

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 14 October 2021

Time: 2.30pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)
Matt Partridge (Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council)
Councillor Sharon Taylor (Stevenage Borough Council)
Councillor John Gardner (Stevenage Borough Council)
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)
Clare Fletcher (Stevenage Borough Council)
Chris Barnes (Stevenage Borough Council)
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)
Lucy King (Stevenage Borough Council)
Warren Myles (Stevenage Borough Council)
Gemma Hannant (Stevenage Borough Council)
County Councillor Richard Roberts (Hertfordshire County Council)
Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council)
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)
Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire LEP)
Briege Leahy (Herts Chamber of Commerce)
Charlotte Blizzard-Welch (Stevenage Citizens Advice Bureau)
Ed Jordan (WENTA)
Claire Dicks (MBDA)
Kit Davies (North Hertfordshire College)
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)
Sian Carter (Homes England)
Karen Hillen (BEIS)
Kevin Cowin (MACE)
James Latham (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)
Mary Hartley (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust)
Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire)
Richard Whitehead (Aecom)

Also in attendance:

Piers Slater (Reef)
Adam Molyneux (WSP UK Ltd) – **for Item 8 only**
Giles Perkins (WSP UK Ltd) – **for Item 8 only**
Andrew Highfield (Hertfordshire County Council) – **for Item 8 only**

Start / End Start Time: 2.30pm
Time: End Time: 4.36pm

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Board was advised that apologies for absence had been received from the following:

Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)
Sarah McLaughlin (Hertfordshire County Council)
Stephen Ward (Catapult)
Kasia Averall (Catapult)
Greg Westover (Legal & General)
Charles Amies (Homes England)
Keith Ellis (Airbus)
Hetty Thornton (Historic England)
Duncan Parsley (GlaxoSmithKline)

6 TOWN DEAL BUSINESS CASES TRANCHE 1

Chris Barnes (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) advised the Board of the review process for Town Deal Business Cases. This features a full draft of each Business Case would be subject to an officer sift before being considered by an Assurance Panel, involving some Board Members. The next stage would be submission to the Board and, subject to Board endorsement, the final stage would be approval by the Accountable Body (SBC). Thereafter, the Business Case(s) would be submitted to the Government.

Chris stated that two summary Business Cases were before the Board for consideration. Full versions of each Business Case were available on request.

(1) Gunnels Wood Road Infrastructure Project

Chris commented that the Business Case was fully consistent with the initial proposal set out in the Stevenage Town Investment Plan (TIP).

Chris advised that the Business Case proposed the use of £1M of Towns Fund money to part-fund the delivery of stage 1 of the Gunnels Wood Road infrastructure project, the design and enabling works required as part of the gyratory roundabout works. The project aligned with the ethos of the TIP, by utilising public funding to leverage private investment to make Stevenage Even Better, and importantly enhance the opportunities for local residents and businesses.

Chris explained that the works themselves related to an infrastructure project, land for redevelopment, delivering local economic growth and high-value jobs, and harnessing the opportunity to enhance skills, training and employment opportunities for the people of Stevenage. The development of a life science park, as detailed at previous Board meetings and in the national press, would continue to solidify Stevenage as a leading centre for life sciences as well as enable other growth opportunities in the area. This could only be achieved if the highway capacity and infrastructure challenges for Gunnels Wood Road were addressed

Chris stated that the lead delivery partner for the project would be Hertfordshire County Council (HCC), supported by Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and Stevenage Borough Council. There was also a key role for GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) in relation to unlocking the outcomes of this project, and the assurance panel which had reviewed this business case, including the Chair and Chief Officers from the accountable body, HCC and the LEP, had recommended a condition to ensure secure allocation of the land prior to significant funding being spent.

Chris mentioned that there were some challenges around the insecurity of stage 2 funding - whilst it had been positive to see some positive partnership working between the Development Board, LEP, HCC and the Borough Council in relation to the Levelling-up fund, this money had not yet been secured. However, part of the reason for including the project in the TIP, and funding stage 1, was that it would provide the strongest possible platform to subsequently secure the additional funding. Notwithstanding this, the Business Case was strongly supported by the assurance panel, with a recommendation that the Development Board endorse the project.

The Board noted an issue raised by James Latham (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst) concerning the transfer of GSK owned land to allow the development to take place. There was the possibility that the sale of the GSK freehold land required would be to a developer, in which case the developer would be a further party to the necessary agreement. The Board considered that it would be important to engage with GSK as soon as possible and get their sign off before design work commenced.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Gunnels Wood Road Infrastructure Project Business Case be endorsed, and recommended to the Accountable Body (Stevenage Borough Council) for approval.

(2) Marshgate Biotech Centre Project

Chris commented that the Business Case was fully consistent with the initial proposal set out in the Stevenage Town Investment Plan (TIP), with the exception of the key worker housing element, which the Board had previously agreed to vary in response to the challenge of receiving £37.5M Town Deal funding (as opposed to the £50M bid contained in the TIP).

Chris advised that the Business Case proposed the use of £1.75M of Towns Fund money to deliver a new life science centre on Marshgate car park, including laboratory and office space, as a European HQ for Autolus, who currently have a Research & Development presence in Stevenage.

Chris explained that the funding would be used to deliver the public elements of the scheme, delivering a new public parking offer, and improvements to the public realm connections to and from the site. This dovetailed nicely with the nearby Park Place and Queensway North developments, which had been completed or were close to completion.

Chris stated that the outputs that this project delivered would provide a significant economic boost to the town as part of the Covid-recovery. This was an opportunity to provide high-quality life science development in the town centre, with job roles at accessible skills levels for a wide range of local people, and really did get to the heart of the TIP. It would be especially positive for many Board Members, who had seen Government and LEP investment in life sciences in the town, together with Borough Council investment in the town centre regeneration, to see the results of both combining to deliver jobs, economic growth, and provide stimulus to the town centre.

Chris considered that the project would create a significant opportunity to harness the spending power and footfall the development would generate; to support existing businesses and attract new ones as part of the transformation of our town; and to start to strengthen those links between residents, businesses, and the quality of the town's amenities and infrastructure.

Chris advised that the lead delivery partner for this project would be Reef, supported by Stevenage Borough Council. An Accountable Body Agreement would be in place to ensure that the funds were managed and used appropriately, and the programme delivered the outputs expected. The assurance panel again provided strong support for this Business Case, and the chance to deliver a project such as this early in the programme would set a really positive statement to the Government.

The following points were made by Board Members:

- In response to a query, Chris explained that the removal of the key worker housing element had been removed from the project in agreement with BEIS, on the basis that such housing (if required) could be provided on sites such as Queensway North, which already had a set of eligibility criteria regarding the occupation of such units. He undertook to ensure that any remaining references to key worker housing were removed from the Business Case;
- In reply to a further query, Chris confirmed that the size of the proposed building reflected Autolus's stated requirements and was fit for purpose; whilst the TIP contained no specific requirements for carbon zero design, it was expected that the planning process would scrutinise sustainability and design issues. Piers Slater (Reef) added that his company's in-house design team took zero carbon issues very seriously. The building would be of modular design and would be future-proofed. An area of land adjacent to the site had been reserved by SBC should Autolus wish to expand the premises any time in the future;
- In terms of an issue regarding loss of car parking due to the development, Chris stated that this should be offset by the car parking to be provided in the new Multi-Storey Car Park proposed on the Railway Station North Car Park, which was part of the Station Gateway project. There was also underused parking space in the St. George's Way Multi-Storey Car Park; and
- Chris confirmed that the intention was to submit Business Cases to the Government as soon as they were approved, rather than all at once in March 2022.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Marshgate Biotech Centre Project Business Case be endorsed, and recommended to the Accountable Body (Stevenage Borough

Council) for approval.