow Close	Clovelly Way
Cook Road	Donkey Park	Emperors Gate	Fairlands Valley Park - cafe
Fairlands Valley Park - main	Fleetwood Crescent	Glanville Road	Hampson Park
Holly Leys	Kessingland Avenue	King George V Playing Fields	Leaves Spring
Market Place	Martins Wood	Meadway Playing Fields	Parishes Mead
Peartree Park	Queensway	Riccatt Lane	Ridlins End Playing Fields
Rockingham Way	Scarborough Avenue	Shearwater Close	Shephalbury Park
Skegness Road	Southgate	St Margarets	St Nicholas Park
The Noke	The Oval	Torquay Crescent	Town Centre Gardens
Whitesmead Rec	York Road		

Appendix B: Canterbury Way Playing Fields Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
CW1	Review the current provision of benches and picnic tables, and identify new opportunities	Medium	No
CW2	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long	Yes
CW3	Explore opportunities for toilet / changing facilities	Long	No
CW4	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long	No
CW5	Identify suitable opportunities for additional tree planting	Medium	No
CW6	Protect and enhance the Biodiversity Net Gain provision	Ongoing	No
CW7	Identify suitable locations for spring bulb displays	Short	No
CW8	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Long	No
CW9	Improve signage	Medium	Yes

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix C: Chells Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
CP1	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium	No
CP2	Explore opportunities for resilient toilet / changing facilities	Long	No
CP3	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium	No
CP4	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long	No
CP5	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short	No
CP6	Identify suitable opportunities for additional tree planting	Medium	No
CP7	Protect and enhance the Biodiversity Net Gain provision	Ongoing	No
CP8	Identify suitable locations for spring bulb displays	Short	No
CP9	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long	Yes
CP10	Improve signage	Medium	Yes

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix D: Fairlands Valley Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
FV1	Explore options to provide lighting along key footpaths and cycle routes	Long	Yes
FV2	Consider opportunities for improving the existing Activity Centre, Café and associated areas	Medium	No
FV3	Explore opportunities for improved toilet / changing facilities	Medium	No
FV4	Review maintenance regimes within the park	Short	No
FV5	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium	No
FV6	Develop supervised and self-led activities within the park	Medium	Yes
FV7	Review frequency of footpath cleansing in response to goose poo build up	Short	Yes
FV8	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long	Yes
FV9	Improve signage and interpretation provision	Medium	Yes
FV10	Identify extended opportunities for wildlife habitat creation	Medium	No
FV11	Increase usage of existing band stand	Medium	No
FV12	Consider options for future use of Fairlands Farmhouse	Long	No
FV13	Promote the Cycle Hub within park publicity	Short	No
FV14	Consider development of dog exercise park	Long	No
FV15	Proactively secure additional on water sport and leisure activities	Ongoing	No

FV16	Review provision of outdoor fitness equipment	Medium	No
FV17	Consider opportunities to improve the existing maze	Medium	No
FV18	Apply for Local Nature Reserve status to Shackledell Grassland	Short	No
FV19	Restoration of the Environment Lake for wildlife and people	Long	Yes
FV20	Investigate appropriate methods to enhance water quality throughout the lake system	Medium	No
FV21	Promote all opportunities available within the park	Short	No
FV22	Develop an enhanced programme of events	Short	No
FV23	Consider opportunities for provision of a wheeled sports facility	Long	No

Appendix E: Hampson Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
H1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long	Yes
H2	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short	No
H3	Review provision of footpaths within site to support improved access	Long	No
H4	Seek funding to enable improvements to the skate park	Long	No
H5	Consider opportunities for provision of a wheeled sports facility	Medium	No
H6	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium	No
H7	Improve signage and interpretation provision	Medium	Yes
H8	Work with partners to monitor and respond to anti-social behaviour incidents	Short	No
H9	Continue to support the Friends of Hampson Park	Ongoing	No
H10	Continue to manage the ancient hedgerow	Ongoing	No

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix F: King George V Playing Fields Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
KG1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long	Yes
KG2	Work with partners to monitor and respond to anti-social behaviour incidents	Short	No
KG3	Explore opportunities for toilet / changing facilities	Long	No
KG4	Progress PlayZone on the site of the former tennis courts	Short	No
KG5	Identify suitable opportunities for additional tree planting	Medium	No
KG6	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long	No
KG7	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short	No
KG8	Explore opportunities to create better links between the town centre and Old Town via the Park	Medium	No
KG9	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium	No
KG10	Refresh planting within the Millennium Garden	Long	Yes
KG11	Consider opportunities for improved wildlife provision within the park	Short	No
KG12	Develop scheme to improve parking provision for park users	Long	Yes

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix G: Meadway Playing Fields Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
M1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long	Yes
M2	Review the current provision of bins and identify new opportunities	Medium	No
M3	Seek to deliver site enhancements in conjunction with access improvements associated with West of Stevenage.	Medium	Yes
M4	Identify suitable locations for spring bulb displays	Short	No

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix H: Peartree Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
P1	Seek funding to support restoration of skate park for beginners	Short	Yes
P2	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium	No
P3	Explore opportunities for toilet / changing facilities	Medium	No
P4	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long	No
P5	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short	No
P6	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long	Yes
P7	Seek funding for provision of outdoor gym equipment	Medium	No
P8	Work with partners to develop a community programme of summer events	Short	No
P9	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium	No
P10	Consider opportunities for further tree planting	Medium	No

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix I: Ridlins End Playing Fields Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
R1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long	Yes
R2	Consider opportunity for provision of wheeled sport facility	Long	No
R3	Explore opportunities for toilet / changing facilities	Long	No
R4	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium	No
R5	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium	No
R6	Consider opportunities for improved wildlife provision within the park	Short	No
R7	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long	No
R8	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short	No
R9	Consider opportunities for additional tree planting	Medium	No
R10	Improve signage	Medium	Yes
R11	Support options appraisal for funding on-site sustainable sports provision	Medium	No
R12	Consider opportunities for further tree planting	Medium	No

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix J: Shephalbury Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
SH1	Explore opportunities for provision of toilet / changing facilities	Long	No
SH2	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long	Yes
SH3	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium	No
SH4	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium	No
SH5	Work with partners to monitor and respond to anti-social behaviour incidents	Short	No
SH6	Explore options to provide floodlighting to the tennis courts	Long	Yes
SH7	Consider opportunities for sport and activity provision	Medium	No
SH8	Provide cycle racks in suitable locations	Medium	Yes
SH9	Review provision of footpaths within sites to support improved access	Long	No
SH10	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short	No
SH11	Undertake additional tree planting	Medium	Yes
SH12	Remove old pavilion base and reinstate space within the park	Medium	Yes
SH13	Consider opportunities for improved wildlife provision within the park	Short	No

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix K: St Nicholas Park Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
SN1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long	Yes
SN2	Consider future options for previous play centre land / facilities	Long	No
SN3	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium	No
SN4	Explore opportunities for provision of multi-use games area (MUGA)	Long	No
SN5	Review provision of footpaths within site to support improved access	Long	No
SN6	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short	No
SN7	Explore opportunities for provision of toilet / changing facilities	Long	No
SN8	Improve provision of outdoor gym equipment	Medium	Yes
SN9	Review the current provision of benches, picnic tables and bins, and identify new opportunities	Medium	No
SN10	Deliver improvements to dog exercise park	Long	Yes
SN11	Explore options to provide lighting along the path from St Nicholas to Great Ashby	Long	No

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

Appendix L: Town Centre Gardens Action Plan

Ref.	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
T1	Play area improvements for children & young people of all ages and abilities	Long	Yes
T2	Develop a programme to respond to issues of vermin	Short	No
T3	Work with partners to monitor and respond to anti-social behaviour incidents	Short	No
T4	Seek funding to clear silt build-up from within the pond	Medium	Yes
T5	Consider opportunities for café provision	Medium	No
T6	Improved maintenance to Garden Rooms	Medium	Yes
T7	Review access points to ensure they are safe and welcoming	Short	No
T8	Consider opportunities for composting facilities to support Green Space Volunteer activities	Medium	No
T9	Review and improve the existing tree trail	Short	Yes
T10	Review existing lighting within the Gardens	Medium	No
T11	Restore planting as required to ensure year-round interest	Ongoing	Yes

Timescales – Short: 1-3 years Medium: 3-7 years Long: 8-10 years

This page is intentionally left blank

Tree & Woodland Strategy for Stevenage

2025 - 2035

DRAFT

Contents

		Page			Page
1	Purpose	1	5	Collaboration & Engagement	13
2	Introduction	3	6	Funding	15
	2.1 Trees	3	7	Consultation	17
	2.2 Woodlands	4	8	Targets & Action Plan	
	2.3 Ancient Hedgerows	4	8.1	Tree Canopy Cover	18
	2.4 Benefits of Trees	4	8.2	Engagement & Collaboration	19
	2.5 Threats & Challenges	6	8.3	Woodland Management	20
	2.6 Our Vision	6	8.4	Nature Connectivity	21
	Context		8.5	Climate Change	22
	3.1 National Context	7	8.6	Age Diversity	23
	3.2 County Context	8	8.7	Species Diversity	24
	3.3 Local Context	9	8.8	Tree Health & Resilience	25
4	Evidence Base		8.9	Risk Management	26
	4.1 Quantitative: Amenity Trees	10	8.10	Protecting & Enhancing the Historic Environment	27
	4.2 Quantitative: Woodlands	11	9	Monitoring & Review	28
	4.3 Qualitative: Amenity Trees	12	10	References	29
	4.4 Qualitative: Woodlands	12			

Someone's sitting in the shade today because someone planted a tree long time ago.

Warren Buffett

DRAFT

1. Purpose

Stevenage was designated Britain's first New Town on 11th November 1946. The town was designed with a great deal of emphasis on green space and its importance in helping to create a thriving community. The town continues to benefit from the foresight of the original architects who retained and protected many of the existing landscape features, such as hedgerows and lanes, woodlands and veteran trees, to create the varied green infrastructure, wildlife corridors and sense of identity that residents and visitors enjoy today.

This strategy sets out objectives for the way in which the town's tree stock, including amenity trees, woodlands and ancient hedgerows, are managed and developed to ensure that they continue to contribute to an attractive and healthy environment for people and wildlife now and in the future.

2. Introduction

It has long been recognised that amenity trees are an essential landscape feature within our 21st century towns and cities, and Stevenage is no exception.

The new town planners included for extensive tree planting to be undertaken as well as the retention of much of the existing farm woodland and hedgerow during the initial development of the town. Their foresight has been realised in the tree stock which we have inherited and enjoy today.

It is a sobering thought to realise that there are a number of trees throughout the new town that were growing before the car was invented. Whilst it is impossible to predict what form of transport will be in general use in another 100 years' time, it is possible to predict that with safeguarding, good planning, and care many of the trees we plant today could still be thriving.

Trees positively contribute to our lives in many ways and just as it is us who are benefitting now, from the foresight of the original new town planners, so we must show our commitment to the future by continuing to plant new, and manage existing, trees for the benefit of future generations. The life span of many tree species is considerably greater than ours, so to achieve all the benefits that trees can provide we need to start now.

2.1 Trees

Trees can take many different forms, functions, and sizes, and can have lifespans varying from tens to thousands of years. They can stand alone as a specimen in a park, for example, line our streets and cycle networks, be managed to restrict their size and shape to create hedgerows, or be found on mass within a woodland setting, and many other variations in between.

2.2 Woodland

Over 40% of the woodlands in Stevenage are identified as being 'ancient woodland' in that which has been in existence since at least 1600; and described as 'semi-natural' because they have received management in the past. It is highly unusual to find so much ancient woodland in an urban environment.

A natural woodland composed of native species without active production management is a reliable way of capturing carbon and at the same time supporting the recovery of biodiversity. In the right places they can also contribute to reducing flood risk, stabilising soils and providing recreational opportunities.

2.3 Ancient Hedgerows

Ancient hedgerows in Stevenage line many of the old roads or country lanes that existed before the new town was developed - Camps Hill Lane, Old Walkern Lane, Shephall Lane, Dene's Lane for example.

In addition to their cultural and historical importance our hedgerows are invaluable to wildlife. If managed correctly they provide shelter and food sources for a variety of wildlife including invertebrates, birds and small mammals - hedgerows with full sized trees are even better for wildlife. They also act as wildlife corridors, slow flooding, can prevent soil erosion and can capture and store carbon within the wood and in the soils on which they grow.

2.4 Benefits of Trees

A good quality treescape makes a significant contribution to every community, providing a wide range of benefits to the environment, local people, wildlife, the economy and helping to mitigate climate change.

- Urban trees promote health and wellbeing. Access to nature alleviates stress, stabilises blood pressure and eases anxiety and depression. People exercise more, and feel better around trees, so promoting healthy, active lifestyles, which subsequently reduces the future costs of health care.

- Urban trees create habitats for wildlife.
Trees, whether in an ancient woodland or a park, provide homes and a food source for a variety of birds, insects, and other wildlife.
- Urban trees prevent flooding.
Trees intercept rainwater and can help to combat surface water flooding - interception by the tree canopy can reduce the amount of rainfall reaching the ground by as much 45%¹. They also improve water quality by filtering out pollution.
- Urban trees improve air quality.
Trees can reduce air pollution, help to limit noise pollution and moderate local climate helping to keep buildings and green spaces shaded and cool in the summer, and protected from cold winds in the winter. It is estimated that in 2020, the air pollution removal services provided by nature avoided 2,001 deaths and prevented 49,126 years of life being lost².
- Urban trees attract business.
Trees help to create attractive environments for business investment and development, creating spaces that people want to live in, work in or visit.
- Urban trees connect us to our heritage.
Trees are the living history of our communities. Many of the hedgerows, lanes, woodlands, and veteran trees that we enjoy today were part of the local landscape before the designation of Stevenage new town. The extensive tree planting that was undertaken as the town was developed has supported the treescape that we enjoy across the town today.
- Urban trees can be an important source of biomass for energy.
Biomass (trees) takes carbon out of the atmosphere while it is growing and returns it as it is burned. If it is managed on a sustainable basis, biomass is harvested as part of a constantly replenished crop. This is either during woodland, tree management or coppicing. This maintains a closed carbon cycle with no net increase in atmospheric CO₂ levels.

2.5 Threats & Challenges to Our Treescape

Trees, like much of our landscape, are facing unprecedented environmental challenges. In Stevenage these include:

Amenity Trees

- Pests and diseases
- Climate change
- Insufficient diversity of species
- Aging tree stock
- Financial constraints
- Subsidence / damage to property
- Demand for more housing
- Pressure for more car parking
- Successful establishment of trees within hard surfaced areas – town centre, neighbourhood centres, industrial areas
- Differing expectations of residents

Woodlands

- No planned maintenance for 20+ years
- Demand for new housing
- Fly-tipping
- Financial constraints

Ancient Hedgerows

- Lack of proactive management
- Housing development immediately adjacent to homes
- Financial constraints

2.6 Our Vision

Through partnership with local residents and other stakeholders we will create a bigger, well managed, more sustainable treescape; connecting trees, woodlands and hedgerows to benefit the environment, people, and wildlife now and in the future.

3. Context

This strategy will focus on the treescape managed by Stevenage Borough Council. For the purposes of this strategy the treescape includes trees in:

- Parks and green spaces
- Verges adjacent to the highway
- Town centre and neighbourhood centres and other parts of the built estate
- Woodlands
- Ancient hedgerows

3.1 National Context

- 25 Year Environment Plan, 2018: the government sets out its aspiration to increase woodland cover in England to 12% of total land area by 2060.
- The Environment Act 2021: a target is set to increase tree and woodland cover to 16.5% to total land area in England by 2050. Other initiatives introduced through the Act include:
 - Biodiversity Net Gain which mandates a mechanism for measuring a 10% net gain in biodiversity through the planning process
 - Nature Recovery Network which seeks to create bigger, better and more joined-up places for wildlife. This will be supported through mandatory Local Nature Recovery Strategies.
 - Since November 2023 Section 115 of the Act requires highway authorities in England have a statutory duty to consult members of the public before felling a street tree.
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2021: A new clause requires that new streets are tree-lined, and that opportunities should be taken to incorporate trees elsewhere within the development, ie in parks and open spaces. It also states that existing trees should be maintained wherever possible.

- The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard aspires that:
 - No person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size; and
 - There should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km of people's homes.

Ideally, both standards would be met. However, there is acknowledgment that in urban areas where available land is more likely to be limited it may not be possible to meet the 500m threshold. In these instances the 4km threshold should be the minimum provided.

- Common Sense Management of Trees is published by the National Tree Safety Group: this publication (originally published in 2011, and revised in 2021) seeks to support land owners and managers with developing a balanced approach to tree risk management.

3.2 County Context

- HCC Tree & Woodland Strategy, 2022: This document sets out ambitions for Hertfordshire's treescapes until 2030, and the actions needed to achieve this.
- Sustainable Hertfordshire Strategy, 2020. This sets out nine ambitions for Hertfordshire including a 20% improvement in the extent and condition of Hertfordshire's habitat network through partnership working.
- Pollinator Strategy, 2019: recognises the role of trees and flowering plants in supporting pollinating insects.
- Green Infrastructure Strategy for Hertfordshire, 2022: sets out how trees, woodlands and other green infrastructure can contribute to a healthy and thriving community. The Strategy includes a plan to help plant 1.8 million trees by 2030.
- Hertfordshire Climate Change & Sustainability Partnership (HCCSP): formed in 2020 the HCCSP brings together all eleven authorities and the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership to collaborate in a collective drive for sustainability.
- Hertfordshire Nature Recovery Partnership: Hertfordshire is one of 48 counties in England developing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The group is formed of partners from across public, private and voluntary sectors, who will collectively work in the development and delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

- *Your Tree, Our Future*: As part of their Tree & Woodland Strategy Hertfordshire County Council are providing more than 100,000 trees for residents, businesses and community groups to plant across Hertfordshire by December 2025.

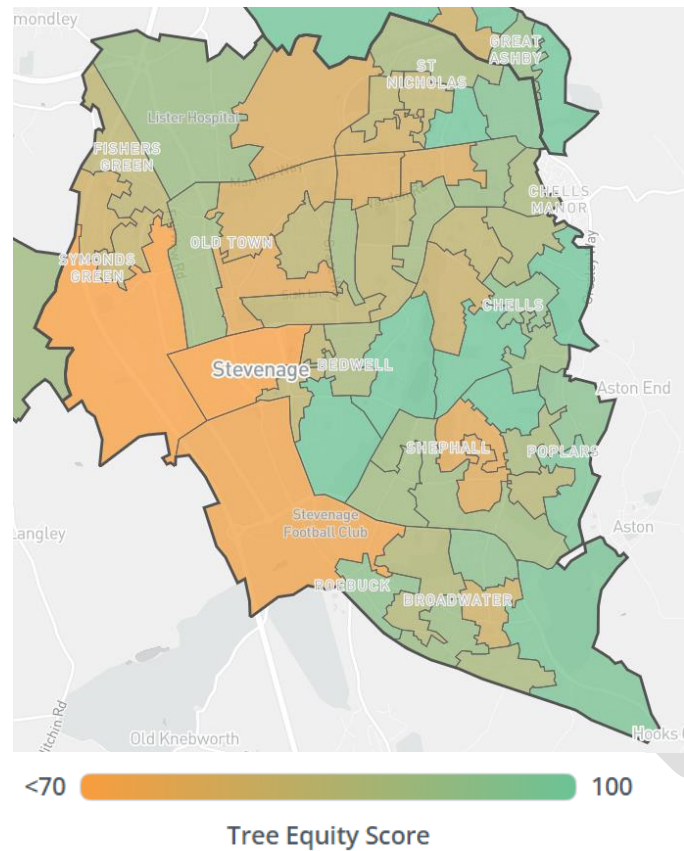
3.3 Local Context

- Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP): the first document was launched in 2010 and has since been revised in 2017 and 2024. Forming the majority of the wildlife resource in Stevenage, it is recognised that the woodlands represent both an ecologically and scenically important habitat, with nearly all the woodland identified as 'Local Wildlife Sites' being ancient in origin.
- Local Plan, 2019: the plan sets out to preserve, create, protect and enhance important green infrastructure including trees, woodlands and hedgerows, and Local Wildlife Sites.
- Climate Change Strategy 2020: tree planting is one priority in Stevenage being net zero by 2030.
- Amenity Tree Management Policy, 2021: seeks to ensure that trees are retained, managed, protected and planted in accordance with sound landscape and arboricultural practice, with due regard to their contribution to amenity and urban landscape for both current and future generations.
- Green Spaces Strategy, 2024: this sets out objectives for the way in which green spaces, including woodlands, in Stevenage are maintained, managed and improved to ensure that they are safe, accessible and sustainable.

4. Evidence Base

4.1 Quantitative: Trees

For urban communities trees are an essential element of green infrastructure to support public health and climate resilience, but not all urban areas currently have equal access to the benefits that trees provide.



Tree Equity Score UK (<https://uk.treeequityscore.org/>) was launched in winter 2023, and was co-developed by the Woodland Trust, the Centre for Sustainable Healthcare and American Forests. It provides a measure of how well the benefits of trees are reaching communities in towns and cities across the UK.

The score ranges from 0 to 100. The lower the score, the greater priority for tree planting. A score of 100 means the neighbourhood has enough trees.

The map shows the current position for Stevenage. This data will help identify priorities for future tree planting within Stevenage.

4.2 Quantitative: Woodlands

The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard aspires that no person should live more than 500m from at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 2ha in size, and there should also be at least one area of accessible woodland of no less than 20ha within 4km of people's homes. However, it does acknowledge that in urban areas the 4km threshold should be the minimum provided.

Their 2017 publication *Space for People, Targeting Action for Woodland Access* provides the following data for Hertfordshire:

	% of population with access to a 2ha+ wood within 500m	% of population with access to a 20ha+ wood within 4km	% extra population with access to a 2ha+ woodland within 500m if existing woods opened	% extra population with access to a 20ha+ woodland within 4km if existing woodlands opened	% population requiring new woodland to be able to access a 2ha+ wood within 500m	% population requiring new woodland to be able to access a 20ha+ wood within 4km
Broxbourne	19.2	100.0	37.5	0.0	43.3	0.0
Dacorum	33.5	72.1	31.3	21.0	35.2	6.9
East Hertfordshire	8.8	67.5	56.5	31.5	34.7	1.0
Hertsmere	15.4	95.3	39.9	4.7	44.8	0.0
North Hertfordshire	9.4	10.9	39.2	71.5	51.4	17.5
St Albans	24.4	71.9	42.8	27.0	32.8	1.1
Stevenage	45.8	100.0	23.1	0.0	31.0	0.0
Three Rivers	43.9	99.3	41.9	0.7	14.3	0.0
Watford	3.1	100.0	64.9	0.0	31.9	0.0
Welwyn Hatfield	30.3	100.0	31.8	0.0	37.9	0.0
County Average	23.38	81.7				

4.3 Qualitative: Amenity Trees

Infographic to be inserted:

- Estimated 29,800 amenity trees
- Most common species: Norway Maple, Prunus, Ash
- Provide 22% canopy cover
- 94% deciduous and 6% evergreen
- Around 20% of trees rate as the highest carbon storage trees over the period of their lifetime

Provide ecosystem services (based on i-tree report) such as...

Remove 47 tonnes of pollution each year	Storing 53,000 tonnes of carbon	Intercept 26,000m ³ of rainfall each year	Sequester 2,140 tonnes of carbon a year
That's equivalent to the annual CO ₂ emissions of x cars	Worth £12,348,220	Which equates to £33,561 each year	Worth £491,692 annually

4.4 Qualitative: Woodlands

Infographic to be inserted:

- 130 hectares of woodland,
- Includes semi-natural broadleaved, planted broad-leaved, planted coniferous, and planted mixed woodlands
- represents around 5% of the Borough
- Around 54 hectares is defined as 'ancient woodland' (from Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory).
- Storing around 27,750 tonnes of Carbon (based on Natural England Research Report NERR094)

5. Collaboration & Engagement

As a co-operative council we will provide a range of opportunities for residents, business, community groups to be involved in and support the management and maintenance of our trees, hedgerows and woodlands.

5.1 Climate Change Community Fund (CCCF)

Launched in 2023, the CCCF is a grant available to local community groups and organisations to address climate change and its effects, through their own community-led projects. Funding is available across all thirteen wards in Stevenage and may be used to support environmental initiatives such as the creation of new treescapes, which may include street tree planting, small woodlands or community orchards.

5.2 Green Space Volunteers

These volunteers work with the Council and undertake tasks to help manage and improve community green spaces around the town including woodlands. Tree related tasks to date include woodland ride maintenance, tree planting, woodland coppicing to improve the structural diversity, restoration of ancient hedgerows, improvements to woodland ponds, wildlife surveys and installation of bird / bat boxes.

No previous experience is required. We will continue to encourage and welcome people from all sectors of our community to volunteer in green spaces by providing a range of opportunities.

5.3 Memorial Tree Planting

We will continue to work with residents, community groups or businesses who wish to fund the purchase, planting and aftercare of a memorial tree(s) in suitable agreed locations within Stevenage.

5.4 Community Tree Watering

Newly planted trees will require regular watering during the warmer and drier months of the year for, at least, the first three years if they are to have a reasonable chance of surviving to maturity. The watering regime for newly planted trees in Stevenage accounts for a significant portion of the annual tree planting budgets.

While it is not feasible for volunteers to help water trees planted in our parks and green spaces there may be an opportunity for residents to help water newly planted street trees. We will seek to develop a scheme that enables local communities to help with the establishment of new trees so that resources might be freed up to enable greater numbers of trees to be planted by the Council in future.

5.5 Your Tree, Our Future

We will continue to support Hertfordshire County Council in the promotion and delivery of their Your Tree, Our Future initiative – providing more than 100,000 trees to residents, businesses and community groups to plant across the county by December 2025.

5.6 Sponsored Tree Planting

We appreciate that not everyone is able to plant a tree in their garden or grounds, and that the cost of funding a memorial tree may be prohibitive to some. However, for those residents, businesses or community groups that would like to support tree planting in Stevenage we will seek to deliver an opportunity to sponsor tree planting. We will explore sponsorship opportunities that will enable all sectors of our community to contribute to the annual programme of tree planting activity in the town.

6. Funding

Local authorities like Stevenage Borough Council have experienced reduced funding and faces an annual challenge to bridge the gap between the increased cost of delivering services and the reduction in funding received to enable us to do so. We have worked hard to find ways to continue to deliver vital front-line services whilst maintaining financial security with minimal negative impact for our residents.

Regular funding for green spaces in Stevenage is achieved through a variety of methods including:

Revenue Expenditure: The Councils net budget, to support over 100 services is funded by government (54%), business rates (32%) and council tax (63%).

External Grants: In the past we have had success in bidding for funding from third parties including the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and the Coronation Living Heritage Fund which has enabled the delivery of community orchards and micro-woods. These funding streams usually have very specific eligibility criteria and competition for the grants has increased significantly so securing funding is not always possible.

Developer Contributions: New developments are usually required to provide funds to mitigate the impact of the new development. Depending on the size of the development, developers are required to deliver or contribute to a wide range of community facilities including schools, GP surgeries, highway improvements, parks etc. Developers contribute to the maintenance and improvements of open spaces through Section 106 agreements, commuted sums, Community Infrastructure Levy or Biodiversity Net Gain.

We need to continue to be creative in finding ways of doing more with less. Examples of this include:

- Environmental Volunteers: Stevenage has a terrific network of environmental volunteers across the town who help to pick litter, manage woodlands, plant trees, maintain planting etc. These volunteers choose to give up their valuable time to help keep Stevenage looking clean and green and add value to what the Council is able to do rather than replace them.
- Advertising: Advertising spaces is sold on the roundabouts throughout the town. The income that is generated from the advertising helps to support the costs of maintaining the landscape provision associated with the roundabouts.
- Concessions: In some instances we already have contracts in place with third parties who provide facilities or activities that increase the service offer within our green spaces, but also benefits the Council through payment of an agreed sum that helps contribute to the running cost of the green space.
- Sponsorship: At present, residents & community groups already have the opportunity to sponsor a memorial tree or bench. The sponsorship sum paid could help cover the cost of the initial provision and the ongoing future maintenance. The Council is already looking to extend the current offer, but also to develop a range of opportunities that are affordable for all sectors of our local community.

7. Consultation

The Council has a long-standing commitment to work with the local community to help shape their local areas and the services that they use.

During winter 2023 we directly contacted 1,500 community groups and 36 schools, and reached out to all residents to let us know what they thought about the trees and woodlands in Stevenage. We received almost 400 responses and nearly 700 comments. Headlines included:

- 47% felt that the tree stock in Stevenage was good or excellent.
- Providing food and shelter for wildlife, making a space more attractive and helping to prevent climate change were amongst the most popular responses for why trees are important to residents.
- 90% of adult respondents felt that more trees should be planted, but this dropped to 70% of young people
- 33% of young people said additional trees should be planted to create woodlands, 26% in parks and 22% in streets. The responses from adults were not dissimilar with 28% feeling that streets and parks would be the best location with 25% choosing woodlands.
- Concerns about the tree stock in Stevenage largely related to removal of trees for development purposes, maintenance of existing trees, safety concerns associated with leaf fall on paths and cycle tracks during the autumn, and the need to replace removed trees with new ones.

Consultation on the draft Tree & Woodland Strategy was undertaken during January 2025.

8.Targets & Actions

8.1 Tree Canopy Cover

Target	Ref	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
<p>Tree canopy cover is defined as the area of leaves, branches, and tree stems that cover the ground at maturity.</p> <p>In 2024 an i-Tree Canopy (an online canopy cover assessment tool, which provides a scientifically robust and consistent approach to estimating canopy cover) assessment established that the tree stock in Stevenage provided a tree canopy cover of around 22%. However, the canopy cover levels across the different Wards vary, with the lowest canopy cover being 13%.</p> <p>Stevenage, with its wide grass verges and well-maintained open spaces, offers a better environment than most towns, but even here it is estimated that around 50% of newly planted standard trees will survive to maturity. We must therefore ensure that we plant and maintain sufficient trees each year to retain the tree canopy cover and to increase provision in areas of the town with lower than 19% canopy cover.</p>	T1	Identify low canopy coverage areas and prioritise tree planting in these areas	Short	No
	T2	Plant 2000 standard trees by 2035	Long	Yes
	T3	Seek grant funding to support additional tree planting and establishment	Ongoing	No
	T4	Explore opportunities to develop a tree planting sponsorship scheme	Medium	No
	T5	Continue to support the HCC <i>Your Tree, Our Future</i> campaign	Short	No
	T6	Ensure that all newly SBC planted amenity trees be watered throughout the spring and summer months for the first three years of life	Ongoing	Yes
	T7	Explore a scheme for local communities to support watering and establishment of newly planted trees	Medium	No

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years;

Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

8.2 Engagement & Collaboration

Target	Ref	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
<p>The Woodland Trust's Woodland Access Standard aspires that no person living in an urban area should live more than 4km from a 20ha+ woodland.</p> <p>Anecdotal evidence suggests that some residents are reticent about visiting a woodland as they don't know what to expect, how safe it is or how easy it is to travel around the woodland.</p>	E1	Deliver volunteer engagement opportunities for trees and woodlands.	Ongoing	No
	E2	Provide improved information about Stevenage woodlands	Medium	No
	E3	Promote our trees, woodlands and ancient hedgerows, and the opportunities that they provide for the whole community	Short	No
	E4	Work with partner organisations to deliver tree / woodland themed events	Short	No
	E5	Deliver training to Green Space Volunteers to support the management of a network of Community Orchards.	Short	Yes
	E6	Explore opportunities to make woodlands accessible to the whole community whilst affording protection to a diverse range of habitats and species	Long	Yes
	E7	Consult with local stakeholders on any significant developments and changes to the treescape in their street.	Ongoing	No
	E8	Support colleagues, developers, and others to select the right tree species and right locations to deliver green infrastructure and biodiversity gains.	Ongoing	No
	E9	Continue to provide technical support and guidance to colleagues,	Ongoing	No

--

	developers, and others to support the protection, retention and management of trees.		
--	--	--	--

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years;

Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

8.3 Woodland Management

Target
<p>Woodlands are an important element in the natural environment of Stevenage. They provide opportunities for recreation, are a valued component of the landscape, an essential habitat for wildlife, provide employment and are an effective means of absorbing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.</p> <p>Over 40% of the woodlands within Stevenage are classified as being ancient, and of an Oak and Hornbeam mix, with Bluebells dominant in the ground flora. The EU Habitats Directive has identified this woodland type as being of international importance. These represent the most important woodland habitats for wildlife, sometimes containing species of local and regional rarity. It is highly unusual to find so much ancient woodland in an urban environment and they are a wonderful resource for the borough.</p> <p>Without active management many of our woodlands have become dense, dark and lacking in structure or dynamism. This condition significantly restricts their potential for wildlife. To improve their value for biodiversity and people they would benefit from a substantial programme of conservation work such as thinning, ride creation, glade creation, removal of non-native tree species and coppicing.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
W1	Develop management plans for each woodland	Long	No
W2	To improve the structural diversity of at least 10% of current woodland area by 2035.	Long	Yes
W3	Create improved habitat woodland edges where possible	Long	Yes
W4	Manage invasive non-native plant species	Ongoing	No
W5	Seek to capitalise on woodland management by-product	Ongoing	No
W6	Explore opportunities for creating buffer between woodland and residential estate	Medium	Yes
W7	Consider recreational opportunities within woodlands	Long	No
W8	Continue to revert Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites (PAWS) to a woodland composition more typical of Ancient Semi Natural Woodlands	Medium	Yes
W9	Manage all woodlands in accordance with the UK Forestry Standard.	Ongoing	Yes

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years;

Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

8.4 Nature Connectivity

Target
<p>Across the country large areas of previously natural land have been broken into much smaller pockets providing habitat for our wildlife, and Stevenage is no different. Development for industry, housing, transport etc has resulted in lots of small, isolated patches of habitat.</p> <p>The creation of wildlife corridors helps to bridge the gap between these habitats enabling greater feeding and nesting opportunities for wildlife and supporting greater resilience to physical and climate changes.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
N1	Identify suitable locations for creation of wildlife corridors to link existing woodlands, ancient hedgerows, and tree belts.	Short	Yes
N2	Plant 5 new micro-woods by 2035	Long	Yes
N3	Undertake ecological surveys to measure the benefit of the newly created wildlife corridors	Medium	Yes
N4	Involve community in undertaking ecological surveys to support future management of woodlands	Short	Yes
N5	Increase woodland biodiversity in line with the Stevenage Biodiversity Action Plan and the emerging Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire	Short	Yes

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.5 Climate Change

Target	Ref	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
<p>Trees and woodlands help improve air quality, reduce the 'urban heat island', provide opportunities for people to re-connect with nature, help to reduce flood risk and provide spaces that can improve health and well-being.</p> <p>Sustainably managed woodlands perform a vital role as carbon sinks and reservoirs⁵ by capturing CO₂ from the atmosphere and storing it as a component of wood itself. Over time, the soil beneath the trees is enriched by adding carbon in the form of organic matter from leaf litter, branch fall and root death. In general, woodland soils have low and infrequent levels of disturbance and the total carbon content per unit area of woodland is higher than that for agricultural soils which are subject to more frequent and significant disturbance.</p>	C1	Incorporate trees with maximum carbon storage potential within planting schemes whilst observing other considerations.	Short	No
	C2	Identify quantity of biomass needed for creation of energy	Short	No
	C3	Identify and create suitable locations for creation of short rotation forestry.	Medium	Yes
	C4	Identify green infrastructure locations that would benefit creation of shade from trees	Medium	No

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.6 Age Diversity

Target	Ref	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
<p>A healthy urban treescape relies on age diversity to maintain its ability to provide constant and sustainable benefits to the people who work, live and visit the town. Maturing trees must be protected and managed to ensure they thrive and survive to become veteran trees (senescent), and juvenile trees must be planted constantly to replace old trees, dying trees, and trees removed for safety reasons.</p> <p>Larger, older trees are typically more valuable in terms of carbon storage, ecosystem services and human well-being than smaller, younger trees. However, with trees taking around 40 years to reach maturity it is essential to maintain a healthy stock of younger trees to ensure successful succession planning.</p>	A1	Map age diversity data on Ward basis to identify areas with low numbers of juvenile trees.	Short	No
	A2	Consider opportunities to create space for new juvenile planting within existing areas of semi-mature and mature tree planting, to support succession planning	Medium	No
	A3	Protect veteran and mature trees, ancient hedgerows, and woodlands from inappropriate development	Ongoing	No
	A4	Continue to prioritise the retention of the trees and hedgerows that pre-date Stevenage new town.	Ongoing	No

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

8.7 Species Diversity

Target
<p>A more diverse tree-scape is better able to deal with possible changes in climate or pest and disease impacts. Heavy reliance on a particular tree species can mean that a treescape can be largely wiped out if a pest or disease takes hold.</p> <p>Diseases affecting different UK tree species have also been shown to have a multiplying effect on the loss of associated biodiversity. If a single tree species disappears, it can have dire consequences for an entire ecosystem. For example, in the UK, the common ash hosts 45 species that are only found on ash trees, and sessile and pedunculate oaks host 326 species that are only found on oak trees. However, an additional 141 species use ash and oak as alternative habitats and depend on these two tree species only. If both ash and oak were to be lost, the number of species at risk would rise to 512⁴.</p> <p>Surveys of the amenity tree stock have provided comprehensive data on the species diversity across Stevenage.</p> <p>With Norway Maples currently constituting 23% of the amenity tree stock in Stevenage it is imperative to improve species diversity going forward.</p>

Ref	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
S1	Map species diversity data on Ward basis to identify areas of the town with particularly low species diversity.	Short	No
S2	Consider areas of low species diversity when prioritising new tree planting.	Short	No
S3	Maintain an accurate audit of amenity trees in Stevenage.	Ongoing	No
S4	Select tree species which are most appropriate to local conditions and future climates.	Ongoing	No

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years;

Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

8.8 Tree Health & Resilience

Target	Ref	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
<p>Factors including global travel / trade and changing climate have increased the chance of pests and diseases coming into the UK with the potential to cause significant damage to our tree stock. Buying UK sourced and grown trees is the best way to prevent the spread of imported pests and diseases.</p> <p>Between 2000-2021, Britain experienced a 360% increase in new tree pest and disease emergence compared with the period 1970-2000⁵. This represents 18 new emergences since 2000. The predicted cost of ash dieback alone has been quantified at £15 billion⁶.</p> <p>Pests and disease are not the only threats to the resilience of Hertfordshire's treescape. There are predictions that by 2080, changes in temperature and water availability could make the South East of England unsuitable for many common tree species and estimates a 30-50% increase in wildfires in the same period⁷.</p>	H1	All trees planted on SBC land will be certified as sourced and grown in the UK; or where this is not possible, nurseries or suppliers that adhere to national standards such as the Plant Health Management Standard.	Ongoing	No
	H2	Continue to base tree planting choices on trees known to be resistant to pests and diseases.	Ongoing	No
	H3	Keep accurate, up-to-date records of all purchases and supplies to assist with tracing exercises in the event of an outbreak.	Short	No
	H4	Regularly clean/disinfect all tree maintenance equipment.	Ongoing	No
	H5	Use proper off-site wash-down facilities regularly to remove any build-up of soil and organic material on vehicles and machinery	Ongoing	No
	H6	Monitor spread of tree disease in Stevenage	Ongoing	No
	H7	Monitor specific trees with Ash Dieback to assess safety implications	Ongoing	No
	H8	Commit to actions within the Tree Resilience and Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire	Short	No

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years;

Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

8.9 Risk Management

Target	Ref	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
<p>One challenge of tree management is that, unlike man-made structures, trees grow, respond to changes in climate and season, shed parts and eventually will die. In an urban environment there is an increasing tendency to see trees as a risk rather than an essential element of the urban landscape (Britt and Johnston, 2008).</p>	R1	Undertake a regular comprehensive survey of every amenity tree to inform a programme of maintenance works.	Ongoing	No
	R2	Assess amenity trees every three years to determine what, if any, works are required to ensure their health, safety, and amenity value, and undertake works as necessary.	Ongoing	No
	R3	Continue to assess trees and plantations to identify those at a higher risk of failure in future, to inform future work programmes.	Ongoing	No
	R4	Undertake a comprehensive inspection of every woodland to inform a cyclical programme of proactive tree maintenance to ensure the safety of people, property and enhancement of wildlife.	Short	Yes
	R5	Survey trees in tenanted gardens to identify risk and propose mitigation actions.	Short	Yes
	R6	Analyse tree related subsidence insurance claim data to identify opportunities for a more targeted, proactive approach to manage trees and minimise future risk.	Ongoing	No

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years;

Long: 8-10 years

8.12 Protecting and Enhancing the Historic Environment

Target	Ref	Action	Timeframe	Additional Resources Required
<p>Stevenage new town was designed with a great deal of emphasis on green space and many of the existing landscape features, such as hedgerows and lanes, woodlands, and veteran trees, were retained to create the varied green infrastructure that residents and visitors enjoy today.</p> <p>At a time when there is increasing pressure for additional housing and car parking opportunities it is increasingly vital that historic planting is not only protected but managed to provide the best opportunity for further longevity.</p>	P1	Protect veteran and mature trees, ancient hedgerows, and woodlands from inappropriate development	Ongoing	No
	P2	Continue to prioritise the retention of the trees and hedgerows that pre-date Stevenage new town.	Ongoing	No
	P3	Implement a best practice approach to the management of hedgerows to halt and reverse declines in hedgerow condition in line with Defra's Hedgerows Standard.	Short	Yes

Timeframe: Short: 1-3 years; Medium: 4-7 years; Long: 8-10 years

9. Monitoring & Review

We will focus on the actions set out above over the next 10 years.

The Councils Arboriculture and Conservation Manager will report progress against the strategy to the Environment and Economy Scrutiny Committee at least every two years.

A more detailed review, to check the priorities and actions are still relevant, will be undertaken in 5 years' time.

The Council will explore opportunities to provide an annual update of progress against actions via the Council's web pages.

The Council will undertake financial scoping to identify funding opportunities from external sources that might be used to support the aims of this strategy.

10. References

- 1 Cases for and against forestry reducing flooding. Forestry Commission.
- 2 UK natural capital accounts: 2022 Office for National Statistics (2022).
- 3 Carbon Sinks and Sequestration UNECE
- 4 Loss of tree species has cumulative impact on biodiversity, November 2021 British Ecological Society
- 5 Application Of Biosecurity In Arboriculture, August 2018 Arboriculture Association
- 6 The £15 billion cost of ash dieback in Britain, May 2019 Current Biology
- 7 Climate Change Risk Assessment, 2012 Defra

DRAFT

This page is intentionally left blank

Estimated time taken to complete: 2 hours*

*Please note that this should be a working document and should be actively reviewed throughout the lifetime of the project/policy/service change



Green Spaces Strategy 2025 - 2035

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

Date created	March 2025
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Assistant Director
Version	1
Author	Julia Hill (Environmental Policy & Development Manager)
Business Unit and Team	Stevenage Direct Services Environmental Policy & Development

Please [click this link](#) to find the EqIA guidance toolkit for support in completing the following form.

For translations, braille or large print versions of this document please email
equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

First things first:

Does this policy, project, service, or other decision need an EqlA?

Title:	Green Spaces Strategy 2025 - 2035	
Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:		
Does it affect staff, service users or the wider community?	Yes/ No	
Has it been identified as being important to particular groups of people?	Yes/ No	
Does it or could it potentially affect different groups of people differently (unequal)?	Yes /No	
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or exclusion issues?	Yes /No	
Will it have an impact on how other organisations operate?	Yes /No	
Is there potential for it to cause controversy or affect the council's reputation as a public service provider?	Yes /No	

Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:	
Remove discrimination and harassment?	Yes/ No
Promote equal opportunities?	Yes/ No
Encourage good relations?	Yes/No

If you answered 'Yes' to one or more of the above questions you should carry out an EqlA.

Or if you answered 'No' to all of the questions and decide that your activity doesn't need an EqlA you must explain below why it has no relevance to equality and diversity.

You should reference the information you used to support your decision below and seek approval from your Assistant Director before confirming this by sending this page to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

--

Name of assessor: Julia Hill

Role: Environmental Policy & Development Manager

Date: 10 March 2025

Decision approved by: Steve Dupoy

Role: Assistant Director

Date:

Equality Impact Assessment Form

For a policy, project, strategy, staff or service change, or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		Green Spaces Strategy			
Lead Assessor	Julia Hill			Assessment team	
Start date	March 2025	End date			
When will the EqlA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)		March 2027			

Page 161

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	All residents Visitors to the town who wish to use the green spaces
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	The strategy sets out objectives for the way in which green spaces in Stevenage are maintained, managed and improved to ensure that they are safe, accessible and sustainable, meeting the needs of our communities and the environment today and in the future.

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	With the exception of allotments all green spaces are free to access 24/7.	Promote equal opportunities	97.75% of residents are within a 10 minute walk of a green space. (Fields in Trust Green Space Index 2024)	Encourage good relations	Consultation with residents / stakeholders on any significant developments and changes to their local green space

<p>What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?</p>	<p>Public consultation was carried out in three phases:</p> <p>(1) Winter 2023/24: To understand which spaces are used, how and why; what is important for people, and how they rate these features within the green spaces currently, etc.</p> <p>This was an on-line consultation, with one version for adults and a similar version for young people. The consultation was promoted via social media, posters in neighbourhood centres, parks and the town centre. It was also sent out to around 150 community and voluntary organisations in the town. The young person's consultation was sent out to all schools via Stevenage Education Trust. Around 490 responses were received.</p> <p>(2) July – Sept 2024: To invite comment on key improvements required to principal parks.</p> <p>This consultation was delivered through a combination of in-person engagement sessions delivered at community facilities across the town and supplemented by an on-line opportunity. The responses helped to inform individual action plans for each of the 11 principal parks. 474 responses were received.</p> <p>(3) Jan – Feb 2025: To seek feedback on the draft strategy to ensure that it was easy to understand, fair and equitable, and that the actions broadly met public needs identified in earlier consultation.</p> <p>This consultation was delivered on-line with the draft strategy made available on the Council's web pages. 35 responses were received.</p>
--	--

<p>In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?</p>	<p>The aim of the strategy is to ensure that, as far as is reasonably practicable, the whole community has good and equal access green spaces and the opportunities that they provide.</p> <p>76% of respondents to the draft strategy felt that it was easy to understand, 14% were uncertain and 10% felt that it was not easy to understand.</p> <p>75% of respondents felt that the strategy was fair and inclusive.</p>
---	--

Evidence and Impact Assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Page 163

Age					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Of those that chose to provide demographic data for Phase 1 of the consultation:				
	Age Range	No. of Responses			
	13-15	299			
	25-34	17			
	35-44	40			
	45-54	23			
	55-64	30			
	65-74	37			
	75-84	6			
	85+	3			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	<p>Green spaces provide a range of opportunities for all ages.</p> <p>The strategy seeks to develop new opportunities and to improve access to information about facilities for all age ranges</p>		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Of those that chose to provide demographic data for Phase 1 of the consultation:				
	Disability or long-term health condition		No. of Responses		
	No		63		
	Prefer not to say		29		
	Yes – learning disability		6		
	Yes – long standing illness		17		
	Yes – mental health condition		17		
	Yes – physical / mobility impairment		15		
	Yes – sensory impairment		9		
	Something else		2		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The strategy seeks to improve physical access to green spaces, and improve provision of accessible and inclusive equipped play spaces		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Gender Reassignment

Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the opportunities provided by green spaces to the whole community		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Marriage or Civil Partnership

Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the opportunities provided by green spaces to the whole community		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Pregnancy & Maternity					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The strategy seeks to improve access to toilets and baby changing facilities within key park locations.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Religion or Belief					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the opportunities provided by green spaces to the whole community		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Race					
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Of those that chose to provide demographic data for Phase 1 of the consultation:				
	Race		No. of Responses		
	Asian / Asian British - Indian		4		
	Asian / Asian British - other		5		
	Asian / Asian British – Pakistani		4		
	White – British		175		
	White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller		4		
	White - Irish		1		
	White - Other		18		
	Other		36		
	Prefer not to say		11		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The strategy seeks to support and promote a variety of cultural activities.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Religion or Belief					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the opportunities provided by green spaces to the whole community		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sex																	
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact													
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>Of those that chose to provide demographic data for Phase 1 of the consultation:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Gender</th> <th>No. of Responses</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Male</td> <td>82</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Non-binary</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Female</td> <td>144</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Prefer not to say</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Something else</td> <td>3</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Gender	No. of Responses	Male	82	Non-binary	5	Female	144	Prefer not to say	11	Something else	3
Gender	No. of Responses																
Male	82																
Non-binary	5																
Female	144																
Prefer not to say	11																
Something else	3																
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	The strategy seeks to improve perception of safety for all, but is mindful of greater concern for women & girls		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)														

Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the opportunities provided by green spaces to the whole community		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Socio-economic ¹ e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users, social value in procurement															
Positive impact	Yes	Negative impact		Unequal impact											
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<p>Of those that chose to provide demographic data for Phase 1 of the consultation:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Employment Status</th> <th>No. of Responses</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Apprenticeship / training</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Carer</td> <td>8</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Retired</td> <td>48</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Self-employed</td> <td>14</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Employment Status	No. of Responses	Apprenticeship / training	2	Carer	8	Retired	48	Self-employed	14
Employment Status	No. of Responses														
Apprenticeship / training	2														
Carer	8														
Retired	48														
Self-employed	14														

¹Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

	Stay at home parent	5	
	Student	89	
	Unemployed	16	
	Volunteer	7	
	Working full-time	56	
	Working part-time	28	
	Zero-hour contract	4	
	Something else	5	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		With the exception of discretionary services the green spaces are freely accessible 24/7.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)

Additional Considerations					
Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?			What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	See colleague responses attached.	Residents?	See summary of all three consultation phases attached
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?			

Overall Conclusion & Future Activity

Page 171

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one) :		
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		76% of respondents to the draft strategy felt that it was easy to understand, 14% were uncertain and 10% felt that it was not easy to understand.
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?

--	--	--	--	--

Approved by Assistant Director:

Date:

Please send this EqlA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk for critical friend feedback and for final submittance with the associated project.

Estimated time taken to complete: 2 hours*

*Please note that this should be a working document and should be actively reviewed throughout the lifetime of the project/policy/service change



Tree & Woodland Strategy 2025 - 2035 Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) Form

Date created	May 2025
Approved by	Cabinet
Owner	Assistant Director
Version	1
Author	Julia Hill (Environmental Policy & Development Manager)
Business Unit and Team	Stevenage Direct Services Environmental Policy & Development

Please [click this link](#) to find the EqIA guidance toolkit for support in completing the following form.

For translations, braille or large print versions of this document please email
equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

First things first:

Does this policy, project, service, or other decision need an EqlA?

Title:	Tree & Woodland Strategy 2025 - 2035	
Please answer Yes or No to the following questions:		
Does it affect staff, service users or the wider community?	Yes/ No	
Has it been identified as being important to particular groups of people?	Yes/ No	
Does it or could it potentially affect different groups of people differently (unequal)?	Yes /No	
Does it relate to an area where there are known inequalities or exclusion issues?	Yes /No	
Will it have an impact on how other organisations operate?	Yes /No	
Is there potential for it to cause controversy or affect the council's reputation as a public service provider?	Yes /No	

Where a positive impact is likely, will this help to:	
Remove discrimination and harassment?	Yes/ No
Promote equal opportunities?	Yes/ No
Encourage good relations?	Yes/No

If you answered 'Yes' to one or more of the above questions you should carry out an EqlA.

Or if you answered 'No' to all of the questions and decide that your activity doesn't need an EqlA you must explain below why it has no relevance to equality and diversity.

You should reference the information you used to support your decision below and seek approval from your Assistant Director before confirming this by sending this page to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk.

--

Name of assessor: Julia Hill

Role: Environmental Policy & Development Manager

Date: 10 March 2025

Decision approved by: Steve Dupoy

Role: Assistant Director

Date:

Equality Impact Assessment Form

For a policy, project, strategy, staff or service change, or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		Tree & Woodland Strategy			
Lead Assessor	Julia Hill			Assessment team	Cristian Pinta
Start date	March 2025	End date			
When will the EqlA be reviewed? (Typically every 2 years)		March 2027			

Page 175

Who may be affected by the proposed project?	All residents Visitors to the town who are impacted by trees – amenity trees, woodlands or ancient hedgerows
What are the key aims of the proposed project?	The strategy sets out objectives for the way in which the town's tree stock, including amenity trees, woodlands and ancient hedgerows, are managed and developed to ensure that they continue to contribute to an attractive and healthy environment for people and wildlife now and in the future.

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	Residents and visitors are able to freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.	Promote equal opportunities	100% of residents live within 4km of a 20ha+ woodland. Actions to prioritise future tree planting in areas with local tree canopy cover.	Encourage good relations	Consulting local residents / stakeholders on any significant developments and changes to the treescape in their street

<p>What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?</p>	<p>Public consultation was carried out in two phases:</p> <p>(1) Winter 2023/24: To understand residents views on trees and woodland, why they are important, how they rate the tree service currently, where new tree planting should take place etc This was an online consultation, with one version for adults and a similar version for young people. The consultation was promoted via social media, posters in neighbourhood centres, parks and the town centre. It was also sent to around 150 community and voluntary organisations in the town. The young person's consultation was sent out to all schools via Stevenage Education Trust. Around 490 responses were received.</p> <p>(2) Jan – Feb 2025: To seek feedback on the draft strategy to ensure that it was easy to understand, fair and equitable, and that the actions broadly met public needs identified in earlier consultation.</p> <p>This consultation was delivered on-line with the draft strategy made available on the Council's web pages. 18 responses were received.</p>
<p>In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?</p>	<p>The aim of the strategy is to ensure that through partnership with local residents and other stakeholders we will create a bigger, well managed, more sustainable treescape; connecting trees, woodlands and hedgerows to benefit the environment, people, and wildlife now and in the future.</p> <p>78% of respondents to the draft strategy felt that it was easy to understand, and 22% were uncertain.</p> <p>55% of respondents felt that the strategy was fair and inclusive, while 33% were uncertain.</p>

Evidence and Impact Assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Age																							
Positive impact	Trees and woodlands are free to access for the whole community Access to nature alleviates stress, stabilises blood pressure and eases anxiety and depression for people of all ages. People exercise more, and feel better around trees, so promoting healthy, active lifestyles.	Negative impact		Unequal impact																			
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Of those that chose to provide demographic data for Phase 1 of the consultation:																						
	<table><tr><th>Age Range</th><th>No. of Responses</th></tr><tr><td>13-15</td><td>299</td></tr><tr><td>25-34</td><td>17</td></tr><tr><td>35-44</td><td>40</td></tr><tr><td>45-54</td><td>23</td></tr><tr><td>55-64</td><td>30</td></tr><tr><td>65-74</td><td>37</td></tr><tr><td>75-84</td><td>6</td></tr><tr><td>85+</td><td>3</td></tr></table>					Age Range	No. of Responses	13-15	299	25-34	17	35-44	40	45-54	23	55-64	30	65-74	37	75-84	6	85+	3
	Age Range	No. of Responses																					
	13-15	299																					
	25-34	17																					
	35-44	40																					
	45-54	23																					
	55-64	30																					
	65-74	37																					
	75-84	6																					
85+	3																						

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Residents and visitors are able to freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
---	---	--	--

Disability e.g., physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness					
Positive impact	Trees and woodlands are free to access for the whole community Access to nature alleviates stress, stabilises blood pressure and eases anxiety and depression. People exercise more, and feel better around trees, so promoting healthy, active lifestyles	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Of those that chose to provide demographic data for Phase 1 of the consultation:				
	Disability or long-term health condition		No. of Responses		
	No		63		
	Prefer not to say		29		
	Yes – learning disability		6		
	Yes – long standing illness		17		
	Yes – mental health condition		17		

	Yes – physical / mobility impairment	15		
	Yes – sensory impairment	9		
	Something else	2		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Residents and visitors can freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	Opportunities to improve access in woodlands	

Gender Reassignment

Positive impact	Trees and woodlands are free to access for the whole community	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Residents and visitors can freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Marriage or Civil Partnership

Positive impact	Trees and woodlands are free to access for the whole community	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Residents and visitors can freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
---	---	--	--

Pregnancy & Maternity

Positive impact	Trees and woodlands are free to access for the whole community	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Residents and visitors can freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Religion or Belief

Positive impact	Trees and woodlands are free to access for the whole community	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Residents and visitors can freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Race

Positive impact	Trees and woodlands are free to access for the whole community	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Of those that chose to provide demographic data for Phase 1 of the consultation:				
	Race		No. of Responses		
	Asian / Asian British - Indian		4		
	Asian / Asian British - other		5		
	Asian / Asian British – Pakistani		4		
	White – British		175		
	White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller		4		
	White - Irish		1		
	White - Other		18		
	Other		36		
	Prefer not to say		11		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Residents and visitors can freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Religion or Belief

Positive impact	Trees and woodlands are free to access for the whole community	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Residents and visitors can freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sex

Sex					
Positive impact	Trees and woodlands are free to access for the whole community	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Of those that chose to provide demographic data for Phase 1 of the consultation:				
	Gender	No. of Responses			
	Male	82			
	Non-binary	5			
	Female	144			
	Prefer not to say	11			
	Something else	3			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Residents and visitors can freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Sexual Orientation e.g., straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual					
Positive impact	Trees and woodlands are free to access for the whole community	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Residents and visitors can freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)		

Socio-economic¹

e.g., low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users,
social value in procurement

Positive impact	Trees and woodlands are free to access for the whole community	Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Of those that chose to provide demographic data for Phase 1 of the consultation:				
	Employment Status		No. of Responses		
	Apprenticeship / training		2		
	Carer		8		
	Retired		48		
	Self-employed		14		
	Stay at home parent		5		
	Student		89		
	Unemployed		16		
	Volunteer		7		
	Working full-time		56		
	Working part-time		28		
	Zero-hour contract		4		

¹Although non-statutory, the council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

	Something else	5	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Residents and visitors can freely access trees and woodlands in Stevenage 24/7.	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Additional Considerations					
Please outline any other potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact		Negative impact		Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	Not applicable				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?		What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Consultation Findings

Document any feedback gained from the following groups of people:

Staff?	See colleague responses attached.	Residents?	See summary of the two consultation phases attached
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?			

Overall Conclusion & Future Activity

Explain the **overall findings** of the assessment and **reasons for outcome (please choose one)**:

1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified		78% of respondents to the draft strategy felt that the document was easy to understand, and 22% were uncertain. Customer service support is available to assist with any enquiries that residents may have in future. 55% of respondents felt that the strategy was fair and inclusive.
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made	
	2b. Continue as planned	
	2c. Stop and remove	

Detail the **actions that are needed** as a result of this assessment and how they will help to **remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities** and / or **encourage good relations**:

Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?

Approved by Assistant Director:

Date:

Please send this EqlA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk for critical friend feedback and for final submittance with the associated project.

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Environment and Regeneration
Date 4 June 2025



PLANNING POLICY UPDATE INCLUDING REVISED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT SCHEME AND REVISED STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

KEY DECISION

Author Lewis Claridge | 2158
Lead Officer Alex Robinson | 2257
Contact Officer Lewis Claridge | 2158

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update to changes in national planning policy and guidance announced by Government and the implications for plan making in Stevenage.
- 1.2 To seek Members' approval to adopt a revised Local Development Scheme (LDS) and Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) which consists of minor updates that affect the Council's approach to both plan making and how the Council consults on planning applications concerning land in the Council's ownership.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 2.1 Approve the revised Local Development Scheme.
- 2.2 Approve the revised Statement of Community Involvement.
- 2.3 Consider the comments of the Planning & Development Committee on the content of this Cabinet Report.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 This report provides Members with an update to changes in national planning policy and guidance announced by Government and the implications for plan making in Stevenage.
- 3.2 The changes to the NPPF and the emerging Planning & Infrastructure Bill does introduce additional considerations to the Council's approach to plan making in Stevenage. However, the Council considers it appropriate to proceed with the submission of the Local Plan – Review and Partial Update and Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule as soon as is practical.
- 3.3 This approach was previously agreed at Cabinet in November 2024 (Local Plan) and January 2025 (CIL). In order to execute this, the Council is making minor changes to the Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement.

Approach to the Local Plan

- 3.4 The Stevenage Borough Local Plan [BD4] was adopted on 22 May 2019. The Plan sets out a spatial vision for the town to 2031 and contains detailed land use policies for the Borough. The Plan superseded the District Plan Second Review (adopted 2004) as the statutory Local Plan for the Borough and is used to determine applications for planning permission.
- 3.5 The preparation of Local Plans is subject to an extensive legal framework, as set out in relevant acts and regulations and interpreted through case law. This is supplemented by national planning policies and guidance which set out the clear principles and expectations of the planning system.
- 3.6 It was agreed, following legal advice, that there should be a two-stage process to reviewing the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, given the position the local authority finds itself regarding the age of the current Local Plan being 5 years since adoption:

Stage 1: Local Plan – Review and Partial Update
--

Stage 2: Local Plan – New Plan

- 3.7 Officers have progressed with undertaking a review and partial update of the Local Plan. The scope of the Local Plan – Review and Partial Update is limited to new and revised policies of the existing adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2019).
- 3.8 It is important to note that the Local Plan Review consists of a Review and Partial Update of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, adopted May 2019. As such, the scope of the review to policies and supporting text is limited to necessary changes only, related to key drivers of change since the Plan was

adopted in 2019. The key changes made to the adopted Local Plan were detailed in the Officer Report to Cabinet in June 2024 [BD5] and November 2024 [BD6] and focus on the continued requirement to tackle the Climate Change and promoting sustainable and active travel across the Borough. Other wider changes will be considered for the next stage of the Local Plan Review, the New Plan.

- 3.9 The first consultation on the Local Plan review was held from 5 July to 15 August 2024 and took place in accordance with Regulation 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012). A second round of public consultation (under Regulation 19 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012) was held from 21 November 2024 to 14 February 2025. The next step in the process is to submit the Plan to the Secretary of State (MHCLG), ahead of an independent Examination in Public by an appointed Planning Inspector.
- 3.10 Approval was granted by Cabinet in November 2024 [BD6] (Local Plan) and in January 2025 [BD7] (CIL) to allow delegated authority to the Assistant Director: Planning & Regulation, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder: Environment and Performance, to proceed to Submission of the Local Plan and CIL; this is scheduled for the Summer 2025. Submission for both updated Local Plan and CIL to the Secretary of State is expected to be from Summer 2025. A final consultation on any modifications proposed by the Inspector to the Plan is then held prior to the Inspector's Report, which would confirm whether the Plan can progress to formal adoption. Appendix C provides a summary of the process.
- 3.11 Given that the Local Plan – Review and Partial Update was at Regulation 19 stage prior to 12 March 2025 and the draft housing requirement meets in excess of 80% of local housing need, under the transitional arrangements outlined as part of the NPPF 2024 (explained further in paragraphs 3.15 to 3.17), this means that the Local Plan – Review and Partial Update will be submitted and examined under the NPPF 2023 and not NPPF 2024. This provides more certainty with regard to the need to update the Plan, which is now over 5 years old and as such progressing the revised Plan to adoption at an earlier stage would mean that policies carry greater weight in decision making.
- 3.12 The consequence of not falling under the transitional arrangements and instead operating under the NPPF 2024, would mean that we would need to prepare a new Plan from scratch, thus increasing the risk that policies in the 2019 Local Plan would lose weight in decision making over time, until the new Plan progressed to the first stage of consultation. By operating under the transitional arrangements and therefore under the NPPF 2023, we are working to a broad two-stage process:

- 1. Local Plan – Review and Partial Update (to be submitted and examined under the NPPF 2023)**
- 2. New Local Plan (to be progressed under the NPPF 2024 or subsequent versions of the NPPF thereafter)**

- 3.13 Officers have sought legal advice from Counsel on the broad approach and Counsel are content that we are following the most appropriate process. In addition, in January 2025 officers sought the advice of the Planning

Inspectorate (PINS) who were also broadly satisfied that we are following the correct process, appropriate to our local circumstances.

Changes to National Planning Policy and Legislation

- 3.14 The following paragraphs run through the changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which the Council's Local Plan needs to be in accordance with.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.15 The previous version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was last updated on 20 December 2023 [BD1]. Changes included:
- Plan-makers will have until 30 June 2025 to submit their local plans, neighbourhood plans, minerals and waste plans, and spatial development strategies for independent examination under the existing legal framework. The Government is also proposing that, to be examined under existing legislation, all independent examinations of local plans, minerals and waste plans and spatial development strategies must be concluded, with plans adopted by 31 December 2026.
 - Authorities that do not meet the 30 June 2025 submission deadline for 'old-style' plans will need to prepare plans under the new plan-making system.
 - Authorities will be required to start work on new plans by, at the latest, five years after adoption of their previous plan, and to adopt that new plan within 30 months. Plans that will become more than five years old during the first 30 months of the new system will continue to be considered 'up-to-date' for decision-making purposes for 30 months after the new system starts.
 - Authorities will no longer be able to prepare supplementary planning documents (SPDs) in the revised planning system. Instead, they will be able to prepare Supplementary Plans, which will be afforded the same weight as a local plan or minerals and waste plan. The government proposes that, when the new system comes into force, existing SPDs will remain in force for a time-bound period; until the local planning authority is required to adopt a new style plan. Current SPDs will automatically cease to have effect at the point at which authorities are required to have a new-style plan in place.
- 3.16 On 12 December 2024, Government released the updated NPPF [BD2]. It promises significant changes to housing delivery, Green Belt planning, and Local Plan collaboration – all in order to achieve, amongst other things, universal Local Plan coverage. Under the revised NPPF, plan makers now have until 31 December 2026 to submit their local plans for independent examination, replacing the previous deadline of 30 June 2025.
- 3.17 The new NPPF includes a set of "transitional arrangements". If draft Plans are beyond Regulation 19 stage on 12 March 2025 and can demonstrate that the draft housing requirement meets in excess of 80% of local housing need, then it will be examined under the previous version of the NPPF (2023).

Planning & Infrastructure Bill 2025

- 3.18 The Planning and Infrastructure Bill 2025 [BD3] was introduced 11 March 2025. It sets out changes to the planning system that the Government hopes will speed up decision making and streamline the delivery of new homes and major infrastructure.
- 3.19 The main highlights arising from the presenting of the Bill include:
- **Planning Committees:** A national scheme will delegate planning applications to officers or committees, set by the Secretary of State. Committees will focus on complex or contentious developments. Regulations will define committee size and composition, with smaller committees recommended for effective decision-making. Mandatory training for committee members will ensure consistency and understanding of relevant laws.
 - **Planning Application Fee Setting:** Local planning authorities (LPAs) can set their own fees, up to cost recovery levels. Income from fees will be ring-fenced for development management services.
 - **Strategic Planning:** The Bill restores strategic planning across England, requiring combined authorities to produce spatial development strategies (SDS). SDS will set housing figures and distribution, contribute to climate change mitigation, and align with local nature recovery strategies. SDS will be tested via public examination, with modifications reported to the Secretary of State.
 - **Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP):** National policy statements (NPSs) must be reviewed every five years. The Bill amends pre-application and acceptance stages for Development Consent Orders to streamline the process.
 - **Nature Recovery:** Establishes environmental delivery plans (EDP) by Natural England to outline conservation measures and levy payments for nature restoration.
 - **Compulsory Purchase:** Streamlines the process for compulsory purchase orders, extending powers to town / parish councils for affordable housing provision.
 - **Development Corporations:** Provides flexibility in geographical areas and types of development. Updates objectives to include sustainable development and climate change mitigation.
 - **Energy Infrastructure:** Empowers the Secretary of State to create financial benefit schemes for residents near new transmission infrastructure. Establishes a new grid connections process and amends the Forestry Act for renewable power generation.
 - **Transport Infrastructure:** Removes the need for licences for electric vehicle charging points, amends the Transport and Works Act 1992 for cost recovery, and sets deadlines for application determinations.
- 3.20 The Bill includes one clause related to Strategic Planning, which requires the production of Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) for a wider regional or sub-regional area.
- 3.21 It is not envisaged that the new wave of SDSs will be detailed or lengthy and instead will be similar to Joint Strategic Plans (JSP) and more information will follow in due course. Stevenage is part of a 6-authority approach to an emerging North East Central Hertfordshire JSP with Hertfordshire County Council, East Herts Council, North Herts Council, Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and Broxbourne Borough Council.

- 3.22 The following sets out the timetable for the passage of the Bill:
- Second Reading 24 March 2025;
 - Reading at House of Lords in Spring 2025, across Summer 2025 recess;
 - Royal Assent in Autumn 2025;
 - Powers commenced and live expected in March 2026.

Potential Future Developments

- 3.23 We are anticipating a series of further changes from Government, to national planning policy documentation and guidance in the coming months; Members will be kept updated and informed as these developments occur.
- 3.24 It is not expected that any of the above announcements will have an impact on the submission of the Local Plan – Review and Partial Update or Community Infrastructure Levy Revised Charging Schedule. Therefore the Council proposes to continue as planned with progressing these important strategic planning documents.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: That Cabinet approve the revised Local Development Scheme.

- 4.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) [BD8] was last approved by the Council's Cabinet in November 2024 [BD6]; it sets out a clear and timetabled programme for the production of the local development plan. The LDS sets out timescales to completion for the following Development Plan Documents:
- Stevenage Borough Local Plan – Review and Partial Update (including Policies Map)
 - New Local Plan
 - Stevenage Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule
 - Stevenage Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)
 - Parking SPD
 - The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD (*revoked October 2024)
 - Developer Contributions SPD
 - Design Guidance SPD
- 4.2 The Ishikawa diagram [BD9] explains the two broad stages to the review of the Local Plan. Essentially this is in two stages:
- Local Plan – Review and Partial Update (green section)
 - Local Plan – New Plan (orange section)
- 4.3 A further revised draft LDS (Appendix A) has since been updated to reflect the latest timescales relating to the Local Plan – Review and Partial Update and can be summarised below:

Local Development Document	Timescale for Review	Comments
Local Plan	<p>Commence review September / October 2023</p> <p>First Consultation June – July 2024</p> <p>Second Consultation November 2024 – January 2025</p> <p>Submission to Secretary of State from Summer 2025</p> <p>Adoption and Implementation from December 2025</p>	Based on the option to undertake a Partial Review of the Local Plan which will also incorporate the Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan.
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	<p>Commenced review Early 2024</p> <p>Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule Consultation October – November 2024</p> <p>Draft Charging Schedule January – February 2025</p> <p>Submission to Secretary of State from Summer 2025</p> <p>Adoption and Implementation from December 2025</p>	To be submitted alongside the Local Plan – Review and Partial Update.
Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)	Revised version to be published June 2025	Will keep under regular review.

New Local Plan	Scoping work to commence end 2025 / early 2026	
Parking SPD	Adoption February 2025	Possible change of status to Supplementary Plans or wider incorporation into Local Plan Policies; to be determined after Partial Review and Update.
The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD	Revoked October 2024	National legislation has effectively replaced the content of the SPD.
Developer Contributions SPD	Adoption February 2025	Possible change of status to Supplementary Plans or wider incorporation into Local Plan Policies; to be determined after Partial Review and Update.
Design Guidance SPD	Adoption February 2025	Possible change of status to Supplementary Plans or wider incorporation into Local Plan Policies; to be determined after Partial Review and Update.
Other SPDs / Documents	As required	As identified and required but no more anticipated at the present time. Wider work relating to Conservation Area Appraisals is being scoped at the present time.

4.4 It should be noted that the timescales proposed within the Local Development Scheme are subject to change, as circumstances develop.

4.5 At this stage, the Cabinet are recommended to approve the draft timescales that would operate for the associated new proposed Local Development Scheme.

Recommendation 2.2: That the Cabinet approve the revised Statement of Community Involvement.

4.6 The Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a statutory document and sets out how Stevenage Borough Council will involve the community and other stakeholders in the preparation, alteration and review of local planning policy and decisions on planning applications. The Council recognises the importance of community engagement in the planning process and to make the best-informed decisions, we need to hear from those in the communities who will feel the impact of development. The original SCI was adopted and published in 2018 [BD10].

4.7 Whilst some requirements for consultation and engagement are set out in national legislation, the Council is committed to going beyond these statutory requirements and aims to get as many people involved in the plan preparation process as possible.

The SCI aims to frontload this process by ensuring that the community is involved at an early stage. The document sets out:

- Why consultation is important;
- What will be consulted on;
- Who will be consulted;
- When consultation and engagement will take place;
- How views will be considered.

- 4.8 The Council's last SCI was approved by Cabinet in June 2024 [BD5] and published in August 2024 [BD11]. Regularly reviewing the SCI allows for its effectiveness to be monitored and for amendments to be made to incorporate any policy changes, and to increase levels of public involvement, where possible.
- 4.9 Since the 2018 SCI, the way we interact with communities has changed. New technologies have emerged, such as online engagement tools and social media channels, which can help us reach out to more people. During and after the Covid-19 pandemic we implemented new digital ways of involving people in the planning process, which we want to build on for future engagement with our communities, in addition to traditional consultation methods.
- 4.10 The current SCI (2024) responded to and incorporated feedback during recent planning consultations, which highlighted that planning documents can be too technical with an overwhelming amount of information. Some feedback included:
- they heard things too late in the process, often when the scheme is already in the planning application stage.
 - sometimes planning is not visible and could be promoted wider using newsletters and printed media beyond email notifications.
 - the planning system is very complex, and it can be hard to understand without providing visuals and presenting the information in the correct way.
 - young people do not hear about planning.
 - the need to highlight the use of technology in consultation and consider the need to improve the way we engage with our communities in the planning process.
- 4.11 The current SCI requires the Council to publicise planning applications in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- 4.12 Changes from the previous SCI have responded to recent queries. Proposed amendments to the 2024 SCI are minimal. These include:
- Paragraph 46 has been updated to include clarification on the consultation methods for Council land sale applications.
 - Small modifications to the document to ensure consistency with updates from legislation, corporate strategies and contact details for internal departments. This ensures that we aim to consult as widely as possible on planning documents and planning proposals.
- 4.13 The main change to the SCI expands on the consultation requirements for Council land sale applications. For these applications the Council (as Local Planning Authority) will consult specific ward members, properties directly adjoining and located opposite the land sale application site will be notified by letter and a notice will be posted on, or close to, the land sale application site. These communications will contain details of the Council land sale planning application proposal and information on where plans (and any supporting information) can be viewed. They will also explain how to make comments about the application.
- 4.14 The revised proposed SCI is attached as Appendix B to this Report.

Recommendation 2.3: That Cabinet consider the comments of the Planning & Development Committee on the content of this Cabinet Report.

- 4.15 The Planning & Development Committee, via the Chair and Vice Chair, have been circulated this Cabinet Report in advance of the Cabinet meeting.
- 4.16 Any feedback from Planning & Development Committee Members will be taken into consideration in the Cabinet's approval of this Report's recommendations.
- 4.17 A summary of Members' comments will be reported back orally at the Cabinet meeting on 4 June 2025.
- 4.18 The views of the Planning & Development Committee are of significant value in shaping the future direction the that local plan and policy making takes, as future Committee decisions will be based on revised and possibly new Local Plan policies and supporting documents.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from the revisions to the Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement.

Legal Implications

- 5.2 The Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement are being revised in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

Risk Implications

- 5.3 Given that the adopted Local Plan is now over 5 years old, there is a risk that policies are considered out of date and therefore have less material weight in the planning decision making process.
- 5.4 By submitting to the Secretary of State at the earliest opportunity, the Local Plan gains further weight in accordance with the NPPF and therefore acts to reduce this risk.
- 5.5 An updated Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement supports the submission of the Local Plan – Review and Partial Update and revised Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule and serves to provide greater certainty in the plan making process and therefore reduce elements of risk in the overall process.

Planning and Policy Implications

- 5.6 The Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement are proposed to provide accurate timescales for relevant plan making documents ahead and provide a sound structure for consulting as widely as possible and involving our communities and stakeholders in the plan making process.
- 5.7 The updated Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement will ensure that the Council's Future Town, Future Council Corporate Plan key policies and objectives are reflected as far as possible.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.8 There are no significant equalities and diversity risks associated with producing the revised Local Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement.

Community Safety Implications

- 5.9 There are no significant community safety implications associated with producing the revised Development Scheme and Statement of Community Involvement.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

- BD1 National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023)
<https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20231228093504/https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- BD2 National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- BD3 Planning & Infrastructure Bill (March 2025) <https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3946> and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-planning-and-infrastructure-bill>
- BD4 Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011–2031 (May 2019)
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/stevenage-borough-local-plan/stevenage-borough-local-plan.pdf>
- BD5 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Cabinet, Item 4: Local Plan Review and Revised Local Development Scheme (5 June 2024)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s36560/4%20Cabinet%20Report%20Local%20Plan%20Review%20LC%20Final%20230524.pdf>
- BD6 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Cabinet, Item 4: Local Plan Partial Review and Update: Regulation 18 Feedback and Regulation 19 Consultation (13 November 2024)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s37640/4%20Cabinet%20Report%20Local%20Plan%20Review%20LC%20Final%20011124.pdf>
- BD7 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Cabinet, Item 8: Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL): Draft Charging Schedule – Public Consultation (15 January 2025)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s38152/8%20Final%20Cabinet%20Report%20-%20CIL%2015012025%20LC%20SM.pdf>
- BD8 Stevenage Local Development Scheme (November 2024)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s37645/4%20Appendix%20E%20Local%20Development%20Scheme%202024%20Revised%20151024.pdf>
- BD9 Local Plan Review Ishikawa Diagram (June 2025)
- BD10 Stevenage Statement of Community Involvement (2018)
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/draft-statement-of-community-involvement/statement-of-community-involvement-2018.pdf>
- BD11 Stevenage Statement of Community Involvement (August 2024)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s36564/4%20Appendix%20D%20Draft%20Statement%20of%20Community%20Involvement%20May%202024.pdf>

APPENDICES

- A Draft Revised Stevenage Draft Local Development Scheme (June 2025)
- B Draft Revised Stevenage Statement of Community Involvement (June 2025)
- C Development Plan Making Process (in line with Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012)

This page is intentionally left blank



Contents

1 Introduction	3
- What is a Local Development Scheme?	3
- Why have you produced a new Local Development Scheme?	3
- Where will I find your Local Plan?	3
- Are you preparing any documents to support the Local Plan?	4
- What about the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)?	5
- Will the timetable change again?	5
- What if I have other questions?	5
2 Stevenage Document Profiles	6
- Stevenage Borough Local Plan (including Policies Map and Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan) Review and Partial Update	6
- Stevenage Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (Revised)	7
- Stevenage Statement of Community Involvement	8
- Supplementary Planning Documents	9
- Stevenage Borough Local Plan (New Plan)	13
3 Local Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy Timetable	14
- Local Development Scheme Gantt Chart	14

1 Introduction

Stevenage Borough Local Plan

Local Development Scheme 2025

What is a Local Development Scheme?

1.1 The Local Development Scheme (LDS) is the timetable for writing the Local Development Documents, including Development Plan Documents for Stevenage. The current LDS by Stevenage Borough Council came into effect on 10 June 2025.

Why have you produced a new Local Development Scheme?

1.2 This document is an update of the LDS approved by the Council in November 2024. The Council has a statutory obligation to publish an up-to-date LDS.

1.3 The update is required to reflect amendments to the timetable of specific Development Plan Documents and to give details on the production of several Supplementary Planning Documents which will be developed and adopted to add guidance to policies within the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019). Following their adoption, the SPDs will become a 'material consideration' to help us determine planning applications.

Where will I find your Local Plan?

1.4 The Local Plan, can be found on our website: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan/stevenage-borough-local-plan>

1.5 We prepared an appropriate and proportionate evidence base to support the Local Plan. Please see the Council's website <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan/evidential-studies>

1.6 The Local Plan and evidence base was assessed by an independent Planning Inspector at Examination. Details can be found here: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan/examination-of-our-local-plan-2011-2031>

1.7 When consultations are 'live' you will be able to comment online via the Borough Council website: <https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/planning-policy-consultations>

Are you preparing any documents to support the Local Plan?

1.8 The Council prepared two rounds of consultation on an Area Action Plan (AAP) for the Railway Station. As a Development Plan Document (DPD), this would have become part of the Development Plan for Stevenage, and would have been subject to statutory consultation and examination.

1.9 After reviewing Stevenage's Local Plan during the Hold Direction, the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) asked Stevenage Borough Council to prepare an Area Action Plan (AAP) for Stevenage Station Gateway Area to support Policy TC4: Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area. This is a limited area within the wider Stevenage Central area.

1.10 The production of the AAP came about as a result of discussions with MHCLG following the Holding Direction placed on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan. The Council was instructed to produce an Area Action Plan for the railway station area (within the TC3 and TC4 Major Opportunity Areas designated in the Local Plan) to detail policies for an extended and regenerated train station and surrounding development opportunities. It also acts as a catalyst for developers interested in supporting this key part of the Plan.

1.11 The latest version of the AAP, the Preferred Options Report produced January 2023, discussed key concepts and high level, strategic options and scenarios around Stevenage Railway Station, in order to enable potential future development that could take place. It did not suggest specific proposals for Stevenage Railway Station or relating to Lytton Way which would ultimately be subject to the planning application process.

1.12 In light of the need for a revised approach to updating and reviewing the Local Plan, officers considered their options to progress the AAP, in light of the need to review the Local Plan:

- Continue (as per the current Local Development Scheme but with revised timescales) to produce the final version of the AAP, consult and then submit to the Planning Inspectorate ahead of Examination in Public and anticipated adoption of the AAP, separate to the Local Plan Review.
- Combine the work already undertaken on the AAP with the emerging Local Plan Review and incorporate into one combined process up to Examination in Public and anticipated adoption of the revised Local Plan (including an updated Policy TC4 and / or new section on Opportunity Areas / Station Gateway Area).

1.13 Normal practice for the review of a Local Plan is to commence a partial review and update of a Local Plan, 5 years post adoption. It would be appropriate to incorporate the emerging Area Action Plan into this partial review. This approach would also provide opportunity for the review to bring the Local Plan up to date with wider drivers for change such as climate change, sustainable travel, health and wellbeing and digital engagement.

1.14 It was agreed with Counsel that there should be a two-stage process to reviewing the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, given the position the local authority finds itself regarding the age of the current Local Plan coming close to 5 years since adoption:

Stage 1: Local Plan – Review and Partial Update Stage 2: Local Plan – New Plan

1.15 The Stevenage Borough Council Executive agreed in July 2023 that officers could progress with undertaking a partial review and update of the Local Plan, which will incorporate the evidence gathered from the two rounds of consultation on the AAP. This will allow the evidence base already gathered through the two rounds of consultation to form an updated and much clearer policy direction for Policy TC4 of the Local Plan as well as potential other policies of the plan, in accordance with wider strategic updates and objectives, including the continued requirement to tackle the Climate Change agenda and promoting sustainable and active travel across the Borough.

1.16 This approach to review of the Stevenage Local Plan would be beneficial in meeting Government requirements to undertake a review by 2025, updating strategic elements.

1.17 We review the need for additional guidance continually. It is not a requirement for Supplementary Planning Documents to be included in the LDS but we are including details of a number of proposed SPDs in this updated LDS to ensure that developers are aware of what additional guidance will come into force in the short-medium term future.

What about the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)?

1.18 We adopted a Community Infrastructure Levy Charging Schedule. This was adopted by Council decision in January 2020 and we started implementing the CIL Charging Schedule on 1 April 2020. This means that any planning permission granted on or after 1 April 2020 is liable for a CIL charge. Money collected through CIL receipts will be used to fund much needed infrastructure within the borough.

1.19 Given the length of time since the CIL was originally implemented in April 2020, there is a need to undertake a review of CIL charging rates and land uses that command a CIL charge, to accord with changes in price indexation as well as changing development viability and practice.

1.20 It is not a requirement to include any timetable for implementing CIL in the LDS. However, the adoption of the CIL CS it is shown for completeness.

Will the timetable change again?

1.21 Timetables associated with Development Plan Documents and Local Development Documents are subject to change. However, as with any planning document requiring consultation and submission to the Planning Inspectorate for Examination, progress is dependent on the level of public consultation and the availability of Inspectors to run an independent public Examination. We will do our best to comply with the timetable but this is not always within our control.

What if I have other questions?

1.22 If you have questions about the contents of this Stevenage LDS or about the Local Plan, please address them to: Planning Policy Team Stevenage Borough Council SG1 1HN or e-mail Planning.Policy_SBC@stevenage.gov.uk

2 Stevenage Document Profiles

Stevenage Borough Local Plan (including Policies Map and Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan) Review and Partial Update

What is the subject of the document?	Sets out the vision, objectives, strategy, planning policies and proposals for the spatial development of Stevenage to 2031. Revised to account for key drivers of change since Local Plan adopted in May 2019 and incorporation of Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan – two rounds of consultation.
What geographical area does it cover?	Stevenage Borough
Is it a Development Plan Document (DPD)?	Yes
Key dates	
<i>Commencement of Review</i>	From September / October 2023
<i>Preparation (Regulation 18) Consultation</i>	June / July 2024
<i>Publication (Regulation 19) Consultation</i>	November 2024 – January 2025
<i>Submission to Government</i>	From Summer 2025
<i>Examination Hearing Sessions</i>	Autumn 2025
<i>Receipt of Inspector's Report</i>	Autumn 2025
<i>Adoption</i>	December 2025 / January 2026
Monitoring and review	Monitoring will be undertaken through Stevenage Borough Council's Annual Monitoring Reports. The Local Plan will be monitored and any timeline for a review will be published through an update to the LDS or the Council's AMR when appropriate.

Stevenage Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (Revised)

What is the subject of the document?	Sets out the CIL charge(s) that will apply to new development in Stevenage, including any differential rates to be applied. Review to bring in line with chargeable land uses and price index changes.
What geographical area does it cover?	Stevenage Borough
Is it a Development Plan Document (DPD)?	No
Key dates	
<i>Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule Consultation</i>	October / November 2024
<i>Draft Charging Schedule Consultation</i>	January / February 2025
<i>Submission to Government</i>	From Summer 2025
<i>Examination</i>	Autumn 2025
<i>Receipt of Inspector's Report</i>	Autumn 2025
<i>Adoption</i>	December 2025 / January 2026
<i>Implementation</i>	From January 2026
Monitoring and review	The CIL CS will be continually monitored in line with changes to relevant legislation and local circumstances.

Stevenage Statement of Community Involvement

What is the subject of the document?	Sets out standards and approaches (including the procedures, processes and timings) that will be used to involve stakeholders and residents with an interest in planning in the production of the Local Plan and development management decisions. A Statement of Community Involvement is not considered a Development Plan Document and is therefore not subject to examination.
What geographical area does it cover?	Stevenage Borough
Is it a Development Plan Document (DPD)?	No
Key dates	
<i>Commence work</i>	April 2025
<i>Publication</i>	June 2025
Monitoring and review	Monitored by Stevenage Borough Council every two years. Next review commences Spring 2027.

Supplementary Planning Documents

Parking SPD

What is the subject of the document?	<p>The adopted SPD sets requirements for vehicular and cycling parking spaces as part of new developments. It also sets requirements for disabled parking. The updated document will not be subject to examination.</p> <p>Revisions and improvements to be made to adopted SPD to account for changes in practice and key drivers of change since SPD adoption.</p>
What geographical area does it cover?	Stevenage Borough
Is it a Development Plan Document (DPD)?	No
Key dates	
<i>Commence work</i>	April 2024
<i>Public Consultation</i>	October / November 2024
<i>Adoption</i>	February 2025
Monitoring and review	Monitored by Stevenage Borough Council every five years.

The Impact of Development on Biodiversity SPD

What is the subject of the document?	<p>The adopted SPD set out the procedures for assessing, demonstrating, providing and, if required, funding a 10% net gain in biodiversity as part of new developments. This requirement was announced in the Environment Bill 2019 and has become a legal requirement of development in 2024.</p> <p>It was agreed in October 2024 that the SPD will be revoked as it has been effectively replaced by Government policy and guidance.</p>
What geographical area does it cover?	Stevenage Borough
Is it a Development Plan Document (DPD)?	No
Key dates	
<i>Revocation</i>	November 2024

Developer Contributions SPD

What is the subject of the document?	The SPD sets out all potential contributions that developers may be expected to pay as part of Section 106 legal agreements if developing land in Stevenage. Revisions and improvements to be made to adopted SPD to account for changes in practice and working protocols since SPD adoption.
What geographical area does it cover?	Stevenage Borough
Is it a Development Plan Document (DPD)?	No
Key dates	
Commence work	April 2024
Public Consultation	October / November 2024
Adoption	February 2025
Monitoring and review	Monitored by Stevenage Borough Council every five years.

Design Guidance SPD

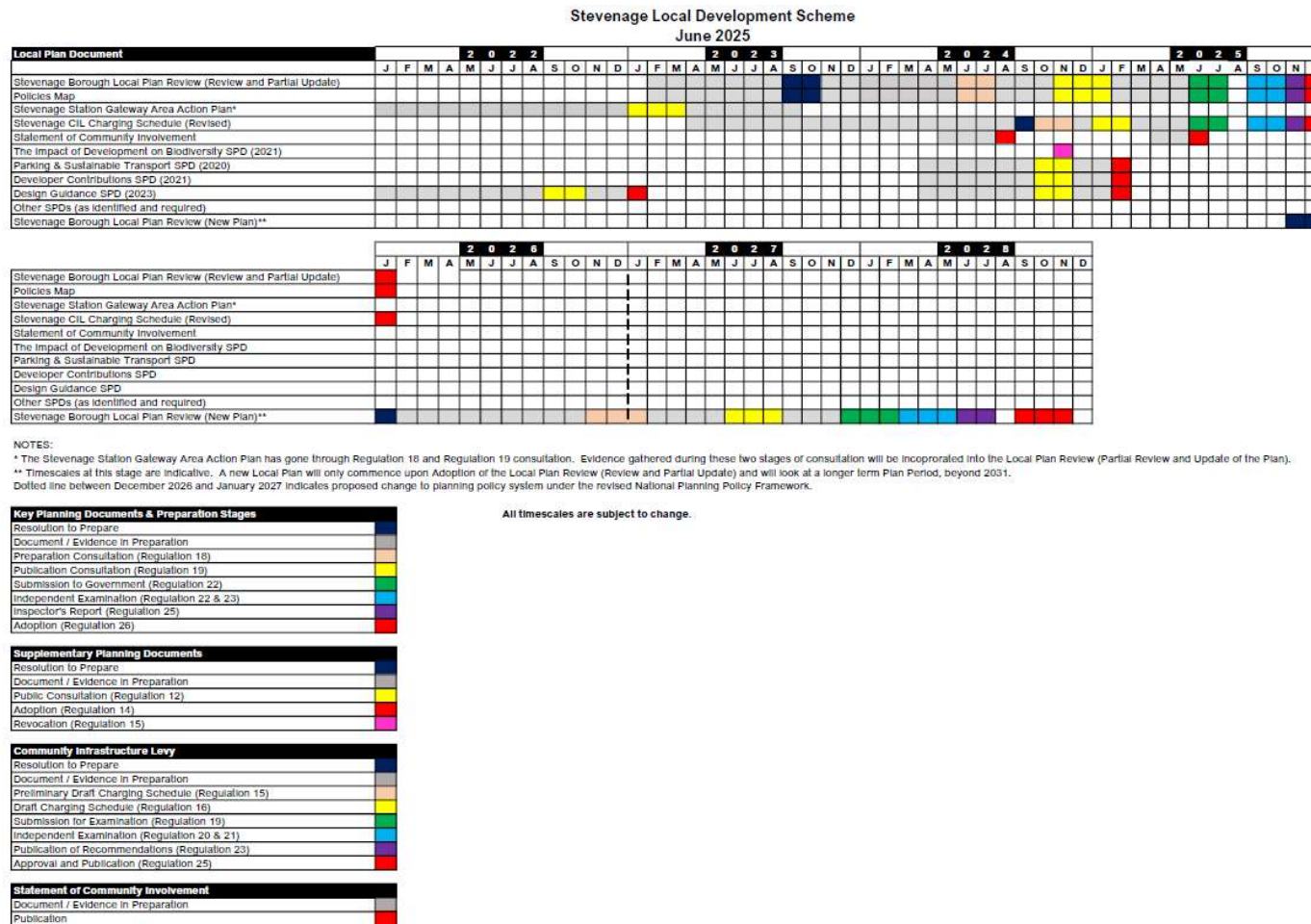
What is the subject of the document?	<p>The SPD builds on the National Design Guide to demonstrate how local context should be embedded into future development as well as promoting the inclusion of principles to reduce climate change and to promote the health and well-being of residents.</p> <p>Revisions and improvements to be made to adopted SPD to account for changes in development practice and key drivers of change since SPD adoption.</p>
What geographical area does it cover?	Stevenage Borough
Is it a Development Plan Document (DPD)?	No
Key dates	
Commence work	April 2024
Public Consultation	October / November 2024
Adoption	February 2025
Monitoring and review	Monitored by Stevenage Borough Council every five years.

Stevenage Borough Local Plan (New Plan)

What is the subject of the document?	Sets out the vision, objectives, strategy, planning policies and proposals for the spatial development of Stevenage beyond 2031.
What geographical area does it cover?	Stevenage Borough
Is it a Development Plan Document (DPD)?	Yes
Key dates	
<i>Commencement of Review</i>	From November 2025
<i>Preparation (Regulation 18) Consultation</i>	November 2026 / January 2027
<i>Publication (Regulation 19) Consultation</i>	June / August 2027
<i>Submission to Government</i>	December 2027 / February 2028
<i>Examination Hearing Sessions</i>	March / May 2028
<i>Receipt of Inspector's Report</i>	June / July 2028
<i>Adoption</i>	September / November 2028
Monitoring and review	Monitoring will be undertaken through Stevenage Borough Council's Annual Monitoring Reports. The Local Plan will be monitored and any timeline for a review will be published through an update to the LDS or the Council's AMR when appropriate.

3 Local Plan and Community Infrastructure Levy Timetable

Local Development Scheme Gantt Chart





This page is intentionally left blank



Contents

1 Introduction	3
2 Summary of consultation activities	7
3 Planning Policy	8
- What is Planning Policy	8
- The Local Plan - key stages of preparation	9
- Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) – key stages of preparation	10
- Community Infrastructure Levy	11
- Statutory consultation requirements	11
- Who we will consult	12
- Consultation Methods	12
- Equalities, Diversity and Data Protection	14
- How we will use the comments we receive	14
4 Neighbourhood Planning	16
5 Planning Applications	18
- Pre-Application Stage	18
- Application Stage	18
- How we will use the comments we receive	18
- Post Application Stage	20
- Planning Aid	21
- Complaints procedure	21
Appendices	23
- Appendix A: Key Contacts and Information Sources	23
- Appendix B: Stakeholders to be involved in the development of the local planning policy	24
- Appendix C: Stakeholders to be involved in Development Management	27
- Appendix D: Statutory publicity requirements for applications for planning permission and listed building consent	31

1 Introduction

What is the Statement of Community Involvement?

1 This Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) is a statutory document and is a requirement under The Planning and Compulsory Act 2004¹. It sets out how Stevenage Borough Council will involve the community and other stakeholders in the preparation, alteration and review of local planning policy and decisions on planning applications. The council recognises the importance of community engagement in the planning process and to make the best-informed decisions we need to hear from those in the communities who will feel the impact of development.

2 The SCI states our approach to engaging with anyone who may have an interest in development that is happening around them. This new SCI will improve the way we engage with our communities in the planning process. Regularly reviewing the SCI allows for its effectiveness to be monitored and for amendments to be made to incorporate any policy changes, and to increase levels of public involvement, where possible.

3 Whilst some requirements for consultation and engagement are set out in national legislation, the Council is committed to going beyond these statutory requirements and aims to get as many people involved in the plan preparation process as possible. The SCI aims to frontload this process by ensuring that the community is involved at an early stage. This document sets out:

- Why consultation is important
- What will be consulted on
- Who will be consulted
- When consultation and engagement will take place
- How your views will be considered

The SCI should help to ensure that all consultation activities are carefully planned to enable a useful and effective outcome, which can be fed directly into the planning process, offer everybody the opportunity to get involved, and ensure that resources are used efficiently. It also allows for monitoring to take place on the effectiveness of consultation activities and for new ideas and approaches to be added, where required.

¹ Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (legislation.gov.uk) s18

If further information is required, please contact the Planning Policy Team:

Email: Planning.Policy_SBC@stevenage.gov.uk

Address: The Planning Policy Team,
Planning & Regulation, Stevenage Borough Council,
Daneshill House, Danestrete, Stevenage, Herts SG1 1HN

Phone: 01438 242242

Customer Service Team Webpage: www.stevenage.gov.uk/contact-us

What is Town Planning and why should we get involved?

4 Planning helps to shape the places people live, work and relax, by guiding development to appropriate locations, protecting important assets, ensuring development is of a high quality and ensuring that adequate infrastructure is available to meet its needs. Planning affects everyone in some way, so it is important that communities understand the process fully and are given the opportunity to get involved. Town Planners have to balance how they will meet social, economic and environmental objectives.

5 A key objective of the town and country planning system, is to strengthen community and stakeholder involvement in the planning and development process. By involving the whole community, a locally-based strategy can be developed that seeks to meet the aspirations and expectations of the widest possible range of residents, employees, communities and organisations.

6 Getting involved in the planning system at an early stage is essential to shaping the decisions which are made. There are three key functions of town planning that you can be involved in, which are discussed in greater detail throughout this document:

- **Determining planning applications** (Development Management) - decisions on whether or not a proposed development should receive planning permission, based on adopted planning policies and other considerations. Anyone can view and make comments on a planning application.
- **Plan making** (Planning Policy) - which sets out policies to guide development and planning decisions over time; This includes the Local Plan and Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs), such as the Design Guide and Parking Standards SPD, as well as the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL). Decisions on planning applications are made in line with local planning documents, so getting involved in the production of these is essential.
- **Neighbourhood planning** - this is a way for local communities to take the lead on preparing planning policies for their areas. Once produced, a neighbourhood plan would sit alongside the Local Plan and would also need to be considered when assessing planning applications.

7 Not all forms of development require planning permission from the council as some types of development, such as small extensions to the rear of some residential properties, or some changes of use, are covered by 'permitted development rights'². For development proposals in Stevenage that do require planning permission, the council is responsible for consulting with the community and deciding whether the development should go ahead based on the policies in the development plan.

How our approach to community involvement has developed

8 , The Council have reviewed the SCI since the Local Plan was adopted in 2019, but since then we are working on a new Local Plan, and the way we interact with stakeholders and communities has changed. New technologies have emerged, such as online engagement tools and social media channels, which can help us reach out to more people.

9 Face to face meetings will not be replaced, but the Covid-19 pandemic has enabled new digital ways of involving people in the planning process, which we want to build on for future engagement with our communities, in addition to traditional consultation methods.

The corporate policy context

10 As a Co-operative Council, Stevenage Borough Council is committed to ensuring local people are at the heart of the decisions we make as an authority. This means avoiding top-down approaches and enabling and encouraging local people to get involved and have their say through proactive and innovative consultation methods and close working relationships.

11 The Council's corporate strategy highlights clear objectives for consultation and engagement. These include::

- Ensure a proactive approach to consultation and engagement
- Take advantage of new technologies and ideas to improve consultation effectiveness and to broaden the opportunities for people to get involved
- Ensure all members of the community have the opportunity to get involved, fulfilling our duties under the Equality Act 2010
- Ensure appropriate consultation timescales are used
- Provide feedback about how we have used the comments made and any next steps
- Ensure greater co-ordination between council services
- Ensure the Council will fulfill our duty under the Data Protection Act 2018 and General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR).

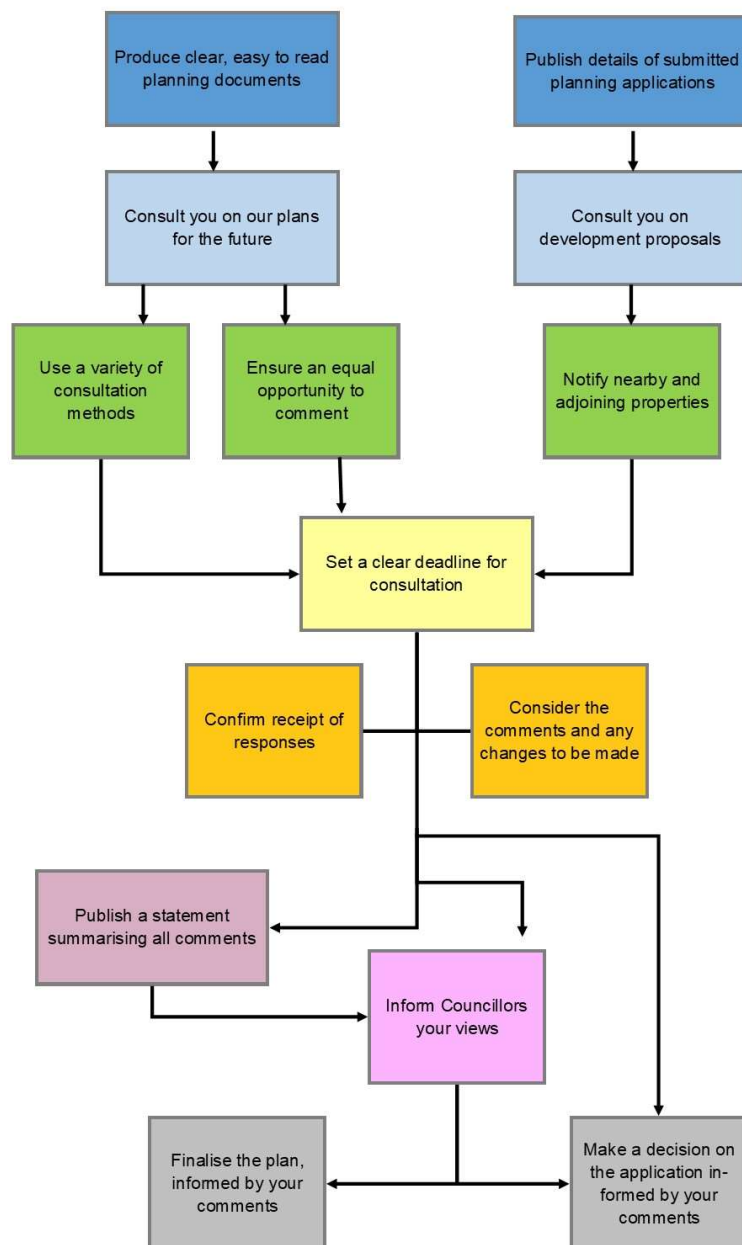
² As set out in [The Town and Country Planning \(General Permitted Development\) \(England\) Order 2015](#)

12 These objectives not only apply to local residents, but also to local businesses, retailers, organisations, and to those people who work or choose to spend time in the Borough. It is important that we reach out to all members of the community in order to achieve the true community-led approach we are seeking.

13 This SCI seeks to ensure these objectives are embedded within the planning process and that consultation is undertaken effectively throughout the process. We will work with other departments to ensure that a consistent approach is taken to consultation. Where, appropriate, we may also link our public consultation with events and activities organised by other council departments and vice versa.

2 Summary of consultation activities

A simple process map to show the steps of our consultation process:



3 Planning Policy

What is planning policy?

14 Planning policy shapes the long-term vision for development in Stevenage. It sets out plans and policies against which planning applications are determined and helps give the local context for making decisions. Planning policy is set out at national, regional, local and neighbourhood levels. These different levels of the plan are designed to work together to achieve the goals of the plan while also taking into account the unique characteristics of a local area.

National policy	The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's planning policies and how they expect them to be applied.
Regional Policy	The Minerals and Waste Plan is prepared by Hertfordshire County Council and sets out the vision, objectives and overall spatial strategy for minerals and waste planning in Hertfordshire.
Local policy	Stevenage's local plan sets out the framework for long term growth in the Borough. The local plan guides planning decisions in the area. Supplementary Planning Documents provide additional detail on the policies in the local plan.
Neighbourhood policy	Neighbourhood Plans are produced by neighbourhood forums and community councils and address policy issues at a neighbourhood level.

15 Local Planning Authorities are required to produce local development documents, which set out the spatial strategy for the Borough and provide the basis on which planning applications are determined. There are two types of local development documents:

- **Development Plan Documents (DPDs) - The Local Plan.** This sets out policies to control land use, including the allocation of sites for particular types of development. It covers the whole of the Borough.
- **Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)** - these provide further details on policies within the Development Plan Documents (the Local Plan).

16 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012 sets out the legal requirements for consultation and engagement during the preparation of local development documents. The Localism Act 2011 sets out an additional requirement for local authorities and other prescribed bodies to actively engage on cross-boundary/strategic matters, known as the Duty to Co-operate.

17 The following chapters explain these requirements in more detail, but also set out additional consultation we will aim to undertake in order to ensure more meaningful engagement is achieved. The Duty to Co-operate should be ongoing through all stages of the plan-making process, as such it is not referenced specifically in the text below.

The Local Plan - key stages of preparation

Stage	Details
1. Evidence gathering/scoping	<p>Evidence will be gathered/produced to identify the key issues the plan needs to deal with. An up-to-date and comprehensive evidence base is required to justify policies within the plan.</p> <p>Early consultation may be undertaken to ensure the correct issues have been identified. This is not a statutory requirement.</p>
2. Public participation - preparation stage (Regulation 18)	<p>The draft plan will be prepared using the evidence gathered at Stage 1 and the results of any initial consultation undertaken. It will set out the main issues to be covered within the plan and the options for meeting the needs and requirements of the Borough. An accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (SA), which assesses the plan's social, economic and environmental impacts, will also be consulted upon. The initial draft of the Local Plan will be published for formal, statutory consultation (see para 17 below).</p>
3. Consideration of responses	<p>Comments received in response to the consultation will be considered by the Council. Once processed, all comments will be made publicly available.</p> <p>The Local Plan will be revised, where necessary, to take into account comments received and any objections raised at this stage, to create a final draft of the plan for further consultation.</p>
4. Public participation - publication stage (Regulation 19)	<p>Formal, statutory consultation (see para 17 below) on the final draft of the Local Plan and its accompanying Sustainability Appraisal (SA).</p>
5. Submission to Secretary of State (Regulation 22)	<p>The Local Plan is formally submitted to the Secretary of State, along with the responses made at Stage 4 (above). It is accompanied by other 'submission documents' including the Sustainability Appraisal, Policies Map, and a statement summarising all consultation undertaken when producing the plan.</p>
6. Examination of the plan by Independent Planning Inspector (Regulation 24)	<p>Following submission, an independent inspector is appointed by the Planning Inspectorate, who will be responsible for assessing the submitted plan and determining whether it is acceptable (or 'sound'). The Inspector will consider the consultation responses received. Generally this stage will involve a Public Examination, where people who have made comments on the plan previously are invited to discuss their concerns around the table, in front of the Inspector, or to submit further statements. The Planning Inspector is in charge of these sessions and will determine what is discussed. These sessions are public, so anyone can come and observe.</p> <p>The Planning Inspector is likely to recommend a number of changes to the plan (known as Main Modifications), to make the plan sound.</p>
7. Consultation on Main Modifications	<p>Consultation is required on any Main Modifications recommended. The scope of this consultation will need to be agreed by the Inspector, but will include the minimum statutory requirements in para 17 below.</p>

Stage	Details
8. Adoption	The Inspector will consider any responses made to the consultation and then issue a report to the Council containing his/her recommendations relating to the plan. The Council will then decide whether to adopt the plan, with those recommendations, or not.

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) - key stages of preparation

Stage	Details
1. Evidence gathering/scoping	<p>Evidence will be gathered/produced to identify the key issues the SPD needs to deal with.</p> <p>Early consultation may be undertaken to ensure the correct issues have been identified. This is not a statutory requirement.</p>
2. Public participation (Regulation 12)	The draft SPD will be prepared using the evidence gathered at Stage 1 and the results of any initial consultation undertaken. This will be published for formal, statutory consultation (see para 17 below). Sustainability Appraisal (SA) is not required for SPDs.
3. Consideration of responses	<p>Comments received in response to the consultation will be considered by the Council. Once processed, all comments will be made publicly available.</p> <p>The SPD will be revised, where necessary, to take into account comments received.</p>
4. Adoption of the SPD (Regulation 14)	Adoption of the SPD by the Borough Council

Community Infrastructure Levy

18 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge introduced by the Planning Act 2008, as a tool for local authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area. It allows local authorities to raise funds from developers undertaking new building projects. The money can be used to fund a wide range of infrastructure that is needed as a result of development taking place.

19 Key stages in the preparation of CIL:

Stage	Details
1. Evidence gathering/scoping	Evidence will be gathered/produced.
2. Public participation - Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule (Regulation 15)	The Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule will be prepared using the evidence gathered at Stage 1. This will be published for formal, statutory consultation (see para 17 below).
3. Consideration of responses	Comments received in response to the consultation will be considered by the Council. Once processed, all comments will be made publicly available.
4. Public participation - Draft Charging Schedule (Regulation 17)	The Draft Charging Schedule will be finalised, taking into account the comments received. This will be published for formal, statutory consultation (see para 17 below).
5. Submission to independent examiner (Regulation 19)	The Charging Schedule is submitted to an independent examiner, along with the consultation responses received at Stage 4 and other statutory submission documents.
6. Examination (Regulation 21)	Following submission, an independent examiner is appointed to assess the Charging Schedule and determine whether it is acceptable. The Inspector will consider the consultation responses received. Generally this stage will involve hearing sessions. Anyone who has responded to the consultation at Stage 4 has a right to be heard by the examiner. If the Council makes changes to the Charging Schedule following Stage 4, other people can also request to be heard. The examiner is in charge of these sessions and will determine what is discussed. These sessions are public, so anyone can come and observe.
7. Adoption (Regulation 25)	The examiner will issue a report to the Council setting out his/her recommendations. The Council will then decide whether to adopt the Charging Schedule.

Statutory consultation requirements

20 For local development documents, the following statutory consultation requirements must be met;

Local Plan	SPDs and CIL
Minimum of 6 weeks	Minimum of 4 weeks
Make consultation documents available on our website, Make consultation documents available on our website, in libraries and in the council offices	Make consultation documents available on our website, Make consultation documents available on our website, in libraries and in the council offices
Send notifications to consultation bodies and those on our consultation database	Send notifications to consultation bodies and those on our consultation database

21 We will seek to ensure a wide range of responses are achieved by going above and beyond the minimum requirements and using a variety of consultation methods at all stages of the process. These methods are discussed in more detail in para 22 - 23 of this statement.

Who we will consult

22 National planning legislation requires local authorities to meet a minimum level of community involvement and specify a number of organisations which must be consulted if the Council considers that they will be affected, known as statutory consultees and general consultation bodies.

23 In addition to meeting its statutory obligations, the Council is committed to ensuring that local groups, organisations and individuals are provided with the best possible opportunity to become involved in the preparation of local development documents. The consultation methods in para 25 - 27 set out the ways in which we seek to do this.

24

We also currently have a database of interested parties who have expressed an interest in planning policy consultations. If you would like to be added to our database to hear of future consultations, please sign up by email to: **PlanningPolicy_SBC@stevenage.gov.uk**

When enrolling on the planning consultation database please note that Stevenage will capture and store some personal details. We will use this information to ensure that you are consulted on planning policy issues across the borough. These details will be kept by Stevenage Borough Council and will only be used for the purpose set out above. Your personal details will remain with us until you wish to no longer be consulted.

Consultation methods

25 Using a variety of different consultation methods and techniques can help to ensure our consultations are understood and are easy to get involved in for as many people as possible, from an early stage. With technologies improving, and changing the way many people communicate, we seek to ensure our methods are up-to-date and make use of all of the opportunities available to us, whilst still ensuring our consultations are available to those who are not familiar with new technologies.

26 *In recent years*, the way we interact with communities has changed. New technologies have emerged, such as online engagement tools and social media channels, which can help us reach out to more people. During and after the Covid-19 pandemic we implemented new digital ways of involving people in the planning process, which we want to build on for future engagement with our communities, in addition to traditional consultation methods.

27 We will take a flexible approach to consultation, depending on the consultation activity being undertaken. We may choose to use some, or all, of the methods below, as well as looking for alternatives, where they might be appropriate:

Email Alerts from Consultation database	Emails and reminders are sent to people who have registered an interest in hearing about planning consultations and statutory consultations. Contact details are provided to offer a direct link to the Planning Policy Team.
Council Website	We will publicise, update and provide dedicated consultation pages to allow easy access to documentation and supporting information / evidence.
Social Media	We will publicise consultations and any planned events on social media platforms Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.
Local Media	We may promote consultations using local newspapers, online media and newsletters in both hard and digital formats.
Accessibility of documents	As well as using online platforms, hard copies of consultation documents will be available to view at Council offices and local libraries.
Community events and presentations	We may give presentations and attend community events to promote our consultation activity within the community for example attending Stevenage Day.
Council Meetings	We have a number of existing public meetings and committees that happen on a regular basis. For example, Full Council, Council Sub committees, Scrutiny committees. Where appropriate we may take our consultation activities and emerging plans to these meetings to raise awareness or seek feedback or approval
Focus groups and workshops	Where appropriate we may invite stakeholders and partners to discuss a specific topic or consultation.
Using our networks	Consultations are shared among wider council departments who can promote it further among their contacts.
Online consultation tools	We will explore using new online consultation tools where we see necessary to help widen the reach of our online activity.

Equalities, Diversity and Data Protection

28 The Equality Act (2010) defines nine 'protected characteristics': age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. We will aim to ensure that these characteristics do not affect people's ability to respond to our consultations and to have their voice heard.

29 The Council recognises that some groups are harder to engage with than others. In more specific terms, these hard-to-reach groups include: people whose first language is not English, people with disabilities, children and young people, older people, ethnic minorities, asylum seekers, gypsies and travellers, religious groups, the homeless, substance abusers and people who have experienced domestic violence (this list is not intended to be exhaustive). Such groups may not be engaged by, or may be unable or generally unwilling to engage in, traditional consultation methods.

30 We will consider the barriers faced by these groups and try to overcome these by using alternative methods of consultation, or by asking the affected groups / individuals how they would like to be involved. We will use the expertise and networks of communication already established throughout different areas of the Council to engage such groups. Where appropriate, the Planning Policy team will hold meetings and host presentations with such groups at a mutually convenient time and venue.

31 The Council will comply with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and UK Data Protection Act 2018 with regard to the rights of individuals and personal information held on our systems. A data protection guide and how we protect your data can be found on our website at: www.stevenage.gov.uk/about-the-council/access-to-information/data-protection-act .

Enabling people with disabilities to access planning documents

32 We aim to ensure that the Stevenage Borough Council website is accessible and usable to as many people as possible. It has been designed to conform with Level AA of the [W3C's Web Content Accessibility Guidelines](#), the minimum standard required by the UK Government. Our full accessibility measures are listed on our website at: www.stevenage.gov.uk/accessibility . To assist users, the following features can be used: contrast and text size manipulation, navigation through the use of just a keyboard and enable screen readers on most pages on the site.

How we will use the comments we receive

33 Following any consultation or engagement stage, we will analyse and take into consideration any submitted comments or representations. We can only consider comments that are relevant to the scope of the consultation document. Comments not directly related to the consultation will be directed to the relevant council department, and will be followed up as appropriate.

34 Comments received during public consultation will always be made public. The Council will however, redact certain information such as residents' addresses and signatures consistent with our obligations under the Data Protection Act 2018 (and any subsequent amendments).

35 Consultations received outside of the specified consultation dates will not normally be taken into account. When consultees are struggling to meet the consultation deadline, they should contact the planning policy team to see whether a late submission will be accepted.

36 A Statement of Consultation will be produced which contains an overview of the consultation activities undertaken, a summary of the responses received and how we have taken these into account when producing the final version of the document. A copy of the statement will be placed on the Council's website and will be made available to view at our Councils' offices / libraries. The responses will also be reported to the Council's Executive, along with recommendations for future action.

4 Neighbourhood Planning

37 Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to shape the development and growth of their local area. It provides the opportunity for local people/businesses to choose where they want new homes, jobs and facilities to be located, what development should look like and what infrastructure is required, and grant planning permission for the new buildings they want to see go ahead.

38 A neighbourhood plan must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the Council's development plan. Once approved, the neighbourhood plan will have the same legal status as the Council's own plan. Policies and guidance set out in a neighbourhood plan will be used by local authorities when considering planning applications within that area.

39 There are specific processes that need to be followed, as briefly set out below. Please do not let the process put you off, if you need help understanding anything, we can offer support and guidance. There are lots of other sources of advice and support too. Further information can be found on the planning policy webpage:
www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy

Stage	Details
1. Creation of Neighbourhood Forum (Regulation 8)	A group or organisation must apply to the local planning authority to be designated as a neighbourhood forum (a forum application). This group must include a minimum of 21 individuals who live or work in the area, or are elected members. They must submit this to the Council for approval.
2. Public participation (Regulation 9)	The Council are required to publicise the application and carry out public consultation for a minimum of 6 weeks. The Council will publish the outcome of the application on its website and notify relevant stakeholders.
3. Pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14)	A draft neighbourhood plan is prepared by the neighbourhood forum group. The group must carry out public consultation on the draft plan for a minimum of 6 weeks. A copy of the draft plan must also be sent to the Council.
4. Submission to Council (Regulation 15)	The forum takes into account the consultation responses received before preparing a final version of the plan, along with a consultation statement setting out how the responses have been dealt with. This is then submitted to the Council.
5. Publication consultation (Regulation 16)	The Council must carry out public consultation for a minimum of 6 weeks.
6. Submission to examiner (Regulation 17)	The Council appoints an independent examiner to examine the plan. The plan is submitted to the examiner for consideration, along with the responses of the consultation (at Stage 5).
7. Independent examination (Regulation 18)	<p>The examination is likely to be carried out through written representations, but a hearing sessions(s) can be held if required. A written report will be issued by the examiner. The report will conclude that either the draft neighbourhood plan should proceed to a referendum (with or without modifications) or that the draft neighbourhood plan should be refused. The Council will publicise the report.</p> <p>The Council must also be satisfied that the plan meets the legal requirements.</p>

Stage	Details
8. Referendum	A referendum is then held, in the same way in which a local election would be. The Council is required to publicise the referendum.
9. Adoption	If a majority vote is gained for the plan (over 50% of those voting, the Council will adopt the plan.

39 If you are interested in being involved in preparing a neighbourhood plan, we would suggest talking to your local Ward Councillor in the first instance.

5 Planning Applications

40 Planning applications for development can shape the character of the borough and the areas where people live, work and spend their leisure time. In 2022/23, the Council determined over 400 planning applications ranging from household extensions, listed building applications, to major new housing estates and business premises.

41 Opportunities exist for informing and consulting the community on development proposals and planning applications at both application stage and after a decision has been made.

Pre-application discussions

42 National planning policy supports efficient and effective early community engagement and has the potential to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the planning system. Engaging residents, councillors and other local stakeholders (e.g Hertfordshire County Council) at the earliest possible stage in the schemes' development process, provides an opportunity for them to shape their place and allow developers the benefit of local knowledge.

43 Pre-application engagement can:

- identify opportunities for scheme improvements at a stage when a proposal can still be modified, resulting in a higher quality development;
- significantly increase the likelihood of gaining a positive recommendation by our planning officers;
- help to communicate the vision and objectives for the area;
- develop a shared understanding of constraints, opportunities and context;
- agree information requirements and identify schemes which are unlikely to be supported;
- establish timescales and explain administrative processes; and
- reduce delays through early engagement of key parties.

44 Costs for pre application are available on our website:

www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/development-management

Application stage

45 Once an application has been lodged with the council, it will be registered and checked to ensure that it contains all the information necessary to be determined, a process known as 'validation'. Once validated, it will be included on the weekly list of received applications and made public. The public register, which includes all active planning applications, is available to view on the Council's website. Copies of applications can also be viewed at the Council's offices

46 The council is required to publicise planning applications in accordance with The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, as follows:

- The properties directly adjoining the application site will be notified of an application by letter from the council and/or a notice will be posted on, or close to, the application site. These communications will contain details of the planning application proposal and information on where plans (and any supporting information) can be viewed. They will also explain how to make comments about the application.
- For certain types of application, such as applications for major development, an advertisement will be placed in the local newspaper.
- For certain types of planning applications, the council is also required to consult specific organisations and groups. A list of the statutory consultees, and details of the regulation requirements, is set out in Appendix B.
- Occasionally, for larger proposals, the Council may decide to issue a press release to communicate proposals more widely. The need for this will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- For Council land sale applications, the Council as Local Planning Authority will consult specific ward members, properties directly adjoining and located opposite the land sale application site will be notified of an application by letter from the council and a notice will be posted on, or close to, the land sale application site. These communications will contain details of the Council land sale planning application proposal and information on where plans (and any supporting information) can be viewed. They will also explain how to make comments about the application.

47 Applicants are also encouraged to engage in their own pre-application consultations with neighbours and/or the wider community prior to submitting a planning application. Further information on how to go about such community consultations can be sought from the Council's Development Management team.

48 From time to time, planning applications are revised after they have been submitted. Often this is in response to concerns raised by council officers or matters raised in objections. In these cases, where considered necessary, the council will re-consult those people originally notified of the application in order for them to be given an opportunity to comment on the amended design.

49 All applications for major development and applications made by the Council itself are determined by councillors via the Planning and Development Committee. The Planning and Development Committee also determine applications where an application has received more than a threshold number of objections (the thresholds are set out in the Council's constitution). In these cases, the council's Development Management officers will prepare a report for the Committee that outlines the proposal and the main issues for consideration, with a recommendation as to whether approval should be given.

50 Decisions on most minor and householder applications are made by the Assistant Director for Planning and Regulation, under powers delegated by the Planning and Development Committee. However, any councillor may request, under the 'call-in' procedure, that a particular application is decided by the Planning and Development Committee, if they consider there to be sound reasons for doing so. Councillors have 28 days from the date of receipt of an application to request that it be considered by the Planning and Development Committee and the councillor is required to set out their reasons for doing so.

51 The Secretary of State also has the power to call-in planning applications. If this happens, the council will provide copies of all correspondence to the Secretary of State. Objectors will be notified of the call-in and given the chance to comment directly to the Secretary of State.

How we will use the comments we receive

52 All written comments received by the council will be acknowledged in writing. At the end of the consultation period all responses will be considered. Officers will not usually respond directly to any questions raised by members of the public.

53 The Council is required by law to determine planning applications in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This means that comments may not always be reflected in changes being made to an application or the ultimate decision. However, the Assistant Director for Planning and Regulation and/or The Planning and Development Committee will always take into account all comments before making a decision on an application.

54 If the application is to be determined by the Planning and Development Committee, anyone who made comments on the application will be notified in writing of the date, time and venue of the meeting where it will be determined. Any person who lodged an objection to a planning application may apply to speak against the proposal at the Committee meeting. If any objector elects to speak to the Committee, then a similar right will be granted to the applicant, his or her agent, and members of the public who support the application. Each side may address the Committee for a maximum of 3 minutes and if more than one person from either side wishes to speak, then a representative should be nominated to express their combined views. In exceptional circumstances and upon request, the Chairman of the Planning and Development Committee may allow more than one representative from each side or other interested parties to speak.

Post-application stage

55 After a decision has been made on an application, the Council will place notice of the decision and the officer's report on the public register, which can be viewed on the Council's website. Decisions also appear on the weekly list of decisions. If the application was determined at Planning and Development Committee, a list of decisions taken at the meeting and the minutes of the meeting will also be placed on the Council's website.

56 Where an applicant is unhappy with the council's decision, they have the right to appeal. Applicants must lodge an appeal with the Planning Inspectorate who will determine its validity before initiating proceedings and setting a start date. Where an appeal is accepted, the council will notify all relevant statutory consultees and those who submitted comments of the appeal and how to make representations (where applicable) and then again once the Inspectorate has made a decision. Further information on appeal procedures can be viewed at www.gov.uk/appeal-planning-inspectorate.

Planning Aid

57 Planning Aid England (PAE) provides planning advice and support to help individuals and communities engage with the planning system and get involved in planning their local area. PAE is built on the principle that everyone should have access to the planning system, regardless of their ability to pay. The services are delivered by a range of volunteer members of the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI). PAE is separate from both central and local government and provides completely independent and impartial planning advice.

58 Planning Aid England can be contacted via their website at:
www.planningaid.co.uk/hc/en-us

Complaints procedure

Customer complaints

59 If you are not happy with the service you have received from the council, you should contact the Planning Team in the first instance. However, if you are dissatisfied with the response, you can make a formal complaint through the Council's Complaint Procedure. There are 2 stages to the complaint procedure. These are:

Stage 1

We will:

- Try to resolve the issue the first time you contact us.
- Send you an acknowledgement with a target response date within 5 working days.
- Respond to your complaint in full within 10 working days. If we need more time to investigate, we'll contact you to let you know.
- If we've made a mistake, then we'll apologise, explain what happened and let you know what we are doing to put things right.

Stage 2

- If you are not satisfied with our response at Stage 1, you can escalate it to Stage 2 by getting in contact within 15 working days.
- You will need to tell us why you remain dissatisfied and the outcome you are looking for.
- We'll send you acknowledgement with a target response date within 5 working days.
- Your complaint will be reviewed by a senior manager.
- You will receive a full written response within 20 working days. If we need more time to investigate, we'll contact you to let you know.
- If you're not happy with the Stage 2 response you can take your complaint to one of the Ombudsman services. We will advise you who to contact and how to do this.

60 You can also read our [complaints policy](http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/compliments-and-complaints/complaints-policy) at www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/compliments-and-complaints/complaints-policy

61 The Ombudsmen Services investigate complaints of injustice arising from misadministration by Local Government and certain other bodies. The Ombudsmen can investigate complaints about how the council has done something. But they cannot question what a council has done simply because someone does not agree with it. For further information, please visit our website: www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/compliments-and-complaints .

62 It is important to note that the Ombudsman does not deal with planning issues and decisions, only the process that the council has been through in dealing with a complaint. An Inspector's decision on a planning application can only be challenged through the High Court via a 'judicial review', which must be lodged within 6 weeks of a decision being made. This would challenge the way in which a decision was made and whether it was lawful, not the decision itself.

63 Taking a case to judicial review is an expensive process and, if you are unsuccessful costs could well be awarded against you, so you are strongly recommended to seek legal advice if you are considering this course of action. If the High Court upholds the challenge, a different Inspector will reconsider the appeal avoiding the mistake, but it is possible the outcome will be the same. For further information on this process, please visit the Planning Aid website www.planningaid.co.uk/hc/en-us .

Appendix A - Key Contacts and Information Sources:

Key contact details

Email alerts:

- Sign up to our Planning Policy Consultation database. This database receives notifications on new planning policy document consultations. Please email Planning.Policy_SBC@Stevenage.gov.uk to be placed on the consultation list.

Webpages:

- Latest information on Stevenage's planning policy framework: www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy
- Current Planning Policy consultations: Current and recent consultations www.stevenage.gov.uk/have-your-say/planning-policy-consultations
- Planning application advice: www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/development-management
- Current planning and other related applications: Search and comment on planning applications - www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/development-management/find-a-planning-application
- Planning Enforcement: www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning/planning-enforcement

Contact by email:

- Planning Policy can be contacted at Planning.Policy_SBC@stevenage.gov.uk
- Planning Applications can be contacted at Planning@stevenage.gov.uk
- Community Infrastructure Levy / S106 team can be contacted at cil@stevenage.gov.uk

Stevenage Borough Council Customer Service Centre

Alternatively, please contact the Council's Customer Service Centre on 01438 242242 and your request will be logged and passed over to the Planning Department for one of our Technical Support Team or Planning Officers to contact you about your planning query.

Appendix B: Stakeholders to be involved in the development of local planning policy

Please note that these lists refer to successor bodies where re-organisation occurs.

Statutory Consultees

The specific consultation bodies which the Regulations³ require the Council to consult are:

- Community and Parish Councils (Including Aston Parish Meeting, Datchworth Parish Council, Graveley Parish Council, Great Ashby Community Council, Knebworth Parish Council, Langley Parish Council, St Ippolyts Parish Council, Walkern Parish Council, Weston Parish Council and Wymondley Parish Council)
- East Hertfordshire District Council
- Hertfordshire Constabulary
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Marine Management Organisation*
- Natural England
- NHS Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- North Hertfordshire District Council
- Relevant communications companies
- Relevant electricity and gas companies
- Relevant sewerage and water undertakers
- The Coal Authority*
- The Environment Agency
- The Highways Agency
- Network Rail Infrastructure Limited (company number 2904587)
- The Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England (Historic England)
- Homes England and the Regulator of Social Housing
- The Secretary of State for Transport

3 The Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012

*Unlikely to be relevant for Stevenage Borough Council.

General Consultation Bodies

The Regulations also require the Council to consult general consultation bodies, where appropriate. For Stevenage, these include:

- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Community/resident groups
- Developers, house builders, the development industry and their agents
- Local business groups (including local business forums)
- Local community action groups
- Local community transport groups
- Local disability groups
- Local education trusts and associations
- Local environmental groups (e.g. Hertfordshire Biological Record Centre, Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust)
- Local health associations
- Local housing groups and associations
- Local history and conservation groups (e.g. Friends of Forster Country)
- Local leisure and sport groups
- Local racial, ethnic or national groups
- Local registered social landlords
- Local religious groups
- Local resident associations
- Local retail associations
- Neighbourhood Watch groups
- Older persons groups

- Voluntary organisations
- Youth groups, schools and colleges

DRAFT

Appendix C: Stakeholders to be involved in Development Management

Stakeholders to be consulted according to The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

Statutory consultee	Type of development
Canal and River Trust	Schedule 4(za) Development Management Procedure Order
Coal Authority	Article 26 and Schedule 4(o) Development Management Procedure Order
Control of major-accident hazards competent authority (COMAH)	Schedule 4(zb) Development Management Procedure Order
County Planning Authorities	Paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, Article 21 Development Management Procedure Order and Schedule 4(b)(c) Development Management Procedure Order
Crown Estates Commissioners	Article 26 Development Management Procedure Order

[Department for Business,
Energy and Industrial
Strategy](#)

[Article 26 Development Management Procedure Order](#)

Designated
Neighbourhood Forum

[Paragraph 8A inserted into Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning
Act 1990 and Article 25A and paragraph \(d\) of Schedule 4 of the
Development Management Procedure Order 2015](#)

[Environment Agency](#)

[Schedule 4\(p\)\(t\)\(u\) \(v\)\(zc\)\(zd\) Development Management Procedure Order](#)

[Forestry Commission](#)

[Paragraph 4 of Schedule 5 of Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#)

[The Gardens Trust](#)

[Schedule 4\(s\) Development Management Procedure Order](#) and see
also [guidance on conserving and enhancing the historic environment](#)

[Health and Safety
Executive](#)

[Schedule 4\(e\) and \(in relation to applications for planning permission made
on or after 1 August 2020 \(zg\) Development Management Procedure Order](#),
see also [guidance on hazardous substances](#) and advice for [local planning
authorities on consulting Health and Safety Executive on planning
applications](#); and [paragraph 113 of guidance on minerals](#)

[\[Relevant\]Highways
Authority \(including
Highways England\)](#)

[Schedule 4\(g\)\(h\)\(i\) Development Management Procedure Order](#)

[Historic England](#)

[Schedule 4\(g\)\(r\)\(s\) Development Management Procedure Order](#) and see also [guidance on conserving and enhancing the historic environment](#)

Lead local flood authority

[Schedule 4\(ze\) Development Management Procedure Order](#)

Local Planning Authorities

[Schedule 4\(b\)\(c\), Article 19 and Article 24 Development Management Procedure Order, Paragraph 4\(2\) Schedule 1 and Paragraph 7 of Schedule 1 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Paragraph 3\(b\) of Schedule 4 to the Planning \(Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas\) Act 1990](#)

National Parks Authorities

[Schedule 4\(a\) Development Management Procedure Order](#)

[Natural England](#)

[Schedule 4\(w\)\(y\)\(zb\) Development Management Procedure Order](#) and [Paragraph 4 of Schedule 5 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990](#)

[Office for Nuclear Regulation](#)

[Schedule 4\(f\) Development Management Procedure Order](#) and see also [deciding planning applications around hazardous installations guidance](#)

Oil and Gas Authority

[Article 26 Development Management Procedure Order](#)

Parish Councils

[Article 25 Development Management Procedure Order](#) and [Schedule 4\(d\) Development Management Procedure Order](#)

Rail Infrastructure
Managers

[Article 16 Development Management Procedure Order](#)

Rail Network Operators

[Schedule 4\(j\) Development Management Procedure Order](#) and see
also [guidance on transport](#)

[Sport England](#)

[Schedule 4\(z\) Development Management Procedure Order](#) and see
also [guidance on open space, sports and recreation facilities](#)

[Theatres Trust](#)

[Schedule 4\(x\) Development Management Procedure Order](#)

Toll Road Concessionaries

[Schedule 4\(m\) Development Management Procedure Order](#)

Water and sewerage
undertakers

[Schedule 4\(zf\) Development Management Procedure Order](#)

Appendix D – Statutory publicity requirements for applications for planning permission and listed building consent

Type of development	Site notice	Site notice or neighbour notification letter	Newspaper advertisement	Website
Applications for major development as defined in Article 2 of the Development Management Procedure Order (which are not covered in any other entry) (including an application for public service infrastructure development made on or after 1 August 2021)	-	X	X	X
Applications subject to Environmental Impact Assessment which are accompanied by an environmental statement	X	-	X	X
Applications which do not accord with the development plan in force in the area (including an application for public service infrastructure development made on or after 1 August 2021)	X	-	X	X
Applications which would affect a right of way to which Part 3 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 applies (including an application for public service infrastructure development made on or after 1 August 2021)	X	-	X	X

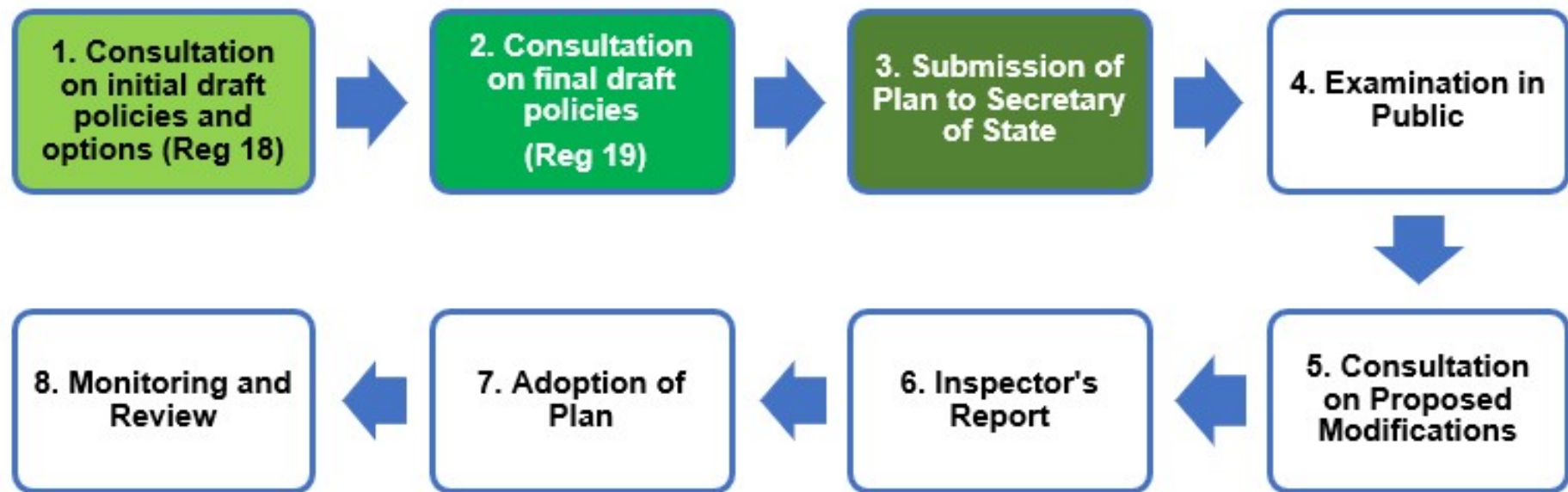
Applications for planning permission not covered in the entries above eg non-major development	-	X	-	X
Applications for listed building consent where works to the exterior of the building are proposed	X	-	X	X
Applications to vary or discharge conditions attached to a listed building consent or involving exterior works to a listed building.	X	-	X	X
Applications for development which would affect the setting of a listed building, or affect the character or appearance of a conservation area.	X	-	X	X
Note: the Environment Impact Assessment guidance sets out further publicity and consultation requirements for applicants where this is relevant.				

However, the statutory consultees which need to be consulted vary depending on the type of application submitted, and the specific site circumstances. Therefore, the detailed table within Schedule 4 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 should be referred to for more detailed information.

DRAFT



Development Plan Making Process (in accordance with Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012)



This page is intentionally left blank

Meeting Cabinet
Portfolio Area Housing & Housing Development
Date 4 June 2025



TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES 2024/25

KEY DECISION

Authors Daryl Jedowski
Matt Gough
Chloe Pullen
Contributor Strategic Leadership Team
Lead Officers Kerry Clifford
Denise Lewis
Contact Officer Kerry Clifford
Denise Lewis

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to highlight the Council's performance against the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) for 2024/25, when compared to the results from 2023/24.
- 1.2 The report gives a detailed overview of the performance against both the Management Data and Tenant Perception Surveys which together make up the Tenant Satisfaction Measures.
- 1.3 To better align with both the Annual Report and the Outturn Monitor Report for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account, the Q4 Performance Report for 2024/25 will be presented to Cabinet in July. Quarterly updates on the Council's Tenant Satisfaction Measures have previously been included in this report. However, as there is a requirement for the Council to publicly report on

its 2024/25 Tenant Satisfaction Measures data by the 30th of June, this is being brought forward in a separate report.

- 1.4 Approval and publication of Tenant Satisfaction Measures data is central to the Council's Provider Improvement Plan which has been created and monitored following the inspection by the Regulator for Social Housing in September 2024 where the Council was awarded a C2 result.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the results of both the TSM Management Data and the Tenant Perception Surveys for 2024/25 and the improvement actions being undertaken to further improve tenant satisfaction levels.
- 2.2 That Cabinet approves the publication of the TSM Management Measures on the Council's website.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) were introduced in April 2023 as a regulatory requirement for all Registered Social Landlords in England. A total of 22 measures are in place, with 12 sourced from a tenant perception survey and the remaining 10 are collected through performance data as part of Stevenage Borough Council's Corporate Performance Suite, categorised as Strategic Measures.
- 3.2 Performance against these measures for 2024/25, compared to 2023/24, was presented to the Council's Executive Housing Working Group on 22 April 2025 and subsequently approved, ahead of being considered by Cabinet.
- 3.3 In preparation for the revised Consumer Standards issued by the Regulator of Social Housing, and in direct response to a wide range of tenant feedback, the Council has implemented a range of transformation programmes and other service improvements. These improvements will be detailed in the forthcoming Annual Housing Report and the Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report for Housing, both of which are being prepared with the latest performance data in mind.
- 3.4 Evidence is already emerging that many of these initiatives are contributing to improved outcomes. A number of key workstreams have been progressed, including:
 - Reforms to the repairs and maintenance service, supported by a new policy framework that provides greater clarity for residents and responds to specific concerns raised in previous feedback.
 - Changes to the way services are delivered, with the aim of improving consistency and quality.
 - Ongoing delivery of the capital housing improvement programme, which while disruptive in some instances, has already contributed to rising levels of tenant satisfaction with the condition of homes.
- 3.5 Resident engagement has also been strengthened. The Council has adopted a new Resident Engagement Strategy, creating more meaningful opportunities for tenants to be heard and helping to shape the future of housing services. Approaches are continuing to evolve based on resident input.

3.6 Where service levels have not met resident's expectations, the Council continues to encourage residents to raise issues through the formal complaints process. Improvements in this area include:

- A new complaint handling system that enables residents to track their cases and receive timely feedback.
- More efficient resolution processes, with complaints data increasingly being used to identify areas for targeted improvement.

3.7 Analysis shows that a significant number of complaints relate to service delivery, particularly around repairs. The Council is already using this information to inform ongoing transformation activity, with positive trends beginning to emerge as a result.

4 DATA OVERVIEW

Management Data

4.1 There are 10 TSM Management Data Measures which are captured and collated as part of the councils quarterly Corporate Performance reporting.

4.2 The table below provides the scores of each measure for 2024/25 (highlighted in green if it exceeds last year's score, in amber if it is equal to and red if it is below).

Ref	TSM Measure	Description	Annual 2024/25	Annual 2023/24	Median Benchmark 2023/24
BS01	Gas Safety Checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required gas safety checks have been carried out.	100	100	99.98
BS02	Fire Safety Checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required fire risk assessments have been carried out.	100	100	100
BS03	Asbestos Safety Checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required asbestos management surveys or re-inspections have been carried out.	100	100	100
BS04	Water Safety Checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required legionella risk assessments have been carried out.	100	96.65	100
BS05	Life Safety Checks (%)	Proportion of homes for which all required communal passenger lift safety checks have been carried out.	100	100	100
CH01	Complaints relative to the size of the Landlord – Stage 1 (per 1,000 homes)	Number of Stage 1 complaints received by the landlord measured per 1,000 homes.	88.73	102.10	39

Ref	TSM Measure	Description	Annual 2024/25	Annual 2023/24	Median Benchmark 2023/24
CH01	Complaints relative to the size of the Landlord – Stage 2 (per 1,000 homes)	Number of Stage 2 complaints received by the landlord measured per 1,000 homes.	10.96	10.98	No data
CH02	Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales – Stage 1 (%)	Proportion of Stage 1 complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.	94.62	77.14	78.4
CH02	Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales – Stage 2 (%)	Proportion of Stage 2 complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code timescales.	81.18	69.32	No data
NM01	Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (per 1,000 homes)	Number of anti-social behaviour cases opened per 1,000 homes.	13.80	13.48	35.1
NM01	Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord that involve hate incidents. (per 1,000 homes)	Number of anti-social behaviour cases that involve hate incidents opened per 1,000 homes.	0.52	0.12	No data
RP01	Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard (%)	Proportion of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard.	3.36	5.89	4.2
RP02	Non-Emergency Repairs completed within target timescale (%)	Proportion non-emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescales.	87.02	87.58	No data
RP02	Emergency Repairs completed within target timescale (%)	Proportion of emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord's target timescales.	98.93	87.01	No data

4.3 Of the 14 figures reported across the 10 TSM Management Data measures, 7 have shown positive change, 3 have reduced, and 4 have remained unchanged. The four unchanged figures fall within the Building Safety category and are attributable to last year's results already being at 100%.

4.4 Several areas demonstrating improvement have recorded significant gains. This is most notable within the Complaints Handling category, where the percentage of complaints responded to within the required timescales has increased to 94.62% for Stage 1 complaints (up from 77.14%) and 81.18% for Stage 2 complaints (up from 69.32%). The Council has also observed a meaningful reduction in the proportion of homes not meeting the Decent Homes Standard, which has decreased to 3.36% (down from 5.89%). Similarly, there has been a strong

increase in the percentage of emergency repairs completed within target timescales, now at 98.93% (up from 87.01%).

4.5 Three measures have shown a reduction compared to last year's figures; these are:

4.6 **NM01 Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord (per 1,000 homes) and Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord that involve hate incidents (per 1,000 homes):** Both general anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases and those involving hate crime have seen slight increases. In absolute terms, the change is minimal — ASB cases rose to 108 from 107, and reported hate incidents increased to 4 from 1. While these figures reflect a slight reduction, the overall impact is limited due to the small scale of the increase.

4.7 **RP02 - Non-Emergency Repairs completed within target timescale (%):** This measure has seen a slight decline, although the change is not significant. It is worth noting that, while RP01 (homes not meeting the Decent Homes Standard) has not improved, RP02 (emergency repairs completed on time) has recorded a marked improvement. In the 2023/24 reporting year, the completion rate for emergency repairs had fallen below that of non-emergency repairs. Consequently, the Council prioritised emergency repairs, resulting in substantial improvement in this area. As the service continues to refine resource allocation and demand management, further improvement is anticipated for RP02 in the next reporting cycle.

4.8 Benchmarking information for the Management Data for 2024/25 is not yet available. However, the table above illustrates current performance in comparison to the median benchmark from 2023/24. In addition to national benchmarks, the Council also compares its performance against a group of bespoke peer organisations to provide a more tailored understanding of relative performance and has further formed a performance group with other Hertfordshire stock holding local authorities to compare data and share best practice.

4.9 Once the full dataset for 2024/25 becomes available, a more detailed benchmarking analysis will be carried out. This will be included in both the forthcoming Annual Housing Report and the Annual Complaints Handling and Service Improvement Report for Housing, where it will inform service planning and identify opportunities for further improvement.

4.10 Overall, the performance across the Management Data, as reported through the Council's Corporate Performance suite, demonstrates a broadly positive trajectory, with several key areas showing marked improvement and others maintaining consistently high standards. While a small number of indicators reflect minor reductions, these are not considered significant and are being actively addressed as required. Looking ahead, the Council remains committed to building on this success in the coming year as it continues to deliver against the Regulator for Social Housing's Performance Improvement Plan and begins the journey towards a C1 grade.

Tenant Perception Measures

- 4.11 The Council has commissioned Housemark to conduct the Tenant Perception Surveys during 2024/25. The Council are required to complete at least 570 surveys for its stock size.
- 4.12 The results of this survey are based on 988 responses for the full year (based on TP01 overall satisfaction responses) and was collected by a combination of online survey (120 responses) and telephone interviews (868 completed).
- 4.13 Based on a total of 7,794 properties and the 988 responses received this year, the overall margin of error for the survey is +/-2.91% (compliance requiring +/- 4.0%) The overall response rate was 12.8%.
- 4.14 Housemark has generally seen lower satisfaction results for online surveys compared to telephone surveys for the social housing providers it is supporting. However, despite this we have seen significant increases across all Tenant Perception Survey questions, as detailed in the table below:

Ref	Question	Definition	Previous year (2023/24)	Annual (2024/25)	Difference (+/-)
TP01	Overall satisfaction	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with the overall service from their landlord.	56.0%	66.9%	+10.9%
TP02	Repairs service overall	Proportion of respondents who have received a repair in the last 12 months who report that they are satisfied with the overall repairs service.	62.7%	70.8%	+8.1%
TP03	Speed of repairs	Proportion of respondents who have received a repair in the last 12 months who report that they are satisfied with the time taken to complete their most recent repair.	52.4%	64.4%	+12.0%
TP04	Home is well-maintained	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their home is well maintained.	59.2%	67.7%	+8.5%
TP05	Home is safe	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their home is safe.	69.9%	76.4%	+6.5%
TP06	Listens to views and acts	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them.	44.9%	55.1%	+10.2%
TP07	Keeps tenants informed	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord keeps them informed about things that matter to them.	50.9%	61.6%	+10.7%

Ref	Question	Definition	Previous year (2023/24)	Annual (2024/25)	Difference (+/-)
TP08	Treats tenants fairly and with respect	Proportion of respondents who report that they agree their landlord treats them fairly and with respect.	70.2%	73.3%	+3.1%
TP09	Complaint handling	Proportion of respondents who report making a complaint in the last 12 months who are satisfied with their landlord's approach to complaints handling.	22.8%	34.1%	+11.3%
TP10	Communal areas are clean and well-maintained	Proportion of respondents with communal areas who report that they are satisfied that their landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained.	53.3%	64.0%	+10.7%
TP11	Contribution to neighbourhood	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied that their landlord makes a positive contribution to the neighbourhood.	47.7%	63.1%	+15.4%
TP12	ASB handling	Proportion of respondents who report that they are satisfied with their landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour.	49.5%	57.9%	+8.4%

4.15 The Council has seen an improvement across all twelve measures compared to the 2023/24 year end data, with the cumulative overall satisfaction at 66.9% representing an increase of 10.9%. The highest increase relates to satisfaction with speed of repairs which is now 64.4% an increase of 12.0%. Tenants are most satisfied with being provided with a home that is safe at 76.4% representing an increase of 6.5%.

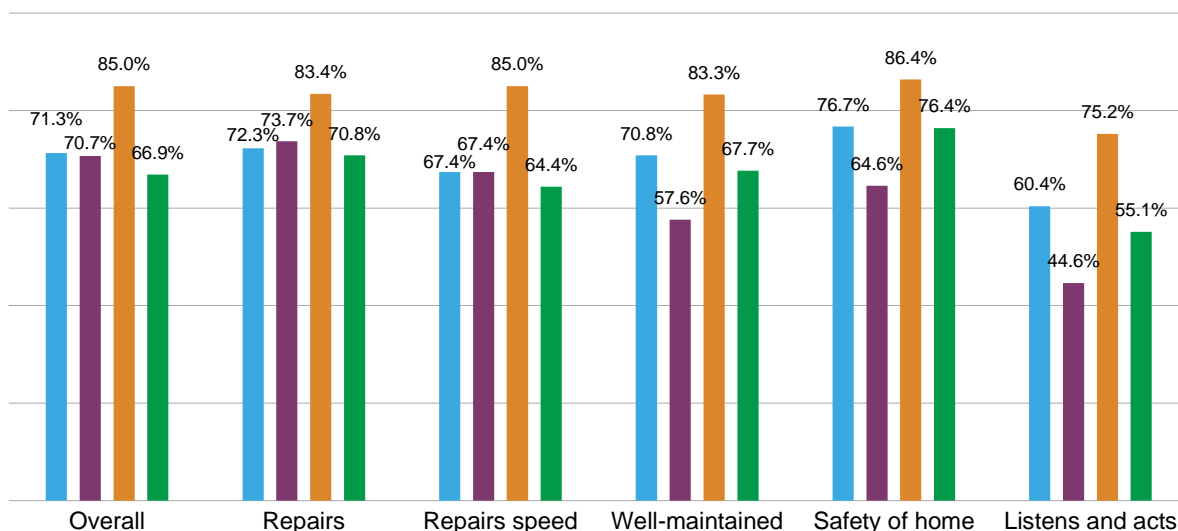
4.16 In addition to the prescribed Tenant Satisfaction Survey questions, the Council can ask additional questions or ask for free text feedback for more in-depth analysis. Feedback from the surveys is being used to help inform specific development and improvement work across service areas. Of the tenants that provided a reason for overall satisfaction and have given permission for their responses to be shared, 33% of these have been reported to individual teams for further contact to be made. 51% of the follow ups requested are in relation to repairs (including damp and mould).

4.17 While the perception surveys provide valuable insight into tenant views, it is important to recognise that some responses relate to services or issues that may not have been formally reported. On review, there are instances where survey feedback does not align directly with service records. For example, some households indicated dissatisfaction with how a complaint was handled, despite not having submitted a formal complaint. In many of these cases, residents had raised a repair request or a general enquiry instead. Housemark has advised that

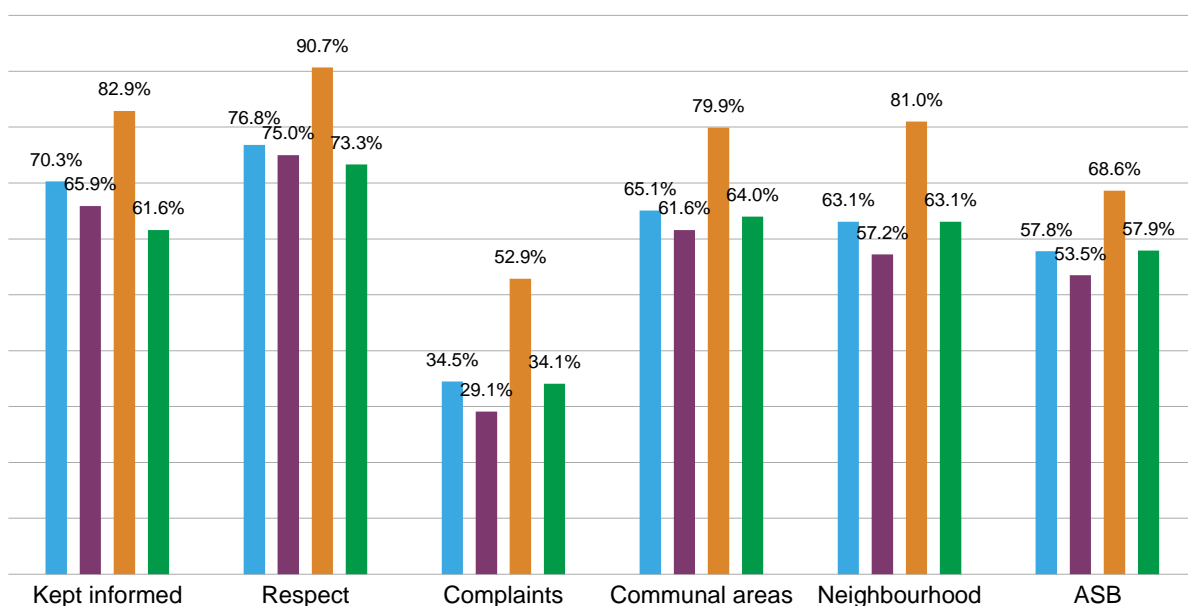
this type of discrepancy is common across many landlords and is not unique to Stevenage Borough Council. For this reason, the Council considers perception survey results alongside other data sources, including transactional feedback and service records, to support a more accurate and balanced understanding of performance.

4.18 Unlike the Management Data, benchmarking information for the Tenant Perception Survey for 2024/25 has already been released. Benchmarking is provided by Housemark, the Council's Tenant Perception Survey partner. Housemark compares Stevenage Borough Council's performance against a suite of comparator organisations selected based on shared characteristics, including demographic profile, population size, housing stock volume, and stock type.

Tenant satisfaction (%) ■ National Median ■ Peer Median ■ Peer High Score ■ Stevenage BC



Tenant satisfaction (%) ■ National Median ■ Peer Median ■ Peer High Score ■ Stevenage BC



4.19 Survey results show that tenant satisfaction in Stevenage tends to align closely with both national and peer median scores across most measures. There are variations, with performance slightly above or below the median in different

areas, but differences are generally not substantial. While the Council is not currently matching the highest scores within the peer group, overall results suggest a broadly comparable level of performance in many key areas.

- 4.20 There are, however, some areas that require focused improvement, particularly where there is a wider gap between current performance and the top scores observed across the peer group. It is important to note that the 'highest peer' score referenced in each measure does not necessarily represent a single authority, but rather the highest recorded score from the entire peer comparator set. Areas such as repairs, home condition, safety, and responsiveness to tenant concerns remain priorities for improvement. Similarly, continued efforts to strengthen communication, demonstrate respect, and manage complaints and anti-social behaviour effectively will help to raise overall satisfaction levels over time.

Housing Improvement Programme

- 4.21 Tenant Satisfaction Measures provide a key insight not only into the scale and performance of service delivery, but also into tenant perceptions and overall satisfaction. Insights from this data have directly informed the development of several key transformation and improvement workstreams. One of the most significant has been the creation of the Housing Improvement Programme.
- 4.22 A number of major projects are underway as part of this programme, and the Social Housing Regulator acknowledged the progress made during its recent inspection. These wide-ranging and comprehensive programmes were developed in response to tenant feedback, performance data, and management information, including the TSMs. Work currently underway includes:
- **Repairs** – New contractor arrangements have been introduced, supported by an improved repairs and maintenance policy. This has contributed to an 8.1% increase in tenant satisfaction with the overall repairs service and a 12% increase in satisfaction with the speed of repairs.
 - **Building Safety** – The Council has continued its programme of safety improvements, achieving 100% completion of required checks and inspections. This, along with enhanced engagement, has contributed to a 6.5% increase in tenants feeling safe in their homes.
 - **Investment in Our Homes** – The ongoing property investment programme has led to an 8.5% increase in tenants feeling that their home is well maintained. In addition, this work is expected to reduce the number of properties falling below the Decent Homes Standard over the coming year.
 - **Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Case Management** – Although the number of ASB cases reported appears higher, this has largely resulted from data management improvements rather than an increase in incidents. The Council is now managing nearly one-third of the cases recorded nationally. Among those who have had cases formally managed, satisfaction with the handling of ASB has risen by 8.4%, reflecting service enhancements, including staff training and case management reforms.
 - **Complaint Handling** – Although complaint volumes have increased slightly, a revised complaints policy, updated procedures, and investment in a new complaints system have led to an 11.3% increase in satisfaction with the

complaints process. These changes are expected to further improve the effectiveness and responsiveness of complaint resolution.

- **Listening and Acting** – The Council's new Resident Engagement Strategy is already creating more opportunities for tenant involvement in shaping services. Engagement in areas such as high-rise improvements, the repairs policy, and home adaptations has contributed to a 10.2% increase in satisfaction among residents who feel the Council listens to and acts upon their views.
- **Keeping Residents Informed** – Implementation of the new Housing Communication Plan has significantly improved how the Council shares information. Initiatives include the publication of a Tenants' Annual Report, a quarterly Housing Matters newsletter, greater use of social media, enhanced written communications and website content, and improved guidance around building safety. These efforts have supported a 10.7% increase in satisfaction among tenants who feel the Council keeps them informed about matters that affect them.

Feedback from the Regulator for Social Housing

- 4.23 In November 2024 the Council was notified by the Regulator of Social Housing that it has been awarded a C2 grade following an on-site inspection against the Consumer Standards.
- 4.24 The Cabinet was notified of the inspection outcome in December 2024 and approved the recommendation that delegated authority be given to the Strategic Director (RP), in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to develop and approve a Provider Improvement Plan (PIP) with the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 4.25 Every inspection by the Regulator for Social Housing results in the creation of a PIP, regardless of the outcome. As of the publication of this report, only 3 councils have been awarded a C1 from a total of 41 that have been inspected. A further 14, including Stevenage, have been awarded a C2.
- 4.26 Cabinet also approved the recommendation that the PIP would be reported to Cabinet as part of the Quarterly Corporate Performance Framework.
- 4.27 The Council met with the Regulator in January 2025 to open dialogue on what the PIP should include as well as provide an update detailing progress made since the inspection took place and the judgement was confirmed.
- 4.28 The Council has met with the Regulator on a monthly basis, with the last meeting occurring at the end of April. This meeting reviewed progress against the PIP and the supporting submission. A root cause analysis, as requested by the Regulator, has been carried out focusing on the headline elements from the PIP. The Council will continue to meet with the Regulator for Social Housing but they have now asked that whilst they would wish to see some specific performance information on a monthly basis, the wider performance updates will now be required on a quarterly basis as they are satisfied that good progress has been made since inspection.
- 4.29 Governance arrangements have been revised moving into the new financial year with a new Housing SLT set up to compliment the activities of the Executive Housing Working Group. This will provide an engine room to further galvanise

activity, building on the governance framework that is already in place. Both Housing SLT and Executive Housing Working Group will meet on a monthly basis, with a defined forward plan and work programme.

5 IMPLICATIONS

5.1 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1.1 There are no direct financial implications from the recommendations contained in this report. However, officers responsible for delivering the priorities over the coming year and implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting financial implications. Any financial impact of the under/over achievement of Corporate Performance Indicators will be reported as part of the Quarterly Monitoring report.

5.2 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.2.1 The submission of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures is a Regulatory requirement, for all registered social housing providers like the council. Failure to submit the information by the 30 June in the correct format could see enforcement action taken by the Regulator of Social Housing. In addition to which officers responsible for delivering the priorities over the coming year and implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to identify and consider any resulting legal implications.

5.3 EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.3.1 There are no direct equality, diversity and inclusion implications arising from this report. Where required, Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for programmes, projects, service changes and improvement activity identified.

5.4 RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 5.4.1 There are no direct significant risks to the Council in agreeing the recommendation(s). However, failure to submit the data would expose the Council to the risk of regulator failure and enforcement action. Officers responsible for implementing any improvement activity set out within this report will need to consider any risk implications that arise.
- 5.4.2 The Council has an embedded approach to risk management that mitigates any adverse effect on delivery of the Council's objectives and internal control processes and provides good governance assurance.

5.5 CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.5.1 The Council declared a climate change emergency in June 2019 with a resolution to work towards a target of achieving net zero emissions by 2030. There are no direct climate change implications arising from this report, except for those activities that seek to have a positive impact in this area, and the officers responsible for delivering the improvements are charged with identifying and addressing any related climate change considerations.

5.6 OTHER CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.6.1 Implementing the priorities and improvement activity outlined in this report may impact on the development of future policy or procedure, which will be monitored through the formal policy/procedure sign-off process via the Senior Leadership Team (SLT).

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank