

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 6 October 2022

Time: 10.00am

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)
Matt Partridge (Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council)
Councillor Sharon Taylor (Stevenage Borough Council)
Councillor Richard Henry (Stevenage Borough Council)
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)
Lucy King (Stevenage Borough Council)
Annie Piper (Stevenage Borough Council)
Gemma Hannant (Stevenage Borough Council)
Ishbel Brierley (Stevenage Borough Council)
Natasha Lee (Stevenage Borough Council)
Clare Fletcher (Stevenage Borough Council)
County Councillor Richard Roberts (Hertfordshire County Council)
Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council)
Jenny Foster (Hertfordshire County Council)
Brieger Leahy (Herts Chamber of Commerce)
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)
Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire LEP)
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)
Charlotte Blizzard Welch (Citizens Advice Bureau)
Ed Jordan (WENTA)
Claire Dicks (MBDA)
Kit Davies (North Hertfordshire College)
Kevin Cowin (Mace Developments)
Helen Tomlinson (DLHUC)
Greg Westover (Legal & General)
James Latham (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)
Mary Hartley (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust)
Hetty Thornton (Historic England)
Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire)
Richard Whitehead (Aecom)
Erin Byrne (Arup)

Start / End Start Time: 10.00am
Time: End Time: 11.35am

1 WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS

Adrian Hawkins, the Board Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Board was advised that apologies for absence had been submitted by the following:

Matt Partridge (Stevenage Borough Council)
Stephen Ward and Kasia Averall (Catapult)
Charles Amies (Homes England)
Keith Ellis and Karen Burness (Airbus)
Karen Hillen – (BEIS)
Duncan Parsley – (GlaxoSmithKline)
Will Rohleder – (Reef Group)
Sarah Brierley – (Community Health Trust)

3 MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 16 JUNE 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 16 June 2022 be approved as a correct record.

4 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENNESS

The Board received the latest conflicts of interest list.

5 REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Town Centre Diversification: Transformation of Former Bus Station

Ishbel Brierley (SBC Regeneration Officer) advised that, following local engagement, a scheme to transform the former Bus station area had been devised to provide a venue for a mixture of live music, street theatre, street food, etc., with the intention of attracting increased footfall into the town centre, both during the day and in the evening.

Ishbel commented that the project was progressing well on site, with soft landscaping nearing completion. A soft launch event was in preparation to take place on 21 October 2022, to which all members of the Development Board were invited. The official launch would take place on 29 October 2022.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that the cost of the scheme was £500,000 (to be met from the Towns Fund); and that eco-friendly materials would be used throughout the project wherever possible.

Stevenage Railway Station Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP)

Dave Wells (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) advised that this scheme was on track for completion in Spring 2023. This would be a key enabling factor for the

wider Stevenage Gateway project. All site enabling works were complete, with the main structure beginning to come out of the ground.

In reply to a question, Dave confirmed that project linked into the Stevenage Works programme, in terms of its alignment with the offer of skills/jobs for local people.

Communications Update

Natasha Lee (SBC Regeneration Marketing & Communications Manager) reported that the first of a series of animated videos had been produced. The first 90 second video centred on town centre diversification, and would soon be available on the Stevenage Even Better website and through social media channels.

Natasha explained that other workstreams included the continued use of site hoardings to communicate the regeneration story (the next one being the Station MSCP site); continued partnership working; enhanced editorial content; case studies and award entries (the new Bus Station had already received a local award); and general profile raising initiatives.

Natasha commented that community outreach would commence from November 2022, the purpose of which was to educate the community about the Stevenage regeneration programme, as well as to counteract some of the negative and sometimes misleading social media content about the programme. The outreach work would focus on local communities and schools.

6 TOWNS FUND PROGRESS REPORT

Annie Piper (SBC Regeneration Programme Officer) advised that details on the spend and achievements on each of the Towns Fund projects had been set out in the report circulated to Board Members.

Annie stated that, in recognition of the delivery challenges being faced, the Towns Fund Team in Government was offering greater flexibility in 2022/23 to accelerate delivery. The Team needed to be ambitious with its spend profiling in order to create space for projects to be worked on without tight spend pressures.

Annie commented that, as set out in the report, the spend was broadly on target, with an additional £2Million programmed for 2022/23. This £2Million had been pulled forward to ensure maximum drawdown on funds, with a redistribution of funds in future years on projects in their early stages. This was in order to create capacity for projects that were short of their spend targets for 2022/23.

In connection with this item, Dave Wells (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) agreed to provide Board Members with details of the Social Value report on the completed Bus Interchange project.

A Board Member requested that consideration be given to looking at the economic (as well as physical) stimulus benefits created throughout the Town Fund programme.

7 SKILLS AND SITEC UPDATE

Kit Davies (North Herts College) informed the Board that the SITEC project had received Phase 1 support from the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership. A building had been repurposed on the College's Stevenage campus to create an exciting, branded and high quality SITEC hub to provide a science lab for Level 3 to 5 students, including state of the art equipment and labs. Ancillary works included the provision of EV charging points and an LED lighting upgrade throughout the building.

Kit stated that work had been progressing with local businesses through Advisory Board meetings, to align the skills and needs of business with the life sciences training courses provided through SITEC. The relationship with the University of Hertfordshire would be vital in further developing the skills of students wishing to progress in the life sciences sector.

Kit explained that it was planned to refurbish two other floors of a building on the College campus to provide a health/health science suite, including an upgrade of digital facilities as part of the wider SITEC offer to meet local needs.

In response to a question from the Board Chair, Kit advised that it was hoped to officially launch the SITEC hub in November 2022. He confirmed that Board Members and representatives of the life sciences sector would be invited to the launch.

8 GUNNELS WOOD ROAD STUDY

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) introduced this item and explained that the Borough Council, County Council, Hertfordshire LEP and Hertfordshire Growth Board had commissioned the Gunnels Wood Road Study. The aim was to work with businesses, local partners and others to create an ambitious vision for the Gunnels Wood area towards 2040. The Study would set out how this significant and prestigious employment area in Stevenage should be intensified and enhanced as a state of the art, walkable, climate resilient and thriving Innovation District that was home to many of the world's leading edge global businesses.

Erin Byrne (Arup) gave a presentation on the vision for the Gunnels Wood area. The intention was to build on current momentum in Stevenage, including the Stevenage West residential development, the Towns Fund projects, and the plans for extension of the GlaxoSmithKline life sciences campus.

Erin commented that the Study would include a high level vision for Gunnels Wood that dovetailed with the wider vision and ambition for Stevenage. A practical, delivery-focussed, market-facing urban design and public realm framework would be developed that could attract funding and drive delivery. High level design guidance that raised ambition and design quality would also be produced.

In terms of engagement with local stakeholders throughout the process, Erin drew attention to the list of these set out in the presentation. It was proposed to create a Business Working Group from Gunnels Wood Road stakeholders to help influence

the vision for the area and the direction of the framework.

Erin advised that it was intended that the Business Working Group would meet three times during the nine month commission period. The Group would assist in the understanding of Gunnels Wood inherent strengths and challenges; influence the vision, framework, design code and delivery plan; and provide long term stewardship of Gunnels Wood as a potential Innovation District.

Board Members commented as follows:

- there was an opportunity to re-establish the Pan Sector Collaboration Group to widen participation from businesses in the Gunnels Wood area, in order to dovetail into the work of the Study;
- consideration should be given during the Study to the creation of a safe pedestrian and cycle link across the A1(M) Junction 7 from the Gunnels Wood area to the Novotel Hotel/Knebworth Park;
- SBC was in the process of proving legal safeguards for the Gunnels Wood area to remain for employment/industrial (as opposed to residential) use;
- Historic England would be keen to engage with and support the Study in respect of the high level design guidance element;
- The Chair confirmed that it was intended that the Business Working Group would report regularly to the Stevenage Development Board;

GlaxoSmithKline (GSK) Development site

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) advised that the project to provide an additional 1.4Million floorspace on the GSK life sciences site was in its early stages, with UBS providing the funding and Reef being appointed as the developer. The pre-planning application process was progressing, and County Council Highways was looking at a re-configuration of the roundabout at the entrance to the GSK site for the benefit of the wider Gunnels Wood Road area.

Town Forum Development

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) informed the Board that the pre-planning application process had also commenced on this scheme, with the aim of providing a mixed use development for retail, life sciences, new restaurants and possible cinema. As with the GSK development, the funding would be provided by UBS, with Reef as the developer. The construction phase would support 540 jobs per year (with the aim of 5-10% of the workforce being Stevenage residents). The completed scheme would generate 1,850 additional jobs, together with estimated additional economic output (GVA) of £98Million.

Investment Zones

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) advised that the Government had, on 2 October 2022, published guidance regarding the concept of Investment Zones, and had invited bidders to submit expressions on interest by 14 October 2022.

Tom explained that the bids were aimed at Upper Tier Authorities (eg) Hertfordshire County Council. Investment Zones were intended to drive growth and unlock housing, with sites benefiting from tax incentives, planning liberalisation, and wider support for the local economy. They would need to demonstrate value for money, minimise displacement and bring forward new development. Investment Zones would particularly support regeneration of undeveloped and under-developed areas. The precise number of zones would depend on factors, such as their overall geographical spread and the fiscal costs of the programme, in the context of the Government's medium-term fiscal plan.

Tom stated that the Borough Council was working with the County Council and Herts LEP to look at an area of Stevenage (possibly the Station Gateway area) being promoted as a potential Investment Zone. If any Board Members had other ideas, Tom asked them to contact either himself or Adam Wood (Herts LEP).

County Councillor Richard Roberts commented that he understood that Investment Zone areas would be very narrow in their scope. He hoped that should an Investment Zone proposal come forward from the Stevenage area it would not adversely affect any of the excellent work (Glaxo redevelopment, Town Fund projects, SG1 development, etc.) already happening in the Borough.

Councillor Sharon Taylor (SBC) supported the comments made by County Councillor Roberts. She was concerned that the Government guidance had not been accompanied by a proper prospectus, and hence the details were unclear.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

10 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that future Board meetings would take place (virtually via Zoom) on the following dates:

- Thursday, 1st December 2022: 2.00pm - 4.00pm
- Thursday, 2nd February 2023: 10.00am – 12.00pm
- Thursday, 30th March 2023: 10.00am – 12.00pm