

**Meeting** Planning & Development Committee  
**Portfolio Area** Environment and Regeneration  
**Date** 3 February 2021



## STEVENAGE CONNECTION AREA ACTION PLAN: ISSUES & OPTIONS REPORT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

### KEY DECISION

#### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report (Appendix A).
- 1.2 To seek Members' approval to carry out public consultation on the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report.
- 1.3 It is important to note that this is an early stage of preparation of the Area Action Plan. The options proposed are high level, strategic options to develop an improved environment, maximise density of space and economic opportunities around Stevenage Railway Station, in order to enable development.
- 1.4 Stevenage Borough Council, as a co-operative Council, seeks to engage widely with businesses, residents and other stakeholder groups. The Issues and Options Report contains key concepts at this early stage and does not suggest specific proposals for the Railway Station and Lytton Way.

## 2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the content of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report be noted.
- 2.2 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Environment and Regeneration, following consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report prior to publication for consultation.
- 2.3 That the Executive approve the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report for consultation for a minimum 6 week period, following the Executive meeting. Consultation dates to be determined by the Assistant Director: Environment and Regeneration.
- 2.4 That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee regarding the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report be included in the report to the Executive on this matter.

## 3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 An Area Action Plan (AAP) is a type of Development Plan Document (DPD) providing a planning framework for a specific area of opportunity, change or conservation. AAPs give a geographic or spatial dimension and focus for the implementation of policies for that area. AAPs can create new policy over and above the Local Plan, within the designated AAP area.
- 3.2 The Council, in conjunction with consultancy David Lock Associates (DLA), is developing an emerging Area Action Plan for the Stevenage Station Gateway area, titled the “Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan”. As it will be a DPD, this will become part of the Development Plan for Stevenage, and as such is required to be subject to statutory consultation and examination. The final AAP document is required to be adopted by full Council.
- 3.3 The AAP will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to engage and shape this area. It also acts as a catalyst for developers interested in supporting this key part of the Local Plan
- 3.4 The requirement to produce the Stevenage Station Gateway AAP (site area TC4 as identified in the Local Plan) resulted from a letter from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in March 2019. This lifted the Holding Direction placed on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan in 2017.
- 3.5 Stevenage Borough Local Plan Policy TC4 (“Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area”) states:

*Within the Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:*

- a. An extended and regenerated train station;*
- b. New bus station;*
- c. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;*
- d. New multi-storey or basement car parking;*

- e. *New Use Class B1 office premises;*
- f. *A new Use Class C1 hotel; and*
- g. *New Use Class A1 and Use Class A3 restaurant and cafe uses.*

*Applications should address the following design and land use principles:*

- i. *Major reconfiguration of Lytton Way between Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way;*
- ii. *Demolition of the Arts & Leisure Centre to facilitate better east-west integration and create new development sites in the environs of the train station*
- iii. *The provision of replacement sports and theatre facilities elsewhere within Stevenage Central*
- iv. *A significantly regenerated and enlarged dual frontage train station of high quality, with associated facilities*
- v. *New public squares on the eastern and western frontages of the train station*
- vi. *High quality office buildings within a short walking distance of the train station*
- vii. *At least one multi-storey car park and cycle parking plus drop-off space*
- viii. *Establishment of an attractive east – west pedestrian route across the East Coast Main Line*
- ix. *High quality landmark gateway environment to create a positive image of Stevenage for all rail visitors*

- 3.6 The Council provides regular updates to MHCLG on progress with the AAP as one of the conditions set in the Secretary of State's letter to the Council in March 2019.
- 3.7 The AAP has been developed in conjunction with DLA and the attached document is a draft "Issues and Options" version. This report outlines the core issues that are present within the station area as well as the background policy issues and wider context that affects its development. This is an early stage of the preparation of an AAP, and a series of initial options that focus on mobility are presented for feedback from targeted stakeholders.
- 3.8 Once the Council has proceeded with the Issues & Options public consultation and begins to consider the preferred options for the Station Gateway area of Stevenage, it is possible that further consultancy assistance will be required to consider costs, feasibility of and graphics related to development of Preferred Options documentation. This will be taken forward into the public consultation Preferred Options AAP and onto the final version of the AAP that will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Public Examination.

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

**Recommendation 2.1: That the content of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report be noted.**

- 4.1 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report is included in Appendix A. A broad overview of the key points from the draft version is presented below.

#### *Policy Context*

- 4.2 There are a range of high level policy objectives which align with the Local Plan and national policy direction for the AAP to respond to. These include:
- Sustainable travel considered throughout;
  - Green infrastructure in the public realm;
  - Climate change consideration in all development decisions;
  - Design of the highest architectural standards.
- 4.3 The high level, strategic options proposed for the area included within the AAP will be strongly influenced by the masterplan for the SG1 development which lies to the east and within the town centre. Connections to this development and connections through into the town square and central area will form the emerging physical context within which the AAP sits.
- 4.4 The Council's "Future Town, Future Transport" Strategy (2019) is the transport plan responding to Hertfordshire County Councils Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4). This brings forward modal shift and sustainable transport measures across the county.
- 4.5 Other strategies are of relevance for the AAP. For example, "Stevenage Re-Imagined: A Ten-Year Arts and Heritage (Cultural) Strategy for Stevenage" provides wider context on the aspirations for public realm and the illustration of the town's cultural heritage. The AAP will seek to reflect the aspirations of this strategy going forward.
- 4.6 The document contains a number of policy actions for the 'Stevenage Gateway' area (approximately concurrent with the AAP area). These are split across short term and medium term plans, and the AAP must respond to them.
- 4.7 The Station Gateway area of Stevenage is a key location for economic competitiveness. Other locations which are a similar time distance away from London terminals are seeing considerable commercial growth, for example Reading, Slough, Milton Keynes and Croydon. Stevenage is perfectly placed in terms of mobility, and already hosts major international companies.
- 4.8 Creating an attractive, healthy, memorable and enjoyable place in the Station Gateway area will provide the seeds for high quality mixed-use development to come forward and make the most of the station area, and contribute widely across the town.
- 4.9 This report has been prepared during the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak. The impact of COVID-19 on rail travel is uncertain. It seems likely that we will see less peak-time travel in the future, reducing the pressure on rush-hour services as more people work from home or stagger their working hours. Rail demand is likely to return to comparable levels as the economy and situation return to normal in the medium to long term, but potentially spread throughout the day.

#### *Issues and Challenges*

4.10 Detailed analysis of the area has divided the issues within the TC4 station area boundary into three categories; experiential issues, functional issues and development issues.

4.11 Experiential issues include:

- The presence of Lytton Way, a wide dual carriageway mostly segregated from pedestrians that takes up a great deal of land. It does not function as an urban street that could host other uses and development along it to create an attractive and enjoyable place.
- Street trees are present within the car parks but are surrounded by tarmac surfacing. As a result the public realm is a poor environment for anyone not in a car.
- At present the station area is a place of transit and only hosts the railway station as a use.

4.12 Functional issues include:

- Poor connectivity to the town centre – the only real route is the overbridge, which runs directly through the station. Although this is a direct route, it then drops into a surface car park which provides a poor entrance to the town.
- Barrier to east-west movement – constrained connection discourages movement across the railway tracks.
- Little support for active modes of travel – to expand cycle provision and narrow footpaths exist.
- The Station is in need of an upgrade – in 2017, Arup’s “Rail Station Vision” study concluded that the new station, built on an overbridge to the south of the existing station was the strongest option. This would align with the SG1 development and the new bus station.
- Constricted space, except for cars – pavements have been reallocated as motorbike parking and poor street furniture.
- Safety and accessibility issues – poor overlooking and passive surveillance of the ground level leads to a perception of a lack of safety, particularly when dark. Cycle paths are also isolated and poorly overlooked. A lack of uses fronting the space other than the rail station, where dwell times are typically low as a place of transit, means there are generally few people around.

4.13 Development challenges include:

- The area around the station is a key location for economic competitiveness.
- The Leisure Centre building offers opportunities for opening up high quality development and improving east-west linkages. This is subject to funding being available.

#### *Emerging Framework*

4.14 Chapter 6 of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues & Options Report is the key chapter for which feedback is targeted from stakeholders who operate within and around the area covered by the AAP.

- 4.15 The AAP area is split into five separate zones:
- North – made up of the existing surface car parks north of the railway station, at the extreme north of the AAP zone.
  - Central (Phase 1) – made up of the existing surface car parks immediately north of the railway station.
  - Central (Phase 2) – made up of the existing station drop-off areas and immediate surrounds of the existing station. This land is primarily in the ownership of Network Rail and would only be able to come forward for development after a new railway station building was constructed further to the south.
  - Station Square – made up of the existing surface car parks immediately south of the railway station. This in effect is a reserve site, future-proofing the potential to develop a new railway station, should funding become available.
  - South – made up of the existing surface car parks north of the railway station, at the extreme south of the AAP zone.
- 4.16 A series of objectives and key principles have been developed for the emerging framework of the AAP.
- 4.17 Objectives of the emerging framework include creation of a new gateway and arrival experience, enhanced movement and access for all transport modes, creating new mixed used developments to unlock opportunity, integrating green infrastructure throughout the area and ensuring sustainability in mobility alongside low carbon developments, which respect the heritage of the town.
- 4.18 Key design principles of the emerging framework include providing people-friendly spaces, improving links from the rail station to the bus station, improving step-free and disabled access, future-proofing the area for a rail station upgrade, consolidating surface car parking to enable development and to ensure good access for all travel modes, including high quality cycling facilities.

#### *Core Enhancements*

- 4.19 All proposed high level scenarios for the reconfiguration of Lytton Way have a set of core enhancements, primarily in the North and South zones of the AAP area, north of Swingate and south of Danesgate. These apply to all potential options and include:
- Reduction in width of Lytton Way to be reallocated to pedestrian or cycle movement with associated green infrastructure.
  - An additional segregated cycleway adjacent to Lytton Way, away from the railway tracks.
  - Improved access to the Police Station.
  - A large public square, future-proofed for a new railway station or enhanced station entrance.

- An east-west “boulevard”, running from the west of the railway line to the town centre and would cross the station and public square.
- A cycle hub at the southern end of the Station Square plot.
- Development plots made available by the consolidation of surface car parking into a Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP), subject to funding being available.

### *Central Area Options*

- 4.20 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues & Options Report designates three potential strategic scenarios for the Central Areas of the AAP zone. No preferred option or scenario has emerged at this early stage of the AAP. All three high level options are focused around opportunities for improved mobility and are discussed below.
- 4.21 Option 1: All Traffic Modes would reduce Lytton Way to a single carriageway, suitable for all modes of travel. As it approaches the area outside the station, it would transition to becoming a shared space carriageway with a change of materials to reduce speeds.
- 4.22 Advantages of Option 1 include that it would retain through access for all modes of travel; there would be a significant improvement in space allocated for active modes; and no re-routing of bus routes would be required.
- 4.23 Disadvantages of Option 1 include potential conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians; and the option does not clearly prioritise sustainable travel modes.
- 4.24 Option 2: Buses and Taxis only again would reduce Lytton Way to a single carriageway and restrict movement to buses and taxis only. A change of surface material reinforces this restriction. As it approaches the area outside the railway station, it would transition to becoming a shared space carriageway with flush kerbs and bollards to calm vehicle speeds.
- 4.25 Advantages of Option 2 include the reduction in vehicle traffic, making pedestrian and cycling movement easier; a reduction in noise outside the railway station; again, no re-routing of bus routes would be required; and there would be a clear prioritisation of sustainable modes of travel.
- 4.26 Disadvantages of Option 2 include the potential conflicts between buses, taxis and pedestrians, though the risk is lower than Option 1; and there would be a potentially significant change to traffic flows around Stevenage town centre.
- 4.27 Option 3: Pedestrianised Plaza would remove regular vehicle movement from the front of the railway station, with Lytton Way ceasing to be a through route. An access route is retained for emergency services needing to access the railway station and immediate environs.
- 4.28 Advantages of Option 3 include free movement for walking and cycling modes in front of the railway station, with few conflict points; a much larger area could be given over to a flexible public square; there would be a reduction in noise outside the railway station; there would be a clear prioritisation of active modes of travel; and buses would still be able to access the new bus station.

- 4.29 Disadvantages of Option 3 include that bus routes would be required to re-route; there is potentially significant change to traffic flows around Stevenage town centre; and there would be no bus access and route to the north of the AAP zone.

#### *Bicycle Path Potential Layouts*

- 4.30 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues & Options Report also designates two potential scenarios to address the challenges created by the existing bicycle path, running along the railway edge. This currently suffers from a generally poor user experience, lack of passive surveillance and constrains the width of potential development parcels. The two potential layouts are detailed below.
- 4.31 Potential layout 1 would retain the existing cycle path and create a new segregated path within the revised Lytton Way street profile. Retention of the existing path would provide an alternative route for cyclists to follow that would not have conflict points. This option would require development parcels to provide active frontages or overlooking on both aspects, rather than simply backing onto the railway tracks. This would therefore constrain development options.
- 4.32 Potential layout 2 proposes to remove the existing cycle path and create a new segregated path within the revised Lytton Way profile. Provision of the new path within the enhanced streetscape of Lytton Way would contribute to an activated public realm. Removal of the existing path would create a more efficient layout and would increase the quantum of developable land available.

#### *Phasing and Temporary Uses*

- 4.33 Phasing approaches have been considered at this stage of the AAP to consider in advance of a preferred approach, following public consultation. To transform the station area towards one of the options offered will require a phasing strategy that considers timing of highway works, provision of active travel infrastructure, timing of relocation of key mobility uses such as taxi ranks and drop-off and relocation and consolidation of station surface car parking.
- 4.34 To enable a phased approach, it is proposed in the AAP that a strategy employing temporary uses should be put in place. The phasing strategy clearly identifies locations suitable for such temporary uses, which can enliven the space around the station and establish the groundwork and footfall for permanent development in the future.

#### *Future Development Parcels*

- 4.35 The emerging framework details potential to maximise development opportunity at each of the five identified development plots in the AAP zone. A series of potential scenarios for each of the five plots are discussed. The Council will consult with all relevant partners in these plots. For example, Network Rail will be consulted on their views regarding an improved Railway Station.



- 4.36 Each development parcel has the potential to support a mix of uses that contribute towards the components of placemaking. A brief outline of each parcel's development opportunity is detailed below:

North – this parcel offers an opportunity to create a landmark development which could predominantly be residential-led. Storey heights should be a minimum of 6 storeys and could rise to over 10 storeys, dependent upon the configuration of the buildings. A basement storey of surface car parking, to retain a proportion of commuter parking provision would be required as part of this development parcel.

Central (Phase 1) – this parcel offers the opportunity to locate a wide variety of uses including a hotel, office space, residential with an active ground floor. Given the lack of adjoining development, storey heights should be a minimum of 6 storeys and could rise to over 10 storeys, A basement storey of surface car parking, to retain a proportion of commuter parking provision would be required as part of this development parcel.

Central (Phase 2) – this is a longer-term development option that will frame the new public space after a potential new station building is constructed (it would be built largely on the area occupied by the existing rail station). As such it would have intensive mixed-use, including a vibrant ground floor with retail, cafés and other active uses. As it is located to the north of the public square, a landmark or feature tower would be appropriate.

Station Square – while this is designated as a longer-term development site, primarily being occupied by a potential new rail station building, it will also form part of the public realm that will define the arrival into Stevenage. As such this should be a well-designed space that will be of high quality and act as an extension of the regeneration of the town centre.

South – the northern end of the parcel would be an ideal location for a high-quality cycle hub, such as that seen in Cambridge or in Dutch cities, providing accessible and secure bike parking and maintenance directly adjacent to the existing and proposed new railway station, as well as the bus station. Offices could be located above the cycle hub, with storey heights determined by market demand and consideration for sunlight into the new public space to the north.

#### *Parking Consolidation*

- 4.37 The final section of the emerging framework addresses the surface car parks adjacent to the railway station, which provide around 450 parking spaces, and are typically well-used. Consolidation of the existing surface parking will be an essential component of delivering the objectives of the AAP.
- 4.38 The Council's Regeneration team have been heavily involved in the development of the AAP to date and ensuring the latest information regarding the status and location of a new comprehensive Multi Storey Car Park is incorporated into the direction the AAP document takes through its stages of preparation and development.

**Recommendation 2.2: That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Environment and Regeneration, following**

**consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to make minor amendments as are necessary in the final preparation of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report prior to its consultation.**

- 4.39 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report is appended to this report. However, it may be necessary to make minor changes prior to the consultation start date. This might include cosmetic adjustments, imagery and graphics, the correction of typographical errors and any minor factual changes.
- 4.40 It is recommended that any such amendments be approved via delegated powers.

**Recommendation 2.3: That the Executive approve the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report for consultation for a minimum 6 week period, following the Executive meeting. Consultation dates are to be determined by the Assistant Director: Environment and Regeneration.**

- 4.41 The procedure to adopt a new SPD is set out in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. Approximately, it is as follows (as referenced in the Council's Statement of Community Involvement, or "SCI"):

***Consultation on initial draft policies and options (Public Consultation)***  
***Develop submission version of policies (Public Consultation)***  
***Submission of Plan to Secretary of State***  
***Examination in Public of Plan***  
***Consultation on Proposed Modifications (Public Consultation)***  
***Inspector's Report***  
***Adoption of Plan***  
***Monitoring and Review***

- 4.42 Essentially, the "consultation on initial draft policies and options" stage is the first stage for public consultation. The "Issues and Options" draft of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan forms this first stage.
- 4.43 The next stage "develop submission version of policies" will form the second stage of the Area Action Plan and will form the "Preferred Options" draft for public consultation.
- 4.44 This will be followed by the version which will be submitted to the Secretary of State ahead of an independent Examination in Public by an appointed Planning Inspector. A final consultation on any modifications proposed by the Inspector to the Plan will be held prior to the Inspector's Report, which confirms whether the Plan can proceed to formal adoption. Monitoring and review of the Plan is required a period of time after the Plan has been adopted.

### *Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening*

- 4.45 Sustainability appraisal and strategic environmental assessment are tools used at the plan-making stage to assess the likely effects of the plan when judged against reasonable alternatives. A sustainability appraisal should be prepared for any of the documents that can form part of a local plan, including core strategies, site allocation documents and area action plans.
- 4.46 During preparation of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, officers concluded that Policy TC4 (Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area) had no significant environmental impact. The statutory consultees for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening have been contacted to confirm they are content with this position.
- 4.47 There is potential to include stronger wording in the AAP referring to environmental effects of the development. This should reflect the position taken in the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal, noting the environmental benefits that the preferred option works would provide such as reduction in air pollution and contribution to net zero carbon targets.

### *Consultation to date*

- 4.48 In the development of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report, officers have consulted internally with Stevenage Borough Council departments. Comments and representations have been incorporated into the final draft of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report as much as possible; in particular from Development Management, Regeneration and Strategic Director level.
- 4.49 A log of internal comments has been maintained. A small number of outstanding issues remain, including discussion between Planning Policy, DLA and the Regeneration team regarding the status and location of potential Multi Storey Car Park sites, subject to funding being available.
- 4.50 The Portfolio Holders Advisory Group (PHAG) was informed of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2020 and invited to submit comments ahead of this report to Executive. In the lead up to the Senior Leadership Team meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021, relevant Stevenage Borough Council departments were consulted, including the Borough Solicitor, Human Resources, Communications and Stevenage Direct Services (Finance).
- 4.51 A number of key stakeholders to Stevenage Railway Station have been informed of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report and invited to submit early representations ahead of public consultation. These bodies include Hertfordshire County Council (Highways Department), Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), Network Rail (Estates Department), Govia Thameslink Railway, Mace (partner in SG1 development), and Legal & General (landowners to the west of the railway).
- 4.52 Council officers met with Hertfordshire County Council Highways on 11<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to brief them on the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report. The background context, key issues and challenges and in particular the emerging framework and options explored were discussed. Hertfordshire County Council officers had some suggestions

that can be taken forward ahead of the AAP going to public consultation. They were broadly supportive in principle of the draft AAP, primarily as it has strong potential to reflect sustainable active travel objectives that are promoted within Local Transport Plan 4.

- 4.53 Hertfordshire County Council's Highways Department will be working closely with Stevenage officers to positively shape the document as it develops through the statutory consultation stages.
- 4.54 An important element of this early work with Hertfordshire County Council includes highway modelling work to inform the options that will be taken forward in the AAP. Hertfordshire County Council already has a 2019 base model and has tested previous options for the bus station and SG1 development. This modelling work can run in parallel with the public consultation period and would provide an indication of the relative impact and workability of the different scenarios proposed.
- 4.55 The content of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report was endorsed by Senior Leadership Team on 12<sup>th</sup> January 2021 to progress through Planning & Development Committee and Executive ahead of public consultation.

#### *Options for Public Consultation*

- 4.56 According to the Stevenage Borough Local Development Scheme (LDS – October 2020), timetables associated with Development Plan Documents and Local Development Documents are subject to change. It was hoped that progress with the AAP for the Railway Station would be swift and that the adoption process will occur in line with the timetable in the updated LDS.
- 4.57 The Area Action Plan, as a Development Plan Document, is similar in status to the Local Plan and therefore requires Examination in Public by an appointed Planning Inspector, representing the Secretary of State. Should the AAP pass the soundness tests during the Examination in Public, the gateway process to formally adopting the AAP would progress immediately; with an expected adoption of the AAP in 2022.
- 4.58 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. Officers will do their best to comply with the timetable but this is not always within their control.
- 4.59 The Local Plan regulations state that an Area Action Plan, as a Development Plan Document, must be consulted on publicly for no less than 6 weeks. Therefore officers would like to progress the AAP public consultation for a minimum of 6 weeks towards the end of February 2021, if possible; if this is not practical or feasible, there will be a delay until after the local elections. Two options have emerged. If Option 1 is not practical or feasible, we would delay public consultation until after the local elections (Option 2).
- 4.60 Following this, the Council must consider the consultation responses, produce a document stating the main issues raised by respondents, and summarise how the issues have been addressed by the Council.

- 4.61 As with any consultation exercise, it is not known how many responses will be received so the post-consultation stages will not be known for definite until a later date.
- 4.62 The Planning Policy team will seek to undertake an engaging technical public consultation on the AAP. As well as consulting with a wide range of consultees as outlined in the SCI, we will write to specific stakeholders and advocate online engagement, addressing issues including employment priorities, access and movement. Liaison with the Communications team will be necessary to facilitate the technical consultation element.

*Option 1: Public Consultation February – March 2021*

| <b>Stage</b>  | <b>Date</b>              |
|---|--------------------------|
| First Consultation (Issues and Options)<br>Minimum 6-week Public Consultation | February – March 2021    |
| Consider and address responses  | April – May 2021         |
| Second Consultation (Preferred Options)                                       | August / September 2021  |
| Submission to Secretary of State  | November / December 2021 |
| Examination in Public   | February 2022            |
| Adoption  | Spring 2022              |

*Option 2: Public Consultation May – June 2021*

| <b>Stage</b>  | <b>Date</b>              |
|---|--------------------------|
| First Consultation (Issues and Options)<br>Minimum 6-week Public Consultation | May – June 2021          |
| Consider and address responses  | July – August 2021       |
| Second Consultation (Preferred Options)                                       | November / December 2021 |
| Submission to Secretary of State  | February / March 2022    |
| Examination in Public   | May 2022                 |
| Adoption  | Summer 2022              |

## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The costs associated with producing and consulting on the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report will be met from the agreed departmental budget.
- 5.2 A budget of £10,000 was allocated to procuring DLA to produce the Issues & Options consultation draft. This included an inception meeting; regular progress meetings; and DLA output including a range of graphics, drawings and electronic document production. This has been input to form the final draft Issues & Options version of the Area Action Plan as a detailed PDF.
- 5.3 It is possible that further consultancy assistance will be required to consider costs, feasibility of and graphics related to development of Preferred Options documentation.
- 5.4 Any potential schemes that are referenced in the AAP and subsequently developed will need to be subject to a business case and / or will require third party funding.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.5 Consultation on the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report will be undertaken in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.
- 5.6 The outcomes of any consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in developing the Preferred Options version of the AAP, prior to approval by the Executive.
- 5.7 The comments of the Planning & Development Committee are invited regarding the content of the report prior to the report going before Executive.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.8 There are no significant risks associated with producing the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report.

### **Policy Implications**

- 5.9 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report accords with, and has been produced to supplement policies in, the adopted Stevenage Local Plan (2019). As it is a Development Plan Document it may also develop policies over and above the Local Plan for the Stevenage Station Gateway area of opportunity.
- 5.10 The document is aligned with other corporate Council documents such as the Climate Change Strategy (adopted September 2020), Action Plan and Charter as well as Stevenage's Future Town Future Transport Strategy.

### **Planning Implications**

- 5.11 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report will supplement the recently adopted Stevenage Local Plan (2019).

- 5.12 The document will add to and complement the Development Plan for Stevenage. It will be a material consideration for planning applications.

### **Environmental Implications**

- 5.13 During preparation of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, officers concluded that Policy TC4 (Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area) had no significant environmental impact. There is potential to include stronger wording in the AAP referring to environmental effects of the development.

### **Climate Change Implications**

- 5.14 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report will seek to provide sustainable travel and promote active modes of transport. This will support the aims and objectives of the Stevenage Climate Change Strategy (September 2020) and contribute to the overall climate change aspirations of the Council.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.15 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report will seek to improve disabled and step-free access to Stevenage railway station; therefore offering further opportunities and benefits for all accessing the railway station and more widely, connecting to the town centre in future.

### **Community Safety Implications**

- 5.16 Whilst the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report does not have any direct community safety implications itself, when implementing any of the proposals the delivery body will need to consider the potential impacts on community safety.

### **Other Implications**

- 5.17 There will be significant economic implications from future work arising from the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan.
- 5.18 For example, the AAP could help to maximise opportunity for provision of high quality facilities for the growing local research and development industry as well as the expanding cell and gene therapy catalyst industry that is seeking future accommodation in the town and wider area.

## **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- BD1 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>
- BD2 Stevenage Borough Local Development Scheme (October 2020)  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/local-development-scheme/local-development-scheme-october-2020.pdf>
- BD3 Stevenage Future Town, Future Transport Strategy (October 2019)  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/evidential-studies/transport-infrastructure/future-town-future-transport-strategy-2019.pdf>
- BD4 Letter from Rt. Hon. James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to Stevenage Borough Council: Stevenage Borough Council's Local Plan (March 2019)  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/holding-direction/the-secretary-of-states-letter.pdf>
- BD5 Stevenage Borough Statement of Community Involvement (November 2018)  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/draft-statement-of-community-involvement/statement-of-community-involvement-2018.pdf>
- BD6 Hertfordshire County Council Local Transport Plan 4 (May 2018)  
<https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/media-library/documents/about-the-council/consultations/ltp4-local-transport-plan-4-complete.pdf>

## **APPENDICES**

- A Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report Draft (December 2020)