



Stevenage Re-Imagined

A Ten-Year Arts and Heritage (Cultural) Strategy for Stevenage

Making Stevenage a destination creative town



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Vision

Making Stevenage a destination creative town

As the first New Town Re-Imagined, Stevenage aims to offer:

- Flagship performing arts, museum and heritage facilities
- An iconic public realm arts programme
- Extensive creative industries spaces and hubs, including digital, to attract and develop talent and to support skills development and economic growth

Through this Strategy a developed, enhanced and sustainable cultural offer, complementing town centre regeneration, will substantially improve local quality of life and health; benefit businesses and the economy; engage children and young people; and attract visitors from the County, London and beyond to a thriving, busy and accessible creative environment.

Big Ideas

A series of focused and connected ambitions provide developmental aims that are embedded in this Strategy, a Strategy which belongs to the people and the creative sector, as well as to Stevenage Borough Council and its partners. Through Stevenage Re-Imagined the Borough will:

- Plan and deliver a major public art programme and trail, enhancing the town centre and Old Town public realm, parks and opens spaces, and the extensive network of cycle paths in the Borough, helping build an exceptional creative profile for Stevenage and working with the business community
- Encourage the establishment of permanent and temporary (pop-up) artist studios and creative industry hubs, including digital media, to support local talent, stimulate employment, develop career pathways and build a strong local pool of creative practitioners and artisans
- Enhance the depth and artistic quality of Festivals and events, maximising the opportunity to enliven the town centre, the Old Town and Fairlands Valley Park, and promoting a unique Festival offer for Stevenage
- Upgrade the Gordon Craig Theatre offer to meet the needs of the 21st century Stevenage population and creating a facility with a suitable range of spaces to attract and inspire visitors
- Consider relocating the Stevenage Museum to a town centre location, with an aspiration to develop the First New Town Museum
- Encourage the provision of high quality music facilities for the town that build on Stevenage's musical traditions and enable young talent to access skills development and career opportunities
- Link arts and heritage with sport to build on the town's substantial sporting heritage and cycling unique selling point (USP), and encourage joined-up events and festivals
- Support innovative Arts and Health projects that use creativity to enhance well-being and quality of life, and support the Borough's Health and Well-Being Strategy – Healthy Stevenage
- Ensure the Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership is able to widen levels and richness of engagement to maximise opportunities to engage all of the Borough's children and young people and to build pathways for ongoing cultural engagement

In Stevenage the arts and heritage will be accessed and valued by everyone in the community, will be supported by the business community, and will become a magnet to attract visitors.

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1. Supporting Borough and Partner Strategies and Policies

The Strategy's Vision, and the identified themes and aims and action plan support key priorities within other strategies, policies and plans that align with Stevenage Re-Imagined, and in particular goals within:

Stevenage Future Town Future Council – Corporate Plan

From a cultural perspective the intended outcomes of the Future Town Future Council Programme are:

- A. A sustainable high quality cultural offer
- B. Sustained growth of cultural engagement
- C. Improving life chances of local people, including health and wellbeing
- D. The most vulnerable are supported by arts and cultural activities
- E. Direct business growth for arts and cultural organisations, with a positive impact on town centre businesses

Stevenage Borough Local Plan

The Strategy recognises three key elements:

- Regeneration
- Housing provision
- Employment growth

Top priority is regeneration of the town centre to help stimulate interest in Stevenage as an attractive place to live, work, visit and invest and to deliver a step-change in perception. Opportunity areas are designated to deliver high-calibre, mixed use schemes of homes, offices, retailing, sporting, cultural, civic, and leisure uses.

Stevenage Regeneration Plan - Stevenage Central Framework Vision

The Regeneration Plan has identified six major Opportunity Areas for investment to transform Stevenage into an attractive, sustainable and thriving place, within a positive environment appropriate for 21st century living. The aspirations for Stevenage Central (Opportunity Area 1) are to “create a vibrant town centre where people want to live, work and play”:

- A town centre with a vibrant evening economy
- Increased numbers of homes
- A hub for public sector services
- High quality design and greener, better integrated public space
- A transport hub and improved connectivity
- Clear public transport, cycle and walking links with the High Street, Leisure Park and Roaring Meg

This Strategy also references the **Community Strategy - Stevenage 2021 – Our Town Our Future** and the **Borough’s Health and Well-Being Strategy**

The Community Strategy links to the wider Hertfordshire Community Strategy and identifies priorities as:

- Children and young people
- Healthier communities and older people
- Safer and stronger communities
- Economy, enterprise and the environment

Hertfordshire County Council Corporate Plan 2017-2021 – County of Opportunity

The Corporate Plan has four key ambitions:

- **Opportunity to Thrive**
A cleaner, greener county with children and adults given the support they need.
- **Opportunity to Prosper**
Successful businesses, with plenty of job and education opportunities.
- **Opportunity to be Healthy and Safe**
Healthier lifestyles, tailored social care and less crime.
- **Opportunity to Take Part**
More volunteers and residents getting involved with their community.

HLEP Strategic Economic Plan for Hertfordshire

Four Priorities are identified:

- Maintaining global excellence in science and technology
- Harnessing relationships with London and elsewhere
- Reinvigorating places for the 21st Century
- Foundations for Growth

Stevenage is particularly referenced for investment support towards regeneration with the note that “place-based regeneration needs to go hand-in-hand with the commercialisation of the town’s science-based assets, particularly when the latter are amongst the finest in the UK.”

Arts Council England Great Art and Culture for Everyone

- Excellence is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries
- Everyone has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries
- The arts museums and libraries are resilient and environmentally sustainable
- The leadership and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled
- Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries

Complementing partner and stakeholder organisations

We know that this Strategy will complement and support the work of partner and stakeholder organisations because, in addition to Stevenage Borough Council Officers and Members, there has been intensive consultation with the following organisations and initiatives:

- Stevenage Leisure Ltd (SLL) – Gordon Craig Theatre team
- Stevenage Museum
- Stevenage Arts Guild
- Hertfordshire County Council via Hertfordshire Music Service and Music Education Hub
- Stevenage Schools
- North Hertfordshire College
- University of Hertfordshire
- UH Arts
- Creative Hertfordshire
- Royal Opera House Bridge
- East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust
- Hertfordshire Public Health Service
- Hertfordshire Libraries
- The Practice Roomz
- Stevenage Lytton Players
- Stevenage Festival

- Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (HLEP)
- Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership (HCEP)*
- Arts and Horticulture in the Hospital Project

*Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership has identified three key priorities as development goals:

- Advocating for the value of cultural learning
- Enhancing local relationships between schools, the education sector and cultural activity
- Ensuring access and entitlement for all young people to a high quality, diverse, creative and cultural education (prioritising children with protected characteristics)

Strategic partner and stakeholder consultation has taken the form of individual meetings, group meetings and telephone conversations. The development of the Strategy has also involved workshops and discussions with a range of local community groups and survey activity to seek views from individual schools, community groups and artists/practitioners. It was particularly important to seek the views of representative samples of local people, and this was undertaken by arranging music and visual arts workshops that would subsequently allow feedback discussion and debate. In some cases, attendance at community group meetings facilitated group discussion and comment, in order for future aspirations for arts and heritage development to be shared.

A detailed report on the Strategy consultation process is attached as Appendix A. Highlighted below are some of the common and consistent comments shared during the consultation process:

- Lack of connectivity between existing activity (including that in schools) and absence of a joined-up approach to marketing and promoting arts and heritage activity

“There is a lot going on in the town but the various groups need to work together to get the maximum results”

- The aspiration for more and a wider range of participatory activity that is accessible and affordable (and inclusive e.g. for young people with special educational needs)
- The need for studio performing arts space/theatre provision that can be used by both community groups and for a different touring, professional product (including spoken word and literature). There is also a strong aspiration to see music performance space in the town centre

“A properly run live music venue has been much needed within Stevenage in all my years of living here. It would provide a home venue to showcase the talent that Stevenage has in abundance, but end up playing further afield due to lack of local opportunity/platform.”

- A desire for enhanced and additional Festival activity, incorporating music plus arts and crafts. This aspiration includes a desire for more events at Fairlands Valley Park
- The need to maximise and build on the town's sculpture trail and Mondrian heritage and to create space for exhibition
- Importance of enhancing and relocating the Stevenage Museum and of using empty buildings for creative activity and engagement on both a permanent and pop-up basis

Themes

The themes that drive Stevenage Re-Imagined have emerged from the aspirations inherent in Borough Strategies, Policies and Plans, and from the priorities identified by the cultural sector and by other stakeholders in the town, including the local community.

1. Widening the cultural offer

There is a need to respond to a changing demographic (anticipated 10,000 new town residents, primarily young adults), to provide a wider mix of cultural activity to attract visitors, to offer Stevenage residents a range of cultural opportunities that better support skills development and career pathways for young people, to engage the business community improve health and well-being and enhance the environment. Stevenage residents benefit from:

- Permanent and temporary exhibitions in the Borough Museum
- The main theatre programme (and exhibitions) offered by the Gordon Craig Theatre*
- Occasional shows and cultural events in the Leisure Centre Main Hall
- The Stevenage Leisure Ltd Theatre Academy and Outreach programme (for children and young people)
- Performances from The Lytton Players at the 80 seat Lytton Theatre
- Musical events and concerts in the Stevenage Music Centre at Nobel School
- Occasional performances in the Valley School theatre space
- Participatory opportunities available through the 20 groups that are members of Stevenage Arts Guild
- Stevenage Festival (biennial)
- Stevenage Day (annual)
- Stevenage Charter Fair (annual)

- Other events, not directly with arts content, such as the annual Fireworks, the Celebrate event hosted by the World Forum, and Cycling Festivals

*The programme offered by the Gordon Craig Theatre is strongly focused on music (Tribute bands), comedy, popular dance, popular entertainment and family shows (including the Christmas show). In addition, the theatre produces three in-house shows annually, incorporating musicals and drama. There is also a strong community offer.

Whilst Stevenage has an existing and relatively vibrant cultural offer, levels of engagement are comparatively low and the town and its inhabitants are ambitious for more, recognising the impact culture can play on quality of life. There are relatively few professional artists and practitioners living and working in Stevenage. There is an aspiration to offer a full range of performing arts activity (including spoken word and literature), to build on the town's traditions of music engagement and performance, and to revive the commitment to public realm art which saw Stevenage as an early pioneer in placing exceptional artworks in public space.

2. Increasing cultural engagement

The 2016 survey of Hertfordshire residents included sample responses from 100 people from within each Local Authority area. The survey sample indicated that Stevenage had the lowest cultural engagement in the County with only 30% of those responding indicating they had engaged with arts and culture over the previous twelve months. The Taking Part Survey (2010) indicated Stevenage was in the bottom 20-30% of Local Authority areas for cultural engagement with only 41% of the population indicating an engagement of three times per annum or more (the highest Local Authority area engagement level was 65%). The Borough Museum is reporting reducing engagement from Stevenage schools and there is a risk that children and young people are missing out on important creative opportunities to enhance their learning and future employment opportunities.

Despite these statistics there is focused cultural engagement through Stevenage facilities and initiatives:

- The Gordon Craig Theatre (500 seats) is popular, selling to an average 67.5% capacity (91% for a long-running Christmas pantomime) and the theatre's Academy is engaging 230 children and young people each week
- The Practice Roomz attracts 80 or more musicians/bands each week (many coming into Stevenage from other locations) to use its six recording studios and practice rooms
- The Community Arts Centre (managed by Stevenage Arts Guild with 20 organisations as members) is in substantial demand to host the activities of local community and amateur arts groups, but its current location on the Roaring Meg Retail Park may not be the most obvious location for an arts centre in the town.
- The Lytton Theatre delivers a programme of amateur theatre, with supporting youth theatre and has its own venue with 80 seats and an aspiration to update and improve the facilities.

- The County Music Service, with its Stevenage Music Centre base at Nobel School, serves many children and young people with music tuition and ensemble performance opportunities
- Stevenage Festival provides a ten-day biennial programme of activity delivered entirely by volunteers and community arts groups
- Stevenage Day is a vibrant one-day Festival event each June, with a substantial live music programme

However, with a population of 90,000 there is considerable scope to improve local cultural engagement, and in particular to ensure that there are accessible opportunities for the whole Borough community, including culturally diverse communities (Irish, Polish, Romanian, Caribbean and Filipino communities are highlighted), those from more disadvantaged backgrounds and those with protected characteristics.

3. Connecting and advocating cultural opportunities

Whilst there are focused cultural opportunities in Stevenage, local organisations report a lack of connection and visibility. Activity is often offered and delivered in isolation, and there is little sense of the overarching cultural offer, reducing impact and advocacy for engagement. This issue is reflected in under use of facilities such as the Borough Museum, Stevenage Music Centre and Valley School Theatre, underuse of cycle paths, and declining attendances at some local amateur and community theatre and music performances. Some users of the Community Arts Centre commented that it is well used but felt it lacked profile due to its location in the Roaring Meg Retail Park. There are greater opportunities to utilise library facilities for arts and heritage activity. Those in the sector report lack of collaborative initiatives and joined-up publicity and advocacy, which together might provide stronger marketing and promotion than individual organisations and practitioners are able to deliver. The need for cultural organisations to work together on this is apparent. There is also a need to fully engage the business community and its employees.

Delivery of the Stevenage Regeneration Plan and implementation of the Cultural Strategy provides the platform to raise the profile of arts and heritage activity and opportunities, and to position culture as a central ingredient of life in Stevenage. The creation of a new Arts and Heritage Forum to bring representatives from the sector together, and to enable regular communication and collaboration (including joined-up marketing), will also bring impetus to a new and high level cultural advocacy.

4. Celebrating the heritage of Stevenage

Stevenage has a longstanding history and heritage, in addition to the heritage status of being the country's first New Town. The original Roman Way, which became the Great North Road, passes through the town and alongside the Six Hills, the largest surviving Roman Barrow group in England and a scheduled Ancient Monument. Stevenage town centre is a Conservation Area, reflecting the value placed on the architecture and town layout that created the first

New Town development in the late 1950's/early 1960's. Current regeneration plans place value on the New Town heritage and will see restoration and regeneration to make a vibrant and iconic environment that complements a changing town centre demographic and ambience.

Stevenage Old Town dates back to the medieval period with many old coaching inns, and with many surviving High St buildings from the Victorian era. Alongside is the site of the Vincent Works, where the famous Vincent Motorbikes were made in the town between 1928 and 1961. Fairlands Valley Park offers an exceptional landscape environment of 120 acres, also complimenting the extraordinary network of cycle pathways (45 km) – a visionary resource unmatched by other UK towns.

Natural heritage includes Whitney Wood and Stevenage also boasts the heritage of public art (primarily sculpture) commissioned and installed in the late 1950's as part of the New Town development and including work from Henry Moore (relocated inside Barclay School) and the Franta Belsky Joy Ride in the Town Square.

The architecture of the new town is rooted in mid-20thC design, with its use of materials like concrete alongside modular panels that provide “pops” of colour. This is most visible in the Town Square which is recognised by Heritage England for its unique place as England's first pedestrian shopping centre. The town also embraced the De Stijl art movement, which encompassed Mondrian, with the pool at the base of the Clock Tower a Mondrian influence. Public art also includes murals presented in the many underpasses that support the cycle network. Various sculpture trails have been initiated to encourage public engagement.

Stevenage regeneration includes a commitment to relocate and refresh Stevenage Museum, providing additional focus on Old Stevenage heritage and the First New Town heritage and ensuring a central location, with drop-off and close proximity parking, making the Museum more widely accessible. There is an important opportunity to redress the underuse of the cycle network, encouraging a new approach to public art and stimulating substantial new engagement with walkways and cycle paths, enhancing cultural contribution to health and well-being. Development of Outdoor Festivals and events will provide a catalyst to increased use of Fairlands Valley Park, as well as enlivening the regenerated town centre, maximising visitor footfall. Heritage Lottery Fund has initiatives that offer opportunities to maximise the heritage of Stevenage and there is also an important opportunity for business engagement.

5. Developing opportunities for children and young people

It is particularly important for Stevenage's children and young people, including those with special educational needs, to have regular access to creative learning opportunities. Valley School has an existing performing arts presentation space, Barclay School aspires to a new Drama Centre and Nobel School hosts the Stevenage Music Centre with rehearsal, practice and performance facilities (though underused at the moment). However, curriculum and budget

pressures are reducing the emphasis on creative arts subjects and extra-curricular activity, and Hertfordshire Music Service (the Music Education Hub lead) reports lower take-up of music opportunities in Stevenage, making it necessary to partner with other areas in order to provide the full range of music learning. Stevenage Arts Guild is mindful that its membership is primarily older people and whilst the Gordon Craig Theatre has a vibrant and popular Academy (and undertakes important outreach work) the benefit reaches a small proportion of the Borough's children and young people.

The establishment of the Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership (HCEP) provides an opportunity to deliver focused targets to increase the engagement of the town's children and young people. Stevenage will be a priority focus for HCEP to pilot work and initiatives that test new activity to meet identified targets. Building on the demand for music practice and recording space for young bands and musicians, there is an opportunity to enhance local music facility provision (and to maximise facilities already available) encouraging new levels of engagement. Widening the cultural offer, and encouraging increased family engagement through participative opportunities at outdoor festivals (e.g. Stevenage Day and the Charter Fair) and as part of public art design and development, will also build aspiration and a commitment to taking part for children and young people of all ages and backgrounds.

6. Improving health and well-being

Over the last twenty years Stevenage has suffered from increasing levels of deprivation (economic and social), in common with other New Towns across the UK. This has been exacerbated by decline in the defence and manufacturing industries, leaving high unemployment amongst lower skilled households. Stevenage currently falls within the bottom half of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation with disadvantages including:

- Higher unemployment rates (3.4%) than the average for Hertfordshire and England
- Higher dependency on benefits (13.5%) than the average for Hertfordshire
- Poorer levels of health (4.57% bad or very bad) compared to the average for Hertfordshire
- More people in social grades C2 and DE (48%) than the average for Hertfordshire or England
- High levels of teenage pregnancy and lone parents

The people of Stevenage are determined this will change and cultural activity can play a significant part in transformation of expectation, and engagement in activity leading to improved health, increased skills and opportunity, and better quality of life. This Strategy has a strong focus on building cultural capital, and encouraging people to take part through participation and voluntary involvement in a wide range of cultural activity, and supports the new Borough Strategy for Health and Well-Being – Healthy Stevenage

Engagement with interactive public art; increasing opportunities through Outdoor Festivals and events, including sporting events such as the cycling festival; enhancement of creative activity delivered through and with schools; initiation of Arts and Health projects (including Arts on Prescription or social prescribing); a widened cultural offer; and better advocacy and marketing, will together play a substantial role in improving local health and well-being (mental and physical) and enhancing quality of life. It is important these initiatives create opportunities for older people with failing health.

There are two cross-cutting themes that are embedded across all six themes identified above:

- Access for All
- Economic development

Stevenage Re-Imagined has a commitment to equality of opportunity and to ensuring that all Borough residents are able and actively encouraged to access arts and heritage opportunities, irrespective of background, social or economic circumstances, health issues, or any disability.

The Strategy is also firmly connected to the economic development and well-being of the town. The Themes and identified Key Aims all play a role in supporting economic development and prosperity, by improving the environment, enhancing leisure and recreation opportunities for employees, making Stevenage a better place to live and work, and by enhancing the skills of local people (and pathways for young people) to contribute to the economy.

Key Aims

Ten Aims have been identified to underpin the Stevenage Re-Imagined Vision and to enable delivery to the six identified themes. The Action Plan supplied as Appendix C provides SMART Objectives that link to each Aim and will present the detailed delivery route map.

Aim	Themes and SBC Corporate Plan Goals supported	Activity and Outcomes
1. Create an extensive new trail of public art, with a focus on interactive artwork, to draw residents and visitors to the cycle network and to Fairlands Valley Park and to enhance the regenerated town centre, also helping to revitalise the existing heritage sculpture trail	Themes - 1,2,4,5 and 6 Goals – A, B and C	Develop a programme of artwork commissioning (which may have focused stages of intensive delivery, but also ongoing commissioning opportunities) to facilitate extraordinary, interactive artwork, building on the town’s cultural heritage to be sited on cycle paths, key routes from the town centre (e.g. Gunnels Wood Rd), in Fairlands Valley Park and in town centre locations (initiated as part of Stevenage central regeneration and including Mondrian style installations) and the Old Town in order to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract local people to walk and cycle and to experience local heritage • Make the public realm more attractive for major business employees • Encourage visitors

Aim	Themes and SBC Corporate Plan Goals supported	Activity and Outcomes
		<p>“Interactive” is the key word. By commissioning work that actively engages audiences then people will be encouraged to visit the artworks to experience them, rather than seeing the works simply as decorative elements of the route. Interactivity can also ensure people visit again and again, the experience is never the same. The regeneration programme, HLEP support, and potential input from the business community, provides a credible opportunity to deliver this initiative which can also revitalise and re-profile the existing sculpture trail and align with the planned way-marker project.</p> <p>This programme will align with Aim 2. As more artists choose Stevenage as a base the pool of local talent will bring more drive and ideas for developing new work and more imaginative ideas for locations. The programme will encourage engagement and involvement of schools, children and young people, with opportunities for community participation with artists, in design, development and installation processes (bringing skills development opportunities and activity that provides potential for engagement to support health and well-being).</p>
<p>2. Facilitate new creative spaces for artists (studios), musicians (practice rooms/recording facilities) and creative/digital industry SMEs to build the local pool of artists, practitioners and creatives</p>	<p>Themes - 1,5 and 6 Goals – A, C and E</p>	<p>There are empty spaces in Stevenage town centre that can be used to incentivise and facilitate temporary (pop-up) and permanent artist studios and creative industry spaces. These may also support creation of pop-up gallery and exhibition space. Identifying and promoting opportunities will draw artists and creatives (in a range of disciplines) from London, especially when aligned to opportunities such as a new public realm commissioning programme, and will also provide opportunities that support developing local talent. It is well documented that providing affordable studio space for artists (and for creative companies) contributes to urban regeneration. There is also potential to explore the development of a creative industries/artist hub with a bespoke building development/refurbishment that would focus this creative development and create the kind of joined-up and visible initiative that would contribute to highlighting the creative offer and improving the cultural profile of Stevenage. This brings further opportunities to develop a range of SMEs for community benefit, including artist co-operatives and social enterprises. An outcome of creating a strong local artist and creative industry sector is that more opportunities will be developed for local participation, including through activities in schools. Artists (including performing and digital artists) will drive the development of new activity and initiatives. The success of The Practice Roomz can be developed further (aligning with Aim 7) with more rehearsal and recording facilities increasing the</p>

Aim	Themes and SBC Corporate Plan Goals supported	Activity and Outcomes
		engagement of young musicians and the opportunities for local talent development.
<p>3. Develop existing Outdoor Festivals and events to increase the cultural offer, and develop new Outdoor Arts and heritage offers that together create volunteering and other opportunities for local people and added value attraction for visitors</p>	<p>Themes - 1,2,4,5 and 6</p> <p>Goals – A,B,C and D</p>	<p>There are a number of key existing Festivals that provide a unique offer linked to Stevenage heritage and traditions.</p> <p>The Charter Fair is part of the history of the town, and has been held every year since King Edward I granted a charter in 1281, giving Stevenage the right to hold a weekly market and yearly fair for all time. This important two day event focuses attention on the Old Town but currently does not include any substantial arts and heritage ingredients. There is an opportunity to enhance the Charter Fair for the benefit of residents and visitors, with potential for participatory activity in advance engaging Stevenage Arts Guild member organisations, local schools and the wider public.</p> <p>Similarly there is an opportunity to further build the range and quality of arts within the Stevenage Day event, in particular benefitting from establishment of a stronger local artist community and utilising the acknowledged Stevenage tradition of live music and performance.</p> <p>The Stevenage Festival (25th anniversary in 2019) is led by a strong volunteer team and will benefit from resourcing as part of a programme to enhance festivals delivery. In particular it offers an opportunity to build engagement of young people in local arts and to further develop volunteering.</p> <p>The annual Celebrate festival hosted at the Gordon Craig has been in existence for over 10 years. The event is led by a rich mix of the town’s diverse communities and demonstrates the strong and diverse cultural heritage of Stevenage.</p> <p>There will be value in exploring the establishment of a new Festival for Stevenage, located in Fairlands Valley Park (and Stevenage Woodlands) and providing a rich and high quality multi art form event (that also provides heritage interest) to profile the natural heritage in addition to providing an arts platform and encouraging increased family use of the Park.</p> <p>The annual Fireworks display and emerging Cycle Festival also provide an opportunity to extend an</p>

Aim	Themes and SBC Corporate Plan Goals supported	Activity and Outcomes
		arts and cultural offer.
4. Maximise skills and personal development opportunities for Stevenage residents through engagement with cultural activity	Themes - 2,5 and 6 Goals B, C and D	<p>Many of the Key Aims will contribute to providing skills and personal development opportunities for Stevenage residents. This Strategy has a particular commitment to facilitating the participation of children and young people, the engagement of those from more disadvantaged social and economic backgrounds, and the engagement of those with protected characteristics. This aim will be achieved by building participation activity into programme delivery e.g. inviting community participants to work with artists on the design and delivery of public realm artwork, and by encouraging participation programmes and paid employment opportunities (e.g. stewarding) as part of, and in the build up to Festival events.</p> <p>Enhanced volunteering will be a priority, with a newly established Arts and Heritage Forum able to coordinate a local volunteer pool to join-up opportunities and to maximise the learning and experience that can be achieved.</p>
5. Upgrade the Gordon Craig Theatre offer and maximise other performance spaces to meet the 21 st century needs of the Stevenage community	Themes - 1,3 and 5 Goals – A and E	<p>Stevenage Borough Council is committed to upgrading the town’s theatre facilities, a process that requires further feasibility work to assess the most appropriate scale and range of spaces, and level of technical fit-out, and to determine the best governance and operating option. Alongside the upgrade of the Gordon Craig Theatre, whether on the same site or an alternative location, partners will seek to enhance and maximise other performance facilities across the town.</p> <p>Delivery of a visiting performance programme will be developed across facilities with the combination of performance facilities developed to ensure there is studio theatre space to house more adventurous and cutting-edge performances (including spoken word and literature) and rehearsal space available to meet increasing demand from locally based practitioners.</p>
6. Relocate and revitalise the Stevenage Borough Museum to widen access and increase footfall	Themes - 2, 4 and 5 Goals – A, B, D and	The location for the new Stevenage Borough Museum will be selected to maximise profile, visibility and access. With substantial redevelopment Stevenage has an opportunity to demonstrate exemplary access to arts and heritage facilities. In particular the Museum will occupy a site allowing

Aim	Themes and SBC Corporate Plan Goals supported	Activity and Outcomes
and create the First New Town Museum as a unique selling point (USP).	E	for easy disabled access and for school party drop-off to encourage visits. The relocation of the Museum will facilitate new exhibitions and a sustainable approach to changing exhibitions as well as the opportunity for pop-up exhibitions to be presented in community locations. An important ingredient of the new Museum, within the regenerated town centre, will be a focus on Stevenage's heritage as the First New Town, the town centre itself also acting as an open-air exhibition of the town's heritage. This USP will be exploited to explore a role for the Museum in sharing the heritage of the wider New Town movement. The development of the new Museum will focus and profile Stevenage's heritage, encouraging wider and increased engagement, including for people to participate in heritage activity and become actively involved as volunteers. It will foster pride in Stevenage and contribute to a joined-up sense of Stevenage as a destination creative town.
7. Increase provision of music making, recording and performance facilities and activity	Themes 1,5 and 6 Goals – A, C and E	The Practice Roomz has established a significant and sustainable music practice and recording studio facility close to Stevenage Old Town. It is attracting and supporting young musicians and bands, but also attracting a range of musicians who regularly use the facilities to develop and record their work. There is capacity within the facility (and at the Stevenage Music Centre) to undertake a range of participatory and education work during daytimes and this will capacity will be better exploited. There is potential to create additional space for practice and recording either as an extension of The Practice Roomz or as a partnership project. There is demand for town centre performance space for a range of music activity which might either be incorporated in a redeveloped Gordon Craig Theatre, or established as bespoke space as part of town centre regeneration. A music performance space will build on the traditions of the former Locarno and provide cultural opportunities particularly relevant to the changing demographic of the town.
8. Support development of new focused Arts and Health initiatives and programmes (supporting the Borough Plan for Health and Well-Being)	Themes - 1,2 and 6 Goals C, D and E	Stevenage suffers from an above average level of poor health. Cultural activity provides an important opportunity to improve health and well-being through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement with physical activity such as dance • Enabling people to make new contacts and friends • Providing purposeful creative activity, often with a satisfying outcome • Giving people a voice and opportunity for self-expression

Aim	Themes and SBC Corporate Plan Goals supported	Activity and Outcomes
		<p>In addition to health and well-being benefits that come indirectly through engagement and participation, this Strategy will implement specific Arts and Health initiatives, in collaboration with cultural (e.g. SLL) and health partners, to focus on creative ways to improve mental and physical health and well-being.</p> <p>In conjunction with Public Health, the local NHS Trust and the University of Hertfordshire, bespoke projects and programmes will be developed and delivered and this will include establishing an Arts on Prescription scheme. The programme will maximise the opportunity to involve students from the University’s pioneering Art Therapy degree programme and will build on the success of local initiatives such as the Healthy Hub at Stevenage Arts and Leisure Centre.</p> <p>Participatory projects will be created that include both regular programmes and discreet, self-contained projects that link to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - an engagement with interactive public art design and installation - increasing opportunities through Outdoor Festivals and events - enhancement of creative activity delivered through and with schools <p>Stevenage will create a flagship Arts and Health programme with a national reputation.</p>
<p>9. Deliver the Cultural Education Challenge by supporting and enabling cultural opportunities for all children and young people</p>	<p>Themes - 2,3, 5 and 6</p> <p>Goals – B, C and D</p>	<p>Pilot activity delivered through the Hertfordshire Cultural Education Partnership will be delivered in Stevenage as part of a commitment to change the low levels of cultural engagement from the Borough’s children and young people. This will lead to a long-term planned programme of targeted initiatives in particular to ensure involvement and engagement from children and young people with protected characteristics. All Stevenage schools will be encouraged to seek Artsmark status and to become accredited centres for Arts Award. The Arts and Heritage Forum will play a role in encouraging organisations and individual artists/practitioners to achieve accreditation to deliver Arts Awards and to support Artsmark development as Artsmark Partners. A number of other Key Aims in this Strategy will support an increase in opportunities for children and young people, including the development of Outdoor Festivals and events, the development of artworks in the</p>

Aim	Themes and SBC Corporate Plan Goals supported	Activity and Outcomes
		<p>public realm and a commitment to increasing volunteering opportunities.</p> <p>Stevenage Arts Guild will be proactive in seeking to increase membership from young people and Young Champions will be sought from each school to play an active role in promoting culture to their peers. The support for children with Special Educational Needs will be focused through encouragement of visiting work from companies such as Anjali, Mind the Gap and Headway Arts, potentially creating a focused mini-Festival at Valley School.</p>
<p>10. Create a Borough-wide Arts and Heritage Forum to act as a platform for communication and cultural advocacy, encompassing professional, amateur and community sectors</p>	<p>Themes - 2 and 3 Goals B and E</p>	<p>Local cultural organisations highlight a tendency towards silo activity and a lack of connectivity across the sector. There is also an absence of joined-up marketing of cultural activity which means opportunities to more effectively promote the cultural offer are lost. Absence of connectivity also means that collaboration is not explored and new ideas emerging from regular communication and sharing of aspirations are not identified and developed. A new Arts and Heritage Forum will be established in Stevenage, with a formal Terms of Reference, meeting on a quarterly basis, and providing an accessible platform for representatives from across all parts of the cultural sector.</p> <p>The Forum will create an opportunity for effective communication, for training and skills development, for collaborative working (supporting for instance the challenges of meeting new event legislation and logistic requirements) and for connected marketing. Participation will be open to all organisations involved or with an interest in culture and to individual artists and practitioners. It will primarily be self-led (with volunteers sought through the Forum to coordinate its agenda and activities), though initially supported by an appropriate SBC Officer, a new Cultural Enabler post.</p>

Resources and resource requirements

Big Ideas are important, but they do need resourcing. Implementation of the aims in this Strategy requires:

- Some personnel expertise and support to help drive Strategy implementation (an early priority)
- Funds for public art commissioning
- Provision of space for artist and creative industry studios
- Funds and personnel to develop the Festivals offer
- Support-in-kind time and space from schools to build cultural entitlement for children and young people
- Funds to enhance participatory opportunities as part of HCEP initiatives
- Funds to facilitate Arts and Health initiatives
- Support-in-kind time from arts and heritage sector organisations to facilitate a Stevenage Forum
- Capital funds for theatre redevelopment, museum relocation, music facility enhancement and for any space refurbishment or new build to make a creative hub

In a time of reducing public finances the aspirations to undertake new initiatives need to be informed by robust identification of funding opportunities. Stevenage Borough Council recognises that it cannot resource these initiatives alone. In the spirit of co-operative working the Council will work with local organisations and partners, including the business community, to actively seek external investment.

The resources to initiate the Big Ideas highlighted in the Stevenage Re-Imagined Strategy can be sourced through the following:

- A. Partnership working
- B. Commercial business contributions
- C. Collaborative fundraising
- D. Regeneration funds
- E. Lottery applications

A. Partnership working

Stevenage Re-Imagined is dependent on partnership working. Key local partners include:

- Stevenage Borough Council
- Hertfordshire County Council
- Hertfordshire LEP
- National and local businesses based in the Borough
- Stevenage Leisure Ltd
- Stevenage Museum
- Hertfordshire Libraries
- All Stevenage schools
- Royal Opera House Bridge
- Hertfordshire Music Service
- North Hertfordshire College
- University of Hertfordshire
- Visit Hertfordshire
- Creative Hertfordshire
- Stevenage Arts Guild
- The Practice Roomz
- The Lytton Players
-

In addition, there are a range of partnerships that can be initiated or further developed in order to support implementation of this Strategy.

Potential partnerships include:

- Contracted developers
- Sustrans UK
- Digswell Arts Trust
- Hertfordshire Health and Wellbeing Board
- East and North Hertfordshire NHS Trust

- The Woodlands Trust
- ACME Studios

The role of partners in supporting resource development comprises:

1. Driving and delivering initiatives that are partner led but contribute to Strategy delivery
2. Contributing (with finance or support-in-kind) to the delivery of projects and programmes
3. Acting as applicants for funds that contribute towards projects and programmes (e.g. local community budgets from SBC and HCC)
4. Advocacy and promotion, including to business employees and potential visitors

B. Commercial contributions

The regeneration of Stevenage brings opportunity to secure contributions from contracted developers, including through CIL and Section 106 contributions, and associated businesses with an interest in the town.

The impact of regeneration and the positive effect on existing business located in the town (or relocating to Stevenage) means that there is an opportunity to source Corporate Social Responsibility and sponsorship sums to support projects, programmes and activities. Cultivation of business to access such contributions may be achieved through HLEP support and/or through contact initiated as part of regeneration planning. In particular there is alignment of the Cultural Strategy with enhancement of the science and technology sector.

C. Collaborative fundraising

Partnership working, as identified above, can involve a collaborative approach to fundraising. There are funds that are not accessible to a Local Authority (e.g. Charitable Trust and Foundation monies and Research Council funds) that can be the subject of applications from partners, sometimes through consortium bidding. One example is the local Follett Trust which might support new Arts and Health initiatives. In particular there is a need to have registered charity partners to apply to the Trust and Foundation sector and University support to access, for example, Arts and Humanities Research Council funds.

The NHS Trust may be in a position to seek funds for Arts and Health projects that are not accessible to creative sector applicants, as well as potentially providing resources in its own right through clinical commissioning. Currently there are still opportunities available through the European Union e.g. Creative Europe that require a collaborative approach. Access to European funds may change after March 2019 but until UK arrangements are clarified there remains a possibility of ongoing opportunity.

D. Regeneration Funds

Capital investment from Stevenage Borough Council and Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership is playing a key role in driving the regeneration programme.

Once delivery of initial projects (Stevenage Central) is underway, there is strong potential to engage further support to contribute towards complementary projects defined in this Strategy, especially focused on enhancement of the public realm through public art initiatives, and economic development through encouragement of creative industry relocation.

E. Lottery applications

A substantial opportunity continues to be available through the key Lottery distributors:

- Arts Council England
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- BIG Lottery
- UK Sport

The first three distributors identified above are the most relevant and all offer opportunities that can provide resources both at a smaller scale and upwards of £100,000. A number of the initiatives highlighted in this Strategy will be eligible for Lottery funding/applications, in particular – public art projects; Outdoor Festivals development; Artist Studio development; Museum relocation; Heritage Trail development; Arts and Health initiatives; music projects; and projects focusing on children and young people. Some resources may be achieved, in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council, to enable support to help drive this Strategy implementation e.g. with a cultural “enabler” position.

A Stage 2 project that is part of the process of initiating Stevenage Re-Imagined will involve funding applications (as defined in the Fundraising Strategy at Appendix B) to support immediate Strategy implementation.

Key milestones

Stevenage Re-Imagined will be the subject of endorsement by Stevenage Borough Council before the end of March 2018.

The first key milestone (June 2018) will focus on:

- Seeking support to contribute towards resources to initiate the strategy which includes specialist cultural “enabler” expertise
- Development of two funding bids to contribute to implementation of the Fundraising Strategy
- Establishment of the Arts and Heritage Forum for the town
- Advocacy to the business community to highlight the aspirations of the Strategy

Key milestones thereafter (looking to the first five years of the Strategy 2018- 2022) will include:

2019

- Putting a forward plan for a museum offer in place
- Definitive decisions on plans to upgrade the Gordon Craig Theatre
- Establishment of temporary artist studio facilities in empty space
- Stage One commissioning of Art in the Public Realm
- Pilot Arts and Health/Arts on Prescription programmes
- Stage One enhancement of the Stevenage Day, Stevenage Festival (25th anniversary) and Charter Fair events

2020

- Potential introduction of a new Outdoor event/festival in Fairlands Valley Park (50th anniversary of the Park)
- Enhanced programme of performance activity in the Valley School Theatre, Nobel Music Centre and Barclay School Drama Centre
- Focus on new initiatives to support cultural entitlement for children and young people – supporting a possible Hertfordshire Year of Culture
- Further enhancement of Stevenage Day and the Charter Fair
- Full programme of Arts and Health activity

- Revitalisation of existing sculpture trail and link to heritage, with the potential for heritage guided walks

2021

- Stage Two commissioning of Art in the Public Realm (including additional underpass artwork)
- Further enhancement of the Stevenage Festival
- Creation of more substantial and permanent/semi-permanent artist and creative industry spaces
- Development of music facilities in the town (including facilities for performance)
- Focused festival of work at Valley School from companies engaging learning disabled artists
- Enhanced arts and heritage programme to celebrate 75 years of the Borough

2022

- Progression of new Gordon Craig Theatre offer.
- Vibrant programme of theatre and music within other facilities to complement Gordon Craig delivery
- Review Strategy achievements over the first five years

Delivery responsibility

The Stevenage Re-Imagined Strategy belongs to the people of the Borough and the creative sector, as well as to Stevenage Borough Council and its partners. As such there is shared responsibility to ensure delivery, and this includes commitment to fundraising.

An Arts and Heritage Forum, open widely to the sector, and including professional, amateur and community organisations, will be initiated to launch the Cultural Strategy. It will subsequently be self-managed/coordinated by member groups, initially supported by an SBC Officer with specialist cultural expertise.

The Strategy implementation will be monitored by the appointed Officer at Stevenage Borough Council. Individual strands of activity, projects and programmes will be the responsibility of organisations as identified in the accompanying Action Plan.

The Action Plan will be reviewed and updated annually by the SBC Officer in dialogue with the established Arts and Heritage Forum.

Increasingly it is anticipated actions to implement projects and activities identified in the Strategy will be driven by partner organisations and by individual artists or practitioners, or by collaborative action.

Evaluation

The establishment of a Borough-wide Arts and Heritage Forum provides an opportunity, in addition to joined-up marketing and promotion, to collaborate on the development of standardised evaluation tools for arts, heritage and creative industries organisations, so that evaluation data can be effectively collated and compared. Social Return on Investment criteria will be used to analyse the benefit of Stevenage Re-Imagined implementation to local people and to the local economy.

A basic logic model has been created (attached as Appendix D) to summarise the benefits and outcomes that can be expected from delivery to this Strategy. Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) can be used to measure progress and achievement for the arts, heritage and creative industries at key milestones during implementation of the Ten-Year Stevenage Re-Imagined Strategy, relating to the Themes and Key Aims identified.

KPIs will focus on:

- Quality of cultural infrastructure in Stevenage
- Membership of and engagement with the Arts and Heritage Forum
- Numbers of arts and creative industries organisations and artists/practitioners based in and operating from Stevenage
- Percentage of Stevenage residents effectively engaging with arts and heritage each year (using three engagements per annum as the benchmark)
- Number of cultural engagements experienced each year by Stevenage children and young people (aged 5-18)
- Numbers attending Festivals with an arts and heritage component
- Numbers participating in Arts and Health/Arts on Prescription programmes
- Achievement of Arts Awards
- Number of schools with Artsmark status
- Stevenage status in the national Active Lives survey
- Perceptions of local people towards Stevenage as a place to live
- Visitor numbers attending arts and heritage events and activities in the town
- Level of engagement and support from the corporate sector in arts and heritage development and delivery
- Sums achieved for inward investment to support arts, heritage and creative industries activity

Ends