

**STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
MINUTES**

**Date: Thursday, 2 February 2023**

**Time: 10.00am**

**Place: Virtual (via Zoom)**

**Present:** Adrian Hawkins (Independent Chair)  
Matt Partridge (Chief Executive, Stevenage Borough Council)  
Councillor Richard Henry (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Councillor Jeannette Thomas (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Tom Pike (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Clare Fletcher (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Dave Wells (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Lucy King (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Gemma Hannant (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Natasha Lee (Stevenage Borough Council)  
Patsy Dell (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP)  
Norman Jennings (Hertfordshire LEP)  
Martha Lytton Cobbold (Knebworth House)  
Melanie Bel Haj (Citizens Advice Bureau)  
Ed Jordan (WENTA)  
Claire Dicks (MBDA)  
Stephen Ward (Catapult)  
Kasia Averall (Catapult)  
Kit Davies (North Hertfordshire College)  
Sian Carter (Homes England)  
Steve Finlan (The Wine Society)  
Dave Mudd (Stevenage Bioscience Catalyst)  
Mary Hartley (Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust)  
Duncan Parsley (GlaxoSmithKline)  
John Lewis (Aecom)  
Ian Langley (Viavi Solutions)  
Ella Lyons (Viavi Solutions)  
Piers Slater (Reef Group)  
Will Rohleder (Reef Group)  
Denise Mulligan (Guinness Partnership)

**Start / End** Start Time: 10.00am  
**Time:** End Time: 11.45am

**1 WELCOME AND CHAIR'S OPENING COMMENTS**

Adrian Hawkins, Board Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. He particularly welcomed Ian Langley and Ella Lyons (both of Viavi Solutions), John Lewis (Aecom)

and Borough Councillor Jeannette Thomas (SBC) who were attending their first Board meetings.

## **2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

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

County Councillor Richard Roberts (Hertfordshire County Council)  
Charlotte Blizzard Welch (Stevenage CAB) – Melanie Bel Haj substituting  
Kevin Cowin (Mace Developments)  
Briege Leahy (Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce)  
Keith Ellis and Karen Burness (Airbus)  
Sarah Brierley (Hertfordshire Community NHS Trust)  
Greg Westover (Legal & General)  
Annie Piper (SBC Regeneration Programme Manager)

## **3 MINUTES - STEVENAGE DEVELOPMENT BOARD - 1 DECEMBER 2022**

It was **RESOLVED** that the Minutes of the meeting of the Stevenage Development Board held on 1 December 2022 be approved as a correct record.

## **4 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AND OPENNESS**

The Board received the latest conflicts of interest list.

It was noted that the Board Chair (Adrian Hawkins) was now also the Chair of the Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). It was also noted that the Leader of SBC (Councillor Richard Henry) was also now a member of the Hertfordshire LEP Board.

## **5 REGENERATION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

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

- Event Island – in conjunction with the Town Centre Management Team, plans were being finalised for the 2023 event programme for the use of the area, and attention was drawn to the “Food Heroes” event to be held in March 2023. In partnership with BDP Architects, a submission had been made to the Pineapple Awards for their “activation” category;
- Station Gateway Enabling Works (Multi-Storey Car Park) – the project was due for completion in the next few months, with an anticipated opening in Spring 2023. It was hoped to organise some previews of the scheme towards the end of the construction and prior to the official opening;
- Town Centre tours and visits – the DLUHC Regional Team had recently visited SBC and HCC to meet with community safety and house building services and had received a tour of the town centre; there had been a joint visit from David Locke Associates and Sports England, who were using Stevenage as a case

study for updated national Active Design guidance; and a funded place expert from the High Streets Task Force had visited to learn what was happening in the town and looking at challenges for transformation, and then provide a diagnostic report with future recommendations; and

- Forthcoming Town Investment Plan projects – the Stevenage Sport & Leisure Hub project was about to be mobilised, and a finalised specification was in preparation to draw down expertise from the SCAPE procurement framework. A new Leisure provider (Everyone Active) had been announced and they would support the design of the new facility. In respect of the Cycling and Pedestrian Connectivity (including Arts & Heritage) project, ongoing discussions were continuing with HCC on how to move elements of the project into delivery.

Matt Partridge (SBC Chief Executive) reported that the DHLUC visit to Stevenage and Hertfordshire was the only one they had conducted for the whole of the East of England, as Stevenage had been singled out as an exemplar for regeneration. The outcome of the visit would be fed back by the DHLUC representatives to their fellow civil servants and Government Ministers.

In response to a question, Dave Wells stated that discussions would be ongoing with Everyone Active regarding the dry and wet facilities to be provided as part of the new Sport & Leisure Hub. A Board Member asked whether there would be potential for a 50 metres long Olympic size swimming pool. The new facility was expected to have two pools, but further work would need to be undertaken on scale and scope to ensure a viable scheme.

## **6 TOWNS FUND UPDATE**

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) presented an update on the nine Towns Fund projects contained in the Stevenage Town Investment Plan. He commented that the Towns Fund spend profile for 2022/23 was on track, and that work on the next phase of projects was commencing. He agreed to circulate the detailed February 2023 Towns Fund Programme report to members of the Board.

## **7 AREA ACTION PLAN (AAP) CONSULTATION UPDATE**

Tom Pike (SBC Strategic Director) presented an update on the Stevenage Gateway Area Action Plan (AAP).

Tom reminded the Board that the objectives of the AAP were to provide a new gateway and arrival experience in the vicinity of the Stevenage Railway Station; enhanced movement and access for all modes of transport; green infrastructure integrated throughout; mixed use development to unlock opportunity; creation of a low carbon urban village; sustainability; celebrating the heritage of Stevenage; and making the most of digital connectivity.

Tom advised that the first stage of public consultation on the AAP had taken place in the Summer/Autumn of 2021. Over 300 consultation responses had been received. The second stage of consultation had commenced and would finish on 18 March 2023. Tom referred to an SBC webpage which allowed the public to submit comments and views and asked Board Members to share their views.

## **8 SITEC PHASE 1 LAUNCH UPDATE**

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

Kit advised that the state of the art Training Laboratory was in operation for Level 2 – 5 students, as was the Immersive Technology Room. Testing had been carried out in association with Life Art, Catapult and Autolus. Industry partners had been very impressed with the facility, which was unique for a Further Education College.

Kit stated that work was progressing on developing T Level programmes (the Government’s flagship vocational training programme) and the College would be launching a T3 level course commencing in September 2023. He added that 15 -20 committed young scientists had already signed up for the course. Work was continuing on facilitating the necessary industry placements for students with local companies.

Kit asked the Board to place a hold on 9 March 2023 as a possible date for an official SITEC launch event, although he was hopeful of offering an open day prior to the official launch for Board Members to visit.

## **9 GUNNELS WOOD ROAD ROUNDABOUT PROJECT UPDATE**

Adam Wood (Hertfordshire LEP) updated the Board on the Gunnels Wood Road (GWR) Roundabout project.

Adam reminded the Board that the objective of the project was to unlock development and lead to the creation of additional high-quality jobs in the GWR area by improving the roundabout at the southern end of GWR plus a package of sustainable travel improvements. The associated £400M GSK development alone would eventually employ up to 5,000 people.

Adam advised that the project had been split into 2 stages as follows:

- Stage 1 works – preparatory works only such as: surveys and investigations, detailed design, costings, relocation of boundary walls, advance diversion of Statutory Undertakers’ apparatus; leading to...
- Stage 2 works – implementing the transport improvements, including pedestrian, cycling & public transport improvements, together with upgrading the GWR roundabout itself and some widening of the A602 between the A1072 and the A1(M).

Adam stated that total funding for Stage 1 was £2,123,000 (LEP Growth Fund £1,013,000; SBC Town Deal £1,000,000; HCC Highways £110,000). The estimated costs of the Stage 2 works was £8M - £10M.

Adam explained that HCC Highways had indicated that it was very important to maintain transparency in their consideration of the GWR Stage 1 Scheme. This was because any final design submitted as part of the planning process would require

input from HCC Highways through their Development Management duties. To meet this requirement, HCC Highways the final design stage would become the responsibility of the developer, with HCC Highways concluding their early design work.

With regard to the next steps, Adam advised that the Stage 1 works were currently being agreed. Any work undertaken by HCC under Stage 1 would be publicly available. The LEP Board had agreed to transfer the balance of Stage 1 funding (about £500,000) to SBC to support the delivery of the remaining works under Stage 1. SBC was likely to sub-contract this work. The Stage 2 works (ie. actual delivery of the GWR Roundabout works and related improvements) would be funded and carried out by Reef/UBS – developers of the GSK site.

In reply to a question, Adam confirmed that the GWR roundabout application linked into the Gunnels Wood Vision works being carried forward by Arup for enhancements to the wider GWR area. He agreed to chase up Arup to arrange a meeting with key business representatives.

Adam noted the comments made by Board Members about the lack of safe pedestrian/cycling access across Junction 7 of the A1(M) to link the town to the Novotel Hotel/Knebworth Park. He commented that whilst the GWR roundabout scheme did not prevent future applications coming forward, he felt that the scheme would be complementary to any future proposals to improve pedestrian/cycling access across Junction 7 of the A1(M).

## **10 GUINNESS PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

The Chair welcomed Denise Mulligan (Guinness Partnership) to the meeting. He and invited her to present an update on the project for re-development of the former Stevenage Matalan site.

Denise advised that the scheme would provide 526 houses in two phases. Phase 1 would provide 143 homes; Phase 2 would provide the remaining 383 units. The scheme would be set out in 6 apartment buildings, with 2 courtyards and 4 roof terraces. 2 ground floor level commercial units would be provided, along with 50 car parking spaces and 800 cycle store spaces.

Denise stated that Lovell Homes had been appointed as the main developer for the project. The contract was due to commence in March 2023, with a scheduled completion date of March 2025. As part of the contractual arrangements, Lovell Homes were required to build a social investment offer into the contract.

Kit Davies (North Hertfordshire College) referred to the Construction hub based in Fulton Close, which trained young people in various building trades. He hoped that the Guinness Partnership/Lovell Homes would be interested in providing work experience/placements for some of these trainees. Denise agreed to contact the Construction hub.

In response to a question, Denise confirmed that there would be the possibility of incorporating some public artwork into the courtyard areas, which would form Phase 2 of the project.

## **11 REEF GROUP - LIFE SCIENCES IN STEVENAGE**

Piers Slater and Will Rohleder (both of Reef Group) gave a presentation on their involvement in Stevenage Life Sciences projects.

Piers referred to the fact that Stevenage was at the centre of the Oxford-Cambridge-London “golden triangle”, with good accessibility, which was why it was well-located for life sciences development. He drew attention to Reef’s projects in Potters Bar (“Ascend”), Cambridge (“The Platform”) and Oxford (“Bridge Laboratories”), as well as the two Stevenage projects, namely “The Campus” (the GSK site) and “The Assembly” (the Autolus / Forum site).

In respect of the Assembly project, Will advised that the first two “clean” rooms in the Autolus building had been handed over, which would be at the forefront of revolutionary cancer treatment. Final practical completion was due in April 2023, and the scheme would provide a net gain of 220 new jobs. He played an inspirational short video featuring a new Autolus employee, who had grown up in Stevenage.

Will explained that the remainder of the Assembly project, comprising a redevelopment of the Forum area, would be considered at a meeting of the SBC Planning & Development Committee to be held on 15 February 2023. This would provide 600,000 square feet of mixed use facilities and a further 1,000 jobs. It was hoped that, if granted planning permission, construction would start in June 2023. Two major pre-lets had been agreed.

In respect of the Campus project, at the GSK site, Will advised that the hope was to go through the planning process in April/May 2023, with the intention of a start on site in Quarter 1 of 2024.

In response to a series of questions, Piers and Will confirmed that the Forum development would comprise a combination of life sciences (high value Research & Development and GMP specialist facilities) units, community use facilities (training/skills), a cinema, a high end coffee shop, art galleries, podcast studios, some retail and some residential.

The Board welcomed the excellent aspirations and plans for enhancing the life sciences sector in Stevenage, and the fact that the town was developing an international reputation in this regard, although it should also be recognised that a further strand of the Board’s work was to raise the profile of the town as a cultural and leisure destination (especially following the recent appointment of a new SBC Leisure provider).

## **12 GENERATION STEVENAGE**

The Board Chair referred to the Generation Stevenage event that had been scheduled to take place all day on Wednesday, 24 May 2023 at Knebworth Barns, Knebworth House. He explained that the event was designed for young people and those looking to change careers to meet representatives from local employers to learn more about the variety of career paths on offer in Stevenage.

The Board Chair stated that the event had been planned for 50 stalls/stands and that he would be sending a link to Board Members in the next few days asking for expressions of interest from the companies/organisations they represented to participate and take up one of the stalls/stands.

**13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no other business.

**14 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

It was noted that the next Board meeting would take place (virtually via Zoom) on Thursday, 30 March 2023 (10.00am – 12.00pm).