

**Meeting** Executive  
**Portfolio Area** Economy and Transport  
**Date** 7 February 2024



## STEVENAGE CYCLE HIRE SCHEME - REPORT AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

### KEY DECISION

**Author** Sarah Martins / Lewis Claridge 2865  
**Lead Officer** Zayd Al-Jawad | 2257  
**Contact Officer** Sarah Martins / Lewis Claridge 2865

### 1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the work undertaken including public consultation, to develop a Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme. Members to note the Executive Report (Part 2) includes the progress made regarding the procurement of a suitable cycle hire scheme operator, preferred pricing schedule and funding approval.
- 1.2 A series of key design principles have been developed for the Cycle Hire Scheme specification. These principles include a preference that the bikes be predominantly physically 'docked', whether through stands, traditional physical docking infrastructure or integration with existing street furniture.
- 1.3 It is important to note that the specification is high level, hub locations should be considered as suggestions rather than definitive recommendations. Experience of

UK schemes has demonstrated that the final decisions on hub locations should not be made until an operator is chosen.

- 1.4 To highlight to Members progress made and the next steps in the Cycle Hire Scheme.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

That Executive:

- 2.1 Note the progress made in the Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme and work undertaken by officers up to September 2023 (Appendix A, B, C, D, E and F).
- 2.2 Approve the ongoing strategic direction and final steps for the Cycle Hire Scheme, to further develop the proposal for a scheme in Stevenage.
- 2.3 Note that the comments of the Environment & Economy Select Committee have been sought and considered on the content of this Executive Report.
- 2.4 Note that engagement with key stakeholders will continue, ahead of incorporating the Cycle Hire Scheme.

## **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 There is a long history of cycling provision in Stevenage, dating back to the development of Stevenage New Town. Eric Claxton, Chief Engineer of the Stevenage Development Corporation designed the New Town to have a substantial network of cycle tracks on which cyclists can ride in safety, uninterrupted by other traffic. Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme is a vital contribution to the heart of the sustainable transport network and plays a crucial role in reducing greenhouse and local pollutant emissions in Stevenage, to help tackle climate change and improve air quality.
- 3.2 The Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019 and reconfirmed a commitment to tackling climate change and its impacts by setting a target to ensure that Stevenage has net zero carbon emissions by 2030. Added to this, the Government has strategic targets to have net zero emissions by 2050. The Council has been proactive in producing a Climate Change Strategy [BD2] and outlined a Climate Change Action Plan. Both the Strategy and Action Plan are being updated to ensure that the Council's commitment to battling climate change is kept at the top of its priorities.
- 3.3 Geographically the town is well connected to strategic north-south transport corridors. The station is served by the East Coast main line railway as well as others including Thameslink services between Cambridge, London, and the south coast. The A1(M) runs to the west of the town, with two junctions: 7 and 8.
- 3.4 As an urban town, Stevenage offers 23 miles of cycle network with ease of access to work, home, shopping, health, education, culture, and leisure. The cycleway network allows cyclists to ride in safety, uninterrupted by other traffic to local amenities. These tracks are segregated from the carriageways of the town and cyclists can cross at major junctions and other convenient points through underpasses.
- 3.5 Stevenage is also home to world class expertise in aerospace and defence, with key legacy linkages to British Aerospace, electronics and space and satellites technologies. This supports a vibrant ecosystem of leading science, technology,

engineering, and manufacturing companies such as: Airbus Defence and Space, MBDA and VIAMI Solutions. Stevenage further hosts a leading pharmaceutical and life science campus at GSK. The planned future relocation of Hertfordshire County Council main office to Robertson House is expected to generate an increase in transport demand in Stevenage.

- 3.6 Unlike most Local Authorities in the UK and Europe, Stevenage possesses a dedicated infrastructure designed with cycling in mind. However, currently only 3% of journeys to work are made by cycles even though 30% of trips are under 3 miles. This highlights how under used the cycleways are.
- 3.7 According to the latest available data (2021 Census), in Stevenage the split for travelling to work is around 68% by car, 3% by cycle and 11% by foot. This means that over two thirds of all journeys to work trips are still being made by private car.
- 3.8 Stevenage Borough Council is working on several sustainable transport initiatives which aim to relieve the congestion on the roads and maintain parking capacity, whilst promoting more sustainable modes of travel and helping to improve air quality. This is particularly important considering the projected growth for Stevenage.
- 3.9 The Council recognises that car use plays an important role in the way that people and businesses connect. The Council is committed to improving and enhancing sustainable modes of transport to give people the opportunity to have choice over the way they travel, and the way their streets are used.

#### *Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme*

- 3.10 In 2019 Stevenage Borough Council (SBC) commissioned the consultancy Transport Initiatives (TI) to carry out a feasibility study into public cycle share / hire scheme in the town. This study used the methodology applied by TI in studies for several councils, including Guildford, Watford, Manchester, and Derby. It included an overall assessment of the potential for bike hire, highlighting areas with the highest potential.
- 3.11 The study was published in 2020 but due to the Covid-19 pandemic, no further progress was made until recently.
- 3.12 Considering changes in bike hire schemes since 2019, in 2023 the Council commissioned Transport Initiatives to update the existing study. The main task was to consider how to progress with a scheme in Stevenage, considering the substantial development planned in the town.
- 3.13 Stevenage Borough Local Plan [BD1] Policy SP6 (“Sustainable Transport”) states:

## Policy SP6: Sustainable transport

We will create the conditions for a significant increase in passenger transport, walking and cycling. We will require new development to provide an appropriate level of car parking. We will:

- a. Support the provision of new town centre sustainable transport facilities, including:
  - i. New bus termini and waiting facilities;
  - ii. New pedestrian and cycle links, with particular emphasis on connections between the Town Centre and the Gunnels Wood employment area and Old Town; and
  - iii. A remodelled railway station that reflects Stevenage's position on the network and wider regeneration ambitions;
- b. Direct high density residential and commercial uses, and other developments that generate significant demand for travel, to the most accessible locations;
- c. Support the provision of sustainable transport schemes as identified in local transport plans and other relevant plans and strategies;
- d. Refuse permission where development proposals fail to provide any relevant plans or assessments relating to transport;
- e. Assess proposals against the car and cycle parking standards set out in the Supplementary Planning Documents; and
- f. Require new development to make reasonable on-site, off-site or financial contributions in accordance with Policy SP5 including (but not limited to):
  - i. The creation or improvement of routes to, from or in the vicinity of the site;
  - ii. The provision of crossings, underpasses, bridges or other appropriate means of traversing significant barriers for pedestrians and cyclists;
  - iii. The implementation of parking control measures within or in the vicinity of the development site; and / or
  - iv. The implementation of other transport schemes identified in our delivery plans.

- 3.14 The Department for Transport (DfT) encourages us to plan positively for cycling, walking and passenger transport. It recognises that the transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel.
- 3.15 Currently, transport makes up nearly a third of Stevenage emissions and transport is one of the 8 key theme visions within the Stevenage Climate Change Strategy. Recent data shows that in Stevenage, modal split for travelling to work is cycling 3%, and walking 11%. In contrast, car journeys account for around 68%. This means that over half of all journeys to work trips are still being made by private car.

### *Policy Objectives*

- 3.16 There are a range of policy objectives which align with the Local Plan, Stevenage Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan [BD4], Stevenage Cycle Strategy [BD5], Stevenage Mobility Strategy [BD6], and national active transport policy direction for the Cycle Hire Scheme to respond to. These include:
- Reduce greenhouse and local pollutant emissions in Stevenage, to help tackle climate change and improve air quality.
  - Improve quality, accessibility, and affordability of clean modes of active transport in Stevenage and offer people an efficient way to connect with public transport as alternatives to using the car.
  - Improve journey times and connectivity in and around Stevenage.
  - Encourage a modal shift in cars to cycles.
- 3.17 Climate change is one of the most important objectives for the Cycle Hire Scheme to respond to. The Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019 and reconfirmed a commitment to tackling climate change and its impacts by setting a target to ensure that Stevenage has net zero carbon emissions by 2030. Added to this, the Government has strategic targets to have net zero emissions by 2050. The Council has been proactive in producing a Climate Change Strategy [BD2] and outlined a Climate Change Action Plan. Both the Strategy and Action Plan are being updated to ensure that the Council's commitment to battling climate change is kept at the top of its priorities.
- 3.18 A Cycle Hire Scheme in Stevenage can offer several economic benefits. These include increasing tourism, where cyclists are more likely to stop and shop generating revenue for local businesses. Furthermore, operating and maintaining a cycle hire scheme can create jobs in areas such as maintenance, customer service and administration.
- 3.19 Enhanced mobility can improve access to affordable convenient transportation options which can improve access to jobs and services.
- 3.20 Stevenage Mobility Strategy December 2016 [BD6] places a high priority on active travel (walking and cycling). The approach embraces national planning policy and promotes a strategy that is consistent Hertfordshire County Council Transport Vision 2050.
- 3.21 A Cycle Hire Scheme can support improved cycling infrastructure. An increase in cycling can further enhance the attractiveness of Stevenage, potentially leading to increase in property values.
- 3.22 Another benefit of a Cycle Hire Scheme is that it can result in a greater diversity of people cycling including many people who did not previously cycle, with a higher level of women than private cycle use.

### *Key Design Principles*

- 3.23 Alongside the high-level objectives a series of key design principles have been developed for the scheme specification. These principles include a preference that the bikes be predominantly physically 'docked', whether through stands, traditional physical docking infrastructure or integration with existing street furniture.
- 3.24 Further design considerations will include:
- Number of cycles, number of docking stations, number of bays per docking station, proportion of pedal cycles to e-cycles, area covered, average distance between stations, expected average daily uses per cycle, expected average daily trips per user, expected number of cycles per registered user.
  - Extra protection for bike locks and two factor authentication to avoid fraudulent activity.
  - Implementation of a cycle redistribution plan to ensure optimum use of cycles.
  - The preference is for the scheme to be accessible to those without a smartphone, for example online, online pass, staffed facilities, PayPoint.
  - The cycles should be trackable via a GPS system and should have the ability to be geo-fenced and potentially setting speed limit on e-bikes.

### *Financial Security / Value for Money*

- 3.25 To ensure an inclusive scheme for those on low incomes, the provider is required to take an active partnership approach to work with specialist groups to support outreach and engagement work.
- 3.26 The Council will provide the initial startup funds to establish the scheme. Subsequently, income generated through the cycle hire scheme contributes directly to the cycle hire operator, offsetting operational costs.
- 3.27 If the income falls below the financial model outlined by the operator, the shortfall becomes the responsibility of the operator, who assumes the risk associated with potential revenue shortfalls. Therefore, there would be no liability on the Council for this shortfall.
- 3.28 This model incentivises the operator to optimise operations and marketing efforts to meet or exceed expected income, fostering a co-operative relationship between the Council's funding and the operator's commitment to financial viability.

### *Assessing Market Interest*

- 3.29 In August 2023, officers in the Planning Policy team published a Soft Market Brochure, to seek the views of a number of indicative market players with the intention of procuring a supplier to deliver a phased introduction to a Stevenage cycle scheme. The soft market testing was a key component in confirming the proposed route to the introduction of a sustainable cycle scheme and explore various operating models.
- 3.30 Early market responses were received from three cycle share operators: Fifteen, Beryl and Brompton Bikes.

- 3.31 Fifteen were formerly known as Smoove and Zoov. The two companies merged a couple of years ago. Smoove is one of the companies behind the Vélib' bike-sharing service in Paris (along with Indigo, Mobivia and Moventia). Zoov offered a hybrid bike-share program for short-term and long-term rentals. Fifteen proposes to partner with Velogik, which has managed and operated the Glasgow Cycle Hire Scheme, working in a joint venture partnership with local charity Bike for Good since 2021.
- 3.32 Brompton Bike Hire LTD has 80+ locations across the UK, ranging from Jersey through to the Scottish islands.

Relevant examples include:

- London Borough of Newham which has 14 locations across the Borough. Of these locations 9 have been funded directly by the Local Authority and the remainder have been funded by Property Developers.
  - Newark Town has 4 hire docks at strategic locations across the town. Three of these have been funded by the Local Authority with the fourth being funded by a private business.
  - In terms of new projects, Brompton has a further 10+ locations planned for the rest of this financial year, which international launches planned for Germany, France, Singapore, and USA next year.
- 3.33 Beryl is the U.K.'s largest cycle hire provider. Beryl operates services in 15 urban areas in the U.K. ranging from large cities such as Manchester and Brighton to smaller towns and cities such as Hereford, Hertsmere, and Watford.

#### *Business and Community Engagement*

- 3.34 Stevenage has two designated employment areas in the borough: Gunnels Wood and Pin Green. Between them they encompass approximately 231 hectares of employment land and host some of the world's largest and most progressive companies. The town's proximity to London and key domestic and international transport links makes Stevenage a gateway to the UK, and the world. Commuters can take advantage of trains into London every eight minutes during rush hour with King's Cross just 19 minutes away. Cycle share schemes have been shown to be a good partner for combined rail and cycle trips.
- 3.35 A business and community engagement event were organised in September 2023, to provide stakeholders with an opportunity to understand what a scheme in Stevenage could like and look at case studies from around the country. This initiated early dialogue on how the scheme is shaped.
- 3.36 In September 2023 the Planning Policy and Regeneration Teams organised two engagement events; a morning event at 76Lounge at the Lamex Stadium aimed at local employers, employees, and an afternoon held at Event Island in Stevenage Town Centre for the local community. Both events provided an opportunity to discuss the potential for a cycle hire scheme in Stevenage.
- 3.37 Publicity for the community event took place via the Council's website, social media platform Facebook, Commonplace consultation platform news page and Eventbrite.
- 3.38 E-mails were sent to local businesses via the Stevenage Business Relationship Manager inviting local / future businesses to the engagement event, as well as signposting businesses to the consultation platform.

- 3.39 A formal invitation to the Cycle Event was sent to local Councillors and as well as Hertfordshire County Council, Cycling UK, ATTLEE, VCSE, Stevenage Education Trust, Local Community and Neighbourhood Team and Hertfordshire Police.
- 3.40 Event posters were distributed around Daneshill House Council offices, Stevenage Library, Stevenage Train Station, Stevenage Museum and Stevenage Council Town Centre Digital Boards.
- 3.41 The engagement work was a good starting point to get people in Stevenage talking about active travel and allowing people to give their views on the proposals as well as cycling in Stevenage in general.
- 3.42 At the events participants were able to:
- Meet and greet cycle hire operators including Tier by Nextbike, Beryl and Brompton.
  - Demonstrate a variety of cycles.
  - Give their views on what a cycle hire scheme in Stevenage should bring.
  - Complete the cycle hire consultation survey during the event.
  - Pinpoint a preferred docking locations using a virtual map via the consultation platform, or via a physical map positioned around certain areas of the event.
- 3.43 During the business engagement event, participants were invited to ask questions, give their views following a presentation by Tier by Nextbike, Beryl and Brompton.

*Public consultation period (18 August to 24 September 2023)*

- 3.44 During the Station Gateway Area Action Plan (Issues and Options) held in 2021, the Council utilised a consultation platform called “Objective”, which presented a number of limitations including user interface, ability to view documentation and limited ability for the public to make clear representations on the Area Action Plan.
- 3.45 For the Preferred Options consultation on the Area Action Plan, research was conducted on several consultation platforms to establish a suitable replacement. After an assessment of providers, the platform “Commonplace” was chosen as the web platform to host the Station Gateway Area Action Plan consultation.
- 3.46 Commonplace was considered appropriate to use for the Stevenage Cycle Hire Consultation as well, since it was suitable for mobile phones as well as desktop users. The design of the site was tailored to hold detailed planning documents, allow consultees to visually analyse the area through maps and assist with preferred hub locations, and identify what would help users feel safer cycling in Stevenage. The platform could engage residents, businesses and different demographics and separated topic areas to assist with understanding.
- 3.47 A link to the Stevenage Cycle Hire consultation platform was sent to 400 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.
- 3.48 A link was sent to a number of business and community stakeholders providing information on the engagement event and the process for responding to the consultation.



3.49 The formal consultation consisted of:

- Publicity via the Stevenage Borough Council website and social media platforms.
- A link to the Council's consultation interface, where the public were able to download the cycle hire related strategies and submit their views via a survey.
- The consultation interface included a series of "consultation questions" and "frequently asked questions", designed to cover the varying aspects of a cycle hire scheme and to generate comments on certain sections of the document, for example information on types of transport mode options, general travel patterns, or what discourages cycling in Stevenage and general views on what would be most important when using a cycle share scheme in Stevenage. This was primarily to ensure that the Council received responses on what consultees felt most important to them in a scheme and to understand how people currently travel within Stevenage.
- The interface included a specialist "youth survey", designed to gauge the views of the next generation of Stevenage residents, workers, and visitors, which proved successful.
- A paper version of the cycle hire questionnaire was available for participants to complete at both events to ensure the consultation was as inclusive as possible.
- A number of Stevenage Borough Council volunteers were available during both engagement events to assist consultees with navigating the consultation platform as well as support members of the public should they require assistance with the paper cycle hire questionnaire.

3.50 The Planning Policy team were assisted by the Regeneration team in promoting the Cycle Hire consultation across Stevenage to ensure a wide a response as possible.

## 4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION

**Recommendation 2.1: That Executive note the progress made in the Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme and work undertaken by officers up to September 2023 (Appendix A, B, C, D, E and F).**

- 4.1 Details of the Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme public consultation are summarised in the paragraphs below.
- 4.2 Documents which formed the public consultation included:
- Stevenage Corporate Plan Future Town Future Council (2023)
  - Stevenage Parking Provision and Sustainable Transport SPD (2020)
  - Stevenage Borough Local Plan (adopted May 2019)
  - Stevenage Cycle Strategy (2018)
  - Stevenage Mobility Strategy (2016)
  - Stevenage Central Framework (2015)
- 4.3 Consultation on the Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme was held between 18 August 2023 and 24 September 2023.
- 4.4 A total of 1137 representations were received from consultees via the digital platform 'Commonplace' as well as 4 non-digital paper representations.
- 4.5 Responses were received from, in terms of external bodies and individuals:
- Hertfordshire County Council
  - East & North Herts NHS Trust
  - Citizens Advice Stevenage
  - Cycle UK Stevenage
  - Mind in Mid Herts
  - Members of the public
- 4.6 A range of themes emerged arising from consultation comments, including some of those highlighted below:

Theme	Comments
Mode of travel used (to gather data intel on a typical day)	<u>General Survey</u> 37% of respondents travelled by car <u>Youth Survey</u> 22% travelled as a passenger in a car
Access to a pedal bike	<u>General Survey</u> 67% of respondents own a pedal bike <u>Youth Survey</u> 61% of respondents own a pedal bike
Active Travel Current cycle habits	<u>General Survey</u> 16% cycle daily 18% cycle weekly 16% cycle monthly 17% cycle annually 33% never cycle
Previous experience in hiring a bike in a cycle scheme before	<u>General Survey</u> 31% of respondents had hired a bike before using a cycle hire / share scheme 68% of respondents had never hired a bike using a cycle hire / share scheme 1% of respondents did not provide any comment
Key Destinations (Where do you or would you cycle to in Stevenage)	<u>General Survey</u> Responses were as follows: 20% Leisure 14% Work 14% Local Park / Greenspace 12% Shopping 10% Visit Friends / Family 10% Events in Stevenage 6% Other 4% Education

<p><b>Safety</b> (Q. What discourages cycling in Stevenage)</p>	<p><u>General Survey</u></p> <p>Responses:</p> <p>17% Weather</p> <p>16% Lack of cycle storage</p> <p>11% Personal Safety</p> <p>10% Lack of access to a bike</p> <p>5% Lack of awareness of cycleways in Stevenage</p> <p>5% Lack of confidence cycling</p> <p>20% of respondents selected 'other' – a selection of comments include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security of securing bike</li> <li>• The condition of the cycle paths</li> <li>• Navigation can be confusing because signposting is poor, and there is little help to find my way past the town centre, which is something of a barrier to getting, for example, from the Old Town to the Roaring Meg.</li> <li>• The cycle tracks in Stevenage are brilliant and enable safe cycling. However, the condition of them is poor with loose and pot holed surfaces. I worry about falling.</li> <li>• Worried about bikes being stolen or vandalised.</li> <li>• Underpasses are scary with all the graffiti etc.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Signage / wayfinding</b> (Q. What would help you feel safer cycling in Stevenage)</p>	<p><u>General Survey</u></p> <p>25% of respondents felt more signage and information would help them feel safer cycling in Stevenage.</p> <p>18% selected improved visibility when cycling. A further 18% would like to see additional lighting around cycle areas.</p>

<p><b>Active Travel</b> (Q. What would be most important to you when using a cycle hire scheme)</p>	<p><u>General Survey</u></p> <p>Order of preference:</p> <p>18% Docking location  18% Affordability  18% Ease of hie  16% Other  9% Connections to other forms of transport  7% Ability to carry groceries † shopping  65 Variety of bikes on offer  5% Proximity to local amenities / leisure facilities</p>
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4.7 Highlights of the consultation analysis included:

- Walking and travelling by car were the most popular forms of travel (see Figure 1).
- The word cloud (Figure 2) draws out the main words used in the responses. Some of the main preferred docking station locations include town centre, station, local parks, retail centres, employment areas and local neighbourhood areas
- Regarding Option 3, on a scale of 1–5 (1 = Disagree and 5 = Agree), respondents could reflect their sentiment on how much they supported the proposal for a cycle hire scheme in Stevenage. From the results, 57% completely supported the scheme and 22% were Neutral, providing a total of 79% of respondents. A total of 5% did not support the option. There was a proportion of respondents which opted not to respond to these questions.



**Figure 3. Level of support for a cycle hire scheme in Stevenage.**



4.8 In summary, regarding scheme support, 57% of respondents completely support a Cycle Hire Scheme in Stevenage. 22% were Neutral, providing a total of 79% of respondents.

4.9 Full details of stakeholder responses are provided in the consultation key issues arising from these meetings included:

Theme	Comments
Sustainable Transport	<p>To support the creation of built environments that encourage greater and safer use of sustainable transport modes, The design of a scheme should consider in the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to reduce travel demand and the need to travel.</li> <li>• Vulnerable road user needs (such as pedestrians and cyclists).</li> <li>• Passenger transport user needs.</li> <li>• Powered two-wheeler (mopeds and motorbikes) user needs.</li> <li>• Other motor vehicle user needs.</li> </ul>
Key Destinations	<p>The proposed cycle hire should aim to serve all keys areas within town such as employment areas, main retail centres. neighbourhood areas and strategic development areas. Therefore, the following key areas should be given priority in selection of cycle hiring docks / parking / storage.</p> <p><b>Key Destinations</b></p> <p>Stevenage Railway Station / Bus Station</p> <p>Stevenage Town Centre</p> <p>Leisure Park</p> <p>Lister Hospital</p> <p>Old Town</p> <p>Stevenage Football Stadium</p> <p>North Herts College</p> <p>Fairlands Valley Park</p>

Theme	Comments
	<p><b>Other Key Employment Areas</b></p> <p>Gunnels Wood Park and GSK</p> <p>Pin Green</p> <p>New employment site at North of Stevenage (Amazon Distribution Centre)</p> <p><b>Main Retail Centres and Neighbourhood</b></p> <p>Poplars District Centre – Sainsbury’s</p> <p>Seven Local Centres and Neighbourhood Areas as mentioned in Stevenage Cycle Strategy 2018</p> <p>There are opportunities for docking stations as part of future Local Plan development sites coming forward. There should be early engagement with developers to identify potential site locations which are aligned with the new cycle infrastructure being provided.</p> <p><b>Key development sites include:</b></p> <p>Potential future Key Development Site</p> <p>Development at the West of Stevenage for 1350 homes</p> <p>Development at the North of Stevenage for 800 homes</p> <p>Development at the South-East of Stevenage for 550 homes</p> <p>We also suggest that a mechanism is developed to allow communities and businesses to bid for a docking station in their area.</p>
Scheme Design	<p>Things to consider that might support increase bike use by staff work.</p> <p>Free bike and lock scheme, Subsidised bike scheme. Improved maintenance of the cycleways, including potholes and better lighting. Fairlands at night is dark and scary.</p> <p>Increasing bike parking provision across the town, there is some parking in the</p>



Theme	Comments
	neighbourhood centres but not much outside of those areas. Electric bikes would also assist staff.
Social value and inclusivity	Offering mileage vouchers for those on low incomes through charitable partners for things like appointments, job centre appointments and for those struggling to access provisions like a food shed.

- 4.10 Officers have taken all comments and views into account, in a conscientious manner. This helped to inform and shape the Cycle Hire scheme specification being reported to Executive.

*Hertfordshire County Council Highways Consultation Response*

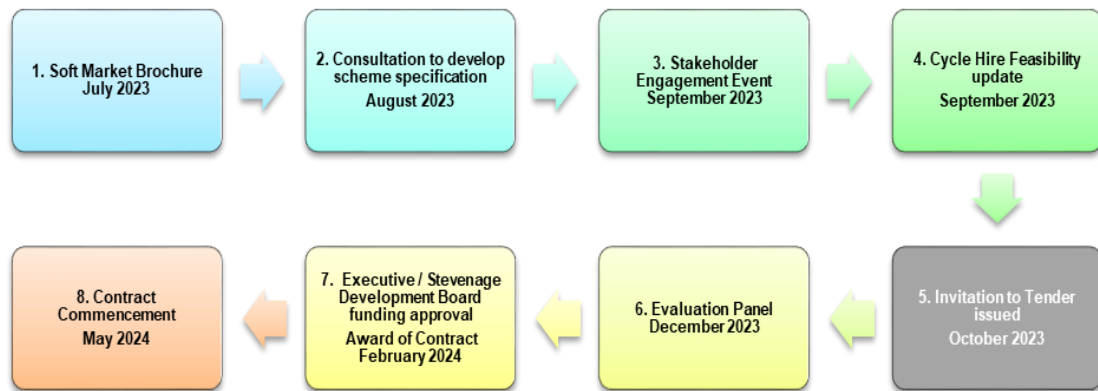
- 4.11 Hertfordshire County Council Highways have generally welcomed the opportunity to work together to develop a plan that contributes to the overall vision for Hertfordshire. Their representations are highlighted in the table below.

Theme	Comments
Key Destinations	<p>In the light of the policy, the Stevenage cycle hire scheme needs to align with the aspirations of relevant strategies such as Stevenage LCWIP-2019, Local Plan-2019, Stevenage Sustainable Travel Towns 2022, Stevenage Cycle Strategy 2018, and Mobility Strategy 2016.</p> <p>Stevenage benefits from a comprehensive existing cycle network and the LCWIP sets out proposals to further enhance this. The cycle hire scheme therefore needs to reflect the cycle routes already in operation.</p> <p>The proposed cycle hire should aim to serve all keys areas within town such as employment areas, main retail centres. neighbourhood areas and strategic development areas.</p>
Cycle Hub Locations	<p>The Highway Authority supports the concept of the Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme (SCHS) and would welcome the opportunity to work with SBC to help design the scheme, agree docking stations and the implementation process.</p> <p>Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) adopted Local Transport Plan 4 (LTP4) in 2018. This document</p>

Theme	Comments
	<p>sets out the long-term transport strategy for the County to accommodate the levels of housing and employment growth being identified by the District/Borough Councils in their emerging Local Plans. LTP4 accelerates the transition from a previous transport strategy that was largely car based to a more balanced approach which caters for all forms of transport and seeks to encourage a switch from the private car to sustainable transport (e.g., walking, cycling and passenger transport) wherever possible.</p> <p>LTP4 Policy1: Transport User Hierarchy states “to support the creation of built environments that encourage greater and safer use of sustainable transport modes, the County Council will in the design of any scheme and development of any transport strategy consider in the following order:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities to reduce travel demand and the need to travel</li> <li>• Vulnerable road user needs (such as pedestrians and cyclists)</li> <li>• Passenger transport user needs</li> <li>• Powered two-wheeler (mopeds and motorbikes) user needs</li> <li>• Other motor vehicle user needs</li> </ul> <p>In the light of the policy, the Stevenage cycle hire scheme needs to align with the aspirations of relevant strategies such as Stevenage LCWIP-2019, Local Plan-2019, Stevenage Sustainable Travel Towns 2022, Stevenage Cycle Strategy 2018, and Mobility Strategy 2016.</p> <p>The Highway Authority would like to see that the cycle hire scheme provides a good mix of e-bike / bikes with the exploration of the potential for cargo bikes as this is a growth market which could reduce vehicular movements.</p> <p>Careful consideration should be given to land ownership when looking at the location of docking stations and third-party land should be avoided. As a starting point opportunity for location on SBC land should be identified. However, if the highway land is required, SBC would need to contact HCC at its earlier stage. Any proposed docking station on the public highway needs to be agreed with the HCC.</p>

Theme	Comments
	<p>It is crucial that the location of the docking stations does not constrict footway widths.</p> <p>In areas of high footfall (e.g., in town centres or outside schools) the recommended effective width of a footway is 3.5m.</p> <p>If this is not feasible due to physical constraints, then the aim should be to maintain a minimum effective width of 1.5 metres (in line with DfT Inclusive Mobility Guidance, Dec-2021, Para 4.2) Where existing footway widths are less than 1.5m the installation of new docking stations should be avoided or localised buildouts should be provided.</p> <p>In summary, the Highway Authority supports the concept of the Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme (SCHS) and would welcome the opportunity to work with SBC to help design the scheme, agree docking stations and the implementation process.</p>
Scheme Design	<p>The Highway Authority would like to see that the cycle hire scheme provides a good mix of e-bike / bikes with the exploration of the potential for cargo bikes as this is a growth market which could reduce vehicular movements.</p>
Accessibility / Wayfinding	<p>In terms of accessibility and wayfinding, each cycle hiring dock must be accessible for all cycle users and sufficient wayfinding information should be displayed for the key destinations including hiring costs, maps, travel time and distance. Scope for advertising at docks.</p>
Town Centre	<p>It is crucial to assess that how town centre cycle ban potentially limits the effective use of the cycle hire scheme and the highway authority would welcome the review of this as part of the design process.</p>
Cycle Hire Recovery	<p>Another important concern is that the cycles might be left blocking the footway or carriageway causing an obstruction. Therefore, the Highway Authority would like to understand the strategy for recovering cycles that are not in the docking station but left blocking the footway and carriageway.</p>

**Recommendation 2.2: That Executive approve the ongoing strategic direction and final steps for the Cycle Hire Scheme, to further develop the proposal for a scheme in Stevenage.**



- 4.12 We have completed the first six stages of project development for a Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme. The assessment of market interest formed the first stage of the Cycle Hire Scheme.
- 4.13 Stage two “consultation to develop a scheme specification” was the first stage for public consultation which went out to public consultation 18 August to 24 September 2023 and summarised in paragraphs above.
- 4.14 The business and community engagement event which took place on 6 September 2023 formed as a third stage to compliment the consultation work providing an opportunity for stakeholders to comment and help shape a scheme for Stevenage.
- 4.15 The next stage “Cycle Hire Feasibility Study” formed the fourth stage of the project. The full report is summarised in the Executive Report (Part 2).
- 4.16 The fifth stage comprised the Invitation to Tender. The tender went out on the Councils In-Tend portal on 20 October 2023.
- 4.17 Stages five to eight are explained further in the Executive Report (Part 2).
- 4.18 As part of the contract specification the design principles were guided by other Scheme best practice examples, ongoing dialogue with Watford Borough Council, Hertsmere Council, Transport Initiatives, guidance from Como UK (Appendix G), and lessons learnt from all of the above and other Local Authorities such as Great Yarmouth.
- 4.19 Watford Borough Council have been operating a cycle hire scheme successfully for the past 4 years with currently 33,000 scheme users. The Watford team shared their experience and lessons learnt.
- 4.20 To support the design further themes from the consultation responses were incorporated into the final specification and form part of the evaluation questions.

**Recommendation 2.3: That Executive note that the comments of the Environment & Economy Select Committee have been sought and considered on the content of this Executive Report.**

4.21 The Environment and Economy Select Committee and Cycle UK Stevenage were presented with an overview of the proposed cycle hire scheme for Stevenage on 12 December 2023.

4.22 A set of PowerPoint slides were presented to the group detailing the scheme objectives, project timeline, consultation analysis and the scheme model based on the updated Stevenage Feasibility Study. The group were invited to comment on the content and key issues arising from this meeting included:

Theme	Comments
Drivers	SBC should drive the scheme working alongside the chosen supplier.
Traffic / congestion	Currently no alternatives to using other modes of transport or the option to plan a multimode journey.
Active travel	Behaviour changes and sustainable travel aspirations are required to assist with any changes in the area.  Can we expect more community engagement events and what do other Local Authorities offer in terms of promotions and discount codes.
Economy	The cycle scheme would assist long standing industries in the area. Promote and draw new businesses to the area.
Vandalism and theft	Concerns raised around the potential vandalism and theft of bikes. Contact with Police / local groups to identify hotspots is essential. Additional lighting around hotspot areas would be beneficial.

Theme	Comments
Safety / training	<p>Concerns raised around the issue with e-scooters and suggested there should be some “no go” areas especially in shopping areas.</p> <p>A typical weight of an e-bike is 44kg, what if there is a collision? Who is liable?</p> <p>Cycle paths and footpaths feel isolated early evening and at night. Lighting needs to be improved. No natural surveillance from footfall or slow traffic.</p>
Way finding	<p>Regarding wayfinding, clear signage is a must and beneficial not only to local people but also to visitors to Stevenage.</p>
Dock v Dockless Schemes	<p>Consideration needed for the type of scheme model. Dockless scheme seem to provide more flexibility. Discussion around issues with Camden and Westminster dockless schemes. A docked scheme would provide bikes are left in a secure location. Start with a docked scheme but consider other hybrid options as the scheme develops.</p>
Dock locations	<p>If trying to meet transport need when bus services are poor, docking locations should be a way of bridging the connectivity between bus services and complementary modes of transport.</p> <p>If docking stations could be moved if they decided, they were in the wrong place it would create more flexibility. Movement and usage analysis could potentially be used to support docking stations in future scheme phases.</p>

Theme	Comments
Finance / funding	The scheme poses a large upfront cost to the Council. It would be beneficial to look at sponsorship to support the overall cost.
Pricing / accessibility	<p>Consideration needed when agreeing user hire costs. Is there the ability to include a flexible pricing scheme and corporate memberships? Providing affordable, socially inclusive, and a sustainable access to mobility is crucial to the scheme being inclusive to every resident. What incentives are there for memberships?</p> <p>How will the Council recover its cost?</p>
Monitoring / review	The scheme could come back to the Committee to be reviewed and that there should be some criteria to assess it against, such as relevance to climate change, transport poverty and modal shift. An initial 6-month update on the data would be required. Followed by an Environment and Economy Committee review 1 year after scheme implementation.
Scheme promotion	Who is responsible for promoting the scheme?

- 4.23 There is broad support for the Cycle Hire Scheme. The need to reduce greenhouse and local pollutant emissions in Stevenage, to help tackle climate change and improve air quality.
- 4.24 The views of the Environment and Economy Select Committee Members are of significant value in shaping the future of the Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme.

**Recommendation 2.4: That the Executive note that engagement with key stakeholders will continue, ahead of incorporating the Cycle Hire Scheme.**

- 4.25 The Sustainable Travel Town programme forms part of the County Council's Local Transport Plan, and aims to increase the number of people walking, cycling, and using public transport. The key difference from previous initiatives is that the Sustainable Travel Town will fully integrate behavioural change techniques with infrastructure improvements so that new facilities are fully utilised.
- 4.26 The County Council invited organisations across Hertfordshire to apply to be part of the programme. This was part of the process to ensure that there is local "ownership" of the programme, which is essential to successful delivery. Stevenage Borough Council was one of nine organisations who applied to be part of the programme. This bid was one of three which were shortlisted, and then subsequently entered into the programme.
- 4.27 The overall vision for the Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town is to enable the delivery of the growth plans set out in the Local Plan (2019) whilst maintaining the attractiveness of the town for residents and businesses. This requires a major shift of journeys from the car to active and public transport.
- 4.28 As part of continuing work on the Sustainable Travel Town programme, a Member group involving relevant Portfolio Holders from Stevenage Borough Council, and a Stakeholder group involving the Council, County Council and other parties including Govia Thameslink Rail and Cycle UK Stevenage, regularly meet to discuss key projects and initiatives. The Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme is considered to be a flagship project as part of the Stevenage STT programme.
- 4.29 There will be scope for further community and business engagement undertaken through the successful scheme operator, to promote the scheme and encourage behaviour change.
- 4.30 Officers are working in close collaboration with the Regeneration Team lead officer to align with the Council's Cycling & Pedestrian Connectivity Project to improve cycling and increase active travel leading to more active and healthier lifestyles.
- 4.31 Hertfordshire County Council have provided support for the Cycle Hire Scheme throughout the process, as have the key stakeholders who have liaised constructively with officers at meetings and through general dialogue.
- 4.32 Hertfordshire County Council has commissioned a research agency to conduct behaviour change research, and develop a behaviour change intervention plan to increase cycling uptake in Stevenage, based on the research findings and behavioural science evidence. The goal of this is to increase cycling uptake in a specified geographic area of Stevenage, with a desired focus on the following target demographics:
- Families living in the area.
  - Young people in colleges aged 16+.
  - Staff employed by Lister Hospital.
- 4.33 The specified location includes the Lister Hospital and the links to the Town Centre in particular the Train Station and Bus Interchange. The research will conclude with the development of an actionable intervention plan proposal that can be readily implemented by Hertfordshire County Council and its partners. The Behaviour Change Project is focusing on cycling and is currently working with officers to agree some projects for delivery in Stevenage.



## **5 IMPLICATIONS**

### **Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The costs associated with producing and consulting on the Stevenage Cycle Scheme were met from the agreed departmental budget.
- 5.2 A budget of £9,500 was allocated to update the Stevenage Feasibility Study.
- 5.3 The consultation costs associated with the digital engagement platform with the providers, Commonplace were already included within the scope of the existing contract. This included access to the webpages, training on the consultation platform and continued support and assistance from the Commonplace team to ensure that a positive, engaging consultation platform was released to the public and key stakeholders.

### **Legal Implications**

- 5.4 The procurement has been undertaken in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

### **Risk Implications**

- 5.5 The financial risk to the Council can be limited by the structuring of the project such that the initial investment and operating costs are met by financial sources already committed to the Council.
- 5.6 There may be risk to street scene from abandoned bikes. This can be limited through the implementation of a docked scheme, managed by structuring the scheme in such a way that will penalise users on abandoning the bike. The operator will have the responsibility to recover abandoned bikes.
- 5.7 Ongoing work to mitigate the likelihood and impact means that the risks are reassessed on a regular basis to reflect changes in the environment and to help focus attention.

### **Policy Implications**

- 5.8 The Stevenage Cycle Scheme 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 [BD3].
- 5.9 The Future Town Future Council Action Plan 2022/23 continues to look at ways to reduce our carbon footprint and encourage residents to make changes to contribute to our goal of being net zero by 2030. This is a commitment to accelerate our journey to net zero emissions by taking active measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This project will provide green, active, and sustainable travel infrastructure. It will reduce transport related emissions and contribute towards achieving our net zero commitment. The scheme provides an innovative way to deliver transport services. By reducing emissions and improving air quality, the scheme will help protect and enhance the natural environment.

### **Planning Implications**

- 5.10 The Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme will add to and complement the Development Plan for Stevenage.

### **Environmental Implications**

- 5.11 During preparation of the Stevenage Cycle Scheme, officers concluded no significant environmental impact. Reductions in emissions and improvements in air quality are likely to have an indirect positive impact on the environment.

### **Climate Change Implications**

- 5.12 Stevenage policies identifies Climate Emergency as strategic priority for and commits to change the way we conduct our lives, societies, and economies to mitigate climate change. This project will reduce transport related emissions, thereby mitigating climate change which supports the aims and objectives of the Stevenage Climate Change Strategy (September 2020) [BD2] and contribute to the overall climate change aspirations of the Council.
- 5.13 Climate change as a whole represents a significant risk which will influence all aspects of life. Current concerns include how changing weather conditions will increase extreme weather events including drought and flooding, impact on food and water security with the resultant knock-on implications for healthcare and other support services as well as general infrastructure.

### **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 5.14 The Stevenage Cycle Hire Scheme aligns with the Future Town Future Council Action Plan 2022/23 and commits to supporting the mental and physical health of the people of the town. Inclusivity and Equitability means making available, accessible and affordable facilities to improve mental and physical health of communities. The cycle hire scheme will provide an active and affordable mode of transport. It will improve the health and well-being of our residents. By making affordable means of transport available for residents, the scheme will improve residents' access to employment opportunities and recreational facilities. This will help reduce inequality and build a more cohesive community in Stevenage.
- 5.15 The proposed scheme will advance residents' access to employment opportunities and recreational facilities. Whilst improve transport choice and accessibility for all. This will reduce inequality and build a more cohesive community in Stevenage.

### **Health and Safety Implications**

- 5.16 Whilst there will be an increased risk of accidents involving cyclists the Stevenage cycleways are segregated from the carriageways of the town and cyclists can cross at major junctions and other convenient points through the underpasses.
- 5.17 The Council in conjunction with the operator will carry out regular monitoring reviews to ensure that any risks associated with accidents involving the cycle hire scheme are reassessed on a regular basis.
- 5.18 It is expected that with road safety measures such as reducing speed limits for e-bikes, safety training of new cyclists, increasing awareness amongst drivers these

risks can be minimised. However, when implementing the scheme, the operator will be expected to consider the potential impacts on community safety.

- 5.19 The proposed scheme is likely to benefit the health of the residents by increasing physical activity by encouraging active travel. The introduction of e-bikes will further help overcome physical barriers associated with cycling.
- 5.20 Reduction in emissions and improvements to air quality are likely to have an indirect positive health and safety implication.

### **Other Implications**

- 5.21 The proposed scheme is likely to provide economic benefits to users by providing an inclusive travel option that helps overcome economic barriers to accessing mobility.
- 5.22 It is likely that local businesses will see an increase in revenue with footfall increasing around the Borough.

## **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 Stevenage Climate Change Strategy (September 2020)  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/about-the-council/climate-change-strategy/climate-change-strategy-september-2020.pdf>
- BD3 Stevenage Future Town, Future Transport Strategy (2019)  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/evidential-studies/transport-infrastructure/future-town-future-transport-strategy-2019.pdf>
- BD4 Stevenage Local Cycling & Walking Infrastructure Plan (2019)  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/evidential-studies/transport-infrastructure/local-cycling-and-walking-infrastructure-plan-2019.pdf>
- BD5 Stevenage Cycle Strategy (April 2018)  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/evidential-studies/transport-infrastructure/stevenage-cycling-strategy.pdf>
- BD6 Stevenage Mobility Strategy (December 2016)  
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/local-plan/evidential-studies/transport-and-infrastructure>

## **APPENDICES**

- A Stevenage Cycle Share Scheme Market Brochure (August 2023)
- B Stevenage Cycle Hire Business Engagement Poster (September 2023)
- C Stevenage Cycle Hire Community Engagement Poster (September 2023)
- D Stevenage Cycle Hire Eventbrite (September 2023)
- E Stevenage Cycle Hire Consultation (August 2023)
- F Stevenage Cycle Hire Youth Consultation (August 2023)
- G CoMoUK Annual bike share report UK (2022)