

Meeting Executive
Portfolio Area Environment and Climate Change
Date 14 September 2022



STEVENAGE CONNECTION AREA ACTION PLAN: PREFERRED OPTIONS REPORT FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with an overview of the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report [Appendix A].
- 1.2 To seek Members' approval to carry out public and stakeholder consultation on the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report.
- 1.3 It is important to note that the options proposed are high level, strategic options and scenarios to develop an improved environment, maximise density of space and economic opportunities around Stevenage Railway Station, in order to enable development in the long-term.
- 1.4 Any interventions that may materialise in the Area Action Plan zone should deliver a new gateway and arrival experience, enhanced movement and access, new mixed-use developments to unlock economic opportunity, create a low-carbon urban village, integrate green infrastructure, provide sustainability in mobility, built form and landscaping, celebrate the heritage of

Stevenage and make the most of digital connectivity and high-speed broadband.

- 1.5 The Stevenage Development Board, in its Town Deal submission to Government, identified the Station Gateway area an area for key regeneration opportunities in Stevenage. Through the allocation of £37.5m Town Deal funding, the Government acknowledged the significant regeneration opportunities in Stevenage, the opportunity for the growth of vital STEM sectors including life sciences. This investment is designed to be clustered around the central parts of the town, and the Government-funded Town Deal funding includes £500k allocation to enable masterplanning of the Station Gateway area going forward.
- 1.6 Stevenage Borough Council, as a co-operative Council, seeks to engage widely with businesses, residents and other stakeholder groups. The Preferred Options Report contains key concepts and aspirations at this stage and does not suggest specific proposals for the Railway Station and Lytton Way.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Executive agree the content of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options document prior to the document going out to public consultation.
- 2.2 That Executive agree the public consultation methods for when the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options document goes out to public consultation.
- 2.3 That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, to make final amendments to the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report prior to going out to public consultation.
- 2.4 That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee are considered regarding the Preferred Options Report ahead of Executive.
- 2.5 That the Executive note that informal engagement with key stakeholders will continue, including the Stevenage Development Board, to test the Preferred Options ahead of final preparation of the Area Action Plan Preferred Options Report.

3 BACKGROUND

Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan

- 3.1 An Area Action Plan (AAP) is a type of Development Plan Document (DPD) providing a planning framework for a specific area of opportunity, change or conservation. AAPs give a geographic or spatial dimension and focus for the implementation of policies for that area. AAPs can create new policy over and above the Local Plan [BD1], within the designated AAP area.
- 3.2 The Council is developing an emerging Area Action Plan for the Stevenage Station Gateway area, titled the "Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan".

As it will be a DPD, this will become part of the Development Plan for Stevenage, and as such is required to be subject to statutory consultation and examination. The final AAP document is required to be adopted by full Council.

- 3.3 The AAP will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to engage and shape this area. It also acts as a catalyst for developers interested in supporting this important part of the Local Plan.
- 3.4 The requirement to produce the Stevenage Station Gateway AAP (site area TC4 as identified in the Local Plan) resulted from a letter from the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) in March 2019 [BD2]. This lifted the Holding Direction placed on the Stevenage Borough Local Plan in 2017.
- 3.5 Stevenage Borough Local Plan Policy TC4 (“Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area”) states:

Within the Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area, as defined on the Policies Map, planning permission will be granted for:

- a. An extended and regenerated train station;*
- b. New bus station;*
- c. High-density Use Class C3 residential units;*
- d. New multi-storey or basement car parking;*
- e. New Use Class B1 office premises;*
- f. A new Use Class C1 hotel; and*
- g. New Use Class A1 and Use Class A3 restaurant and cafe uses.*

Applications should address the following design and land use principles:

- i. Major reconfiguration of Lytton Way between Fairlands Way and Six Hills Way;*
- ii. Demolition of the Arts & Leisure Centre to facilitate better east-west integration and create new development sites in the environs of the train station;*
- iii. The provision of replacement sports and theatre facilities elsewhere within Stevenage Central;*
- iv. A significantly regenerated and enlarged dual frontage train station of high quality, with associated facilities;*
- v. New public squares on the eastern and western frontages of the train station;*
- vi. High quality office buildings within a short walking distance of the train station;*
- vii. At least one multi-storey car park and cycle parking plus drop-off space.*
- viii. Establishment of an attractive east – west pedestrian route across the East Coast Main Line;*
- ix. High quality landmark gateway environment to create a positive image of Stevenage for all rail visitors.*

- 3.6 The Council provides regular updates to DLUHC (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) on progress with the AAP as one of the conditions set in the Secretary of State's letter to the Council in March 2019. The Council last updated DLUHC in August 2022 to provide an update on indicative overall timescales to adopting the AAP, as well as immediate next steps. DLUHC are content with the progress made to date on the AAP.
- 3.7 The first version of the document was an "Issues and Options" version [Appendix B]. This report outlined the core issues that are present within the station area as well as the background policy issues and wider context that affects its development. This represented an early stage of the preparation of an AAP, and a series of initial options that focussed on mobility were presented for feedback from the public, as well as targeted stakeholders. As a first stage of development of the AAP, this adds some weight to Policy TC4 of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan. Further weight to Policy TC4 will be added with the subsequent Preferred Options version of the AAP.

Objectives and Key Design Principles

- 3.8 There are a range of high-level policy objectives which align with the Local Plan and national policy direction for the AAP to respond to. These include:
- Creating a new gateway and arrival experience;
 - Creating an exemplar, low-carbon "urban village";
 - Sustainable travel considered throughout;
 - Green infrastructure in the public realm;
 - Climate change consideration in all development decisions;
 - Design of the highest architectural standards.
- 3.9 Climate change is one of the most important objectives for the AAP 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 [BD3] 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.
- 3.10 Related to tackling the challenges of climate change in Stevenage, as well as the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, the Council has seen recent investments come forward to help the sustainability of this area and its environs and is working on a range of other related transport initiatives and strategies, including:
- New Stevenage Bus Interchange.
 - Sustainable Travel Town Implementation Plan.
 - Bid for new electric bus fleet.
- 3.11 The high level, strategic options proposed for the area included within the AAP will be strongly influenced by the masterplan for the SG1 development which lies to the east and within the town centre. Connections to this

development and connections through into the town square and central area will form the emerging physical context within which the AAP sits.

- 3.12 The Station Gateway area of Stevenage is a key location for economic competitiveness. Other locations which are a similar time distance away from London terminals are seeing considerable commercial growth, for example Reading, Slough, Milton Keynes and Croydon. Stevenage is perfectly placed in terms of mobility, and already hosts major international companies in the Gunnel Wood Industrial Area as well as GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), a major pharmaceutical company.
- 3.13 Creating an attractive, healthy, memorable and enjoyable place in the Station Gateway area will provide the seeds for high quality mixed-use development to come forward and make the most of the station area and contribute widely across the town.
- 3.14 Key design principles of the emerging framework include:
- Providing people-friendly spaces;
 - Improving links from the rail station to the bus station;
 - Improving step-free and disabled access,
 - Future-proofing the area for a rail station upgrade, consolidating surface car parking to enable development; and
 - To ensure good access for all travel modes, including high quality cycling facilities.
- 3.15 The AAP is being prepared in full knowledge and recognition that a wider masterplan is developing for the Station Gateway area of Stevenage. Up to £500,000 has been committed to ensuring that works for this area are enabled, as well as for deep engagement with a variety of stakeholders. This report sets out the technical planning steps required to develop and approve an Area Action Plan. The work on the AAP will be conducted alongside the work of the Council's Regeneration Team, and Stevenage Development Board partners, to look in greater depth at potential options to create a thriving and successful gateway to the town.
- 3.16 All proposed high-level scenarios for the reconfiguration of Lytton Way have a set of core enhancements, primarily in the North and South zones of the AAP area, north of Swingate and south of Danesgate. These apply to all potential options and include:
- Reduction in width of Lytton Way to be reallocated to pedestrian or cycle movement with associated green infrastructure.
 - An additional segregated cycleway adjacent to Lytton Way, away from the railway tracks.
 - Improved access to the Police Station.
 - A large public square, future-proofed for a new railway station or enhanced station entrance.
 - An east-west "boulevard", running from the west of the railway line to the town centre and would cross the station and public square.
 - A cycle hub at the southern end of the Station Square plot.

- Development plots made available by the consolidation of surface car parking into a Multi Storey Car Park (MSCP), subject to funding being available.

Planning Policy Process

- 3.17 The Issues and Options stage was the first stage of development of the Area Action Plan. This is followed by a “Preferred Options” consultation which is informed by the Issues and Options consultation response. Following this, the final version of the AAP will be submitted to the Secretary of State. This will be followed by an Examination in Public.
- 3.18 The AAP, as a Development Plan Document, is similar in status to the Local Plan and therefore requires Examination in Public by an appointed Planning Inspector, representing the Secretary of State. Should the AAP pass the soundness tests during the Examination in Public, the gateway process to formally adopting the AAP would progress immediately afterwards.
- 3.19 The Council is in the very early stages of scoping a review of its Local Plan. Policy TC4: Station Gateway of the current Local Plan enables the AAP to be produced. However, this will not automatically prescribe development to happen in this area. An adopted AAP will provide further weight to the Local Plan and form strong evidence to inform the Local Plan Review.
- 3.20 Any proposals that do come forward in the Station Gateway area will be duly considered by the Planning & Development Committee in accordance with Local Plan Policy TC4, the AAP and any relevant policies under review, at the appropriate time.

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

- 3.21 Sustainability appraisal and strategic environmental assessment are tools used at the plan-making stage to assess the likely effects of the plan when judged against reasonable alternatives. A sustainability appraisal should be prepared for any of the documents that can form part of a Local Plan, including Core Strategies, Site Allocation documents and Area Action Plans.
- 3.22 During preparation of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan, officers concluded that Policy TC4 (Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area) had no significant environmental impact. The statutory consultees for Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Screening have been contacted to confirm they are content with this position.
- 3.23 There is potential to include stronger wording in the AAP referring to environmental effects of the development. This should reflect the position taken in the Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal, noting the environmental benefits that the preferred option works would provide such as reduction in air pollution and contribution to net zero carbon targets.

Decision of the Executive, February 2021: Issues and Options AAP for Public Consultation

- 3.24 In February 2021, the Executive [BD4] approved the publication of the Stevenage Connection AAP: Issues and Options Report for public consultation.

Decision of the Executive, February 2022: Consultation Responses to Issues and Options AAP

- 3.25 In February 2022, the Executive [BD5] received a report outlining the responses from the consultation on the Issues and Options AAP in July – September 2021.
- 3.26 The report set out 4 options for the area adjacent to Stevenage Railway Station incorporating Lytton Way:
- Option 0 – Do nothing.
 - Option 1 – All traffic modes: reduces the central area of Lytton Way between Swingate and Danesgate to a single carriageway suitable for all modes of traffic.
 - Option 2 – Bus and Taxi only: reduces the central area of Lytton Way between Swingate and Danesgate to a single carriageway and restricts movement to buses and taxis only.
 - Option 3 – Pedestrianised Plaza: removes regular vehicle movement from the front of the station and Lytton Way ceases to be a through-route. An access through-route is retained for emergency vehicles needing to access and egress the station and immediate environs.
- 3.27 There were two cycle path options proposed as well as a range of other potential core enhancements for the area, including development parcels, temporary uses and phasing developments.
- 3.28 The varied response the Council received, not just on the Options for the central section of Lytton Way, shows that in developing the Preferred Options AAP and taking the AAP through to its final stages, the aspirations in the vision for the AAP are of prime importance. This is to ensure that the Station Gateway area of opportunity is brought to life and delivered in the appropriate manner in accordance with other related measures. This is being reflected in the Preferred Options Report.
- 3.29 Hertfordshire County Council Highways (with consultancy WSP) produced a report for Stevenage Borough Council that assesses the impacts of each of the Lytton Way options on the highway network around Stevenage, as well as offer potential mitigation measures. The modelling work undertaken was based on a baseline year of 2021, with scenarios based on traffic flows in 2025 and 2031, with and without the A1(M) SMART motorway in operation.
- 3.30 While the emerging Highways Modelling report suggested that Option 1 would have the least impact on traffic flows (particularly at peak hours) around Stevenage, the Hertfordshire County Council AAP consultation response highlighted Option 2 as the most preferred option which aligns with strategic aspirations to improve active travel.

- 3.31 While the model results make it difficult to recommend Options 2 or 3 from a highway capacity viewpoint, both Option 2 or 3 could work in highway capacity terms if residents of Stevenage and users of the town centre accepted a much higher level of modal shift than would be required for Option 1. The level of ambition in the Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town may make the level of mode shift achievable – however without major behaviour change and modal shift, there are potential risks of causing significant congestion. The Council's objectives to reach net zero carbon by 2030 also need careful consideration in this regard. The Council, as well as ensuring that the AAP final options consider the net zero ambitions, will be carefully considering how to realise climate change and net zero objectives in the forthcoming Local Plan Review.
- 3.32 The Highways Modelling Report provides a sound analysis of the potential impacts on the highway network in Stevenage, of any changes to the configuration of Lytton Way that could occur in the medium to long-term. It is important to note that implementing any interventions derived from the AAP options would require likely further work and analysis, as they advance through the planning process to potential approval and delivery.
- 3.33 The Executive Report from February 2022 and Issues and Options AAP Consultation Statement [Appendix C] provides further details of consultation responses. In summary:
- Option 2: reduce the central section of Lytton Way to one lane both ways, for buses and taxis only, has emerged as a preferred option. However, Option 3: reduce the central section of Lytton Way to zero lanes to be a pedestrianised plaza, was also very popular across many consultation respondents and key stakeholders. Some elements of this option will be reflected or future proofed as much as possible into the final preferred option, in order to match the aspirations of active travel and the regeneration plans for the town centre (SG1).
 - While Option 1 is less supportive of active travel aspirations, it was also popular among respondents, therefore demonstrating a clear overall desire for some form of positive change involving Lytton Way. Option 0 “do nothing” received significantly less support than Options 1, 2 and 3.
 - There was a clear preference for “Potential Layout 1” relating to the cycle path options – this is reflected in the Preferred Options document. This layout retains the existing cycle route, running alongside the railway line and at the extreme western edge of the AAP site boundary.
- 3.34 The Executive, in February 2022, emphasised the importance of the arrival experience and that a high-tech and vibrant economy should help to shape the future identity of the area. There should be further reference to culture in order to utilise this area in the future to showcase the heritage and culture of Stevenage New Town.
- 3.35 It was resolved by the Executive in February 2022, that:
- It be agreed to progress to the next stage of the Area Action Plan progress, namely the production of the “Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report”, (the Preferred Options Report),

this report being based on the outcomes of the “Issues and Options” consultation;

- It be noted that the draft of the Preferred Options Report will be presented to Executive for approval to go out to public consultation (formal consultation, if approved, will take place once approved); and
- That informal engagement with key stakeholders will continue, to test the Preferred Options ahead of preparation of the Area Action Plan Preferred Options Report.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

Recommendation 2.1: That Executive agree the content of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options document prior to the document going out to public consultation.

- 4.1 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report is included in Appendix A.
- 4.2 There are a range of high-level policy objectives which align with the Local Plan and national policy direction for the AAP to respond to. These include:
 - A new gateway and arrival experience;
 - Creating an exemplar, low-carbon “urban village”;
 - Sustainable travel considered throughout;
 - Mixed-use development to unlock economic opportunity;
 - Green infrastructure in the public realm;
 - Climate change consideration in all development decisions;
 - Design of the highest architectural standards;
 - Celebrating the heritage of the town;
 - Making the most of digital connectivity and high-speed broadband.
- 4.3 A broad overview of the key points from the draft version is presented below.
- 4.4 In general, there has been a retention of Chapters 2 to 5 relating to background, setting the context, issues and challenges and existing environment. This has incorporated any issues highlighted during the Issues and Options AAP consultation, as summarised in the previous Report to Executive and in particular, the Issues and Options AAP Consultation Statement [Appendix C].
- 4.5 Again, relating to what has been summarised in the previous Report to Executive and the Issues and Options AAP Consultation Statement, the key changes being reflected in the Preferred Options AAP are to Chapter 6 “Emerging Framework”. These include:
 - Including reference at the beginning of Section 6 to reinforce the key principles of the AAP, that will be recognised through any final option the AAP recommends. All potential changes and scenarios proposed will promote movement and improve access to and from

the Railway Station to the Town Centre and enhance the sense of arrival to Stevenage, providing the gateway to improved opportunities for the area.

- Regarding the central section of Lytton Way, a focus on moving forward with Option 2 as a preferred option, with flexibility to convert to elements of other Lytton Way Options in the future and further work to consider how this land can best enable movement and the delivery of the AAP vision.
- Importance of flexibility to incorporate elements of other Options in the final version of the AAP. Flexibility in land use terms, to move from Option 2 (preferred option) to Option 3 in accordance with active travel aspirations and the overall opportunity the area presents, to bring about the best possible sense of arrival and gateway to the regenerated town – in accordance with the vision and aspirations of the Area Action Plan / Local Plan Policy TC4: Station Gateway.
- Focus on moving ahead with “Potential Layout 1” for a likely Cycle Path Option.
- Retention of objectives, key design principles and core enhancement sections, incorporating comments raised during the Issues and Options AAP consultation.
- Retention of phasing, temporary uses and development parcels sections, again incorporating any Issues and Options AAP consultation comments.
- Integration of current and recent developments in the vicinity of the Railway Station, including:
 - Town Investment Plan and Towns Fund Projects / Business Cases, some of which have a strong linkage to the Station Gateway area of Stevenage, as outlined in the Executive Report in February 2022 [BD5].
 - Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP), Station North (construction started 23 May 2022, to last for 40 weeks; completion estimated March 2023;
 - New Bus Interchange (opened 26 June 2022) and associated at-grade crossing on Lytton Way.

Sustainability Appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening

- 4.6 No substantive comments were received on the content of the SEA Screening Report during the public consultation on the Issues and Options AAP [Appendix D].
- 4.7 For the Preferred Options AAP, contact has been made with the three statutory agencies (Historic England, Environment Agency and Natural England). A revised SEA Screening Report will accompany the Preferred Options AAP when it goes out to public consultation.

- 4.8 As the Preferred Options AAP carries through options from the Issues and Options AAP, it is unlikely that any significant comments or objections will be made by these bodies. Any representations that are made will form part of the Consultation Statement for the Preferred Options AAP, once consultation has closed.

Recommendation 2.2: That Executive agree the consultation methods for when the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options document goes out to public consultation.

Consultation methods for Issues and Options AAP Public Consultation

- 4.9 The formal consultation consisted of:
- A series of dedicated meetings with a range of key stakeholders to the AAP area.
 - Publicity via the Stevenage Borough Council website and social media platforms (including the Council's Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn pages).
 - A link to the Council's consultation interface, where the public were able to download the AAP and SEA Screening document and submit their observations and representations.
 - The consultation interface included a series of "consultation questions", designed to cover the varying aspects of the AAP and to generate comments on certain sections of the document.
 - A press release and articles in the Comet newspaper relating to the AAP public consultation.
 - Continuation of distribution of leaflets and posters publicising the public consultation. This included distribution at Stevenage Central Library, Daneshill House Reception and Stevenage Railway Station retail outlets.
 - Continuation of engagement with the wider public via consultation stalls at the Railway Station and West Gate Shopping Centre, the Town Square and Stevenage Indoor Market.
 - Engagement with community interest groups on the AAP at events that were scheduled for Summer 2021. Leaflets and posters were placed on various neighbourhood centre notice boards. In addition, there was engagement with supermarkets and doctors' surgeries on notice boards, to gauge views on the preferred options for Lytton Way.
 - Engagement, via the Regeneration team, with key partners, businesses and wider stakeholders to help look at the 'art of the possible' for this Gateway location.

Progression to Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report

- 4.10 At all stages of the process to date, officers have taken all comments and views into account, in a conscientious manner. This has helped to inform and shape the position being reported to Executive.
- 4.11 The following paragraphs detail other important considerations for officers in preparing the Preferred Options version of the AAP.
- 4.12 The first stage for public consultation, the “consultation on initial draft policies and options”, has been completed. The “Issues and Options” version of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan formed this first stage in 2021.
- 4.13 The next stage, “develop submission version of policies” will form the second stage of the Area Action Plan and will form the “Preferred Options” draft for public consultation.
- 4.14 Following the Preferred Options consultation, the AAP will be submitted to the Secretary of State ahead of an independent Examination in Public by an appointed Planning Inspector.
- 4.15 A final consultation on any modifications proposed by the Inspector to the Plan will be held prior to the Inspector’s Report, which confirms whether the Plan can proceed to formal adoption. Monitoring and review of the Plan is required a period of time after the Plan has been adopted.

Next Steps

- 4.16 At Executive, Members will be given the opportunity to express their views on how the Preferred Options consultation will operate. For the Issues and Options AAP consultation in Summer 2021, extensive public consultation and stakeholder engagement was carried out across the town which brought significant and useful feedback.
- 4.17 Running a similar level of engagement would have substantial resource impacts; in particular for the Planning Policy team and potentially other teams at Stevenage Borough Council.
- 4.18 Consultation for Preferred Options could incorporate methods including:
- Asking what types of development people would like to see in a newly-regenerated area around the station;
 - “You said, we did” summary;
 - Frequently asked questions or “FAQs”;
 - Summary of the impacts of each option (particularly highways impacts);
 - Highlighting the potential to future proof the consultation area to adapt to other options that maintain a balance between traffic flow considerations and active travel ambitions of the Council.
- 4.19 Informal and formal engagement is continuing. For example, the Stevenage Development Board met on 16 June 2022 and were in broad support of the AAP’s vision, aspirations, and general direction of travel, ahead of the

Preferred Options AAP going to Executive. In particular, the aspirations of the AAP were seen as vital in providing a gateway to the town and providing positive first and last impressions, to cement the relationship between the Railway Station and the Town Centre. The Development Board appreciated that the AAP represented a medium to long-term project, not a quick solution. The Board also recognised that arrival for business is key to retaining the best talent and investment to the town.

- 4.20 For the Preferred Options consultation, we would go wider to tie together with more detailed masterplanning and market engagement (with input from Regeneration and Stevenage Development Board) to help shape the Area Action Plan and ensure we have deep support behind it into the final version.
- 4.21 As part of the next stage of consultation and work on the masterplan for the Station Gateway area, there will be further work undertaken to consider scenarios and options for how land use, and the spaces around the Station Gateway area, can best work. This will include further engagement and liaison with the public and key stakeholders to the area.
- 4.22 If Executive approve the Preferred Options draft to go out to public consultation, the necessary amendments and updates to the AAP will be made as soon as possible in order to facilitate a public consultation. This would be envisaged to run for a minimum of 6 weeks from Winter 2022 / 2023, subject to the level of consultation methods agreed by Executive. It is then envisaged that a further Report would come back to Executive in early 2023 to feed back on the Preferred Options consultation and agree the next steps to progressing the final version of the AAP.
- 4.23 Once the Preferred Options Report is out to public consultation, this will add further weight to Policy TC4 and thereafter until the Area Action Plan is adopted. During the process to adoption, it is anticipated that further positive engagement with landowners and key stakeholders in the process will aid early delivery of the eventual schemes on the AAP sites and for the relevant sections of Lytton Way.
- 4.24 The table below illustrates an indicative timetable for progression of the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan. This is subject to change based on the volume of engagement and response received on the Preferred Options AAP.

Stage	Date
<i>Preferred Options AAP: Public Consultation</i>	Winter 2022 / 2023 (minimum 6 weeks)
<i>Preferred Options AAP: consider and address responses</i>	Early 2023
<i>Executive: Report Preferred Options AAP consultation responses and approve Submission AAP</i>	Early 2023

Stage	Date
<i>Submission of AAP to Secretary of State</i>	Summer 2023
<i>Examination in Public of Plan</i>	Summer / Autumn 2023
<i>Inspector's Report</i>	Autumn 2023
<i>Adoption of Plan</i>	Autumn / Winter 2023
<i>Monitoring and Review</i>	From Winter 2023 (in accordance with Local Plan Review)

Recommendation 2.3: That delegated powers be granted to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, to make final amendments to the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report prior to going out to public consultation.

- 4.25 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report is appended to this report [Appendix A].
- 4.26 It is requested that Executive agree to delegate powers to the Assistant Director: Planning and Regulation, to make any final amendments to the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report prior to going out to public consultation. This will include final wording amendments, graphics, maps, and any final publishing as required.
- 4.27 It is likely that a consultancy will be contacted to assist with the final stages of publishing of the Preferred Options draft document, as was undertaken for the Issues and Options document.

Recommendation 2.4: That the comments of the Planning & Development Committee are considered regarding the Preferred Options Report ahead of Executive.

- 4.28 The Planning & Development Committee were presented an update on the AAP on 22 June 2022. Comments included:
- Importance of ensuring, if options to reduce Lytton Way were agreed, that the northern access via Tesco is adequate to alleviate some of the traffic impacts.
 - The need to get the balance with active travel is of great importance, but proposals concerning the area and in particular, Lytton Way, need to consider access from the south of the town.
- 4.29 The views of the Planning & Development Committee Members are of significant value in shaping the future direction the Stevenage Connection AAP takes as it progresses into Preferred Options stage. Key concerns expressed previously include the need for wide engagement; potential future

changes to Lytton Way; and connectivity between the Railway Station and the town centre, as it progresses through several stages of regeneration.

Recommendation 2.5: That the Executive note that informal engagement with key stakeholders will continue, including the Stevenage Development Board, to test the Preferred Options ahead of final preparation of the Area Action Plan Preferred Options Report.

- 4.30 The Stevenage Development Board were consulted on the Issues and Options public consultation findings at their meeting scheduled for 24 February 2022 and again on 16 June 2022. The Development Board provided broad support for the AAP as described in paragraph 4.16 of this Report.
- 4.31 Following the Executive meeting in September 2022, there may be scope for further engagement with other key stakeholders to inform them of progress on the AAP and listen to any comments they may wish to make.
- 4.32 Given the role of the Stevenage Development Board in securing funding for masterplanning the future of the Station Gateway area, it is important that the Preferred Options AAP is shaped by continued close working with the Stevenage Development Board on masterplanning activity. This is in order to explore the options, scenarios and ideas for development in the area in greater depth and to ensure the right outcomes are achieved in time.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

- 5.1 The costs associated with producing and consulting on the draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report will be met from the agreed departmental budget.
- 5.2 The Hertfordshire County Council / WSP Highways Modelling Report work, to supplement the Issues & Options Consultation and Preferred Options report drafting, required a budget of c. £30,000.
- 5.3 Potential further Highways Modelling work could be utilised, for example to test the success or otherwise of the Preferred Lytton Way Options by temporarily restricting through traffic on Lytton Way to identify if the reality of this situation is the same as predicted in the model. This would have further budget implications.
- 5.4 Depending on the extent of public consultation methods desired and agreed by the Executive, there could be further cost / budget implications and resourcing impacts on several teams within the Council.
- 5.5 It is possible that further consultancy assistance will be required to consider costs, feasibility of and graphics related to development of Preferred Options documentation.

- 5.6 Any potential schemes that are referenced in the AAP and subsequently developed will need to be subject to a business case and / or will require third party funding.

Legal Implications

- 5.7 The draft Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report has been prepared in accordance with the appropriate legislation, regulations and guidance, including the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The outcomes of any consultation will be conscientiously considered in accordance with the legal requirements in developing the Preferred Options version of the AAP, prior to approval by the Executive.
- 5.8 The comments of the Planning & Development Committee have been considered regarding the content of this Report.

Risk Implications

- 5.9 Given the level of exposure the AAP has had to date, the potential impacts on traffic flow in Stevenage and in conjunction with wider discussions regarding Lytton Way and current and recent developments in the Station Gateway and Lytton Way area, there is a risk that political agendas could influence the direction in which the Preferred Options AAP is steered, in the lead up to and during the public consultation process. A careful approach will be needed to ensure all views are considered and appropriate wording is taken through to the Submission version of the AAP.
- 5.10 The Multi-Storey Car Park (MSCP) site is well underway and on course for completion in 2023. This will need to be carefully considered when progressing the AAP into its latter stages, prior to Submission to the Secretary of State.

Policy Implications

- 5.11 The Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan will accord with and is being produced to supplement policies in the adopted Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2019). As it is a Development Plan Document it may also develop policies over and above the Local Plan for the Stevenage Station Gateway area of opportunity.
- 5.12 The Preferred Options Report, when drafted 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 (2019) and emerging Stevenage Sustainable Travel Town Implementation Plan.

Planning Implications

- 5.13 The Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan will supplement the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (2019).
- 5.14 The document will add to and complement the Development Plan for Stevenage. It will be a material consideration for planning applications.

Environmental Implications

- 5.15 During preparation of the Stevenage Borough Local Plan and the SEA Screening Report for the AAP, officers concluded that Policy TC4 (Station Gateway Major Opportunity Area) had no significant environmental impact. There is potential to include stronger and more focused wording in the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Preferred Options Report referring to environmental effects of any potential future development.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.16 The Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan will seek to provide sustainable travel solutions and promote active modes of transport. This will support the aims and objectives of the Stevenage Climate Change Strategy (September 2020) and contribute to the overall climate change aspirations of the Council.

Equalities and Diversity Implications

- 5.17 The Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan will seek to improve disabled and step-free access to Stevenage Railway Station; several Issues and Options consultation responses highlighted that this should be a priority. This will therefore offer further opportunities and benefits for all accessing the Railway Station and more widely, connecting to the regenerated town centre in the future.

Community Safety Implications

- 5.18 While the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan is unlikely to have any direct community safety implications per se; when implementing any of the proposals the delivery body will need to closely consider the potential impacts on community safety.

Other Implications

- 5.19 There will be significant economic implications from future work arising from the Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan.
- 5.20 For example, the AAP could help to maximise opportunity for provision of high-quality facilities for the growing local research and development industry as well as the expanding cell and gene therapy catalyst industry that is seeking future accommodation and opportunities in Stevenage and the wider area.

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 Letter from Rt. Hon. James Brokenshire MP, Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, to Stevenage Borough Council: Stevenage Borough Council's Local Plan (March 2019)

<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/planning-policy/holding-direction/the-secretary-of-states-letter.pdf>

- BD3 Stevenage Climate Change Strategy (September 2020)
<https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/about-the-council/climate-change-strategy/climate-change-strategy-september-2020.pdf>
- BD4 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Executive, Item 5: Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report for Public Consultation (February 2021)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s27638/Station%20Gateway%20AAP.pdf>
- BD5 Meeting of the Stevenage Borough Council Executive, Item 8: Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report Public Consultation Feedback (February 2022)
<https://democracy.stevenage.gov.uk/documents/s30618/Station%20Gateway%20AAP%20-%20Exec%20Report.pdf>

APPENDICES

- A Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Draft Preferred Options Report (August 2022)
- B Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Report (July 2021)
- C Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Issues and Options Consultation Statement (January 2022)
- D Stevenage Connection Area Action Plan: Strategic Environmental Assessment Screening Statement (July 2021)