

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
MINUTES**

Date: Thursday, 1 December 2022

Time: 2.00pm

Place: Virtual (via Zoom)

Present: Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)
Matt Partridge (Chief Executive, 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)
Natasha Lee (Stevenage Borough Council)
Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council)
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)
Charlotte Blizzard Welch (Citizens Advice Bureau)
Ed Jordan (WENTA)
Claire Dicks (MBDA)
Kasia Averall (Catapult)
Kit Davies (North Hertfordshire College)
Kevin Cowin (Mace Developments)
Sian Carter (Homes England)
James Latham (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)
Dave Mudd (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)
Karen Burness (Airbus)
Mary Hartley (East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust)
Richard Whitehead (Aecom)
Rebecca Collings (Nicholls)

Start / End Start Time: 2.00pm
Time: End Time: 3.47pm

1 WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS

Adrian Hawkins, the Board Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He particularly welcomed Rebecca Collings (Nicholls) and Dave Mudd (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst) who were attending their first Board meetings. Dave was replacing James Latham on the Board, and the Chair thanked James, who was attending his last meeting, for his contribution to the work of the Board over recent years and wished him well for the future.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

Baroness Taylor (Stevenage Borough Council)
Clare Fletcher (Stevenage Borough Council)
County Councillor Richard Roberts (Hertfordshire County Council)
Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership)
Briege Leahy (Herts Chamber of Commerce)
Stephen Ward (Catapult) – Kasia Averall substituting
Greg Westover (Legal & General)
Colin Haigh (Hertfordshire County Council)
Helen Tomlinson (DLUHC)
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)
Keith Ellis (Airbus) – Karen Burness substituting
Sarah Brierley (Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust)
Julie Newlan (University of Hertfordshire)
Hetty Thornton (Historic England)

3 MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 6 OCTOBER 2022

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 6 October 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

Dave Wells (SBC Assistant Director: Regeneration) updated the Board on the SBC Regeneration Programme as follows:

- Event Island – three events had been held using the completed space, since the initial soft launch. These were a Halloween event, the construction of a marquee holding a temporary ice rink (until 8 January 2023); and the Christmas Lights switch-on. Officers were looking at establishing a programme of curated events for 2023, following significant interest from local community groups;
- Visitor Insights – this piece of software was to be used by the Regeneration Team and provided 5 years' worth of geo-location data sourced from mobile phones regarding footfall of places visited in Stevenage Town Centre and High Street; and
- Station Gateway – the Multi-Storey Car Park was progressing well and was on schedule for completion and opening in Spring 2023. Visits to the site would be arranged in the New Year.

6 TOWNS FUND UPDATE

Annie Piper (Regeneration Programme Manager) presented an update on the Towns Fund.

Annie advised that the deadline for the first Towns Fund monitoring and evaluation report to the Government was approaching (due on 16 December 2022), and work had involved the lining up of resources for the next tranche of projects to move to delivery following the use of a procurement framework. These were the Stevenage Sports & Leisure Hub, Diversification of Retail and Garden Square, and Cycling & Pedestrian connectivity (including Arts & Heritage) projects.

In answer to a question regarding the potential use of the Bowes Lyon House as part of the footprint for the New Sports & Leisure Hub, Annie commented that initial discussions with Hertfordshire County Council officers regarding this had been promising, and that discussions would continue in 2023.

Annie explained that the draft Towns Fund monitoring and evaluation report would be shared with the Board for comment prior to signing off by the Board Chair and Clare Fletcher (SBC Strategic Director responsible for finance). The report would contain information on a Programme wide Progress Summary; Project outputs; footfall indicator; and RAG Guidance.

Annie reported that spend on the Towns Fund programme was on target (£4M had been spent in Quarter 2 of 2022/23, and £7.5M by December 2022).

7 SITEC PHASE 1 UPDATE

Kit Davies (North Hertfordshire College) gave a presentation on the SITEC project.

Kit advised that the estates work had been completed, as had branding work. Equipment had been installed and commissioned, and staff recruitment was underway. Work on Life Sciences partnerships and T level apprenticeships was in progress.

Kit stated that there was laboratory capacity for 120 Level 3 students, 140 Apprentices (Levels 3 – 50 and 160 Higher Education and Access students. There was an immersive room that embraced Virtual Reality technology suitable for delivering specialist, technical and high-level learning through the use of VR software. In phase 1, this included using FourPlus VR software to deliver training in the life sciences sector (NHC being the first college in the country to have this licence).

Kit referred to the shareholder engagement that had taken place and was continuing, with organisations such as Life Arc and Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst, Autoscribe Informatives; Vax Hub (UCL), Autolus and the University of Hertfordshire.

Kit drew attention to upcoming activities, which included curriculum development; a launch event in Spring 2023 (to which Board Members would be invited); a SITEC

Steering Group (with support from the Herts LEP, the Bioscience Catalyst and Catapult), and School outreach work and a SITEC life sciences academy programme.

In respect of a question regarding the mechanism for engaging with SITEC, Kit advised that colleagues were in the process of writing to companies in the region, although the focus at present was on the Life Sciences sector. However, companies such as MBDA were on the list for future engagement.

8 SG1 PROGRESS REPORT

Kevin Cowin (Mace Development) reminded the Board of the extent of the SG1 development area, a 14.5 acre site which encompassed the former Swingate House, the SBC Council Offices, the Mecca bingo hall, the former bus station area, the Library and Quadrant area, the Southgate Car Park, and the Old Police Station.

Kevin advised that the SG1 development objectives included a mixed use re-purposing of the area to boost the daytime and evening economy. It would comprise the provision of a modern public sector/health hub and high quality, low carbon homes wrapped around green spaces.

Kevin commented that the SG1 Masterplan provided for 1,860 new homes; a new primary school; and 60,000 square feet of commercial floor space. Land assembly had been delivered; Swingate House and the Old Police Station had been demolished; and the Section 106 Agreement was in final negotiations.

Kevin stated that the efforts of Mace were focussed on funding options to deliver the first block of works, and work was progressing with SBC to move forward with a fully funded plan. Mace shareholder funding was ringfenced for the earliest possible contract start. The construction supply chain had been actively engaged to mobilise for a start on site by June 2023.

In reply to some questions, Kevin explained that there were plans for some positive communications about the project once the Section 106 Agreement had been completed. He also agreed to liaise with Kit Davies (North Herts college) early in the New Year regarding the Stevenage Works Group and linking in to educational/training opportunities.

9 PROJECT OPPORTUNITIES

Gunnels Wood Road Group

The Board Chair advised that Claire Dicks (MBDA) would be chairing a virtual (Zoom) meeting of the Gunnels Wood Employers Group in January 2023.

Claire explained that the purpose of the Group was to involve as many local employers as possible in the changes and connectivity plans for the area produced by Arup. She would be reaching out to other companies to seek their involvement, and asked any Board members interested in contributing to the first and future meetings to contact her as soon as possible.

Enterprise Centre concept

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) reported that Reef remained interested in developing the Poundland site in Queensway as an Enterprise Centre for life sciences and co-working spaces. Due to the current economic situation, the project presented a greater viability challenge than a year ago. There was also the possibility of integrating elements of the scheme with other sites in the town centre. There was a continued appetite to look at various scheme options over the next 3 to 6 months.

Ed Jordan (WENTA) offered to provide advice and assistance on this project, if required.

Investment Zones update

Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council) advised that the HCC Investment Zone submission to the Government, which had focussed on the Stevenage and Ware industrial areas, had been one of 12 submitted to the Government.

Patsy commented that there had been no feedback from the Government, and there had been an indication in the Chancellor's Autumn Statement that the Investment Zones concept may not be progressed. However, HCC was determined to continue the legacy of the work going forward should the Investment Zones idea or something similar emerges in the future.

Tom Pike agreed to meet with Claire Dicks to discuss the data that had been used in formulating the Gunnels Wood Road element of the submission.

Station Gateway

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) advised that the ambitions for the Stevenage Railway Station were part of the Stevenage Gateway Area Action Plan. He commented that the station was very busy (over 3.384M journeys per year and over 800,000 interchanges). However, the Station had limited arrival space, the right of way across the station had a limited width of only 4 metres; and its overall look was dated.

Tom referred to and summarised three concepts for the Station drawn up by Arup a number of years ago. These had been re-visited by Nicholls, a consultant specialising in the regeneration of railway stations.

Rebecca Collings (Nicholls) presented an updated concept for the Station, with visuals showing how a regenerated area would look with a reconfiguration of Lytton Way and a connection from the level of the street to the level of the station.

Rebecca presented visuals relating to regeneration schemes of other station areas, including Reading Station and Oxford Station.

Rebecca explained that avenues to be explored in relation to the Stevenage Station project would include drawing up a robust economic case; engaging local business representatives; exploring funding opportunities; and engaging Network Rail in the process. She referred to the strategic objectives for the project as follows:

1. Supporting our economy – supporting and developing the local, regional and national economy as the station created a new “arrivals lounge” for Stevenage.
2. Supporting our economy – better links to other UK life sciences and STEM centres in London, Oxford and Cambridge.
3. Improving connectivity – establish Stevenage station as a regional rail hub, with connectivity across Hertfordshire, East-West and North-South.
4. Improving connectivity – improve accessibility and physical connection across the town, making the station an enabler, not a barrier.
5. Improving connectivity – get more people onto the train as the preferred mode of travel into and out of Stevenage.
6. Improving connectivity – promote connectivity with sustainable public transport, cycle and pedestrian connections.
7. Improving connectivity – minimise disruption to passengers and rail services during construction.
8. Delivering high-quality urban realm – improve the functionality and appearance of the station.
9. Delivering high-quality urban realm – support regeneration of the wider station area.
10. Delivering high-quality urban realm – optimise development opportunities, with balanced mixed use.
11. Delivering high-quality urban realm – future-proof the structural capability of the station to support further regeneration in the longer term.

Rebecca referred to the next steps for the project which included commissioning an economic study and cost analysis; early engagement with select local stakeholders; the planning of potential site visits; mapping of funding opportunities; and further engagement with Network Rail.

Councillor Richard Henry (Stevenage Borough Council) asked that the cultural ambitions for Stevenage be referenced in the project documentation.

In respect of the strategic objective relating to better links to other UK life sciences and STEM centres in London, Oxford and Cambridge, Kasia Averall (Catapult) stated that a project had recently commenced aimed at connecting up the life sciences clusters in London and Stevenage. Catapult had produced a white paper for the project, which she offered to present to the Board in the future.

Officers were asked to circulate the powerpoint slides for the presentation, so that Board Members could respond to any of the issues raised.

10 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

11 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

- Thursday, 2nd February 2023: 10.00am – 12.00pm
- Thursday, 30th March 2023: 10.00am – 12.00pm

The Chair wished all Board Members a Merry Christmas and best wishes for the New Year.