Stevenage
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Meeting	Executive
Portfolio Area	Economy and Transport
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FUTURE TOWN, FUTURE TRANSPORT: ADOPTION OF A TRANSPORT STRATEGY FOR STEVENAGE

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the consultation responses to the draft "Future Town, Future Transport".

1.2 To describe the amendments made to the draft "Future Town, Future Transport" taking account of respondents' comments.

1.3 To seek Members' approval to adopt the amended Future Town, Future Transport as the transport strategy for Stevenage.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the responses to the consultation on the draft "Future Town, Future Transport" be noted.

2.2 That the proposed amendments to the draft "Future Town, Future Transport" made following public consultation be approved.

2.3   That the revised "Future Town, Future Transport" attached at Appendix B to this report be adopted as the transport strategy for Stevenage, sitting under the Future Town, Future Council Corporate Plan as one of the "Place of Choice" strategies.

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   The period to 2031 will be the next step in the evolution of the New Town. The adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP) sets out policies to bring forward at least 7,600 new homes, 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.

3.5   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.

3.6   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.

3.7   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.

3.8   In July 2018, Council resolved to prepare a Transport Strategy for the Borough, which seeks to deliver this step change in approach to transport. The Executive then approved consultation on a draft Transport Strategy, entitled "Future Town, Future Transport", in October 2018.

3.9   The draft Strategy set out the council's approach to sustainable transport, providing for coordinated action by a wide range of agencies and institutions, and a framework for planning and decision-making. It drew together the aims of national, county, and local policy documents in relation to this issue, and identified the principal existing and future challenges affecting transport in Stevenage, taking account of future growth in population and jobs.

3.10   The draft Strategy established the key local transport issues and opportunities that exist in Stevenage, and set 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

3.11   The draft Strategy built upon the council's existing Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP), which sets out the infrastructure required to ensure the Local Plan can be delivered, to show how the transport-related infrastructure and changes will be delivered, by whom and when.

3.12   The substantive content of the draft Strategy focused around a comprehensive schedule of transport-related plans and projects in and around Stevenage, including what had been achieved so far, projects that were already underway, and those that were/are planned or proposed for the future in the form of short and medium-term Action Plans. The Strategy contains a number of schemes which are out of the Council's control and are led and to be implemented by third parties.

3.13   As a strategic document, the draft Strategy was produced to act as a co-ordinating and promotional instrument to provide an overview of the actions proposed that affect the Borough and to guide the Council and relevant stakeholders on key projects to ensure that transport investment is joined up and will maximise benefits to all residents and businesses.

3.14   Consultation on the draft Transport Strategy occurred between December 2018 and March 2019 but responses were accepted until July 2019. The "Future Town, Future Transport" document was published on the Council's

online consultation portal and hard copies were made available at Stevenage libraries and at the Customer Service Centre for public viewing. Emails were sent to all individuals on the Council's consultation database to notify them of the consultation and explain how to submit comments. Articles regarding the consultation were published in Inspire and Chronicle magazines and officers gave presentations to multiple organisations to engage members of the wider community. Discussions were held with some of the largest employers in the town and the strategy was presented to the SmartGo Stevenage Steering Group which comprises Stevenage-based employers, Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce and key public transportation service providers.

3.15 In addition to the draft Transport Strategy, a separate survey was published asking individuals to select the measures that would most encourage them to walk, cycle, or use public transport, and to provide their views on Stevenage's streets, including whether there were any specific streets that would benefit from improvements as part of a 'Liveable Streets' trial. This was advertised through internal SBC communications to engage SBC staff, and was advertised through social media to engage local residents.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: that the responses to the consultation on the draft Future Town, Future Transport be noted.

4.1 Comments were received from sixteen individuals and ten organisations and feedback was received during discussions with a further seven organisations. Organisations included community groups, public bodies, members of the private sector, representatives of local businesses, and regulatory bodies.

4.2 A full list of organisations are:

– Campaign to Protect Rural England - Hertfordshire
– Hertfordshire County Council
– Historic England
– Knebworth Park and Gardens
– Box Bike Delivery
– London Luton Airport
– Bus User Group Stevenage
– MBDA
– Stevenage Bioscience catalyst
– Transport for London

Verbal responses were noted from meetings with:

– Stevenage Youth Council
– Stevenage Old Town Community and Business Partnership
– Arriva
– GSK
– SmartGo Stevenage steering group

- Disability Panel Group
- Scuff Wheels Ltd.

4.3 In addition, 82 individuals completed the Liveable Streets survey. This mainly comprised local residents, with other surveys submitted by SBC employees and members of the Youth Council.

4.4 Between them, respondents submitted comments on the majority of the document as well as providing ideas to incorporate into the final Strategy. In general terms, the strategy was welcomed as an opportunity to build on Stevenage's unique and excellent infrastructure to increase active travel and improve environmental and social conditions.

4.5 Support was offered for many of the actions identified within the strategy, and further suggestions were also proposed, along with more specific changes to the strategy such as typographical changes.

4.6 There were also conflicting views in relation to some of the actions proposed. For example, whilst some supported park and ride, others were concerned about the cost of introducing such a scheme and whether bus priority measures might offer a better solution.

4.7 A Consultation Statement has been produced, which summarises the responses made (Appendix A to this report). Chapter 3 of the Consultation Statement contains a detailed overview of respondents' comments and Appendix 1 of the Consultation Statement contains a summary of each individual response. Respondents' comments were discussed at a Portfolio Holder Advisory Group for Economy, Enterprise and Transport.

4.8 In terms of the survey, general support was offered for the Liveable Streets concept with more accessible and useable streets, and specific streets were nominated from most wards for improvements as part of a Liveable Street trial.

4.9 Two of the suggested options for encouraging walking and cycling were ranked considerably higher than the rest: improved lighting and maintenance improvements on the existing network. Around 50% of respondents selected a reduction in prices as the clear first choice preference for encouraging the use of public transport.

4.10 A clear preference was recorded, that respondents did not want to introduce bus lanes in the town.

4.11 A more detailed summary of the survey results can also be found within the Consultation Statement.

> **Recommendation 2.2: that the proposed amendments to the draft Future Town, Future Transport made following public consultation be approved.**

4.12 All of the comments received have been processed and considered by officers. Amendments to the draft strategy have been incorporated into a final version (Appendix B to this report), where appropriate.

4.13 In general, due to the level of support and agreement for the draft Transport Strategy, the document has remained largely the same. Minor wording

amendments have been made to improve the clarity and context of the document, and information such as delivery dates have been updated to reflect the progress of schemes since the publication of the draft.

4.14   The majority of significant changes have been made in the Short Term Action Plan chapter. None of the changes significantly alter the content of the Transport Strategy or commit the Council to implementing new plans or projects. The changes mainly describe SBC services or objectives which are already undertaken but were not included in the draft Strategy. Some changes commit the Council to investigating potential future options to promote sustainable transport.

4.15   Chapter 4 of the Consultation Statement (Appendix A to this report) contains a detailed overview of the amendments made following consultation. A summary of the key changes is included below:

Town Centre Regeneration -

4.16   Respondents highlighted the importance of improving the permeability of active and sustainable transport in the Town Centre and highlighted the opportunity offered by the Regeneration to achieve this. The Town Centre Regeneration has therefore been added as a new short term project in the Strategy.

4.17   The Regeneration is already being implemented and has its own framework for delivery but its inclusion in the Transport Strategy is seen as important to ensure that the concepts of connectivity and accessibility continue to be embedded into the overall regeneration scheme. This will include looking at improvements to cycling routes around the town centre and safety in the pedestrian areas.

Cycleway Maintenance and Improvements

4.18   Many respondents focussed on the condition of the pedestrian and cycle network and stated that a few key improvements would make it a much more attractive and viable alternative to driving. This was also fed back to the Council through responses to the Liveable Streets survey and so it was added as another short term project in the Strategy.

4.19   The Strategy now explains the relevant responsibilities of the Council and of the County Council and references various evidential studies which have been produced by the Council and the County Council to identify the priority improvement measures and the benefits they would bring.

Liveable Streets

4.20   Support was given to promote the concept of Liveable Streets and residents nominated streets to include in potential Liveable Street trials. This will feed directly into the ongoing work of the Council's Community and Neighbourhood Management programme, and internal meetings have been held to discuss how to ensure the Liveable Streets concepts are a key feature of this work in the future.

4.21   The Strategy has been updated to give greater clarity about the remaining stages of community engagement and the identification of pilot Liveable Streets projects through the CNM programme.

A1(M) Smart Motorway

4.22 Some opposition was received to the inclusion of the A1(M) expansion project. The project is led by Highways England and is therefore out of the control of the Council. The Strategy has been amended to make it more clear that whilst the scheme is designed to ease congestion and improve safety on the A1(M), it should result in a reduction of traffic on Stevenage's roads as traffic moves back onto the Strategic Road Network, freeing up capacity in the town.

4.23 The Strategy now states that the Council will seek to use any capacity increases resulting from the A1(M) scheme for sustainable transport measures.

Large Scale Public Sector Schemes

4.24 Suggestions came from numerous individuals to implement large scale schemes such as Park and Ride, monorail or Light Rail Transit across the town.

4.25 This type of large scale scheme could be considered in the future as having the potential to enable a significant modal shift in public transportation habits so the Transport Strategy has been amended to include investigating the potential of potential schemes in the long term.

The reason for including it in the long-term section, rather than as a short or medium term project, is because the successful implementation of a large scale public transport scheme is likely to require the introduction of measures to disincentivise car-use to ensure there are sufficient potential users to make any future scheme financially viable. If car-use is to be disincentivised, a full range of viable alternatives to car-use must be in place to enable car-users to take alternative transport options, so the implementation of short-term projects in this Transport Strategy will be required before a large scale public transport scheme can be introduced.

Use of technology

4.26 Numerous respondents suggested that technology could be used to promote behaviour change. Smartphone apps or other IT programmes could be used to educate, promote and reward sustainable travel as a complementary measure to the infrastructural improvements in the Strategy.

4.27 As a result of the consultation, the council has trialled the BetterPoints sustainable transportation behaviour-change app internally with staff. This smartphone app records transport behaviours and promotes sustainable transport through the use of competition with colleagues and a range of rewards. The trial could be a precursor to a town-wide roll-out in partnership with businesses or potentially county-wide led by the County Council. The trial closed on 22 Sept and the results are currently being considered and have been shared with HCC.

Sustainable Travel Town

4.28 Hertfordshire County Council has invited applications to join the Sustainable Travel Town programme as a key initiative to deliver the objectives of their Local Transport Plan 4. The programme aims to deliver comprehensive

packages of schemes and behaviour change initiatives in two or three towns across the county to achieve a significant modal shift to non-car modes of transport.

4.29   The Council has submitted an initial bid to be designated as a Sustainable Travel Town and will continue to seek entry onto the programme. If successful, a range of programmes to be delivered will be selected through discussions between HCC and the Council, utilising evidential studies including the HCC North Central Growth and Transport Plan, the SBC Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan, the SBC Cycle Strategy and this Transport Strategy.

Monitoring

4.30   The monitoring chapter was amended to make it clearer that monitoring would focus on progress with the schemes included in the Strategy, not the effect of schemes on travel patterns in Stevenage. Travel patterns are monitored and published annually by the County Council as Highways Authority.

4.31   As such, whilst the Council will look at the data from the County Council when it is available to see the impacts of the Transport Strategy on transportation habits, its monitoring will focus on the delivery of transport schemes.

> **Recommendation 2.3: that the updated version of Future Town, Future Transport be adopted as the transport strategy for Stevenage.**

4.32   The Transport Strategy can either be adopted as a policy document of the Council or further amendments can be made to it, necessitating further stages of public consultation.

4.33   If adopted, the Strategy will sit under the Future Town, Future Council Corporate Plan as one of the "Place of Choice" strategies. Officers will be committed to monitoring progress with the Transport Strategy annually and can implement an update to the Strategy if considered necessary based on the findings of monitoring. This could either be as a result of successful progress of schemes enabling further schemes to be implemented, or lack of progress with identified schemes necessitating alternative schemes.

5   IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

5.1   The costs of adopting the Transport Strategy will be met from the agreed departmental budget. The cost implications of particular schemes contained in the Strategy are highlighted within the Strategy, where known.

5.2   Many schemes are subject to securing funding, either from internal departmental budgets, development partners, infrastructure providers, developer contributions or other external funding opportunities.

5.3   Many of the costs within the Strategy are taken from the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) which is a rolling list of infrastructure projects required (or

desirable) to support the Local Plan. This IDP identifies costs and sets out where funding to deliver schemes 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.

5.4   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.

5.5   The Strategy will be used to prioritise projects and access external funding opportunities, including LEP, Central Government funding and money from HCC as Highways Authority. SBC has previously submitted bids to fund transport-related schemes. For example, LEP funding has been agreed for the relocation of the bus station and a bid to HCC for the introduction of a cycle share scheme was unsuccessful. As the outputs of this Strategy are all infrastructure schemes, CIL / S106 monies can provide another source of funding.

5.6   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

5.7   There are no direct legal implications associated with adopting the Transport Strategy.

Risk Implications

5.8   There is a risk that insufficient funding opportunities are identified and secured to deliver the schemes and programmes in the Transport Strategy. This could prevent the ambitions of the Strategy being met which could have detrimental impacts on the transport network within the borough.

Policy Implications

5.9   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, it will constitute a corporate policy document that should be utilised across council departments and by relevant stakeholders, as appropriate.

5.10   It is also aligned with other corporate Council documents such as the Cultural Strategy, Healthy Stevenage Strategy and the recently-declared Climate Emergency Motion. It has received input from other Council departments to ensure a corporate approach.

Planning Implications

5.11   The Transport Strategy accords with the recently adopted 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.

Climate Change Implications

5.12   The Transport Strategy has the potential to have a significant positive impact on climate change through the multiple benefits that prioritising sustainable and active modes of transport, and minimising car use, can bring. Active forms of transport, walking and cycling, can replace the need to use private-cars, cutting the emissions associated with journeys within the town. The promotion of public transport through improvements to train and bus services will also help to reduce reliance on private-car journeys, replacing them with more energy-efficient options. The Strategy will also have benefits in terms of air quality more generally.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

5.13   The Transport 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

5.14   The Transport 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   Report for 21 November 2018 Executive, Item 8

BD7   Stevenage Borough Council's Green Travel Plan, 2013-18

APPENDICES

A   Draft Future Town, Future Transport Consultation Statement 2019

B   Future Town, Future Transport 2019