TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION: TOWN CENTRE FRAMEWORK

KEY DECISION

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1. PURPOSE

1.1 To update the Executive on the ongoing work to develop a Framework to attract inward investment, development and opportunities to regenerate the town centre of Stevenage.

1.2 To present the Stevenage Central Framework, developed by David Lock Associates in partnership with Stevenage Borough Council and the Stevenage First Board.

1.3 To establish the Stevenage Central Framework as the basis for Regeneration and Asset Management strategies and policies.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the Stevenage Central Framework: which has been developed by David Lock Associates in partnership with this Council and the Stevenage First Board be noted.

2.2 That the Stevenage Central Framework be adopted as the basis for the development of planning policy.

2.3 That the Framework be adopted as a blueprint for the regeneration of the town centre and the wider central area, as identified spatially in the Framework.

2.4 That officers be instructed to update the Strategic Asset Management Plan to support the regeneration of Stevenage Central, as established in the Framework.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Executive, which met on 17 June 2014, instructed officers to:
i) establish a task force, which acts as a delivery mechanism for regeneration focussed on the town centre; and,

ii) develop a Regeneration Framework that would be the basis for: (a) co-ordinating private and public sector-led initiatives; (b) identifying infrastructure requirements and programmes necessary to deliver them; and (c) promote development opportunities in the town centre to investors, developers, residents, businesses and visitors – acting as a focus for inward investment.

3.3 The Stevenage First Board was established in October 2014 and has been meeting regularly. It is a partnership Board with membership from the private and public sector, including representatives from: Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership (HLEP), Hertfordshire County Council, Hertfordshire Chamber of Commerce, Stevenage Town Centre Management Company and Stevenage Borough Council. The Chairman of the Stevenage First Board is Andrew Percival, who is a member of the Board of the HLEP.

3.4 Following a competitive process eight urban design practices submitted proposals which were considered by a commissioning board which included members and officers of Stevenage Borough Council and the Stevenage First Board. Stevenage Borough Council commissioned David Lock Associates (DLA) to develop a Framework for the town centre area.

3.5 DLA have worked closely with this Council and the Stevenage First Board to ensure that the Framework captures the opportunities that there are to regenerate the town centre by attracting inward investment and development.

3.6 DLA, through the development of the Framework, have suggested that a wider spatial area should be considered to ensure that there sufficient opportunities for regeneration. DLA have called this area of interest: Stevenage Central. The Stevenage Central area includes the town centre and a wider opportunity site. The Stevenage Central Framework is the overarching regeneration strategy for the development of the central area of Stevenage including the town centre. The timeframe of the framework mirrors that of the emerging Local Plan: twenty five years. The Framework is an ambitious plan to reframe the future of the first ‘New Town’ and builds on the pioneering spirit of the community.

3.7 The Stevenage Central Framework is not a statutory document, but the findings will be used to develop the planning policies of the emerging Local Plan for the Borough. By using the Framework to develop Local Plan policies the Council is displaying a confidence in the plans findings as well as ensuring that there are focussed planning policies to enable the Framework to be delivered. Moreover, the proposals set out in the Framework have been tested for viability, meaning that the aspirations of the plan are considered to be deliverable albeit that there are challenges ahead.
4. **STEVENAGE CENTRAL FRAMEWORK**

4.1. The Stevenage Central Framework is targeted at the effective translation of the original New Town motto and principles into a bold new vision and Regeneration Plan for 21st Century Stevenage. The vision of Stevenage Borough Council and Stevenage First reflects this:

Our vision is to reinvigorate the centre of Stevenage so that it once again represents the aspirations of its people and makes provision for the opportunities they seek.

Stevenage was, and should be again, a destination town centre with a combined retail, leisure and residential offer that will meet the needs of our population, and attract visitors well into the future.

4.2. In achieving this vision the Town Centre Framework responds to a number of drivers for change as follows:

- Embracing Growth – a positive statement of ambitions for change
- Loyalty and Commitment – securing new uses and opportunities to meet the needs of our population.
- Looking back to Look forward - reflecting positively on our New Town heritage
- Re-capturing Value - securing the expenditure of our population and businesses
- Stimulating Development - Creating a scale of opportunity and profile to stimulate private development activity
- Making the most of our Connections – Maximising the benefits of rail accessibility and the potential for a new station
- Providing the right Opportunities – re-considering how the town centre works to create new sites
- Maximising Public Sector Investment – providing a clear rationale for targeted public sector investment

4.3. The Stevenage Central Framework is made up of complementary and interlinked components:

**Part 1 - Stevenage Central**

4.4. This sets out the position today, the drivers for change and ambitions for Stevenage Central in the context of the New Town heritage.

**Part 2 - The Regeneration Plan**

4.5. The Stevenage Central Framework is an integrated set of proposals and projects to achieve the vision and ambitions for the town. The Regeneration Plan acts as the key spatial diagram showing the interrelationships between the various interventions being put forward.
4.6. **The component themes of the Regeneration Plan are:**

- Stevenage Central Land Use Plan
- Stevenage Central Movement Plan
- Stevenage Central Public Realm Plan
- Stevenage Central Heritage Plan
- Stevenage Central Major Opportunity Areas

4.7. Under each theme the regeneration aims and principles are set out in terms of the contribution to the overall ambitions for Stevenage Central. Key interventions and projects are identified and presented on pro-forma setting out the proposition in each case, parameters and delivery issues/viability.

**Part 3 - The Delivery Plan**

4.8. The Stevenage Central Delivery Plan sets out a clear route map for change. It provides a robust strategy for the delivery of the Regeneration Plan and the interventions and projects that are proposed. The Delivery Plan includes details on:

- viability; sequencing;
- funding;
- action planning;
- delivery responsibilities; and
- future management and partnership.

**Part 4 - The Evidence Base**

4.9. The final part of the Stevenage Central Framework is the Evidence Base that underpins the proposals set out in the Regeneration Plan.

**Stevenage Town Centre Framework Components**

4.10. The Town Centre Framework seeks to create new sites that are attractive to anticipated market demands. The Regeneration Plan defines Major Opportunity Areas (MoAs) which will be the focus for investment by the public and private sectors, with subsequent major planning applications. The Plan is based upon a series of bold interventions required to match the scale of ambition for Stevenage Central.

The Framework puts the Railway Station at the centre of Stevenage Central. The creation of the new east–west route is integral to the development of the Station area and would include the reconfiguration of Lytton Way, providing additional sites for regeneration.
5. **IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 **Financial Implications**

5.1.1 Funding of £1 Million was made available from the Council’s New Home Bonus (NHB) monies (2014/15) to pump prime regeneration of the Town Centre including the development of the town centre framework. A further NHB bid of £139,910 was approved by Members in 2015/16 to start the improvements to the public realm in the town centre. Any further additional capital investment costs will need to consider the Council’s financial planning process.

5.2 **Legal Implications**

5.2.1 No Legal issues have been identified.

5.3 **Equalities and Diversity Implications**

5.3.1 No issues have been identified.

5.4 **Risk Implications**

5.4.1 There will be few certainties in relation to the delivery of such an ambitious regeneration programme as set out in the Stevenage Central Framework. To mitigate the risk the plan has been tested for viability by DLA and DTZ have acted as a ‘critical friend’ through a review of the initial findings. However, it could be argued that the risk to the ‘health’ of the town centre and central areas would be greater if the Council is not proactive in regeneration and seeking inward investment.

5.5 **Policy Implications**

5.5.1 The Framework will be the basis of regeneration policy for the town centre and wider central area.

5.6 **Planning Implications**

5.6.1 The Framework will be used to develop planning policies for the town centre and central areas which will support sustainable development.

5.7 **Staff & Accommodation Implications**

5.7.1 This is a pragmatic and ambitious regeneration framework. For it to be successful the Council will have to ensure that it has sufficient capacity and people with the right skills to deliver it. This may be both from a permanent team and bringing specialists into the programme when and where necessary.
BACKGROUND PAPERS

- BD1 - Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031, First Consultation (June 2013)

- BD2 - Sharing the Dividends 2013-2018, Stevenage Borough Council Corporate Plan
  http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/content/committees/55185/55538/55541/Executive-12-February-2013-Item-5.pdf

- BD3 – Town Centre Regeneration, Executive Report 17 June, 2014

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Stevenage Central: Town Centre Framework