

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Planning and Regulation  
**Date** 21 November 2018



## SMART CHOICES, BETTER PLACES: A TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR STEVENAGE

### KEY DECISION

Author – Caroline Danby Ext 2823  
Lead Officer – Chris Berry Ext 2954

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members' with an update on progress made in preparing a Transport Strategy for Stevenage.
- 1.2 To seeks Members' approval to carry out public consultation on the draft Transport Strategy.

### 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the content of the draft Smart choices, better places: A Transport Strategy for Stevenage (attached as Appendix A) be agreed for public consultation.
- 2.2 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft Strategy prior to its consultation.
- 2.3 That public consultation on the draft Transport Strategy be approved for a period of 3 months, commencing 5 December 2018.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 As Britain's First New Town, Stevenage has a relatively unique history in terms of its design and layout, which impacts upon the way people move around the town. Its pedestrianised town centre was the first of its kind and its neighbourhood centres and segregated cycleways were designed to enable and encourage self-containment and active modes of transport – walking and cycling. The town is also very well connected by rail, with Stevenage station being on the East Coast Mainline and served by Thameslink services. Local buses service the town, connecting it to the local area.
- 3.2 Stevenage also has excellent road links north and south, being directly connected to Junctions 7 and 8 of the A1(M), which links London to the north. The A602 connects Stevenage to Hitchin and Ware, whilst the nearby A505 provides connections between Luton Airport and Cambridgeshire.
- 3.3 However, despite its innovation at the time, the design of the New Town did not fully predict the rise of the motor car and the residential roads were not designed to accommodate such an increase in traffic and on-street parking. Whilst the network handles the number of journeys fairly well, increase in car use in Stevenage has led to an underuse of the pedestrian and cycle network, and an increase in parking problems on residential streets.
- 3.4 It is clear that the excellent walking and cycling infrastructure is not being used as effectively as it could be, and that improvements could be made to other forms of sustainable transport infrastructure to make it more appealing, thus encouraging behavioural change.
- 3.5 Parking at residential properties is now a common concern for many residents. Residential streets are considerable local assets. They provide not only access to the wider world from people's homes, but spaces in which neighbourhood activities take place, from organised events, such as street parties, to chance interactions as people walk down the street. However, a change in the way people use these streets is required to increase their value to local communities, resulting in socio-economic benefits.
- 3.6 The period to 2031 will be the next step in the evolution of the New Town. The emerging Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP) sets out policies to bring forward at least 7,600 new homes for our residents, together with new jobs and community facilities to support this growth. This includes the large-scale regeneration of the town centre, helping to stimulate interest in Stevenage as an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest.
- 3.7 Key to delivering this growth sustainably is ensuring that the infrastructure required to support this growth is available and of a high quality. The SBLP recognises that peak time congestion on the transport network, even without growth, is a considerable local issue, and delivering this growth with a "business as usual" approach to car-based transport patterns is not an option.
- 3.8 At the county level, Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC's) recently adopted Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) sets out how transport can help deliver a positive future vision of Hertfordshire. It recognises the wider impact of a successful transport system, in terms of enabling and encouraging economic

growth, meeting housing needs, improving public health and reducing environmental damage. It moves away from the previous strategies that were largely car based, to a more balanced approach with a focus on encouraging walking, cycling and public transport as a priority.

- 3.9 Consequently, the SBLP includes a Mobility Strategy, which sets out the Borough Council's commitment to prioritising sustainable and active modes of transport and to changing behaviours across the town. It seeks to mitigate the demands of the Local Plan, but to go beyond this, with a reduced reliance on the private car and more active and integrated communities, thus also offering health and other social benefits to the people of Stevenage.
- 3.10 Local policies also recognise that technological advances and lifestyle changes will continue to influence the way people and businesses connect.
- 3.11 As well as being a driver behind this push towards sustainable and active travel, the emerging SBLP also brings forward opportunities to make this change happen.
- 3.12 Sustainability is at the heart of the plan and development is directed to locations that can be effectively connected to the existing pedestrian and cycling networks. As opposed to trying to retrofit solutions, new development can be planned with active and sustainable travel principles in mind, to ensure that local facilities are provided on-site, where appropriate, and that walking and cycling take priority over car use.
- 3.13 A key element of the SBLP is its ambitious proposals to regenerate, rebrand and reimagine the central area of Stevenage, known as Stevenage Central. This offers significant opportunities to improve the experiences of residents and visitors through good urban design that helps create a sense of place. This is a unique opportunity to take a holistic view of the centre and to re-think the existing transport nodes, integrating sustainable transport infrastructure more effectively into the built environment and breaking down some of the barriers to movement that currently exist.
- 3.14 Offering sustainable and active forms of transport choices will have benefits for the community:
  - Local streets will change from being places to park and drive cars to places which local communities can enjoy.
  - The local and wider environment will benefit as fewer emissions are emitted, improving local air quality and reducing the effect transport has on climate change.
  - Residents and visitors will gain health and economic benefits by making shorter journeys by foot or on a bike.
- 3.15 At the 25 July 2018 meeting, Council resolved to prepare a Transport Strategy for the Borough, which seeks to deliver this step change in approach to transport.

## 4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

**Recommendation 2.1: That the content of the draft Smart choices, better places: A Transport Strategy for Stevenage (attached as Appendix A) be agreed for public consultation**

- 4.1 The production of a Transport Strategy was agreed by Council on 25 July 2018. Since this time, officers have been pulling together existing evidence to inform the strategy, and a draft has been produced.
- 4.2 The Strategy sets out Stevenage's approach to sustainable transport; providing a strategy for coordinated action by a wide range of agencies and institutions, and a framework for planning and decision-making. It draws together the aims of national, county, and local policy documents in relation to this issue, and identifies the principal existing and future challenges affecting transport in Stevenage, taking account of future growth in population and jobs.
- 4.3 The Strategy seeks to establish Stevenage as a leader in sustainable transport, reflecting its original New Town design objectives. It establishes the key local transport issues and opportunities that exist in Stevenage, and sets out a vision and objectives for what will be delivered in the future. It is focused around four key themes:
  - 1. Connectivity: improve connections between our residents to jobs and services, and business to markets.
  - 2. Liveable streets: restore neighbourhood streets to places that our community can enjoy and be proud of
  - 3. Active and healthy travel: achieve a change in behaviour to encourage walking and cycling
  - 4. Green travel: reduce the carbon footprint of Stevenage's travel movements
- 4.4 The Strategy builds upon the council's existing Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which sets out the infrastructure required to ensure the Local Plan can be delivered. It begins to show how the transport-related infrastructure and changes will be delivered, by whom and when. By clearly setting out action plans for future work, the Strategy will enable the Council to prioritise and bid for external funding for specific works.
- 4.5 The Borough Council is only one of the many stakeholders that need to be involved in achieving this strategy. The Strategy has been developed with HCC, as Highways Authority, and sets out Action Plans to deliver projects and plans in a co-ordinated manner and by a wide range of agencies and institutions (such as HCC, local businesses, infrastructure providers and operators, as well as a corporate approach across the Borough Council). As such, it is crucial that the council works with these public and private sector

partners to ensure they share its objectives when progressing their projects locally. Getting our residents involved will also be key to achieving our aims in this regard, particularly around Liveable Streets.

- 4.6 The substantive content of the draft Strategy focuses around a comprehensive schedule of transport-related plans and projects in and around Stevenage, including what has been achieved so far and projects that are underway, to those that are planned or proposed for the future in the form of short and medium-term Action Plans.
- 4.7 Each of the projects and plans is presented in a standard format, with a schedule setting out key dates for achieving actions, identifying who is responsible for delivering the task, and where the money will come from. The following example demonstrates the proposed layout within the Strategy:

#### Liveable Streets Pilot Projects, SBC



1. The Council will identify a minimum of three 'Liveable Streets' projects in Stevenage. These will be pilots to help understand what types of projects and schemes people want and what will be successful in enhancing the local street environments in residential areas of Stevenage. Local communities will be at the heart of these projects. The Council will seek to bring communities together to help them re-imagine and re-design their streets and public spaces to make them more attractive, more enjoyable and safer places to live.
2. Schemes to tackle issues such as antisocial parking and vehicle obstruction, slow traffic down, and reduce or prevent through traffic, can help to transform residential streets from those dominated by cars and traffic, to places that encourage walking and cycling and interaction between neighbours and communities. Physical improvements will be accompanied by promotional and educational activities to encourage behavioural change leading to more sustainable travel choices.
3. The Council will work with experts such as Living Streets and Sustrans, who have proven experience of what can be achieved.

Action	Deadline	Who?	Funding
Scope potential pilot projects	Nov 2018	SBC-Planning	Link to CNM programme? \$106 funding Existing budgets – Planning and Engineers CIL income in the future
Select initial project	Dec 2018	SBC-Planning	
Consultation with local community	Jan 2019	SBC-Planning	
Procure delivery body, as necessary	Mar 2019	SBC-Planning	
Commence physical work	Apr 2019	SBC-Planning, Engineers	
Complete all pilot projects	Feb 2020	SBC-Planning, Engineers	

- 4.8 As a strategic document, the Strategy acts as a co-ordinating and promotional instrument to provide an overview of the actions proposed that affect the Borough.
- 4.9 Stevenage has already made some progress in terms of encouraging sustainable transport choices, which form a firm basis for achieving the aims of the Strategy and can be built upon and expanded in the future. The Strategy sets out those projects that have already been completed, such as:
- The Council's Green Travel Plan, which has been successful in promoting sustainable travel by council employees, with a small fleet of electric pool cars and electric bikes now in use.
  - SMARTGo Stevenage, which is part of a national scheme that offers discounts and incentives to help employers encourage their staff to use more sustainable transport modes and to stay more active. It has over 30 employers on board within the town, representing 15,000 employees, including some of the largest employers such as GSK and MBDA.
  - Stevenage Cycle Hub opened recently at Fairlands Valley, offering a wide range of facilities and services aimed at encouraging cycling within the town.
- 4.10 The Short Term Action Plan builds on the completed projects and sets out an ambitious programme for the next 3 years. This is split into parts: plans for the next 12 months (2019 – 2020) and then an action plan for the following 2 years (2020-2022). Within the first 12 months, most schemes are either already underway or are scheduled and costed for the next financial year. Some examples of schemes that are included are:
- HCC's LTP4 sets out an intention to designate a number of urban areas as Sustainable Travel Towns. Within these areas, comprehensive packages of schemes and behaviour change initiatives aimed at achieving a significant modal shift to non-car modes and reduction in single occupancy car use will be considered. Stevenage will bid to become a designated Sustainable Travel Town.
  - Liveable Streets – the idea is to make streets more appealing and useable for residents. Streets are often dominated by parking of cars and vans, and road users are prioritised. Living Streets and Sustrans are organisations that have implemented similar examples elsewhere, but each place will have its own context and character. The Council will identify a minimum of three 'Liveable Streets' projects in Stevenage. These will be pilots to help understand what types of projects and schemes people want and what will be successful in enhancing the local street environments in residential areas of Stevenage. There is potential to consider a 'core offer' for each neighbourhood in terms of the minimum standards of infrastructure provision people would like to see and what the priorities might be. Local communities will be at the heart of these projects. The Council will seek to bring communities together to help them re-imagine and re-design their streets and

public spaces to make them more attractive, more enjoyable and safer places to live.

- To make significant progress on town centre related schemes: Bus station relocation and railway station improvements – generally helping to break down the barriers that currently exist to movement around the town centre.

4.11 Within the second part of the Short Term Action Plan, for the following 2 years (2020-2022), most projects can be delivered either without significant resource, or already have funding and resource attributed to them. These include schemes such as:

- Campaign to extend contactless payment on trains into Stevenage
- Fifth platform at Stevenage Station
- Employer accreditation programme – to introduce a Stevenage Borough Council endorsement (stamp of approval) to employers who make significant efforts to encourage sustainable and active travel.

4.12 The Medium Term Action Plan identifies projects to be delivered by the end of the Local Plan period (2031). These are generally projects that are not yet underway, and are yet to be fully worked up or have funding in place. However, some may be worked up and come forward sooner than expected, and there is nothing to preclude that within the Strategy. Examples include:

- Consideration of bus priority measures across the town
- Underpass improvements
- Stevenage Outer Orbital Path (STOOP) improvements

4.13 In the longer term, post the SBLP period, it becomes much harder to predict what might happen in terms of transport and new technologies. There is the potential for transport choices to be revolutionised, with the increasing use of emerging technologies such as autonomous vehicles, robots and drones. It is important to recognise that things may change and to ensure the town is prepared for this, by future-proofing new development as much as possible. The Strategy seeks to ensure Stevenage continues to take advantage of and embrace new technologies.

4.14 It will be important to monitor the Strategy on a regular basis to understand how much progress is being made in delivering the actions identified and whether there are steps that could be taken to improve or increase progress. The Strategy contains a section on monitoring, which sets out how the council will seek to achieve this.

**Recommendation 2.2: That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Economy, Enterprise and Transport, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft Strategy prior to its consultation.**

- 4.15 The draft Transport Strategy is appended to this report. However, it may be necessary to make minor changes to it prior to the consultation start date. This might include cosmetic adjustments, the correction of typographical errors and any minor factual changes.
- 4.16 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.

**Recommendation 2.3: That public consultation on the draft Transport Strategy be approved for a period of 3 months, commencing 5 December.**

- 4.17 The Council motion made clear the intention to work with local communities, along with businesses and other partners to develop our approach to sustainable transport. The Transport Strategy is intended to be a consultative document, which seeks the full participation of communities and stakeholders.
- 4.18 Hertfordshire County Council, as the highways authority, has been closely involved in the preparation of this strategy. Officers have also worked with teams internally, such as Regeneration, Engineers, Leisure and Housing Development, to ensure a co-ordinated corporate approach is taken and that the Strategy is comprehensive in its scope.
- 4.19 Stevenage is a co-operative Council which recognises that services planned with local communities are more likely to be successful. The Strategy offers an opportunity to encourage real participation in many elements of the plans and projects proposed. The intention is to engage all members of the community as much as possible to ensure what is being delivered is what people really want for their communities.
- 4.20 Engagement will be sought, both on the Strategy itself, but also on the specific projects and schemes as they begin to be delivered.
- 4.21 Some of the schemes and projects identified in this strategy will have already been subject to consultation and engagement, for example those contained within the SBLP, which sets out the high level plans for Stevenage Central, including the relocation of the bus station, improvements to the railway station and bus priority measures, amongst other things, and the Stevenage Mobility Strategy. However, further detailed discussions and consultation activities will be required for all of these significant proposals, once they begin to progress.

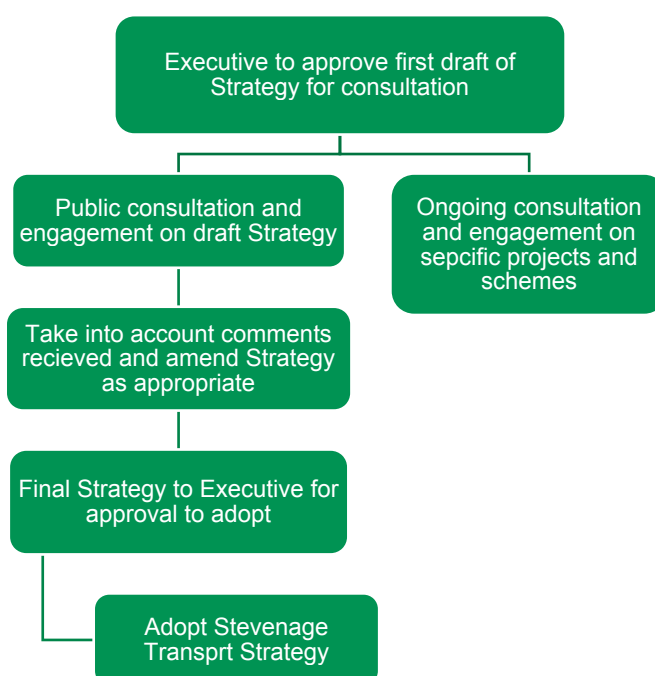


- 4.22 Furthermore, there are many potential projects within the Strategy that residents and local community or stakeholder groups may be able to more actively participate in. Active community engagement has already been successfully achieved in delivering the Co-operative Neighbourhood Management (CNM) programme across various parts of the town. The Strategy seeks to use this approach to implement local schemes particularly, such as the Liveable Streets pilots. Residents can tell us what they want in their areas and what would make them use their streets more and encourage walking and cycling, for example, greening up streets, parking restrictions or reduced speed limits.
- 4.23 Other forms of community participation may include involvement in 'walking buses' to schools, adopting an underpass, and joining a recreational cycling club or visiting a cycling hub.
- 4.24 Involving other stakeholders will also be key to ensuring the Strategy is deliverable. There will be extensive consultation with businesses and other stakeholders (including Network Rail, bus operators, Highways England and other public agencies and institutions) to ensure that their interests are taken into account.
- 4.25 Many local businesses, including those global commercial organisations represented in Stevenage, are already taking a proactive approach to sustainable transport with their own Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) agendas, by offering incentives for staff such as shuttle buses and pool bikes, and as being members of the employee benefit scheme, SmartGo Stevenage. Local businesses will continue to be encouraged to get involved in helping to achieve the aims and objectives of this strategy.
- 4.26 The intention for this Strategy is an extended initial consultation period for a period of around 3 months, to take into account the Christmas break and the fact that the consultation should be wide-reaching and engaging for communities. It is recommended that public consultation commences on 5 December 2018 and closes on 6 March 2019.
- 4.27 The Council's Communications Team have been involved in putting together a full launch strategy, to ensure the consultation is meaningful and engaging, and that active participation is genuinely achieved.
- 4.28 The consultation will be publicised by a range of measures, including:
- Placing the Strategy on the Council's website for the duration of the consultation;
  - Notifying everyone on the Local Plan database by email or letter;
  - Making hard copies of the Strategy available at the Customer Service Centre and at the town's two libraries;
  - Use of social media, such as the Council's Facebook and Twitter pages to target consultation responses and seek engagement;
  - Use of the existing CNM programme and community engagement events;
  - Presentations/workshops at resident meetings.
- 4.29 The Council will specifically engage with the following stakeholders:

- Local residents and communities
- Cycling and walking groups
- Bus and rail user groups
- Local businesses – through SmartGo Stevenage network, business breakfasts and Herts Chamber
- Infrastructure providers
- Other commercial operators within the town

4.30 Following this consultation, the Strategy will be revised taking into account the comments received.

4.31 A summary of the consultation responses received and a finalised version of the Strategy will be reported back to Executive in Spring 2019, where approval to adopt the Strategy will be sought.



## 5 IMPLICATIONS

### Financial Implications

5.1 The costs of producing the Strategy will be met from the agreed departmental budget.

5.2 The Strategy highlights the cost implications of particular schemes and projects, where these are known. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is a rolling list of infrastructure projects required (or desirable) to support the Local Plan. This already identifies many of the schemes and sets out where

funding to deliver them will come from. Any additional projects identified will feed into the IDP. This will also help to prioritise them against other infrastructure needed across the Borough.

- 5.3 Many of the schemes identified within the Strategy will not be led by SBC. Schemes will often be led by infrastructure providers, or by HCC as Highways Authority. The Strategy makes clear who is responsible for each project and what role SBC has in delivering it, if any.
- 5.4 The Strategy will be a useful tool for prioritising projects and accessing external funding opportunities, including LEP, Central Government funding and money from HCC as Highways Authority. As the outputs are all infrastructure schemes, CIL / S106 monies can provide another source of funding.
- 5.5 It is important to acknowledge that not all schemes/projects outlined in the Strategy are funded and programmed. Some are more aspirational ideas at this stage, for consideration in the longer term. Each project will have different resource implications. The Action Plans within the document make clear which projects are programmed for delivery and who will be responsible for delivering them.

#### **Legal Implications**

- 5.6 There are no significant legal implications associated with producing the Transport Strategy.

#### **Risk Implications**

- 5.7 There are no significant risks associated with producing the Transport Strategy.

#### **Policy Implications**

- 5.8 The Transport Strategy accords with the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and seeks to provide an overview of sustainable transport schemes and projects within or affecting the Borough. Whilst not a statutory planning document, once adopted, it will constitute a corporate policy document that should be utilised across council departments and by relevant stakeholders, as appropriate.
- 5.9 It is also aligned with other corporate Council documents such as the Cultural Strategy and has received input from other Council departments to ensure a corporate approach.

#### **Planning Implications**

- 5.10 The Strategy will accord with the emerging Local Plan. It will seek to ensure infrastructure to support the plan's proposals is delivered and opportunities arising from the plan's allocations are utilised to ensure sustainable transport is considered at the early stages of all new development.

## **Environmental Implications**

- 5.11 The Strategy has the potential to have a positive impact on the environment through the multiple benefits prioritising sustainable and active modes of transport, and minimising car use, can bring. Active forms of transport, walking and cycling, can have significant benefits in terms of health and well-being, as well as other indirect social benefits. The minimisation of private car use, as well as the introduction of electric vehicles will have benefits in terms of air quality and reducing our carbon footprint more generally.

## **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.12 The Strategy pulls together existing and future plans and projects that will deliver sustainable transport objectives. Whilst the Strategy itself does not have any direct equality or diversity implications, when implementing any of the proposals the delivery body will need to consider the potential impacts on different community groups, in particular those who are less mobile or disabled. Input from all members of the community will also need to be ensured when engaging with local communities in relation to specific proposals for their areas, particularly.

## **Community Safety Implications**

- 5.13 The Strategy pulls together existing and future plans and projects that will deliver sustainable transport objectives. Whilst the Strategy itself does not have any direct community safety implications, when implementing any of the proposals the delivery body will need to consider the potential impacts on community safety.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- BD1 [National Planning Policy Framework](#)  
BD2 [Local Transport Plan 4, HCC](#)  
BD3 [Stevenage Borough Local Plan, 2011-2031](#)  
BD4 [Stevenage Mobility Strategy](#)  
BD5 [Infrastructure Delivery Plan, 2017](#)  
BD6 [Minutes and papers for 25 July Council](#)  
BD7 [Stevenage Borough Council's Green Travel Plan, 2013-18](#)

## **APPENDICES**

- A Stevenage Transport Strategy