

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Environment and Regeneration
Date 9 February 2022



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

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options public consultation (Appendix D).
- 1.2 To seek Members' approval to draft the next version of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report, to be reported back to Executive prior to commencing public consultation.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Executive:

- 2.1 Note the content of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report Consultation Statement (the Consultation Statement).
- 2.2 Agree to progress to the next stage of the Area Action Plan progress, the production of the "Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred

Options Report”, (the Preferred Options Report), this report being based on the outcomes of the “Issues and Options” consultation.

- 2.3 Delegate powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to prepare the Preferred Options Report.
- 2.4 Note that the final draft of the Preferred Options Report will be presented to Executive for approval to go out to public consultation in Summer 2022 (formal consultation, if approved, will take place once approved).
- 2.5 Note that the comments of the Planning & Development Committee will be sought and considered on both the Consultation Statement and the content of this Executive Report.
- 2.6 Note that informal engagement with key stakeholders will continue, to test the Preferred Options ahead of preparation of the Area Action Plan Preferred Options Report.

3 BACKGROUND

Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan

- 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 [BD1], 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 important 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 [BD2]. 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.*

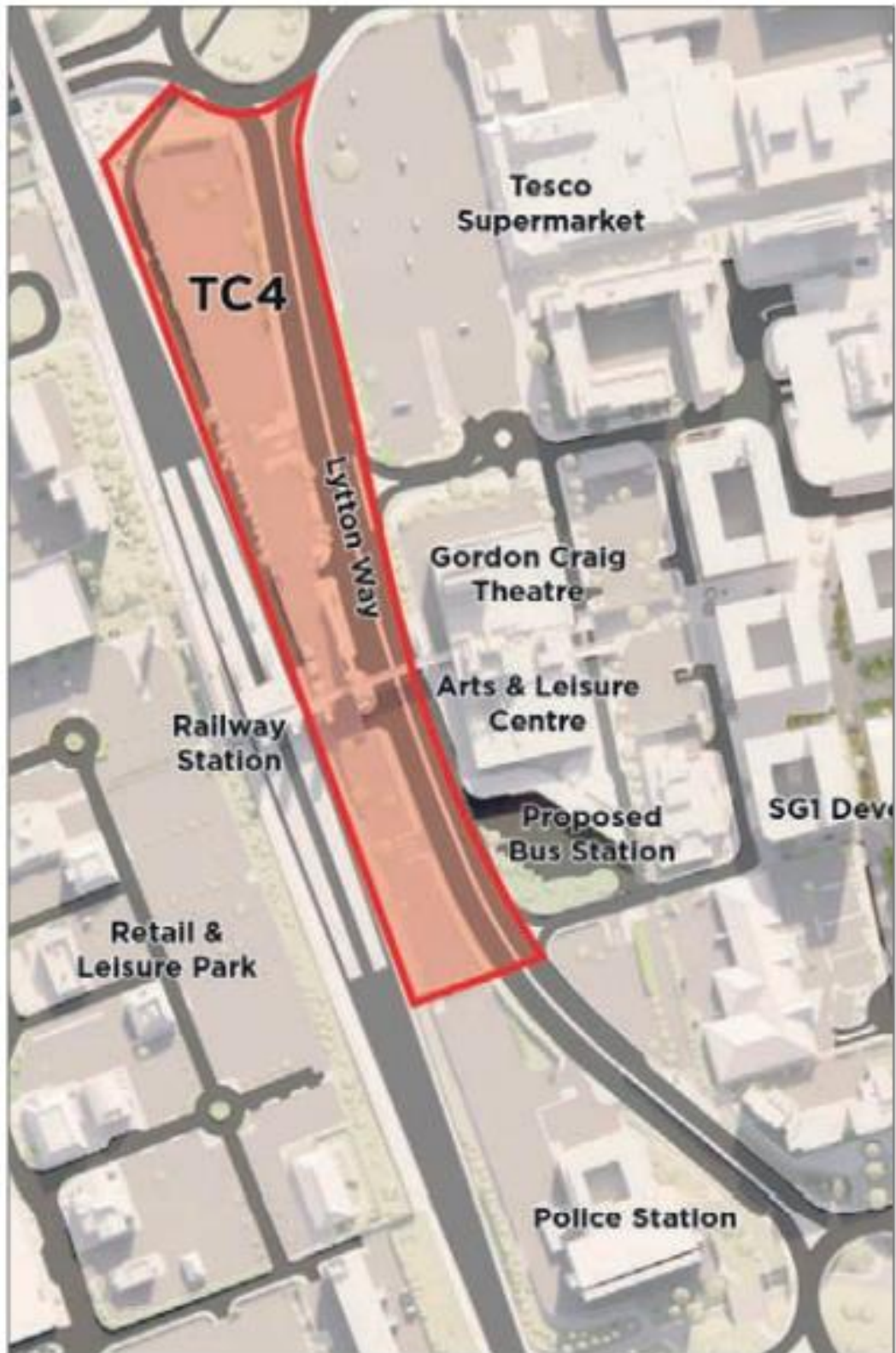
Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- 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 (now the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities or DLUHC) on progress with the AAP as one of the conditions set in the Secretary of State's letter to the Council in March 2019.

Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report

- 3.7 The AAP has been developed in conjunction with DLA and the first version of the document was an "Issues and Options" version (Appendix A). The 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 represents an early stage of the preparation of an AAP, and a series of initial options that focus on mobility were presented for feedback from targeted stakeholders.
- 3.8 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.



3.9 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.

- 3.10 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 in the Gunnels Wood Industrial Area as well as GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), a major pharmaceutical company.
- 3.11 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.
- 3.12 Chapter 6 of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues & Options Report is the key chapter for which feedback was targeted from stakeholders who operate within and around the area covered by the AAP.
- 3.13 A series of objectives and key principles have been developed for the emerging framework of the AAP.
- 3.14 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.
- 3.15 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.
- 3.16 The AAP is being prepared in full knowledge and recognition that a wider masterplan is developing for the Station Gateway area of Stevenage. Up to £500,000 has been committed to ensuring that works for this area are enabled, as well as for deep engagement with a variety of stakeholders.
- 3.17 The emerging framework will fully consider the development of the Bus Interchange on the eastern side of Lytton Way. Significant progress has been made on the construction of the new bus interchange located closer to the railway station. The interchange will provide safe bicycle parking, a comfortable and modern waiting environment for passengers and capacity for electric bus charging, as well as a cafe and mobility store.

Stevenage Bus Interchange (Under Construction)



- 3.18 The AAP will also fully consider the position closely regarding the Multi Storey Car Park planning permission (January 2022), relating to the site north of the Railway Station, which is within the AAP area. Further details are provided in this Report in paragraphs 4.40 to 4.43.
- 3.19 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.

Planning Policy Process

- 3.20 The Issues and Options stage is only the first stage of development of the Area Action Plan. This is followed by a “Preferred Options” consultation which will be informed by the Issues and Options consultation response. Following this, the final version of the AAP will be submitted to the Secretary of State. This will be followed by an Examination in Public.
- 3.21 The AAP, 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 afterwards.

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

- 3.22 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.
- 3.23 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 confirmed that they are content with this position.

- 3.24 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.

Decision of the Executive, February 2021

- 3.25 In February 2021, the Executive approved the publication of the Stevenage Connection AAP: Issues and Options Report for public consultation [BD3].

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: That Executive note the content of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report Consultation Statement (the Consultation Statement).

- 4.1 Appendix D provides full detail of the public consultation exercise for the Stevenage Connection AAP. A summary of the consultation is given in the following paragraphs.

- 4.2 Consultation on the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report was held between 12th July 2021 and 5th September 2021, meeting the requirements stipulated for DPD consultations in the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012.

- 4.3 Documents which formed the public consultation included:

- Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report, July 2021 (Appendix A);
- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening for the Area Action Plan, July 2021 (Appendix B).
- A series of consultation questions, related to the content of the AAP (Appendix C).

Early engagement prior to public consultation (prior to 12th July 2021)

- 4.4 Following approval by Executive in February 2021 and prior to the consultation period commencing, some early engagement and publicity was carried out to promote the forthcoming public consultation on the AAP. This engagement included:

- Presenting the Issues and Options Report to and discussion with Stevenage Development Board, 13th May 2021.
- Discussions with key stakeholders to gauge early opinion, ahead of their submission of formal representations to the public consultation. At this stage, discussions were held with Sustrans, the Stevenage Cycling UK

User Group, East Coast Mainline Authorities and internal colleagues at the Council.

- A consultation video was produced, which highlighted the current issues with Stevenage Railway Station, Lytton Way and general connectivity and included a series of “fly-through” shots and images. The Planning Policy team procured a local firm, Pearldrop Ltd, to produce the video, which was published on various social media platforms, including the Council’s own YouTube channel – to promote the Area Action Plan consultation.
- The video, while easily accessible online, was played on location at Stevenage Indoor Market, Stevenage Visitor Centre and other locations across the town.
- A promotional leaflet and poster were produced and distributed around the town, to highlight that the public could “have their say” on proposals to shape Lytton Way and the wider Station Gateway area over Summer 2021.
- Ensuring that the AAP consultation could align with the work programme of the broader Communications and Engagement Plan, managed and updated by the Communities & Neighbourhoods team. This was to ensure that the AAP could be added to any events / engagement with the neighbourhoods of Stevenage, to raise awareness as much as possible.
- Engagement with the wider public through “consultation stalls” at the Railway Station. Here, Council officers were present to listen to members of the public and discuss their views regarding the current issues that face the Station, Lytton Way and surrounding area, as well as inviting people to vote (via a colour chip coin) on their preferred option for the central section of Lytton Way.

Formal public consultation period (12th July to 5th September 2021)

4.5 The AAP consultation document (Appendix A), SEA Screening document (Appendix B) and consultation questions (Appendix C) were advertised on the Council website, on social media and hard copies were made available in Daneshill House and the two town libraries, in accordance with COVID-19 restrictions at the time.

4.6 The formal consultation consisted of:

- Publicity via the Stevenage Borough Council website and social media platforms (including the Council’s Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn pages).
- A link to the Council’s consultation interface, where the public were able to download the AAP and SEA Screening document and submit their observations and representations.
- The consultation interface included a series of “consultation questions”, designed to cover the varying aspects of the AAP and to generate comments on certain sections of the document, for example the cycle path options or general views on connectivity between the Railway Station and Lytton Way. This was primarily to ensure that the Council

received responses on the document as a whole and not just, for example on the proposed options for Lytton Way. The questions were only answered in full by a small number of respondents. However, they proved useful in shaping public opinion across the consultation period and subsequent representations made.

- A series of more formal “key stakeholder meetings” were held virtually; two of the meetings were held in person at Daneshill House, with one meeting followed up by an officer-guided site visit of the AAP area.
- A press release and articles in the Comet newspaper relating to the AAP public consultation.
- Continuation of distribution of leaflets and posters publicising the public consultation. This included distribution at Stevenage Central Library, Daneshill House Reception and Stevenage Railway Station retail outlets.
- Continuation of engagement with the wider public via consultation stalls at the Railway Station and West Gate Shopping Centre, the Town Square and Stevenage Indoor Market.
- The Planning Policy team were assisted by the Communities & Neighbourhoods team and in particular, neighbourhood wardens, in promoting the Area Action Plan consultation across Stevenage to ensure a wide a response as possible.
- The Communities & Neighbourhoods team engaged with community interest groups on the AAP at events that were scheduled for Summer 2021, for example the Irish Centre Social in Bedwell in July 2021. This team placed leaflets and posters on various neighbourhood centre notice boards. This team also engaged with supermarkets and doctors’ surgeries on notice boards, to gauge views on the preferred options for Lytton Way.

4.7 A link to the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report was sent to all individuals who had signed up to the Council’s planning consultee register. The register mainly consists of individuals who have responded to previous Local Plan consultations or specific planning applications and contains all statutory consultees and Duty to Co-operate bodies, as required by Regulations.

4.8 Those who provided an e-mail address when registering to the list were sent an e-mail with a link to the document and an explanation of the consultation process. This consisted of the majority of all consultees. Approximately 200 letters were sent to individuals who had not provided an e-mail address. The letters advised recipients how they would be able to view the document (both electronically and physically) and the process for responding to the consultation.

4.9 The material consulted on included:

- Vision, ambitions, and aspirations of the AAP.
- Connectivity and access.
- Transport and highways.

- Public realm and sense of arrival at the Railway Station.

Summary of formal responses

- 4.10 A total of 301 representations were received from several consultees as well as internal teams and committees.
- 4.11 Formal responses were received from external bodies and individuals and included:
- Hertfordshire County Council: Growth and Infrastructure Unit.
 - Legal and General.
 - London North Eastern Railway (LNER).
 - Knebworth Estates.
 - Historic England.
 - Hertfordshire Constabulary.
 - Cycling UK Stevenage.
 - Members of the public.
- 4.12 A full summary of responses is provided in Appendix D together with officer responses to each comment as well as a description of any recommendations to be taken forward for consideration when drafting the Preferred Options Report.
- 4.13 A wide range of themes emerged arising from consultation comments, including some of those highlighted below:

Theme	Comments
Vision & Aspirations	<p><i>The proposals all look positive and exciting to see; the Plan will result in a different feel around the Station which can only be positive.</i></p> <p><i>The overall vision for the station as a multi-modal hub, providing a high-quality gateway to the town, has a positive level of support.</i></p>
Existing Environment	<p><i>A full review is required of the routes that people use to walk and cycle to and from the station so that a proper assessment can be made of the adequacy of existing routes.</i></p>
Emerging Framework	<p><i>Additional segregated cycleway needs to tie into the existing cycle network at Six Hills Way and Fairlands Way in order to provide safe connected links to key onward destinations such as Gunnels Wood Road and Stevenage Old Town.</i></p> <p><i>The plans need to make it clear how the new</i></p>

Theme	Comments
	<i>Multi Storey Car Park fits into the scheme in all the options.</i>
Existing cycleways	<p><i>Around this area, the network is practical but not inviting.</i></p> <p><i>The current cycleway has little natural surveillance so can feel unsafe to use.</i></p>
Railway Station	<p><i>Improvements should include enclosed, but transparent, footbridge across Lytton Way to provide weather protection.</i></p> <p><i>New set of steps to the footbridge on the leisure centre side of the road to create a more direct route to the new bus station.</i></p>
Walking & Cycling	<p><i>Access to the station from the Leisure Park needs to be greatly improved. This includes new staircases and ramps at the station itself, and the creation of safe, direct pedestrian routes across the car parks.</i></p> <p><i>Appropriate artwork and other improvements should be made where these routes pass through subways.</i></p>
Active Travel	<i>Signage and lighting of walking routes should be proactively considered to provide a safer and welcoming option to those within a shorter distance of the station; this includes walking routes within and beyond the town centre.</i>
Access	<i>Access to the station for older and disabled people should not be reduced by any changes made or works undertaken as part of this scheme.</i>
Drop off and pick up	<p><i>Accessible, convenient and well-lit areas for passengers to be dropped off or picked up (e.g. by friends or relatives) do not appear to be highlighted.</i></p> <p><i>Directions to Stevenage Station in the area and further away (e.g. on the A1) should be assessed in detail and updated where needed to minimise excess vehicle miles and the potential for conflicts.</i></p>
Connectivity	<i>Increase connectivity between the Leisure Park (and other commercial uses including the</i>

Theme	Comments
	<i>strategic employment area around Gunnels Wood Road) to the west, the station and the Primary Shopping Area and wider Town Centre to the east will help to deliver the strategic growth objectives across the Local Plan period.</i>
Cycle Path Potential Layouts	<p><i>Cycle Path Potential Layout 1 (maintaining the current National Route) was, by far, preferred to Potential Layout 2 (removing the current National Route).</i></p> <p><i>Level differences at Six Hills Way are an issue that need to be overcome.</i></p> <p><i>Removal of the existing cycle path should only be done if required for redevelopment of the station and other sites.</i></p>
Phasing & Temporary Use	<i>The existing footbridge should be retained until there is wider redevelopment enabling suitable alternatives to be provided.</i>
Development Parcels	<p><i>Support for the creation of distinct development parcels.</i></p> <p><i>The AAP should consider future opportunities for the intensification of development and alternative land uses at the Leisure Park.</i></p>
Parking Consolidation	<i>Any new parking should include provision for electrical charging points and cycling parking provision.</i>

4.14 In terms of preferred options for the central section of Lytton Way, suggested by consultees, the following highlights emerged:

Theme	Comments
Safety & Security	<i>All options are positive but need to incorporate safety and security measures.</i>
Movement & Access	<p><i>The AAP should support and enable accessible, convenient, and well-lit areas for passengers to be dropped off or picked up (e.g. by friends or relatives).</i></p> <p><i>Any preferred option should work on the principle that ground level movement is a priority, in terms of attractiveness to pedestrians.</i></p>

Theme	Comments
Option 0	<p><i>Not widely considered a realistic scenario for the AAP. It is contrary to Stevenage Borough Council's own policies (both the Local Plan and the Town Centre Framework) and does not enable any of the objectives, principles or core enhancements of the AAP to be achieved.</i></p>
Option 1	<p><i>Some responses included the option to consider one way traffic flow. This option improves link to the town centre, there are alternative routes to drive.</i></p> <p><i>There is a risk that the road outside the station would be blocked by vehicles dropping off / picking up passengers unless this is strictly monitored and controlled. It is likely that there would be additional delays to bus services travelling along this section</i></p>
Option 2	<p><i>This option addresses several objectives and principles of the AAP, removing the majority of vehicles from in front of the station helping reduce severance with the town centre and supporting the concept of a town square whilst retaining access to the relocated bus station for bus services from both directions.</i></p> <p><i>Vehicle drop off and pick up facilities will need to be provided in the MSCP and southern car park with good direct pedestrian links to the station.</i></p>
Option 3	<p><i>There will be significant disabled access challenges.</i></p> <p><i>This option is best for a new sense of arrival to Stevenage. A fully pedestrianised scheme is considered the only effective option to create a transformation in terms of connectivity between the station and the wider Town Centre and modal shifts.</i></p> <p><i>A new pedestrianised space will also create an opportunity to create a materially different arrival experience which directly connects the Station Gateway into the wider Town Centre.</i></p>

Consultation responses – wider consultation

- 4.15 During the consultation period, a series of consultation stalls were organised around the town to gauge public opinion on the four options for

Lytton Way (including asking the public to vote for a preferred option by placing a coloured chip coin in a box) as well as obtaining a wide range of comments on the Station Gateway area as a whole.

- 4.16 The main responses for the Lytton Way options, as well as wider responses for the AAP, from consultation stalls and wider engagement are summarised in the tables below:

Option 0 – No change	
Chip Coin Votes	65

Option 1 – All traffic modes	
Chip Coin Votes	100
Comments included	<i>Leave two lanes for traffic with one bus lane</i>
	<i>Would result in additional delays to bus services</i>

Option 2 – Bus and Taxi only	
Chip Coin Votes	121
Comments included	<i>Lytton Way should be solely for buses</i>
	<i>Don't prioritise buses and taxis</i>
	<i>Where will the drop off be if not accessible for cars</i>
	<i>Makes it easier for the area to operate like a Town Square</i>

Option 3 – Pedestrianised Plaza	
Chip Coin Votes	151

Comments included	<i>Impact on / too much traffic if fully pedestrianised</i>
	<i>Access to Station would be better at ground level for all including making it more accessible for disabled people</i>
	<i>Where will the drop off be if not accessible for cars</i>
	<i>Option 3 is best for a sense of arrival</i>
	<i>Would result in long diversions for buses travelling from the north of the town</i>

General Comments	
Car parking	<i>Make it free</i>
	<i>Make a MSCP for the Station</i>
	<i>Ensure there are plenty of EV charging points</i>
	<i>Provide enough drop off / pick up points</i>
Connections	<i>Improve pedestrian and cycling connections from Station to Town Centre</i>
	<i>Ensure that there is emergency vehicle access throughout the area so that the town remains connected</i>
	<i>Improve signage so that movement is easier</i>
Cycle provision	<i>Plenty of safe and secure cycle parking needs to be provided</i>
Sustainability	<i>Make use of living walls, roofs, wood and water walls. Include plenty of flora</i>
	<i>Use the area for pop-up stalls and markets</i>
Art and heritage	<i>Include artwork and sculptures</i>
	<i>Don't lose the hall of fame</i>

Summary of key stakeholder meetings

4.17 A total of 9 meetings were held with the key stakeholder groups identified through the early engagement process when the AAP was first drafted and developed. These were as follows:

- Cycling UK Stevenage: 1st July 2021 (prior to public consultation launch)
- Mace: 2nd July 2021 (prior to public consultation launch)
- Hertfordshire LEP: 2nd July 2021 (prior to public consultation launch)
- Hertfordshire County Council: 5th July 2021
- Govia Thameslink Railway: 7th July 2021
- Stevenage Bus Users Group: 9th July 2021
- National Rail: 21st July 2021
- Sustrans: 23rd July 2021
- Legal & General: 11th August 2021

4.18 In addition, a site visit to the Station Gateway area was held with the Cycling UK Stevenage group on 23rd August 2021.

4.19 At each meeting, officers presented a set of PowerPoint slides to the stakeholder group detailing the Area Action Plan. The stakeholder group were then invited to comment on the content of the AAP from their perspective and comments recorded as part of the overall consultation response.

4.20 Full details of the key stakeholder meetings are provided in the Consultation Statement (Appendix D). Key issues arising from these meetings included:

Theme	Comments
Vision & Aspirations	<i>Generally supported to provide much needed transformation of this part of the town and to support activities at and around the Railway Station.</i>
Destination & Sense of Place	<i>Potential for exemplary buildings to showcase as a crucial destination.</i>
Cycling	<i>Consideration needed for cycling past or through the Station, not just to and from it. People use the cycle route to commute and travel to places other than the Railway Station. Signage would be beneficial and clear signage is a must.</i>
Connectivity & Movement	<i>Importance of the boulevard link to Town Square, a way finder, offering a viewpoint, vista,</i>

Theme	Comments
	<p><i>and series of connection, and the importance of alignment to the Station.</i></p> <p><i>Further movement analysis could potentially be used to support any future options.</i></p>
Access	<p><i>Regarding the road bridge, there are key issues in terms of future access. Step grade drop needs to be part of the proposed solutions in the Preferred Options.</i></p>
Economy	<p><i>Grow on space is important, for example relating to low carbon development.</i></p> <p><i>The AAP area could work well as a service industry for the aerospace and R&D cluster at Gunnels Wood, and / or supporting the emerging cell and gene cluster.</i></p>
Digital	<p><i>Digital incentives are also very important in this area going forward.</i></p>
Railway Station	<p><i>Entrance at grade is a priority.</i></p> <p><i>There is pressure on future possibilities for a new Station. This should consider how long this would take and the costs of intervention.</i></p>
Lytton Way Options	<p><i>Overall, the proposed Options 1 to 3 have a positive level of support as they are transformative, positive and will result in a different feel around the Station. They will encourage further walking and cycling in the vicinity.</i></p> <p><i>Option 1 – doesn't enable modal shift.</i></p> <p><i>Option 2 – work would need to be undertaken to set out what happens for traffic movements such as drop off, turning and movement</i></p> <p><i>Option 2 & 3 – opens up the barrier of the ring road but will require detailed modelling and assessment.</i></p>

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

4.21 No substantive comments were received on the content of the SEA Screening Report during the public consultation.

Summary of all consultation responses and likely preferred option(s) for Lytton Way

- 4.22 The public consultation exercise returned a wide range of responses from members of the public, interest groups and key stakeholders. The AAP covers many planning and policy issues and challenges.
- 4.23 The varied response the Council received, not just on the Options for the central section of Lytton Way, proves that when developing the Preferred Options AAP and taking the AAP through to its final stages, the ambitions and aspirations in the vision for the AAP are of prime importance. This is to ensure that the Station Gateway area of opportunity is brought to life and delivered in the appropriate manner in accordance with other related measures (see paragraphs 4.31 to 4.48).
- 4.24 There was a clear preference for “Potential Layout 1” relating to the cycle path options. This layout retains the existing cycle route, running alongside the railway line and at the extreme western edge of the AAP site boundary.
- 4.25 Potential Layout 2 proposes to remove this cycle path and was not thought as feasible in achieving sustainable and active travel; Potential Layout 1 retains this cycle path and offers the opportunity to connect the AAP area to the town centre (with any Lytton Way Option taken forward) and a new north-south route.
- 4.26 Potential Layout 1 also offers the opportunity to enhance the existing National Cycle Route and create additional cultural features, for example, to celebrate the town and relate to the new identity being created by regeneration of the town centre and a sense of arrival into Stevenage.
- 4.27 Taking everything into consideration, the early indications are that there is a lower level of support for a “do nothing” approach as advocated by Option 0. Transport and accessibility attracted a great deal of interest, for which officers will consider closely for the Preferred Options stage.
- 4.28 Option 2: reduce the central section of Lytton Way to one lane both ways, for buses and taxis only, is emerging as a preferred option. However, Option 3: reduce the central section of Lytton Way to zero lanes to be a pedestrianised plaza, was also very popular across many consultation respondents and key stakeholders. Some elements of this option could be incorporated into any final preferred option.

Recommendation 2.2: That Executive agree to progress to the next stage of the Area Action Plan progress, the production of the “Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report”, (the Preferred Options Report), this report being based on the outcomes of the “Issues and Options” consultation.

- 4.29 Officers have taken all comments and views into account, in a conscientious manner. This has helped to inform and shape the position being reported to Executive.
- 4.30 The following paragraphs detail other important considerations for officers in preparing the Preferred Options version of the AAP.

Hertfordshire County Council Highways Modelling Report

- 4.31 The Hertfordshire County Council response to the Issues and Options consultation specified an order of Preferred Options for the central section of Lytton Way:

1 st choice:	Option 2
2 nd choice:	Option 3
3 rd choice:	Option 1
4 th choice:	Option 0

- 4.32 Officers are currently working with Hertfordshire County Council Highways department on a report that will assess the impacts of each of the Lytton Way options on the highway network around Stevenage, as well as offer potential mitigation measures (Appendix E). The modelling work undertaken is based on a baseline year of 2021, with scenarios based on traffic flows in 2025 and 2031, with and without the A1(M) SMART motorway in operation.
- 4.33 While the emerging Highways Modelling report suggests that Option 1 would have the least impact on traffic flows (particularly at peak hours) around Stevenage, the Hertfordshire County Council AAP consultation response highlighted Option 2 as the most preferred option which aligns with both theirs and our aspirations to improve active travel.
- 4.34 Hertfordshire County Council, through their response to the consultation and through working with officers on the Highways Modelling Report, is in broad agreement with Stevenage Borough Council on the desired direction of travel to take forward in the Preferred Options Report. This aligns with the position taken in preparing Policy TC4 of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and which had been modelled as part of Local Plan preparation, tested through Examination in Public and subsequently adopted in 2019. The Local Plan includes provision for “*major reconfiguration of Lytton Way between Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way*” (Policy TC4 (i)).
- 4.35 Officers are continuing to work closely with Hertfordshire County Council Highways officers to develop the Preferred Option in the AAP which aligns closest with active and sustainable travel aspirations. It is acknowledged by both parties that substantial intervention would be required to realise the Preferred Option that will materialise in the AAP.
- 4.36 The model indicates that the traffic redistribution caused by traffic causes the highway network around Stevenage town centre, offer challenges in the models with the existing gap parameters. This means neither Option 2 nor Option 3 shows long term operational resilience, with the 2031 scenarios showing a situation where traffic cannot get through the model causing major delays to bus services. This means that at present, the recommended option in highway capacity terms is Option 1, because it is the only option that is not predicted to cause significant congestion.
- 4.37 While the model results make it difficult to recommend Options 2 or 3 from a highway capacity viewpoint, there are other considerations that

officers may need to use when assessing which scheme is most appropriate. Both Option 2 or 3 could work in highway capacity terms if residents of Stevenage and users of the town centre accepted a much higher level of mode shift than would be required for Option 1. The level of ambition in the Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town may make the level of mode shift achievable – however without major behaviour change and modal shift, there are potential risks of causing significant congestion.

- 4.38 Effectively, the roadworks associated with the new bus station have already demonstrated that Option 1 is likely to work. This means that one option could be to test the success or otherwise of Options 2 and 3 by temporarily restricting through traffic on Lytton Way to identify if the reality of this situation is the same as predicted in the model.
- 4.39 The modelling report does touch on some potential mitigation measures, for further investigation, to alleviate the traffic flow impact, including:
- Removal of the bypass lane from Danestrete to Six Hills Way;
 - Additional Right Turn Lane from Fairlands Way to St Georges Way;
 - Amendments to eastbound carriageway on Fairlands Way at St. Georges Way roundabout;
 - Signalisation of north bound Gunnels Wood Road approach to Fairlands Way roundabout;
 - It is also recommended that bus priority measures should be considered to help buses traverse the congested network.

Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP)

- 4.40 Officers are considering the position closely regarding the Multi Storey Car Park planning permission (January 2022), relating to the site north of the Railway Station [BD4], which is within the AAP area:
- “Construction of Multi Storey Car Park and Secure Cycle Stores to provide 622 car parking spaces of which 30 are accessible “Blue Badge” spaces, 80 secure cycle spaces, and 27 motorcycle spaces with associated hard and soft landscaping works. Up to 25% of car parking spaces are to be provided with active Electric Vehicle charging point and up to 50% of car parking spaces are to be provided with passive Electric Vehicle charging infrastructure for future activation to suit demand. The MSCP is six storeys tall with a central photovoltaic canopy on the open top deck.”*
- 4.41 Officers are also fully aware of the wider work ongoing to deliver the MSCP. A report was presented to Executive in December 2021 [BD5] which provided the technical and financial detail relating to the MSCP and cycle hub at the Railway Station, as part of a wider sustainable transport interchange.
- 4.42 Subject to agreement by Executive, it is anticipated that the contractor for the MSCP can commence works from April 2022. The proposed construction programme for the MSCP is approximately 40 weeks.

- 4.43 Officers will be careful to ensure that the MSCP and associated development is fully recognised and incorporated into the Preferred Options AAP.

Proposed MSCP, north of Stevenage Railway Station



Towns Fund: Station Gateway

- 4.44 Officers are working closely with the Regeneration team at the Council regarding the Towns Fund project on the Station Gateway. This was reported to Stevenage Development Board on 2 December 2021 and to Executive on 8 December 2021 [BD6].

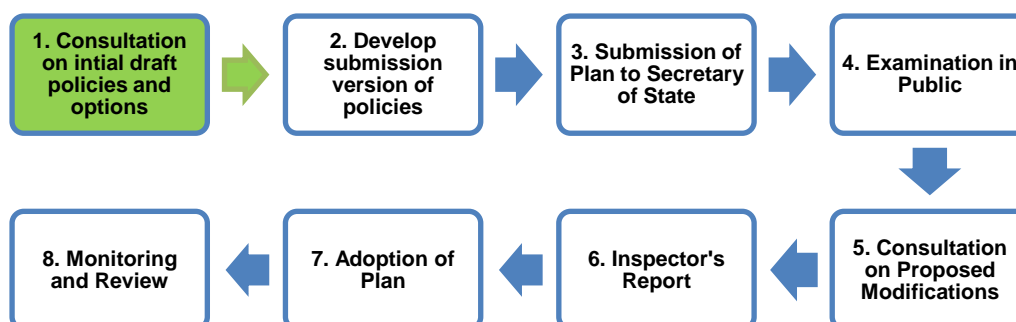
- 4.45 This project involves the delivery of the Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) as part of a sustainable transport interchange on the Stevenage North railway car park. The project was being led by the Council and was funded through £6.5m from the Towns Fund and £3.5m direct match funding from SBC and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. The land was owned by the Council and the match funding / investment element would be subject to a separate business plan to be considered by the decision-making committees of the Council. The project was fully consistent with the Stevenage Town Investment Plan and was a key first phase to progress the wider Stevenage Gateway scheme without prejudicing the Area Action Plan process.
- 4.46 At Stevenage Development Board on 2 December 2021, it was acknowledged that complementary improvements to Stevenage Railway Station would be required at some point in the future to provide a welcoming aspect for visitors to the town through the Gateway area. The Station Gateway Project Business Case was endorsed and recommended to the Accountable Body (Stevenage Borough Council) for approval.
- 4.47 At Executive on 8 December 2021, the report [BD6, paragraphs 3.20 to 3.25] referred specifically to the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan as a crucial supporting mechanism for the realisation of the Towns Fund project for the wider Station Gateway scheme.
- 4.48 Officers will continue to work with the Regeneration team to ensure that the development of the Towns Fund project for the Station Gateway is fully incorporated into the Preferred Options AAP.

Progression to Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report

- 4.49 The first stage for public consultation, the “consultation on initial draft policies and options”, has been completed. The “Issues and Options” draft of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan forms this first stage.
- 4.50 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. This is the stage that officers would like to progress to, based on the representations from the Issues and Options Report.
- 4.51 Following the Preferred Options consultation, the AAP will be submitted to the Secretary of State ahead of an independent Examination in Public by an appointed Planning Inspector.
- 4.52 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.

Next Steps

- 4.53 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” [BD7]):



- 4.54 At Executive, Members will have the opportunity to note and review the outcomes of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options public consultation.
- 4.55 The Executive will have the opportunity to discuss the direction of travel in terms of Preferred Option or Options (a combination of Options is a potential outcome), that will be developed when drafting the next version of the AAP document.
- 4.56 This document will then need to be prepared by officers ahead of another round of public consultation, titled the “Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report”.
- 4.57 The Preferred Options AAP would need to be drafted, after the 31 January 2022 Planning & Development Committee meetings (see Recommendation 2.5) and the Executive meeting of 9th February 2022, and any subsequent key stakeholder meetings (see Recommendation 2.6), to go back to the Executive for approval to go out to public consultation.
- 4.58 The table overleaf illustrates an indicative timetable for progression of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan.

Stage	Date
Consultation on initial draft policies and options (Issues and Options AAP: Public Consultation)	12 July – 5 September 2021
Develop submission version of policies (Preferred Options AAP: Public Consultation)	Summer 2022 (minimum 6 weeks)
Preferred Options AAP: consider and address responses	Autumn 2022

Stage	Date
<i>Submission of Plan to Secretary of State</i>	Winter 2022
<i>Examination in Public of Plan</i>	Spring 2023
<i>Inspector's Report</i>	Spring / Summer 2023
<i>Adoption of Plan</i>	Summer 2023
<i>Monitoring and Review</i>	From Autumn 2023 (in accordance with Local Plan Review)

4.59 In terms of eventual delivery of schemes and initiatives that support the final Area Action Plan, it is important to note that this is an early stage of preparation of the Area Action Plan and the Issues and Options Report includes aspirational proposals at this stage. This adds limited weight to Local Plan Policy TC4.

4.60 Once the Preferred Options Report is prepared, this will add further weight to Policy TC4 and thereafter until the Area Action Plan is adopted. During the process, it is anticipated that further positive engagement with landowners and key stakeholders in the process will aid early delivery of the eventual schemes on the AAP sites and for the relevant sections of Lytton Way.

Recommendation 2.3: That Executive delegate powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Environment and Regeneration, to prepare the Preferred Options Report.

4.61 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report is appended to this report (Appendix A).

4.62 If the Executive approve to progress to the next stage of drafting the AAP (Recommendation 2.2), it will be necessary to prepare the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report following this Executive meeting. This will include substantial rewriting of sections, imagery, graphics and any factual changes.

4.63 It is likely that a consultancy will be contacted to assist with the drafting of the Preferred Options draft document.

Recommendation 2.4: That Executive note that the final draft of the Preferred Options Report will be presented to Executive for approval to go out to public consultation in Summer 2022 (formal consultation, if approved, will take place once approved).

4.64 Once the draft Preferred Options version of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan is in a position to be reported to Executive, a report will be prepared for approval by Executive to go out to public consultation on the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report.

- 4.65 This is anticipated to be presented to Executive in Summer 2022; however, this is subject to change. Members will be kept updated on progress with the development of the Preferred Options Report.

Recommendation 2.5: That Executive note that the comments of the Planning & Development Committee will be sought and considered on both the Consultation Statement and the content of this Executive Report.

- 4.66 A special Planning & Development Committee meeting is scheduled for 31 January 2022. A summary of this report will be presented to the special Planning & Development Committee meeting and any subsequent comments or suggestions will be recorded and reported back to Executive on 9 February 2022.
- 4.67 The views of the Planning & Development Committee Members are of significant value in shaping the future direction the Stevenage Connection AAP takes as it progresses into Preferred Options stage. Key concerns expressed previously include the need for wide engagement; potential future changes to Lytton Way; and connectivity between the Railway Station and the town centre, as it progresses through several stages of regeneration.

Recommendation 2.6: That Executive note that informal engagement with key stakeholders will continue, to test the Preferred Options ahead of preparation of the Area Action Plan Preferred Options Report.

- 4.68 The Stevenage Development Board will be consulted on the Issues and Options public consultation findings at their meeting scheduled for 24 February 2022.
- 4.69 Following the Executive meeting on 9 February 2022, there may be scope for further engagement with other key stakeholders to inform them of progress on the AAP and to record any comments they may wish to make.
- 4.70 All views and representations made following the Executive meeting on 9 February 2022 will be collated and included as part of the subsequent report to the Executive, anticipated for Summer 2022, which will seek approval to undergo public consultation on the Preferred Options AAP.

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 The Planning Policy team procured a local firm, Pearldrop Ltd, to produce the video which was published on various social media platforms – to promote the Area Action Plan consultation. This cost £4,500 to produce.
- 5.3 The Hertfordshire County Council and WSP Highways Modelling Report work, to supplement the Issues & Options Consultation, required a budget of c. £25,000.
- 5.4 All other elements of the public consultation exercise were carried out in-house; the Planning Policy team were assisted by the Communities & Neighbourhoods team and in particular, neighbourhood wardens, in promoting the Area Action Plan consultation across Stevenage to ensure a wide a response as possible.
- 5.5 It is possible that further consultancy assistance will be required to consider costs, feasibility of and graphics related to development of Preferred Options documentation.
- 5.6 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

- 5.7 The outcomes of any consultation will be conscientiously considered in developing the Preferred Options version of the AAP, prior to approval by the Executive.
- 5.8 The comments of the Planning & Development Committee have been invited regarding the content of this Report.

Risk Implications

- 5.9 There are no significant risks associated with this report.

Policy Implications

- 5.10 The Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan will accord with and is being produced to supplement policies in the adopted Stevenage Borough 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.
- 5.11 The Preferred Options Report, when drafted will align 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 (2019).

Planning Implications

- 5.12 The Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan will supplement the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2019).
- 5.13 The document will add to and complement the Development Plan for Stevenage. It will be a material consideration for planning applications.

Environmental Implications

- 5.14 During preparation of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and the SEA Screening Report for the AAP, officers concluded that Policy TC4 (Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area) had no significant environmental impact. There is potential to include stronger and more focused wording in the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report referring to environmental effects of any potential future development.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.15 The Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan will seek to provide sustainable travel solutions 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

- 5.16 The Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan will seek to improve disabled and step-free access to Stevenage Railway Station; several Issues and Options consultation responses highlighted that this should be a priority. This will therefore offer further opportunities and benefits for all accessing the Railway Station and more widely, connecting to the regenerated town centre in the future.

Community Safety Implications

- 5.17 While the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan is unlikely to have any direct community safety implications per se; when implementing any of the proposals the delivery body will need to closely consider the potential impacts on community safety.

Other Implications

- 5.18 There will be significant economic implications from future work arising from the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan.
- 5.19 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 and opportunities in Stevenage and the 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 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>
- BD3 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Executive, Item 5: Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report for Public Consultation (February 2021)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s27638/Station%20Gateway%20AAP.pdf>
- BD4 Meeting of the Planning & Development Committee, Item 2: Station Car Park North, Lytton Way, Stevenage (January 2022)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s30291/Station%20Car%20Park%20North.pdf>
- BD5 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Executive, Item 6: Construction of a new North Multi-Storey Car Park and Cycle Hub as part of Sustainable Transport Interchange (December 2021)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s30165/Item%206%20-%20New%20Station%20North%20MSCP%20report.pdf>
- BD6 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Executive, Item 5: Towns Fund Business Case: Station Gateway (December 2021)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s30114/Item%205%20-%20Towns%20Fund%20-%20Station%20Gateway%20report.pdf>
- BD7 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>

APPENDICES

- A Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report (July 2021)
- B Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement (July 2021)
- C Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Consultation Questions (July 2021)
- D Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Consultation Statement (January 2022)
- E Stevenage Station Gateway Area Action Plan – Draft Summary of Paramics Model Findings (December 2021)